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Ramadan

Fajr	: 04:50
Shrooq	: 06:09
Dhuhr	: 11:59
Asr	: 15:20
Maghrib	: 17:50
Isha	: 19:07

Kuwait urges Arab unity on Gaza

Arab leaders endorse plan to rebuild Gaza under Palestinian Authority



CAIRO: Arab leaders including HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah gather for a family picture during the Arab League summit on Gaza on March 4, 2025. — AFP

CAIRO: Representing HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah called for a unified Arab stance against Palestinian displacement at the Extraordinary Arab Summit in Cairo on Tuesday. He emphasized the importance of a unified Arab position against any attempts to displace Palestinians and firmly rejected placing responsibility on regional countries, particularly Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. HH the Crown Prince called for a comprehensive plan to reconstruct Gaza and compensate the Palestinian people for the destruction caused, while holding the Zionist occupation accountable for rebuilding what its forces have destroyed. He underscored the need for legal action against the Zionist entity through international law, humanitarian law and key global bodies, including the UN General Assembly, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, the International Criminal Court, and the International Court of Justice. Kuwait also reiterated its commitment to the two-state solution, calling for a concrete and realistic approach through the international conference scheduled for June to implement it.

Continued on Page 6

RAMADAN KAREEM

Love is universal

By Hudhaifa Hassan Twaha

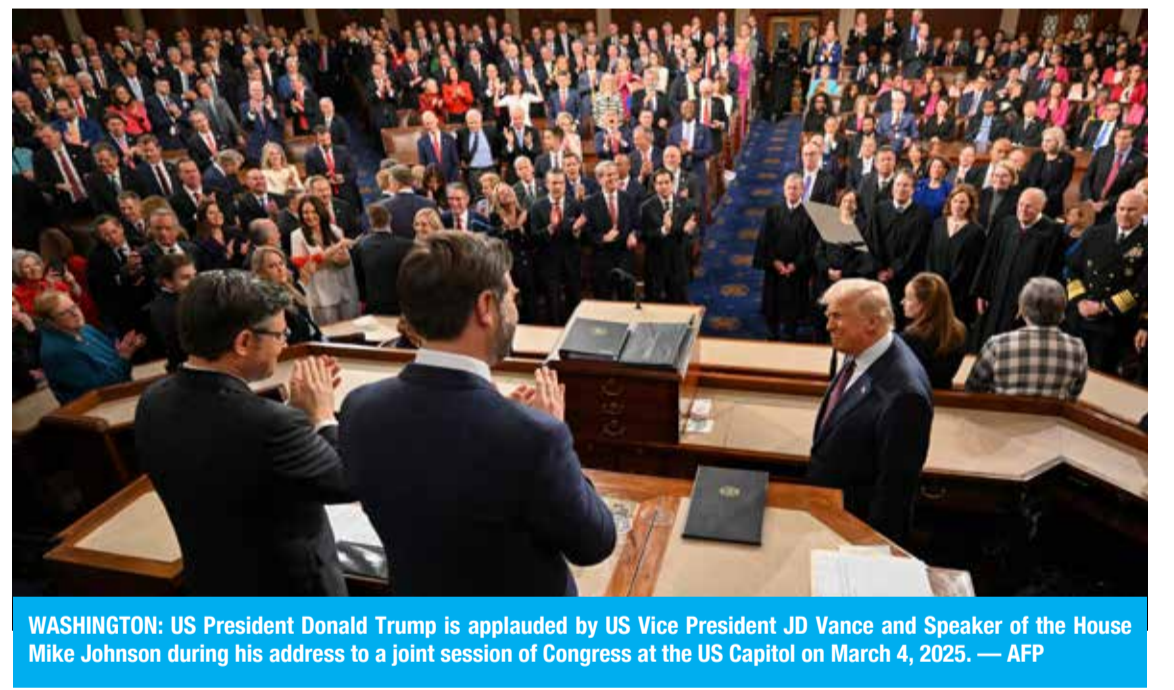
According to Islamic, the idea of social welfare has been presented as one of its principal core values, and the practice of social service at its various forms has been instructed and encouraged. A Muslim's religious life remains incomplete if not attended by service to humanity. The individual, the family, the state and the non-governmental organizations and the government — all are responsible for the performance of social responsibilities and for the promotion of social welfare. Almighty Allah said in the Noble Quran, translated as: "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam, provided them with the means of transportation on land and sea, and provided them with good, pure (and wholesome) things, and gave them preference over many of Our other creatures." (Al-Isra'a 17: 70) According to the teachings of Islam, no individual's honor should be compromised, and no harm should be meted out to him. It is an obvious fact humans are superior to other creatures on earth. Therefore, human beings should be grateful for this honor and execute the duties enjoined upon them. No person should feel superior to another. Abdullah bin Masoud (RA) narrated that a man approached the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and asked him, "How can I know when I have done well and when I have done something bad?" The Prophet (PBUH) said, "If you hear your neighbors saying that you have done well, then you have done well, and if you hear them say that you have done something bad, then you have done something bad." (Al-Albani rated it as sahih (authentic) in Sahih Ibn Ma'jah # 3, 421) Abu Zuhair Ath-Thaqafi (RA) narrated, "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) addressed us and said, 'Soon you will be able to distinguish the people of Paradise from the people of Hell.' They asked, 'How O Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'By praise and dispraise; you are Allah's witnesses over one another.'" (Al-Albani rated it as Hasan (authentic) in Sahih Ibn Ma'jah # 3, 419) In Islam, there is much emphasis on the necessity of promoting brotherhood and friendship with the people of other faiths as well as the

