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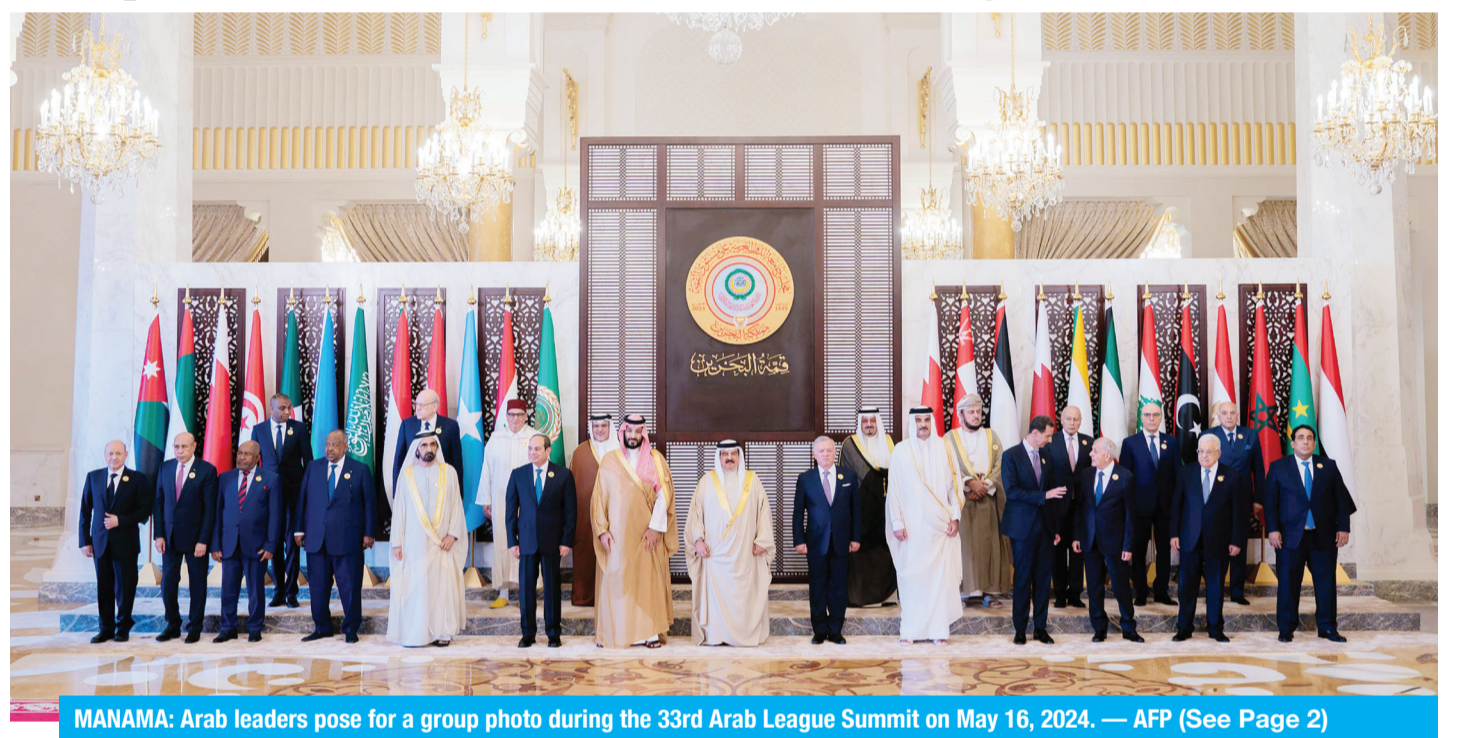


Kuwait slams Zionist aggression

Arab Summit calls for UN peacekeepers in Palestine • Leaders congratulate Amir



MANAMA: Representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, meets Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud on the sidelines of the Arab Summit. — KUNA



MANAMA: Arab leaders pose for a group photo during the 33rd Arab League Summit on May 16, 2024. — AFP (See Page 2)

S Africa: Zionist genocide hits 'new and horrific stage'

THE HAGUE: South Africa accused the Zionist entity Thursday at the top UN court of stepping up a genocide in Gaza, urging judges to order a halt to the Zionist assault on Rafah. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) heard a litany of allegations against the Zionist entity from lawyers representing Pretoria, including mass graves, torture, and deliberate withholding of humanitarian aid.

"South Africa had hoped, when we last appeared before this court, to halt this genocidal process to preserve Palestine and its people," said top lawyer Vusumuzi Madonsela. "Instead, (the Zionist entity's) genocide has continued apace and has just reached a new and horrific stage," added Madonsela. South Africa was kicking off two days of hearings at the Peace Palace in The Hague, home of the ICJ, imploring judges to order a ceasefire throughout Gaza.

In a ruling that made headlines around the world, the ICJ in January ordered the Zionist entity to do everything in its power to prevent genocidal acts and enable humanitarian aid to Gaza. But the court stopped short of ordering a ceasefire and South Africa's argument is that the situation on the ground — notably the operation in the crowded city of Rafah — requires fresh ICJ action.

The Rafah campaign is "the last step in the destruction of Gaza and its Palestinian people", argued Vaughan Lowe, a lawyer for South Africa. "It was Rafah that brought South Africa to the court. But it is all Palestinians as a national, ethnic and racial group who need the protection from genocide that the court can order," he added.

The orders of the ICJ, which rules in disputes between states, are legally binding but it has little means to enforce them. It has ordered Russia to halt its invasion of Ukraine, to no avail. South Africa wants the ICJ to issue three emergency orders — "provisional measures" in court

Continued on Page 6

MANAMA: Representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, urged the international community and UN Security Council to force the Zionist occupation to immediately stop its military operations in Gaza Strip. Addressing the Arab Summit in Manama, HH the Prime Minister strongly condemned the Zionist occupation forces' assault on Rafah which would have consequences on civilians who lack safe havens.

He called for providing international protection for the Palestinian people, swift delivery of humanitarian aid and stopping expansion of the war in the region,

4 women granted judicial enforcement authority by minister

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood, and Minister of Youth Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah granted four women in the Supreme Council for Family Affairs authority of judicial enforcement on Thursday. In commemoration of Kuwaiti Women's Day, a statement from the ministry of social affairs was issued, in which Dr Huwailah praised the capability and achievements of Kuwaiti women across all fields.

Huwailah's decision comes in accordance with article 16/2020 of the constitution, which protects women from domestic violence.

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Mol warns against disturbances during municipal elections

KUWAIT: Interior Minister Undersecretary Lt Gen Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah affirmed on Thursday the ministry will firmly deal with any manifestations that disturb the by-elections for the Municipal Council in the sixth and ninth constituencies on May 18. The general administration of security relations and media stated in a press release that the deputy interior minister, chairing a meeting with the assistant undersecretaries of the ministry of interior to review the readiness of members of the police force for the Municipal Council's by-elections, stressed the necessity of providing all security and traffic services.

Sheikh Salem said instructions of First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of

and underlined the important role of UNRWA. HH the Prime Minister rejected calls for the forced displacement of the people of Gaza and thus having neighboring countries bear the humanitarian impacts, which are in violation of international humanitarian principles.

HH the Prime Minister called on the UN Security Council to grant the State of Palestine full membership status, welcoming the UN General Assembly's resolution, adopted on May 9, 2024, which supported Palestine's membership. Kuwait, he said, would always remain committed to supporting the Palestinian cause and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just cause. Kuwait, he added, was

committed to UN resolutions, the Arab peace initiative and establishment of an independent Palestinian state on June 4, 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, "which is a major condition to achieve peace and security in the region".

HH the Prime Minister said the Zionist occupation's killing, deliberate destruction and genocide were blatant and unprecedented violations of international laws and human values. The region will never see peace, security and stability, and people would never feel justice while the Palestinian people are unable to gain their legitimate rights, he said.

Continued on Page 6



KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood, and Minister of Youth Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah grants four women in the Supreme Council for Family Affairs authority of judicial enforcement on May 16, 2024. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Interior Minister Undersecretary Lt Gen Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah chairs a meeting with assistant undersecretaries on May 16, 2024. — KUNA

Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, are to provide all facilities that enable citizens to perform their electoral duty.

He also reviewed with the attendees the traffic

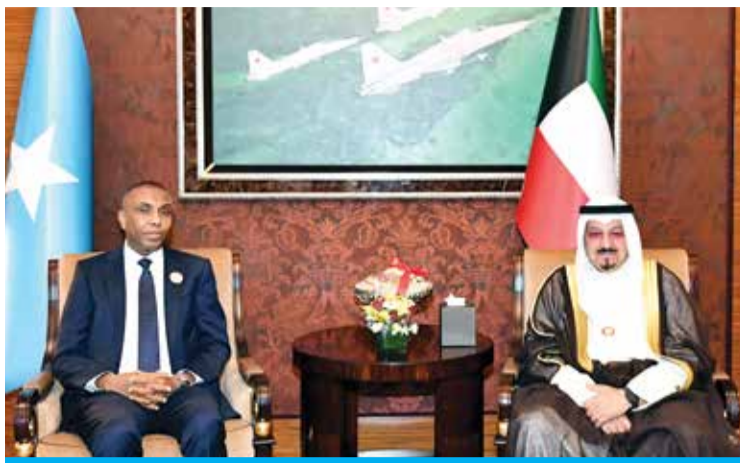
and organizational security plans that will be implemented on polling day, measures that will be taken to maintain security and order and secure electoral headquarters. — KUNA



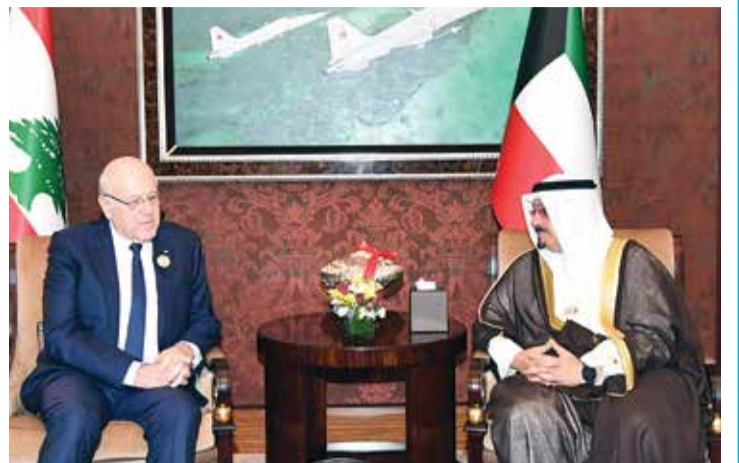
Amir's Representative meets Arab leaders



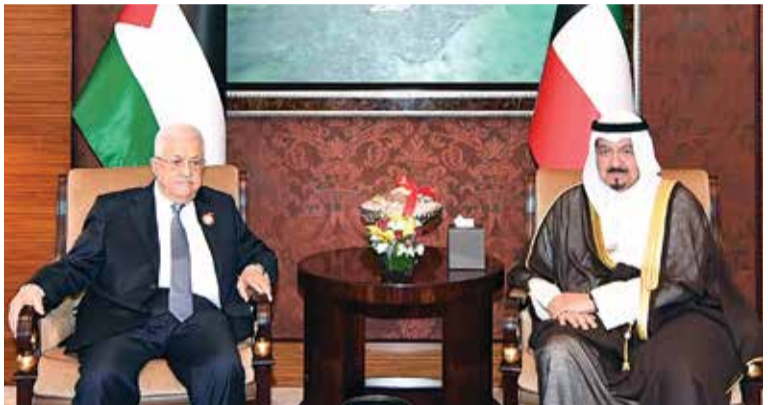
MANAMA: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Iraqi President Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid in Manama on Thursday. — KUNA photos



Representative of His Highness the Amir receives Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre in Manama on Thursday. During the reception, which was held on the sidelines of the 33rd Arab Summit in Manama, they discussed firm relations between both countries and ways of developing them.



Representative of His Highness the Amir receives Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati in Manama on Thursday.



Representative of His Highness the Amir meets Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. During the reception, held on the sidelines of the 33rd Arab Summit in Manama, they discussed firm relations between both countries and their peoples and ways of promoting them, along with regional and international developments.



Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets the UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Dubai Ruler Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashed Al-Maktoum Al-Nahyan on sidelines of the 33rd Arab Summit.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, receives the Russian President Special Envoy to the Middle East, Mikhail Bogdanov. The reception, held on margins of the 33rd Arab Summit, was attended by the delegation accompanying the Representative of His Highness the Amir.

GCC Creative Conference held at Harvard

Premier event connects GCC and US, promotes cultural diversity, inspires cross-cultural understanding

By Dr Esraa Al-Shatti

BOSTON: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Creative Conference held from May 10-12, 2024 in Boston attracted the presence of distinguished GCC nationals from various sectors to connect Gulf countries and the United States. Created by Saad Al-Tami, President of Diwan, a student-run organization at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the conference aimed to foster cultural diversity, inspire cross-cultural understanding and enhance opportunities and foreign investment in the Gulf region.

The GCC Creative Conference was the first of its kind to bring together the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council under the prestigious umbrella of Harvard University. Featuring 150 speakers across 24 panels and four workshops, the event covered a wide range of topics from healthcare and sustainability to cultural heritage and digitalization in the Gulf.

The opening remarks were delivered by GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi. The panel discussions provided rich insights from all sectors, including healthcare, sustainability, medical innovation, cultural heritage, women empowerment, future trends of the market and economy in the GCC, empowering youth, investment strategies, transforming education, corporate social responsibility and ethical business practices.

As a luxury trailblazer in the GCC region, Dr Esraa Al-Shatti led the panel "Evolving Elegance and Arts: Navigating the Luxury Market in the Gulf Region". She moderated the discussion, highlighting the luxury market in the GCC region, including growth rates and forecasts across various sectors. Dr Al-Shatti said luxury is a diverse and multidisciplinary field reflecting the depth of the luxury market and can be a significant source of income for the GCC's economy.

The discussion featured insights from Marco Parsiegla, CEO of Amouage Perfumes, who enriched the conversation with his knowledge about perfumery in the GCC region and how his company is adapting to global market trends. Parsiegla mentioned his



BOSTON: Saad Al-Tami, Amirah Aulaqi, Sheikhza Alzain Al-Sabah and Dr Esraa Al-Shatti are pictured during the Gulf Cooperation Council Creative Conference.



R&D strategy involving regional creatives, which has doubled Amouage's retail sales in the last three years. Dr Al-Shatti emphasized that the luxury market is both a tangible and ethereal concept, reflecting the socio-psychological essence people desire. The GCC's luxury industry, encompassing fashion, jewelry, beauty, hospitality and automotive sectors, is a significant source of economic income for the region.

Amirah Aulaqi, founding partner of The Advancement of Arab & Gulf Women in America, discussed the emotional connection brands must establish with consumers. She highlighted how understanding consumer behavior is crucial for enhancing sales and competitiveness. Aulaqi shared insights on how she has helped high-end automotive brands in the United States better understand their GCC consumers, resulting in higher revenue.

Lulwa Al-Wazzan, with a decade of experience in the jewelry industry, shared her journey of blending digital channels with face-to-face interactions to reach her customers. She emphasized that knowledge and understanding of the region can make brands pioneers in their field.

The conference covered a diverse array of topics, including: Healthcare advancements and medical innovation; Sustainability and environmental strategies; Cultural heritage and preserving traditions; Women empowerment and leadership; Economic trends and market forecasts in the GCC; Youth empowerment and investment strategies; Transforming education and corporate social responsibility; Digitalization and the future of energy in the GCC; The role of mentorship in entrepreneurial success and Navigating data and artificial intelligence in the GCC.

Sheikha Afrah Mubarak Al-Sabah closed the event with an inspiring poetic journey. Sheikha Alzain Al-Sabah, Ambassador of Kuwait to US, provided motivational closing remarks. She emphasized the importance of education, youth support and continuous communication between the GCC and the United States for future investments and collaborations.

Sheikha Alzain highlighted the significance of storytelling, empathy, and shared human experiences in driving development. She urged all attendees, from policy builders to entrepreneurs, to focus on evolving and creating impactful solutions through innova-



Lulwa Al-Wazzan, Dr Esraa Al-Shatti and Saad Al-Tami

tion and unity. She concluded by emphasizing that behind every policy decision is a human face, story, and life, and that development must be a collective effort deriving creativity from connectivity.

AU presents a holistic approach to enhance quality of education

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: In alignment with Kuwait's vision to improve the quality of education and as part of the institution's social responsibility plan, the Australian University (AU) hosted the fifth edition of a forum aimed at elevating the ranking of education in the country across schools and universities. Additionally, the forum explored the methods aimed to bridge the gap between the education sector and the labor market.

In his opening speech, Prof. Isam Zabalawi, president of the Australian University, highlighted student engagement and well-being as the cornerstones for maximizing the effectiveness of the educational experience. He discussed their positive impact on both the professional labor force and the overall success of educational institutions.

Referring to AU's strategy, Zabalawi reflected the university's concern on constantly bringing initiatives that contribute to students, faculty, and staff well-being as well as building an inclusive and engaging environment that unlocks human potential in achieving excellence in teaching, learning, and research. He further discussed the most effective methods utilized by AU to develop students' engagement through constantly involving them to be part of research projects, co-curricular activities such as volunteer work, internships, and social clubs, as well as encouraging them to attend in campus events like seminars, workshops, and guest lectures.



