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Kuwait, Turkey reaffirm close ties

Amir returns home after state visit to Turkey, thanks President Erdogan



ANKARA: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah departs after concluding his state visit to Turkey on May 8, 2024. — KUNA

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrived on Wednesday, with his accompanying delegation to Kuwait from Turkey after concluding his state visit. "On the basis of the historic bilateral relations bonding the leaderships of the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Türkiye, the two friendly peoples and mutual keenness on part of the political leaderships in the two countries on boosting the friendly relations and the partnership, as well as on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of official relations between the two friendly countries, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah paid a state visit to the Republic on May 7-8," said a statement issued by Kuwait marking the conclusion of the state visit.

"His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal was welcomed as a dear guest of His Excellency President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was the head of the hosts at Esenboga International Airport in Ankara," the statement added. Erdogan and HH the Amir held a session of bilateral discussions, followed by another one at the official level grouping delegations from the two sides. The talks were marked with consensus

on issues of common concern and the necessity of bolstering bilateral relations in all sectors.

The two sides affirmed their pride in the distinctive ties between the two countries and peoples, and praised the level of commercial and economic relations and cooperation, namely the volume of trade exchange, activities by the Kuwait Public Investments Authority in Turkey and investments by Turkish companies in Kuwait.

They signed, on sidelines of the discussions, a number of significant agreements, memoranda of understanding in the fields of coping with natural catastrophes, free trade zones, housing and infrastructural sectors, in addition to an MoU regarding the strategic ministerial-level dialogue. Moreover, Kuwaiti and Turkish officials signed an executive protocol for defense equipment contracts and an MoU between the Kuwaiti interior ministry and the Turkish catastrophes and emergency authority.

President Erdogan, the statement continued, affirmed support for sovereignty, territorial sanctity and regional security of Kuwait, stressing that

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Zionists pound Gaza; 49 bodies found in hospital

RAFAH: The Zionist entity bombarded Rafah on Wednesday and the military said ground troops conducted "targeted raids" in the southern Gazan city, as negotiations to halt the seven-month war resumed in Cairo. The Zionist entity has defied international objections and sent tanks into Rafah, which is crowded with Palestinian civilians sheltering near the Egyptian border, seizing on Tuesday a crossing that is the main conduit for aid into the besieged territory.

The White House condemned the interruption to humanitarian deliveries, with a senior US official later revealing Washington had paused a shipment of bombs last week after the Zionist entity failed to address concerns over its long-threatened Rafah operation. The Zionist military on Wednesday said it was reopening another major aid crossing into Gaza, Kerem Shalom, as well as the Erez crossing, both on the territory's border with the Zionist entity.

But the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said the Kerem Shalom crossing — which the Zionist entity shut after a rocket attack killed four soldiers on Sunday — remained closed. It came after a night of heavy Zionist strikes and shelling across Gaza. AFP TV footage showed Palestinians scrambling in the dark to pull survivors, bloodied and caked in dust, out from under the rubble of a Rafah building. "We are living in Rafah in extreme fear and endless anxiety," said Muhanad Ahmad Qishta, 29. "Places the (Zionist) army claims to be safe are also being bombed," he told AFP.

In devastated northern Gaza, Al-Ahli hospital said a strike on an apartment in Gaza City killed seven family members and wounded several other people. The Zionist military said it had struck over 100 targets across the Gaza Strip throughout Tuesday. It added in a statement that its "troops are conducting targeted raids on the Gazan side of Rafah crossing in the eastern part of Rafah".

Continued on Page 6

MoH and Zain promote child protection hotline

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health (MoH), in partnership with Kuwait's leading digital service provider, Zain, announced the kick-off of a nationwide awareness campaign to promote the Child Protection Helpline 147. The dedicated hotline, which was first provided by Zain to MoH's Child Protection Office in 2016, establishes a direct and confidential point of contact to report all forms of child abuse, neglect or harm in Kuwait.

The initiative was announced during a ceremony held at Zain's headquarters in Shuwaikh, where Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Al-Gharabally and Child Protection Office Director Dr Mona Al-Khawari were present, along with the ministry's top officials

and Zain's executive team. Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said: "Acting against child abuse and neglect is a top priority for the Ministry of Health via the Child Protection High Committee, which laid the foundations, plans and necessary measures to protect every child from harm."

Bader Al-Kharafi said: "We take pride in the extended partnership between Zain and the Ministry of Health, which has succeeded in introducing a plethora of impactful programs and initiatives to serve everyone in our community over the years." The hotline is recognized by Child Helpline International (CHI) and is available 24/7 to receive reports of all forms of child abuse, neglect or harm. All reports are treated with utmost confidentiality, and the person who reports the alleged incident is protected under the law. (See Page 3)



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi and Child Protection Office Director Dr Mona Al-Khawari with top officials from MoH and Zain.

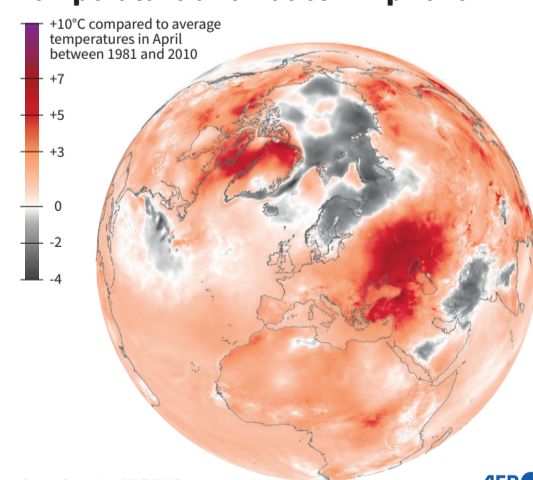
World sweltered as April smashed global heat records

PARIS: April marked another "remarkable" month of record-breaking global air and sea surface temperature averages, according to a new report by the EU's climate monitor published on Wednesday. The abnormally warm conditions came despite the continued weakening of the El Nino weather phenomenon that contributes to increased heat, said the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service, pointing to human-caused climate change for exacerbating the extremes.

Since June last year, every month has been the warmest such period on record, according to Copernicus. April 2024 was no exception, clocking in at 1.58 degrees Celsius above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average. "While unusual, a similar streak of monthly global temperature records happened previously in 2015/16," Copernicus said.

The average temperature over the last 12 months was also recorded at 1.6C above pre-industrial levels, surpassing the 1.5C target set by the 2015 Paris Agreement to limit global warming. The anomaly does not mean the Paris target has been missed, which is calculated over a period of decades. But it does signal "how remarkable the global temperature conditions we are currently experience are", Copernicus climatologist Julien Nicolas told AFP.

Temperature anomalies in April 2024



Last month was the second warmest April ever recorded in Europe, as was March and the entire winter period. Swathes of Asia from India to Vietnam have been struck by scorching heat waves in recent weeks, while southern Brazil has suffered deadly flooding. "Each additional degree of global warming is accompanied by extreme weather events, which are both more intense and more likely," Nicolas said. Diverging extremes in the form of floods and droughts peppered the planet in April. Much of Europe saw a wetter April than usual, although southern Spain, Italy and the western Balkans were

Continued on Page 6

Court refuses to free ex-candidate, sets May 15 hearing

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The criminal court on Wednesday rejected a request from defense lawyers to release ex-election candidate Musaed Al-Qraifa, on trial for allegedly insulting the political leadership, and set May 15 for the next hearing. Defense lawyers for Qraifa said the court heard the testimonies of a secret service officer and the legal representative of the interior ministry on the case.

The court then refused an appeal by the defense lawyers to free the defendant until the date of the trial. The lawyers said that Qraifa denied in court all accusations against him including insulting the political leadership and spreading false news. The presiding judge set the next hearing on May 15 to hear arguments of the defense team.

Several MPs and activists were present in large numbers as the judge allowed only the defense team and interior ministry representatives to attend the session. Qraifa was brought to the courtroom in his jail uniform. Qraifa made the offensive statements for which he is being tried at an election campaign just days before the April 4 parliamentary polls.



Turkish newspapers hail Amir's landmark visit

A new phase of Kuwaiti-Turkish relations

ISTANBUL: Turkish newspapers highlighted the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Turkey, with the front pages dedicated to describing the visit and the discussions with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The newspaper, Yeni Safak, reported that six strategic agreements have been signed between Kuwait and Turkey aimed at enhancing bilateral relations in the fields of defense and diplomacy.

Yeni Safak emphasized that the visit will lay the foundation for developing cooperation between the two countries in many fields, noting that the Turkish press has shown broad interest in His Highness' visit to Turkey to reaffirm bilateral relations. The Aksam newspaper reported that President Erdogan received His Highness the Amir, who visited Turkey on his first official visit to a non-Arab country since assuming

office in December last year, in an official ceremony.

The newspaper said that following the talks between the leaders and the Kuwaiti and Turkish delegations, His Highness the Amir and President Erdogan attended a ceremony to sign six cooperation agreements regarding multiple fields to enhance cooperation. Among the agreements, there was a protocol regarding defense procurement between the two governments and a memorandum of understanding to establish a strategic dialogue between the two countries.

The Turkgun newspaper noted Turkish interest in His Highness the Amir's visit, considering it a significant new phase of Kuwaiti-Turkish relations and adding that it would mark a new beginning in bilateral relations. The ULKA TV channel covered the visit, noting Kuwait and Turkey's

goals not only to enhance cooperation between the two countries but also to achieve further integration, harmony, and agreement regarding the regional situation in the area.

The Turkish press confirmed that His Highness's official visit to Turkey is historic and comes at a very crucial time, explaining that it gains utmost importance during the circumstances the region is going through, especially the war in Gaza. It is known that Kuwait and Turkey are linked by historic relations, and these relations have their impacts and implications on the political equations in the Middle East, whether directly or indirectly. Turkish-Kuwaiti relations witnessed a sophisticated pattern after the brutal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991, especially after the role played by the Turkish government in contributing to the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Charge d'Affaires of Poland to Kuwait, Anna Marta Godoj-Ciszowska holds a reception on the occasion of Poland's national day. The event attracted lots of dignitaries. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Embassy celebrates Poland national day, lauds Kuwait ties

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Charge d'Affaires of Poland to Kuwait, Anna Marta Godoj-Ciszowska lauded the enduring bond between Poland and Kuwait, affirming that the two countries have cultivated a robust relationship spanning decades. During her speech at a reception held on the occasion of Poland's national day, she reflected on the historical significance of the adoption of the Third of May Constitution, a pivotal moment in Poland's history, which took place on May 3, 1791, saying that the constitution serves as a timeless testament to essential principles such as freedom, independence, and solidarity among peoples and countries, shaping the region's collective identity.

Furthermore, she commemorated Poland's accession to the European Union on May 1, 2004,

alongside nine other countries, including The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Cyprus, and Malta, noting "Poland's accession to the European Union is certainly one of the most important events in the recent history of our country. This year we also celebrate the 25th anniversary of Poland's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty, 25 years ago, Poland, together with the Czech Republic and Hungary joined NATO and they became the first allies' members from Eastern and Central Europe."

Meanwhile, the ambassador highlighted the milestone of commemorating the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Poland and Kuwait, underscoring the depth of cooperation and mutual respect shared between the two countries. She added "It is my great pleasure to announce the opening of a new flight route connecting the vibrant city of Kuwait to the enchanting city of Krakow. Today marks not just the commencement of a flight, but the bridging of cultures, the opening of doors to new opportunities, and the strengthening of ties between two remarkable destinations."

The ambassador highlighted the collaborative efforts between Poland and Kuwait, particular-



ly noting the joint archaeological mission in the Subiya Desert and Failaka Island, which has been ongoing for nearly two decades, yielding significant discoveries and fostering cultural exchange. She expressed pride in facilitating a training program for Kuwaiti Coast Guard and Navy cadets

in Poland, further enhancing bilateral ties through knowledge sharing and capacity building, conveying optimism about the future prospects of Poland-Kuwait relations, emphasizing the importance of continued collaboration across various sectors for mutual benefit and growth.



Kuwait and Morocco discuss ways to boost judicial cooperation

RABAT: Kuwait's President of the Supreme Judicial Council and the President of the Court of Cassation in Kuwait, Adel Bouresli, discussed on Tuesday with Moroccan top judicial officials ways to enhance judicial cooperation between the nations. In a press release, Bouresli said he met with the President-Del-

egate of the Supreme Judicial Council in Morocco, Mohammad Abdelnabawi, and the King's Attorney General at the Court of Cassation, Chief Public Prosecutor, Hassan Al-Daki, to strengthen judicial cooperation between the two countries.

Bouresli added that he discussed with Moroccan judicial officials a number of issues in order to enhance ways of cooperation in judicial areas of common interest. Bouresli also expressed hopes to exchange experiences and expertise between the two countries in the judicial and legal fields, as well as to strengthen efforts, especially in the field of combating all types of crime. He pointed out that the meeting also constituted an opportunity to review the jurisprudence of the two countries on issues of common interest. — KUNA

Kuwaiti companies eyeing more investments in UAE

ABU DHABI: Kuwait's firms are seeking to increase their presence in the United Arab Emirates due to the developed system and legislation that have created a global market for international trade and securities, Chief Executive of the Kuwait Business Council in Dubai and the North Emirates, Feras Al-Salem, said Tuesday.

Among the recent deals signed between Kuwait and the UAE are preventing double taxation, financial evasion by companies in Kuwait and the

Emirates, customs agreements, operating additional sea freight trips, and opening new shipping lines, as well as the dual listing of the Kuwaiti and Emirati exchange markets. Al-Salem told KUNA in a statement during the council's participation in the 13th edition of the Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) in Abu Dhabi.

The business environment in the UAE has become attractive for Kuwaiti investments in light of the keenness of the two sisterly countries' leaderships on boosting commercial and economic trade, which helped reach trade exchanges of \$13 billion for 2023 and about \$3.4 billion during the first quarter of this year, Al-Salem, who is a guest of honor of the AIM, elaborated. Kuwait's investments in the UAE are the largest in the Arabian Gulf region, exceeding \$50 billion, he said.

Al-Salem referred to thousands of Kuwaiti firms

Kuwait deplors settlers' attacks

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed on Tuesday Kuwait's condemnation of settlers' assaults on Jordan's humanitarian aid convoys heading to the besieged Gaza Strip. In a statement, the Ministry affirmed Kuwait's position, calling on the international community to assume its responsibility by deploring these attacks and avoiding them. This aims to guarantee the sustainable delivery of these aid convoys to Palestinian people in order to curb the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in the Strip caused by ongoing attacks, it stated.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reiterated his appeal for Zionist occupation forces to avoid any escalation in Gaza and engage instead in constructive talks on a ceasefire. "The closure of both the Rafah and Karm Abu-Salem (Karem Shalom) crossings is especially damaging to an already dire humanitarian situation. They must be reopened immediately," he said at a press conference at the UN Headquarters in New York on Tuesday.

He underscored the need for an agreement between the Zionist government and the leadership of Hamas to stop the "unbearable suffering" of both Palestinians in Gaza and the hostages and their families. "It would be tragic if weeks of intense diplo-

matic activity for peace in Gaza yielded no ceasefire. There was no release of hostages. And a devastating offensive in Rafah," he warned. "I reiterate my appeal for both parties to show political courage and spare no effort to secure an agreement now," he stressed.

The UN chief further emphasized that a full-scale assault on Rafah will be a "human catastrophe." "Countless more civilian casualties. Countless more families were forced to flee yet again, with nowhere safe to go. Because there is no safe place in Gaza. "Attacking Rafah will further upend our efforts to support people in dire humanitarian straits as famine looms," Guterres went on.

Guterres also warned that the repercussions of an attack on Rafah will be felt far beyond the war-ravaged Gaza Strip, the occupied West Bank, and the wider Middle East region. "Even the best friends of Zionists are clear: An assault on Rafah would be a strategic mistake, a political calamity, and a humanitarian nightmare. "I appeal to all those with influence over Zionists to do everything in their power to help avert even more tragedy," he added.

In the far south of the Gaza Strip, the town of Rafah, bordering Egypt, has been hosting hundreds of thousands of Palestinians driven from elsewhere in the besieged enclave due to the ongoing military operation. There are also grave concerns that humanitarian aid stocks are fast running out across the war-torn Strip and that fuel reserves will run out by the end of the day. — KUNA

with the participation of Kuwait and a number of dignitaries across the globe. Delivering an augural speech at the event, Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasbi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah, said investments have contributed to forming the UAE's economy, adding that they managed to reduce the ratio of oil from GDP to 30 percent.

The UAE is aware of the importance of joint action and unifying international efforts to achieve investment and prosperity, he said. He revealed that his country is seeking to allure foreign investments estimated at \$150 billion by 2031 to be one of the top ten destinations in terms of direct foreign investments. The event, which will run until Thursday, will feature more than 100 ministers, mayors, and governors of central banks, as well as 900 speakers, in addition to a number of panel discussions, workshops, and forums. — KUNA

working in the UAE's market, thanks to economic diversification and the growth of non-oil sectors. Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ambassador to the UAE, Jamal Al-Ghunaim, told KUNA during the meeting that the embassy offers support and direction to, and protects and helps, Kuwaiti investors to make successful investments and remove obstacles facing them in the UAE.

Economic ties between Kuwait and the UAE are robust and developed in all sectors that benefit the two sister countries and contribute to economic stability and sustainable development in the Gulf region, he stated. Kuwait-UAE economic relations show the two countries' commitments to enhancing bilateral cooperation and achieving common prosperity to be a strong base for robust and fruitful future relations between the two states in several fields, he noted.

The AIM kicked off earlier in the day in the UAE,

Local

MoH, Zain kick off awareness campaign to promote Child Protection Helpline 147

Dedicated hotline for reporting child abuse cases in Kuwait

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) in partnership with the country's leading digital service provider, Zain, announced the kick-off of a nationwide awareness campaign to promote the Child Protection Helpline 147. The dedicated hotline, which was first provided by Zain to MoH's Child Protection Office in 2016, establishes a direct and confidential point-of-contact to report all forms of child abuse, neglect, or harm in Kuwait.

The initiative was announced during a ceremony held at Zain's headquarters in Shuwaikh, where Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi; Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi; Zain Kuwait CEO, Nawaf Algharabally; and Child Protection Office Director, Dr. Mona Al Khawari were present, along with the Ministry's top officials and Zain's executive team.

Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi commented: "Acting against child abuse and neglect is a top priority for the Ministry of Health via the Child Protection High Committee, which laid the foundations, plans, and necessary measures to protect every child from harm. The committee operates according to scientific plans and strategies and has taken impactful steps to promote a culture that protects children and monitors any neglect or abuse cases. It is also tasked with studying abuse causes and formulating suitable solutions to prevent them in partnership with other related stakeholders."

Dr. Al-Awadhi continued: "In continuation of the Ministry's efforts in this regard, a special team was formed to protect children across all of Kuwait's Governorates. The multi-disciplinary team consists of doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, and social workers. MoH also formed the Child Protection Office under the Ministry's legal office, and it is responsible for managing the necessary teams, decision making, and protocols."

The Minister noted: "MoH's Child Protection Office is an example of the collaboration between ministries, government and non-government agencies,



Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi, Bader Al-Kharafi, and Dr. Mona Al Khawari with top officials from MoH and Zain.



and civil society organizations. The Office develops and operates strategies and national projects that are consistent with global plans, in line with the decision of the General Assembly of the World Health Organization to guide healthcare systems to combat abuse against children, girls, and women. MoH played a bigger role through a multisectoral national strategy that includes prevention, awareness, offering services to victims, and more."