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'America is back,' Trump declares in Congress speech

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump declared "America is back" Tuesday in his first address to Congress since returning to power, touting his radical policies in the face of raucous Democratic hostility while proclaiming a breakthrough on Ukraine. In the longest presidential speech to lawmakers on record, the Republican repeatedly hailed billionaire advisor Elon Musk's controversial assault on the federal bureaucracy and said his administration was "just getting started." "The American Dream is unstoppable," said Trump in a speech lasting over one hour and 40 minutes, which beat Bill Clinton's record for his State of the Union speech in 2000. Almost every line got loud applause from Republican Party members, including on two occasions when Trump singled out

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WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump is applauded by US Vice President JD Vance and Speaker of the House Mike Johnson during his address to a joint session of Congress at the US Capitol on March 4, 2025. — AFP

Pro-Palestinian protest held at Columbia Univ

NEW YORK: More than 200 pro-Palestinian protesters gathered Tuesday in front of Columbia University in New York to demonstrate against former Zionist prime minister Naftali Bennett, who was at the campus for a speaking engagement. After more than



NEW YORK: Pro-Palestinian protesters gather outside the campus of Columbia University on March 4, 2025. — AFP

Children, soldiers among 18 killed in Pakistan attack

PESHAWAR: Thirteen civilians and five soldiers were killed when suicide bombers drove two explosive-laden cars into an army compound in north-western Pakistan, the military said on Wednesday. Four children were among those killed in Tuesday's attack, which involved four suicide bombers, with fighting raging into the early hours of Wednesday. The attack took place in Bannu, a district in the turbulent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province close to Afghanistan and adjacent to the formerly self-governed tribal areas, once a hotbed for militancy. "The terrorists entered Bannu Cantt from two

Continued on Page 6



BANNU, Pakistan: Mourners pray during the funeral ceremony of suicide blast victims on March 5, 2025. — AFP

Local

Zain's Ramadan video focuses on people 'belonging, resisting and rebuilding the land'

TVC going viral on all major social media channels with over 6 million views within a few days



KUWAIT: With its renowned pioneering spirit, Zain Group unveiled a daring Ramadan video (TVC) for 2025 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJuG-stVnZA>), the first to be filmed in locations across Gaza, Lebanon, and other affected regions, reminding the global community that the Zain brand is there with them, and for them, at all times.

Airing on local TV channels in the Gulf, and showcased on Zain Group's YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, LinkedIn and X social media channels, the commercial brings together authentic imagery with a captivating narrative of perseverance but also defiance. Within a few days of launch, the TVC witnessed over 6 million views with tens of thousands of comments and support of the video concept. The campaign is accompanied by the hashtag #????_????, encouraging audiences to share their own stories of being present for their land.