Abdulaziz Al-Roomi addresses the audience.



Prof Isam Zabalawi



Rola Mourdaa hands a certificate to Abdulaziz Al-Roomi.

Since proper education is the building block for a successful career future, Abdulaziz Al-Roomi, executive director of Boubyan Bank's Human Resources Group, touched upon the main challenges facing fresh graduates in the work industry and the solutions that academic institutions and companies should implement to overcome these challenges. He highlighted Boubyan Bank's 13-year history of training fresh graduates and equipping them with the necessary skills to achieve their desired career goals.

Most importantly, Roomi emphasized that even if interns do not secure a job at Boubyan Bank, the skills and hands-on experience they acquire enable them to compete in any industry or company they aspire to join. He mentioned two of Boubyan's training programs, Bedina 7 and Career Prime, which demonstrate the bank's commitment to investing in ambitious talents, contributing to their growth, and helping them achieve their career goals.

Esra Al-Eisa, an associate professor of industrial engineering at Kuwait University, highlighted the importance of happiness in creating an effective edu-

cational journey, using Finland as an example, where teaching happiness is part of the curriculum. She asserted that this can only be achieved with tutors providing unconditional support to students, addressing their struggles, and reviving the critical values needed to shape a positive educational experience.

She expressed her hope that Kuwait would return to the practices of the 1960s when happiness was an essential part of the educational experience, enriching aspects like art, social activities, and sports. However, she lamented that these elements are now often overlooked in favor of educational excellence, which she believes has negatively impacted the overall quality of education.

Rola Mourdaa, manager of Teaching and Learning center at the Australian University, highlighted the huge impact of Education in cultivating developed countries. She explored the key role played by the government, parents, students, and educational institutes in utilizing technology and research, along with the proper mentoring and learning techniques to develop an effective and sustainable ed-



Attendees stand in respect for the Kuwait national anthem. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

ucational experience. She referred to the joint responsibility possessed by all the previous stakeholders to raise the quality of education in Kuwait.

Local

Ministers highlight role of women in modern Kuwait

Kuwait commemorates Women's Day

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and Minister of Municipality Dr Noura Al-Mashaan highlighted Thursday the role of Kuwaiti women as partners in the construction of modern Kuwait, development, and paving the democratic path. Minister Al-Mashaan made these remarks to KUNA on the occasion of Kuwaiti Women's Day, stating that they have proven their determination, ability, and influence across a variety of fields.

The constitution has guaranteed the rights of women both politically and socially, without discriminating between male and female citizens, remarked the minister. The late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's initiative to grant women political rights stemmed from his belief in the role of women in development and his appreciation for their heroic role during the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

Kuwaiti women overcame obstacles and hardships to accomplish impressive feats on regional and international levels, becoming pioneers in development, Al-Mashaan commented, adding that this was not in a spur of the moment but predated the discovery of oil. June 12, 2005, ushered in a new era for Kuwaiti women as Dr. Masouma Al-Mubarak was appointed as the country's first female minister.

Furthermore, women succeeded in many positions of leadership, including minister, undersecretary, university president, ambassador, democratically elected representative, or even judicial authority. Success stories also extended to the private sector, with women chairing large corporations and getting listed in international lists of strong personalities.

The Minister affirmed political leadership's intent on empowering women and providing support in various fields to ensure active participation. Minister Al-Mashaan highlighted the recent win by Dr Reem Al-Shammari, who won the Arab Woman Cybersecurity Award, saying that this is but one of many examples, but the sacrifices of Kuwaiti women during the invasion remain at the helm.



Minister Dr Amthal Hadi Al-Huwailah



Minister Dr Noura Mohammad Al-Mashaan

Also, the Minister of Social Affairs, Labor, Family Affairs, and Childhood and the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah, said on Thursday that Kuwaiti women have an important role in society, making significant efforts in various fields. The occasion of Kuwaiti Women's Day, which falls on May 16, represented a historic milestone for Kuwaiti women and embodied a sense of pride and honor for them whenever this cherished occasion would arrive, said Dr Al-Huwailah in a statement to KUNA.

The Minister said that Kuwaiti women have played a key factor in society, as they won their political rights after being endorsed by the Kuwaiti National Assembly, which was preceded by the decision of the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to grant women their suffrage. This was in recognition of the importance of Kuwaiti women's role in society, their significant efforts in development, and their limitless and heroic contributions during the 1990-1991 Iraqi occupation of the country. Dr. Al-Huwailah noted that Kuwaiti women aim to build on their successful journey and enhance their scientific contributions to



KUWAIT: Acting Social Affairs Ministry Undersecretary Abdulaziz Al-Mutairi poses for a group photo after a symposium held by the Ministry in cooperation with several NGOs themed 'Kuwait woman is distinguished'. It was attended by Assistant Undersecretary Dr Khalid Al-Ajmi, Acting Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs Dr Mariam Al-Azmi and other dignitaries.

achieve sustainable development. Alongside these efforts, they manage sustainable household responsibilities as mothers and serve as educators. She praised the success of Kuwaiti women in various leadership roles. "They are ministers, ambassadors, university directors, parliamentarians, and judges," she said, and their achievements in these positions were a significant milestone in their social, political, and economic journey, showcasing creativity and excellence.

The minister stated that expanding opportunities for qualified Kuwaiti women would significantly contribute to the country's progress and prosperity. Eliminating gender discrimination would further enhance devel-

opment and increase growth rates in Kuwait, she added. She highlighted the heroic role of Kuwaiti women during the Iraqi occupation, where they sacrificed their lives for the country.

Their exemplary acts of sacrifice and dedication have earned them a place of honor in history. Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah expressed her pride in the political leadership, led by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, for entrusting women with full confidence, as she underscored their significant societal role and active participation, evident in holding numerous leadership and supervisory posts in various departments. — KUNA



Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation Chief Executive Officer Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah.



A group photo of the attendees.

'Kuwait has its own women'

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti woman has played a substantial role in Kuwait's progress and prosperity, motivated by her dedication to the homeland, said Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Thursday. She plays a pivotal role at the level of the national economy, said the Deputy Foreign Minister during the inauguration of a forum organized by Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, themed "Kuwait has its own women."

The forum marking Kuwaiti Women's Day was attended by diplomats. The forum constitutes an opportunity to shed light on the Kuwaiti woman's distinguished role and her contributions to the es-

tablishment and progress of the homeland at the economic, political, social, and cultural levels, he said. The Deputy Foreign Minister said organizing the forum in coordination between the foreign department and the KPC mirrored Kuwait's substantial concern for female citizens, namely their major role in the oil sector.

This concern is in line with national policies dating back to the times of establishing Kuwait, out of the belief that the woman "is a prime section of the community and a key for progress and development," Sheikh Jarrah Jaber said. May 16 is an important day, celebrated annually to mark Kuwaiti women's accomplishments, he has affirmed. The Kuwaiti woman has been playing a distinguished role at the social, political, intelligent, and cultural levels, he said, noting that the state has taken many decisions intended to bolster the woman's status at the local and external levels. — KUNA

They have held many supervisory and leadership positions, proving their exceptional capabilities and high competence. Celebrating Kuwaiti Women's Day reaffirms and showcases their positive and pioneering role and their continued contributions to building and developing society. They have thrived within supportive legislative and social environments, enjoying political and economic freedom and fostering creativity and excellence in various fields.

Despite the challenges and difficulties accompanying their journey to success, Kuwaiti women have gained leadership and precedence in the Gulf region, holding multiple positions in various political, economic, cultural, and social fields and becoming crucial contributors to the development process in the region. Kuwait's history records numerous contributions by Kuwaiti women across all fields, setting an example of struggle and perseverance.

Maryam Abdul-Malik Al-Saleh was the first to enter the teaching field in 1938, followed by Sharifa Al-Qatami, who was the first female citizen to work for Kuwait Oil Company in 1960. In medicine and nursing, Najeeba Al-Mulla was the first female doctor to join the Kuwait Medical Association in 1967. In law, Suad Al-Qenaei and Sheikh Al-Duaj were among the first female lawyers in 1973. In theater, Maryam Al-Saleh and Maryam Al-Ghadban participated in early theatrical works, while Salwa Essa became the first Kuwaiti flight attendant for Kuwait Airways in 1975.

The role of Kuwaiti women during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait that began in August 1990 cannot be overlooked. They stood alongside men



Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah



Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah

in resisting the occupiers, with some being martyred and others imprisoned. Sana'a Al-Foudari was the first female martyr, followed by Asrar Al-Qabandi and other martyrs. Kuwaiti women's achievements continue.

Recently, Kuwait celebrated another accomplishment with Dr. Reem Al-Shammari winning the 2024 Arab Women Cyber Security Leader Award, the first regional recognition of its kind at the GISEC Global Conference, honoring outstanding women across the Arab world whose achievements have had a wide-reaching impact. Kuwaiti women had gained more prominence in leading positions as ministers and undersecretaries, reaching 28 percent of the personnel across state bodies in addition to sectors such as the military, police, diplomatic corps, oil sector, and judiciary.

Kuwaiti women also gained recognition in the economic sector, taking around 41 percent of the leadership and administrative positions in the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), for instance. Some 26 percent of similar positions for women were recorded in the banking sector, and 35 percent of the working force in Kuwaiti banks was secured by female employees.

On May 11, a new government was formed according to a decree by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, headed by His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, including 13 ministers, two of whom are women: Dr Noura Al-Mashaan, Minister of Public Works and Municipality Affairs, and Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, Family and Children Affairs, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs. — KUNA

Arab Forum tackles corruption, terror

RIYADH: The acting head of the Kuwaiti Financial Intelligence Unit, Hanadi Bu-Hmeid, stressed the importance of exchanging experience among international agencies tasked with combating money laundering and terror financing. "We are taking part in the Arab Forum of Anti-Corruption Agencies and Financial Intelligence Units out of keenness on sharing experience with specialists in combating money laundering and terror financing," she told KUNA on the sidelines of the event, which opened earlier Wednesday.

"As part of the forum, we will participate in a panel discussion due tomorrow, which will shed light on the significance of cooperation among the private and public sectors in information sharing," Bu-Hmeid pointed out. She thanked the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for hosting the forum and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman for sponsoring the event. The forum is co-hosted by the Presidency of State Security and the National Anti-Corruption Commission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

On his part, the chief of the Saudi State Security Agency, Abdulaziz Al-Howairini, said that money laundering and financing for terrorism pose trans-border threats to international security and stability, thus requiring close international cooperation. In his inaugural speech to the gathering, he briefed the attendees on the efforts, policies, and legislation of Saudi Arabia in combating those threats and exchanging experience with other stakeholders, whether governments or regional agencies. Kuwait's delegation to the forum also includes Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim. — KUNA



Hanadi Bu-Hmeid

May 16: A turning point in women's political journey

KUWAIT: May 16 each year marks a turning point in Kuwait's history for Kuwaiti women: it marks the day they were granted political rights, enabling them to vote, run for office, and assume leadership positions. On May 16, 2005, the Kuwaiti National Assembly officially approved women's franchise, culminating an initiative launched by the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The initiative of the late Amir was motivated by his belief in the importance of the role of women and his appreciation of women's contributions to Kuwaiti development.

In the 2006 National Assembly elections, Kuwaiti women participated for the first time as candidates and voters, and in the 2008 elections, 27 women ran for office, achieving record numbers of votes and, in some constituencies, surpassing those bagged by male candidates.

In the 2009 National Assembly elections, Kuwaiti women achieved a historic milestone in the country's democratic life when four women won seats in the Assembly among 17 female candidates: Dr. Massouma Al-Mubarak, Dr. Asseel Al-Awadhi, Dr. Rola Dashti, and Dr. Salwa Al-Jassar. Kuwaiti women have demonstrated their pioneering role in the country's development across various fields, from the pre-oil era to the present.

Kuwait Union of Women Societies, Uzbek Women Committee sign MoU

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Women's Associations Union has signed a memorandum of understanding with Uzbekistan's Family and Women Committee to coordinate efforts for the protection of women's rights and bolster cordial ties. Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the society's chairperson, noted in a statement ahead of the virtual signing of the MoU with the chairperson of the committee, Parpiboeva Ozoda Abdulkadirova, the necessity for sustainable action programs to back regulations that call for serving women's affairs. The accord stipulates increasing cooperation in the realm of women's rights and legitimate rights, boosting gender equality, enhancing women's role in public and government affairs, enhancing business leadership for females, swapping information and know-how, and improving health care for this segment of society. — KUNA



NBK organizes blood donation campaign



KUNA's media center holds training course

KUWAIT: KUNA Center for Media Skills Development on Thursday concluded its training program on advanced English news writing. The course, which started on May 12th, saw the participation of KUNA employees and counterparts from the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) and Qatar's News Agency (QNA). The program was presented by KUNA's Deputy Editorial Chief Bader Al-Sharhan, who said in a press release that participants were introduced to new writing skills as well as discussed the challenges journalists face in news writing. The KUNA Center for the Development of Media Skills was established in 1995 to train media personnel and elevate their skills. —KUNA

KUWAIT: As a part of its social responsibility, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organized a blood donation campaign for its staff, on the occasion of the World Blood Donor Day. NBK staff voluntarily went to the Blood Bank and offered their participation for blood donation. The mobile blood unit of the Blood Bank was available at NBK Headquarters to receive the donations. On this occasion, Talal Al Turki, NBK Public Relations Executive Manager, said: "NBK always goes far in serving the community. The blood donation campaign demonstrates NBK's lasting commitment to the commu-

nity and to its Corporate Social Responsibilities Program."

"NBK's initiative is a commitment towards all patients who are in dire need of blood and is held to support the blood bank in Kuwait," he added. The Blood Bank team commended NBK's initiative and its continuous cooperation in serving the community in the philanthropist field. NBK strongly supports health care awareness. Throughout the years, NBK also organized several annual social awareness programs including dental checkups, blood pressure tests, weight checkups, mental health and breast cancer awareness.



China unveils its openness to the rest of the world

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: China is committed to developing a unique national identity and becoming a leading global nation, aiming to strengthen international ties and inspire the rest of the world. A Kuwaiti media delegation's visit to China highlighted the longstanding historical connections between the two countries and facilitated fruitful discussions on mutual development plans. The delegation visited Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou, gaining firsthand exposure to China's significant economic and technological advancements.

One of the highlights of the trip was during delegation's visit to the China-Arab Research Center on Reform and Development at Shanghai International Studies University (SISU). Secretary General of the center, Professor Wang Guanda, praised Kuwait and Gulf countries. He described them as "the center of Arab power", stating that they serve as a link between Africa, Europe and Asia, drawing considerable attention from China for developing this region in particular.

Wang emphasized plans to strengthen economic ties between China and the Gulf through the Belt and Road initiative, focusing on joint projects in solar power, renewable energy, and the construction of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port in Kuwait. Casual



135th session of Canton Fair in Guangzhou City.

discussions with the media delegation and university professors revealed a shared optimism for the future, highlighting initiatives to bridge the language barrier through student exchange programs, book sharing, translations, and visits.

Language, innovation

Wang noted that about 200 students graduate with Arabic language degrees from SISU each year, with a total of 1,000 across 52 universities in China. Drawing from his experience studying Arabic at Kuwait University in 1998, Wang announced plans to establish a dedicated translation department for Kuwait in the center's new building next year. He also highlighted China's technological, retail, and economic progress, citing a 5.3 percent GDP growth in the first quarter of the year, totaling 29.63 trillion yuan (approximately 4.17 trillion US dollars), according to reports from the China People's Bank.

In Shanghai, the media delegation also paid a visit to the China International Import Expo (CIIE) exhibition hall, where they met with Li Guoqing, deputy director general of the CIIE Bureau. "The exhibition provides a platform for companies from all over the world to jointly discuss, cooperate and exchange opportunities, through high-level opening-up and high-feasibility development," Li said. He mentioned that this year marks the fifty-third anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Kuwait, expressed, "Although our two countries are separated by thousands of mountains, our friendship has a long and lasting history." He highlighted that the strength of this friendship was very vivid during Kuwait's participation in CIIE, in 2021. The event saw the presence of Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry at the time, alongside the presence of other notable Kuwaiti entities.



Kuwait media delegation, professors and students discuss reform and development at SISU at China-Arab Research Center.

Global inspiration

The media delegation's visit to Shenzhen revealed a city far ahead of its time, astonishingly transformed from a small fishing village in the 1970s into China's first special economic zone and a modern global hub of innovation. Cao Saixian, Director General of the Foreign Affairs Office of Shenzhen, described the city as a melting pot of cultures and ideas, driving creativity and technological advancements. She emphasized the city's heavy investment in research and development, with 94.9 percent of company spending directed towards this sector, totaling approximately \$261.04 billion in 2023, the highest in China.

The delegation also witnessed Shenzhen's commitment to environmental sustainability. At Nanshan Energy Eco-Park, they saw how the city converts waste into energy, striving to become a zero-waste city with world-class standards. The trip concluded with a visit to Guangzhou and the renowned Can-

ton Fair, the largest trade fair in China.