Dr. Al-Awadhi also shed light on the fruitful collaboration between the Ministry of Health and Zain, which resulted in the establishment of the 147 helpline since 2016. The hotline receives abuse reports and provides mental counseling to children and their parents. He also noted that the helpline is recognized by Child Helpline International (CHI), and the campaign launch coincided with the International Day for Child Helplines.

In addition, the Minister applauded the legislative achievement in Kuwait, with the issuing of the Children Rights Act 21 for the year 2015, which affirms children's rights and the State's responsibility to take all the necessary measures to ensure children receive the highest level of healthcare services through preventative and curative services. Furthermore, the law contains other key branches like social care, educational care, and criminal protection, reflecting Kuwait's commitment to offer comprehensive care for children and their rights.

Bader Al-Kharafi said: "We take pride in the extended partnership between Zain and the Ministry of Health, which has succeeded in introducing a plethora of impactful programs and initiatives to serve everyone in our community over the years." "This nationwide campaign reflects a wider, more comprehensive effort to heighten awareness of children's rights and bring the community's attention to the risks they face. Our initiative focuses on shedding light on the significant role of the 147 helpline that Zain provided and promoting the community's collective role in safeguarding every child in Kuwait."

Al-Kharafi continued: "At Zain, we strive to play an active role in shouldering the nation's social development plans because we strongly believe in the invaluable role the private sector plays in supporting the public sector to bring about positive change within the community."

"The helpline provides a confidential and direct point-of-contact that allows anyone to report child abuse cases, and it is supervised by an expert team of social counselors. Our campaign targets the entire community, whether individuals, companies, ministries, or civil society organizations. We will harness the power of Zain's digital reach through our social channels to spread the message and promote the campaign's mission even further."

Zain first provided the Child Protection Helpline 147 to the MoH's Child Protection Office in 2016, and it was recently officially transferred to the Ministry. The hotline is recognized by Child Helpline International (CHI) and is available 24/7 to receive reports of all forms of child abuse, neglect, or harm. All reports are treated in utmost confidentiality, and the person who reports the alleged incident is protected



Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi: "Multisectoral national strategy to prevent child abuse cases"



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi: "Providing Internet services is at Zain's core; our social responsibility necessitates that we take action to shed light on its dangers and ensure children's safety online"

under the law.

Reports through the 147 helpline are received by an expert team of counselors and social workers from the Child Protection Office, who are trained to handle all kinds of abuse reports. The team determines the severity of every case and notifies the related authorities immediately, while also providing counseling, mental support, and social guidance to callers or victims, if necessary. The nationwide awareness campaign targets the entire Kuwait community, including individuals and organizations, including MoH's medical institutions, encouraging medical staff, doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals to report any abuse they may become aware of.

Child Protection initiatives

Through its membership to the GSMA, Zain partnered with Child Helpline International (CHI) to represent this global network in markets where it has no presence. Ultimately, Zain's partnership with CHI succeeded in providing free access to helplines in several markets across MENA. In the Global Child Forum's report entitled, the State of Children's Rights and Business 2023, Zain scored higher than the sector average and doubled the ranking of many regional corporates in key children's rights categories. Described as a 'Leader' in the benchmarking rankings, Zain scored 8.4/10 overall against an ICT sector average of 5.8/10 and a regional average of just 3.4/10. The average of all global companies benchmarked stood at 4.9/10.

As a 'Leader', Zain was described in the report as a company that "has developed and implemented

several policies and practices that address your organization's impact on children's rights across several important areas. Your company has taken concrete steps to move beyond policies and have embedded children's rights into company practice, following-up through monitoring, transparent reporting, and programs to create action for children's rights."

Through Zain's community-oriented and child well-being initiatives, the company looks to continue to improve and safeguard the livelihoods of the communities it serves and beyond. This notable benchmarking recognition helps assess Zain's progress to date in children's rights and safety and inspires the company to do even better in the future.

Child Online Safety is of great importance for Zain given that over 30 percent of all internet users globally are estimated to be children and with the expansion of broadband access, this number is only set to rise over time. Zain is fully committed to addressing the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.2 calling on ending all forms of violence against children by 2030.

Zain scored perfect marks in several categories in the reports' benchmarking exercise, including Standards & Guidelines; Board accountability; Materiality assessment; Supplier assessment; Grievance mechanisms; Collaboration; Product safety; Policies & commitments; and Resource use and damage to the environment, cementing its position as a leading proponent of corporate governance, sustainability, children's rights, and sound business practices.

With the aim to further raise awareness on children's rights and online safety, Zain expanded its

partnership with Child Helpline International (CHI) to support child helplines across its countries of operation. This partnership aims to enhance collaboration between child helplines, Zain, and key child protection stakeholders; explore new technologies and software to enhance the helplines; create awareness campaigns; and expand services to include instant messaging and social media.

Zain has been actively working on implementing child sexual abuse material blocking mechanisms across its operations. In recent years, the company assessed the regulations and existing blocking mechanisms in each market. As a result, the company established a goal for all its markets to have child sexual abuse material (CSAM)-blocking mechanisms in place.

In a previous initiative, Zain established a partnership with UNICEF, signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to work towards the advancement of the rights of children in the region. Zain and UNICEF collaborated based on their respective expertise on strengthening activities around child rights. The MoU covered aspects on online gaming, raising awareness on child online safety, and convening stakeholders on online protection.

Through its partnership with UNICEF, Zain collaborated to create a Child Online Safety Booklet for school students and children. The goal of the booklet is to educate children on the risks they may be exposed to while being connected online or while gaming. In addition, the booklet offers tips and recommendations on what to do and not to do while online. This booklet was developed for Zain esports to disseminate to any partnership where children are players.

In another previous initiative, Zain launched the second phase of its 'Internet Monsters' campaign, showcasing the company's commitment to raising further awareness on the risks children face online with lessons being taught through the adaptation of popular fairy tales. Internet Monsters showcases alternate plotlines to well-loved children's stories, taking into consideration how online risks such as cyberbullying; self-generated child abuse content and materials; social media addiction; or widespread online scams and threats could come to the fore if technology was introduced into the telling of the fairy tales.

The 'Internet Monsters' campaign by Zain also included the commissioning of a dedicated illustration that drew attention to the fact that children can report online risks and abuse by calling their national child helplines. The campaign also included the development of two animated videos narrating different safety tips, to be shared with children, on how to protect themselves online. The videos were directed in a light and playful manner to appeal to children. The MoH and Zain encourage the community to report any incidents to 147 and assures all of confidentiality and protection under the law.



Nawaf Algharabally, Bader Al-Kharafi and Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi at the event.

GCC pushes for global development, growth



GCC Secretary General Jasem Al-Budaiwi during his speech.

RIYADH: GCC Secretary General Jasem Al-Budaiwi has affirmed that the council seeks to put all available resources at its disposal to achieve global development. The Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council said in a statement on Wednesday that the Secretary-General was addressing the eighth International Cooperation Conference, themed "Propelling the Greater Caribbean through Pathways for Sustainable Development," held in Paramaribo, the capital of Suriname, on Tuesday.

He has affirmed, according to a report broadcast by the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA), that the convention is a platform to examine means for attaining high standards of living for the peoples of the region and facing challenges jointly. The GCC's participation in the event affirms the desire of the council's member states to upgrade their close cooperation with the countries of the Caribbean, he said, indicating this approach had been endorsed during a ministerial meeting held on September 18, 2023, in New York. He expressed confidence that the GCC and Caribbean countries can form an economic and effective coalition at the regional and international levels to attain sustainable development. — KUNA

Burgan Bank sponsors 'Umm Kulthum with Marwa Nagy' concert; partners with NCIG

Cementing its role as a champion of arts and entertainment advancement

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently announced its sponsorship of the "Umm Kulthum with Marwa Nagy" concert, marking the beginning of the Bank's strategic partnership with the National Creative Industries Group (NCIG). The concert is scheduled to take place on May 29-30 at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre, with tickets now available for sale on the Centre's website and application. This comes as part of Burgan's dedicated social responsibility program and its unwavering commitment to the advancement of Kuwait's arts and entertainment sector.

Commenting on the Bank's sponsorship, Kholoud Al-Feeli, Deputy General Manager – Marketing and Communication at Burgan Bank, said: "We are very proud of our newest partnership with NCIG, which stands today as one of the most influential instigators in the development of the Kuwaiti arts and entertainment sector. On our mission to be a force of positive change in our community, we continue to expand our network of strategic partnerships and collaborations with proactive entities that have left a mark on society.

Building on this soon-to-be fruitful partnership, we are delighted to be sponsoring the 'Umm Kulthum with Marwa Nagy' concert, a night of immersive musical theatre that is designed to transport many audiences to a time of glamour and nostalgia." On her part, Shaikha Shaikha Al-Sabah, Chief Executive Officer at NCIG, said: "We are delighted to collaborate with Burgan Bank in what we foresee to be a journey that will yield very positive



Kholoud Al-Feeli

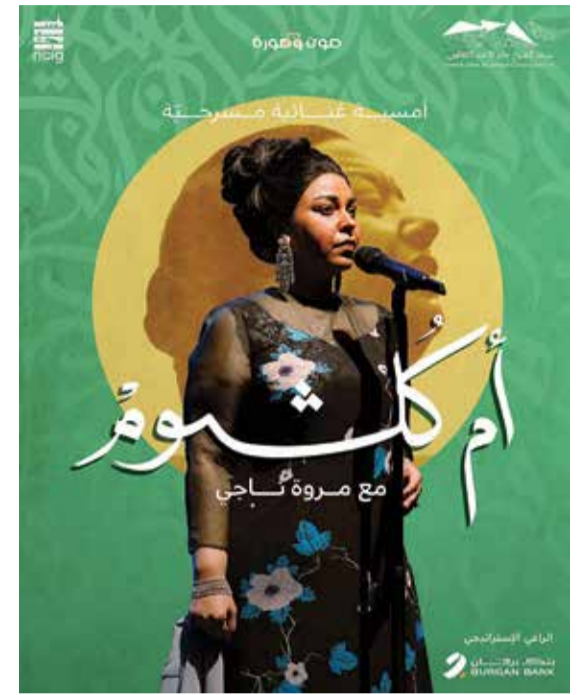


Shaikha Al-Sabah

results for our community in the arts and entertainment division.

The first stop on this joint partnership is the 'Umm Kulthum with Marwa Nagy' concert, a night of music and theatre that brings back fond memories of the foregone Umm Kulthum nights in the hearts of her fans. In addition to the musical acts, the show also incorporates performative acts that walk the audience through some of the megastar's milestones and introduce a number of key figures who played influential roles to her professional success."

Marwa Nagy, who plays Umm Kulthum and performs her songs, is an Egyptian actor and singer in the Egyptian Opera House. Marwa has participated in numerous acclaimed shows and is most notably known for performing Umm Kulthum's songs in several regional and international music festivals. The show is also led by



the Egyptian conductor, Ehab Abdel-Hamid.

As a committed patron of the arts and culture in Kuwait, Burgan Bank continues to sponsor notable musical and theatrical performances that explore new technologies and horizons in theatre and music production; especially those that encourage young, aspiring talents on-stage and backstage to innovate and push the boundaries of artistic expression.

Britain seeks to boost Palestinian exports to Kuwait

KUWAIT: The British and Palestinian embassies to Kuwait jointly hosted a delegation from the British Consulate in Jerusalem and the UK-funded "Tasdeer" team. The purpose of this highly successful visit was to explore how to export more high-quality Palestinian goods and services to Kuwait. The delegation had a busy schedule in Kuwait. Calls included: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Commerce and Industry; the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA); the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and a range of private companies focused on logistics, food and drink, stone and marble, and telecommunications.

Each meeting included a warm welcome to the visiting delegation and messages of support for the proposed export campaign. The British Ambassador to Kuwait, Belinda Lewis, said: "This was an extremely valuable visit from colleagues in Jerusalem, who received a characteristically warm welcome. There is a big appetite in Kuwait for high quality Palestinian products - particularly food, textiles and stone and marble - so the UK-funded Tasdeer team is now working hard on logistics, customs requirements and other practical matters to increase exports as efficiently as possible.



This joint project between the British and Palestinian embassies to support the Palestinian economy is a top priority for my team and we are hopeful that a number of commercial contracts will be signed with Kuwaiti companies in the very near future." "Tasdeer" is a UK government-funded program that works with a range

of Palestinian stakeholders across Gaza and the West Bank, including the Ministry of National Economy, the Ministry of Finance, Customs, and a number of private Palestinian businesses, to help facilitate the export of evermore high-quality Palestinian-made goods and services to foreign markets.

Kuwait to be celebrated as 'Arab cultural capital'

KUWAIT: The National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) announced Wednesday that the celebration of Kuwait as the 2025 Arab Cultural Capital would be exceptional. Speaking to KUNA, NCCAL Secretary General for Art Sector Musaed Al-Zamel said that his team was working hard to prepare for the celebration by undertaking many tours and holding sessions to determine the priorities of this major cultural event. Al-Zamel added that

the celebration ceremony would create new ideas that will feature forums, meetings, and cultural sessions that are specific to this event.

The NCCAL work team is examining the best locations to hold the celebration festivities, which will be worthy for visitors to see and experience, he added. He pointed out that the NCCAL employees are cooperating with other local institutions, diplomatic authorities, and Arab countries' embassies to shed light on Kuwait's cultural wealth. Al-Zamel is head of the work team appointed by the higher committee to celebrate Kuwait as the Arab Cultural Capital for the year 2025, headed by Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. — KUNA

PAM measures to streamline labor market

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) continues its efforts to regulate the marketplace and bring labor from abroad, sources said. An expert committee comprising representatives from PAM, Interior, Foreign and Higher Education ministries, Kuwait University and specialized

NGOs, has been entrusted with the task. A recent meeting discussed several proposals with regards to bringing in labor to employ particularly in certain technical professions, the sources added.

The sources said the committee reviewed the most notable jobs the marketplace needs in order to set a special mechanism for bringing in labor for each profession. The implementation of the proposals will be executed in phases and the first phase will cover medical, education, engineering, legal and financial professions. The need of the marketplace will be ascertained by the expert committee and labor force to be recruited will include all permitted nationalities in the country.

Saudia, Kuwait Airways expand codeshare deal

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways and Saudi Arabia expanded their codeshare partnership, an agreement that enables the use of Kuwait Airways' code on Saudi Arabian Airlines flights to Washington and Los Angeles. In a press release, Kuwait Airways explained that the new agreement will further promote bilateral partnerships between the national carriers while providing better travel options and connectivity to passengers between Kuwait and the United States of America.

Kuwait Airways Chairman Abdulmohsen Salem Al-Fagaan stated, "We firmly believe that this agreement will enhance commercial and tourism relations between the United States of America and Kuwait, and between the Middle East, GCC, Asia, and the USA, via Kuwait-Jeddah or Riyadh." "Passengers and travel agents will be able to book these flights directly through our websites or the travel agents' reservation systems.

Both airlines have also agreed to explore additional possibilities of cooperation in the future with the frequent flyer program and the expansion of codeshare agreements," he explained. Al-Fagaan pointed out that the agreement is a continuation of the objectives established by Kuwait Airways and is within the framework of its strategic plans to provide the best levels of service to its esteemed customers. He also indicated that this is in line with the company's objectives to link Kuwait to all parts of the world through these partnerships and to accomplish its desired goals.

As for Saudia's Chief Commercial Expert, Arved Von Zur Muehlen, this expansion "reflects Saudia's commitment to providing seamless travel experiences and enhanced connectivity." "This agreement not only strengthens our ties with Kuwait Airways but also fosters greater collaboration between our two nations, opening up new avenues for commercial and tourism relations," he added. Kuwait Airways and Saudi Arabian Airlines signed a codeshare agreement in May 2023 to promote bilateral and strategic partnerships for the benefit of customers of both airlines. — KUNA



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Modi's party deletes X post accused of targeting Muslims

UN: Nearly 3 million people displaced in Myanmar amid clashes with junta



RAFAH: Palestinian family members gather around a wounded relative (not pictured) as civil defense teams help rescue victims from the destroyed Al-Qadri family home which was struck by Zionist bombardment in Rafah.

RAFAH: People approach an injured person lying amidst rubble on the ground at the site of a building that was hit by Zionist bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on May 7, 2024.— AFP photos

Gaza women bear the brunt of war

'Awful': Gaza aid worker reveals dire conditions for women

JERUSALEM: Gazans are feeling the toll of seven months of war, with women bearing the brunt as hospitals face overcrowding and shortages, says a doctor who just left the southern city of Rafah. "In my 25 years of experience, I've never seen a conflict where people must run around in circles with nowhere to go," Hairhoun Lahna said. A gynecologist, Lahna was head of mission for Rahma Worldwide, an American non-governmental organization, and Palmed, a France-based association for "health in Palestine".

Xi welcomed with 'respect and love' in Serbia

BELGRADE: Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic reaffirmed his strong support for China's sovereignty over Taiwan Wednesday as he gave a lavish welcome to President Xi Jinping, who is seeking to deepen political and economic ties with friendlier countries in Europe. China has poured billions into Serbia and neighboring Balkan countries, particularly into mining and manufacturing, and last year Beijing and Belgrade signed a free trade agreement. Xi and his wife Peng Liyuan were greeted by Vucic on a red carpet outside the main government offices in Belgrade on Wednesday. The Chinese leader was met by a gun salute and the Chinese national anthem before shaking hands with officials including the prime minister and the National Bank of Serbia governor.

The two leaders waved from a balcony to several thousand people waiting outside, with some waving Chinese flags. Vucic called welcomed Xi a "friend of Serbia". "Such respect and love as he will find here in our Serbia, he will not find anywhere else," Vucic added. He told the crowd as Xi applauded: "We have a clear and simple position regarding Chinese territorial integrity. Yes, Taiwan is China". Beijing claims the self-ruled island as its own, and said it will not rule out using force to bring the island under Chinese control. As the two leaders sat down for meetings, Xi told Vucic in opening comments that there was a "strong feeling of friendship between our two countries". Xi arrived in Belgrade on Tuesday evening following a state visit to France that saw sometimes robust exchanges with President Emmanuel Macron on trade and China's

crowding, he told AFP on the phone. "They find themselves in tents or shelters where people crowd together," said the 57-year-old French doctor who worked in Khan Yunis' European Hospital, as well as a maternity ward in Rafah. Lahna, clearly affected, recounted witnessing a mother's death from blood poisoning four days after childbirth. "We dish out antibiotics willy-nilly to cope with the situation" because the risk of infection is "enormous", with women lacking enough water to wash themselves and unable to change into clean clothes, he said in the interview on Tuesday. Gaza's healthcare system is in tatters, with many hospitals tar-

geted or hit by Zionist entity forces. A UN Women report published this week said women and girls in Rafah and the rest of the Gaza Strip were in "a constant state of despair and fear". It found 93 percent of those interviewed felt unsafe, 80 percent had feelings of depression, 66 percent were unable to sleep and 70 percent suffered from intense anxiety and nightmares. In addition, more than half of them "have a medical condition requiring urgent medical attention", the report said. The scenes in the north of the narrow coastal strip "seem straight from Berlin after World War II" or the Chechen capital Grozny, said Lahna, describing it as "no longer livable".

