






Tour our **NEW Showroom** virtually now by scanning the **QR Code**

volvocars.com

5 Egypt, Spain reject US plan to displace Gazans



8 Apple reveals its version of budget AI: The iPhone 16e



9 ABK reports 16% increase in net profit to KD 52.41 million for 2024



16 New Zealand beat Pakistan by 60 runs in Champions Trophy opener



Amir honors top police cadets

Sheikh Meshal patronizes, attends Saad Al-Abdullah Academy graduation ceremony



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah awards a top police cadet of Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences during a graduation ceremony on Feb 19, 2025. — Amiri Diwan photos

Two Kuwaiti soldiers martyred in live drill

KUWAIT: Two soldiers were martyred and two others were injured during a live ammunition drill on Wednesday, Kuwait Army announced. Investigations are ongoing to uncover the circumstances behind the incident, it added. — KUNA

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Wednesday attended and patronized the graduation ceremony of the 47th batch of Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences police cadets. HH the Amir was received by First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah and Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Salem Nawaf Al-Sabah.

Attending the graduation ceremony were HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Chief of the Supreme Judicial Council and the Court of Cassation

Dr Adel Bouresli, top state officials as well as the graduates' families. The graduation ceremony began with the national anthem and Quranic verses, followed by a speech from the Academy's Director General Brig Ali Al-Wuhaib.

He spoke of the academy's long history and its excellent educational and training curriculums with the highest levels of efficiency. He highlighted the developmental efforts through cooperation agreements and strategic partnerships, that promote the exchange of expertise and improve skillsets. Brig Al-Wuhaib spoke to graduates, telling them that while this is the end of a chapter, it's also the start of a new chapter,

one of responsibility, sacrifice, national values, military honor and team spirit, urging the graduates to be role models in justice, discipline and integrity.

He extended his congratulations to graduates' parents, as they are partners in this achievement for their contributions. He addressed HH the Amir in appreciation for his patronage and attendance, vowing that the police force would exert all efforts for the safety and stability of the homeland. This was followed by the police cadets' performance and oath-taking ceremony. HH the Amir gave out certificates to the top graduates before the conclusion of the ceremony. — KUNA (See Page 3)

UAE rejects displacement of Palestinians

ABU DHABI: United Arab Emirates President Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan told visiting US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Wednesday that Abu Dhabi opposes the displacement of Palestinians, official media reported. Sheikh Mohammed "affirmed the UAE's firm position rejecting any attempts aimed at displacing the Palestinian people from their land", the Gulf state's WAM news agency said.

Rubio departed Abu Dhabi after a brief stop in the UAE, the final leg of his first Middle East tour, which included discussions on a proposal by US President Donald Trump to place Gaza under US control and relocate its inhabitants. The trip also saw breakthrough talks with Russian officials in Riyadh a day earlier, with discussions on issues including efforts to end the Ukraine war.

The UAE president "stressed the need for the reconstruction of Gaza to be linked to a path leading to comprehensive and lasting peace based on the two-state solution", WAM reported. Rubio's visit to the UAE comes ahead of a Friday summit in Saudi Arabia of the six-state Gulf Cooperation Council, as well as Egypt and Jordan, in order to respond to Trump's Gaza plan. The Trump administration, which rejects any future role for Hamas in the Palestinian territory, has called on the Arab countries, which

Continued on Page 6

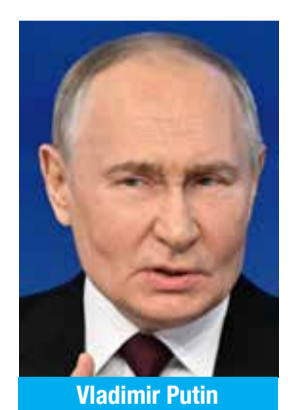
Trump, Zelensky trade barbs as Putin hails talks

WASHINGTON/KYIV: US President Donald Trump denounced Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as "a dictator without elections" and said he better move fast to secure peace or he would have no country left. Trump spoke hours after Zelensky

hit back at his suggestion that Ukraine was responsible for Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion, saying the US president was trapped in a Russian disinformation bubble.

"A Dictator without Elections, Zelenskyy better move fast or he is not going to have a Country left," Trump wrote on his Truth Social media platform. Zelensky, who met Trump's Ukraine envoy Keith Kellogg in Kyiv on Wednesday, said he would like Trump's team to have "more truth"

Continued on Page 6



Egypt unveils first ancient royal tomb since Tutankhamun

CAIRO: Egypt's antiquities authority says it has found the ancient tomb of King Thutmose II, the first royal burial to be located since the famed discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. The tomb, discovered near the Valley of the Kings in Luxor in southern Egypt, belonged to King Thutmose II of the 18th dynasty, who lived nearly 3,500 years ago. Thutmose II was an ancestor to Tutankhamun himself, and his half-sister and queen consort was Pharaoh Hatshepsut.

Her giant mortuary temple stands on the west bank of the Nile at Luxor a few kilometers from where the tomb of Thutmose II was found. Although preliminary studies suggest its contents were moved in ancient times — leaving the tomb without the iconic mummy or gilded splendor of the Tutankhamun find — the antiquities ministry on Tuesday called the discovery "one of the most significant archaeological breakthroughs in recent years".

It has been excavated by a joint Egyptian-British mission, led by the Supreme Council of Antiquities



and the New Kingdom Research Foundation. The tomb's entrance was first located in 2022 in the Luxor mountains west of the Valley of the Kings, but was believed at the time to lead to the tomb of a royal wife. But the team then found "fragments of alabaster jars inscribed with the name of Pharaoh Thutmose II, identified as the 'deceased king', alongside inscriptions bearing the name of his chief royal consort, Queen Hatshepsut", confirming whose tomb it was, the ministry said. Shortly after the king's burial, water flooded the burial chamber, damaging the

Continued on Page 6

Muslims attacked in Australia; anti-Muslim hate highest in UK

SYDNEY/LONDON: Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday condemned a "reprehensible" assault on two Muslim women at a shopping center, rejecting criticism that Islamophobia was treated less seriously than anti-Semitism. The country's Islamic community, joined by Test cricketer Usman Khawaja, have pointed to the Feb 13 incident in Melbourne as an example of the insufficient government response to threats against Muslims.

Asked if the government would have reacted more swiftly if the incident had been anti-Semitic, Albanese told journalists that an attack on anyone because of their faith was "reprehensible". "I take all attacks on people on the basis of their faith seriously, and they should all face the full force of the law." Albanese faced criticism earlier this week for not condemning the attack sooner.

Continued on Page 6

Bridging cultures, Japan and Kuwait unite in celebration

Japan Embassy marks His Majesty the Emperor's birthday



Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait, Mukai Kenichiro cuts the cake with Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.



Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait tour the expo on the sidelines of the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Officials, diplomats and ambassadors attend the ceremony.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of Japan to Kuwait held a reception on Tuesday to celebrate His Majesty the Emperor's birthday. In his opening remarks, the Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait, Mukai Kenichiro hailed the deep-rooted relations between Japan and Kuwait, noting that the relations have developed in various fields. He stated "His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito, the 126th Emperor of Japan, will celebrate his 65th birthday on February 23. I am thrilled to be able to celebrate our national day here with the people of Kuwait, along with the 64th National Day of Kuwait and the 34th anniversary of its liberation next week."

Japan's Ambassador to Kuwait reflected on his first few months in the country, recalling his meeting with His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, noting "Since then, I have met with many people who have expressed their trust and friendship toward Japan and their love for Japanese culture. One of them said that strengthening relations between both cultures would lead to the development of Kuwait. I believe the same is true for Japan. The relationship that we are developing together is not limited to the economy but extends to various fields such as



Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait, Mukai Kenichiro speaks at the event.

culture and education."

The ambassador stated that on December 23, they held the 4th session of the Policy Dialogue between both Foreign Ministries in Kuwait to discuss ways of cooperation between the two countries in various fields. "Today and yesterday, the 5th session of

the Japan-Kuwait Electricity & Water & Renewable Energy Policy Dialogue was held in Kuwait, with the visit of officials from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry as well as Japanese companies from Japan. We would take these opportunities to develop concrete cooperation projects between the two countries," he said.

The ambassador expressed hope that many Kuwaitis will visit the Kansai-Osaka Expo, which will open on April 13, saying "The venue will be filled with a variety of fascinating exhibits, all of which will showcase cutting-edge Japanese technology, culture, and history." Ambassador Kenichiro encouraged the people of Kuwait to make the trip to Osaka, explaining "Whether you are a repeat Japan fan or a first-time visitor to Japan, it will be an experience of a lifetime. The Expo is also an opportunity to strengthen economic ties through increased direct investment."

He continued "Japan is a large market and a very attractive investment destination, with capital investment in Japan topping around \$700 billion in 2023, a record high. The Expo will showcase the most advanced Japanese technologies, including AI, advanced mobility, and healthcare technologies, and there will be opportunities for business meetings with Japanese

companies. In addition, the venue of the Expo will be carbon neutral with the use of a hydrogen clean energy system and CO2 emission-reducing concrete. We hope that Kuwait will invest in Japan, and we also look forward to the development of cooperation between Japan and Kuwait through such technology."

He concluded "I was also reminded of the immense popularity of Japanese pop culture here in Kuwait. "Figurama Collectors" has donated figures from the Japanese anime "Attack on Titan" and others for display here. "Attack on Titan" is a story that reminds us of the importance of peace and the beauty of human life through the dirty conflicts of mankind. I hope that human beings cooperate to bring the world as close to peace as possible this year."

At the reception, sushi and other Japanese dishes cooked by the ambassador's chef were served, and a corner was set up to promote agricultural and marine products from Ishikawa Prefecture in Japan and set a corner to experience traditional Japanese tea. The event was attended by Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs as the guest of honor and many representatives from government bodies, diplomatic corps, international organizations, businesses and media.

Foreign Ministry brings diplomats together for Yom Al-Graish

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: In a warm and festive outdoor gathering that celebrated both tradition and diplomacy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted Yom Al-Graish event as we approach Ramadan at the Saud Al-Nasser Diplomatic Institute on Wednesday. "A bridge of goodwill, affection, and communication," is how Nasser Subaih Al-Subaih, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for the institute, described the event. He emphasized that Yom Al-Graish, a cherished Kuwaiti tradition, provides a "chance to connect and network" while offering diplomats an opportunity to gain "insight into Kuwaiti culture in a short time."

Yom Al-Graish, widely observed in Kuwaiti households, is a time for families and friends to gather for a final celebratory meal, held as a way to welcome Ramadan before the month of fasting begins. By bringing this tradition to the diplomatic institute, purpose of the event, according to Al-Subaih, is to provide ambassadors and diplomats with a firsthand experience of Kuwaiti customs, fostering cultural understanding and strengthening international ties in an atmosphere free from political discussions.

Set in the beautiful outdoor space of the institute, the event was filled with the sights and sounds of Kuwaiti heritage. Guests enjoyed a spread of traditional



Ambassadors and diplomats gather at Saud Al-Nasser Diplomatic Institute to celebrate Yom Al-Graish. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwaiti dishes, while performances showcased the country's musical and artistic heritage, from the historic Ardah dance to modern maritime performances. Adding a special touch, individuals with disabilities participated in the event by displaying handmade crafts, locally blended perfumes, and recycled paper artwork, reflecting their integral role in Kuwaiti society.

The Indonesian Ambassador to Kuwait, Lena Maryana, expressed her appreciation for the initiative, describing it as an event that "brings all countries together in one place." She noted that many diplomats were experiencing Yom Al-Graish for the first time, despite having been in Kuwait for several years. Drawing a parallel to traditions in Indonesia, she explained how her

country marks the approach of Ramadan with family gatherings, mosque cleanings, and visits to cemeteries to pay respects to ancestors. She admired Kuwait's unique traditions, emphasizing that "this event is a beautiful way to learn about the rich traditions of Kuwait" and hoped it would become an annual tradition.

Thailand's Ambassador to Kuwait, Ekapol Poolpiat, echoed similar sentiments, calling the gathering "a form of cultural diplomacy that connects us to Kuwait." He described Ramadan in Kuwait as "very dynamic and enjoyable", where people come together through diwanias, iftars and various events. He expressed his admiration for the spirit of togetherness fostered by Kuwaiti traditions, adding that diplomatic

gatherings like Yom Al-Graish are valuable opportunities for cross-cultural exchange.

Tajikistan's Ambassador to Kuwait and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Zubaydullo Zubaydov, was equally impressed by the experience, describing it as "an amazing day where we witnessed Kuwaiti customs and traditions in the spirit of Ramadan." He highlighted the music, traditional food and cultural practices, emphasizing that every Islamic country has its own special traditions for Ramadan. In closing, he extended his greetings to the people of Kuwait, His Highness the Amir and the Crown Prince, wishing them blessings for the upcoming National and Liberation Days, as well as the holy month of Ramadan.



Individuals with disabilities from the Kuwait Center for Autism showcase handcrafted items.

Kuwait assumes DCO presidency

DEAD SEA, Jordan: Kuwait on Wednesday assumed the presidency of the fifth session of the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) General Assembly for 2025 from Jordan. The chairman of the fourth session for 2024, Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Al-Omar, received the presidency of the organization from Jordanian Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship Sami Smeirat during the sessions of the DCO's fourth general assembly at the King Hussein Bin Talal Conference Center in the Dead Sea area, which was held under Jordan's chairmanship, with wide international and Arab participation and the presence of Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan, Hamad Al-Marri.

Al-Omar said in his speech following the handover ceremony that "Kuwait has assumed the presidency of the DCO, which coincides with Kuwait's presidency of the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Arab Gulf States and the selection of Kuwait as the Capital of Arab Culture and the Capital of Arab Media." He referred to the decision issued by the General Secretariat of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf during Qatar's presidency of the Council in 2024, which aims to enhance cooperation between the General Secretariat of the Cooperation Council and the General Secretariat of the Digital Cooperation Organization through joint activities that support the Ministerial Committee for E-Government and the Ministerial Committee for Post and Telecommunications, which are related to the aspirations and



Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Al-Omar presents his speech during the opening of the Digital Cooperation Organization. — KUNA photos

initiatives of the member states.

He indicated that Kuwait intends to organize joint activities during its presidency of the organization this year in the field of digitization and during the next meeting of the General Secretariat of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, as well as the next meeting of the General Assembly of the Digital Cooperation Organization. He added that these activities will cover a number of topics, including digital skills among youth, digital rights, intellectual property, partnerships between the public and private sectors, the role of women in the field of communication and information technology, and other issues of common interest.

Al-Omar expressed his happiness with Kuwait assuming the presidency of the Digital Cooperation Organization this year and beginning to activate the (2025-2028) strategy, which will enable member states to continue developing the digitization process in all economic and social fields. He stressed that the participation of the State of Kuwait and its supportive presence in such organizations align with its Vision 2035,

pointing out the start of implementing a series of initiatives and projects such as building data centers for major international companies and developing a network of marine and terrestrial cables in the region.

He stated that the launch of a new regional corridor linking Kuwait to the German city of Frankfurt was recently announced, noting that the opportunity is now available to enhance partnerships, exchange knowledge, and provide innovative digital solutions that contribute to developing societies and achieving sustainable development. In turn, the Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship and Chairman of the Organization's Council, Eng. Sami Smeirat, affirmed in a speech he delivered at the opening of the General Assembly Jordan's commitment to enhancing digital cooperation and innovating sustainable solutions to drive growth and prosperity in the digital world.

He added that this meeting is an important platform to discuss ways to enhance cooperation in the digital field, accelerate the pace of economic growth, and support innovation in a manner that

serves the achievement of sustainable development goals. He pointed out that Jordan is a regional center for digital innovation and investment, as well as a headquarters for a rapidly growing digital industry that contributes significantly to the international economy.

He stressed the presence of a large number of digital specialists in Jordan, especially since about 70 percent of Jordan's population is under 34 years old, and 81 percent of Jordanian universities have curricula related to information technology. He stated that 27 percent of digital economy entrepreneurs in the Middle East are Jordanians, placing them in tenth position in senior roles and possessing high digital expertise and skills.

For her part, Secretary-General of the Digital Cooperation Organization, Dima Al-Yahya, said in her speech that "digital transformation is comprehensive and transparent, and no country should be left behind. Let us cooperate with countries, economies, and industry leaders and support harmony in efforts while sponsoring initiatives to build capabilities for this industry to serve as a 'bridge for transition, progress, and de-

Kuwait places road safety on top priorities

MARRAKESH: Minister of Public Works Dr Noura Al-Mashaan stated on Wednesday that Kuwait has prioritized road safety in its development plans and work programs by implementing road development, expansion and maintenance projects using high-quality materials to enhance durability and to extend the lifespan.

Al-Mashaan made this statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) during her participation in the fourth session of the Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, currently being held in Marrakesh under the slogan "Commitment for Life," with participation from ministers and experts worldwide. Al-Mashaan added that the involvement of the Ministry of Public Works and the Roads and Land Transport Authority in this global conference "comes to enhance road safety as a central issue of concern to society."

She emphasized Kuwait's commitment to applying the best methods and practices in developing infrastructure, enhancing safety standards, and supporting policies and strategies aimed at reducing traffic accidents and minimizing human and material losses. The Global Ministerial Conference, organized by the World Health Organization in cooperation with the Moroccan Ministry of Transport and Logistics, began on Tuesday, for three days to discuss various topics related to challenges arising from traffic accidents and propose solutions and policies to achieve the United Nations goal of cutting the number of traffic accident deaths by half by 2030.

The conference also includes parallel events, such as the "World Film Festival" on road safety and the international participation of youth for road safety, in addition to a meeting of the Global Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations active in the field of road safety. The conference will culminate in the adoption of the Marrakesh Declaration, which will serve as the basis for the United Nations General Assembly resolution regarding the international goal. — KUNA

Amir patronizes 47th police cadet graduation



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Wednesday attended and patronized the graduation ceremony of the 47th batch of Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences police cadets. His Highness the Amir was received by First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, and Ministry Undersecretary Lieutenant General Salem Nawaf Al-Sabah. Attending the graduation ceremony were His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Chief of the Supreme Judicial Council and the Court of Cassation Dr Adel Bouresli, top state officials as well as graduate families.

Minister tours Gardenia popup exhibition



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and senior officials visit Gardenia popup exhibition on Wednesday. Gardenia popup features around 70 participants this year, ranging from restaurants and furniture companies to construction firms and plant specialists. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait envoy urges action against Zionist violations

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Tareq Al-Banai, has called for confronting the systematic violations and ongoing disregard of the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law by the Zionist occupation. This statement was delivered by Ambassador Al-Banai on Tuesday, as the chair of the Arab Group for February, during discussions on the Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations.

Ambassador Al-Banai emphasized the Arab Group's commitment to the work of the committee and the importance of enhancing the UN's role in upholding the principles and objectives of the Charter. He reiterated the group's stance on maintaining an international system based on the full respect of the UN Charter by all states without exception. He highlighted the occupation's breaches of the UN Charter and warned that these violations set dangerous precedents threatening the integrity of the UN, its agencies, and international cooperation.

