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# Spain, Ireland and Norway recognize Palestinian state

More Zionist carnage in Gaza • Kuwaiti Hospital in Rafah out of service

## Amir receives PM, Audit Bureau chief



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace on Tuesday, who introduced to him newly appointed Chairman of the State Audit Bureau Essam Salem Al-Roumi. — KUNA

MADRID/GAZA: Spain, Ireland and Norway formally recognized a Palestinian state on Tuesday in a coordinated decision slammed by the Zionist entity as a "reward" for Hamas, more than seven months into the devastating Gaza war. The three European countries believe their initiative has strong symbolic impact that could encourage others to follow suit.

After Ireland's government formally approved the measure, Prime Minister Simon Harris said the aim was to keep Middle East peace hopes alive. "We had wanted to recognize Palestine at the end of a peace process. However, we have made this move alongside Spain and Norway to keep the miracle of peace alive," he said in a statement, urging the Zionist entity to "stop the humanitarian catastrophe" in Gaza.

Norway's Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide hailed the move as "a special day for Norway-Palestine relations". And after Spain's cabinet backed recognition, Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said "we know that there is still a long way to go, and Spain is willing to walk its part of the path to peace." Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said recognition was "essential" for peace, insisting the move was "not against anyone, least of all (the Zionist entity)" and the only way to secure a future of two states living side-by-side "in peace and security".

Last week, Yolanda Diaz, a far left member of the



MADRID: Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez delivers a speech on the recognition of Palestinian statehood by Spain at La Moncloa Palace on May 28, 2024. — AFP

Spanish government, hailed the proposed recognition, saying: "We cannot stop. Palestine will be free from the river to the sea". The slogan refers to the British mandate borders of Palestine, which stretched from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea before the Zionist entity was created in 1948. On Tuesday, Spain's foreign minister said the three countries would give a "calm but firm" joint response to the Zionist entity's social media attacks. Tuesday's move will mean 145 of the United Nations' 193 member states now recognize Palestinian statehood.

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### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Court frees ex-MP on bail

KUWAIT: The criminal court on Tuesday freed former MP Anwar Al-Fiker on bail, who denied charges that he challenged the powers of HH the Amir and spread false news. The court set the next hearing for Sept 3. Fiker was asked to pay KD 5,000 in bail and was banned from leaving the country.

#### Saudi King chairs cabinet meeting

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's King chaired a virtual cabinet meeting on Tuesday, state media said, his first after the royal court announced earlier this month he had a lung infection. At the beginning of the session, King Salman "thanked his sons and daughters, the people of the kingdom, for their... kind prayers" during his recovery, the official Saudi Press Agency said. — AFP

#### Thailand approves longer stays

BANGKOK: Thailand's government said on Tuesday it had approved longer visa stay periods for tourists, postgraduate students and remote workers, and better visa conditions for retirees. Starting in June, Thailand will allow travelers from 93 countries to stay for periods of 60 days, while more will also be eligible for visas on arrival. Foreign students will be permitted to stay for an additional year upon graduation, while insurance requirements for foreigners seeking to retire in Thailand will be relaxed. The validity of so-called "digital nomad" visas will be extended to five years, from 60 days presently, with each stay limited to 180 days. — Reuters

## Cabinet approves CAPT board decree, repeals two others

KUWAIT: The Cabinet, during its weekly meeting on Tuesday chaired by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, approved a draft decree forming the Central Agency for Public Tenders' board of directors. During the meeting, the Cabinet was briefed by the Minister of Public Works and the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan on the railway connection project between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The Cabinet stressed the importance of the project, which will contribute to organizing and activating sustainable railway connectivity and enhance trade exchange and economic growth between the two countries. The Cabinet also approved two draft decrees abolishing law no. 40 of 1966 regarding mayors and repealing establishing the National Security Service, and submitted them to HH the Amir

## Minister, high-level Chinese delegation inspect major ports

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan conducted an inspection visit to the ports of Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Shuaiba, Shuwaikh and Doha, accompanied by a high-level Chinese government delegation consisting of experts and engineers specializing in developmental projects.

The ministry of public works said in a press release that Mashaan, along with the Chinese delegation, toured these sites accompanied by Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei and senior engineers and officials from the ministry of public works who specialize in major government projects.

The ministry clarified that the Chinese delegation's visit comes as part of the implementation of the memorandum of understanding signed between the two countries during the visit of HH the



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah chairs a Cabinet meeting on May 28, 2024. — KUNA

Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The Cabinet expressed condolences to the Iranian leadership and people on the demise of President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. The Cabinet congratulated the newly appointed Head of the State Audit Bureau Essam Salem Al-Roumi on the new post, wishing him success. — KUNA

Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to China in September. During this visit, fruitful official discussions were held with Chinese President Xi Jinping concerning the establishment and development mechanisms of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project.

The ministry reported that Mashaan exchanged expertise and proposals with the head and members of the visiting delegation and conducted in-depth technical and field discussions with them, focusing on the importance of documenting constructional and economic relations related to the implementation of large developmental projects in the country.

The parties discussed a range of desired proposals and visions that would achieve the ambitious level set by the senior political leadership to proceed with arranging and laying the foundations for the future plan to implement the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project. On Monday, Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya held in-depth discussions with the Chinese delegation, focusing on the importance of documenting technical, constructional and economic relations related to the implementation of large developmental projects in Kuwait. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works Dr Noura Al-Mashaan and a Chinese government delegation visit Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port on May 28, 2024. — KUNA



## Local

# Expert underlines the differences between teaching and educating

## A fine line between teachers, educators

By Ghadeer Ghloom

**KUWAIT:** The weaknesses in teacher performance within the educational system and the evident lack of interest among some educators, has created a concerning impact on the overall quality of education and the skills of graduates, including future teachers. Teachers educated by less qualified or disengaged instructors are now perpetuating this cycle of inadequate teaching, resulting in under-qualified students. Teaching is a profession that must be valued and approached with the utmost seriousness, as it fundamentally shapes the future of society.

Teachers and educators hold the keys to shaping the future of societies since education plays a major role in shaping societies. However, according to Kuwait Times' interview with Mubarak AlEnezi, humanities and business teacher, these terms are often used interchangeably, but hold profound differences. Understanding these differences is crucial for recognizing the value of true education and ensuring that the individuals who lead our classrooms are not just imparting knowledge, but also inspiring, guiding, and nurturing the future society.

"There are distinct differences between teaching and educating. While all educators can be teachers, not all teachers are educators. Teachers focus

on helping students learn and memorize the content of lessons. They manage classrooms and evaluate students through tests and quizzes. They might remember students' names and faces. Educators go beyond these tasks. They understand the needs and desires of their students, identify their talents and skills, and help them grow as individuals. Educators recognize the strengths and weaknesses in their students' personalities and work to develop them positively."

"Educators are role models who guide students towards achieving their goals ethically. They emphasize the importance of education and learning for personal development and for contributing to the community. They also maintain important relationships with parents to support the ethical development of students' skills," he highlighted. Hence, being an educator requires talent and skill beyond just a career choice.

AlEnezi further emphasized on the necessity of



Mubarak AlEnezi



genuine and ethical teaching performance, saying: "Individuals in this field must constantly evaluate their performance with students to decide if they are suited for this challenging and rewarding path. It requires time, dedication, and a commitment to

personal and professional development. Choosing a career in education should be done with careful consideration of one's abilities and ethical standards, as the wrong decision can lead to unqualified and unhappy individuals in the community."

## Wasatia chief named member of AMMALE Coordinating Council

**PARIS:** The Alliance of Mosques, Muslim Associations, and Leaders in Europe (AMMALE) selected the Director of Wasatia (moderation) Promotion Center, Dr Abdullah Al-Shreika, as a member of the Coordinating Council in Europe. Secretary General of AMMALE's European Coordinating Council, Farid Hannash, said in a statement to KUNA that Kuwait's practice of moderation was in line with the principles of Islam. Hannash added that the partnership between the AMMALE's Coordinating Council and the Wasatia promotion center would promote Islam and peace in Europe.

He added that the center propagated the essence of the message of Islam and the basis of safety for Muslims and the world, pointing out that the joining of Dr Al-Shreika to AMMALE's Coordinating Council is an asset for the council. In a similar statement to KUNA, Director Al-Shreika said that the center aimed, through participating in the council, to bring together the Islamic, cultural, and intellectual competencies and institutions of Muslims in Europe.

Dr Al-Shreika stressed the importance of promoting dialogue and coexistence between followers of religions and cultures in Europe in a way that ensured the preservation of Islamic identity and enhanced the means of introducing Islam, its tolerant moderation, and its universal human values. Dr Al-Shreika, also Secretary of the Supreme Committee for Moderation at the Kuwaiti Cabinet, pointed out the importance of participating in the representation of Muslims in all official and civil bodies, in public events related to the Islamic religion and the affairs of Muslim minorities, in public discussions, and in the media with full respect.

Regarding the committees of the Coordinating Council, he said that they consist of 22 committees. The European Coordinating Council (AMMALE) is an independent institution established by activists and representatives of Islamic institutions from 17 European countries on October 7, 2023, at the Grand Mosque of Paris. — KUNA



Dr Abdullah Al-Shreika

## Austrian President honors Assistant Foreign Minister

**KUWAIT:** The Austrian Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen honored the Assistant Foreign Minister Ambassador Sadiq Marafi with a high ranking award that recognizes Ambassador Marafi's exceptional efforts in promoting bilateral relations between Kuwait and Austria. On May 27, 2024, Austrian Ambassador to Kuwait, Marian Wrba, presented the Grand Decoration of Honor in Gold with Star of the Republic of Austria to Ambassador Marafi at the Austrian Residence.

Ambassador Sadiq Marafi served as Kuwait's ambassador to Austria for over nine years, significantly enriching the relationship between the two nations. During his tenure, he was highly active and dedicated to strengthening the traditionally friendly ties between Kuwait and Austria. He also played a prominent role among the group of Arab ambassadors to Austria. Sadiq Marafi has been instrumental in enhancing political contacts with Austrian foreign policy. Notable diplomatic achievements include facilitating Austrian Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl's visit to Kuwait in December 2018 and Austrian Federal Chancellor Sebastian Kurz's visit in March 2019.

Additionally, he was pivotal in agreeing upon a Memorandum of Understanding on regular political consultations between the Foreign Ministries of Kuwait and Austria that the Austrian and Kuwaiti Foreign Ministers signed during the official visit of Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Vienna in June 2023. Beyond his diplomatic and political contributions, Austria recognizes Sadiq Marafi's important role in promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue between the Arab world and Europe. Being chairman of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Vienna, he also collaborated with the Austrian Foreign Ministry to organize the Austrian-Arab Cultural Year 2020.

This initiative included a festival concert at the



Representing Austrian President, Austrian Ambassador to Kuwait, Marian Wrba handed the Golden Star award to Ambassador Sadiq Marafi.



Viennese Hofburg by the Kuwaiti JACC Orchestra, which Marafi brought to Vienna, garnering substantial positive attention from the Austrian public. In addition to his ambassadorial duties, Sadiq Marafi has been an essential member of the board of the Ban Ki-moon Centre in Vienna since its inception, providing significant support to its work. As a key decision-maker in the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry, Sadiq Marafi will continue to play an essential role in fostering cooperation between Kuwait and the Europe-

an countries, the European Union, and Austria.

In addition to substantial trade volume with growth potential and major Austrian investments in Kuwait, such as the construction and operation of one of the world's largest and most modern sewage treatment plants in Umm Al-Hayman, Kuwait is a crucial regional political partner for Austria. Austria considers Kuwait an important mediator and bridge builder in the region, making it a vital point of contact in the Gulf and the Middle East.

## Navigating between work and passion

By Aaron Philip

**KUWAIT:** Most people think that once you start working, you might not be able to follow your passion. However, Abu Abdullah doesn't live by this stereotype. "Passion keeps you afloat during those demanding workdays. While working may provide a salary, pursuing your passion will make you happy and satisfied," said Abu Abdullah whose passion is to work on paintings with deep meanings. Following your passion can come at a cost at times, there are certain sacrifices that one must make. Alisha Abdul Rauf is a 22-year-old expat with a full-time job who also offers dance classes for kids on weekends, sacrificing family time she would otherwise have.

"I love to dance. I work in the finance department of a firm (while pursuing) my higher education. It can get difficult sometimes, there are times when I lose my motivation to even get out of bed, however the thought of dancing

keeps me cheerful. I try to dance as much as possible whenever I get time," said Abdul Rauf. Like Abdul Rauf, Chethan, an expat who also loves to dance and is currently working in the tax department of a firm, finds time to attend dance classes during his busy schedule. "I don't get much time to hang out with my friends, since I have classes on the weekends," said Chethan.

For some, pursuing a hobby they're passionate about outside their field of work can be therapeutic. "Music is my passion, composing songs, listening to songs and playing guitar is my thing," said Khaled, who is a journalist by profession. After getting home every day, he tries to spend some time listening to songs. Music gives him a feeling of relief and satisfaction, he further added. Kareem, an engineer, loves to play football during his free time. He tries not to let a weekend pass without playing football. Following one's passion, he said, can give one something to look forward to.

### Passion to career

According to Harvard Business Review, passion is what drives you to explore and engage in activities aligned with your values. Fundamental to passion is the strong and intense emotional drive that fuels its pursuit. It's the deep, fervent interest and enjoyment you derive from a particular activity, cause, or field. And it's this emotion that often creates a high level of commitment to one's passion, even



when times are hard. Take the many artists that continue to pursue their passion for art even if they never see the financial benefits during their lifetimes.

Griffin's commitment to his passion has led him to make a career out of it. A resident in Kuwait who is currently pursuing his higher education abroad in animation and graphic designing, Griffin has been able to align his passion with his future job. "At times (drawing) was an escape for me from reality. Currently, I'm working on a small film. I love what I'm doing, it makes me feel complete." Griffin believes that a person who follows his passion has a motivation to keep going and has a reason to smile.

## Education Minister inaugurates digital follow-up center

**KUWAIT:** The Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, inaugurated the digital follow-up center on Tuesday, which will be a major hub for following up on remote work procedures and a center for managing operations in all sectors of the Ministry, including educational areas and schools. The Ministry said in a press release that the opening of the center comes within the framework of the Ministry's efforts to enhance the efficiency of the educational system, taking advantage of modern technologies in monitoring and following up on communication mechanisms.

The statement added that the first operational phase will begin on Wednesday, coinciding with the twelfth grade exams, as the center will enable Ministry officials to follow up on the progress of the secondary school exams. He explained that the center will also allow the Ministry's officials to communicate remotely with the control staff, review the daily statistics of the examination process, monitor the progress of correcting papers and ratios, and announce the results effectively and transparently.

The director of the Information Systems Department at the Ministry, engineer Huda Al-Mutairi, said in a statement that the center contains modern technologies, advanced computers, and large screens to display data and statistics about the Ministry. Al-Mutairi added that the center is also equipped with an advanced video communication sys-



Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr Adel Al-Adwani, inaugurates the digital follow-up center on Tuesday. — KUNA

tem that allows officials to communicate with school districts and school administrations through the Thames program. During the opening, the minister listened to a detailed explanation about the center and digital technology. — KUNA

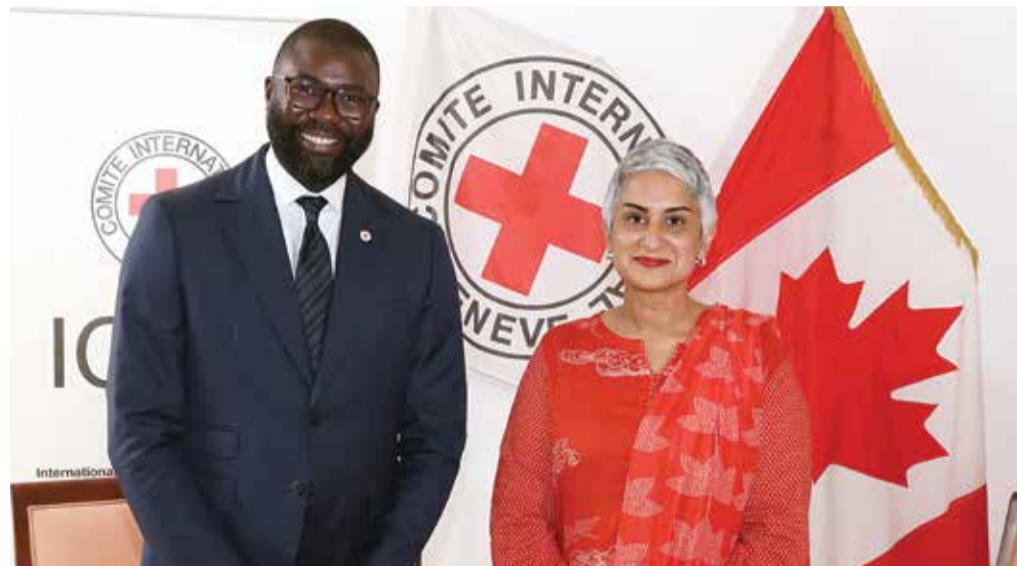


KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Lorenzo Morini on Tuesday. They discussed and reviewed bilateral relations and ways to enrich them through various aspects. — KUNA

Local

# Red Cross urges nations to respect humanitarian law

## Gaza catastrophe 'a moral failure of the international community'



Ambassador of Canada to Kuwait Aliya Mawani with Mamadou Sow, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)'s Regional Head of Delegation for the GCC.



Canadian alumni, members of the diplomatic corps, and representatives from civil society, private sector, and academia attend the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Passant Hisham

**KUWAIT:** "What we are witnessing in Gaza is a moral failure of the international community," said Mamadou Sow, the International Committee of the Red Cross' Regional Head of Delegation for the GCC, during an interview with local media at the official residence of Canada, ahead of an event titled "Keeping Humanity Alive".

Celebrating World Red Cross Day and the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, Sow emphasized the ICRC's role in continually reminding people of the importance of international humanitarian law as the only way to limit consequences of war and save lives. However, he noted that as the organization's role is only to disseminate this law, educate people about it, and clarify it - it remains the states' responsibility to respect it.

"What we are currently lacking is political will," he affirmed. Therefore, he stressed on the vital role of Kuwait, Canada and many other partners in supporting the current situation, not only through financial aid and delivery of humanitarian goods, but also by providing political support and advo-

ating for the respect of the international humanitarian law.

### Kuwait, Canada play pivotal roles

Host of the event, Ambassador of Canada to Kuwait Aliya Mawani, emphasized Canada has been a steadfast supporter of adherence to international law in the middle of this complicated time in the region and around the world, with particular reference to Gaza. She highlighted Canada's unwavering solidarity with Gaza, reflected through its constant call for an immediate ceasefire. "Every day there are more people getting killed, more infrastructure being destroyed, and we have been very clear that we want this to stop," she said. "We want to see the devastation that is happening for civilians stop."

Despite the challenges most countries face in providing humanitarian assistance to Gaza, Mawani highlighted Canada's commitment to doing its best to help. She pointed to Canada's cooperation with the ICRC last week in opening a field hospital in Gaza, supported by the Canadian Red Cross. Sow praised Kuwait's role.