Lahna said Kamal Adwan Hospital in the northern city of Beit Lahia, which he visited last week, was "a five-star hotel" compared with the destruction in the rest of the city. But in Rafah, on the border with Egypt, people were panicking after Zionist entity ordered more than 100,000 to evacuate from the overcrowded city's eastern neighborhoods. The United Nations says 1.4 million residents and displaced Gazans are crammed in the city. An emergency doctor doing volunteer work in Rafah and nearby Khan Yunis said the situation was "catastrophic". Rafah's Al-Najjar Hospital was a "red zone" with patients and

staff fleeing "out of fear", said Doctor James Smith. The closure of the Kerem Shalom crossing with Zionist entity on Sunday, after a Hamas-claimed rocket attack killed four Zionist entity soldiers, had cut off the supply of medicine and staff to support field hospitals. "The smell of sewage is rife everywhere," Smith said. "It's been getting worse over the course of the last couple of days." Smith said he takes on jaundice cases, likely due to hepatitis that cannot be diagnosed for lack of available tests. Other cases involved children and adults suffering from "complex respiratory problems, diarrhoea and vomiting", he said. — AFP



BUDAPEST: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Chinese President Xi Jinping smile on an archive picture seen on the first page of Hungarian daily newspaper 'Magyar Nemzet' (Hungarian Nation) at a newspaper's shop in Budapest, Hungary on May 8, 2024. — AFP

close ties to Russia despite the Ukraine war. The other two countries chosen for Xi's first trip to Europe since 2019 - with Hungary as the final stop after Serbia - are among the most sympathetic to Moscow in Europe. Streets in the Serbian capital were decked out with Chinese flags, along with posters and billboards that proclaimed a "warm welcome" to "Chinese friends". Xi's visit also coincided with the 25th anniversary of the 1999 US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, which killed three people. "Do not forget that our Chinese friends were with us 25 years ago when this

country was being demolished and bombed," Vucic told the crowds. "They paid a high price, they lost people only a few hundred meters from here on this very day." The embassy was hit during a months-long, US-led NATO campaign targeting Serbian security forces who were at war with ethnic-Albanian insurgents in Kosovo. The US later apologized, saying outdated maps had led the pilot to strike the wrong target. On Tuesday, Xi wrote in the Serbian daily Politika that NATO had "flagrantly bombed the Chinese embassy", warning that China would "never allow such tragic history to repeat itself". — AFP

Wife of former PM Imran Khan moved to jail

ISLAMABAD: The wife of former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan was moved Wednesday from house arrest to the same jail as her husband, lawyers said, where the pair will serve matching prison terms for illegal marriage. Khan's party has been targeted with a sweeping crackdown since nationwide protests erupted over his arrest on May 9 last year, which saw unprecedented anger directed at the military. Bushra Bibi, 49, and Khan, 71, were both convicted of corruption and breaking Islamic marriage laws in the lead up to February's general election, which saw military-backed parties come to power. Khan, who was also jailed for leaking state secrets, says the cases were designed to keep him from contesting. "She has already been shifted to a female ward of the jail on her own request," Intazar Hussain Panjutha, a lawyer for Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, told AFP.

She had been held at the home she shared with Khan - declared a sub-jail - on the outskirts of the capital for the past three months. Khan is also serving a concurrent 10-year term for leaking state secrets. The divorced mother met Khan when he approached her for spiritual guidance and appear in public wearing a face-covering hijab. She had made repeated requests to be "treated as a commoner" and taken to the prison, a spokesman for the party said. The couple married just months before Khan was elected prime minister. He was booted from power in April 2022 by a no-confidence vote after analysts said he fell out with the country's influential generals. He went on to wage a defiant campaign against the establishment which culminated in thousands of supporters pouring onto the streets on May 9 when he was first arrested. Army installations and government property were targeted in a public display of anger against the military that is rarely seen in Pakistan. Thousands of supporters were detained and dozens of party leaders rounded up, decimating Khan's once unstoppable street power. PTI said the first anniversary of the mass arrests on Thursday would be marked by rallies. — AFP

Suspect held in latest attack on German politicians

BERLIN: German police on Wednesday arrested a 74-year-old man suspected of hitting a former mayor of Berlin in the head, the latest in a rash of assaults against politicians in Germany. Chancellor Olaf Scholz blasted the attacks against politicians as "outrageous and cowardly", stressing that violence did not belong in a democratic debate. Franziska Giffey was at a library on Tuesday afternoon when the suspect came up from behind her to hit her in the head and neck with a bag containing hard objects, police said. Giffey, who is now Berlin state's economy minister and a member of Scholz's Social Democratic Party (SPD), was treated in hospital for light injuries. The detained suspect was previously known to investigators over "state security and hate crimes", said police, adding that they were investigating the motive of the attack.

Prosecutors were also considering if the man should be sent to psychiatric care because of indications that he might be mentally ill. According to provisional police figures, 2,790 crimes were committed against politicians in Germany in 2023, up from 1,806 the previous year. Nevertheless, that was down from the 2,840 recorded in 2021, when the last general elections were held. Giffey said she was feeling well after the initial scare. But she was "concerned and shaken about a growing 'free wild culture' in which people who are engaging politically in our country are increasingly exposed to attacks that are supposedly justified and acceptable. "We live in a free and democratic country, in which everyone can be free to express his or her opinions," she wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "But there is a clear line - and that is violence against people," she added. Berlin's current mayor Kai Wegner said anyone who attacked politicians was "attacking our democracy", as he vowed to examine "tougher sentences for attacks against politicians". — AFP

Washington police clear pro-Palestine encampment

WASHINGTON: Washington police cleared an encampment of pro-Palestinian protesters at George Washington University on Wednesday, authorities said, making several pre-dawn arrests. Just after 4:00 am (0800), hundreds of officers moved in on a university quad, making arrests and using pepper spray, the student-run GW Hatchet newspaper reported. CNN said around three dozen people were arrested. Police remained on the scene around 10:00 am, an AFP reporter saw, as tents were being dragged toward a garbage truck and a student held a poster reading "Free Palestine" on the sidewalk. The arrests came as the mayor and police chief from the nation's capital were expected to testify in front of Congress later in the day about why the encampment - which had entered its second week - had taken so long to clear.

However, after the encampment was cleared, Republicans who control the House Oversight Committee said they were canceling the hearing. "It was unfortunate the situation at GW forced the Oversight Committee to act; however it was apparent that the DC police force was not going to do their job," Representative James Comer said in a statement. The police department said in a statement that it had tried to "deescalate tensions" without arrests, but that based on "incidents and information, there has been a gradual escalation in the volatility of the protest."

Campus protests have sprung up across the country in recent weeks, with students demonstrating against the war in Gaza and calling on universities to cut direct or indirect financial ties with US weapons manufacturers and Zionist institutions. The at-times raucous rallies have rocked colleges. Some Jewish students have reported threats and anti-Semitism, while pro-Zionist counter-protesters at the University of California, Los Angeles, physically attacked demonstrators at an encampment.

Both President Joe Biden and universities have tried to walk a fine line between free speech rights and concerns about intimidation. On Tuesday, Biden condemned a "ferocious surge" in anti-Semitism in a speech at the Capitol, saying "there's no place on any campus in America - any place in America - for anti-Semitism or hate speech or threats of violence of any kind." Demonstrators - including some Jewish student organizers - have said they denounced acts of anti-Semitism, and accuse their detractors of conflating criticism of Zionists with anti-Semitism. — AFP



WASHINGTON: A worker pressure washes the street after police officers cleared a pro-Palestinian student protest encampment at George Washington University on May 8, 2024, in Washington, DC. — AFP

International

Modi's party deletes X post accused of targeting Muslims

Election body says BJP's 'objectionable' post violated Indian law

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party on Wednesday deleted a cartoon video posted on social media platform X that was criticized for targeting minority Muslims during an ongoing national election.

India's election code bans campaigning based on "communal" incitement but the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has frequently invoked the country's main religious divide on the campaign trail. The video, posted by an official BJP account, featured caricatures of opposition politicians scheming to abolish special affirmative action programs for marginalized Hindu groups and instead distribute them to Muslims.

The election commission wrote to the platform's Indian office on Tuesday saying the "objectionable" post violated Indian law. On Wednesday the original post had disappeared from the platform, with a notice saying it had been deleted. A police complaint filed by the opposition Congress party accused the video of promoting "enmity between different religions". Modi, who is widely expected to win a third term in office when the six-week general election concludes next month, has made similar claims to the

video in campaign appearances since last month.

He has used public speeches to refer to Muslims as "infiltrators" and "those who have more children", prompting condemnation from opposition politicians, who have complained to election authorities. On Tuesday he again said that his political opponents would "snatch" affirmative action policies meant for disadvantaged Hindus and redirect them to Muslims. Modi remains widely popular a decade after coming to power, in large part due to his government's positioning of the nation's majority faith at the centre of its politics, despite India's officially secular constitution.

That in turn has made India's 220-million-plus Muslim population increasingly anxious about their future in the country. The BJP last month published another contentious animated video on Instagram in which a voiceover warned that if the opposition came to power, "it will snatch all the money and wealth from non-Muslims and distribute them among Muslims, their favorite community".

The video was removed after several users reported it for "hate speech". — AFP



GUWAHATI: Voters queue up to cast their ballots at a polling station during the third phase voting in India's general election, in Guwahati on May 7, 2024. — AFP

Malta ex-PM, top officials charged in corruption probe

VALLETTA, Malta: Former Maltese premier Joseph Muscat, the current deputy premier and the central bank chief are among dozens of people and companies charged in a hospital privatization scandal rocking the Mediterranean island nation. Muscat and one of his ex-ministers, Konrad Mizzi, have been charged with accepting bribes, corruption in public office and money laundering, according to documents obtained by AFP late Tuesday.

It is the first time a former premier will face criminal charges in court. Muscat strongly denies the allegations. Deputy Prime Minister Chris Fenech - previously tipped to be Malta's next European Commissioner - and former finance minister Edward Scicluna, governor of the Central Bank of Malta, were also charged with fraud, misappropriation and fraudulent gain. Muscat's former chief of staff Keith Schembri has been charged with money laundering, soliciting bribes and abuse of office to exact an unlawful advantage "through threats or abuse of authority".

The charges were filed on Monday after a long-running investigation that has shaken Malta's political establishment. It dates back to the decision by Muscat's Labour government in 2015 to pass management of three public hospitals to a private company, Vitals Global Healthcare. The company had no healthcare experience and after 21 months it sold the concession to another company, Steward Health Care, without having made any of the investments it had promised.

Following a challenge by the opposition Nationalist party, a court last year annulled the privatization deal, finding evidence of fraudulent behavior. An appeal court upheld the ruling and found there had been "collusion" between the companies and senior government officials. Following a request by civil society group Repubblika, a separate criminal investigation was launched in 2019 which recommended last month that charges be brought. Those charged are expected to be summoned to court in coming days, beginning what is likely to be a long legal case. Those accused of money laundering risk jail sentences of up to 18 years. Muscat - who resigned in 2019 in the political fallout over the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia - has strongly protested his innocence.

"If they weren't so serious, the accusations against me would be laughable," he wrote on his Facebook page on Tuesday. "Without even questioning me, the authorities decided to smear me and accuse me of corruption, money laundering, establishing a criminal organization, and even claiming I took 30 million euros." — AFP

Three policemen killed in Afghan bomb attack

FAIZABAD, Afghanistan: Three policemen were killed and five were wounded on Wednesday when a sticky bomb was detonated next to a security convoy tasked with clearing illegal poppy crops in northeastern Afghanistan, the interior ministry said. The improvised explosive device (IED) was attached to a motorcycle which targeted a convoy of police vehicles in Faizabad, the capital of mountainous Badakhshan province, around 11 am (0630 GMT).

"The bomb exploded while the convoy of police forces was on its way to destroy poppy cultivation," Taliban Interior Ministry spokesman Abdul Mateen Qani posted on X, formerly Twitter.

The explosion comes days after Taliban security officials and residents clashed over the violent clear-



FAIZABAD, Afghanistan: Afghan municipal workers clean the site of a sticky bomb that detonated next to a security convoy in Fayzabad of Badakhshan province on May 8, 2024. — AFP

ance of poppy crops in two Badakhshan districts, leaving two dead and sparking rare protests.

Afghanistan was the largest producer of opium before poppy cultivation was banned in a decree by

the Taliban supreme leader in April 2022. Farmers have been encouraged to plant different crops, but none compete with the financial draw of the poppy, leading some to continue to discreetly cultivate small plots. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

An AFP journalist saw Taliban authorities searching homes and detaining dozens of people near the scene. Images posted on social media but not immediately verified by AFP showed a charred motorcycle and a police truck riddled with holes. — AFP

Eyewitness Aminullah, who did not want to give his full name, said he heard a huge explosion and saw that a convoy of Taliban authorities had been hit.

"Immediately the security forces cleared the area of people," he told AFP. The number of bombings and suicide attacks in Afghanistan has fallen since the Taliban ended their insurgency after ousting the US-backed government and returning to power in August 2021. However, a number of armed groups, including the Islamic State group, remain a threat, with regular reports of explosions that go unconfirmed by authorities. — AFP

Hope dwindles 48 hours after S Africa building collapse

GEORGE: Rescuers raced against time to find more survivors amid the rubble of a deadly building collapse in South Africa on Wednesday, as search operations were about to enter their third day. Dozens of people are still unaccounted for almost 48 hours after rescue services started combing through the debris in the southern city of George.

At least seven people were killed as an under-construction five-storey building collapsed on Monday for reasons that are yet to be determined. Twenty-nine of the 75 workers who were at the site when the incident occurred have been pulled out of the rubble alive, authorities said.

Six have life-threatening injuries, and 16 are in critical condition. Moses Malala, a foreman who survived the collapse, told AFP he heard a loud sound before the building came crashing down. Malala, who was working on the roof, said he felt his feet slipping as the building started to fold on one side.

He watched his colleagues fall one by one. Many are still buried under the rubble. Malala was injured but escaped with his life and has been helping with rescue efforts. "I have pain too much... I can't sleep" he said. "Since Monday I was here on the site, we try to remove our relatives, our brothers and sisters". Thirty-nine people remain unaccounted for, authorities said. The next few hours are critical to save them, they added. The



GEORGE, South Africa: Rescue workers at the scene of a collapsed building in George on May 7, 2024. — AFP

chances of surviving drop dramatically after 72 hours. More than 200 rescue workers and emergency service personnel divided into three teams searched separate areas on Wednesday. The building, which collapsed at around 2 pm local time (1200 GMT) on Monday, was meant to be a 42-unit apartment block.

On Tuesday night, slight cheers were heard as a survivor was pulled out of the rubble and put onto a

stretcher, an AFP correspondent saw.

Another body was retrieved and wrapped in a blanket. Religious leaders and social workers were at the scene to assist and comfort distraught families. Men, women and children sang and prayed at the city hall as they awaited news of their loved ones. One pastor told AFP they were offering "spiritual support" to those affected by the tragedy. — AFP

Kuwait, Turkey reaffirm close...

Continued from Page 1

contacts between the two countries would closely continue at various levels. He expressed his appreciation of Kuwait's good efforts and the pioneering role at the regional and international levels as well as its policy aimed at attaining prosperity for peoples.

Regarding regional developments, the two countries expressed concern at conditions in Gaza, the occupied Palestinian territories, the crimes committed against Palestinian brothers and the catastrophic conditions in the occupied territories. The two sides expressed concern regarding the tragic conditions in Rafah in southern Gaza, where the residents were threatened to be relocated against their will, affirming the necessity that the international community, namely the UN Security Council, shoulder the responsibility for implementing resolutions that call for an immediate ceasefire, protecting civilians, ensuring delivery of humanitarian aid in the occupied territories and settling the Palestinian cause according to resolutions of the international legitimacy.

Erdogan decorated HH the Amir with the prestigious State Order in appreciation for his major role in boosting the bilateral relations. At the end of the visit, HH the Amir expressed gratitude to Erdogan for the warm hospitality and invited him to visit Kuwait. He also expressed good wishes to the president and the friendly Turkish people. HH the Amir also voiced his deepest gratitude to President Erdogan for awarding him with the Order of State.

The Turkish Presidency said on Tuesday Erdogan and HH the Amir discussed economic and trade relations as well as the Zionist attacks on Gaza. "Comprehensive talks were held on economic and trade relations between Turkiye and Kuwait during the meeting held on the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries," the Presidency's directorate of communications said in a press statement.

It pointed out that the leaders mulled initiatives across a variety of sectors, including the defense sector and the steps necessary to boost bilateral trade to \$5 billion. The two leaders underlined the necessity of reviving the joint economic commission mechanism and increasing bilateral trade and investment to benefit both countries. They also discussed future cooperation in the areas of diplomacy, culture, health, tourism and education.

During the meeting, President Erdogan affirmed that Turkey will continue to support Kuwait's territorial integrity, sovereignty and security and pledged to maintain close ties with Kuwait at all levels. The meeting touched upon the Zionist hostilities against innocent Palestinians in Gaza. "President Erdogan emphasized the significance of Kuwait's stance against the (Zionist) oppression, stating that it is empowering to the Palestinian cause and that Turkiye has consistently pursued a permanent ceasefire since the beginning of the conflict," read the statement.

Erdogan stressed the importance of developing cooperation between the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organization of Turkic States. In this regard, he noted that Kuwait's support for these efforts is important and will ensure the opening of new windows of opportunity. — KUNA

Zionists pound Gaza; 49 bodies...

Continued from Page 1

An emergency doctor working in Rafah and nearby Khan Yunis said that with humanitarian access compromised, the health situation was "catastrophic". "The smell of sewage is rife everywhere," said the doctor, James Smith. "It's been getting worse over the course of the last couple of days." World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Wednesday hospitals in the Gaza Strip's south had only "three days of fuel left" because of the border closures. "Without fuel all humanitarian operations will stop", he posted on X.

Meanwhile, the Hamas-run government media office said health workers had uncovered at least 49 bodies from the premises of Gaza City's Al-Shifa hospital, the territory's largest which was devastated by two weeks

of fighting in March. The bodies were recovered from "a third mass grave" at Al-Shifa, following the discovery of some 30 bodies last month, said Mutassem Salah, head of the hospital's emergency department.

AFP footage from Al-Shifa hospital showed at least a dozen bodies wrapped in black plastic body bags. Standing in front of the ruins of the hospital, which was devastated by two weeks of fighting in March, Salah said several of the bodies had decomposed. On Wednesday, the media office said health workers continued to uncover bodies from the complex. So far 520 bodies have been recovered from "seven mass graves" found at three different hospitals across Gaza in recent weeks, the media office said.

The Zionist military offensive has killed at least 34,844 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the territory's health ministry. Talks aimed at agreeing a ceasefire resumed in Cairo on Wednesday "in the presence of all parties", Egyptian state-linked media reported. A senior Hamas official said the latest round of negotiations would be "decisive". — AFP

World sweltered as April smashed...

Continued from Page 1

drier than average, Copernicus reported. Heavy rain resulted in flooding over parts of North America, Central Asia and the Arabian Gulf. While eastern Australia was hit with heavy rains, the bulk of the country experienced drier than normal conditions, as did northern Mexico and around the Caspian Sea.