The video concept

The concept of the video captures the unyielding spirit of those who remain firm in the face of adversity. The impactful TVC delivers a strong message: "The people of the land are, and always will be, present, standing firm in their love and devotion to their land, no matter the challenges they face." Using a play on the word "attendance", the TVC reinforces that true "presence" is not just about showing up somewhere and claiming it, it is about 'belonging, resisting, and rebuilding'.

Adding to the emotional depth of the campaign is the voice of renowned artist Majed Al Mohandes, whose brilliant performance transforms the soundtrack into an anthem of resilience and hope. The film also features Maria from Gaza, the little girl



- Triggering conversations and touching hearts on controversial topics
- Filmed in locations across Gaza, Lebanon, and other affected regions

who became famous for her powerful speech to US President Donald Trump, firmly stating that she will not leave her home and asking him if he would leave the States and live somewhere else. Another important inclusion is Renad, the young chef from Gaza who became known for her cooking on social media during the relentless bombings.

These young people's presence is a testament to the determination of the region's people, no matter their age. One powerful visual in the commercial is a flagpole showing multiple symbolic elements: the Lebanese cedar tree, representing strength and endurance; Gaza's keys, a symbol of the right of return; and Syria's oud string instrument, reflecting resilience through art. The flagpole carries a flag that reads a declaration of the power of strong, peaceful souls capable of restoring nations.

As the video unfolds, it reveals a crystal-clear statement: "Whoever tries to take over the land and reshape it by building rivieras, will fail. This land is not for sale and its people will always rise from the rubble to reclaim and rebuild it with love and hope." The TVC's original idea was generated by Zain Group's branding team and produced by Joy Productions in Kuwait. It was directed by Samir Abboud from Lebanon and features artist Majed Al Mohandes; the girls vocals were by Maryam Shehab; Lyrics by Heba Hamada; Music Composition by Ehab Abdulwahed; Music Arrangement by Michel Fadel; and the Production House was VIP Films.

Annual ground-breaking Ramadan TVC
Every Ramadan, Zain seeks to present a new message in its TVCs that touches upon the most relevant

issues in life, and this year was no different. In previous TVCs, Zain has addressed peace and tolerance, and highlighted the suffering of refugees and the effects of disputes and conflicts on people regionally as well as a message of hope during the COVID crisis. The company has also partnered with global entities including the United Nations to achieve its sustainability and humanitarian goals and communicated such in its Ramadan TVCs.

It is central to Zain that its commercials reflect the values of its brand, which is based on being a cornerstone of every community and country in which it serves, supporting perseverance and defiance against injustice. Zain views itself as a facilitator that enables people to enjoy aspects of their lives and sharing occasions with friends and family seamlessly.

Kuwait's envoy expresses concerns over UN report

GENEVA: The Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen, on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), expressed his surprise at the absence of any reference in the UN report on freedom of religion or belief to one of the most prominent forms of coercion and ill-treatment based on religion or belief: the daily restrictions imposed on freedom of religion for Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories.

This statement was made in a speech delivered by Ambassador Al-Hayen in Geneva on Tuesday, in his capacity as Chairman of the Council of Ambassadors of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries during the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief at the 55th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Ambassador Al-Hayen stressed that preventing access to places of worship, discriminatory practices in granting permits and systematic harassment of worshippers by the occupying forces constitute glaring examples of what the Special Rapporteur described in the report as systematic violations of freedom of religion and belief that amount to ill-treatment and coercion.

In this context, Ambassador Al-Hayen expressed his hope that the Special Rapporteur would address this omission and that this issue would receive the attention it deserves within the framework of the mandate entrusted to her, in order to ensure that all violations are addressed objectively and comprehensively and that no relevant context is overlooked. This, he noted, would enhance the credibility of the report and its consistency with the principles on which the work of "mandate holders" is based.

Ambassador Al-Hayen also expressed concern about instances of discrimination and acts of violence to which individuals are subjected because of their religion or belief, stressing the importance of protecting all individuals from these violations in accordance with international human rights standards. He pointed out the importance of cooperation to absolutely prohibit all forms of coercion, torture, and ill-treatment for any reason, including religion or belief. He called on all states to fulfill their obligations under international law to prevent torture and ill-treatment, protect victims, and ensure accountability for these violations. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Muslim worshippers pray during the holy month of Ramadan in Kuwait City.