"I think all of us take a lot of pride in seeing the scale of humanitarian response

from the Kuwaiti government, organizations and the people of Kuwait," referring to the pivotal partnership between the ICRC, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, especially in global humanitarian operations and dialogues. "But of course, the needs are so vast, that whatever we do pales in comparison to the depth of human suffering," he added.

### Confidentiality, neutrality

The open discussion with Sow, moderated by Ambassador Mawani, spanned a range of pressing topics, including the operational scope of ICRC's work, the significant challenges it encounters amidst global crises, and its role in protecting and assisting civilians in the Middle East, such as in Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria and Iraq. Sow highlighted calling for the respect of international humanitarian law in the region as ICRC's central pillar of response to the current challenging situation, by meeting with non-state armed groups like Hamas and Ansar Allah and engaging in conversations to improve the fate of people around the world.

A key focus of Sow's address was the ICRC's role as a neutral intermediary in facilitating recent prisoner exchanges between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, highlighting the complex operations and negotiations such endeavors entail. He emphasized the active essence of neutrality. "Neutrality is not about standing by passively; it's about active engagement without taking sides, which allows us to deliver aid to those most in need amidst conflict."

Remaining confidential is another key pillar of ICRC's strategy, using what Sow called "diplomatic confidential bilateral dialogue". This approach, as Sow stated, is what helped ICRC visit more than one million detainees around the world in the Middle East and more than 300 places of detention in this region, by communicating with authorities to improve conditions.

### Missing persons

Sow added that ICRC will always hold on to the fate of missing persons as its top priority, considering it among its longtime projects, even though this area of concern is not given enough attention by the media. Regarding orphans, he said

ICRC is committed to reuniting them with their distant relatives through constant communication with the organization's teams inside and outside Gaza.

The ICRC also prioritizes women's rights, recognizing their critical importance both in conflict situations and within the framework of ICRC's humanitarian efforts. He recounted various instances where the organization intervened to protect women and reunite separated girls with their mothers. "During times of conflict, women's vulnerabilities are heightened. We don't wait for these vulnerabilities to manifest; rather, we assume their presence and incorporate them into our response strategies."

Regarding ICRC's internal operations, Sow highlighted the organization's commitment to inclusivity and gender equality. "We have women leading dialogues, negotiating on the frontlines and spearheading responses. In fact, our current president is a woman," he noted. He emphasized the importance of including women in problem-solving teams. "If you attempt to address a problem without female representation, you may overlook issues that specifically affect women."

## Kuwaiti-Pakistani non-oil trade hits \$590 million

**KUWAIT:** The volume of non-oil trade exchange between Kuwait and Pakistan reached \$590 million in 2023, Undersecretary of Ministry of Commerce and Industry Ziad Al-Najem said Tuesday. The country has started focusing on further economic and commercial cooperation with courtiers across the world, Al-Najem said in a speech during a meeting of technical experts of the fifth Kuwait-Pakistan ministerial committee that kicked off Tuesday and will continue until May 30.

"Kuwait is focusing on the need to work towards a more open trade and economic policy by signing bilateral agreements in the commercial, economic, and investment fields, holding joint committees, as well as opening the Kuwaiti market to foreign investments," he said. He stressed that the government of Kuwait pays great attention to the private sector as the main pillar that works to stimulate economic growth, which is in line with the future vision of the country aiming to transform it into an international financial and commercial hub.

The country is striving to open the way for foreign investors to invest in Kuwait and help them take advantage of the benefits provided by the Direct Investment Promotion Authority for foreign investors. Kuwait is also looking to enhance cooperation in the field of food security, which is gaining prominence across the world.

He pointed out that trade, economic, and investment relations between Kuwait and Pakistan are thriving, which is evident through the exchange of joint visits, such as the visit of former minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan to Pakistan in September 2018 to hold the fourth meeting of the Joint Committee and the visit of the prime minister of Pakistan to Kuwait in November last year.

"We are seeking through this meeting to open new horizons of cooperation in various fields, identify trade and investment opportunities in both countries, and resolve all obstacles and problems facing both sides," he added. He expressed hope that the gathering would result in reaching desired outcomes that contribute to enhancing and developing economic, investment and commercial relations between the two friendly countries.

During its meeting, the committee discussed a draft agreement in the industrial field and a draft memorandum of understanding in the field of agriculture, in addition to discussing the latest developments in bilateral relations. Several government entities participated in the committee, including the ministries of finance, interior, foreign affairs, and health. Representatives from the Kuwait Investment Authority, the Public Authority of Manpower, the Kuwait Ports Authority, oil companies, and the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, among others. The committee is set to submit its report to the ministerial meeting on Thursday led by Minister of Commerce and Industry, and Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Al-Omar. — KUNA



Minister of Information participates in a dialogue session at the Arab Media Forum in Dubai. — KUNA photos

## Minister outlines strategy for cutting-edge media sustainability, models

**DUBAI:** Kuwait's Minister of Information and Culture, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, underscored the country's commitment to adopting advanced and innovative media models and methods as part of the Ministry of Information's 2021-26 strategy to create sustainable and leading media content. Speaking at the Arab Media Forum (AMF) in Dubai on Tuesday in a dialogue session titled "Kuwait Towards a New Media Decade," Al-Mutairi underlined the significance of the forum's 22nd edition with the three themes of advanced narrative models of innovative media content, sustainability in media, and the role of artificial intelligence, which is consistent with the media strategy.

He gave details on Kuwait's media vision under the auspices of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, focusing on transparency, community participation, professional content, and technological advancement. Al-Mutairi mentioned the goal of building a comprehensive media system using modern technology to provide platforms catering to citizens' needs and enhance their involvement with national issues, emphasizing the media's role in fostering positive community dia-

logue by sharing success stories and positive experiences and strengthening communication between citizens and officials.

He pointed out that media can unify national discourse, reflect shared values and challenges, and create educational and cultural programs to develop unity and solidarity. He highlighted the media's role in promoting national values and cultural identity by raising awareness about peaceful coexistence and collaboration, as the media can help build a strong, cohesive society capable of outlining developmental challenges.

On regional cooperation, Al-Mutairi stressed efforts with Gulf media institutions to unify media discourse, enhance content quality, and face common challenges through a joint Gulf media strategy under the guidance of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders. Media cooperation strengthens cultural and social ties among Gulf populations, he said, cultivating mutual understanding and integration, which reinforces a shared Gulf identity and sustainable development.

Regarding sustainable development, media can help achieve these goals by raising awareness about environmental, social, and economic issues, encouraging sustainable practices, and involving society in development efforts, Al-Mutairi stated. He pointed out that media can advocate for the preservation of natural resources and environmental balance through educational programs and community ini-

tatives, contributing to a sustainable future for upcoming generations.

Discussing media as a form of soft power, Al-Mutairi underlined the importance of quality, credibility, and creativity in content delivery, mentioning that media can be an effective tool for cultural diplomacy and positive international influence by portraying a positive image of society's values and culture, thereby boosting tourism, investment, and drawing in global talent.

He explained the need to balance freedom of expression with media regulation by establishing clear legal frameworks that ensure free speech while preventing the spread of rumors and misinformation, which requires cooperation between the government, media institutions, and civil society. Balancing freedom of expression and media regulation augments public trust in the media, reduces fake news, and helps build an informed, stable society capable of making well-informed decisions, he added.

Al-Mutairi outlined the responsible use of social media, stressing the need for awareness and educational policies that encourage users to verify information and respect cultural and social values, thereby building a safe digital community, reducing misinformation, and strengthening societal stability and progress. The Kuwaiti delegation, led by Al-Mutairi, features Kuwait's Consul General to Dubai and the Northern UAE, Ambassador Ali Al-Thaydi, and consulate officials who attended the forum. — KUNA



Senior officials and dignitaries attend the forum.

## Kuwait's Al-Arabi Al-Sagheer wins prestigious award

**DUBAI:** Kuwaiti Al-Arabi Al-Sagheer magazine for children won a prestigious award on Tuesday for its role in raising awareness and educating the young with its riveting content. The Arab Media Award, sponsored by vice president, prime minister, and ruler of Dubai Mohammad bin Rashed Al-Maktoum, is part of the Arab Media Summit and the Arab Media Forum.

Magazine Editor-in-Chief Ibrahim Al-Mulaifi voiced to KUNA his joy and gratitude for winning this significant award in the children's journalism category, adding that this is a reflection of the hard work and dedication of the team. Al-Mulaifi presented the win to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people and commended the unlimited support of Information and Culture Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. The award coincides with the largest media congregation in the region, with some 4,000 participants, including the most notable names in the industry. — KUNA



Ibrahim Al-Mulaifi



Winners of the Arab Media Award. — KUNA photos

## In my View

Time between  
fact and shadow

By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

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There are those who complain about the speed and time as if their watches run at maximum speed. Those who complain about the fast movement of years are those who didn't achieve much, as time is not measured by the watch movement; rather, it is measured by what a man or woman leaves behind. We wake up and go to work, then return home, and we create time for entertainment, a vacation, or an adventure. As this cycle is repeated, we end up wondering about the secret behind the time's speed.

There is another type of time. It is like a shadow that you hardly feel—a time that is void of brakes, a time that lacks influences. How can time move non-stop and go without true feelings? How can we feel such a time or even live in it? There is a true time, and there is a shadowy time. Some of us live in the shadows, which is something we hardly notice. We try to remember when it happened, and then, at the end, we do not pause at it for long.

As for our real time, it is the time that we know; it lives in us, and we live in it. A time during which we sought knowledge, prayed for a virtue, helped the needy, or participated in a project that benefited others. The day that comes by becomes full, but the year's entire days are complete. Today, some people are preoccupied with personal glory only, or personal disputes and struggles, and because of that, the year goes by fast like a shadow that has no benefit.

Some people do not live to their full age. They exert much effort to maintain their health and attempt to extend their age, but on the contrary, they let their years go fast. Congratulations to those whose years flourished positively. Congratulations for their good deeds, and most importantly, congratulations for a good life.

## NBK engages 'Bankee' students in securing fees for children of underprivileged families

## Bank monetizes virtual currency 'Bankoz' contributions



Manal Al-Mattar, Head of Group Corporate Communications at National Bank of Kuwait, Sumaya Al-Jassim and Maha Al-Barjas, Secretary General of the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society take a group photo with students and their teachers.

KUWAIT: In a step to foster solidarity and charity among youngsters, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) celebrated the completion of the donation drive of "Bankee" participating students to support the education of children of underprivileged families in Kuwait, which was organized in cooperation with Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS). The bank took the initiative to provide donation boxes in schools participating in the "Bankee" program for school year 2023/2024 to allow students make donations from their accumulated balance of the program's virtual currency "Bankoz", which they received as rewards and incentives during its implementation, to support the education of the underprivileged students.

This was coupled with an awareness campaign by the bank at participating schools to encourage students to donate, in cooperation with the KRCS. Teachers were also asked to frequently remind students of the donation box, and to explain to them the merits of this virtue and its positive impact on society, in an effort to promote giving and philanthropic work and instill the values of cooperation and solidarity in them from an early age.

Following that, NBK collected and monetized students' contributions into KD equivalent and donated the amount in the students' name for the child education project supervised by the KRCS, to cover the tuition fees of a group of underprivileged students; thus enabling them to pursue their education and avoid dropping out. In a ceremony held by the bank, the donated amount was presented to the KRCS, in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority "Nazaha" and Creative Confidence Company, along with teachers from participating schools, donating students, and their parents.

In the first year of its official kick-off, Bankee program was implemented in 30 public and private

schools, attracting remarkable engagement from participating students. The program not only improved their financial culture, but also had a tangible impact on many of them by cultivating key values including honesty and integrity, accountability and responsibility, collaboration and teamwork.

## Miscellaneous initiatives

On this occasion, Manal Al-Mattar, Head of Group Corporate Communications at National Bank of Kuwait said, "NBK always seeks to cement its position as Kuwait's leading socially responsible corporation by launching miscellaneous initiatives covering all sectors of society," noting that "This initiative will have a positive impact on society on different levels."

"The initiative instills multiple values in the students participating in the "Bankee" program who donated their balances of the "Bankoz" virtual currency, notably solidarity and extending a helping hand to others. Simultaneously, NBK's monetizing of these virtual balances and donating the amount to support the education of a group of low-income students in Kuwait underscores its unwavering dedication to supporting the underprivileged groups in society on one hand, and ongoing support of education within its sustainability strategy, which promotes education as a key pillar, on the other hand," she remarked.

"This donation magnifies students' benefit from the "Bankee" program, by going beyond educating them financially to cultivating many moral concepts and values, which helps raise a generation of Kuwaiti youth who are capable of playing an effective role in achieving the desired sustainable development of society at large in the future," she mentioned.

## Child education

On her part, Maha Al-Barjas, Secretary General of the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society extended appreciation to NBK, saying, "Through this initiative, NBK

played two roles, one is educational, by fostering the culture of giving and charity among students who help their colleagues from underprivileged families who are financially incapable of pursuing their education.

On the other hand, the bank demonstrated its pioneering role in charity and community service by providing a donation for the child education project supervised by the KRCS to be used in securing the tuition fees for a group of underprivileged students in Kuwait." "Child education project resonates with Kuwait's government and people's dedication to addressing the issues of the underprivileged families," she stated, stressing that concerted efforts are needed to provide suitable educational opportunities for children and prevent dropping out.

It is worth mentioning that Bankee is Kuwait's first hands-on school financial literacy program, which was launched by NBK with the aim of promoting financial inclusion, especially among school students, in an effort to set the younger generation in Kuwait on a path to a resilient financial future. The program aims to familiarize students with key financial concepts including earning, spending and saving, and financial responsibilities using classroom economy model.

Having achieved a remarkable success in its pilot phase, Bankee encouraged more schools and students to join it when it was officially kicked off at the beginning of school year 2023/2024. Out of 150 applicants, 30 schools have been enrolled in the program so far, in addition to a special needs school for learning difficulties (Joan Al Kuwait Elementary School), with a total of 15,000 students and 3,000 teachers. NBK has recently received the Bronze Award from Qorus in the Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) category for Bankee Program. This recognition underscores the bank's commitment to incorporating innovations that integrate sustainability and ESG standards into its activities.

## KRCS delivers medical aid to Sudan ministry

KHARTOUM: Continuing its campaign, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society dispatched the latest shipment of medical aid to the Sudanese Health Ministry. The shipment includes 5.6 tons of cancer treatment supplies and one thousand sanitary bags. Speaking to KUNA, Abdulrahman Al-Oun, the Director General of KRCS, emphasized that aiding Sudan is a humanitarian duty, particularly given the difficult circumstances the country is currently facing. Al-Oun affirmed the continuation of aid in partnership with KRCS and the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) to make sure the shipments are thoroughly distributed. On his side, Sudan's Deputy Minister of Health, Ismet Mustafa, expressed his sincerest gratitude to Kuwait for their support and



KRCS officials deliver medical aid to the Sudanese Health Ministry. — KUNA

assistance, affirming that Sudan needs the assistance of friendly and neighboring countries to face the health challenges they are facing. — KUNA



Participants attend the 22nd Arab conference for punitive and correctional institutions. — KUNA

## Summit underlines importance of using modern technology

CAIRO: The 22nd Arab conference for punitive and correctional institutions called for employing modern technology to enhance services provided to inmates and benefit from prior experiences. This came at the conclusion of the Cairo-hosted conference with representatives of Arab interior and justice ministries present, as well as the UN anti-drug and crime office and the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences.

The conference culminated in a number of recommendations boosting cooperation and coordination

between these establishments, according to a press release. It mentioned that a slew of tabled issues were discussed, including substitute punishments for incarceration and the effects of such punishments on familial bonds. The conference advised opting for these substitutes to improve the application of justice, improve integration, decrease expenses and efforts, and contribute to curbing re-admittance.

It called for adopting programs to raise awareness about inmate rights to social security and urged member states to take on measures to provide social assistance for inmates unable to work. The statement highlighted Naif University as an opportunity to acquaint the public with the efforts of correctional facilities as well as facilitate the exchange of successful experiences. Representing Kuwait was an interior ministry delegation headed by assistant director general for punitive and correctional establishments, Brigadier Haza'a Al-Juaib. — KUNA

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Brazilians pack up after 3 consecutive floods

Seoul city finds high levels of toxins in Shein products

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## Iran's focus turns to Raisi's successor

Reformists could win vote 'by huge margin' if allowed to run: Analyst

**TEHRAN:** After Iran mourned president Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash, the nation's focus turns to the election for his successor, with the conservative camp seeking a loyalist to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The lead-up to the June 28 vote has opened the field to a broad range of hopefuls. The big question now is how many of them will have their candidacies approved by the Guardian Council, a conservative-dominated vetting body.

Ultraconservative Raisi, who had more than a year left of his term, died on May 19 alongside his foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and six others when their helicopter crashed into a fog-shrouded mountainside. They were laid to rest after funeral rituals lasting several days that drew huge crowds of mourners. The June vote will be held during a turbulent time, as the Zionist entity continues its war in Gaza, and amid continued diplomatic tensions over Iran's nuclear program. Iran also faces sustained economic hardship, exacerbated by tough sanctions reimposed by the United States after it withdrew from a landmark 2015 nuclear deal.

Khamenei, who has the final say in all matters of state, has assigned Raisi's vice president, Mohammad Mokhber, 68, to assume interim duties for the next few weeks and organize the June election. Media reports suggest Mokhber himself plans a run, as do parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and several prominent former officials. Among other hopefuls, ultraconservative former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili was one of the first to announce his desire to stand.

Other contenders include moderate former foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, and centrist Ali Larjani, a former parliament speaker. Populist ex-president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has so far kept voters guessing and said he is "checking the conditions to decide whether to register". "We have to wait for positive developments in the country," he added.

### Vetting process

In late 2022, Iran was rocked by nationwide protests sparked by the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, following her arrest in Tehran for an alleged breach of the strict dress code for women.

Hundreds of people, including dozens of security



TEHRAN: Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf (right) greets lawmakers during the inauguration session for the new Parliament on May 27. — AFP

personnel, were killed and thousands arrested. Analyst Abbas Abdi told the reformist newspaper Hammihan that if Iran's "protesting community" sees an opportunity for change, it "will show its protest, activism and responsibility through participating in the election".

He said he was "sure that the reformists will win by a huge margin", but only if they are allowed to stand — a major concern after the disqualification of many hopefuls from previous elections. Abdi added that if the authorities permit a broad spectrum of candidates to run this time, "it will create the necessary hope in the people and lead to high participation". Candidate registration begins on May 30 and closes on June 3. Hopefuls will then be vetted by the 12-member Guardian Council, which has barred many candidates in the past, among them Ahmadinejad and Larjani.

Recent parliamentary and presidential elections have seen declining turnout, despite efforts by the authorities to encourage voters to go to the polls. Ahead of Iran's March 1 parliamentary election, the Guardian Council disqualified tens of thousands of hopefuls. With many of those barred reformists or moderates, the vetting helped conservative and ultra-conservative factions to tighten their grip on power in an election that saw the lowest turnout since the Islamic revolution of 1979.

