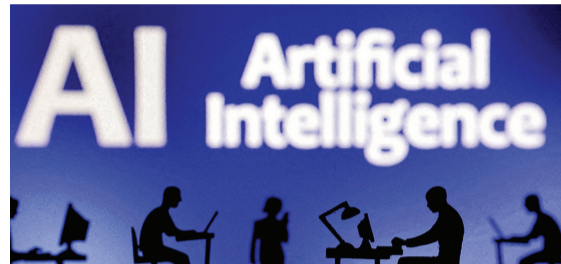


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Zionist massacre at Gaza school

Spain joins genocide case at ICJ • Kuwait slams Zionist march



GAZA: Relatives mourn at a hospital in Deir el-Balah over the body of a boy killed in a Zionist airstrike on a UN school housing displaced Palestinians in Nuseirat on June 6, 2024. — AFP

GAZA: At least 40 people were killed in a Zionist strike Thursday on a UN-run school in the Nuseirat area of central Gaza. The raid came after US, Qatari and Egyptian mediators resumed talks aimed at securing a truce and hostage-prisoner swap in the nearly eight-month war. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital in Deir al-Balah, near Nuseirat, said it had received the bodies of at least 37 martyrs from the strike.

Ismail Al-Thawabta, the director of the Hamas-run government media office, rejected the Zionist entity's assertion that the UN school had hidden a Hamas command post. "The occupation uses ... false fabricated stories to justify the brutal crime it conducted against dozens of displaced people," Thawabta told Reuters. Thawabta and a medical source said 40 had been killed, including 14 children and nine women.

As people at the school cleared rubble from bloodstained classrooms, survivor Huda Abu Dhafer described waking up to the sound of rockets. "People's remains were scattered inside the yard and outside. The gas canister exploded," she told Reuters. "My nephew was martyred, he lost his leg and arm, he was a 10-year-old ... This woman's leg got a fragment in it, her son bled from his mouth and leg, her mother-in-law sustained three injuries."

The school, run by the UN Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA, was sheltering 6,000 displaced people at the time, UNRWA chief Philippe La-

zzarini said. "At least 35 people were killed and many more injured," he wrote on X. "Claims that armed groups may have been inside the shelter are shocking. We are however unable to verify these claims. Attacking, targeting or using UN buildings for military purposes are a blatant disregard of International Humanitarian law."

An AFP photographer saw Palestinians removing blood-stained mattresses and examining damage to the school where displaced Gazans had been sheltering, parts of it littered with broken concrete slabs. Faisal Thari, a displaced Gazan who had sought refuge in the school, told AFP: "Why? What have we done for them to bomb us? We've fled from place to place. There is no safe place. No UNRWA school is safe. No tent is safe. There is no safe place."

Hamas in a statement decried a "new crime... against our people", urging international pressure on the Zionist entity to stop "these brutal massacres". The EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell called for the strike to be "independently investigated".

A medic at the hospital said another Zionist pre-dawn strike killed six people in a house in Nuseirat refugee camp, while witnesses reported intense shelling in the Bureij and Al-Maghazi camps in the same area. Zionist warplanes also carried out strikes in parts of Rafah, a source in Gaza's southernmost city told AFP.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Thul Hijjah crescent sighted

KUWAIT: Saudi Arabia announced that the Thul Hijjah crescent moon has been sighted, therefore Friday will be the first day of the month. Arafat Day will be on Saturday, June 15, and the first day of Eid Al-Adha will be on Sunday, June 16.

15,000 new govt jobs for citizens

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Council approved 15,000 job opportunities to be provided for citizens seeking jobs in the public sector, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Chairman of the Civil Service Council Sharida Al-Maousherji announced on Thursday.

Former minister sentenced to jail

KUWAIT: The court of cassation sentenced a former minister and three others to 7 years in jail each after they were found guilty of profiteering. The court said the former minister, a former ministry undersecretary, a former co-ops union president and a merchant illegally profited from a tender for an AI project at cooperative societies awarded to a company.

Kuwait to review penal legislation

KUWAIT: Kuwait's attorney general gave orders to form a committee comprising several members of the public prosecution whose job will be to review and reevaluate penal legislation in the country in comparison with contemporary criminal laws, then present their findings to the public prosecution for further coordination with the ministry of justice.

Democracy 'at risk' as leaders mark D-Day

OMAHA BEACH, France: US President Joe Biden on Thursday warned on the 80th anniversary of D-Day that democracy around the world was at risk, as leaders marked the 1944 landings in occupied France that helped defeat Nazi Germany in World War II. Haunted by today's war in Europe following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Biden, Britain's King Charles III, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and French President Emmanuel Macron paid tribute to the tens of thousands of Allied troops who

stormed the beaches of Normandy in northern France on June 6, 1944.

The commemorations also provided a hugely symbolic backdrop to talks on how Kyiv can regain ground after Russian advances, with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky attending an international ceremony with all the leaders. Biden said D-Day showed the need for international alliances and vowed never to abandon Ukraine in its fight against Russia, in a pointed swipe at his election rival ex-president Donald Trump who has publicly questioned the importance of organizations such as NATO.

"We're living in a time when democracy is more at risk across the world than at any point since the end of World War II," Biden said. "Isolationism was not the answer 80

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OMAHA BEACH, France: Britain's Foreign Secretary David Cameron, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and US President Joe Biden attend a ceremony marking the 80th anniversary of the 1944 D-Day landings and the liberation of western Europe from Nazi Germany occupation on June 6, 2024. — Reuters

As Saudi ties thaw, Syrians head for hajj

DAMASCUS: For the first time in more than a decade, thousands of Syrians are traveling directly from government-held parts of Syria to Saudi Arabia for the hajj rituals, a signal of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's gradual reintegration into the Arab fold. After Syria's conflict erupted in 2011, Saudi Arabia cut ties with Assad and backed figures opposed to him -

including by granting Syria's opposition thousands of visas to be distributed among Syrian pilgrims in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Turkey.

But Riyadh re-established ties with Assad last year and in May appointed its first envoy to Syria since the rift. Direct flights also resumed, allowing pilgrims to head straight from Damascus to Jeddah to perform the hajj, a religious duty for all Muslims that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime if they are capable.

"I'm extremely happy. I still can't believe that I will participate in the hajj," Berlanta Dimashqiya, an 84-year-old resident of Damascus, said.

Continued on Page 6



DAMASCUS: Syrian pilgrims wait to board a flight to Saudi Arabia for the annual hajj pilgrimage at Damascus airport on June 5, 2024. — Reuters

First fatal human case of bird flu as cows die in US

GENEVA: A person died of bird flu in Mexico in the first confirmed case of a human infected with the H5N2 variant, the World Health Organization said Wednesday. The 59-year-old, who died on April 24 after developing fever, shortness of breath, diarrhea and nausea, had "no history of exposure to poultry

or other animals" and "multiple underlying medical conditions", the WHO said in a statement.

The resident of the State of Mexico was hospitalized in Mexico City and died the same day, the statement said. It was the "first laboratory-confirmed human case of infection with an influenza A(H5N2) virus reported globally", the WHO added. Mexican health authorities reported the confirmed case to the UN health body on May 23 after conducting laboratory tests.

The source of exposure to the virus was unknown, the WHO said, although cases of H5N2 have been reported in poultry in Mexico. H5N2 cases were detected in a backyard poultry farm in Michoacan state

in March, with other outbreaks identified in the State of Mexico, according to the UN health body. But it said establishing a link between the human case and the poultry infections was so far impossible, estimating the risk to people as "low".

Mexico's health ministry said in a statement that the person who died was "a 59-year-old man with a history of chronic kidney disease, type 2 diabetes, (and) long-standing systemic arterial hypertension". "There is no risk of contagion for the population," the statement said, adding that "all samples from identified contacts (of the patient) have been negative".

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Local

AI won't take your job, but it might give lazy coworkers a wakeup call

Workplace is transforming • AI is at the heart of this evolution

By Sheikh Mohammed Ahmed Al-Sabah

KUWAIT: Ever wondered how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping the landscape of our workplaces? It's a topic that's been buzzing around, especially when it comes to concerns about job security. But let's peel back the layers and dive into the facts. Contrary to the ominous rumors, AI isn't on a mission to snatch away your job; think of it more like a brilliant assistant who's here to enhance and elevate our work lives.



Sheikh Mohammed Ahmed Al-Sabah

The workplace is transforming, and AI is at the heart of this evolution. Rather than being a job-snatcher, AI acts as a valuable collaborator, allowing us to re-imagine the way we work. So, let's embark on a journey to understand how AI is contributing to the workplace narrative, dispelling fears and embracing the exciting possibilities it brings. In this article, we'll unravel the myth that AI is a job-snatcher and explore how it's not replacing your job but could be the game-changer your workplace needs for an upgrade, fostering productivity, and nurturing growth.

The myth of job loss

Dispelling the myth, AI isn't the antagonist ushering in mass unemployment. It's more of a co-pilot, handling the mundane so humans can focus on the exciting aspects of their jobs. According to insights from the World Economic Forum, AI is set to create more jobs than it displaces, contributing to an improvement in work quality. AI is all about injecting enthusiasm and innovation into our professional spheres.

AI's impact on laziness

AI won't induce laziness; instead, it acts as a discerning guide, spotlighting areas for improvement within a team. With smart algorithms and data analysis, AI nudges teams to enhance their performance. It's akin to a friendly mentor encouraging everyone to be more proactive. AI doesn't just stop there; it keeps tabs on individual performance, providing constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement. Moreover, it facilitates seamless collaboration, creating a culture of teamwork and trust.

Productivity boost

Now, for the exciting revelation – AI takes care of mundane tasks, liberating human potential for more stimulating work. This means that employees can focus on tasks that need higher levels of cognitive skills. This can include creativity, problem-solving, and innovation. By freeing up time and energy, AI enables workers to pursue more mean-

ingful and rewarding work, enhancing their satisfaction and well-being.

This shift is a game-changer, substantially amplifying productivity. Instead of fearing job loss, people should hail AI as the ally that makes work more enjoyable. According to Accenture's insights, AI can skyrocket productivity by 40 percent, essentially serving as a superhero sidekick for workplace efficiency. By augmenting human capabilities, AI can help workers achieve better outcomes, faster and with fewer errors. By embracing AI, workers can leverage its power to boost their performance and career prospects.

Creating a culture of continuous improvement

Envision your workplace as a hub of learning, and that's what AI enables. AI is not a threat, but a catalyst for positive change in the workplace. By introducing AI, companies can create a culture of continuous improvement, where employees are encouraged to adapt and upskill, ensuring they stay relevant in an evolving work landscape. AI can also provide feedback and guidance, helping employees identify their strengths and areas for improvement.

Companies can leverage AI to inspire employees to get new skills and stay ahead in a dynamic job landscape. By providing access to online courses, mentoring programs, and learning platforms, companies can help employees get new skills and knowledge that can benefit their careers. AI can also personalize the learning experience, tailoring it to the needs and preferences of each individual. By creating a learning environment, companies can also increase employee engagement, retention, and loyalty.

It's not about job security; it's an opportunity for skill elevation. Rather than fearing job loss, employees should embrace AI as a valuable ally in achieving professional growth. AI can augment human capabilities, providing insights and suggestions that can enhance decision-making and innovation. AI can also create new opportunities, as IBM said that 54 percent of workers will need to re-skill or upskill to take advantage of the new roles created by AI. By leveraging AI, employees can become career superheroes, ready to face any challenge.

Conclusion

AI is not a threat to job security; it's a revolutionary force driving positive change in our workplaces. AI unleashes efficiency, spotlights areas for improvement, and enables employees to concentrate on tasks that need human ingenuity. Embracing this technological evolution leads to a vibrant and innovative work environment, where humans and AI collaboratively contribute to shared success. The takeaway? AI won't take your job; it's poised to inspire your team to become workplace superheroes together!

NOTE: Sheikh Mohammed Ahmed Al-Sabah is the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Association of Artificial Intelligence of Things



Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva Ambassador Naser Al-Hayen

Kuwait strongly condemns provocative Zionist march

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemned the provocative march led by the Zionist occupation's government, Knesset members, and a number of settlers in Jerusalem, violating the sanctity of the Holy Mosque and assaulting Palestinians. In a statement on Thursday, the Ministry denounced such a horrendous act that undermines the two-state solution and promotes a culture of hatred and violence.

The statement renewed the call to the international community and the UN Security Council to take responsibility and execute resolutions on stopping those violations, hold those responsible accountable, and protect civilians. It further reaffirmed Kuwait's unwavering stance toward the Palestinian people and their right to an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Kuwait's support for the just Palestinian cause is firm and unwavering, said a Kuwaiti diplomat at an international conference on Thursday. Speaking at the 112th International Labor Organization's (ILO) conference, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Naser Al-Hayen, told a special session on labor in occupied Arab lands that the current disastrous situation in the Gaza Strip should be addressed promptly to avoid further bloodshed.

The forced displacement of millions of Palestinians is a heinous crime for which Zionist occupation was solely responsible, affirmed the Kuwaiti diplomat, who did not fail to mention the apocalyptic scenes of destroyed infrastructure throughout Gaza. The ILO's impact of the war in Gaza on the labor market and livelihoods in the Occupied Palestinian Territory clearly showed the catastrophic humanitarian situation, which touched all Palestinians, specifically laborers there, he added.

He revealed that the report suggested that over 200,000 Palestinians have lost their jobs, adding to the unending crimes committed by the Zionist occupiers. Ambassador Al-Hayed insisted that the Zionist occupation had crossed all red lines and also violated all international laws and norms, including the ILO's constitution. He pointed out that preventing laborers from across occupied territories from moving freely and seeking work was another criminal act carried out by the Zionist aggressors.

While the world celebrated International Workers' Day back on May 1, the occasion was marred by brutalization of Palestinian laborers, causing them to lose job security, stability, and peace, affirmed Ambassador Al-Hayen. The Kuwaiti diplomat concluded with an affirmation that the State of Kuwait welcomed Article 177 of the ILO report that called for an immediate halt of the unjust war in the Gaza Strip and the end of occupation. — KUNA



GAZA: A Palestinian boy looks at a pool of blood at a UN-school housing displaced people that was hit during bombardment in Nuseirat, in the central Gaza Strip, on June 6, 2024. — AFP

Social media platforms playing important role in crises management

KUWAIT: Social media platforms play an important role in mitigating and managing crises, said a Kuwaiti academic on Thursday. Speaking at KUNA at the conclusion of the KUNA Center for the Development of Media Skills' training course on managing media crises via social media, Professor at Kuwait University Dr Fawaz Al-Ajmi indicated that the direct line to the wider audiences made social media such an important communication tool. Administrators and experts at various institutes must be aware of how to deal with media crises and speak to the public through social media platforms to avoid mis-

manipulation, which required tools that would enable media personnel to refute and defuse. Established in December 1995, the KUNA Center for the Development of Media Skills had provided many training courses and programs to boost media personnel's skills and elevate journalists' capabilities. — KUNA

KUNA launches media program for children

KUWAIT: Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Thursday announced the launch of a media program for children from June 23 until July 4, with the aim of introducing the young ones to the media profession and journalism. On this occasion, Director General of KUNA, Dr. Fatma Al-Salem, revealed that registration



Al-Najat Charity launches '10,000 sacrifices' campaign

KUWAIT: The Al-Najat Charity Association announced on Thursday the launch of a campaign '10,000 sacrifices' with the aim of making more than 200,000 people happy in ten countries. The director general of the association, Mohammed Al-Ansari, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the campaign is aimed at assisting countries suffering from severe poverty, indicating that the priority will be for those affected in Gaza, Sudanese refugees, displaced Yemenis, and Somalis. He stated that the association is implementing the campaign in full coordination with the ministries of foreign affairs and in cooperation with the official accredited and renowned associations. He explained that the value of one sacrifice in this campaign amounts to KD30. — KUNA



Mohammed Al-Ansari



Photo shows participants in KUNA Center for the Development of Media Skills' training course on managing media crises via social media. — KUNA

for the program would start on June 11, focusing on children between the ages of 9 and 12. She indicated that the KUNA Junior Club would organize the program. Participants would receive journalistic training to improve their language and analytic skills. Head of Marketing, Lamya Al-Farsi, affirmed that various media disciplines would be taught during the program. Skills to discern false news from real news, in addition to AI applications, would also be included, she revealed. Al-Farsi indicated that seats were limited and urged early registration for the program. — KUNA

Nine stores closed over spoiled meat

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Public Authority for Food and Nutrition has closed nine stores in Mubarakiya. Authorities found tons of meat that are unfit for human consumption. The case was referred to the prosecution. Head of the Authority's center in Mubarakiya, Mohammad Al-Kandary, said the Authority is keen on implementing the laws. Nine stores were shut down, and several citations were issued following the discovery of 506 kilograms of spoiled meat. The meat was confiscated and destroyed. — Agencies



Local

'Ladies Diwaniya' launched

An inspiring, empowering platform for talented, influential women to connect



Kuwaiti women from diverse fields discuss at the diwaniya.



French ambassador discusses some topics with Kuwaiti women.



Ambassador of France to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of France to Kuwait launched, on Wednesday, the first-of-its-kind diplomatic "Ladies Diwaniya" at the French Residence. Ladies Diwaniya gathered Kuwaiti women from diverse fields such as business, politics, the arts, culture, and fashion. During the event, Ambassador of France to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher expressed that her observation of diwanis, which traditionally only men attended, inspired her to create a space for women where they could gather to

discuss a variety of topics and foster connections among themselves.

She added, "This initiative aims to provide an inspiring and empowering platform for talented and influential women to connect, share their stories, and build robust networks of solidarity." Held on Wednesday, the event is also a tribute to the vibrant tradition of Kuwaiti diwanis. The ambassador said, "I am always impressed by the high level of generosity and the sense of hospitality that define diwanis. These women are not only leaders in their fields but are also examples of excellence in hos-

pitality and lifestyle, organizing beautiful events that reflect a rich cultural taste both shared in Kuwait and France."

She noted that the gathering is not just about networking; it's about creating a space where women can speak freely, share their challenges, and celebrate their successes, adding, "The aim is to cultivate a culture of empowerment and resilience, to foster professional and personal growth, and to drive forward positive change in society."

The French Ambassador Le Flecher indicated that there are regular meetings

where remarkable women can exchange ideas, contribute to creating innovative projects, and foster a community of mutual support and mentorship where participants will have the opportunity to inspire and be inspired, drawing strength and motivation from each other's experiences and achievements. "We believe that by nurturing these connections and fostering a spirit of collaboration, we can amplify the impact of Kuwaiti women in all sectors, paving the way for future generations to follow in their footsteps," she pointed out. The next event will be on Wednesday.

