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Gazans suffering as famine looms

Children unfed all day, thousands for one toilet • Major powers call for truce



GAZA: Hana Abdelrahman Al-Rai, a four-year-old child suffering from malnutrition and displaced from Gaza City's eastern suburb of Shujaiya, reacts as she is carried outside a tent in Zawayda in the central Gaza Strip on June 4, 2024. — AFP

PARIS: Palestinians displaced by the Gaza war are living in "appalling" conditions, with children sometimes going for a whole day without food and thousands sharing the same toilet, Oxfam warned on Tuesday. Deadly Zionist bombardment and fighting have raged in the Gaza Strip's far-southern Rafah area near the Egyptian border in recent weeks, again displacing those who had fled there in search of safety.

More than one million people have fled Rafah for other areas, according to the UN Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA. Oxfam said more than two-thirds of Gaza's population is estimated to be crammed into less than a fifth of the besieged territory. "Despite (Zionist) assurances that full support would be provided for people fleeing, most of Gaza has been deprived of humanitarian aid, as famine inches closer," the aid agency said.

"A food survey by aid agencies in May found that 85 percent of children did not eat for a whole day at least once in the three days before the survey was conducted," it added. Since Zionist troops launched their ground assault on Rafah on May 6, an average of eight aid trucks per day have entered, Oxfam said, citing UN figures.

While hundreds of commercial food trucks are estimated to be entering daily, the goods on board include non-nutritious energy drinks, chocolate and cookies, and are often very expensive, it added. "By

the time a famine is declared, it will be too late," Oxfam's Middle East and North Africa director, Sally Abi Khalil, said. "Obstructing tons of food for a malnourished population while waving through caffeine-laced drinks and chocolate is sickening."

In an interview with French television last week, Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected allegations of starvation in Gaza, saying everything had been done to avert a famine. Gazans were eating 3,200 calories a day or 1,000 more than the daily requirement, he said.

Oxfam said families in some parts of southern Gaza, like the coastal area of Al-Mawasi, designated a "humanitarian zone" by the Zionist army, were getting by with barely any water or sanitation services. "Living conditions are so appalling that in Al-Mawasi, there are just 121 latrines for over 500,000 people — or 4,130 people having to share each toilet," Oxfam said.

Meera, an Oxfam staff member in Al-Mawasi who has been displaced seven times since October, described conditions there as "unbearable". "There is no access to clean water, and people are forced to rely on the sea," she said. On Monday, sewage flooded a camp for the displaced in Khan Yunis after a wastewater pipe burst, an AFP reporter said, with some trying to scoop the filth out of their tents using plastic bottles.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Road names to get numbers

KUWAIT: The Cabinet on Monday instructed the minister of public works to take necessary measures to replace road names in Kuwait with numbers, except for roads named after heads of state or those named after other countries and cities in reciprocation. (See Page 3)

6m pills seized, 6 arrested

KUWAIT: The interior ministry's criminal investigation department foiled on Tuesday the smuggling of six million Lyrica (pregabalin) pills through Kuwait's international airport. The ministry said in a statement the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) apprehended six individuals involved in the operation. The street value of the confiscated drugs is about KD 2 million. — KUNA

China lunar probe takes off

BEIJING: The ascender module of a Chinese lunar probe successfully took off from the far side of the Moon on Tuesday bearing samples, state media reported. The Chang'e-6 probe touched down on Sunday in the Moon's immense South Pole-Aitken Basin, one of the largest known impact craters in the solar system, according to the China National Space Administration. — AFP

Egypt extends rolling blackouts

CAIRO: Egypt said it was extending its rolling power blackouts across the country for an extra hour on Tuesday to allow for preventative maintenance on its regional gas and power networks and because of increased consumption caused by a heatwave. Temperatures rose to nearly 40 degrees Celsius in Cairo on Tuesday and were forecast to climb even higher over the coming few days. — Reuters

Modi celebrates victory, but falls short of landslide

NEW DELHI: India's Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed election victory on Tuesday but the opposition said voters had sent a clear message after his party lost its parliamentary majority for the first time in a decade. Commentators and exit polls had projected an overwhelming victory for Modi, whose campaign wooed the Hindu majority to the worry of the country's 200-million-plus Muslim community, deepening concerns over minority rights.

But Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) failed to secure an overall majority of its own, figures from the election commission showed, meaning it would need to rely on its alliance partners. India has placed its faith in the ruling coalition "for a third consecutive time", Modi wrote on social media platform X, referring to the BJP and its allies. "We will continue the good work done in the last decade to keep fulfilling the aspirations of people."

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NEW DELHI: (Left) India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi flashes the victory sign at the BJP headquarters to celebrate the party's win in the country's general election on June 4, 2024. (Right) India's Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi brandishes the constitution as he addresses a press conference at the party headquarters. — AFP photos



Shooters reload to spearhead Kuwaiti challenge in Paris

KUWAIT: Kuwait hopes to make its mark at the Paris Olympics with shotguns, sabers and a single-handed dinghy. All five of the Olympic medals won by Kuwaitis have come with the help of a shotgun and it is again to the traps and skeet range that the country will be looking for medal success in Paris. But when Fehaid Al-Deehani topped the podium in the men's double trap shooting at the 2016 Games in Rio, he did so as an "independent Olympic athlete" because Kuwait had been suspended by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Mohamed Al-Daihani will make his Olympic debut at the age of 40 and follow in the footsteps of his father Nayef, who competed in the skeet at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. After qualifying for the Games by taking third place in skeet at the Asian Championships in January, he paid tribute to Deehani and twice Olympic bronze medalist Abdullah Al-Rashidi. "(Their) achievements are considered a source of pride for Kuwait, as well as an inspiration for all Kuwaiti shooters, and I am one of them," he told the



RIO DE JANEIRO: Fehaid Al-Deehani celebrates after winning the gold medal at the Rio Olympics in this Aug 10, 2016 file photo. — Reuters

International Shooting Federation website.

Another shooter, former world champion Khaled Al-Mudhaf, booked qualification for the Games by finishing third at the world championships in Azerbaijan last year. After the IOC ban was lifted in 2018, Kuwait took 10 athletes to the Tokyo Games in five sports: Athletics, karate, rowing, shooting and swimming. Rashidi's second bronze in skeet was the only medal. Only two female athletes went to Tokyo, 17 years after sprinter Danah Al-Nasrallah became the first Kuwaiti woman to compete at the Olympics at the Athens Games.

Continued on Page 6

Saudi warns of above-average heat during hajj

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia said Tuesday pilgrims can expect average high temperatures of 44 degrees Celsius during the hajj, which last year saw thousands of cases of heat stress. "The expected climate for hajj this year will witness an increase in average temperatures of one and a half to two degrees above normal in Makkah and Madinah," national meteorology center chief Ayman Ghulam told a press conference. The forecast indicates "relative humidity 25 percent, rain rates close to zero, average maximum temperature 44 degrees", he said.

The hajj, which begins on June 14, is one of the five pillars of Islam and must be undertaken at least once by all Muslims who have the means to do so. It involves a series of rites completed over four days in Makkah and its surroundings in the west of oil-rich Saudi Arabia. Last year more than 1.8 million Muslims took part in the hajj, official figures showed.

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Local

Kuwait adopts proactive strategies to counter cyber threats, attacks

Cyber conference tackles challenges



Taiba Al-Qabandi is picture with other participants during the VIP exhibition tour.



Panelists discuss during the conference.

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of the National Cyber Security Center, the Cyber First Kuwait Conference explored Kuwait's cybersecurity landscape to unveil strategies for safeguarding the country's digital future, aligning with the New Kuwait Vision 2035 in digital transformation. The conference gathered cybersecurity experts, including luminaries in information security, risk, compliance, forensics, and cyber law with the aim of fostering collaboration across public and private sectors in a shared goal to stand against the threats posed by malicious cyber attacks.

During her keynote speech, Taiba Al-Qabandi, Vice President for Governance and Risk Management at NCSC, highlighted the critical role of cybersecurity in this era, as cyber threats haven't been just targeted toward individuals, but

toward institutions and entire countries. She stressed the National Cyber Security Center's commitment to cooperating with local and international stakeholders in cybersecurity so as to create a secure digital environment. This collaboration aims to promote development, prosperity, and the digital economy while maintaining the trust of operators and investors in information and communication technology.

According to her, the importance of this event lies in providing a platform to exchange and share best technological practices, keeping abreast of the latest developments to enhance the security and protection of the digital environment against rapidly evolving cyber threats and attacks. Presenting panel discussions and keynote presentations, the conference discussed various topics ranging from aligning Kuwait's National Cybersecurity Strategy with Vision 2035 to navigating

cybersecurity in the era of AI and securing critical infrastructure.

In recognition of the cybersecurity, leaders, innovators, solution providers, and influencers, the Cyber First Kuwait awards were granted to the cybersecurity heroes of today. In response to escalating cyber threats, the Kuwaiti government has instituted the National Cyber Security Strategy, prioritizing cybersecurity at the forefront of its national agenda.

The collaborative efforts between the Kuwaiti government and the private sector to enhance cybersecurity maturity are yielding significant results. The introduction of the National Cybersecurity Strategy complements the private sector's increased investment in cybersecurity measures. Projections for 2024 estimate that Kuwait's cybersecurity market will generate an impressive revenue of approximately \$2.405 million.

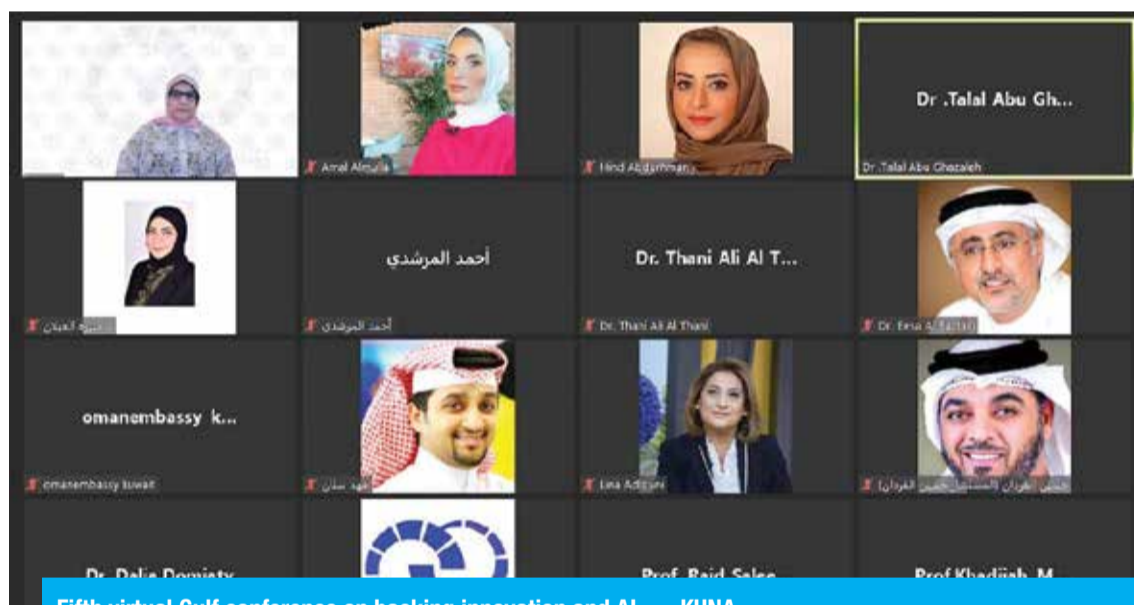


Attendees register for the conference.

Ministry seeks diversity via AI

KUWAIT: Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information for Media Services and New Media Sector Saad Al-Azmi stressed on Monday the need for economic diversity through varied programs like artificial intelligence (AI) and innovation, among others. Delivering a speech on behalf of Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi during the fifth virtual Gulf conference on backing innovation and AI, Al-Azmi said it is imperative to enhance innovation for economic growth through establishing a complete system by providing smart funding, building capabilities, and encouraging partnerships.

Al-Azmi said that it is also necessary to share knowledge among entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized companies to achieve the goals of the 2021-2026 Ministry's strategy in this regard. He also called for encouraging direct investment in research and development and supporting outcomes of innovation like inventions and registering patents. Meanwhile, Dr Hanadi Al-Mubarak, head of the conference, said Ku-



Fifth virtual Gulf conference on backing innovation and AI. — KUNA

wait, in light of its 2035 vision, has become an international capital of thought leadership and a pivotal destination for innovation and entrepreneurship as well as

sustainable development. The three-day conference is featuring 150 regional, Arab, and Gulf experts who discuss innovation systems and AI. — KUNA

Minister amends articles to address recurring issues

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Municipality Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan issued a resolution on Tuesday - amending construction regulations, allowing for more flexibility and addressing recurring issues in private residences. The amendment came for certain articles within ministerial resolution 206 for the year 2009 on regulations and specifications of private and model residences, which specified a Ministry-issued statement.

This is to keep pace with architectural development, facilitate the construction process for citizens, and accommodate their needs and demands. It is also an implementation of a municipal council decision. The resolution came after much deliberation and effort by the state's municipality and the municipal council and will be put into practice as soon as it is issued in the state's official gazette. — KUNA

Kuwait, China bolster partnership; EQUATE launched in Shanghai

BEIJING: Kuwait and China have recently established cooperation in the petrochemical field, said the Kuwaiti Ambassador to China, Jasem Al-Najem. This statement came to KUNA on the occasion of inaugurating an office of the EQUATE Petrochemical Company in the city of Shanghai. This step mirrors the keenness and concern of the Kuwaiti oil companies in the Chinese market, he added. The envoy affirmed that bolstering the China-Kuwait partnership would pave the way for broader economic cooperation between the two countries.

Kuwait was the first country in the Middle East to sign the "belt and road" initiative in 2013. He affirmed that the close relations between China and Kuwait date to 50 years ago, noting that these ties had been capped with the landmark visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Asian nation last September. The two sides had agreed during the visit on cementing cooperation and signed a number of



memoranda of understanding in various sectors. The EQUATE office's inauguration ceremony was attended by Kuwait General Consul in Shanghai, Anas Maarefi, the head of the Public Investment Authority in China, Abdulrazzaq Al-Buajian, the Director General of the Glycol Section at EQUATE, Ahmad Al-Saleh, and a number of executives and officials. The volume of trade exchanges between Kuwait and China stands at more than \$22.4 billion. — KUNA



Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Jasem Ibrahim Al-Najem visits EQUATE. — KUNA

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Crown Prince receives congratulatory messages

Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tareq

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah received a phone call from Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tareq, congratulating him on being appointed as Crown Prince by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In turn, His Highness the Crown Prince thanked Sultan Haitham. He underscored the strong bonds that the two nations share, and wished Oman and its people lasting prosperity. — KUNA



Former Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Al-Sabah

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah on Tuesday received a letter from Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, congratulating him on being appointed as Crown Prince by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In turn, His Highness the Crown Prince extended his gratitude towards Sheikh Dr Mohammad's heartfelt letter, wishing him long-lasting good health and prosperity. — KUNA



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah

Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah extended his warmest congratulations to His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on the Amiri order appointing His Highness as Crown Prince. Sheikh Athbi Al-Sabah said that His Highness the Amir's order comes thanks to Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's competence, demonstrated through his posts as prime minister and foreign minister as well as other leading posts. He prayed to Almighty Allah to help His Highness live up to the trust and direct his steps for the good of the country under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir. — KUNA



Asian Shooting Confederation President Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah

Asian Shooting Confederation extends warm congratulations to the new Crown Prince His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. On behalf of the Executive Committee Members of Asian Shooting Confederation (ASC) and ASC Member Federations, the President Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah and the Secretary General Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi extend their warm congratulations to HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on his appointment as the new Crown Prince. Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah looks forward to continued collaboration and support under the guidance of the new Crown Prince. May this period be marked with success, peace, and prosperity for the people of Kuwait.



Dean of Diplomatic Corps Zubaydzoda Zubaydullo Najot

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Kuwait, Tajikistan Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador Zubaydzoda Zubaydullo Najot, congratulated HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah on his appointment, on behalf of all heads of diplomatic missions and organizations accredited to the country. This appointment is a testament to the great confidence that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has placed in him. Zubaydzoda also praised His Highness the Crown Prince's great experience in diplomatic work, first as an ambassador, then as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and then as Prime Minister. He fondly recalled his meeting with Sheikh Sabah during his visit to Tajikistan in 2012. The visit was a resounding success, recalled the ambassador. — KUNA



Turkish Ambassador Tuba Nur Sonmez

On behalf of our Embassy and the Turkish community in Kuwait, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah on his appointment as the Crown Prince. I wish that this appointment brings further stability and prosperity to the people of Kuwait. As Turkish-Kuwaiti diplomatic relations celebrate their 60th anniversary, I would like to emphasize our readiness to collaborate with Kuwait in this new era under the visionary guidance of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Amir HH Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Lebanon Speaker Nabih Berri

Lebanon's parliament speaker Nabih Berri on Tuesday congratulated His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah on being appointed Kuwait's Crown Prince. A statement from the Lebanese parliament revealed that Berri sent a cable to His Highness the Crown Prince congratulating him on behalf of himself, the parliament and the Lebanese people. Berri wished His Highness future success and good fortune, and wished Kuwait continuous security and prosperity. — KUNA



Armenian Ambassador Sarmen Baghdasarian

On behalf of the Armenian Embassy, I, Sarmen Baghdasarian, would like to extend my best wishes to HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah for his appointment as Crown Prince of Kuwait, wishing him good health and success in his new role. We are confident that Kuwait will continue to prosper and develop under the leadership of the Amir HH Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Armenia will continue to work closely with Kuwait to further enhance our existing solid bilateral relationship on all levels.