Al-Banai noted that the committee convenes at a time when the credibility and effectiveness of the UN are being tested, particularly as the occupying forces continue a genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza for over a year. The Kuwaiti envoy urged all UN members to ensure that the occupying power fully implements the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in Gaza. — KUNA

KFAS launches 'TechEdge' to empower youth

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) has launched the "TechEdge" program, a strategic initiative developed in collaboration with National University of Singapore, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), and Zain. This program aims to equip young Kuwaiti professionals with advanced expertise in high-demand technological fields—such as artificial intelligence, data science, and cybersecurity—preparing them to excel in these rapidly evolving sectors.

The program aims to underscore the vital importance of cybersecurity and data protection amid growing digital challenges. By equipping participants with in-depth knowledge of cutting-edge technologies and tools, it empowers them to counter cyber threats and strengthen digital infrastructure. Beyond enhancing technical expertise, the initiative prepares young professionals to navigate the evolving demands of an increasingly digital world.

This initiative supports New Kuwait Vision 2035 by fostering the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) collaboration, driving economic diversification, and advancing digital transformation. By equipping the workforce with cutting-edge skills, it strengthens Kuwait's path toward a resilient, technology-driven future.

On this occasion, Emad Al-Ablani, General Manager - Head of Group Human Resources remarked, "Our commitment lies in developing a highly skilled national workforce capable of excelling in a rapidly evolving labor market driven by technological advancements. By providing them with the necessary



Group photo of the participants of the program.

expertise and tools, we empower them to lead in advanced technology fields. This initiative not only reinforces sustainable development but also accelerates Kuwait's digital transformation, aligning with the country's broader strategic vision.

"The "TechEdge" program represents a significant opportunity for early-career professionals to enhance their expertise. Through high-quality educational and training initiatives delivered in partnership with the National University of Singapore—a globally recognized leader in technology—the program is poised to equip participants with the skills needed to excel in cutting-edge fields. This collaboration underscores our commitment to fostering talent and driving innovation in Kuwait's technology sector," he added.

Al-Ablani emphasized the bank's dedication to playing a pivotal role in the developmental journey of Kuwait's youth, who are brimming with potential and capabilities. "Our focus is on providing the right guidance and resources to harness their talents effectively, ensuring they contribute meaningfully to the nation's sustainable development goals," he concluded.

Nawal Bourisli, Chief Purpose and HR Officer at Zain Kuwait, said: "This partnership embodies Zain's continuous efforts to contribute to the development of the

knowledge economy, capacity building, and fostering innovation among youth, particularly in digital and tech skillsets that shape our world today. Innovation is one of the key drivers of sustainable growth, and this is precisely what we aim to achieve through our support of the TechEdge program, launched in collaboration with one of the world's leading academic institutions, the National University of Singapore."

She added: "This collaboration reflects the synergy between the public and private sectors in advancing the country's developmental goals, with a primary focus on investing in human capital to drive sustainable economic and social development. It is yet another addition to Zain's ongoing programs under our 'Innovation Nation' initiative, through which we collaborate with leading entities to achieve our strategic objectives in this field."

She continued: "Through this partnership, we seek to support innovators and entrepreneurs, share private sector expertise, foster a culture of creativity, and invest in the digital skills of youth, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, which have become a top priority in modern job markets."

Last year, NBK unveiled the NBK Tech Academy, marking a significant milestone as Kuwait's first



NBK team participating in the program.

academy dedicated to digital technology and data systems. This initiative underscores the bank's commitment to staying at the forefront of digital advancements in technology, information, and data security. The academy features a comprehensive professional training program designed to nurture young Kuwaiti talent across a range of critical areas, including Fin-Tech, Data Analytics, Ethics in Technology, Cyber Security, Fundamentals of Digital Payments, Digital Innovation, Artificial Intelligence, Scripting and Programming, Fundamentals of Codifications, and Finance for Non-Finance Professionals.

Through its "Innovation Nation" initiative, Zain is committed to strengthening Kuwait's innovation and creativity ecosystem by offering interactive programs and activities throughout the year in collaboration with leading academic and cultural institutions from both the public and private sectors. This initiative targets youth, students, graduates, and entrepreneurs, covering a wide range of professional and personal development areas, with a particular focus on digital and technological capabilities such as robotics, data science, programming, artificial intelligence, and more, contributing to the development of the next generation of technology leaders in Kuwait.



Ardha performance

KU celebrates national days

‘It embodies the cohesion of Kuwaiti people as well as their sacrifices’

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: Kuwait University held celebrations for the 64th anniversary of the National Day and the 34th anniversary of the Liberation Day of Kuwait on its campus on Wednesday, February 19th, to preserve the sense of belonging to our country. Dr Dina Al-Mailem, President of Kuwait University, kicked off the events with a speech highlighting the importance of celebrating national holidays. “This occasion is dear to our hearts, as it carries the meanings of pride and sense of belonging to this cherished country and embodies the cohesion of the Kuwaiti people as well as their sacrifices,” Dr Al-Mailem said.

“On this National Day, we celebrate our beloved homeland and proudly recall its ancient history and remarkable achievements while recognizing our role and responsi-



Dr Dina Al-Mailem

bilities in building the future of this country and elevating its status. We emphasize the role of youth in the nation's prosperity, as they are its heartbeat and main pillar. By equipping ourselves with science and knowledge, we achieve its renaissance, and



Oud and singing performance

through creativity and innovation, we outline the features of the future,” she added.

She stated that love for the homeland is reflected in sincere work and effective participation in development and preserving its resources: “Every effort we exert and

every dream we strive to achieve is a brick in constructing a stronger and more beautiful homeland. So, let us be proud of this country and make its banner shine among the nations,” she added. Kuwait University was keen to organize this celebration to affirm its national role as a key partner in building a national society and a major contributor to preparing national cadres to lead the development movement in the country, as honor truly belongs to this nation and achieving its aspirations.

“We are proud of the patronage of the wise leadership of HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for their continuous support of Kuwait University, enabling it to be a stimulating educational environment for creativity,” she said, believing that the strength of the country lies in its scientific progress and investment

in its youth. A speech was also delivered by Mariam Al-Refaei, a graduate of the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University, who ranked second among the top ten civil engineering students in the world according to the American Society of Civil Engineers, making her the first Kuwaiti and Gulf national to achieve this distinction. She expressed her gratitude to Kuwait for the opportunities that facilitated her reaching this level.

Dr Hussain Al-Ansari, a professor at the College of Social Sciences and former director of Kuwait University, also gave a speech and recited some of his poetry in honor of Kuwait. The celebrations also featured musical performances, including the famous Arabic sword dance, the Ardha, an oud performance of national songs, and numerous booths organized by various departments at Kuwait University.

Experts, students discuss maritime archaeology

KUWAIT: From February 15 to 17, archaeologists, heritage professionals, marine scientists, scuba divers and university students convened in Kuwait to discuss maritime archaeology, underwater excavation techniques, and 3D technologies in underwater research. Under the rubric “3D-Q8”, the project served as a platform for education, training, and exchange that included a lecture series, a half-day workshop, and an interactive virtual reality seminar led by underwater archaeology specialists from Malta.



Dr Timmy Gambin delivering a lecture on underwater archaeology and marine ecology.



Mellieha underwater excavation site in Malta.

The multi-day initiative emerged from a partnership between the University of Malta, Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL), and the Department of Marine Science at Kuwait University. Professor Timmy Gambin, an associate professor of maritime archaeology in the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Malta, led the Maltese team, accompanied by John Wood, a 3D photogrammetry expert and technical rebreather diver. Talal Al-Muhanna, a Kuwaiti filmmaker and postgraduate student of maritime archaeology at the University of Malta, coordinated the collaboration effort.

UNESCO

UNESCO defines Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH) as “all traces of human exist-

ence having a cultural, historical, or archaeological character that have been partially or totally underwater, periodically or continuously, for at least 100 years.” This definition encompasses a wide range of potential artifacts—from prehistoric Stone Age tools to ancient harbors and commodities transported by ships over thousands of years. As Gambin et al. noted in a 2021 article for Remote Sensing: “The seabed can be considered as the world's largest museum, and underwater sites explored and studied so far provide priceless information on human interaction with the sea.”

Talal Al-Muhanna – whose MA dissertation is being supervised by Dr. Gambin – stated: “Ever since Kuwait ratified the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage, a robust framework for maritime archaeology has become available to prospective maritime archaeologists in Kuwait.” Indeed, with its comprehensive guidelines for researching, recovering, preserving, protecting, and managing underwater cultural heritage, UNESCO's 2001 Convention is gradually establishing a global standard in underwater archaeology. Al-Muhanna added: “As a State Party to the 2001 Convention, Kuwait can reap positive benefits. At the same time, like all States Parties, ratification implies fulfilling various obligations too.”

Marine archaeology in Kuwait

To date, marine archaeology in Kuwait has focused on identifying and examining archaeological features along the shoreline, primarily on Failaka Island. From 2013 to 2019, under the auspices of Kuwait's National Council, the Kuwaiti-Polish Archaeological Mission (KPAM) conducted coastal surveys around Failaka Island, identifying numerous archaeological features such as stone tidal weirs (fish traps). The KPAM archaeological team, which included Polish marine archaeologist Magdalena Nowakowska, determined that some of the studied features were built during the Early Islamic Period, while specific fishing practices related to these features continued to be used by island inhabitants into the early 20th century.

Building bridges to the past

In a time when environmental factors such as ocean acidification, marine pollution, and rising sea levels threaten the integrity and sustainability of Kuwait's maritime landscapes, aquatic resources, and underwater cultural heritage, Project 3D-Q8 aims to rejuvenate discussions about underwater archaeology in Kuwait and foster interdisciplinary connections between local and international institutions with shared sustainability goals and scientific interests. Dr Fahad Al-Senafi, Acting Head of the Marine Science Department at Kuwait University, commented: “It is time to initiate a deeper exploration of the region's rich history, right here in our own backyard in Kuwait. In the face of a changing climate, it is valuable to examine how ancient civilizations adapted to past environmental shifts, as this knowledge can help inform our strategies for the future.”

With top-notch facilities at its coastal campus in Al-Fintas, the Marine Science Centre boasts numerous classrooms, research laboratories, a library, a lecture hall, and direct access to the ocean. Al-Senafi, whose expertise and interests span physical oceanography, ocean modeling, and climate dynamics, added: “This region, once closely connected to Mesopotamian civilization, has long been shaped by the rivers that once flowed into Kuwaiti waters. Over time, these waters have accumulated historical remnants in our seabed, preserving a record of the past beneath layers of sediment, waiting to be explored.”

3D-Q8 program

Project 3D-Q8 launched on February 15 with an invitation-only workshop for scuba divers, underwater photographers, remote sensing technicians, heritage workers, and university students interested in underwater surveying techniques. The workshop was followed by a public lecture at the Marine Museum at the Radisson Blu Hotel, where topics related to underwater archaeology in Maltese waters were discussed. On February 17, the Marine Science Centre in Al-Fintas hosted public talks. A set of morning lectures by Dr Gambin focused on the protection and management of underwater cultural heritage and the environmental factors impacting underwater archaeology. Later that day, John Wood led a highly popular interactive seminar featuring Virtual Reality (VR) headsets. Visitors, staff, and students were offered VR experiences. Dr Mohammad Al-Jassar, Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts & Letters (NCCAL), expressed enthusiasm for the initiative and emphasized the importance of promoting Failaka Island in line with sustainable tourism, as evidenced by NCCAL's ongoing project in collaboration with the World Monuments Fund.

Failaka

Between the two days of public talks offered by Project 3D-Q8, the University of Malta team took an excursion to Failaka Island, guided by local heritage worker Hasan Al-Failakawi. As one of the Gulf's key archaeological sites, 3D photogrammetry expert John Wood and Kuwaiti drone operator Ahmad Albehbehani conducted preliminary aerial surveys of select sites. The results will include 3D models and orthographic photographs.

Future prospects, new horizons

“My visit to Kuwait has been an enriching experience”, Gambin declared. “The state-of-the-art facilities are truly impressive, but what stands out most is the dedication and expertise of the heritage and marine sciences specialists. Their commitment suggests that Kuwait has the potential to become a leading force in underwater research and a catalyst for innovation in the field, not only in its territorial waters but also across the broader region.” Gambin's positive interactions led him to conclude, “The future bodes well for collaborative efforts between the University of Malta, Kuwait University, and the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters.” Indeed, strengthening research ties and fostering new opportunities in maritime heritage and marine scientific exploration could create common ground.

Funding

Project 3D-Q8 was funded by a Research Networking Scheme (RNS) grant from Xjenza Malta (Science Malta). The project sought to enhance understanding and appreciation for underwater archaeology by fostering knowledge development, improving capacity building, and facilitating professional networking. The Ambassador of Malta to Kuwait, Prof Dr George Said-Zammit, provided additional support.



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Bader Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah take photo with a number of MoH officials. – KUNA photos

PAMA, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Ahmadi Health districts celebrate national days

KUWAIT: In line with its commitment to caring for children under its care, the Public Authority for Minors Affairs (PAMA) organized the “Pride and Joy” festival on the occasion of the country's national holidays and to make children happy and spread smiles and joy in their hearts. The events held at the authority's headquarters included many entertainment and artistic activities, handicrafts and various shows that highlight the national and heritage role of the State of Kuwait.

devotion to this dear homeland, its wise leadership, and the loyal Kuwaiti people, and honors the medical cadres,” indicating that this wide participation from various departments carries a deeper meaning than merely being a celebration: it embodies a renewed covenant.

He expressed his happiness to participate in the celebration held at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital, which stands as an icon among the Ministry of Health hospitals in terms of construction, design, and its uniqueness in containing unparalleled medical equipment found in other hospitals, along with national cadres of doctors, nurses, technicians, and administrators.

Also, Al-Ahmadi Health District celebrated the 64th National Day and the 34th Liberation Day on Sunday under the slogan “Pride and Honor,” under the patronage of Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi, in the presence of the Undersecretary of the Ministry, Dr Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. Undersecretary Al-Mutairi spoke about the importance of celebrating this cherished occasion and recalling the country's historical journey, appreciating the efforts of the medical teams for their excellence in organizing and holding this celebration.

In a similar statement, the Director of the District, Dr Bader Al-Otaibi, stressed the commitment of Al-Ahmadi Health to celebrate national holidays annually, indicating that various departments participated in the celebration held at Al-Adan Hospital, which included a number of activities that reflect the history of Kuwait and express feelings of belonging to the homeland. For his part, the hospital director, Dr Hussein Al-Shammari, told KUNA that the hospital is keen to participate in such significant occasions, as preparations have been made for the event from its various medical departments, calling for blessings of security and safety to continue for Kuwait. – KUNA



In another development, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Health District celebrated on Monday the 64th anniversary of Independence Day and the 34th anniversary of Liberation Day under the slogan “Pride and Honor,” with the patronage and attendance of Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Bader Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and Sheikhha Awwad Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Minister Al-Awadhi told reporters on the sidelines of the celebration held at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital that “celebrating national occasions expresses love for our dear homeland and serves as a reminder of the efforts of our fathers and grandfathers in the march of this cherished homeland and its advancement.” He added that “this national celebration enhances the values of loyalty, belonging, and



(From left to right) Dr Ali Al-Mousawi, Dr Fahad Al-Senafi, Dr Arafat AlShuabi, Dr Mohammad Al-Jassar, Dr Timmy Gambin and Talal Al-Muhanna at Marine Science Center, Al-Fintas, Kuwait.





UN: Sudan battle forces 10,000 families out of famine-hit camp

Manila neighborhood puts bounty on dengue-carrying mosquitoes

Page 7

Page 6

Egypt, Spain reject Trump's Gaza plan

Arab League to hold extraordinary session in Cairo on March 4

MADRID: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Wednesday rejected a controversial proposal by US President Donald Trump to displace Palestinians from the war-devastated Gaza Strip.

The Arab League is scheduled to hold an extraordinary meeting in Cairo on March 4 in response to Trump's plan to take over Gaza and permanently move its Palestinian inhabitants elsewhere, including to Egypt and Jordan, and then redevelop the coastal territory into the "Riviera of the Middle East".

Speaking in Madrid ahead of the gathering, Sisi called for the "international community's support and adoption of a plan to rebuild the Gaza Strip without displacing the Palestinian people — I repeat, without displacing the Palestinian people — from their land, which they cling to, and their homeland, which they do not agree to relinquish". Sanchez, one of the staunchest defenders of the Palestinian cause within the European Union, agreed, saying "Gaza belongs to the Palestinians and is part of the future Palestinian state". Trump has proposed a plan to redevelop the tiny enclave into an international beach resort after resettling its Palestinian inhabitants. He called on Jordan and Egypt to take in Palestinians.

Sisi added that the UN Palestinian Refugee

Agency (UNRWA), which provides aid, health and education services to millions in the Palestinian territories and neighboring Arab countries of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, was indispensable for Palestinians. UNRWA said its operations in the Gaza Strip and West Bank will suffer after a Zionist law banned it in October on Zionist land - including East Jerusalem, which the Zionist entity annexed in a move not recognized internationally - and contact with Zionist authorities from Jan 30.

"Their expulsion would not only be immoral and contrary to international law and United Nations resolutions, but would also have a destabilizing effect," the Socialist premier added.

Trump's plan sparked an outcry from Arab governments as well as from world leaders, and the United Nations warned against "ethnic cleansing" in the Palestinian territory. "We stressed the importance of the international community adopting a plan to reconstruct the Gaza strip without displacing Palestinians — I repeat, without displacing Palestinians from their lands," President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi told a press conference with Spain's prime minister in Madrid. The two leaders also signed a declaration upgrading Egypt-Spain relations to a "strategic partnership", as well as several memorandums of understanding in various fields including illegal migration and defense. — Agencies



MADRID: Queen Letizia of Spain (center) and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez (right) clap during a lunch in honor of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (left) at the Royal Palace in Madrid on February 19, 2025. — AFP

Do look up: How Earth can defend itself against asteroid

PARIS: There is a very small chance that an asteroid capable of taking out an entire city could strike Earth in less than eight years. But even if this asteroid is hurtling our way, humanity is now able to defend itself against such a threat, experts say.

The odds that the recently discovered asteroid will hit Earth on December 22, 2032 have now risen to 3.1 percent, NASA said on Tuesday, the highest probability for an impact by such a large space rock in modern forecasting. "Don't panic," Richard Moissl, head of the European Space Agency's planetary defense office, told AFP. As astronomers gather more data, the odds of a direct hit are widely expected to edge upwards before rapidly dropping down to zero.

However, even in the unlikely event that the probability does keep rising up to 100 percent, "we are not defenseless", Moissl emphasized. Here are some of the ways that humanity could deflect or destroy the asteroid known as 2024 YR4.