Deputy FM chairs diplomatic meeting



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Thursday chaired a consulate and diplomatic corps meeting, during which items on the agenda were discussed, according to the Ministry's statement. — KUNA



Kuwait keen on empowering youth

KUWAIT: Amiri Diwan advisor Sheikh Faisal Humoud Al-Sabah said that the political leadership is keen on empowering youth, who are considered national wealth and the foundation for the advancement of societies. Sheikh Faisal, in a statement marking the 3rd Gulf Youth Day, said celebrating the Gulf Youth Day reflected the desire of the GCC leaders to invest in the potential of the youth.

Kuwait, acting upon the instructions 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, is paying

great attention to the empowerment of youth, who were "the foundation of advancement and construction of society and a major element in development," he said. He called for supporting the initiatives and ideas of the youth, as well as encouraging them to explore their potential and skills. Sheikh Faisal commended the efforts of the youth authorities in the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries. — KUNA



Sheikh Faisal Al-Sabah

Kuwait increasing women's role on security issues

CAIRO: Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Sheikhha Jawaher Ibrahim Duajj Al-Sabah affirmed Kuwait's keenness on allowing women to play a greater role in peace and security issues as well as in the decision-making process. Speaking to KUNA after her participation in a training course on "mediation and protecting refugee rights" in Cairo on June 3-4, Sheikh Jawaher said that Kuwait has recently formed a national committee to implement UN Security Council Resolution No 1325 of 2000 on women, peace, and security.

The UN resolution acknowledged the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on

women and girls. It calls for the adoption of a gender perspective to consider the special needs of women and girls during conflict, repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration, and post-conflict reconstruction. Sheikhha Jawaher also commended the Arab League's efforts to help Arab women play an active role in mediation.

The two-day course was organized by the Arab League in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Women Regional Office of Arab States for members of the Arab Women Mediators Network. Sheikhha Jawaher said that this training course aimed to enhance the capabilities of members of the Arab Women Mediators Network on mediation and protecting the rights of refugees and to shed light on the current challenges facing by the region. Displacement is one of the major repercussions of conflicts, and the number of refugees has increased recently, she stated, adding that the majority of refugees are women and children. — KUNA



Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Sheikhha Jawaher Ibrahim Duajj Al-Sabah during the event.

Kuwait urges Iran to cooperate with IAEA

VIENNA: Kuwait has called on Iran to pursue cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to settle pending issues and assure the agency about peaceful nature of its nuclear program, as it says. Talal Al-Fassam, Kuwait Ambassador to Austria and its Permanent Representative at the International Organization in Vienna, was addressing the currently held IAEA board of Governors' session. Ambassador Al-Fassam in-



Talal Al-Fassam, Kuwait Ambassador to Austria and its Permanent Representative at the International Organization in Vienna speaks during the conference.

a decision Tehran slammed as "hasty and unwise". The motion brought by Britain, France and Germany - but opposed by China and Russia - at the International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-nation board is the first of its kind since November 2022. It comes amid an impasse over Iran's escalating nuclear activities and as Western powers fear Tehran may be seeking to develop a nuclear weapon, a claim Iran denies.

The resolution was carried by 20 votes in favor - including the United States, which initially was reluctant for fear of aggravating Middle East tensions - with 12 abstentions and one country not participating, three diplomats told AFP. The confidential document obtained by AFP reiterates it is "essential and urgent" that Tehran provide "technically credible explanations" for the presence of uranium particles found at two undeclared locations in Iran. "A continued failure" by Iran to provide full cooperation on the years-long probe "may necessitate" a comprehensive assessment by IAEA chief Rafael Grossi, the text said.

The resolution also says Iran must "reverse its withdrawal of the designations of several experienced Agency inspectors", and "without delay" reconnect the cameras used to monitor its nuclear activities. The text also notes the "concerns" surrounding "recent public statements made in Iran... regarding its technical capabilities to produce nuclear weapons and possible changes to Iran's nuclear doctrine". Following intense negotiations with the United States, the resolution was modified to secure Washington's support.

Although symbolic in nature at this stage, the censure motion aims to raise diplomatic pressure on Iran, with the option to potentially refer the issue to the UN Security Council. Iran's mission to the United Nations said the censure motion was "hasty and unwise" and would "undoubtedly have a destructive effect on the process of diplomatic interaction and constructive cooperation", ISNA news agency quoted it as telling the Al-Monitor news website. Tehran had already threatened "a serious and effective response" and called the censure motion "devoid of any legal, technical and political basis". — Agencies

Meteorologist predicts hot and humid weather

KUWAIT: The Meteorological Department predicted that the country's weather will generally be humid and very hot at the weekend during the day and moderately hot at night. The director of the Department of Meteorology, Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that weather maps and numerical models indicate that the country will be hot, with humid air mass and north-west winds. Al-Qarawi added that the north-westerly winds are in a fluctuating direction with light to moderate speeds between 8 and 38 kilometers per hour. The expected temperatures will be between 47 and 49 Celsius. The sea will witness moderate waves between 2 and 5 feet.

On Saturday afternoon, the weather will be hot and relatively humid, with light to moderate north-west to south-east winds between 10 and 35 kilome-



KUWAIT: Motorists drive on the highway during a heatwave in Kuwait City. — KUNA

ters per hour. The expected maximum temperature ranges between 44 and 47, and the sea will witness light to moderate waves between 1 and 5 feet. He noted that the weather on Saturday night will also be hot and humid, with winds fluctuating in the south-easterly direction. — KUNA

dicated in his statement that the IAEA Director General affirmed in his latest report that the unresolved matters were related to commitments that had been made by Tehran within framework of the comprehensive safeguards to verify the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.

The UN nuclear watchdog's board of governors has passed a resolution criticizing Iran's lack of cooperation with the agency, diplomats told said,



A group photo of the participants of the seminar organized by the Ministry of Oil. — KUNA

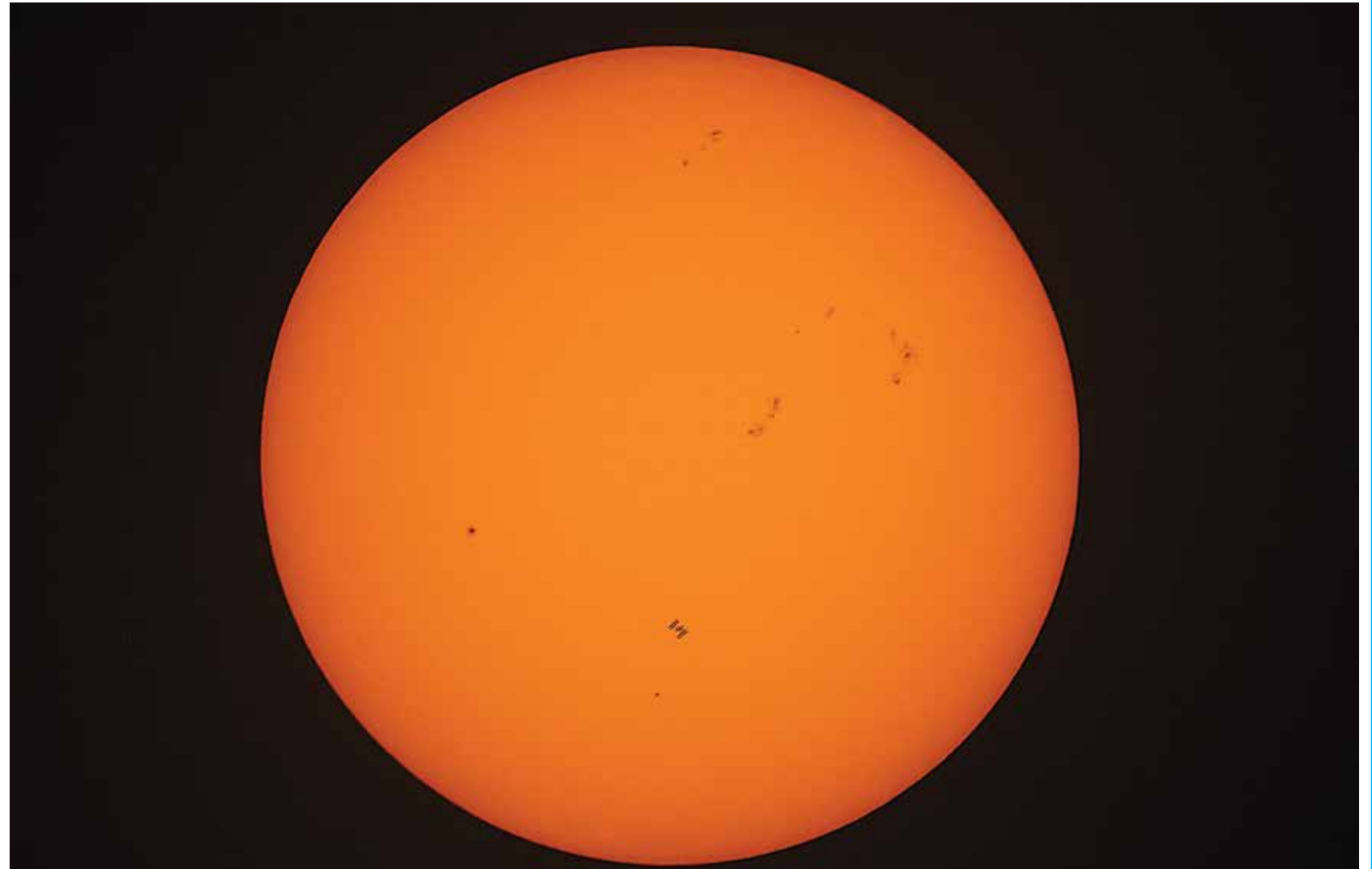
Cybersecurity 'is crucial to protect oil and gas assets'

KUWAIT: Acknowledging the potential detrimental impact on the global economy, Kuwait's Ministry of Oil affirmed on Wednesday that cybersecurity plays a strategic role in safeguarding oil, assets, and other sensitive information within the ministry. These remarks by the Head of PR and Media at the Ministry of Oil, Sheikha Tamadhur Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, came during a seminar organized by the Ministry, attended by Colonel Abdulrahman Al-Shatti of the Directorate of Cybersecurity at the Ministry of Defense.

With the increased reliance on technology in the oil sector, cybersecurity has become a necessity to protect operations, underscoring the necessity for advanced technology, strategic security integration, and periodic training programs, Sheikha Tamadhur said. Developing cybersecurity in Kuwait, she continued, reflects an important aspect of the country's strategy for facing challenges in that space and protecting the infrastructure, calling on other government bodies to follow suit.

On his part, Al-Shatti gave a visual presentation showcasing cybersecurity in all its forms, the different effects on the civil and military levels, and shared knowledge on evaluating and managing cyber risks. Moreover, risks in cyberspace are present at individual, institutional, and governmental levels, highlighting that those cyber threats can take the form of espionage, pirating, and recruitment for organized terrorist groups as well as their activities. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: The International Space Station (center-bottom) transits the sun as seen from Al-Masayel district on June 6, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

NBK increases awareness on electronic fraud risks and prevention measures

Bank promotes 'Let's Be Aware' campaign



KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always seeks to intensify efforts to increase awareness on electronic fraud risks and protection methods among the public, as part of its continued participation in the "Let's Be Aware" campaign introduced by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), which aims to promote financial literacy and raise awareness about the role of the banking sector and ways to maximize the benefit from its various services.

In this context, NBK's Digital Communication team organized an awareness session for employees to highlight the latest forms of electronic fraud, the common methods used by scammers, and how to avoid falling victim to them. Commenting on this, Abdulmohsen Al-Rushaid, AGM, Head of Digital Communications at National Bank of Kuwait said, "NBK aims to expand its efforts in spreading banking and financial awareness among all sectors of the society, including employees, by familiarizing them with the latest forms of electronic fraud and how to steer clear of them, and highlighting how crucial is cybersecurity."

"The engagement was great, as employees enjoyed the session and gained valuable insights that will undoubtedly benefit them and customers as well, thus minimizing electronic fraud cases," he remarked. "Such awareness activities help foster a fraud-resilient environment, which underscores our proactive approach in educating and empowering the public against fraud. As a leading financial institution in Kuwait and across the region, NBK frequently organizes various activities that contribute to raising awareness about all topics related to banking and help in combating fraud and financial crime," he mentioned.

"NBK uses all its digital channels to highlight different fraud types including fictitious investments whether in cash, commodities, virtual currencies or real estate. Additionally, it always warns customers against all fraud attempts via SMS, e-mail or phone calls by sharing messages on its social media platforms to warn customers against clicking unverified ads like those promising high gains, enticing individuals to register their personal information on fake trading platforms or accounts promising financial aids," he explained.

It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key promoter and participant in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives to increase financial and banking awareness among different sectors of society. The bank also ranked first in promoting the "Let's Be Aware" campaign in 2023 according to CBK, outperforming all local banks.



Abdulmohsen Al-Rushaid



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New Cardiac Catheterization Unit inaugurated at Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital. — KUNA photos

Armed Forces Hospital inaugurates cardiac catheterization unit

KUWAIT: The medical service authority at Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital inaugurated the new Cardiac Catheterization Unit in the presence of the Chief of the General Staff of the Army, Lieutenant General Pilot Bandar Al-Muzain, and the undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense, Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah.

The Chief of the Army General Staff said in a press release that the team praised (during the opening ceremony) the efforts of Jaber Al-Ahmad hospital employees and those in charge of the Cardiac Catheterization Unit. He urged them to maintain excellence and always strive to upgrade the health care system in the armed forces. He stressed the importance of providing all medical supplies to provide medical care for distinguished

members of the armed forces and their families. For his part, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah said that the inauguration of the new Cardiac Catheterization Unit represents a valuable addition to the medical services provided at the hospital for members of the armed forces and a distinct qualitative shift in the level of health services due to the devices and equipment used. The head of the Medical Services Authority, Major General Dr. Walid Mallallah, reviewed the most important construction projects that have been completed, including the renovation and development of specialized departments and equipping them with the latest medical devices and future projects of the hospital.

The head of the cardiology and catheterization division, Brigadier General Dr. Abdullah Suleiman, gave a detailed explanation of the latest devices used in the new cardiac catheterization unit, which is one of the most advanced devices in this field. The opening of the unit is one of the most important projects undertaken by the medical services authority to develop the health services provided in various medical fields. — KUNA



A decade on, three Iraqis recount IS horrors in Mosul

In first, SpaceX's mega rocket succeeds in ocean splashdown

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NUSEIRAT: A Palestinian boy stands in a destroyed room of a UN-school housing displaced people that was targeted by Zionist bombardment on June 6, 2024. — AFP

Zionists attack sheltering refugees in 'precision' strike

'What have we done for them to bomb us?'

GAZA: Faisal Thari's quest for safety led him to seek refuge in a UN school, only to face the horror of its bombing Thursday. Shocked, he deplored the civilian toll of the Gaza war. "The strike landed on civilians and poor people who had nothing to do with anything," Thari told AFP. "Why? What have we done for them to bomb us?" he said, standing in front of concrete hanging from the classroom ceiling by a thread of rebar.

"We've fled from place to place. There is no safe place. No UNRWA school is safe. No tent is safe. There is no safe place," he said, referring to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. With railings dangling from the facade and blood still pooled in a corner, the distinct UN blue on the walls was a sign the building had served as a school for Nuseirat refugee camp.

The Zionist army said it had "conducted a precision intelligence-based strike on a Hamas compound in an

UNRWA school in Nuseirat" at around 2:00 am on Thursday. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital in nearby Deir al-Balah said the strike killed 37 people and wounded 60, with many of them in critical condition. "We are in a very tragic situation because there is no space inside the hospital to receive more casualties," said its director, doctor Khalil Al-Dakran.

Thousands sheltering

The hospital had been running at four times its clinical capacity, he said, and the number of deaths may increase in coming hours because of its overstretched services. "Another horrific day in Gaza. Another UNRWA school turned shelter attacked", UNRWA commissioner-general Philippe Lazzarini wrote on social media platform X.

Lazzarini said 6,000 people had been sheltering on the school's grounds when it was struck. "Claims that armed groups may have been

inside the shelter are shocking", he said, adding his agency was unable to verify them.

The UNRWA chief said the agency had given the coordinates of the facility to the Zionist entity but it was still hit. On the ground, an AFP journalist saw dozens of people crying amid bodies. Distraught adults stood around a dead child laid on a blood-stained stretcher.

A woman held the child's hand as the emergency blanket was wrapped around his body, a shiny substitute for a shroud. People dressed in UNRWA vests inspected damage to the building. In a classroom where dozens of people had been staying, chunks of concrete were strewn across the floor, along with mattresses and Batman-themed sheets.

'We were sleeping'

"We were sleeping and at 2 o'clock we woke up to the ceiling, walls,

and windows falling on us," Salman Al-Maqqdama told AFP, having just returned from the hospital with his head wrapped in gauze and numerous scars on his face.

Ziad Al-Qatrawi, also displaced, said those killed were civilians who had fled "their homes in the north and came here to hide, to live a safe life". Laundry was still hanging on the remaining intact railings behind Gamal Fnouna, a displaced Gazan.

"Where do we go after eight months? They (the Zionist army) have chased us around and told us to come to these places which are supposed to be safe." Many UNRWA buildings throughout the Gaza Strip were turned into shelters for civilians, due to the space they offer and the perception that UN buildings would be safer. UNRWA says most of its schools housing displaced have been damaged by the war, some having been razed to the ground. — AFP

At least 104 killed in attack by RSF: Sudan committee:

CAIRO/DUBAI: Sudan's army said on Thursday it would deliver a "harsh response" to an attack a day earlier on a village by the Sudanese paramilitary Rapid Support Forces that pro-democracy activists said killed more than 100 people. The attack was the largest in a string of dozens of attacks by RSF soldiers on small villages across the farming state after it took control of the capital Wad Madani in December.

Army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan's statement followed accusations by the local activists that the army did not respond to pleas for help on Wednesday. The army did not reply to a request for comment. The top United Nations official in Sudan on Thursday called for an investigation into the attack in Wad Alnouri village in Gezira State in central Sudan. "Even by the tragic standards of Sudan's conflict, the images emerging from Wad Al-Noura are heart-breaking," said UN Humanitarian Coordinator Clementine Nkweta-Salami in a statement.

