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Recognizing Palestine is 'justice for Palestinians'

Zionists discuss hostage deal; Five killed as airstrikes hit south Lebanon



GAZA: Palestinian women hold the shrouded bodies of children killed in Zionist bombardment as they sit in front of a body bag containing another victim, at a health clinic in the area of Tel Al-Sultan in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on May 26, 2024. — AFP

BRUSSELS: Recognizing the State of Palestine "is justice for the Palestinian people (and) the best guarantee of security for Zionist entity," Spain's foreign minister Jose Manuel Albares said Sunday alongside Palestinian prime minister Mohammed Mustafa. Welcoming Spain's move, with Norway and Ireland, to recognize the Palestinian state on Tuesday, Mustafa said, "We want to have every country in Europe to do the same."

Albares and Mustafa spoke side-by-side in Brussels, where the Palestinian leader was also meeting EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide. Later Sunday, Mustafa was to have further talks with Borrell, Barth Eide and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan. On Monday he will have another meeting in Brussels with the Spanish, Norwegian and Irish ministers. And on Wednesday he will be in Spain.

Zionist entity has warned Spain, Norway and Ireland that ties with them will face "serious consequences" for their announced recognition of a Palestinian state. The devastating war in Gaza in retaliation for Hamas's October 7 attack has given impetus to countries wanting recognition of the State of Palestine. They hope that the steps towards a long-elusive two-state solution, with Zionist entity and a Palestinian state, will build foundations for Middle East peace.

A majority of UN member countries recognize Palestinian statehood. European countries are split on the issue. Spain, Norway and Italy will join EU nations Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Sweden in recognizing the State of Palestine. Mustafa said recognition of a Palestinian state addresses "the injustice that has been inflicted on the Palestinian people for decades". "We hope that this momentum of recognitions and initiatives will continue," he said.

Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu convened his war cabinet on Sunday, a senior official said, amid intense diplomacy to forge a Gaza truce and hostage release deal. In Brussels, the European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told journalists before meeting the Palestinian premier that a strong Palestinian Authority (PA) was in Zionist entity's interest.

EU members Ireland and Spain, and also Norway, have said they will recognize Palestine from Tuesday, drawing furious Zionist condemnation. "A functional Palestinian Authority is in Zionist entity's interest too, because in order to make peace, we need a strong Palestinian Authority, not a weaker one," Borrell said. Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Mustafa, whose government is based in the occupied West Bank, said the "first priority" was to support

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Turbulence injures 12 on Qatar flight

LONDON: Twelve people were injured during turbulence on a Qatar Airways flight from Doha to Ireland that landed safely on Sunday, Dublin airport authorities said. The incident comes a week after a passenger died and dozens were injured when a Singapore Airlines flight from London hit severe turbulence and was diverted to Bangkok. Six passengers and six crew members suffered injuries in the latest incident, when Qatar Airways flight QRO17 endured turbulence over Turkey, Dublin airport said in a statement.

The flight landed as scheduled shortly before 1:00 pm (1200 GMT) Sunday, it added. Qatar Airways said the injuries sustained were "minor" and that the incident was now subject to an internal investigation. "Upon landing, the aircraft was met by emergency services, including airport police and our fire and rescue department, due to six passengers and six crew [12 total] on board reporting injuries after the aircraft experienced turbulence while airborne over Turkey."

"The Dublin Airport team continues to provide full assistance on the ground to passengers and airline staff," said the statement from Dublin airport. A British man died and more than 100 people were injured when Singapore Airlines flight SQ321 endured extreme turbulence last Tuesday, forcing the plane to make an emergency landing in Bangkok, where several people are still being treated in hospital.

Passengers and crew suffered skull, brain and spine injuries when they were thrown violently around the cabin during the terrifying high-altitude ordeal. Singapore Airlines have since tightened their seatbelt rules. Air safety experts say that passengers are often too casual about wearing seatbelts, leaving them at risk if the plane hits unexpected turbulence. Scientists also warn that so-called clear air turbulence, which is invisible to radar, is getting worse because of climate change. — AFP

Mad about Maz: Comic caper in the paper

By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times and Kuwait News welcomed renowned Iranian-American comedian Maz Jobrani who visited the offices on Monday. He was taken on a tour of the building, providing an exploration journey at Kuwait Times' various departments alongside the reporting and content creation team, guided by PR and CSR Manager Jana Anaqeeb. Jobrani experienced the world of journalism firsthand, including a visit to the archives room where content creator Yousef Abu Ghazaleh presented a set of historical events coinciding with significant dates in Jobrani's life, such as his first year traveling to the United States. (See Page 3)



KUWAIT: Maz Jobrani receives Kuwait Times' special edition featuring his visit to Kuwait Times and Kuwait News. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat.

6 newborns killed as fire ravages at Indian hospital

NEW DELHI: Six newborn babies have died after a fire tore through a children's hospital in the Indian capital, with people charging into the flames to rescue the infants, police said Sunday. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the fire and deaths "heart-rending" in a post on social media. The fire department was called after flames tore through the hospital in Delhi late Saturday evening.

But in the crucial first minutes, it was bystanders who spotted the fire and braved the blaze to rescue the newborns. "All the 12 newborn babies were rescued from the hospital with the help of other people," senior police officer Surendra Choudhary said in a statement, but added that by the time they reached medical attention, six were dead.

The blaze in the hospital broke out hours after a

separate fire at an amusement park in India's western state of Gujarat left 27 dead, including four children. In that fire - which ripped through a centre with a bowling alley and other games crowded with youngsters - police warned that many of the corpses were so badly burned it was difficult to identify them. Fires are common in India due to poor building practices, overcrowding and a lack of adherence to safety regulations.

"Legal action is being taken against the owner of the hospital," Choudhary said. He did not give further details on how the children died. In addition to the six reported killed, another baby among the 12 brought out of the ward was dead before the fire began, Choudhary said, without elaborating further. The fire broke out in the New Born Baby Care hospital in Delhi's Vivek Vihar area.

Delhi Fire Department Director Atul Garg told the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency that 14 fire trucks were sent to battle the blaze. "The fire spread too fast due to a blast in an oxygen cylinder," he said. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal called the situation "heartbreaking".

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Iran's filmmaker Rasoulof: From jail to Cannes

CANNES: He perfected his trade in Iran's prisons, and now Mohammad Rasoulof has received a special jury prize at Cannes, confirming him as one of the world's most powerful and fearless filmmakers. Rasoulof's film "The Seed of the Sacred Fig" tells the story of a court investigator whose family life is torn apart during Iran's women-led protests. Collecting the prize on Saturday, Rasoulof said his heart was with the film's crew, "still under the pressure of the secret services back in Iran".

The special jury prize was awarded for "drawing attention to unsustainable injustice" in his country. Rasoulof's uncompromising movies about repression in Iran, and his outspoken criticism of its rulers, have twice landed him prison terms, and he was facing

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Public Works Minister urges punctuality in projects' execution

Ministry launches 9 tenders for Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and Minister for Municipality Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan has emphasized the importance of adhering to the specifications of the contracts the ministry has signed with the private sector to ensure that the contracts are implemented properly and that the projects are completed by the deadline indicated in the contracts.

Mashaan made the remarks after meeting with leaders in the ministry who are undertaking key projects in the fiscal year of 2024-2025. Speaking to KUNA, the minister, who chaired a session with officials of the ministry's various divisions, said action plans for each division have been reviewed and any obstacles hindering the completion of the projects have been discussed.

The meeting also discussed the projects that must be executed and finalized in the next 100 days and those that the ministry is undertaking as part of the country's development plans, namely Terminal 2 of the airport, the railway link-up venture with Riyadh, the water desalination venture in Umm Al-Haiman and the maternity hospital project.

Minister Al-Mashaan said she gave instructions to the leaders to start work immediately and coordinate with the ministry's diverse divisions to begin renovating and maintaining the roads across the country's six governorates via 12 contract tenders.

She also demanded that all relevant procedures must

be implemented according to governance and digital systems for sake of greater transparency and integrity and better services. Moreover, she advised the leaders to adhere to the contracts' terms, timetables and tackle obstacles hindering the ventures' execution.

Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port

In related news, the Ministry of Public Works announced Saturday the launch of nine tenders as part of the ministry's annual plan for supply, contracting and service contracts that will be offered during the fiscal year 2024/2025.

The tenders are for execution of the third part of the first phase of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project after which the port will begin partial operations.

The Ministry pointed out that these tenders include the tender for the construction, completion and maintenance of infrastructure, container yard area, main buildings and facilities, within the third part of the first phase of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, and the tender for consultancy agreements to supervise the implementation of the aforementioned contract.

Other tenders include one for the manufacture, supply, installation, testing, operation and maintenance of handling equipment, and another for the consultative agreement to supervise the process. A tender for the deepening of the port basin and the



KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and Minister for Municipality Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan is seen during her meeting with officials. — KUNA

channel linking the port to the current navigational channel in Khor Abdullah is also among the nine to be launched this year.

A tender for management consultancy services for the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project. The min-

istry is also launching a tender related to the marine dredging of the small ship berth, with the aim of facilitating the sailing of small ships used by the Coast Guard, the Ministry of Defense and others to the rafts inside the marina. — Agencies

In my view

It's time to revive Kuwaiti drama

By Azzah Al-Ghamdi

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Series and movies are among the most popular forms of entertainment worldwide. Many people spend their free time watching series and movies, while fewer individuals dedicate their time to reading. Drama, in particular, captivates audiences globally, who not only engage with the events but often quote behaviors they observe. This engagement can boost tourism to the countries where these films or series are produced, as viewers are eager to visit the locations featured on screen.

However, there is currently a significant shortage of high-quality dramatic texts. In the past, talented drama writers produced exceptional works, but today, audiences frequently complain about weak scripts. The problem is not with the actors, who are often highly skilled professionals, but with the scripts they are given.

The root of this issue lies in the lack of professional scriptwriters. Most current writers approach writing as a hobby rather than a profession. This needs to change, ideally through the establishment of a dedicated department within the ministry of information focused on writing dramatic texts. These writers should not adhere to conventional working hours but should be evaluated based on the quantity and quality of the scripts they produce. A supervisor should approve the dramatic story ideas, allowing writers to focus solely on their craft without other distractions.

Writing scripts for series and films requires a clear mind and dedicated time to develop ideas into well-constructed dramatic texts. These texts should then be reviewed, modified, and produced by Kuwait TV, ensuring exclusivity and potentially increasing the channel's resources.

There are numerous complaints about the current state of local dramas, with many viewers preferring non-local dramas, particularly Turkish series, which are highly popular among Arab audiences due to their strong storytelling. Therefore, we need drama writers who can create content aligned with Kuwaiti customs and traditions. Recent controversies over works that do not reflect our culture highlight the need for the ministry of information to take purposeful steps to introduce new ideas and culture to viewers.

In the past, there were outstanding works that provided the audience with valuable cultural insights. One such notable series was "To Dad and Mom with Love", starring the late artist Khaled Al-Nafisi and the artist Hayat Al-Fahad. This series was a hallmark of Kuwaiti dramatic works.

Dramatic works should convey meaningful ideas and promote positive habits, rather than constantly depicting negative aspects. Many recent dramas have focused on themes like drugs and crime, filled with scenes of screaming and crying, which spread negative energy among viewers.

Kuwait has historically been a source of culture and civilization, presenting a positive image of Kuwaiti society through the media. Given the current shortage of drama artists, it is crucial for the ministry of information to support writers and provide them with a conducive environment. This support will enable Kuwait TV and Kuwaiti media to regain their leading position.

KFF seeks solutions for fires erupting at Salmi tire dump

KUWAIT: Acting General Director of Kuwait Fire Forces (KFF) Lieutenant General Khaled Fahad said there were many obstacles hindering firefighters' work at the tires dumping site in Al-Salmi which must be addressed.

The remarks came at a meeting with representatives from Kuwait Municipality, the Environment Public Authority and Public Authority for Industry. At a meeting held by KFF to coordinate with the specialized bodies, Fahad followed up on the progress made to protect citizens and residents near the tires dumping site.

He pointed to the lack of fire preventative measures, the dumping of tires in a random unorganized manner, the difficulty of reaching the site, the absence of a fence around the site to protect it from trespassers and the lack of a water source.

Fahad stressed the importance of preparing the site with water tanks and fire extinguishers and taking all safety measures in case of any emergencies in the site, such as security cameras and guards. He also called for the construction of a paved road which ends at the dumping site.

Fahad praised the efforts made in finding solutions to help firemen fight fires that erupt at the tires dumping site. He emphasized the importance of cooperating with the fire forces to protect residents and citizens from fires.

The tire dump has caught fire multiple times in the

Kuwait underlines commitment to aiding Palestine

BRUSSELS: The State of Kuwait on Sunday stressed its commitment to continue aid and humanitarian assistance to the people of Palestine, and also praised UNRWA's vital role in serving and helping the Palestinians. "I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Kuwait's commitment to humanitarian and relief aid to the Palestinian people," Kuwait's Ambassador to Belgium and head of its missions to the European Union and NATO, Nawaf Al-Enezi, told an international meeting on Palestine in Brussels.

He stressed that "UNRWA represents the backbone of the humanitarian response to Gaza, and plays a vital and indispensable role." He noted that Kuwait recently made a voluntary contribution in the amount of \$30 million to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. Enezi welcomed the recent decision by Norway, Spain, and Ireland to recognize the State of Palestine, and hoped that other countries will view similar decisions more favorably.

He "strongly welcomed" the International Court of Justice's latest decision ordering the Zionist enti-



KUWAIT: Acting General Director of Kuwait Fire Forces (KFF) Lieutenant General Khaled Fahad meets with officials to discuss tire fires. — KUNA photos

ty to immediately stop its military operation in Rafah. The Kuwaiti ambassador underlined the necessity to implement Security Council Resolution 2720 and allow immediate delivery of humanitarian aid in a safe and unhindered manner and to create the necessary conditions for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Situation 'beyond words'

Sunday's Ministerial International Partners Meeting on Palestine was chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Espen Barth Eide, and hosted by EU High Representative, Josep Borrell, with the participation of Mohammad Mustafa, the new Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority. In his statements to the press, Borrell said, "It is so important that we gather together to try to support the Palestinian Authority because these are extremely difficult times for the Palestinian people."

"The situation in Gaza is beyond words. The occupied West Bank is on a brink, risking to explode any time. And as we speak, 'Zionist' military operations continue in and around Rafah," he said. "And this happens against the verdict of the highest United Nations court - the International Court of Justice (ICJ) - that ordered 'the Zionist entity' to halt the military operation in Rafah and to open the border crossing for humanitarian aid," said the EU foreign policy chief. He stressed that "we must do everything in our powers: to reach an immediate end of the hostilities; to achieve the



A blaze devours tires at the Salmi tire landfill in this file photo.

immediate release of all hostages; and to alleviate the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza. Referring to the West Bank, Borrell said "there, we see an intensified spiral of violence, indiscriminate attacks by extremist settlers, who are more and more targeting humanitarian aid heading to Gaza".

Mohammad Mustafa, told journalists that "this important meeting comes at a very critical time when three European countries (Ireland, Norway and Spain) made a very courageous decision to recognize the State of Palestine." "We see the meeting today as a very important opportunity for us as a new government to present our international partners with the outlines for our priorities and plans for the coming period," he said. Mustafa noted three priorities for his administration: Support to people in Gaza and speed up the ceasefire, build better institutions and improve services on the ground in Gaza and to stabilize the economic and financial situation on the ground.

Norwegian foreign minister Espen Eide in his remarks to the press called for a ceasefire in Gaza and underlined that "there is no alternative in the long run to the two-state solution." "We need to make sure that the Palestinian Authority will be able to survive and improve its service and plan for future return to Gaza," he said. He called on the Zionist-occupation regime to transfer the Palestinian money which it collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority and urged all donors to step up their financial support for Palestine. — KUNA

Commerce Minister Attempt to smuggle hashish foiled

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Omar Al-Omar has resumed work after recovering from exhaustion due to jet lag while participating in the China-GCC Forum for Industries and Investment, the Ministry said in a statement on Sunday. The minister had suffered from exhaustion while delivering his speech during the forum, the ministry noted, adding that his condition was stable after receiving first aid, and he was able to attend meetings.



Minister of Commerce and Industry Omar Al-Omar

KUWAIT: The security services managed to thwart the smuggling of 100 kg of hashish brought via the sea, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) said. The Drug Control General Department arrested a national involved in bringing the drugs for trafficking, the Ministry's department of security, media, and relations said in a press statement. The seized illegal substance is estimated at about KD 250,000. The Ministry affirmed continuing its endeavors to combat drug smugglers and protect society from this dangerous scourge. It appealed to all people to cooperate with security men and call the emergency number (112) and the hotline (1884141) in case of any negative phenomena. — KUNA

Education ministry asked to cut down power use

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity and Water has asked the Ministry of Education for cooperation in limiting power consumption during the summer, when loads are highest in Kuwait. In a letter penned by the electricity ministry's undersecretary, the ministry has instructed the education ministry to follow several power-saving guidelines. They include setting the air conditioner at 24 degrees Celsius, turning off lights in unused areas, switching to LED light bulbs and turning off fans and water heaters in washrooms. While the letter doesn't specify where the measures must be taken, it's likely pointing to schools which are closed during the summer period.

Local

NCCAL, YPA ink deal to enhance creative economy

Cooperation to support creative youth who own SMEs working in artistic, cultural fields



KUWAIT: Officials from NCCAL and YPA pose for a photo during the signing ceremony. — KUNA photos



NCCAL Secretary-General Dr Mohammad Al-Jassar (left) and YPA Acting Director General Nasser Al-Sheikh sign the agreement.

KUWAIT: National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) and Youth Public Authority (YPA) agreed on Sunday to work together to enhance creative economy among Kuwaiti youth. NCCAL Secretary-General Dr Mohammad Al-Jassar said in a press statement

following the signing of a partnership agreement that this step aims to encourage young innovators and hone their skills through organizing training courses and joint programs.

Jassar said this partnership will work to find incubators for young people to

launch their businesses, adding that he looks forward to working with the Authority to achieve the aspirations of young people and enable them to excel and achieve. YPA Acting Director General Nasser Al-Sheikh said in a similar statement that this cooperation would

support creative young people who own small and medium enterprises working in artistic, literary, and cultural fields. He added that it would work to integrate shared resources and expertise to strengthen the creative industries sector, which is considered one of the soft pow-

ers of countries and peoples.

He stressed that this step came in implementation of the Authority's strategy, which focuses on strengthening partnership with state agencies, civil society institutions, and the private sector to develop youth work in the country. — KUNA



Lieutenant General Bandar Al-Muzain inspects the Abdullah Al-Mubarak and Nawaf Al-Ahmad air base projects.



KUWAIT: Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwait Army Lieutenant General Bandar Al-Muzain (right) is seen with the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Kuwait Dr Matar Al-Neyadi. — KUNA photos

Kuwait army chief of staff meets UAE ambassador

KUWAIT: Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwait Army, Lieutenant General Bandar Al-Muzain, discussed on Sunday with the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Kuwait Dr Matar Al-Neyadi topics pertaining to the military.