By attending the 135th session of the fair and getting across multiple nationalities such as Kuwaitis, Algerians, African Americans, and more, the delegation noticed the presence of a diversity of suppliers and manufacturers from all over the world, all with the purpose of chasing business opportunities, such as networking with business owners, building partnerships, and trade agreements. The place reflected its key role in developing the economic and trade exchanges between China and the rest of the world - almost building trade relations with 229 countries and regions established.

This year's session alone gathered around 241,948 buyers from a wide diversity of countries and regions. Given the longstanding bilateral trade relations between China and Kuwait, it's not surprising to notice that among the visitors was around 1000 Kuwaitis, with nine Kuwaiti companies participating in featuring their products.



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Documentary shows life under Zionist occupation

KUWAIT: Rima Khalidi, spouse of the Palestinian ambassador and Vice President of the International Diplomatic Club Kuwait (IDCK), organized a screening of the Palestinian documentary "Resistance Climbing" on Sunday, May 12, 2024 in Contemporary Art Platform Theater (CAP). The documentary talks about a Palestinian climbing team that defies all the difficulties imposed by the Zionist occupation on the Palestinians in order to obtain a space for normal life.

The film screening was attended by Lana Al-Ayyar, wife of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairwoman of the IDCK; Ghada Shawky, spouse of Egypt ambassador and President of the executive board of the IDCK; and a large number of wives of ambassadors accredited to Kuwait and women of Kuwaiti society. Al Khalidi welcomed Al Ayyar and the attendees and gave a briefing on the nature of the film, which reflects the Palestinian people's



love for life and the necessity of living a normal life like all other people.

Ghada Shawky gave a speech in which she thanked the wife of the Palestinian ambassador for this initiative, and that such films are extremely important as a soft cultural and artistic power in order to convey the message of the Palestinian people and Palestine, which is now the true symbol of the steadfastness, resilience and strength. After the screening of the documentary, Ameera Nijim, one of the founders of the Palestine Climbing Association, based in Ramallah, proceeded to answer the audience's questions.



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People use their umbrellas to shelter from heavy rain while crossing a busy traffic intersection in Bangkok on May 16, 2024. — AFP

Thailand mulls relocating its capital amid rising sea levels

Low-lying Bangkok risks being inundated by ocean

BANGKOK: Thailand may have to consider relocating its capital Bangkok because of rising sea levels, a senior official in the country's climate change office told AFP. Projections consistently show that low-lying Bangkok risks being inundated by the ocean before the end of the century. Much of the bustling capital already battles flooding during the rainy season. Pavich Kesavawong, deputy director-general of the government's department of climate change and environment, warned that the city might not be able to adapt with the world on its current warming pathway. "I think we are beyond the 1.5 (degrees Celsius) already," he told AFP, referring to the increase in global temperatures from pre-industrial levels. "Now we have to come back and think about adaptation." "I imagine Bangkok will be under water already, if

we stay in our (current) circumstance." Bangkok's city government is exploring measures that include building dikes, along the lines of those used in the Netherlands, he said. But "we've been thinking about moving", Pavich said, noting that the discussions were still hypothetical and the issue was "very complex". "Personally I think it's a good choice, so we can separate the capital, the government areas, and business areas," he said. "Bangkok (would) still be the government capital, but move the business."

Climate impacts

While a move is still a long way from being adopted as policy, it would not be unprecedented in the region. Indonesia will inaugurate this year its new capital Nusantara, which will replace sinking

and polluted Jakarta as the country's political center.

The mammoth move has been controversial and extremely expensive, with an estimated price tag of \$32 billion to \$35 billion. Thailand is suffering the effects of climate change across a range of sectors, from farmers struggling with heat and drought to tourism businesses affected by coral bleaching and pollution. It has closed several national parks in response to recent coral bleaching and Pavich said further closures were possible. "We have to save our nature, so we think that we will do any measure to protect our resources," he said.

However, Pavich acknowledged that government efforts to tackle the growing problem of air pollution, particularly in Thailand's north, had yet to bear fruit. The Cabinet approved a bill focused on clean air

this year, and Pavich said national parks officials had stepped up efforts to prevent and put out fires in protected areas. "The agriculture sector is very challenging for us," he said, referring to continued post-harvest burning that is a major contributor to seasonal haze. An improvement is not likely for several years.

More immediately, his department - part of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment - is pushing Thailand's first climate change legislation, which has been in the works since at least 2019 but was shelved during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pavich said the legislation, which includes provisions on everything from carbon pricing to mitigation and adaptation measures, is likely to pass into law this year. Thailand is targeting carbon neutrality by 2050, and net-zero by 2065. — AFP

England set to ban gender identity teaching in schools

LONDON: Children up to the age of 18 at schools in England will not be taught gender identity under government proposals published Thursday, amid growing concern in the UK and elsewhere about transgender issues. The move follows a landmark review which last month urged "extreme caution" on prescribing hormone treatments for young people grappling with gender identity issues. England's first gender identity development service for children, run by the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, closed in March after years of criticism that it had been too quick to prescribe puberty-blocking treatment.

Under the proposals contained in new draft guidance, the "contested theory of gender identity" would not be taught to pupils of any age, said a Department for Education statement. Education Secretary Gillian Keegan said the measures were aimed at making sure children were "not exposed to too much too soon, taking away the innocence of childhood." "That is why this updated guidance includes clear age limits for the teaching of the most sensitive content and specifies that the contested topic of gender identity should not be taught," she wrote in the guidance document.

'Toxic' debate

Since 2020, sex education has been compulsory in secondary schools in England, which teach children from the age of 11. But the subject, and particularly gender identity, has increasingly become part of the "culture wars" between social conservatives and liberals. Harriet Cass, the retired paediatrician who led the four-year review into gender identity services, called the "toxicity" of the debate "exceptional".

"At secondary school (11-18 years) pupils will learn about legally 'protected' characteristics, such as sexual orientation and gender reassignment," said the Department for Education statement. "But the updated guidance is clear that schools should not teach about the concept of gender identity."



LONDON: A handout photograph released by the UK Parliament shows Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaking during the weekly session of Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs), in the House of Commons in central London. — AFP

'Inappropriate' content

The proposals will also ban sex education for children under the age of nine following concerns about some of the materials being used in schools. "Parents rightly trust that when they send their children to school, they are kept safe and will not be exposed to disturbing content that is inappropriate for their age," Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said in the statement. "That's why I was horrified to hear reports of this happening in our classrooms last year," he added.

The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) questioned whether the government's proposals would effectively protect children given the widespread access to smartphones. "We cannot ignore the fact that some children and young people are already accessing information from different sources outside of school," said the union's general secretary Paul Whiteman. "This

may lead to questions that need careful handling from trained professionals."

Suicide prevention

The new guidance also includes additional content on suicide prevention and the risks of viewing content promoting self-harm online. The extent of harmful material available online was highlighted in the UK by the death in 2017 of 14-year-old schoolgirl Molly Russell. A coroner ruled that she had died from an act of self-harm while suffering from the "negative effects of online content", leading her family to set up a campaign highlighting the dangers of social media. Her father Ian Russell last year criticized the response of social media companies to a report aimed at preventing future tragedies as "underwhelming and unsurprising". The government's new proposals will be subject to a nine-week consultation and be statutory once finalized. — AFP

Court: Belgian school religious symbol ban does not breach rights

STRASBOURG: A Belgian regional ban on religious symbols in schools does not breach children's rights, a top European court ruled Thursday, in a case brought by former pupils who were forbidden from wearing the Islamic headscarf. The three young Muslim women, who attended schools run by the Flemish Community, appealed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on grounds of freedom of religion.

The Community, one of Belgium's federal regions, since 2009 has banned the wearing of outward signs of religious affiliation in its educational system. The plaintiffs' parents had appealed without success for Belgium to declare the ban illegal, before the young women took the case to the ECHR in November 2020. The women, now in their 20s, argued that the measure infringed several articles of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The court ruled that "prohibiting, in general, the wearing by pupils of visible symbols of belief, did not in itself run counter to Article 9 of the Convention," which guarantees religious freedom, it wrote in a summary of the judgment. It said the ban aimed at "the protection of the rights and freedoms of others and of public order".

It also noted that the pupils had been informed of the rules at their schools prior to joining, adding that the measure targeted all religious symbols and not just the Islamic veil. It rejected the rest of their complaints under other articles of the convention on the grounds that they had failed to exhaust their options in Belgian courts before taking their case to the ECHR. The ECHR, based in Strasbourg, has previously ruled on the issue of religious symbols in schools. In June 2009, it dismissed a claim brought against France by six students excluded from their places of learning for wearing religious symbols - the Islamic headscarf and the "keski" Sikh turban. — AFP

International

Tunisian lawyers protest over colleagues' arrests

Govt blasts foreign criticism as 'interference'

TUNIS: Hundreds of lawyers, activists and others demonstrated on Thursday in the Tunisian capital over the arrest of two lawyers in police raids on the national bar association, AFP journalists said. Protesters gathered near the main courthouse in Tunis as police barred journalists from entering the building at the behest of the prosecutor, reporters were told. Inside, black-robed lawyers chanted "Freedom!" and "The police state belongs in the past!", according to videos streamed live on social media.

The protest was called by the bar association which this week also decided on a nationwide strike after Sonia Dahmani and Mehdi Zagrouba were arrested when police raided its headquarters on Saturday and Monday. Zagrouba was taken to hospital after fainting and being beaten while in custody, lawyers said. The president of the bar, Hatem Meziou, on Tuesday called for an end to "the abuse of power" and "violence" targeting lawyers.

He called the police raids unlawful and urged President Kais Saied to intervene. But Saied said Thursday that "the bar association is located on Tunisian soil and is not subject to (its own) territorial regime so that anyone can hide there". He said the arrests took place "in full respect for Tunisian law, which guarantees equality and the right to a fair trial", according to a video released by the presidency on social media. Saied, who granted himself full authority after a sweeping power grab 2021, said that "no one is above the law". The European Union, France and the United States have all expressed concern after the two lawyers were detained.

Saied on Thursday called such criticism foreign "interference", and told the foreign ministry to "summon as soon as possible the ambassadors of a number of countries", without specifying which ones.

Interference?

Tunisian President Kais Saied on Thursday denounced foreign "interference" following international criticism of a recent flurry of arrests of political commentators, lawyers and journalists in the North African country. Saied, who in 2021 orchestrated a sweeping power grab, ordered the foreign ministry to summon diplomats and "inform them that Tunisia is an independent state". Speaking during a televised meeting, the president told Mounir Ben Rjiba, state secretary to the foreign ministry, to "summon as soon as possible the ambassadors of a number of countries", without specifying which ones.

Ben Rjiba was asked to "strongly object to them that what they are doing is a blatant interference in our internal affairs". "Inform them that Tunisia is an independent state that adheres to its sovereignty," Saied added. "We didn't interfere in their affairs when they arrested protesters... who denounced the war of genocide against the Palestinian people," he added, referring to demonstrations on university campuses in the United States and elsewhere over the Israel-Hamas war.

Several prominent Tunisian pundits, journalists, lawyers and civil society figures have been arrested in recent days, many of whom over a decree



TUNIS: Tunisian lawyer Hatem Meziou (center) addresses journalists during a press conference at the bar association headquarters in Tunis following a police raid days earlier, on May 14, 2024. — AFP

that punishes "spreading false information" with up to five years in prison. Since Decree 54 came into force with Saied's ratification in 2022, more than

60 journalists, lawyers and opposition figures have been prosecuted under it, according to the National Union of Tunisian Journalists. — AFP

Two die as Zionists hit south Lebanon

BEIRUT: Lebanese state-run media said Zionist air-strike on a car in the country's south on Thursday killed two people, with Hezbollah-affiliated rescuers saying at least one of them was a group member. Zionists and Hamas ally Hezbollah have exchanged near-daily fire since the Palestinian group's October 7 attack that sparked the war in Gaza, now in its eighth month.

"Two people were martyred in the raid that targeted a car on the Ramadiya-Qana road," the official National News Agency (NNA) said, after earlier reporting a drone strike. A rescuer from the Hezbollah-affiliated Islamic Health committee said an airstrike on a car in Qana had killed two young men, including a member of the Iran-backed movement. Hezbollah earlier said it had launched "more than 60" rockets at Zionist military positions in the annexed Golan Heights in retaliation for overnight strikes that killed a Hezbollah member who Zionists said was a field commander.

The strikes were "in response to the enemy's attacks last night on the Bekaa region" in eastern Lebanon's Baalbek area, it said in a statement. The Zionist army later said it had identified about "40 launches" from Lebanon towards the Golan Heights that caused no injuries before striking back at the sources of the fire. It reported several more attacks from Lebanon on northern Zionist entity, to which it had also responded with strikes.

Earlier, NNA had reported a midnight raid on the Baalbek area, where Hezbollah holds sway, hours after the group launched an attack deep into Zionist territory. "The outskirts of the eastern Lebanon mountain range... was subjected to five enemy raids," the agency said, adding that they wounded a Lebanese citizen and caused fires. A source close to Hezbollah told AFP one of the strikes "hit a Hezbollah military camp".

A Zionist army spokesman told AFP: "I can confirm that an air strike was indeed conducted deep in Lebanon against a terror target related to Hezbollah's precision missile project". The area of Baalbek in the Bekaa valley is a Hezbollah bastion, bordering Syria. On Wednesday, Hezbollah said it launched drones at a military base near the city of Tiberias, in one of its deepest attacks into the country since cross-border clashes began on October 8. It came after Zionist entity said it killed one of Hezbollah's field commanders in southern Lebanon on Tuesday. — AFP

Gunman charged with Slovak PM's attempted murder

BANSKA BYSTRICA: Authorities charged an alleged gunman Thursday with the attempted murder of Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, saying the shooting was sparked by the election win last month of a Fico ally. The premier's condition has stabilized but was still "very serious" a day after the violence that prompted deep worries of an escalation in the politically polarized nation. "This is a lone wolf whose actions were accelerated after the presidential elections since he was dissatisfied with its outcome," interior minister Matus Sutaj Estok said.

Slovak president-elect Peter Pellegrini, the Fico ally who won April's vote, earlier Thursday called for calm, urging political parties to halt campaigning for June's EU parliament election. The leader of the biggest opposition party, centrist Progressive Slovakia, announced his grouping had already done so. Slovakia's politics have been divided for years between pro-Europeans and nationalist-leaning camps, with the latest elections heavily influenced by disinformation and verbal attacks on social media.

Pellegrini, Fico's ally who will assume office in June, said Slovakia should avoid "further confrontation" in a joint statement with outgoing President Zuzana Caputova. The two politicians represent rival political camps but Caputova said they wanted "to send a signal of understanding" as she urged an end to "the vicious circle of hatred".

Surgeons spent hours in the operating theatre, battling to save the 59-year-old leader after the shooting, which happened on Wednesday afternoon as Fico spoke to members of the public after a meeting. Deputy prime minister Robert Kalinak said doctors stabilized Fico's condition, "but unfortunately, his condition is still very serious as the injuries are complicated".

Footage of events just after the shooting showed security agents grabbing a wounded Fico from the ground and hustling him into a black car. Other police handcuffed a man on the pavement nearby. Fico, whose party won the general election last September, is a four-time prime minister and political veteran accused of swaying his country's foreign policy in favor



Picture taken on May 15, 2024 shows Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico being transported from a helicopter by medics and his security detail to the hospital in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia where he is to be treated after he had been shot "multiple times". — AFP

of the Kremlin. Outside the hospital, shock mixed with outrage as residents of Banska Bystrica condemned the assault. "I'm certainly afraid that such attacks will be repeated," Nina Stevulova, a 18-year-old student, said. "There's no need to do such things. Feel free to throw a tomato or an egg at him or scold him that 'You are a thief or a murderer,'" Karol Reichl, a former professional driver, told AFP. "But don't come with a gun and shoot," the 69-year-old said.

Media reported that the suspected gunman was a 71-year-old writer. The alleged suspect's son told Slovak news site aktualita.sk he had "absolutely no idea what father was thinking, what he was planning, why it happened". Political analyst Miroslav Radek said the attack risked causing "further radicalization of individuals and politicians in Slovakia". "I am afraid that this attack may not have been the last," Radek told AFP. The shooting came just weeks ahead of June's European parliament elections in which far-right parties are expected to make gains.

In the central Slovak city of Levice, where the alleged gunman came from, engineer Jaroslav Pirozack

told AFP he was sad for Fico. "But at the same time, he's the one spreading hate and dividing the society, he's the one sowing hatred," the 34-year-old said.

As well as his current stint as premier, Fico headed the government in 2006-10 and 2012-18. He was forced to resign in 2018 after an investigative journalist's murder exposed high-level corruption and sparked anti-government sentiment. But he came back again. Since returning to office last October, Fico has made a string of remarks that have soured ties between Slovakia and neighboring Ukraine after he questioned Ukraine's sovereignty.

After he was elected, Slovakia stopped sending weapons to Ukraine, invaded by Russia in 2022. He also sparked mass protests with controversial changes, including a media law that critics say will undermine the impartiality of public broadcasters. At a press conference following the shooting, MP Lubos Blaha from Fico's party lashed out against the prime minister's critics. "You, the liberal media, and progressive politicians are to blame. Robert Fico is fighting for his life because of your hatred," Blaha said. — AFP

Kuwait slams Zionist aggression...