She cited photos shared on social media by the Wad Madani Resistance Committee, which has been tracking such attacks, showing what it described as dozens of victims wrapped for burial. The committee said on Thursday that 104 were killed and hundreds injured in Wad Alnouri and that the RSF was moving towards other villages.

"Wad Alnoura village ... witnessed a genocide on Wednesday after the RSF attacked twice," the committee said in a statement late on Wednesday. A telecommunications blackout prevented Reuters from reaching medics or residents to verify the details.

The RSF began fighting with the army in April 2023 after disputes over the integration of the two forces, and has since taken over the capital Khartoum and most of western Sudan. It is now seeking to advance into the centre, as United Nations agencies say the people of Sudan are at "imminent risk of famine".

In a statement late Wednesday, the RSF said it had attacked three army camps in the Wad Al-Noura area, and clashed with its enemy "outside the city". The resistance committee called the RSF's statement an "expected" attempt to "criminalize the people of Wad al-Noura and label them a legitimate target".

The Wad Madani Resistance Committee accused the RSF on Wednesday of using heavy artillery against civilians, looting and driving women and children to seek refuge in the nearby town of Managil. "The people of Wad Alnoura called on the army to rescue them, but they shamefully did not respond," the committee said. — Agencies



In this file photo, men transfer body bags carrying migrants who died after their boat capsized.



Egyptian survivor Mahmoud Shalabi, 22, one of the 104 survivors of the deadly migrant shipwreck, rests in a shelter in this file photo. — Reuters photos

Justice out of reach a year after Greece migrant boat tragedy

ATHENS/BEIRUT: Egyptian electrician Mahmoud Shalabi was the only person from his hometown to survive when a fishing trawler crammed with migrants capsized off Greece a year ago, killing hundreds in one of the deadliest recorded boat disasters in the Mediterranean.

Sixteen friends from Shalabi's neighborhood outside Cairo were never found. Today, their relatives call him daily to see if the missing have turned up alive, or if there is any news about what caused the boat to sink that day last June. "No one is accepting that they might be dead," said Shalabi in an interview in Athens, where the 23-year-old is doing odd jobs

while his asylum application is processed. "Families are being tortured every day, not knowing anything about their son or their brother or their father."

The disaster on June 14 off southwestern Greece sent shockwaves across Europe and beyond and raised questions about the European Union's tactics to stem the flow of migrants from Africa and the Middle East. The boat had set off from Libya. But a year on, no independent investigation has been completed into the coast guard's role, no one has been held accountable, and relatives await news of the fate of loved ones, according to interviews with a dozen survivors, relatives and lawyers.

The coast guard declined to comment. Shipping minister Christos Stylianides said the courts will find out what happened, in time. "We have to be patient," he told Reuters. The cause of the shipwreck is disputed. Survivors say the authorities caused the boat to capsize when they tried to tow it. Authorities say the boat refused assistance. In a report compiled one week after the incident, two experts appointed

by the coast guard concluded that the movement of migrants onboard likely made it tip over. Definitive answers will help ensure such disasters don't happen again, witnesses say.

Greece's coastguard was aware of the migrant ship on the morning of June 13, and monitored it from the air. The ship sent out distress calls, but a coast guard boat did not arrive until 11 pm. The vessel sank three hours later. The situation on board was desperate. Supplies had run out. Shalabi was asleep below deck and woken by screams as the boat began to take on water. He swam to the surface, which was crowded with floating corpses.

Up to 700 people were estimated to be on board. Some 104 survived and 82 corpses were recovered. The rest are missing. The search for survivors proved fruitless. Greek authorities for months blamed nine Egyptians on board, but they were released last month when a Greek court dismissed the case. The focus of investigations is now likely to fall on the coast guard, legal experts said. — Reuters

International

In first, SpaceX's mega rocket succeeds in ocean splashdown

Rocket key to Musk's vision of colonizing Mars, making humanity an interplanetary species

BOCA CHICA: SpaceX's massive Starship rocket achieved its first ever splashdown during a test flight Thursday, in a major milestone for the prototype system that may one day send humans to Mars.

Sparks and debris flew off the spaceship as it came down over the Indian Ocean northwest of Australia, dramatic video captured by an onboard camera showed, even as it succeeded in its goal of surviving atmospheric re-entry.

"Despite loss of many tiles and a damaged flap, Starship made it all the way to a soft landing in the ocean!" tweeted SpaceX CEO Elon Musk. "Congratulations SpaceX team on an epic achievement!!" The most powerful rocket ever built blasted off from the company's Starbase in Boca Chica, Texas at 7:50 am (1250 GMT), before entering orbit and soaring half-way across the globe, in a journey that lasted around an hour and five minutes.

Starship is key to Musk's vision of colonizing the Red Planet and making humanity an interplanetary species, while NASA has contracted a modified version to act as the final vehicle that will take astronauts down to the surface of the Moon under the Artemis program later this decade.

Three previous attempts have ended in its fiery destruction, all part of what the company says is an acceptable cost in its rapid trial-and-error approach to development. "The payload for these flight tests is data," SpaceX said on X, a mantra repeated throughout the flight by the commentary team.

During the last test in March, the spaceship managed to fly for 49 minutes before it was lost as it careened into the atmosphere at around 27,000 kilometers per hour (nearly 17,000 mph). Since then,

SpaceX made several software and hardware upgrades. On Thursday it also succeeded in the first soft splashdown for the first stage booster called Super Heavy, in the Gulf of Mexico, to massive applause from engineers at mission control in Hawthorne in California.

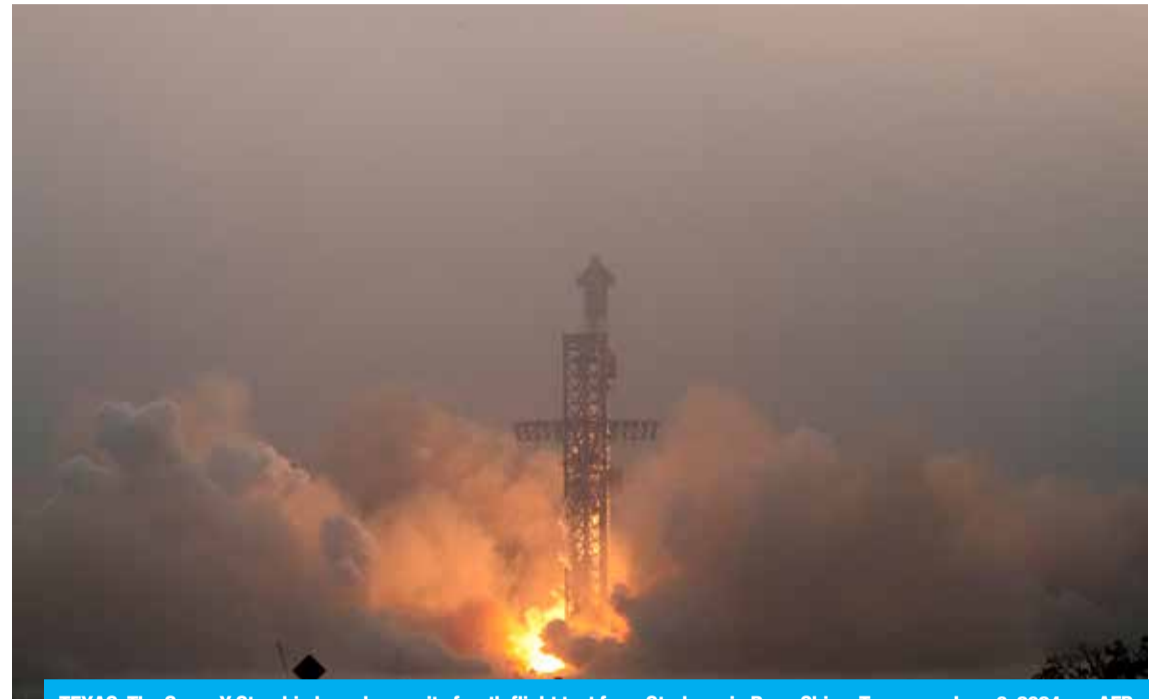
The cheers grew even louder in the flight's final minutes. Ground teams whooped and hollered as the upper stage glowed a fiery red during its descent, in footage relayed by SpaceX's Starlink satellite network. A piece of flying debris even cracked the camera lens, but the ship ultimately stuck the landing.

"Congratulations SpaceX on Starship's successful test flight this morning!" NASA chief Bill Nelson wrote on X. "We are another step closer to returning humanity to the Moon through #Artemis - then looking onward to Mars."

Twice as powerful as Saturn V

Designed to eventually be fully reusable, Starship stands 397 feet (121 meters) tall with both stages combined - 90 feet taller than the Statue of Liberty. Its Super Heavy booster produces 16.7 million pounds (74.3 Meganewtons) of thrust, about twice as powerful as the Saturn V rockets used during the Apollo missions - though later versions should be more powerful still.

SpaceX's strategy of carrying out tests in the real world rather than in labs has paid off in the past. Its Falcon 9 rockets have come to be workhorses for NASA and the commercial sector, its Dragon capsule sends astronauts and cargo to the International Space Station, and its Starlink internet satellite constellation now covers dozens of countries.



TEXAS: The SpaceX Starship launches on its fourth flight test from Starbase in Boca Chica, Texas, on June 6, 2024. — AFP

But the clock is ticking for SpaceX to be ready for NASA's planned return of astronauts to the Moon in 2026, using a modified Starship as the final vehicle to take astronauts from orbit down to the surface.

To accomplish this, SpaceX will need to first place a primary Starship in orbit, then use multiple "Starship tankers" to fill it up with supercooled fuel

for the onward journey - a complex engineering feat that has never before been accomplished.

At least one SpaceX fan has grown tired of waiting. Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa announced this week he has canceled a planned trip around the Moon on Starship with a crew of artists, because he has no idea when it might actually happen. — AFP

Japan lawmakers investigate UFO security 'threat'

TOKYO: UFO sightings should not be dismissed out of hand because they could in fact be surveillance drones or weapons, say Japanese lawmakers who launched a group on Thursday to probe the matter. The non-partisan group, which counts former defense ministers among its 80-plus members, will urge Japan to ramp up abilities to detect and analyze unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP), more commonly known as UFOs.

Although the phenomenon is often associated with little green men in the popular imagination, it has become a hot political topic in the United States. Washington said last year it was examining 510 UFO reports - more than triple the number in its 2021 file - and NASA in September said it wants to shift the conversation "from sensationalism to science".

The Japanese parliamentarians hope to bring the domestic perception of UAP in line with its ally's following several scares related to suspected surveillance operations. "It is extremely irresponsible of us to be resigned to the fact that something is unknowable, and to keep turning a blind eye to the unidentified," group member and former defense minister Yasukazu Hamada said before the launch.

In an embarrassment for Japan's defense ministry, unauthorized footage of a docked helicopter destroyer recently spread on Chinese social media after an apparent drone intrusion into a military facility. And last year the ministry said it "strongly presumes" that flying objects sighted in Japanese skies in recent years were surveillance balloons sent by China. — AFP

N Korean missile researcher now a S Korean lawmaker

SEOUL: Park Choong-kwon was once a member of an elite North Korean unit that developed long-range missiles. Now, as a lawmaker in the South, he is sounding the alarm over Kim Jong Un's weapons. As a teenager in the North, Park was plucked from his regular classroom and sent to a school for gifted kids, from where he quickly progressed to the country's National Defense University.

But he disliked the military discipline and was disillusioned by high-level corruption, eventually deciding to defect to the South, where the 38-year-old was sworn in as a lawmaker last month. Set up in the 1960s, Park's alma mater is a key part of the nuclear-armed North's banned weapons programs - it takes the country's top brains and uses them to further Kim's quest for bigger and better missiles, satellites and nuclear warheads.

The university "was created with the main goal of making intercontinental ballistic missiles," said Park, who studied there from 2003 to 2007. Under Kim Jong Un - who took over from his late father in 2011 - the university has been expanded, with new departments for hypersonics, satellites and nuclear, and the pace of weapons development is more advanced than many outsiders understand, he said.

"The North started publicly rolling out its new weapons lineups in 2017, including hypersonic missiles, strategic surface to surface missiles ... and hydrogen bombs," he said. "But the development of these weapons was already 80 to 90 percent complete when I escaped in 2009."

North Korea's attempt to put a second spy satellite into orbit last week may have ended in a mid-air explosion, but Park says even failure shows how ad-

vanced the country's programs really are. "They are trying a new engine test even when they are capable of putting one satellite into orbit with an existing engine," said Park, who was born and raised in the eastern coastal city of Hamhung, and is the fourth defector to become an MP in the South.

Hacking unit

The only institution in North Korea that got to choose its students ahead of the National Defense University was the hacking unit, Park told AFP. "The top two students in my class were recruited to the hacking unit," he said.

North Korea's cyber-program dates back to at least the mid-1990s, but has grown to a 6,000-strong cyberspace unit, known as Bureau 121, that operates from several countries including Belarus, China, India, Malaysia and Russia, according to a 2020 US military report. Park told AFP the North puts meticulous care into nurturing hackers, who have stolen hundreds of millions of dollars of cryptocurrencies and other digital assets in recent years, industry data shows. They are a key source of revenue for Kim's government as sanctions continue to bite.

Park himself majored in chemical engineering, and quickly became involved in making long-range missiles designed to hit targets on the US mainland. But despite his elite status within North Korean society, he became disillusioned with the system.

Forced to study key texts in which former leader Kim Jong Il refuted attacks on Korean-style socialism, Park found "the criticisms made more sense to me". Then, in his final year at the university, he discovered that to get a good work placement after graduation, he would need to pay. "Bribing officials \$3,000 would land you a job in Pyongyang," he said, adding that the country's ruling Rodong party was "corrupt to its core".

"After that I began to see the suffering of the people. The last hopes and dreams I had for the system all faded away. There was nothing I could do to change from within," he said. "So, I decided to defect." In 2009, after meticulously planning his escape so as not to put his



SEOUL: Newly-elected lawmaker Park Choong-kwon, who defected to South Korea from North Korea in 2009, poses outside the National Assembly Building in Seoul. — AFP

remaining family at risk, he crossed the Tumen river to China, and then made his way to the South.

Forever enemy

Once safely in Seoul, Park decided to study for his doctorate at the top Seoul National University, before going to work at Hyundai Steel. Last year, the ruling People Power Party, which advocates a tough line on North Korea, recruited him to run for parliament - and he won office in April legislative elections.

Park says he plans to work on North Korea issues during his term, but not exclusively, as he has other interests and areas of expertise, as an engineer for example. Getting information from the outside world to people in tightly controlled North Korea is key to changing the situation, he said.

"North Korea employs a two-track strategy of maintaining the regime's power: designating an outside enemy to stir a sense of crisis among its people and showcasing new weapons to give a sense of pride," Park told AFP. But if the North Korean public "awaken", this strategy will stop working, he said, meaning that the endless cycle of "provocation" can end. — AFP

Zionist massacre at Gaza school...

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait's ministry of foreign affairs strongly condemned a provocative march led by the Zionist occupation's government, Knesset members and a number of settlers in Jerusalem, violating the sanctity of the Holy Mosque and assaulting Palestinians. In a statement on Thursday, the ministry denounced such a horrendous act that undermines the two-state solution and promotes a culture of hatred and violence.

In another development, the Zionist military reported a rare attack near the Gaza border, saying a squad of Palestinian fighters killed a soldier and three of them were killed in return fire. A statement by Hamas armed wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, said its fighters had conducted an operation behind enemy lines in the Rafah area of southern Gaza. The Zionist military offensive has killed at least 36,654 people in Gaza, mostly women and children.

As the fighting has raged on, the Zionist entity has faced growing diplomatic isolation, with international court cases accusing it of war crimes and several European countries recognizing a Palestinian state. Spain, which last week sparked Zionist fury by formally recognizing Palestinian statehood, said Thursday it would become the latest country to join South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice accusing the Zionist entity of genocide against

Palestinians in Gaza. Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said Madrid's "sole goal is to put an end to the war and to advance" a two-state solution to the conflict.

Albares, asked if he felt the Zionist entity's actions in Gaza amounted to genocide, said it was up to the court to decide. "At the moment we see a large-scale war that does not distinguish between civilian and military targets in Gaza, as well as the enormous risk of regional spillover," he added. Several Latin American nations, including Colombia and Mexico, have already joined South Africa's proceedings before the court. Until now, however, no European country has taken that step. Ireland has also indicated it plans to join the case.

"It is urgent that we all support the court so that precautionary measures aimed at stopping any military operation are respected," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said at an economic forum. "And it is essential that we all strengthen the United Nations, supporting the role of the court as the highest judicial organ of a rules-based international system. Have no doubt: Spain will stand on the right side of history." US President Joe Biden last week outlined what he called a three-phase Zionist plan to halt the fighting for six weeks while captives are exchanged for Palestinian prisoners in Zionist jails and the delivery of aid into Gaza is stepped up. Major sticking points remain, however, with Hamas insisting on a permanent truce and full Zionist withdrawal - demands the Zionist entity has rejected. Egypt's state-linked Al-Qahera news quoted a high-level source on Thursday saying that Cairo had "received positive signs from the Palestinian movement signaling its aspiration for a ceasefire". — Agencies

had carefully prepared her bag, including a sheet of paper with a long list of prayers that her relatives has asked her to make on their behalf in the holy city of Makkah.

At least 7,000 Syrians have already flown to Makkah since the flights resumed, Bassem Mansour, the director-general of the Syrian Civil Aviation authority, said. "Our equipment and airports are safe, our airstrips are good, and our planes are good," Mansour told Reuters. Damascus International Airport has been hit by Zionist air strikes repeatedly in recent years, part of the Zionist entity's campaign against Syrian installations used by Tehran for weapons transfers. — Reuters

Democracy 'at risk' as leaders...

Continued from Page 1

years ago and is not the answer today," he said. "Real alliances make us stronger - a lesson that I pray we Americans never forget."

Biden also vowed that, under his leadership, the United States "will not walk away" from Ukraine "because if we do, Ukraine will be subjugated and it will not end there". "Ukraine's neighbors will be threatened, all of Europe will be threatened," he added, describing Russian President Vladimir Putin as a "tyrant bent on domination". He said that to surrender to bullies or "bow down to dictators" is "simply unthinkable".

Kyiv has been pushing Europe to up its military support, with Russia in recent months gaining the upper hand on the battlefield and concerns growing over what a Trump presidency could mean for the conflict. "Allies defended Europe's freedom then, and Ukrainians do so now. Unity prevailed then, and true unity can prevail to-

day," Zelensky said in a post on X. Arriving at the ceremony he shook hands with wheelchair-bound veterans, bowing down in respect to them.