Lieutenant General Al-Muzain received

the Emirati ambassador accompanied by the Emirati Military Attache, Colonel Mohamad Al-Muhairi, said the Army General Staff in a statement. The statement added that during the meeting, friendly conversations were exchanged, and the most important topics of mutual interest were discussed.

In related news, Lieutenant General Bandar Al-Muzain inspected on Saturday the Abdullah Al-Mubarak and Nawaf Al-Ahmad air base projects. The visit was aimed at checking the progress of work, the completion rates of the projects as part of his follow-up on the implementation of projects in various sectors of the Kuwaiti army.

Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwait Army's office said in a press statement that the team confirmed during the tour its keenness to speed up the pace of completion of the projects to have them ready by the agreed upon deadline. The statement added that the tour came with the aim of ensuring the availability of operation requirements and equipment and providing the bases with any needed equipment and supplies. During the tour, Lieutenant General Al-Muzain was accompanied by Air Force Commander Major General Staff Pilot Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad, Head of Military Bases Transition Engineer Faisal Al-Hajri, and several Air Force officers and engineers. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Maz Jobrani poses for a photo with members of the Kuwait Times team. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Maz Jobrani visits Kuwait Times and Kuwait News

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times and Kuwait News welcomed Maz Jobrani for a tour of the building, providing an exploration journey at Kuwait Times' various departments alongside the reporting and content creation team, guided by PR and CSR Manager Jana Alnaqeb. Jobrani experienced the world of journalism firsthand, including a visit to the archives room where content creator Yousef Abu Ghazaleh presented a set of historical events coinciding with significant dates in Jobrani's life, such as his first year traveling to the United States. Jobrani was also shown the news documented on the day of his birth and thoroughly enjoyed his time in the archives room.

Before continuing his tour, Jobrani was gifted a copy of Kuwait Times' inaugural edition and a special edition cus-



Jobrani puts on the traditional Kuwaiti headwear — the ghafiyah, ghutra and egal.

tomized for him, printed during his visit to commemorate the occasion of his visit.

Who is Maz Jobrani?

Maz Jobrani is an Iranian-American comedian, actor, and writer renowned for his stand-up comedy that often addresses social and political issues, particularly Middle



Eastern identity and immigrant experiences. He is a founding member of the "Axis of Evil" comedy group, which aims to challenge Middle Eastern stereotypes through humor. Jobrani has appeared in films and TV shows such as "The Interpreter," "13 Going on 30," and "Superior Donuts," and authored the book "I'm Not a Terrorist, But I've Played One on TV: Memoirs of a Middle Eastern Funny Man."



Maz Jobrani at the Kuwait Times Archives Room.



Jobrani is seen with the Kuwait Times Press staff.



Kuwait Times staff prepares Jobrani's special edition.



Jobrani takes a photo of Kuwait Times special edition featuring his photo on the front page.

Local

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Gold prices fall after two weeks of gains

KUWAIT: The prices of gold have dropped last week to reach \$2,334 per ounce after making unprecedented gains over the past two weeks. A report by Kuwaiti company Dar Alsaabek shared with KUNA says the drop in prices is due to the US Federal Reserve's announcement that the interest rate cut will be further delayed. The company adds that a report by Michigan University has revealed that Consumer sentiment in the US shifted down a gear in May. The University of Michigan's consumer confidence index fell from a reading of 77.2 for April to 69.1 in May.

Joanne Hsu, the survey's director, noted Americas' worsening outlook for the jobs market looking one year ahead. "These deteriorating expectations suggest that multiple factors pose downside risk for consumer spending," she said. "Still, sentiment remains almost 20 percent above a year ago and about 40 percent above the all-time historic low in June 2022, reflecting how much consumer views have improved as inflation eased." — Agencies

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A cat looks on as ducks are seen bathing in an artificial lake, with temperatures rising in Kuwait City on May 26, 2024. — Photo by Yasser A-Zayyat

Kuwaiti, Saudi aid arrives in Sudan

Kuwait Red Crescent plans to dispatch medical staff, more aid soon

KHARTOUM: A ship boarding \$1 million worth of medical aid sent from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia docked at Port Sudan on Sunday. The Kuwait Ambassador to Sudan Dr Fahad Al-Dhafiri said in remarks to KUNA that dispatch of the relief supplies from Kuwait Red Crescent Society and King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center was in line with an agreement that had been signed between the two sides for coordinating relief activities in Sudan and elsewhere in the world.

The KRCS had dispatched 190 tons of food and medical aid to Sudan last September, he said, indicating that more assistance would be earmarked for the stricken nation — including dispatch of medical cadres. Many Sudanese are suffering from shortage of necessities due to the ongoing infighting.

War has raged for more than a year between the regular military under army



Dr Fahad Al-Dhafiri

chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo. Media reported Sunday that at least 134 people have died at an hospital in the

Darfur city of El-Fasher in western Sudan, including one MSF team member. El-Fasher in North Darfur is the only state capital in the vast western region not under RSF control and is a key humanitarian hub for a region on the brink of famine.

Port Sudan, the coastal city where Kuwaiti aid has been delivered, houses many of

those displaced by the war. A majority have had to flee multiple times since the start of the war in April last year. They come from all over the country, where an eruption of violence in December forced more than half a million people to flee. Many of them were already displaced and had been seeking refuge in Wad Madani.

Across Sudan, humanitarian workers have been repeatedly targeted, harassed and killed by both sides. On Friday, a Sudanese Red Crescent volunteer was killed "while on duty by a gunshot in North Kordofan", the International Committee of the Red Cross said. Since the war began in April last year, tens of thousands of people have been killed, including up to 15,000 in West Darfur town, UN experts said. Nearly nine million people have been forced from their homes. — Agencies



PORT SUDAN: An elderly man waits to refill his donkey-drawn water tank during a water crisis in Port Sudan in this file photo. — AFP

South Africa enhances tourism appeal with new e-visa countries

By Faten Omar

DURBAN: South African Tourism Minister Patricia De Lille reaffirmed her country's commitment to facilitating visas for several countries, revealing that a new list of countries eligible for e-visas will soon be released. She spoke to Kuwait Times and international media on the sidelines of the recently concluded travel trade show Africa Indaba. The event promoted Africa as an attractive destination, fostering business partnerships and driving sustainable tourism development.

The event follows a remarkable 15.4 percent increase in international tourist arrivals, reaching 2.4 million from January to March 2024, compared to the same period in 2023. De Lille emphasized the importance of networking, collaboration and building bridges across borders, noting that the event



Patricia De Lille

tegral role in our history and attaining our freedom. In Durban, we have the Mandela Capture Site and the PheZulu Cultural Village Day Tour. This site marked a turning point in our history and saw the start of Mandela's notable sacrifice for our freedom."

South African Deputy Minister of Tourism Fish Mahlalela revealed plans for a roadshow to the Middle East, especially targeting the Kuwaiti market. He called for visitors from Middle Eastern countries to explore South Africa, noting that numbers from the region are low despite two major Arab airlines flying daily to several South African cities. "The tourism sector has a central role in changing the scene in South Africa. The more tourists we attract, the more achievements we accomplish, leading to youth development and better life and equality," Mahlalela added.

Regarding safety, he stated that the tourism ministry is working closely with the police to manage hotspots and create a safe environment for tourists. "We are also working with private security companies to stay ahead of the thieves and ensure our tourists have the best experience in Durban," he added.

South Africa Tourism invited the media to experience the best the country has to offer. The group explored various options to enjoy Durban, including nature, wildlife, luxury shopping, South African culture, and great weather from July to September, characterized by mild temperatures and clear skies. Additionally, South Africa Tourism introduced the media to a range of halal local and international cuisine, catering to diverse tastes.



Visitors to Durban get the opportunity to dive with sharks.

The media group visited a game reserve in the heart of Zululand, KwaZulu-Natal, nestled among the breathtaking topography of the upper White Umfolozi River Valley. The reserve's rich biodiversity and stunning landscapes provide a backdrop for thrilling safaris offering up-close encounters with the Big Five. Seeing animals like cheetahs, giraffes, rhinos, monkeys and kudus in their natural habitat is an awe-inspiring experience that evokes a profound sense of connection to the natural world and instills a deep appreciation for wildlife ecosystems.

The journey was further enriched by the warm hospitality of the friendly local people, who shared their rich cultural heritage and vibrant traditions. From Durban, the group ventured to Oribi Gorge for wild adventure activities. Situated in one of KwaZulu-Natal's most spectacular natural settings, the Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve lies about 25 kilometers inland from Port Shepstone. This pristine reserve offers a blend of extreme adventure and natural beauty, featuring the world's highest gorge swing.

Another unique adventure South Africa offers is the shark cage dive at Durban's Aliwal Shoal. Participants donned wetsuits and masks and climbed into floating stainless-steel cages, watching in awe as up to 20 sharks glided gracefully by the cage walls, offering a unique and exhilarating perspective on marine life.

For those preferring aerial adventures, a microlight flight over the Indian Ocean provides a breathtaking experience, offering a bird's eye view of dolphins and whales navigating through the warm waters below. For luxury lovers, Durban boasts a plethora of luxury hotels and gourmet restaurants,



DURBAN: This photo shows Mahatma Gandhi's residence where Kuwait Times visited as part of a media tour.

providing a sophisticated and comfortable base for their travels.

For shoppers, Durban offers several shopping malls with the best deals and luxury brands. The Victoria Street Market is an authentic local shopping experience, offering traditional customs, accessories, handmade goods and a vibrant atmosphere. Visitors can explore stalls selling everything from spices and fresh produce to intricate beadwork and hand-crafted souvenirs. The market also features a small mosque that attracts Muslims and others wishing to pray. Donations were also being collected here for the people of Gaza.

Durban is also home to Mahatma Gandhi's former residence, an iconic landmark of immense significance in both Indian and South African history, standing as a testament to the shared heritage on the Inanda Heritage Route.



A microlight flight over the Indian Ocean offers a breathtaking experience.

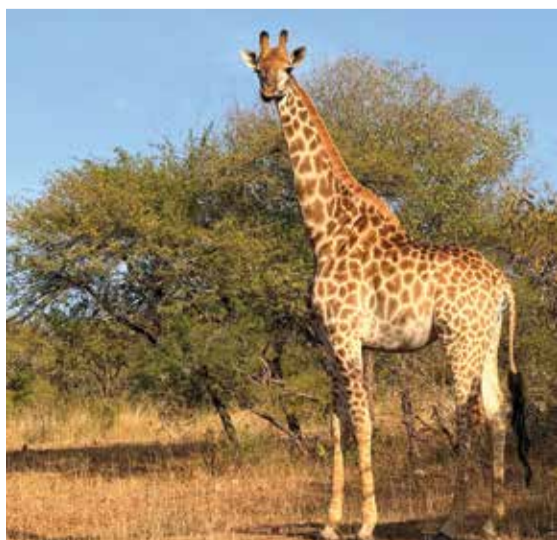


A mosque is seen at the Victoria Street Market, where tourists can enjoy an authentic local shopping experience.

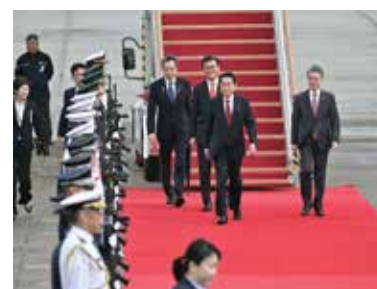
featured over 1,200 exhibitors from 26 African countries and more than 1,100 buyers representing 55 countries.

"We relaunched the R1.2 billion Tourism Equity Fund to support the growth of emerging tourism enterprises," De Lille said, adding that the global brand campaign for South African Tourism is crucial in enhancing their global reputation and building positive relationships with visitors worldwide.

To promote Durban, she said: "As we celebrate 30 years of our democracy, it is important to reflect on the many people and places which played an in-



A giraffe is seen at a game reserve in the heart of Zululand, KwaZulu-Natal.



China, Japan PMs in Seoul; first trilateral summit in five years

Mexico City records highest-ever temperature

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WASHINGTON: People hold up signs reading 'Free Ross' as former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump (left) arrives to address the Libertarian National Convention in Washington, DC, May 25, 2024. Ross Ulbricht, the founder of the online marketplace Silk Road for the sale of heroin, cocaine, LSD and other illegal drugs, was sentenced to life in prison in 2015. — AFP

Trump's trial reaches end game

US ex-president accused of falsifying business records

NEW YORK: The historic trial of Donald Trump enters its final act Tuesday, with closing arguments to the jury who must then decide whether to hand down the first ever criminal conviction of a former US president. Less than six months before American voters choose whether to return Trump to the White House, the stakes riding on the verdict are hard to overstate—for the 77-year-old personally, but also for the country as a whole. Trump is accused of falsifying business records to buy the silence of porn star Stormy Daniels about a 2006 sexual encounter between them that could have damaged his 2016 presidential bid.

If convicted, he faces up to four years in prison on each of 34 counts, but legal experts say that as a first-time offender he is unlikely to get jail time. Crucially, a conviction would not bar Trump from appearing on the ballot in November as the Republican presidential challenger to Democrat Joe Biden.

It has taken nearly five weeks, the testimony of more than 20 witnesses and a few courtroom fireworks to reach closing arguments—the last chance for the prosecution and defense to impress their case on the anonymous, 12-member jury.

As expected, Trump chose not to testify in his defense—a move that would have exposed him to unnecessary legal jeopardy and forensic cross-examination. For a man who has always prided himself on being in charge and in control, the role of silent, passive defendant did not come easily. At times it has been downright excruciating, especially when Trump was forced to sit and listen while Daniels recounted their alleged encounter in sometimes graphic detail.

Speaking to reporters before and after each day in court, Trump launched regular tirades against Judge Juan Merchan—calling him “corrupt” and a “tyrant”—and condemned the whole trial as “election interference” by Democrats intent on

keeping him off the campaign trail. The politics of the case were in full view in the final days when a coterie of leading Republicans—including several vice-presidential hopefuls—came to the court and stood behind Trump in a gesture of support as he spoke to the press.

In all, he was cited 10 times for contempt of court and fined \$10,000 by Merchan for failing to heed a gag order prohibiting him from publicly attacking witnesses, the jury, court staff or their relatives. The judge has said he expects closing arguments to take up all of Tuesday. He will then give his final instructions to the jury, who will likely begin their deliberations on Wednesday. To return a guilty or not guilty verdict requires unanimity. Just one holdout means a hung jury and a mistrial.

Other cases

Aside from Daniels, the key prosecution witness

was Michael Cohen, Trump's former “fixer” turned bitter foe who arranged the \$130,000 hush money payment. Walking jurors through the reasoning behind the payments, Cohen said they were made “to ensure that the story would not come out, would not affect Mr Trump's chances of becoming president of the United States.”

Trump's defense team devoted most of their questioning trying to discredit Cohen, recalling that he had admitted lying to Congress and spent time in prison for tax fraud. The defense called only two witnesses of their own before resting. In addition to the New York case, Trump has been indicted in Washington and Georgia on charges of conspiring to overturn the results of the 2020 election. He also faces charges in Florida of allegedly mishandling classified documents after leaving the White House. None of those trials are expected to take place before the November election. — AFP

4 children among 27 killed in India arcade fire

AHMEDABAD: Four young children were among 27 people killed when a fire in India ripped through a crowded amusement park, a top local official said Sunday, as rescuers scoured the site the morning after the blaze. Survivors reported having to kick down doors and leap out of windows to escape the inferno that swept through a centre packed full of young people enjoying games including bowling, Indian media reported on Sunday. Lines of bodies draped in white cloths were laid out before being taken away from the centre in Rajkot, a city in the western state of Gujarat.

The four children reported dead were all aged under 12, said police, who warned that many of the corpses were so badly burned it was difficult to identify them. Outside the still-smouldering wreckage, the mother and sister of 20-year-old Asha Kathad - who had

worked in the centre - waited for news. They held up a photograph of Asha on a mobile phone. “We don't have any information about her,” Asha's mother told local reporters, too distraught to give her full name as she wept.

‘Trapped’

More than 300 people were enjoying the summer holiday weekend in the two-storey structure at the TRP amusement and theme park when the blaze broke out on Saturday evening, Rajkot fire officer Ilesh Kher told reporters on the night of the fire. “People got trapped as a temporary structure at the facility collapsed near the entrance, making it difficult for the people to come out,” he said.

The flames spread rapidly because of the structure's flammable material, he added. Fires are common in India due to poor building practices, overcrowding and a lack of adherence to safety regulations. Also on Saturday night, a fire in India's capital ripped through a newborn baby hospital, killing six infants, with passersby charging into the burning building to pull out the other



RAJKOT: Officials clear charred remains at the site of a fire accident on the following day of the disaster, at an amusement park facility in Rajkot, in India's Gujarat state on May 26, 2024. — AFP

newborns from the ward.

Speaking at the site of the amusement park fire, top local government official Prabhav Joshi confirmed to AFP that the number killed had risen on Sunday morning to 27. “The toll in the fire incident is now 27,” he said. “Po-

lice have arrested two persons and the investigation is continuing.” The local Rajkot government said in a statement that forensic officers were “collecting DNA samples from the remains”, as “the bodies have been charred beyond recognition”. — AFP

Macron visits Germany to soothe ties, warn of far-right peril

PARIS: Emmanuel Macron on Sunday embarks on the first state visit to Germany by a French president in a quarter century, seeking to ease recent tensions and also warn of the dangers of the far right ahead of EU elections. Macron on his three-day, four-stop visit will seek to emphasize the historic importance of the postwar relationship between the two key EU states, as France next month commemorates 80 years since the D-Day landings that marked the beginning of the end of German World War II occupation.

But all has not been smooth in a relationship often seen as the engine of the EU, with Berlin taken aback by Macron's refusal to rule out sending troops to Ukraine and German officials said to be uneasy at times about his often-theatrical style of foreign policy. In a question-and-answer session on

social media with young people earlier this month, Macron enlisted help from German Chancellor Olaf Scholz when asked if the Franco-German “couple” was still working.

“Hello dear friends, long live French-German friendship!” Scholz said in French in a video on Macron's X feed. “Thank you Olaf! I very much agree with you,” Macron replied in heavily accented German. While Macron is a frequent visitor to Berlin, the trip will be the first state visit in 24 years following a trip by Jacques Chirac in 2000 and the sixth since the first postwar state visit by Charles de Gaulle in 1962.

Macron's trip will begin Sunday afternoon with a day of talks with his German counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier, whose role is largely ceremonial compared with the might of the French



BERLIN: French President Emmanuel Macron and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier attend a debate on stage during their visit of the Festival of Democracy (Demokratiefest) in Berlin, Germany on May 26, 2024. The French president pays a three-day state visit to Germany until May 28. The festival celebrates the 75th anniversary of Germany's Basic Law. — AFP

presidency. On Tuesday he will travel to Dresden in the former East Germany to deliver a speech on Europe at a European festival. Tuesday sees Macron in

the western German city of Munster and later in Meseberg outside Berlin for talks with Scholz and a Franco-German joint cabinet meeting. — AFP

Tunisia replaces interior, social affairs ministers

TUNIS: Tunisia's president abruptly replaced the interior and social affairs ministers Saturday night in a surprise cabinet reshuffle following a wave of arrests that has raised fresh fears for the health of the young democracy. President Kais Saied named Khaled Nouri minister of interior, according to a statement from his office, replacing Kamel Feki, who had been considered close to the head of state. Technocrat Kamel Madouri will be the new social affairs minister, replacing Malek Zahi, who was also seen as having the president's ear.