The natural El Nino pattern, which warms the Pacific Ocean and leads to a rise in global temperatures, peaked earlier this year and was headed towards "neutral condition" in April, Copernicus said. Still, the average sea surface temperatures broke records in April for the 13th consecutive month. Warming oceans threaten marine life, contribute to more humidity in the atmosphere and puts at risk its crucial role in absorbing planet-heating greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate forecasts suggest the second half of the year could even see a transition to La Nina, which lowers global temperatures, Nicolas said, "but conditions are still rather uncertain". The end of El Nino does not mean an end to high temperatures. — AFP

International

UN: Nearly 3 million people displaced in Myanmar amid clashes with junta

Cambodia's Hun Sen urges junta-Suu Kyi talks

YANGON: The number of displaced people in Myanmar has reached three million, the United Nations said, the vast majority forced to flee their homes by conflict unleashed by the military's 2021 coup. Around 2.7 million have fled since the putsch that toppled Aung San Suu Kyi's government after a short-lived experiment with democracy.

The coup sparked renewed clashes with established ethnic armed groups and birthed dozens of new "People's Defense Forces" that the military has failed to crush. "Myanmar stands at the precipice in 2024 with a deepening humanitarian crisis," the UN's resident coordinator in the country said in a statement released on Monday.

An estimated one-third of those displaced are children, according to the statement. Around half of the three million have been displaced since late last year, when an alliance of ethnic armed groups launched an offensive across northern Shan state, the statement said. The offensive seized swathes of territory and lucrative trade crossings on the China border, posing the biggest threat to the junta since it seized power.

Myanmar's borderlands are home to a plethora of ethnic armed groups, many of whom have battled the military since independence from Britain in 1948 over autonomy and control of lucrative resources.

The UN said a severe funding shortfall was hampering its relief efforts, particularly ahead of the May-June cyclone season. Last year cyclone Mocha smashed into western Myanmar's Rakhine state, killing at least 148 people.

More than 355,000 people are currently displaced in western Rakhine state, which has been rocked since November by clashes between the Arakan Army (AA) and the military, the UN said.

Meanwhile, Cambodia's former leader Hun Sen said Tuesday he has asked the head of Myanmar's junta for a video meeting with jailed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Hun Sen, who ruled Cambodia for nearly four decades before stepping down last year, held video talks Tuesday with Min Aung Hlaing as the



DEMOSO, Myanmar: A Kayah woman and children carrying containers from a delivery of drinking water by the charity Clean Yangon at a camp for internally displaced people in Demoso township, in Myanmar's eastern Kayah state. — AFP

Myanmar military struggles to quell widespread resistance to its rule.

Nobel laureate Suu Kyi is serving a 27-year sentence imposed by a junta court after a trial condemned by rights groups as a sham to shut her out of politics. A post on Hun Sen's Facebook page said the veteran leader used the call to "again request Min Aung Hlaing to consider organizing a video meeting between him and Aung San Suu Kyi with the aim of saying hello to her".

The 78-year-old has largely been hidden from view since being detained when the generals seized power, and any meeting with Hun Sen would be a significant step. Since her detention in February 2021, her only known encounter with a foreign envoy came in July last year, when the then Thai foreign minister Don Pramudwinai said he had met her for over an hour.

Investigators conducted raids across 13 locations in India and detained several people for questioning.

The CBI said then that it had found at least 35 instances of Indians being sent to Russia.

India's foreign ministry had earlier said it was working to secure discharges for around 20 Indian nationals in the Russian army. Several Indian recruits told AFP in February that they were lured into joining up by promises of high salaries and Russian passports before being shipped to the frontlines.

The soldiers said they had been promised non-combatant roles but were trained to use Kalashnikov assault rifles and other weapons before being sent to Ukraine. Russia's army held off a much-hyped Ukrainian counter-offensive last year, and it has since made gains on the front lines as Kyiv struggles with ammunition and manpower shortages. India is a longstanding ally of Russia and has shied away from explicit condemnation of the invasion of Ukraine. Unemployment remains high in India despite rapid economic growth and huge numbers seek work abroad each year, including thousands who had sought employment in Zionist entity after labor shortages sparked by the war against Palestinian militants in Gaza. — AFP

Hun Sen, now serving as the head of Cambodia's senate, was the first foreign leader to visit Myanmar after the coup, travelling there in 2022. Min Aung Hlaing pledged to consider the request to speak to Suu Kyi "with the highest attention", Hun Sen's Facebook post said.

Up to now, the junta has rebuffed numerous requests by foreign leaders and diplomats to meet Suu Kyi, including from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional bloc. ASEAN has spearheaded efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the escalating conflict in Myanmar, with little success. More than 4,900 people have been killed in the military's crackdown on dissent since its coup and more than 26,000 others arrested, according to a local monitoring group. — AFP

Former Karnataka minister remanded in kidnapping case

BENGALURU, Former Karnataka minister HD Revanna, who was arrested for allegedly abducting a sex abuse victim of his son Prajwal Revanna, was remanded in seven days' judicial custody on May 8. His three-day police custody ended on May 8, according to reports. He was produced in the XVII Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court. Judge Ravindrakumar B Kattimani remanded him in seven days' judicial custody. Janata Dal (Secular) leader Revanna, who was detained by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in the kidnapping case last week, has been sent to judicial custody till May 14. Revanna on Tuesday failed to get relief from the special court for elected representatives, which had adjourned his bail plea hearing for Wednesday.

Revanna, son of JD(S) patriarch and former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, and his confidant Sathish Babanna were booked on Thursday night for allegedly abducting a woman on April 29. The case was registered on a complaint filed by the woman's son, who alleged that his mother was sexually abused by Revanna's son and JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna. The SIT has also secured the custody of Babanna.

The woman was allegedly abducted to prevent her from testifying against Prajwal, police sources said.

The explicit videos of the alleged sexual abuse of women by Prajwal had been making the rounds on social media based on which the state government formed the SIT on April 28 to probe the case after the Karnataka State Commission for Women wrote a letter to the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

The 33-year-old Prajwal, who was the NDA candidate in the Hassan Lok Sabha constituency, reportedly left the country on April 27, a day after the elections, and skipped the SIT summons to appear before it.

Interpol has issued a Blue Corner notice against the absconding MP, who is facing sexual abuse charges.

Meanwhile, Congress leader and Karnataka's deputy chief minister, DK Shivakumar on Wednesday accused HD Kumaraswamy of plotting to circulate thousands of USB flash drives containing the purported explicit videos of the latter's nephew, Prajwal Revanna.

Shivakumar has blamed Kumaraswamy for the scandal. A day after the JD(S) leader accused him of circulating 25,000 USB flash drives before the parliamentary elections, Shivakumar called the former Karnataka chief minister the "king of blackmailing".

Shivakumar said Kumaraswamy was the "lead, director and producer of the story". He claimed Kumaraswamy knew about the flash drives. — Agencies



BENGALURU: Former Karnataka minister HD Revanna was remanded in seven days' judicial custody on May 8.

India arrests four accused of recruiting for Russian army

NEW DELHI: Indian authorities have arrested four people accused of "trafficking" citizens of the country to fight for the Russian army in Ukraine. Two years since Russia's invasion began, tens of thousands of its soldiers have been killed in Ukraine and Moscow has been on a global quest for more troops.

At least two Indian soldiers have been killed in the conflict, with several recruits telling AFP they were shipped to the frontlines under false pretences. A statement published by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) late Tuesday said four men had been arrested, including one who had worked in Russia as a translator for a network facilitating the recruitment of Indian soldiers. "Investigation is continuing against other accused persons who are part of this international network of human traffickers," the statement added. The arrests come two months after the inves-



LAOAG, Philippines: In this handout photo from the Armed Forces of the Philippines taken and received on May 8, 2024, shows the BRP Jose Rizal launching a C-Star Surface to Surface Anti-Ship Missile directed towards a mock enemy target during the maritime strike exercise as part of the joint US-Philippines annual military Balikatan drills in Laoag, on Luzon island's northwest coast. — AFP

US and Philippine troops sink enemy vessel in war games

MANILA: US and Philippine forces sank a decommissioned China-made Philippine Navy ship Wednesday during South China Sea war games simulating an attack on an enemy vessel, officials said. The exercises are being held near the city of Laoag, around 400 kilometers (250 miles) south of Taiwan, amid a backdrop of increased confrontations between Philippine and Chinese vessels around South China Sea features claimed by Manila and Beijing.

The BRP Lake Caliraya, a small tanker decommissioned by the Philippine Navy in 2020, slowly dipped below the water after being struck by waves of anti-ship missiles, rockets, cannon fire and land-based artillery off Laoag, they said. A navy fast attack craft and frigate, an air force fighter and helicopter and land-based artillery from the Philippine military as well as a US F-16 fighter and an AC-130 gunship took part in the attack on the simulated enemy vessel, they added.

The participants had "a mission of trying to prevent an aggressor from landing on the Philippine soil," Lieutenant-Colonel Omar Al-Assaf, lead Philippine planner for Wednesday's activity, told reporters.

"The ability of both the US and the Filipino army and air force to work together to achieve this is extremely lethal," said Lieutenant-Colonel Matt Cahill, commander of a US Army unit taking part in the war games. He compared it to team sports in which "you don't take the field with a new team, right before the big game" but must practice together beforehand.

The Philippine military earlier ruled out any symbolism in the choice of a China-made ship as target practice for the allies. "There is no issue with that. The vessel has been used in the Philippines for a long, long time. So any attachment, if ever there is, doesn't matter at all," said Philippine Navy chief Vice Admiral Toribio Adaci.

More than 16,700 Philippine and US troops are taking part in the annual military drills - dubbed Balikatan, or "shoulder to shoulder" in Tagalog - in multiple locations across the Asian archipelago. Journalists watched Wednesday's event on video screens beamed towards a strip of sand dunes where, two days earlier, the two allies had also conducted a live-fire exercise with missiles and artillery to stop an imaginary invasion force landing on the Philippines' north coast.

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 the drills, China's foreign ministry warned Monday that "any military exercise should not be targeted at or harm the interests of third parties". — AFP

News in Brief

Volcano in Indonesia erupts

JAKARTA: A volcano in eastern Indonesia erupted on Wednesday and spewed an ash tower almost a mile into the sky, prompting officials to raise an alert level to the second-highest and warn people to keep away. Mount Ibu, located on the island of Halmahera in North Maluku province, erupted at 11:11 am local time (0211 GMT) and sent a thick column of dark smoke and ash above the peak. The volcano spewed an ash tower 1.5 kilometers (0.93 miles) above the peak, Indonesia's volcanology agency (PVMBG) said. — AFP

Fighter jet crashes in Singapore

SINGAPORE: An F-16 fighter jet crashed at a military airbase in Singapore on Wednesday with no casualties, the defense ministry said. "The pilot successfully ejected and the plane crashed thereafter within Tengah Air Base," it said in a statement. "The pilot is conscious and able to walk. He is receiving medical attention and no other personnel are hurt." The ministry said the Singapore jet "experienced an issue during take-off and the pilot responded in accordance with emergency procedures." It added that it had begun investigating the crash. — AFP

Poland detains Russian deserter

WARSAW: Polish border guards said Wednesday they had detained a Russian deserter who illegally crossed into Poland, a staunch Ukraine supporter, from the territory of Moscow ally Belarus. The Russian embassy in Warsaw said it had not been informed of the matter and questioned the truth of the announcement. "We have detained a Russian deserter. He had his military papers on him," border guard spokeswoman Katarzyna Zdanowicz told AFP. "The individual is a 41-year-old man who illegally crossed the Belarusian border into Poland, in the northeast," she said, without providing further details. — AFP

Police in Vietnam arrest 20

HANOI: Police in Vietnam have arrested 20 people for stealing and taking control of tens of thousands of Facebook accounts both domestically and internationally, state media said Wednesday, netting them nearly \$4 million in profit. The group is accused of producing and spreading malware to hijack more than 25,000 high-value business accounts, according to VNExpress. Cybersecurity police made the arrests during several raids across Hanoi, business hub Ho Chi Minh City and northern Nam Dinh province in April. — AFP

Court bans 'Glory to Hong Kong' protest song

HONG KONG: Hong Kong banned a protest song popular during massive pro-democracy demonstrations in 2019 on Wednesday after a court judged "Glory to Hong Kong" was used as a "weapon" to incite violent protests. The song grew popular during the protests, and was also secretly recorded by an anonymous orchestra. Its defiant lyrics incorporate the key protest slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times". "Glory to Hong Kong" is the first song to be banned in the former British colony since it was handed over to China in 1997. The Hong Kong government's first attempt to get an official injunction was refused by the High Court last year in a surprise ruling, which said a ban could have a "chilling effect" on innocent third parties.

Angering the city's government, the song has in recent years been played at several international sporting events, with event organizers mistaking it for the Chinese territory's anthem.

Hong Kong is a semi-autonomous territory with no anthem of its own, and uses China's "March of the Volunteers". Wednesday's ban comes after a campaign by the city's authorities against the song, which has seen them demand it be removed from Google's internet search results and other content-sharing platforms - a request that has been largely rebuffed.

Reversing a lower court's decision last year, appeal judge Jeremy Poon wrote in a judgement that the composer of the song had "intended it to be a 'weapon' and so it had become". "It had been used as an impetus to propel the violent protests plaguing Hong Kong since 2019. It is powerful in arousing emotions among certain fractions of the society," he said. The order would also stop a range of acts including broadcasting and performing the song "with criminal intent".

The song can also no longer be disseminated or reproduced on internet-based platforms, though the injunction contained exceptions for "academic activity and news activity"—a tweak the government made after earlier questioning by judges. The judgement said an injunction order was "necessary" because internet platform operators "indicated that they are ready to accede to the Government's request if there is a court order". The Asia Internet Coalition—an industry group that includes tech giants like Google, Apple, Spotify, and X—said it was assessing the implications of the decision "to determine its impact on businesses". —AFP

THURSDAY, MAY 9, 2024

AlTerkait: Al Safat shareholders' rights increased by 30% compared to 2023

Company won World Business Outlook award for executing best merger between two investment companies in GCC

KUWAIT: The general assembly of Al Safat Investment Company was held on Wednesday, May 8 at Al Safat Tower, where a long-term strategy was presented, focusing on a set of criteria and controls to ensure sustainability and financial stability, reflecting on its investments and the rights of its shareholders in the future. Abdullah Hamad AlTerkait, Chairman of Al Safat Investment Company, stated: "The company has been able to move forward with its well-planned expansions in line with that strategy, enhancing its presence through diversifying its financial services along with sectoral diversification as well."

Financial position

AlTerkait confirmed in a press statement on the occasion of the annual general meeting of the company that the strengthening of Al Safat's financial position during the past year came within its strategic plan for 2023. He explained that although the past year was full of changes, Al Safat ensured to keep up with those changes and achieve the greatest possible benefit within the framework of the com-



Abdullah Hamad AlTerkait chairs the general assembly of Al Safat Investment Company on Wednesday.



prehensive transformation witnessed by financial and investment sectors.

Financially, AlTerkait reported that the company recorded an increase in shareholders' equity from KD 22,787 million at the end of 2022 to KD 29,446 million for the year 2023, a growth of 30 percent. During this period, it achieved operational profits of KD 2.21 million compared to KD 244,000 for 2022.

Milestones and mergers

He noted that the company went through several milestones during the previous period, including major milestones that altered the sizes of assets and liabilities, such as the merger with Cap Corp Investment Company through the merger mechanism, followed by the execution of the share exchange plan.

He pointed out that the merger was based on a 0.5 exchange ratio of Al Safat's shares for each share in Cap Corp, where the merger was accomplished by issuing new shares to Al Safat Investment Company in exchange for a purchase of KD 10,200,000, which is the listed price of the company's shares on the acquisition date.

AlTerkait explained that the transaction resulted in Al Safat Investment acquiring a group of assets valued at KD 16,283,245, carrying minimal liabilities estimated at only KD 396,191, making the net assets acquired by Al Safat Investment in the process KD 15,887,054. Considering the cost paid by the company for the merger with Cap Corp, which amounted to KD 10,200,000, AlTerkait hinted that the company realized profits of KD 5,687,054 from the merger.

Future outlook

AlTerkait revealed Al Safat's direction towards conducting quality operations within the frame-



Chairman of Al Safat Investment Company Abdullah Hamad AlTerkait

work of agreements under implementation, including completing the exit procedures from the Middle East Chemical Industries Company, expected to be finalized during 2024. He indicated that the company is in final negotiations with potential investors to exit and complete the sale of the Carpet Manufacturing Company, with expected contractual measures to be taken during the current year, 2024.

The Al Safat team is currently continuing its efforts to develop the investment portfolio of Cap Corp and transform it from a local portfolio to a Gulf one. Additionally, the market maker service is subject to main arrangements, as the company has reached an advanced preparatory stage to acquire the service in coordination with regulatory authorities, with activation expected in the near future following full readiness according to the rules followed in Boursa Kuwait.

Opportunity study

Regarding the company's vision and according to the content of Al Safat's strategy for the next five years, AlTerkait mentioned that the company's management is studying potential merger and acquisition opportunities that would enhance the financial robustness of the company and its position among Islamic investment companies.

AlTerkait said: "It is clear that our aspirations extend to local and global merger and acquisition opportunities and are not limited to specific fields, but we aspire to explore new areas, one of the most important of which is the real estate sector."

Best merger award

Al Safat Investment Company won the award for the best merger operation between two investment companies for the year 2023 - GCC region, from World Business Outlook. The company received this award for executing the merger process in a record time and with remarkable results, most notably the

speed and smoothness of the transitional process in both financial operations and shareholders, in addition to retaining a large percentage of employees in their positions while preserving everyone's rights. The awarding body aims to honor exceptional achievements, significant contributions, dedication, hard work and steadfast commitment to growth in the business, financial, and investment sectors and celebrate them. It highlights the best in business excellence, financial and investment worlds.

Governance framework: Requirements

Amid governance requirements, the executive management of the board of directors pledged the accuracy and integrity of the company's financial reports to be presented fairly. The reports review all financial aspects, including data and operational results, prepared according to internationally accepted accounting standards approved by the authority, under which the board of directors undertakes to the esteemed shareholders the integrity and fairness of all financial data and related reports of its activities.

Judicial ruling

Al Safat Investment Company obtained a final judicial ruling issued by the Dubai Court of Appeal in its favor, compelling Evolve Management Facilities (a UAE company) and other defendants to pay Al Safat a total of 346,797,739 Emirati dirhams (equivalent to KD 28,838,312), plus legal interest on the amount awarded at a rate of 5 percent from March 4, 2021, until full payment. The annual interest amounts to 17 million dirhams, equivalent to KD 1.4 million. The company will diligently take all necessary measures to collect the amounts awarded in its favor, which will have a positive future impact on its financial position and the rights of its shareholders.

The Blue real estate project

AlTerkait explained that The Blue real estate

- Al Safat achieved operational profits of KD 2.21 million
- Focus on diversifying financial services alongside sectoral diversification as well
- The company acquired assets of around KD 16.3 million through the merger with Cap Corp
- Al Safat heading towards signing quality agreements and profitable investment exits

project - a craftsmanship complex bringing together commercial businesses and specialized companies - achieved a high success rate during the past year. The project, by leasing vacant units and occupying The Blue craftsmanship complex at a rate of 65 percent.

Social responsibility

Al Safat Investment Company's social responsibility is considered a vital and effective element that reflects its identity. The company encourages doing good, celebrating it, and continually improving for the better, as well as spreading awareness and culture through media, shedding positive light on achievements, and providing assistance whenever possible.

In 2023, the company sought to expand its vision and diversify its sources of giving, focusing mainly on health, youth and empowering women. Al Safat Investment Company organized celebrations for the National Day and Liberation Day of the country, participated in sponsoring the Women Empowerment event at Volvo Studio, participated in Environment Day and Job Fair events, and participated in health awareness campaigns.