Canada's Trudeau said democracy was "threatened by aggressors who want to redraw borders". "Our way of life did not happen by accident," he said at the Canadian ceremony. The biggest guests of honor were some 180 surviving veterans in their late 90s or even over 100, some in wheelchairs and huddled in blankets as they gazed over the shores. Macron awarded a dozen of them France's highest honor, the Legion d'Honneur.

King Charles III at the British memorial at Ver-sur-Mer that overlooks Gold beach, one of the landing sites for British troops, said: "Our gratitude is unfailing and our admiration eternal." "Free nations must stand together to oppose tyranny," he said. "Let us pray such sacrifice need never be made again."

British veteran Cecil Newton said he was upset that so many young men were killed. "All those who were in action will always be with me, with us. I can see them now," Newton, 100, said. King Charles noted that veterans were becoming fewer, adding: "Our obligation to remember them, what they stood for and what they achieved for us all can never diminish." — AFP

take a greater economic toll in the farm belt than initially thought. Farmers have long culled poultry infected by the virus, but cows cost much more to raise than chickens or turkeys. A US Department of Agriculture spokesperson said the agency knew of a few deaths but that the vast majority of cows recover well. Reuters was not able to determine the total number of cows with bird flu that died or were killed in South Dakota, Michigan, Texas, Ohio and Colorado. Avian flu has infected dairy cows in more than 80 herds across 10 states since late March, according to the USDA.

Some of the animals died of secondary infections contracted after bird flu weakened their immune systems, said state veterinarians, agriculture officials, and academics assisting in state responses to bird flu. Other cows were killed by farmers because they failed to recover from the virus. Cattle infected with bird flu suffer reduced milk production, digestive issues, fever and diminished appetite, according to farmers and veterinarians. — Agencies

As Saudi ties thaw, Syrians...

Continued from Page 1

While some Syrians living in government-held areas had been able to attend the hajj in past years by taking flights with layovers, such long trips had proved too strenuous for many elderly people. Huda Abu Sha'ar said she had felt a "big joy" when she heard direct flights had restarted. She

International



Music shop owner Amar Kheder



Judge Ahmed Hureithi



Azad Hassan, an Iraqi student

A decade on, three Iraqis recount IS horrors in Mosul

‘Willpower always prevails. They wanted to break me, but they lost’

MOSUL: When the Islamic State group rampaged through Iraq's ancient city of Mosul a decade ago, the jihadists killed thousands, upended countless more lives and left deep scars among the survivors. Under their self-declared "caliphate" stretching across swathes of Syria and Iraq, they committed beheadings, torture and enslavement, turning life into living hell and leaving behind mass graves.

The Sunni Muslim extremists seized Mosul on June 10, 2014 and the group's then leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, soon made his first public appearance in the city's iconic Great Mosque of Al-Nuri. In the lands they controlled, the jihadists banned music, burnt books and punished perceived wrongdoers by stoning them and cutting off the fingers of smokers and the hands of alleged thieves.

It was not until 2017 that US-backed Iraqi forces drove IS out of Mosul in one of the bloodiest urban battles of modern times, leaving behind a city in rubble and despair. When the guns fell silent, Mosul's traumatized residents were left to rebuild their shattered lives. AFP spoke to three of them about their memories of that terrible time.

The student

Azad Hassan, 29, was a young student when IS came, and he suffered the full brunt of their violence. He lost one of his hands to the jihadists, and relatives whom he never saw again. He recalled the terrifying spring morning in 2015 when a crowd gathered in a Mosul square, with all eyes fixed on him, his brother and two other men.

His heart thumped in his chest when he saw the people cheering, their excitement strangely reminding him of a football match. "It was as if Real Madrid and Barcelona were playing," the 29-year-old recalled, before adding that the situation was deadly serious. IS fighters "cut off our hands", Hassan said, explaining that they were being punished for a feud with a jihadist. The family's suffering did not end there. IS detained Hassan's brother and three other relatives, and they remain missing to this day. Hassan said he did



MOSUL: An Iraqi boy rides his bicycle across a building destroyed during the battles to defeat the Islamic State group, in the old city of Mosul in northern Iraq, on May 20, 2024. — AFP photos

not give in to a thirst for revenge, but kept studying, started a family and would soon receive his Master's diploma in Arabic literature.

Now the father of a seven-year-old, he said he has also become an advocate for people with disabilities and for missing persons. Although he admits to often having to battle negative feelings, he said that his "willpower always prevails". "They wanted to break me, but they lost," he said. "I now go to university, play football and drive. But the scar is still here."

The judge

Two days before the jihadists swept into Mosul,

Judge Ahmed Hureithi left the city to find refuge in Baghdad, but then the extremists came for his family. They detained his father and two brothers, and later beheaded the youngest "with a sword". He was only 17 years old. "They published pictures," said Hureithi, 60. "They were proud of such acts."

Years later, Hureithi would preside over a court in the capital Baghdad, judging hundreds of former fighters for unleashing their reign of terror. In 2019, he sentenced to death 11 French nationals, although they are still being held in an Iraqi prison. "I ruled according to Iraqi law," Hureithi said. "The evidence was sufficient and clear."

The courts have handed down hundreds of death and life sentences to people convicted of "terrorism" in trials that some human rights groups have denounced as hasty. Hureithi is adamant that he bears no grudge against the defendants and that he "acted with great impartiality".

Hureithi returned to a still-devastated Mosul in 2020, and is now vice president of Nineveh province's court of appeal. "I didn't recognize the city," the judge recalled. "It was as if I was entering it for the first time."

The music lover

When IS invaded the city, music shop owner Amar Kheder had one goal: to get his beloved music collection out of harm's way before the jihadists destroyed it. He arranged for a food truck driver to take his decades-old collection of vinyl, tapes, radios and gramophones to friends in Baghdad.

"We concealed the boxes behind the food," Kheder, 50, recalled. "Once the archive was out of harm's way, I was relieved." Jihadists turned up once to enquire about the music shop, but by then he had already turned it into a secondhand clothing store.

He decided to stay in Mosul in the belief that IS rule would last just a few months. In the end, it was three years before the jihadists were ejected. Undeterred by the destruction in the city, Kheder restored his shop and sent to Baghdad for the treasures that his family had collected over more than 50 years. His is not just any store, but a balm for the soul, he said. "I consider it a pharmacy ... it offers each person a remedy."

Today, Kheder's shop is again filled with a trove of music history. Vinyl discs, cassette tapes and CDs occupy every corner — many Iraqi and Arab artists, but also Bach and Beethoven. Vintage round tables, classic radios and old recording machines take center stage, and the walls are adorned with framed pictures of iconic Arab singers from a bygone era. After so much suffering, Kheder said, his music treasure in Mosul has survived and "life has come back ... to a city for historians, intellectuals and scholars". — AFP



RAMALLAH: Workers from the Gaza Strip who had crossed to the Zionist entity to work before Oct 7, rest in a temporary shelter in the occupied West Bank after being expelled from the Zionist entity in this file photo. — AFP

Zionists 'decimating' Palestinian workers' rights: UN official

GENEVA: The head of the International Labour Organization on Thursday criticized the decimation of Palestinian workers' labor rights since the start of the Zionist war in Gaza and called for an end to new restrictions blocking them from working in the Zionist entity.

The entity's treatment of Palestinian workers, under scrutiny for decades by the UN labor body, has increased since the Oct 7 war with criticism focused on more than half a million job losses and the entity's exclusion of some 200,000 Palestinians from the Zionist entity for security reasons.

"This has been the hardest year for Palestinian workers since 1967," ILO Director-General Gilbert Houngbo told the Geneva meeting, referring to the date of the war when the entity seized the West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem from Jordan and the Gaza Strip from Egypt.

Labor rights had been "decimated", he said in a speech presenting an ILO report on Palestinian working conditions, while asking the Zionist entity to reopen its labor market.

His call was echoed by Palestine's Minister of Labour, many diplomats from countries including Egypt and workers' groups. One became emotional describing conditions in Gaza where more than 36,000 people have been killed in the Zionist entity's military operation, according to Gaza health authorities.

At the same meeting, dozens of delegates later walked out of the UN meeting room as the entity outlined its position.

The Zionist delegate Yeela Cytrin blamed the exclusion of Palestinian workers from the entity on Hamas, saying they had targeted commuter routes on and after the Oct 7 attack where 1,200 were killed and over 250 taken hostage, according to Zionist tallies. "The path to improving labor conditions does not lie in blind condemnation of (the Zionist entity)," she said of the meeting.

The ILO, one of the oldest UN bodies created after World War One, aims to promote compliance with international labor standards. While its report is an annual event since 1980 it is the first time the body has made prescriptive recommendations. One of them, besides the call for the Zionist entity to reopen its labor market, is for the ILO to play a role in Gaza's recovery by helping with job creation and social protection schemes for workers. "The simple fact that the Palestinian people can have decent jobs back, it would help with the healing," said Houngbo. — Reuters

Zionist bombs of white phosphorus stalk south Lebanon

BEIRUT: Mohammad Hammud, in his late 70s, was at home with his wife in a south Lebanon border village when Zionist bombing hit. This time, the attack was different. "Fire broke out in front of the house ... there was a strange smell ... we had trouble breathing," he told AFP by telephone from his village of Hula. "We thought it was a regular bombing but when the emergency responders arrived they told us it was phosphorus and took us to hospital," he said. The Zionist military and Lebanon's Hezbollah movement have been exchanging near-daily fire since the October 7 Hamas attack and the Zionist war on Gaza. Lebanon has accused the Zionist entity of using controversial white phosphorus rounds, in attacks authorities say have harmed civilians and the environment. White phosphorus, a substance that ignites on contact with oxygen, can be used to create smokescreens and to illuminate battlefields. But the munition can also be used as an incendiary weapon and can cause fires, horrific burns, respiratory damage, organ failure and death.

"(The Zionist entity's) widespread use of white phosphorus in south Lebanon is putting civilians at grave risk and contributing to civilian displacement," Human Rights Watch said in a report released Wednesday. The rights watchdog said it "verified the use of white phosphorus munitions by Zionist forces in at least 17 municipalities across south Lebanon since October", including five where it was "unlawfully used overpopulated residential areas".

AFP photographs taken on at least 10 separate occasions between October and April show eerie, octo-

pus-like smoke plumes consistent with white phosphorus. The images were taken in at least eight different locations along the border, several times in apparent proximity to houses.

The Zionist army said in October its procedures require that white phosphorus rounds "are not used in densely populated areas, subject to certain exceptions". "This complies and goes beyond the requirements of international law," it said in a statement, adding that the army "does not use such shells for purposes of targeting or setting fire".

'Asphyxiation'

Lebanon's official National News Agency has repeatedly reported Zionist phosphorus bombing in south Lebanon, including in recent days, sometimes causing fires. The agency said "phosphorus shells fell between the houses" in Hula on January 28 after "enemy artillery" targeted the village. Hammud said he and his wife, in her 60s, were admitted to hospital in nearby Mais Al-Jabal after the attack that day, receiving treatment including oxygen. The hospital told AFP that four civilians, two of them women, were admitted to intensive care for "asphyxiation and severe shortness of breath due to white phosphorus", including a man in his 70s and a woman in her 60s.

Lebanon's health ministry said Wednesday it had registered 178 people as suffering from "chemical exposure due to white phosphorus" since October, a figure that does not distinguish between fighters and civilians. Doctors at three other hospitals in south Lebanon told AFP their facilities had treated people with respiratory symptoms of white phosphorus exposure.

Brian Castner, a weapons investigator for Amnesty International's crisis team, said "using white phosphorus in areas populated by civilians can constitute indiscriminate attacks, which are a violation of international humanitarian law". "If civilians are injured or killed that can be a war crime," he added. — AFP



A picture taken from the Zionist border with Lebanon shows shells exploding over hills around the southern Lebanese village of Aita Al-Shaab on December 8, 2023. — AFP

FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 2024

Modi's appeal clouded in India by prices, jobs, graft: Survey

Opposition leader seeks probe into stock market moves during election

NEW DELHI: Lack of jobs, high inflation and falling income in India led voters to rein in support for Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the general election where his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) failed to win a majority, according to a survey.

Modi's was named the leader on Wednesday of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) that won a simple majority, the first time his Hindu nationalist BJP has to lean on regional parties for support to form the government.

The NDA won 293 seats in the 543-member lower house of parliament, more than the simple majority of 272 seats needed to form a government. However, his party BJP won only 240 seats. The INDIA alliance led by Rahul Gandhi's centrist Congress party won over 232 seats, more than forecast.

At least 30 percent of voters said they were worried about inflation, a jump from the 20 percent prior to the election, according to a survey by Lokniti-CSDS, the Hindu newspaper said. The agency spoke to nearly 20,000 voters across 23 of India's 28 states throughout the voting period, it said. The Hindu said that in an earlier survey conducted before the election, unemployment was the main concern of 32 percent of the respondents. "However, during the campaign, possibly on account of the promises of employment resonated with voters, this proportion was reduced to 27 percent in the post-poll survey," the newspaper said.

Decreasing income and the government's way of dealing with corruption and scams were other issues worrying voters, according to the survey. A total of 21 percent of the respondents said they chose the BJP for its efforts

in developing the country while 20 percent did so for Modi's leadership, which doubled from the 10 percent in the pre-poll survey. Construction of a grand Hindu temple in the town of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh state in January, cited several times by Modi and the BJP as a landmark event, was the most liked work of the government, according to the survey.

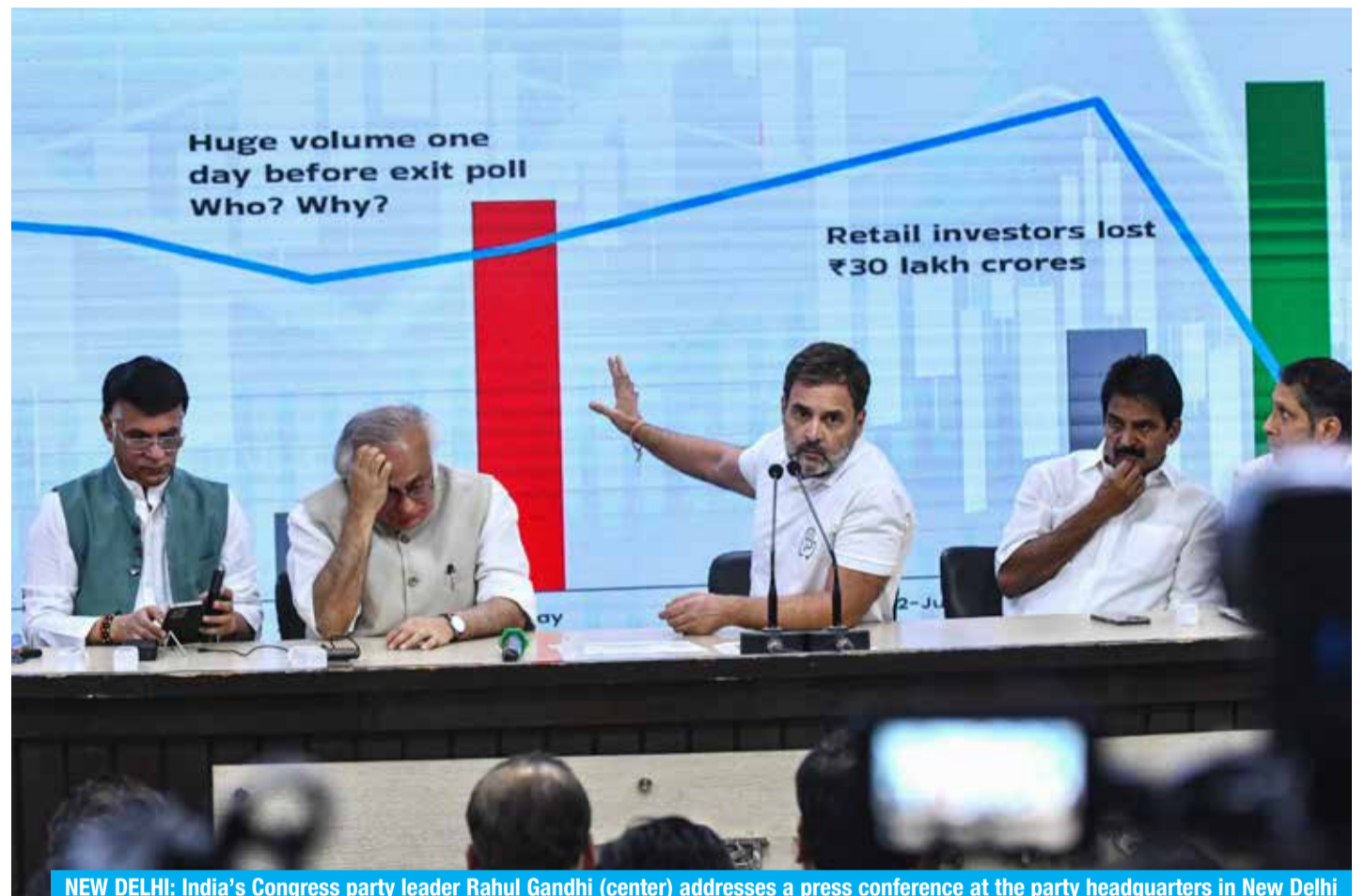
Despite that, the party was unable to win the Faizabad seat where Ayodhya is located. It also performed poorly in other parts of Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state which sends 80 lawmakers to parliament. The BJP's share of seats there slipped to 33 from 62 at the last election.

Meanwhile, India's opposition Congress leader Rahul Gandhi demanded a parliamentary investigation on Thursday into sharp stock market moves before and after the exit polls following the country's general election that concluded last week. Modi's alliance won the vote with a surprisingly slim majority, well below the landslide forecast by the weekend exit polls.

Projections made by Saturday's exit polls sent stock markets surging on Monday, with the NSE Nifty 50 and S&P BSE Sensex jumping 3.3 percent and 3.4 percent respectively, a day before the Election Commission counted votes and declared results.

Modi and some of his ministers had said during campaigning that the markets would surge when results were declared on June 4, with Home Minister Amit Shah saying in a television interview, "buy before June 4, they will shoot up".

Stock markets, however, crashed to a four-year low on Tuesday - down



NEW DELHI: India's Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi (center) addresses a press conference at the party headquarters in New Delhi on June 6, 2024. — AFP

nearly 6 percent - after election results showed Modi's BJP lost its outright majority and the BJP-led NDA won a narrow majority to give Modi a third term.