The reshuffle also created the new post of secretary of state overseeing national security under the interior minister, with Sofiene Ben Sadok named to the role, the statement said without elaborating. The reshuffle comes on the heels of a string of arrests over the past two weeks of around 10 human rights activists, lawyers and journalists. The European Union, the United States and former colonial power France have expressed concern at the arrests, drawing condemnations from Saied of “unacceptable foreign interference”.

The reshuffle was announced a day after hundreds of Tunisians marched through the capital chanting “down with the dictatorship” as they protested against the recent arrests under a presidential decree critics say is being used to stifle dissent. Two Tunisian media figures received one-year jail sentences on Wednesday after making comments the authorities deemed critical, in the latest prosecutions under Decree 54, a 2022 ban on “spreading false news”.

“Down with the decree,” the Tunisian marchers shouted. “Dictator Kais (Saied), it's your turn now,” they added, alluding to the Arab Spring uprising that toppled longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011. Saied was democratically elected president in 2019, but seized sweeping authority in a 2021 power grab and has ruled by decree since. Since Decree 54 came into force, more than 60 journalists, lawyers and opposition figures have been prosecuted, according to the National Union of Tunisian Journalists. — AFP

International

Deadly heatwave hits Mexico

Mexico City records highest-ever temperature of 34.7 C

MEXICO CITY: Mexico City recorded its highest-ever temperature on Saturday when thermometers hit 34.7 degrees Celsius as a deadly heatwave scorches the country. The "highest temperature since records have been kept" was recorded Saturday afternoon at the Tacubaya observatory, the National Meteorological Service said. The previous record of 34.4 degrees Celsius was observed the day before at the same station in the capital, the weather service added. Mexico has recorded 48 deaths due to intense heatwaves hitting the country since March, the government said on Friday.

More than 950 people have suffered various health effects over the same period, as of May 21, according to the health ministry. The eastern coastal state of Veracruz recorded the highest number of deaths, with 14, followed by Tabasco, San Luis Potosi and Tamaulipas with eight each. Last year, Mexico reported a record 419 heat-related deaths in the hot season, which runs from March to October, in a country of 129 million people. It is not just humans that are suffering - in southern Mexico dozens of howler monkeys have dropped dead, apparently due to the heat.

'Warmest year in history'

Scientists from the National Autonomous University of Mexico warned on Wednesday that in the next two weeks intensifying heat could bring new record temperatures to the capital. This year is on course to be "the warmest year in history," Francisco Estrada, coordinator of the university's Climate Change Research Program, said at a press conference, Mexico City, which sits at 2,240 meters above sea level, has traditionally enjoyed a temperate climate and few homes have air conditioning.

But the capital has repeatedly seen fresh high-temperature records this hot season, with the mercury reaching then-records of 34.3 C on May 9 and 34.2 C on April 15. The intense heat - which has emptied stores of bottled water and ice packs in the capital and its metropolitan area, where about 22 million people live - combined with the scarce wind, has triggered pollution in the megacity where around 6.5 million vehicles circulate. President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has described this year's heat as "exceptional." "It's a very regrettable natural phenomenon related to climate change," he said. — AFP



GUADALAJARA: A toddler plays in a water fountain during a heat wave hitting the country in Guadalajara, Jalisco state, Mexico. — AFP

Disinformation war engulfs Mexican presidential race

MEXICO CITY: Does Mexican presidential front-runner Claudia Sheinbaum want to make circumcision compulsory and close a revered Catholic church? No, it's all part of an election disinformation war. The June 2 vote is not only being fought with campaigning in the streets, but also online, where the war is often based on false rumors, many of them debunked by AFP factcheckers.

Internet users using old videos or footage taken out of context have repeatedly accused opposition candidate Xochitl Galvez of wanting to scrap outgoing President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's social programs. Sheinbaum, the granddaughter of Jewish migrants, has faced unfounded rumors that she wants to make circumcision mandatory and turn the Basilica of Guadalupe into a museum.

Such disinformation generates confusion that undermines confidence in candidates and discourages voting, said Felipe Lopez Veneroni, a political analyst and professor at the National Autonomous

University of Mexico. The hate speech creates "a completely irrational and emotional narrative, which is motivated more by fear than by the clarity of the proposals," he said. False rumors reaffirm "prejudices that many people already have - they believe what they want to believe," Veneroni said.

Both Galvez and Sheinbaum - who are competing to be Mexico's first woman president - have been accused online of having lied about their university degrees. Such attacks present them "as weak, incompetent or incapable of leading," said Frine Salguero, executive director of the Simone de Beauvoir Leadership Institute, a Mexico City training center for women.

"They seek to exclude and dissuade women who participate in the political sphere. Unfortunately it's a reflection of Mexican society," she added. Immigrants have also been dragged into the disinformation war, accused of being bought with social assistance from the government in return for voting for Sheinbaum. In reality, only 83,000 naturalized migrants are able to cast ballots -- a tiny fraction of the 99 million people registered to vote.

The National Electoral Institute has clarified that it does not grant the right to vote to foreigners without Mexican citizenship. Accusations of fraud and doubts surrounding an electoral process are often commonplace on social media. — AFP

EarthCARE satellite to probe how clouds affect climate

PARIS: Will clouds help cool or warm our world in the years ahead? The EarthCARE satellite will soon blast off on a mission to find out, aiming to investigate what role clouds could play in the fight against climate change. The collaboration between the European Space Agency and Japan's JAXA space agency is scheduled to launch Tuesday on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from California's Vandenberg base.

The two-ton satellite will orbit nearly 400 kilometers above Earth for three years, building a complete profile of those fluffy clouds over our heads. "They are one of the main contributors to how the climate changes—and one of the least understood," Dominique Gillieron, head of the ESA's Earth observation projects department, told AFP. Clouds—from cumulus and cirrus to cumulonimbus—are a varied and complicated phenomenon. Their composition depends on where they are located in

the troposphere, Earth's lowest layer of atmosphere, Gillieron explained.

The troposphere starts at around eight kilometers above the polar regions, but near the equator it begins at around 18 kilometers up. This means that clouds affect the climate differently depending on their altitude and latitude. For example, white and bright cumulus clouds, which are made out of water droplets, sit quite low and work like a parasol, reflecting the Sun's radiation back into space and cooling the atmosphere. Higher up, cirrus clouds made of ice crystals allow solar radiation to pass through, heating up our world. Cirrus clouds then trap in the heat like a "blanket," Gillieron said.

Parasol or blanket?

So understanding the nature of clouds has become very important, said Simonetta Cheli, head of the ESA's Earth observation programs. EarthCARE will become the first satellite to measure the vertical and horizontal distribution of clouds, she told a press conference. Two of the satellite's instruments will flash light at the clouds to probe their depths. The Lidar instrument will use a laser pulse to measure both clouds and aerosols, which are tiny particles in the atmosphere such as dust, pollen

or human-emitted pollutants like smoke or ash. Aerosols are the "pre-cursors" to clouds, Gillieron explained. The satellite's radar will pierce through the clouds to measure how much water they contain.

It will also track the speed of the clouds moving through the atmosphere, similar to how radar helps police nab speeding cars. The satellite's other instruments will measure the shape and temperature of the clouds. All this data will create the first complete picture of clouds from the perspective of a satellite. The scientific community is eagerly awaiting this information so it can update climate models that estimate how quickly our world will warm, the ESA said.

The amount of solar radiation that gets past Earth's clouds could therefore be crucial to understanding and mitigating the impact of human-driven global warming. The mission aims to find out "whether the current effect of the clouds, which is rather cooling at the moment—the parasol outweighs the blanket—will become stronger or weaker," Gillieron said. This trend has become more difficult to predict as global warming has changed the distribution of clouds. "EarthCARE is being launched at an even more important time than when it was conceived in 2004," Cheli said. — AFP

Recognizing Palestine is...

Continued from Page 1

people in Gaza, especially through a ceasefire, and then "rebuilding the institutions of the Palestinian Authority" there after Hamas seized it from the PA in 2007.

Meanwhile, deadly fighting rocked the Gaza Strip and Hamas militants fired a salvo of rockets at the commercial hub Tel Aviv, sending people scrambling for shelter. US President Joe Biden has pushed for renewed international efforts to halt the war, now in its eighth month. A Zionist senior official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP that "the war cabinet is expected to discuss a hostage release deal".

While Zionists' main focus is to free the remaining hostages, Hamas has insisted on a permanent end to the fighting - a demand Netanyahu has rejected. The official had said Saturday that "there is an intention to renew these talks this week" after negotiations involving US, Qatar and Egyptian mediators stalled in early May. A member of Hamas's political leadership, Izzat Al-Rishq, said Sunday that so far, "we have not received anything from the mediators".

He insisted on the Palestinian group's long-standing demand for a permanent cessation of hostilities as "the foundation and the starting point for anything". Rishq accused Netanyahu of "trying to buy more time to continue the aggression". Shortly afterwards, Hamas's armed wing said it had targeted Tel Aviv "with a large rocket barrage in response to the Zionist massacres against civilians". The army said at least eight rockets were fired from Gaza's far-southern city of Rafah and that "a number of the projectiles were intercepted", with no reports of casualties.

'Constant bombardment'

Netanyahu has vowed to destroy Hamas to prevent any repeat of the kind of attack the Palestinian Islamist group launched on October 7, but has also faced growing domestic and international criticism. Zionist offensive has killed at least 35,984 people in Gaza, mostly civilians. As the war ground on, the families of hostages still held by Palestinians militants have piled pressure on Netanyahu to secure a deal to free them.

Washington has also taken a tougher line with its close ally as outrage over the war and US support for Zionists has become a major issue for Biden, seeking in re-election in a battle against Donald Trump. With more strikes reported Sunday across Gaza, Zionist military said that over the past 24 hours it had destroyed "over 50 terror targets". Fighting has centered on Rafah, where Zionists launched a ground operation in early May despite widespread oppo-

sition over concerns for civilians sheltering there.

Rafah resident Moaz Abu Taha, 29, told AFP of "constant bombardment from land and air, which has destroyed many houses". Gaza's civil defense agency said it had retrieved six bodies after a house was targeted in eastern Rafah. The army said militants who "attempted to attack" troops in the Rafah area had been "eliminated".

Global outcry

The UN has warned of looming famine in the besieged territory, where most hospitals are no longer functioning. Zionist military said Sunday the arrival of aid had been stepped up, both via a new US-built pier and through its own land crossings, Kerem Shalom and Erez West. Aid trucks from Egypt began entering Gaza through Kerem Shalom crossing on Sunday, state-linked media Al-Qahera News reported, after Cairo has refused to coordinate aid through Rafah as long as troops control the Palestinian side of the crossing.

Amid the bloodiest ever Gaza war, Zionists have faced growing global outcry over the surging civilian death toll, and landmark moves last week at two international courts. Last Monday, the prosecutor at the International Criminal Court announced he was seeking arrest warrants against Netanyahu and his defense minister as well as against three top Hamas figures.

And on Friday, the International Court of Justice ordered Zionist entity to halt its Rafah offensive or any other operation there that could bring about "the physical destruction" of the Palestinians. In central Gaza's Deir Al-Balah, an AFP photographer said Palestinians were washing their dirty clothes and dishes in the sea. "Since the war began, we have been suffering from a lack of water," said displaced man Anas Helles, adding that bottled water had become expensive. "We use it even though it may be polluted or unsafe, but there is no alternative to sea water," said another man, Ahmed Helles. "We buy water, but we have no money left."

Zionists hit Lebanon

In another development, Zionist strikes on south Lebanon on Sunday killed five people, official media and a source close to Hezbollah said, as Zionist military claimed attacks targeting the Iran-backed militant group. Lebanon's Hezbollah, a Hamas ally, has traded regular cross-border fire with Zionists since the Palestinian militant group's October 7 attack.

Lebanon's official National News Agency (NNA) reported that "the enemy targeted a motorbike in Hula", a border village, "leading to two martyrs and two wounded". It was the third such strike on people on motorbikes in south Lebanon on Sunday, the agency said. The NNA had earlier reported "two martyrs and wounded civilians in the raid that targeted a motorcycle in Aita Al-Shaab", another border village. — AFP

6 newborns killed as fire ravages at...

Continued from Page 1

"We all stand with those who lost their innocent children in this accident," he said on social media. "The causes of the incident are being investigated,

and whoever is responsible for this negligence will not be spared."

Modi also offered his condolences to those who lost their babies. "My thoughts are with the bereaved families in this incredibly difficult time," he wrote on social media. "I pray that those injured recover at the earliest." The two fires came as northern India was gripped by intense heat, with temperatures in Delhi hitting 46.8 degrees Celsius on Saturday, according to the India Meteorological Department. — AFP

Iran's filmmaker Rasoulof: From...

Continued from Page 1

a new eight-year sentence when he fled the country on the eve of the Cannes Film Festival. He had already won the top prize at the Berlin Film Festival in 2020 for "There is No Evil", a searing drama about the death penalty. He was unable to receive the award because his passport was revoked in 2017.

But his time in prison helped Rasoulof learn how to work underground. "The more you spend time with interrogators, the secret police, the more you learn how to thwart them," he said in Cannes. "They show you your emails, so you learn how to write them. They show you your bank statements, so you learn when you should not have used your credit card," he said. "I admit that it has a bit of a gangster side, my business. But prison is a good place to learn these things."

Prizes and prison

Born in 1972 in Shiraz, southwest Iran, Rasoulof studied sociology then editing in Tehran. He began with short films before directing "Iron Island", which earned him a place in a smaller Cannes section, the Directors' Fortnight, in 2005. Rasoulof's first stint in jail came after he tried to make a documentary along with fellow dissident filmmaker Jafar Panahi, about the mass protests that followed the disputed 2009 re-election of president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

He was banned from making movies for 20 years, but continued to work in secret and was accepted in the Un Certain Regard section at Cannes in 2011, winning best director for "Goodbye", which his wife accepted on his behalf. He was allowed to attend Cannes in 2017, where he won the top prize in the same section for "A Man of Integrity". But its sharp



CANNES: Iranian director and producer Mohammad Rasoulof poses during a photocall after he won the Special Jury Prize for the film 'The Seed of the Sacred Fig' in Cannes. — AFP

dissection of corruption and injustice led authorities to revoke his passport. Rasoulof was jailed in July 2022 after leading an open letter by filmmakers in support of protests over a deadly building collapse in the city of Abadan, accusing the government of "corruption, theft, inefficiency and repression".

In May 2024, his lawyer announced that Rasoulof had been given an eight-year sentence for "collusion against national security" that also included flogging, a fine and confiscation of part of his property. But Rasoulof told reporters in Cannes that he had already plotted an escape plan by then, using contacts he made in prison. Rasoulof also got the idea for "The Seed of the Sacred Fig" in prison, when he met an official who admitted he was challenged constantly by his children over his work, and thought regularly about hanging himself in front of the prison doors. "I am also very sad, deeply sad, to see the disaster experienced by my people every day... the Iranian people live under a totalitarian regime," he said Saturday. — AFP

International

Cyclone hits Bangladesh

Nearly a million people flee inland for shelter

PATUAKHALI: An intense cyclone smashed into the low-lying coast of Bangladesh on Sunday, with nearly a million people fleeing inland for concrete storm shelters away from howling gales and crashing waves. "The severe Cyclone Remal has started crossing the Bangladesh coast," Bangladesh Meteorological Department Director Azizur Rahman told AFP, adding the raging storm could continue hammering the coast until at least the early hours of Monday morning. "We have so far recorded maximum wind speeds of 90 kilometers per hour, but the wind speed may pick up more pace."

Forecasters predicted gusts of up to 130 kilometers per hour, with heavy rain and winds also lashing neighboring India. Authorities have raised the danger signal to its highest level. Cyclones have killed hundreds of thousands of people in Bangladesh in recent decades, but the number of superstorms hitting its densely populated coast has increased sharply, from one a year to as many as three, due to the impact of climate change.

"The cyclone could unleash a storm surge of up to 12 feet above normal astronomical tide, which can be dangerous," Bangladesh senior weather official Muhammad Abul Kalam Mallik told AFP. Most of Bangladesh's coastal areas are a metre or two above sea level and high storm surges can devastate villages. "We are terrified," said 35-year-old fisherman Yusuf Fakir at Kuakata, a town on the very southern tip of Bangladesh in the predicted route of the storm, speaking just before its arrival. While he had sent his wife and children to a relative's home inland, he stayed put to guard their belongings.

At least 800,000 Bangladeshis fled their coastal villages, while more than 50,000 people in India also moved inland from the vast Sundarbans mangrove forest, where the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers meet the sea, government ministers and disaster officials said. "We want to ensure that a single life is not lost," said Bankim Chandra Hazra, a senior minister in India's West Bengal state.



KUAKATA: A man reacts as high tidal waves hit the coast along a sea beach during rainfall in Kuakata on May 26, 2024, ahead of cyclone Remal's landfall in Bangladesh. — AFP

Ferry sinks

As people fled, Bangladesh police said that a heavily laden ferry carrying more than 50 passengers - double its capacity - was swamped and sank near Mongla, a port in the expected path of the storm. "At least 13 people were injured and were taken to a hospital," local police chief Mushfiqur Rahman Tushar told AFP, adding that other boats plucked the passengers to safety. A young man drowned in rough seas at Kuakata on Sunday afternoon, district government administrator Nur Kutubul Alam told AFP.

Bangladesh's disaster management secretary Kamrul Hasan said people had been ordered to move from "unsafe and vulnerable" homes. "At least 800,000 people have been shifted to cyclone shelters," Hasan said.

What was supposed to be a two-day national dialogue began earlier Saturday, ostensibly to chart a way back to civilian rule for the West African nation beset by jihadist violence. The army has governed Burkina Faso since 2022, carrying out two coups that it said were justified in large part by the persistent insecurity. Jihadist rebels affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group have waged a grinding insurgency since 2015 that has killed thousands and displaced millions.

An initial national dialogue had resulted in a charter that installed Traore as president and put in place a government and a legislative assembly. Under the new charter, quotas will no longer be used to assign seats in the assembly to members of traditional parties. Instead, "patriotism" will be the only criteria for selecting deputies. "You have just rewritten a new page in the history of our country," said the Minister of Territorial Affairs, Emile Zerbo, who opened the meeting on Saturday morning.

The authorities have mobilized tens of thousands of volunteers to alert people to the danger, but local officials said many people stayed home as they feared their property would be stolen if they left. He said around 4,000 cyclone shelters have been readied along the country's lengthy coast on the Bay of Bengal.

Airports close

In addition to the villagers and fishermen, many of the multi-storey centers have space to shelter cattle, buffaloes and goats, as well as pets. On the low-lying island of Bhashan Char, home to 36,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, 57 cyclone centers were opened, deputy refugee commissioner Mohammad Rafiqul Haque told AFP.

'Strategic vision'

The initial charter had set the duration of the transition to civilian rule at 21 months, with the deadline due to expire on July 1. But Traore had repeatedly warned that holding elections would be difficult given the perilous security situation. The new charter also calls for a new body called the "Korag" to "monitor and control the implementation of the country's strategic vision in all areas and through all means". Its composition and operations are at the discretion of the president.