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HH the Prime Minister called on Arab countries to coordinate and cooperate to confront serious challenges to honor aspirations of "our people for security and stability". He, meanwhile, called for free and safe navigation in international waters in line with international law and law of the seas and securing energy supplies, rejected all forms of interference in the sovereignty of Arab countries and reaffirmed importance of dialogue, peaceful solutions and respect of sovereignty of nations and international agreements. Arab leaders also congratulated HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on assuming power, wishing him success and the best of luck, and Kuwait and its people further progress and prosperity. In their final statement, they also voiced heartfelt condolences over the passing of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The Arab League also called for a UN peacekeeping force in the Palestinian territories and an international peace conference at a summit dominated by the war between the Zionist entity and Hamas. In its final statement following the meeting in Manama, the 22-member grouping called for "international protection and peacekeeping forces of the United Nations in the occupied Palestinian territories" until a two-state solution is implemented.

It also adopted calls by host Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to "convene an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations, to resolve the Palestinian issue on the basis of the two-state solution". The meeting of Arab heads of state and government convened in Bahrain more than seven months into the conflict in Gaza that has convulsed the wider region. The Zionist entity has killed at least 35,272 people, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's

health ministry, and a Zionist siege has brought dire food shortages and the threat of famine. Abbas told the summit his political rivals in Hamas gave the Zionist entity an excuse to wage war on Gaza with its Oct 7 attack from the Palestinian territory. "The military operation carried out by Hamas by a unilateral decision on that day, October 7, provided (the Zionist entity) with more pretexts and justifications to attack the Gaza Strip," he said.

Speaking at the summit, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described the war in Gaza as "an open wound that threatens to infect the entire region", calling for "the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages". Guterres said "the only permanent way to end the cycle of violence and instability is through a two-state solution".

The "Manama Declaration" issued by the Arab nations also urged "all Palestinian factions to join under the umbrella of the Palestine Liberation Organization", which is dominated by Abbas' ruling Fatah movement. It added that it considered the PLO "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people". It is the first time the bloc has come together since an extraordinary summit in Riyadh, capital of neighboring Saudi Arabia, in November that also involved leaders from the 57-member Organization of Islamic Cooperation, based in the Saudi city of Jeddah.

While in November leaders declined the approval of punitive steps against the Zionist entity, Kuwaiti analyst Zafar Al-Ajmi told AFP the meeting in Manama differed from recent summits. Western public opinion has become "more inclined to support the Palestinians and lift the injustice inflicted on them" since the Zionist entity's creation more than 70 years ago, Ajmi said. Meanwhile, the Zionist entity had failed to achieve its war objectives including destroying Hamas and was now mired in fighting, he said.

In a campaign they say is in solidarity with Palestinians amid the Gaza war, Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis have launched a flurry of attacks on vital shipping lanes in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since November. The summit in Bahrain "strongly condemned the attacks on commercial ships", saying they "threaten freedom of navigation, international trade, and the interests of coun-

4 women granted judicial enforcement...

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Reem Al-Azmi, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, praised the decision to grant the authority to the four women, making the majority of members with authority to protect victims of domestic violence women.

Dr Huwailah earlier said Kuwaiti women have an important role in society, making significant efforts in various fields. The occasion of Kuwaiti Women's Day, which falls on May 16, represented a historic

milestone for Kuwaiti women and embodied a sense of pride and honor for them whenever this cherished occasion arrives, she said in a statement to KUNA.

Dr Huwailah noted Kuwaiti women aim to build on their successful journey and enhance their scientific contributions to achieve sustainable development. Alongside these efforts, they manage sustainable household responsibilities as mothers and serve as educators. She praised the success of Kuwaiti women in various leadership roles. "They are ministers, ambassadors, university directors, parliamentarians and judges," she said, and their achievements in these positions are a significant milestone in their social, political and economic journey, showcasing creativity and excellence. — KUNA

S Africa: Zionist genocide hits...

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jargon — while it rules on the wider accusation that the Zionist entity is breaking the 1948 UN Genocide Convention. First, it wants the court to order the Zionist entity to "immediately withdraw and cease its military offensive" in Rafah. Second, the Zionist entity should take "all effective measures" to allow "unimpeded access" to Gaza for humanitarian aid workers, as well as journalists and investigators. Lastly, Pretoria asked the court to ensure the Zionist entity reports back on its measures taken to adhere to the orders.

Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the Rafah offensive in defiance of US warnings that more than a million civilians sheltering there could be caught in the crossfire. Just minutes before the court hearings opened, Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said the

operation in Rafah "will continue as additional forces will enter" the area. The United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said Wednesday that 600,000 people have fled Rafah since military operations intensified, amid battles and heavy Zionist bombardment in the area. "As the primary humanitarian hub for humanitarian assistance in Gaza, if Rafah falls, so too does Gaza," said South Africa in a written submission to the court.

"The thwarting of humanitarian aid cannot be seen as anything but the deliberate snuffing out of Palestinian lives. Starvation to the point of famine," said lawyer Adila Hassim, her voice choking with emotion. Pretoria stressed that the only way for the existing court orders to be implemented was a "permanent ceasefire in Gaza".

The Zionist military has conducted relentless bombardment from the air and a ground offensive inside Gaza that has killed at least 35,233 people, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's health ministry. The Zionist entity said Thursday that five of its troops were killed by friendly fire in a Gaza battle, as a rift emerged inside the war cabinet on how the Palestinian territory should be ruled in future. — AFP

International

Xi, Putin hail ties as 'stabilizing' force in chaotic world

'China is ready to work with Russia to uphold fairness and justice in the world'

BEIJING: Leaders Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin framed their nations' ties as a stabilizing force in a chaotic world as they met Thursday in Beijing, where the Russian president is seeking greater Chinese support for his war effort in Ukraine. It is Putin's first trip abroad since his March re-election and the second in just over six months to China, an economic lifeline for Russia after the West hit it with unprecedented sanctions over its military offensive in Ukraine. Putin was greeted by Xi at a grand welcoming ceremony outside Beijing's Great Hall of the People, footage by state broadcaster CCTV showed.

In a meeting, Xi then told his "old friend" Putin that China-Russia relations were "conducive to peace". "China is ready to work with Russia to... uphold fairness and justice in the world," Xi added. Putin, in turn, told Xi the two countries' relations were "stabilizing factors in the international arena". "Relations between Russia and China are not opportunistic and not directed against anyone," Putin said, according to a Kremlin readout. "Together, we uphold the principles of justice and a democratic world order that reflects multipolar realities and is based on international law," he added. Following closed-door meetings, the two leaders then signed a joint statement on deepening their countries' "comprehensive strategic partnership", state news agency Xinhua said.

No 'further escalation'

The Russian leader's arrival came hours after he hailed his country's troops for advancing on "all fronts" on the battlefield in Ukraine, following a major new ground assault. And the Kremlin said Russia and China had agreed to oppose "further escalation" of the conflict in Ukraine on Thursday. "The parties note the need to stop any steps that contribute to the prolongation of hostilities," the Kremlin's readout of their joint statement said. China has dismissed claims it is aiding Russia's war in Ukraine and insisted that the West is exacerbating the conflict by sending arms to Ukraine.

Xi has also rebuffed Western criticism of his country's close ties with Moscow. But their economic partnership has come under close scrutiny from the West in recent months. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned China's support for Russia's "brutal war of aggression" in Ukraine had helped Russia ramp up production of rockets, drones and tanks - while stopping short of direct arms exports. China claims to be a neutral party in the Ukraine conflict, which it has never condemned and in which it has sought to frame itself as a mediator.

And in a statement to media following talks with Putin, Xi said the two sides agreed on the need for a "political solution" to resolving the war. "China's position on this issue has always been clear,"



BEIJING: In this photograph distributed by the Russian state agency Sputnik, Russia's President Vladimir Putin and China's President Xi Jinping attend a concert marking the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and China and opening of China-Russia Years of Culture at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing. — AFP

Xi said in footage broadcast by Russian TV. That position included "respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries" as well as "respecting the reasonable security concerns of all sides", the Chinese leader added.

The remarks echo a paper issued by Beijing last year, which Western countries said could enable Russia to hold much of the territory it has seized in

Ukraine. China also "looks forward to the early restoration of peace and stability on the European continent", Xi said, promising Beijing would "continue to play a constructive role to that end". Putin in response said he was "grateful" to Beijing for its efforts to help resolve the conflict. He also referenced Beijing's complaints about growing security cooperation between the United States

and its allies in Asia, warning of "harmful" military alliances in the region.

On Thursday afternoon, the Russian leader met Premier Li Qiang - China's number two official - who said Beijing was willing to "continue to deepen cooperation in various fields". Putin and Xi then attended a ceremony celebrating 75 years of diplomatic relations between Moscow and Beijing. Xinhua said.

Transactions slow

China-Russia trade has boomed since the Ukraine invasion and hit \$240 billion in 2023, according to Chinese customs figures. But after Washington vowed to go after financial institutions that facilitate Moscow, Chinese exports to Russia dipped in March and April, down from a surge early in the year. An executive order by President Joe Biden in December permits secondary sanctions on foreign banks that deal with Russia's war machine, allowing the US Treasury to cut them out of the dollar-led global financial system.

That, coupled with recent efforts to rebuild fractured ties with the United States, may make Beijing reluctant to openly push more cooperation with Russia - despite what Moscow may want, analysts say. Putin's post-election trip to Beijing echoes Xi's own visit to Russia after his re-appointing as leader last year. The Russian leader is due to travel to the northeastern city of Harbin for a trade and investment expo on Friday. — AFP

India opposition criticizes PM Modi for anti-Muslim comments

NEW DELHI: India's main opposition party on Thursday condemned Prime Minister Narendra Modi for anti-Muslim comments in election campaign speeches that have heightened concerns over sectarian tensions in the world's biggest democracy. Modi remains popular across much of India and his Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is widely expected to win this general election when it concludes in early June.

Since voting began last month, the 73-year-old premier has stepped up his rhetoric targeting India's main religious divide in a bid to rally voters. He has referred in campaign rallies to Muslims as "infiltrators" and claimed the main opposition Congress party would redistribute the nation's wealth to Muslims if it won.

P. Chidambaram, a former Indian finance minister and senior lawmaker for Congress, said Thursday that Modi was playing "his usual game of dividing Hindus and Muslims". "The world is watching and analyzing the Indian prime minister's statements, and they do not bring glory to India," he added.

After Modi suggested that a for-

mer prime minister from Congress had planned for a separate "Muslim budget", the party's general secretary Jairam Ramesh condemned his statements as "nonsensical". "This is typical Modi bombast and bogusness," he said Wednesday on social media platform X. Since he swept to power a decade ago, Modi has sought to align India's politics more closely with its majority faith, in defiance of the country's officially secular constitution.

His cultivated image as a champion of Hinduism has made him roundly popular but has left many among the country's 200-million-plus Muslim minority uneasy about their status and anxious about their futures. Modi on Tuesday denied stoking religious tensions in a television interview with broadcaster News18. "The day I start talking about Hindu-Muslim (divisions) will be the day I will lose my ability to lead a public life," Modi said.

'Vote jihad'

But at a campaign rally the following day, Modi accused Congress of planning to commit "vote jihad", an implied suggestion that his opponents were rallying Muslims to vote against



NEW DELHI: India's Prime Minister and leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Narendra Modi (center) with chief minister of Maharashtra state Eknath Shinde (left) and their deputy chief Minister Devendra Fadnis (right) waves to the crowd during his roadshow in Mumbai. — AFP

him. India's poll code prohibits sectarian campaigning and opposition parties lodged a complaint about an earlier Modi speech last month with the election commission, which has yet to announce any sanctions against the premier. Other members of Modi's party have been accused of matching his rhetoric and unfairly targeting Muslims during the election.

A BJP candidate in Hyderabad, Madhavi Latha, was widely condemned on social media Monday for demanding veiled Muslim women remove their facial coverings at a polling station so she could personally check that their appearances matched their identity documents. Police in the southern city announced an investigation into the incident. — AFP

Azerbaijan and Armenia agree deal on shared border

YEREVAN: Armenia and Azerbaijan said on Thursday they had agreed a deal on disputed sections of their shared border, a new step towards normalizing ties between the historic rivals. The deal between the two Caucasus nations, both former Soviet republics, includes the return to Azerbaijan of four border villages seized by Armenia in the 1990s. Yerevan and Baku say they hope to reach a comprehensive peace agreement. This follows Azerbaijan's recapture last year of its breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh, which had been controlled for decades by Armenian separatists.

In late March, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan agreed to return four abandoned villages which Yerevan seized in the 1990s. But locals in nearby Armenian settlements say that could cut them off from the rest of the country and accuse Pashinyan of unilaterally giving away territory without any guarantees in return. The premier's move has sparked weeks of anti-government protests in Armenia, with thousands of demonstrators led by charismatic cleric Bagrat Galstanyan demanding Pashinyan's resignation.

Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministries said in identical statements that the two countries' border delimitation commissions signed a protocol formalizing the "adjustment of coordinates based on the geodetic measurements on the ground" based on Soviet-era maps. The move will see four border villages - Baghanis Ayrum, Ashaghi Askipara, Keyrimli and Ghizilhajli - return to Azerbaijani control. Speaking during his cabinet meeting on Thursday, Pashinyan hailed the agreement as a "very important milestone for further strengthening Armenia's sovereignty and independence". "For the first time since independence (from the Soviet Union in 1991), our republic has an officially delimited border," he said. "This brings our security and stability to a new level." — AFP



JERUSALEM: This handout picture shows a US Army Soldier assigned to the 7th Transportation Brigade (Expeditionary) tossing a line to the Army tug vessel USAV Fort Moultrie (ST-912) from the Roll-On, Roll-Off Distribution Facility (RRDF), or floating pier. — AFP

US military says aid pier anchored to Gaza beach

JERUSALEM: US troops on Thursday anchored a long-awaited temporary pier, aimed to boost aid deliveries into war-ravaged Gaza, to a beach in the besieged Palestinian territory, the US military and the Zionist entity said. The US Central Command said the pier was "successfully affixed to the beach in Gaza" at around 7:40 am, with around 500 tons of aid expected to enter the Palestinian territory in the coming days. "It's a pretty substantial amount, and it's spread out over multiple ships right now," Vice Admiral Brad Cooper, deputy CENTCOM commander, told reporters in Washington.

"The connection of the floating pier in the Gaza Strip was successfully completed," Zionist's military said in a statement later on Thursday. President Joe Biden announced the emergency pier in March to

address the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, where the United Nations has warned of famine with virtually the entire population displaced by the Zionist military action in response to the October 7 Hamas attack.

Built at a cost of at least \$320 million, the project is extraordinary in that such massive humanitarian efforts by the United States are usually in response to actions by hostile countries, not a US ally. The humanitarian assistance is being screened in Cyprus and loaded by truck. Once on land, it will "move quickly", being offloaded from the coast into Gaza within hours, Cooper said, adding that "thousands of tons of aid are in the pipeline".

He said that around 1,000 US soldiers and sailors were involved in the operation but that they were only involved in the pier and not in delivery - which will be handled through the UN. "There will be no US military boots on the ground in Gaza," he said.

The United Nations has warned of a looming famine in Gaza, where it says the vast majority of the coastal territory's 2.4 million inhabitants have been displaced since the start of Gaza war, now in its eighth month. — AFP

15 EU states want asylum seekers to go to third countries

COPENHAGEN: Fifteen EU states have demanded a further tightening of the bloc's asylum policy, making it easier to transfer undocumented migrants to third countries, including when they are rescued at sea. The demand, sent in a letter to the European Commission that AFP received on Thursday, comes less than a month before European Parliament elections, in which far-right anti-immigration parties are forecast to make gains.

The letter asks the European Union's executive arm to "propose new ways and solutions to prevent irregular migration to Europe". The group includes Italy and Greece, which receive a substantial number of the people making the perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea to reach the EU - many seeking to escape poverty, war or persecution, according to the International Organization for Migration. They want the EU to toughen up its recently adopted asylum pact, which introduces tighter controls on those seeking to enter the 27-nation bloc.

That reform includes speedier vetting of people arriving without documents, new border detention centers and faster deportation for rejected asylum applicants. The 15 proposed in their letter the introduction of "mechanisms... aimed at detecting, intercepting - or in cases of distress, rescuing - migrants on the high seas and bringing them to a predetermined place of safety in a partner country outside the EU, where durable solutions for those migrants could be found".

They said it should be easier to send asylum seekers to third countries while their requests for protection are assessed. They cited the example of a controversial deal that Italy has struck with non-EU Albania, under which Rome can send thousands of asylum seekers plucked from Italian waters to holding camps in the Balkan country until their cases are processed. The concept in EU asylum law of what constitutes "safe third countries" should be reassessed, they continued.