Ministry of Islamic Affairs: A guide for non-Arabic speakers in Ramadan

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: In a country as diverse as Kuwait, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs ensures that everyone, regardless of language, can fully engage with the teachings of Islam throughout the year. But, with Ramadan here, it's the perfect time to connect even more with the spirit of this holy month. Whether you're new to Islam, a long-time Muslim, or just curious, there are countless ways to deepen your understanding and embrace the season. As Mohamed Ali, Administration Assistant at the Ministry's Foreign Relations Department explained that the ministry oversees several initiatives that help introduce and deepen the understanding of Islam among non-Arabic speakers.

Iftar gatherings

Hundreds of expatriates participate in communal iftar gatherings in Ramadan, where they receive lectures on fasting, its etiquette, and its spiritual

significance before breaking their fast. The ministry ensures these iftars serve as both a community-building and educational opportunity. These iftar gatherings, according to Ali, are held at key mosques across Kuwait, including the Grand Mosque, Masjid Abdul Aziz Al-Uthman in Qibla every Saturday, and Masjid Latifa Al-Nimsh in Salmiya throughout the month, among others.

Sermons in 73 Mosques

The ministry supervises Friday sermons in 73 mosques across Kuwait all year long in 11 languages, including Urdu, Tamil, Sinhalese, Malayalam, Telugu, Bengali, English, Chinese, Turkish, Filipino and Indonesian. These multilingual sermons serve as a great opportunity for non-Arab speakers to grasp the religious messages being shared, especially during the month of Ramadan.

Collaboration with 7 Islamic organizations

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs also partners with around seven Islamic organizations focused on reaching non-Arabic speakers. These groups offer lectures, distribute educational materials in the streets, and run digital campaigns to further spread Islamic teachings. The ministry supports these efforts by helping organize cultural and religious fo-

rum, securing event permits, and arranging visits from scholars outside Kuwait. They also provide allowances to preachers, ensuring that these efforts remain sustainable.

Among these organizations, the Islamic Presentation Committee (IPC) is a major partner, working to introduce Islam to non-Muslims and guide new converts. Another important partner is the Islamic Center of Kuwait (ICK), which offers a variety of lectures, courses, and community activities that cater to the expatriate population. Additionally, the Grand Mosque of Kuwait runs its own intensive Da'wah (Islamic outreach) activities, offering specialized lectures, workshops, and educational programs for both visitors and non-Arabic-speaking communities.

Religious education

The ministry facilitates religious lessons in various languages in cooperation with mosques and community centers, covering topics such as Islamic creed, Quranic recitation, jurisprudence, and Arabic language learning. These lessons take place in mosques and community centers, ensuring accessibility for different nationalities. Serving similar services like IPC and ICK, examples of these centers are Tawasul, Al-Bayan Association for Introducing Islam, Alblagh Almunib and Salsabeel Charity Society.



Ministry of Islamic Affairs



The Grand Mosque

Local

Cabinet sends Ramadan greetings, reviews recommendations, reports

Ministers apprised of participation of Amir's Representative in Arab summit

KUWAIT: The Cabinet was briefed on the visit to Egypt by the Representative of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, leading the Kuwaiti delegation to the extraordinary Arab Summit. The summit discussed the latest developments regarding the Palestine cause and joint Arab efforts to support the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among which is the right to live on their own land.

The weekly Cabinet meeting, held at Bayan Palace on Tuesday morning, was chaired by Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, as stated by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sharida Abdullah Al-Maousherji. At the beginning of the meeting, the Cabinet members expressed their best wishes for His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince, as well as for the citizens and expatriates in Kuwait and the Arab and Muslim nations, during the holy month of Ramadan.

The Cabinet members were briefed on the messages recently sent to His Highness the Amir by leaders of friendly countries regarding ways to promote bilateral relations and cooperation. Minister of State for Communications Affairs Omar Saud Abdul-Aziz Al-Omar made a presentation on the strategic partnership agreement between Kuwait and Microsoft, which envisions the launch of an AI data center, a center for excellence in cloud auditing, and other centers.