Civil society representatives, the security and defense forces and lawmakers in the transitional assembly took part in the weekend talks, which most political parties boycotted. Human rights groups have accused Burkina Faso's junta leaders of abuses against civilians during their military campaigns against jihadists, and of silencing media and opposition leaders. After taking power, the coup leaders expelled French troops and diplomats, and have instead turned to Russia for military assistance. — AFP

The country's three seaports and the airport in the second-largest city Chittagong were closed, officials said. India's Kolkata airport closed Sunday, while the Indian navy readied two ships with aid and medical supplies for "immediate deployment". While scientists say climate change is fuelling more storms, better forecasting and more effective evacuation planning have dramatically reduced the death toll. In the Great Bhola Cyclone in November 1970, an estimated half a million people died - mostly drowned by the storm surge. In May last year, Cyclone Mocha became the most powerful storm to hit Bangladesh since Cyclone Sidr in November 2007. Sidr killed more than 3,000 people and caused billions of dollars in damage. — AFP

Burkina Faso military regime extended for five years

OUAGADOUGOU: Burkina Faso's military regime, in power since a 2022 coup, will extend its rule for five years under an accord adopted during national consultations on Saturday, the talks' chairman said. "The duration of the transition is fixed at 60 months from July 2, 2024," Colonel Moussa Diallo, chairman of the organizing committee of the national dialogue process, said after the talks. He added that coup leader and acting president Ibrahim Traore could run in any elections at the end of the transition period.

Colombia, ELN guerrillas reach first agreement in peace talks

CARACAS: Colombia's government and the ELN guerrilla group on Saturday signed the first agreement of their stop-start peace talks, which provides for the participation of civil society in the process. The signing of the first of six accords on the peace agenda represents a major advance in the slow-moving dialogue between Bogota and the Marxist ELN, or National Liberation Army. The negotiations, meant to end decades of armed conflict, began in late 2022 and resumed in early April this year in Venezuela.

"We know that peace is not built on oblivion and impunity, and that the voice of the victims is fundamental to this process and the legitimacy of the agreements," said representatives of the Colombian government and the ELN in a joint statement, referring to the involvement of civil society. "We are committed to organizing and holding a meeting at which the victims of armed conflict... will present proposals" to enrich the peace process, the statement added. Pablo Beltran, head of the ELN delegation, said the first agreed point "seeks that there be a great social and political alliance, that we go towards a great national agreement."

In February, the ELN temporarily froze peace talks in response to officials' negotiations with a dissident faction. In mid-April, the parties resumed the process, but in early May the ELN announced it would resume kidnappings - a means to raise funds through ransom money - claiming that the left-wing government of President Gustavo Petro had not honored pledges to provide the group with international donations. The government said at the time foreign funds were intended to finance the peace process, not compensate the group for halting kidnappings.

Despite Saturday's progress, the resumption of kidnappings remains a critical point in the dialogue between the two sides, who have maintained a bilateral ceasefire. One of the group's high-profile kidnappings in recent years was that of the father of Liverpool footballer Luis Diaz last October. He was released 12 days after he was taken in what the ELN described as a "mistake." Founded in 1964, the ELN had more than 5,800 combatants in 2022, according to authorities.

The guerrilla group, inspired by the Cuban revolution, has taken part in failed negotiations with Colombia's last five governments. The ELN has a centralized command but individual units have a degree of autonomy, further complicating peace talks. Negotiations with the ELN resumed in November 2022 after the election of Colombia's first-ever leftist president Petro. In 2016, the much larger Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, laid down arms in a historic peace accord, though violence in the country has continued. — AFP



MAIP MULTITAKA: People dig at the site of a landslide at Yambali Village in the region of Maip Multitaka, in Papua New Guinea's Enga Province. More than 670 people are believed dead after a massive landslide in Papua New Guinea. — AFP

More than 670 estimated 'dead in PNG landslide'

PORT MORESBY: More than 670 people are believed to be dead after a massive landslide in Papua New Guinea (PNG), a UN official told AFP on Sunday as aid workers and villagers braved perilous conditions in their search for survivors. The once-bustling hillside village in Enga province was almost completely obliterated when the landslide struck in the early hours of Friday morning, burying scores of homes and the people sleeping inside them.

"There are an estimated 150-plus houses now buried," said UN migration agency representative Serhan Aktoprak, adding that "670-plus people are assumed dead". "The situation is terrible with the land still sliding. The water is running and this is creating a massive risk for everyone involved," added Aktoprak, who oversees teams of emergency workers from Port Moresby.

The unforgiving terrain, damaged roads and an outbreak of tribal violence nearby have seriously hamstrung efforts to get help into the disaster zone. More than two days after the landslide rumbled down the face of Mount Mungalo, mud-caked villagers in bare feet are still searching for their loved ones using shovels, axes and other makeshift tools. Disaster worker Omer Mohamad arrived at the site on Sunday, finding deeply "traumatized" villagers using "sticks and spades to discover the trapped bodies".

'Destruction is massive'

"The situation is really horrible, people are in shock and traumatized," he told AFP. "The land is still sliding. You can see rocks falling down from the mountain." More than 1,000 people have been displaced by the catastrophe, aid agencies estimated, with food gardens and water supplies almost completely wiped out. Aid agencies and local leaders initially feared between 100

to 300 people had perished underneath the mud and rubble spanning almost four football fields in length.

But the death toll grew after local leaders and disaster workers realized official figures underestimated the population. Aktoprak said. "Five bodies and the leg of a sixth had been pulled from the debris by Saturday night. This number is expected to start climbing in the coming days as diggers and other heavy machinery speed up the painstaking excavations. "The destruction is massive," Nickson Pakea, president of the nearby chamber of commerce, told AFP on Saturday. "They need machinery and other equipment to uncover these bodies. We are facing a big problem."

Tribal violence

Located on the side of densely forested Mount Mungalo, the village was home to a transient population that could swell to more than 4,000 people. It served as a trading post for the alluvial miners who panned for gold in the highlands region. "It's a centre of the community. People come from near and far to do their alluvial mining, and then they come to this place to trade," Pakea said. A difficult journey to make at the best of times, vehicle access has been further complicated by a burst of tribal violence along the only route not blocked by the slip.

Aktoprak said the violence was "not related to the landslide". Papua New Guinea's military had stepped in to provide a "security escort" to aid convoys, he added. "In one day alone, a total of eight persons had been killed, five business stores and 30 houses had been burnt down," Aktoprak said of the escalating tribal feud. At some points, the landslide - a mix of car-sized boulders, uprooted trees and churned-up earth - was thought to be eight meters deep.

Locals said it may have been triggered by heavy rains that have saturated the region in recent weeks. Papua New Guinea has one of the wettest climates in the world, according to the World Bank, with the heaviest downpours concentrated in the country's humid highland interior. Research has found shifting rainfall patterns linked to climate change could exacerbate the risk of landslides. This year has seen intense rainfall and flooding across Papua New Guinea. — AFP

China, Japan PMs in Seoul; First trilateral summit in five years

SEOUL: The premiers of China and Japan arrived in Seoul Sunday for their first trilateral summit in five years, which is expected to focus on economic issues rather than sensitive geopolitics. Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida are scheduled to meet with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol separately Sunday afternoon in the South Korean capital. On Monday the three leaders will hold a trilateral meeting, the first such encounter in five years, partly thanks to the pandemic but also due to long-strained ties between Seoul and Tokyo.

Yoon, who took office in 2022, has sought to bury the historical hatchet with former colonial power Japan in the face of rising threats from nuclear-armed North Korea. Since the last trilateral summit "our regional and global landscapes have vastly changed," Kishida said before departing for Seoul, saying the new meeting was "highly significant". "I would like to have an honest conversation with President Yoon Suk Yeol and Premier Li Qiang, and agree on working-level cooperation in a forward-looking manner," he said, adding he hoped the meeting would be a "success" and revitalize three-way diplomacy.

Yoon is set to hold a bilateral meeting with Li, who is making his first visit to South Korea since taking office in March 2023, followed by one with Kishida. The three leaders will have a dinner together Sunday evening. But experts have warned that due to the three countries' starkly divergent positions on key issues including Pyongyang's nuclear threats and growing ties with Russia, it will be hard for them to form a consensus.

But Seoul and Tokyo, which are key regional security allies of China's arch-rival Washington, are looking to improve relations and trade, plus ease tension with Beijing, experts say. "The importance of cooperation between the three nations, which account for 20 percent of the world's population and trade, 25 percent of total GDP, cannot be over-emphasized," South Korea's Hankook Ilbo said in an editorial. "It is of utmost importance that the three nations have the willingness to overcome differences of views."

No North Korea consensus

Despite North Korea conducting ever-more advanced weapons tests and China staging military drills around Taiwan, experts expect the summit to ignore security issues and seek common ground for easy diplomatic wins. China is North Korea's largest trading partner and a key diplomatic ally, and it has previously resisted condemning Pyongyang for its weapons tests, instead criticizing joint US-South Korea drills.

Pyongyang on Sunday slammed what it claimed were "wartime" level spy planes and boat missions by Seoul and Washington, threatening to take "immediate action" if its sovereignty was breached. An official from Seoul's presidential office said North Korea-related issues "are difficult to resolve cleanly and quickly in a short time", so the summit will focus more on economic cooperation. "A joint declaration is currently being discussed," he said, adding that Seoul would try to include security issues "to a certain extent". — AFP



SEONGNAM: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol (right) and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida gesture during a meeting at the Presidential Office in Seoul on May 26, 2024. — AFP

MONDAY, MAY 27, 2024

Zain hosts content marketing workshop

Workshop leverages social media to foster creativity and promote small businesses



Zain's content marketing workshop.

KUWAIT: Zain hosted a special workshop on content marketing at its Innovation Campus (ZINC), presented by creative writer and author Manaer Al-Kandari. The session, joined by aspiring small business owners and content creators, aimed at fostering creativity and sharing tips on how to best leverage social media platforms to successfully promote SMEs.

The session is a continuation of a series of specialized workshops Zain hosts periodically to foster a culture of creativity by leveraging on the unlimit-

ed capabilities of technology. Through such initiatives, the company hopes to empower individuals to use tech innovation to pursue their passion for art and content creation, by bringing the best local experts to share their insights and expertise.

Al-Kandari also explained how to carefully outline and execute a comprehensive marketing strategy for every unique small business, as well as how to create attractive content and use it as a key tool to market products and services. In addition, she described the nature of various social media plat-

forms, how they serve different audiences, and how to leverage each platform's strengths to best reach the target audience. Al-Kandari also discussed how to outline and execute a comprehensive marketing strategy tailored to each small business. She emphasized the creation of attractive content as a key marketing tool and described the nature of various social media platforms, their different audiences, and how to leverage each platform's strengths to reach the target audience effectively.

The workshop was well-received by content

creators, SME owners, and creative individuals, offering a mix of theoretical and practical approaches to enhance attendees' skills and produce valuable outcomes. Zain fosters a culture of creativity in the community by empowering talented individuals to leverage technology. The company collaborates with local content creators to offer programs and sessions that encourage the public, especially young people, to pursue their passions and develop their innovation, creativity, and technology skills.

More than one in 4 Syrians 'extremely poor': World Bank

BEIRUT: More than a quarter of Syrians live in extreme poverty, the World Bank said Saturday, 13 years into a devastating civil war that has battered the economy and impoverished millions. The World Bank published two new reports on Syria, which found that "27 percent of Syrians — about 5.7 million individuals — live in extreme poverty".

"Extreme poverty, while virtually non-existent before the conflict, affected more than one in four Syrians in 2022" and might have further deteriorated after a deadly earthquake last year, one of the reports said. The quake killed about 6,000 people in the country.

According to the United Nations, about 90 percent of Syrians live in poverty, while it previously estimated that around two million lived in extreme poverty after more than a decade of war. The report cited neighbor Lebanon's economic meltdown in late 2019, the COVID-19 pandem-

ic and the war in Ukraine, as having eroded the welfare of Syrian households in recent years.

The civil war in Syria has also ravaged the economy, infrastructure and industry, while Western sanctions have added to the country's woes. "Continued funding shortfalls and limited access to humanitarian assistance" have further strained poor Syrians, already coping with "soaring prices, reduced access to essential services and rising unemployment," the World Bank said. The UN told AFP previously that its humanitarian response plan for Syria for 2024 requires more than \$4 billion but that it is only six percent funded. The international community is set to meet in Brussels Monday to try and muster funds for Syria at a yearly pledging conference.

A lack of opportunities and dwindling aid has pushed many Syrians to rely on money sent from relatives abroad to survive, with the World Bank estimating that "in 2022, the



DAMASCUS: People queue for bread which has increased 12-fold in price. — AFP

total value of remittances received by Syrian households reached about \$1.05 billion". Syria's estimated GDP stood at around \$6.2 billion in 2023. Syria's "real GDP is projected to contract by 1.5 percent in 2024, extending the 1.2 percent decline in 2023," the report said.

"Inflation is anticipated to remain

high in 2024 due to the pass-through effects of currency depreciation, along with persistent shortages and potential further subsidy cuts (for) food and fuel," it said. Syria's war has killed more than half a million people and displaced millions more since it erupted in 2011 after Damascus cracked down on anti-government protests. — AFP

Musk plans to build supercomputer for xAI startup

WASHINGTON: Billionaire tech mogul Elon Musk has told investors he plans to build a supercomputer dubbed "gigafactory of compute" to support the development of his artificial intelligence startup xAI, an industry news outlet reported Saturday.

Musk wants the supercomputer—which will string together 100,000 Nvidia chips—operational by fall 2025, and "will hold himself personally responsible for delivering it on time." The Information said. The planned supercomputer would be "at least four times the size of the biggest GPU clusters that exist today," such as those used by Meta to train its AI models, Musk was quoted as saying during a pre-

sentation to investors this month.

Since OpenAI's generative AI tool ChatGPT exploded on the scene in 2022, the technology has been an area of fierce competition between tech giants Microsoft and Google, as well as Meta and start-ups like Anthropic and Stability AI. Musk is one of the world's few investors with deep enough pockets to compete with OpenAI, Google or Meta on AI.

xAI is developing a chatbot named Grok, which can access social media platform X, the former Twitter which is also owned by Musk, in real time. Musk cofounded OpenAI in 2015 but left in 2018, later saying he was uncomfortable with the profit-driven direction the company was taking under the stewardship of CEO Sam Altman. He filed a lawsuit against the company in March, accusing it of breaking its original non-profit mission to make AI research available to all. OpenAI argues that Musk's lawsuit, as well as his embrace of open source development, is little more than a case of sour grapes after leaving the company. — AFP



PARIS: US businessman Elon Musk addresses participants via videoconference during the 8th edition of the Vivatex technology startups and innovation fair, at the Porte de Versailles exhibition centre in Paris. — AFP

G7 urges Zionist entity to protect Palestinian banking services

STRESA, Italy: G7 finance ministers urged Zionist entity on Saturday not to disrupt "vital financial transactions" in the occupied Palestinian territories, following indications it could cut off Palestinian banks.

"We call on (Zionist entity) to take the necessary measures to ensure that correspondent banking services between (Zionist entity) and Palestinian banks remain in place, so that vital financial transactions and critical trade and services continue," read the final statement following the talks in Italy.

The G7 ministers who had gathered in Stresa for the two-day finance summit also urged Zion-

ist entity "to release withheld clearance revenues to the Palestinian Authority, in view of its urgent fiscal needs". And they asked Zionist entity "to remove or relax other measures that have negatively impacted commerce to avoid further exacerbating the economic situation in the West Bank".

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen had on Thursday expressed concern at Zionist entity's "threats" to cut off Palestinian banks from their Zionist entity correspondent banks. Zionist entity's finance minister Bezalel Smotrich said Wednesday he planned not to renew a vital arrangement between financial institutions, which is due to expire within weeks. Yellen warned of the eventual risk of a "humanitarian crisis" were this to happen, and said she had raised her concerns with Zionist entity. "These banking channels are critical for processing transactions that enable almost \$8 billion a year in imports from Zionist entity, including electricity, water, fuel, and food,"

she said. They also facilitate "almost \$2 billion a year in exports on which Palestinian livelihoods depend". Smotrich also threatened to stop transferring tax funds to the Palestinian Authority and to end Norway's role in facilitating the transfers.

Under peace agreements brokered in part by Norway in the 1990s, Zionist entity collects money for the Palestinian Authority, which exercises limited autonomy in parts of the West Bank. But Zionist entity has blocked transfers since shortly after the Oct 7 attacks. Smotrich's threat came after Norway joined Ireland and Spain earlier this week in recognizing a Palestinian state. The Zionist entity cabinet this year approved a plan to transfer to Norway tax funds designated for the Palestinian Authority for its staff in Gaza. Some Zionist entity officials, especially far-right ministers like Smotrich, have called for stopping the fund transfers out of concern that they could be utilized by Hamas. — AFP

What are the costs behind Trump's economic proposals?

WASHINGTON: Republican former president Donald Trump once dubbed himself a "Tariff Man" seeking to boost consumer coffers. As he makes another White House bid in 2024, tariff hikes—this time on all US imports—are again on the table.

But analysts estimate the new levies could bring added consumer costs of some \$500 billion annually, while other proposals like tax cut extensions could further inflate the national deficit. What are Trump's key economic policies and their consequences? Trump has advocated for at least a 10 percent tariff on imports from all trading partners, describing this as "a ring around the country." This would hit some \$3 trillion in goods, at 2023 import levels.

On Chinese goods, Trump floated levies of 60 percent or higher, warning last month: "You screw us and we'll screw you." The tariff revenues would in turn help to offset extensions to sweeping tax cuts approved in 2017 under his administration's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA), with some provisions due to expire after 2025.

While the act lowered income taxes for many Americans, they have also been criticized for being more beneficial to the wealthy. At a rally this month, Trump pledged a "middle class, upper class, lower class, business class, big tax cut." He has vowed to reverse President Joe Biden's electric vehicle subsidies as well, among other moves.

A 10 percent across-the-board tariff and more on China would cost an average American household at least \$1,700 in increased taxes each year, according to a report this week from the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE). The toll "will be nearly five times those caused by the Trump tariff shocks through late 2019, generating additional costs to consumers from this channel alone of about \$500 billion per year," it said.

Those new consumer costs translate to at least 1.8 percent of GDP, the nonpartisan Washington-based institute said, also noting the potential negative effects of foreign retaliation and lost competitiveness.

Extending Trump's tax cuts for the next decade would add \$4.6 trillion to the deficit, according to a report this month by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), a nonpartisan federal agency. CBO's earlier cost estimate for an extension was \$3.5 trillion through 2033. This means policymakers might have to find ways to offset the hit to the deficit, such as by lowering spending.

Renewed trade wars will also "more than offset the benefit from lower taxes," said Oxford Economics in an April analysis. Trump's proposals shift tax burdens "away from the well-off and toward lower-income members of society," said PIIE senior fellows Kimberly Clausing and Mary Lovely, who wrote the report. Fully extending TCJA provisions would "entail about one percent of GDP in tax cuts, accruing disproportionately to the top end of the income distribution," PIIE estimates.