Safe country debate

EU law stipulates that people arriving in the bloc without documents can be sent to a third country, where they could have requested asylum - so long as that country is deemed safe and the applicant has a genuine link with it. That would exclude schemes like the divisive law passed by the UK, which has now left the EU, enabling London to refuse all irregular arrivals the right to request asylum and send them to Rwanda. Rights groups accuse the African country - ruled with an iron fist by President Paul Kagame since the end of the 1994 genocide that killed around 800,000 people - of cracking down on free speech and political opposition.

The 15 nations said they wanted the EU to make deals with third countries along the main migration routes, citing the example of the arrangement it made with Turkey in 2016 to take in Syrian refugees from the war in their home country. The letter was signed by Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland and Romania. It was not signed by Hungary, whose Prime Minister Viktor Orban has resisted EU plans to share our responsibility across the bloc for hosting asylum seekers, or to contribute to the costs of that plan. — AFP

FRIDAY, MAY 17, 2024

Zain demonstrates AI-powered solutions to empower businesses

Company sponsors IDC Kuwait CIO Summit 2024



Zain's team at the event.

KUWAIT: Zain has sponsored the IDC Kuwait CIO Summit 2024, titled The Future of IT: Rethinking Digitalization for an AI Everywhere World. The event, held at Arraya Ballroom, offered a platform for exchanging ideas and expertise on how artificial intelligence will reshape the business landscape and develop the digital economy.

The Summit was attended by Acting Director General of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) Dr Ammar Al-Husaini, ZainTECH CEO Andrew Hanna, along with leaderships from the public and private sectors, experts and academics, and executives from local, regional, and international technology firms. The event featured many insightful keynotes and panel discussions aimed at IT leaders and decision makers.

During the event, Zain took the stage to demonstrate some of the best AI-powered solutions provided by ZainTECH, the integrated digital solutions provider of Zain Group, to empower businesses to embrace true digitization. These services, including cloud, cybersecurity, robotics & drones, data analytics, and more leverage on the capabilities of AI to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance performance for companies from across industries.

Zain's session also discussed the practices that set some companies apart when it comes to investing

in artificial intelligence to create value and achieve true ROI of AI investments. The session proposed a framework designed to help companies from across the most vibrant sectors to accelerate time to value from their AI initiatives.

The IDC Kuwait CIO Summit 2024 was organized in collaboration with the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT), the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, and the National Cybersecurity Center. The event also came in partnership with many global technology firms.

The event provided an essential platform for empowering IT leaders and helping them better understand and adapt to today's AI-infused business landscape. The Summit delivered expert guidance on achieving success while crafting innovative solutions for current and emerging challenges to achieve sustainable growth in today's digital economy.

As a leading digital service provider, Zain believes in the importance of harnessing the potential of AI to lead the digital transformation journey. Recently, the company teamed up with global partner Huawei to establish an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Center of Excellence. The step aims to push both partners' plans for AI-enabled innovative services and 5.5G network automation in the region.



Zain showcased its innovative solutions to serve businesses.

Moody's Ratings affirms Kuwait's A1 rating; maintains stable outlook

NEW YORK: Moody's Ratings (Moody's) has on Thursday affirmed the Government of Kuwait's long-term local and foreign currency issuer ratings at A1. The outlook remains stable.

The rating affirmation reflects Moody's assessment that Kuwait's balance sheet and fiscal buffers will remain extremely strong for the foreseeable future and preserve macroeconomic and external stability. Balanced against this key credit strength is the lack of progress in reforms that would reduce the vulnerability of the economy and government finances to oil market volatility and long-term carbon transition risks, which reveals underlying and persistent institutional constraints. While the government aims to address the institutional impediments, how effective it will be is highly uncertain at this stage.

The stable outlook reflects balanced risks to the ratings. Progress in economic and fiscal diversification away from hydrocarbons not currently factored into Moody's baseline assumptions may reduce Kuwait's exposure to oil price fluctuations and long-term carbon transition. The recent dissolution of parliament and temporary suspension of related constitutional articles aimed at overcoming institutional constraints has the potential to accelerate reforms. By contrast, increasing global momentum towards carbon transition that significantly lowers the demand for and price of oil would likely weigh on Kuwait's credit metrics and weaken the credit profile in the absence of fiscal and economic reforms.

Kuwait's local and foreign currency country ceilings have been raised to Aa1 from Aa2. The three-notch gap between the local currency ceiling and the sovereign rating reflects the country's stable balance of payments through episodes of oil price volatility, against the economy's exposure to a key revenue source and a challenging domestic political environment that constrains reform and diversification prospects. The zero-notch gap between the foreign currency ceiling and local currency ceiling reflects very low transfer and convertibility risks, given the country's very large net external creditor position that includes ample foreign

exchange reserves held by the central bank.

Ratings rationale

Kuwait's sovereign balance sheet and fiscal buffers will remain extremely strong for the foreseeable future, anchoring the sovereign credit profile. However, lack of progress in reforms that is largely the result of underlying and persistent institutional constraints exposes the government to oil market volatility and long-term carbon transition risks. In the past week the sovereign took the extraordinary step to temporarily suspend parliament for up to four years in an attempt to address the institutional impediments to reform, but building a track record of credible and effective policies is likely to take time.

Moody's expects Kuwait's government financial assets (GFA) to remain very large over the coming years. Moody's estimates that the country's GFA,

which mainly comprise assets in the Future Generations Fund (FGF), exceeded 400 percent of GDP at the end of 2023 – among the highest across rated sovereigns. Since there is no mechanism to transfer funds or income from FGF into the government's budget or the General Reserve Fund (GRF, the government's treasury account), Moody's expects the size of FGF will continue to grow in tandem with global asset prices.

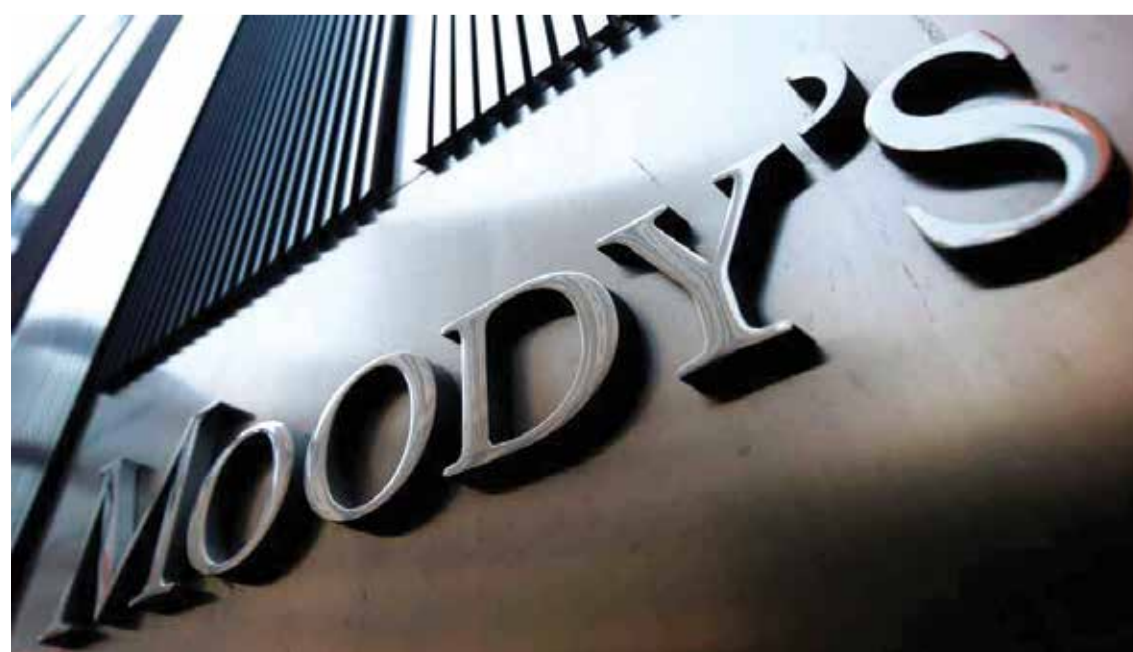
At the same time, Kuwait's debt burden is extraordinarily low, in part due to the expiration of the previous public debt law in 2017 preventing debt issuance despite some years of sizeable deficits since then. Government debt was less than 3 percent of GDP as of the end of fiscal 2023 (ending March 2024), which is among the very lowest globally and also results in very strong debt affordability. Moody's assumes that a new law allowing the government to incur new debt will eventually be passed, which will mean a higher debt burden based on the rating agency's fiscal deficit forecasts of 4-7 percent of GDP over fiscal years 2024-27. That said, the debt burden will remain low and Kuwait's net asset position will remain very large in the coming years.

Kuwait's very large fiscal buffers preserve macroeconomic and external stability. Moody's estimates that Kuwait runs a very large net international investment position because of FGF. The very sizeable stock of foreign assets which also includes foreign exchange reserves at the Central Bank of Kuwait significantly lowers external vulnerability risk by supporting the credibility of Kuwait's currency basket peg and deterring speculation against the Kuwaiti dinar, even during periods of lower oil prices. In turn, the monetary policy regime – with the currency as the nominal anchor – has been effective in maintaining price stability and limiting inflation volatility.

Counterbalancing these credit strengths, Kuwait is one of the sovereigns most dependent on the hydrocarbon sector. Hydrocarbons account for more than 90 percent of the country's exports and government revenue, exposing it to fluctuations in oil prices and long-term carbon transition. There has been limited progress in economic and fiscal diversification away from hydrocarbons in large part due to an unproductive relationship between the government and parliament that has thus far impeded reforms.

Rationale for the stable outlook

On the upside, material progress in economic and fiscal reforms (not currently factored into Moody's baseline assumptions) can have a ripple effect through the economy, raising economic competitiveness from a low base and incentivizing domestic and foreign private investment. Faster implementation of projects can also encourage economic diversification, particularly in industries where Kuwait has demonstrated some potential such as transport and logistics, downstream petrochemicals, data centers, and solar and wind energy. The temporary suspension of parliament provides a window for the government to push through credit-enhancing reforms given the institutional impediments Kuwait has faced, albeit with a risk of undermining the credibility of the country's institutional and governance framework if not used effectively. On the downside, weakness in global demand or accelerating momentum in carbon transition weighing on oil prices and oil production in Kuwait would weaken the government's credit profile over time in the absence of fiscal and economic reforms, despite large fiscal buffers.



Business

US consumer inflation eases in April, sending stocks higher

Data looks to quell consumers' concerns about the impact of rising prices

WASHINGTON: US consumer inflation eased slightly last month, according to government data published in a positive sign for President Joe Biden ahead of November's election. The data supports his administration's messaging that the US economy has turned a corner, as it looks to quell consumers' concerns about the impact of rising prices going into an expected rematch against former president Donald Trump.

US stock markets set new records in New York following the publication of the inflation data, as hopes rose that the Federal Reserve would start cutting interest rates in the coming months. The annual consumer price index (CPI) came in at 3.4 percent in April, down 0.1 percentage point from March, the Labor Department said in a statement.

This was in line with the median forecast of economists surveyed by Dow Jones Newswires and the Wall Street Journal.

Monthly inflation came in at 0.3 percent, slightly below expectations. "I know many families are struggling, and that even though we've made progress we have a lot more to do," Biden said in a statement, adding: "Prices are still too high." But Trump, his likely Republican opponent, said in a statement that American workers and families were "literally paying the price for Joe Biden's failed economic policies, with prices on household essentials like gas, food, rent and diapers skyrocketing."

"The American people cannot afford four more years of Bidenomics," he added.

The April CPI data marks the first month of slowing annual data since January, although both the annual and monthly figures remain too high for policymakers' liking. "The index for shelter rose in April, as did the index for gasoline," the

Labor Department said in a statement.

"Combined, these two indexes contributed over seventy percent of the monthly increase in the index for all items," it added. The gasoline index jumped by 2.8 percent from a month earlier, while shelter prices increased by 0.4 percent. "This is a welcome moderation in consumer prices in April—especially after the elevated reading that we've had in the first quarter," Nationwide Chief Economist Kathy Bostjancic told AFP.

She added that the data "keeps alive the prospect" of a first Federal Reserve interest rate cut in September. In more good news for US consumers, a widely-watched inflation measure that excludes volatile food and energy prices also eased last month, rising at an annual rate of 3.6 percent, down from 3.8 percent in March. This marked its lowest annual rate since April 2021, according to Labor Department data, and suggests the overall inflationary picture is moving firmly in the right direction.

The so-called "core" inflation index rose 0.3 percent in April from a month earlier, according to the Labor Department, also slightly lower than in March. The April CPI data provides the US Fed with some welcome economic news as it mulls when to start lowering interest rates from their current 23-year high.

The US central bank has been locked in a battle against rising prices, hiking rates and holding them in a bid to bring inflation back down firmly to its long-term target of two percent. "We think the data support the case for a patient approach on policy decisions from the Fed going forward although the base case remains one of lower rates this year," High Frequency Economics chief US economist Rubeela Farooqi wrote in a note to clients. Bostjancic from



MONTEBELLO, US: People shop at a supermarket in Montebello, California, on May 15, 2024. The Consumer Price Index climbed 3.4 percent in April from the previous year, according to figures released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.—AFP

Nationwide called the April CPI data "encouraging," but said the Fed would likely want to see more evidence that inflation was moving down towards target before they start cutting rates.

Nationwide expects the US central bank to make two interest rate cuts this year, with the first coming in September, she added. This is one

less than Fed policymakers penciled in back in March, when they predicted three quarter-percentage-point cuts this year.

Futures traders have raised their expectations of a September rate cut in recent days, and now put the chances of a cut by mid-September at just over 70 percent, according to data from CME Group.—AFP

NBK warns against transferring money to unknown parties

KUWAIT: As part of its endeavors to increase financial awareness and inclusion among the different segments of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to promote the "Let's Be Aware" campaign introduced by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). During this month, the bank intensified awareness material on all its social media platforms with the aim of increasing public awareness of various misleading fraud schemes to steal customers' banking information.

In this regard, NBK highlights the various evolving fraud techniques, especially where scammers clone the voices and images of a relative or a friend using AI to make scam calls or send voice messages asking for an urgent money transfer for emergency. This way, payment links will seem as if they were sent from a family member or a close friend leading to transfer money directly without hesitation. Therefore, NBK stresses the necessity to verify the identity of any person or entity before making transfers. Scammers steal people's information, whether

photos or video clips which contain their voices through social media platforms or even random phone calls, such as numbers calling from different countries around the world, which aim to steal their voices to use it in scams. So, NBK always warns against transferring money to unknown people, stressing the necessity to verify people's identity before any transfers. NBK warns against sharing any important personal information, such as social security number, bank account numbers, or password-protected information on social media, as this may expose such sensitive information to theft by unknown persons. The bank also stresses the need to verify information, websites and pages visited through social media to ensure they are the authentic official websites.

NBK always employs innovative methods to promote financial literacy among the public and familiarize them with their rights and the precautions that should be taken to protect their banking information and accounts. This is done by sharing educational messages, photos and video clips on its social media platforms, as well as reposting CBK's related communications. NBK also seeks to spread financial awareness among the largest segments to maximize the exposure of the campaign's messages. It also harnesses its strong customer communication capabilities including all its digital channels, which are the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks. NBK's efforts to raise customer awareness are instrumental in its



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strategy, as the bank always uses all communication channels to advise them to keep their passwords/PINs and financial/personal account information strictly confidential, and not to share them with anyone impersonating a bank employee. It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key supporter and partner in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives to increase financial and banking awareness among different segments of society. As a leading financial institution in Kuwait, NBK frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector, as well as various training courses for its employees to enhance their experience in the areas of combating fraud and financial crime.

As a leading financial institution in Kuwait and across the region, NBK firmly observes its responsibilities towards the communities it serves. It is always taking the initiative to provide all necessary support to important and strategic campaigns, like the "Let's Be Aware" campaign, which serve the interests of the national economy and society at large.



CEO Dave Calhoun

Next Boeing CEO faces pile of problems

NEW YORK: Since announcing plans in late March to replace CEO Dave Calhoun at the end of 2024, Boeing's problems have seemingly gone from bad to worse, complicating an already daunting executive search. In the ensuing weeks, Boeing has endured troubling congressional hearings with whistleblowers and safety experts, repeat delays to a space launch, and a steep decline in commercial plane deliveries that has deepened financial losses.

On Tuesday night, the department of Justice said Boeing had breached a 2021 criminal settlement over the 737 MAX crashes, opening the company up to possible prosecution. Faced with these challenges, Boeing's next chief will need to be a kind of corporate magician capable of turning around troubled operations, resetting bruised relations with airline clients and redefining the company's public identity following scandal and missteps.

"Given the nature of what's required, the new CEO may prove to be a bit of a unicorn," said a recent note from Bank of America analyst Ron Epstein. Aviation experts say the next Boeing CEO will ideally have an aerospace background, experience managing big manufacturing projects, strategic smarts and a hands-on approach to safety. Boeing declined to comment for this story on its executive search. But the company may disclose more at its annual meeting on Friday.

Calhoun's impending departure is part of a March 25 leadership shakeup that included an immediate replacement of its head of commercial aviation and a new chairman of the board. A former General Electric and private equity executive who has been on Boeing's board since 2009, Calhoun ascended unexpectedly to CEO after Dennis Muilenburg was fired in late 2019 following the two deadly MAX crashes.