The 2021 election that brought Raisi to power also saw many reformist and moderate figures disqualified. Turnout hit a record low for a presidential election. During his years in office, Raisi faced a barrage of criticism from former officials and activists, including over his handling of an already fragile economy. — AFP

## Trump's hush money case based on 'lies': Defense

**NEW YORK:** Defense lawyers in Donald Trump's hush money trial made their final pitch to the jury on Tuesday, insisting the first ever criminal prosecution of a former US president was based on "lies." 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.

Trump is accused of falsifying business records to reimburse his lawyer, Michael Cohen, for a \$130,000 payment to porn star Stormy Daniels, when her account of a 2006 sexual encounter could have doomed his 2016 presidential campaign. "This is a very dangerous day for America," Trump told reporters before entering the Manhattan courtroom as three of his five children — Don Jr, Eric and Tiffany — stood behind him. "We have a rigged court case that should have never been brought."

"President Trump is innocent," his defense attorney Todd Blanche told the jury at the start of what he said would be about two-and-a-half hours of closing arguments. He attacked Cohen, the prosecution's star witness, as a liar. "He told you a number of things on that witness stand that were lies, pure and simple," Blanche said. "You cannot convict President Trump of any crime beyond a reasonable doubt on the word of Michael Cohen." Then-president Trump was "busy running the country" when the reimbursements were made to Cohen," he said, and he did not inspect all the invoices that came across his desk. — AFP

## American United School in Kuwait holds sixth graduation ceremony



AUS Class of 2024

**KUWAIT:** The American United School in Kuwait holds sixth graduation ceremony for the academic year 2023/2024 on Wednesday, May 22, at the Grand Hyatt Kuwait. The number of graduates was 78, who have been accepted into prestigious universities worldwide in the United Kingdom, the United States, and locally at Kuwait University and private universities.

The ceremony was attended by the Chairwoman of the United Education Company's Board of Directors, Sheikha Dana Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Vice Chairman of the United Education Company, Mr. Meshal Ali, the Chairwoman of the Board of Trustees, Sheikha Fotouh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and the Director of the American United School, Michael Winger.

In her speech, Jude Al Obaid, the valedictorian, recalled the challenges and difficult times she and her fellow graduates faced, which they overcame with determination, patience, and perseverance. She praised the efforts of the teachers and the support of the school administration in overcoming all obstacles, developing their talents and skills, fully preparing them for university life, and enabling them to achieve their dreams and aspirations. Jude said, "Wherever life takes you, embrace the unknown, trust in your abilities, and write your stories with courage, passion, and purpose."

"Her Excellency Ambassador Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah, the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the United States, delivered the keynote address. She urged the graduates to strive, invest their ener-



H.E. Ambassador Sheikha Al Zain Al Sabah

gies and talents, and seize opportunities to achieve success and excellence in all fields, serving their country and the world by relying on the knowledge they acquired during their educational journey over the past years and what they will achieve in the future. She said, "Your academic journey was not just about what you do and how you do it, but about the impact it has on others. So I wish you all many joyful moments. Be brave, be worthy, be compassionate, and above all, remember to do what you love, and everything else will follow. Good luck."

The American United School in Kuwait (AUS) was established in 2012 and is internationally accredited by the Council of International Schools (CIS) and the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA-CISS). It has 1,267 students enrolled in various educational stages, from kindergarten to high school.



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## International

# Seoul city finds high levels of toxins in Shein products

Pair of shoes had 428 times the permitted levels of phthalates, which cause hormone disruptions

SEOUL: Children's products sold by the Chinese-founded online shopping giant Shein contained toxic substances in amounts hundreds of times above acceptable levels, the government of South Korea's capital Seoul said Tuesday. Shein, headquartered in Singapore, has skyrocketed in popularity around the world in recent years, offering a vast selection of trendy clothes and accessories at stunningly low prices.

This explosive growth has also led to increased scrutiny of its business practices and safety standards, including in the European Union and South Korea — where Seoul authorities have been conducting weekly inspections of items sold by platforms including Shein, Temu and AliExpress.

In the latest round, they selected eight products sold by Shein, including children's shoes, leather bags and a belt and found several to contain high amounts of phthalates — chemicals used to soften plastics.

One pair of shoes contained 428 times the permitted levels of phthalates — the highest observed so far during the Seoul inspections — and three bags had amounts as high as 153 times the limit, the city government said. Phthalates are widely used to soften plastic and are found in thousands of products including containers, beauty products and toys. However, they have been known for decades to cause hormone disruptions and have

been linked to obesity, heart disease, some cancers and fertility problems.

Seoul city official Park Sang-jin told AFP they had requested removal of these products from sale, and said that since the city began inspections in April, most platforms have complied with such requests. A Shein spokesperson told AFP the company "takes product safety very seriously". The company requires its suppliers to comply with its controls and standards, and works with international third-party testing agencies to ensure compliance with product safety standards, it said.

"Upon learning of any claim against our products, we immediately remove the product(s) from our site as a matter of caution whilst conducting our investigations," it said, adding it takes appropriate follow-up action "if non-compliance is verified".

So far, Seoul authorities said they have inspected 93 products and found that almost half of them contained toxic substances. These items include children's watches and coloring pencils. Last month, the European Union added Shein to its list of digital firms that are big enough to come under stricter safety rules — including measures to protect customers from unsafe products, especially those that could be harmful to minors. Shein and Temu have followed Chinese e-commerce titan Alibaba in challenging Amazon, especially by making inroads in the US market. — AFP



A person walks past an advertisement for Shein in this file photo. — Reuters

## Hong Kong arrests 6 for sedition under new security law

HONG KONG: Hong Kong police arrested six people on Tuesday under the city's new security law for "posting messages with seditious intention" online on a Facebook page about commemorating Beijing's deadly 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. Five women and one man were arrested for "posting messages with seditious intention on an anonymous social media page since April 2024", the National Security Department of the Hong Kong Police Force said in a statement.

One of the women arrested is already on remand in a maximum-security prison. Security chief Chris Tang confirmed the woman was Chow Hang-tung, a prominent activist who has been jailed since September 2021. Chow was the former leader of the now-disbanded Hong Kong Alliance, which had organized an annual candlelight vigil in Hong Kong to mourn the victims of June 4, 1989, when Beijing sent troops into Tiananmen Square to quash protests calling for political change.

Tuesday's arrests came as the 35th anniversary of that crackdown approaches. Tang also told a news briefing the Facebook page in question was the "Chow Hang-tung Club". He said the six, aged between 37 and 65, were "making use of a sensitive day to incite the public to commit acts that endanger public safety, public order and national security".

Discussion of the Tiananmen crackdown is highly sensitive for China's communist leadership and commemoration is forbidden on the mainland. The Chinese government sent troops and tanks into Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989 to break up peaceful, weeks-long protests. Hundreds, by some estimates more than 1,000, were killed.

Police said the messages were written "with the aim to incite hatred towards" the governments of China and Hong Kong "as well as inciting netizens to organize or take part in unlawful activities at a later stage". The police statement said the six were suspected of violating Hong Kong's newly enacted

"Safeguarding National Security Ordinance".

The offence carries a maximum penalty of seven years in prison. Tuesday marked the first such arrests under the new law, which was enacted in March and is commonly referred to as Article 23. It includes penalties of up to life imprisonment for five categories of crime including treason, insurrection, and external interference. It also expanded the British colonial-era offence of "sedition" to include inciting hatred against China's Communist Party leadership. The legislation is Hong Kong's second national security law and follows the one imposed by Beijing in 2020 after huge, sometimes violent pro-democracy protests were broken up.

### 'Preserving' memories

The "Chow Hang-tung Club" Facebook page had been publishing daily posts since late April about her memories of participating in the city's June 4, 1989, commemorations. Hong Kong held an annual vigil for three decades that brought thousands to a city park in a sign of freedoms that set it apart from the mainland, where all mention of the incident is censored. The vigil has been banned in Hong Kong since 2020, replaced instead by increased police presence around the park.

Chow, according to Facebook posts, had called on the public to submit their memories for her to exhibit in court as a way of "preserving our true narrative". She and two former Hong Kong Alliance leaders face an upcoming trial after they were charged with "incitement to subversion" under the Beijing-imposed security law. Chow has been jailed for three other cases, including for "unauthorized assembly" for commemorating June 4 in 2020, and has been sentenced to more than 30 months in jail.

Tuesday's arrests appeared "to showcase that any public — including online — discussion or opinions ... could be deemed seditious or endangering national security", said Eric Lai, a legal scholar at Georgetown University. "In Hong Kong, the scope of free speech and free expression in the digital space is obviously diminished," he said, pointing to a recent government ban on the protest song "Glory to Hong Kong". The United States, the European Union, Japan and Britain have been among Article 23's strongest critics, with UK Foreign Minister David Cameron saying it would "further damage the rights and freedoms" of those in the city. — AFP

## More survivors from Papua New Guinea landslide 'unlikely'

PORT MORESBY: It is "very unlikely" more survivors of Papua New Guinea's deadly landslide will be found, a UN agency warned Tuesday, as thousands of residents at risk from further slips were warned to evacuate. Some 2,000 people are feared buried by a massive landslide that entombed a remote highland community in the early hours of May 24.

For days, locals have been heaving through meters-deep churned-up earth, uprooted trees and car-sized boulders in the search for loved ones — often using little more than their hands and digging sticks. But hopes are dimming that anyone is still alive underneath the mountain of earth. "It is not a rescue mission, it is a recovery mission," UNICEF Papua New Guinea's Niels Kraaier told AFP. "It is very unlikely they will have survived."

Full-scale rescue and relief efforts have been severely hampered by the site's remote location, heavy rainfall, nearby tribal violence and the landslide severing the only road link to the outside world. Early on Tuesday, Enga provincial administrator Sandis Tsaka warned clumps of limestone, dirt and rock were still shearing off the side of Mount Mungalo.

Tsaka told AFP authorities were trying to coordinate a mass evacuation from two districts that had a total population of about 7,900 people. "The tragedy is still active," he said. "Every hour you can hear rock breaking — it is like a bomb or gunshot and the rocks keep falling down." More than 1,000 people have already been displaced by the catastrophe, aid agencies have estimated. But many residents have refused to leave at-risk areas because they were holding out hope of finding friends and family.

Satellite images show the enormous scale of the disaster. A 600-metre-long (1970-feet) smear of yellow and grey debris can be seen cutting through once verdant bushland and severing the region's only road. "This was an area heavily populated with homes, businesses, churches and schools, it has been completely wiped out. It is the surface of the moon — it is just rocks," said Tsaka. "People are digging with their hands and fingers," he said, expressing anguish at the government's powerlessness in the face of the challenge. "I am not



MAIP MULITAKA: Locals dig at the site of a landslide at Mulitaka village in this undated handout photo taken by the UN Development Program and released on May 28, 2024. — AFP

equipped to deal with this tragedy," Tsaka admitted. For days, the Papua New Guinea Defence Forces have struggled to access the site with heavy earth-moving equipment. Some residents have voiced opposition to the use of heavy machinery, fearing it would desecrate the remains of loved ones. "They treat their dead bodies as sacred," UN migration agency official Serhan Aktoprak told AFP. "If excavators come in, an excavator is not going to distinguish between the rubble and a body." "The last thing that anybody wants to have is a confrontation with the community."

There are also concerns about the impact of the disaster on villages to the west of the landslide that are now cut off from the rest of the world. UN Development Program official Nicholas Booth said up to 30,000 people were affected across several communities.

While they have enough supplies for the coming weeks, opening up that road remains essential, he said. "This landslide has blocked the road westward, so not only are there challenges in accessing the village itself, but it does mean the communities beyond that are also cut off."

Papua New Guinea's national disaster center has told the United Nations that the initial "landslide buried more than 2,000 people alive". The bodies of only a fraction of that number have been recovered so far. According to a letter obtained by AFP, the catastrophe required "immediate and collaborative actions from all players", it added, including the army, and national and provincial responders. — AFP

## Spain, Ireland and Norway...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, a civil defense official in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip said a Zionist strike on a displacement camp west of Rafah on Tuesday killed at least 21 people, days after a similar strike that sparked global outrage. Mohammad Al-Mughayyir said they were killed in an "occupation strike targeting the tents of displaced people west of Rafah." Hamas said a Zionist strike had caused "dozens of martyrs and wounded" in the area.

It came as Zionist tanks penetrated the heart of Rafah, according to Palestinian officials, despite widespread condemnation over an air strike on a crowded camp in the southern Gaza city that killed 45 people two days earlier. Zionist tanks were "stationed on the Al-Awda roundabout in the center of the city of Rafah", one witness said.

A Palestinian security source said tanks were in central Rafah, where Zionist troops launched a controversial ground assault earlier this month. "People are currently inside their homes because anyone who moves is being shot at by (Zionist) drones," one resident, Abdel Khatib, said.

The Zionist occupation forces' repeated attacks on the Kuwait Speciality Hospital in Rafah, one of a few places offering medical care for over 1.2 million people in the southern Gaza city, have forced it to shut down. "Due to the occupation forces expansion of their military operation in Rafah and their repeated and deliberate attacks on the hospital and its vicinity, including the deadly bombardment of its main gate recently in which two of the medics were martyred in addition to the injuries of five others in a previous attack, we announce that the Kuwait Speciality Hospital in Rafah is now out of service," Director of the Kuwaiti Hospital Dr Suhaib Al-Hams said in a statement. He pointed out that the doctors

and other medical workers would move to the field hospital, which is currently established at the Al-Mawasi refugee camp.

With an emergency United Nations Security Council meeting due to discuss Sunday's strike on the displaced camp, the situation remains tense in Rafah. In a statement issued hours before the meeting, the Zionist military said the weapons used in Sunday's strike "could not" have caused the deadly blaze in the Rafah camp.

Sunday evening's strike, which medics said also wounded hundreds of civilians, drew worldwide condemnation. The sight of the charred carnage, blackened corpses and children being rushed to hospitals led UN chief Antonio Guterres to declare that "there is no safe place in Gaza. This horror must stop".

More air strikes and shelling rained down overnight on besieged Gaza — including the Tal al-Sultan area where the displacement camp went up in flames near a facility of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA. "The situation is very dangerous," said resident Faten Jouda, 30. "We didn't sleep all night. There was random bombing from all directions, including artillery shelling and air bombardment as well as firing from aircraft."

"We saw everyone fleeing again," she told AFP. "We too will go now and head to Al-Mawasi because we fear for our lives," she said of a nearby coastal area the Zionist had declared a safe "humanitarian zone". UNRWA said one million civilians had fled Rafah since the Zionist entity launched its assault on the city in early May despite a chorus of international warnings. "This happened with nowhere safe to go & amidst bombardments, lack of food & water, piles of waste & unsuitable living conditions," it posted on X.

The Zionist offensive has killed at least 36,096 people in Gaza, mostly civilians, according to the territory's health ministry. UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini said Monday that "the images from last night are testament to how Rafah has turned into hell on Earth". — KUNA

## Palestinians flee Rafah as Zionist assault intensifies

GAZA: Hundreds braved roads in Rafah in south Gaza Tuesday as they fled the Zionist entity's expanding ground assault, with increased shelling, tanks in the city center, and forces positioned on higher ground. "We are panicking and afraid," 40-year-old Ihab Zorob of west Rafah told AFP. "Our children and wives haven't stopped crying. The bombing last night and throughout the morning has been intense and severe," he said. "Seeing people flee has made us more afraid, so we've decided to seek shelter in Al-Mawasi (on the coast). Hopefully we'll find space there."

Rafah city on the Palestinian territory's southern border with Egypt has been under Zionist ground assault since early May. UNRWA, the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, said that one million civilians had fled Rafah since the ground attack went ahead despite a chorus of international warnings.

On Tuesday, AFP reporters saw people carry what belongings they could as they fled western Rafah's Tal al-Sultan, where a strike on Sunday that the Zionist entity said targeted Hamas killed 45 people, according to Palestinian officials. The more fortunate transported piles of mattresses and blankets and dozens of children on the back of trucks, while others carried what they could in rubbish bags, or walked with rolled up mattresses on their heads.

In the nearby southern city of Khan Yunis, AFP reporters saw piles of pillows, mattresses and bags of clothes covering a sandy area where people fleeing Rafah had settled. Yasser Adwan, a 22-year-old resident of west Rafah, told AFP that "(Zionist) drones targeted anyone moving or walking in the streets of



GAZA: Palestinians fleeing unsafe areas in Rafah arrive with their belongings on a donkey-cart in Khan Yunis following renewed Zionist strikes on May 28, 2024. — AFP

Rafah". He reported several casualties "left lying in the street" because civil defense teams could not retrieve them for fear of being targeted themselves.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said in a statement that Zionist shelling in and around health facilities in the governorate has left just one still operational. It said that only Tal Al-Sultan Maternity Hospital was still "struggling to continue providing service to patients in the Rafah Governorate".

Several witnesses reported Zionist tanks taking up position on high ground at Tal Zorob near the border with Egypt. The Zionist military said in a statement its forces had carried out operations on the Philadelphia Corridor, a strip of land along the Egyptian border and near Tal Zorob, on Monday night.