Only one planetary defense strategy has been tried out on an actual asteroid. In 2022, NASA's Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) deliberately smashed a spacecraft into the 160-metre-wide

Dimorphos asteroid, successfully altering its orbit around a larger space rock. An advantage of this plan is that we could hit the 2024 YR4 asteroid with multiple spacecrafts, observing how each one changed its trajectory, Bruce Betts, chief scientist for the nonprofit Planetary Society, told AFP.

The asteroid discovered in December is estimated to be 40-90 meters wide — roughly half the size of Dimorphos. "You have to take care not to overdo it," Moissl warned. If the spacecraft partially destroyed the asteroid, it could send "bits flying off" that still head towards Earth, he said. If this kind of mishap changed the eventual impact site on Earth — for example, "from Paris to Moscow" — that would likely cause major problems back home, Betts added.

A separate idea called a gravity tractor involves a large spacecraft flying up near the asteroid and — without touching it — using its gravitational pull to tug it away from Earth. Another non-contact plan would put a spacecraft near the asteroid armed with thrusters that would exert a "constant stream of ions" to shove the asteroid off course, Moissl said. Scientists have also considered spray painting one side of the asteroid white, increasing its reflectiveness so it slowly changes trajectory. These subtler strategies would require reaching the asteroid sooner than for some more severe options.

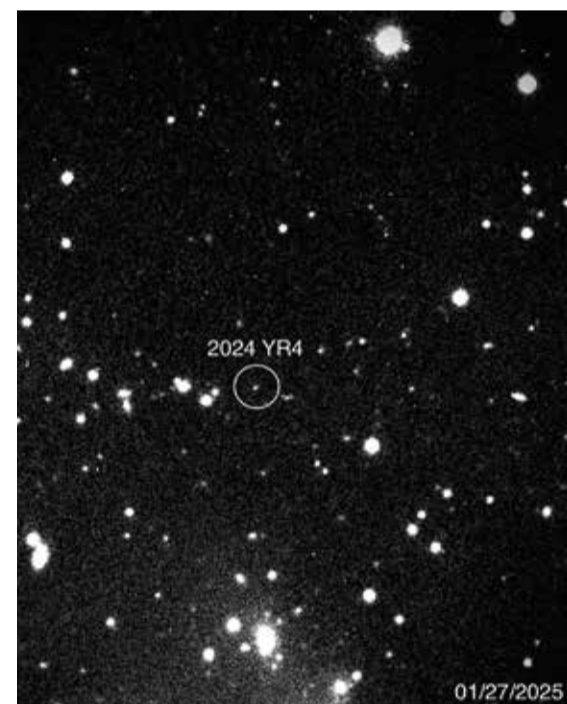
Or we could also just blow it up with a nuclear bomb. Rather than drilling a nuclear weapon deep into an asteroid — as depicted in the 1998 sci-fi action movie "Armageddon" — this would likely

involving detonating a bomb nearby. Last year, US researchers testing out this theory on a marble-sized mock asteroid in the lab found that the x-rays from a nuclear blast would vaporize its surface and send it shooting off in the opposite direction. Even setting aside the ethical, political and legal issues of sending nukes into space, this is considered more of a last-ditch plan for kilometers-wide asteroids like the one that killed off the dinosaurs. And again, there is a risk that a nuclear explosion could still send unpredictable chunks hurtling towards Earth.

Along less dangerous but similar lines, another idea is to shoot laser beams from a spacecraft to vaporize the side of an asteroid, pushing it away. Lab experiments suggest this plan is viable, but it is not one of the "top techniques" being looked at, Betts said. If necessary, deflecting this asteroid is "doable, but it depends on the speed at which we move as a planet", Moissl said.

While experts and space agencies will make their recommendations, ultimately the decision on how to tackle the asteroid will be made by world leaders. If all else fails, we will have a good idea of the strike zone of the asteroid — which is not a "planet killer" and at most could threaten a city, Moissl said.

This means that preparing for impact, potentially including evacuation if the area is populated, will be the last line of defense. "Seven and a half years is a long time to prepare," Moissl said, re-emphasizing that there is a roughly 97 percent chance the asteroid will miss Earth. — AFP



This handout picture provided by NASA on January 31, 2025 shows asteroid 2024 YR4 as observed by the Magdalena Ridge 2.4m telescope at the New Mexico Institute of Technology on January 27, 2025. — AFP

Japan returns to nuke power

TOKYO: The UN nuclear watchdog chief visited Japan's stricken Fukushima plant on Wednesday, the day after Tokyo approved an energy plan that marks a return to nuclear power.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is monitoring Japan's efforts to decommission the Fukushima Daiichi plant after a 2011 earthquake-triggered tsunami killed 18,000 people and set off the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl.

As IAEA head Rafael Grossi arrived in Japan on Tuesday, the cabinet adopted a plan to increase reliance on nuclear power to help meet growing energy demand from artificial intelligence and microchip factories. "At a moment where Japan is embarking on a gradual return to nuclear energy in its national energy mix, it is important that this is also done in complete safety and with the confidence of the society," Grossi said after meeting the foreign minister.



OKUMA: IAEA director general Rafael Grossi speaks to the media in Okuma town of Fukushima prefecture on February 19, 2025. — AFP

Japan had previously vowed to "reduce reliance on nuclear power as much as possible". But this pledge was dropped from the latest Strategic Energy Plan — which includes an intention to make renewables the country's top power source by 2040.

Under the plan, nuclear power will account for around 20 percent of Japan's energy supply by 2040, up from 5.6 percent in 2022.

The shift back to nuclear comes as Japan contends with how to remove around 880 tons of radioactive debris from the Fukushima Daiichi reactors. So far, only one tiny sample has been retrieved by a robotic claw. Grossi, making his fifth visit to Fukushima, viewed the vast "interim" contaminated soil storage facilities near the plant for the first time.

Around 13 million cubic meters of soil — enough to fill 10 stadiums — was scraped from the region to remove harmful radiation. Around 300,000 cubic meters of ash from incinerated organic material is also being stored. On Wednesday, AFP reporters saw trucks and construction vehicles going back and forth between several spots where hundreds of large soil-filled black bags were stacked, some thinly covered by snow. Japan plans to recycle roughly 75 percent of the soil — the portion with low radioactivity — for building projects such as road and railway embankments. — AFP

Trump media group sues judge after Bolsonaro indictment

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's media company filed a lawsuit in Florida on Wednesday against a Brazilian Supreme Court justice, accusing the judge's social media restrictions of violating free speech.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Tampa, landed just hours after Justice Alexandre de Moraes received an indictment accusing former Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro of attempting a coup following his 2022 election loss. Trump and Bolsonaro have maintained strong political and ideological ties for years, and both faced legal challenges over their alleged attempts to overturn their respective election defeats. Trump Media & Technology Group, which operates the Truth Social site and the Rumble video outlet, argued that Moraes'

orders requiring platforms to suspend certain accounts violate US free speech protections and exceed his jurisdiction.

The orders carry daily fines of around \$9,000 and threats of platform shutdowns.

"Justice Moraes cannot dictate the contours of lawful discourse within the United States," the complaint states. While Truth Social hasn't been directly targeted by the Brazilian restrictions, it claims potential harm because it relies on Rumble's technology infrastructure.

The case follows Moraes' clash with X (formerly Twitter) last year, when he blocked the platform in Brazil until owner Elon Musk complied with account suspension orders.

Moraes has defended such actions as necessary to protect Brazilian democra-

cy. The companies seek a declaration that Moraes' orders are unenforceable in the United States and an injunction preventing tech companies from removing their apps from US stores. The lawsuit emerges amid escalating political tensions in Brazil. In 2023, Bolsonaro supporters stormed Brazil's presidential palace, Congress, and Supreme Court, and recent investigations allege the former president and allies plotted to assassinate high-ranking officials — claims Bolsonaro denies.

Brazilian prosecutors on Tuesday charged Bolsonaro, 69, and his co-accused with five counts related to allegedly trying to prevent President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva from taking office. Investigators also uncovered an alleged plot to assassinate Lula, Vice President Geraldo Alckmin and a senior judge, reportedly with Bolsonaro's approval. Bolsonaro is barred from holding public office until 2030 for questioning Brazil's voting system during his failed reelection bid. — AFP

الهندي
Indian
heritage
KUWAIT | BAHRAIN | OMAN

Opening

on
22 Feb 2025
7:00 pm Onwards

M-65
The Warehouse
Mall
Al Sabahiyah

55334185
indianheritage_kw

International

UN: Sudan battle forces 10,000 families out of famine-hit camp

Kenya slammed for hosting Sudan paramilitary rebels

PORT SUDAN, Sudan: Two days of fighting between Sudanese rivals have forced an estimated 10,000 families to flee a famine-hit displacement camp in the Darfur region, the UN migration agency said Wednesday. The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) last week stormed Zamzam camp, home to at least half a million people, triggering clashes with the Sudanese army and allied militias, witnesses told AFP. The International Organization for Migration said the violence since February 11 had displaced 10,000 families from Zamzam, just south of North Darfur state capital El-Fasher.

The agency cautioned that its data covers only the first two days of the reported attack as its collection capacity had been reduced due to funding constraints.

Beyond the camp, a further "1,544 households were displaced from various villages" near El-Fasher, the IOM said. El-Fasher is the only state capital in the vast western region of Darfur that the RSF has not captured in its nearly two-year war with the Sudanese army.

With the military on the verge of retaking the capital Khartoum following a multi-front offensive on central Sudan, the paramilitaries have intensified attacks

on El-Fasher in a bid to consolidate their hold on Darfur. But the RSF has not managed to take the city, its attacks successively repelled by the army-aligned Joint Forces but sending tens of thousands of people fleeing.

Before the most recent attacks, there were already 1.7 million people displaced in North Darfur alone, with two million facing extreme food insecurity, according to the UN.

Established in 2004, Zamzam has received waves of displaced Sudanese during the current war, which began in April 2023. Some aid officials told AFP the camp's population has swelled to around one million during the war.

Famine was first declared in Zamzam in August, and has since taken hold of two other displacement camps around El-Fasher. According to a UN-backed assessment, famine is projected to spread to five more areas of the state including the capital El-Fasher by May. Across Sudan, the war has killed tens of thousands of people, uprooted over 12 million and created the world's largest hunger and displacement crises.

Meanwhile, Kenya was condemned by Sudan and critics at home as "criminally

irresponsible" on Wednesday for hosting Sudanese paramilitary rebels who are planning to declare a parallel government. The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, at war with the Sudanese army for nearly two years, are preparing to proclaim a government in territories under their control at an event in Nairobi on Friday, RSF sources told AFP.

Sudan's foreign ministry, loyal to army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, criticized Kenya for allowing the event. The move "promotes the dismembering of African states, violates their sovereignty, and interferes in their internal affairs," it said in a statement. Kenyan President William Ruto also faced widespread criticism at home. "What Ruto is doing is a reckless abandonment of the traditional caution and dignified approach to Kenyan diplomacy," Mukhisa Kituyi, a Kenyan politician and former secretary-general of United Nations Trade and Development, told AFP.

He is "trying to legitimize a criminal gang that has been dismembering people," he added, calling the move "criminally irresponsible". Ruto's government did not respond to a request to comment. Since April 2023, the war between the army and RSF has killed tens of thousands of peo-



AL-KAMILIN: A woman carries water in Al-Kamilin which was retaken by the Sudanese army in Sudan's Al-Jazira state on February 19, 2025. — AFP

ple, uprooted more than 12 million and created the world's largest hunger and displacement crises.

The African Union in a statement published on Wednesday voiced "deep concern over the continued escalation of the conflict, between the two warring parties, particularly

the non-stop perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity". The conflict has torn the country apart, with the army controlling eastern and northern Sudan while the RSF commands nearly all of the western Darfur region and swathes of the south. — AFP

Three detained in French school sexual abuse probe

PAU, France: Three men in France on Wednesday were taken into custody as part of a probe into accusations of sexual abuse at a Catholic school, in a controversy that is putting Prime Minister Francois Bayrou under increasing pressure. Prosecutors have been investigating around 100 complaints concerning alleged violence, sexual assault and rape committed at the Notre-Dame de Betharram school in southwestern France over several decades.

The three were detained for questioning on suspicion of aggravated rape and sexual assault, the Pau prosecutor's office said on Wednesday. The men were born in 1931, 1955 and 1965, while acts under investigation are alleged to have taken place between 1957 and 2004, prosecutor Rodolphe Jarry said in a statement. Critics say that the case has cast a shadow over the integrity of Bayrou, who served as the country's education minister between 1993 and 1997. Some of Bayrou's children attended the boarding school near the southwestern city of Pau.

The left last week accused Bayrou of lying to parliament when he said he was unaware of the widespread claims. Bayrou, a veteran centrist named by President Emmanuel Macron in December to end months of political crisis after inconclusive snap polls, does not have a majority in a divided parliament and depends on the support of the Socialists to survive.

He has survived multiple no-confidence motions over his budget partially due to support from the Socialists. Losing their backing over the school sexual abuse scandal would be a major blow. — AFP

Pope 'breathing on his own' despite pneumonia: Vatican

VATICAN CITY, Holy See: Pope Francis' heart is holding up very well despite his pneumonia, a Vatican source said Wednesday, amid growing concerns over the hospitalized 88-year-old's condition.

The pontiff was admitted to a Rome hospital with bronchitis last week after suffering breathing difficulties, but the Holy See revealed on Tuesday evening that he had developed pneumonia in both of his lungs. "The pope spent a peaceful night, woke up and had breakfast," the Vatican said Wednesday after Francis' fifth night at the Gemelli hospital, which has a suite reserved especially for popes.

"The pope is breathing on his own. His heart is holding up very well," a source in the Vatican said.

Francis has been speaking to friends by telephone, has been out of bed and sitting in a chair, and working on and off, the source said. On Tuesday, the Vatican had reported that Francis was in "good spirits". But in an evening medical bulletin, it warned that "the laboratory tests, chest X-ray, and the Holy Father's clinical condition continue to present a complex picture".

A "polymicrobial infection" which has come on top of "bronchiectasis and asthmatic bronchitis, and which required the use of cortisone antibiotic therapy, makes therapeutic treatment more complex", the Vatican said. "The follow-up chest CT scan which the Holy Father underwent this afternoon... demonstrated the onset of bilateral pneumonia, which required additional drug therapy," it added.

The pontiff had part of his right lung cut away when he was 21, after developing pleurisy that almost killed him. The Vatican has cancelled a papal audience on Saturday and said the pope would not attend a mass on Sunday, although it has yet to announce plans for his weekly Angelus prayer, which is held on Sunday at midday.

Putin on Wednesday hailed progress in talks with the US, a day after top diplomats met in Saudi Arabia and as the public spat between Zelensky and Trump deepened. The Russian leader also claimed his troops had crossed into Ukraine's northeastern Sumy region — a first ground attack there since 2022 — but Kyiv swiftly denied the claim.

Russia has revealed in Trump's remarks, Putin on Wednesday said that the United States' allies "only have themselves to blame for what's happening", suggesting they were paying the price for opposing Trump's return to the White House. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov praised him as the "only Western leader" who understood that "dragging Ukraine into NATO" was a cause of the conflict.

Putin said he rated the bilateral talks in Saudi Arabia "highly", describing them as a "first step" to restoring relations with Washington. "In my opinion, we made the first step to restore work in various areas of mutual interests," he told journalists while visiting a drone manufacturing plant in his native Saint Petersburg. Kyiv was not invited to the Riyadh talks as Moscow and Washington moved to sideline both Ukraine and Europe. s

Russia, which for years has railed against the US military presence in Europe, wants a reorganization of the continent's entire security framework as part of any deal to end the Ukraine fighting. — Agencie

In Saudi Arabia on Monday, Rubio met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, emphasizing "the importance of an arrangement for Gaza that contributes to regional security", according to a statement. On Sunday, during his first stop in Jerusalem, the US secretary of state offered unwavering US support to Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, giving the Zionist entity the green light to proceed however it chooses in Gaza, where a fragile ceasefire took effect on Jan 19. On Tuesday, Rubio led a US delegation in rare talks with Russian officials headed by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in the Saudi capital. — AFP



ROME: A group of children stand in front of a statue of Pope John Paul II outside the Gemelli hospital where Pope Francis is hospitalized for tests and treatment for bronchitis in Rome, on February 19, 2025. — AFP

Candles, some with pictures of the pope on them, have been set at the bottom of a statue of Pope John Paul II outside the Gemelli hospital, where pilgrims have been coming to pray. "I came to say a prayer for the pope so that he may recover soon. I send him my best wishes", Jacqueline Troncoso, a Bolivian resident in Rome, told AFP. The Vatican published drawings made by children in the hospital for Francis, as well as letters from parents asking him to pray for their sick offspring.

Francis, the head of the Catholic Church since 2013, was admitted to hospital after struggling for several days to read his texts in public. Jesuit theologian Antonio Spadaro, who is close to Francis, told Italy's Corriere della Sera daily the pope could be in

hospital for two to three weeks.

"It is clear that the situation is delicate, but I have not perceived any form of alarmism," he said.

The pope "has an extraordinary vital energy. He is not a person who lets himself go, he is not a resigned man. And that is a very positive element, we have seen that in the past", he said.

The pneumonia is the latest of a series of health issues for the Jesuit, who has undergone hernia and colon surgery since 2021 and uses a wheelchair due to pain in his knee. The pope has left open the option of resigning if he became unable to carry out his duties. But in a memoir last year he said it was just a "distant possibility" that would be justified only in the event of "a serious physical impediment". — AFP

Trump, Zelensky trade barbs as...

Continued from Page 1

about Ukraine, a day after Trump said Ukraine "should never have started" the conflict with Russia.

The Ukrainian leader said Trump's assertion that his approval rating was just 4 percent was Russian disinformation and that any attempt to replace him would fail. "We have evidence that these figures are being discussed between America and Russia. That is, President Trump... unfortunately lives in this disinformation space," Zelensky told Ukrainian TV. The latest poll from the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, from early February, says 57 percent of Ukrainians trust Zelensky.

Less than a month into his presidency, Trump has upended US policy on Ukraine and Russia, ending Washington's bid to isolate Russia over its invasion of Ukraine with a Trump-Putin phone call and talks between senior US and Russian officials. Trump said he may meet Putin this month. The Kremlin said such a meeting could take longer to prepare but Russia's sovereign wealth fund said it expected a number of US companies to return to Russia as early as the second quarter.

UAE rejects displacement...

Continued from Page 1

are firmly opposed to any displacement of Palestinians in Gaza, to propose alternatives to the US president's plan. Trump has proposed putting the Gaza Strip, devastated by more than 15 months of war with the Zionist entity, under US control and moving its 2.4 million inhabitants, mainly to neighboring Jordan and Egypt.

Muslims attacked in Australia...