Despite manufacturing and supply chain problems at Boeing, Calhoun appeared poised to remain CEO through 2028. But everything changed on January 5 when an Alaska Airlines jet made an emergency landing after a fuselage panel blew out mid-flight, prompting intensified scrutiny from regulators, airline customers and lawmakers. Given the depth of the problems, some Boeing watchers argue the company needs to make profound changes beyond the executive-suite shakeup already announced, which keeps Calhoun in his post through December.

He will also be in line to influence the selection of his replacement if he is reelected to the board at Friday's annual meeting. Boeing has acknowledged that the Alaska Airlines incident shows more work is needed, while insisting it has made progress on safety.

Richard Aboulafia of consultancy AeroDynamic Advisory has tied Boeing's travails to decisions made by Calhoun and CEO predecessors that have diminished Boeing's engineering prowess in a hunt for profit and shareholder payouts. The next CEO could be "anybody who's really committed to the industry and not just there to manage money," Aboulafia told AFP. "Anything that gets the rot out of the system." — AFP

Japan economy suffers severe contraction in Q1

TOKYO: Japan's economy suffered a worse-than-expected contraction in the first quarter, official data showed Thursday, in further bad news for its unpopular government. Gross domestic product in the world's number four economy shrank by 0.5 percent against market expectations of a drop of only 0.3 percent.

Exports dived 5.0 percent, after growing 2.8 percent the previous quarter, while imports fell 3.4 percent. Compared with the first quarter of 2023, GDP fell an annualized 2.0 percent compared with a forecasted drop of 1.2 percent, according to Bloomberg News.

The economy was hit by a major earthquake on January 1 on the Noto peninsula and by halts in production at auto giant Toyota's Daihatsu subsidiary. Japan has been flirting with recession since last year, with zero growth—revised Thursday from an expansion of 0.1 percent—between October and December.

In the previous quarter, from July to September, GDP suffered a major contraction of 0.9 percent, also revised on Thursday from an earlier reading of minus 0.8 percent.

The new data will add to pressure on Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and his government, which for months has seen poor poll ratings. Germany re-



TOKYO: People walk along an underground concourse leading to the subway in Tokyo on May 16, 2024. Japan's economy suffered a worse-than-expected contraction in the first quarter, official data showed May 16, in further bad news for its unpopular government.—AFP

placed Japan as the number three economy in 2023 -- in large part because of the weak yen—and is projected to be overtaken by India too.

For decades, Japan has battled stagnant growth and deflation as well as a rapidly ageing population. Inflation, however, has picked up, allowing the

capital and liquidity buffers, an end-of-mission press release said after conclusion of IMF staff team's visit to the country. The team, led by Masahiro Nozaki, conducted discussions for the 2024 Article IV Consultation with Singapore during May 7–16, 2024. The government's Forward Singapore initiative will help promote inclusive growth amid rapid population ageing and technological advancements.

Nozaki said in the statement: "Singapore's economy is recovering as gradual disinflation continues. Following a moderation in the first half of 2023, growth has gained momentum since the second half of the year, supported by improved global demand for semiconductors and a rebound in tourism. Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) core inflation, which excludes the costs of accommodation and private transport, decreased to 3.1 percent in March 2024, supported by disinflation in food and tradable

goods, although signs of persistence in services inflation remain. Labor market conditions started to ease last year amid weaker GDP growth and nominal wage growth slowed in the fourth quarter of 2023, but unemployment remains low."

"IMF staff projects GDP growth to recover to 2.1 percent in 2024 from 1.1 percent in last year, reflecting a continued recovery in manufacturing, tourism, and consumer-facing services. IMF staff projects headline and MAS core inflation to moderate to 3 percent in this year, with the latter expected to stabilize at around 2 percent by 2025. Risks to the growth outlook mainly stem from external factors, such as a steeper than projected slowdown in China, prolonged tight US monetary policy, and deeper geo-economic fragmentation. On the other hand, stronger global growth would have positive spillovers to Singapore.—AFP

Weekender

FRIDAY, MAY 17, 2024



— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



PHYSICAL GAMES

Building blocks for healthy child development



By Ghadeer Ghloom



In the world of children's play, Kuwait Times took an exploratory journey with Pediatric Occupational Therapist Dr Eman Jaafar Abdullah, discovering the realms where the essence of humanity unfolds, revealing the profound secrets of playing that unlock little individuals' consciousness and perceptions. Dr Eman shared valuable perspective on physical and digital play, shedding light on fundamental factors including spatial awareness and stereognosis.

Physical playing is a magical foundation for the mental and physical growth of a child, especially for children up to 6 years old. This type of play has many benefits, including discovering future hobbies through experience, such as finding out if they enjoy coloring, drawing, swimming and other activities, in addition to developing skills in imagination, interaction with others and emotions.

There are two fundamental factors that must be highlighted, namely what is known as spatial awareness. This refers to the ability to feel oneself in the surrounding environment, giving awareness to the individual about three-dimensional objects instead

of just two-dimensional, along with the ability to touch while playing, supporting physical understanding. It provides opportunities for sensory discovery both within oneself and in the surrounding environment, understanding how to interact and react to it.

As for digital games, they do not offer the same depth in three-dimensional experience and sensation, since they only provide a two-dimensional experience. For example, a child pushing himself down a slide to play requires the physical force needed to slide downwards, something not achievable in digital play. This example applies to other activities in an individual's life. This highlights the importance of physical play over digital play in providing bodily awareness, spatial awareness and depth perception. It is about benefiting from motor and sensory skills.

Another point to consider is stereognosis, the ability to recognize objects through touch without relying on vision. This ability is developed through the use

of delicate hand movements needed in the future for tasks like holding a pen, buttoning a shirt and other fine hand motor skills. Digital play does not sufficiently develop these abilities due to the lack of varied surfaces, shapes, textures and temperatures for tactile feedback, causing delays in some children's sensory skills development.

Through physical play, children learn skills like coordination and planning. For instance, kicking a ball teaches a child about the force and distance they generate in

their environment and the impact the environment has on their movements. This helps the child learn how to apply the right force and effort, contributing to problem-solving skills and cognitive thinking. The physical and mental benefits of building these capacities from a young age reflect positively as they grow older, benefits not provided by flat screens like tablet computers.

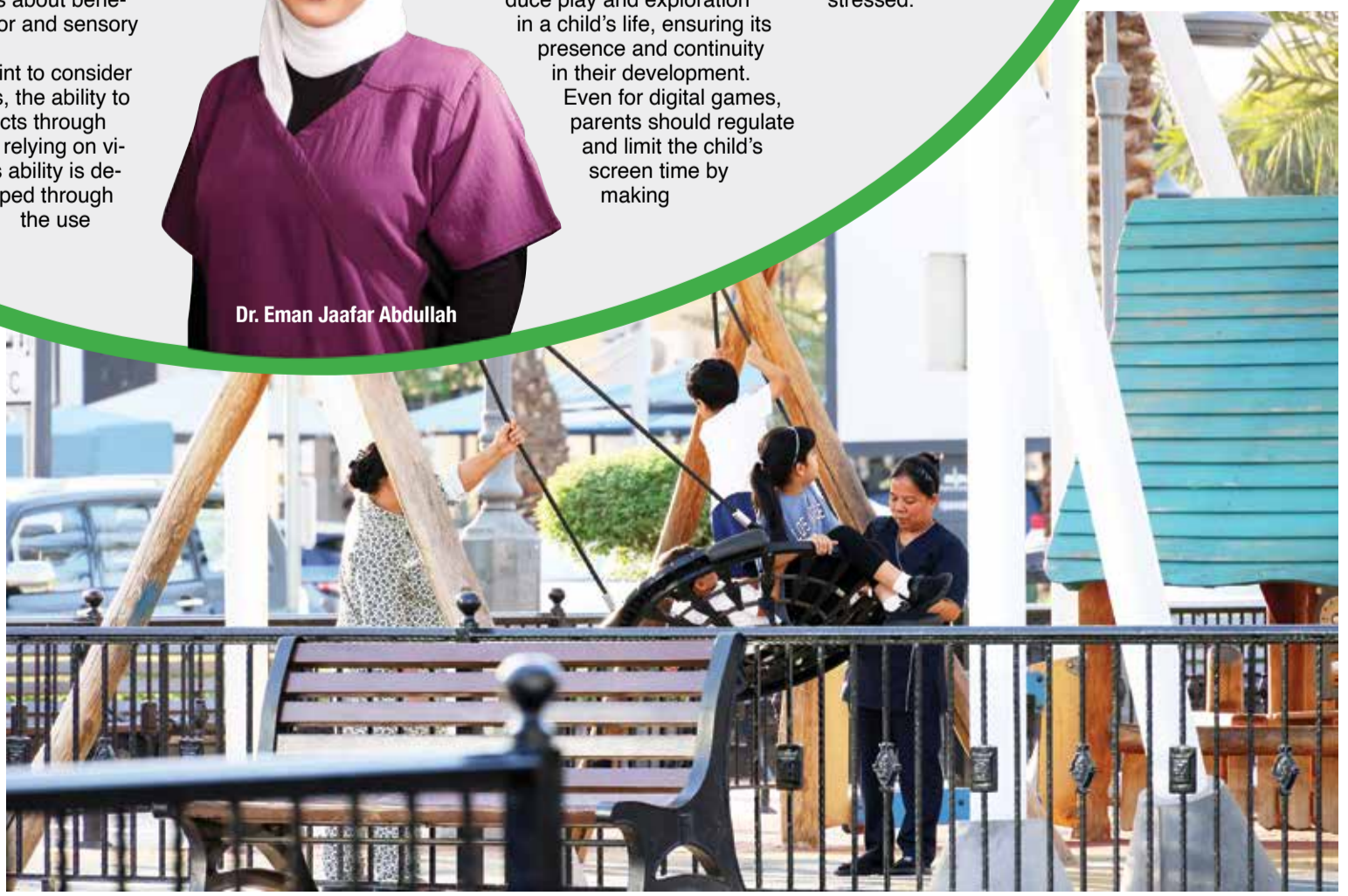
Dr Eman concluded by advising parents on scheduling routines for their children. "Children enjoy routine and rules because it allows them to anticipate what comes next, giving them the ability to prepare for what's ahead. Therefore, it is recommended to establish a routine for a child to be exposed to new skills. Having a routine helps parents know when to introduce play and exploration in a child's life, ensuring its presence and continuity in their development. Even for digital games, parents should regulate and limit the child's screen time by making

the iPad available only on weekends, for instance," she told Kuwait Times.

It is also advised to expose the child to physical activities that suit their abilities and skills, neither too easy to bore them nor too difficult to discourage them, making it easier for parents to guide towards physical play rather than digital play. Once the child's preferred type of activity is discovered, they should be further exposed and encouraged. This brings us back to the point mentioned earlier, that physical play is a gateway to discovering hobbies and passions. It is essential not to forget that play is indeed a right among children's rights," Dr Eman stressed.



Dr. Eman Jaafar Abdullah





A haboob or dust wall looms dark and red over Kuwait City in 2011.



A haboob storm engulfs the highway in Jahra, Kuwait in 2018.

ACCOUNTANT BY PROFESSION, STORM CHASER BY PASSION

By Passant Hisham



During a serene hour in 2011, high atop one of Kuwait's skyscrapers, Sarah Al-Sayegh's camera was already geared up to catch the golden sunset. While waiting, she started noticing an unprecedented shift in the sky's appearance. A large cloud immediately got closer, forming a huge sandstorm that caught her attention right away. "At this moment, I was hooked and attached; I just couldn't stop taking pictures of it," she said. Away from her fulltime job as an accountant, the 41-year-old has become the first Kuwaiti woman storm chaser. The scientific mysteries behind climate change, the challenges of predicting weather conditions, along with the adrenaline rush attached with storm chasing, are what drew her to be part of this thrilling world. "Watching a tornado forming in front of me or a lightning spark occurring near me is something that amazes me every time," she told Kuwait Times.

Stating that warning systems in Kuwait don't include tornadoes, Sarah has been driven not only by passion, but also a sense of responsibility to document every storm that comes along her way. "It's a message that I am trying to send to meteorology centers, because with a better warning system, they could save lives and properties," she

life for this one perfect shot, recalling her 2016 journey to Texas as "the most dangerous one". As she and her group buckled up to shoot a tornado, they felt a lightning spark approaching them. "We felt the heat and the electricity so close to us," she recounted.

Upon hearing its sound, they all suddenly ducked to avoid being hit by it. "We were frightened but ended up laughing," she remembered. "It is the closest I was to get hit by a lightning spark." Another time Sarah witnessed what she called "the biggest tornado I have ever seen", which was in Kansas in the US. Watching it gradually forming from ground to sky astonished yet intimidated her at the same time. "It's beautiful to see it, but it kind of gives you a chill." As she sought shelter, she hoped it wouldn't get close to any city, knowing the destructive damage it could cause.

Sarah said that while the level of storm severity differs from Kuwait to the US, sometimes in Kuwait she can catch storms with similar cloud structures of the US. All what it takes, according to her, is to "predict well, be patient, and most importantly, be at the right time and in the right place". However, she still recalled one severe sandstorm incident in Kuwait in 2018, when the storm caused heavy rainfall and floods that engulfed the streets and residential areas. According to Kuwait Times, this storm resulted in one death and 409 injuries.

Over time, Sarah no longer needed to study the weather or predict storms because her instincts grew stronger,



Dust storm with supercell over Kuwait City.



Sarah Al-Sayegh

said. "Tornadoes are there, and they are happening in our region." She referred to twin tornadoes in Qatar during the World Cup, but no one knew about them.

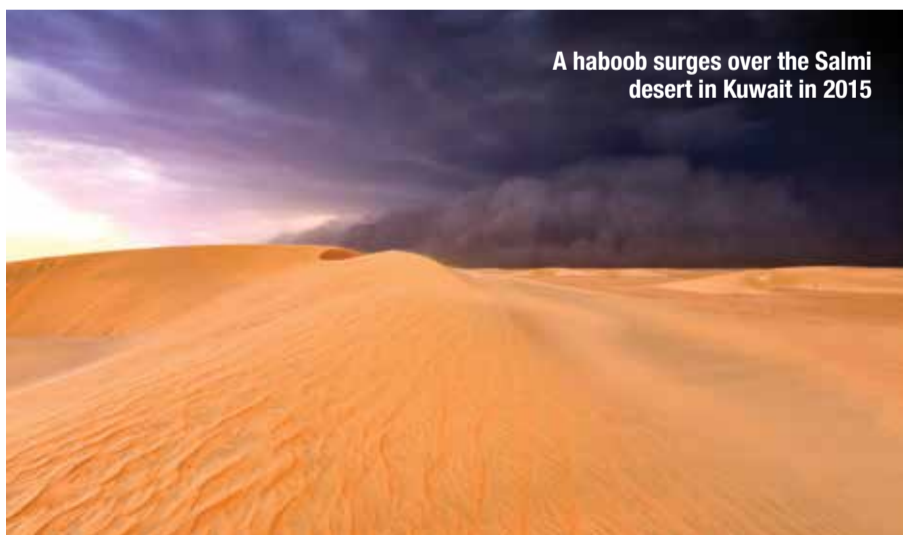
Between the US and Kuwait, Sarah has grown accustomed to driving for hours or traveling miles just for a single moment captured through her lens, which according to her, is "worth it all". Sometimes she didn't mind risking her

even without any visible signs. Two years ago, while camping in the Kuwaiti desert, she looked at the sky and whispered to her friend, "Tomorrow, this area will be hit by a major storm." The next day, social media was flooded with pictures of a storm in that very

spot. She cried all day for missing the chance to document it.

Despite her passion, Sarah believes not all storms are worth risking one's life for. She emphasized the importance of studying storms thoroughly and having an exit plan before embarking on any

storm chasing adventure. "Safety, safety and safety," she stressed, reminding that nature's power can sometimes exceed our predictions.



A haboob surges over the Salmi desert in Kuwait in 2015



A supercell cloud formation twists ominously above fields in Nebraska in 2018.



A supercell paints the sky above Texas in 2021.



A tornado over Texas in 2017.



A tornado over the plains of Kansas in 2018.



A dust storm rolls over Kansas in 2022.



A Friday at the Friday Market

By Aaron Philip

The Friday Market, or Souq Al Juma, is a bustling hub where one can find just about anything imaginable, with visitors to this market representing a diverse array of nationalities. The market is divided into sections offering both new and secondhand goods, housed within a massive structure containing hundreds of stalls.



Kuwait Times took a stroll through the souq, noting its unique characteristics. The market operates only three days a week - Thursday, Friday, and Saturday - concluding each week's activities on Saturday at 9 pm. It remains closed the rest of the week, with vendors making attractive offers before the close of business on Saturday. According to a porter working at the souq, all products are brought in on Wednesday night and arranged in the stalls. Wednesdays are dedicated solely to this preparation process.

The Friday Market boasts an extensive range of products, from carpets, home furniture and kitchen utensils to electronics, heavy machinery, curtains, perfumes and much more. Furqan, a vendor specializing in vintage items such as old teapots, vessels and lanterns dating back around 50 years, explained many of these items are acquired from locals who sell them following the passing of elderly family members. Prices for such items can reach up to KD 30.