Rafah resident Fatima Al-Nams, 65, told AFP that "throughout the night, the bombing didn't stop, with air and artillery fire and vehicles advancing to the west" of the city. "We will evacuate like the other citizens now," added Nams, who as a resident of the last area in the Gaza Strip to be attacked by ground troops had not yet been displaced, unlike most people in the territory. — AFP

## International

# Brazilians pack up after 3 consecutive floods

## Residents of wealthy town hit by historic flooding shaken after losing everything

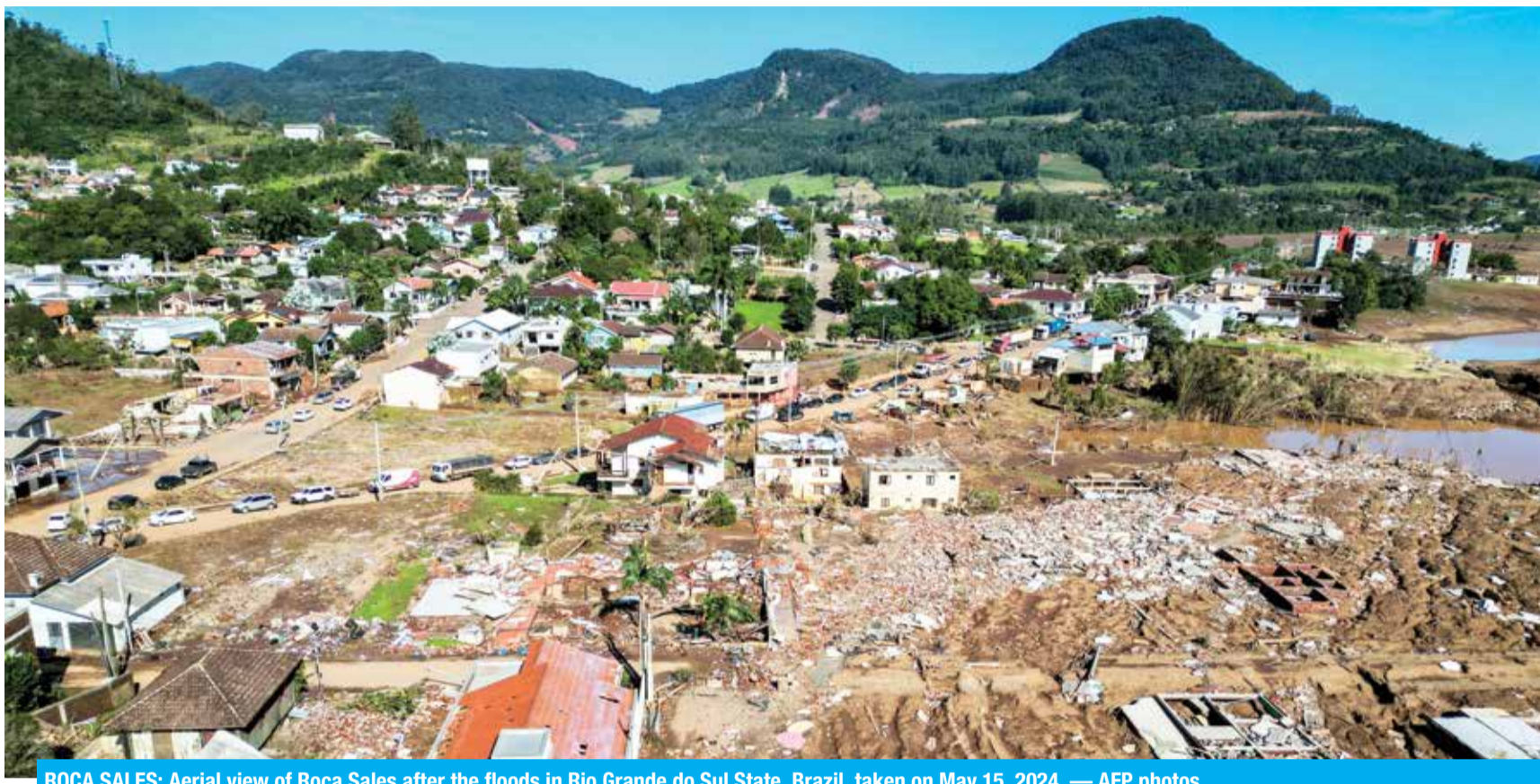
**ROCA SALES, Brazil:** Fabiana Alves sifts through her mud-caked belongings while her partner loads up the car. After three floods in eight months, the couple has had enough and is leaving the Brazilian riverside town of Roca Sales for good.

"We're leaving because ... I'm terrified. Any cloud, water, or rain and we think another flood is coming. We can't live like this anymore," the 50-year-old told AFP. The wealthy town of 12,000 residents was one of the hardest hit by historic flooding in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, parts of which are still under water one month after rivers first burst their banks.

At least 170 people have died, dozens are missing and more than 600,000 have been displaced by flooding, which experts attribute to climate change exacerbated by the El Niño weather phenomenon. Ruined buildings and empty stores abound in the center of Roca Sales. Supermarkets have yet to re-open since river waters crashed through the town.

Residents of the town, which faces the Taquari River, used to expect a flood once every decade or so. Now, they hit so often that there is barely time to recover. Experts widely agree that global warming makes extreme weather events more frequent and more intense.

"We are rebuilding for the third time. People no longer have resources," Roca Sales mayor Amilton Fontana told AFP. "The people here are very hard-working, very resilient, but really, these three floods have shaken not only the physical infrastructure but also people's mental resilience."



ROCA SALES: Aerial view of Roca Sales after the floods in Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil, taken on May 15, 2024. — AFP photos



Fabiana Alves cleans her house after the floods.

## South Africa gears up for 'most unpredictable' vote

**JOHANNESBURG:** South Africans braced Tuesday for a tight general election that may loosen the ruling ANC's 30-year hold on power - with many voters fed up with unemployment, crime and corruption. For a second day, 1.6 million "special voters" including the elderly, essential workers, police and prisoners, were allowed to cast their ballots early.

The rest of South Africa's 27-million-strong registered electorate will be called on Wednesday to elect provincial legislatures and a new national parliament. The latter then chooses the president.

For the first time since the advent of democracy, the African National Congress is at risk of losing its outright majority and could be forced to negotiate a coalition. "This is certainly South Africa's most unpredictable election since 1994," political analyst Daniel Silke said. "It reflects the broad-based economic decline that the country has been languishing under now for the better part of the last decade or so."

Under the leadership of the late Nelson Mandela, the ANC won freedom for black South Africans after decades of apartheid. It then helped build a strong democracy and lifted millions out of poverty by creating a broad social welfare system.

But many in the country of 62 million now blame it for overseeing massive graft and mismanaging the economy. "I will not vote for ANC but I don't know who I will vote for," said Nomsa Cele, 55, a hawkker selling hats and jewelry on the quiet beachfront of Durban, the largest city in the battleground province KwaZulu-Natal, whose streets are plastered with electoral posters.

In the bustling streets of Umlazi township, one of the biggest in KwaZulu-Natal, rival tents for the ANC and the radical left opposition Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) were pitched outside Umlazi Commercial High School.

Busisiwe Mthethwa told AFP her ballot was secret but said with a slight smile she would vote for the "red party", implying she was leaning towards

the EFF. The 62-year-old said she had not cast her vote in 2019 because "she had lost hope in the ruling party's corruption tactics" but believed "it's now time to make my vote count and kick them out." An Afrobarometer survey last week showed that unemployment, currently at 32.9 percent, rolling blackouts, corruption and poverty were the most urgent problems South Africans want to be addressed.

### 'A weaker party'

President Cyril Ramaphosa, who is seeking a second term, defended his record in a speech to the nation on Sunday, citing progress in fighting graft and fixing gaps in electricity production among other successes. "We have placed South Africa on a new trajectory of recovery and laid a strong foundation for future growth," the 71-year-old said. "We cannot afford to turn back. There is more work to be done."

He has also promised to usher in universal credit and push ahead with plans to provide health coverage. But polls suggest the ANC could win as little as 40 percent of the vote, down from 57 percent in 2019. Under South Africa's post-apartheid constitution, MPs are elected on a party list system, and the executive president is chosen from among their number by the Cape Town-based parliament.

If the ANC has fewer than 201 seats, Ramaphosa would have to negotiate with opposition parties and independent MPs to secure a majority and return to government headquarters in Pretoria. It could face stark choices. On the right, it is beset by the Democratic Alliance (DA), which has vowed to "Rescue South Africa" by rolling back the ANC's race-based economic empowerment programs and to boost growth through privatization and deregulation.

On the left, it is bleeding support to former president Jacob Zuma's uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) and Julius Malema's EFF, which favor radical reforms like land redistribution and the nationalization of key economic sectors.

Were the party to come close to 50 percent however, it could also strike a potentially easier deal with some of the dozens of smaller groups on the ballot. "The choosing of its partners will ultimately set the scene for South Africa's future course," said Silke. "But the ANC will be a weaker party ... And indeed, the future of President Ramaphosa could also very well be in doubt as a result of a poor ANC performance." — AFP



JOHANNESBURG: A cardboard cutout of South African President Cyril Ramaphosa stands next to ANC political party agents on May 28, 2024. — AFP

back," she said. On the main street of Roca Sales, downcast residents trudge towards a food donation point. "There is only one reality: everyone is suffering," said Gelson Moraes Lopes, a 48-year-old waiter who receives several hot plates of pasta from a volunteer. Originally from the neighboring state of Parana, Lopes and his wife chose to move to Roca Sales, attracted by its high quality of life. The town boasts a per capita income 16 percent higher than the Brazilian average of almost \$10,000, according to official data from 2021.

Moraes Lopes arrived days before the first flood, in September 2023. Everything he moved with was lost. In November, "fate returned" with another deluge, and now, he ended up with a meter of mud filling his apartment. This was the last straw. "We're going back to Parana," he told AFP.

### No choice but to stay

Jania Delay Silva, 60, and her husband, Joao Carlos Vargas, 61, have no choice but to stay. "We can't survive any other way," said Delay Silva, wiping away tears. The retired couple was living on the outskirts of Roca Sales when their house was destroyed in the November floods. They had started building a new one at a higher point, which seemed safer, next to their agricultural fields.

But when the flood hit, they had to leave the unfinished property. For now they live in a house lent to them by relatives, "with no door or electricity," said Delay Silva. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) on Friday described the situation in Rio Grande do Sul as "very worrying" and warned of the need to help the population prepare for and recover from extreme climate events. — AFP

## North Nigeria city caught in 'Game of Thrones' royal standoff

**KANO:** Northern Nigeria's largest city Kano has been gripped by tension as two rival royal figures wrestle over an influential throne key to control of one of the country's most important political fiefdoms. Dubbed a Nigerian "Game of Thrones" by local media, the royal tussle underscores how traditional institutions are increasingly becoming tools of political power in Africa's most populous country.

Emirs in the mostly Muslim north, alongside Obas or kings and other traditional rulers in the predominantly Christian south, still wield broad influence outside Nigeria's elected government. The emir of Kano by tradition is the second most senior Islamic ruler among Nigerian Muslims after the Sultan of Sokoto.

Last week, Kano's state governor Abba Kabir Yusuf restored former emir Muhammadu Sanusi II to the throne, four years after he was deposed by the previous governor. His successor Aminu Ado Bayero was removed on Thursday alongside four other emirs after Kano assembly lawmakers amended the emirate law of 2019 that established them. As the drama unfolded, Bayero returned to Kano under the cover of night and the next day declared himself the bona fide emir, citing a court order restraining his dismissal pending a hearing in early June. "We call on the authorities to do justice in this matter. Kano is a very influential state in Nigeria. Whatever affects Kano affects Nigeria," he said.

As legal battles continued, Kano's high court barred Bayero from presenting himself as emir pending the June hearing. Sanusi moved into the palace on Saturday where he now holds daily court, while Bayero is lodged in a royal guest house a few kilometers (miles) away where his supporters pay their respects.

Sanusi accused political leaders of "Balkanizing" the power of the emirates by creating numerous posts instead of one. His return restored order in Kano, he said. "What the government and the assembly did is a rescue mission," he said, receiving his reinstatement letter.

Both palaces are heavily guarded by military and police personnel. Kano city has maintained relative calm, but there are fears the impasse could degenerate into violence before the court hearing, with the supporters of the two royals becoming increasingly restless.

### Power struggle

On Sunday, Bayero supporters staged a protest, condemning his removal. But critics believe protests were sponsored by pro-Bayero politicians. Hours later, the police said they had uncovered "a plot" by "miscreants" to cause violence in the city and attack selected government buildings including the state assembly and the governor's official residence.

The thugs were being sponsored by politicians, Hussein Gumel, the state's police commissioner told reporters in his office. The royal squabble between Sanusi and Bayero is also a proxy fight for political control between former governors of the state.

Sanusi was appointed the 14th emir of Kano in 2014 by then Kano state governor Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, who was a member of the then opposition APC party. He was installed to succeed his grand-uncle and Bayero's father who died on the throne. However, Sanusi's troubles started after Abdullahi Umar Ganduje succeeded Kwankwaso as governor in 2015. — AFP



TBILISI: Demonstrators protesting the "foreign influence" law crowd outside the parliament building in central Tbilisi on May 28, 2024. — AFP

## Georgia adopts 'foreign influence' law despite protests

**TBILISI:** Georgia's parliament on Tuesday voted into law a controversial "foreign influence" bill, overriding a presidential veto despite weeks-long mass protests and warnings from the West that it could jeopardize the country's path to the European Union.

The law - which critics compare to repressive Russian legislation used to silence dissent - targets NGOs and media, obligating groups that receive at least 20 percent of their funding from abroad to register as "organizations pursuing the interests of a foreign power."

The proposal has drawn fierce backlash from Western governments including the United States, which said the measure risked "stifling" freedom of expression in the Black Sea Caucasus nation. Brussels has warned the measure is "incompatible" with the ex-Soviet republic's longstanding bid for EU membership, which is enshrined in the country's constitution and supported - according to opinion polls - by more than 80 percent of the population.

Lawmakers voted 84 to 4 to pass the bill on Tuesday, after overriding pro-EU President Salome Zourabichvili's veto. Most opposition MPs walked out of the chamber ahead of the vote. The EU said that it "deeply regrets" the law's adoption, with foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell saying the bloc was "considering all options to react to these developments".

Waving Georgian and EU flags, a large crowd of protesters outside parliament shouted "Russian slaves!" during the vote. Georgia has been gripped by a wave of unprecedented rallies for the past seven weeks, since the ruling Georgian Dream party revived the plans, which are similar to measures it dropped last year after a public outcry. Another mass protest is scheduled to take place later on Tuesday.

"I think we were all expecting this outcome, but I feel so angry, I feel so frustrated. The most important thing right now is to not lose hope," protestor Lizi Kenchoshvili, 23, told AFP outside parliament minutes after the vote, vowing to continue protesting. Georgian Dream says the law will ensure "transparency" and argues foreign-funded groups undermine Georgia's sovereignty. But rights groups and Western governments warn it will further ignite tensions in the deeply polarized Caucasus country ahead of October parliamentary elections seen as a key democratic test. — AFP

# Business

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2024

## Abdullah AlTerkait elected Chairman of UIC, Faisal Sarkhou as his deputy

Union of Investment Companies holds 19th ordinary general assembly with 92.9% attendance

**KUWAIT:** The 19th ordinary general assembly of the Union of Investment Companies (UIC) reconstituted the new board of directors headed by Abdullah Hamad AlTerkait, succeeding former Chairman of the Board of Directors Saleh Saleh Al-Selmi. At a meeting held by the General Assembly on Tuesday with an attendance rate of 92.9 percent, the member companies discussed the agenda and all its items were approved, including the reports of the board of directors and the auditor, while the general assembly cleared the previous board members of any liabilities.

### Board of directors

The assembly elected the new board of directors whose membership includes: Abdullah Hamad AlTerkait, representative of Al-Safat Investment Company, Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, representative of Kamco Invest, Abdullah Muhammad Hamoud Al-Shatti, representative of Aayan Leasing and Investment Company, and Fahad Abdul Rahman Al-Mukhaizim, representing National Investments Company. Dakhil Abdullah Al-Dakhil representing Rasameel Investment Company, Muhammad Abdullah Al-Saad representing Amar Finance and Leasing Company, Fawaz Sulaiman Al-Ahmad representing Kuwait Investment Company, Duajj Raad Al-Saleh representing Kuwait Clearing Company and Jassim Hassan Zainal, representative of Arzan Financial Group for Finance and Investment.

### Formation of the Council

Following the general assembly, the council elected Abdullah Hamad AlTerkait to assume the presidency of the Union and Faisal Mansour Sarkhou as Vice President, Fahad Abdul Rahman Al-Mukhaizim as Secretary and Duajj Raad Al-Saleh as Treasurer.

In a press statement issued by the Union after adoption of the new board, AlTerkait expressed his thanks and appreciation to the members of the board of directors for their confidence in recommending him as Chairman of the board for the new session. He also thanked the former members of the board of directors: Saleh Saleh Al-Selmi, Bader Nasser Al-Subaie and Issa Khaled Al-Issa for the efforts they made and provided during their period of membership in the Union's board of directors, praising all members of the committees working in the Union for their volunteerism to enrich the aspects of technical work in the union.

### Union's achievements

Chairman of the Board of Directors Abdullah Hamad AlTerkait said: The Union has achieved various achievements over the past years through positive contributions at the level of issues of concern to investment matters locally. AlTerkait explained that the local investment environment has become conducive to achieving more achievements and successes, especially in light of the support the country is currently providing to achieve its sustainable development goals under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, may God protect him.

### A foundation for success

He added His Highness the Amir's keenness to direct the work towards launching projects that



### Abdullah AlTerkait:

- We are keen to cooperate with government state institutions and the private sector to translate the visions of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait
- The local investment environment has become conducive to achieving more economic achievements and successes
- The Union is interested in promoting sustainable investment and encourages commitment to environmental, social and governance standards



Faisal Mansour Sarkhou

state institutions in order to achieve the desired goals and then provide a suitable environment to attract local and international investments into Kuwait in a way that translates the recommendations of His Highness the Amir.

### Future role

Regarding the expected future role of the Union of Investment Companies and its interest in strengthening the national economy and contributing to the development of the Kuwait's financial market, AlTerkait reaffirmed the new council's commitment to making an effort to realize more achievements by utilizing the capabilities and competencies of the members of the new council, and with the confidence of the member companies.

He explained that the targeted role will be multi-

faceted. That includes promoting sustainable investment practices as well as encouraging adherence to environmental, social and governance standards in investment strategies and enhancing transparency.

### A catalyst for innovation

According to AlTerkait, the Union will seek to become a catalyst for innovation and technological progress in the investment sector in light of the rapid pace of digital transformation and the increasing importance of financial technology solutions. He pointed out that efforts will continue to be exerted to strengthen the Union's position as a leading organization in the training and professional development sector, based on our belief in the Union and in the necessity of investing in the human element as a basic step to achieving sustainable development goals. This is in addition to the rapid developments witnessed by the global, regional and local labor market, as its requirements for skills and competencies are changing, he said, adding continuous learning and skill improvement has become essential for investment professionals to establish themselves and compete.

### Openness and cooperation

"As part of the Union of Investment Companies' efforts to achieve its mission through openness and cooperation with various bodies concerned with the work of specialized entities, the Union has signed many memorandums of understanding and cooperation agreements with many local and international bodies as these endeavors aim to contribute to improving the investment environment in Kuwait, enhancing the role of the private sector in business fields, and spreading awareness and knowledge in various investment activities in a way that contributes to advancing economic development towards growth and prosperity," AlTerkait concluded.

the nation and the citizens need represents a solid foundation capable of achieving an unprecedented economic progress which places on all of us the responsibility of listening, obeying, supporting and participating in the collective work for the country's advancement and prosperity and enhancing its resources, finances and investment capabilities.

AlTerkait stressed that the Union will spare no effort in cooperating with governmental and private



KUWAIT: The Union of Investment Companies holds the 19th ordinary general assembly.

## UAE president meets business chiefs in S Korea

**SEOUL:** The president of the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday met leaders of some of South Korea's biggest conglomerates after the UAE last year announced plans to invest \$30 billion in the country. President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan is the first sitting UAE president to make a state visit to Asia's

fourth-largest economy. During Seoul's President Yoon Suk Yeol's visit to the country last year, the UAE said it would invest \$30 billion in South Korea.

Follow-up announcements to the investment plan, which is expected to cover arms and energy, are expected to be made during the two-day visit which includes a summit with Yoon.

The Emirati president met leaders of South Korea's largest companies upon his arrival, most notable the chairmen of Samsung Electronics, SK Group and Hyundai Motor Group. Bang Si-hyuk, chairman of HYBE and the mastermind behind K-pop sensation BTS, as well as

Kim Taek-jin, CEO of leading gaming firm NCSOFT, also attended the meeting at a hotel in central Seoul.