Tariffs also act as a tax on consumption, and lower-income households spend a much larger share of their income while wealthier households can save more. "As fiscal policy, the Trump agenda amounts to regressive tax cuts, only partially paid for by regressive tax increases," said the PIIE report. Consumers could also see inflation rise as much as 0.6 percentage points, said Oxford Economics, if Republicans double down on tax cuts and tariffs, and repeal the clean energy provisions of Biden's landmark Inflation Reduction Act. — AFP

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

Cautious Fed, dovish ECB highlight divergence of global policy outlook

US inflation falls, but still short of desired goal

KUWAIT: In the latest US FOMC meeting minutes, participants indicated that while inflation eased over the past year, recent data suggested lack of further progress towards reaching the 2 percent desired level. Furthermore, some participants indicated their willingness to tighten policy further if inflation remains sticky to a point where hiking becomes appropriate. The meeting minutes come following an incremental improvement in inflation, where the April CPI figure showed inflation at 3.4 percent down from 3.6 percent in March.

Despite this, "many participants noted signs that the finances of low- and moderate-income households were increasingly coming under pressure, which these participants saw as a downside risk to the outlook for consumption." Moreover, "they pointed to increased usage of credit cards and buy-now-pay-later services, as well as increased delinquency rates for some types of consumer loans." Officials indicated uncertainty about how long it would take to get inflation back to 2 percent, and how much impact high interest rates are having to get to their goal. The hawkish tone revealed in the minutes was followed by strengthening of the greenback as well as decline in equities.

Unemployment claims fall

The number of people filing for unemployment benefits in the US fell by 8,000 to 215,000 claims from 223,000 previously, below market expectations of 220,000 claims. The numbers suggest a historically resilient labor market despite a historical tightening cycle by the Fed and a recent uptick of the unemployment rate in April.

US business activity rises

Business activity in the US is booming. The PMI composite index, which measures activity in both manufacturing and services sectors, rose to a 25-month high of 54.4 in May. This indicates that businesses are confident about the future, as output and order books are rising. Services PMI rose to 54.8 from 51.4 previously, a 12-month high, while the manufacturing PMI increased to 50.9 from 50.0 in April. Chris Williamson, Chief Business Economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence, stated that the readings "put the US economy back on course for another solid GDP gain in the second quarter." "Not only has output risen in response to renewed order book growth, but business confidence has lifted higher to signal brighter prospects for the year ahead," Wil-

liamson added. However, he warned that "selling price inflation has meanwhile ticked higher and continues to signal modestly above-target inflation," complicating the path to the Fed's desired 2 percent inflation goal. The US dollar index closed the week at 104.72.

Eurozone composite PMI

In the eurozone, composite PMI reached a 12-month high of 52.3 driven by higher than expected growth in the manufacturing sector. Manufacturing PMI rose to a 15-month high of 47.4, above expectations of a 46.6 print but remains in contraction territory. Meanwhile,

to the upcoming June 6 ECB meeting. Markets are strongly pricing in a 25bps rate cut by the ECB for the upcoming meeting. The EUR/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.0845.

Inflation prints above expectations

Inflation in Britain slowed down, but not as much as expected. This surprised economists and investors, making it less likely the Bank of England will cut interest rates next month. Prices overall rose 2.3 percent compared to last year lower than March's 3.2 percent reading. This is the slowest increase since July 2021.

Rates - 26th May 2024

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0864	1.0803	1.0884	1.0845	1.0770	1.0940	1.0895
GBP	1.2699	1.2676	1.2761	1.2740	1.2680	1.2860	1.2756
JPY	155.60	155.47	157.19	156.99	156.30	157.60	154.86
CHF	0.9092	0.9077	0.9159	0.9148	0.9100	0.9180	0.9057

services PMI remained unchanged at 53.3. The rise in business activity was supported by the bloc's largest economy, Germany, which recorded a 12-month high composite PMI of 52.2 after logging increases in both manufacturing and services activity. On the other hand, France's composite PMI fell from 50.5 to 49.1, taking it back into contraction territory. Markets reacted positively following the release of the data, with both the Euro and European equities rising.

However, the drop was smaller than expected (2.1 percent) and some inflation measures, like services inflation, were higher than predicted. Investors now think a rate cut in June and August are unlikely. Despite the surprise in inflation print, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is portraying it as a positive sign for the economy by commenting that "today marks a major moment for the economy, with inflation back to normal."

Mixed PMI data

PMI data out of the UK showed that the manufacturing sector grew from 49.1 to 51.3, officially entering expansion territory and reaching a 22-month high. Meanwhile, services sector activity fell to 52.9 from 55.0 previously, reaching a 6-month low. Composite PMI decreased to 52.8 from 54.10 in April. Chris Williamson, Chief Business Economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence, stated that the readings showed an "encouraging revival of manufacturing accompanied by sustained, but slower, service sector growth." The sur-

vey also showed cooling services inflation, a welcome sign for the Bank of England, whose officials have lamented about elevated inflation in the services sector.

Retail sales decline


Retail sales in the UK fell 2.3 percent m/m, more than the 0.4 percent decline that was expected. Core retail sales, excluding auto motor fuel sales, fell 2 percent on the month versus previous and forecasted figure of a 0.6 percent drop. The poor retail sales reading was attributed to the poor rainy weather in the UK as well as tight financial conditions that has households squeezed. Markets are pricing in a rate cut by the Bank of England in November. The GBP/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.2740.

Members of the Reserve Bank of Australia discussed their decision to hold interest rates at 4.35 percent earlier this month. The last meeting marked the fourth month in a row with no change. While inflation is slowing down, it's taking longer than expected. The bank is cautious because the impact of their actions takes time and they're unsure how businesses and wages will react to a slowing economy. Their main goal is to get inflation back to the 2-3 percent range, and they'll keep a close eye on the global economy, domestic spending, inflation, and jobs to decide what to do next. They are open to either raising or lowering rates in the future depending on the data. Markets are pricing in the first rate cut to occur nearly 12 months from now in May 2025 followed by no further action until year-end. The AUD/USD currency pair closed the week at 0.6627.

The Reserve Bank of New Zealand maintained the cash rate at 5.5 percent, meeting market expectations. The central bank signaled that monetary policy needs to remain restrictive. Furthermore, the committee views that inflation is falling slower than expected and remains above its target range. In a more hawkish stance, some committee members refused to rule out the possibility of another hike should the circumstances require it. Reserve Bank of New Zealand Assistant Governor Karen Silk said that she is "concerned about near-term inflation risks." She also highlighted that the central bank "adjusted its modeling after it underestimated the strength of domestic inflation." The NZD/USD currency pair closed the week at 0.6120.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30690.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 23 MAY 2024

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	35,423	7,784.40	-0.6%	1.2%	4.1%	596,022,530	176,566,095	41,150	17.3	1.3	82.0%
Main Market	7,776	5,983.54	0.4%	1.1%	7.4%	1,062,930,964	94,493,149	47,792	11.7	0.9	18.0%
All Share	43,199	7,134.67	-0.4%	1.2%	4.7%	1,658,953,494	271,059,244	88,942	13.2	1.0	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	26,437	1,763.66	-0.5%	1.9%	7.1%	227,017,618	91,608,368	15,954	17.3	1.3	61.20%
Basic Materials	470	831.92	-1.0%	-2.7%	11.5%	4,073,971	2,668,776	990	9.6	1.6	1.09%
Consumer Discretionary	1,133	1,646.51	-1.8%	-2.0%	2.7%	113,264,912	17,044,689	6,682	12.0	1.3	2.62%
Consumer Staples	283	929.51	8.2%	11.6%	41.1%	3,017,904	1,530,989	493	26.3	1.5	0.65%
Energy	228	1,087.18	2.5%	2.4%	14.6%	20,228,491	2,104,646	1,090	10.4	0.8	0.53%
Financial Services	4,778	1,377.55	0.9%	3.3%	13.6%	714,849,666	76,281,842	27,483	14.1	0.9	11.06%
Health Care	214	445.90	-4.7%	-8.5%	-7.5%	456	327,051	2	12.9	1.5	0.50%
Industrials	2,534	746.98	-1.4%	-2.8%	-17.7%	118,562,107	22,984,189	10,290	12.3	0.9	5.87%
Insurance	1,020	2,491.33	1.1%	0.2%	8.7%	30,162,892	2,563,591	2,198	8.6	1.2	2.36%
Real Estate	2,834	1,332.21	1.0%	3.6%	9.8%	391,642,304	38,386,730	18,052	13.2	0.8	6.56%
Technology	24	1,731.45	-9.2%	-9.2%	199.4%	819,951	190,561.56	257	NM	2.0	0.06%
Telecommunications	3,070	1,003.60	-2.2%	-3.8%	-9.2%	31,718,593	15,126,518	5,104	16.4	1.3	7.11%
Utilities	174	415.79	0.0%	-4.8%	-8.7%	3,594,629	568,017	347	13.5	1.3	0.40%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
EQUIPMENT	45.3	70.30%	48,818,572	2,076,539,429	2,320
MENA	85	32.81%	143,674,241	12,031,203	5,798
MASAKEN	35.0	28.21%	32,232,152	1,025,532	911
WETHAQ	51	27.18%	24,719,010	1,176,681	1,391
KGL	51.6	25.24%	8,568,085	384,874	502

Top Losers

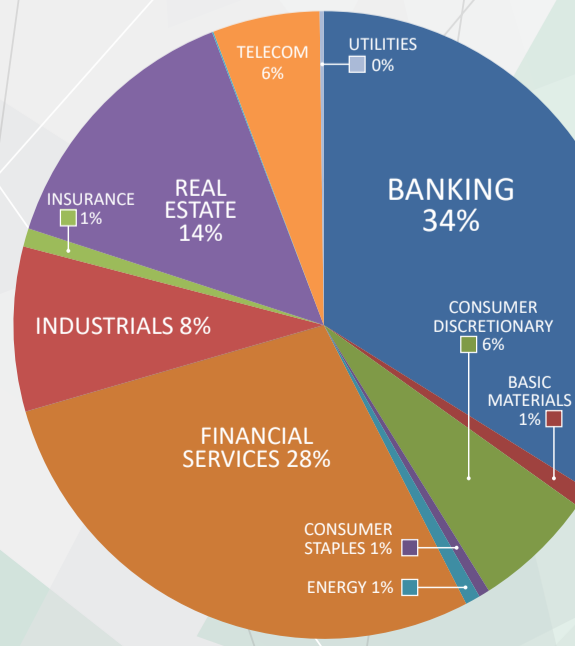
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
PAPCO	159	-20.90%	2,889,984	474,563	629
UNICAP	157	-15.14%	23,647,582	4,021,303	1,327
FUTUREKID	158	-14.13%	13,552,236	2,216,391	999
MASHAER	75.8	-8.83%	6,358,936	481,518	657
MRC	84.5	-8.15%	88,995	7,498	31

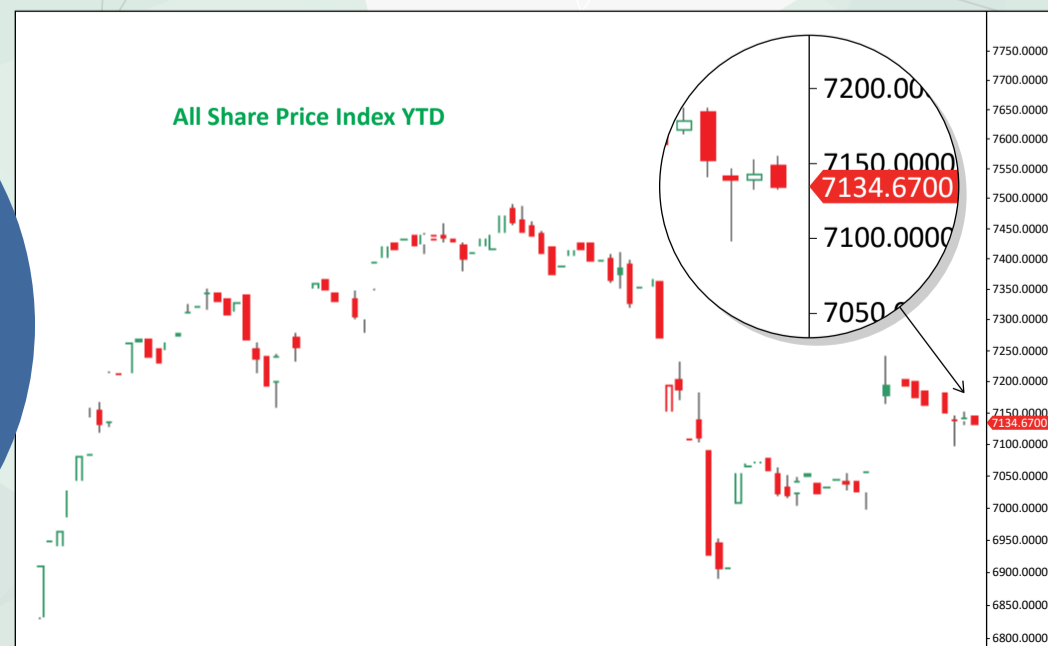
Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
MENA	85	32.81%	143,674,241	12,031,203	5,798
INOVEST	112	2.75%	117,387,735	13,791,341	4,767
MANAZEL	37	18.21%	93,863,517	3,371,913	1,932
GFH	89.7	7.04%	89,768,579	7,947,189	2,102
KIB	179	4.07%	73,450,278	13,110,412	1,097

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	744	-0.13%	41,732,282	31,073,119	4,952
NBK	863	-1.37%	28,180,921	24,490,891	3,634
INOVEST	112	2.75%	117,387,735	13,791,341	4,767
ZAIN	459	-2.75%	29,150,337	13,661,882	4,358
KIB	179	4.07%	73,450,278	13,110,412	1,097





Market Summary:

- Premier volume and value dropped by 21% and 34%, while the Main market increased by 54% and 23%, respectively.
- The Premier index retreated after failing to overcome the resistance level, while the Main index showed stability.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7134, with support levels at 7105, 7085, and 7041, and resistance at 7162. The Premier index closed at 7784, with support levels at 7767, 7716, and 7685, and resistance at 7808. The Main index closed at 5983, with support levels at 5970, 5959, and 5940, and resistance at 5990.

Business

NBK attends Career Fair of 5th Wave of 'Partners to Employ Them' initiative

Initiative for the disabled within bank's CSR commitments



NBK team at the Career Fair booth.

KUWAIT: As part of its leading CSR contributions in Kuwait, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) participated in the Career Fair of the 5th Wave of "Partners to Employ Them" initiative for the disabled 2023-2024, organized by the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA) in collaboration with the Human Construction Society for Social Development (HCS).

During the Career Fair held on May 21 at the Cultural Center of Kuwait University – Shadadiya, the participating staff of NBK Group Human Resources presented the available vacancies for the disabled, as well as responded to all inquiries raised by the participants. Participation in career fairs stems from its importance as a platform for supporting national talent to promote sustainable human capital for the future. Commenting on this, Talent Acquisition Manager at National Bank of Kuwait Jarrah Al-Shatti said: "We are always keen on extending all sorts of support to all segments of society, particularly people with special needs. In this regard, our efforts in-

clude providing internship and programs to support university students and job candidates from people with special needs, to facilitate mainstreaming them into the bank, which also reflects our commitment to inclusion and diversity."

"At NBK, we firmly believe in providing equal opportunities for all segments. Therefore, we have unwavering commitment to extend all sorts of support to the cherished special needs segment to drive their knowledge acquisition, regarding this as a national duty and unshakable commitment," he added.

"NBK believes in the potential of every individual in our society, and the need to provide them with due support for learning and development. Reflecting this belief, we have a policy for recruiting certain categories of special needs people, in cooperation with the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs (PADA) and the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM)," he noted. To ensure ethical hiring practices, NBK adheres to strict governance frameworks, including fair la-



Jarrah Al-Shatti

We firmly believe in promoting equality and providing equal opportunities for all social segments

bor standards and the provision of ability and work psychometric tests to all candidates, guaranteeing a transparent and unbiased recruitment process. The bank's policies are rigorously designed to combat

discrimination and promote a culture of equality and fairness across all hiring activities.

It is worth mentioning that NBK is the first bank in the Middle East to assign sign language trained staff in all branches to serve hearing-impaired customers. It has dedicated branches equipped with the latest services to accommodate and facilitate banking for customers with visual, hearing or physical disabilities, maintaining the following practices to cater to special needs: ATMs equipped with Braille keyboards and headphones, enabling visually impaired customers to make easy and secure withdrawals, Braille printing facilities, iPads with speech-to-text functionality for visually impaired customers, wheelchair access to branches (available in all branches), and reserved, clearly marked parking spaces for special needs customers. Moreover, the bank provides easily accessible safe deposit boxes, debit and credit cards with photo for easy identification, when requested.

France 'determined' to progress at G7 on global wealth tax

STRESA, Italy: France's finance minister said Friday he was "determined" to advance on a global wealth tax, despite concerns from the United States and Germany and other unfinished, pending tax reforms.

"I am totally determined to move forward" on the subject, said Bruno Le Maire on the sidelines of a meeting of G7 finance ministers in Stresa, northern Italy. On Thursday, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, also attending the G7 meeting, voiced opposition to the plan that has been championed by Brazil during its presidency of the G20.

Yellen said she was opposed to "this particular formulation" that would redistribute proceeds among countries based on their exposure to climate-related damage. German Finance Minister Christian Lindner said Friday that Berlin, too, "views the new elements of a global tax agenda with the utmost skepticism", calling for focus on "what we have already worked out."

But Le Maire suggested that progress on the wealth tax was possible despite opposition. "It was the same thing the United States said when it came to taxing digital giants," he said, referring to an OECD plan aimed at a fairer distribution of tax revenues of multinationals. Nearly 140 countries, including the United States, have agreed on a new international tax architecture for the biggest companies.

The first pillar aims at a fairer distribution of tax revenues, notably from US tech giants, while the second is a minimum tax rate of 15 percent on multinationals. A number of countries have already adopted the second pillar in recent months, including at the EU level. — AFP

Pakistan reform program to push growth: IMF team

ISLAMABAD: At the request of the Pakistani authorities, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) team, led by Nathan Porter, the IMF's mission chief to Pakistan visited Islamabad during May 13-23, 2024, to discuss Pakistan's plans for a home-grown economic program that can be supported under the IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

"Building on the economic stabilization achieved through the successful completion of the 2023 Stand-by Arrangement, the IMF and the Pakistani authorities made significant progress toward reaching a Staff Level Agreement (SLA) on a comprehensive economic policy and reform program that can be supported under an Extended Fund Facility (EFF)," a statement issued by Porter said following the visit.

"The authorities' reform program aims to move Pakistan from economic stabilization

With little to buy, Cubans abroad send home food, not money

HAVANA: Maria Paez feels relieved after receiving a package of food items including eggs, meat, and yogurt from her children in Miami - bought online and shipped to Havana. These days, with a severe economic crisis and food shortages, Cubans abroad increasingly prefer to send care packages to family back home, rather than cash transfers.

"Receiving these types of products is a relief for us" and, "in terms of spending money, the savings are substantial," Paez, a 59-year-old mathematics graduate told AFP.