Italian Ambassador Lorenzo Morini

Italian Ambassador, Lorenzo Morini, expressed his most sincere congratulations and best wishes to His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on his nomination

as Crown Prince. The ambassador extended his warmest wishes for success under the guidance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Cabinet briefed on public tenders, money laundering, terror reports

Ministers approve minutes of Supreme Committee for Investigation of Citizenship

KUWAIT: Kuwait Cabinet was apprised on Monday of the endorsement of the Board of Directors of the Central Agency for Public Tenders to present all practices totaling 18 submitted by the Ministry of Public Works to perform maintenance of roads and highways in various parts nationwide. This was announced in a statement by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shariada Al-Maousherji after the Cabinet meeting held at Seif Palace, under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The move comes in implementation of the directives of His Highness the Prime Minister regarding the need to start maintaining the streets, immediately for the sake of motorists, Al-Maousherji said. The Cabinet commended the official celebration of the full operation of the Al-Zour refinery that was held last Wednesday under the patronage and presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. It is one of the most important oil refining projects in the world and a qualitative shift in the environmentally friendly oil industry in the path of Kuwait's sustainable development, he noted.

The Cabinet expressed its sincere appreciation to the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Dr Emad Mohammad Al-Atiqi,

and all national cadres who contributed to the completion of this development project. It confirmed Kuwait's position as one of the most important countries producing oil and its derivatives, under the wise leadership and vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Moreover, the Cabinet was briefed on the report of the National Committee for Anti-Money Laundering and Combating Terrorist Financing regarding the recommendations submitted by the Financial Action Task Force for the Mutual Evaluation of Kuwait (FATF). Being keen to implement all measures to maintain Kuwait's position, the Cabinet decided to refer the report to the ministerial legal affairs committee to study all topics.

Aligning with eagerness to follow up on carrying out the projects, the Cabinet was informed about a visual presentation on the latest developments regarding the project of establishing and operating Mubarak Al-Kabeer airport. As part of its follow-up to implementing bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding with China, the Cabinet was briefed on the visual presentation of the executive case of these bilateral agreements and memos.

The Cabinet decided to refer all projects and deals to the economic affairs committee to prepare a report about them. In addition, the Cabinet tasked the



Kuwaiti ministers meet at Seif Palace, under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Minister of Public Works and the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan with taking the required measures regarding changing the names of streets, roads, and squares. Finally, the Cabinet ap-

proved the minutes of the meeting of the Supreme Committee for the Investigation of Kuwaiti Citizenship, which include cases of loss and withdrawal of some nationalities, in accordance with the law. — KUNA

KFF extinguishes fire at Al-Salmi scrapyard



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Forces (KFF), led by General Director of KFF Lieutenant General Khaled Fahad, extinguished a blaze on Tuesday at a scrapyard in the Al-Salmi area. In a press statement, KFF said that the fire was rapidly extinguished without any casualties and that the quick response of firefighters helped to prevent the spread. It added that Director of the Fire Department of Al-Jahra Governorate, Colonel Ali bin Redha, was also present at the scene. — KUNA photos

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In my view

Only our nails will scratch our skin



Dr Khalid A Al-Saleh

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On August 15th, 1945, Japan's Emperor Hirohito addressed the Japanese people in a historic event. In his speech that lasted for just few minutes, Emperor Hirohito used the Japanese classical language to speak about the enemy's use of new lethal weapons. He confirmed the approval of what came out of the Potsdam conference without mentioning his country's surrender. Emperor Hirohito called on the Japanese people to maintain their unity and adopt good behavior, urging them to rebuild and focus on the future. Ever since then, Japan has remained one of the most advanced countries in the world.

Despite Japan's unconditional surrender, the Japanese leader did not lose faith in his people. The emperor believed in Japan's ability and its steadfastness. Japan is not only one of the most advanced countries; it has made a lot of progress in technology. This is a good lesson for other leaders across the globe. Kuwait experienced such bitter moments during the Iraqi invasion. Just like Japan, Kuwaiti leaders were hopeful. They began to rebuild the nation after the invasion. I hope that we will always remember the efforts of these great leaders. They worked very hard, bringing in foreign experts and medical teams who worked alongside Kuwaiti experts to rebuild and develop the country. During that time, Kuwait brought in a prime minister who (just like medics) diagnosed, prescribed, and reshaped Kuwait for good. "Only our nails will scratch our skin." Any official who doesn't understand this, should step aside. We want Kuwait to be one of the most developed countries in the world.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A commercial aircraft flies past the rising waning crescent moon above Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Joint Committee to start field work in Souq Al-Mubarakkiya



Governor of Kuwait City Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali and Chairperson of the Voluntary Work Center Sheikh Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: The first meeting of the committee formed by the capital governorate and Kuwait Voluntary Work Center. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali, Governor of Kuwait City, said that the popup committee formed between the Capital Governorate and Kuwait Voluntary Work Center will start field work in the historical Mubarakkiya Souq. The joint committee held a meeting on Tuesday, attended by the Governor and Sheikh Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Chairperson of the Voluntary Work Center,

in which they discussed drawing a framework and placing systems regarding issues in Al-Mubarakkiya, a statement from the governorate said. Following a trip to the historical Souq, the committee was able to pinpoint issues regarding cleanliness, amenities, and public facilities and start coming up with a plan to restore them and maintain the invaluable beauty of its heritage. — KUNA

Kuwait underscores catastrophic situation in the Gaza Strip

GENEVA: Kuwait's Permanent Envoy to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen, called on the international community to take responsibility for the catastrophic situation in the Gaza Strip, saying that the labor sector suffered major damage due to continuous Zionist aggression. Al-Hayen stated this to KUNA on the sidelines of the 112th annual International Labor Organization conference with the participation of 187 countries.

He underscored the augmenting humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the forced eviction of two million Palestinian citizens, the Zionist occupation hindering the entry of aid, as well as the mounting rate of unemployment. He stressed that this conference must send a forceful message to the Zionist occupation to adhere to international laws regulating labor, adding that Kuwait is demanding the rights of Palestinian workers as per labor agreements.

The Kuwaiti diplomat spoke of the maltreatment Palestinian workers are subjected to, including unfair suspension of permits and material and moral damage. The 112th meeting holds special importance as its agenda is filled with hefty topics and is held in the midst of ongoing aggression on the Gaza Strip. Over the span of 11 days, it will handle issues concerning laborers, including protection criteria, basic rights and principles, work suitability, and the care economy.

Ceasefire proposal

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has expressed Kuwait's appreciation for the proposal presented by US President Joe Biden to stop the aggression against the Gaza Strip. The Ministry reaffirmed, in a statement, Kuwait's full confidence in the mediation efforts of both of Qatar and Egypt in this context. It also reaffirmed Kuwait's support for all efforts aimed at achieving an immediate ceasefire, complete withdrawal of occupation forces, providing urgent humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, and enabling the displaced Palestinians to return to their homes.

WHO's decision

Meanwhile, Kuwait's permanent representative to the United Nations and International Organizations, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen, welcomed the World

Health Organization's (WHO) decision to grant Palestine enhanced rights. Ambassador Al-Hayen said, at the end of the 77th session of the World Health Assembly meeting that the Arab and Islamic groups, in addition to China, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, have succeeded in passing this resolution and granting Palestine greater autonomy within the WHO.

The resolution has gained support from 101 member states, granting Palestine expanded privileges within the WHO, including the right to occupy a seat among member states, to submit proposals and amendments, and to be elected for positions in the bureau of the General Session and main committees of the Health Assembly. Ambassador Al-Hayen also praised the role that WHO and its Director-General have played in giving a detailed health report of the situation in Gaza, holding the Zionist forces responsible for the situation in Gaza.

He expressed his happiness at choosing Kuwait, represented by Dr Abdulrahman Al-Qashaan, as the WHO Health Regional Coordinator for the Eastern Mediterranean office in Cairo. He also stressed that Kuwait supports the Palestinian cause and that it is a priority for Kuwait. The Kuwaiti delegation participated in the 77th session of the World Health Assembly in Geneva, headed by Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen, Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs at the Ministry of Health, Dr Al-Munther Al-Hasawi, Health Attache to International Organizations, Dr Abdulrahman Al-Qashaan, and Head of International Organizations, Dr Mohammad Al-Furaih.

Attempts to undermine UNRWA

In another development, the Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Jassem Al-Budaiwi, condemned Zionist occupation's attempts to demoralize efforts exerted by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) by designating it as a terrorist organization. In a statement, Al-Budaiwi said that the Zionist occupation is obligated to ease the work of UNRWA workers according to international and humanitarian resolutions. Al-Budaiwi affirmed that the international community must support UNRWA and its work and end illegal practices committed by Zionist occupation. The GCC chief reiterated the support and stands by GCC countries with the Palestinian issue, including support to establish a Palestinian state. — KUNA



Nasser Al-Hayen

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Muslims fear as Modi's BJP secures third term

China, Hong Kong boost security on Tiananmen anniversary

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KHAN YOUNIS: Palestinian sisters Samar and Sahar react as they search for their missing mother Amira Al-Breim at the rubble of a house hit in a Zionist strike on June 3, 2024. — Reuters

Sisters cry out for missing mom after Gaza airstrike

Thousands of Palestinians believed to be buried under rubble

GAZA: After another airstrike pulverized Gaza, the two Al-Breim sisters realized their mother Amira was missing and rushed to the scene, crying out her name and frantically sifting through rubble for any sign of her. "It is like we're in a nightmare. It is as though we are in a dream. A dream," sobbed Samar Al-Breim amid piles of collapsed concrete and twisted cables. "I pray to God that I wake up and find out that it was only a dream and that it is not true," she added. "What did they do to deserve this?"

Children were also sleeping at the site of the airstrike in Khan Younis in southern Gaza, she said. "The children were asleep, they are innocent, they were torn to pieces." Her sister Sahar said their uncles, along with their families, had perished, adding that she also should have been staying at her mother's house overnight but had been unable to come due to a lack of transport. "My mother is stuck underneath here," she added, gesturing to the mounds of rubble. "There is nowhere safe in all of Gaza."

Thousands of Palestinians are believed to be buried under rubble after relentless airstrikes in an offensive that has killed more than 36,000 people, according to Gaza health authorities, and laid waste to the densely populated enclave. "We hope to God there will be a ceasefire because we have lost a lot - we have lost all our loved ones. We have nothing left," said Sahar, continuing to call out her mother's name.

Mediators have failed to clinch a permanent ceasefire despite months

of negotiations. Netanyahu on Monday reiterated that Zionist top priority in Gaza remained the destruction of Hamas as well as the recovery of the hostages held by the group. Samar Al-Breim clutched at a few random items amid the mounds of rubble. "They (Zionists) want to annihilate us..." Samar added. "Despite the pain, the death, the destruction they have caused, we will be victorious, God willing... and we will be stronger than before." — Reuters

Zionists on alert as Lebanese rockets spark brush fires

KIRYAT SHMONA: Zionist authorities were on alert for new brush fires on Tuesday, after munitions fired from Lebanon by Hezbollah the previous evening ignited several blazes across northern Zionist entity. The Fire and Rescue Service said dozens of firefighting teams worked through the night with teams from the Nature and Park Service, army, police and other agencies before the largest fires were brought under control in the morning, an AFP journalist reported. "As of this time there are three active sites" near the border with Lebanon, the fire service posted on X earlier Tuesday. An AFP journalist said firefighters were still working to extinguish smaller fires.

The flames encroached on Kiryat Shmona, a town near the Lebanese border that has been largely evacuated in the face of near-daily exchanges of fire between the army and Lebanon's Hezbollah group since October 7 attack triggered war in the Gaza Strip. Extreme heat that has gripped the region in recent days had already raised the risk of brush fires, made worse by daily barrages of rockets and drone strikes that have rained down incendiary material. An AFP photographer in the northern town saw fierce fires engulfing parts of the border area.

On Sunday, a brush fire in the annexed Golan Heights burned around 10 square kilometers (nearly four square miles) of land after a rocket fired from Lebanon struck near the town of Katzin. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) also reported fires in Alma Al-Shaab and Dhayra, two villages near the border. It said the fires were caused by "Zionist phosphorus incendiary shells". The Zionist army said it had deployed reinforcements to support firefighters overwhelmed by the scale of the blazes.

"Six... reservist soldiers were lightly injured as a result of smoke inhalation and transferred to a hospital to receive medical treatment," the army said. "The forces gained control over the locations of fire, and at this stage, no human life is at risk," it added. Officers of the army's Northern Command had arrived in Kiryat Shmona during the night and the army was "conducting a situational assessment" in the sector. — AFP



KIRYAT SHMONA: Fires burn as a result of rockets launched from Lebanon into northern Zionist entity, near the Lebanon border amid ongoing cross-border clashes between Zionist troops and Hezbollah fighters. — AFP



DIMONA: Hajj Freij Hawashla, born in 1939, prepares tea at the unrecognized Bedouin village of Ras Jrabah, east of Dimona city in southern Zionist entity.



DIMONA: A child plays at the unrecognized Bedouin village of Ras Jrabah east of the city of Dimona. — AFP photos

Bedouin villagers fight eviction in desert region

RAS JRABAH: Plans to expand desert city of Dimona, known as the cradle of the national nuclear program, are stoking fears among nearby Bedouin villagers for their traditional way of life. When Hassan Hawashla looks out his window, he sees rows of identical modern apartment blocks, and construction cranes building more, as Dimona spreads into the surrounding Negev desert. "Every day when I look at this city, it's getting closer and closer to us," said Hawashla, 40, who himself is among the construction laborers working in Dimona.

His own Bedouin village of Ras Jrabah is an informal settlement of tin-roofed houses and a few concrete buildings, crisscrossed by dusty dirt roads and home to about 500 people. Any new construction there gets promptly torn down by Zionist authorities who object to any permanent structures being built and want to move the entire village, Hawashla said. Dimona, located 80 kilometers south of Jerusalem

and with a population of about 36,000, meanwhile has ambitious plans to nearly double in size, local government documents show.

Bedouin (from Zionist entity), a nomadic Arab ethnic group, see it as yet another threat after long living on the margins of the society, often in poverty and with few opportunities. About 30 percent of the Bedouin population live in dozens of similar villages in the Negev desert, which is known as Naqab in Arabic, says the non-profit group Bimkom. Another Bedouin village, Wadi Al-Khalil, was wiped off the map last month after authorities ordered its demolition to clear space for a highway expansion.

'Minimum land' for Bedouin

Dimona, originally known as the cradle of nuclear power due to its nearby Negev Nuclear Research Center, is now planning a construction boom. "All the money goes into the buildings, but the buildings are empty," said Hawashla. Meanwhile, he said his own village receives no services from the government—not even bomb shelters to protect it from rockets fired from war-torn Gaza, 70 kilometers away. Zionist authorities did not respond to AFP requests for comment by the time of publication. Zionist authorities have told residents of Ras Jrabah to move across town to Qasr E-Sir, a recognized Bedouin locality on the western side of Dimona, according to Hawashla.

But Hawashla's father Freij told AFP that the villagers do not want to move there because of strained relations with a different Bedouin group that lives there. "This tribe doesn't want us and we don't want them either," said Freij, who was born in 1939 before Dimona was founded. The old man recalled that, when the first Jews came to the area and he was a child, the Bedouin gave them water, bread and yoghurt.

Another man from the region, Marwan Frieh, said his father and grandfather were born and raised in an unrecognized village before authorities forced them into Rahat, the largest Bedouin town of the Negev. Frieh now monitors cases such as Ras Jrabah and other villages through Adalah, a group that fights for the rights of Arabs in Zionist entity. He said that 11 unrecognized Bedouin villages representing 6,500 people are now fighting eviction orders in courts. Frieh said Zionist land policy in the region amounted to "maximum Bedouin on minimum land, and minimum Jewish on maximum land".

The Ras Jrabah community has fought in court to reverse eviction orders, lost and appealed to the Beersheba district court. The villagers have suggested having their community declared a new neighborhood of Dimona, an idea authorities rejected. Myszana Morany, who represented Ras Jrabah during the appeal last week, said there was little chance for the community to win their case. — AFP

International

Security tight in China, HK on Tiananmen anniversary

Taiwanese president says memory 'will not disappear in the torrent of history'



HONG KONG: An armored police vehicle is seen on a street in the Causeway Bay district of Hong Kong on June 4, 2024. — AFP photos

HONG KONG/TAIPEI: Hong Kong police detained several people and Chinese authorities restricted access to Beijing's Tiananmen Square on Tuesday on the 35th anniversary of the crackdown on pro-democracy protesters, as cities in Taiwan and elsewhere marked the date. Chinese tanks rolled into the square before dawn on June 4, 1989 to end weeks of pro-democracy demonstrations by students and workers. Television news images of a lone Chinese man in a white shirt standing in front of a column of tanks spread around the world and became the iconic image of the demonstrations. Decades after the military crackdown, rights activists say the demonstrators' original goals including a free press and freedom of speech remain distant, and June 4 is still a taboo topic in China. The ruling Communist Party has never released a death toll, though rights groups and witnesses say the figure could run into the thousands.