"We are looking for ways to increase our cooperation in the shipbuilding sector, including commercial vessels and warships... and the environmentally friendly energy sector," Chung Kisun, CEO of HD Hyundai, a shipbuilding conglomerate, told reporters before the meeting. South Korea's presidential office last week said the two countries' leaders will discuss way to enhance cooperation in traditional and clean energy, economy and investment, "peaceful" nuclear energy and defense. — AFP

## Why does OPEC+ often clash over production capacity?

**LONDON:** OPEC+ is working to agree oil production capacity for its member countries by the end of 2024, an issue that has created tensions in the past because each nation's output target is calculated from its notional capacity. Members of OPEC+ - comprising OPEC and allies such as Russia - tend to push for higher capacity to get higher output targets after the percentage cut required by the group is factored in.

OPEC+ has been curbing output to support prices. But as many members rely on oil export revenues, they have an incentive to push for the highest production quota they can. OPEC+ members previously reported their own capacity figures. To try to diffuse disagreements, the group has tasked three independent consultancies - IHS, Wood Mackenzie and Rystad - to assess member capacity before the end of June. These assessments won't be ready for the next OPEC+ online meeting on June 2. But the group will need to make progress on the issue if it is to use new capacity figures to estimate future cuts after the existing ones expire at the end of 2024.

Saudi Arabia, the world's third largest producer, has said countries that have expanded capacity should be rewarded for their investment. The countries that have built more capacity such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) would like to use some of it to get a return on their investment.

Other countries such as Nigeria

have struggled to meet their existing targets due to a lack of investment and maintenance. Even if countries cannot hit their targets, they do not like to see their notional capacity cut by OPEC+ because that could mean a lower production quota. In December 2023, Angola quit OPEC after arguing it was assigned a lower capacity than it deserved and would have to make deeper output cuts than needed.

Production capacity provides a reference point from which production targets are set and cuts are made. Cuts are distributed proportionally to capacity levels. OPEC+ regularly publishes cuts but doesn't regularly publish capacity numbers, which further complicates matters. Saudi Arabia, for example, has a declared capacity 12 million barrels per day (bpd) - not far off the 11.5 million bpd used by OPEC+ as reference production for the kingdom from May 2022, and agreed in July 2021.

Under its current quota, the kingdom produces around 9 million bpd, or at 75 percent of its capacity levels. It has recently shelved plans to boost capacity to 13 million bpd, deciding its money was better spent on other projects. Meanwhile, the UAE's reference production approved by OPEC+ is around 3.5 million bpd from May 2022. The UAE says it has come very close to expanding its capacity to 5 million bpd and wants its OPEC+ quota increased. Under existing cuts, the UAE produces 2.9 million bpd, or just 60 percent of the capacity it says it has. — Reuters



SEOUL: UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan arrives in South Korea on Tuesday. — WAM



## Business

# Boursa Kuwait hosts IR workshops in collaboration with Instinctif Partners

## Company supports investor relations activities, highlights best practices in corporate reporting

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait hosted investor relations workshops in collaboration with Instinctif Partners, a strategic reputation advisory firm based in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, at the bourse's premises on May 27, 2024, targeting companies listed in the Kuwaiti capital market.

The workshops aimed at enriching the awareness and understanding of the latest, best-in-class standards and practices in IR, an important aspect of communicating with investors and ensuring the timely and accurate dispersion of information, which in turn helps create trust and transparency in capital markets and allows investors to fully analyze listed companies and their performance and make astute investment decisions.

The workshops were run by Matthew Smallwood, Managing Partner, Samah Ragab, Associate Partner and Duaa Kannin, Consultant at Instinctif Partners, who shared their perspectives and expertise with over 30 IR practitioners.



KUWAIT: A group photo taken on the sidelines of the investor relations workshop organized by Boursa Kuwait in collaboration with Instinctif Partners.



Matthew Smallwood



Naser Meshari Al-Sanousi

The workshops explored the latest trends and challenges shaping the IR industry, including the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) metrics and reporting. The experts from Instinctif also highlighted how to build an effective IR program, utilizing efficient communications and building tools to support those activities, including developing the company website and mastering the art of presentations. The workshops also shed light on how to cultivate strong investor relationships by building successful long-term partnerships based on trust and capitalizing on data-driven insights. In addition, the workshops offered a deep dive into crafting award-winning annual reports that showcase a company's value proposition, strategic direction, and operating landscape.

Senior Director of Marketing and Corporate Communications Naser Meshari Al-Sanousi commented on the workshops, saying, "Boursa Kuwait is dedicated to fostering a culture of sustainable excellence and enhancing the overall awareness

and knowledge of the best standards, practices and trends adopted worldwide and encouraging them to be implemented across the Kuwaiti capital market. These workshops are a key initiative in our strategy to maintain a sound capital market infrastructure, one that can attract new investors and cultivate long-lasting relationships with the international investment community. I would like to thank the listed companies for their contribution to the success of this event and extend deep gratitude to Instinctif Partners for organizing this initiative and look forward to more collaborations in the future."

Boursa Kuwait's organization of this and other similar initiatives stems from the company's strategy to ensure that Kuwaiti capital markets participants are informed and knowledgeable of the latest trends globally, specifically in the IR industry, which is fast becoming a vibrant industry and a key tenet of a company's strategy, as the IR function provides an essential communications point between listed companies and their investors, whether current or prospective.

Investor relations in the Kuwaiti capital market is quickly gaining traction, as companies wishing to list on the "Premier" Market are obligated to allocate a unit or department dedicated to investor relations. That department is responsible for educating shareholders about the company's activities, financial performance and strategic directions. It is also responsible for answering shareholder inquiries and questions, communicating with shareholders to exercise their rights to attend and vote in general assemblies as well as building links between the

Board of Directors, Executive Management, current and potential investors and all interested parties.

It is worth noting that companies listed in the "Premier" Market segment accounted for 72 percent of the traded value in the first quarter of 2024, while "Premier" Market companies' share of traded volume came in at 53 percent for the same period. Additionally, the "Premier" Market's market capitalization during the first quarter of 2024 was over KD 36 billion, representing 83.5 percent of the total market capitalization of KD 43.11 billion.

This is due to the reclassification of the Kuwaiti capital market into an "Emerging Market" in some of the world's leading index providers and the inclusion of Kuwaiti listed companies, many of whom are "Premier" Market companies, into these indexes. Additionally, companies listed in the "Premier" Market regularly participate in Boursa Kuwait's Corporate Days, organized in collaboration with world-renowned financial institutions and showcasing the investment opportunities that reside in the Kuwaiti capital market. Putting these companies in touch with some of the world's leading investment firms and financial institutions, the events aim to highlight these companies' financial health and business strategies and outlooks helping investors gain an in-depth understanding of the benefits and opportunities of investing in Kuwaiti companies.

Commenting on the collaboration with Boursa Kuwait, Matthew Smallwood, Managing Partner at Instinctif Partners, said: "It was a pleasure presenting to a responsive and knowledgeable audience at Boursa Kuwait. Attendees were excited and showed

great ambition to adopt the best-in-class standards and practices to become high-quality practitioners in the field of Investor Relations. A critical pillar of a company's reputation, IR can contribute to better investor interactions and conversations, making it easier to attract new investors and retain old ones, which in turn helps deliver a valuation that companies deserve, thanks to the higher levels of transparency and trust. I would like to thank Boursa Kuwait for this opportunity and look forward to more collaborations in the future."

Boursa Kuwait's collaboration with Instinctif Partners highlights its commitment to enhancing its corporate communications and investor relations and ensuring their alignment with global best practices. It underscores the bourse's proactive approach and its dedication to fostering an efficient and transparent capital market, one that can become a vital contributor to the State of Kuwait's vision to transform into a leading cultural, financial and investment hub in the Middle East.

The initiative forms part of Boursa Kuwait's efforts to create a lasting meaningful impact on the communities where it operates as part of its Corporate Sustainability strategy and ongoing efforts to equip all market participants with an in-depth understanding of the functioning of capital markets and various tools and techniques required to make informed investment decisions and effectively meet investors' needs. It is also in line with Goal 4 – Quality Education – and Goal 17 – Partnership for the Goals – of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## Gulf Bank holds credit analysis training for staff

KUWAIT: The Talent Development Team at Gulf Bank's Human Resources Management collaborated with the American Management Center (AMC) to design a training program on credit analysis. The goal was to enhance the skills of Wealth Management staff, aligning with the bank's ongoing efforts to promote professional growth among its employees.

Tailored specifically for Gulf Bank's Wealth Management department, the program aimed to equip employees with essential skills for conducting thorough credit and financial analyses for both Wealth Management clients and high-profile bank customers. It covered topics such as individual credit and financial analysis, understanding credit risk, and detailed financial data analysis. These topics aimed to improve decision-making related to credit, and build stronger relationships with clients, enhancing their confidence in the bank's premium services.

Salma Al-Hajjaj, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources, emphasized the program's significance as a reflection of the bank's commitment to excellence. By empowering the Wealth Management team with advanced skills, the bank aims to maintain high professional standards and ensure customer satisfaction. Al-Hajjaj also stressed Gulf Bank's dedication to providing quality services tailored to



Salma Al-Hajjaj

- The program reflects our commitment to upholding the highest standards of professionalism and ensuring the satisfaction of our valued customers.
- We are dedicated to providing quality services tailored to our Wealth Management clients' needs and aligned with their lifestyles.

our Wealth Management clients' needs and aligned with their lifestyles. They focus on attracting high-net-worth individuals seeking distinguished banking services by enhancing their workforce's capabilities through continuous training and staying updated on industry developments.

She highlighted the bank's efforts to offer distinctive banking services by understanding and meeting clients' needs. Gulf Bank dedicates specific branches to distinguished clients, equipped with advanced banking technologies to ensure privacy, comfort, and efficient service delivery.

Additionally, private Wealth Management clients receive personalized attention from an account manager who oversees all their banking needs. They benefit from various perks such as access to airport lounges, travel discounts, comprehensive insurance through credit cards, and other exclusive benefits.

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

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

## US unveils policy to boost carbon offset market integrity

WASHINGTON: The US government unveiled rules to govern the use of voluntary carbon credits on Tuesday, seeking to boost confidence in a nascent market after some high-profile offset projects failed to deliver the promised emissions reductions.

The heads of the Treasury, Energy and Agriculture Departments as well as President Joe Biden's top climate and economic advisers announced a joint statement of policy and principles to guide participation in voluntary carbon markets as part of its broader efforts to encourage their development. "Voluntary carbon markets can help unlock the power of private markets to reduce emissions, but that can only happen if we address significant existing challenges," said Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen.

"The principles released today are an important step toward building high-integrity voluntary carbon markets." Many companies "offset" their own greenhouse gas emissions by buying voluntary carbon credits, which represent the avoidance or removal of emissions via projects largely located in developing countries.

But a series of high-profile controversies has shaken confidence in the market for carbon offsets, with several large companies that buy carbon credits retreating from the market as recent studies found that several large forest protection projects failed to deliver their promised emission reductions.

Voluntary carbon markets shrank for the first time last year in at least seven years. The principles for "responsible participation" in offset markets outlined by US officials on Tuesday include strict standards to ensure that projects deliver real and quantifiable emissions reductions, monitoring to ensure projects do not harm local communities and that corporate buyers prioritize decarbonizing their own supply chains before opting for credits.

The move by the US to ensure "integrity" in voluntary carbon markets comes as several organizations, such as the Integrity Council for Voluntary Carbon Markets (ICVCM), have started to publish principles to define high-quality offsets. ICVCM Council Chair Annette Nazareth said the new principles aligned with its own Core Carbon Principles which are emerging as the first independent global benchmark for high-integrity carbon credits.

"We are in a climate emergency and we need every tool in the box to meet the 1.5°C target," she said. "High-integrity carbon credits can mobilize private finance at scale for projects to reduce and remove billions of tons of emissions that would not otherwise be viable."

WWF senior vice president of climate change Marcene Mitchell said carbon credits "have the potential to unlock significant investment in a range of climate solutions" but that "evidence-based science and guidance" was needed to enable companies to transform their own operations and value chains. — AFP

## Afaq Future Real Estate Company

# A Kuwaiti company leading the way in real estate development in Bahrain



Youssef Nasser Yousef Al-Abduljaleel

KUWAIT: Youssef Nasser Yousef Al-Abduljaleel, CEO of Afaq Future Real Estate Company, has announced the company's prominent position in the realm of real estate development and marketing. Afaq Future Real Estate Company excels in providing comprehensive and seamless solutions for developing and selling properties under construction, followed by managing towers and collecting rents post-sale in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The company specializes in the development and marketing of high-quality residential towers in Bahrain. Their properties are finished to meet the highest standards of quality, comfort, and investment potential. When purchasing an apartment in one of Afaq Futures' towers in Bahrain, customers have the option to entrust the company with the

management of their rental properties. The professional team at Afaq Future handles all aspects of rental management, including marketing, maintenance, and rent collection.

As part of their commitment to customer satisfaction, Afaq Future offers a unique proposition to their clients. They guarantee a fixed annual income of 8 percent from the rental returns of purchased apartments. This ensures a steady and uninterrupted monthly income, providing financial stability and peace of mind for their clients, thereby enhancing the appeal of their properties as attractive investment opportunities. Afaq Future Real Estate Company continues to set the benchmark in the real estate sector, combining quality, reliability, and innovation to deliver exceptional value to their clients.

## Business

# Burgan Bank named 'Best Domestic Bank in Kuwait' in Euromoney survey

## Testament to bank's unwavering commitment to service excellence

KUWAIT: In a new tribute to its outstanding performance and its position as a trusted financial partner, Burgan Bank announced that it was voted as the Best Domestic Bank in Kuwait in the 2024 Euromoney Trade Finance Survey. A notable global recognition and benchmark to service excellence, Euromoney's annual survey gathers and analyses thousands of trade-finance service users' independent votes to rank and assess their top providers within the domestic, regional, and global markets.

Commenting on this prestigious accolade, Fadel Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) - Kuwait at Burgan Bank, said: "It is a great honor for us at Burgan to be recognized by Euromoney and voted as the best financial service provided in the banking sector in Kuwait by its network of individuals and company representatives. For many years, customer service has been a core facet of our institutional success, and it remains, to this day, at the forefront of our mission. As we strive to be the most modern and progressive bank in Kuwait, we continue to tailor every detail of our customers' banking journey

to their evolving needs and aspirations, guaranteeing consistently high levels of satisfaction."

To ensure accurate results and rankings, Euromoney follows a meticulous process in its analysis of the annual Trade Finance Survey, which begins by collecting votes from respondents, who are all users of trade finance services, based on their location, remit, and job function. For the 'Best in Service' (CSAT) ranking, the survey analysis applies a 1-5 grading scale, with 1 denoting "poor service" and 5 denoting "very good service". Among the aspects of the bank's service that the survey asks respondents to rate are products, financing, advisory, price and scale, support, and digital offering. The survey also delves into more topics such as market view and the respondents' evaluation of their company's performance within the ecosystem it functions.

It serves to note that this accolade comes on the heels of the 'Quality Recognition Award' for the year 2023, which Burgan Bank received from JP Morgan Chase, in recognition of its consistently high-quality

performance. It also follows numerous awards and recognitions that the Bank received in 2023, including the Great Place to Work certificate, the Brandon Hall Silver Award for Excellence in Learning in the Flow of Work, as well as the GCC Excellence Award in Recruitment and Development of Nationals.

The Euromoney Finance Trade Survey is part of Euromoney's vast portfolio of trade publications, industry events and insights tools. Euromoney magazine was launched in 1969 to cover the emergence of the international cross-border capital markets. Today, Euromoney is the primary magazine of the wholesale financial world, its institutions and its users, and has been for more than 50 years.



Fadel Abdullah



## OpenAI forms AI safety committee after key departures

SAN FRANCISCO: OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, announced the formation of a new safety committee on Tuesday, weeks after the departures of key executives raised questions about the firm's commitment to mitigating the dangers of artificial intelligence. The company said the committee, which will include CEO Sam Altman, is being established as OpenAI begins training its next AI model, expected to surpass the capabilities of the GPT-4 system powering ChatGPT.

"While we are proud to build and release industry-leading models on both capabilities and safety, we welcome a robust debate at this important juncture," OpenAI stated. Comprised of board members and executives, the committee will spend the next 90 days com-

prehensively evaluating and bolstering OpenAI's processes and safeguards around advanced AI development.

OpenAI stated it will also consult outside experts during this review period, including former US cybersecurity officials Rob Joyce, who previously led efforts at the National Security Agency, and John Carlin, a former senior Justice Department official. Over the three-month span, the group will scrutinize OpenAI's current AI safety protocols and develop recommendations for potential enhancements or additions.

After this 90-day review, the committee's findings will be presented to the full OpenAI board before being publicly released. The committee's formation comes on the heels of recent executive departures that stoked concerns about OpenAI's AI safety priorities.

Earlier this month, the company dissolved its "superalignment" team dedicated to mitigating long-term AI risks. In announcing his exit, team co-lead Jan Leike criticized OpenAI for prioritizing "shiny new products" over vital safety work in a series of posts on X, the platform

previously known as Twitter. "Over the past few months, my team has been sailing against the wind," Leike said. OpenAI has also faced controversy over an AI voice some claimed closely mimicked actress Scarlett Johansson, though the company denied attempting to impersonate the Hollywood star. — AFP



OpenAI CEO Sam Altman speaks during the Microsoft Build conference in Seattle on May 21, 2024. — AFP

## Global stock markets tread water before key inflation data

LONDON: Stock markets wavered Tuesday as New York and London returned to action following public holidays, with investors now bracing for key inflation data later this week that could shed light on the interest-rate outlook.

Wall Street was mixed at the open as investors returned from the three-day Memorial Day weekend. "There appears to be some post-holiday lethargy," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare. US stocks mixed at start of holiday-shortened week with markets closed Monday for the Memorial Day holiday, trading was muted, lifting the Nasdaq modestly but bidding the Dow lower.

About 20 minutes into trading, the Dow Jones In-

## Argentina's Milei US-bound to meet tech bosses

BUENOS AIRES: Argentine President Javier Milei heads for the United States Monday for the fourth time since taking office in December, meeting tech giants as he seeks to "reposition" his economically troubled country, the government said.

Accompanied by his economy minister, Milei is set to meet representatives of OpenAI, Apple and Google this week, as well as Meta chief executive Mark Zuckerberg, presidential spokesman Manuel Adorni told reporters. The ultra-liberal president will meet "the owners of four of the top 10 companies by market capitalization in the world in this

bid to reposition Argentina globally," Adorni told reporters. It is Milei's seventh trip overall since December, and comes in a week the Senate will be debating his budget-slashing and liberalizing economic reform package.

Milei's last visit abroad, to Spain, unleashed a major diplomatic spat last week after he called the prime minister's wife "corrupt" at a gathering of far-right leaders in Madrid. On his way home after his trip to Silicon Valley and Stanford University, the self-declared "anarcho-capitalist" president will attend the swearing-in Friday of El Salvador's gang-busting leader Nayib Bukele, reelected with a large majority in February.