"Receiving eggs is very important" because "it is a guaranteed breakfast," added Paez, who has lived alone with her husband since their two children migrated to the United States. In total, she received 18 products, a lifeline in Cuba which is facing its worst economic crisis in three decades, with shortages of food, medicine and fuel. After several years of double-digit inflation, a carton of 30 eggs now costs 3,300 pesos (\$27.50) on the communist island, where the average salary is 4,800 pesos.

Cuba's bleak economic circumstances have pushed some five percent of the population to flee in recent years. Online stores offering the delivery of essential products to Cuba have flourished as demand rises. Most are based in the United States - home to two million Cubans - but they have also cropped up in Mexico, Canada, and Spain.

Every day dozens of delivery vans and private vehicles can be seen on the streets of Cuba distributing packages of food items that are in short supply, or whose prices have skyrocketed since the government authorized private-owned stores in 2021.

At one such delivery service in the US city of Hialeah, near Miami, which has a large Cuban population, Luis Manuel Mendez, 59, told AFP he sends food, medicine and school supplies to the two children he left behind when he emigrated a

year-and-a-half ago. "Things in Cuba are very expensive," so "it is much more feasible to buy it here and send it," said Mendez. His children "don't want money, what they want is for me to send them basic necessities."

Nearby, there is a constant stream of people carrying bags to another agency which coordinates the sending of food packages to Cuba. Maribel Ruiz, 62, said she helps out an aunt and cousins back home.

"The problem is that you send the money, but there is nothing to buy in the stores there. You have to send them packages of medicine, food, clothes, everything." Cuba has been battling sky-high inflation and shortages since the pandemic - which hit

seven others named in a joint paper are Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Luxembourg and Slovakia. The issue was discussed during a meeting of EU ministers in Brussels Friday.

EU competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager said Brussels would start with a "fact-finding mission" and then "figure out what tools are actually necessary in order to prevent territorial restrictions that make prices rise where they shouldn't". The commission, the EU's antitrust watchdog, would work with member states to find a solution, she told reporters after the meeting.

The constraints cost EU consumers more than 14 billion euros a year, the eight countries said, pointing to an estimate from a 2020 commission study. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis also urged the EU to crack down on giant firms at the weekend in a letter to commission president, Ursula von der Leyen.

The free movement of goods is one of the key pillars of the EU's single market. "Removing trade barriers should be a key priority for the single market. This helps in keeping consumer retail prices for food and non-food products fair. Something which is especially important in times of high consumer prices," Dutch Economy Minister Micky Adriaansens said. The eight states propose "a concrete way forward towards an EU ban" on restricting the exchange of goods within the bloc "by amending existing or new common EU rules or instruments", she added. — AFP



HAVANA, Cuba: Maria Paez, 59, organizes the food that her children sent her from Miami through a food remittance distributor in Havana. Due to the crisis, Cuban emigrants choose to send food, sacrificing the vital cash remittances that the island requires. — AFP

tourism hard - plus a tightening of US sanctions in 2021, combined with structural weaknesses in the economy. According to the Havana Consulting Group, based in Miami, remittances from the United States to Cuba reached a record \$3.7 billion in 2019, becoming the country's second source of income after the export of medical services, and above tourism. Cuban economist Emilio Morales, who chairs the consultancy, said this figure has since dropped "from \$2 billion in 2022 to \$1.9 billion in 2023." Morales said emigrants also increasingly prefer "to invest large sums of money in getting their families" out of the country or pay online companies to send packages to their door. — AFP

EU told to tackle differences of food cost across bloc

BRUSSELS: Eight EU states urged Brussels Friday to clamp down on multinational giants unfairly limiting the sale of products within the bloc, forcing European consumers to pay more. Their call comes a day after the European Commission slapped a 337.5-million-euro (\$366-million) antitrust fine on Mondelez, the US confectioner behind major brands including Toblerone and Oreo, for restricting cross-border sales of chocolate.

The cost of living is a hot topic ahead of EU-wide elections in June as European households have been hit hard by soaring consumer prices following the coronavirus pandemic and Russia's war on Ukraine. Inflation has slowed down since its peak in late 2022 but food costs remain high. Several EU countries believe addressing unfairness in the single market is one way to help struggling consumers. Eight EU governments led by the Netherlands said there are price differences for the same products within the European Union and Brussels "should take action" if it was because big multinationals were limiting the sale of goods in the EU's single market. The

MONDAY, MAY 27, 2024



A member of Beirut's Eleven Brothers takes part in a cricket tournament at a parking lot where the migrants' team plays weekly in the Lebanese capital Beirut.



Migrants living in Lebanon compete in a cricket match.

Sunday cricket an escape for migrant workers in Lebanon



In a Beirut car park, migrant workers cheer as their teams face off in a cricket tournament, a moment of respite in crisis-hit Lebanon, where working conditions are often tough. "Sunday we are so happy... We eat together, we laugh together," said cricketer Pradeepa Silva, a 42-year-old Sri Lankan, as she and her teammates prepared coconut rice and other traditional food nearby to share. "Work is very tiring" and workers are stressed and worried, said Silva, who is employed as a housemaid six days a week and pays for her daughter's university studies back home.

Every Sunday, players mainly from Sri Lanka but also from the Philippines, India and Pakistan gather in Beirut's Ashrafieh neighborhood to play cricket - a little-known sport in Lebanon. Migrant workers are employed under Lebanon's controversial "kafala" sponsorship system, which rights groups have repeatedly denounced saying that it enables a wide range of abuses. On May 19, several hundred people gathered for a tournament that also brought together traditional food stalls, a DJ playing Bollywood hits and other music, teams from the British and Sri Lankan embassies and young Syrian refugee players.

Iris Sagario from the Philippines ran onto the field for the Roaring Lions women's team, wearing an orange and blue shirt with her name printed on the back. "I love cricket," said the 43-year-old, who works as a housekeeper. "I'm very excited to play every Sunday" - her only day off. After winning their match, Sagario's team broke out into cheers, hugging and high-fiving each other. They went on to take the women's trophy.

'Lord's of Lebanon'

More than 160,000 migrants from 84 nationalities were in Lebanon last year, according to a report from the International Organization for Migration. With daily bombardment in south Lebanon as Hezbollah and the Zionist army clash amid tensions over the Zionist entity-Hamas conflict in Gaza, some foreign

named the car park they have been using for around two decades "Lord's of Lebanon", a reference to the famous Lord's cricket ground in London, which is known as the "home of cricket". Matches in the car park were halted for five years when the players lost access to the site but resumed in 2022, Sugath said. His team changed its name to

leaves migrant workers at the mercy of their employers, amid persistent reports of physical and sexual abuse, unpaid wages and long work hours.

Sugath appealed to all employers to give workers "at least one hour, two hours off on Sunday... Let them have some freedom, let them use the phone, call their families". As the men's com-

players "never think about" politics. An electrician by trade, Singh wore his team's traditional cricket whites, with long white trousers and shoes, and was among those in charge of the coin toss to decide which teams would field or bat first.

The Lebanese 500 lira coin he used, valued until 2019 at around 35 US



Foreign workers attend an event in a parking lot in Beirut, where the Eleven Brothers migrants' cricket team organizes weekly matches for foreigners living in Lebanon.

embassies have advised their nationals to leave the country. "At first I was worried" but "my sir (employer) assured me that all is good," said Sagario, who was also in Lebanon in 2006, when the Zionist entity and Hezbollah last went to war. "I'm choosing to stay because... I don't know what I'll do if I go back to the Philippines. I want to give financial (help) to my family," she said. Curious passersby sometimes peered over a tumbledown stone wall to watch the matches.

Organizer Fernando Sugath, 52, from Sri Lanka said some players nick-

the Saint Joseph Cricket Club in honor of the neighboring church that helped them return to the site.

'Let them have some freedom'

Migrant workers at the cricket match "are very lucky that they've got some good employers who give them the Sunday off", said Sugath, who first came to Lebanon in 1996 as a cleaner and is now an administrative assistant. Rights groups have long criticized Lebanon's restrictive sponsorship system, saying it facilitates exploitation and

petition kicked off, big hitters began smashing the ball into the trees lining the car park as fielders scrambled for a catch. Majid Satti, 39, from Pakistan, captains the Eleven Brothers team - with five players from Pakistan and six from India - which came runner-up in the men's tournament.

Their two countries have long had a strained relationship, but "we have no issue... we are all like brothers here," said Satti, a concierge who has been in Lebanon for 15 years. Vice-captain Raju Singh, 41, from India, said the

cents, is now worth less than a single cent following Lebanon's economic collapse, during which some migrant workers were abandoned by their employers and others pushed to leave the country. Singh said he loved cricket and travelled almost 30 kilometers each week for the Sunday games. "When we finish (and) we go home, we are waiting for next Sunday," he said. — AFP



Players of a cricket team for migrants pose for a picture during a tournament at a parking lot.



Team members and fans wait for the start of a cricket tournament at a parking lot where the Eleven Brothers migrants' team play weekly in the Lebanese capital Beirut. Every Sunday, players mainly from Sri Lanka but also from countries including the Philippines, India and Pakistan, gather at a carpark in Beirut's Ashrafieh neighborhood to play cricket - a little-known sport in football and basketball-mad Lebanon. — AFP photos



(From left) French actress and master of the ceremony of the 77th Cannes film festival Camille Cottin and French actor Laurent Lafitte stand past Croatian director Nebojsa Slijepcevic, French director Jacques Audiard, Spanish actress Karla Sofia Gascon, US director George Lucas, US director Sean Baker, US director and president of the Jury of the 77th Cannes Film Festival Greta Gerwig, French director Coralie Fargeat, Iranian director and producer Mohammad Rasoulof, Indian director Payal Kapadia, Indian actress Chhaya Kadam and Indian actress Divya Prabha posing with their trophies past Japanese film director, producer, screenplay writer and film editor Hirokazu Kore-Eda on stage during the Closing Ceremony at the 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France, on May 25, 2024. — AFP photos

WINNERS AT THE 77TH CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

The 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival ended Saturday in the south of France with the awarding of its top prize, the Palme d'Or. Here is a list of the winners:

Palme d'Or: Sean Baker for "Anora"

Grand Prix: Payal Kapadia for "All We Imagine as Light"

Best director: Miguel Gomes for "Grand Tour"

Best actress: Karla Sofia Gascon, Zoe Saldana, Selena Gomez and Adriana Paz for "Emilia Perez"

Best actor: Jesse Plemons for "Kinds of Kindness"

Best screenplay: Coralie Fargeat for "The Substance"

Special Jury Prize: Mohammad Rasoulof for "The Seed of the Sacred Fig"

Camera d'Or for best first film: Halfdan Ullmann Tondel for "Armand"

Best short film: Nebojsa Slijepcevic for "The Man who Could Not Remain Silent" — AFP



Norwegian director Halfdan Ullmann Tondel poses during a photocall after he won the Camera d'Or for the film 'Armand' next to director Chiang Wei Liang (2nd left) and director You Qiao Yin (center) after winning the Camera d'Or Special mention for the film 'Mongrel', flanked by Congolese and Belgian director, songwriter, artistic director and President of the Camera d'Or jury Baloji (left) and French actress, director, producer and President of the Camera d'Or jury Emmanuelle Beart during the Closing Ceremony.



Portuguese director Miguel Gomes poses during a photocall after he won the Best Director prize for the film 'Grand Tour'.



(From left) Indian actress Divya Prabha, Indian director Payal Kapadia, Indian actress Chhaya Kadam and Indian actress Kani Kusruti pose during a photocall.



Spanish actress Karla Sofia Gascon

Iranian director's identity was hidden even from his actress

A hard-hitting Iranian film about the country's women-led protests that has wowed Cannes was kept so secret that even its star didn't know who was making it for several months, she told the festival on Saturday. "The Seed of the Sacred Fig" has blown away critics at the Cannes Film Festival with its powerful depiction of a family torn apart by the "Women, Life, Freedom" protests that erupted in Iran in 2022. It is considered a frontrunner for an award at the closing ceremony later on Saturday.

Its director, Mohammad Rasoulof, got the idea while serving time in prison for his previous uncompromising films and had to make it in extreme secrecy. Setareh Maleki, who plays one of the daughters, said she was not afraid to get involved. "I'm a bit crazy so choosing this role wasn't a problem for me," she told reporters in Cannes. "I was the first or second person to join the team

and for months, people didn't tell me who the director was in order to ensure the project remained safe.

"But I guessed it was Mohammad Rasoulof. Who (else) would have this courage?" she added. Rasoulof, who fled the country just before the festival, had a message for his fellow filmmakers in Iran: "Don't be intimidated." Iran's rulers "have no other weapons than terror", he said. "We must not fear them. We must believe in freedom and fight for a dignified life in our country." "The Iranian regime, which presents itself as the supreme power, is in a panic that our stories will be told. It's absurd," he added.

Rasoulof said he got the idea for the film after meeting a prison official who admitted he was challenged constantly by his children over his work, and thought regularly about hanging himself in front of the prison doors. He said the theme of the film was indoctrination by people who have "turned religion into a political weapon". "It's a totalitarian situation, a dictatorship, which is taking root in the country in the name of religion. "The Islamic Republic has taken the Iranian people hostage," he said. — AFP



Iranian director and producer Mohammad Rasoulof poses during a photocall after he won a Special Jury Prize for the film "The Seed of the Sacred Fig" during the Closing Ceremony.

'Palme d'Or whisperer': US distributor Neon wins fifth straight Cannes prize

A tiny movie distributor founded seven years ago has won at the Cannes Film Festival for a stunning fifth consecutive time on Saturday. Neon, a New York-based indie movie outfit, has been dubbed "the Palme d'Or whisperer", for a track record that turns the world's most powerful movie producers green with envy. "Parasite", "Titane", "Triangle of Sadness" and "Anatomy of a Fall" - the last four winners in Cannes - were all released in US theatres by Neon, under deals struck before they won the prize.

And they did it again on Saturday with "Anora", US indie director Sean Baker's raw and often-hilarious story about a New York erotic dancer who strikes gold with a wealthy client. "Palme d'Or X five. Merci, Cannes," the company posted on social media, adding a photo of five-time NBA basketball champion Kobe Bryant. Neon purchases - and more recently, has produced - movies that it then distributes to theatres, as well as running marketing and awards campaigns for the films.

It bought North American rights to "Anora" weeks before Cannes kicked off, in a move that will now only accelerate the company's soothsaying reputation. Last week, just days after its director secretly escaped from Iran, Neon also snapped up "The Seed of the Sacred Fig", which won a special jury prize on Saturday. That film - about a family's struggles amid political unrest in Tehran - was made by Mohammad Rasoulof, who fled an Iranian prison sentence for "collusion against national security" days before Cannes kicked off.

Weinstein, Chan

Neon founder Tom Quinn had spent decades working in indie films with producers including Harvey Weinstein, be-

fore deciding to branch out on his own. In 2016, he struck a deal with China's Sparkle Roll Media, fronted by screen legend Jackie Chan. Their first film was "Colossal", an oddball sci-fi starring Anne Hathaway. Neon was officially launched the following year.

Critical success soon came with ice-skating comedy "I, Tonya", which won an Oscar for star Allison Janney. Following the election of Donald Trump as United States president, Chinese investors swiftly departed, replaced by Texas billionaire Dan Friedkin. But

the stunning, genre-hopping drama about a poor family infiltrating a rich family's home, which became a sensation. Not only did it win the Palme d'Or in 2019, but it went on to become the first non-English-language film to win best picture at the Oscars.

Since then, Cannes has proven to be a happy hunting ground for Neon, which has grown to around 55 staff. Neon bought body horror "Titane" almost two years before it won the 2021 Palme d'Or. And the company won bidding wars for both "Triangle of Sad-



(From left) US actor Karren Karagulian, US producer Alex Coco, US actress Mikey Madison, US director Sean Baker, US producer Samantha Quan and Armenian actor Vache Tovmasyan pose with the trophy during a photocall after they won the Palme d'Or for the film 'Anora' during the Closing Ceremony at the 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France, on May 25, 2024.

film-buying remained in the hands of Quinn, who had worked for years and on multiple films with South Korean director Bong Joon-ho.

"It didn't matter what he was going to do next - it was going to be a Neon film," Quinn said in a recent interview. "We were going to go for broke, and pre-buy it," he told "The Town" podcast. That film turned out to be "Parasite",

ness" and "Anatomy of a Fall" immediately following their Cannes premieres, but before the prizes were unveiled. Named after an ephemeral gas that glows when captured inside a glass tube, the company caught lightning in a bottle again Saturday. — AFP

Lifestyle



Actor Edwin Neal who played Hitchhiker in 1974 'The Texas Chainsaw Massacre' movie, attends the Texas Frightmare Weekend in Irving, Texas. — AFP photos



Fans of the 'Texas Chainsaw Massacre' movie gather during the Texas Frightmare Weekend in Irving, Texas.

Minaj's UK concert postponed after her Netherlands arrest

A concert by US rapper Nicki Minaj in Britain was called off at the last minute Saturday night, after the superstar was detained at Amsterdam's main airport on suspicion of possessing soft drugs in an incident she partly live-streamed on social media. The artist was due to perform in Manchester on Saturday, but posted on social media platform X that authorities "said they found weed" in her luggage before briefly taking her into custody.

Minaj said the "pre-rolls" belonged to her security guard and that her bags had been searched "without consent". Police confirmed to AFP that they had detained a 41-year-old American woman on suspicion of trying to export soft drugs to another country but declined to say directly that it was Minaj, as per their usual policy. Military police spokesman Robert Kapel later told AFP that the suspect had been released after the payment of a "reasonable" fine.



US rapper Nicki Minaj

The rapper apologized on X to fans for missing the concert, but said she would be back for a second Manchester show on May 30 and that she would be performing in Birmingham on Sunday as part of her Pink Friday 2 World Tour. "I'll find a way to not only make up the date with the performance but I'm going to create an added bonus for everyone that had a tkt (ticket) for this show. Promise," she wrote. Manchester's Co-op Live arena, where Saturday's show was supposed to take place, said in a statement that tickets would remain valid for a new concert date to be announced soon.

'Free Nicki Minaj'

Thousands of fans had been allowed into the venue on Saturday before the show was called off. Videos posted to social media showed a packed arena, long queues of concertgoers, and supporters chanting "Free Nicki Minaj" in solidarity with the detained superstar. The hashtag #FREENICKI also trended on X. A common misconception outside the Netherlands is that cannabis is legal in the country, home to world-famous coffee shops (which often sell weed) that are a huge draw for many tourists. The consumption of small quantities of cannabis is technically illegal but police choose not to enforce the law as part of a "tolerance" policy in place since the 1970s. Transporting drugs to another country is illegal.

'Sabotage'

Minaj suggested in a series of social media posts that the arrest in Amsterdam was part of a plot to sabotage her tour. "So they succeeded at their plan to not let me get on that stage tonight," she wrote on X. "They've been trying to stop me from coming to every show," she said in an Instagram post that did not specify who was attempting to thwart her. "This is what it looks like when ppl (people) are paid big money to try to sabotage a tour after all else failed."