In China-ruled Hong Kong, police officers tightened security around downtown Victoria Park, where large June 4 candlelight vigils had been held annually before tougher new national security laws took effect in recent years. Police took away several individuals in vans, including 68-year-old Alexandra Wong after she held up a bouquet of flowers and shouted, "The people will not forget!"

Others who lit up their mobile phones in the park at night were escorted away and searched by police. Over the past week, eight people were arrested for sedition under a new national security law, including prominent activist Chow Hing-tung, stemming from what media said were online posts linked to June 4. "There are still forces that attempt to undermine Hong Kong's stability and security," Hong Kong leader John Lee told reporters, without mentioning June 4 specifically.

In Taiwan, several hundred protesters held a vigil on Liberty Square in downtown Taipei, holding up small LED candles and laying flowers before an altar with the numbers 89 64. "The more they try to hide this event, the more effort we should put in to remember it," said Juan Chung-hao, 33, a university researcher in the crowd. Taiwan - a democratic island that China claims as its own - is the only part of the Chinese-speaking world where June 4 can now be remembered openly. Taiwan President Lai Ching-te and his government reject Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying only Taiwan's people can decide their future. "The memory of June 4th will not disappear in the torrent of history," he said in a post on the anniversary. In

pandemic, as well as soaring inflation and migration. Since the last EU elections in 2019, European far-right parties have responded to a worsening economic situation by cranking up their rhetoric, said European politics expert Catherine Fieschi at Counterpoint, a London-based think tank. Brussels has claimed success in dealing with the pandemic and touts its solidarity in the face of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, she said, "but things are still not going as well as they did in 2019." "Praising Europe's successes" amid a cost-of-living crisis means "not understanding the pessimism of far-right voters," she added.

Hungary: war 'referendum'

In campaign posters and speeches, Orban repeatedly calls for "peace" and an end to the war - implying coming to terms with Russia's authoritarian president, Vladimir Putin. Orban has also frequently cast himself as the "protector" of stability in a changing world that he claims is under threat from immigration, LGBTQ rights and Brussels's climate policies. A senior member of Orban's Fidesz party, outgoing EU parliament member Balazs Hidveghi, said Orban has won support by reading what is on voters'



TAIPEI: A man arranges candles on a banner during a rally to mark the 35th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, at Liberty Square in Taipei on June 4, 2024.

Beijing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told reporters that Beijing "firmly opposes anyone smearing China and using this (June 4) as a pretext to interfere in China's internal affairs".

Square closed

An official website for the Tiananmen Tower overlooking Tiananmen Square posted a notice earlier saying it would be closed for the entire day on June 4. Time slots for visits to the square were also not available for June 4 on its official WeChat mini-app. Chang'an Avenue, a wide boulevard fringing the square where the "Tank Man" once stood, was closed to pedestrians and cyclists on Monday evening, a witness said. Small groups of "stability maintenance" volunteers, or retirees with red armbands, have kept watch in central Beijing neighborhoods since last week. Guards have also been stationed on pedestrian bridges, a regular practice during politically sensitive periods.

On Chinese social media platforms including WeChat and Douyin, users were unable to change their profile photographs, according to online posts and Reuters tests. In the past, some online users have altered profile

names and pictures with symbolic images such as candles around June 4. "Thirty-five years have passed, and the authorities remain silent. All that can be seen on the Internet is 'A Concise History of the Communist Party of China', which says that a tragic incident was caused by the student movement in 1989," wrote the Tiananmen Mothers. "We cannot accept or tolerate such statements that ignore the facts," added the group of more than 100 mostly China-based survivors and families of victims of the Tiananmen crackdown.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong highlighted the "brutal force" used against student protesters 35 years ago, and expressed concern about China's curbs on human rights. "We call on China to cease suppression of freedoms of expression, assembly, media and civil society and to release those detained for peacefully expressing their political views," Wong said in a statement. British Foreign Secretary David Cameron also called for the protection of human rights in a June 4 remembrance message. The US consulate and European Union office in Hong Kong lit candles in their windows. The EU tweeted that it "continues to stand in solidarity with human rights defenders worldwide". — Reuters

Pandemic, war anger boost far right in EU vote

VIENNA: While EU leaders vaunt their handling of COVID and the Ukraine war, far-right parties have seized on discontent over the crises - a strategy set to pay off in upcoming European elections. Embodying this trend are two countries at the heart of Europe: Austria and Hungary. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has vowed to "occupy Brussels" as he transforms his country into what he calls an "illiberal democracy". He has cast the June 9 elections as a "referendum" on the response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In neighboring Austria, meanwhile, the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) has soared in the polls, buoyed by discontent over the government's handling of the COVID

minds. He cited the EU's response to the war, claiming that "most people want" a ceasefire and peace negotiations. EU sanctions on Russia were "the wrong response" as they failed to "prevent the continuation of hostilities", Hidveghi told AFP. In power for the past 14 years, Fidesz is currently leading in the opinion polls. Various surveys indicate it has between 39 and 48 percent support.

Austria: COVID backlash

In Austria, the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) now tops the polls with an estimated 25 to 30 percent of votes - thanks to a similar strategy. Its popularity slumped in 2019 amid a string of corruption scandals, but the party has since bounced back. Its recent success under its leader Herbert Kickl is attributed above all due to his rebellious COVID anti-vaccination stance. During the pandemic, the party seized on anger over strict measures such as nationwide lockdowns and a mandatory vaccination law that was later scrapped. The measures sparked mass protests, with the FPÖ styling itself as an anti-jab party.

Even "rather apolitical parts of the population were mobilized", said Andreas Moelzer, a former FPÖ mem-

ber of the European Parliament. Martin Rutter, one of the organizers of anti-vaccine protests, said the ruling conservative party "lost voters to the FPÖ" due to its strict stance on COVID. He complained that media coverage on the sensitive issues was "all heading in the same direction" - reflecting a consensus on strict COVID measures. For his part, he has "noticeably reduced" his consumption of "mainstream" news.

Social media 'bubbles'

Like him, ever more voters across Europe are "completely eluding traditional media", Fieschi said. She said "bubbles" of opinion are forming on social media such as Telegram. FPÖ members have not shrunk from spreading conspiracy theories and false information. Fieschi pointed to a polarizing "us-against-them" approach to political debate across Europe. "Everywhere, the established elites have been judged very harshly during the Covid-19 period," she said, citing opinion polls. In France, Germany, the Netherlands and beyond, far-right parties are also polling strongly with hard lines on some of the same issues broached by Orban. — AFP

Gazans suffering as famine looms...

Continued from Page 1

Heavy fighting rocked Gaza on Tuesday after G7 and Arab powers urged both the Zionist entity and Hamas to agree to a truce and hostage release deal outlined by US President Joe Biden. Mediator Qatar said it had yet to see statements from either side "that give us a lot of confidence", but the foreign ministry said Doha was "working with both sides on proposals on the table".

Washington said it would seek a UN Security Council resolution to back the three-phase roadmap which Biden presented last Friday as the Zionist entity's plan, even as the war has ground on. Biden told Qatar's Amir that "Hamas is now the only obstacle to a complete ceasefire", and "confirmed (the Zionist entity's) readiness to move forward" with the terms he set out last week.

The Gaza war raged on unabated, with the Zionist military reporting its fighter jets struck around "65 terror targets" across Gaza and that troops located tunnel shafts and weapons in the southern city of Rafah. Four bodies were retrieved from a bombed house in the Bureij camp in central Gaza, and three more from the rubble of a destroyed building in Gaza City, the civil defense agency said. Gaza's government media office said another Zionist strike killed eight police officers in Deir al-Balah.

The White House insisted Monday that the truce plan was the Zionist entity's own and not drafted by Washington to put pressure on its key ally. However, Biden also took a swipe in an interview with Time magazine at Netanyahu, who is leading a shaky right-wing coalition government and has been fighting corruption claims in court. Asked if he believed the Zionist premier was dragging out the war for political self-preservation, Biden said: "There is every reason for people to draw that conclusion."

Biden also said that he and Netanyahu - who have had tense relations as the Gaza death toll has soared - were at odds over the need to create a Palestinian state. "My major disagreement with Netanyahu is, what happens after... Gaza's over? What, what does it go back to? Do (Zionist) forces go back in?" asked the US president. "The answer is, if that's the case, it can't work."

French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday told Netanyahu in a phone call that the Palestinian Authority of President Mahmoud Abbas that rules parts of the occupied West Bank should "ensure the governance" of the Gaza Strip after the war.

Zionist bombardment and ground offensive have killed at least 36,550 people in Gaza, mostly women and children. Some 55 percent of Gaza's structures have been destroyed, damaged or "possibly damaged", according to the United Nations satellite analysis agency. UN human rights chief Volker Turk also threw his support behind the truce plan, saying of the war that "we don't even know how to describe it anymore". "It is beyond precarious. It is beyond catastrophic." — Agencies

ified for the Olympics in the sport of sailing," Shah, who will compete in the single-handed dinghy, told Kuwait News Agency. "I am proud to be the first Kuwaiti woman and the first Gulf woman to achieve this."

Yousef Al-Shamlan also made a bit of history for the country when he qualified for the men's saber in March. Kuwaitis have competed in fencing through quotas at the Olympics since the 1976 Montreal Games but 25-year-old Shamlan is the first to qualify by right. "This is a huge moment for Kuwaiti fencing," said Hamad Al-Awadhi of the Kuwaiti Fencing Federation. — Reuters

Modi celebrates victory, but falls...

Continued from Page 1

The main opposition Congress party was set to nearly double its parliamentary seats, in a remarkable turnaround largely driven by deals to field single candidates against the BJP's electoral juggernaut. "The country has unanimously and clearly stated, we do not want Narendra Modi and Amit Shah to be involved in the running of this country, we do not like the way they have run this country," Gandhi told reporters, referring to Modi's powerful number two, Home Minister Shah. "That is a huge message. I was confident that the people of this country would give the right response."

With nearly 99 percent of votes counted, the BJP's vote share at 36.7 percent was marginally lower than it was in the last polls in 2019. Modi was re-elected to his constituency representing the Hindu holy city of Varanasi by a margin of 152,300 votes - compared to nearly half a million votes five years ago. The election commission figures showed the BJP and its allies on track to win at least 291 seats out of a total of 543, enough for a parliamentary majority. But the BJP itself had won or was leading in only 239, well down from the 303 it took five years ago, while Congress had won or was ahead in 99, up from 52.

Two key regional allies in the ruling National Dem-

ocratic Alliance endorsed Modi as the next prime minister, rejecting local media speculation that they could be wavering in their support or possibly switch sides. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Janata Dal (United) said their pre-poll alliance with BJP was intact and they would form the next government.

The BJP's numbers were likely pulled down by the party's poor showing in the country's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, which also sends 80 lawmakers to parliament. The party was leading in 33 seats in the state, down from the 62 it won there in 2019, with analysts saying bread-and-butter issues had overshadowed the BJP's appeal to the Hindu majority. A grand temple that Modi inaugurated in January had not boosted the BJP's fortunes as it was expected to, they said.

Among the independent lawmakers elected were two serving time in jail - firebrand Sikh separatist preacher Amritpal Singh, and Sheikh Abdul Rashid from Indian-administered Kashmir, who was arrested on charges of "terror funding" and money laundering in 2019.

Celebrations had already begun at the headquarters of Modi's BJP before the full announcement of results. But the mood at the Congress headquarters in New Delhi was also one of jubilation. "BJP has failed to win a big majority on its own," Congress lawmaker Rajeev Shukla told reporters. "It's a moral defeat for them."

Stocks slumped on speculation the reduced majority would hamper the BJP's ability to push through reforms. Shares in the main listed unit of Adani Enterprises - owned by key Modi ally Gautam Adani - nosedived 25 percent, before rebounding slightly. — Agencies

the effects of heat, including providing air-conditioned tents and misting systems. Ghulam told Tuesday's press conference there was "a need for sufficient quantities of water to cover daily consumption as temperatures rise". He also said food for pilgrims should be transported in refrigerators so it does not spoil.

Meanwhile, the General Authority of Roads has completed painting asphalt surfaces in the area surrounding Namirah Mosque to reduce temperature for pilgrims and cool the climate to moderate degrees. The authority's official spokesman Abdulaziz Al-Otaibi confirmed in a statement to Saudi Press Agency that applying the technology of reducing the asphalt's surface temperature by reflecting sunlight, comes in partnership with several participating parties to serve pilgrims. — Agencies

Shooters reload to spearhead...

Continued from Page 1

This year there is much excitement surrounding Ameena Shah, who has qualified for the Olympic regatta in Marseille in a first not only for Kuwait but all Gulf countries. "I am very happy with this historic achievement, it is the first time that Kuwait has qual-

Saudi warns of above-average...

Continued from Page 1

More than 2,000 people suffered heat stress - which includes heatstroke, exhaustion, cramps and rashes - according to Saudi authorities, after temperatures soared to 48 degrees Celsius. At least 240 people - many from Indonesia - died during the pilgrimage, according to figures announced by various countries which did not specify causes of death. Saudi Arabia did not provide statistics on fatalities.

Officials in the kingdom take steps to try to mitigate

International

Biden orders measures to bar migrants from asylum

Trump-style restrictions to be activated when US-Mexico border arrests surge

WASHINGTON: Migrants caught illegally crossing the US-Mexico border could be denied the chance to claim asylum and quickly deported or turned back to Mexico under new restrictions announced on Tuesday, part of a sweeping enforcement effort by US President Joe Biden. The new measures will take effect immediately and will have exceptions for unaccompanied children, people who face serious medical or safety threats and victims of trafficking, a senior official said on a call with reporters.

Biden, a Democrat, has toughened his approach to border security as immigration has emerged as a top issue for Americans in the run-up to Nov 5 elections where he will face Republican Donald Trump in a rematch of the 2020 contest.

The new asylum restrictions are not permanent, the US official told reporters. They are activated when the daily average of border arrests tops 2,500 over a week and will be paused when arrests drop below 1,500 per day, the official said. The deterrent measures "will significantly increase consequences for those who cross the southern border unlawfully," the official said, requesting anonymity as a condition of the call.

Key operational questions about how the new measures will be implemented remained unclear, however, including how the administration would quickly deport migrants from far-away and uncooperative countries and how many non-Mexican migrants Mexico would accept under the new enforcement regime.

Biden took office in 2021 vowing to reverse some of Trump's restrictive immigration policies but grappled with record levels of migrants caught crossing illegally, a trend that has strained US border authorities and cities receiving new arrivals. Trump has criticized Biden for rolling back his policies and vowed a wide-ranging crackdown if reelected. The new restrictions resemble similar policies implemented by Trump and use a legal statute known as 212(f) that served as the underpinning for Trump's travel bans blocking people from several majority-Muslim nations and other countries.

The new restrictions are expected to trigger legal challenges from immigrant and civil rights groups who have criticized Biden for adopting Trump-like policies and backtracking on US legal obligations to asylum seekers. In advance of the announcement, Trump's campaign issued a statement criticizing Biden for high levels of illegal immigration and said the move to exempt unaccompanied minors would encourage child trafficking. The White House moved to defuse criticisms that Biden is effectively copying Trump. "All of these policies are in stark contrast to how the previous administration managed immigration," a senior administration official told AFP. "They demonized immigrants, instituted mass raids, separated families at the border and put kids in cages. Their policies went against our values as a nation."

Trump spent his time in office trying to build a wall on the Mexican border and has drastically ramped up his anti-immigration rhetoric as he seeks a White House comeback. He has repeatedly spoken of migrants "poisoning the blood" of the United States and says he would enact the biggest deportation of migrants in history as soon as he takes office.

Inaction in congress

Biden has pushed unsuccessfully for months to pass a Senate bill that would toughen border security, including with a provision that resembles his latest moves by executive action. The bill was crafted by a bipartisan group of senators but Republicans rejected it after Trump came out in opposition. "Legislation is still the only way to permanently address border security and immigration reform," White House deputy press secretary Andrew Bates said in a memo on Tuesday. The number of migrants caught crossing the US-Mexico border illegally dropped in recent months, a trend US officials partly attribute to increased Mexican enforcement.

Claudia Sheinbaum was elected as Mexico's first female president in a landslide victory on Sunday and will take office on Oct 1. Biden's border restrictions



CIUDAD JUAREZ: Migrants seeking to enter the United States through a barbed wire fence installed along the Rio Grande are driven away with pepper spray shots by Texas National Guard on May 13, 2024. — AFP

could put pressure on Sheinbaum, the successor to current President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, to keep illegal border crossings down. Lopez Obrador said at a daily press conference that he expected to speak with Biden over the phone as soon as Tuesday and that the countries "have been making good progress" on the issue of immigration.

Under the new measures, migrants who demonstrate a fear of being returned to their home countries will be screened for other types of humanitarian protection but could be deported if denied, the Biden official told reporters. Those who are removed will

face at least a five-year bar to reentry and potential criminal prosecution. "These steps will strengthen the asylum system, preventing it from being overwhelmed and backed up by those who do not have legitimate claims," the official said. The Biden administration has taken a number of steps over the past year to toughen the asylum process, including issuing a regulation in May 2023 that heightened the standard for an initial asylum claim. Biden officials have said the effectiveness of US enforcement is limited by a lack of resources in the absence of more funding from Congress. — Agencies

Fears for India's Muslims as Modi's party wins

BENGALURU, India: For India's 200-million-plus Muslim minority, a third term for the Hindu-nationalist ruling party brings renewed fears for their future in the constitutionally secular country. Many Indian Muslims worry Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will relegate them to "second-class citizens" in a Hindu nation. "During the last 10 years, Muslims were publicly targeted, abused, and humiliated," said housewife Shabnam Haque, 43, in Jharkhand's state capital Ranchi. "Hate against the community is increasing day by day and Muslims are being dehumanized. We fear this trend will increase." But while Modi celebrated victory, the opposition was stronger than pundits had predicted, and the BJP is dependent on allies without an overall majority of its own for the first time in a decade.