Gratitude and appreciation

AlTerkait extended his sincere gratitude to all the company's shareholders, board members and executive management for their continuous support of Al Safat Investment activities, as well as to all those who supported its journey. He added: "Thanks are also extended to the various regulatory authorities in the State of Kuwait such as Capital Markets Authority and Ministry of Commerce and Industry for their continuous cooperation and the effort and diligence they exert in developing and improving the financial markets sector in the State of Kuwait."

'A blessing': Rains refill drought-hit reservoirs in Iraq

DARBANDIKHAN, Iraq: The reservoir behind the massive Darbandikhan dam, tucked between the rolling mountains of northeastern Iraq, is almost full again after four successive years of drought and severe water shortages.

Iraqi officials say recent rainfall has refilled some of the water-scarce country's main reservoirs, taking levels to a record since 2019. "The dam's storage ca-

capacity is three million cubic meters (106 million cubic feet). Today, with the available reserves, the dam is only missing 25 centimeters (10 inches) of water to be considered full," Saman Ismail, director of the Darbandikhan facility, told AFP on Sunday.

Built on the River Sirwan, the dam is located south of the city of Sulaimaniyah in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region. "In the coming days, we will be able to say that it's full," said Ismail, with the water just a few meters below the road running along the edge of the basin. The last time Darbandikhan was full was in 2019, and since then "we've only had years of drought and shortages," said Ismail.

He cited "climate change in the region" as a reason, "but also dam construction beyond Kurdistan's borders". The central government in Baghdad says upstream dams built in neighboring Iran and Turkey

have heavily reduced water flow in Iraq's rivers, on top of rising temperatures and irregular rainfall.

This winter, however, bountiful rains have helped to ease shortages in Iraq, considered by the United Nations to be one of the five countries most vulnerable to some impacts of climate change.

In Iraq, rich in oil but where infrastructure is often run-down, torrential rains have also flooded the streets of Kurdistan's regional capital Erbil. Four hikers died last week in floods in Kurdistan, and in Diyala, a rural province in central Iraq, houses were destroyed.

Ali Radi Thamer, director of the dam authority at Iraq's water resources ministry, said that most of the country's six biggest dams have experienced a rise in water levels. At the Mosul dam, the largest reservoir with a capacity of about 11 billion cubic meters, "the storage level is very good, we have benefitted from

the rains and the floods," said Thamer. Last summer, he added, Iraq's "water reserves... reached a historic low". "The reserves available today will have positive effects for all sectors", Thamer said, including agriculture and treatment plants that produce potable water, as well as watering southern Iraq's famed marshes that have dried up in recent years. He cautioned that while 2019 saw "a sharp increase in water reserves", it was followed by "four successive dry seasons".

Water has been a major issue in Iraq, a country of 43 million people that faces a serious environmental crisis from worsening climate change, with temperatures frequently hitting 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) in summer. "Sure, today we have rain and floods, water reserves that have relatively improved, but this does not mean the end of drought," Thamer said. — AFP

Business

NBK continues field follow-up of 'Bankee' implementation in schools

Al-Marzouq: We aim to help prepare a financially literate generation by instilling basic economic concepts

KUWAIT: The Executive Management of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues their visits to public and private schools across Kuwait to follow up the implementation of the "Bankee" program, which was officially initiated in this school year in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Kuwait Authority for Anti-Corruption "Nazaha", and Creative Confidence.

In this context, the bank organized a visit to Amra Bint Hazm Elementary School for Girls in Faiha Area featuring the participation of Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO of NBK-Kuwait accompanied by representatives from Ministry of Education and Nazaha, in which they closely monitored the latest updates regarding the school students' financial literacy program.

During the visit, Al-Marzouq toured several classrooms within the school to review in detail the implementation of program, including the virtual bank experience that allows students to have a financial account in which they use the "Bankoz" virtual currency, and how they win prizes and rewards as they



Sulaiman Al-Marzouq speaks during the program.

attractive content, and the remarkable development in their financial culture, and the positive changes in their behaviors after implementing the program.

On the right track

Commenting on this, Al-Marzouq said, "We are very happy with the great interaction of students in various Kuwaiti schools with the Bankee program



A group photo with students of Amra Bint Hazm Primary School for Girls.

economic concepts in students at an early age, such as earning, spending, saving, and calculating financial obligations, and promoting sound financial practices such as wise spending and saving. This is done through a program that simulates real-world economy in a practical and interactive manner, which will benefit the whole society in the long term, and have positive impact on the Kuwaiti economy in general," he noted.

Al-Marzouq emphasized that NBK extends utmost support to national initiatives that aim to enable the Kuwaiti young generation to play an instrumental role in building Kuwait's renaissance and prosperity in the future, indicating that investing in students at a young age and providing them with the required educational support and assistance as per the latest international standards would create a generation who are capable of raising Kuwait's flag high in all fields.

Financial inclusion and sustainability

"The Bankee program is part of our broader commitment to promoting financial inclusion and

spreading financial culture among all segments of society. It also aligns with the bank's sustainability strategy, which focuses on supporting education as a fundamental part, reflecting our firm belief that it is the cornerstone of Kuwait's renaissance and progress," Al-Marzouq added.

"The program also establishes a concept that the bank strongly supports and encourages in delivering its social responsibility, which is cooperating with public and private sector entities to implement various initiatives, launch programs and entering into partnerships to extend support to all segments of society in different fields.

Having achieved a remarkable success in its pilot phase, Bankee encouraged more schools and students to join it. Out of 150 applicants, 30 schools have been enrolled in the program so far, in addition to a special needs school for learning difficulties (Joan Al-Kuwait Elementary School), with a total of 15,000 students and more than 3,000 teachers.

Bankee also launched its website in Arabic and English, as well as social media pages on Instagram, Tik Tok and YouTube, to enable all participants to benefit from the provided content, activities and events held at different schools all year round.

It is worth mentioning that NBK has recently been honored with the Bronze Award from Qorus in the Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) category for Bankee Program. This recognition signifies the bank's commitment to incorporating innovations that integrate sustainability and environmental, social, and governance standards into its activities.

"Bankee" stands as the pioneering program launched by NBK, designed to contribute to financial inclusion, especially among school students, with a view to promote sustainable financial literacy within the community in the future. NBK officially kick-started the program in October 2023 in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Nazaha.

- Investing in students at a young age creates youth who are capable of raising Kuwait's flag high in all fields
- The program resonates with our broader commitment to promoting financial inclusion and delivering social responsibility
- We partner with public and private sector entities to implement various initiatives to extend support to all segments of society

accumulate the program's currency in their accounts in exchange for their exceptional performance and behavior. The school administration stated during the visit that "Bankee" has become an integral part of the students' daily classroom activities, highlighting that they are highly engaged with the program's

during the first school year of its official implementation, which indicates that it is on the right track to achieve its desired goal." "The objective of "Bankee" is to prepare a financially literate generation who are capable of managing their own and their families' finances in the future, by instilling basic



One of the students explaining the features of the program.



In Bulgaria, a losing battle against EU Green Deal

BELI BRYAG, Bulgaria: The European Union's plans to phase out coal are not going down well in Beli Bryag, a Bulgarian mining village that was sacrificed to expand an open-pit mine. Empty houses with gaping window openings and 50-odd people remain in the community, down from some 400 in 2009. That was when it was decided to tear down the village to make space for the mine.

Now it seems the facility may not have a long life either. Bulgaria has committed to exiting coal by 2040 as part of EU efforts to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by mid-century under its Green Deal. "The situation is tragic," said Beli Bryag mayor Ivelina Dimcheva, whose husband and brother are miners. "It's absurd to destroy our houses to expand a mine, which risks closing afterwards," she told AFP. Her clan is among five families who have refused to accept a compensation deal to relocate. Instead, they have taken their case to court to save their homes.

The Green Deal, unpopular in coal-dependent Bulgaria, is a major issue ahead

of the European parliamentary elections on June 9 and the country's own national election the same day. Coal workers have been offered "no prospects", said Stanimir Georgiev, 50, a 30-year veteran of the mines who is organizing strikes and protests to defend his livelihood in the run-up to the European polls.

"The Green Deal is a charade which threatens our well-being and fuels anti-European feelings," he said outside the Maritsa East coal-fired power plant complex, which gets its supplies from the Beli Bryag mine. Russian flags fly outside houses in this central region of Bulgaria, which is traditionally close to Russia. — AFP



TROYANOVO, Bulgaria: This photograph taken on April 12, 2024, shows cars driving on a road past the Troyanovo-1 coal mine, near the village of Troyanovo, eastern Bulgaria. —AFP

Market-based schemes not reducing poverty: Report

PARIS: Market-based approaches to forest conservation like carbon offsets and deforestation-free certification schemes have largely failed to protect trees or alleviate poverty, according to a major scientific review published on Monday. The global study—the most comprehensive of its kind to date—found that trade and finance-driven initiatives had made "limited" progress halting deforestation and in some cases worsened economic inequality.

Drawn from years of academic and field work, the report compiled by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), a group of 15,000 scientists in 120 countries, will be presented at a high-level UN forum starting Monday. Its

authors urged a "radical rethink" of increasingly popular market-based approaches often promoted as effective at saving forests, curbing global warming and raising living standards in developing nations.

"The evidence does not support the claim of win-wins or triple wins for environment, economy and people often made for market mechanisms as a policy response to environmental problems," said contributing author Maria Brockhaus from the University of Helsinki. "Rather our cases show that poverty and forest loss both are persistent across different regions of the world... where market mechanisms have been the main policy option for decades," she told AFP by email.

Since the last IUFRO assessment in 2010,

the report noted a rise in complex and overlapping market-based schemes "with financial actors and shareholders more often interested in short-term profits than long-term just and sustainable forest governance". Its lead author, Constance McDermott from the University of Oxford, said this may not be true of all individual projects "but overall... it's hard to say they've been a rousing success". The report said a \$120 million project in the Democratic Republic of Congo had "reinforced entrenched interests" by restricting local people from forests without addressing logging by powerful extractive businesses.

In Malaysia, indigenous groups promised better livelihoods from a foreign-backed plantation venture on their customary land received no benefit, the report said. "As both cases show, 'wins' are often gained elsewhere, while the burdens of forest loss, enclosures and forestland conversion are carried locally," said Brockhaus.

In Ghana, deforestation rates had risen despite a slew of sustainable cocoa standards, corporate pledges, and carbon offset projects, while farmers were earning less today than decades ago, said McDermott.

Meanwhile green trade policies imposed by wealthy countries—like the EU's ban on imports linked to deforestation—might look good from Brussels but did not consider the knock-on effects, she added. "There's no accountability. If this doesn't work—or farmers are pushed off their farm as a result—it's not going to hurt the person eating chocolate in the UK or Germany," she said.

Despite recent turmoil, carbon markets are projected to grow into a multi-billion-dollar industry as corporations increasingly turn to credits to meet their net-zero climate targets. Credits are purchased from projects, often in developing nations, that reduce or avoid the release of planet-heating emissions, such as protecting CO2-absorbing rainforests or peat swamps. —AFP



SYDNEY: Environmental activists hold a protest rally in front of Kirribilli House, the official residence of the Australian Prime Minister, in Sydney on May 8, 2024, calling for the Albanese government to halt further approvals of coal and gas projects. — AFP



FUTURETEC

Announcement for severing relations with a former employee

Future Technology Systems Company for Computer hereby announces that Mr. Ahmed Yousef Dheif-Alla Al-Zateemeh, holder of civil ID no. 293060803157

was working with the company in the position of Sales Manager. The work relationship with him was terminated on 31/05/2023 and he no longer has any relation with the company.

Therefore, we would like to declare that the company shall not bear any consequences or liabilities resulting directly or indirectly from dealing with him in any business in the name of the company, and we discharge our legal liability for the same.

Business

NBK ECONOMIC INSIGHT

Kuwait's business credit growth in Q1 recovers, but household weak

Private sector and resident deposit growths improve

KUWAIT: Kuwait's domestic credit growth was a relatively decent 0.9 percent in Q1, resulting in a 2 percent y/y increase through March. Business credit drove most of the growth in Q1, expanding by 1.7 percent q/q, more than double the increase recorded in all of 2023 (+0.8 percent). Business lending needs to record ongoing strength in Q2 for it to finish 2024 at a meaningful increase, given that the second half of the year is usually weak.

Household credit, after a modest recovery in the second half of 2023, was muted in Q1. Higher for longer interest rates and the political backdrop are headwinds for growth going forward.

The recovery in business credit (+1.7 percent YTD, +1.3 percent y/y) has been relatively broad-based across sectors with "construction" and "trade" still in the lead in line with 2022-2023, up 7 percent and 3.2 percent YTD, respectively, while the dominant "real estate" increased 1.9 percent, exceeding the 1.3 percent growth seen in full-2023. In contrast, "other services", which tends to be volatile fell by 3.1 percent YTD, and is the only main sector to be in the red so far this year. After a very strong 2023 in terms of project awards (KD 2.2 billion), the first four months of 2024 have been relatively weak with awards dropping by 34 percent y/y to stand at around KD 415 million. On the other hand, household credit was lackluster, inching up a limited 0.3 percent in Q1 (+1.9 percent y/y), and decelerating from 0.9 percent and 0.6 percent q/q growth

Table 1: Credit growth

Credit	Mar-2024	% growth			
	KD billions	q/q	YTD	y/y	2023
Business	23.6	1.7	1.7	1.3	0.8
of which Real Estate	9.8	1.9	1.9	2.7	1.3
Household	18.8	0.3	0.3	1.9	1.5
Securities	3.5	1.1	1.1	6.4	6.9
Banks & financial instit.	2.2	-2.0	-2.0	4.0	4.2
Total domestic credit	48.1	0.9	0.9	2.0	1.7
Non-resident credit	6.4	9.1	9.1	22.2	5.7
Total credit	54.5	1.8	1.8	4.1	2.1

Source: Central Bank of Kuwait

in the previous two quarters. Looking ahead, higher-for-longer interest rates is a headwind for credit growth, and particularly for household credit.

Meanwhile, it is important to mention that credit for non-residents jumped by 9 percent YTD, which results in an overall credit (domestic plus non-resident) growth of 1.8 percent YTD. Non-resident credit has been growing faster than domestic credit since 2022 and accounted for 11.8 percent of total credit as of March 2024.

up from 9.8 percent in December 2021.

Resident deposits increased by a robust 1.8 percent in Q1, pushing up y/y growth to 4.3 percent. Private sector deposits showed some recovery following a weak 2023, growing by 2.2 percent q/q and accounting for 92 percent of the increase in deposits in Q1. Public-institution deposit trends have been weakening after soaring in the last quarter of 2023 (+18 percent q/q) while government deposits were marginally positive YTD after surging

Table 2: Deposit growth

Deposits	Mar-2024	% growth			
	KD billions	q/q	YTD	y/y	2023
Private sector	38.2	2.2	2.2	1.2	1.2
of which Time dep.	21.2	2.5	2.5	9.9	12.1
of which CASA dep.	15.1	1.6	1.6	-9.5	-11.0
Public Institutions	6.8	0.7	0.7	7.2	2.0
Government	4.6	0.4	0.4	33.1	37.2
Total resident dep.	49.6	1.8	1.8	4.3	3.9
Non-resident deposits	4.0	-7.0	-7.0	-11.9	-0.7
Total deposits	53.6	1.1	1.1	2.9	3.5

Source: Central Bank of Kuwait

by 37 percent in 2023 when they accounted for 69 percent of the total increase in deposits. It is worthy to mention that, within private-sector KD deposits, CASA increased in Q1 (+1.6 percent q/q), its first quarterly increase in seven quarters. On the other hand, trends of time deposits continued to weaken with y/y growth falling to 10 percent, from a peak of 26 percent in mid-2023.

Given lack of progress on the inflation front in the US so far this year,

the market-implied pricing of cuts in US rates has been toned down from five to six 25 bps cuts at the start of the year to only two cuts currently. While this dynamic will continue to evolve, it is also uncertain whether the CBK will follow the Fed in any potential rate cuts this year. Credit growth in Kuwait will likely continue to feel the pinch if policy rates remain elevated while any rate cuts will be supportive for credit growth, especially household.

BMW: EU probe into China EV subsidies against free trade

FRANKFURT: The chief executive of German luxury carmaker BMW on Wednesday warned the European Union's investigation into Chinese electric car subsidies runs counter to free trade. The EU launched the inquiry last year, fearing that Chinese subsidies are a threat to Europe's own vast automotive industry.

The move enraged Beijing, sparking fears of a trade war between the bloc and the world's second-biggest economy. Oliver Zipse—CEO of BMW, which has major investments in China, the world's biggest car market—said that the Munich-based group "always strives for free trade".

"What we are experiencing today with the anti-subsidy investigation against China is exactly the opposite of what we expect," he said during a call after the group reported falling profits in the first quarter. It was unlikely BMW's warnings would stop the EU imposing additional tariffs on Chinese car manufacturers, he said, but added that he hoped any such step would be temporary.

"I would warn against doing something like that permanently—it would do much more damage to German industry," he said.

He pointed out many Chinese imports to Europe are made by non-Chinese manufacturers with operations in the country, including German companies. "You see how quickly you can shoot yourself in the foot," he said. According to NGO Transport & Environment, nearly 20 percent of all electric cars sold across the EU last year were built in China—but more than half of those were made by Western carmakers. BMW has a major production base in Shenyang, where it manufactures cars through a joint venture.

Zipse's comments came as the BMW group, which also makes Mini and Rolls-Royce cars, reported first-quarter net profit dropped 19 percent year-on-year to 2.95 billion euros (\$3.17 billion) due to higher costs. Sales slipped 0.6 percent to 36.6 billion euros.

In China the group sold almost 183,000 BMW brand vehicles, down 4.1 percent from a year earlier.

Germany's auto giants in particular have invested heavily in China in recent decades. They were already facing problems due to fierce local competition, and the fallout from the EU probe amounts to an extra headache. If the EU concludes there are unfair practices, it could impose tariffs on Chinese car manufacturers above the standard 10 percent EU rate, but Brussels could also decide to do nothing.

The probe is one of several state aid investigations directed at China by the bloc in recent times, with the EU accusing Beijing of flooding Europe with subsidized goods. — AFP



BEIJING: People visiting a Tesla stall at the China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) in Beijing.



BEIJING: People visiting the BYD stand at the Beijing Auto Show in Beijing. — AFP photos

Global car giants seek tech allies in China's EV market

BEIJING: Struggling foreign automakers in China are looking for help from local tech giants to try to stay competitive in the world's biggest electric car market, where shiny smart screens, assisted driving and sophisticated map technology are in high demand. At the recent Beijing Auto Show, China's biggest car expo, a number of foreign firms announced tech partnerships—from Nissan joining forces with Baidu to Toyota signing a cooperation agreement with Tencent. The two Japanese companies are among a number of traditional auto juggernauts, once dominant in China, that are now struggling to keep pace with a new generation of local EV startups.

"They are notoriously conservative companies and their competencies aren't technology," Tu Le, managing director of Sino Auto Insights, told AFP.

"They've tried to invest in frontier technology for the automotive space but it doesn't come naturally," he said. "But they are being forced to try to be more open-minded towards technology due to where the market is moving in China and the new entrants into the space—companies like Xiaomi and Huawei with high tech consumer products backgrounds."

Those firms are now in a brutal price war with more than 100 Chinese electric car brands, all fighting to offer the most attractive prices and the most advanced tech to wealthier consumers. As a result, foreign firms have suffered, Gregor Sebastian, a senior analyst and EV industry expert with the Rhodium Group, an independent research firm, told AFP.