Continued from Page 1

Australian leaders have been vocal in condemning a series of anti-Semitic incidents over recent months. But on Monday, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils said it was alarmed by a trend of attacks against Muslim people. The response "remains grossly insufficient", federation president Rabeah Jneid said in a statement. "When compared to the swift and significant attention given to less severe incidents affecting other communities, the disparity in response is not only apparent but also unacceptable."

The country's anti-Islamophobia envoy, Aftab Malik, called Tuesday for Australian leaders to condemn the attack and invest in making Muslims feel safe. "All forms of hate need to stop," he later told Australian broadcaster ABC. Khawaja posted on social media Tuesday that such attacks on the Islamic community were being "swept under the rug".

On Wednesday, however, he welcomed Albanese and the country's opposition leader "speaking up" on the matter. Victoria Police said Wednesday a female suspect would appear in Melbourne Magistrates Court over the assault. Two Muslim women

— a 30-year-old and a 26-year-old — allegedly sustained non-life-threatening injuries.

Meanwhile, a group which tracks anti-Muslim hate across the UK said Wednesday it had received the highest ever number of reports in 2024, blaming online platforms and AI for much of the increase. "The rise in anti-Muslim hate is unacceptable and this is deeply concerning for the future," said Tell MAMA's director Iman Atta. "We have had the largest volume of cases reported to us... since we started our work in 2012," she added.

The group received reports of 6,313 anti-Muslim hate cases in 2024 — most of them online. It was able to verify 5,837. This compared with 4,406 reports the previous year, of which 3,767 were verified. Assault cases rose 73 percent with 99 recorded in 2023 and 171 in 2024, while there were 2,197 offline cases of abusive behavior reported to Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) in 2024.

Numbers have spiked since the start of the Gaza conflict in Oct 2023, and the murders of three young girls in Southport in July 2024. False claims that the Southport killings were carried out by a Muslim immigrant went viral on social networks in the early days after the attacks. They helped trigger the UK's worst riots in decades when mobs attacked mosques and immigrant shelters. Axel Rudakubana, a UK citizen born in Cardiff to parents of Rwandan origin, is serving 13 life terms for the murders. — Agencies

Egypt unveils first ancient royal tomb...

Continued from Page 1

interior and leaving fragments of plaster that bore parts of the Book of Amduat, an ancient mortuary text on the underworld. Some funerary furniture belonging to Thutmose II has also been recovered from the tomb in "the first-ever find" of its kind, according to

the ministry. It quoted mission chief Dr Piers Litherland as saying the team will continue its work in the area, hoping to find the tomb's original contents.

There has been a surge of major archaeological discoveries in recent years, as Egypt seeks to boost its tourism industry as a key source of foreign currency revenue. Last year, Egypt hosted 15.7 million tourists and aims to attract 18 million visitors in 2025. The crown jewel of the government's strategy is the long-delayed inauguration of the Grand Egyptian Museum at the foot of the pyramids in Giza, which Egypt has said will finally open this year. — AFP

International

Manila neighborhood puts bounty on dengue-carrying mosquitoes

One peso for every five mosquitoes, dead or alive

MANILA: Residents in a central Manila neighborhood lined up Wednesday, as dengue cases spike nationwide, to collect a bounty — one peso for every five mosquitoes, dead or alive. Carlito Cernal, village captain in Addition Hills, said the awareness-raising project he initiated could have a “huge impact” on curbing the tropical disease’s spread when combined with local clean-up efforts.

Philippine health officials and experts who spoke to AFP were less convinced, but enthusiasm was high among residents who carried pails, cups and other containers filled with dengue-spreading mosquitoes to exchange for cash at the village hall. Iluminado Candasua brought three live specimens in a sealed plastic cup that were duly counted and transferred by village officials to their so-called death chamber, a glass-enclosed UV light machine.

“It’s very hard to capture mosquitoes,” Candasua told AFP, explaining how he strategically chose a darkly lit fire station where he used a cup to manually trap the insects against a wall.

Candasua said the peso he got for his efforts, worth little more than a US penny, would go into a piggy bank he’s using to save for a cellphone for his child. The World Health Organization ranked the Philippines as the country most affected by dengue in the Western Pacific region in 2023 when it had 167,355 cases and 575 deaths.

The tropical disease, while rarely fatal, carries symptoms ranging from fever and headaches to swollen glands. The country has seen an “unusual rise” in cases this year, with 28,200 patients re-

corded as of February 1, according to Department of Health spokesman Dr Albert Domingo, a 40 percent increase from the same period last year.

Five cities and municipalities have declared outbreaks. Domingo told AFP on Wednesday it was important that local communities consult with health authorities before launching ad hoc efforts, adding that the problem was best addressed by “going back to the fundamentals”.

“The sooner we clean our surroundings and overturn any possible areas where stagnant water is collecting, then we will have a better fight against dengue,” he said, urging residents to protect themselves with insect repellent and long sleeves. Public health expert Anthony Leachon told AFP that while he welcomed all anti-dengue initiatives, the Addition Hills roundup would have “little or no impact at all”. Some residents, he warned, might even exacerbate the problem by cultivating mosquitoes for coins.

While Rachel Estoque did not intentionally breed mosquitoes, the haul she turned in Wednesday came from a source of stagnant water in her home. The 45-year-old housewife told AFP she woke up early to catch mosquito larvae growing in water in her flower pot. The 20 larvae earned her four pesos, enough for a tiny packet of cooking oil. But like others waiting to trade in their catch, Estoque said the money was less important than the principle involved. “My child suffered from dengue before and I know how scary and difficult that is... that’s why I’m participating in this project,” she said. — AFP



MANILA: Village chief Carlito Cernal (right) and welfare workers look for mosquitoes in a plastic container handed over by residents at the start of “peso for mosquito” program in Manila on February 19, 2025. — AFP

Japan urges Taliban official to respect human rights

TOKYO: Japan urged the Taliban government to respect human rights during a rare diplomatic meeting with a senior member of the visiting Afghan delegation, Tokyo said Wednesday. “Several” high-ranking Taliban officials have been invited by the Nippon Foundation, the Tokyo-based non-profit told AFP, reportedly on a week-long trip.

It is the first time that members of the Taliban government have visited Japan since their 2021 takeover in Afghanistan. Toshihide Ando, head of the

Japanese foreign ministry’s Middle Eastern and African affairs bureau, met a senior Taliban delegate on Tuesday, a ministry official told AFP.

He “encouraged them to respect human rights and promote an inclusive political process”, they said. The Taliban authorities have imposed a harsh interpretation of Islamic law on the population, including the return of public floggings and executions. Women have been barred from education, work and many public spaces in what the United Nations has described as “gender apartheid”. The ministry declined to identify the Taliban official who met Ando, but Afghan media have said the group includes those overseeing higher education and foreign affairs policies. The Taliban government makes regular visits to neighboring and regional countries, including in Central Asia, Russia and China.

However, it has only officially visited Europe for diplomacy summits in Norway in 2022 and 2023.

Japan’s embassy in Kabul temporarily relocated to Qatar after the fall of the previous foreign-backed government and the takeover by the Taliban in 2021.

But it has since reopened and resumed diplomatic and humanitarian activities in the country.

As organizer of this week’s trip, the Nippon Foundation highlighted “the harsh conditions under which women and children in Afghanistan are forced to live”. “We wanted them to recognize the need to accept a wide range of humanitarian support from the international society for those who are vulnerable”, the foundation told AFP, explaining why it invited Taliban officials. The initiative by the private-sector group is “meaningful in that it complements a long-standing effort by the Japanese government to seek change from the Taliban in coordination with the international community”, top government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi said Monday. — AFP

Myanmar scam centre workers wait for deportation to China

SHWE KOKKO, Myanmar: Battered and bruised Chinese workers from online scam centers in Myanmar faced an anxious wait to return home, as Beijing and Thailand finalized plans on Wednesday for their repatriation. Scam compounds have flourished in Myanmar’s lawless borderlands, staffed by foreigners, many of whom say they were trafficked and forced to work swindling people around the world.

Many of those involved are Chinese, though people from numerous countries are thought to have been caught up in an industry analysts say is worth billions of dollars a year.

The Karen Border Guard Force (BGF), a militia allied with the Myanmar junta, has said it is preparing to deport 10,000 people linked to the compounds in areas it controls on the border with Thailand.

In a shabby, strip-lit room in a building in Shwe Kokko — a Myanmar border town known as a hub for scam centers — dozens of workers, mostly Chinese, sprawled on plastic sheeting, looking exhausted as they awaited their deportation. An AFP stringer was among a group of journalists taken by the BGF on Tuesday to meet some of the workers.

Some bore shocking bruises — one man’s bottom was completely covered in livid purple, while several showed painful lesions on their lower legs and other had burn injuries. “I really want to go home,” said one Chinese man, who spoke on condition of anonymity. “I wanted to go home as soon as I arrived. I



Alleged scam centre workers and victims rest during a crackdown operation by the Karen Border Guard Force (BGF) in Myanmar’s eastern Myawaddy township on February 18, 2025. — AFP

really miss my parents and family.”

“I am very nervous,” he told AFP. Naing Maung Zaw, a spokesman for the Karen BGF, said six Chinese men who were supervising the centers had been detained and would be handed over to China as suspects. “Some workers were tortured and were injured in scam centers that are not in our controlled areas,” he told reporters.

China’s Public Security Assistant Minister Liu Zhongyi is due to meet Thai ministers in Bangkok on Wednesday to agree the return of a first batch

of several hundred Chinese nationals. They will be handed over around 9:30 am Thai time (0230 GMT) on Thursday and taken by truck to the airport in the Thai town of Mae Sot, around 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) south of Shwe Kokko, according to a Thai military source. Chinese planes will then take them home. The first two flights are expected to arrive in Mae Sot on Wednesday evening, with six more due on Thursday, local authorities said. Chinese security personnel are expected to accompany the returnees on the planes. — AFP



JAMRUD, Pakistan: Police officials offer prayers during the funeral ceremony of a slain police officer, killed on security duty to escort a poliovirus vaccination team at Jamrud in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on February 3, 2025. — AFP

Policeman shot dead

Separately, gunmen shot dead a Pakistan police officer guarding a polio vaccination team on Wednesday in a remote area close to the Afghan border, police said. Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan are the only countries where polio is endemic and militants have for decades targeted vaccination teams and their security escorts.

Polio has resurged in Pakistan, with two cases reported so far this year, and at least 73 polio infections last year, compared to six in 2023. “Two motorcycle riders opened

fire... as a result, the police officer died on the spot, but the polio team remained unharmed,” Niaz Muhammad, a police officer in Bajaur district, told AFP. Bajaur district in northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province shares a 52-kilometre (32-mile) border with Afghanistan.

The start of the polio campaign had been delayed in the district for security reasons, after a rise in militant attacks in the area, said Waqas Rafiq, a senior police official. “Despite the attack, the campaign continues in all areas (of the district) except the site of the incident,” he said. — AFP

News in Brief

India reassures Nepali students

BHUBANESWAR/KATHMANDU: India has assured students from Nepal of its efforts to ensure their well-being, following protests triggered by the suicide of a Nepali woman studying in the eastern state of Odisha. Police have taken into custody a male student as they investigate Sunday’s death at a women’s hostel, said officials of the university in the state’s capital of Bhubaneswar attended by more than 400 Nepali students. “Nepali students studying in India form an important facet of enduring people-to-people links,” the Indian embassy in Kathmandu, the capital of the neighboring majority-Hindu nation, said on Monday. — Reuters

Guinean ‘kidnapping’ draws flak

CONAKRY: A leading opposition figure in Guinea was apprehended by “masked men” and taken from his home on Wednesday morning, sources close to his family said. Abdoul Sacko is part of a coalition known as the Forum of Active Forces made up of the main parties, trade unions, and NGOs who are calling for power to be returned to civilians. Guinea is currently under the rule of a military junta headed by general Mamadi Doumbouya, who came to power after overthrowing the government in 2021. — AFP

Spain arrests seven people smugglers

MADRID: Spanish police have arrested seven alleged people smugglers accused of killing eight migrants, including a baby, during a sea crossing from Senegal to the Canary Islands, authorities said Wednesday. The police said they began investigating after a vessel docked at the island of El Hierro in December with 224 people aboard, including some who had suffered serious injuries during an altercation on the boat. — AFP

Uganda Ebola patients recover

KAMPALA: Eight patients treated for Ebola in Uganda have recovered, the country’s health minister said on Wednesday, declaring the country’s latest outbreak of the deadly disease “contained”. The eight “have been under treatment and have fully recovered,” Jane Ruth Aceng told AFP. “This is a major breakthrough,” the minister added. — AFP

UK cracks down on online knife sales

LONDON: A new law introduced after a spate of high-profile knife crimes will make it harder for young people to purchase knives online, the UK government announced Wednesday. The stricter regulation follows several fatal knife crimes involving young people, including the 2024 murder of three girls by teenager Axel Rudakubana, who was able to purchase the blade he used on Amazon, bypassing age verification rules. — AFP

Dutch return ‘Benin Bronzes’

THE HAGUE: The Netherlands said Wednesday it was returning more than 100 “Benin Bronzes” to Nigeria that British troops looted in the late 19th century and ended up in a Dutch museum. British soldiers stole the ancient sculptures, including depictions of royal figures and animals, in 1897 from the Kingdom of Benin in modern-day Nigeria. The treasures were then sold and had been displayed at the Wereldmuseum (World Museum) in Leiden. — AFP

Pakistan gunmen identify, kill seven Punjabi travelers

QUESTTA, Pakistan: Gunmen in volatile southwest Pakistan shot seven bus passengers dead after identifying them as being from another region, officials said Wednesday. Security forces have been battling sectarian, ethnic and separatist violence for decades in impoverished but mineral-rich Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran.

Attacks on security forces and ethnic groups have sharply increased in the past few years, especially against laborers from Punjab, the country’s most populous and prosperous province and also a major recruitment base for the military. Attackers late on Tuesday burst the tires of a bus that was travelling through Balochistan along a highway close to the provincial border with Punjab, Saadat Hussain, a senior government official in the area, told AFP.

Gunmen boarded the bus and demanded to see the identity cards of passengers. “The passengers belonging to Punjab province... were taken off by the terrorists and killed,” Hussain said. “They were lined up and shot dead.” No one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Last year was the deadliest in a decade for Pakistan, with a surge in attacks that killed more than 1,600 people, including 685 members of the police or security forces, according to the Center for Research and Security Studies, an Islamabad-based analysis group.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2025

Boursa Kuwait concludes sponsorship of CFA Institute Research Challenge

Challenge serves as a platform for university students to develop their financial analysis skills

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait has successfully concluded its sponsorship of the CFA Institute Research Challenge, organized by the CFA Society Kuwait, a member of the CFA Institute. The challenge provided a competitive educational platform for university students to enhance their financial analysis skills and investment decision-making capabilities.

This sponsorship aligns with Boursa Kuwait's commitment to supporting initiatives that promote financial literacy and empower young talent with technical knowledge and analytical skills, thereby contributing to the development of future leaders in the financial sector and the advancement of Kuwait's capital market.

Through this partnership, Boursa Kuwait became the first official sponsor and strategic partner of the competition in Kuwait, reflecting its dedication to supporting educational initiatives that foster financial and investment knowledge. This year's challenge focused on analyzing the financial performance of Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc), as selected by CFA Society Kuwait. Student teams presented in-depth financial analyses and investment recommendations based on professional standards to a panel of judges, under the guidance of their respective universities and industry experts.

Participating universities included:

- Kuwait University
- American University of the Middle East (AUM)
- Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST)
- American University of Kuwait (AUK)

A panel of distinguished financial and investment experts evaluated the students' presentations, offering valuable industry insights.

The judging panel consisted of:

- Noura Al-Abdulkareem – Head of Markets Sector, Boursa Kuwait
- Abdulaziz Al-Wazzan – Chief Investment Officer, Yarwa Capital
- Ahmed F Al-Falah – Managing Director, Investment Banking, Kuwait Financial Centre (Markaz)



Naser M Al-Sanousi

• Ankul Aggarwal – Partner and Head of Deal Advisory, KPMG

The competition showcased a high level of academic and analytical performance, with Kuwait University's team securing first place, while the American University of the Middle East (AUM) placed second.

The winning team from Kuwait University comprised:

- Khalid Al-Eisa
- Hilal Al-Mutairi
- Abdulwahab Al-Jasmi
- Shahad Al-Fahad

The team was mentored by Dr Abdullah Al-Awadhi, Assistant Professor of Finance and Financial Institutions at Kuwait University's College of Business Administration. As the faculty advisor, Dr Al-Awadhi oversaw student selection, served as the main liaison with CFA Society Kuwait, reviewed research and presentations, and provided feedback without influencing students' decisions or changing written materials.

In his remarks to the competition's graduates, Naser M. Al-Sanousi, Senior Director of Marketing & Corporate Communications at Boursa Kuwait, stated: "Today, we celebrate months of dedication, research, and meticulous financial analysis. We honor the achievements of ambitious young minds whose contributions will undoubtedly shape the future of



Aminah Abotalaf

Kuwait's financial sector."

Al-Sanousi added: "I extend my sincere appreciation to the CFA Society Kuwait and the CFA Institute for their continuous commitment to promoting financial literacy in the next generation of financial professionals. Boursa Kuwait values its partnership with the institute and society and remains committed to shaping the future of capital markets by

A well-deserved victory for Kuwait University students, with the American University of the Middle East (AUM) securing second place

equipping the community with financial knowledge, technical expertise, and the confidence needed to succeed in the financial sector."

Boursa Kuwait's strategic partnership with CFA Society Kuwait and the CFA Institute is a key component of its efforts to make a meaningful impact on the communities in which it operates. This aligns with the bourse corporate sustainability strategy, its commitment to initiatives that cultivate a knowledgeable, skilled, and future-ready generation, and its broader goal of enhancing financial awareness and expertise within Kuwaiti society. This initiative also supports United Nations Sustainable Development



Ahmed F Al-Falah

Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

From her side, Aminah Abotalaf, President and Chair of Advocacy Committee of CFA Society Kuwait, commented: "This competition is more than an academic challenge; it is a real-world experience that reflects the realities of the investment sector. The students' commitment to research and analysis demon-

among new and experienced investors.

The agreement enables both organizations to leverage their expertise in financial services and offer accessible educational content to individuals seeking to expand their investment knowledge. This includes resources to help investors assess opportunities and make more informed financial decisions, such as a financial glossary, definitions of financial instruments, guidance on financial planning, an introduction to investment strategies and methods, and various educational materials.

Ahmed F Al-Falah, Managing Director – Investment Banking at Kuwait Financial Centre (Markaz) and a member of the judging panel, emphasized the importance of such initiatives, stating: "At Markaz, we are committed to participating in initiatives that encourage young talent, test their academic capabilities, and allow them to explore their potential as they embark on their careers in investment. It was inspiring to see some students we have previously supported at Markaz now presenting their insights with confidence and expertise."