'Very scared'

For some, the reduction of BJP seats offered a glimmer of hope. "Diverse political representation is crucial for a healthy democracy, and a strong opposition is vital," said Salman Ahmad Siddiqui. The 42-year-old banker comes from the city of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh — India's most populous state and the heartland of the Hindu faith — where the BJP lost its majority. "The election results are unsurprising, reflecting a growing sense of unease among young people and the middle class," Siddiqui added. But Rahman Saifi, 27, a social activist from Uttar Pradesh, said the BJP still had a fresh mandate to drive forward its right-wing policies for its faithful Hindu followers. "Even with a reduced majority, they may continue to push their agenda of establishing a Hindu Rashtra (country) in India," Saifi said. "It's concerning."



BHADOHI: A Muslim woman shows her inked finger after casting her ballot at a polling station in India's Uttar Pradesh state during India's general election. — AFP

Hindu activists will likely be emboldened to call for more religious sites to be taken from Muslims. Those demands have grown louder since Modi inaugurated a grand temple to the deity Ram in January, built on the grounds of a centuries-old mosque in Ayodhya razed by Hindu zealots in 1992. "Muslims are very scared that ... they will implement anti-Muslim laws and policies in a dictatorial manner and promote hatred in society", shopkeeper Anwar Siddiqui said in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh — a BJP heartland.

Far to the south, Muhammad Samshuddeen, 25, a shopkeeper in the tech hub of Bengaluru said that "India is a secular country for all religions," adding, "We are here to live peacefully too." In Muslim-majority Kashmir, the Modi government's 2019 decision to bring the region under New Delhi's direct rule — and the subsequent clampdown — have been deeply resented. The BJP's third term will mean "further hardship", 53-year-old Riyaz Ahmed from Srinagar said. "We have been suffocated," he said. —AFP



AHMEDABAD: Election staff members open an electronic voting machine (EVM) to count votes for India's general election inside a vote counting center in Ahmedabad, India on June 4, 2024. — Reuters

Separatists, stars: Notable winners in India's election

NEW DELHI: A jailed Sikh separatist, a Bollywood actress and an international cricket star have all been elected to serve in India's next parliament, according to official results published Tuesday. AFP takes a look at some of the unusual winning and losing candidates in this year's marathon six-week election:

Separatist elected from jail

Firebrand preacher Amritpal Singh, 31, was arrested after a month-long manhunt last year and remains behind bars for advocating a separate Sikh homeland for members of the minority faith. But on Tuesday he defeated 26 other candidates to win the parliamentary seat of Khadoor Sahib in northwestern Punjab state. Singh rose to prominence calling for a separate Sikh homeland known as Khalistan, the struggle for which sparked deadly violence in India in the 1980s and 1990s. He has not been convicted of the charges against him so is still qualified to take office. But whether he will be allowed out of prison to participate in parliamentary votes will be at his jailers' discretion.

Outspoken Bollywood actress

One of the Indian film industry's most outspoken celebrities — with a reputation for social media bombast — will represent an idyllic community in the Himalayan foothills. Kangana Ranaut, 37, has made a name for herself playing fierce and independent female leads in Bollywood films laden with patriotic spirit, including a 19th century Indian freedom fighter and an air force pilot. Off the silver screen, she has long been an unabashed supporter of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). She once called global pop sensation Rihanna a "porn star" in response to the latter's social media post supporting protests against the Modi government's proposed farm laws. Her Twitter account was once permanently suspended for repeatedly violating hateful conduct and abuse policies, but was reinstated after Tesla founder Elon Musk took over the platform and rebranded it X.

Rahul Gandhi wins, twice

Rahul Gandhi of the opposition Congress party is Modi's main rival and the son, grandson and great-grandson of former Indian prime ministers, going back to independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru. Despite hailing from the country's most consequential political family, he was humiliated during the last national election in 2019 when he lost re-election for the seat of Amethi. His defeat in a Congress stronghold represented at different times by his mother and father marked a low point for Gandhi, who Modi has skewered over the years as an out of touch dynast. Gandhi still managed to return to parliament after the 2019 poll, having contested and won a backup seat in the southern state of Kerala — a strategy allowed under Indian election law. This year the 53-year-old also contested two seats and won both, meaning a by-election will be held for whichever constituency he turns down.

Modi's party loses in temple town

Modi in January presided over the inauguration of a grand temple to the deity Ram in the northern city of Ayodhya, built on the grounds of a centuries-old mosque razed by a Hindu mob in 1992. The ceremony was a landmark moment in the Modi government's Hindu-nationalist drive as the temple's construction fulfilled a longstanding demand of Hindu activists. It was widely celebrated across the country with back-to-back television coverage and street parties, and residents of Ayodhya rejoiced in the prospect of an economic boom from an influx of pilgrims. But Lallu Singh, the BJP's two-term member for Faizabad, the constituency that includes the city, was set to lose by more than 50,000 votes to an opposition party candidate.

Cricket-to-politics

Former India all-rounder Yusuf Pathan will become the latest in a long line of South Asian cricketers to make the transition to political office after establishing an unassailable lead in his contest. Pathan played 79 times for his country and was a member of the India squad that won the 2011 Cricket World Cup on home soil, although he did not play in the final. He was elected in West Bengal for a member party of the alliance opposing Modi. Cricket's immense popularity in South Asia puts the sport's top talents among the region's biggest celebrities, some of whom have leveraged their fame into political careers. Former India captain Sachin Tendulkar, who still holds the all-time Test run record, took a seat in parliament in 2012, months before announcing his retirement. —AFP

Revival on cards as Congress party springs surprise

NEW DELHI: It was a shot in the arm for India's main opposition Congress after poll results Tuesday showed the grand old party was close to doubling its seats despite starting as underdogs. The once-mighty political force with a proud role in ending British colonial rule had been down in the dumps after two humiliating defeats at the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the previous two elections. Exit polls had predicted another drubbing for the Congress this time but the party defied pundits, improving its performance by leaps and bounds.

Enthusiastic party supporters were beating drums and waving giant flags at the party headquarters in the capital New Delhi as results started trickling in. Figures from the election commission projected Congress to grab 99 seats, significantly higher than the 52 it managed in 2019. For the first time in a decade the BJP appeared likely to fall short of an overall majority of its own, meaning it would need to rely on its alliance partners to form the government. Congress supporters credited its above-par performance to the "astute" leadership of Rahul Gandhi, the most prominent leader of the party. He is also the scion of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty that played a dominant role in Indian politics for generations. "Rahul has worked hard day and night. He deserves all the accolades. He has single-handedly lifted the party up," said Avneesh Jain, a party worker. "At this rate we will win the next election for sure."

'Divisive agenda'

Gandhi, 53, has been hamstrung by several criminal cases lodged against him by members of BJP, including a defamation conviction that saw him briefly disqualified from parliament last year. Congress's bank accounts were also frozen by the tax department this year. Against the odds, Gandhi continued to attack Modi and the BJP, calling out their "divisive" agenda that he said sought to marginalize the country's 200-million plus Muslim minority.

"Our bank accounts were seized. We didn't have the money to contest the election," said senior Congress politician Alka Lamba. "But then the public supported us." The results have reposed faith in the Congress leadership, especially Gandhi, who was pitted against the rival's well-oiled election machinery. The Congress promise of an annual cash transfer of Rs 100,000 (\$1,200) to every poor Indian family and jobs to the youth also seemed to have struck a chord with voters.

"Rahul Gandhi has delivered through his promises to the youth and the poor," said Ziya Us Salam, a political analyst and author. "He has also shed his highly undeserved tag of 'pappu' (witless)," he told AFP. "He has the credibility that Modi doesn't have. Modi only indulged in divisive speeches and bigotry. He had nothing constructive to offer to the masses." —AFP



NEW DELHI: Supporters of Indian National Congress (INC) party celebrate vote counting results for India's general election, near the INC headquarter in New Delhi on June 4, 2024. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5, 2024

Intel unveils new chip tech in AI battle with Nvidia, AMD

Gelsinger introduces latest Xeon 6 processors for servers

TAIPEI: US chip titan Intel on Tuesday struck a defiant tone in the face of strong challenges from rivals Nvidia, AMD and Qualcomm, unveiling technologies it said would lead the artificial intelligence revolution.

For decades, Intel has dominated the market for the chips that run everything from laptops to data centers. But in recent years, its competitors, especially Nvidia, have soared ahead on specialized AI processors. During a keynote speech at Taiwan's Computex expo, CEO Pat Gelsinger introduced Intel's latest Xeon 6 processors for servers, and shared more details about its next-gen Lunar Lake chips for AI PCs.

"AI is driving one of the most consequential eras of innovation the industry has ever seen," Gelsinger said. "The magic of silicon is once again enabling exponential advancements in computing that will push the boundaries of human potential and power the global economy for years to come."

Gelsinger said Intel's latest equipment provides the best available mix of performance, energy efficiency and affordability.

Intel's Gaudi systems—used for advanced AI work such as training models—come at a third of the cost of what competitors offer, he claimed. Gelsinger's presentation followed earlier keynote speeches by Nvidia boss Jensen Huang, AMD CEO Lisa Su and Qualcomm's Cristiano Amon—and they were replete with claims and counterclaims about which firm's products were best for AI.

Su and Amon gave detailed presentations on the chips their companies have developed for AI-enhanced personal computers. Microsoft this month

unveiled its Copilot+ AI PCs, which will have artificial intelligence features built into its Windows operating system.

Along with Microsoft, these will be offered by some of the world's biggest manufacturers, including Dell, HP, Samsung and Lenovo, and will have AI features on the device and not just through the internet. Gelsinger in particular rejected Qualcomm's claim that its AI PC chips were better than Intel's.

"I just want to put that to bed right now," he said. "Ain't true!"

AI computers are expected to be 80 percent of the PC market by 2028, Intel said, citing the Boston Consulting Group.

Computex is the top annual tech showcase in Taiwan, whose semiconductor industry is crucial to the production of everything from iPhones to the servers that run ChatGPT. With the world's leading tech firms betting big on AI, Taiwanese manufacturers have emerged as central players in those plans.

The island produces the bulk of the world's most advanced semiconductors, including those needed for the most powerful AI applications and research. Taiwan's government wants to use these capabilities to accelerate the widespread use of AI. "We have a lot to do to build Taiwan into an AI smart island," President Lai Ching-te, who took office last month, said during a visit to Computex on Tuesday.

However, Taiwan's central position in the supply chain for semiconductors—the lifeblood of the modern economy—has become a source of concern in capitals and boardrooms around the world.



Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger holds a sample of a wafer during his keynote speech at Computex 2024 in Taipei on June 4, 2024. — AFP

Taiwan is self-ruled, but China claims the island as its territory and has said it would never renounce the use of force to bring it under its control. In recent

years, the relationship between Beijing and Taipei has deteriorated and the Chinese military has staged multiple large-scale exercises around the island. — AFP

US, Indo-Pacific partners discuss clean energy

WASHINGTON: The US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework is holding a ministerial meeting this week in Singapore, including major firms joining a "Clean Economy" investor forum to boost infrastructure and climate investments across the region. It marks the first in-person IPEF ministerial session since the substantial conclusion of negotiations for the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement and the Fair Economy Agreement in November in San Francisco.

US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said the countries plan to outline steps under each of the agreements this week. "We're going to finalize all of those agreements at the ministerial," Raimondo said. Additional announcements are expected on a supply chain agreement, she said.

The IPEF Clean Economy Investor Forum includes 22 major US companies such as Amazon, com's AWS Bechtel, Alphabet's Google, Microsoft, BlackRock, Bechtel, Citi, Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan, Morgan Stanley and KKR. Raimondo said there also will be major Australian and Japanese investors at the forum. "Government-to-government agreements are great," Raimondo said. "But honestly it's time to implement - put some points on the board. ... We hope to start doing deals and making investments in the clean economy in the IPEF countries."

Raimondo said each country has submitted their top clean economy projects "and then we're going to have matchmaking sessions at the investor forum." Raimondo said the projects include renewable energy generation such as solar and wind, energy transmission and other infrastructure, transportation and mobility projects. She said she hopes in the coming months the forum will lead to multibillion-dollar investments in places such as Thailand and Malaysia. — Reuters

IEA: World falling short on 2030 renewables goal

PARIS: Nations are falling short of the goal agreed at UN climate talks to triple renewable energy capacity by 2030 as part of efforts to curb global warming, the International Energy Agency said Tuesday. An IEA analysis of policies, plans and estimates from nearly 150 countries found that they could reach 8,000 gigawatts of renewable power capacity in six years. This would be well short of the 11,000 GW pledged at the COP28 climate talks in Dubai late last year in order to reach the goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels.

"Countries' ambitions and implementation plans are not yet in line with the key goal set at COP28," the IEA said. "But governments have tools to step up in coming months" through their Nationally Determined Contributions, the Paris-based agency, which advises developed nations, said in a statement accompanying its analysis.

NDCs are the targets set by each country to reduce their emissions of planet-heating greenhouse gases. "The tripling target is ambitious but achievable—though only if governments quickly turn promises into plans of action," said IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol.

Massively deploying solar, wind and other renewable power is crucial to meeting another major agreement reached at COP28: transitioning away from fossil fuels. Since the landmark Paris Agreement on climate change in 2015, the world has added on average 11 percent of new renewable power installations per year as prices have fallen sharply. — AFP

NBK opens new branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad City

KUWAIT: Reflecting its dedication to provide top-notch banking services to customers anywhere within its strategy to be always closer to customers, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has opened its new branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad City, thus expanding its branch network, which is the largest domestically in terms of number and geographical breadth.



Ali Al-Mulla

The opening of the new branch comes as part of the bank's efforts to solidify its leadership in the banking market and its continuous endeavors to ensure delivering an integrated banking experience to customers across all the areas of Kuwait. The operation of the new branch also comes to keep pace with the rapid urban developments and population growth in the city.

Keeping pace with the rapid banking developments, NBK has introduced in its new branches, including Sabah Al-Ahmad City Branch, radical changes from the traditional concept of branches to match international standards.

Brazilian economy picks up in Q1 as shoppers spend more

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's economy grew 0.8 percent in the first quarter, the government said Tuesday, a rebound boosted by consumer spending which analysts say could put the central bank on guard over inflation.

The result was slightly better than analysts' forecasts of 0.7 percent in Latin America's biggest economy, whose President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has vowed to deliver "solid" growth.

Lula said the result was "more proof we are on the right track," in a post on X.

Brazil's GDP was up 2.5 percent compared to the first quarter of 2023, said the Brazilian Institute of Statistics (IBGE). Independent analyst Andre Perfeito noted a 1.5 percent increase in household consumption was a key factor in the first quarter growth, with more Brazilians working after a fall in unemployment.

William Jackson, chief emerging markets economist at Capital Economics, said the pace of growth and consumer spending "will raise (even more) concerns about inflation at the central bank."

The central bank has slowly made tiny adjustments downwards of the interest rate, now at 10.5 percent, under pressure from Lula who has said high lending costs are hurting economic growth.

Brazil's benchmark interest rate is among the world's highest in real terms, after aggressive increases following the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent global prices on an upward spiral in early 2021. The first-quarter growth was also driven by a rebound in agriculture which expanded by 11.3 percent, according to the IBGE.



NBK's new branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad City.

This includes futuristic design, interactive services, and advanced banking solutions provided through these branches. These changes also come in response to the needs and expectations of customers, with whom the bank always maintains close communication to identify their needs through its various digital channels and advanced analytics using cutting-edge AI technology, to align its services accordingly.

On this occasion, Ali Al-Mulla, Head of Domestic Branches - Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said, "NBK always seeks to enhance customer banking experience by expanding its branch network, introducing innovative banking solutions and services that allow them quick and easy banking to ensure utmost convenience."

NBK's network of branches, ATMs and ITMs available across all areas in Kuwait integrate with its various cutting-edge digital channels to deliver an integrated and exceptional banking experience to customers, while serving the bank's strategy to be always closer to customers," he added.

"The new Sabah Al-Ahmad City Branch will receive NBK customers from the City's residents as well as other area of Kuwait from 8.30 am to 3 pm 5 days a week from Sunday to Thursday," he mentioned.

It is worth mentioning that by opening the new branch, NBK has increased the number of its domestic branch network, which is the largest in Kuwait, to 72 branches, in addition to having the largest owned ATM network locally.



BRASILIA: A man walks near the ministry of Finance building in Brasilia, Brazil. — Reuters

However, the sector is not performing as well as in previous years and was down three percent from the first quarter of 2023. Agricultural products with significant harvests at the start of the year—such as soybeans, corn, tobacco and cassava—showed a drop in estimated annual production compared to the same period last year. IBGE analyst Rebeca Palis highlighted that the economic growth in the first quarter had been "entirely based on domestic demand."

Brazil's economy contracted 0.1 percent in the fourth quarter of 2023, after eking out growth of 0.1 percent the previous quarter. In May, the government raised its growth projection for 2024

to 2.5 percent. However, it has warned the estimates do not take into account the devastation caused by historic flooding in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, one of the country's largest economies.