Minaj's profanity-laced lyrics, skin-baring videos and unique, animated flow catapulted her to fame in 2010. Known for a bold sartorial style that includes neon costumes and wigs, Minaj - whose hits include "Starships," "Bang Bang" and "Anaconda" - is considered one of rap's most influential female artists. Her brash personality and penchant for controversy have also made her a tabloid fixture, including over a 2018 incident in which rap rival Cardi B threw a shoe at Minaj and allegedly attempted to fight her.

The rapper also hit the headlines during the COVID-19 pandemic after skipping New York's star-studded Met Gala because of its requirement that attendees be vaccinated. She said she would get the jab only once she had "done enough research". She said a friend of a cousin in Trinidad had experienced swollen testicles after getting the vaccine - claims that sparked a formal rebuttal from the Caribbean nation's health minister. — AFP

Slasher in middle age: 'Texas Chainsaw Massacre' hits 50

It was shot quickly on a limited budget with unknown actors wearing the same sweat-soaked outfits for weeks on end. So if "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" had disappeared without a trace, not many people would have been surprised. Instead, it's celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, a half-century in which it has been the benchmark for a subgenre of horror - the slasher movie.

"There's no corner of the earth that you can go to and say the 'Texas Chainsaw Massacre' title and not have somebody know what you're talking about, whether they've seen the movie or not," said Chase Andersen of Exurbia Films, which owns the rights to the franchise. "It's become part of the modern nomenclature. It's as American as apple pie." Just not the kind of apple pie that grandma made. In 1974, director Tobe Hooper hit upon a formula that would inspire countless copycats: a happy-go-lucky group of young people stumble upon an isolated house occupied by a masked lunatic who proceeds to chop them up with sharp things.

Leatherface - the lunatic - wields a chainsaw and a hammer to devastating effect, cutting up one man as he sits in his wheelchair, disemboweling another as a young woman watches from the meathook he hung her on, and smashing one guy in the head. "Michael Myers ('Halloween') wears a mask, you know, Jason ('Friday the 13th') wears a mask. I mean, Leatherface was the first guy to do it," said Josh Hazard, who had gathered with other horror fans to mark Texas Frightmare Weekend. "It really set a



precedent for how horror movies were going to go."

Genre-defining

If it is now obvious that "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" was something special, it didn't appear like that at the time. Actor Ed Neal, whose early appearance as a wild-eyed hitchhiker presages the violence that is to come, told AFP it hadn't felt like a genre-defining project. "They come in and give me the script. And I go: 'Get the hell out of here with this,'" he said. "I thought, well, nobody will ever see it."

"And here we are." Like the recent Netflix word-of-mouth hit "Baby Reindeer," "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" claims with its opening crawl to have

been based on true events. Some audiences really bought into that, says Neal, who claims some Japanese fans thought it was a documentary. "They thought it was real footage. 'How did they get the camera in there? Didn't they eat the camera guy?' I said: 'yeah, they probably did.'"

'It smelled really bad'

The "Massacre" franchise has mushroomed in the last five decades, with prequels, sequels, remakes and even video games. Still, most fans agree, Leatherface's 1974 outing stands atop the pile. "To this day, there's still not another movie like 'The Texas Chainsaw Massacre'," said Ronnie Hobbs of Gun Interactive, which launched a video game based on

the film last year. "Even the sequels and none of the remakes can capture that grittiness and that uncomfortableness of the original." Perhaps some of that is down to the bare-bones production, says Andersen of Exurbia Films. "Having a shoestring budget... they had to get really creative," he said. "They didn't have the luxury of having multiple props or multiple costumes."

"A perfect example would be Gunnar Hansen when he portrayed Leatherface. He had to wear the same costume throughout the entire shoot, and by the end of the shoot, it smelled really bad." Teri McMinn, who played one of Leatherface's victims, said the film's creative cinematography and its relative lack of actual bloodshed - most of the violence is hinted at, rather than seen - mean she is proud of her part in cinema history. "This particular one is in the Museum of Modern Art," she said, referring to the New York institution which is also holding a week-long exhibition on the movie in August.

One bit of camerawork has entered cinematic folklore as true art - a low angle tracking shot that follows her character as she walks up to the house of horrors. The real terror for McMinn at the time was not the gore, but the prominent place of her backside on the big screen. "I watched it the first time and I went, 'oh, my God.' It was in CinemaScope and Technicolor and I'm just petrified that my mother and my aunt would see it," she laughed. — AFP



Leatherface mask is displayed as fans of the 'Texas Chainsaw Massacre' movie gather during the Texas Frightmare Weekend.



Fans of the 'Texas Chainsaw Massacre' movie gather during the Texas Frightmare Weekend in Irving, Texas.

Richard Sherman, songwriter behind Disney hits dies

Richard Sherman, the writer behind songs in classic Disney movies such as "Mary Poppins" and "The Jungle Book" died Saturday at the age of 95, the film and entertainment company said. He died in Beverly Hills from age-related illness, Disney said. Sherman and his brother Robert, who died in 2012, worked as staff composers for Disney between 1960 and 1973, during which time they wrote more than 200 songs for 27 films and two dozen television productions.

Their work was that of another era, with Hollywood magazine Variety describing their roles as "a job that no longer exists: in-house songwriters for a studio." "Even when they weren't working for the Mouse House,

their songs carried a Disney sensibility - bouncy and positive, without any of the cynicism so prevalent in creative works (including music) in the late 1960s and 1970s," the magazine said. In a statement, Disney described Richard Sherman as a "key member" in founder Walt Disney's "inner circle of creative talents."

The brothers' work included "Chim Chim Cher-ee," a hit from the 1964 film "Mary Poppins," which won them an Oscar for best song. They also won the Academy Award for best score for the movie. Robert Sherman wrote the lyrics and Richard, known as Dick, composed the music, following in the footsteps of their songwriter father Al

Sherman. "We are forever grateful for the mark Richard left on the world, and we extend our deepest condolences to his family," Disney CEO Bob Iger said in a statement.

The brothers were also responsible for hits such as "It's a Small World" and "I Wan'na Be Like You" from "The Jungle Book," and composed the scores for non-Disney works such as 1968's "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang." "The duo's work remains the quintessential lyrical voice of Walt Disney," the company said. They continued collaborating with Disney throughout the years, with Richard Sherman writing new lyrics for the live action version of "The Jungle Book" in 2016 and composing songs for "Christopher Robin" in 2018. He was "literally a never-ending fountain of stories, of facts, of anecdotes, and of bits and pieces of everything that had happened," actor Tom Hanks said in 2013. — AFP



Richard Sherman

Sports

Boston Celtics roar back to push Pacers to brink of elimination

Celtics found a way to slow down Indiana's high-octane offense

LOS ANGELES: The Boston Celtics, fueled by 36 points from Jayson Tatum, erased an 18-point deficit to beat the Indiana Pacers 114-111 on Saturday and take a commanding 3-0 lead in the NBA Eastern Conference finals.

Tatum added 10 rebounds and eight assists, Jaylen Brown scored 24 points and Al Horford made seven three-pointers on the way to 23 points. But the shift came when the Celtics found a way to slow down Indiana's high-octane offense in the second half to snatch the win in Indianapolis, where they'll try to close out the series on Monday.

"Closeout games are the hardest," Tatum said, cautioning that the Celtics can't afford to relax despite the fact that no NBA team has rallied from 0-3 down to win a playoff series. Pacers coach Rick Carlisle certainly wasn't ready to wave the white flag.

"We're going to be undeterred, we're going to be back here Monday night looking to extend the series and we're going to come at them even harder," vowed Carlisle, who said the Pacers played "a courageous game."

Indiana, who were unbeaten in six prior home games this post-season, came out determined to avoid the 0-3 hole despite the absence of All-Star guard Tyrese Haliburton, who aggravated the left hamstring strain that troubled him this season in game two.

Andrew Nembhard, taking over at point guard, scored 32 points and handed out nine assists and Pascal Siakam and Myles Turner scored 22 apiece for the Pacers, who pushed their lead to 18 in the second quarter and again in the third.

But a three-point play by Jrue Holiday, who was fouled on a driving layup and made the free throw, put the Celtics up 112-111 with 38.9 seconds to play. It was their first lead since the first moments of the second quarter and they made it stand up, Holiday coming up with a decisive steal from Nembhard and making a pair of free throws to seal it.

"I think the and-one I just saw the opportunity," said Holiday, who was questionable to start because of illness until shortly before the game. "I think Siakam was on his heels so I just attacked him and got the and-one." Despite the absence of Haliburton, the Pacers got their offense firing and erased an early nine-point deficit, exploding in the second quarter to build their first 18-point lead of the contest.

Another level

Nembhard scored 17 points in the second quarter and the Pacers connected on 15 of their 22 shot attempts to surge past the Celtics. With 21 points by halftime Nembhard had already surpassed his career playoff high.

He drilled a long three-pointer with less than five seconds left in the first half to give the Pacers a 69-57 lead at the break. Indiana were up by 18 again midway through the third, but Boston bore down defensively and reeled them in.

It remained to be seen if Haliburton will be available for game four on Monday. "It was determined that tonight was not an option," Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said before the game, saying Haliburton would be reassessed before game four.

Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said the absence of



INDIANAPOLIS: Obi Toppin #1 of the Indiana Pacers is defended by Derrick White #9 and Xavier Tillman #26 of the Boston Celtics during the third quarter in Game Three of the Eastern Conference Finals at Gainbridge Fieldhouse on May 25, 2024 in Indianapolis, Indiana. — AFP

Haliburton had left Boston struggling to adjust to early on. "It took us a little while to figure out how we were going to match up with them in order to

slow them down," he said. "I felt like it was our defense, and I thought we took it to another level in the second half." — AFP



Spain to hold World Aquatics finals in 2031

KUWAIT: President of the International Aquatics Federation Kuwait's Hussein Al-Musallam met Monica Garcia, in the presence of Spanish Olympic Committee President Alejandro Blanco, and

President of Spanish Aquatics Raul Carbon and Madrid Mayor Jose Luis Martinez-Almeida, and discussed Spain's hosting of the World Aquatics Championship in 2031.

This comes within the plans of the World Aquatics to distribute the championships over the given continents, and support swimming in all countries and remote areas, in order to create successive sports generations in the field of swimming.

Al-Musallam said Spain is one of the advanced countries in aquatics, besides having successful facilities to host such a world event.



LONDON: Toulouse's French scrum-half Antoine Dupont lifts the trophy as Toulouse players celebrate their win after the European Champions Cup rugby union final match between Leinster and Toulouse at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. — AFP

Leinster suffer more Champions Cup final agony

LONDON: James Ryan insisted "failing greatly" was a worthwhile risk following Leinster's latest bout of European Champions Cup final heartbreak. Leinster's 31-22 extra-time defeat by Toulouse meant the Irish province completed an unwanted hat-trick after losing both the 2022 and 2023 Champions Cup finals to another French club, La Rochelle.

It was also their fourth defeat in the showpiece match, all of them coming since Leinster won the last of their four Champions Cup titles in 2018. Neither Toulouse nor Leinster managed a try in the initial 80 minutes of Saturday's gruelling encounter at London's Tottenham Hotspur Stadium that ended with the European heavyweights level at 15-15.

Toulouse wing Matthis Lebel then scored the first try of the match early in extra time before team-mate Richie Arnold was sent off for a dangerous clear-out at a ruck. Leinster hit back with a try from Ireland flanker Josh van der Flier, but Toulouse replacement Thomas Ramos' two penalties in the second half of the 20 minutes of extra time proved decisive.

Ireland lock Ryan, who came off the bench at half-time in regulation play after Jason Jenkins was injured, said: "It was very intense. It's a final. Obviously, it went to extra time so 100 minutes of Test match rugby is probably what it felt like.

"It was some effort from the lads to stick into the

game. Sometimes it just doesn't go your way." Defeat cemented Leinster's reputation as the 'nearly men' of rugby, with the Dublin-based side also providing the bulk of the Ireland squad that yet again fell short in their quest to win the country's first World Cup title at last year's tournament in France.

But Ryan was adamant Leinster's mentality was sound, the 27-year-old second row saying: "What we said in the changing room was when you want to achieve great things, you always have the risk of failing greatly as well. "Would I rather be in a team that tries to be the best team in Europe every year and risks feeling like this? I still would."

'Hurts a lot'

Toulouse had averaged 6.6 tries and over 44 points per game in the competition on their way to this season's final. But it was defence that was the foundation of their record-extending sixth Champions Cup title triumph.

Toulouse made 242 tackles to Leinster's 137, England back-row Jack Willis leading the way for the reigning French Top 14 champions with 30 of his own. Nevertheless, Leinster captain Caelan Doris said: "I don't think the belief came specifically from the fact they were making a lot of tackles.

"I think we back our attack philosophy in general and even in a short space of time, we believe we can score tries." The Ireland No 8, asked how this latest reverse compared to the two losing finals against La Rochelle, replied: "Recency bias can be in play a little bit but it feels like the hurt is right up there. The changing room is devastated. "I think the fact that we believed and we were knocking on the door right through the game, it hurts. It hurts a lot." — AFP

Osaka, Alcaraz bring curtain up on French Open

PARIS: Naomi Osaka and Carlos Alcaraz bring the curtain up on the French Open on Sunday as Roland Garros prepares to bid a likely farewell to Rafael Nadal. Osaka, a four-time major winner who has yet to get past the third round in Paris, is first up on the showpiece Court Philippe Chatrier against Italy's Lucia Bronzetti.

Alcaraz, the reigning Wimbledon champion, then begins his campaign against J.J. Wolf of the United States, a lucky loser from qualifying. Andy Murray and his fellow three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka will close proceedings in the night session. Japanese star Osaka, a former world number one, has endured a bittersweet relationship with the French capital. In 2021, she was fined for opting out of mandatory media commitments before withdrawing from the tournament in order to protect her mental health.

A year later, she fell in the first round before leaving the sport in September 2022 for 16 months to start a family. "I'm learning a lot of lessons through motherhood, and I hope that I can remember to apply them on the tennis court," said the 26-year-old.

Should she get past 48th-ranked Bronzetti, she will then likely run into top seed and defending champion Iga Swiatek. Now up to 134 in the world after being outside the top 800 in January, Osaka is gradually learning to appreciate the demands of clay where it is harder to simply hit her opponents off the court.

'Like a dance'

"Just observing other players more, watching how they play, watching how they move. I think the clay court is a little bit like a dance," she said. World number three Alcaraz made the semi-finals last year where he was defeated by Novak Djokovic, revealing later that the prospect of facing the world number one had caused so much tension that his body cramped up during the match.

Wolf, ranked at 107, has won just one match on the tour in 2024. His only other main draw appearance at the French Open ended in a first-round exit

last year. Wawrinka, the 39-year-old 2015 champion, and 2016 runner-up Murray meet for the 23rd time, a rivalry which has included two semi-final clashes in Paris. Murray is playing his final season on tour but whether or not 14-time champion Nadal joins him in retirement later this year remains to be seen. Nadal, who will be 38 on June 3, revealed Saturday that he hasn't committed himself to retiring and wanted to "100 percent keep the door open".

He missed the tournament in 2023 with injury and his 2024 appearance may be brief after he was



PARIS: Japan's Naomi Osaka serves to Italy's Lucia Bronzetti during their women's singles match on day one of The French Open tennis tournament on Court Philippe-Chatrier at The Roland Garros Complex in Paris on May 26, 2024. — AFP

drawn to face fourth-ranked Alexander Zverev on Monday. "It's a big, big chance that this is going to be my last Roland Garros, but if I have to tell you it's 100 percent my last Roland Garros, sorry, but I will not. I cannot predict what's going on," Nadal said Saturday. The Spanish legend has racked up 112 wins in 115 matches at the tournament since his title-winning 2005 debut when he was just 19.

He has 22 Grand Slam titles—second only to Djokovic's 24 on the all-time men's list—but his career has been plagued by injuries. Nadal has played just four tournaments since January last year after suffering a hip injury and then a muscle tear. — AFP

Chase leads WI to T20I series win over South Africa

KINGSTON: Roston Chase struck a magnificent 38-ball 67 as West Indies beat South Africa by 16 runs at Sabina Park to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match T20I series. Chase led a strong batting performance from the home side who made 207-7 and while South Africa made a fast start they were unable to get close to the target.

West Indies, who are co-hosts of the T20 World Cup which gets under way on June 1 in the United States, will face South Africa again on Sunday to conclude the series. It was a strong all-round performance from the Caribbean team coached by Daren Sammy, who captained the West Indies to the T20 World Cup title in 2016.

West Indies captain Brandon King won the toss and opted to bat and the skipper made a bright start scoring 36 off 22 balls. Kyle Mayers was aggressive as he struck 32 off 16 balls, with three sixes before he went in the ninth over with the home side on 83-3.

Both King and Mayers were dismissed by 21-year-old leg spinner Ngabayomzi Peter, who impressed in his debut for South Africa. But the damage was done with the 63-run partnership between Chase and Romario Shepherd.

Chase, playing some elegant strokes, hit seven fours and two sixes but was kept off the strike in the final over when Lungi Ngidi picked up two wickets and conceded just three runs. It was a tough day for medium-pacer Andile Phehlukwayo who ended with

figures of 2-51 off his three overs.

South Africa made a lightning start to their reply, with openers Reeza Hendricks and Quinton de Kock rattling up 81 in 4.5 overs before De Kock was bowled by slow left-armed Akeal Hosein having made 41 off just 17 balls.

De Kock had taken the attack to the West Indies smashing four fours and four sixes. Hendricks went in the next over, bowled by the off-spin of Chase having made 34 off 18 balls with three sixes. But slow left-armed Gudakesh Motie ensured that South Africa couldn't build any real momentum taking 3-22 from his four overs, including the wicket of skipper Rassie van der Dussen, who had threatened with his aggressive 30 off 22.

Van der Dussen would have been disappointed with his dismissal as he hit a wide full toss to Hosein at long-off. The tourists' tail was unable to keep up with the run-rate in the final overs as West Indies secured the series win and offered a reminder that, as two-times winners, they could be a factor in this World Cup.

"It's an amazing feeling. Chase is very valuable. Very happy with his performance. They had a good start but it finished well for us. Play really good cricket - that's what we are focussing," said King. Van der Dussen felt his seamers had been responsible for allowing West Indies to set a high target.

"We let them get too much again. The spinners bowled really well and Peter on debut was brilliant," he said. "We have one more chance and we are looking to bounce back tomorrow (Sunday)," he said. South Africa will head to Florida after Sunday's game where they will hold an intra-squad warm-up game at the Lauderhill venue. West Indies will face Australia in a warm-up game in Trinidad on Thursday. — AFP

Sports

Barca claim throne as Europe's dominant women's football force

Barcelona's youth academy is creating potential stars

BILBAO: For years Barcelona have looked up at Lyon, the established elite at the top of the women's game, working intensely to surpass them. The Catalans finally avenged final defeats by Lyon in 2019 and 2022 on Saturday in Bilbao, beating the French giants 2-0 to lift the Champions League for the third time.

They still trail Lyon's all-time record of eight - that could take years to overhaul - but there is no doubt that Barcelona are the dominant force in Europe. With back-to-back Champions League triumphs, three in four years, and five finals in the last six, the Catalans reign supreme.