Boursa Kuwait's corporate sustainability strategy is designed to ensure that all initiatives align with the company's corporate social responsibility governance framework, industry best practices, and investor expectations. The strategy also emphasizes the establishment of strong and sustainable partnerships that contribute to Boursa Kuwait's success, allowing the company to leverage the expertise and strengths of other organizations and institutions across various fields. Additionally, it seeks to integrate corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts into the company's culture, ensuring long-term sustainability and a lasting impact embedded within its daily operations.

As part of this strategy, Boursa Kuwait has launched multiple initiatives in collaboration with local and international organizations, with a particular focus on supporting NGOs and charitable programs, promoting financial literacy and capital market awareness, empowering women and protecting the environment.

Apple iPhone 16e takes AI features to lower price points

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple launched its latest low-cost model, dubbed the iPhone 16e, on Wednesday as it looks to grab a bigger share of the mid-range smartphone market and fend off competition from rivals such as Samsung and China's Huawei. The new phone, which leaves behind the SE naming convention for Apple's budget series, will take on popular Android smartphones at a time when consumer electronics makers are looking to add artificial intelligence tools to their devices.

Priced at \$599, the iPhone 16e will have enough computing power to run Apple Intelligence, the set of features that includes integrated access to ChatGPT. Apple late last month forecast strong sales growth signaling that it will recover from a dip in iPhone sales as it rolls out artificial intelligence features to more regions and languages. However, analysts have been cautious about the sales boost such tools could provide as the AI features are set to be launched in phases in some regions on its latest iPhone 16 line-up and the iPhone 15 Pro model.

The sales of SE model as part of total revenue for iPhones has dropped from 10 percent from its introduction in 2016 to about 1 percent last year, according to Counterpoint Research. The iPhone 16e will come with the A18 chip that powers more expensive models launched in September last year and will support Apple Intelligence out of the box. It will be about \$200 less expensive than the cheapest version of iPhone 16, launched in September. The iPhone 16e will also be the first device from Apple to feature the C1 chip, which is the first modem designed in house for cellular connectivity, a shift from chips made by Qualcomm.

The new device's camera system will have a 48-megapixel sensor and two lenses, one of which will be a two-times zoom lens integrated into the primary camera. Previous SE models were known for their smaller screen size and attracted a niche group of buyers, but the latest generation comes with a 6.1-inch display, the same as the least expensive iPhone 16 model. This year's much-anticipated update brings a change to its slab-design, nixing the physical home button and introducing Apple's FaceID feature. — Reuters

Kuwait, Portugal to enhance trade cooperation: KCCI

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) announced on Wednesday the existence of exceptional opportunities to deepen partnership with Portugal and explore areas of cooperation that benefit businesses and industries in both countries.

The KCCI said in a press statement on the occasion of receiving the delegation of the Arab-Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry at the Chamber's headquarters that the two countries enjoy a long-term relationship based on mutual respect, cooperation and the pursuit of common prosperity. It added that the two countries have achieved remarkable progress over the past years as they have transformed and modernized their economies to keep pace with changing global trends. The statement added that Kuwait focuses greatly on economic diversification to enhance economic growth by empowering the private sector. It explained that the Portuguese delegation included companies representing diverse and strategic sec-

Trump to slap 25% tariffs on foreign cars

PALM BEACH, US: US President Donald Trump expanded his offensive against trading partners on Tuesday, threatening 25 percent tariffs on imported cars, and similar or higher duties on pharmaceuticals and semiconductors.

Trump has announced a broad range of levies on some of the biggest US trading partners since taking office in January, arguing that they will help tackle unfair practices — and in some cases using the threats to influence policy. He recently pledged 10 percent duties on all goods coming from China, and 25 on steel and aluminum imports.

At his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, he told reporters that tariffs on the automobile industry will "be in the neighborhood of 25 percent," with specifics to come around April 2. Asked about threatened tariffs on pharmaceuticals and chips, Trump said: "It'll be 25 percent and higher, and it'll go very substantially higher over (the) course of a year." He added he wanted to give affected companies time to bring their operations to the United States, saying that he had been contacted by major firms that "want to come back".

The president also said that Washington's trading partners could avoid being taxed by investing



KUWAIT: KCCI officials and delegation from Arab-Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry hold talks in Kuwait on Wednesday. — KUNA

tors including tourism, construction, digital services, legal, housing and others and that they have exceptional potential for bilateral cooperation.

The statement quoted the member of the Board of Directors of the Arab-Portuguese Chamber, Dr Nuno Anahori, as saying in his speech during the meeting that the KCCI seeks to achieve the greatest possible trade cooperation between the two

friendly countries. Anahori added that the Portuguese companies have entered the Qatari market and are seeking to reach the Kuwaiti market and explore investment opportunities. He said offers will be made to the Kuwaiti business community regarding the facilities provided to investors in Portugal and the most prominent investment opportunities available. — KUNA



PALM BEACH, Florida: US President Donald Trump takes a question as he speaks during the signing of executive orders at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida, on February 18, 2025. — AFP

in factories in the United States. "We want to give them time to come in," he said. "When they come into the United States and they have their plant or factory here, there is no tariff. So we want to give them a little bit of a chance."

Experts have warned it is often Americans who end up paying the cost of tariffs on imports, rather

than foreign exporters. About 50 percent of the cars sold in the United States are manufactured within the country. Among imports, about half come from Mexico and Canada, with Japan, South Korea and Germany, also major suppliers.

Trump's tariffs threats have been cautiously received in Asia, home to some of the main US suppliers of the potentially affected industries. Yoshimasa Hayashi, Tokyo's top government spokesman, told reporters "with regard to automobile tariffs, we have raised the issue with the US government, taking into account the importance of Japan's auto industry."

"Japan will first take appropriate action while carefully examining the specific details of the measures," he added. Taiwan, a global powerhouse in semiconductor production that Trump has accused of stealing the US chip industry, also remained cautious.

"The scope of products subject to tariffs has not yet been clarified. We will continue to monitor the direction of US policies and assist Taiwan's industries," Taipei's economic ministry said in a statement. The island's government had previously said it would boost investment in the United States as it sought to head off Trump's duties. Meanwhile a spokesperson for Malaysia's semiconductor industry, which accounts for around 13 percent of global back-end manufacturing, told AFP on Wednesday the United States would be "slapping themselves" with the new tariffs. — AFP

ABK reports 16% increase in net profit to KD 52.41 million for 2024

EPS rises 17% to 21 fils • Operating profit grew 11% to KD 107.41 million

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) proudly announced its robust financial results for the financial year 2024, once again affirming its position as a leading financial institution.

Financial performance

ABK reported a net profit of KD 52.41 million, representing a 16 percent increase and an increase in earnings per share (EPS) of 17 percent to 21 fils. Operating profit increased by 11 percent to KD 107.41 million while operating income witnessed an increase of 9 percent, reaching KD 200.75 million, reflecting the Bank's strong profitability and shareholder value creation.

Total assets reached KD 7.37 billion while maintaining steady growth in loans and advances amounting to KD 4.83 billion, with customer deposits at KD 4.42 billion, affirming the Group's reputation as a trusted financial partner. Moreover, the Bank's non-performing loan (NPL) ratio stood at 1.23 percent, with NPL coverage at 460 percent, capital adequacy ratio (CAR) at 16.94 percent, and shareholders' equity at KD 628 million, further underscoring ABK's financial stability, healthy financial position and robust balance sheet.

The board proposed to distribute cash dividends of 10 percent equivalent to 10 fils per share as well as bonus shares of 5 percent equivalent to 5 shares for every 100 shares. These recommendations are subject to the approval of the Annual General Assembly.

Added value

On this occasion, Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani, Chairman of ABK, expressed his happiness with the outstanding results, stating, "The profits for 2024 reflect our ability for sustainable growth and delivering added value to shareholders. They also confirm the success of our strategic plans to develop the Group's operations and operational efficiency according to the highest standards, helping us enhance our competitive position in the banking sector across various fronts."

Behbehani added that 2024 witnessed the continued implementation of the digital transformation plan across various departments and sections of the Group, pointing



Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani



Abdulla Al-Sumait

out the signing of numerous agreements to leverage artificial intelligence technologies and develop banking solutions, services, and products offered to individual and corporate clients. He emphasized that throughout 2024, ABK was keen to formulate plans to address local, regional, and global economic challenges, including changes in interest rates, inflation levels, and geopolitical tensions, to protect its interests and preserve shareholders' rights.

Developments

Behbehani explained, "Last year, the Bank was upgraded to the Premier Market on Boursa Kuwait. Additionally, 2024 marked our return to debt capital markets with our \$300 million Additional Tier 1 (AT1) bond offering with a coupon rate of 6.5 percent per annum. The subscription exceeded 4.5 times the offered amount, reaffirming the Bank's financial trust and reputation among investors and its financial stability."

He noted that ABK achieved more than 10 global awards from institutions specializing in performance evaluation across various sectors. Among these are six awards from Global Finance Magazine for digital excellence in Kuwait and the Middle East, two awards from MEED for Excellence in Customer Protection/Fraud Control in Kuwait, and Best Retail Bank in Egypt. This is in addition to five awards from International Business Maga-



zine across Kuwait and Egypt. The Bank was also recognized as Best Investor Relationship Bank by International Finance and for Best Corporate Governance Banking by The Global Economics, among others. Behbehani added that the Group has consistently maintained its high credit ratings, with an A by Fitch and an A2 by Moody's, underscoring the Group's robust financial position and its ability to tackle various challenges.

Integrated operations

The Chairman stated that the Group has focused on achieving operational integration in Kuwait, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. This effort includes the introduction of new banking services, products, and solutions tailored to all customer segments.

Behbehani announced the launch of the group's five-year strategy, focusing on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) and sustainability. This initiative aims to foster sustainable growth and minimize the environmental impact of the Bank's operations,

highlighting its role as a responsible financial institution in the market. He also highlighted the publication of the fourth annual sustainability report, which reviews significant developments across the Group's operations and activities in all the markets where it operates. Furthermore, he noted that ABK Capital, ABK's investment arm, has been actively enhancing its products by launching several new investment portfolios and forming global partnerships. The company aims to provide exceptional benefits to clients as part of its strategy to strengthen its presence in the investment sector and stay abreast of developments in this area.

Continued success

On his part, Abdulla Al-Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at ABK, said, "In 2024, we successfully achieved growth in our financial indicators once again. This success stems from our consistent adaptation to both local and global market developments, engaging in carefully assessed financing operations, and innovating new services, solutions, and products that continue to attract more customers to our ever-expanding family."

He noted that over the past year, the Group participated in numerous financing deals within Kuwait and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. This participation reflects the strong trust companies have in the Bank to meet their needs in developing projects and enhancing operational activities. Al-Sumait also mentioned that 2024 saw the launch of a newly revamped website to stay abreast of technological advancements. This update was accompanied by the introduction of various digital solutions, meeting the growing demand from customers for secure and fast banking and financial transactions using their smart devices, available 24/7.

Achievements

Al-Sumait highlighted that 2024 marks a significant milestone with the continuous growth in both individual and corporate clients. The focus has been on enhancing and simplifying the services provided to ensure

customer satisfaction during financial and banking transactions. Additionally, clients were rewarded with various promotional campaigns and exclusive benefits tailored to their needs. He also highlighted that in 2024, the WAMD service for instant money transfers in collaboration with KNET was introduced. This is alongside a RMB (Chinese Yuan) currency transfer service for businesses. Additionally, several special packages were launched catering to diverse customer segments. These include the 'Al-TajerPlus' package designed to help merchants expand their operations and projects, as well as a package specifically for oil sector employees, among others.

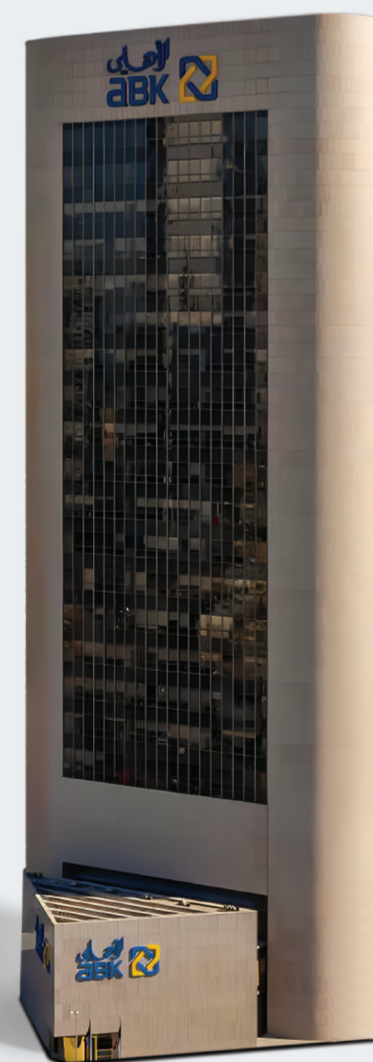
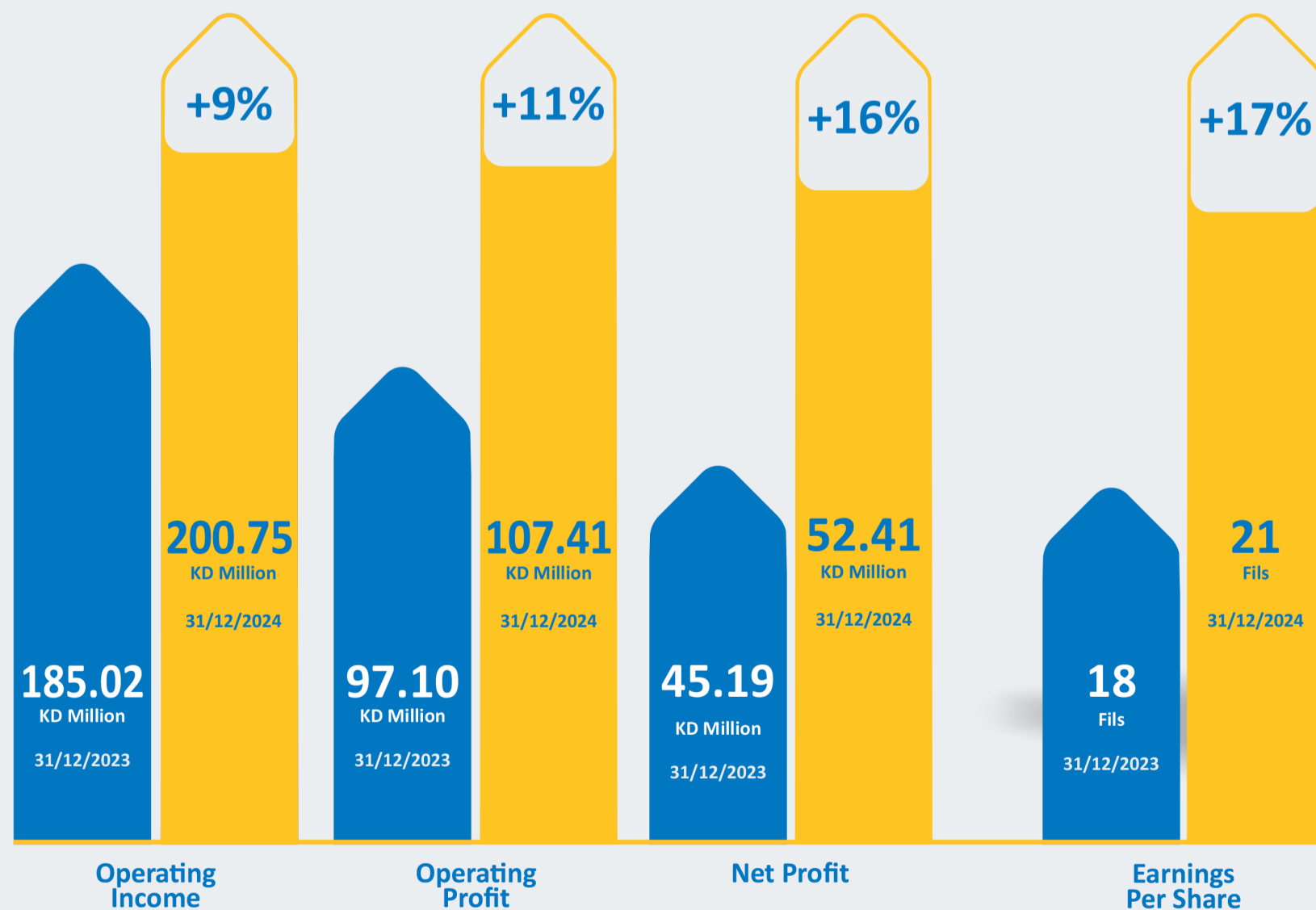
Furthermore, Al-Sumait explained that in 2024, the Group focused on enhancing employee capabilities by engaging in various training programs and recruiting new talent. Additionally, efforts were made to improve the work environment and ensure equality among employees.

Branches and social responsibility

Al-Sumait highlighted the ongoing plan to develop the Bank's branches in both Kuwait and Egypt. Additionally, ABK is enhancing its operations in the UAE by introducing more services, such as mortgage loans, signing a Real Estate Escrow Account agreement, and establishing a Corporate Services Desk, among other initiatives.

He noted that last year featured the sponsorship of events across health, education, culture, and sports sectors. "These efforts are part of an evolving social responsibility program designed to meet the diverse needs of communities in Kuwait, Egypt, and the UAE," Al-Sumait added. Al-Sumait concluded, "In 2024, we continued supporting the 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign to promote financial inclusion in Kuwaiti society. This was achieved by delivering exceptional and purposeful awareness content within our bank branches and digital platforms, organizing numerous events and competitions for the public, and participating in television and radio interviews. These efforts were conducted in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association."

Financial Results 2024



Business

US tariffs threat a 'shock' to Canadian businesses

Businesses to question their dependence on US amid policy rethink

MONTREAL: Donald Trump's threats of import tariffs have sent shockwaves through Canada, forcing businesses to question their dependence on the United States — a reassessment that is creating headaches for many sectors.

"It was an absolute shock," Matthew Holmes, vice president of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, told AFP. "There's an incredible anxiety that comes from the unpredictability and the uncertainty." "It got everybody talking in Canada about (how) we can't trust this partnership anymore," he added.

Earlier this month US President Trump announced 25 percent tariffs on Canadian and Mexican imports, then granted a 30-day reprieve. The pause, however, has done little to reassure Canadian businesses that send more than 75 percent of Canada's exports to the United States, and who worry that a trade war would lead to a recession and hundreds of thousands of job losses.

Canada must prepare for the tariffs by removing barriers to trade between provinces and diversify its export markets, Holmes said. "We need to be ready and have the infrastructure and relationships and start building those out now." Otherwise, he said, Canadian businesses will be "really, really screwed."

According to a recent survey, nine out of 10 Canadians agree on the need to lessen Canada's trade reliance on the United States. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently hosted a summit in Toronto that brought business leaders together to discuss ways of growing the Canadian economy, including removing internal trade barriers, diversifying export markets and boosting productivity.