Jackson said the growth rebound was "temporary... and doesn't mark the start of a strong recovery."

He said indicators pointed to a weaker second quarter, and Capital Economic estimates 2024 growth at 1.5-1.8 percent. "The floods in Rio Grande do Sul may weigh on growth. And we doubt that the strength of agricultural production in Q1 will be sustained," Jackson said. — AFP

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

Kuwait's external position remains strong as investment income soars

FDI inflows hit more than a decade high in 2023

KUWAIT: Official provisional data show that Kuwait's external position remained extremely robust in 2023, despite some narrowing of the current account surplus amid reduced oil export revenues. Investment income receipts were strikingly robust due to the solid performance of overseas financial markets while remittance outflows were pared back, likely due to higher living costs and FX uncertainties in Egypt. On the flip side, the financial account continued to record sizeable net outflows, albeit lower than in the previous year on reduced outbound investments and a fall in resident deposits abroad. Current account surpluses at a solid level are expected in the medium term due to elevated oil prices, though lower international interest rates from H2 2024 could cut deposit returns, adversely affecting some investment income credits.

The current account surplus narrowed to KD 15.8 billion (31 percent of estimated GDP) from KD 19.3 billion (35 percent of GDP) in 2022. This was the seventh consecutive year of surpluses and the second highest by value in ten years. The decline in 2023 came on the back of a marked reduction in the trade balance due to lower oil export revenues (oil production declined by 4.3 percent and oil prices fell by 20 percent), lower non-oil exports and surging imports (16.8 percent). Oil export revenues constituted around 93 percent of total exports.

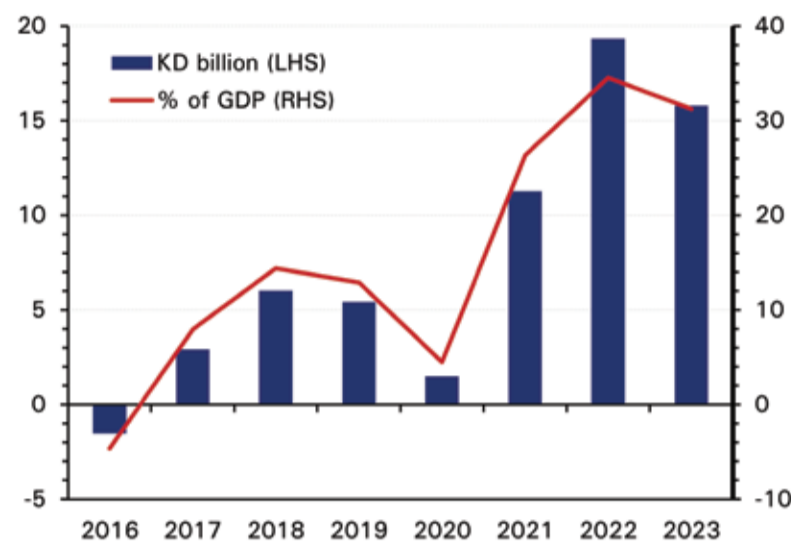
As usual, the trade surplus was partially offset by a deficit in the services account, which widened to KD 5.9 billion (11.6 percent of GDP), with growth in credits (+10.8 percent) outpacing growth in debits (+6.8 percent). Driving the increase in services debits was a near doubling of government goods & services purchases and rising transportation debits, as well as an increase in expenditures by residents on tourism.

Investment income

Investment income, which captures income flows from capital deployed overseas, increased by almost 25 percent in 2023 to KD 9.9 billion, the highest annual receipt in the available data. This is on the back of strong financial market performance.

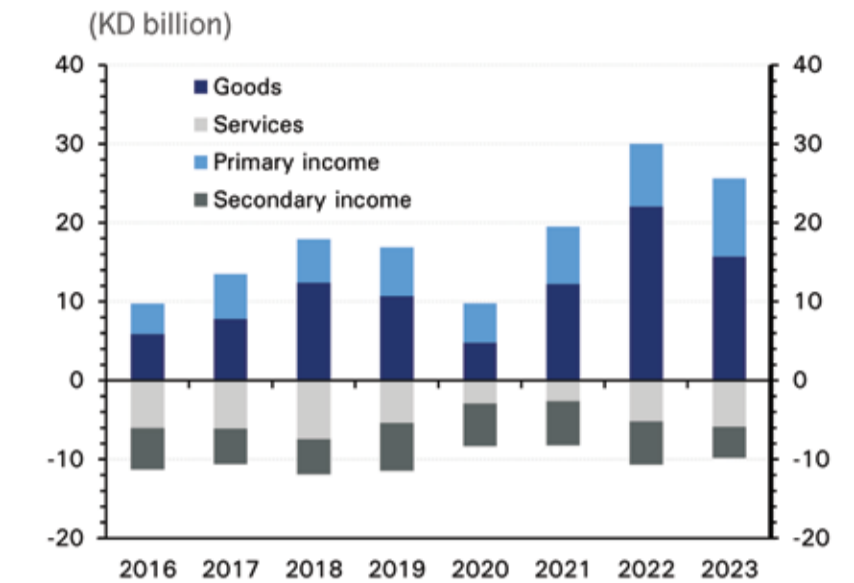
Income from portfolio investments and deposits held overseas surged by 16.5 percent y/y and 87 percent respectively, the latter benefiting from the hike in US policy rates that raised yields on bank deposits and short-term treasuries. Gains were partly offset by

Chart 1: Current account balance



Source: Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK)

Chart 2: Current account breakdown (KD billion)



Source: CBK

a fall in receipts from direct investments abroad (-18.5 percent), though a fall investment income accrued to non-residents from assets in Kuwait (Kuwait's All-Share Index fell 6.5 percent in 2023) also lifted the surplus in the primary income account.

The magnitude of the investment income is significant because it likely consists mostly of returns to the government on its massive investments overseas, managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority. Equivalent to an impressive 19.7 percent of estimated GDP, total investment income is worth around half the revenues the state makes from its net oil receipts and has more than trebled from a decade earlier. Note that this investment income is reinvested by KIA and not included in the government's headline budget accounts, though easily exceeds the annual fiscal deficits of KD 1-5 billion recorded in recent years with the exception of FY20/21. Workers' remittances decline amid higher inflation and EGP volatility

The deficit in the secondary income account, how-

ever, which predominantly reflects monies transferred overseas by foreign workers in Kuwait, shrank significantly in 2023. Workers' remittances fell 29 percent to a multi-year low of KD 3.9 billion. This decline likely stemmed from a combination of higher local living costs post-pandemic, a slowdown in expatriate migrant inflows in 2023 (and stronger enforcement of a deportation regime for illegal migrants) and instability in the official and unofficial Egyptian pound exchange rate that likely caused many Egyptian expatriates, the second largest overseas demographic in Kuwait, to pause remitting money back to their country.

Financial outflows down

On the other side of the balance of payments, the financial account recorded net outflows of KD 15.5 billion in 2023 (31 percent of GDP), down from KD 19.7 billion in the previous year. This fall came mainly on a paring back of direct equity investments overseas, which more than halved to KD 3.4 billion from

KD 7.8 billion in 2022 as investors looked toward interest gains on local deposits.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Kuwait, meanwhile, almost tripled in 2023, rising from KD 232 million in 2022 to KD 649 million. This was the best inward FDI performance in more than ten years, though as a share of output, at 1.3 percent of GDP, the amount was still conservative compared to GCC peers. Meanwhile, portfolio investment outflows also declined, to KD 13.1 billion (-7.6 percent), mainly due to a drop in outflows into overseas fixed income funds (debt instruments): outflows into foreign equities increased, to almost KD 6.7 billion, in comparison. In 'other investment', outflows of residents' deposits abroad (mainly general government) fell to KD 1.1 billion from KD 2.4 billion in 2022. Finally, gross foreign reserves of the Central Bank of Kuwait declined by KD 150 million (+KD 1.1 billion in 2022). Gross reserves remained large at KD 14.6 billion, covering well above three months of goods & services imports.



The Executive Management and employees of
HSBC Bank Middle East Limited – Kuwait
 Extend their congratulations to His Highness
Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah
 On being announced as Crown Prince, appointed by His Highness the Amir
Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

May Allah protect and guide them in carrying out their responsibilities for the greater good of Kuwait and its people.



Business

India shares plunge as Modi's weaker win fuels policy jitters

Shares in Adani's firm drop 25% during vote count

MUMBAI/SINGAPORE: Indian stocks suffered their worst intraday fall since March 2020 on Tuesday, as vote counting trends in the general election suggested Prime Minister Narendra Modi's alliance was unlikely to win the overwhelming majority predicted by exit polls. With over half the votes counted, Modi's own Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) looked unlikely to secure a majority on its own in the 543-member lower house of parliament and would need allies in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to form the government.

That could lead to some uncertainty over economic policies, such as the push for investment-led growth, which has been the cornerstone of the Modi government's rule. The Indian economy grew 8.2 percent in the financial year ended March 2024.

Shares in the main listed unit of Indian billionaire Gautam Adani's conglomerate fell 25 percent on Tuesday as an ongoing vote count in national elections suggested a reduced majority for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party. Adani is considered a longtime close associate of Modi, both from Gujarat state. Opposition parties and other critics have accused Adani of benefiting from their relationship to unfairly win business and avoid proper oversight.

Adani Enterprises was trading at \$32.72 (2,733 rupees) per share after midday, down \$9.05 from Tuesday's open. It was the biggest negative mover on the Mumbai stock exchange, with the Sensex benchmark falling more than seven percent by afternoon trade.

"The key question is whether BJP can retain single-party majority. If not, then would its coalition be able to deliver economic development, particularly infrastructure?" said Ken Peng, head of investment strategy, Asia, at Citi Global Wealth.

The NSE Nifty 50 index closed down 5.93 percent at 21,884.5 points, and the S&P BSE Sensex fell 5.74 percent to 72,079.05. The indexes fell as much as 8.5 percent earlier in the day, after hitting record highs on Monday.

At the day's low, the indexes saw their biggest intraday fall since March 2020, when stocks were battered by the first lockdown during the COVID pandemic. "Due to the dependency on coalition partners, the upcoming NDA government may shift its focus towards a welfare-oriented approach rather than concentrating on reforms during the July budget," said Puneet Sharma, CEO and fund manager at Whitespace Alpha.

Indian markets are likely to now derate due to higher risk perception, said analysts at brokerage Emkay Global, which believes that difficult reforms like changes to land and labor policies, along with privatization of state-run enterprises, were "off the table". Exit polls over the weekend had projected a big win for Modi's NDA, catapulting markets to all-time highs on Monday as investors were buoyed by expectations of sustained economic growth.

Benchmark indexes had more than tripled in value since Modi became prime minister in May 2014, as of Monday's close. Foreign investors, who poured a net \$20.7 billion into Indian equities last year but pulled back ahead of the election, had been widely expected to turn buyers if the Modi alliance secured a decisive mandate. They bought shares worth a net 68.51 billion rupees (\$824.4 million) on Monday. "In our view, the important thing is that the NDA returns to form the next government, which represents policy continuity," said Mike Sell, head of global emerging market equities at Altiqum in London. "Whether they win by 20 or 120 impacts the amount of structural reform that can take place, but ultimately a win is a win and the increasing positivity around the Indian structural growth story will be undiminished." The lack of clarity on the margin of victory for the NDA saw intraday volatility on the share index rise to its highest level in 26 months.

Traders said that selling by high-frequency traders accelerated the drop and the sharp fall triggered margin calls. The market is witnessing a significant



MUMBAI: People watch results for India's general elections on a screen outside the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) in Mumbai, India, June 4, 2024. — Reuters

correction due to margin calls as retail investors were carrying heavily leveraged positions, said Rupak De, senior technical analyst at LKP Securities.

Some investors saw the decline as a buying opportunity. "Regardless of the final election count, the India economy will continue to benefit from longer-term tailwinds of favorable population demographics and the ongoing geopolitical tensions between China and US," said Gary Tan, portfolio manager at Allspring Global Investments. Investors

expect the Modi government to continue focusing on turning the country into a manufacturing hub - a project that has courted foreign companies including Apple and Tesla to set up production as they diversify beyond China. The rupee ended at 83.53 against the dollar, down 0.5 percent on the day, marking its worst single-day fall in 16 months. The benchmark 10-year bond yield rose 10 basis points on day, its biggest on day rise in eight months, ending at 7.0382 percent. — Agencies

News in Brief

Oman wealth fund total assets reach \$49.98bn

DUBAI: Oman's sovereign wealth fund said on Tuesday its total assets reached 19,240 billion Omani rials (\$49.98 billion) in 2023 with a 9.95 percent return on investment. — Reuters

Maersk lifts 2024 guidance by \$3bn amid shipping woes

COPENHAGEN: Danish shipping giant Maersk on Monday said it expected its profits in 2024 to be \$3 billion higher than previous projections as freight rates have increased amid the crisis in the Red Sea. Months of attacks by Yemen's Houthis have prompted some shipping companies to detour around southern Africa to avoid the Red Sea route - which normally carries about 12 percent of global trade. Maersk said in a statement that on the back of the "disruption caused by the ongoing crisis in the Red Sea" and "continued strong container market demand" it was now seeing signs of "further port congestions", and additional increases in container freight rates. — AFP

Australia's first 'green bond' a \$4.8bn hit with markets

SYDNEY: Australia said its first "green bond" raised billions of dollars and was vastly oversubscribed Tuesday, a boost for those backing a bigger role for markets in tackling climate change. Canberra said it had sold US\$4.8 billion-worth of 10-year bonds, which are designed to finance projects that promise to be more environmentally friendly. Australia's Treasurer Jim Chalmers hailed the sale, saying the money would be invested in hydrogen hubs, large-scale batteries and clean transport. It will, he said, "help make Australia an indispensable part of the global economy and bring new jobs to communities all around the country". — AFP

TSMC votes for chief executive CC Wei to also become chairman

TAIPEI: TSMC's board of directors on Tuesday unanimously elected chief executive CC Wei to succeed Mark Liu as chairman of the chip titan. Wei will be the first person to hold the dual roles for Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, which controls more than half the global output of microchips used in everything from smartphones to cars and missiles. Wei takes up his new role as the firm sits at the centre of a worldwide drive for the processors that are also needed to power generative artificial intelligence products, which have skyrocketed in popularity. Liu has been in the post since 2018, when he succeeded company founder Morris Chang. — AFP

Brazil economic growth inches up 0.8% in first quarter

SAO PAULO: Brazil's economy grew 0.8 percent in the first three months of 2024, the government said Tuesday, a rebound boosted by household spending after two quarters of almost zero growth. The result was slightly better than analysts' forecasts of 0.7 percent in Latin America's biggest economy, whose President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has vowed to deliver "solid" growth. Independent analyst Andre Perfeito said a 1.5 percent increase in household consumption was a key factor in the growth, highlighting a fall in unemployment. — AFP

Burgan Bank appoints Mishary Al-Essa as new Deputy GM, Investments

KUWAIT: In line with its human capital development strategy, Burgan Bank recently welcomed Mishary Al-Essa as its newly-appointed Deputy General Manager of Investments. This follows a series of highly valuable talent acquisitions, which centered on attracting the most ambitious and talented national calibers across Kuwait's banking and finance market, further cementing Burgan's commitment to the nationwide Kuwaitization strategy.

"Burgan Bank's current success is the sum of experiences and skills that every employee brings to the table," said Fadel Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Vietnam expands bank rescue effort on deposit exodus

HANOI: Vietnam's central bank lent another \$1.2 billion to ailing Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank over the last two months, according to a bank document seen by Reuters, taking the total to \$24.5 billion as part of its efforts to rescue depositors.

The massive bailout of Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank's (SCB) depositors has so far cost the central bank the equivalent of 6 percent of Vietnam's 2023 gross domestic product in special loans. Reuters reported in April that the central bank had mounted an "unprecedented" rescue of SCB, a lender engulfed in the nation's biggest financial fraud, which a source at that time said would collapse without the funding.

As of May 29, the central bank had lent SCB 622.7 trillion dong (\$24.5 billion), according to the document prepared by SCB that detailed daily injections into the bank to keep track of the funds and their use, up from 592.7 trillion dong (\$23.3 billion) as of April 2.

SCB used the central bank funds to help it settle withdrawals and payments of 626.9 trillion dong since October 2022 when the lender was put under central bank supervision, the document showed. At that time, it had deposits of 669 trillion dong. The State Bank of Vietnam and SCB, previously one of the country's largest commercial lenders by deposits, did not reply to Reuters' requests for comment. The State Bank of Vietnam confirmed in April it was providing financial support to SCB.

The run on SCB was triggered by the October 2022 arrest of real estate tycoon Truong My Lan, who in April was sentenced to death after being found guilty of masterminding a huge fraud at the bank.

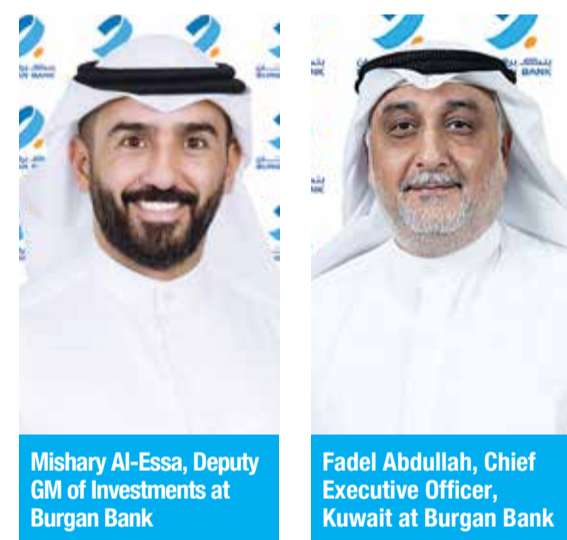
Judges concluded that she siphoned off \$12.5 billion in loans from SCB to shell companies while effectively controlling the bank through proxies. She pleaded not guilty and has appealed the ruling.