"We are interested in having a JPC to investigate the role of the prime minister, home minister, BJP members," Congress leader Rahul Gandhi told reporters, refer-

ring to comments made by them during the campaign and a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe. "We want to understand who are the foreign investors who did these trades?" he said. Markets regulator the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment.

A source familiar with the developments said SEBI was examining share trade patterns ahead of the exit polls and general election results for any suspicious transactions. Modi's office, an aide of Shah and a BJP spokesperson did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment. — Reuters

Krti wins in Visa competition in Doha



KUWAIT: Krti Fintech has triumphed in Visa's competition, showcasing a service designed for the financial, banking, and commercial sectors, with a specific focus on customers. After qualifying for the finals of the Visa Everywhere Initiative Kuwait and Qatar edition, Krti has been recognized among Fintech's top financial technology projects. Krti was established by Abdulrahman Al-Hammadi, Founder & CEO, Abdullah Al-Baker Co-Founder, CLO and COO, and Naser Borelli, CBO.

Krti provides technical solutions through a comprehensive application that leverages artificial intelligence. The app maximizes the benefits of loyalty and reward programs offered by merchants to their customers, enhancing the advantages of bank cards. This collaboration across various sectors aims to deliver added value and innovation in the field of financial technologies.

ECB cuts rates, keeps next move under wraps

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank cut interest rates for the first time in five years on Thursday but kept investors in the dark about its next move given increasing uncertainty over inflation after a sharp slowdown in the past year. The ECB lowered its record-high deposit rate by 25 basis points to 3.75 percent, joining the central banks of Canada, Sweden and Switzerland in starting to unwind some of the steepest rate hikes used to tame a post-pandemic inflation surge.

Thursday's well-flagged move is seen as the start of an easing cycle, but lingering price and wage pressures are clouding the outlook and may force the eurozone's central bank to wait months before cutting again. "The Governing Council will continue to follow a data-dependent and meeting-by-meeting approach to determining the appropriate level and duration of restriction," the ECB said in a statement.

While the ECB kept open its options for July, a

IEA: Clean energy investment to hit \$2 trillion in 2024

LONDON: Global investment in clean energy technology and infrastructure is set to hit \$2 trillion this year, twice the amount going into fossil fuels, an International Energy Agency report showed. Total energy investment is expected to exceed \$3 trillion for the first time in 2024, the IEA said in its annual World Energy Investment report. Some \$2 trillion is set to go to clean technologies - including renewables, electric vehicles, nuclear power, grids, storage, low-emissions fuels, efficiency improvements and heat pumps - with the rest directed towards gas, oil and coal.

string of influential policymakers, including board member Isabel Schnabel and Dutch central bank chief Klaas Knot have already made the case for a pause next month, suggesting the next window of opportunity for easing will be in September.

Economists see another two rate cuts from the ECB this year, most likely in September and December, while markets are pricing in between one and two more moves - a big change from the start of the year, when more than five cuts were anticipated. "Interest rate decisions will be based on its assessment of the inflation outlook in light of the incoming economic and financial data, the dynamics of underlying inflation and the strength of monetary policy transmission," the ECB added. "The Governing Council is not pre-committing to a particular rate path."

Conservative policymakers, who still appear to command a majority on the rate-setting Governing Council, have argued that the ECB is not in any hurry to cut since a rebound in the economy proves high rates are not choking off growth. Part of their caution may be due to unexpectedly stubborn inflation. Indeed, the ECB raised its 2025 inflation projection to 2.2 percent on Thursday from 2.0 percent.

"Despite the progress over recent quarters, domestic price pressures remain strong as wage growth is elevated, and inflation is likely to stay

Combined investment in renewable power and grids overtook the amount spent on fossil fuels for the first time in 2023. "For every dollar going to fossil fuels today, almost two dollars are invested in clean energy," said IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol. "The rise in clean energy spending is underpinned by strong economics, continued cost reductions and by considerations of energy security," he added. China is set to account for the largest share of clean energy investment in 2024 with an estimated \$675 billion, while Europe is set to account for \$370 billion and the United States \$315 billion.

More spending is focused on solar photovoltaic (PV) than any other electricity generation technology with investment set to grow to \$500 billion in 2024 due to falling solar module prices.

Global upstream oil and gas investment is expected to increase by 7 percent in 2024 to \$570 billion, following a similar rise in 2023. This was mostly led by national oil companies in the Middle East and



European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde attends a news conference following the ECB's monetary policy meeting in Frankfurt, Germany, June 6, 2024. — Reuters

above target well into next year," the ECB said.

Some economists say the biggest risk to the rate cut schedule is actually the US Federal Reserve, not wages and inflation. The Fed has clearly signaled a delay in policy easing and a further delay in US rate cuts is likely to make the ECB more cautious too, as a widening interest rate differential would weaken the euro and raise imported inflation. Attention now turns to ECB President Christine Lagarde's press conference, where she is likely to be grilled about the ECB's likely next moves. — Reuters



The International Energy Agency chief Fatih Birol poses during an interview with Reuters in Paris. — Reuters

Asia, the report said. However, there are still shortfalls in energy investment in parts of the world such as emerging economies and developing economies outside China, it added. — Reuters

World stocks at record high after cautious ECB cut

NEW YORK/LONDON: World stocks hit an all-time high and the euro rose on Thursday after the European Central Bank cut interest rates for the first time in nearly five years, but also signaled that further moves could take a while. ECB policymakers duly delivered their widely-flagged quarter-point cut to 3.75 percent, but markets were left feeling a little deflated after the bank also said it now did not expect inflation to fall back to target until 2026.

It was enough to snip the pan-European

STOXX 600's gains back to 0.6 percent, while the euro inched up to almost \$1.0890 against the dollar and government bond yields - which reflect borrowing costs and move inversely to price - ticked up too. MSCI's 47-country main world index rose as much as 0.3 percent to a record high. On Wall Street, the S&P 500 index was flat near an all-time high, the Dow Jones Industrial Average added 0.4 percent, while the Nasdaq Composite Index dipped 0.1 percent, also from an all-time high.

Chip maker Nvidia fell 0.8 percent from a record high, after crossing \$3 trillion in market valuation in the previous session. "The focus for markets (now) is whether they will find room to cut in September," Saltmarsh Economics' Marchel Alexandrovich said.

He said it wasn't a surprise that inflation

forecasts had been revised up. "Inflation is proving sticky and that makes it difficult."

The euro's gain, after a 2 percent rise over the last month, took it to \$1.0888, although most traders were sitting on their hands, with President Christine Lagarde stressing at the start of her post-meeting press conference: "We are not pre-committing to a particular rate path". Stronger-than-expected data over the last few weeks, plus Thursday's increase in the ECB's in-house inflation forecasts, have raised doubts about how many more cuts will be justified this year. "This was a cautious cut," said Samuel Zief, head of global FX strategy at J.P. Morgan Private Bank. "We currently think that September could be next. But (there is) no reason to expect significant reductions any time soon with growth actually picking up steam of late." — Reuters



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange in New York City. — Reuters

US weekly jobless claims rise, trade deficit widens

Q1 labor costs revised lower as labor market rebalances

WASHINGTON: The number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits increased last week and unit labor costs rose by less than previously thought in the first quarter, indicating the labor market is cooling but not enough to allay the Federal Reserve's hesitance to begin cutting interest rates.

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits rose 8,000 to a seasonally adjusted 229,000 for the week ended June 1, the Labor Department said on Thursday. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 220,000 claims in the latest week. The labor market has been steadily rebalancing back toward pre-pandemic levels after the Fed raised interest rates by roughly 525 basis points since March 2022 to slow demand in the overall economy.

The so-called continuing claims tracking those who collect benefits beyond the first week increased 2,000 to a seasonally adjusted 1.792 million during the week ending May 25.

Meanwhile, the US trade deficit expanded slightly less than analysts expected in April, to the widest since late 2022, as imports rose more quickly than exports, according to government data released Thursday. The overall gap was \$74.6 billion, growing from March's revised \$68.6 billion figure, said the Commerce Department. This was the largest deficit since October 2022, according to official data. US consumption has been more resilient than anticipated even as the central bank rapidly hiked interest rates to dampen demand - and this has helped to support imports.

But with weaker global demand, there have been concerns that export growth would not be able to

keep up. "The level (of weekly jobless claims) remains in a range that suggests the labor market remains tight," said Thomas Simons, US economist at Jefferies. "Continuing claims are still very low by any historical standard, and we still see the data as supporting the notion that people who lose a job are able to find a new one with relative ease."

Data earlier this week showed US job openings in April fell more than expected and the number of available jobs per job-seeker reached its lowest level since June 2021.

Earlier on Thursday, US employers announced the fewest job cuts last month since December and layoff announcements so far in 2024 are running behind last year's pace, according to data from outplacement firm Challenger, Gray and Christmas. Employers announced 63,816 cuts in May, a 1.5 percent decrease from the 64,789 cuts announced in April and down about 20 percent from the 80,089 cuts announced a year earlier. Year-to-date layoff announcements are 7.6 percent lower than in the first five months of 2023.

US worker productivity grew slightly less than previously estimated in the first quarter but exceeded market expectations, and unit labor costs rose by less than first thought, data from the Labor Department also showed on Thursday. Nonfarm productivity, which measures hourly output per worker, increased at a 0.2 percent annualized rate in the first quarter, revised down from an initial estimate of 0.3 percent one month ago. Economists polled by Reuters had estimated a revision down to 0.1 percent. Unit labor costs rose at a 4.0 percent



A 7-Eleven convenience store has a sign in the window reading "Now Hiring" in Cambridge, Massachusetts. — Reuters

annualized rate, down from the first estimate of 4.7 percent. Economists had projected labor costs to be revised up to 4.9 percent.

Productivity accelerated and labor costs were subdued through much of 2023, ending at 3.5 per-

cent and unchanged, respectively, in the fourth quarter. At the time, that had been seen as one of the arguments favoring Fed rate cuts in 2024 as it was hoped improved worker efficiency would dampen inflation. — Agencies

Meta gets 11 EU complaints over AI models

BRUSSELS: Meta Platforms was hit with 11 complaints on Thursday over proposed changes that would see it use personal data to train its artificial intelligence models without asking for consent, which may breach European Union privacy rules. Advocacy group NOYB (none of your business) urged national privacy watchdogs to act immediately to halt such use, saying recent changes in Meta's privacy

policy, which come into force on June 26, would allow it to use years of personal posts, private images or online tracking data for its AI technology. NOYB has already filed several complaints against Meta and other Big Tech companies over alleged breaches of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which threatens fines up to 4 percent of a company's total global turnover for violations.

Meta has cited a legitimate interest for using users' data to train and develop its generative AI models and other AI tools, which can be shared with third parties.

NOYB founder Max Schrems said in a statement that Europe's top court had already ruled on the issue in 2021. "The European Court of Justice (CJEU) has already made it clear that Meta has no 'legitimate interest' to override users' right to data protection when it

comes to advertising," he said.

"Yet the company is trying to use the same arguments for the training of undefined 'AI technology'. It seems that Meta is once again blatantly ignoring the judgments of the CJEU," Schrems said, adding that opting out was extremely complicated. "Shifting the responsibility to the user is completely absurd. The law requires Meta to get opt-in consent, not to provide a hidden and misleading opt-out form," Schrems said, adding: "If Meta wants to use your data, they have to ask for your permission. Instead, they made users beg to be excluded".

NOYB asked data protection authorities in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Spain to launch an urgency procedure because of the imminent changes. — Reuters



No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance											Valuation Multiples *			
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	863	860	863	851	12	26,653,109	3	0.35%	1.01%	846	860	13.0	1.69	3.9%	1.03
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	257	262	264	254	10	60,380,192	8	3.15%	-2.10%	261	266	15.0	1.27	4.3%	1.29
104	Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait	Banking	271	272	275	268	7	2,357,252	-2	-0.73%	22.58%	267	273	13.6	1.13	3.2%	0.92
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	177	177	178	175	3	16,750,395	2	1.14%	21.54%	173	176	17.0	0.65	2.8%	1.07
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	188	183	188	181	7	6,644,775	-4	-2.14%	11.72%	176	185	17.8	0.65	3.2%	1.30
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	740	722	740	720	20	63,485,897	-8	-1.10%	8.40%	715	725	21.3	2.12	2.5%	1.15
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	583	579	585	578	7	7,936,956	0	0.00%	2.29%	579	593	30.9	2.44	1.3%	1.14
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	184	183	187	181	6	3,654,964	0	0.00%	44.09%	178	187	8.4	0.84	5.5%	2.06
204	National Investments	Financial Services	248	250	258	245	13	5,441,550	2	0.81%	4.60%	248	257	27.8	1.02	6.0%	2.11
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	121	120	123	119	4	22,800,917	-1	-0.83%	14.29%	118	122	NM	0.69	0.0%	0.95
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	190	185	190	181	9	2,452,978	-3	-1.60%	-8.38%	179	186	22.2	1.02	1.0%	1.26
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	162	155	162	153	9	10,472,442	-5	-3.13%	-10.92%	151	158	8.0	1.07	4.8%	1.65
252	Al Imtiaj Investment	Financial Services	59.9	53.9	60	53.2	6.8	20,598,632	-6.2	-10.32%	-4.60%	53.0	56	NM	0.37	0.0%	1.34
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	219	214	222	211	11	7,705,698	-3	-1.38%	4.39%	214	220	16.9	1.25	1.9%	1.14
404	Salhia Real Estate	Real Estate	436	426	436	419	17	4,274,825	-10	-2.29%	4.27%	424	444	16.0	1.40	3.4%	0.55
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	840	852	862	830	32	6,541,179	22	2.65%	7.13%	838	856	18.0	1.91	1.6%	0.97
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	140	139	141	135	6	16,963,384	-1	-0.71%	39.00%	137	141	15.4	0.83	2.9%	0.60
501	National Industries	Financial Services	226	217	226	215	11	9,483,217	-9	-3.98%	11.69%	206	217	13.4	0.98	2.2%	1.61
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,205	1,420	1,455	1,204	251	2,247,339	180	14.52%	8.40%	1,390	1,450	15.3	1.11	4.6%	1.09
506	HEISCO	Industrials	873	910	947	855	92	2,750,085	40	4.60%	10.98%	907	940	20.6	2.16	3.3%	0.95
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	660	687	687	658	29	4,369,802	27	4.09%	17.44%	677	687	20.1	1.35	9.0%	0.91
603	Agility	Industrials	297	295	298	293	5	14,485,077	2	0.68%	-42.04%	280	298	8.6	0.79	6.8%	1.58
605	Zain	Telecommunications	452	450	456	448	8	20,846,681	2	0.45%	-11.24%	450	459	10.2	1.57	7.8%	0.58
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	2,600	2,627	2,647	2,540	107	1,983,140	43	1.66%	-18.85%	2,550	2,675	8.3	3.70	13.1%	0.68
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	211	223	223	209	14	6,810,522	14	6.70%	23.89%	222	227	NM	0.94	0.0%	1.26
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	940	996	1,036	810	226	9,496,656	76	8.26%	-28.29%	990	1,100	197.6	9.73	2.8%	1.29
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	91.1	88.8	91.8	88.7	3.1	46,183,320	-0.4	-0.45%	16.38%	86.3	90.0	9.9	1.19	5.4%	1.41
821	Warba Bank	Banking	185	180	186	178	8	34,156,825	-5	-2.70%	2.58%	176	181	22.8	0.98	1.5%	1.07
822	Kuwait Telecommunications	Telecommunications	553	541	564	540	24	2,073,290	-34	-5.91%	-3.91%	530	548	16.3	2.49	6.4%	0.71
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	777	765	829	763	66	2,276,111	-15	-1.92%	33.04%	750	770	18.6	2.06	2.6%	0.40
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	500	543	547	497	50	5,099,088	49	9.92%	6.47%	535	546	29.7	2.10	3.7%	0.76
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,079	2,002	2,148	2,001	147	1,030,232	-98	-4.67%	16.13%	1,971	2,005	25.6	7.67	3.6%	1.36
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,012	1,004	1,023	1,002	21	4,155,707	1	0.10%	-4.92%	995	1,010	9.5	3.60	7.0%	0.80

* As of end of week closing

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Business

stc hosts 2nd workshop on financial intelligence with Waleed Al-Saleem

The workshop organized as part of the company's 'Weyak' initiative

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, held its second workshop for entrepreneurs in collaboration with the Kuwaiti content creator Waleed Al-Saleem. The initiative was organized as part of stc's extensive corporate social responsibility framework, under the educational pillar and through the Company's 'Weyak' initiative that was launched to support entrepreneurs and start-ups in Kuwait. The workshop covered important topics related to financial intelligence and effective investment strategies.

Held at the stc training center, the "Financial Intelligence Workshop" was open to entrepreneurs interested in learning more about some of the key financial concepts that are essential for any entrepreneur, as well as risk-adjusted investment strategies that could potentially support them in funding their projects. The registration for the workshop was closed an hour after the announcement was made due to the high demand for the session.

During the workshop, Al-Saleem went through an overview of managing finances and investment to the 40 attendees, followed by a Q&A session at the end of the workshop. The interactive session allowed participants to engage directly with Al-Saleem, gaining personalized insights and advice tailored to their specific business challenges. The feedback from at-

tendees was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing a renewed confidence in managing their financial affairs and strategizing for future growth.

stc indicated in a statement that the workshop comes as a continuation of the series of workshops that the Company has and will continue to organize for entrepreneurs under its 'weyak' initiative. Through initiatives like the 'weyak' program and workshops such as these, stc seeks to support and equip motivated business leaders with the knowledge and tools they need to succeed and thrive. Providing educational and informative platforms is a key component of stc's commitment to fostering a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem in Kuwait. These efforts are designed to empower entrepreneurs with the skills and resources necessary to navigate the complexities of the modern business landscape, ultimately contributing to Kuwait's economic development and innovation.

Upon concluding another successful workshop, stc once again thanked Al-Saleem for his expert guidance and valuable insights, which will surely add great value to the participating entrepreneurs. The company also expressed gratitude to all the attendees for their active participation and engagement. The enthusiasm and level of interaction demonstrated by the participants reinforce stc's commitment to continuing the introduction of informative and educational programs and workshops.



Waleed Al-Saleem with the participants of the financial intelligence workshop.



Elvira Nabiullina, Governor of Russian Central Bank, attends the congress of Association of Banks of Russia in Moscow. — Reuters

Russian CB urges global integration despite sanctions

ST PETERSBURG: Despite Western sanctions, Russia must be integrated in the global economy with countries that are prepared to work with it, central bank Governor Elvira Nabiullina said at Russia's flagship annual economic forum in St Petersburg on Thursday. The event once drew top Western bankers and company executives, but the main foreign participants now are from countries still friendly to Russia. The presidents of Bolivia and Zimbabwe are due to appear alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin at Friday's plenary session.