The presentation also included a comprehensive initiative for building the capacity of national cadres and improving their AI skills to better qualify them for the labor market in the future. The Cabinet appreciated the efforts of Al-Omar and the committee that is following up on the strategic partnership agreement between Kuwait and Microsoft. The Cabinet reviewed the minutes of the ministerial committee on economic affairs, including the recommendation from the Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development for endorsing the annual development plan (2025-2026). — KUNA



Cabinet held weekly meeting at Bayan Palace on Tuesday.



Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah delivers Kuwait's speech at the extraordinary Arab summit in Cairo. — KUNA photos

Crown Prince thanks Sisi as Arab leaders endorse Gaza plan

KUWAIT: Representative of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, sent a message of thanks to his brother, His Excellency President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt. The message reads: "Peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah be upon you. As I leave the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt after attending, representing His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, and participating in the extraordinary Arab summit hosted by Egypt, I would like to express to Your Excellency my sincere thanks and deep gratitude for the generous hospitality and warm reception that I and the accompanying delegation received, which embodied the depth of the close historical fraternal relations that bind our countries and peoples."

"I affirm that your country's hosting of this extraordinary summit with wide, high-level participation in extremely complex and delicate circumstances reflected the pivotal and important role of the Arab Republic of Egypt at the regional and international levels, hoping that the decisions and recommendations issued by the summit contribute to strengthening joint Arab action and bringing viewpoints closer together on all current issues, especially the Palestinian issue, which is at the top of our priorities," the message stated.

"We spare no effort to support it, renewing Kuwait's firm position in solidarity and standing by the brotherly Palestinian people in light of the ongoing violations they are subjected to, affirming our support for their efforts to obtain all their legitimate na-



Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince leaves Cairo after heading the Kuwait's delegation to the extraordinary Arab Summit.

tional rights to establish their independent state on their lands. In conclusion, I send to Your Excellency my best wishes for good health and wellness, praying to God Almighty to grant you success and bless your efforts to lead your country and brotherly peoples toward further progress, advancement, and prosperity. Please accept, Your Excellency, our utmost appreciation," it added.

Meanwhile, Arab leaders on Tuesday endorsed a plan to rebuild the Gaza Strip under the future administration of the Palestinian Authority, presenting an alternative to US President Donald Trump's widely condemned proposal to take over the territory and displace its people. The prospect of the Palestinian Authority (PA) governing Gaza remains far from certain, however, with Zionist entity having ruled out any future role for the body, and Trump having closed the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) liaison office in Washington during his first term

while stepping up support for Zionists.

Trump triggered global outrage by suggesting the United States "take over" the Gaza Strip and turn it into the "Riviera of the Middle East", while forcing its Palestinian inhabitants to relocate to Egypt or Jordan. Tuesday's Arab League summit in Cairo—a day after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated his support for Trump's proposal—offered an alternative with the adoption of a "comprehensive Arab plan".

It announced the establishment of a trust fund to pay for the territory's reconstruction, and urged the international community to back it. "All these efforts are proceeding in parallel with the launch of a political track" towards Palestinian statehood, it added, an ambition that Zionist leaders have opposed. The statement welcomed "the Palestinian decision to form a Gaza administration committee under the umbrella of the Palestinian government". — Agencies

Ministry amends foreign scholarship regulations

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Higher Education announced on Wednesday amendments to some articles of the foreign scholarship regulations that will be implemented starting from the current academic year 2025/2026. The ministry stated in a press release that this step comes upon directives from Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Nader Al-Jallal, due to the importance of developing the foreign scholarship policy and ensuring the quality of academic achievement among scholarship students.

This effort contributes to qualifying them for the labor market with high efficiency, raising the level of graduates, reducing academic failure and achieving the highest standards of scientific excellence and equity in distributing opportunities among scholarship students. The statement quoted Undersecretary of the Ministry Lamia Al-Malhem as saying that the amendments were made after a comprehensive study of the scholarship policy results and its outputs in recent years, determining its targets and desired outcomes.

Additionally, all academic standards and requirements of international universities were reviewed, along with periodic reports from cultural offices

abroad. Al-Malhem added that following this study, it was decided to amend some provisions of the external missions regulations, including replacing the preparatory English language stage with a requirement that the student obtain a score of no less than (5.5) in the approved English language test (IELTS) in advance, along with achieving the score required by the university in the accepted specialization as a basic condition for joining the mission headquarters.