IATA urges Pakistan, Bangladesh to release blocked airline funds

DUBAI: The International Air Transport Association on Tuesday urged Pakistan and Bangladesh to remove barriers to airlines repatriating ticket revenues after Nigeria released the vast majority of blocked funds. Pakistan and Bangladesh collectively owe \$731 million out of a global total of \$1.8 billion in blocked airline funds, according to the world trade body.

— Kuwait at Burgan Bank. "With the joining of Mishary Al-Essa, I am certain that we will go farther towards our goals for achievement and excellence as we scale our operations and elevate our investment strategies."

"On behalf of the Board and Executive Management, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Al-Essa, whose experience and insight are instrumental in our constant pursuit of ethical growth and development," Fadel added. Al-Essa's professional journey spans 13 years, during which he acquired and honed his experience across the investment industry. Before assuming his most recent responsibilities at Burgan Bank, he was Vice President of the Alternative Investments Department at Kamco Invest. In addition to his vast technical experience, Al-Essa is a Master of Business Administration (MBA) graduate from MIT Sloan School of Management, a CFA Charterholder, and holder of a BSc degree in computer engineering from Kuwait University.



Mishary Al-Essa, Deputy GM of Investments at Burgan Bank

Fadel Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer, Kuwait at Burgan Bank



A logo of Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank (SCB) is seen in front of an under-construction building in Ho Chi Minh City. — Reuters

Under Vietnam's official deposit guarantee scheme, only about \$5,000 is covered per depositor per bank, but as of early April, the central bank's cash injections into SCB amounted to about a quarter of Vietnam's foreign exchange reserves. The central bank has not said how it has funded its large-scale lending to SCB, but money supply rose by about \$82 billion between September 2022, the month before SCB's bailout began, and February 2024, the latest public data showed.

That is a 15 percent increase, compared to GDP growth of nearly 6 percent in roughly the same period, according to Reuters' analysis of data from the central bank and Vietnam's statistics office. The Southeast Asian country's foreign reserves, meanwhile, have remained largely stable, although the central bank has sold dollars in recent weeks to prop up its currency.

Several countries have encountered difficulties repatriating funds due to falls in the value of their currencies, a lack of US dollars, or red tape. "We are encouraging them to prioritize the airlines' money, because this is very important for their economic and also airline activities," said Xie Xingqun, IATA's regional vice-president for North Asia. In Pakistan, the main problem is delays over requirements for airlines to submit audit and tax exemption certificates, he said. "In Bangladesh, I think the key issue is they just lack the US dollars for foreign currencies," said Xie. Nigeria has cleared 98 percent of blocked funds which in June 2023 amounted to \$850 million, IATA said Sunday.

"We are on the right path and urge the govern-

ment to clear the residual \$19 million and continue prioritizing aviation," said Willie Walsh, IATA's director general. Carriers had faced problems in repatriating revenues in US dollars from Nigeria after a devaluation of the local currency. The high volume of blocked funds led some airlines to reduce their operations and one carrier to suspend operations to Nigeria, IATA said. Egypt also approved the clearance of its blocked funds, IATA said, which combined with Nigeria helped reduce the total backlog by some 28 percent since December last year. Lebanon, Ethiopia and Algeria are among the other countries that have yet to release funds owed to airlines, according to IATA. — AFP

Business

Airlines look to turbulence data, but shy from more seatbelt curbs

IATA identifies turbulence as a 'major safety concern' and a cost burden

DUBAI: Airlines are showing more interest in turbulence prediction technology after two headline-grabbing incidents in recent weeks, but are holding back from making passengers stay in seatbelts at all times, according to global airline body IATA. A dramatic loss of altitude on a Singapore Airlines flight last month led to dozens of injuries and the first death linked to plane turbulence in 25 years. Days later, 12 more were injured as a Qatar Airways flight hit turbulence.

"There is no silver bullet when it comes to turbulence. But more information, more data will definitely improve the situation," said Nick Careen, senior vice president, operations, safety and security, at the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Aviation is seeing an increase in turbulence and incident reporting, but bad turbulence remains rare and the severity has not increased, Careen said at IATA's annual gathering in Dubai.

Passengers aboard Singapore flight SQ321 said crew and those not strapped in left the floor and slammed into the cabin ceiling, cracking it in places. The incident has put seatbelt practices in the spotlight, with airlines typically allowing passengers to



Nick Careen, senior vice president, operations, safety and security, at the International Air Transport Association (IATA)

undo belts during normal cruise conditions, while recommending they keep them on. "I don't believe there is a conflict," IATA Director General Willie Walsh told Reuters. Walsh and Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr - both former pilots - both said they

always keep seatbelts fastened when flying.

Turbulence, or pockets of disturbed air, can cause a plane to shake or suddenly drop. It is the leading cause of in-flight injury, but usually causes no more than passenger unease. Last year was aviation's safest by many parameters and modern commercial jets are built to cope with forces many times those experienced in-flight.

Nevertheless, IATA identifies turbulence as a "major safety concern" and a cost burden when pilots re-route. The head of Emirates said he expected industry policies around turbulence and seatbelts would become more conservative following the Singapore Airlines incident.

Hong Kong-based Greater Bay Airlines said last week it was updating policy to remind passengers to fasten seatbelts at all times, as a "precautionary" but not "mandatory" measure. Singapore Airlines said it would adopt a more cautious approach, including not serving hot drinks or meals when the seatbelt sign is on. "I think it's clear now how important it is especially for passengers to follow the directives that they're given," RwandAir CEO Yvonne Makolo said. Turbulence has many causes, most obviously the

unstable weather patterns that trigger storms. This can be detected by weather radar. Another type, clear air turbulence, is a sudden and severe swirl even where there are no clouds. Such invisible pockets of air are hard to predict.

Turbulence prediction technologies are evolving. IATA in 2020 launched the Turbulence Aware data exchange platform to share real-time information among participating aircraft.

So far, however, just 21 of IATA's more than 300 airlines use it. Emirates joined last week, adding around 140 aircraft to the network. Some research suggests turbulence could worsen with climate change. Singapore Airlines has said flight SQ321 encountered "sudden extreme turbulence", but not what type was involved.

A preliminary report by Singapore's Transport Ministry said a rapid change in gravitational force and a 54-metre altitude drop likely caused passengers and crew to become airborne.

Guliz Ozturk, CEO of Turkey's low-cost Pegasus Airlines, said it had reviewed cabin and pilot announcement policies and would consider investing in predictive technologies. - Reuters

Frustration in the air: Boeing delays hang over aviation meet

DUBAI: Back-slapping over record passenger figures is tinged with frustration at the airline trade body's annual meeting as carriers lament years-long delays to deliveries of new Boeing aircraft.

Headline projections of nearly five billion passengers and close to \$1 trillion in revenues this year, both records, were reasons for celebration at the IATA annual general meeting in Dubai. But the figures would have been stronger without the problems facing Boeing, one of the two major aircraft suppliers along with Airbus, whose safety and manufacturing standards are under the spotlight.

"It is suppressing growth at the moment, without question," said International Air Transport Association director general Willie Walsh, explaining that delivery delays had been "factored in" to the annual estimates. Last week, Boeing, at the centre of a number of safety incidents, announced more inspectors and improved benchmarks under a "roadmap" demanded by US regulators.

The US aeronautics giant has faced intense scrutiny following manufacturing problems and damning testimony from whistleblowers. On January 5, a Boeing 737 MAX 9 operated by Alaska Airlines made an emergency landing after a fuselage panel blew out mid-flight. The jet was only delivered in October.

The same model had been grounded after two accidents linked to design defects in 2018 and 2019 which left a total of 346 people dead. Boeing also suffered production problems last year on the 737 and the long-haul 787 Dreamliner, while

deliveries of the 777X are expected in 2025 - six years behind schedule. Dubai's state-owned Emirates airline, which placed a massive order of 205 777Xs for tens of billions of dollars, has been particularly hard-hit by the delays. "For me, this will be a five-year hiatus (for Boeing) starting from now... to get the production levels back," Emirates president Tim Clark told Bloomberg.

Walsh said delivery delays were also being seen from Airbus, Boeing's European rival, at a time when many carriers are eager to renew or expand their fleets as the industry roars back post-pandemic.

"I think it's the cause of quite a lot of frustration," he said. "Many airlines see opportunities to expand their network, want to provide services to new destinations that can't, because they can't get the new aircraft." Boeing is at a crossroads after the departure of CEO Dave Calhoun was announced in March. His successor has not been announced.

"Whoever runs Boeing needs to restabilize the pride of engineering which Boeing is known for," said Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr. "The industry needs Boeing... nobody wants less competition," he added. Scott Kirby, who heads United Airlines, agreed that Boeing needs to get back to its strengths.

"They are one of the best technology, engineering, quality companies in the world," he said. "But they, I think, let the short-term financials take primacy."

Vik Krishnan, an aeronautics specialist with consultancy McKinsey, testified to "exasperation" among airlines. It "ultimately shows that there is an unmet demand (for travel) and that there is no easy solution," he told AFP. As Airbus shares many suppliers with Boeing, and some of their problems, it's a major bottleneck for an industry during a period of major expansion. "It's not good news that Boeing is in the situation it is in, including for Airbus," said Jerome Bouchard, partner at management consultancy Oliver Wyman. - AFP



A Boeing 737 MAX 7 aircraft piloted by Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Chief Steve Dickson lands during an evaluation flight at Boeing Field in Seattle, Washington. - Reuters

Gulf Bank expands 'Ayadi' service, ITMs for Eid celebrations

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is spreading the joy of Eid Al-Adha with its customers and the public, by extending its "Ayadi" service to most of its branches and ITMs across Kuwait. The "Ayadi" service is now available at majority of Gulf Bank branches across Kuwait. Additionally, interactive teller machines (ITMs) are available at various locations, including Head Office - Mubarak Al-Kabeer Street, Crystal Tower, Al-Adan, Al-Salam, Fahheel Xcite, Hawally, Kuwait International Airport (TI), Mishref, Al-Fanar Mall, Al-Khiran Mall, and Sabah Al-Ahmad branch. The "Ayadi" service provides customers with fresh banknotes in denominations of KD 20, KD 10, KD 5, and KD 1, addressing the increased demand for new banknotes during the Eid Al-Adha celebrations.

Additionally, Gulf Bank offers its customers the Pay Link service via its mobile application featuring easy and simple steps. 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.

Nigeria strike shuts power grid, schools and disrupts flights

ABUJA: Nigerian labor unions shut down the national power grid and disrupted flights on Monday as they launched an indefinite strike that closed schools and public offices after failing to reach a new minimum wage deal with the government.

Africa's most populous country is facing its worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation, with double-digit inflation leaving many Nigerians struggling to afford food. The two main unions, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC), said they urged workers to strike after the government refused to increase its minimum wage offer beyond 60,000 naira (\$40) a month.

The current minimum monthly wage is 30,000 naira and the NLC said it had called for the minimum wage to rise to 494,000 naira. Following crunch talks, the government released a statement late on Monday saying it was "committed to a National Minimum Wage that is higher than N60,000" and that the two sides would meet "every day for the next week" in order to reach an agreement on the issue.

The presidency also published an appeal on social media platform X for the unions to "continue along the path of negotiations". Government buildings, petrol stations and courts in the capital Abuja were closed, according to AFP journalists, while the doors to the city's airport were also shut and long queues formed outside. "Today we didn't do anything at the office, it was

virtually empty. Everything is at a standstill, there's no light at my house and very few gas stations are selling fuel," said Charles, a 53-year-old government administration worker in Abuja. Eight members of Nigeria's Super Eagles football squad, including winger Ademola Lookman, were stranded by the airline disruptions and could not make a World Cup qualifier training session, a team spokesman said. In the economic capital Lagos, the strike also took effect, with bands of schoolchildren walking home from empty schools and workers picketing outside a courthouse where the gates were padlocked. "Nigeria workers stay at home. Yes! To a living wage. No! To a starvation wage!" the unions said in a joint statement.

The unions are also protesting an electricity tariff hike and there have been widespread blackouts after the Transmission Company of Nigeria said workers said had shut down the national grid overnight. The United Nigeria Airline told customers that airports across the country had been closed due to the strike. In a statement on X, Nigerian carrier Air Peace also warned of "disruptions or possible cancellations" across its network. Since coming to office a year ago, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has ended a fuel subsidy and currency controls, leading to a tripling of petrol prices and a spike in living costs as the naira has slid against the dollar.

Tinubu has called for patience to allow the reforms to work, saying they will help attract foreign investment, but the measures have hit Nigerians hard. "Workers are finding it very stressful and demoralizing," said civil society activist Veteran Chi. "It's really tough and people can't buy anything."

A source close to the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) said domestic flights had been cancelled and the airport would be shut to all flights on Tuesday.

AFP has contacted FAAN for confirmation. Airport workers' unions said in a joint statement they were withdrawing all services from Tuesday to allow international flights already airborne to land before their full action begins. "All aviation workers should recognize the seriousness of this struggle and comply unflinchingly. All branch officers of our unions shall ensure compliance at all airports."

Security was stepped up with an increased presence of soldiers on the streets of Abuja. Outside the Federal Secretariat, which houses several ministries, picketing union members urged workers to return home. "Stay at home and stay safe. We don't want to embarrass you.

No work now," they called. In the northern city of Kano, government offices and public schools were closed. Children in one neighborhood chanted: "No school, it's a free day!" The unions had said in a statement on Friday: "Nigerian workers, who are the backbone of our nation's economy, deserve fair and decent wages that reflect the current economic realities." Presidential spokesman Ajuri Ngelale agreed the minimum wage was "unsustainably low" but said a "pragmatic assessment" was needed.

Thousands of Nigerians rallied against soaring living costs in February, though previous union strikes have had limited impact and turnout. - AFP



ABUJA: Passengers react while stranded at the gate of the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport after the Nigerian unions began an indefinite strike in Abuja, on June 3, 2024. - AFP

Lifestyle



A visitor walks in the ruins of the



A wrecked car is seen among the ruins.



This file photo shows part of the village in February 1945.

A French village preserved as a reminder of Nazi cruelty since Waffen-SS troops murdered 643 people there in 1944 is in danger of decay, sparking efforts to preserve the site. On June 10, 1944, Oradour-sur-Glane in German-occupied southern France became the scene of a massacre of civilians that still shocks the nation to this day. Possibly as punishment for the killing by the French Resistance of a high-ranking SS member, German troops rounded up everyone they could find in the village and machine-gunned or burned alive men, women and children, torched or razed buildings and destroyed a church. Postwar president Charles de Gaulle said the "martyr village" should never be rebuilt, but instead kept as a permanent reminder of the horrors of the Nazi occupation for postwar generations.

'Survivors are gone'

But 80 years later, village buildings are crumbling, roofs have disappeared and walls are covered in moss, prompting local politicians and descendants of villagers to call for a major conservation effort to keep the memory alive. "All the survivors are gone, the only witnesses of the massacre are these stones," said Agathe Hebras, whose grandfather Robert was the last survivor of only six people to escape the SS murder spree. He died last year. "I am deeply attached to these ruins, like many people here, we can't let them wither away," the 31-year-old told AFP. "We need to take care of them as best as we can for as long as possible." A new, eponymous town built nearby after the war is bustling, but the old ruins - which are owned by the French state and a listed heritage site - are eerily silent.

'Urgent action'

Some of the crumbling, blackened buildings carry signs like "Hairdresser", "Cafe", or "Ironmongery", reminding visitors that people went about their daily lives here until the murderous assault. Scattered over 10 hectares are the odd rusty bicycle, sewing machine or shell of a period car. "We need very, very urgent action," said Oradour-sur-



France seeks to save Nazi massacre village from decay

Glane's mayor Philippe Lacroix. "As this setting disappears so will remembrance, little by little." Carine Villedieu Renaud, 47, the granddaughter of the only couple that survived the massacre, often walks across the ruins on her way to the new town, remembering her grandmother who lost her mother, her sisters and her four-year old daughter in the massacre. "She would take me for walks among the ruins," she said. "We would pick flowers and she would tell me about her old life."

While the grandmother told her stories "without taboo", other sur-

vivors only felt able to speak about the massacre decades later, if at all. Hebras said her grandfather, who lost two sisters and his mother in the killings, only began to talk about the events in the late 1980s. "The first generation of children born in Oradour after the massacre, which includes my father, lived through a very hard time because their parents kept silent, believing that they needed to forget to keep on living," she said.

'Universal significance'

Since 1946, the government has

allocated the equivalent of 200,000 euros (\$216,000 at current rates) annually for maintenance, in addition to ad hoc spending, like the 480,000 euros allocated to the village church's restoration last year. But much more is needed, said Laetitia Morellet, the regional deputy director for heritage and architecture. "We don't want to bring back what was destroyed," she told AFP. "We want to preserve the state of destruction, because that is what helps people understand this war crime." Some 19 million euros are needed, and an effort to

source the money through donations and state financing is underway. Oradour-sur-Glane could eventually gain "a certain universal significance" beyond the 1944 massacre and World War II, said Benoit Sadry, president of an association grouping the victims' families. "What counts is to keep proof that in mass crimes committed during wars it is always the civilian population that pays the highest price," he said. — AFP



A visitor walks in the church in the ruins of the village as France marks the 80th anniversary of the Oradour-sur-Glane massacre in 2024.