Western sanctions since Moscow sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022 have deprived Russia of access to the global financial system. Moscow is particularly feeling the effects in terms of international settlements as it tries to launch new trading routes. "Despite sanctions, we must be integrated in the global economy with those who are ready for it," Nabiullina told a panel discussion.

"What does this mean? A working, independent system of settlements and payments, but not only that. It means the interconnectedness of our deposit systems, the mutual recognition of ratings, audit reports, insurance policies," Nabiullina said Russia needed to lead on technological development in the financial sphere but that this would be difficult when Russia cannot rely on other countries' solutions.

Finance Minister Anton Siluanov spoke of ensuring Russia's financial sovereignty. Economy Minister Maxim Reshetnikov named investment support, the development of sovereign technology and resolving Russia's labor market woes as the three main tasks.

Foreign investment in Russia has dropped by around 40 percent to \$696 billion, according to central bank data. A chunk of that comes from Russian firms incorporated in Cyprus and the Netherlands. — Reuters

Costco's generous wages trigger pay hikes in Japan town

MEIWA, Japan: When Costco Wholesale opened its warehouse in a rural Japanese town not far from Tokyo last year offering hundreds of jobs at eye-popping pay, a nearby noodle shop chain took a drastic step: it hiked hourly wages by a third. It was an almost unthinkable decision for Yamada-udon, which sells 390-yen (\$2.48) bowls of noodles and for which the slightest rise in cost requires acrobatic scrambling to stay in business.

"For us, even a one- or two-yen rise in raw materials costs is tough, so to increase hourly pay by even 10 yen is extremely challenging as we need to generate far more sales," said marketing director Takehiro Ehashi. After a round of internal discussions, Yamada-udon decided to renovate the store, in Meiwa, Gunma prefecture, offering 1,300 yen an hour for the first three months. That was shy

of Costco's starting hourly wage of 1,500 yen but enough to entice job-seekers in the notoriously tight labour market. After three months, wages would be at 1,050 yen, versus 970 yen pre-Costco.

Pressure from the big-box US retailer to offer competitive salaries is tough for businesses like Yamada-udon, but could be the kind of jolt that Japan's local economies need to create a virtuous cycle of higher wages, solid consumption and stable demand-driven inflation, some say.

A meaningful and sustainable rise in wages is a key goal for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, while the Bank of Japan says it's a crucial factor for normalizing monetary policy. Real wages - stripping out the effect of inflation - have fallen for 25 straight months despite Japanese firms agreeing to the biggest hike in wages in three decades in both 2023 and 2024.

That has dragged down consumption and the broader economy, which depends heavily upon it, making it harder for the BOJ to execute a smooth exit from easy policy. Japan lags far behind other big economies

with an index for its real average annual wages showing almost no growth between 1995 and 2021, according to IMF data. That compares with growth rates of 50 percent in the US and nearly 30 percent in France during the same period.

Two years ago, Costco set its minimum hourly pay at 1,500 yen across all of its stores in Japan in a bid to retain workers. That's high even for Tokyo, where the legal minimum wage is the country's highest, at 1,113 yen, and 60 percent more than the minimum in Gunma prefecture. Costco received more than 2,000 applications for about 300 spots for its Meiwa store which opened in April 2023 about an hour north of Tokyo.

"If we offer higher wages, our staff can earn and spend more," said Costco Gunma Meiwa warehouse manager Kaoru Yamamoto. "By doing so, we feel we can make a big contribution by creating a favorable cycle in the local economy." Costco plans to accelerate its new-store openings in Japan, nearly doubling the number of outlets to more than 60 by 2030, many in remote regions such as Shiga and Okinawa prefectures. — Reuters

Swiss renewable energy battle moves to ballots

SAINT-IMIER: Switzerland's largest wind farm, sitting astride the ridge of the Jura mountains by the French border, consists of only 16 turbines—tiny compared to those of other European countries.

The wealthy Alpine country has said it wants to rapidly accelerate the development of renewable energy sources as it strives to meet its target of carbon neutrality by 2050. Authorities want to use a new climate bill approved last year to boost wind and solar power's current minuscule contribution to Switzerland's energy mix.

But that plan could hit a snag: the bill is being challenged by a national referendum on Sunday, potentially blocking its implementation next January. While most environmental organizations back the law and its ambitions, a few smaller groups secured enough signatures to trigger a referendum under Switzerland's direct democracy system, amid fears it will fast-track large-scale energy projects and cause "unnecessary destruction of landscapes".

Switzerland's largest party, the hard right Swiss People's Party (SVP), has also backed the vote, warning that implementing the law could threaten Swiss energy security. "It is not with renewable energy produced on mountaintops in the Jura that we will manage to guarantee supply security," Yvan Pahud, an SVP parliamentarian, told AFP. The SVP supports more nuclear power instead.

Pierre-Alain Bruchez, who instigated the referendum, balked at the idea of installing large numbers of solar panels high up in pristine mountain landscapes. The retired economist said he launched his battle after learning with "horror" of the Grengiols-Solar project, aimed at installing around 230,000 solar panels in the mountainous Wallis canton, at an altitude of 2,500 meters.

"We must not sacrifice nature on the altar of climate change," he said. Vera Weber, president of the Franz Weber Foundation for Nature and Animal Protection, which also called for the referendum, agreed.

"This law weakens the protection of nature in

Russia to build high speed railway between Moscow, St Petersburg

MOSCOW: Russia has approved a project to build the first high-speed passenger railway between its two biggest cities, Moscow and St Petersburg, to be funded with billions of dollars from the state budget, a government directive showed on Thursday.

The government approved the construction of the



SAINT-IMIER, Switzerland: This photograph taken on May 8, 2024 shows wind turbines in Mont Soleil mountain, above Saint-Imier, ahead of a nationwide vote on a new electricity law. — AFP

Switzerland," she told AFP.

Despite such arguments, overturning the law could prove difficult. Sunday's vote will take place less than two months after Switzerland became the first country ever to be condemned by an international court for not doing enough against climate change. The verdict by the European Court of Human Rights appears to have jolted the Swiss public, with 73 percent of voters polled recently saying they backed the law.

The bill is aimed at rapidly increasing hydro, wind and solar production, and it clears the way for a simplified approval process for large-scale projects. As for solar power, the main aim would be to install panels on building roofs and facades. The Swiss government, which supports the law, has acknowledged that court appeals against renewable energy projects "will probably be less likely to succeed than before".

However, it stresses that large installations in "biotopes of national importance" and in migratory bird reserves will remain banned, albeit with some exceptions.

679 km railroad, which should allow Russian-made trains travelling at 360 km/hour to get from Moscow to St Petersburg in 2-2.5 hours instead of the current 4-5 hours, on the first business day of the St Petersburg International Economic Forum.

The railway, which will cost more than 2.3 trillion rubles (\$25.97 billion), will be built by a Russian company, VSM Two Capitals, on concession terms using state and private money. The Russian government plans to allocate at least 300 billion rubles of loans from the National Welfare Fund at 1 percent in 2025, and subsidies amounting to about 328 billion rubles between 2024 and 2038, the directive showed.

WWF, which is among several environmental groups that support the law, highlighted that the bill calls for "over 80 percent of planned renewable energy development to go through solar on existing buildings".

WWF expert Patrick Hofstetter added that "effective measures against electricity waste are finally being introduced". "From our point of view, the benefits of the project clearly outweigh" the negatives, he said.

Greenpeace's Swiss chapter said the law could help Switzerland "overcome its dependence on fossil fuels like oil and gas, which often come from bellicose states". Jacqueline de Quattro, a parliamentarian with the Liberal party, agreed. Switzerland, she pointed out, spends eight billion Swiss francs (\$8.9 billion) a year "on undemocratic fossil imports like Russian gas, or oil from Arab countries".

Given how reliant the Swiss are on the comforts energy brings, she told AFP, "we must also accept from time to time to see a wind turbine on the horizon". — AFP

More than 580 billion rubles is needed for the project from the National Welfare Fund, with other funding coming from sources including Russian state-owned banks VTB, Sberbank and Gazprombank, the former minister of transport Vitaly Savelyev said in February. The head of Russia's Sberbank German Gref said on Thursday it will participate in financing the project.

Russia has proposed to raise taxes for companies and the wealthy, which may add an extra \$30 billion to next year's budget revenues and allow Moscow to increase spending, including on its war in Ukraine. — Reuters



Ryu Kawane works at Costco store in Meiwa, Gunma Prefecture, Japan on May 28, 2024. — Reuters

Weekender



Community revival

Volunteers breathe new life into neglected duck park in Shaab



By Passant Hisham

Forgotten and neglected for years, a small public duck park in the Shaab area of Hawally governorate had become a desolate place. Lifeless grass, waste dumped everywhere, and a contaminated pond endangered the ducks, deterring residents from visiting. Desperate for change, they reached out to Yousef Al-Omran, aka Bu Jarrah, a Kuwaiti social volunteer known for his community renovation projects, through his Instagram account.



Yousef Al-Omran aka Bu Jarrah in the park before joining the renovation process

Sporting sunglasses and dishdasha under the harsh sun, Bu Jarrah slipped his hands into gloves as he prepared to join his team in cleaning the park. "What we are witnessing today is a very urgent situation; that's why we had to intervene," Bu Jarrah told Kuwait Times, pointing towards the pond where a helpless duck was gasping for air during its last minutes.

Haya Almaqroun, Vice President of Shaab Co-operative Society, who has been advocating for the park's renovation over the past year and took proactive steps toward transforming it, said: "In the governmental sector, there is a lengthy paperwork process required to complete a single procedure. That's why I believe the solution lies in the power of social media, which can motivate responsible authorities to facilitate the call for reform and development."

Bu Jarrah said he couldn't see something like this and turn his back on it. On the same day he saw the park, he reached out to a sponsor to fund the project and asked Shaab residents — children and adults — to join in. "The good news is that even the official authorities are cooperating with us on this project," he said, adding his team is working under the supervision and approval of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources and with the collaboration of Shaab Cooperative Society. "They also promised us to provide maintenance for the park every two weeks."

Almaqroun revealed that the co-op is planning to continue developing the rest of the park, particularly the children's play area and walking paths. "It was once known as Hyde Park," she recalled. The park's history, she explained, dates back seven years, when the Alaradi family gifted the duck pond and play area to the residents of Shaab. However, after the patriarch's death, almost no one was there to



Bu Jarrah's team, workers and residents get ready to clean the park.



A cat looks on as ducks bathe in the pond.



A duck enjoys a refreshing swim in the pond.



Ducks affected by dirt from the contaminated pond water.

properly maintain it.

The changes that Bu Jarrah's team made included clearing the entire area of waste, replacing the contaminated pond water with clean water, installing a water circulation pumping system to ensure water filtration and providing a designated box for the ducks' food. Additionally,

to enhance the park's visual appeal, they introduced a pedestrian bridge, planted 20 cogon grass seedlings around the pond, constructed a 60 cm fence along the pond's perimeter and restored the park's damaged lighting.

One of Shaab's residents, 11-year-old Youssef Al-Hadad, who has been visiting the park since he was four

years old, expressed his excitement about the park's transformation. "I want people to point at it and say Shaab Park is one of the most beautiful parks in Kuwait," he said.



Before

The duck pond before renovation.

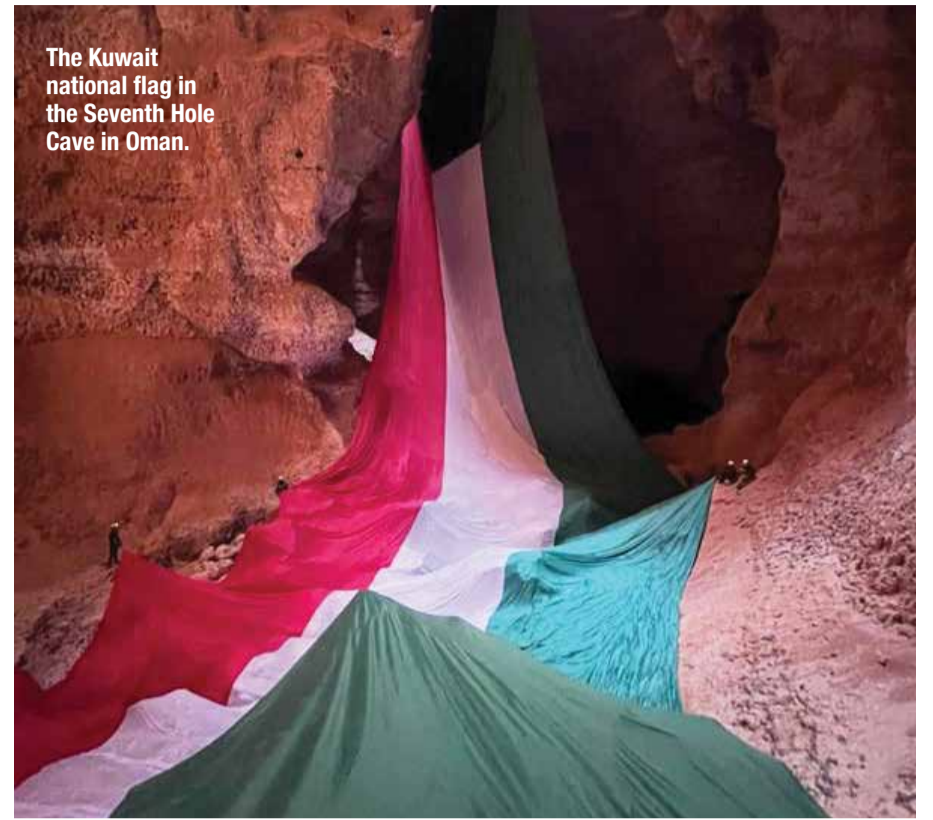


After

The duck pond after constructing a fence to protect the birds.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



The largest Kuwaiti national flag on GCC's highest mountain Jebel Shams.



The Kuwait national flag in the Seventh Hole Cave in Oman.

Firefighting: On the frontlines of danger

By Sajeev K Peter



Left alone in his apartment, 4-year-old Rashed lit a tissue box, not knowing what he was doing. A fire erupted and the boy didn't know what to do. Frightened Rashed tossed the flaming tissue box into a nearby cabinet. As the fire spread out of the cabinet and to nearby objects, the boy got scared and hid under his bed. "We found him after an hour. It was a heartbreaking sight. We couldn't distinguish the boy from the charred remains of the furniture," Ali Aldagher, a firefighter with Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) said, recalling an incident that occurred in Jaber Al-Ali in 2017 that turned out to be an eye-opener for many and served as a stark reminder for the local parent community.

"If asked whether I sympathized with Rashed's parents, I would say no, because it was their responsibility. They failed in their responsibility," Aldagher told Kuwait Times. As he emphasized the responsibility of the parents, he said there was neither a smoke detector nor a fire extinguisher in their apartment. "They didn't teach their kid what to do in case of an emergency," he said.

Rashed's shocking death and the bloodcurdling incident prompted him to come up with "Junior Firefighter", a book that teaches children what to do in case of an emergency and explains survival skills. Around 70,000 copies both Arabic and English were printed and were given away to school children and their parents. The book was sponsored by EQUATE Petrochemical company, he said.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kuwait Fire Force launched a major campaign in schools across Kuwait educating children on what to do in the event of a fire and giving them some tips on fire safety.

Aldagher also recounted the events that led to the invention of "Firebot", a tank-like robot that can sense radiation and the presence of hazardous chemicals and warn of possible fire risks. "After my graduation, I was invited to assist an English professor at the American University of Kuwait. Then the university found out that I am also a firefighter with the Kuwait Fire Force,"



(From left) Khaled Kanaan, Yousef Al-Gallaf and Ali Aldagher with the Guinness World Records certificates.

he said. He explained how he got everything assembled piece by piece with the help of the students.

"Firebot was a capstone project for Kuwait. It is fitted with a camera and can be controlled using a smartphone. Students from five semesters in a row worked on it with me until we reached the final stage," he said. Asked why he didn't think of manufacturing Firebot commercially, he said he will give it a try. "It requires factory funding," he said.

Talking about the biggest Kuwaiti flag that was raised on GCC's highest mountain Jebel Shams, Aldagher said it was an exciting experience. "They were proud moments for all of us to raise the biggest flag in the world atop the highest

peak in the GCC on a National Day in 2022 and hoist the biggest Kuwaiti flag inside a cave in Oman in 2023," he said. "If the first one was a dangerous mission, the second one was nearly a mission impossible. I don't think anyone can do it again," he insisted.

Jebel Shams (Mountain of the Sun - 3,009 m) in Oman is the highest peak in GCC and is best known for the view into the spectacularly deep Wadi Ghul lying alongside it. Recalling the experience inside The Seventh Hole Cave in Oman, Aldagher said: "We had to hang on a rope for 45 minutes to complete the job of raising the flag inside the cave. We were 15 on the mission."

The Seventh Hole derives its name

from being the seventh hole or access point found on the plateau. There are miles of passageways and chambers carved through the soft limestone, hidden below the surface. "It was very fascinating, and something I learned about it only on this recent trip," he said. "It is historic. We covered the core of the cave and the flag was as big as a football ground," he said. These missions on National Day earned them a place in the prestigious Guinness World Records. "In fact, we didn't break a record, but we established it," he said.

In the efforts to raise the flag in the cave, many sustained injuries, while some got trapped inside the labyrinth of the cave. Along with high-rank-

ing KFF officers Yousef Al-Gallaf and Khaled W Al-Kanaan, they rescued the trapped people.

Aldagher joined KFF in 2010. "It is a risky profession as the stress firefighters endure can lead to mental disorders. Firefighters can sustain critical injuries such as fractures and traumatic brain injuries from falling debris and collapsing structures. Once I had to be revived as I became unconscious after smoke inhalation and heat exhaustion. I also had poor blood circulation," he said.

"But as a professional firefighter, I love my job. It is a noble job," he added. Aldagher, who is also passionate about cinema, acting and writing said: "I love writing poetry. If I get to choose to lose everything for writing poetry, I will choose writing poetry."