Argentina rolls out 10,000 peso banknote

BUENOS AIRES: Inflation-battered Argentina on Tuesday introduced a 10,000-peso banknote, worth the equivalent of about \$11 -- five times the face value of the previous biggest 2,000-peso bill. The new note, which will allow people to carry around fewer bills, will be available at banks and

"Foreign car makers in China in general, but particularly Japanese car makers, have really been... hammered in the last 12 to 18 months in the Chinese market," he said. "They've lost market share rapidly... This is linked to intense Chinese competition from producers like BYD, but also the numerous EV startups." BYD, which has emerged in recent years as the country's undisputed champion of the sector, beat Tesla in the final quarter of 2023 in global EV sales.

Foreign automakers are now compelled to find ways to boost their standing in a market increasingly dominated by a low-cost and high-tech vehicle lineup. Smart technology features are among the new set of requirements for obtaining a leading edge in China's EV race.

But as the US-China geopolitical competition has intensified in recent years, Beijing has tightened control over foreign firms' access to information it considers sensitive, such as advanced and the heaps of data produced by domestic cars. One major reason why foreign automakers are seeking partnerships with local tech firms is to benefit from their innovation, which Chinese automaking executives have attributed to the cut-throat competition in the industry.

But another is access to data. "There is a bit of a walled garden scenario going on here," Daniel Kollar, head of automotive and mobility at the consultancy Intralink, told AFP. "China wants to be seen as playing by the rules, letting foreign players access the market," he said. "But they really don't want to give up on the security side of things."

The solution is to work with a Chinese partner. "If you want to offer highly advanced mapping solutions in China, you need to work with a local company and either license their mapping data or

enter into a joint venture," Sebastian told AFP.

Nissan has hailed its deal with Baidu as allowing it to bring "exciting intelligence system(s) and AI-based services to customers in China and beyond". And Toyota said it will help with gaming giant Tencent on AI would help it capitalize on Chinese consumers' growing appetite for advanced smart features in the cars it sells in China. Baidu has also recently started collaborating with South Korean automotive giant Hyundai and its affiliate Kia.

These Chinese firms are the "experts" in precisely the space where foreign firms are falling behind, Sino Auto Insights' Tu Le said. "That combined with most automakers being especially weak in digital creates the perfect opportunity for Tencent and Baidu to make that pivot towards the mobility space." During a surprise visit to Beijing last week, Tesla boss Elon Musk met top Chinese officials and received a key security clearance for its locally produced EVs.

The regulatory breakthrough coincided with reports that Tesla had entered into a deal with Chinese tech titan Baidu for maps and navigation. Sebastian told AFP that tech partnerships are driven by a more long-term strategy aimed at staying ahead in the Chinese market. "This is more talking about the next five to 10 years rather than the next two to three years," he said.

"If political relationships with China continue to be stable and not deteriorate further, maybe (foreign firms) can tap Baidu or Tencent for next-generation products in the 2030s." And Tu Le said the possibilities of AI in smart cars could be huge. "Imagine the autonomous system in a vehicle has access to all your historical data along with your ride and drive data, buying habits and preferences," he said. "It could create ways to try to monetize you every few minutes." — AFP



ATMs from Tuesday, the South American country's central bank said in a statement.

Argentina is in the grips of an economic crisis that has seen annual inflation nearing 290 percent as poverty affects about half the population. With no end in sight, the central bank said a 20,000-peso note will be issued later this year. The 2,000-peso bill was launched just a year ago, double the then biggest note of 1,000 pesos—of which one would need about 15 to pay for an average restaurant dinner for one today. The issuing of high-dominance banknotes is nothing new in Argentina, which had a bill with a face value of 1,000,000 pesos in the 1980s. — AFP

THURSDAY, MAY 9, 2024

KATY PERRY FOOLS INTERNET WITH FAKE AI PHOTOS OF MET GALA

US singer Katy Perry said even her own mother was fooled by AI-generated fake images she posted Tuesday of herself pretending to attend the Met Gala in New York. "Couldn't make it to the MET, I had to work," the "Firework" singer wrote to her 207 million followers on Instagram. But two photos with it appear to show Perry on the famous steps of the Metropolitan Museum, which hosted the glitziest fashion night of the year on Monday. One had her wearing a huge floral dress, while a second had her in a warrior-style bronze bustier and grass petticoat.

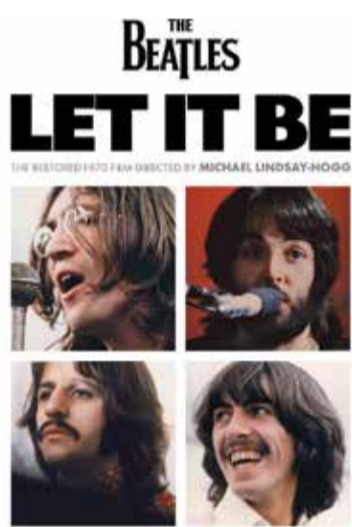
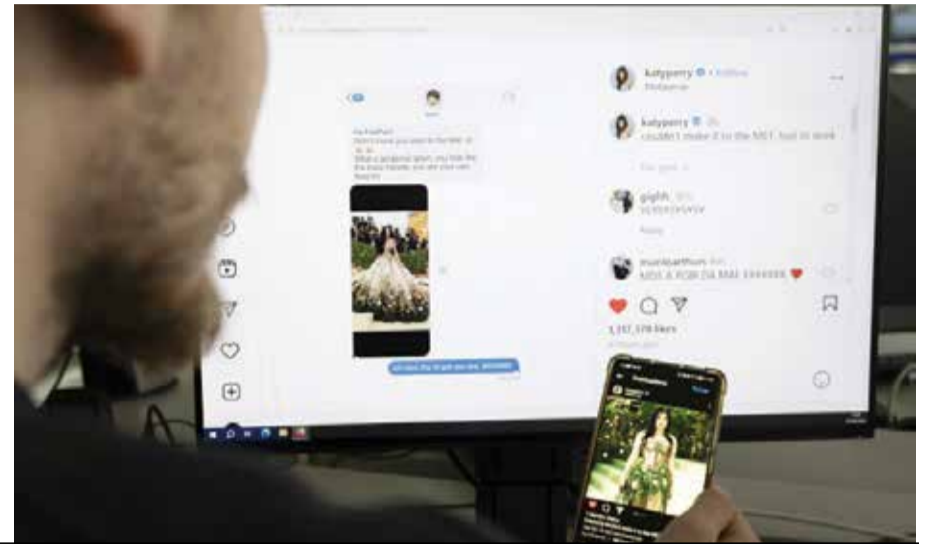
She put her location as "Metaverse", but many online fans failed to pick up

on the fact that Perry was not actually present. The image even fooled Perry's mother. The singer shared an exchange in which her mum wrote: "Didn't know you went to the Met." Perry responded: "lol mom the AI got you too, BEWARE!"

Other fakes also emerged of the evening, including images of singer Rihanna and actor Selena Gomez. Although AI has often been used to create harmful and sexualized images of celebrities, some are now embracing the technology themselves. Earlier this year, British singer-songwriter FKA Twigs revealed she had built a deepfake version of herself. It "is not only trained in my personality, but also can use my exact tone of voice to speak many lan-

guages," she said in a statement.

"I will be engaging my 'AI twigs' later this year to extend my reach and handle my online social media interactions, whilst I continue to focus on my art from the comfort and solace of my studio," she added. In January, a fake pornographic image of superstar Taylor Swift was viewed 47 million times on X in half a day before being removed by the platform. The following month, 20 internet giants including Meta (Instagram, Facebook) and X committed to deploying technologies to more effectively identify and report content generated by AI. —AFP



Remastered Beatles movie 'Let It Be' gets long-awaited re-release

"Let It Be", the documentary film about The Beatles released just after the band's break up in 1970, hit screens again on Wednesday -- the first time it has been legally available in over 50 years. Shot in January 1969, director Michael Lindsay-Hogg's movie contained glimpses of the tensions and acrimony between John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr that eventually led to them disbanding. "George wasn't getting many songs recorded because John and Paul were so prolifically brilliant," Jonathan Clyde of the Beatles' Apple Corps told AFP.

"John had met Yoko (Ono) and was making his own journey, Paul was doing what he wanted to do and Ringo had started shooting films," he said. The film shows the "Fab Four" in rehearsals and recording sessions for the album "Let It Be". The last part features their unannounced 40-minute concert on the roof of their record company building on London's Savile Row. It was restored from the original 16mm negative with the sound remastered using the latest de-mixing technology, and has been re-released on Disney+.

More objective

Clyde said the film covered a period when they had tried to rekindle the same spirit they had when they started out performing at Liverpool's Cavern Club and in Hamburg. But it became tainted by the break-up in April 1970, a month before the film was released, unfairly making it a "sort of odd postscript to the end of their career", he added. "They never felt a great love for 'Let It Be' because I think it was associated with all the trouble," he told an audience after a screening of the remastered film in London on Tuesday.

More than half a century later it could now be seen in a more objective light as an invaluable record of the Beatles' creative process. "We all know they were genius, they created this incredible music year after year after year but actually they also worked incredibly hard at it," he said. "You can see those two steps forward one step back, days when really nothing happened and then suddenly a burst of energy that took it forward."

Some 60 hours of previously unseen footage shot for the film was used by "Lord of the Rings" director Peter Jackson for his 2021 series on the making of "Let It Be". Jackson's "The Beatles: Get Back", a documentary about a documentary, offered a more positive take on the Beatles' final months together using the outtakes to show the bandmates joking around together as they created classics for their 12th and last studio album. —AFP

French actress Huppert to head Venice Film Festival jury

French actress Isabelle Huppert, best known for her role as a sado-masochist in "The Piano Teacher", will lead the jury at this year's Venice Film Festival, organizers announced Wednesday. The 81st edition of the prestigious festival will take place from August 28 through September 7 on the beach-lined Lido island.

"There is a long and beautiful history between the Festival and I," said Huppert, who has won Venice's Coppa Volpi for best actress twice, for Claude Chabrol's "Story of Women" and "La Ceremonie", in 1988 and 1995 respectively. "Becoming a privileged spectator is an honor. More than ever, cinema is a promise. The promise to escape, to disrupt, to surprise, to take a good look at the world, united in the differences of our tastes and ideas," the 71-year-old said.

Last year, the festival's top Golden Lion prize went to Greek director Yorgos Lanthimos's "Poor Things", a feminist reworking of Frankenstein. The 2023 jury was led by US director Damien Chazelle, best known for the Oscar-winning "La La Land". —AFP

Europe's 'Swifties' await icon with open arms

When a pair of "Swifties" in The Netherlands tried to get a local Taylor Swift fan night going two years ago, club owners turned up their noses—doubting the US megastar would be a hit with the hip crowd. "They were not on our side at all," Alexa Fischer, 25, told AFP. "We couldn't even put their names on our socials because they were embarrassed to host the Swift party," recalled her friend, Femke van Splunter. As it turned out, their first party was an instant success—with all 200 tickets snapped up in a day.

Eighteen months later, once-reticent clubs now seek out the duo to organize Swiftie nights—having taken the full measure of the phenomenon in Europe, where the singer-songwriter kicks off the latest leg of her record-smashing Eras tour in Paris on May 9.



Fans of US singer Taylor Swift, also known as Swifties, display friendship bracelets as they arrive for the first of the pop star's six sold-out Eras Tour concerts at the National Stadium in Singapore. —AFP

Devotion belittled

The trigger for the first event was the 2022 release of Swift's hit album "Midnights", as well as the urge to come together with like-minded fans to celebrate. "We were like: 'A lot of people are hyped about it but we don't know where they are and we don't know who to hype with,'" said van Splunter, 30. Like the Nether-



Isabelle Huppert attends The 2024 Met Gala celebrating "Sleeping Beauties: Reawakening Fashion" at The Metropolitan Museum of Art on May 06, 2024 in New York City. —AFP

Spain prosecutors seek to close Shakira tax fraud case

Spanish prosecutors on Wednesday moved to dismiss a tax fraud case against Shakira just months after opening proceedings against the "Hips Don't Lie" singer over unpaid taxes worth \$7 million. "The Barcelona provincial prosecutor's office for financial crimes has requested that the proceedings against Shakira be closed ... for the 2018 tax year," the prosecutors office said in a statement, pointing to "insufficient evidence".

Prosecutors opened the case in July, accusing the Colombian superstar of using a network of companies, some of them based in tax havens, to cheat the tax office out of 6.6 million euros (\$7.09 million) in 2018, including interest and adjustments. A month later, the so-called Queen of Latin Pop paid 6.6 million euros to settle the debt, her agent told AFP. On November 20, Shakira reached a last-minute settlement with prosecutors on the opening day of her trial over an earlier tax fraud case involving income she earned between 2012 and 2014.

Prosecutors had sought a jail sentence of over eight years for the singer whom they accused of defrauding the tax authorities of 14.5 million euros in a case that centered on how much time she was living in Spain. Shakira denied

the charges, saying she only moved to Spain full time in 2015.

Sing a song of tax woes

By the time the case came to trial, she had already paid 17.45 million euros to settle her outstanding tax debt, prosecutors said at the time. On the day it opened, the trial -- which had been due to run for three weeks and hear from some 120 witnesses -- was quickly concluded after she agreed to pay a fine of nearly 7.8 million euros to settle the case. At the time she explained she had settled "with the best interest of my kids at heart" because she needed "to move past the stress and emotional toll of the last several years" and focus on her career.

Now 47, Shakira lives in Miami with her two sons after splitting from Barcelona star defender Gerard Pique. He was himself convicted of tax fraud in 2016 and ordered to pay 2.1 million euros in fines and arrears. Spain's Supreme Court in 2021 annulled his conviction. Last year, Shakira's superstar Argentine producer Bizarrap won the Latin Grammy for song of the year with a track taking a swipe at Pique -- who has since retired from football -- in which she accuses him of leaving her with a "debt to the tax office". —AFP



Colombian singer Shakira arrives for the 2024 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on May 6, 2024, in New York. — AFP

Lifestyle

No-makeup makeup



UNVEILING THE NO-MAKEUP MAKEUP LOOK

In the dynamic world of beauty and cosmetics, where the allure of full glam and bold colors often dominates, the no-makeup makeup look emerges as a celebration of simplicity and elegance. This approach, which skillfully enhances natural features with minimal products, represents a shift towards subtlety and authenticity in the beauty landscape.

Subtlety as the new statement

Contrary to the traditional reliance on heavy foundations and vibrant colors, no-makeup makeup relies on a light touch. The aim is to enhance, not mask, with a focus on even skin tone, natural glow, groomed brows, and nourished lips. This technique champions the art of illusion—using just enough product to

care routine resonates strongly. The arid environment makes hydration and sun protection crucial components of daily skincare, setting the perfect canvas for the no-makeup makeup look.

Celebrating diversity and individuality

Moving away from a one-size-fits-all

The cultural shift in Kuwait

In Kuwait, the no-makeup makeup look reflects a broader cultural shift towards wellness, authenticity, and environmental consciousness. It mirrors a society that values the understated over the ostentatious, where beauty is increasingly associated with health and wellbeing. This trend also aligns with the global movement towards sustainability in beauty products, with a preference for clean, non-toxic makeup and skincare solutions that are gentle on the skin and the environment.

Redefining beauty on our terms

The no-makeup makeup look invites us to redefine beauty standards, advocating for a return to basics where simplicity and authenticity reign. It's a movement towards self-acceptance and embracing one's natural beauty, resonating deeply within Kuwait's evolving beauty culture. This trend not only celebrates the individual's natural aesthetics but also encourages a beauty routine that is sustainable, health-focused, and inclusive.

In essence, the no-makeup makeup look goes beyond mere aesthetics; it's a reflection of cultural values and a changing societal landscape. In Kuwait, as in many parts of the world, it heralds a new era of beauty—one that values the quiet strength of subtlety and the power of natural elegance. Get more inspiration by visiting our website <https://dashebeauty.com> or follow up at our beauty blog.

**The essence of no-makeup makeup**

The no-makeup makeup technique is more than a trend; it's a lifestyle choice that emphasizes skin health, natural beauty, and confidence in one's inherent elegance. It resonates with a diverse audience, from professionals seeking a polished look for their daily routine to enthusiasts who value the sophistication of minimalism.

subtly perfect the face without a trace of overt makeup.

Skincare: The true foundation

At the heart of this beauty philosophy is skincare. A well-cared-for complexion reduces the need for makeup, highlighting the importance of hydration, protection, and nourishment. In Kuwait, where the climate can pose challenges to skin health, the emphasis on a diligent skin-

care routine resonates strongly. The arid environment makes hydration and sun protection crucial components of daily skincare, setting the perfect canvas for the no-makeup makeup look. beauty standard, no-makeup makeup embraces individual uniqueness. In Kuwait, a country rich in culture and diversity, this trend aligns with the growing appreciation for natural beauty. It underscores the beauty of freckles, natural skin hues, and the unique features that distinguish every face. This approach fosters a beauty ethos that is inclusive, recognizing the wide spectrum of beauty across different skin types, tones, and textures.

The icy peaks of Jargalant Mountain are supposed to belong to snow leopards, whose numbers have dwindled to fewer than 1,000 in Mongolia, but hard-pressed herders are increasingly pushing into the vulnerable animals' traditional habitat. "Now there are eight herders' families on this mountain," said Daribazar Nergui, who has lost 10 of his livestock to the elusive apex predators, known as "ghosts of the mountain". Wild animals and domesticated livestock have long coexisted in Mongolia's vast hinterlands.

But a push for more grazable land by herders seeking to expand their flocks and their earnings has brought them onto lands once reserved for wild animals, leaving them vulnerable to disease and starvation. Another species that's been threatened is the Mongolian gazelle. Long a symbol of the country's natural beauty, the slender animals travel thousands of kilometers from eastern and southern Mongolia across northern China on their annual migrations.

But their numbers have plummeted from tens of millions to under three million, according to the environment ministry. Climate change and desertification have forced them to change ancient habits, from following fresh vegetation throughout the seasons to going wherever there is enough grass to survive, experts say. "When you have an increase of livestock, you need to find a new pasture, but the new pastures are being used by wildlife," Batbold Dorjgurkhem of the conservation group WWF told AFP. "Once we had five livestock per square kilometer, now we have fifteen per square kilometer," he said.

Soaring numbers

Mongolia's livestock population has



MONGOLIA'S WILDLIFE AT RISK FROM OVERGRAZING

tripled in recent decades, according to government figures, from 20 million in 1990 to 60 million today. The surge has been driven by soaring demand for cashmere abroad, mainly from China. Mongolia is one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world and about one-third of the population is nomadic.

Booming livestock numbers have helped lift many out of the extreme poverty that once defined nomadic life, experts say, but herders still face harsh economic realities. "If you have few animals, around 200 to 300, you can't improve your life,

you can't buy a car or save money for your children's future," herder Darkhanbaatar Batsukhkh, from Erdenesant, which lies roughly 200 kilometers southwest of the capital Ulaanbaatar, told AFP. Deepening herders' woes has been the country's extreme weather, most notably the dzud, when harsh winters freeze the ground and make it impossible for livestock to graze.

Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of dzuds, according to the United Nations. "Herders are under enormous financial pressure," Gandulgu-

un Sanjaa, the leader of a group of 200 herder families in eastern Sukhbaatar province, told AFP. "They are always short of money," he said, citing the need to pay for livestock feed and school tuition for their children.