In this file photo, General Charles de Gaulle, head of the Provisional Government, collects himself in front of the graves of the cemetery of the martyred village of Oradour-sur-Glane on March 4, 1945. - AFP photos



A group of US soldiers visit the ruins of Oradour-sur-Glane in August 1945.



DIOR heads to Scotland with romantic, gothic 'cruise' show



Dior tapped into Scotland's traditions and rebellious streak late Monday, presenting its 2025 "cruise" collection, with punk tartan, chain mail and magical ball gowns. Haute couture has increasingly taken the catwalk on the road to showcase its latest creations, with "cruises" to spectacular locations all over the world. After Athens, Seville and Mexico, this year Dior plumped for historic Drummond Castle, near Crieff in Perthshire, central Scotland.

Among the audience in the castle's formal gardens were Dior muses Jennifer Lawrence, Anya Taylor-Joy, Rosamund Pike and Laetitia Casta, with an army of waiters in elegant black kilts in keen attendance. Models descended the stone stairs from the castle to the sound of bagpipes, disappearing from view behind the manicured hedges and trees. They appeared as warriors from the bushes, with long braids down their backs, clad in leather, chain mail and flashy breastplates.

Elsewhere, there were magical lace collars, capes, heavy velvet ball gowns and pearl-embroidered corsets. Some styles were combined, with skirts opening onto thigh-high boots, kilts, shorts, teddys, knee-high socks and punk-inspired leather and silver chokers. Tartan, Scotland's most

famous fabric, was mostly everywhere - in purple, gold and bright red - giving a grungy feel. French actress Camille Cottin said creative director Maria Grazia Chiuri wove tartan and punk culture "with huge grace". "It was magnificent," she said afterwards.

Art of embroidery

Strong female characters are often present in Chiuri's collections, and the Scottish show was no exception as she took inspiration from Mary, Queen of Scots. The tragic heir to the throne of England spent nearly 20 years in captivity before being executed in 1587. "She spent decades embroidering as a means of comfort and reflection but also to express herself during her 19 years of imprisonment," Chiuri wrote on Instagram. The collection as a result featured Scottish emblems such as the unicorn and the thistle.

Dior, which is part of luxury brand LVMH, joined forces with local artisans and designers, notably Samantha McCoach, who founded the brand Le Kilt, to reinterpret the Scottish wardrobe essential. The show also paid homage to Dior's founder, Christian Dior, and his love of Scotland and its traditions. Nearly 70 years ago, he organized a spectacular

show at the nearby Gleneagles Hotel, and an evening of dance with high society of the time.

"Cruise" shows in exceptional locations are helping to boost a brand's image as the luxury industry struggles to bounce back from the Covid-19 pandemic. LVMH for example saw a two-percent fall in sales in the first quarter of 2024 compared with the same period last year, with spending hit by inflation globally. There is also a boost to local tourism. "To have Dior, an iconic fashion house, come to Perthshire will bring worldwide attention to the region," Caroline Warburton, from VisitScotland, told AFP. — AFP



Sports

Nortje takes 4-7 as S Africa beat Sri Lanka in T20 WCup

Sri Lanka's total was their lowest in all T20 cricket

NEW YORK: South Africa's Anrich Nortje took a remarkable four wickets for just seven runs as the Proteas dismissed Sri Lanka for a record low 77 on their way to a six-wicket win in the teams' T20 World Cup opener in New York on Monday.

Sri Lanka's total was their lowest in all T20 cricket, with fast bowler Nortje's figures the best by a South African at a T20 World Cup, surpassing his own 4-10 against Bangladesh in Sydney two years ago. "It's been a while since I've had those figures," said Nortje, the player of the match, at the presentation ceremony. "Just happy to have pulled it off for the team."

"We didn't know what to expect from the pitch, we'd heard one or two rumors about being up and down," the 30-year-old added. Kagiso Rabada (2-21) and left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj, who took two wickets in two balls on his way to 2-22, also damaged the cause of 2014 champions Sri Lanka.

Opener Kusal Mendis (19) and veteran all-rounder Angelo Mathews (16) were the only Sri Lanka batsmen to pass 15 after their captain, Wanindu Hasaranga, seemingly misread conditions by opting to bat first upon winning the toss.

South Africa, however, also lost early wickets as their top order also struggled to time the ball on a drop-in pitch that is the cornerstone of a Long Island ground built specially for the tournament. But the big-hitting Heinrich Klaasen struck a six and a four off successive deliveries on his way to 19 not out as South Africa finished on 80-4 with 26 balls to spare.

The difficulty both sides had in scoring runs raised fears the showpiece match between arch-rivals India and Pakistan - due to be played at the ground on June 9 - could become a lottery.

'Find ways to score on this'

South Africa captain Aiden Markram, whose side have two more games at the ground, said: "Credit for what we did in the field but the batting was a bit up and down. "It was quite a tough wicket... We're fortunate that we have our next two here and have a decent idea of how it's going to play but it's important to assess as you move around and come up with plans."

Leg-spinner Hasaranga took 2-22 but in truth he had too few runs to play with following a Sri Lanka innings where he was one of four ducks. "We were hoping for 160-170 but now we know it was more of a 120-130 wicket, especially with our bowlers," said Hasaranga. "We wanted to perform a lot better."

South Africa fast bowler Ottneil Baartman, making his World Cup debut, sparked Sri Lanka's collapse when, with his first ball, he had Pathum Nissanka caught in the deep before Nortje dismissed Kamindu Mendis in similar fashion.

Maharaj then struck twice in the ninth over as both Hasaranga, stumped by De Kock and Sadeera Samarawickrama, clean bowled by a quicker delivery, fell for nought to leave Sri Lanka 32-4 before Charith Asalanka survived the hat-trick. — AFP



EAST MEADOW: South Africa's Kagiso Rabada (R) bowls a delivery during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 group D cricket match between Sri Lanka and South Africa at Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in East Meadow, New York. — AFP

Afghanistan rout debutants Uganda

GEORGETOWN: Afghanistan produced a dominant bowling and batting performance to thrash debutants Uganda by 125 runs in the T20 World Cup in Guyana on Monday. Afghanistan openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran laid the foundations for the win with an opening stand of 154 in Afghanistan's 183-5.

Left-arm seamer Fazalhaq Farooqi dazzled with five wickets for just nine runs as Uganda were skittled for 58 in 16 overs. "It was the kind of start we wanted as a team," Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan said.

"It does not matter who we play, it is about the mindset. "The hard work we have done in the last few weeks, the way the openers started and the way our bowlers bowled - it was a great overall team effort."

Afghanistan had looked poised for a massive total

after Gurbaz's 76 off 45 balls which included four fours and four sixes. Zadran was in similarly swash-buckling form, blasting 70 off 46 deliveries including nine fours and a six.

Gurbaz and Zadran's opening partnership was the second highest in men's T20 World Cup history, beaten only by the 170 by England's Jos Buttler and Alex Hales in 2022. But when Gurbaz and Zadran fell in the space of four balls, Uganda were able to peg back Afghanistan.

Masaba claimed a piece of cricket history for the East African nation after taking his country's first ever World Cup wicket, bowling Zadran in the 15th over to leave the score at 154-1. Alpesh Ramjani then removed Gurbaz, who was caught by Riazat Ali Shah at deep square leg for 76.

Masaba claimed his second wicket, getting rid of Najibullah Zadran, who was caught at deep square leg by Dinesh Nakrani. Cosmas Kyewuta took the other two wickets. Any hopes that Uganda's bowling fightback would spill into their innings were snuffed out by Fazalhaq in the first over.

After Uganda opener Ronak Patel creamed a four off Fazalhaq's first ball, the Afghan bowler hit back with two wickets with his next two deliveries, removing Patel and Roger Mukasa, to leave the Africans reeling at 4-2.

Mujeeb Ur Rahman then had Simon Ssesazi caught by Fazalhaq off a top edge for four as Uganda slumped to 8-3. The wickets continued to tumble and Uganda were soon 18-5 in the fifth over.

Fazalhaq took the wickets of Masaba and Robinson Obuya, both caught behind, to complete his five-wicket haul before skipper Khan mopped up the tail by dismissing Bilal Hassan lbw and bowling Hendry Ssenyondo. Uganda skipper Masaba took positives from his team's T20 World Cup debut, despite the heavy defeat.

"Pretty special moment for us, hearing our national anthem and seeing our flag at the World Cup," Masaba said. "Something I will cherish for the rest of my life. "First game at the World Cup, lot of nerves. Good to get that out of the way. We will look to come out and play better next game." — AFP



Rashid Al-Kandary

Al-Kandary attends Asian Triathlon Federation assembly

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Triathlon Club and Federation President Rashid Al-Kandary attended the General Assembly of the Asian Federation as well as the Federation's conference that was chaired by the Asian Triathlon Federation President HH Prince Faisal bin Jlewi. The meetings were held in Saudi Arabia from June 1st until the 4th.

Al-Kandary said his participation in the meetings was positive and successful. He said "the Asian General Assembly, as well as the meeting of West Asia aimed to develop the triathlon in Asia and the support of the International Federation for the "yellow continent, as President Marisol Casado, head of technical committee Zita Csovelyak and head of the competitions committee Antonio Alvarez.

Al-Kandary said it was decided to hold the next Asian Championship at Al-Khubar City, Saudi Arabia, and the West Asia championship in Al-Fujairah, UAE. He said Kuwait nominated for membership in the competitions committee of the Asian Federation, adding that Kuwait Federation supports any championship in Asia. He said Kuwait is always in support of the Palestinian Triathlon Federation and all its activities.

Matt Kuchar, Webb Simpson qualify for US Open

NEW YORK: PGA Tour veteran Matt Kuchar and 2012 US Open winner Webb Simpson successfully qualified for this year's US Open the old-fashioned way. Kuchar and Simpson were among those who locked up their spots in this month's major championship via final qualifying on Monday, often called "Golf's Longest Day."

A total of 672 players competed in 36-hole qualifiers at locations around the United States and Canada to try to earn one of 44 available spots into the field at the US Open, to be played June 13-16 at Pinehurst Resort & Country Club (Course No. 2) in North Carolina.

Kuchar, 45, was the medalist at his qualifying site. He shot rounds of 70 and 67 at The Bear's Club in Jupiter, Fla., to go 7 under for the day. While Kuchar has never won a major, he has nine wins on the PGA Tour and once rated as high as No. 4 in the Official World Golf Ranking. However, due to a lack of recent success, he did not qualify for any exemptions into the US Open field.

Simpson's exemption for winning the 2012 US Open expired after 2022. He did not qualify last year and hasn't made a cut at a major since the 2022 PGA Championship. On Monday, Simpson recorded a 67 and a 69 at Duke University Golf Club in Durham, N.C., which tied him for fourth, two shots behind medalist Frankie Capan

III. Simpson finished one stroke above a 7-for-2 playoff that determined the final two of the site's seven berths. Carter Jenkins and Harry Higgs won those spots via the playoff. Australia's Adam Scott is in danger of missing the U.S. Open, which would end the longest active streak of major starts in the sport. He has played in every major since the 2001 Open Championship, a stretch of 91 straight. However, he is not currently exempt for this year's edition.

On Monday, he followed an opening-round 64 with a second-round 69 to get to 7 under at Springfield (Ohio) Country Club, but he wound up in a 2-for-1 playoff against countryman Cam Davis. Scott chipped in for birdie on the first playoff hole, but Davis responded by sinking his birdie putt. After both players parred the second hole, Davis made a 3-foot birdie putt to beat Scott and earn Springfield's final berth.

However, there is one more chance for Scott to receive an exemption. Anyone in the top 60 of the OWGR as of June 10 will be invited if not already eligible. Scott enters the week at exactly No. 60, and he will not play in the Memorial later this week.

LIV Golf member Dean Burmester of South Africa tied for second in Florida, one stroke behind Kuchar. However, fellow LIV player Joaquin Niemann of Chile finished one stroke out of a 3-for-



Matt Kuchar

1 playoff for the fifth and final spot.

Niemann, once ranked in the top 15 in the world, is on track to miss the U.S. Open unless the USGA extends a special exemption to him. The PGA of America gave Niemann a special invite to last month's PGA Championship, where he tied for 39th. Spaniard David Puig, a LIV golfer, earned medalist honors at Lake Merced Golf Club in Daly City, Calif.

The players who qualified on Monday -- (a) denotes amateur:

Ridgeway, Ontario - Mark Hubbard, Adam Svensson of Canada, Rico Hoey, Davis Thompson, Greyson Sigg, Aaron Rai of England, Ashton McCulloch of Canada (a)

Rockville, Md. - Tim Widing of Sweden, Isaiah Salinda, Wells Williams (a)

Summit, N.J. - Benjamin James (a), Max Greyserman, Andrew Svoboda,

Jim Herman

Jupiter, Fla. - Matt Kuchar, Daniel Berger, Dean Burmester of South Africa, Luke Clanton (a), Willie Mack III

Alpharetta, Ga. - Jackson Buchanan (a), Chris Petefish, Frederik Kjettrup of Denmark (a)

Durham, N.C. - Frankie Capan III, Brian Campbell, Sam Bennett, Chesson Hadley, Webb Simpson, Carter Jenkins, Harry Higgs

Columbus, Ohio - Justin Lower, Seamus Power of Ireland, Brendon Todd, Gunnar Broin (a), Chris Naegel

Springfield, Ohio - Zac Blair, Beau Hossler, Carson Schaaque, Cam Davis of Australia

Daly City, Calif. - David Puig of Spain, Omar Morales of Mexico (a), John Chin, Charles Reiter

Bend, Ore. - Joey Vrzich, Colin Prater (a). — Reuters

Dravid to bow out as India coach after T20 WCup

NEW YORK: Rahul Dravid said Monday that he will leave his post as India coach at the end of the T20 World Cup after almost three years in charge. Dravid's contract runs out at the end of the month and he will not re-apply for the job, which has been advertised by India's governing cricket body, the BCCI, since last month.

"It is going to be the last one that I am in charge of," the 51-year-old told reporters ahead of India's opening match against Ireland in New York on Wednesday. "Unfortunately, the kind of schedules and where I find myself at this stage in my life, I don't think I'll be able to re-apply."

"I love doing the job. I've really enjoyed coaching India and I think it's a truly special job to do." The former India captain took over the team from Ravi Shastri after the 2021 T20 World Cup. This

year's edition in the United States and West Indies is his last chance to end the country's global trophy drought, which stretches back to the 2013 Champions Trophy.

Dravid oversaw India's runs to the finals of both the World Test Championship and their home 50-over World Cup last year, but they came up short against Australia each time. "I enjoyed working with this team and it's a great bunch of boys to work with," Dravid said.

"To be very honest, I think we've actually played really well in these tournaments. "The World Test Championship is slightly different in terms of it's not one tournament but a whole cycle, but playing extremely well in the cycle to get to the final there again. "The 50-over World Cup we had a great run and went into the final. I think we've been right up there with some of the best teams." India have not won the T20 World Cup since its inaugural edition in 2007 and they have not lifted the one-day World Cup since 2011.

India face Pakistan on June 9 and tournament hosts USA three days later in New York, before concluding their group fixtures against Canada in Lauderhill, Florida, on June 15. — AFP

Doomed Rebels seek Hurricanes upset to stay alive a bit longer

WELLINGTON: Melbourne Rebels head coach Kevin Foote said Tuesday his doomed Super Rugby team can do "something special" by delaying their demise with an upset quarter-final win at the Wellington Hurricanes. The debt-laden Rebels will cease to exist beyond this season after Rugby Australia opted last week to shut down the club, which went into administration in January owing almost AU\$23 million (US\$15 million).

The Rebels limped into the play-offs, qualifying eighth in the regular season table following a 40-19 away defeat to the Fijian Drua on Saturday. The defeat came just a few days after the squad learnt the team was being axed.

Only a surprise victory at the table-topping Hurricanes in Wellington on Saturday will extend the Rebels' limited shelf-life. Australian teams have a

poor record in New Zealand, but Foote said the visitors have nothing to lose.

"We actually want to do something special. It's what history is all about, sports gives us this opportunity," Foote told reporters in a video call. "You look at all the great rugby stories and think about the story you are going to tell."

The Rebels' demise means Australia will only have four Super Rugby teams in 2025 - ACT Brumbies, Queensland Reds, Western Force and NSW Waratahs. The Melbourne team had been scheduled to host the British and Irish Lions on their tour next year, but that is now off.

A handful of Wallabies play for the Rebels, including Carter Gordon, Taniela Tupou, Rob Leota, Lukhan Salakaia-Loto and Andrew Kellaway. Foote said it had been a challenging few days for the squad. "It was always going to hurt, to be honest. It doesn't really make sense for a lot of us," he said.

"We really believed, from the coaching perspective, that if it had stayed together to build confidence in the squad, we could have gone on to make finals more of a regular occurrence." The South African said there was an emotional team meeting after the news broke, just before the team flew to Fiji. — AFP

Sports

From non-league to top of the league for Japan upstarts Machida

Machida lead the league only on goal difference

MACHIDA: Led by a former high-school coach and playing in a picturesque stadium surrounded by trees, Machida Zelvia are taking the J. League by storm in their debut season in Japan's first division.