Students are granted a full calendar year from the date of announcing the acceptance results to meet this condition before joining the mission headquarters. She stated that this decision comes after analyzing the reasons for students' academic failures and the extent of their impact on their educational journeys. This includes the student's failure to acquire the necessary skills after completing the language program, as some students achieve only the minimum requirement to pass the language stage without reaching a sufficient level of proficiency for academic use. This situation results in subsequent difficulties in their specialized studies and academic failure.

The changes to some items of the scholarship regulations also included the Excellence Scholarship item, whereby the student accepted into the Excellence Scholarship must have a GPA of no less than 2.67 on a 4-point scale or its equivalent in other systems during the study phase to continue in the Excellence Scholarship. This amendment falls within the Ministry's efforts to raise the level of graduates and achieve the highest standards of scientific efficiency. She pointed out that the Ministry of Higher Edu-

cation is keen to achieve justice and equal opportunities among students in benefiting from scholarships. Therefore, one of the conditions for scholarship students in the External Scholarship Regulations has been amended, now requiring applicants for scholarships not to have previously obtained a scholarship or grant within Kuwait for their first university degree (bachelor's), unless the amount spent on them is refunded.

This procedure aims to ensure the optimal use of available resources and direct them toward supporting students more effectively. Al-Malhem emphasized that these changes in the regulations for foreign missions aim to enhance the quality of education and improve student performance at international universities. Additionally, they seek to reduce linguistic obstacles that may hinder students' academic progress, which limits high rates of academic failure and contributes to preparing distinguished national cadres capable of competing in both local and international labor markets.

She stressed to students wishing to study abroad the necessity of preparing early to pass the approved English language tests required to join the mission headquarters and ensure acceptance into prestigious universities. She indicated that all students should follow important announcements issued by the Ministry of Higher Education on its official social media accounts to receive academic support and guidance through the ministry's annual (Guide Me) campaign, which will soon be launched alongside the announcement of the annual admission plan for the current year. — KUNA

KRCS supports Sudanese people

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Khaled Al-Mughamis stressed the importance of supporting Sudan in light of the current circumstances to improve its conditions and alleviate the suffering of its people. Al-Mughamis stated in a press statement after meeting with Sudanese Ambassador to Kuwait Awad Karim Balla on Wednesday that a Kuwaiti relief plane carrying 40 tons of aid will head to Sudan on Thursday in cooperation with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs and Defense.

He added that the society has not been absent from the humanitarian arena in Sudan, as it has implemented a number of humanitarian, relief and medical activities and programs, expressing his hope for the return of peace and security to Sudan, asking God Almighty to spare Sudan and its people from all harm and misfortune.

For his part, Sudanese Ambassador to Kuwait Awad Karim Balla praised in a similar statement the humanitarian contributions of the KRCS in Sudan and around the world, noting that these great efforts have alleviated the suffering of those in need. He mentioned that the relief plane heading to Sudan is the 35th flight in the series of Kuwaiti relief aid launched in May 2023. He added that Sudan is suffering and in need of reconstruction after the ongoing conflicts, noting that the most affected sector is health.

The ambassador extended his sincere thanks to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for their efforts in making Kuwait one of the first countries to respond to the humanitarian appeal. He stressed, "Kuwait is a pioneer in providing aid, relief, and assistance to us, and the Sudanese people will not forget Kuwait's humanitarian role towards Sudan, praising "the close and historical relations between the State of Sudan and Kuwait." He called on the Kuwait Red Crescent and other charitable societies to continue and amplify efforts to address the major humanitarian crisis that Sudan is currently experiencing. — KUNA



Ambassador Khaled Al-Mughamis, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and Sudanese Ambassador to Kuwait Awad Karim Balla hold talks. — KUNA

Minister: OPEC+'s decision aims to ensure stability

KUWAIT: Oil Minister Tareq Al-Roumi affirmed that the decision by eight oil-exporting countries within the OPEC+ group to gradually increase their production starting from April 1, after they had voluntarily reduced it by 2.2 million barrels per day since 2023, aims to ensure the stability of global oil markets. This was stated in a press release by Minister Al-Roumi on Tuesday, following his participation in the ministerial meeting of the eight OPEC+ countries that are implementing voluntary production cuts, which took place yesterday, Monday, via video conference.