Milei will travel again next month to Madrid to receive an award from a liberal think tank, before attending a G7 meeting in Italy and a peace summit convened by Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky in Switzerland. On his last three visits to the United States, Milei twice met tycoon Elon Musk, received a decoration from a Jewish orthodox community and sat down

with former president Donald Trump. Milei has slashed public spending, cut the cabinet in half, done away with tens of thousands of government jobs, suspended new public works contracts and ripped away fuel and transport subsidies since taking office. — AFP

als and oil also dominated trade. As efforts falter to boost other imports from Africa, including agricultural products and manufactured goods, the continent's trade deficit with China has ballooned.

Chinese sovereign lending, once the main source of financing for Africa's infrastructure, is at its lowest level in two decades. And public-private partnerships (PPPs), which China has touted as its new preferred investment vehicle globally, have yet to gain traction in Africa. The result is a more one-sided relationship than China says it wants, one that is dominated by imports of Africa's raw materials and that some analysts argue contains echoes of colonial-era Europe's economic relations with the continent.

"This is something late-19th century Britain would recognize," said Eric Olander, co-founder of the China-Global South Project website and podcast. China rejects such assertions. "Africa has the right, capacity and wisdom to develop its external relations and choose its partners," China's foreign ministry wrote in response to Reuters' questions.

"China's practical support for Africa's path of modernization in accordance with its own characteristics has been welcomed by an increasing number of African countries."

China's engagement in Africa, a focus of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), grew rapidly in the two decades before the COVID-19 pandemic. Chinese companies built ports, hydropower plants and rail-

ways across the continent, financed mainly through sovereign loans. Annual lending commitments peaked at \$28.4 billion in 2016, according to the Global China Initiative at Boston University. But many projects proved unprofitable. As some governments struggled to repay loans, China cut lending. COVID-19 then pushed it to turn inward, and Chinese construction projects in Africa fell.

A rebound in sovereign lending is not expected. Policymakers in Beijing have instead been pushing Chinese companies to take equity stakes and operate infrastructure they build for foreign governments. The aim, China analysts say, is to help companies win higher-value contracts and, by giving them skin in the game, ensure the projects are economically viable.

Lending to Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs), perhaps the most common means of PPP infrastructure investment, has been growing as a proportion of China's overseas loans, according to figures shared exclusively with Reuters by AidData, a research centre at US university William & Mary.

The \$668-million Nairobi Expressway, a public-private partnership built and run by the state-owned China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), could be proof of concept for the model in Africa. Since it opened in August 2022, the toll road has been allowing commuters to speed above the Kenyan capital's notorious traffic snarls, beating revenue and usage targets. — AFP

## Momentum building behind global firms' climate disclosures

LONDON: More countries than initially expected are adopting international climate-related disclosure standards, a global rulemaking body said on Tuesday, but cautioned that significant departures from the norms would come at a cost. The International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB), created to write "baseline" disclosure rules for companies to stop "greenwashing," finalized its rules a year ago and on Tuesday gave an update on adoption.

"There is a momentum, and it's significantly higher than we expected," ISSB Chair Emmanuel Faber told a news conference. More than 20 jurisdictions are taking steps to introduce ISSB in some form, representing nearly 55 percent of global economic growth, more than 40 percent of global stock market capitalization, and more than half of global greenhouse gas emissions, the G20-backed organization said.

They include Japan, Singapore, Australia, Canada, Britain, Brazil, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Hong Kong, South Korea, Malaysia, Kenya, Nigeria and China. The EU has been included among the 20 as the bloc and the ISSB have agreed that their respective company climate disclosures are interchangeable for global firms. Faber said only a "small minority" of the 20 were proposing tweaks for implementing ISSB norms, potentially creating more compliance costs for international companies.

"We want to have a combination of being proportionate, in acknowledging that not each jurisdiction starts from the same place," Faber said. "There will be a cost for jurisdictions over time, and for their companies and investors, not to be joining the global baseline," Faber added.

Global securities regulators under the umbrella of IOSCO have "endorsed" the ISSB norms for use by listed companies. IOSCO Chair Jean-Paul Servais said it was "quite normal" for there to be some "carve outs" or departures from the ISSB norms, particularly in emerging economies, as up to 130,000 companies globally are set to apply the standards. "It's a danger to think we can be perfect in one day," Servais said, adding that proportionate changes would help avoid political and company pushback against the disclosures. The US has written its own rules, though they have been put on hold pending a court challenge. — Reuters

## France wants EU to revive capital markets union

PARIS: France is banking on a new push to integrate the European Union's fragmented capital markets to give them the scale needed to wean its flourishing startup sector off of dominant US venture capital, ministers, CEOs and investors said. A hodgepodge of local regulations and oversight has kept Europe's financial markets largely shaped by national borders, preventing the emergence of deep capital markets to rival the United States.

For startups in France and elsewhere in European Union that means they almost inevitably turn to US venture capital - private equity funding of early stage promising companies - to fund growth as there simply is not enough big investors at home. While the US funding is welcome, the result is a missed opportunity for Europe, said Matthieu Rouif, CEO of French startup Photogram, which recently raised \$43 million from UK fund Balderton and Silicon Valley's Y Combinator.

"A huge amount of wealth has been created over the past 20 years, created off the back of tech innovation, and the fact Europeans don't have access to that is a big issue," he said at the Viva Technology fair in Paris last week. The 10 biggest venture capital firms are all from the United States and dwarf their European rivals in the amounts of money they can raise for investment, according to the French central bank. — AFP

## Business

# NIC awarded 'Kuwait's Best for Family Office Services' and 'Kuwait's Best for Next-Gen'

## Two new global accolades for 2024 from Euromoney International

**KUWAIT:** The National Investment Company has announced that it has won two new global awards from Euromoney International: "Kuwait's Best for Family Office Services" and "Kuwait's Best for Next-Gen" for 2024.



Al-Muthana  
Al-Maktoum

These esteemed awards, among the most coveted in the regional financial sector, is a recognition to NIC's leading position, solid performance, and outstanding results in high-net-worth clients investment solutions. They reflect the trust and confidence that our clients place in us and incentivizes to continue exceeding their expectations.

NIC was granted the awards based on the company's contribution in introduction of innovative and tailor-made private banking services in Kuwait and its provision of investment services and opportunities that meet customers' financial goals in a way that enhances the company's position and strength, capitalizing on the extensive experience of executive team in wealth management.

Al-Muthana Al-Maktoum, Managing Director of the Wealth Management Sector at NIC, said: "We are proud that Euromoney selected NIC to win prestigious awards for the second year. In ad-

dition to being selected as "Kuwait's Best for Family Office Services" and "Kuwait's Best for Next-Gen" for 2024, NIC has received the "Best Wealth Management Company in Kuwait 2023" during the Private Banking Awards in London, which confirms the NIC's continuing determination to provide diverse, bespoke services, and to attract a large segment of clients.



Throughout the years, NIC has always been providing excellent standard in services and advisory solutions which contributing to the expansion of her client base by 22 percent for new relation onboarding in various products in 2024.

Al-Maktoum also mentioned that NIC is proud to be a primary contributor to the development and expansion of Kuwait's investment sector through offering creative investment solutions for its clients throughout the years, through the adoption of value added investment methods in wealth management, which positioned NIC among the top tier investment companies in the region in terms of the volume of assets under management.



He also highlighted that the awards reflect NIC's commitment to providing the next generation wealth management services, as well as an affirmation of the company's notable relationships with clients and long-term partnerships that are based on trust and prudence in wealth management at professional levels, and providing integrated investment products to clients while providing solutions and plans that help them achieve their various financial goals.

Euromoney is a global company that bases its nominations and selections on comprehensive

studies that evaluate quantitative and qualitative factors, such as key performance indicators and financial ratios, innovation and new services, industry insiders, reports, and research. These awards are granted to distinguished entities with significant achievements and results, created added value in their sectors, and contributed to raising the level of service provided through their innovative products and services. Euromoney Awards and Rankings for Excellence Programs have lasted over 50 years and attracted thousands of entries from international financial institutions.



## Five Guys, Deliveroo celebrate top performing riders

**KUWAIT:** In recognition of the outstanding efforts of Deliveroo riders throughout the year, Five Guys and Deliveroo organized a special lunch event at Five Guys restaurant for a group of top performing riders. During the event, Five Guys flipped roles (and burgers!) by having six Restaurant and Operations Managers take on kitchen duties and serve lunch to the riders. This gesture served as a token of appreciation for their outstanding efforts.

"Five Guys has demonstrated a commendable commitment to recognizing and rewarding the hard work and dedication of Deliveroo riders, and we are proud to collaborate with them on this initiative," said سهام Al-Husaini, General Manager of Deliveroo Kuwait & Qatar. "At Deliveroo, we deeply value our riders and the integral role they play in our success as we strive to create an environment where riders' efforts are not only acknowledged but also celebrated."

"I am deeply honored to recognize riders' out-

standing commitment to delivering our premium burgers not only with speed but with contagious smiles that brighten every delivery," said Riyaz Shaikh, the Senior Director of Operations for Al-Sayer Franchising. "This special event highlights our robust partnership with Deliveroo and our mutual dedication to excellence in every aspect of our service. By honoring the hard work of these riders, we aim to boost their morale, especially as they navigate through the intense summer heat in Kuwait, ensuring every delivery is fast and friendly."



Deliveroo is an award-winning delivery service founded in 2013 by William Shu and Greg Orlowski. Deliveroo works with approximately 183,000 best-loved restaurants and grocery partners, as well as around 135,000 riders to provide the best food delivery experience in the world.

Deliveroo is headquartered in London, with offices around the globe. Deliveroo operates across 10 markets, including Belgium, France, Hong Kong, Italy, Ireland, Qatar, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and the United Kingdom.

## Move to faster stock settlement creates hurdles for ETF market

**NEW YORK:** The move to next-day settlement for trading in US securities on Tuesday will require exchange-traded funds (ETFs) and the marketmakers to juggle multiple jurisdictional requirements and capital needs, market participants said. US trading moves to a shorter settlement on Tuesday, which regulators hope will reduce risk and improve efficiency in the world's largest markets, but is expected to temporarily increase transaction failure for investors.

The biggest headache that many ETF issuers and their service providers face is what happens when there's a "mismatch" between when trades of the ETF wrapper—the fund itself—settle, and the settlement schedule for the ETF's holdings traded outside of the United States.

A US-listed ETF will be subject to the new "T+1" settlement rules but not all of the constituents of that fund face the same parameters. Meanwhile, European ETF issuers will have to wait for two days for buyers of their products to pay but they will have only a single day to pay for new orders of any ETF components that trade in the United States. The primary impact will be felt by asset managers whose funds include European holdings, since China and India already have accelerated their settlement periods and Canada, Mexico and Argentina also made the switch this week, said John Hooson, managing director of ETF services at BBH. "The majority of ETF issuers are dealing with this in some way shape or form."

Such dislocations, he added, "will have to be

solved with an authorized provider posting additional collateral." Authorized providers, the marketmakers who respond to ETF orders by purchasing or selling baskets of shares, will have to find ways to continue creating those ETF baskets in a timely and cost-efficient manner, or see their cost of capital and need for short-term liquidity increase.

Time zone differences may stress the settlement process still further, said Todd Rosenbluth, head of ETF research at VettaFi. "That may lead to wider bid/asked spreads and reduced liquidity as people try to address all these mismatches," Rosenbluth said. He added he expects this to be a short term challenge that "will work its way through the markets over a few weeks."

Robert Humbert, global head of ETF product at BNY Mellon, one of the largest custodians and asset servicing firms, said that about 30 percent of the order volume his company oversees already settles on a T+1 basis, and expects that to bump up to 70 percent when the SEC-mandated rule change kicks in on Tuesday. "Certainly, mismatching could be an issue for some but the flip side is that T+1 ultimately is a more capital-efficient process," Humbert said. Market participants "will only need to hold capital for one day, not two."

Both Hooson and Humbert point to another area where ETF market participants will need to adjust. Currently, marketmakers manage their own inventories on a T+1 basis, in order to create or redeem new ETF baskets on the old T+2 settlement cycle. The change means those liquidity providers will now have to shift to T+0. Humbert, however, argues that the industry is prepared.

"We've spent the last 12 months working with ETF issuers and their authorized participants to iron out problems," he said. Rosenbluth agrees, noting that asset management firms "tend to be very good at getting ahead of known and anticipated events." — Reuters

## China's Xi calls for more jobs for youth, migrant workers

**BEIJING:** China's President Xi Jinping called on Monday for efforts to promote high-quality and sufficient jobs for college graduates and migrant workers, while presiding over a Politburo group study session, state media Xinhua reported on Tuesday. Xi's comments come amid a shaky recovery in the world's second-biggest economy as a severe property crisis, local government debt risks and rising geopolitical uncertainties weigh on people's job security, income growth and spending. "(We should) insist that employment of young people including college graduates is a top priority," the Xinhua report quoted Xi as saying at a group study session of the Politburo, a top decision-making body of the ruling Communist Party. The Xinhua report didn't give details on job promotion support measures or plans. The survey-based jobless rate for 16-24 year-olds, excluding college students, was 14.7 percent in April, down from 15.3 percent in March, official data showed last week. China's statistics bureau revised its methodology by removing college students from the survey pool after youth jobless rate surged to around 20 percent last year.

Xi also said the government should take steps to promote the employment of migrant workers, guide them to return to their hometowns and for people to start businesses in the countryside. He called for stabilizing the income of people who had been lifted out of poverty and preventing large-scale return to poverty due to unemployment, Xinhua said. Companies and industries with strong job creation capabilities will be supported, the report said. —AFP

## Malaysia targets \$107bn investment in semiconductor sector

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia is targeting at least 500 billion ringgit (\$107 billion) in investment for its semiconductor industry, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said on Tuesday, as the Southeast Asian country looks to position itself as a global manufacturing hub. Malaysia is a major player in the semiconductor industry, accounting for 13 percent of global testing and packaging. It has attracted multibillion-dollar investments from leading firms in recent years, including Intel and Infineon.

Anwar said the investment being sought would be for integrated circuit design, advanced packaging and manufacturing equipment for semiconductor chips. Malaysia also wants to establish at least 10 local companies in design and advanced packaging for semiconductor chips, with revenues between \$210 million to \$1 billion, Anwar said in a speech at an industry event.

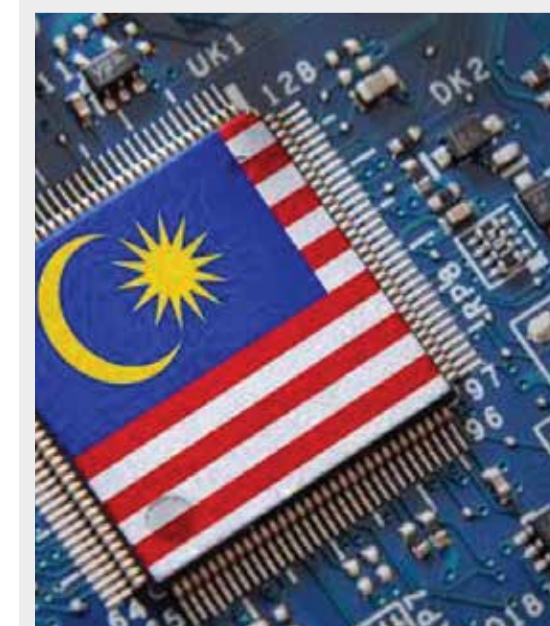
The Southeast Asian country will allocate \$5.3 billion in fiscal support to meet these targets, he added, saying further details would be announced later. "We have a strong capacity to diversify and move higher in the value chain ... to move towards even more high-end manufacturing, semiconductor design and advanced packaging," Anwar said.

He did not specify a timeline for the targets to be met. On April 22, Anwar said Malaysia planned to build Southeast Asia's largest integrated circuit design park and would offer incentives including tax breaks, subsidies and visa exemption fees to attract global tech companies and investors.

He said the proposed integrated circuit design park was part of Malaysia's efforts to move beyond backend chip assembly and testing and into high-value, front-end design work.

Malaysia is seen as well placed to grab further business in the semiconductor sector, as Chinese chip firms diversify outside of China for assembling needs. China's Xfusion, a former Huawei unit, said last September it would partner with Malaysia's NationGate to manufacture GPU servers - servers designed for data centres and which are used in artificial intelligence (AI) and high-performance computing. Shanghai-based StarFive is also building a design centre in Malaysia's Penang state, while chip packaging and testing firm TongFu Microelectronics said in 2022 it would expand its Malaysia facility - a venture with US chipmaker AMD.

Germany's Infineon said last August it would invest 5 billion euros (\$5.4 billion) to expand its power chip plant in Malaysia, while U.S. chipmaker Intel announced in 2021 it would build a \$7 billion advanced chip packaging plant in the country. — Reuters



## Lifestyle



A Lebanese artisan creates wood sculptures.



An artist demonstrates his wood carving skills.



## Beirut design fair reborn after 4 years of economic crisis

**A** Beirut design fair has made a comeback after Lebanon's economic meltdown forced a four-year hiatus, with some pieces on display in spaces devastated in a deadly 2020 port explosion. We Design Beirut, which ended Sunday, exhibited work from more than 150 designers and artisans for four days in several locations in the Lebanese capital.

hbe, not related to Mariana, speaking from the capital's luxurious Villa Audi, one of the fair venues.

Designers and creative workers have been among those Lebanese leaving for better prospects abroad, some spurred by the lack of primary materials or after their workshops were destroyed in the 2020 port explosion, he added.

sculptures and handicrafts as part of the event. Mariana Wehbe said many artisans in Lebanon had "lost their jobs in recent years because many of the designers who worked with them have left", adding that some handicrafts were "at risk of extinction".

Dima Stephan, 34, who designs rattan furniture, said an artisan taught



A visitor looks at tiles handmade by Lebanese artisans.

The fair aimed "to showcase the diversity of Lebanese design despite the country's difficulties", said Mariana Wehbe, who launched the event with industrial designer Samer Alameen. The annual fair kicked off in 2010 but hit pause in 2019, when Lebanon's economy went into free fall, in what the World Bank would call one of the planet's worst economic crises in recent history.

The event was set to return in October last year but was postponed again after the Zionist entity launched its military campaign in Gaza. "We are trying to make Beirut a center for design and creation again," said curator William We-

### 'Risk of extinction'

On August 4, 2020, a catastrophic explosion of poorly stored ammonium nitrate at Beirut's port killed more than 220 people, injured at least 6,500 and laid waste to swathes of the capital. Inside the opulent Villa Audi, a mirror installation took center stage while large mushroom-shaped lamps lit the gardens.

Lamp designer Zein Daouk said she turned to ceramics after the office of her architecture firm was destroyed in the blast. One fair venue near the port was also damaged in the explosion but was showing off modern

her how to make traditional Lebanese chairs - a craft traditionally reserved for men - and she now adds a modern twist. The fair also presented works and crafts made with recycled materials, in a country also known for its waste crises. In an abandoned textile factory in Beirut's Armenian district, university students displayed a giant installation made of recycled plastic and shaped like a volcanic eruption. "We wanted to support students so that they do not leave" crisis-riddled Lebanon, Wehbe said. — AFP



A Lebanese artisan demonstrates her skills in carving on copper.