The team from Tokyo's suburbs top the table approaching the half-way point of the season, just over a decade after being in non-league—semi-professional—football.

At the helm is Go Kuroda, who was hired in late 2022 after almost three decades coaching one of the top high-school sides in a country where student football draws big crowds.

Machida lead the league only on goal difference after losing 3-1 to lowly Albirex Niigata on Saturday at home, but striker Mitch Duke believes they can go all the way.

"We just need to challenge ourselves in games like this, against teams that are in the lower part of the table," the Australian international told AFP. "That's one thing that we probably need to improve, but other than that I think we have all the confidence and belief in the team that we can win the league."

Machida's homely 15,000-capacity stadium is located in a densely wooded park, a long and winding bus journey from the nearest train station. The club were founded in 1989 and mostly played non-league football before joining the newly created J. League third division in 2014.

Their form fluctuated until Kuroda joined at the start of last season, taking them into the top flight at the first time of asking as second division champions.

Fast and physical

They have maintained their momentum this year, converting an injury-time penalty to beat three-time Asian champions Urawa Reds away last month and

thumping neighbours Tokyo Verdy 5-0.

Machida's success has been built on the power of 194cm (six feet, three inches) striker Oh Se-hun—a recent call-up to the South Korean national team—and backed by fast, hard-working team-mates.

Football writer Masafumi Mori says Machida have "a style that Japanese teams traditionally aren't comfortable playing against".

"Japanese teams are usually very technical, but Machida Zelvia aren't like that, they have a lot of strength up front and they're very good on the counter," he said.

"It's not a style that Japanese fans like, but it gets results." Mori also credits Kuroda and his coaching staff for their attention to detail and extensive analysis of opposition teams.

Kuroda arrived after leading Aomori Yamada High School to three titles in the national high school tournament, a competition that has shaped countless future Japan national team stars. Kuroda is not the first former high school coach to land a J. League job but he is the first to make an impact.

Bragging rights

The 54-year-old is realistic about Machida's chances of upsetting the odds and winning the title. No team has ever won the J. League on their debut in the top flight. "I was worried that the players might let their guard down after beating Urawa in the previous game and I was very strict to try to prevent them from falling into that trap," Kuroda said after Saturday's defeat.

"Strong teams win games like this, but we're new to this and we don't have players with title-winning experience. I get the impression we're not there yet." Machida's success means they now have to cope



MACHIDA: This photo taken on June 1, 2024 shows Machida's manager Go Kuroda gesturing during the top division J-League football match between Machida Zelvia and Albirex Niigata at Machida GION Stadium in western Tokyo. — AFP

with the demands of international football. Oh, Duke and Japanese goalkeeper Kosei Tani have all been called up by their countries and forward Shota Fujio and midfielder Yu Hirakawa are involved with Japan's Olympic side.

Whether Machida win the title or not, Duke says

they want to "make a statement" by finishing above city rivals Verdy and FC Tokyo. "I've seen some comments where people claim that we're not in Tokyo, but we are," he said. "We want to establish ourselves as the best Tokyo team and have that little bit of a bragging right." — AFP

France, England lead the contenders as Germany host Euros

BERLIN: Euro 2024, beginning in Germany on June 14, is a mouth-watering prospect, as France and England lead the heavyweight contenders for a tournament which will be played out in some of the continent's finest stadiums across a football-mad nation. The setting for the month-long competition is important, given the underwhelming nature of the last Euros three years ago, held all over the continent rather than in one country, and played before limited crowds during the COVID pandemic.

This time all fans will descend on 10 stadiums in Germany, many with memories of the unforgettable summer of 2006 when the country last staged a major tournament. The hope is this competition will be just as memorable, and for the right reasons, despite security concerns in a tense global climate and complaints about Germany's creaking rail network.

That 2006 World Cup was won by Italy, who come into this European Championship as title holders, but it also saw Germany emerge again as a force to be reckoned with after years in the doldrums. Back then there were question marks about the host nation's chances, yet they reached the semi-finals. There are similar doubts this time surrounding Julian Nagelsmann's team, given Germany have exited the last two World Cups in the group stage and lost in the last 16 at the last Euros.

Host hopes

However, it would be foolish to talk down the three-time European champions too much given the players at their disposal. "I have the feeling that we can win the tournament. And most of the time, my intuition is not too bad," said Nagelsmann, whose team play Scotland in the opening game in Munich.

There are good reasons why France and England are widely seen as the favourites to raise aloft the Henri Delaunay trophy at Berlin's Olympic Stadium on July 14. France are Europe's top-ranked nation and have been in the last two World Cup finals. Their team has evolved since Qatar in 2022 but the quality at their disposal, beyond Kylian Mbappe, is fearsome and they are eager to win a first European Championship since 2000.

"Like other nations we have the potential to maybe go all the way, but we must not already be thinking about the semi-finals or a possible final," warned coach Didier Deschamps. It is not always the



HERZOGENAURACH: Germany's midfielder Florian Wirtz attends a training session of the German national football team in Herzogenaurach, in preparation for the UEFA EURO 2024 European Football Championship. — AFP

case that everything goes to form. But if it does, and France and England top their groups, they will be on a collision course to meet in the semi-finals at Borussia Dortmund's Signal Iduna Park.

England carry the burden of never having won the Euros. Beaten on penalties by Italy in the 2021 final, Gareth Southgate's team lost a nail-biting quarter-final to France at the last World Cup. The two men who could give them the edge are Harry Kane and Jude Bellingham. Kane will be at home in his surroundings having just scored 44 goals in his first season for Bayern Munich.

Ronaldo still going, Georgia debut

Munich's Allianz Arena hosts the first semi-final. The other semi-final venue was Bellingham's home ground for the three years he spent at Dortmund, but he comes to the Euros after a fine first campaign at Real Madrid, fresh from winning the Champions League. "Are we one of those teams who can win? Of course," said Southgate, whose team are in Group C with Denmark, Serbia and Slovenia. "I'd be an idiot if I said no, but if I said yes, that doesn't mean there's not a lot of work ahead of us."

Absent from the last two World Cups, Italy will be in Germany to defend their European crown, despite losing twice to England in qualifying. The Azzurri are in a group with Spain, semi-finalists at the last Euros but who have not won a major tournament knockout game in 90 minutes since Euro 2012.

There may be as many as eight realistic potential champions, including 2016 winners Portugal, still led by Cristiano Ronaldo, even though he is now 39. Belgium and the Netherlands will hope to make an impact too, but the Euros—the third edition since expanding to 24 teams—is richer for the presence

of less-fancied nations.

Ukraine will be afforded widespread sympathy and have a decent team under Serhiy Rebrov. Albania, under the Brazilian Sylvinho, appear at only their second Euros, while Georgia make their debut. Managed by former France and Bayern Munich defender Willy Sagnol, and led by Napoli winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, they will be worth watching. Their tournament starts on June 18 against Turkey in Dortmund. — AFP

Kuwait Disabled Sports Club in West Asia semis

AMMAN: Kuwait Disabled Sports Club of wheelchair basketball have cruised into the semi-final of the 8th future generation championship of West Asia clubs currently held in Jordan's capital, Amman, and will last until June 7.

The team defeated on Tuesday their UAE's rivals, Khorfakkan Club for the Disabled, 68-38 to top the group in the tourney featuring seven clubs. Speaking to KUNA, Shafi Al-Hajri, head of the club, said the Kuwaiti team deserve this qualification as the players have performed well.

The team will meet Wednesday, the second position in the other group, he noted, stressing that Kuwaiti players would do their best in this game to qualify for the final. — KUNA

Inter CEO Marotta takes over as club president

MILAN: Inter Milan's sporting CEO Giuseppe Marotta was appointed the Serie A champions' new president on Tuesday following the recent takeover by new US owners Oaktree. Marotta, considered the architect of Inter's recent return to football's top table, has replaced former president Steven Zhang following a shareholders' meeting in Milan in which a new board was also appointed.

"I would like to thank Oaktree for the trust they have shown in giving me this opportunity to work alongside them and the board," said Marotta in a statement. Oaktree took control of Inter last month, days after the club were officially crowned kings of Italy for the 20th time, when previous owners Suning failed to repay a three-year loan which matured at 395 million euros (\$428 million).

The US investment fund appointed six of its people to the Inter board alongside Marotta, who keeps the role as sporting CEO for which he was hired by Chinese conglomerate Suning and Zhang in 2018. Corporate CEO Alessandro Antonello has maintained his position on the board along with two other "independent directors" kept on from the Suning era.

Since Marotta's arrival Inter have won two Serie A titles, two Italian Cups, three Italian Super Cups and reached the final of both the Champions League and Europa League. The 67-year-old was previously CEO at Juventus for a trophy-laden eight years.

Oaktree, who manage \$192 billion of assets, have repeatedly said that they want operational and financial stability for Inter whose accounts are heading in the right direction after years of heavy losses exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

That means keeping on Marotta and Antonello and also coach Simone Inzaghi, whose Inter team secured the Serie A title with five matches to spare by winning a thrilling derby with local rivals AC Milan.

Inzaghi is expected to sign a contract extension until 2027 while new deals for captain Lautaro Martinez and Italy midfielder Nicolo Barella are also being discussed. "We have great confidence in the club's management team, and today's appointments fully confirm this," said Alejandro Cano, Oaktree's managing director for Europe and new Inter board member. Inter are also working on a new stadium project in Milan suburb Rozzano, which Antonello has said is the club's priority despite talks with AC Milan and Milan city council over potentially taking possession of a renovated version of the current San Siro. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	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

We, Mohammed Asif Ali (father, Indian Passport No. W7984098) and **Sabina Asif** (mother, Indian Passport No. X8047738) of **Faiza** (Indian Passport No. W0760654), resident of Ballari (Dist), door No. 17/25 opposite Cantonment Mosque, Cantonment, Pin 583104, Karnataka (State), India, declare to change their daughter's name from **Faiza** to **Faiza** (given name) **Asif** (surname).
(#5611, 03/06/2024)

I, ALEKHYA PASUPULETI, holder of Indian Passport No. U0192138, having Permanent Address 4-43/B Usman Nagar Rajampet Annamayya Dist, AP, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) **ALEKHYA** and (surname) **POLISETTY**.
(#5612, 03/06/2024)

I, PAVITRA PASUPULETI, holder of Indian Passport No. M8740168, having Permanent Address 4-43/B Usman Nagar Rajampet Annamayya Dist, AP, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) **PAVITHRA** and (surname) **POLISETTY**.
(#5613, 03/06/2024)

I, PASUPULETI SREENIVASULU, holder of Indian Passport No. T5329947, having Permanent Address 4-43/B Usman Nagar Rajampet Annamayya Dist, AP, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) **ESWARAIAH** and (surname) **POLISETTY**.
(#5614, 03/06/2024)

India's Chhetri says farewell as Palestine eye WCup landmark

India to play home qualifier against Kuwait in Kolkata



KOLKATA: India's captain Sunil Chhetri (2L) with teammates attends a practice session ahead of their preliminary joint qualification round 2 match for the FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup against Kuwait, in Kolkata. — AFP

HONG KONG: Indian legend Sunil Chhetri will say farewell to international football on Thursday while Palestine are on the brink of reaching the final stage of Asian World Cup qualifying for the first time. The 39-year-old skipper Chhetri has 94 goals in 150 appearances for India, behind only Cristiano Ronaldo, Iran's retired Ali Daei and Lionel Messi in the list of all-time international goal-scorers.

India's most-capped player announced last month that Thursday's home qualifier against Kuwait in Kolkata will be his international swansong, and he will want to go out with a bang. Igor Stimac's side lie second in their group, behind already qualified Qatar, and can take a large step towards the third and final qualifying round for 2026 with victory.

With two games left and two nations to go through, the last qualifying berth

from the group is wide open with India and Afghanistan level on four points and Kuwait on three. "I feel privileged to have had a career like this," Chhetri told The Economic Times.

"When I started playing football, all of this was unthinkable. "If I would have left for Europe when I was a 15-year-old, for example, I could have had a different kind of career," added Chhetri, who had a brief unsuccessful spell in Portugal more than a decade ago. "But when I now look back, I will not trade what I have got for anything in the world."

In other Asian qualifying matches for 2026 on Thursday, Palestine need just a point against Lebanon in Doha to seal their place in the final round for the first time. Against the backdrop of war in Gaza, the Palestinian team has already claimed a piece of footballing history this year by making a debut appearance in the Asian Cup knockout phase.

Bayern teen's time?

Many of the regional heavyweights have already progressed, among them Australia, Japan, Iran, Iraq and Uzbekistan. Son Heung-min's South Korea have yet to join them, but they need just a point from their last two games—at Singapore on Thursday and home to China five days later—to be sure.

South Korea will be under a second interim boss since sacking Jurgen Klinsmann in February—AFC Champions League-winning coach Kim Do-hoon. The German lost his job after being knocked out in the semi-finals of the Asian Cup and the South Korean FA have been frustrated in their attempts to find a permanent successor.

China and Thailand are battling to join the Koreans as qualifiers from Group C. China are second in the group and face the Thais at home knowing that victory will put them into

the next phase but any other result could open the door to Thailand.

China coach Branko Ivankovic has not been able to name his strongest squad. "The difficulties we face with injuries and suspensions cannot be used as an excuse," Chinese media quoted him as saying.

"We must make the most of the players we have available." Graham Arnold's Australia have a perfect four wins and the coach can afford to tweak his line-up knowing that they have already progressed. The Socceroos travel to Bangladesh on Thursday and then host Palestine, and Arnold is likely to give a first cap to exciting winger Nestory Irankunda. The 18-year-old, who will join Bayern Munich this summer, is in the Australia squad for the first time and will add pace and unpredictability to a functional team that rarely thrills. — AFP

Djokovic out of French Open with knee injury

PARIS: Novak Djokovic pulled out of the French Open on Tuesday ahead of his quarter-final against Casper Ruud because of a knee injury suffered in the previous round. "I am really sad to announce that I have to withdraw from Roland Garros," Djokovic wrote on social media. "I played with my heart and gave my all in yesterday's match and unfortunately, due to a medial meniscus tear in my right knee, my team and I had to make a tough decision after careful consideration and consultation."

Tournament organisers had initially announced his withdrawal, saying an MRI scan earlier on Tuesday had revealed the full extent of the injury. World number one and 24-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic was due to play Ruud on Wednesday for a place in the last four. Djokovic defeated Ruud in straight sets in last year's final at Roland Garros.

As a result Ruud will go on to face fourth seed Alexander Zverev or 11th seed Alex de Minaur in the semi-finals on Friday. The 37-year-old Djokovic had cast doubt over his fitness following Monday's five-set win over Francisco Cerundolo, admitting he needed anti-inflammatory drugs to get through the match.

Djokovic blamed the "slippery" Philippe Chatrier court for the injury he sustained early in the second set of his 6-1, 5-7, 3-6, 7-5, 6-3 victory over Cerundolo. "I don't know what will happen tomorrow or after tomorrow if I'll be able to step out on the court and play. You know, I hope so. Let's see what happens," Djokovic said after his record 370th win at a Grand Slam.

"For the last couple weeks I have had, I would say, slight discomfort, I would call it that way, in the right knee, but I haven't had an injury that would be concerning me at all. "I was playing a few tournaments with it, and no issues until today." Djokovic had already been tested to the limit physically by a gruelling four-hour, 29-minute slog against Lorenzo Musetti in the third round that concluded at 3:07 am Sunday morning, the latest finish in French Open history.

Preventable injury?

He had complained about the state of the clay in the match with Musetti, and did so again in the last 16, calling for the court to be swept more regularly. "Could have this injury been prevented? "Possibly, if there was just a little bit more of a frequent care of the court," Djokovic said.

His withdrawal from the French Open means that Jan-nik Sinner will become Italy's first world number one next week. "It's every player's dream to become number one in the world. On the other hand, seeing Novak retiring (from the tournament) is disappointing, so I wish him a speedy recovery," said Sinner.

Sinner advanced to his first Roland Garros semi-final shortly after Djokovic's exit from the competition, defeating Bulgarian 10th seed Grigor Dimitrov in three sets. The Serbian star arrived at the tournament with his status at the top under threat from Sinner, who was guaranteed to supplant Djokovic if the latter failed to reach the final in Paris. — AFP



Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi with the winners and Zain's team.



The competition strengthened bonding between employees.

Zain organizes fifth padel tournament for its employees

KUWAIT: Zain organized the fifth padel tournament for its employees, closing yet another successful edition of the competition in the popular sport.

The thrilling event promoted physical wellbeing

and fostered out-of-office bonding between Zain employees and the executive management team. It was joined by Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi.

Employees and executives from across the company's departments joined the exciting fifth season of the competition, where 16 teams signed up to compete for the championship title. The matches continued for one day at OCEAN Padel Academy's courts in Salmiya.

Returning champions team ZAIN won the title, while team Heavyweights came in second place and team KOBE came in third place. The company con-

tinues to organize engaging activities like this one to promote physical activity, empower competitiveness, and further grow the strong bonds between members of the Zain family.

By fostering a culture of health and friendly competition, the company strengthens its community and inspires its members to achieve their best.

Zain spares no effort to organize activities and programs that cater to its employees' talents and interests. The company is keen on encouraging employees to pursue healthier lifestyles and take part in different sports and health programs all year round.