The meeting included Algeria, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Sultanate of Oman, Russia in addition to Kuwait. Minister Al-Roumi noted that during the meeting, a comprehensive assessment of the current oil market conditions and prospects for development in the coming months was reviewed, explaining that the decision to gradually increase production aligns with market data according to what was agreed upon during the meeting held last December.

Al-Roumi emphasized that this decision reflects the commitment of the eight OPEC+ countries to adopt a proactive and responsible approach aimed at ensuring the stability of the global oil market, noting that this decision is part of the ongoing efforts and initiatives undertaken by OPEC+ to achieve a sustainable balance in the market that protects the interests of both producers and consumers. It is noteworthy that the production share allocated for Kuwait is 2.413 million barrels per day, rising to 2.421 million barrels per day in April and then gradually increasing to reach 2.548 million barrels per day by September 2026. — KUNA

Kuwait Heritage



Sea view in front of Dame Violet Dickson's house in 1938. (Source: Mohammad Al-Habib, Kuwait Through the Dickson Family's Lens, published in Kuwait, 2019.) — Compiled by Mahmoud Zakaria, researcher in heritage.

Kuwait records remarkable rise in cancer recovery rate

Makin Club supports cancer survivors in Kuwait

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: At the first meeting of the Makin Club - National Cancer Awareness Campaign (CAN), Dr Eman Al-Shammari emphasized that Kuwait is witnessing a remarkable rise in cancer recovery rates, reflecting the significant progress in modern medical treatments. The Kuwait Cancer Control Center records about 2,995 new cancer cases annually, according to its statistics for 2019, and women constitute a large percentage of these cases. The number of women with cancer has reached 1,418 cases, which highlights the importance of intensifying efforts in the fields of awareness, early screening, and therapeutic and psychological support.

Within the framework of psychosocial support for female survivors, the National Cancer Awareness Campaign organized a Ramadan meeting at the Makin Club, inaugurated by the Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr Amthal Al-Huwailah, in February. The meeting provided an opportunity to enhance communication among survivors and exchange experi-

ences. The Makin Club continues its efforts to provide psychological support courses for new cancer patients, organized by psychologist Nadia Al-Obaidi. The women praised the Makin Club course, adding that it has had a great positive impact on newly diagnosed cancer patients, in addition to attracting more recovering women to participate in its various activities.

Dr. Nadia Al-Mahmoud also explained that Kuwait is considered one of the leading countries in providing psychological and spiritual support to cancer patients. Dr. Shaikha Al-Obaidi, the Head of the Medical Physics Unit at the Kuwait Cancer Control Center and a member of the Makin Club, explained that CAN's campaign has established psychological consultation rooms in cooperation with the Social Service Center at the Kuwait Cancer Control Center, aiming to provide psychological and spiritual support to cancer patients, along with guidance and support for those affected by it.

In a related context, Bodour Al-Saeed opened the month of Ramadan with a special spiritual lecture for recovering patients, focusing on the importance of



Participants take a group photo.

faith and optimism in the journey of recovery, which reflects the comprehensive attention to the psychological and spiritual aspects of patients. Thus, the CAN campaign continues to strengthen its efforts to support cancer patients at various levels, contributing

to improving the quality of life for patients and survivors alike, calling on survivors to join the Makin Club by contacting 65070469 to benefit from the club's services. CAN will continue to enhance its efforts to support cancer patients at various levels.



Sudhakar Nibhanobudi receives the award on behalf of NBK.

NBK honored with 'Best use case of data driven decision making' award

KUWAIT: Further cementing its leadership in innovation, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) was honored with the "Best use case of data driven decision making" award at the Ninth Middle East Banking AI & Analytics Summit 2025, recently held in Dubai. The award recognizes NBK's successful implementation of self-service analytics through Tableau Data Management across the bank. The Middle East Banking AI & Analytics Summit Awards are the first and largest independent accolades recognizing AI and analytics excellence in banking across the MENA region, evaluated by a panel of expert judges.

The award underscores NBK's continued leadership in the fast-evolving technology landscape, reflecting

its strategic commitment to investing in data analysis and processing. This approach enables the Bank to gain deeper insights into customer needs and behavior while enhancing operational efficiency. NBK's Data Office strategy is designed to empower the bank's various business sectors with data-driven decision-making, with self-service analytics serving as a core pillar of this approach.