A Lebanese artisan makes an object from rattan.



Visitors look at decorative objects designed in Lebanon during the annual event 'We Design Beirut' at Villa Audi.

## OpenAI's Johansson gaffe pushes voice cloning into spotlight

**O**penAI was forced to apologize to actor Scarlett Johansson last week for using her voice - or something very similar - on its latest chatbot, throwing the spotlight on to voice-cloning tech. Although OpenAI denied the voice they used was Johansson's, their case was not helped by CEO Sam Altman flagging the new model with a one-word message on social media - "Her".

Johansson voiced an AI character in the film "Her", which Altman has previously said is his favorite film about the technology. Right from the start, AI voice cloning has proved problematic. Last year, British firm Elevenlabs went viral for all the wrong reasons when it released its voice-cloning software.

Internet pranksters immediately began pushing out deepfaked celebrities - Harry Potter star Emma Watson was shown reading Hitler's Mein Kampf. Law enforcement warned that AI clones could be used to extort money from loved ones over the phone. The technology has developed rapidly in the past year becoming far more realistic and nuanced.



Scarlett Johansson

Danish entrepreneur Victor Riparbelli, CEO of British AI firm Synthesia, told AFP it was largely down to a program called Tortoise that was released two years ago. The program's developers threw thousands of hours of voice data into their model in an unstructured way and discovered it not only learnt what to say but how to say it.

"That was a pretty big paradigm shift," Riparbelli said on the sidelines of last week's VivaTech conference in Paris. Tortoise was an open source program and Elevenlabs was the first to go to market using it. OpenAI uses similar systems though they do not release any details.

### 'Not very good'

Much of the controversy around voice cloning has focused on concerns over people misusing the software. But the claim against OpenAI is unusual because it is the company itself accused of playing fast and loose.

"It was very unfortunate that OpenAI did that - really not very good," Katya Laine, CEO of TALKR.ai, told

AFP at VivaTech. "If they actually cloned her voice without her knowing then I think that's very very bad," said Riparbelli. The two entrepreneurs are among hundreds harnessing AI voice programs for uses that they argue will make companies more efficient. Laine's firm provides virtual voice assistants - essentially AI customer service agents. She said her firm's system could now resolve 25 to 30 percent of calls without any human involvement.

Synthesia specializes in video avatars, which Riparbelli said allowed any office worker to turn text or slides into a video performed by a realistic AI. Both Riparbelli and Laine allow their clients to use their own avatars, off-the-shelf products or those supplied by the likes of OpenAI and Elevenlabs. Riparbelli said Synthesia used actors whose likenesses and voices were licensed for two years with an option to renew after the initial period. The problems arise if actors' voices are used without their consent.

### 'Odd precedent'

The fiasco overshadowed a de-

veloper conference in Paris last week when OpenAI was showing off a suite of new tools. In front of a big screen in an auditorium, Romain Huet, OpenAI's Head of Developer Experience, breezily chatted into his phone. Seconds later, his short voice sample had been processed and could be heard commenting over a generated video - in five languages. The demonstration showed how quickly the field is moving, but the headlines had already been written.

The Washington Post asked in a newsletter "How dumb is OpenAI?", other commentators were suggesting wunderkind Altman was nothing more than a huckster. Nonetheless, Riparbelli was open to OpenAI's argument that they had used another actor who just sounded like Johansson. "If it's not her but someone who sounds a lot like her ... where do you draw that line," Riparbelli asked. "If they're not allowed to use someone who sounds a lot like her, then it sets a very odd precedent." — AFP

Lifestyle

# China wheelchair users claim outdoors with hand-cranked bikes

**S**peeding along crumbling roads past dusty villages and herds of sheep, a team of cyclists turns heads in China's Inner Mongolia with their unusual equipment. The group, most of them wheelchair users, were strapped into low-slung, three-wheeled handcycle bikes instead of the two-wheeled mountain bikes more commonly seen on the challenging terrain. Dodging trucks and car-sized potholes, they barreled down country roads towards the regional capital Hohhot, frequently greeted with excited shouts by groups of villagers. The cyclists are members of Krankin' Thru China, formed over a decade ago to promote wheelchair users' participation in open-air sports.



Krankin' Thru China members Wang Feng (left) and Pan Yifei embrace after riding their handcycles.

China passed an accessibility law last year aimed at creating a "barrier-free" society but everyday life for people with disabilities can still be challenging in many parts of the country. "From the very start we wanted to use handcycle bikes as a way to encourage injured friends to come outdoors," said Wang Feng, who discovered adaptive bikes years after losing the use of his legs because of a childhood illness.

Krankin' Thru China has embarked on multiple long-distance trips in remote parts of the country, including a three-month journey in 2017 from the mountainous southwestern province of Yunnan to the capital Beijing.



Pan Yifei (back) and Wang Feng (front) ride handcycles on a street in Hohhot, in China's northern Inner Mongolia region. — AFP photos

They have also collaborated with a Shanghai-based university to help build a prototype aimed at making handcycle bikes more affordable and widely available, one of which they tested on the odyssey through rural Inner Mongolia.

**'So impressive'**

Wang and teammates Pan Yifei and Joshua Dominick set off in early May from Qahar Right Rear Banner, a sparsely populated area known for its mines and a nearby volcano park. Wang said he often meets people who don't realize the bikes are designed with disability in mind. "When I tell them this is a hand-cranked bike for disabled people, they're shocked ... they think it's so impressive," he said.

In Hohhot, the group met a disability association who took turns trying out the bikes. The locals propelled themselves rapidly around a running track as curious children and retirees

looked on. "I saw this before in videos but I never tried it myself," Di Wenke, a 36-year-old wheelchair dancer, told AFP. "I felt as fast as a machine... and I felt like onlookers envied me."

Di said that adaptive sports - including wheelchair dancing and handcycling - helped tackle some of the social stigma surrounding disability. "Compared to my previous closed-off mindset, my heart has opened up," he said. "Having a hobby of your own can be a very nurturing thing." As well as bike trips, Krankin' Thru China hosts regular adaptive swimming and horseback riding events. "Among the injured friends that I know, they have experienced a change in their attitude," Wang said, with many asking him for advice on becoming more involved.

**Frequent obstacles**

Many challenges remain. As the team approached Hohhot, they re-

lied on word of mouth and trial and error to find country inns that could accommodate their wheelchairs. The riders needed assistance to climb the front steps of one place, and stairs and elevated bathroom floors were frequent obstacles.

While China's largest cities are making progress in building accessible infrastructure, smaller towns and rural communities are largely constructed without wheelchair users in mind. And when it comes to mountain biking, most adaptive bikes on the market are prohibitively expensive and constructed out of specialized parts that are difficult to replace.

"It happened before, where we were on the road in Yunnan... that there was a breakdown, so this was quite a big safety risk," Wang said. "A lot of assistive equipment has to be custom-made, causing it to be very expensive or for there to be very few

(options)... so there are also very few people who can access these sports," teammate Pan said.

The prototype bike tested on this trip - designed by New York University researchers and built by the team alongside lecturer Noel Joyce and students at NYU's Shanghai campus - is an attempt to change that. It is constructed of standardized parts available at most machine shops and based on an open-plan blueprint.

Joyce told AFP he hopes the new model can lower the barriers to enjoyment of outdoor sports. "Anyone with a disability should be able to repair a bicycle in the same amount of time that anyone that's able-bodied," Joyce said. "It's the start of trying to create scenarios where people with disabilities are more frequently out in the world and enjoying the world." — AFP



This photo taken on March 31, 2024 shows a group of disabled people checking a newly built handcycle in Shanghai.



In this photo taken on May 5, 2024 Pan Yifei (right) and Wang Feng (left) meet with members of a disability association at a park.



Noel Joyce, professor of the New York University Shanghai, builds a handcycle for disabled people in Shanghai.

## France's historic D-Day beaches threatened by rising sea levels

**A**s France prepares to mark 80 years since Allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy, the historic coastline faces a new threat - rising sea levels linked to climate change. More than 100 kilometers (62 miles) of Normandy's coastline bear traces of June 6, 1944, including bunkers, shipwrecked vessels, and other vestiges from the Allied troops' first step to freeing western Europe from Nazi German occupation.

But now, the sea from which 150,000 Allied troops conducted the largest seaborne invasion in history threatens those same heritage sites. Rising sea levels are eroding dunes and cliffs, while marshes and reclaimed land risk submersion at sites visited by millions each year.

The famed beaches - code-named Utah, Omaha, Juno, Sword and Gold - that were stormed by US, British Commonwealth and other allied troops have all drastically changed in 80 years. The D-Day sites "already bear no resemblance to what Allied soldiers experienced on June 6, 1944", said Regis Leymarie, a geographer with the Coastal Conservatory in Normandy. "We're in the process of moving from historic sites to

places for interpreting history," he added. And changes are coming fast. Rising global sea temperatures are accelerating the melting of polar ice caps and increasing sea levels, posing a threat to Normandy's coastal communities. "The environment will be transformed in 10 years or so," said Leymarie.

**'We don't have any help'**

For some communities, these changes are already here. In Graye-sur-Mer, a village along Juno Beach, the sea has toppled entire bunkers, leaving local residents worried that history is being swept out with the tide. And yet, few town councils are prepared to take action.

Of the 15 or so contacted by AFP in recent months, fewer than half have re-

plied. Three others said they would not be "affected" or even "threatened" in the near future. Charles de Vallavieille, the mayor of Sainte-Marie-du-Mont and director of the Utah Beach Museum, disagreed. "(There are) difficulties. We must not deny them," he said.

Standing in front of the museum founded by his father in 1962, de Vallavieille recalled watching former soldiers return to Normandy. "I've seen veterans waving to the sea, crying ... It's the emotion of the beach," de Vallavieille said.

He said these sites should be protected but that there are limitations to actions local leaders can take, adding: "We don't have the right to do anything". "We don't have any help even though it's a problem that affects the

whole coast - protect one place and the water will go elsewhere."

**'Coming to the end'**

Located between the American and British landing sites, the Bessin cliffs, which were the site of a daring vertical assault by US Army Rangers, have not been spared. Several German artillery batteries stood on these hard-to-reach outcrops, including the famed Pointe du Hoc, which attracts some 500,000 visitors a year.

Ascending the 25-metre (82-foot) cliff face in foul weather and under German fire, only 90 of the 225 attackers escaped unharmed. Managed by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), the site is very fragile and partially col-

lapsed in 2022. ABMC said it had taken several steps to "secure the area", including installing reinforced concrete walls and sensors to detect significant movement. The agency also moved paths back 20 meters to ensure public safety.

For Normandy conservation official Leymarie, the only thing left to do is adapt to the coming changes. Sea levels are currently rising by a few millimeters a year. "It's only over two or three generations that we become aware of it," he said. "We're coming to the end of the D-Day landing sites as we knew them," Leymarie said. "And nature will reclaim its right." — AFP



This photograph shows a partially submerged bunker (Blockhaus) from the Atlantic Wall at the entrance of Arcachon Bay near Cap Ferret, south-western France on May 19, 2024.



This photograph shows a buried boat wreckage at section "Easy Red", in Omaha Beach, northern France, on May 17, 2024. — AFP photos

## Sports

# Rohit, Kohli in focus as India look to end global title drought

Last chance both men have to hoist a trophy from one of the showpiece white-ball tournaments

**NEW DELHI:** Skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli will look to end India's global title drought as the star duo step out for what is likely to be their final World Cup appearance. Rohit, 37, and Kohli, 35, have long been the twin torchbearers for the hopes of their cricket-mad nation, which last saw a major title triumph in the 2013 Champions Trophy.

India made the final of last year's ODI World Cup at home but lost to Australia in front of a crestfallen packed house at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad. The T20 World Cup, starting June 1 in the West Indies and United States, may be the last chance both men have to hoist a trophy from one of the showpiece white-ball tournaments.

"Rohit Sharma knows he isn't going to play for too long now. Just two to three years more. Same with Virat Kohli," former India batsman Mohammad Kaif said on Star Sports. "So this is the last chance for Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

"They lost the World Cup final in Ahmedabad. They played as if they had the cup snatched away from them. Hearts were broken and fans were devastated." The next T20 World Cup will be in two years' time followed by the 50-over tournament in 2027.

The veterans will combine for India after a contrasting IPL season where Kohli dominated as a one-man run machine and Rohit's team floundered. Kohli topped the batting charts with 741 runs for Royal Challengers Bengaluru, forming a thrilling opening partnership with the skipper Faf du Plessis.

Former India batsman Ajay Jadeja said Kohli had

made his case to open for his side at the World Cup. "For me, Virat Kohli opens," Jadeja told Jio Cinema. "If you have Virat in your side, you know consistency is the one thing you will get, so, might as well use him. He's the best at the top and the powerplay allows him to settle in."

Rohit was replaced as captain of Mumbai Indians by Hardik Pandya for this year's season and had a patchy tournament, finishing with 417 runs which included a 61-ball century against Chennai Super Kings. Rohit, nicknamed "Hitman" for his attacking play and big-scoring, signed off in his last league match of the year with a 28-ball fifty but his previous seven innings had produced just 88 runs.

## 'Biggest test'

Both men have been part of India's past World Cup glories. Rohit was part of the team's victory in the inaugural T20 World Cup in 2007 when India defeated arch-rivals Pakistan in the final at Johannesburg.

India's last World Cup win came in 2011 when a young Kohli carried cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar on his shoulders during their victory lap of the field. Both men have faced pressure to deliver their side a title in the years since, but Kohli stepped down as T20 captain in 2021 and was then removed as ODI skipper in the same year without delivering.

Rohit, who led Mumbai to five IPL titles, picked up the baton but a World Cup trophy has proven elusive under his leadership as well. In this year's



**AHMEDABAD:** (FILES) India's captain Rohit Sharma (L) and teammate Virat Kohli celebrate after the dismissal of Australia's Mitchell Marsh during the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) final match between India and Australia at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. — AFP

T20 World Cup India face Pakistan, Canada, the United States and Ireland in the group phase of the tournament, with Kaif saying the team had the clear run to the knockout matches. "India hardly

have competition in the group stage. There are only two main matches—the semi-final and the final," he said. "Are you ready for those two days? That's the biggest test for Rohit Sharma." —AFP

## Pathirana: S Lanka's death 'sensation' for T20 World Cup

**COLOMBO:** Young fast bowler Matheesha Pathirana has rattled the world's top batsmen with his toe-crushing yorkers in the Indian Premier League and looks set to boost Sri Lanka's chances in the T20 World Cup.

The 21-year-old, dubbed "Baby Malinga" for an unorthodox slinging style of delivery, reminiscent of compatriot Lasith Malinga, has only played 12 ODIs and six T20 matches for Sri Lanka but has already established himself as a death-over specialist.

Pathirana took 13 wickets in just six matches for Chennai Super Kings this IPL season before returning home early due to a hamstring injury that left his Sri Lanka teammates ruing his possible absence. But all seems well as the bowler has departed with the Sri Lankan squad, led by Wanindu Hasaranga, for the showpiece 20-over tournament starting June 1 in the West Indies and United States.

"Sri Lanka are banking on Matheesha Pathirana to turn around their fortunes in the upcoming T20 World Cup," cricket writer Rex Clementine wrote in The Island newspaper. "Pathirana was a sensation in the IPL for Chennai Super Kings. He has showcased (a) glimpse of his skill sending down unplayable death overs," Clementine added.

"If he is able to get his line right without being wayward, he will have a major impact in this competition." Malinga is equally excited about the prospect of seeing the young tyro using "his pace and his yorker".

"But the biggest thing I see with Matheesha is his big heart," Malinga told Cricinfo. "He's very positive in the match. Those aren't things we can teach him. Those are things he's got naturally. Even in the year he first came into the IPL, he didn't have any fear, or any doubts.

"If you tell him this is what we need at this time, he has the ability to do that. He's got the ability to make a decision. He's quite clear in his thinking." Sri Lanka's chief selector Upul Tharanga has also backed the youngster to choke opposition batsmen in the final few overs along with 29-year-old pacer Nuwan Thushara.

The prospect of seeing those two in tandem sets Malinga purring. "In the T20 format you are always talking about the yorker because that's the ball that stops sixes from happening," he said. "To have two bowlers who can bowl yorkers like the two of them can in the same tournament... That's crazy, that's absolutely mad.

"I think (Sri Lanka's) bowling line-up is the best in the world." Pathirana returned figures of 4-28 in Chennai's 20-run win over Mumbai Indians this season, taking player of the match honours and overshadowing a century by India captain Rohit Sharma.

He took key wickets including T20 specialist Suryakumar Yadav in the eighth over and then returned at the death to bowl Romario Shepherd with his trademark slinging delivery.

Pathirana has made a consistent impact in the world's most popular T20 league since joining Chennai and credits his performance to the mentorship of team mainstay M.S. Dhoni, India's former captain. "In my cricket life, mostly he is playing my father's role," Pathirana said on Chennai's YouTube channel.

"He always takes care of me, and gives me some advice on what I have to do—similar to my father when I'm in my home," he added. "He's just telling me small things, but it makes a lot of difference, and it gives me a lot of confidence." Dhoni last year suggested that Pathirana should steer clear of Tests to focus primarily on the 20-over format. — AFP

## Disgraced swimmer Sun Yang eyes competitive return

**SHANGHAI:** Disgraced three-time Olympic champion Sun Yang hopes to return to competitive swimming "as soon as possible" after his more than four-year ban for a doping violation ended on Tuesday.

The Chinese freestyler was originally suspended for eight years by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) in 2020 for smashing vials of blood during a 2018 test, the circumstances of which he still disputes.

The ban was reduced on appeal to four years and three months by the Court of Arbitration for Sport in 2021. "I hope that I'll be able to pick a competition and return to the starting block as soon as possible," the 32-year-old said in an interview published by state-run media outlet The Paper.

Sun's return comes with China's swimmers under intense scrutiny since it emerged that WADA allowed 23 of them to compete at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, despite testing positive for a banned substance. WADA accepted China's explanation that



**GWANGJU:** (FILES) This photo taken on July 21, 2019 shows gold medalist China's Sun Yang posing with his medal after the final of the men's 400m freestyle event during the swimming competition at the 2019 World Championships at Nambu University Municipal Aquatics Center in Gwangju, South Korea. — AFP

the swimmers unwittingly consumed the substance through food at their hotel.

## 'No big deal'

Sun's return is too late for him to compete at this summer's Paris Olympics, but he hinted that he was setting his sights on longer-term goals. "The Olym-

pics are just a competition for me, they will end, and after they end, there will be another one," Sun said.

"I am frequently doing some simulated competition tests now that I've returned to training... I am constantly trying to recapture that feeling," he said. The two-metre tall (6ft 7in) Sun was the first Chinese swimmer to win Olympic gold, in 400m and 1500m at the 2012 London Games, but has long been a controversial figure in the pool.

Some rivals called him a cheat at the 2016 Rio Olympics and two competitors refused to stand with him on medal podiums at the 2019 world championships. Sun was also given a three-month ban in 2014 after testing positive for a banned substance.