Aitana Bonmati and Alexia Putellas scored the goals against Lyon at the San Mames stadium. The pair are the owners of the last three Ballon d'Or wins between them but have a vast array of talent in support. Their squad includes stars brought in from abroad like Lucy Bronze, formerly of Lyon, and Caroline Graham Hansen, but also significant home grown quality.

Barcelona's youth academy is creating potential stars in a way made possible by earlier investment in women's football. Beating Lyon was one of the few challenges left for Barcelona, along with completing the quadruple after last season's treble. They did both in one swoop before 51,000 fans, a record Champions League final attendance.

Barcelona supporters, the vast majority of spectators, whistled Lyon fiercely at the start but applauded them generously as the French club collected their runner-up medals. If it was a changing of the guard, Barcelona were reluctant to admit it.

"Eight Champions Leagues is a lot of Champions Leagues," said Barcelona's departing coach Jonatan

Giraldez. "What I like is living in the present moment - we had some room to improve from last year, we didn't win the Copa de la Reina (then).

"History will say if we are one of the best teams, or if it's Olympique Lyon. We saw a super interesting game, people enjoyed it, it was a high-level game." The coach, moving next season to US side Washington Spirit, added: "In years, this Barca will be put into perspective, today is a day to enjoy."

'Next year we have to compete again'

Barcelona playmaker Bonmati said she did not encourage talk of the club dominating. "We've been showing for years the team that we are, obviously today we are champions of Europe for another year, Lyon are still a great team," Bonmati told reporters.

"Next year we have to compete again, I don't like to talk about a hegemony beginning, we have to prove it every year." However, that kind of attitude is how dynasties are created. Bonmati was thrilled by Barcelona's vast travelling support, with an estimated 40,000 fans coming to Bilbao. She called on them before the game to be the team's 12th player and they delivered.

"What we saw in Bilbao, San Mames, it's been something unique and unrepeatable," said Bonmati. "All I could think was that we cannot fail. What hurt most about the finals we lost... was all the fans going there. I would like to dedicate this trophy to the fans."

In 2022, Lyon striker Ada Hegerberg pointed out there was women's football "before" Barcelona, in response to the huge crowds the Catalans were attracting, setting two world record atten-



BILBAO: Barcelona's players celebrate with the trophy after winning the UEFA Women's Champions League final football match between FC Barcelona and Olympique Lyonnais at the San Mames stadium in Bilbao. — AFP

dances at Camp Nou.

Lyon coach Sonia Bompastor said Barcelona's "passion" was something other teams could learn from and that it "made a difference" in the final. "The reality is that Barcelona have taken two consecutive

trophies as European champions," she explained.

"Their dynamic is extremely positive, not just because of their results but because they have so many supporters in the stadium. We need to be inspired by that." — AFP

Giroud, Pioli bid farewell to AC Milan

MILAN: Olivier Giroud said goodbye to AC Milan fans with a goal in Saturday's entertaining season finale with Salernitana, drawn 3-3, that was the last match with the seven-time European champions for the France forward and for coach Stefano Pioli.

Veteran striker Giroud put Milan two ahead in the 27th minute at the San Siro, shortly after Rafael Leao had opened the scoring. Giroud welled up after he netted for the 17th time this season. He will finish his club career at Los Angeles FC after playing his final matches for France at Euro 2024, and he signed off after three eventful years with his 49th goal for the club.

The 37-year-old leaves as a big fan favorite and will be remembered in particular for scoring key goals in Milan's 2022 Serie A triumph, the only trophy he won in his three years in Italy. When he was substituted with five minutes remaining and Milan still leading 3-1, fans belted out a chant in honor of his winning double in a derby victory which was crucial to their team pipping local rivals Inter Milan to that Scudetto.

Giroud struggled to hold back the

tears when speaking to fans on the pitch on an evening of goodbyes. He called the title win "one of the best feelings of my career" before sharing a touching embrace with his parents.

Simon Kjaer, another Scudetto winner leaving Milan, was equally emotional, telling fans that "the way I feel playing here is the same way I feel playing for my country".

'A fire in my heart'

Pioli, the architect of the league triumph two years ago, was given a warm round of applause by fans and his players, who hoisted him on their shoulders at the end. "We won and lost together, shared joy and pain together," said Pioli. "You lit a fire in my heart that will not be extinguished. I won't forget you."

Milan announced on Friday that Pioli would be leaving at the end of the season after an eventful four-and-a-half years in charge which have brought the club back to the upper echelons of Italian and European football.

In addition to the Scudetto he also guided Milan to last season's Champions League semi-finals - the first time they had gone that far since winning the competition in 2007. Pioli's fate was sealed by his team's failure to mount a serious challenge as Inter romped to the title, by six straight Milan derby defeats and by an early exit from the Champions League, followed by going out of the Europa League to Serie A rivals Roma. Pioli, who was under contract until the end of next season, is



MILAN: AC Milan's French forward #09 Olivier Giroud greets fans as he holds his framed team jersey signed at the end of the last match played for AC Milan after the Italian Serie A football match between AC Milan and Salernitana at San Siro Stadium, in Milan. — AFP

reportedly set to be replaced by Lille coach Paulo Fonseca.

Juve eye Motta

Juventus are heading towards the Thiago Motta era after finishing their season with a straightforward 2-0 win over Monza. Goals from Federico Chiesa and Alex Sandro in two first-half minutes were enough for Juve to win just their third league match since the end of January.

Juve, guided by caretaker manager Paolo Montero since Massimiliano Allegri was sacked last week, ended their season by snapping a run of six straight

Serie A draws. Motta is hotly-tipped to become the next Juve boss after the former Italy midfielder decided not to renew his contract at Bologna, who lost at Genoa on Friday.

That defeat for Bologna and Saturday's win allowed Juve to move third, although their final position will depend on how Europa League winners Atalanta do against Torino on Sunday and in their game in hand with Fiorentina next weekend.

Atalanta, five points behind Juve in fifth, have to win their final two games to leapfrog Juve and match their highest ever placing in Italy's top flight. — AFP

Inter Miami win in Vancouver without resting Barca trio

MIAMI: Inter Miami rested Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez but still managed to extend their unbeaten run in Major League Soccer to 10 games with a hard fought 2-1 win at the Vancouver Whitecaps on Saturday.

With neither of their star strikers - or their former Barcelona team-mate midfielder Sergio Busquets - having made the trip to Canada, Miami coach Gerard Martino turned to Ecuadorean forward Leonardo Campana and Finnish winger Robert Taylor in his front line and they delivered the goals.

Martino said none of the former Barcelona trio was injured but that the team felt it was wise to rest them and avoid a 12-hour return flight ahead of a midweek game against Atlanta on Wednesday. The Whitecaps had sold out their 55,000-seat stadium in anticipation of Messi playing. Vancouver's offered half-price food as compensation, but there were signs in the crowd objecting to Messi's absence.

Taylor put Miami ahead in the 38th minute when he was found by a superb pass from Jordi Alba and cut inside on to his right foot before burying a shot into the far corner. Taylor then created Miami's second, in the 54th minute, with Campana leading a counter-attack, switching to Taylor on his left and the winger bursting into the box before picking out the Ecuadorean with a pinpoint pull-back which Campana confidently slotted home.

The Whitecaps reduced the deficit through a Ryan Gauld penalty in the 72nd minute after a foul by Tomas Aviles and Vancouver piled on the pressure in search of an equalizer. Fafa Picault headed against the post and the Haitian forward caused Miami's defence a series of problems in the latter stages, but they hung on for the three points.

Rossi brace

Diego Rossi scored twice as defending MLS champions Columbus Crew picked up their third straight win on the road with a 2-0 victory at Orlando City. The Crew, who play in the final of the CONCACAF Champions Cup against Mexico's Pachuca next Saturday, had a made a slow start to the regular season in MLS but Wilfried Nancy's team look to be hitting their stride. Uruguayan Rossi put Columbus ahead, on the stroke of half-time, with a penalty awarded in unusual fashion. It was Orlando who were awarded a penalty after Crew defender Steven Moreira brought down City's Colombian winger Luis Muriel inside the box but the video review spotted a foul at the start of the action, at the other end of the field.

After going to the monitor, referee Jair Marrufo ruled that Cesar Araujo had brought down Aidan Morris in the other box and awarded the spot kick for Columbus - with Rossi gratefully converting. Rossi's second, in the 61st minute, was less controversial - the forward running on to a pass from Yaw Yeboah and then beating Pedro Gallese with a delightful chip with the outside of his foot. — AFP



MONTMELÓ: (From L) Second-placed Ducati Spanish rider Jorge Martín, winner Ducati Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia and third-placed Ducati Spanish rider Marc Márquez celebrate on the podium after the MotoGP Race of the Moto Grand Prix of Catalonia at the Circuit de Catalunya on May 26, 2024 in Montmeló on the outskirts of Barcelona. — AFP

urday and was hoping to do the double at Catalunya as he did last year, but was left frustrated despite starting on pole. — AFP

able to win the race," said Bagnaia.

"(It was a) tough start but then I saw some struggling at the front and I pushed more. "The bike was amazing, the team did an amazing job setting up the bike and now I'm looking forward to the next race (next weekend's Italian MotoGP)."

Seventh at lights out on his Pramac Ducati, Martin got through on Pedro Acosta for second and then Bagnaia on turn 10 to take the lead with 20 laps to go. Youngster Acosta was in hot pursuit on the day after his 20th birthday but skidded off the track in lap 11, rejoining in 20th place. After Bagnaia passed Martin towards the end he kept the overall leader at arm's length to clinch victory. "I am super happy, super proud, starting from seventh I executed perfectly the first corner and into fourth," said Martin.

"Towards the end I tried to keep the pace but had nothing left in my pocket. "I tried to put some pressure on Bagnaia but there was nothing left and it was complicated." After a sluggish start Marquez, aiming for a first MotoGP win since 2021, charged forward from 14th spot on the grid on his Ducati-Gresini.

He finally got past Aprilia rider Espargaro to claim a podium spot. Espargaro, 34, won the sprint on Sat-

Bagnaia wins Catalunya MotoGP

BARCELONA: Two-time defending world champion Francesco Bagnaia snatched victory at the Catalunya MotoGP on Sunday to edge closer to championship leader Jorge Martin. Bagnaia on his factory Ducati reeled in race leader Martin before the Italian passed him on lap 20 at turn five where he crashed out of the sprint on Saturday, to claim his third victory of the season.

Martin could not respond and Bagnaia triumphed by nearly two seconds to cut the gap on the Spaniard to 39 points in the standings. Home favorite Marc Marquez came in third ahead of Aleix Espargaro, who announced he is retiring at the end of the season earlier this week.

Marquez is third in the standings, 41 points behind compatriot Martin. "Honestly I was very angry about yesterday (his crash in the sprint whilst leading on the last lap) but I knew the potential I had and was

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

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

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I Neethu Jose holder of Indian passport no N6512046 issued at Cochin, Indian permanent address No Thekkevayalil House, Thidnad PO, Pin 686123, Kottayam, Kerala, India, India present hereby declare that hence forth my name will be read as given name Neethu and surname Kurian.

(#5608, 27/05/2024)

Emergency call 112

PSG win French Cup final

Mbappe made his farewell appearance for PSG



VILLENEUVE-D'ASCQ: Paris Saint-Germain's players and staff celebrate on the podium after winning the French Cup Final football match between Olympique Lyonnais (OL) and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at the Stade Pierre-Mauroy, in Villeneuve-d'Ascq, northern France. — AFP

Richardson wins first 100m, Chebet smashes record

EUGENE: World champion Sha'Carri Richardson won her first 100m of the Olympic season on Saturday, clocking 10.83sec at the Eugene Diamond League where Kenyan Beatrice Chebet shattered the 10,000m world record.

Richardson, who won the world title last August in her personal-best of 10.65sec, was coming off a pair of sluggish 200m performances in China. But she signaled her intentions for next month's US Olympic trials with the second-fastest time of the year behind American Jacious Sears' 10.77 in April and came out on top of a stacked field in which Jamaica's Tokyo Olympic gold medalist Elaine Thompson-Herah finished last in 11.30.

Five-time Olympic gold medallist Thompson-Herah, who has endured a rollercoaster since repeating as 100m Olympic champion in Tokyo, largely due to Achilles tendon trouble, was launching her 2024 campaign and has work to do before the Jamaican trials in June.

Richardson admitted to a few butterflies before her first 100m of the year. "Obviously I had to be for my opener, I will not be human to say that I wasn't nervous," the 24-year-old said, adding that she tried to use the nervousness as motivation.

With the win under her belt she was looking forward to "grinding, focusing, growing and getting ready for the trials," which will be held on the same Hayward Field track June 21-30. Chebet got things going at Hayward Field before the Diamond League events even kicked in, shattering the 10,000m world record with a time of 28min 54.14sec in a race serving as the Kenyan Olympic qualifier.

The victory, in which she improved on the previous record of 29.01.03 set by Ethiopian Letesenbet Gidey in 2021, immediately stamped her a favorite in Paris, even though it was her first elite race at the distance on the track.

Chebet, a two-time cross-country world champion, said she wasn't thinking of the world record, but knew it was set up for Ethiopian Gudaf Tsegay to challenge for the world mark. She shadowed Tsegay most of the way, took the lead with a flawless late move and pulled away with ease in a majestic final lap.

Chebet said she would now target at 5,000m-10,000m double in Paris. "For me, I am happy, to be the first time on the Olympic team," she said. "With good health, I know I am going to medal at the Olympics."

There was a marquee matchup in the meet's signature Bowerman Mile, where 1,500m world champion Josh Kerr held off Olympic gold medalist Jakob Ingebrigtsen by 26-hundredths of a second to triumph. — AFP

LILLE: Paris Saint-Germain coach Luis Enrique said he had been lucky to work with Kylian Mbappe after the superstar forward played his last game for the club in Saturday's 2-1 French Cup final win over Lyon. Mbappe made his farewell appearance for PSG before an expected move to Real Madrid but he was unable to add to his club-record tally of 256 goals with Ousmane Dembele and Fabian Ruiz scoring on the night.

Dembele and Ruiz netted in the first half and PSG then withstood a Lyon comeback attempt after the break following a Jake O'Brien goal which reduced the deficit. The most successful side in the history of the French Cup, PSG have now won the trophy 15 times, including seven times in the last decade and four since Mbappe signed from Monaco as a teenager in 2017.

The victory allowed PSG to complete a domestic league and cup double in Luis Enrique's first season as coach, although the campaign remains overshadowed by their exit from the Champions League in the semi-finals against Borussia Dortmund.

"We played the final very well. We played with great intensity and were great on the ball," said Luis Enrique. "I think we have had a very good season. We would have liked to stay around for another week and not go on holiday yet but that is life," he said, referring to next weekend's Champions League final. "Nobody said football was fair, but it doesn't

matter. Next season we will come back stronger and will look to sign even hungrier players, who have even more desire to win." Of the departing Mbappe he added: "I think I have been lucky to coach Kylian but it has been a difficult season for him because after seven years and all he has achieved it is always hard to say goodbye. "But he was always prepared to help the team and tonight was the cherry on the cake even if he didn't score."

Clashes between supporters

The game was somewhat overshadowed by incidents earlier in the day, with rival fans clashing at a motorway toll around 50 kilometres south of the northern city of Lille. The clashes involved about 100 Lyon supporters and about 200 PSG fans, with two coaches ending up on fire, according to a police source. A source in the regional police authorities said 20 supporters were slightly injured, with French President Emmanuel Macron, who attended the final, condemning the violence. Mbappe was making his 308th and final appearance for his hometown club, for whom he signed in August 2017 from Monaco in a 180 million-euro deal. Victory means he leaves PSG with four French Cup winners' medals to go with six Ligue 1 titles and two victories in the now-defunct League Cup. Mbappe finished his last season in Paris with 44 goals in all competitions, eight on PSG's run to the Cup final.

He was centimetres away from giving PSG an early lead at Lille's Stade Pierre-Mauroy, which was hosting the game with usual venue the Stade de France being prepared to host the Olympics.

A second-minute corner was headed on by Lucas Beraldo and Mbappe, diving in at the far post, narrowly failed to connect with the ball. Lyon survived an early onslaught but fell behind midway through the first half when Dembele was left completely unmarked at the back post to head in a cross.

Dembele turned provider as PSG scored again in the 34th minute, when his ball to the back post was converted at the second attempt by Spain midfielder Ruiz. Lyon, who enjoyed a remarkable revival in Ligue 1 to go from bottom of the table in December to finish sixth and qualify for Europe, appeared down and out.

They did attempt a comeback, with Irish defender O'Brien heading in a corner 10 minutes after the break to give them hope. But PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma produced a brilliant save to tip a Nicolas Tagliafico header over the bar, and Alexandre Lacazette had a shot deflected wide as Mbappe and PSG held on.

"We have mixed feelings tonight," said Lyon coach Pierre Sage. "If you had told us at the start of December that we would qualify for Europe through the league and get to the Cup final, I don't think anyone would have believed it." — AFP

Leverkusen lift German Cup to claim first double

BERLIN: Bayer Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso said he was ready for a big night after his club sealed the double on Saturday, telling reporters: "I'm not working tomorrow." Asked if he would celebrate with the players in the German capital, before the club returns to Leverkusen for a parade on Sunday, Alonso replied "of course." "We need to enjoy it. We need to release the tension from the whole season. "I'm not working tomorrow."

Leverkusen won the Bundesliga unbeaten - the club's first league title - and lifted the German Cup on Saturday after Granit Xhaka scored the only goal in a 1-0 win against Kaiserslautern. Alonso's first full season managing at the top level finished with a Bundesliga and German Cup double, a Europa League final and a stunning record of just one loss in 53 games.

Leverkusen's only loss came in Wednesday's Europa League final against Serie A side Atalanta, but Alonso's charges rebounded in dogged fashion. "I need a bit more time to grasp it. It was a dream season. To be able to celebrate here is incredible - we need to enjoy it," Alonso told Germany's ARD network.

The coach, who rejected reported interest from Liverpool, Bayern Munich and Real Madrid to stay at Leverkusen this season, was serenaded with chants of "Xabi Alonso" by delirious fans whose club had only won two trophies before this season.



BERLIN: Bayer Leverkusen's Spanish head coach Xabi Alonso and his players celebrate with the trophy after the German Cup (DFB-Pokal) final football match between 1 FC Kaiserslautern and Bayer 04 Leverkusen at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin. — AFP

"Of course I'm happy but I'm especially proud of the players. The double is totally deserved," said the Spaniard. The victory tested Alonso as he rarely has been this season, with Leverkusen reduced to 10 men late in the first half after centre-back Odilon Kossounou's second yellow.

Pictured cradling his head in his hands on the bench moments after, the 42-year-old took off striker Patrik Schick and winger Jonas Hofmann while his team sat deeper and attacked on the counter. Despite their one-man advantage, Kaiserslautern were kept in check by the German champions, with few

clear-cut chances in the second half.

"We quickly analyzed who we can change," said Alonso. "We played well and created some good chances, but what's most important was the belief of the team. "They were ready to fight with 10 men and get it done."

Leverkusen join Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund, Werder Bremen, Cologne and Schalke as the only clubs to have won the German domestic double. Alonso, a two-time Champions League winner as a player, will return to the top European competition with Leverkusen next season, when the final is to take place at Munich's Allianz Arena. — AFP