Flamenco flames light up Kuwait theatre



Members of the Spanish flamenco troupe Anabel Veloso Company perform at the Abdulhussain Abdulredha Theatre in Salmiya on June 5, 2024. – Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

What's Cooking in our Kitchens

If you live in Kuwait, you've probably noticed that people take their rice seriously in this country. Whether it was white mashkoul rice served as a side dish with a stew or cooked with fragrant spices and meat to make majbous, this simple ingredient is an integral part of the local cuisine. We can go on for days if we want to list all the variations! This week, our recipes are heavy on this starchy staple. And our staff will give you three ways to enjoy it. One: Jollof rice, a popular West African dish where the rice is cooked in a rich tomato sauce. Two: Sayadieh, a classic spiced rice dish with fried fish. The third recipe is not so much a rice dish — its undisputable star is beef. But this flavorful stir fry is great to have with a bowl of, you guessed it, white rice.



JOLLOF RICE

By Chidi Emmanuel

Jollof rice is a popular and flavorful West African dish, known for its rich, reddish-orange hue and savory taste. The dish is made by cooking rice in a blend of tomatoes, onions and bell peppers, often seasoned with a mix of spices such as thyme, curry powder and bay leaves. Variations of jollof rice can include vegetables, meat or seafood, making it a versatile and beloved staple at parties, celebrations, and everyday meals. Each West African country, particularly Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal, has its own unique take on jollof rice, sparking friendly rivalries over which nation makes the best version of this beloved dish.

Ingredients

- 2 cups long-grain parboiled rice
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp ginger, minced
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 tsp thyme
- 1 tsp curry powder
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp salt (or to taste)
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 2 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- 2 cups tomato puree or blended tomatoes
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 scotch bonnet or habanero pepper (optional, for heat)
- 2 large carrots, diced
- 1 cup green peas (optional)
- Protein of choice (chicken, shrimp, beef, etc, pre-cooked)

Instructions

1. Prepare the rice: Rinse the rice thoroughly under cold water until the water runs clear. This helps remove excess starch and prevents the rice from becoming mushy.
2. Make the tomato sauce: In a blender, combine the tomatoes, bell peppers, and one onion. Blend until smooth.
3. Cook the base: Heat the vegetable oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and sauté until translucent. Add the garlic and ginger, cook it for an additional minute.
4. Add spices and tomato paste: Stir in the thyme, curry powder, paprika, and tomato paste, and cook for about 2 minutes.
5. Combine with tomato sauce: Pour the blended tomato mixture into the pot. Add the bay leaf and the scotch bonnet or habanero pepper if using.



Cook the sauce on medium heat for about 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the sauce reduces and the oil begins to separate from

the tomato mixture.
6. Add rice and broth: Add the rinsed rice to the pot, stirring well to coat each grain with the sauce. Pour in

the chicken or vegetable broth, and add the diced carrots and peas if using. Season with salt and black pepper.

7. Cook the rice: Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce the heat to low. Cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid and let the rice cook for about 20-30 minutes, or until the rice is fully cooked and has absorbed the liquid. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking, but avoid opening the lid too often.
8. Add protein (if using): If you are adding cooked protein like chicken, shrimp, or beef, stir it in during the last 10 minutes of cooking to heat through.
9. Serve: Once the rice is done, remove the pot from heat. Fluff the rice with a fork, remove the bay leaf and scotch bonnet pepper, and serve hot.

BEEF CHILLI FRY

By Rajesh K



Beef chilli fry is a popular and flavorful dish from the southwestern Indian state of Kerala. This dish is renowned for its spicy and aromatic profile, achieved through the use of local spices, tender beef and a medley of ingredients like green chilies, garlic and ginger. The beef is marinated with a blend of spices, then stir-fried, resulting in a rich, spicy and slightly tangy flavor. Often garnished with curry leaves, this dish is a favorite in Kerala cuisine, reflecting the region's culinary diversity and robust use of spices. It is typically served with rice, parotta or as a standalone appetizer.



Ingredients

- 1 Kg beef (chunk)
- 1 tbsp ginger and garlic (crushed)
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp black pepper powder
- 1 1/2 tsp Kashmiri chili powder
- Salt to taste
- 1 cup corn flour
- Handful curry leaves
- 4-5 green chilies
- 1 tbsp vinegar
- 1/2 tsp chili flakes

Instructions

1. In a pressure cooker, add beef, crushed ginger and garlic, salt, turmeric powder and curry leaves and

cook 3/4th of the way.

2. Remove the cooked beef from the cooker and let it rest for two minutes before cutting it into strips.
3. In a bowl mix well Kashmiri chili powder, turmeric powder, black pepper powder, corn flour, chili flakes, soy sauce, salt, vinegar. Add water to the batter, keeping the consistency thick.
4. Add the shredded beef pieces to the batter. Then fry the beef pieces in oil till golden brown.
5. Add the green chilies and curry leaves and sauté for about 2 minutes. Now the delicious beef chilli fry is ready to eat.

SAYADIEH

By Yasser Al-Zayyat



Sayadieh is a traditional Middle Eastern dish, particularly popular in coastal regions like Lebanon and Syria. It consists of seasoned fish, typically served over a bed of spiced rice. The dish is renowned for its aromatic flavor, which is achieved by a combination of spices such as cumin, turmeric and coriander, along with caramelized onions that impart a rich sweetness. Often garnished with pine nuts and fresh herbs, sayadieh is a beloved comfort food that showcases the region's abundant seafood and vibrant culinary traditions.

Ingredients

- For the fish
- 1 kg white fish fillets (such as cod or haddock)
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3 tbsp olive oil

For the rice

- 2 cups basmati rice
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp ground turmeric
- 1/2 tsp ground coriander
- 4 cups fish stock or water
- Salt to taste
- 3 tbsp olive oil

For garnish

- 1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted
- Fresh parsley, chopped
- Lemon wedges

Instructions

1. Prepare the fish: Season the fish fillets with cumin, turmeric, coriander, salt, and pepper. Heat olive oil in a large pan over medium heat. Cook the fish fillets until golden brown and fully cooked, about 4-5 minutes

per side. Remove from the pan and set aside.

2. Prepare the rice: Rinse the basmati rice under cold water until the water runs clear. Soak the rice in water for 20-30 minutes, then drain. In

add salt to taste, and bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for about 15-20 minutes, or until the rice is fully cooked and the liquid is absorbed.



the same pan, add more olive oil if needed and sauté the chopped onion until golden brown. Add the minced garlic and cook for another minute. Stir in the cumin, turmeric, and coriander. Add the soaked and drained rice to the pan, stirring to coat the rice with the spices and oil. Pour in the fish stock or water,

3. Assemble the dish: Fluff the cooked rice with a fork and transfer to a serving platter. Place the cooked fish fillets on top of the rice. Garnish with toasted pine nuts and chopped parsley. Serve with lemon wedges on the side.



Event: Restoring Our Past, Preserving Our Future exhibition
Location: Yarmouk Cultural Center - Dar Al Athar Al Islamiyyah
Date: Until 8 June

Event: Graduate guide to choosing a major
Location: Art Therapy Studio
Date: June 8, 2024

Event: Build Your Own Terrarium
Location: Sai Garden
Date: June 6-8, 2024

Event: Windsurfing
Location: Argan Al-Bidaa
Date: June 7-8, 2024

Event: Tango workshops
Location: Embassy of Argentina
Date: June 7, 2024

Event: Glass fusing workshop
Location: Argan Bedaya
Date: June 8, 2024

Event: Paint and sketch workshop
Location: Scientific Center - Discovery
Date: June 8, 2024
Time: 3 pm- 5 pm

Event: Sports Square
Location: Marina Crescent
Date: All weekend

Event: K-beauty workshop
Location: Madang Korean Cultural
Date: June 8, 2024

Sports

Stoinis shines as Australia cruise past Oman in T20 opener

Uganda claim first ever T20 World Cup victory with win over PNG

BRIDGETOWN: Marcus Stoinis shone with bat and ball as Australia launched their bid for a grand slam of major cricket titles with a 39-run victory over Oman at the T20 World Cup in Barbados on Wednesday.

Stoinis smashed a game-changing 67 not out off just 36 balls to power Australia to 164-5 and then took three wickets for 19 runs as Oman were restricted to 125-9 in reply at Kensington Oval.

"It was a nice start," player of the match Stoinis said afterwards. "Maybe a few cobwebs for us but we're better for it, and nice that we got the win."

"And nice that I got to spend some time in the middle and have a bit of a bowl." Stoinis hammered six sixes and two fours during a swashbuckling batting performance that led Australia's recovery after they had slumped to 50-3 earlier in the innings.

David Warner helped provide some stability with a half century as Australia eventually got going after captain Mitchell Marsh and Glenn Maxwell fell off successive balls to seamer Mehran Khan in the 11th over. After a steady couple of overs, Stoinis went on the attack, dominating a 102-run fourth-wicket partnership which effectively wrested the initiative away from the Omanis.

Warner, in his final tournament before international retirement, compiled 56 off 51 balls, including six fours and one six, before falling in the penultimate over. Warner's innings propelled him beyond former captain Aaron Finch as Australia's top run-getter in T20 Internationals with a tally of 3,155.

Four of Stoinis' six sixes meanwhile came in the 15th over of the innings, bowled by Mehran, and triggered such a pace of acceleration that the 2021 champions were able to more than double their total over the last six overs of the innings.

"Davey (Warner) and I talked about (tactics) before that over," Stoinis added in explaining the sudden batting onslaught. "And then you know how it is when you get the first couple balls away for boundaries, you just think you might as well try to turn it into a big over."

Beaten by Namibia in a thrilling super over finale in their opening game on Sunday, Oman had seemed in the mood for a fight with the early dismissal of Travis Head followed by the Marsh-Maxwell double-blow.

However Australia's competitive know-how saw them through that tricky period as they made a winning start to their campaign to become the first nation to hold all three global cricket titles – Test, One-Day and T20 – simultaneously.

Mitchell Starc, who left the field before the end of his spell with cramp, made his trademark early strike in defence of Australia's total and finished with two wickets, as did fellow pacer Nathan Ellis and leg-spinner Adam Zampa.

Oman captain Aqib Ilyas meanwhile took encouragement from the performance of Oman's bowlers after a solid start. "Playing against a top side today was a great experience, especially following on from the Super Over last game," Ilyas said. "They played really well, but credit goes to our bowlers. Our bowlers can do really well on turning tracks."

Earlier, Uganda claimed their first ever T20 World Cup win with a three-wicket victory over Papua New Guinea at Providence Stadium on Wednesday in a low-scoring but tense encounter.

The African side bowled out PNG for 77 and after struggling at 26-5 in reply reached the target in 18.2 overs with Riazat Ali Shah top-scoring with 33.

Riazat put on a crucial sixth wicket partner-



BRIDGETOWN: Aqib Ilyas (R) of Oman gets back to the crease as Glenn Maxwell (L) and Matthew Wade (2nd L) of Australia attempt a run out during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 group B cricket match between Australia and Oman at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados. — AFP

ship of 35 with Juma Miyagi (13) which effectively won the game for the tournament debutants.

But PNG will rue the moment that Riazat, on eight, was dropped by Charles Amini, who misjudged a relatively simple catch.

The Pacific Islanders had their work cut out trying to defend such a low total but were also undone in part by some loose bowling, conceding 15 wides.

After that let-off, Riazat played a disciplined and focused innings until, with just three needed to win, he skied a catch to John Kariko at third man.

The Ugandans celebrated their victory with dancing on the edge of the field as the team, which beat out more established cricketing nation Zimbabwe to reach the tournament, picked up their first points. — AFP

Kuwait gymnasium team partakes in Salmanov championship

KUWAIT: Kuwait Rhythmic gymnasium team participated in Salmanov International Championship being held in Maribor city, Slovenia from June 5th until June 9th. Kuwait's team includes players Abdullah Miqdad, Mousa Al-Sahhaf, Hussein Dashti, Saud Al-Rudaini and Saud Al-Sinnawi.

Meanwhile, the girls are represented by Fatima Al-Namma. The delegation is headed by the federations' Board Member Mohammad Al-Daihani and includes Khalid Al-Mithin and coaches Vitali Arsenov and Mustafa Al-Shafei in addition to judges Bader Hassan, Salah Askar and Rabab Al-Haris.

Salmanov Championship is one of the strong competition and sanctioned by the International Gymnastics Federation and has elite European players competing. Kuwait Federation aims at enhancing the players' performance and have them compete in an international atmosphere.



Rohit plays down injury scare after India rout Ireland

NEW YORK: India captain Rohit Sharma allayed fears about an arm injury after making 52 before retiring hurt as his side thrashed Ireland by eight wickets in the teams' T20 World Cup opener in New York on Wednesday.

India only required 97 to win after a dominant display by their bowling attack, with left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh striking twice in the third over to reduce Ireland to 9-2 after Rohit won the toss. All-rounder Hardik Pandya took two wickets in two balls on his way to 3-27 and Jasprit Bumrah, the player of the match, 2-6.

"Just a little sore," said Rohit at the presentation ceremony. "New ground, new venue, wanted to see what's it like to play on. I don't think the pitch settled down, there was enough there for the bowlers." Ireland, all out for just 96, needed to hold every chance to have any hope of a shock upset. But Rohit had made just two when, off the last ball of the first over of India's chase, he edged Mark Adair through the hands of Andrew Balbirnie at second slip. Adair dismissed Virat Kohli for just one, when the star batsman sliced to deep third man, but the damage had been done as India launched their bid to win a first major title since their 2013 Champions Trophy triumph with a commanding Group A victory.

Flamboyant Pant

Rohit punished Ireland with a 37-ball innings, in-



EAST MEADOW: India's Axar Patel dives and catches the ball to dismiss Ireland's Gareth Delany during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 group A cricket match between India and Ireland at Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in East Meadow, New York. — AFP

cluding four fours and three well-struck sixes as he shared a stand of 54 with Rishabh Pant. The wicket-keeper, returning to international cricket after a horror car crash in December 2022, finished on 36 not out and ended the match with a typically flamboyant reverse-scooped six off Barry McCarthy as India won with nearly eight overs left.

Rohit was not there alongside him, however, having been previously struck on the arm by Josh Little, although he struck the next two balls from the

paceman for resounding sixes. Victory was all but secured for India, the inaugural 2007 T20 World Cup champions, when they dismissed Ireland cheaply as a drop-in pitch of variable bounce at a Long Island ground built specially for the tournament again proved tough to bat on. India's joy, however, would have been tempered by the thought they too could be batting first on a similar surface when they return to the ground on Sunday to play arch-rivals Pakistan in the showpiece match of the group phase. — AFP

at the Chiefs in the quarter-finals last year and Kiss said: "Things are possible, but we're going to have to be our best to break that hoodoo."

Chiefs head coach Clayton McMillan said his side was similarly wary of the record. "I don't know what's more daunting, Australian teams potentially never having won finals in New Zealand or being the first team that loses to an Australian team in the finals," he said.

"What you produce on the day is all that matters." In New Zealand's capital, the Rebels must win at Wellington's Sky Stadium to prevent it being their last Super Rugby appearance after 14 years of existence. The debt-laden team 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' South African head coach Kevin Foote is optimistic they can upset the Hurricanes, who topped the table after the regular season. "His-



AUCKLAND: (FILES) Cortez Ratima of the Chiefs runs with the ball during the Super Rugby match between the Auckland Blues and Waikato Chiefs at Eden Park in Auckland. — AFP

tory tells you that the Australian teams haven't done well, but you can't worry about that," he said. "We'll focus on what we can control." — AFP

Leclerc confident but avoiding talk of title bid

MONTREAL: Charles Leclerc will seek to build on his flawless, if emotional, triumph for Ferrari at the Monaco Grand Prix with another valuable victory in this weekend's Canadian Grand Prix.

But the 26-year-old Monegasque driver, who dominated in Monte Carlo by taking pole position and then controlling a processional race, has been quick to keep expectations under control and avoided talk of a title bid after only eight rounds of this year's record 24-race season.

"We shouldn't get carried away," he said, retaining his measured approach. "Obviously, Monaco is such a specific track and I think we had a really good car there. "It doesn't mean it will stay that way until the end of the year, but looking back I think we have done a good job maximising the races we have done."

"For now, 31 points is ok, but I don't think about the championship. It's too early in the season. We have more to improve and little by little we can get there." Leclerc's Monaco win was Ferrari's second this year, following Carlos Sainz's success in Australia, and delighted the 'tifosi' who are desperate to see the Italian outfit enjoy sustained success again and end Max Verstappen and Red Bull's run of supremacy. The three-time world champion struggled again in Monaco, particularly over the kerbs, and may face similar challenges at the fast and demanding Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, which mixes street track characteristics with high-speed open circuit sections.

"I have been with the team and in the simulator preparing for this race," said Verstappen. "It is unique, has old-school kerbs and there are plenty of opportunities for overtaking. It is very important to have a good set-up and find a balance between straight-line speed and stability under braking." He added that he welcomed news that Red Bull had extended Sergio Perez's contract to 2026. "We had a record-breaking season last year and the team is strong," he said. "It's a successful partnership."

As Ferrari seek to beat Red Bull again, as McLaren did when Lando Norris won in Miami, Mercedes will continue their pursuit of the pace-setters with more upgrades in a bid to turn promise into results. Both George Russell and Lewis Hamilton will have the new front wing that only Russell had in Monaco.

For Aston Martin, owned by Lawrence Stroll, whose son Lance drives alongside two-time world champion Fernando Alonso, the race on the man-made island of Notre Dame in the middle of the St Lawrence river is a 'home' event.

They will hope for an upturn in form and no scrapes with the 'wall of champions' at the final corner where many drivers have crashed. The forecast for changeable and possibly wet weather will ensure an unpredictable and closely-contested race is in prospect.

It could also throw up an unexpected result as out-of-favour Esteban Ocon, who is set to leave Alpine at the end of the year following his collision with team-mate Pierre Gasly in Monaco, being replaced in opening practice by reserve Jack Doohan, 21, son of former motorcycling world champion Mick Doohan.

History shows that the tricky track is enjoyed by champion drivers with seven-time champions Lewis Hamilton and Michael Schumacher sharing the circuit records of seven wins apiece and six poles, but with Mercedes winless since the 2022 Brazilian Grand Prix. Verstappen may remain the man to beat. He won from pole last year to claim his second Montreal victory and like his troubled Red Bull team needs to regain form and consistency if he is to stay clear of Leclerc and Norris in what in prospect appears to be a close fight for the drivers' title this year. — AFP

Chiefs, Hurricanes primed to extend Super Rugby 'hoodoo'

WELLINGTON: Waikato Chiefs and Wellington Hurricanes will aim to extend the "hoodoo" dominance of New Zealand teams on home soil against their Australian rivals in the Super Rugby quarter-finals. No Australian side has ever won a Super Rugby knock-out match in New Zealand, suffering a miserable run of 15 straight away defeats since the tournament started in 1996. The Chiefs host the Queensland Reds in Hamilton on Friday with the Hurricanes at home to Melbourne Rebels in Wellington on Saturday.