Spreading disease

The push for expanded pastures has meant that livestock now live in close proximity to wild animals -- leading to occasional conflict when predators feed on sheep and goats and sometimes fueling the spread of disease. The Saiga

Antelope, native to western Mongolia, has proved especially susceptible to livestock-borne illness.

The species' numbers fell from 15,000 to 3,000 thanks to a devastating 2016-17 outbreak of Ovine rinderpest, sometimes called goat plague. Their population has rebounded but the animals remain "near-threatened". "We can't catch and inject vaccines into wild animals," Ochirkhuu Nyamsuren, vice dean of the Mongolian University of Life Science's veterinary school, told AFP. "Natural selection and group immunity are their only fate." Still considered vulnerable on a global level, the snow leopard population has stabilized in Mongolia. A 2021 survey found 953 of the big cats -- the second-largest population anywhere in the world.

But the intrusion of herders onto their protected lands has alarmed local officials and threatened domesticated and wild animals alike. Munkhdavaa Khasag, the deputy governor of Mankhan, the district where Jargalant is located, said at least 220 livestock were eaten there by snow leopards last year. "Herders always complain about snow leopards and their lost animals," he told AFP. "But we tell them that they must leave Jargalant Mountain -- it is a national park reserved area for snow leopards and they are not allowed to pasture their livestock."

Experts say the government must work to make the country's livestock sector more sustainable. "Mongolia must create a healthy system, with raw materials and products from livestock valued higher," the WWF's Batbold told AFP. "Herders need ways to increase their income other than raising more livestock." —AFP



This photo shows a snow leopard on Jargalant Mountain, in Mankhan, in Mongolia's western Khovd province.



An ibex on Jargalant Mountain, in Mankhan, in Mongolia's western Khovd province.



Goats and sheep in a fenced area near a herder's ger (tent) in Jargalant Mountain in Mankhan, in Mongolia's western Khovd province.— AFP photos

Lifestyle



Dutch artist Rajacenna van Dam, paints ten paintings at once with both hands and feet, live in a museum in Vlaardingen.--AFP photos

What a feet: Viral Dutch artist paints 10 pictures at once

Two paintbrushes between the toes, two in her hands, and fierce concentration etched on her face, Dutch artist Rajacenna van Dam is crafting 10 paintings at the same time. An astronaut, a bespectacled panda and seven other pictures burst into life from her brush, painted on 10 canvasses laid out on a table, upside-down on the floor, and two easels. It started as a party trick for the curly-haired Rajacenna -- her artist name -- who wanted a challenge to relieve her boredom. But it has since become a profession that has shot her to viral fame, with every paint stroke worked out in advance in her head before setting to work with hands -- and feet.

"I work a bit on one canvas, then move to another one, so I'm always dividing my attention between them," said Rajacenna, who is technically left-handed. "Five years ago, I started painting with both hands, as a bit of a challenge and to go quicker. I discovered I was ambidextrous," the 31-year-old artist told AFP. Then a journalist asked her as a joke whether she could also use her feet as well. Challenge accepted.



Dutch artist Rajacenna van Dam, paints ten paintings at once with both hands and feet.

Starting out "for fun" and after a few mishaps with sticky tape between her toes, she tried using plasticine to keep the brush between her toes. It was a success and she posted a video of her exploits online, quickly becoming a viral hit. Orders flooded in. She is so skilled

that only she can tell the difference between paintings crafted with her hands and those with her feet. "I can really see a big difference. It's a bit less precise," she said, performing her skills at a museum in Vlaardingen, her home town in the south of the Netherlands.

'Very special'

Rjacenna has loved drawing since she was a small child. After a short adolescent dip in interest, her passion was rekindled by an Italian street artist. Today her videos on social media attract millions of views, especially when she paints 10 canvasses at a time with her hands and feet. "I get bored quite quickly, so I like to challenge myself. Doing all this at the same time gives me a sort of feeling of meditation, which calms me a lot," she told AFP. To her knowledge, she is the only person capable of such a feat.

"But I hope that people will be inspired to do more things, to challenge themselves a bit more, to do things like paint with their feet," she said. Her paintings sell for between 6,000 and 12,000 euros (\$6,450 to \$12,900), according to her father Jaco van Dam. "It's also very special for us as parents. She surprises us too and I don't know either how she manages to do it," he told AFP. But a study on her brain by a Turkish-German neurologist Onur Gunturkun provides a clue, he added.

"A brain scan showed that the left and right sides of her brain are three times more connected than average," he said. Neurologist Gunturkun has said Rajacenna was "capable of things that neuroscience deems impossible". In a nod to Albert Einstein, whose brain was famously removed after his death, a painting of the scientist by Rajacenna hangs on the wall of the museum. Rajacenna has attracted some famous admirers, notably pop star Justin Bieber, who described her work as "amazing" when she presented him with a portrait of himself.

It certainly impressed a couple of pensioners watching her at the museum. "It's extraordinary that someone can do that," said Anton van Weelden, 75. "What's more, the paintings are very beautiful and realistic," said Van Weelden, who said he would never dare try something like that. "I couldn't even paint like that with my right hand," he joked. —AFP



David Temple, paleontology curator at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, says all fossils need some degree of curation or restoration.



Fossil restorationist Lauren McClain dusts off a Hadrosaurid femur in Houston, Texas.

US restorationist solves 60m-year-old dinosaur fossil 'puzzles'

Before a T. rex can tower over museum visitors or a Triceratops can show off its huge horns, dinosaur fossils must first be painstakingly reconstructed -- cleaned, fit together and even painted. For US restorationist Lauren McClain, the process is like putting together a giant 3D puzzle. McClain's job begins at her home workshop near Houston, Texas, where she carefully clears away dirt stuck to the more than 60-million-year-old remains using a tiny drill with an air compressor, similar to a dentist's tool.

Then, she must assemble this ancient puzzle -- even though pieces are almost always missing. She molds fillings for the lost parts, plugging the holes and repairing the nicks that have appeared in Edmontosaurus femurs or Megalodon teeth over millions of years. She has even worked on a fossil from a 200-million-year-old Eurypterida, or sea scorpion. McClain doesn't actually like puzzles very much, she says.



Fossil restorationist Lauren McClain works on a Mosasaur jaw.

But when it "turns into a dinosaur... I can get down with those kinds of puzzles," the 33-year-old says. "When you've got something that's in a hundred pieces, you really have to study all of those edges and how they align, and really, really hone in on those details to rebuild it into what it was," McClain explains. Many of the giants McClain reconstructs once roamed the land which is now the United States, ranging from Florida in the southeast all the way to Montana and the Dakotas in the north and California in the west.

Prehistoric femur

McClain has been a dinosaur buff since she was a child fan of "Jurassic Park." She even held her wedding at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, home to several dino skeleton recreations. While working as a graphic designer, McClain began joining fossil excavations a few years ago, and with the help of a few professional paleontologist mentors, set up her own restoration venture, called Big Sky Fossils.

She quit her desk job to focus on her company full time seven months ago. Recently, McClain has been working on the cranial dome of a Pachycephalosaurus belonging to a Texas museum, and, while looking for more space to expand her workshop, has been working in her garage to restore a Hadrosaurid femur almost as big her.



Lauren McClain stands next to a Hadrosaurid femur that she is in the process of restoring in her garage.

London men-only Garrick club votes to admit women: UK media

Members of one of London's oldest gentlemen's clubs, the Garrick Club, voted on Tuesday to allow women to join for the first time following a row that has bitterly divided its male-only membership. The club's membership is a closely guarded secret but is known to include leading figures from the civil service, the law, journalism, publicly funded institutions and the arts. The Guardian and Telegraph newspapers reported that a motion to allow women to join passed with around 60 percent of votes in favor.

The Guardian said the vote occurred at the end of a private meeting where several hundred members spent two hours debating the issue. The Telegraph reported that 40 percent of the club's 1,500 members voted against. The Garrick did not immediately respond to a request from AFP for comment. Several high-profile members had reportedly threatened to quit the club if the proposal was rejected.

BBC world affairs editor John Simpson last week tweeted: "Various Garrick Club members including (musicians) Sting, Mark Knopfler and leading actors and producers have reportedly written to the club chairman saying they'll resign if the membership doesn't vote to accept women next Tuesday." He added: "Many others like me would also find it impossible to stay."

In March, the head of Britain's spy service Richard Moore resigned after a list of the club's membership was made public for the first time. It was revealed by The Guardian. Moore sent a message to MI6 employees acknowledging the reputational hit that news of his membership posed to the service -- in particular the risk of it undermining its work to attract more women to join MI6. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's most senior policy adviser, the civil service leader Simon Case, also quit his membership.

Founded in 1831 for actors and "men of refinement and education", the

Garrick is one of the last such clubs not to allow women in, except as guests of men. A petition launched in 2021 backing the admission of women attracted the support of Cherie Blair, a leading barrister and wife of former prime minister Tony Blair.

She recalled that in 1976 as a trainee lawyer she was left standing outside while her future husband Tony was allowed in for dinner. "It's outrageous that so little progress has been made since then," she wrote. Organizers of the petition said that the large number of judges and senior lawyers who were members deprived women of networking opportunities in a profession in which women were under-represented, particularly in the higher echelons.

Charles Dickens

A previous vote in 2015 on allowing female members saw the narrowest of majorities -- 50.5 percent -- back continuing the ban on female membership. The Garrick, located in Covent Garden in central London, offers members overnight accommodation, a restaurant, bars and a library. Other high-profile figures reported to be members include "Sherlock" star Benedict Cumberbatch and senior minister Michael Gove. An early member was Charles Dickens.

The Guardian reported that members who supported women's membership have drawn up a list of seven women they plan to nominate to join. It included a historian, a former interior minister and an actor. The club's admissions process is opaque and slow, meaning it is unclear when the first women will join. The process involves numerous seconders, an invitation to dine at the club and discussions by committee members who can block nominees. —AFP



A general view of the exterior of the private members' Garrick Club, founded in 1831 and situated in the heart of London's West End and Theatreland, in Covent Garden, central London on October 7, 2020.--AFP

Sports

Delhi Capitals down Rajasthan Royals to stay in IPL play-off race

Spinner Kuldeep Yadav returns with impressive figures of 2-25

NEW DELHI: Skipper Sanju Samson's 86 went in vain as Delhi Capitals beat Rajasthan Royals by 20 runs on Tuesday to stay in the hunt for an IPL play-off berth. Delhi posted 221-8 courtesy of Jake Fraser-McGurk's 20-ball 50 and an attacking 65 by Abishek Porel at their home Feroz Shah Kotla ground. Rajasthan looked good in their chase after Samson's fifth half-century of this season but his dismissal, a catch in the deep which was ruled clean by the third umpire, turned the match in Delhi's favour.

Rajasthan, who are yet to confirm their play-off spot, lost three more wickets in the next two overs and Delhi restricted the opposition to 201-8 for their sixth win in 12 matches. "We had it in our hands, it was 10-11 runs per over which was achievable but these things happen in the IPL," Samson said after the loss.

Inaugural champions Rajasthan, placed second behind toppers Kolkata Knight Riders, have eight wins in 11 matches and still favorites to make the top two in the play-offs.

Top four teams will make the play-offs but number one and two will have the advantage of getting an extra match to enter the final on May

26 in Chennai. Spinner Kuldeep Yadav returned impressive figures of 2-25. Fast bowlers Khaleel Ahmed and Mukesh Kumar also took two wickets.

But the batters set up victory after Fraser-McGurk, who raised his 50 in 19 balls, and Porel attacked in an opening stand of 60. Rajasthan lost wickets after the openers departed but Tristan Stubbs hammered 41 off 20 balls in a late charge to take the total to 221-8.

Stubbs was helped by Gulbadin Naib, who hit 19, and Rasikh Salam, who hit two sixes in his nine runs, as Delhi got 53 runs from the last three overs. The in-form Samson, a wicketkeeper-batsman who has amassed 459 runs, attempted to set up the chase only to depart in the 16th over when Shai Hope caught the batsman off Kumar.

Hope's foot was parallel to the boundary rope but the third umpire ruled it out and a disappointed Samson walked back after a chat with the on-field officials. Veteran spinner Ravichandran Ashwin led the Rajasthan bowling with figures of 3-24.

Yuzvendra Chahal took his 350th T20 wicket — first Indian to achieve the feat — when he got skipper Rishabh Pant, a left-hand batsman, caught out at fine leg for 15. — AFP



NEW DELHI: Delhi Capitals' Tristan Stubbs drops a catch of Rajasthan Royals' Jos Buttler during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Delhi Capitals and Rajasthan Royals at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi. — AFP

Hurricanes beef up for Super Rugby showdown

WELLINGTON: The Wellington Hurricanes have beefed up their starting side for Saturday's top-of-the-table Super Rugby showdown at the Auckland Blues, adding captain Brad Shields, plus All Blacks Jordie Barrett and TJ Perenara.

The Hurricanes head to Eden Park just one point ahead of the second-placed Blues with four rounds left of the regular season. Barrett takes his place in the midfield with the scrumhalf berth filled by Perenara, who scored his 63rd Super Rugby try off the bench last weekend to set a new competition record. Former England international Shields packs down at blindside flanker with junior New Zealand international Xavier Numia also coming into the side at prop. Head coach Clark Laidlaw said his team faced a tough task in Auckland, where the Hurricanes have not won for five years.

"This is an exciting opportunity for us to be able to take on a top side at their home and put our best foot forward," said Laidlaw. "We haven't won in Auckland since 2019 - so we know that there is a massive challenge ahead."

The Hurricanes are the leading try scorers this season with 53, just ahead of the Blues and the Waikato Chiefs who are tied on 52 each. Blues full-back Zarn Sullivan returns from a knee injury, while his sibling Bailyn is on the Hurricanes bench.

"It's awesome, it's a proud moment for our family," Zarn Sullivan said. The Blues have a point to prove after the Hurricanes carved out a 29-21 win when the teams met in Wellington in March. "It's a top-of-the-table clash. I know the boys will be up for the occasion and wanting to right a



WELLINGTON: (FILES) Waratahs' Mark Nawaqanitawase is tackled during the Super Rugby match between the Wellington Hurricanes and NSW Waratahs at the Sky Stadium in Wellington. — AFP

few wrongs from when we lost to them down in Wellington," Sullivan added.

The Blues have also selected a powerful side with a back row made up of All Blacks Dalton Pa-

Rohit Sharma and how they see the combination," Sangakkara told reporters.

"But he has made his case, so hopefully he'll have a good run in the World Cup." Samson has been an understated leader of his team, who are all but through to the play-offs with eight wins in 11 matches, and is third in the batting list behind Virat Kohli (542) and Ruturaj Gaikwad (541).

Pant, who has been lauded for his glove work and batting after recovering from his crash in December 2022, is also among the top 10 batsmen with 413 runs from 12 matches. "With Sanju, the biggest thing about this season for him is having a lot of clarity about the way he should bat," former Sri Lanka wicketkeeper-batsman Sangakkara said.

"There are certain stages of the game that he seems to lose a bit of concentration, which we've addressed from past seasons," he added. "He's changed his mindset about the importance of rest and recovery, rather than just training all the time and being tired mentally and physically." This year is Samson's first in a World Cup squad and Sangakkara said he is a team man. "He's a special player and when he's fresh and focused there's nothing he can't do," said Sangakkara. — AFP

pali'i, Hoskins Sotutu and Akira Ioane. All Blacks centre Rieko Ioane sits out having suffered a concussion in last Friday's 38-11 win at the Melbourne Rebels. — AFP

Bangladesh recall Shakib for last two Zimbabwe T20s

DHAKA: Bangladesh on Wednesday recalled all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan and pace bowler Mustafizur Rahman for the final two Twenty20 internationals of the five-match series against Zimbabwe. Former captain Shakib has not played a T20 since July 2023, and was this year elected as a member of parliament for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling party.

Shakib has refused to draw the curtains on his cricket career, and his participation in this series is the strongest indication yet he will compete in next month's Twenty20 World Cup. "We expect him to play in the World Cup. This is why he is back in the squad for this series," Jalal Yunus, the cricket operations chief of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), told AFP.

Left-arm pace bowler Mustafizur was rested for the first three matches after returning from the Indian Premier League, where he was the season's joint-highest wicket taker for the Chennai Super Kings. Top-order batsman Soumya Sarkar also returned to the side after missing the first three matches due to injury.

Parvez Hossain Emon and Afif Hossain, both named in the squad for the first three matches but neither making the XI, have been left out. Pace bowler Shoriful Islam also rested to accommodate the returning trio.

Bangladesh have already sealed the series 3-0, with the last two matches scheduled in Dhaka on Friday and Sunday. The Zimbabwe tour is the last home series for Bangladesh before the Twenty20 World Cup begins next month in the United States and West Indies. Yunus said the BCB expected to announce its World Cup squad at the end of the series. Squad: Najmul Hossain Shanto (capt), Liton Das, Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Shakib Al Hasan, Towhid Hridoy, Mahmudullah Riyad, Jaker Ali Anik, Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Soumya Sarkar, Tanvir Islam, Mohammad Saifuddin. — AFP

Carl Lewis sees little scope for progression

NASSAU: US long jump legend Carl Lewis does not see any immediate progression in what he dubbed the "toughest" of all field events, questioning the mental fortitude of easily distracted, up-and-coming athletes. Lewis won four consecutive Olympic long jump golds between 1984-96, as well as two world titles.

He went unbeaten in the event for a decade before famously being beaten by Mike Powell at the 1991 world championships in Tokyo in what has been dubbed one of the most thrilling field face-offs in history.

It took Powell to leap a world record of 8.95 metres to win that day, beating Bob Beamon's 8.90m set at altitude at the 1968 Mexico Games - and still an Olympic record. Powell's effort and Lewis' two final jumps in Tokyo remain the three longest distances ever recorded at low altitude. "Why is the long jump not popular? Because no one's jumping far," the outspoken Lewis said of the perceived decline in interest in the discipline. Illustrating Lewis's point Greece's Miltiadis Tentoglou won the Olympic title in Tokyo with a best of 8.41m and took gold at last year's world outdoor championships with a mark of 8.52m.

"It's not rocket science. When you have a generation that got used to people that were jumping 8.60m and competition was there, people were excited." Currently, he told a select group of journalists at the World Athletics Relays in Nassau, "fans don't feel like they're going to see anything special".

"With the long jump at one point, you really felt like 'I want to be there because I'm going to see something special.'" But times have changed, Lewis continued, with a severely reduced number of newcomers willing to submit to the rigorous training demands needed to become a top jumper.

"I just don't think our culture is raising kids to do that anymore" he said. "It's just not in the culture to work that hard, to not be distracted. It's just not there. "And in our culture, I'm not talking about just athletes but I'm talking about kids. What I had to go through, a kid now? 'Oh no, got to stop, mental health'. "Seriously, I'm just being honest."

Changes create new 'event'

Lewis credits Jesse Owens as a role model, the American who became an iconic figure in winning four golds at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, including the long jump. "Jesse Owens would have made the final every Olympic Games in history to this day," Lewis said.

"His personal best (of 8.13m) would have got the bronze medal in London. So why is that? Because it's hard." Lewis was a fervent critic of World Athletics' proposed change in rules in the long jump in a bid to eliminate foul jumps.

The change would see the take-off board replaced by a "zone", with distances measured from the moment of flight from within said zone. "You're supposed to wait until April 1st for April Fools' jokes," Lewis tweeted at the time.