However, bargaining can sometimes be challenging, as expressed by a furniture vendor who recounted instances of customers attempting to negotiate prices despite already being offered reasonable deals. Bargaining with expatriates, he noted, can be particularly challenging.

Suman, a Bangladeshi vendor selling used televisions, stressed on the importance of thoroughly checking and repairing products before putting them up for sale. He takes pride in offering high-quality products at affordable



prices, ensuring customer satisfaction. Carpet seller Saurab said the market's clientele of both expats and locals are drawn by the wide variety of carpets available in different colors and designs. Prices are determined by the material and charged per meter.

Curtain vendor Shakib noted expats are the main buyers of curtains,

which are imported from China. Thursdays and Fridays tend to be the busiest days at the market, he added.

The Friday Market offers not only a diverse array of products but also serves as a meeting point for people from various countries to socialize. While Fridays can be bustling, visitors can find respite from the summer heat

with refreshments available at numerous kiosks throughout the market. A visit to the Friday Market is a must for anyone seeking a unique shopping and cultural experience. Moreover, you can always find what you're looking for at this souq.



Event: Guided Tour: Grand Mosque
Location: Grand Mosque
Date: May 18, 2024

Event: Art Collage Workshop
Location: Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Center
Date: May 18, 2024

Event: International Museum Day Activities
Location: Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Center
Date: May 18, 2024

Event: Quttainah Medical Museum Tour
Location: Quttainah Medical Center
Date: May 18, 2024

Event: Punch Needle Workshop
Location: The Scientific Center
Date: May 18, 2024

Event: Acrylic Workshop
Location: Barba Shuwaikh
Date: May 18, 2024

Event: Arab Literature & Identity
Location: The Promenade
Date: May 18, 2024

Sports

Curran signs off IPL season with starring role for Punjab

Me and Jonny are leaving tomorrow: Curran

GUWAHATI: Skipper Sam Curran starred with bat and ball in his last match of this IPL season as Punjab Kings beat Rajasthan Royals by five wickets for a consolation win on Wednesday. Chasing a tricky 145 on a sluggish pitch, Punjab depended on Curran's unbeaten 63 to achieve their target with seven balls to spare in Rajasthan's adopted home ground in Guwahati.

Left-handed Curran put on a key 63-run stand with Jitesh Sharma, who made 22, and despite losing his partner in the 16th over steered the team home to lift them from the bottom of the 10-team table. Curran, who took over as Punjab captain midway this season after an injury to regular skipper Shikhar Dhawan, and teammate Jonny Bairstow will depart for England on Thursday in preparation for the T20 World Cup in June.

"Me and Jonny are leaving tomorrow," player of the match Curran said. "Obviously nice. Have thoroughly enjoyed the season, have enjoyed captaining. Atmosphere around the group has been really good. Excited about the World Cup." Most of the England players in IPL including Rajasthan's Jos Buttler have already left home ahead of four T20 matches against Pakistan as a tune-up for the World Cup in the West Indies and the United States.

Impact substitute Ashutosh Sharma smashed 17 and the winning run to hand Rajasthan their fourth successive defeat in this edition of the T20 tourna-

ment. "To be very honest, we have to sit back and accept that we are going through some failures," Rajasthan skipper Sanju Samson said.

"You have to find out what's not working well as a team. When you are getting to the business end, we need someone to raise their finger up and say 'I am going to win the game for the team'. We have the players who can do that."

The loss for Rajasthan hurt their chances of a top-two finish in the league stage a day after they confirmed their play-off spot. Rajasthan, who stay in second place with one game in hand, and table-toppers Kolkata Knight Riders are the only two teams to have booked their play-off berth.

The top four teams make the play-offs, but the first and second-placed sides have the advantage of two chances to qualify for the final on May 26 in Chennai. Punjab, who had already bowed out of the play-off race, kept the opposition down to 144-9 despite a 34-ball 48 by Riyan Parag.

Left-arm quick Curran bowled Yashasvi Jaiswal, for four, in the first over and then Samson departed for 18 off Nathan Ellis after a slow start. Parag found Ravichandran Ashwin, who hit 28 off 19 balls, for company and the two attempted to push the scoring in their partnership of 50. The rest of the batting faltered against a disciplined attack as Curran, fellow quick Harshal Patel and spinner Rahul Chahal took two wickets each. — AFP



GUWAHATI: Punjab Kings' captain Sam Curran (right) plays a shot as his Rajasthan Royals' counterpart and wicketkeeper Sanju Samson (left) watches during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Rajasthan Royals and Punjab Kings at the Assam Cricket Association Stadium in Guwahati. — AFP



THIMPHU: Kuwait's Hussein Al-Musallam (center)

Al-Musallam opens Aquatics Games Center in Bhutan

THIMPHU: President of the International Swimming Federation Hussein Al-Musallam opened the Aquatics Games Center in the Kingdom of Bhutan as part of the plan of the international federation to develop the aquatics games in Asia.

Iraqi car bomb survivor eyes gold in Paris

BAQUBA: When car bomb survivor Najlah Imad first took up table tennis, her relatives warned against it. But a decade later, the Iraqi teenager who lost three limbs is gunning for gold at the 2024 Paralympic Games.

"Table tennis was a turning point. Since I started playing, my life has changed," the 19-year-old athlete told AFP. Najlah was just three years old when a 2008 sticky bomb ripped into her father's car—an ex-military—in the city of Baquba northeast of Baghdad. In a split second, like tens of thousands of Iraqis, Najlah became a victim of bombs that have ripped through the conflict-scarred country for decades. She lost most of her right leg, her left leg at the knee, and her right forearm.

Remarkably, she now recounts the life-altering incident with a sense of calm. "Table tennis has improved my mental health," she said from a dilapidated sports centre in Baquba. Najlah's face lights up when she speaks of her sports journey. But her smile disappears when she stands on her prosthetics in front of the blue table, focused and ready to speedily hit the ball with utmost precision.

The young athlete, with black hair cut to the neck, discovered her love for the game at the age of 10 when a trainer visited her house looking to form a local Paralympic team. Her family was initially hesitant and cautioned her, predicting that she would be exhausted and "wouldn't achieve anything". But the warnings did not stop her.

Zverev beats injury scare to reach Rome semis

ROME: Alexander Zverev reached his 18th Masters semi-final in Rome on Wednesday but only after a worrying fall which sparked memories of the horror injury he suffered at the French Open two years ago. The world number five from Germany defeated Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-3 to set up a last-four duel with Alejandro Tabilo, the Chilean journeyman who had stunned Novak Djokovic earlier in the tournament.

Zverev's moment of concern came in just the third game on centre court at the Foro Italico when he fell on the clay and landed on his front. The 2017 champion cut his left wrist and a finger in the tumble and

The Bhutan Aquatics Center is considered the first swimming pool in the world at the height of 8,400 above sea level in the Himalaya mountains. It is also the first swimming pool in Bhutan that enjoys an abundance of lakes and rivers with a high annual rate of drowning, so the aquatics center will help promote public health in the kingdom besides eradicating the swimming illiteracy there.

The center will also be used in the training of swimmers from USA, Australia and Europe at extreme heights. Hussein Al-Musallam lauded this facility which is the most modern in the world.



BAQUBA: Iraqi paralympics table tennis athlete Najlah Imad, displays her medals at her house in Baquba. — AFP

"When I first started, I saw other people with disabilities playing sports despite losing limbs," she said. She admired their positive energy. "They were always smiling, which encouraged me." After six months of intensive training, Najlah played her first match in a local Baghdad tournament. "I won," exclaimed Najlah. "I was the surprise of the competition."

A first triumph fuelled her passion, and she became a fierce competitor. Over the years, Najlah has participated in 30 international tournaments, winning medals and trophies, which she proudly displays on a shelf in her modest home.

In 2021, she went to Tokyo for the Paralympic Games, and in 2023, she won a golden medal in the 2022 Asian Para Games in China. A rising star, Iraq's Paralympic committee provides Najlah with a modest monthly stipend and travel expenses to competitions when the budget allows it.

required treatment from the tournament physio before he continued the match.

Zverev, 27, suffered a serious ankle injury at the 2022 French Open after falling on the clay of Roland Garros during his semi-final against Rafael Nadal and missed the rest of the season. On Wednesday, however, he was able to dust himself down to defeat Fritz in 90 minutes, firing 20 winners with six aces and not facing a single break point.

"Taylor has been one of the best players on clay this year. To have a win like that is great for me, especially after the fall," Zverev said. "I still have a little bit of pain, so once the adrenaline settles I'm going to check out tomorrow what it is. But definitely happy with the win."

Zverev is the highest-ranked man left in the event after Daniil Medvedev's elimination on Tuesday. As well as Djokovic's exit, Italian world number two Jannik Sinner and third-ranked Carlos Alcaraz both dropped out injured before the tournament. Holger

Six greatest, baddest and the best boxers

PARIS: Victory for either Oleksandr Usyk or Tyson Fury on Saturday will create the first undisputed heavyweight champion of the world in 24 years. The ever-bubbling alphabet soup of boxing sanctioning bodies—a winner in Riyadh would become the first four-belt heavyweight champion—means that becoming, and remaining, undisputed champion requires not just skill and toughness in the ring, but acumen outside it.

A winner will join a select group. Here AFP Sport picks six of the undisputed best.

Jack Dempsey (Undisputed champion from Jan 1921 to Sept 1926, 3 defences)

The hard-hitting and aggressive Jack Dempsey became the first official world champion at the start of 1921 when the American National Boxing Association and the powerful New York State Athletic Commission agreed to recognise a world champion. The "Manassa Mauler", with a right nickname "Iron Mike" and a left hook dubbed "Big Bertha" had become "lineal" world champion, in boxing parlance "Beating The Man to become The Man" when he bludgeoned Jess Willard in 1919. But the newly-minted official status helped turn his first sanctioned defence, against Frenchman Georges Carpentier, into the first "million-dollar fight". He defended his title twice more, before losing twice to Gene Tunney and retiring.

Joe Louis (June 1937 to March 1949, 26 defences)

After the first African American heavyweight champion, Jack Johnson lost to Willard in 1915, no black boxer fought for the title until 1937, because Joe Louis, who had just lost to Max Schmeling was a more palatable challenger for Cinderella Man James Braddock's title than the German. Louis knocked out Braddock to claim a title he held for record 26 defences over more than 12 years. The most famous was the first-round revenge demolition of Schmeling at Yankee Stadium in 1938. Louis was smart, calm, technically sound, and packed a ferocious punch. "Everyone has a plan until they've been hit," he said.

Rocky Marciano (Sept 1952 to April 1956, 6 defences)

After war service, an undistinguished amateur career and a baseball tryout with the Chicago Cubs, the boxer, who changed his name from Rocco Marchegiano, turned professional just before his 25th birthday in 1948. He fought 49 times as a pro, winning every fight, 43 of them by knockout. Only 5-foot-10, Marciano was relentless, resilient and a thunderous puncher. He was 29 when he got his title shot, flooring Jersey Joe Walcott in the last round with a straight right: His "Suzie Q". Having pummeled an ageing Louis on his way up, knocked out the 39-year-old Walcott in the first round of their rematch, Marciano quit for good at 32 after stopping 42-year-old Archie Moore.

Muhammad Ali (Feb to Sept 1964, Feb to April 1967, Oct 1974 to Feb 1978, 10 unified defences)

The Greatest only fails to match Louis for total defences because he was effectively banned from

boxing from March 1967 to October 1970, for his opposition to the military draft. The Louisville Lip, who later declared "I'm so mean, I make medicine sick", had already upset the American establishment by changing his "white man's name", Cassius Clay. After toppling Sonny Liston to win the title at 22 in 1962, he lost his undisputed status for taking a rematch with Liston. Ali defended his remaining titles seven times, before reunifying the division in 1966 against Ernie Terrell. At 25 he was banned. Ali was 29 by the time he got his crack at regaining his world titles, against Joe Frazier in 1971, but suffered his first loss. It took until 1974, and his victory over George Foreman in the "Rumble in the Jungle", a fight that highlighted Ali's craft, cunning and courage, to reclaim his crowns. He lost his titles to Leon Spinks in 1978, won some of them back in a rematch seven months later, but, aged 38, lost a reunification bout to Larry Holmes in 1980. By then Ali had won over all but his most determined critics.

Joe Frazier (Feb 1970 to Jan 1973, 4 defences)

Joe Frazier's often electrifying trilogy against Ali was boxing box office as two greats, with contrasting styles and personalities and opposing political views went toe-to-toe. "Smokin' Joe" preferred close-quarters attack, but his constant bobbing made him hard to hit. In their opener, "The



LAS VEGAS: (FILES) US Challenger Evander Holyfield (L) delivers a left against US Mike Tyson during their WBA Heavyweight championship title fight on November 09, 1996 at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. Holyfield won the WBA heavyweight title with a technical knockout in the 11th round. — AFP

Fight of the Century" — a gruelling 15-rounder — he decked Ali with the devastating left hook he called his "heat-seeking missile". By the rematch in 1974, George Foreman had taken Frazier's title. Ali not only floated like a butterfly but clinched like a crab and won on points. In the 1975 "Thrilla in Manila" Ali unleashed a merciless barrage in the 13th. The referee stopped the fight in the next round. Frazier, 30 at the time of that bout, only fought twice more.

Mike Tyson (Aug 1987 to Feb 1990, 6 defences)

By the time he was 13, Mike Tyson had been arrested 38 times. In 1986, at the age of 20 years and 4 months, he was the youngest heavyweight champion in history. Even though he was only 5-foot-10 his approach was vicious intimidation. He won his first 19 professional fights by knockout. Smart but troubled, his wild lifestyle took a toll. He was ambushed by Buster Douglas in 1990. Although he regained two belts in 1996, he immediately lost to Evander Holyfield. At his brief, snarling, sneering peak, Tyson lived up to his billing as the "baddest man on the planet". — AFP



ROME: Germany's Alexander Zverev plays a backhand return to US Taylor Fritz during the Men's ATP Rome Open tennis tournament at Foro Italico in Rome. — AFP

Sports

Griezmann hat-trick fires Atletico Madrid into Champions League

Good work as a team, in defence and attack: Simeone

MADRID: Antoine Griezmann secured Champions League qualification for Atletico Madrid with a hat-trick in a 3-0 triumph at Getafe on Wednesday in La Liga. Diego Simeone's side ensured they will finish in the top four and therefore reach Europe's top competition for the 12th consecutive season.

Inspired by France international Griezmann, the Rojiblanco's romped to victory in the Madrid suburbs at Getafe's Coliseum Alfonso Perez. Atletico, fourth, trail Girona by two points and now lead fifth-place Athletic Bilbao by 11 as the Basque side fell to a 2-1 defeat at struggling Celta Vigo.

Despite a strong start and becoming the only side in Spain to beat new champions Real Madrid this season, Atletico's season began to crumble. Athletic ousted them in the Copa del Rey semi-finals and Borussia Dortmund knocked them out in the Champions League quarters.

Atletico knew a victory would guarantee them a return to the competition next season and the superb Griezmann did not give Getafe, 10th, a chance. "It's been a lot of years getting into the Champions League, which is something to value, but with the team we have and the talent we have, and the coach we have, it's something we have to do," Griezmann told Movistar.

The 33-year-old forward had netted only twice in his previous 13 La Liga appearances, with concerns emerging over his form, but he put them to bed with his second treble of the campaign. "Without my team-mates I am nothing," continued Griezmann.

"My ankle was annoying me a lot (in recent weeks)... working with the physios and pushing hard, the pain has gone and I can enjoy myself." Atletico's all-time leading goalscorer opened the scoring in the 27th minute when he ran on to Rodrigo De Paul's scooped pass and beat Getafe stopper David Soria with a low effort.

Griezmann converted his second before half-time from Angel Correa's low pass across the area, with the goal given after a VAR review after it had been flagged offside. The former Real Sociedad striker netted again to complete his hat-trick after the break, finishing a sharp Atletico move.

The visitors played the ball out neatly from the back and Lino threaded through Griezmann, who prodded home at the near post for his 16th league goal of the season. "The boys made a great effort, we knew the importance of having a good game today and having our place in the Champions League booked," said Simeone. "Good work as a team, in defence and attack." Celta's comeback win over Athletic leaves Cadiz's hopes of survival hanging by a thread despite their late 1-0 win at Sevilla.

Williot Swedberg and Hugo Alvarez's goals helped Celta triumph at Balaidos to move five points clear of the drop zone, after Alex Berenguer had sent Copa del Rey winners Athletic ahead with a goal direct from a corner.

Sergio Guardiola's 96th minute winner for 18th place Cadiz means they are four points from safety with two matches remaining. — AFP



GETAFE: Getafe's Serbian midfielder #20 Nemanja Maksimovic, Getafe's Paraguayan defender #15 Omar Alderete and Getafe's Uruguayan defender #04 Gaston Alvarez challenge Atletico Madrid's Argentinian forward #10 Angel Correa during the Spanish league football match between Getafe CF and Club Atletico de Madrid at the Coliseum Alfonso Perez stadium in Getafe. — AFP

FIFA meets to award 2027 Women's World Cup under Gaza cloud

BANGKOK: Football's world governing body FIFA will decide the hosts for the 2027 Women's World Cup at its congress in Bangkok on Friday, where the war in Gaza will also rear its head. After the 2023 World Cup in Australia and New Zealand lifted the women's game to new heights, FIFA must decide whether to take the 2027 edition to South America for the first time or return to Europe.