"It's hard to win in New Zealand," Reds head coach Les Kiss said. The Reds narrowly lost 29-20

Sports

Group C favourites England ready to make Euro 2024 'headlines'

Southgate eyes a place in the final in Berlin on July 14

LONDON: England are ready to make Euro 2024 "headlines" as the Group C favorites prepare to launch their bid for a first major trophy in 58 years. Gareth Southgate's side, who face Serbia, Denmark and Slovenia in the group stage, head to Germany as one of the leading contenders for Euro glory after a series of painful near misses in recent tournaments.

England lost on penalties to Italy in the coronavirus-delayed European Championship final at Wembley in 2021. The Three Lions were defeated by Croatia in the 2018 World Cup semi-finals and were eliminated by France in the 2022 World Cup quarter-finals after Harry Kane missed a late penalty.

Those agonizing failures have only sharpened England's desire to get their hands on major silverware for the first time since Bobby Moore lifted the 1966 World Cup. Able to call on world-class talents including Harry Kane, Jude Bellingham and Phil Foden, England are ranked alongside France - World Cup runners-up two years ago - and hosts Germany as the bookmakers' three top title contenders.

And in what could be his final tournament in charge, England boss Southgate, whose contract expires in December, is embracing those expectations as he eyes a place in the final in Berlin on July 14. "Everybody is waiting for that headline ('We can win the Euros'). I would be an idiot if I said 'no', and equally if I said 'yes' that doesn't mean there's not a lot of work ahead of us," Southgate said.

"There is no doubt what's possible, they have gone close already. Are we one of those teams that can win? Yes, absolutely. They know what is possible, they know what they've won at club level and what that's taken. You can see cup football, you have to navigate game by game." England's first game is in Gelsenkirchen on June 16 against Serbia, who finished second in their qualifying group behind Hungary.

Denmark test for England

It will be England's first encounter with the Serbs since their split with Montenegro in 2006. Southgate's men, unbeaten in their eight qualifying matches, take on Denmark four days later in Frankfurt before finishing the group stage against Slovenia in Cologne on June 25.

England fans will recall their side, then managed by Fabio Capello, beat Slovenia 1-0 in a must-win group game to reach the knockout stages at the 2010 World Cup. If they are to win the European Championship for the first time, England would greatly benefit from finishing top of Group C.

As group winners, they would face a last-16 tie against a team that finishes third in Group D, E or F, while they would probably face a daunting last-16 clash against Germany if they finish second. England's toughest group game is likely to come against Denmark, who pushed them to the brink in a dramatic Euro 2020 semi-final eventually won 2-1 by Southgate's side after extra time.

Denmark famously won the 1992 Euros and, while Kasper Hjulmand's squad failed to make it out of their group at the last World Cup, they are still capable of causing a surprise in Germany.

Slovenia are participating in a major tournament for only the fourth time and the first since the 2010



NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE: (FILES) England's manager Gareth Southgate talks to the fourth official during the international friendly football match between England and Bosnia-Herzegovina at St James' Park in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, north east England. — AFP

World Cup. Having reached their first European Championship for 24 years, Matjaz Kek's team are hoping to make the knockout stages of a major event for the first time.

Serbia will rely on Juventus striker Dusan Vlahovic, Fenerbahce forward Dusan Tadic and AC Milan striker Luka Jovic to fuel their bid for a place in the last 16. — AFP

Mbappe on target as France stroll past Luxembourg

METZ: Euro 2024 favorites France beat Luxembourg 3-0 in an international friendly on Wednesday with superstar striker Kylian Mbappe on the score sheet. In the tournament that starts in Germany next Friday France are in Group D with Netherlands, Austria and Poland, all far more challenging rivals on paper than Luxembourg, who however stood firm until late in the first half.

With a third goal in four games for France Randal Kolo Muani scored a soft header on 43 mins after a sweet centre from Mbappe, while Marseille defender Jonathan Clauss fired a scorcher into the top corner on 70 minutes to make it 2-0.

The biggest cheer of the evening came however when substitute Bradley Barcola waltzed around the visiting defence to set Mbappe up on 85mins with the Real Madrid bound forward slamming home with conviction.

"That did him good," said Deschamps. "Kylian is a great leader and we need him at his best," he said of Mbappe, who looked off form in his previous two France games.

The 33-year-old Al-Ittihad (Saudi Arabia) based holding midfielder N'Golo Kante got his first run out since June 2022 and left the pitch exhausted midway through the second half after putting in a solid performance supporting both defence and attack.



LONGEVILLE-LES-METZ: France's forward #10 Kylian Mbappe (R) fights for the ball with Luxembourg's defender #02 Maxime Chanot during the international friendly football match between France and Luxembourg at Saint-Symphorien Stadium in Longeville-les-Metz, eastern France. — AFP

"He was as good as ever," Deschamps said. "He did himself proud."

Mike Maignan was hardly tested in the France goal with his defence also enjoying a relatively quiet evening.

France were given hearty support at the match

held at Metz, who were relegated from the French top flight in a play off with Saint Etienne, who climbed back into the top flight on Sunday.

Didier Deschamps' men take on Canada Sunday in Bordeaux, before their Euro 2024 opener June 17 in Dusseldorf against Austria. — AFP

Netherlands pin Euro 2024 hopes on de Jong

THE HAGUE: Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman is gambling on the fitness of Frenkie de Jong, hoping the Barcelona playmaker can inspire a talented side to emulate the European Championship heroes of 1988. While not among the top favorites in Germany, the Oranje could yet prove to be dark horses for the tournament, with an experienced defence and a midfield packed with talent from Europe's top clubs.

Central to Koeman's plans is De Jong, who has battled ankle injuries this season at Barcelona but hopes to be fit for his team's Group D opener against Poland on June 16.

Koeman included the 27-year-old in his squad despite not recovering from his third ankle injury of the season, saying he was prepared to make an exception for his star player.

"We have a trajectory in mind, but it will depend on how the ankle holds up whether I will be fit in time," said De Jong, adding: "There are no hard deadlines."

Koeman will want his talisman fit from the off as the Oranje face a tough group, with joint-favorites France and Austria to come after the opening clash with Poland. Joining De Jong in midfield will be Jerdy Schouten, who has impressed during PSV Eindhoven's all-conquering season in the Dutch top flight and run to the Champions League knock-out stages.

The Dutch can count on a formidable defence, with Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk joining up with Nathan Ake, fresh from Premier League glory with Manchester City.

Veteran defender Daley Blind and Bayern Munich's Matthijs de Ligt are also in the mix, with competition for squad places so tough there was no place for Ian Maatsen, who helped Borussia Dortmund to the Champions League final. Up front, Koeman is likely to play former Manchester United striker Wout Weghorst as a target man, with Liverpool's Cody Gakpo providing valuable support.

Borussia Dortmund's Donyell Malen should come into the tournament brimming with confidence and Steven Bergwijn could play a role despite suffering a horror season with Ajax.

The Oranje qualified second in their group behind France, and Koeman will be hoping to overturn two defeats to Les Bleus (4-0 and 2-1) when they meet on June 21 in Leipzig.

The Netherlands warmed up by thumping Scot-



ZEIST: Dutch Coach Ronald Koeman (C) attends a training session of the Dutch football team at the KNVB Campus in Zeist, as part of the team's preparation for the UEFA Euro 2024 European football championships. — AFP

land 4-0 in March but a 2-1 friendly loss four days later to Germany raised questions about their ability to compete with the continent's best sides.

What is sure is that the team will be roared on by an army of orange-clad fans hoping to erase painful memories of the team's last tournament outing, a brutal 2022 World Cup quarter-final with Argentina. — AFP

France to top Euro group but watch out Austria

PARIS: France are inevitably the favorites to top Group D at Euro 2024 but suggestions they will cruise through the first round might be wide of the mark given the presence of the Netherlands and a resurgent Austria in their section.

The French are leading contenders to win the trophy but there are legitimate questions to be asked about the current condition of the 2022 World Cup runners-up. A home friendly defeat by Germany in March and a slightly fortuitous win over Chile a few days later suggested that Didier Deschamps' team need not necessarily be feared.

Kylian Mbappe's form is a concern to some extent, given he was not a regular for Paris Saint-Germain in the final months of the season and his departure from the club, and move to Real Madrid, have clearly been a distraction.

Not that Deschamps necessarily agrees. "You don't think he's in form? He just scored 44 goals in a season," he said of Mbappe last week. There are also questions to be answered about the form and fitness of Deschamps' defensive options - not least Davot Upamecano - while France are hoping key midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni fully recovers in time from the foot injury which ruled him out of the Champions League final.

The format of a 24-team Euros - the four best third-placed teams as well as the top two in each group advance to the last 16 - makes it hard to imagine France failing to reach the knockout phase. Any serious problems for Les Bleus are unlikely to arrive until later, and they are eager to make up for what happened at the last two Euros played under Deschamps - they lost the 2016 final to Portugal on home soil and went out on penalties to Switzerland in the last 16 in 2021.

The Netherlands should be the next strongest side in the group, but defeats home and away to France in qualifying indicate a gap between those teams. The Dutch were quarter-finalists at the last World Cup, since when Ronald Koeman has returned for a second spell in charge as the successor to Louis van Gaal.

They will forever be associated with the iconic side that won the 1988 Euros, starring Ruud Gullit, Marco van Basten and Frank Rijkaard, but they have not won a knockout tie at the finals of the tournament since 2004. Koeman does boast a core of players of the highest quality, including Virgil van Dijk, Frenkie de Jong, Jeremie Frimpong, and 21-year-old midfielder Xavi Simons. De Jong must shake off an ankle injury, however, and the Oranje could do with getting off to a good start against Poland in Hamburg on June 16. — AFP

Classifieds

Change of Name

I, Hawa, holder of Indian Passport No. M7067479, having permanent address Maharashtra, India, PIN - 415605 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Hawabi Jil-bran and (surname) Parkar.

(#5618, 07/06/2024)

I, Lakhbir Singh, S/o Naranjan Singh, holder of Indian Passport No. M5723236 issued at Kuwait, having permanent address R/o Vpo Samadh Bhi The Bagha Purna Moga, Punjab, India. India present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Lakhvir and (surname) Singh.

(#5617, 07/06/2024)

I, ALAM ABDUL VALI ANSARI SHAH, holder of Indian Passport No. Z3200385, having permanent address Imilia, Belthra Road, Ballia, Uttar Pradesh - 221715, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) ALAM and (surname) SHAH.

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Emotional Indian legend Chhetri bows out with Kuwait draw

39-year-old forward scored 94 goals for India over a career spanning nearly two decades



KOLKATA: India's Sunil Chhetri (C) vies for the ball during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Asia qualifier match between India and Kuwait, at Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata on June 6, 2024. — AFP

KOLKATA: Thousands cheered a tearful Sunil Chhetri off the pitch after his last match for India on Thursday, bringing to a close an international career which put him among the world's all-time leading scorers. Nearly 59,000 fans came to watch the captain's swan song in Kolkata—a 0-0 draw against Kuwait in a World Cup qualifier—a remarkable turnout in a country where football comes a distant second to cricket in popularity.

The 39-year-old forward scored 94 goals for India over a career spanning nearly two decades, behind only Cristiano Ronaldo, Iran's retired Ali Daei and Lionel Messi in the all-time international scorers' list. Fans flocked to

the stadium hours before gates opened to chant, sound bullhorns and dance in the baking afternoon heat.

Fans roared during Chhetri's fleeting opportunities on the ball but otherwise the atmosphere in the stands was subdued. "Referee don't blow the whistle, otherwise Sunil Chhetri will leave us," said one banner hanging from the stands.

Another showed a stooped Chhetri carrying a giant football daubed with the saffron, white and green of India's flag. But his 151st and final appearance failed to help India to victory over Kuwait in the Asian World Cup qualifier.

Chhetri's best chance in the 55th minute came to nothing when a pass from Brandon Fernandes was inter-

cepted by the Kuwait keeper. An emotional Chhetri waved to crowds and pressed his palms together in thanks as he departed the field. He wiped away tears as he walked through an honour guard formed by his teammates to see him off the pitch.

'Inspiration to everyone'

Chhetri is a sporting icon in cricket-mad India. The diminutive striker, who is 1.7 metres tall (5ft 7in), made his debut against fierce rivals Pakistan in 2005 and scored India's only goal. He hit a hat-trick against Tajikistan to help India qualify for the Asian Cup for the first time in 27 years in 2011.

"He became a legend while still playing, and that's something only a

few can do," India's coach Igor Stimac said last month. "He's an inspiration to everyone, absolutely committed to the Indian jersey."

Chhetri had two brief but unsuccessful spells in Portugal and the United States, but has spent most of his career in India. He currently plays for Bengaluru. In 2009 he was offered a contract by London club Queens Park Rangers, in England's second tier, but he could not get a work permit.

India are second in Group A, behind already qualified Qatar and a point ahead of Afghanistan and Kuwait, with the top two advancing. India play Qatar in Doha on Tuesday while Kuwait host Afghanistan in the final round of group games. — AFP

Swiatek defeats Gauff to reach French Open final

PARIS: Iga Swiatek closed in on a third successive French Open title Thursday as she defeated Coco Gauff 6-2, 6-4 in the semi-finals, while Novak Djokovic said surgery on his injured knee "went well". World number one Swiatek extended her winning run in Paris to 20 matches and advanced to a fourth Roland Garros final in five years, with 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva or Italy's Jasmine Paolini standing between her and another title.

Swiatek, who had won 10 of her previous 11 meetings with Gauff in straight sets, wasted no time in grabbing the initiative as she broke the US Open champion in the opening game of the match. The Pole withstood break points in her first two service games, before striking again to move up a double break at 4-1.

She closed out the first set without trouble, but third seed Gauff threatened a fightback when she nosed 3-1 ahead in the second set after wiping away tears following an argument with the chair umpire over the timing of a line call. Swiatek though responded the very next game and won four in a row to surge to the cusp of victory.

Gauff saved two match points to make Swiatek serve it out, which the top seed eventually did at the fourth time of asking. "It was intense. In the second set it was tight because we were breaking each other," said Swiatek.

"I was consistent with my tactics, didn't overthink stuff and just went for it in the end." Swiatek improved to 34-2 at the French Open after beating Gauff at Roland Garros for the third tournament in a row.

She has won all four of her previous Grand Slam

finals and could become only the fourth woman to win four Roland Garros titles in the Open era—after Justine Henin, Chris Evert and Steffi Graf. Swiatek is also on track to join Serena Williams as the only women to complete the treble of French, Madrid and Rome Open titles in the same year.

Surprise semi-finalists

Russian Andreeva, the youngest Grand Slam semi-finalist since Martina Hingis in 1997, takes on the unheralded Paolini in the other last-four encounter. Andreeva stole the headlines in the quarter-finals with a shock victory over world number two Aryna Sabalenka, who was hit by a stomach bug, becoming the youngest woman to reach a Slam semi-final since Hingis at the US Open 27 years ago.

She will now bid to back up that statement performance against 12th seed Paolini, who also got through with a surprise win against former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina. Both Andreeva and Paolini had never reached the quarters at a major tournament before this week, but are now just one match from the final.

With another win, Andreeva will also be the youngest Slam finalist since Hingis, who won the 1997 US Open aged 16. The pair met for the only previous time earlier this year in the Madrid Open last 16, when Andreeva came out on top in two tight sets.

"I remember our match in Madrid. I remember that it was tough," said Andreeva. "She played really good tennis, and after I was able to catch up a little bit. 'I'm sure that it will be a great match.'"

Paolini had never got past the second round at a Grand Slam before this year, but the 28-year-old has been much improved in 2024, also reaching the Australian Open last 16. "She's so young but she's so, so good mentally, and she can defend very well," Paolini said of her upcoming opponent.



PARIS: Poland's Iga Swiatek celebrates after winning against US Coco Gauff at the end of their women's singles semi final match on Court Philippe-Chatrier on day twelve of the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros Complex in Paris on June 6, 2024. — AFP

"It's going to be a tough match, but we are in the semi-final, so there is no chance to get easy matches." Djokovic confirmed Thursday he had undergone an operation on his right knee he injured during his last-16 win.

The 24-time Grand Slam winner Djokovic was forced to withdraw ahead of his Roland Garros quarter-final against Casper Ruud after a scan revealed a torn medial meniscus in his right knee. "In the past day, I had to make some tough decisions after sustaining a meniscus tear during my last match," he posted on social media.

"I'm still processing it all but I am happy to update you that the surgery went well." The 37-year-old made no mention of whether he would be fit to take part at Wimbledon which begins on July 1 but added that he was going to "do my best to be healthy and fit to return to the court as soon as possible". — AFP

Premier League clubs vote to retain VAR

LONDON: English Premier League clubs have voted in favor of retaining the controversial Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system next season. It was reported that 19 of the 20 top-flight clubs voted to continue using VAR at the Premier League's annual general meeting in Harrogate on Thursday. The BBC said only Wolves — who last month triggered the vote to scrap the much-maligned system — had backed its abolition.

In order for VAR to be scrapped, 14 clubs needed to vote in favor of removing it. The Midlands club had accused VAR of "undermining the value of the Premier League brand" after another season of several debatable decisions. VAR was introduced in the Premier League at the start of the 2019-20 season with the aim of helping referees avoid clear and obvious errors that had marred matches in the past.

But there were numerous controversies surrounding VAR during the recently concluded 2023-24 campaign, with Premier League managers and fans growing increasingly vocal in their disdain for the system. Following Thursday's vote, Wolves expressed frustration at the outcome but welcomed the Premier League's desire to improve VAR.

"While we are disappointed with the outcome of the vote on the future of VAR at today's annual general meeting, we acknowledge and accept the decision made by our fellow clubs and we are reassured that the Premier League is taking the concerns of clubs and supporters seriously," a Wolves statement said. "We welcome the commitment to improve VAR, particularly in areas that address delays, consistency, and fan experience."

"While we still believe that Premier League football would be superior without VAR, we think that these improvements are crucial for the integrity of the game and for enhancing the overall matchday experience for our supporters."

Forced to sit through lengthy VAR delays, often without an explanation for why the decision is being checked, supporters have been outspoken in their criticism of the system. Malcolm Clarke, the chairman of the Football Supporters' Association, said: "Support for VAR has collapsed since its introduction into English football." — AFP