Provincial governments and business leaders, he told delegates, must "step up and push hard" to make Canada more competitive, while acknowledging that

it has been easy to just sell to the country's southern neighbor. But that may be easier said than done, according to Robert Gillezeau, an economics professor at the University of Toronto. "The two economies are extremely interconnected with over a trillion dollars in trade between the two countries," he told AFP, pointing to their close proximity and "longstanding good relations" for how ties developed. "For some sectors, it'll be a little bit easier" to disentangle from the United States, Gillezeau said. For others, "it's going to be a mess," he added. "You can't just snap your fingers and take that integrated industry and have it work with someone else or have it become fully domestic... There is no quick fix."

The food industry is a case in point. "We've frozen our purchases of some American goods and we're looking elsewhere for alternatives," explains Mike Bono of Can-Am Food Services.

But it is not possible for the company — which is one of the largest distributors of fruits and vegetables in Quebec and Ontario with nearly 3,000 customers including restaurants and hotels — to find substitutes for all of its American offerings.

The removal of interprovincial trade barriers was flagged in a report as a way to boost Canada's economy as far back as 1940. Ottawa led efforts to dismantle them in 2017 but hundreds of exceptions were kept in an agreement signed by the provinces. Removing these barriers would improve productivity and increase Canadian GDP, but "would take a level of effort and coordination that we rarely see in the federation," Gillezeau said. Internal Trade Minister Anita Anand, who wants to see these barriers abolished as soon as possible, believes that "in the face of Donald Trump's repeated threats, we must choose Canada."



LOS ANGELES: Cargo shipping containers sit on the Evergreen Ever Fame container ship docked at a container terminal at the Port of Los Angeles in Los Angeles. — AFP

She explained that removing the barriers — such as alcohol sales restrictions, different labelling rules, varying professional licensing certifications, and independent dairy marketing boards in each province — could lower prices by 15 percent, boost productivity and inject up to Can\$200 billion into the

economy. Some are also calling for east-west oil and gas pipeline projects to be revived in order to lessen dependency on US infrastructure. Oil from western Alberta, for example, is currently shipped via a pipeline that dips into the United States before emerging in Ontario. — AFP



Thierry Wasser (left), a perfumer at French beauty house Guerlain and Raja Palaniswamy, a director at the Jasmine Concrete Exports Private Limited, examine Jasmine flowers at the factory in Dindigul.

Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan rises 35.3%

TOKYO: Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan rose 35.3 percent to JPY 76.9 billion (\$485 million) in January from a year earlier, the first increase in five months, government data showed Wednesday, supported by strong exports. Kuwait has posted a trade surplus with Japan for 17 years on a monthly basis, the finance ministry said in a

preliminary report with Kuwait's total exports to Japan rising 44.6 percent on-year-year to JPY 101.1 billion (\$645 million) for the first time in five months.

Japan's exports to Kuwait jumped 85.2 percent to JPY 24.2 billion (\$149 million), up for the second straight month. The Middle East's trade surplus with Japan rose 4.4 percent to JPY 832.8 billion (\$550 billion) last month, data showed, as exports to Japan from the region expanded 13.7 percent from a year earlier. Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas and other natural resources, which account for 94.5 percent of the region's total exports to Japan rose 12.8 percent while Japan's exports to the region rose 41.5 percent on demand for cars, machin-

ery and steel. Japan's global trade balance returned to deficit in January, posting its first deficit in two months at JPY 2.8 trillion (\$18.2 billion), weighed down mainly by higher imports and a weaker yen. Japanese exports grew 7.2 percent from a year earlier, helped by large shipments of vehicles, ships and medicines, while imports of communication devices such as smartphones, electronics and pharmaceutical products rose 16.7 percent. Both exports and imports hit record highs in January since comparable data became available in 1979 as the yen weakened. China remains Japan's largest trading partner, followed by the United States. Trade data is measured on a customs-cleared basis before seasonal factors. — KUNA

Indian exports face uncertainty over Trump's tariffs

NEW DELHI: US President Donald Trump's threat to impose reciprocal tariffs from early April is feeding anxiety in India's export sectors from autos to agriculture, with Citi Research analysts estimating potential losses at about \$7 billion a year. Government officials waiting to learn how the tariffs will be calculated before they can assess their full economic impact, say they are readying plans to counter them as well as working on a proposal for a US trade deal to cut tariffs and grow two-way trade.

Here are key aspects of the impact of reciprocal tariffs on India:

The most vulnerable are chemicals, metal products, and jewelry, followed by automobiles, pharmaceuticals, and food products, Citi analysts say. India's merchandise exports to the United States, estimated at nearly \$74 billion in 2024, included pearls, gems, and jewelry worth \$8.5 billion, pharmaceuticals worth \$8 billion, and petrochemicals amounting to about \$4 billion. At an aggregate level, India charged a weighted average tariff of about 11 percent in 2023, around 8.2 percentage points higher than US tariffs on Indian exports, Citi estimates show.

US manufacturing exports to India, valued at nearly \$42 billion in 2024, face significantly higher tariffs, ranging from 7 percent on wood products and machinery to as much as 15 percent to 20 percent on footwear and transport equipment, and nearly 68 percent on food items. In a fact sheet last week, the White House said the US's average applied Most Favored Nation (MFN) tariff on farm goods was 5 percent compared to India's 39 percent. India set a 100 percent tariff on US motorcycles, compared to a US tariff of just 2.4 percent on Indian motorcycles, it added.

If the United States decides to impose reciprocal tariffs on a broader range of farm products, India's farm and food exports — where tariff differentials are the highest but trade volumes are low — would be among the hardest hit. The labor-intensive industries of textiles, leather and wood products face relatively lower risk, due to smaller tariff differentials or a limited share of US-India trade.

Additionally, many American companies make these products in South Asia and benefit from India's free trade pacts, allowing them to sell them in the domestic market at lower tariffs.

In the worst-case scenario of a uniform tariff hike of 10 percent on all goods and services imported from India by the United States, the Indian economy could take a hit of 50 basis points to 60 bps, Standard Chartered Bank economists estimated, assuming a decline of 11 percent to 12 percent in imports.

India has already cut tariffs on several items, for example to 30 percent on high-end motorcycles from 50 percent and 100 percent on bourbon whiskey from 150 percent, while promising to review other tariffs, stepping up energy imports, and buying more defense equipment. — Reuters

Gulf Bank concludes sponsorship of LOYAC's The Influencer program

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing commitment to youth empowerment, Gulf Bank has successfully concluded its sponsorship of The Influencer program, organized by the LOYAC Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA), a subsidiary of the non-profit organization LOYAC.

Held from January 20 to February 17, 2025, the program provided youth aged 15 to 19 with a unique opportunity to develop essential skills in public communication and leadership. Fatemah Alhabib, Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, emphasized the importance of youth empowerment, stating: "Empowering youth begins with providing them with the skills and tools to express themselves, shape their careers, and make a positive impact in their communities. We are proud of our ongoing partnership with LOYAC, which allows us to support and nurture the next generation of leaders and innovators."

She added: "Over the past weeks, participants embarked on a journey of challenges and new experiences, developing skills in effective communication, public speaking, content creation, digital marketing, photography, and video editing. More importantly, they gained confidence in their abilities, and learned to share their stories and express their ideas in a meaningful and impactful way."

Alhabib emphasized that The Influencer program is more than just a training experience — it's a platform that brings together ambitious minds, opens doors to new opportunities, and equips young people with the skills to succeed in any path they choose. The Influencer program provides as-



Fatemah Alhabib, Rania Barghout and Farah Al-Saqqaf pose for a group photo with the graduates.

piring youth with a unique opportunity to develop advanced communication skills through interactive workshops and hands-on training. Covering a range of fields, including effective communication strategies, leadership development, public speaking, photography, video editing, digital marketing, and podcasting, the program equips participants with essential tools for personal and professional growth. Led by experienced trainers and industry

professionals, these sessions provide participants with the knowledge and skills to create a meaningful impact in their communities.

For the third consecutive year, Gulf Bank has proudly sponsored The Influencer program, demonstrating its ongoing commitment to social sustainability by supporting civil society organizations dedicated to youth development and empowerment.

Fed concerns rise as tariff threats ratchet higher

WASHINGTON: US Federal Reserve officials remain uncertain about the impact tariffs might have on inflation, but have begun outlining more serious risks to supply chains, public expectations and ultimately prices as the scope of the Trump administration's plans for import taxes has become clearer.

The trade war touched off during President Donald Trump's first term eventually prompted the Fed to lower interest rates because, rather than feeding inflation, the global and US growth outlook began to dim. But with a high inflation episode still top of mind, consumers still spending, and higher sensitivity at the Fed to how supply disruptions can create persistent inflation, the sweep and extent of Trump's plans are causing concern. The administration's piecemeal approach may in particular be damaging, Fed officials say, as businesses and consumers adjust to an outlook that seems both unpredictable and primed for higher prices. Trump has so far raised the levy on Chinese goods, delayed others on Mexico and Canada, set tariffs on imported steel and aluminum starting next month, and directed his team to draw up duties for any country imposing them on

US goods, and more actions may follow. Fed officials worry the moves could cause a surge in public expectations about inflation that would threaten more chronic price hikes in the future. "Most tariffs lead to a one-time shock and then the world moves on," Atlanta Fed President Raphael Bostic said earlier this month. But if debate, implementation and retaliation spool out over time and start to affect inflation expectations, "it would be appropriate to respond" through monetary policy. Not all Fed officials are as concerned. Fed Governor Christopher Waller said on Monday he does not expect tariffs to trigger persistent inflation and believes central bankers should respond to the data in front of them. Waiting for perfect certainty even in volatile times "is a recipe for policy paralysis," Waller said.

Minutes of the Fed's January meeting due on Wednesday may provide more detail about officials' debates about Trump's promised agenda. The meeting occurred just a week after Trump's inauguration, but uncertainty was already rising and added to policymakers' reluctance to cut interest rates further until they had more information on how Trump's policies would affect the economy.

Administration officials argue their plans, which also include tax cuts, deregulation and crackdowns on immigration, will ultimately lower inflation, a view not widely shared by economists. A recent paper by Boston Fed researchers concluded that tariffs of 25 percent on Mexico and Canada and 10 percent on China would add 0.8 percentage point to inflation, a blow to the Fed's outlook. — Reuters

US SEC seeks India's help in Adani fraud probe

NEW DELHI: The US Securities and Exchange Commission has asked Indian authorities for help in its investigation of Adani Group founder Gautam Adani and his nephew over alleged securities fraud and a \$265-million bribery scheme, a court filing showed on Tuesday. The regulator told a New York district court it was making efforts to serve its complaint on the founder and his nephew, Sagar Adani, and was seeking help from India's law ministry to do so.

Neither individual is in US custody, and both are now in India. "The SEC has requested assistance ... under the Hague service convention," it said in the court filing. Adani Group and India's law ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. Last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he did not discuss the Adani case with US President Donald Trump during his visit to Washington, describing it to reporters as an individual issue never discussed by leaders. India's opposition Congress party has called for Adani's arrest and accused Modi of shielding him or favoring him in deals in the past. Modi's party and Adani have denied the charges. Last year, federal prosecutors in Brooklyn unsealed an indictment accusing Adani of bribing Indian officials to convince them to buy electricity produced by Adani Green Energy, a subsidiary of his Adani Group. — Reuters

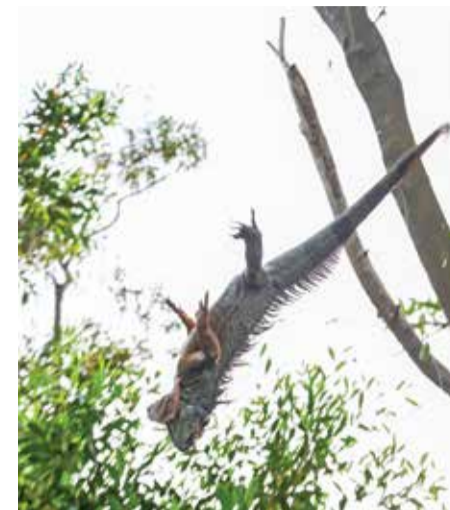
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2025



Iguanas in trees next to a residential area in Pingtung.



Government-hired hunter Li Wei-po holding a captured iguana in Pingtung.



An iguana falling from a tree after being shot at by hunters in Pingtung.



A hunter holding down a captured iguana with his foot while the animal was bound in Pingtung.



A captured green iguana being held in Pingtung.



Captured iguanas with their legs bound as hunters search for the lizards in Pingtung.



A government-hired hunter holding up a captured iguana in Pingtung.

Taiwan bounty hunters kill invading iguanas as numbers soar

Armed with a slingshot, Taiwanese bounty hunter Wu Cheng-hua bends sideways and aims his lethal weapon up at a green iguana, one of tens of thousands in the crosshairs of a government cull. Taiwan's iguana population has exploded since the spikey-backed giant lizards were introduced from Central and South America more than 20 years ago as exotic pets. Many escaped, or were dumped, and have bred rapidly in the warm climate of the island's south, invading neighborhoods and ravaging farmers' crops.

After Wu finishes his shift at a breakfast eatery, he joins a group of hunters hired by the Pingtung County government, which pays up to NT\$500 (US\$15) per iguana. "Sometimes we've been lucky and caught 300 iguanas in a day," Wu, 25, told AFP. "Sometimes we were not so lucky and caught two, three or a dozen." Carrying harpoon slingshots used for spearfishing and wearing rubber boots, the hunters crane their necks as they scan the thick forest for iguanas, which live in the canopy.

There are more misses than hits as the men fire their stainless steel darts at the prehistoric-looking creatures high up in the trees and shielded by leaves and branches. AFP journalists watch as an iguana plunges several meters to the ground and runs for its life. Another is shot multiple times before it is pulled out of the tree still alive. The men bind the legs of the captured iguanas to stop them escaping and leave them on the ground as they carry on hunting.

'A perfect storm'

Taiwan began culling iguanas nearly 10 years ago and this year's target has been set at more than 100,000. Experts and government officials say the effort is



Hunter Wu Cheng-hua aiming his slingshot at an iguana in a tree in Pingtung.

unlikely to eradicate the reptiles, which have also become pests in other countries, including the United States. Some estimates put Taiwan's green iguana population at 200,000. A female iguana breeds once a year, laying dozens of eggs at a time.

"Climate anomalies" have fueled iguana numbers in recent years, said Chen Tien-hsi, a wildlife expert at the National Pingtung University of Science and Technology. A lack of seasonal rain and unusually warm winters have increased hatching and survival rates of the young, which Chen said had created "a perfect storm for explosive population growth". Pingtung County has ramped up its iguana cull from a few hundred a year in the beginning to 48,000 last year, Agriculture Department director-general Cheng Yung-yu said.

But Cheng said more effective "removal strategies" were needed. "Despite significant manpower and resources being spent on their removal annually, their population continues to grow almost exponentially," he said.

'Minimize suffering'

Animal rights group PETA has urged Taiwan to find "non-lethal strategies" for controlling its iguana population or, if culling was deemed necessary, to "minimize suffering" of the creatures. Several hunters told AFP they would be able to kill more efficiently and humanely if they were allowed to use air guns, the use of which is tightly controlled in Taiwan



Bound iguanas captured by hunters on the ground in Pingtung.

Wu and his colleagues end their hunt in the early evening after catching 14 iguanas in three hours. The reptiles -- some of them alive and bloodied -- are laid on the ground before being tossed into a plastic box. Hunters are required to euthanize the iguanas and keep them in a freezer until they can be incinerated by the government. While hunting was physically harder than his cooking job, Wu said he liked helping farmers protect their crops. "Otherwise, everything they grow will be eaten up," Wu said. "It is very sad to see them like this." —AFP

China's 'Ne Zha 2' becomes highest-grossing animated film

Chinese blockbuster "Ne Zha 2" has ousted Disney's "Inside Out 2" to become the highest-grossing animated film of all time, state media reported Tuesday, citing a domestic ticketing platform. "Ne Zha 2" has packed out cinemas in China, where it has already claimed the title of the country's biggest box-office release, since its release last month. State news agency Xinhua, citing ticketing platform Maoyan, said on Tuesday that the fantasy epic had raked in more than 12.3 billion yuan (\$1.7 billion).

That figure edged it past "Inside Out 2", which took \$1.7 billion following its release last year. "Ne Zha 2" tells the tale of a rebellious young deity who uses his powers to battle formidable foes after his village is destroyed. The film was released overseas this month, sparking hopes among many Chinese that it would garner similar acclaim abroad. The original "Ne Zha" became what was then China's highest-grossing animated film after it was released in 2019. —AFP



A woman (bottom right) past a production for the Chinese animated film Ne Zha 2, produced by Enlight Media, outside the production company's headquarters in Beijing on February 11, 2025.--AFP

Taiwan star Wang Talu probed for allegedly evading military service

Taiwan is investigating dozens of people, including film star Wang Talu, on suspicion of evading mandatory military service, the government said Tuesday. A recent review of irregularities in military conscription assessments found about 80 cases involving "potential legal violations", the Ministry of Interior said in a statement. Among them were conscripts with no prior medical problems who were "suddenly diagnosed with conditions affecting their eligibility", the ministry said.

"Additionally, the ministry received reports from whistleblowers and local governments about attempts to evade conscription through illegal means," it said. The conscription age in Taiwan is 18, with deferment granted for higher education -- though all men are required to serve in the military for one year by the time they turn 36. Mandatory military service was extended from the previously obligatory period of four months, taking effect at the beginning of last year.

The review of suspicious assessments was conducted in late 2024 by a committee comprising the interior, defense and health ministries, along with "various medical associations", the statement said. Wang's case was identified separately from the review, the ministry said. All the cases have been handed over to the prosecutors' office, the ministry said. Wang, who rose to fame in Taiwan for his role in the 2015 teenage romantic comedy "Our Times", was one of 10 people detained on



This picture taken and released by Taiwan's Central News Agency (CNA) on February 18, 2025 shows Taiwanese film star Wang Talu (center) leaving Taiwan New Taipei District Prosecutors Office after being interrogated as he is under investigation for allegedly evading mandatory military service.--AFP

Tuesday for allegedly evading military service, local broadcaster TVBS said.

He was also reportedly under investigation for the alleged forgery of a medical document. The 33-year-old is hugely popular in South Korea and China where news of his questioning by police on Tuesday was the top trending topic on China's X-like Weibo. Wang previously told reporters that he intended to do his military service. "There's nothing to say, and I'm still so young, there's no need to evade mili-

tary service, when the time comes, I'll serve the military," Wang said, in 2015 footage aired by TVBS on Tuesday. Under Taiwanese law, anyone found guilty of illegally evading conscription faces up to five years in prison. Taiwan faces the constant threat of a Chinese invasion and is seeking to strengthen its defense capabilities, but the military is struggling to recruit and retain troops. —AFP

Lifestyle



Visitors try out installations set up with a series of sound-producing devices and mechanisms.