FIFA's 74th Congress - held for the first time in Premier League-mad Thailand - will also hear a call from the Palestinian Football Association to sanction Israel for "violations of international laws", though FIFA says it will not vote on the matter.

Delegates will vote on Women's World Cup bids from Brazil and a joint offer from Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. Brazil, home of women's football greats such as Formiga and Marta, appear to be the narrow favorites after FIFA's evaluation task force scored their bid slightly higher.

The evaluation report notes the "tremendous impact on women's football in the region" that South America hosting the Women's World Cup would have. Brazil's bid includes 10 stadiums used for the men's World

Cup in 2014, with Rio de Janeiro's famous Maracana lined up for the opening match and the final.

But work needs to be done, in particular to the Amazonia stadium in Manaus which has stood almost unused for a decade. The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) has been in turmoil with president Ednaldo Rodrigues ousted by a court ruling in December, only to be reinstated a week later by another judge. Suspicions of government interference raised the threat of penalties from FIFA or football's regional ruling body in South America, Conmebol.

Open vote

By contrast, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands are offering a "compact tournament footprint" that uses rail links to reduce the environmental impact. But the FIFA inspectors warned of a "more complex legal framework" with the European bid - which could mean higher costs.

The bid aims to be the most commercially successful Women's World Cup so far, though the evaluation report noted the smaller stadium sizes would make it harder to break the attendance records set in Australia and



BANGKOK: This handout photo from the Royal Thai Government taken and released on May 15, 2024 shows Thailand's Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin (L) being given a shirt with his name on it by President of FIFA Gianni Infantino at a gala dinner ahead of the FIFA Congress in Bangkok. — AFP

New Zealand last year.

Amsterdam's Johan Cruyff Arena and the cauldron of the Westfalenstadion, home to Borussia Dortmund, have been earmarked for key matches. But since Europe has hosted the tournament three times before - including Germany in 2011 and France in 2019 - delegates may favor breaking fresh ground.

The congress will make its decision on Friday by open vote for the first time, as FIFA tries to pursue transparency after years of accu-

sations of shady backroom dealing. Delegates had their choice simplified last month when the United States and Mexico withdrew their joint bid, deciding instead to focus on trying to win the right to stage the 2031 edition.

FIFA will also make a fresh stand on racism at the congress. President Gianni Infantino has called for a concerted fight against racism, after numerous instances of abuse hurled at Real Madrid and Brazil forward Vinicius Junior in Spain, among others. — AFP

Indian record-breaker Chhetri to retire from international football

NEW DELHI: India captain Sunil Chhetri said Thursday he will retire from international football aged 39, ending a record-breaking career for his country spanning two decades. The attacker has hit 94 goals in 150 appearances for India, behind only Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi in the list of active international goal-scorers.

He is also India's most-capped player. In a video message on social media platform X, Chhetri said the 2026 World Cup qualifier against Kuwait

in Kolkata on June 6 will be his last international outing. "It's not that I was feeling tired, not that I was feeling this or that," he said.

"When the instinct came that this should be my last game, I thought about it a lot and eventually I came to this decision," he said. India are second in qualifying Group A with four points, behind Qatar. "The game against Kuwait demands pressure, we need the three points to qualify for the next round. It's hugely important for us," the skipper said.

"But in a strange way, I don't feel the pressure because these 15-20 days with the national team and the match against Kuwait is the last," he added. Across club and country, Chhetri's goal tally stands at 252 from 515 appearances, averaging almost a goal every two games. He scored a penalty in India's most recent outing, a 2-1 World Cup qualifying defeat to

Afghanistan in March. "The phases, the faces, the eras and battles - he's been the one constant through it all," Chhetri's Indian Super League club Bengaluru FC said on X after the announcement. "He's going to do it one last time, and we can never be grateful enough for the giant that walked amongst men."

Football has struggled to find its feet among the 1.4 billion people of India, where the sport's local following is dwarfed by the nation's longstanding cricket obsession. Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter once called India a "sleeping giant" of the sport. India are currently ranked 121, one spot below Lebanon which has a population of 5.5 million. Chhetri began his football journey in 2002. It was reported in 2009 that he had signed for English Championship side Queens Park Rangers, but was unable to take up the contract after being denied a work permit. — AFP

Inter's title party continues as off field problems lurk

MILAN: Inter Milan will officially crown themselves champions of Italy on Sunday evening when they face Lazio before being awarded the Serie A trophy in front of an adoring San Siro crowd. Simone Inzaghi's side won the Scudetto with five matches remaining after laying waste to the rest of the league, racking up 92 points so far and humiliating local rivals AC Milan.

Inter fans have not only seen their heroes beat Milan, who trail by 18 points in second, to 20 league titles but they watched them seal the deal by winning a sixth straight local derby. And after smashing Frosinone last week Inter will be in no mood to let their fans down before another title party in front of 75,000.

Some 200,000 people have tried to snap up places not already taken up by season ticket holders, with Inter to host a concert and DJ set on the San Siro pitch after captain and Serie A's leading scorer Lautaro Martinez holds aloft the league trophy.

Inter will be a strong bet for another title challenge next year if the club's Chinese owners Suning complete a loan agreement to pay off a debt which has been hanging around the club's neck all season.

Investment fund Oaktree are due around 375-380 million euros (\$407-\$413) by Monday and Inter should pay that off, but only by borrowing more money from another US fund Pimco. Inter are yet to announce funding of 430 million euros which they need to settle their debt with Oaktree - who will take control of the club if they do not receive payment - and agree a series of contract renewals.

Those include Martinez, Italy midfielder Nicolo Barella and Inzaghi, who is set to extend his current deal by two years to 2027. Inter will effectively kick the can down the road with another reported three-year loan with even higher interest than the 12 percent negotiated with Oaktree.

On the pitch, Inzaghi looks set to pick his strongest team for Lazio, who still have an outside chance of reaching the Champions League despite a bizarre season which has featured managerial, fan and player unrest. With two rounds of fixtures remaining Igor Tudor's side are unlikely to finish fifth as they trail losing Italian cup finalists Atalanta, who have a game in hand, by four points. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707	Qibla	22459381
Rawda	22517733	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Adaliya	22517144	Mirqab	22456536
Khaldiya	24848075	Sharq	22465401
Kaifan	24849807	Salmiya	25746401
Shamiya	24848913		
Shuwaikh	24814507		
Abdullah Salem	22549134		
Nuzha	22526804		
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764		
Qadsiya	22515088		
Dasmah	22532265		
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908		
Shaab	22518752		

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

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**Embassy of India
Kuwait**

TENDER No.- KUW/ADM/872/02/2023 DATED- MAY 17, 2024

TENDER NOTICE FOR REPLACEMENT OF FLOOR MARBLE AND POLISH WORK

Embassy of India, Kuwait invites bids from interested companies for replacement of marble and polishing work in its premises.

Prospective / Interested companies are advised to inspect the area and present their offers in a sealed cover marked "Offer for replacement of Marble and polishing work in the Embassy- to be opened by addressee only" and addressed to the "Head of Chancery, Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Arabian Gulf Street, Safat 13015, Kuwait." The bid must be submitted at the Embassy on or before 13th June 2024 [Thursday]. A pre bid meeting will be held at 1430 hrs on 26th May 2024 [Sunday] in the Embassy of India, Kuwait.

The detailed Tender Document along with its Annexure may be downloaded from Central Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in/cppp/> and also the official website of the Embassy of India, Kuwait from <https://indembkwt.gov.in/whats-new.php>. (please scan QR)

For any other clarification please contact Mr. S. James Jacob, Head of Chancery on any working day (Sunday - Thursday) between 0800 hrs 1630 hrs on +965-22513498 / 50382250 or email to: admkuwait@mea.gov.in.



ROME: Juventus' Brazilian defender #06 Danilo holds the trophy as Juventus players pose after winning the Italian Cup Final between Atalanta and Juventus at the Olympic stadium in Rome. — AFP

Juventus win Italian Cup for 15th time

Atalanta denies first trophy in six decades

ROME: Dusan Vlahovic shot Juventus to the Italian Cup with the only goal in Wednesday's final against Atalanta who were denied a first trophy in six decades. Serbia striker Vlahovic's fourth-minute strike was enough for Juve to claim the cup for the 15th time in a largely uninspiring final in Rome.

Massimiliano Allegri's side had won just three matches since the end of January coming into the final but frustrated Atalanta from the moment Vlahovic, who also had a goal disallowed for offside in the second half, netted the only goal of the game.

Wednesday's win ended a three-year trophy drought for Juventus, Italy's most successful and widely-supported club who have been overshadowed by the Milan clubs and Napoli in recent seasons.

Poor performances this season have led to speculation that Allegri, who was sent off late on, will be sacked in the summer, and he hinted that his second spell as Juve coach is set to come to an end.

"If I'm gone next season, because

I've already been sacked in the media, we're in the Champions League and have won a trophy," said Allegri to Mediaset.

"We've done everything we were supposed to do, get into the Champions League and reach a final, the boys did really well to win it."

Atalanta were fancied to win their first major honour since winning the cup in 1963 after a fabulous season for the traditionally provincial club.

However Gian Piero Gasperini's team couldn't find a way through a brilliantly organised Juventus defence which stopped attack-minded Atalanta from having a single shot on target.

The closest Atalanta came to levelling was when Ademola Lookman thumped a shot off the base of the post with 10 minutes remaining.

Atalanta now turn their attentions to sealing Champions League football through Serie A and next week's Europa League final. The Bergamo club, who are fifth in Italy's top flight, face Bayer Leverkusen in Dublin in their first ever European final.

"We were up against a good team who went in front straight way and defended very well. I don't think we played badly... they didn't do any more than we did," said Gasperini.

Allegri sent-off

With fans expecting the Atalanta show Vlahovic put himself forward as chief party pooper when he rushed through to collect Andrea Cambiaso's pass and smash home his 18th goal of the season.

Vlahovic has been profligate at times this season but his emphatic finish allowed Allegri to play the game he loves best, packing the defence and rebuffing Atalanta's attacks.

Very little happened in the first half after he scored, largely thanks to Juve's insistence that nothing happen. Ademola Lookman went close with a deflected shot five minutes after the break but it was Vlahovic who went close to doubling Juve's lead in the 65th minute.

The 24-year-old was fed by Federico Chiesa and then skipped past two

defenders before his close-range finish was stopped by a combination of Marten de Roon and goalkeeper Marco Carnesecchi.

Vlahovic then thought he had made sure of the cup for Juve with 17 minutes remaining, again meeting a Cambiaso ball to glance in a perfect header, only for the goal to be ruled out for offside.

Lookman then thwacked his effort off the woodwork and soon after Juve midfielder Fabio Miretti rattled the crossbar in one of the game's few moments of genuine drama.

The match finished with under-pressure Allegri sent off after the coach completely lost his head with referee Fabio Maresca when a foul on Danilo wasn't immediately given in the area as Atalanta pushed for an equaliser.

Allegri was enraged to the point that he threw his jacket and tie to the floor before ranting at officials pitchside, as Juve directors tried to pull him away, before he returned fully dressed to celebrate cup glory. — AFP

Celtics overpower Cavs, Mavs edge closer after beating Thunder

LOS ANGELES: The Boston Celtics overpowered the Cleveland Cavaliers 113-98 to reach a third straight Eastern Conference finals on Wednesday as Western Conference top seeds Oklahoma City moved to the brink of elimination after crashing 104-92 at home to Dallas.

In Boston, Jayson Tatum's 25 points helped the Celtics subdue an injury-hit Cavs line-up to complete a 4-1 win in the best-of-seven series. The Eastern Conference No.1 seeds will face either the Indiana Pacers or the New York Knicks for a place in the NBA Finals.

But while Boston continued their progress, Oklahoma City's playoff campaign is hanging by a thread after their damaging defeat to Dallas. Mavericks star Luka Doncic led from the front with a triple-double, finishing with 31 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists.

The Mavs lead the series 3-2 and can clinch a place in the Western Conference finals with victory in game six back in Dallas on Saturday. "We just got one more to win out of two games, and that's it," Doncic said. "It's 3-2, but that's nothing. We've got to finish it and go with the same mentality."

Doncic had been furious after the Mavs surrendered the initiative in a game-four loss in Texas on Sunday, but said a more relaxed approach had been the key to Wednesday's commanding effort. "Sometimes I forget that I love to play basketball, it's the thing I do," Doncic said. "My mental focus was just to go out there with a smile on my face and play basketball."

Doncic was given offensive support from Derrick Jones Jr. with 19 points while three other players made double figures. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder scorers with 30 points, eight assists and six rebounds.

Cavs injuries take toll

Earlier, Cleveland's hopes of clawing their way back into their series with Boston were rocked before the game after confirmation that three of their top six players—Donovan Mitchell, Jarrett Allen and Caris LeVert—were out with injury.

But Cleveland shrugged off that setback to produce a battling performance that saw them get within three points of the Celtics midway through the fourth quarter. Evan Mobley was superb for Cleveland, pouring in a game-high 33 points while Marcus Morris Sr. added 25 off the bench. Yet just when Celtics fans at the TD Garden were nervously wondering if a shock defeat was on the cards, Boston stitched together a decisive 13-2 run—crowned by a three-pointer from Tatum—that left them ahead by 14 points at 101-87. — AFP

Troubled Man Utd keep alive Europe hopes with win

LONDON: Manchester United kept alive their hopes of salvaging a dismal season by qualifying for Europe as Amad Diallo's rocket inspired a 3-2 win against Newcastle on Wednesday. Erik ten Hag's side are battling to secure a seventh place finish in the Premier League, which could secure a place in next season's UEFA Conference League.

United will qualify for the Europa League if they win the FA Cup final against Manchester City on May 25. But if City triumph at Wembley then seventh will be enough for a Conference League spot. And eighth-placed United are still in the hunt for that place after beating Newcastle to move level on points with the seventh-placed Magpies.

Goals from Kobbie Mainoo, Diallo and Rasmus Hojlund at Old Trafford gave United only their third win in nine league games. However, United's goal difference is vastly inferior to Newcastle's, meaning they must better the Magpies' result in the last game of the season.

United travel to Brighton on Sunday, while Newcastle head to Brentford. Newcastle's defeat means fifth-placed Tottenham are guaranteed to be in the Europa League next season. Sixth placed Chelsea won 2-1 at Brighton in Wednesday's other game to move closer to European qualification after a turbulent campaign.

United embarked on a sheepish 'lap of honour' after their final home game of the season. And, while it has hardly been a campaign to celebrate, this was

a much-needed result as Ten Hag fights to avoid the sack at the end of a season that ranks as one of United's worst in the Premier League era.

"It's important to win the last game at Old Trafford this season. The fans deserve this because they've had difficult times and always stayed with us," Ten Hag said. "We wanted to pay the fans back. We have Brighton in the last game which is important in the ranking. We don't have it in our hands but we have to do our job."

'Evolution' for Chelsea

United's first half dominance was rewarded in the 31st minute when Diallo's deflected pass found Mainoo completely unmarked thanks to Kieran Trippier's sloppy marking. The teenage midfielder looked shocked he had so much time and space as he picked his spot with a low finish from 12 yards.

Newcastle drew level in the 49th minute as Anthony Gordon was given the freedom of the penalty area to convert Jacob Murphy's cross with a close-range volley. Ten Hag's angst was short-lived as United regained the advantage in the 57th minute when Newcastle could only clear Bruno Fernandes' corner to Diallo, who lashed a fierce shot past Martin Dubravka from just inside the area.

Hojlund came off the bench to net in the 84th minute with a lethal finish after evading two defenders, but Lewis Hall's stoppage-time curler from long-range kept United sweating until the end. At the Amex Stadium, Cole Palmer put Chelsea ahead with the 22nd league goal of his superb season in the 34th minute.

Ignoring the boos from the stands, former Brighton left-back Marc Cucurella clipped his cross towards Palmer, who looped a clinical header past Bart Verbruggen. Christopher Nkunku doubled Chelsea's advantage in the 64th minute with his third league



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Brazilian midfielder #18 Casemiro shoots the ball during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Newcastle United at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England. — AFP

goal of an injury-plagued first season with the club.

Nkunku finished off Malo Gusto's cross to leave Brighton deflated and celebrated by blowing up a blue balloon lying on the pitch. Chelsea defender Reece James was sent off in the 88th minute for kicking Joao Pedro after being knocked over by the Brighton striker.

Danny Welbeck's close-range finish in the seventh minute of stoppage-time came too late to stop Chelsea recording four successive league wins for the first time since October 2022. Mauricio Pochettino's side host Bournemouth on Sunday knowing a draw will be enough to earn a European berth, with fifth place still in play if they win and Tottenham lose at Sheffield United.

"Full credit to the players, we fully deserved the victory. That's why I'm so happy," Pochettino said.

"The evolution of the team is there. It allows us to dream to play in Europe next season." — AFP