The 62-year-old elaborated that fouling percentages had barely changed over the last 30 years. "The reason the rate of fouling is high is because the event's difficult," he said, describing the take-off board as one of the very foundations of long jumping.

"The beauty of the long jump is the challenge. When you take away that challenge... all of a sudden, you've created a new event. "They're doing testing and I think testing is going to show that people are not going to jump farther." Lewis also warned about the discrepancy in availability to new technology. "You create the constant complication of you'll never be able to do that at every level, ever. So because of that, you're going to have 99% of the world doing one event and then 1% of the world doing another event." — AFP



Sanju Samson

Sports

Bayer Leverkusen edge closer to Dublin as another record looms

Call to hire Alonso was 'brave and adventurous', as well as a 'perfect decision'

BERLIN: Xabi Alonso's rampaging Bayer Leverkusen will have an additional incentive in Thursday's home second-leg Europa League semi-final against Roma: breaking a 59-year-old European football record.

Avoiding defeat against Roma on Thursday will not only mean a trip to Dublin for the Europa League final, it will also extend their unbeaten run to 49 games - the best mark in European football history. A Eusebio-inspired Benfica went on a 48-game unbeaten streak between 1963 and 1965. The record has stood since, but Leverkusen have a golden chance of blowing it out of the water.

Alonso's side has already overtaken Juventus' 43-match unbeaten run from 2011 to 2012, which was the best of a team in the top five European leagues. Leverkusen won 2-0 in Rome last week and could progress to the final even with a one-goal loss, but breaking the record would be yet another outstanding achievement in an already brilliant season.

'I can tell my grandchildren'

Speaking after Leverkusen equalled Benfica's record with a 5-1 win at Eintracht Frankfurt on Sunday, Leverkusen goalkeeper and captain Lukas Hradecky said pursuit of an unbeaten season gave his side "extra motivation".

"It's close," said Hradecky after the game, explaining "I can tell my granddaughter and grandson about this." The Finn was referring to the league season, where Leverkusen have two more games to become the first team to go a Bundesliga campaign without defeat, but Leverkusen are just five matches away from an unbeaten treble.

Even with Alonso forced to watch from the stands due to a yellow card suspension, Leverkusen were

not troubled against Frankfurt. Already crowned Bundesliga champions for the first time back in April, Leverkusen are through to the German Cup final, where they face second-division Kaiserslautern.

Avoiding defeat on Thursday will set up a meeting with either Atalanta or Marseille in the Europa League final in Dublin. Before the start of the season, Leverkusen had just two major trophies in their history. With the Bundesliga already under their belt, Alonso's side could more than double their historical trophy haul in the Spaniard's first full season in charge of a top side.

Former Leverkusen coach and sporting director Rudi Voeller said Thursday the call to hire Alonso was "brave and adventurous", as well as a "perfect decision". Speaking with the Koelner Stadt-Anzeiger, Voeller praised Leverkusen's "outstanding squad" depth. "It's rare in the football business that you not only strengthen in the top positions, but also in the areas behind them. That's the secret why Bayer is still unbeaten. "The treble is still possible. But no matter what happens, it's still an outstanding season."

Wirtz, Grimaldo to return

Leverkusen have managed to keep their stunning run going despite Alonso deciding to rest players. Attacking midfielder Florian Wirtz and wing-back Alex Grimaldo were left out of the squad entirely on Sunday.

"They had small complaints in the last few days. We didn't want to take any risks," Alonso said. "They'll train again from Tuesday." Leverkusen scored five despite missing Wirtz, their attacking midfield lynchpin, and assists machine Grimaldo.

Wirtz has four goals and four assists in nine Eu-



ROME: Bayer Leverkusen's Dutch defender #30 Jeremie Frimpong (C) tries to score against Roma's Serbian goalkeeper #99 Mile Svilar during the UEFA Europa League semi final first leg football match between AS Roma and Bayern Leverkusen at the Olympic stadium in Rome. — AFP

ropa League games this season, including a goal in the first leg in Rome. "He's still 21 and has a great future ahead of him," Alonso said after the Roma game. Wirtz celebrated his 21st birthday at midnight just an hour after the match was over, with the team

celebrating with the midfielder in the dressing room. With close to a full-strength squad and playing at home for the second-last time this season, breaking Benfica's record on Thursday could be the next step in Wirtz and Leverkusen's great future. — AFP

Scamacca seeks Euro glory with Atalanta, Italy

MILAN: Gianluca Scamacca will lead the line in Atalanta's bid to reach their first ever European final as the striker's hot form puts him firmly in the frame for Euro 2024. A classic centre-forward, Scamacca has had an up-and-down first season back in Italy with Atalanta but is in the form of his life on the eve of Thursday's second leg of their Europa League semi-final with Marseille.

The 25-year-old has scored 10 times and set up another in his last 12 matches, and his fizzing low finish last week ensured Atalanta came away from the Stade Velodrome with a 1-1 draw after having their backs to the wall for large parts of the first leg in southern France.

He will be the focal point of Atalanta's exciting attack in front of passionate home fans in Bergamo who have once again seen their traditionally provincial club punch way above its weight. Scamacca has scored 18 goals in all competitions this term with the bulk of those strikes coming after he was left out of the Italy squad for March's friendlies with Venezuela and Ecuador.

He was dumped by Luciano Spalletti after the Azzurri coach, in a February interview with the Gazzetta Dello Sport, blasted footballers "playing on the PlayStation until four in the morning". Spalletti named no names in an unexpected tirade against modern players' apparently flagging commitment to football but eyes immediately turned towards Scamacca, who was left out de-



MARSEILLE: Marseille's Panamanian defender #62 Michael Amir Murillo (L) and Atalanta's Italian forward #90 Gianluca Scamacca (R) fight for the ball during the UEFA Europa League semi-final first leg football match between Olympique de Marseille (OM) and Atalanta at the Stade Velodrome in Marseille. — AFP

spite Italy having a long-standing problem of finding reliable strikers.

'Chit-chat and rumour'

Scamacca, from Rome, has a roughneck presence due to his size and array of tattoos and has had to deal with embarrassing headlines involving his family. In March 2021 his estranged father smashed up cars - including one belonging to the police - outside

and identity are key political battlegrounds.

In a country now led by the far-right government of Giorgia Meloni, racist abuse of sportspeople is a long-standing problem. But confident Curtis, a four-time gold medal winner at the European junior championships, tells AFP she is unflustered by being a rare black face in her sport.

"I consider myself lucky as I've never had anything like that (racist abuse) happen to me," Curtis says. "But if I were to ever meet someone who saw what I am as a problem I wouldn't make a big deal out of it. It wouldn't make a big difference to me because it's not my problem, it's theirs."

"If you look at my sport there is this element regarding black athletes. There just aren't that many of them. "But honestly it's not something I'm too bothered by. They can say what they want, that

Roma's training ground for no apparent reason and a few months later his grandfather burst into a bar in Scamacca's childhood neighborhood of Fidene and threatened people with a knife.

"I've had to deal with prejudice since I was 16-years-old but I know what kind of person I am, and I only need to show it to the people who care about me," Scamacca said after scoring in Atalanta's 3-0 win at Napoli in March. — AFP

Cappuccino-fuelled Kane must 'deliver' against Madrid

MADRID: Bayern Munich coach Thomas Tuchel called on Harry Kane to fire the German giants past Real Madrid and into the Champions League final, while revealing the striker's passion for coffee on Tuesday.

Former Tottenham striker Kane has scored a career-best 44 goals in 44 matches across all competitions in his first year at Bayern, ahead of Wednesday's clash at the Santiago Bernabeu. Kane, yet to win a trophy in his career, converted a penalty in the 2-2 first leg draw in Munich last week as six-time winners Bayern outplayed the record 14-time champions.

"I knew we'd get a big personality into the dressing room on top of everything you can analyze, goalscoring, movements, dealing with the pressure," Tuchel told a news conference. "He was captain of Tottenham and is still captain of the English national team. He brought everything to the table that we could possibly hope for - and tomorrow he needs to prove the point and deliver."

Tuchel had been asked if anything surprised him about Kane, who leads the Champions League scoring charts on eight goals along with Paris Saint-Germain's Kylian Mbappe. "How much cappuccino he drinks a day, it's ridiculous," joked a relaxed Tuchel.

"It's very surprising. All the time I go to the kitchen he's on the coffee machine and having a cappuccino. It's obviously good - I started doing it, the guy looks healthy and he's in good shape." The coach admitted at the other end of the pitch it might not be possible to stop Real Madrid forward Vinicius Junior, who struck twice at the Allianz Arena. — AFP



Harry Kane

"I'm a black girl, that it's strange. But it's strange for you, not for me."

Olympic aims

Curtis, who also tried her hand at basketball despite being "completely uncoordinated", "basically grew up in water" after her parents brought her to the pool aged two years old. "The only thing I can remember from when I was little was that it was really cold and I actually hated it to be honest," jokes Curtis.

She has since become one of Italy's brightest swimming prospects, qualifying for the Olympics in March with a junior European record of 24.56sec in the 50 metres freestyle. That time was also a new Italian record, comfortably beating the 24.72sec set by Silvia Di Pietro, 14 years Curtis' senior, in the 2022 European Championships in Rome. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

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, Ayesha, holder of Indian Passport No. P6318774, having permanent address Sai Kripa Chawl R2, Tembi Pada, Lokmanya Nagar, Bhandud West, Maharashtra, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name Ayesha and surname Bano. (#5603 8/5/2024)

I, Afiah, holder of Indian Passport No. T8990009, permanent address Malawan Khurd, Sarai Inayat, Allahabad, Pin - 211019, Uttar Pradesh, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name Afiah and surname Bano. (#5603 8/5/2024)

I, Fatima, holder of Indian Passport No. T4258524, permanent address Malawan Khurd, Sarai Inayat, Allahabad, Pin - 211019, Uttar Pradesh, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name Fatima and surname Bano. (#5603 8/5/2024)

I, Mustaqeem Muzaffar Roomani, holder of Passport No. R2950973, do hereby change my name to Mustaqeem Muzaffar (as given name) and Rumanani (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Mustaqeem Muzaffar Rumanani and I also undertake to carry out this change in all my documents. (#5604 8/5/2024)

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL hotline 128

Dortmund stun PSG to reach CL final Dortmund will be underdogs in the June 1 showpiece



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's French midfielder #33 Warren Zaire-Emery (L) shoots and hits the post during the UEFA Champions League semi-final second leg football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Borussia Dortmund, at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. — AFP

PARIS: Mats Hummels headed in the only goal as Borussia Dortmund stunned Kylian Mbappe and Paris Saint-Germain in their Champions League semi-final second leg on Tuesday, winning 1-0 on the night and advancing 2-0 on aggregate to next month's final at Wembley.

Hummels struck five minutes into the second half at the Parc des Princes and PSG were unable to muster a response, the home side all out of luck as they hit the woodwork four times in total. Dortmund, who sit fifth in the German Bundesliga, were never expected to go so far and will be underdogs in the June 1 showpiece regardless of whether they face their old rivals Bayern Munich or Real Madrid.

It will be their first final since 2013 when, remarkably, the match was also played at Wembley and Jurgen Klopp's Dortmund lost to Bayern. Hummels played in that final and here, 11 years later, he was the hero as Dortmund built on the advantage given to them by Niclas Füllkrug's goal in the first leg.

"It'll take us a bit of time to realise that, but we're looking forward to it extremely," Dortmund coach Edin Terzic told broadcaster Amazon Prime of getting to the final. "We did it somehow, making it to London." The story of this semi-final, however, is as much about PSG's failure in another crunch knockout tie in the competition. They have still never won

the trophy despite all the money invested by their Qatari owners since the 2011 takeover, and there will be no dream send-off for Mbappe.

He will leave when his contract expires after this season and had been hoping to play his last game for the club in the June 1 final. Instead PSG will be left to reflect on how they failed to get their hands on the biggest trophy of all during Mbappe's seven years at his hometown team.

"We were not clinical enough. They scored two goals, one from a corner and one from a long ball. We created lots more chances, many more than them, but we didn't take them," PSG captain Marquinhos told Canal Plus.

"We got so close and we wanted to get to the final. But we had to win tonight and be more clinical, and we were not." PSG's last two semi-final appearances both came during the pandemic, meaning this was the first time they had hosted a match at this stage of a European competition with fans in 29 years, since losing to AC Milan in 1995.

Woodwork to rescue

Luis Enrique's team had won 2-0 at home against Dortmund in the group stage and were safe in the knowledge that a repeat of that performance would be enough. The PSG coach made one major selec-

tion decision, dropping Bradley Barcola and bringing in Portuguese striker Goncalo Ramos. That meant moving Mbappe from the middle onto the left wing.

Dortmund would have been bracing themselves for an onslaught from kick-off, but that did not transpire. Mbappe took only seven minutes to produce his first attempt, yet his volley was easily saved by Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel.

The hosts had most of the possession but struggled to get Mbappe into the game, the France captain often looking isolated on the wing. In fact it was Dortmund who had the best chance of the first half, when Karim Adeyemi led a counterattack before seeing his shot saved by Gianluigi Donnarumma.

It felt as though the hosts needed to change something or risk going out with a whimper. They should have been ahead two minutes after the restart, when Ramos touched on a ball driven into the box by Mbappe, but Warren Zaire-Emery contrived to hit the post from close range.

That was to prove crucial as Dortmund struck moments later. PSG cheaply conceded a corner, and Julian Brandt's delivery from the Dortmund right was headed in by Hummels. Ramos swept a shot over on the hour mark before Nuno Mendes became the second PSG player to strike the right-hand post, this time with a powerful shot from distance. — AFP

Milan nets Giro 4th stage, Pogacar retains lead

ANDORA: Italy's Jonathan Milan emerged a popular home winner of the Giro d'Italia fourth stage on Tuesday with race favourite Tadej Pogacar retaining the overall lead. The 190km ride from Acqui Terme to Andora on the Italian Riviera was marred by the race-ending crash of Eritrea's Biniam Girmay.

While the man who created history as the first black African to win a Grand Tour stage, in the 2022 Giro, was taken off in an ambulance, Pogacar was safely in the peloton hunting down a two-man breakaway, Pablo Munoz and Stefan de Bod had forged to the front early in the stage, but their time in the spotlight was numbered with the peloton relentlessly reeling them in. They were duly swallowed up with 5km to go.

Filippo Ganna of Ineos Grenadiers was the first to attack, and he led over the final hill and down into the day's final destination, the port of Andora. But it was to be Milan (Lidl-Trek) who took the bunch sprint honours, ahead of Australian Kaden Groves (Alpecin-Deceuninck) and German Phil Bauhaus (Bahrain Victorious).

"I have so many emotions now. I said from the beginning we came here with one goal for everyone so today the guys did an amazing job and it was such an amazing sensation to win here again at the Giro d'Italia," said Milan, who was adding to his stage win last year.

All the top riders in the overall standings finished in the main pack and the general classification remained unchanged. Pogacar, who crossed in 30th, holds a 46-second cushion over his main title rival Geraint Thomas, with Daniel Martinez a further second back in third in the GC ahead of stage five, over 178km from the port of Genoa down the coast to Lucca in northwest Tuscany. One man who will be a frustrated onlooker is Girmay. The Eritrean, third in the stage 24 hours earlier, took a heavy fall on a descent ahead of the final intermediate sprint on a wet right-hand bend around 67km from the finish. — AFP



ANDORA: Team Lidl-Trek's Italian rider Jonathan Milan celebrates his best sprinter's cyclamen jersey during the podium ceremony of the 4th stage of the 107th Giro d'Italia cycling race, 190 km between Acqui Terme and Andora in Andora. — AFP

Al-Arabi thrash Al-Nasser 4-0

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: As Kuwait Zain Football League draws to a close, matches are becoming critically important specially between the two top teams in the standings. Kuwait which has 57 points and Al-Arabi with 54 points after defeating the winless Al-Nasser 4-0 on Tuesday.

Al-Arabi's goals were scored by Ayman Al-Safaqisi in the 40th minute, Salman Al-Awadhi in the 58th minute,

Hamza Khaba in the 61st minute and Bandar Al-Salama in the 94th minute. Al-Qadisiya club was out of luck as they drew 0-0 with Al-Salmiya to reach 50 points and take third place while Salmiya remained in fourth place with 32 points.

Kuwait Premier League was divided into two groups after the 18th round the "championship" and relegation, as the championship group includes Kuwait, Arabi, Qadisiya, Salmiya, Al-Nasser and Fahaheel. Meanwhile, the relegation group has Kazima, Shabab, Khaitan and Jahra.

All teams move to their respective group with their total points from the previous two rounds.



KUWAIT: Al-Arabi and Al-Nasser players fight for the ball during the Kuwait Zain Football League match.

Celtics, Thunder win NBA playoff openers

LOS ANGELES: The top-seeded Boston Celtics and Oklahoma City Thunder rolled to convincing victories in their opening NBA playoff series on Tuesday. Eastern Conference top seeds Boston laid down a marker with a 120-95 rout of the fourth-seeded Cleveland Cavaliers at the TD Garden.

Oklahoma City meanwhile were made to work harder by Luka Doncic and the Dallas Mavericks before finally pulling clear to seal a 117-95 victory in their Western Conference semi-final series opener. In Boston, Jaylen Brown scored 32 points while Derrick White added 25, including seven three-pointers, in an emphatic win for the Celtics, who are chasing a record 18th NBA championship.

Boston were in complete control for most of the game, holding a double-digit lead through the second half to close out an emphatic win at the TD

Garden. Boston star Jayson Tatum added 18 points but had an off-night shooting-wise, making just 7-of-19 from the field.

Donovan Mitchell led the scoring for Cleveland with 33 points, with Evan Mobley adding 17 and Darius Garland 14. Brown said the Celtics' defense had laid the foundation for the win. "It starts with defense, we wanted to set the tone on defense and we kept them under 100 (points)," Brown told TNT television.

"But we feel like we've got an answer for everything so we just play the game the right way, and see what they want to take away and then we play after that." Boston got off to a flying start, jumping out to an early 12-2 first quarter lead before a Cleveland rally saw them edge into a 23-21 lead after Mitchell's running three-pointer.

But Boston responded swiftly, reclaiming the lead immediately and never allowing Cleveland to get their noses in front thereafter. After taking a 10-point lead into half-time, Boston kept the pressure up in the second half, stretching out to a 26-point lead in the fourth quarter as they romped to a comfortable win. Game two in the series takes place in Boston on Thursday.

Thunder roll past Mavs

In Oklahoma City, the Thunder and the Mavericks fought a nip-and-tuck duel before the No.1 seeds pulled away decisively in the fourth quarter. Trailing by nine points at half-time, Dallas rallied in the third quarter to get within one point at 66-65.

But the youthful Thunder line-up began to find their range, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander adding 10 points in the third quarter to help OKC build a 10-point cushion heading into the fourth quarter. Oklahoma City's barrage of scoring continued in the fourth with Jalen Williams adding 10 points as the Thunder outscored their visitors 28-16 to seal victory by a 22-point margin.

Gilgeous-Alexander led the OKC scoring, finishing with 29 points, nine rebounds and nine assists while Chet Holmgren added 19 points and Williams 18. Kyrie Irving led Dallas with 20 points while Luka Doncic, struggling with a sore knee, finished with 19 after shooting six-of-19 from the field.

Oklahoma City, who have an average age of just over 23, are the youngest team to win a second round playoff game and were the youngest team to win a postseason series after sweeping the New Orleans Pelicans in the first round. — AFP