"I think compared to other athletes I am very lucky, and I am very grateful and thankful," Sun said, referring to his past achievements which also include 11 world championship golds from 2011 to 2019. He said he had felt "very dark" when he initially found out about his second ban, but that his time away from the pool had given him the space to develop other interests.

"When I look back (on the past four years), I think it's really no big deal," Sun said. "In fact, the biggest change in my past four years is that I started a family and now have another half," he said, referring to his marriage to gymnast Zhang Doudou. "These four years have added some colour to my life." — AFP



**Babar Azam**

## Pakistan aim for 'third time lucky' at T20 World Cup

**KARACHI:** Pakistan skipper Babar Azam is hoping it is third time lucky for his side at the Twenty20 World Cup after finishing losing semi-finalists in 2021 and runners-up a year later. Pakistan's build-up to the tournament, which takes place in West Indies and the USA, has been chaotic, with Azam replacing Shaheen Shah Afridi as captain barely three months before it gets underway.

They squeaked a 2-2 T20 series draw at home against a depleted New Zealand in April before heading to Ireland where they slumped to defeat in the opener before coming back to win that series 2-1. As now seems to be entirely normal, the men in green have shown they still have the capacity to be the best outfit one day and the worst the next, making them the most unpredictable side in the 20-team event which kicks off in the United States on June 1.

Pakistan are placed alongside India, co-hosts United States, Canada and Ireland in Group A. The top two teams will qualify for the next round of Super Eight, to be held in the West Indies with the final in Barbados on June 29. If they lose to India in what is likely to be a monumental clash in New York on June 9 -- Pakistan have won just one of seven T20 World Cup matches against them—their final group game with Ireland in Florida a week later could become a knock-out affair. But Azam is confident his

side can be lucky this time. "Semi-final and then final, so it's our turn to win the trophy this time," he said before leaving for Ireland.

## 'Every base covered'

Since crashing out of the 50-over World Cup in November last year, Pakistan cricket has undergone a multitude of changes with coaching staff changed twice and the white-ball captaincy changed hands from Azam to Shaheen and back.

A new channel owner, Mohsin Naqvi, who is also the country's interior minister, has taken charge of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). Naqvi reconstructed the selection committee, held a training camp at an army base to improve the often vulnerable fitness and brought in former South African opener Gary Kirsten as white-ball coach—all to improve their chances in the World Cup. Fast bowler Mohammad Amir—the only surviving member of Pakistan's T20 World Cup title win in England in 2009 -- and spinner Imad Wasim were brought out of retirement to further bolster the bowling attack, spearheaded by Shaheen and fast-rising Naseem Shah.

"My mood is good and my fitness is good and I am looking forward to winning the World Cup," Shaheen told a PCB podcast recently, in spite of reported dissent over the captaincy saga. "I have good partners and when they do well then you are also motivated." To spur the players further, Naqvi also announced a \$100,000 bonus for each player if they win the World Cup. Mystery spinner Abrar Ahmed and Shadab Khan supplement Wasim in slow bowling. "This is the best team with every base covered, so we can win and there should be no excuse," said Shaheen, whose fitness will be the key for Pakistan. — AFP

## Bangladesh skipper calls for better wickets at T20 WCup

**DHAKA:** Bangladesh can only hope to improve their lacklustre T20 World Cup record once they get better pitches at home, new captain Najmul Hossain Shanto told AFP ahead of the showpiece tournament.

The South Asian nation is one of nine countries to have played all T20 World Cups since the tournament began in 2007 but is alone in never having made it to the knockout stage. Najmul, appointed all-format captain in February aged just 25 to replace newly minted politician Shakib Al Hasan, blamed their failures on home pitches ill-suited to the typical run feasts seen elsewhere in the 20-over format.

"First of all, we have to play on good wickets," he told AFP. "Some people can take it as an excuse, but it is really a fact that we play very few matches on a good wicket." Bangladeshi pitches are known for low-scoring matches and only one player in their World Cup squad, top-order batsman Towhid Hridoy, has a T20 international strike rate above 130.

"It is difficult to change things in six months. If we continue on a good wicket for one or two years, then these strike rates will improve," said Najmul. Ninth-ranked Bangladesh have nonetheless started seeing some improvement in the short game with series wins at home against powerhouses Australia, England and New Zealand this decade.

But there have been hiccups along the way such as the 2-1 defeat by the USA in a three-match warm-up series in Houston this week. "We have won a few series and we have won against big teams," Najmul said before the USA series. "The confidence of the team is in a good position.

"The matches we have played recently, if we can be like that in the World Cup, if we can take the decisions properly, if we can execute our plans, then it is possible to do something good." This year's T20 World Cup—which begins June 1 in the United States and West Indies—is likely to be a curtain call for some of Bangladesh's most formidable players. Najmul's predecessor Shakib, still the top-ranked T20 all-rounder, made a brief cameo for this month's home series against Zimbabwe but had not played a 20-over international for nearly a year beforehand.

Shakib, 37, was elected to Bangladesh's parliament in January and looks set to hang up his cap shortly along with fellow all-rounder Mahmudullah Riyad, 38. "Of course, I want them to play in the World Cup, giving their best," Najmul said. "It is their decision when they will end their careers. As a captain, I would like them to share their experience with every player." Bangladesh face an uphill battle in their group with formidable opponents in South Africa and Sri Lanka, along with Nepal, playing in only their second T20 World Cup, and the Netherlands. — AFP

Sports

# Kuwait SC crowned champions of Dawri Zain for 2023-2024 season

Zain applauds Arabi SC and Qadsia SC for 2nd and 3rd place wins



KUWAIT: Al-Shaheen and Al-Khashti crown the champions, with Al-Ghanim, KFA, and club board members in attendance.



Kuwait SC players lift the Dawri Zain trophy.

KUWAIT: Zain has joined in officially crowning Kuwait SC champions of the Kuwait Premier League (Dawri Zain) for the 2023-2024 season. The champions lifted the top-tier's trophy after a thrilling match played at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium in the season's closing round.

The champions were crowned by Kuwait Football Association Chairman, Abdullah Al-Shaheen, and Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer, Waleed Al-Khashti. In attendance were Kuwait SC Chairman, Khalid Al-Ghanim, club board members, Zain and KFA officials.

Zain congratulated the players, technical staff and fans of Kuwait SC for winning the league championship title for the third consecutive year. This victory

solidifies Kuwait SC's dominance as the club with the most titles in the Kuwait Premier League's history, boasting a total of 19 titles. The team secured the title in the league's penultimate round, with the crowning ceremony held during the final round of the Championship Group.

Zain also congratulated Arabi SC and Qadsia SC for securing the second and third places respectively. Additionally, the company extended its thanks to all the teams that competed in Dawri Zain, bringing excitement and joy to thousands of fans throughout the season.

Zain crowned the champions under the umbrella of its strategic partnership with the Kuwait Football Association. The company is the Official Sponsor

of the KFA's competitions throughout the 2022-2026 seasons, including the Kuwait Premier League (Dawri Zain), the Zain First Division League, III the Amir's Cup, and the KFA Cup (Zain Cup).

Under this partnership, Zain recently sponsored the grand ceremony that accompanied the thrilling final match of the 62nd edition of the Amir's Cup, held under the patronage and in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Qadsia SC were crowned champions of the much-cherished cup after defeating Salmiya SC in the exciting final, where over 19,000 spectators cheered on their teams at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

As the Official Sponsor of the KFA's competitions,

Zain offers over KD 60,000 worth of prizes for athletes and fans per season, which is the biggest prize pool ever to be distributed in the Kuwaiti League's history. By dedicating cash prizes for athletes, the company seeks to encourage players to pursue excellence and elevate the league's performance. Zain is set to celebrate this season's best players in its annual Excellence Awards ceremony soon.

Zain believes the private sector plays a key role in supporting the local sports and youth sectors, as well as encouraging local athletes to raise Kuwait's flag high in regional and international arenas. The company embodies this belief by consistently supporting major sports programs and local athletes all year round.



KUWAIT: Kuwait's national disabled athletics team.

## National disabled athletes return with gold, silver medals

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Disabled Athletics team returned home following its participation in the 11th Athletics championship that was held in Japan. Kuwait's team won a gold medal by Faisal Al-Rajhi who came first in the 5,000 meter wheelchair race, while Faisal Suroor won the silver medal in shotput, and

with these wins the two players qualified for the Paralympic Games in Paris 2024.

Faisal Suroor said he was happy with his achievement that he made in one of the most important world events and dedicated his medal to H.H. the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the government and people of Kuwait.

He said the shotput event witnessed the participation of the best players in the world making it highly competitive. Kuwait's team included Fahad Al-Mutairi as head of delegation, Nizar Ramadan and Ahmad Harby coaches, and players Faisal Al-Rajhi, Faisal Suroor, Dhari Al-Butti and Malak Hadi Al-Enezi.

## Real's CL aura masks fear behind Super League hunt

LONDON: Self-appointed kings of the Champions League, Real Madrid go for a 15th European crown against Borussia Dortmund in Saturday's final, but the competition may cease to exist if the Spanish giants get their way. Madrid and rivals Barcelona have pressed ahead in their wish to create a European Super League, defying the condemnation of the project from around the rest of the continent.

That includes from their opponents at Wembley this weekend with Dortmund CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke repeatedly stressing his club will have no truck with a Super League. An initial attempt to launch a closed-shop breakaway league in 2021 collapsed within days after a backlash from fans, governments and the game's authorities.

But supporters of the Super League have already had a victory this week as a Madrid court found governing bodies FIFA and UEFA had "abused their dominant position" and "prevented free competition" by opposing a breakaway division.

### State-backed threat

Madrid's reasons for pursuing an earthquake in European football may seem confusing. Los Blancos have won the Champions League five times in the past 10 years. At the same time, they have managed to modernize the 85,000 capacity Santiago Bernabeu into a world class stadium and remain a go-to destination for the planet's best players.

Jude Bellingham was plucked from Dortmund 12 months ago for a fee in excess of 100 million euros



MADRID: Real Madrid's players attend a training session at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on May 27, 2024 ahead of their Champions League final football match against Borussia Dortmund. —AFP

(\$108 million) despite the riches and home comforts offered by Premier League clubs for the England international.

Kylian Mbappe is expected to complete his move to the Spanish capital in the coming days after turning his back on Qatar-funded Paris Saint-Germain.

Madrid's aura in the Champions League may strike fear into their competitors. Yet, inside the club there is concern that their position as the competition's most successful club could eventually come under threat without structural change to the sport.

For the first time last season one of European football's state-backed projects, Abu Dhabi-backed Manchester City, lifted the Champions League - thrashing Madrid 5-1 on aggregate in the semi-finals.

City also benefit from the billions of television revenue that pours into England's Premier League that has financially left Europe's other major leagues trailing in its wake. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Clinics & Hospitals

#### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752

Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

#### Hospitals

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

### Change of Name

I, Mohamed Nijam Uddin Ahmed, holder of Indian Passport No. M5765018 issued at Guwahati. Resident of Vill- Borpukhuri PS & Dist - Hojai Assam (India), PIN - 782435. I have changed my name from Mohammed Nijam Uddin Ahmed to Nijam Uddin Ahmed. (#5610, 28/05/2024)

I Neethu Jose holder of Indian passport no N6512046 issued at Cochin, Indian permanent address No. Thekkevayalil House, Thidandan PO, Pin 686123, Kottayam, Kerala, India. Present hereby declare that hence forth my name will be read as given name Neethu and surname Kurian. (#5608, 27/05/2024)

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## Celtics sweep Pacers, reach NBA Finals

Celtics return to finals two years after losing to Golden State Warriors



INDIANAPOLIS: Derrick White #9 of the Boston Celtics drives from the backcourt against Ben Sheppard #26 of the Indiana Pacers during the first quarter in Game Four of the Eastern Conference Finals at Gainbridge Fieldhouse. — AFP

WASHINGTON: The Boston Celtics clinched the Eastern Conference championship on Monday with a 105-102 win over the Indiana Pacers, sweeping the series 4-0 and booking a spot in the NBA Finals. The Celtics will face the winner of the Western Conference Finals, where the Dallas Mavericks hold a 3-0 lead over the Minnesota Timberwolves ahead of Tuesday's game four.

The Celtics win in Indianapolis was their seventh straight in the post-season but they left it late against a Pacers team again without injured star guard Tyrese Haliburton. Jaylen Brown once again proved decisive.

He hit a step-through to level at 102-102 with 2:40 left in the fourth, then superbly rose to block Andrew Nembhard at the rim. With 45 seconds remaining Brown found Derrick White

in the corner who sank the three-point jumper that ultimately clinched the game—and the series.

Nembhard, who had 24 points, 10 assists and six rebounds for the Pacers, missed a three-pointer with 33 seconds left which would have tied the game. Brown led Boston's scoring with 29 points and Jayson Tatum had 26 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists.

The Celtics return to the finals two years after losing to the Golden State Warriors as they search for their first NBA title since 2008. "It's been nothing but a grind, we haven't skipped no steps all season," said Brown, named the Eastern Conference Finals MVP after averaging almost 30 points through the series.

"We've got a bunch of great guys in this locker room, tough guys. Our coaching staff has been great, front

office great and now we want to take the next step," he added. Boston have gone 12-2 throughout the post-season as they beat the Miami Heat, Cleveland Cavaliers and the Pacers to reach their 23rd NBA Finals in franchise history.

Celtics head coach Joe Mazzulla paid tribute to his team. "Look at all the talent, look at the players that we have. It's really all about them, they let us coach them. They allow us to push them, they listen to us and they set the temperature of the organization every single day," he said.

"As a coach, the greatest gift you can have is a group of guys that trust you and that allow you to coach them," he added.

### Pacers upbeat in defeat

It was the third time in the four series games that Indiana had lost

after holding leads or being tied in the final minute of a game. The Pacers had led by nine with 8:28 left in the fourth but without the influential Haliburton they were unable to see the game out.

"An amazing season, a magical season. The level of fight was just tremendous all the way through this," said Pacers head coach Rick Carlisle. "Circumstance never fazed them one way or the other. They were in this to win every possession that they could and in any game that they could, and so a lot of respect to our players and just how they conducted themselves in this series," he said. "There are a lot of things accomplished this year. Expectations will be raised for next year, which is good," added Carlisle. — AFP

## Nadal eyes Olympics after likely French Open farewell

PARIS: Rafael Nadal's record-breaking French Open career came to its likely end on Monday when the 14-time champion slumped to a demoralising defeat against Alexander Zverev before he revealed his journey to the Paris Olympics in July will not take a detour to Wimbledon.

Nadal, who turns 38 on June 3, went down 6-3, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 in the first round to world number four Zverev, suffering only his fourth loss in 116 matches at Roland Garros since his 2005 title-winning debut. It was the first time he had been defeated in Paris in the opening round and will again lead to questions over his long-term future in the sport.

"I don't know if it's the last time I'll be here in front of all of you," he said. "If it is, then you have been amazing. The feelings I have today are difficult to describe in words. It is the place I love the most." He added: "It's hard to say about the future. I am travelling with my family and I am having fun. The body is feeling better than it did two months ago.

"Maybe in two months I say it's enough. That is something I don't feel yet." Nadal may not return for the 2025 French Open but he still plans to play the Olympics at Roland Garros in July. Nadal, an Olympic singles gold medalist in Beijing in 2008 and doubles champion at the Rio Games, later told reporters: "That's my main goal now.

"I need to prepare myself the proper way to try to arrive healthy and well-prepared." He won't make the rankings cut for the Olympics, but as a Grand Slam winner he would be eligible for a spot reserved for major winners.

Plagued by injuries, which had limited him to just four events since January last year, former world number one Nadal is now 275 in the rankings and was unseeded in Paris. "My body has been a jungle for two years. You don't know what to expect. You know, I wake up one day and I found a snake biting me. Another day a tiger," said Nadal of his recent battles with a hip injury.

In his career, he has had to skip 11 Grand Slams. That is certain to become 12 next month when he is likely to skip Wimbledon where he was champion in 2008 and 2010. "It looks difficult to make a transition to grass, having the Olympics again on clay," he said. — AFP

## Kuwait athletics team ready for Basra tourney

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti team is ready to compete in the West Asia Athletics Championships, scheduled in Basra, Iraq, from May 29 until June 1, said an official on Tuesday.

The tournament will feature the participation of 13 teams. Speaking to KUNA via phone, Secretary of the Kuwaiti Athletics Federation Hussein Dashti said that the delegation, comprising of 18 athletes and other staff, will be headed by deputy chairman of the federation Mohsen Al-Ajmi.

He affirmed that the team was ready to perform and compete in the Asian tournament, hoping that they could score wins and bring back an assortment of medals.

The competition will be tough, he stressed, revealing that teams from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, the UAE, Lebanon, Palestine, Yemen, Syria, and Iran will take part in the tournament in addition to the host Iraq. — KUNA



Hussein Dashti

## 'Emotional' Cornet ends career after record 69th straight Grand Slam

PARIS: Frenchwoman Alize Cornet's career ended on Tuesday after her record-extending 69th consecutive Grand Slam appearance at the French Open, the tournament where she made her debut aged 15 and was once a ball girl. Cornet was no match for China's Australian Open runner-up Zheng Qinwen on Court Philippe-Chatrier in the first round, losing 6-2, 6-1. She made her debut at Roland Garros in 2005 and has not missed a Grand Slam tournament since the 2006 US Open.

The 34-year-old's run of consecutive appearances at the majors smashed the previous women's record of 62 set by Japan's Ai Sugiyama. "Emotionally it was not easy," said Cornet on her decision to retire after a 20-year professional career.

"Some days I was really excited about retirement and some other days I was very scared and very uncertain. So overall, I feel in peace today about it, and so I'm very happy about that decision." Cornet reached a career-high ranking of 11th in 2009 and enjoyed a surprise run to the 2022 Australian Open quarter-finals, beating Simona Halep along the way.

Cornet's career will also be remembered for a run of three successive wins over Serena Williams in 2014 -- including dumping the 23-time Grand Slam champion out of Wimbledon in the third round. "The quarter-finals in Australia was the source of a lot of emotions," she said on making the last eight at a Slam for the first time at the 63rd attempt. "My win over Serena was strong, intense, it was a source of great joy. But the quarter-finals—I had been running after this quarter-final for such a long time, and also winning against Simona Halep with that heat, well, it was overwhelming. "I think I will remember that." Cornet ended her career on home soil with a 20th French Open appearance.



PARIS: France's Alize Cornet holds an award during a tribute ceremony after her women's singles match on Court Philippe-Chatrier against China's Zheng Qinwen on day three of the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros Complex in Paris on May 28, 2024. — AFP

She was also a ball girl at the tournament as a child, including for a match featuring former world number one Amelie Mauresmo, now the tournament director who presented her with an award on Tuesday. "It was wonderful," she said of being a ball girl. "It was a first experience where I was close to the players. When I think back now, Amelie Mauresmo is handing me the end-of-career trophy, and she's been there all the time. I think about all the journey behind me." — AFP