Visitors try out installations set up with a series of sound-producing devices and mechanisms at an exhibition entitled "Iran's Sound Scene" in Tehran. — AFP photos



IRAN'S EARLY RECORDINGS REVIVE FORGOTTEN SOUND HERITAGE

In a century-old building in Tehran, Saeed Anvarinejad turned the dial of a vintage radio to tune into some of Iran's earliest recorded sounds, some serving as reminders of the seismic changes that shaped the country's history. Along with a team of fellow enthusiasts, he spent months tracking down the earliest recordings of Iranian music, speeches, interviews, theatrical plays, radio broadcasts and even the hum of daily life from more than a century ago up to the present day.

"Sound is a phenomenon we pay little attention to... although it's very important," said Anvarinejad, one of the organizers of the "SoundScape" exhibition. And "the era of early sound recording in Iran is a very important time in the socio-political history of the country". He highlighted the emotional power of early voice recordings, saying they captured "in a very raw and pure way... the feeling that people have at that moment," unlike written records.

According to Anvarinejad, the oldest surviving sound recordings from Iran date back to 1898 and 1899, during the reign of Mozaffar Al-Din Shah of the Qajar dynasty, which reigned over the country from the late 18th to the early



An installation is set up with a series of sound-producing devices and mechanisms at an exhibition entitled "Iran's Sound Scene".

20th century. His rule saw the unfolding of the Constitutional Revolution, a pivotal moment in Iran's political transformation that established a parliament and constitutional monarchy. "It was a time when... a new order was taking shape in the Iranian mind and very important

things were happening politically, socially and culturally," he added.

"We thought it would be good to have a new approach to the sound (from that time) and engage audiences with it." Upon tuning the wooden-framed antique radio, a chilling broadcast announced the

overthrow of prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1953, who had pushed for the nationalization of Iran's oil industry sparking a coup d'etat orchestrated by the United States and Britain. "This is Tehran! Good news! Good news! People of the cities of Iran, be awake and alert, the traitor Mosaddegh has fled!" crackled the voice of a radio anchor.

'Mysterious void'

Other audio included Iran's first recorded call to prayer in either 1912 or 1913, and the 1959 report on the death of Qamar, the first woman singer to perform in public in the country. One striking installation at the exhibition involved a mechanical device mounted on a concrete wall with gears, chains, wheels and a lever which played old recordings of the stringed tar instrument through retro telephone handsets.

Another, "Mowj Negar", featured printed sound waves arranged in three rows on one wall, with a metal device which moved along the waves. When moved, the device activates melodies from the Qajar and early Pahlavi (1925-1979) eras that once echoed through Iran's grand palaces and bustling city streets. Nearby stood a wooden cabinet

named "The Silent Closet", displaying a series of photos from the First World War -- but without a single accompanying sound.

"There are no sound recordings from Iran during this period, not because technology was unavailable, but likely because the country was in such turmoil that recording sound was not a priority," said Atabak Axon, another exhibition organizer. "There was a 12-year silence that remains a mysterious void in Iran's auditory history." For centuries, sound has played a central role in Persian culture, connecting belief with poetry and identity.

For 21-year-old Sarvin Faizian, visiting the exhibition with friends was a deeply moving experience "as if I was experiencing my parents' past." Similarly, Fatemeh Sadeghi described feeling overwhelmed by nostalgia, while 63-year-old Kamran Asadi found the exhibition unexpectedly personal. "It is a very good and intimate atmosphere for me," he said, lingering on an old song playing in the background. "It is good for the younger generation to learn where Iran's heritage of music and art came from."--AFP



Project manager at the "Iran's Sound Scene" exhibition Saeed Anvarinejad poses for a picture next to an installation set up with a sound-producing mechanism.



Rangers to euthanize 90 dolphins stranded on remote Australian beach

Wildlife rangers will Wednesday begin shooting 90 dolphins stranded on a remote Australian beach, saying the stressed creatures would be euthanized after attempts to refloat them failed. A pod of 157 dolphins from a poorly understood deep-sea species was found stranded Tuesday evening on an isolated beach in Australia's southern island of Tasmania. Tasmania's environment department said only 90 survived by Wednesday afternoon, growing increasingly "stressed" the longer they were exposed to beaming sun and lashing winds.

"Following expert veterinary assessment we have made the decision to euthanize the animals," incident controller Shelley Graham told reporters. "That's

likely to be the course of action for all 90." They appeared to be members of a large dolphin species known as false killer whales, officials said, named for the orca-like shape of their skull. Efforts to refloat the dolphins -- which can weigh upwards of one ton -- had fallen short and were unlikely to succeed, said biologist Kris Carlyon.

"This is possibly the trickiest location I've seen in 16 years of doing this in Tasmania. It is extremely remote, extremely difficult to get access. "We've given it a good crack this morning, but we are running out of options for a successful refloat." Dozens of sleek and dark-skinned dolphins were pictured Tuesday wallowing in wet sand as a shallow tide lapped against them. "Euthanasia of an animal

this size, it's not a simple exercise," said Carlyon.

It is reasonably common for pods of false killer whales to strand themselves on Australia's beaches. But officials said it was the first time in 50 years they had beached in that part of Tasmania. "Often we don't get to the bottom of the ultimate cause," said Carlyon. "They have really strong social bonds. One disoriented individual can drag the rest of them ashore."

Poorly understood

The dolphins were stranded on a beach near the Arthur River inlet on the west coast of Tasmania, a sparsely populated area known for its windswept coastline. "The moment a whale or dolphin strands, the clock of survival starts tick-

ing," said marine scientist Vanessa Pirota. "We don't yet understand why whales and dolphins strand. Tasmania has proven to be a hotspot location for seeing mass strandings like this. Perhaps it's the geographical location -- which makes it difficult to navigate around."

False killer whales can reach up to six meters (20 feet) in length and are known as a highly social species that gathers in pods of 50 or more. Big adults can weigh more than one ton, according to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The species is often involved in mass strandings that can "wipe out whole schools involving hundreds of animals," according to the Australian Museum.--AFP



These handout photos show dolphins stranded on a beach near Arthur River on the west coast of Tasmania.



These handout photos show officials working on dolphins stranded on a beach near Arthur River on the west coast of Tasmania.





People read, write and draw in silence while listening to pianist Maria Garzon during the 'Connect with yourself' segment of an event run by The Offline Club, at the Sherriff Centre in London. — AFP photos



Numbered wristbands for people who have handed in their mobile phones at an event run by The Offline Club.

Digital detox: Young adults flock to London 'offline' nights

Louis Shafier dropped her mobile phone into a deposit box, happy in the knowledge that for the next two hours she would be completely offline. No pings, beeps or distractions. "I'm bad at switching off. I have a proper addiction to my phone," she told AFP, as she headed into an evening out organized by the "Offline Club" in London. Tickets were snatched up when they went on sale for the two-hour "digital detox" night, with more than 150 young adults aged mostly between 20 and 35 eager to ditch their screens for an IRL evening -- meeting up in real life.

They each paid £9.50 (\$11.97) for the chance to switch off their phones and make in-person human connections. "We are the technology generation, but we're tired of it. We want to reconnect with the real world," said Bianca Bolum. The 25-year-old jeweler had come on her own and was hoping to meet new people.

According to the UK's telecoms regulator Ofcom, young Brits aged between 25 and 34 spend an average of four hours and three minutes a day glued to their smartphones. But Liliann Delacruz, 22, said she spent about 10 hours a day texting with her family and friends, surfing the net and checking her socials. The evening was a chance to "get outside my bubble." Scattered around the room in a local London church were tables stacked with board games, as an excited hum echoed around the walls.

Engineer Harry Stead, 25, said he



People socialize while attending an event run by The Offline Club, at the Sherriff Centre in London.

found leaving his phone at the door "freeing". "I don't realize the addiction and then too often I feel the urge to look at my phone and scroll," he told AFP, adding he suffered from "FOMO" ("Fear of missing out").

'Loneliness epidemic'

Shafier, 35, had come with a friend and they sat chatting together as they sewed. If she had been at home, her phone would have been next to her. "I hate I use my phone so much. I'm angry at myself," she said. As soon as the evening was over though, she switched her phone back on, scanning her screen.

Ironically the participants found out about the club via social media, often Instagram posts. Organizer Ben Hounsell, 23, said he was not against technology or calling for everyone to get rid of their

phones. "A lot of people are realizing that just getting away from your phone for a few hours can be super beneficial in a number of ways," he said. Since the club launched at the end of October, more than 2,000 people have taken part.

"It's really just growing super rapidly in London. Every event seems to sell out instantly," he said. The club has also opened branches in Paris, Barcelona and Dubai. The first Offline Club was launched in Amsterdam by Ilya Kneppelhout and two friends.

"The loneliness epidemic and the mental health epidemics are on the rise. So people really seek connection, genuine connection with others away from screens," said Kneppelhout. "A lot of us have social media and phone addictions because we're using it even though we don't want to... and we're using it even



People hand in their mobile phones while attending an event run by The Offline Club.

though we know it doesn't make us feel better."

#offline

Kneppelhout has been inspired by book clubs such as Reading Rhythms in New York or the Silent Book Club where people gather to read together. Those seeking a longer detox can even join retreats in several countries lasting days. Some influencers, ever present on social media, are leading the way. French woman Lena Mahfouf announced to her millions of followers in November that she was taking a month-long break.

Venetia La Manna, an online activist for sustainable fashion, disconnects from her phone every weekend, and lets her followers know with the hashtag #offline48. "I'm able to be more present with my loved ones, I sleep better, I have



Mobile phones handed in by people attending an event run by The Offline Club.

more time to be creative, to be in nature and to be with my community."

For most people, "the real issue isn't necessarily harm to mental health; it's missed opportunities. What didn't you do because you were scrolling?" said Anna Cox, a professor of human-computer interaction at University College London. "Did you miss a conversation with your partner," for example, or stay up later than planned and put off doing the washing up? But Cox said there are excellent strategies "to help people reduce the time they spend on their devices," such as turning off notifications or switching the phone's interface to black and white. "We need to educate ourselves -- and particularly young people -- on how to take control of our devices," she added. --AFP



A man plays and pets Dino, a golden retriever led by his trainer Vesna Kiskovska (right) at the Skopje International Airport.



A woman pets Dino, a golden retriever at the Skopje International Airport, in Skopje.



A girl plays and pets Dino, a golden retriever at the Skopje International Airport.



Vesna Kiskovska, the trainer of Dino walks past passengers at the Skopje International Airport.

Flyer's best friend: N Macedonia's zen dog aids anxious travelers

Nervous flyers and stressed passengers have a furry respite at North Macedonia's main airport, thanks to Dino the golden retriever's presence in the departure lounge.

Better known by his nickname "zen dog", the four-year-old pup makes regular stops at Skopje's airport to "provide a more relaxing and pleasant travel experience", according to the facility's management. "We are aware that traveling can be stressful," said Maja Bajalska Georgievska, communications manager of the capital's airport.

To help calm the anxious, Dino makes multiple passes by the airport's boarding gates, allowing passengers to pet the curious canine and enjoy a moment of zen or snap a selfie. "Even when he's not approached by travelers, he tries to interact with them," said Dino's trainer Vesna Kiskovska. "He's a golden retriever, a dog who loves making

friends." The program is the first of its kind in the region, according to TAV Airports Holding, the operator of Skopje's airport.

Aerophobia -- or a fear of flying -- is common among travelers, according to various studies. Dogs, however, seem to possess a unique ability to help curb stress in humans. According to a 2021 study published in the Journal of Clinical Medicine: "assistance dogs can make patients with anxiety disorders feel safer, they facilitate social activity and reduce the feelings of isolation and loneliness". Since November, Dino has visited Skopje's airport dozens of times, usually during busier periods to help calm travelers. "A lot of people are very nervous or anxious about flying, and dogs are soothing," said Sophie Franzen, a 25-year-old Dutch tourist. "It's an excellent idea." -- AFP



A woman pets Dino at the Skopje International Airport. — AFP photos



A fan poses for a picture in front of the clinic where Colombian singer Shakira is hospitalized in Lima. — AFP

Shakira medical record leak sparks Peru investigation

Peruvian authorities threatened sanctions and hefty fines Tuesday as they investigated how popstar Shakira's medical records were leaked following her treatment at a Lima clinic. The 48-year-old four-time Grammy-winning Colombian singer-songwriter was taken to the emergency room on Saturday for an abdominal condition, forcing her to scrap a blockbuster Sunday show.

Shortly after her brief hospitalization, her medical report appeared on social media, sparking widespread outrage among fans and an official investigation. A spokeswoman for Peru's national health service watchdog told AFP on Tuesday that investigations were well underway and the clinic could face a fine of up to \$430,000. "Yesterday (Monday) we were at the clinic, we met with the officials, they have given their explanation, which is confidential," spokeswoman Ruby Cubas told AFP. The investigation is expected to last 25 days.

The Delgado clinic, where Shakira was treated, said it was also investigating what it called a "serious ethical breach of our code of conduct and regulations governing personal data processing." "We have already identified and started the sanctioning process against those proven responsible," it said in a statement.

Shakira is on her first world tour in seven years. She is set to perform nearly 50 dates in Latin America by the end of June, followed by more concerts in the United States and Canada. --AFP

Sports

Berrettini ends Djokovic comeback at Qatar Open

Italian's first ever win over Djokovic

DOHA: Novak Djokovic's comeback came to a crashing halt on Tuesday as he lost 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 to Matteo Berrettini in the second round of the Qatar Open. Djokovic, who was seeded third and received a first-round bye, was playing his first match since limping out of his Australian Open semi-final in January. But the Serb said that while he was not 100 percent, fitness was not the issue. "I was outplayed by just a better player today," he said.

"Yes, I wasn't at my desired level, and it could be that I'm still not moving the way I want to move, but I played without pain, so there is no excuse in that." "I think he played a masterclass match to be honest, tactically, and served very well, so just a very deserved win from his side."

It was only Berrettini's second win this year and his first over a player in the top 10 since 2023. It was also the Italian's first ever win over Djokovic. Their previous encounters included victories for the Serb in the Wimbledon final and Roland Garros quarterfinals both in 2021.

"Something I've been looking to do for a long time. I've played against him in the

most important tournaments on tour," the 28-year-old Italian said on court after the victory. "I wish I could have won one of those matches."

Berrettini has struggled with injuries over the last 18 months but won three tournaments after returning to court last year. "Really happy with my performance," he said. "Really happy because I enjoyed my time out there, which is the most important thing."

The first set went with serve but Berrettini took two points off Djokovic's serve to win the tiebreak. The Italian then broke to love in the second game of the second set. Djokovic had broken Berrettini 27 times in their four previous encounters but the Italian was comfortable on serve until the final game before finally winning on his second match point.

"A champion like Novak is always ready to come back," Berrettini said. "You don't have to think about match point. You have to think about the next point." Djokovic said that Andy Murray had agreed to continue as his coach "indefinitely" but said that he did not plan to overhaul his style.

"I am trying to improve my game, like



DOHA: Italy's Matteo Berrettini serves against Serbia's Novak Djokovic during their men's singles match at the ATP Qatar Open tennis tournament in Doha on February 18, 2025. — AFP

everybody else. But my game is not going to change now drastically," Djokovic said. "My game is what it is, the core is going

to be the same."

"There are more injuries. Things are not the same as 10 years ago, 15 years

ago. I still try to take care of my body on a daily basis, and it's more challenging now, no doubt. I still try to do my very best, given the circumstances."

'Cold and windy'

Alex de Minaur celebrated his birthday by beating Russian Safiullin 6-1, 7-5, even though the Australian did not enjoy the weather.

"They're tough days, these ones," said De Minaur. "It's cold, it's windy, you probably don't want to get out of bed. But once you step on court, you have to do everything you can to win."

"Whether it's ugly or pretty tennis, you just put the ball in the court, and that's what I did today." World No.6 Daniil Medvedev eliminated compatriot and defending champion Karen Khachanov 4-6, 7-5, 6-3.

Medvedev, the former world No.1, has not won a tournament since the Rome Masters in spring 2023. He was knocked out in the second round of this year's Australian Open by teenage American Learner Tien. A third Russian former champion, Andrey Rublev, the fifth seed, beat Alexander Bublik 6-3, 6-4. — AFP

Kenin ends Paolini's Dubai title defence

DUBAI: Jasmine Paolini's defence of her Dubai Championships title ended on Wednesday with the Italian knocked out in the last 16 by Sofia Kenin. The American, ranked 27th in the world, defeated the fourth seed 6-4, 6-0 in just over an hour. Kenin raced to a 5-2 lead in the opening set before closing the door on a Paolini fight back. Any hopes Paolini had of forcing the match to a deciding set were undone when she took a bad fall early in the second set. Rolling over her right ankle mid-rally she played on, but was obviously suffering.

This was Kenin's first win over a top five ranked player since her victorious title run at the 2020 Australian Open. Kenin's reward for defeating last year's Wimbledon and French Open finalist was a quarter-final date with Elena Rybakina after the Kazakh sixth seed overcame a tight battle with Paula Badosa 4-6, 7-6 (10/8), 7-6 (7/2).

Paolini's loss came after a tricky start to her title defence on Tuesday. She had reached match point before rain forced the players off the court. Over four hours later, the world No.4 returned to win the final point, beating German qualifier Eva Lys 6-2, 7-5.

The reigning Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen meanwhile suffered a similar fate to Paolini, the Chinese seventh seed beaten in three sets by Kenin's fellow American, Peyton Stearns. The 23-year-old Stearns, ranked 46 in the world, fought back from a set down against last year's Australian Open finalist to win the second round tie held over after Tuesday's rain 3-6, 6-4, 6-4. He next faces young Russian Mirra Andreeva in the last 16 later Wednesday. Waiting for the winner of that encounter in the quarter-finals is second seed Iga Swiatek. The Pole, beaten in the Australian Open semi-finals last month, won the last eight games to beat Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska 7-5, 6-0. — AFP

Teamwork key to smashing European doping networks

PARIS: A collaboration between the Serbian anti-doping agency and law enforcement operatives who seized 3,000 kilograms of performance-enhancing drugs and broke up an organized crime gang last year is "the future in the fight against doping", WADA's Director of Intelligence and Investigations Gunter Younger has told AFP.

The collaboration stemmed from a proposal from the World Anti-Doping Agency to the European Union in 2022 to assist with funding of a week-long workshop bringing together law enforcement officers from across Europe and anti-doping personnel from national agencies.

The Serbian gang—eight members were arrested—had brought in doping products with an estimated worth of three million euros (\$3.1 million) from India, Serbia's anti-doping agency said. Although the raids were carried out by the police, they acted on intelligence gathered by the Serbian agency.

Similar operations have been carried out in Poland—which uncovered a laboratory capable of producing one million steroid pills a day—and in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Greece. "It is the future in the fight against doping, because without law enforcement, sport organizations are overstretched" in the battle against products brought into countries by organized crime groups, Younger told AFP.

Although anti-doping personnel do not actively participate in the raids, their involvement adds an edgier element to WADA's global image. "It is not the perception of the public of what we are," Younger said. WADA's image came under the microscope last year after it cleared 23 Chinese swimmers who had failed doping tests, accepting the Chinese authorities' explanation that they had eaten contaminated food.

A report into the case cleared WADA of showing "favoritism" although it was insufficient for the United States which withdrew funding from the global doping body this year. This month, WADA has had to defend its handling of the doping case concerning world



KUWAIT: The participants pose for a group photo after the conclusion of Kuwait Amateur League.

Victories win 7th season of Kuwait Amateur League

KUWAIT: Continuing the successes of the Kuwait Amateur League, Abdullah Al Saleh, Director of Haidu Academy (CAN) announced the conclusion of the Kuwait Amateur League for its seventh season 2024-2025, where 14 academies participated in this season during three months of competition, in which about 400 Kuwaiti players participated in this league with ages from 17 to 40 years old.

Abdullah Al-Saleh added that the conclusion of

the tournament was held under the patronage of the General Sports Authority - Sports for All Sector - in cooperation with the Kuwait Football Association and the cooperation of the National Campaign for Cancer Awareness (CAN), and Al-Saleh pointed out that the final of this season concluded in a distinctive way with a strong match between Haidu Can Academy and Victories Academy in the final liquidation, which was characterized by a friendly and fair play, at the end of which Victories Academy was able to win the title of the Kuwait Amateur League for the first time against Haidu (CAN) Academy 2-0, the winning team received the league cup, and player Fahad Al Awad from Haidu CAN team won the best scorer's award in the league.

The player Abdul Karim Ismail from the Factories team won the best player award, the coach

Mohammed Ali from the Haidu (CAN) team won the best coach award, and the goalkeeper Ali Al Khalidi won the best goalkeeper award from the Haidu CAN team.

Abdullah added that the success of the Amateur Football League every year is due to the increase in participation from academies and the number of registered players, and this encourages us to continue the interest in holding this league and other sports activities that provide the right place to promote the hobby and also discover young talents in the field of sports, especially the game of football, the passion of the masses, and in the end, Abdullah Al-Saleh thanked all the participating teams and the organizers for the cooperation and help in making the tournament a success, hoping to meet soon in the eighth amateur football league.

Hamilton 'invigorated' by Ferrari move ahead of new season

LONDON: Lewis Hamilton said he felt "invigorated" and "full of life" following a move to Ferrari as his new car was unveiled in front of some 15,000 raucous fans during the 2025 Formula One season launch at London's O2 Arena on Tuesday.

Seven-times world champion Hamilton has left Mercedes after 12 seasons to join the Italian giants for the upcoming campaign that starts with next month's Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne. Ferrari have been ever present throughout Formula One's 75-year history and the prospect of winning a record eighth drivers' championship with the 'Scuderia' has clearly proved enticing for 40-year-old British motorsport great Hamilton.

"The word I am thinking of is invigorated because I feel so full of life and so much energy because everything is new and I'm just focused on what is up ahead," said Hamilton in a brief on-stage interview—Ferrari are holding a press conference at their Maranello headquarters on Wednesday.

"I'm so proud to be part of the team, something new and exciting for me," he added following his first public appearance in Ferrari's traditional red racing colours. His words echoed those of reigning world champion Max Verstappen, who earlier Tuesday told reporters his old rival could be "reborn" at Ferrari where he will join Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc. Hamilton ended his more than two-year wait for a win with victory on home soil at the British Grand Prix in July. Yet he still finished a mammoth 214 points behind Verstappen in the drivers' standings as his time at Mercedes—where he won six titles—came to a disappointing end.

'New motivation'

But Verstappen, bidding to equal Michael Schumacher's record of five successive drivers' championships, said joining Ferrari could be the change Hamilton needs. "It will provide him with a different scenery, a new motivation," said Verstappen. "And



LONDON: (From L) Ferrari's British driver Lewis Hamilton, Ferrari's French team principal Frederic Vasseur and Ferrari's Monaco driver Charles Leclerc arrive on stage for the presentation of the new Formula 1 car of Ferrari Formula One Team during the Formula One - 2025 season launch "F1 75 LIVE" event at the O2, in London. — AFP

when you have been with a team for a long time, have won a lot and then had a few tough seasons, maybe your motivation is different.

"Now it is almost like he is reborn. "We all know how good Lewis is and we all know how good Charles is. Ferrari have two great drivers. It is going to be exciting for the sport, but it will also depend on how good the car is." Hamilton joins a Ferrari team narrowly pipped to the constructors' championship by McLaren last year.

"I am definitely anticipating Lewis being a championship contender," said McLaren chief executive Zak Brown. "We and Ferrari ended last year with nothing between us and I think that will continue." Hamilton will have his first serious drive of his new car during next week's lone winter testing session in Bahrain, with Ferrari aiming for their first championship in nearly two decades.

"If Lewis gets off to a good start and he gets the team around him, he will find his confidence and he could be a real contender for this world championship," said Christian Horner, the principal of Verstappen's Red Bull team.

Horner added: "But if he doesn't get off to a good start, it will inevitably be harder for him." Tuesday's glitzy event saw all 10 Grand Prix teams launch their new cars at the same venue, the first time this has happened in Formula One history. — AFP

Sports

Club Brugge dump Atalanta out of Champions League

Club Brugge first Belgian side to win a knockout tie in Champions League era

BERGAMO: Teenage starlet Chemsdine Talbi scored twice as Club Brugge claimed a 3-1 victory away to Atalanta in Italy on Tuesday to win their Champions League play-off tie 5-2 on aggregate and advance to the last 16.

Talbi's brace was followed by a superb Ferran Jutgla strike as the Belgians built on their 2-1 win at home in last week's first leg and advanced to a tie against either Lille or Aston Villa in the next round. Atalanta had 29 attempts on goal but were punished on the break by the Belgians and Ademola Lookman's reply at the start of the second half was scant consolation.

Lookman also had a penalty saved while Atalanta captain Rafael Tolo was sent off late on, as last season's Europa League winners bowed out of Europe. "Over the course of the two matches we created more than they did but they made more of their chances," said Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini.

"But you can only give them credit as they're a lively team and have a lot of quality." It is a major surprise as Atalanta had finished ninth in the table in the league phase, just missing direct qualification for the last 16, while Club Brugge came 24th, taking the last spot in the play-offs.

"We played in a really mature way, with a lot of confidence and courage," Club Brugge coach Nicky Hayden told broadcaster TNT Sports. The Belgians had claimed a surprising and highly controversial victory in last week's first leg thanks to a disputed

late penalty converted by Gustaf Nilsson.

They went ahead on Tuesday in Bergamo inside three minutes as Jutgla teed up Talbi, who still had work to do before firing low into the far corner. Talbi, the 19-year-old winger, enjoying something of a breakthrough season, struck again on 27 minutes, following in to score after a Christos Tzolis shot had been parried.

Incredibly, the visitors then made the score 3-0 on the night in first-half stoppage time when Tzolis supplied Jutgla and the former Barcelona youngster lashed in a shot from the edge of the box. Atalanta needed to score four in the second half just to force extra time, and they got one back within a minute of the restart through Nigerian star Lookman.

They then won a penalty when Tzolis was penalized for bringing down Juan Cuadrado, but Lookman's kick was saved by Club Brugge goalkeeper Simon Mignolet. With the game gone for the Italians, Tolo's frustration got the better of him as he was sent off three minutes from time for charging at Maxim De Cuyper and knocking his opponent over after trying to throw the ball at him, and then slipping.

Club Brugge are the first Belgian side to win a knockout tie in the Champions League era. They will discover their next opponents in Friday's draw for the last 16 -- they have already played Aston Villa, beating the Premier League side 1-0 at home in the league phase in November. — AFP



BERGAMO: Club Brugge's players celebrate winning the UEFA Champions League knockout phase play-off 2nd leg football match between Club Brugge KV and Atalanta at the Stadio di Bergamo in Bergamo. — AFP

Benfica hold off Monaco to reach CL last 16

LISBON: Benfica snatched a nailbiting 3-3 draw against Monaco on Tuesday to reach the Champions League last 16 with a 4-3 aggregate victory in the play-off round. Monaco twice led on the night and came close to forcing extra-time but Orkun Kokcu's 84th minute equalizer helped Benfica scrape through in Lisbon, with Barcelona or Liverpool awaiting in the next round.

Kerem Akturkoglu put the hosts ahead against the run of play, with Takumi Minamino levelling for Monaco after 32 minutes. Eliesse Ben Seghir fired the visitors ahead but Vangelis Pavlidis struck from the spot to keep the score tied on the night.

French youngster George Ilenikhena netted in the 81st minute for Monaco but Kokcu prodded home to send Benfica through. "It was a tough night, we knew Monaco would put pressure on us from the start and we felt it, we didn't play our best game," Kokcu told SportTV.

"Still, we're happy to have progressed to the last 16, I'm happy to have contributed to the result." Monaco hammered Nantes 7-1 on Saturday in the French top flight, sharpening their pencils ahead of their crucial exam at the Estadio da Luz.

Both sides were without key players through injury and suspension, with Benfica missing Angel Di Maria among others, while Monaco started with just one recognized midfielder. Wingers Maghnes Aklouché and Ben Seghir played more centrally than usual and both shone in Lisbon, despite ending up on the losing side.

Benfica goalkeeper Anatoliy Trubin made a good save to deny Monaco's Krepin Diatta early on, as the Ligue 1 side looked to get back on level terms in the tie and had the better of the first half. However it was the hosts who took the lead after superb work by Benfica striker Pavlidis.

The Greek attacker, who netted a hat-trick against



LISBON: Monaco's French defender #13 Christian Mawissa (L) is airborne as he goes for the ball during the UEFA Champions League knockout phase play-off second leg football match between SL Benfica and AS Monaco at Luz stadium in Lisbon. — AFP

Barcelona in the group stage, turned provider on this occasion and, after darting into the area, crossed to the back post for Akturkoglu to turn home. Swiss international Breel Embolo almost levelled for Monaco but his header hit the post, although the visitors netted less than a minute later. Embolo did well to hold off veteran defender Nicolas Otamendi, allowing former Liverpool attacker Minamino room for a shot and he drilled home at the near post. Monaco should have taken the lead just before half-time but Embolo fired a glorious chance high over the crossbar after the impressive Aklouché surged through the middle and teed him up.

'A lot of fight'

Ben Seghir forced Trubin into a fine save early in the second half, before pulling Monaco level at 2-2 on aggregate after 51 minutes. The Moroccan winger produced a deadly accurate first-time finish inside the near post after Aklouché cut the ball back to him from the right.

Bruno Lage's side struggled to find a foothold in

and Doncic, entertain Charlotte in a game postponed from January by wildfires.

The Lakers, fifth in the Western Conference at 32-20, made a deal with Dallas on February 2, trading away forward Anthony Davis and others to obtain Slovenian guard Doncic, uniting the playmaker with 40-year-old legend James in hopes of making the Lakers a title contender.

"Just the excitement of being able to add a caliber player like that, a generational talent like that to our franchise, it's something that has given me energy," James said. "I'm looking forward to seeing what we can do. We only had two games so far and I believe he has been on a minutes restriction since he came back from the calf (injury)."

"As he continues to get in form, I think we could be really good going down the stretch. But we'll see what

happens." James missed the NBA All-Star Game while resting a foot and ankle injury ahead of facing Charlotte on Wednesday and visiting Portland on Thursday.

"With 30 games left and us trying to make a playoff push in the wild, wild west, I feel like it's important for me to take care of myself and understand what's coming on," James said. "I have to look out for myself when it comes to this injury that I've been dealing with for years."

"Hopefully I can play against Charlotte on Wednesday and Portland on Thursday. It's a big stretch for us." Oklahoma City Thunder lead the West and share the NBA's best record with the Cleveland Cavaliers, at 44-10. In the East, the Cavs are 5.5 games ahead of reigning champion Boston while the Thunder lead Memphis by eight in the West. — AFP

Jose Mourinho eyes Europa League run with Fenerbahce

PARIS: Jose Mourinho's Fenerbahce are poised to progress to the last 16 of the Europa League when they visit Anderlecht on Thursday as the Portuguese coach targets a sixth European trophy of his storied managerial career.

Fenerbahce go into the second leg of their knockout phase play-off tie with a healthy 3-0 lead from the first meeting last week in Istanbul, when Dusan Tadic, captain Edin Dzeko and Youssef En-Nesyri scored their goals.

Assuming they avoid a spectacular collapse in Brussels, they will advance to a tie in the next round against either Rangers or Greek giants Olympiakos, with the identity of their opponent to be revealed in Friday's draw.

Now aged 62, Mourinho was appointed ahead of this season by the Istanbul giants from the Asian side of the Bosphorus. He was charged with the task of unseating great rivals Galatasaray and delivering a first Turkish title for Fenerbahce since 2014.

However, the outlook domestically does not look too promising—Fenerbahce are currently second, six points behind unbeaten Galatasaray with 23 games played. Mourinho's side have lost just two Super Lig games, 3-1 at home to Galatasaray in September, and 1-0 at another Istanbul rival, Besiktas, in December.

With that in mind, Fenerbahce could be forgiven for placing most of their focus just now on the next intercontinental derby against Galatasaray—the clubs come from the Asian and European sides of the Bosphorus respectively—on Monday.

But success in Europe would be a remarkable achievement for Mourinho, whose side were eliminated from this season's Champions League in the qualifying rounds. Fenerbahce have never been to a European final and the only international title for a Turkish club remains Galatasaray's triumph in the UEFA Cup in 2000. — AFP



SALT LAKE CITY: (Files) Luka Doncic #77 of the Los Angeles Lakers shoots over John Collins #20 of the Utah Jazz during the second half of a game at Delta in Salt Lake City, Utah. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

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

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I Mohammad Manzoor Alam Alias Mohammad Manzoor Ansari holder of Indian passport no P6320829, resident of Village Bhadauni, Phulwari Sharif, PS District Nawada, Bihar, India. 12 November 2024, I will be known only by the name of Mohammad Manzoor Ansari will now do all work in the name of Mohammd Manzoor Ansari. (#6637) 20/02/2025

I, Ravanamma Pasupuleti, holder of Indian Passport No. N1652162 having permanent address 15/76, Gutta Kinda Racha Palli, T Sundupalle, Annamayya, Andhra Pradesh, 516129, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Jyothi (given name) and Somalia (surname). (#6636) 18/02/2025

I, Ahleia, holder of Indian passport No. V7438999 having permanent address Puthoval Vilaveedu Cherunniyoor, Varkala, Trivandrum, Kerala, India, 695142 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Ahalya and (surname) Raveendran Nair (#6639) 19/02/2025

I, Vishal, holder of Indian Passport No. S8256191 having permanent address vpo Kahri, Hoshiarpur, Pin: 146111, Punjab, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Vishal (given name) and Kumar (surname). (#6638) 18/02/2025

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL hotline 128

Bayern edge out Celtic to reach CL last 16 as Milan dumped out

PARIS: Bayern Munich needed a stoppage-time goal to see off Celtic and secure a place in the last 16 of the Champions League on Tuesday, while AC Milan were dumped out by Feyenoord and both Club Brugge and Benfica also advanced.

In Germany, Bayern were defending a 2-1 lead over Celtic in their play-off tie from last week's first leg but the Bundesliga leaders were unable to put the tie to bed, with Harry Kane hitting the bar before half-time. Instead it was Celtic who went ahead on the night on 63 minutes thanks to Nicolas Kuehn, the former Bayern player, who slotted low into the net after a failed attempt to win the ball by Kim Min-jae.

That meant the tie was heading for extra time, but Bayern ultimately would not need to go that far as they scored in the fourth minute of injury time. Alphonso Davies bundled the ball in from close range to make the score 1-1 on the night and clinch the tie for six-time European champions Bayern 3-2 on aggregate.

Vincent Kompany's team will find out their last-16 opponents when the draw is made on Friday, but it will be either German rivals Bayer Leverkusen or Atletico Madrid. "Of course, we always want to dominate and be much better than the opponent, especially here. But the result is always the most important thing," Kompany told UEFA.com.

It was a heartbreaking way for Celtic to go out but the Scottish champions will take heart from their performance over the two legs. "It never looked like we were going to concede the goal that we did and sadly for us, we did. I can only take immense pride from the performance and the



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's Canadian defender #19 Alphonso Davies celebrates after scoring the equalizing goal during the UEFA Champions League second-leg, knockout phase play-off match FC Bayern Munich vs Celtic in Munich. — AFP

guys gave everything," said Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers.

Earlier, seven-time European Cup winners Milan were eliminated by Feyenoord, a 1-1 draw at San Siro taking the Dutch club through 2-1 on aggregate. Santiago Gimenez, playing against the club he left just last month, had put Milan ahead on the night from close range in the first minute to level the tie on aggregate.

However, Milan had Theo Hernandez sent off early in the second half for a second booking, and Feyenoord levelled on the night through Julian Carranza on 73 minutes. The visitors had Givairo Read shown a red card at the end of the game after they

had held on to win the tie. They could now come back to San Siro in the next round, with Inter Milan and Arsenal their two possible opponents.

Having won 1-0 in Monaco last week, the Portuguese giants extended their aggregate lead when Kerem Akturkoglu opened the scoring on the night midway through the first half. Monaco came roaring back with Takumi Minamino and Eliesse Ben Seghir netting either side of half-time to level the tie on aggregate. The remaining play-off second legs will take place on Wednesday, with the standout fixture seeing Real Madrid defend a 3-2 first-leg lead at home to Manchester City. —AFP

NZ defeat Pak in Champions Trophy opener

KARACHI: New Zealand underlined their title aspirations with a 60-run victory against defending champions Pakistan in a Group A match of the Champions Trophy at the National Stadium on Wednesday. Will Young struck 107 and Tom Latham smashed an unbeaten 118 to help New Zealand overcome a sluggish start and post a commanding 320-5 after being put into bat.

Glenn Phillips chipped in with a brisk 61 as New Zealand breached the 300-mark, which had looked

like a distant dream after their wobbly start. Pakistan were all out for 260 in 47.2 overs with Babar Azam (64) and Khushdil Shah (69) scoring half-centuries but the hosts never looked in the hunt.

Earlier, Pakistan's President Asif Zardari joined thousands of fans at the National Stadium on Wednesday for the start of the Champions Trophy, the first international cricket tournament to be hosted in the country for three decades.

The eight-nation event, which was launched with Pakistan's Air Force flying over the stadium to mark the occasion, marks the end of Pakistan's exile in terms of international tournaments and opened with Pakistan, the defending champions, taking on New Zealand. — Agencies



KARACHI: New Zealand's Will Young plays a shot as Pakistan's captain and wicket-keeper Mohammad Rizwan watches at the National Stadium on Feb 19, 2025. — AFP

VOLVO

For the safety of your family
for a safer Kuwait

XC60 Starting from
KD 16,499



2209 9999 - 9500 0000

volvocars.com/en-kw