The strategy also outlines a roadmap to enhance employee efficiency through cutting-edge programs and specialized workshops on advanced visual analytics, statistical analysis, forecasting reports, and the creation of high-performance dynamic data visualizations, alongside fostering design thinking. The award is a testament to the Data Office team's efforts in advancing the bank's data landscape and analytical tools. It underscores the success of NBK's strategy in fostering a digital culture and enhancing AI-driven data analysis and processing, enabling more precise predictions of customer behavior and needs.

The Middle East Banking AI & Analytics Summit is the region's premier and only AI and data analytics event, uniting over 300 senior executives and decision-makers from the banking and financial services sector across the GCC. The summit spotlighted the transformative impact of generative AI on business processes, best practices in risk management, leveraging quantitative AI for future opportunities, and the role of AI and analytics in decision-making. It also addressed key topics such as regulatory compliance in banking, payment innovations, cloud-based solutions, and AI integration to enhance customer trust.

NBK's Data Center was designed and developed in line with the highest international standards, enabling the bank to analyze vast amounts of data to assess customer trends and needs. This capability empowers NBK to make swift, data-driven decisions that align with customer aspirations and expectations. For more information on the Best use case of data driven decision making Award at the Middle East Banking AI & Analytics Summit, please visit <https://mebankingai.com/ae/>



Public Authority for Youth launches 'Charity Village'

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Youth announced the launch of the volunteer project 'Youth Charity Village' at its Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Youth Center next Sunday to distribute iftar meals for fasting individuals. The project will continue until the end of the holy month of Ramadan with the participation of volunteer youth groups. Acting Deputy Director General of the Authority for the Youth Sector, Waleed Al-Ansari, stated in a press announcement on Tuesday that the village will serve as a volunteer youth center for all those wishing to contribute and participate in distributing meals, which will exceed 50,000 iftar meals.

Al-Ansari emphasized the Authority's commitment to providing youth with volunteer opportunities to serve the community and affirm their active roles within it, praising the significant role of youth in the success



Acting Deputy Director General of the Public Authority for Youth Waleed Al-Ansari

Head of the Volunteer Response and Rescue Team Suleiman Al-Khadri

of community volunteer projects. He encouraged youth who are interested in participating to arrive at the Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Youth Center at 4:00 pm starting next Sunday to help prepare and distribute meals. —KUNA

He explained that the village is a model for enhancing the role of youth centers in supporting various projects, noting that it also hosts different sports, artistic, and educational activities in addition to its volunteer contributions. — KUNA



Minister, Tajikistan ambassador discuss judicial and legal issues

KUWAIT: Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait and Tajikistan's Ambassador to Kuwait Zubaydullah Zubaydov discussed the aspects of joint cooperation in the judicial and legal fields and its development between the two friendly countries. The ministry said in a press statement that the two sides stressed, during the meeting, the depth of the historical relations between the two countries and the importance of working to develop and enhance them at all levels. — KUNA



Record rain offers relief as Japan battles worst wildfire in 50 years

Zionist attacks on Lebanon health sector possible war crimes: Amnesty

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WASHINGTON: US Representative Melanie Stansbury, Democrat from New Mexico, holds a sign reading "This is not normal" as US President Donald Trump arrives to address to a joint session of Congress in the House Chamber of the US Capitol in Washington, DC, on March 4, 2025. — AFP photos

Greenland rejects Trump pledge to make the island American

Trump has not ruled out military force to seize Greenland despite claiming he's a peacemaker

NUUK, Denmark: Greenland's prime minister on Wednesday hit back at President Donald Trump's pledge to take the Arctic territory "one way or the other", insisting that islanders did not see their future with the United States or even Denmark. Mute Egede rejected Trump's expansionist ambitions to annex the sparsely populated but mineral-rich and strategically placed island, in a partisan address to the US Congress in Washington on Tuesday. "We don't want to be Americans, or Danes either. We are Greenlanders. The Americans and their leader must understand that," Egede wrote in a Facebook post. "We are not for sale and can't just be taken. Our future is decided by us in Greenland," he said, six days before the island's legislative elections where the longstanding question of independence tops the agenda.



The Nuuk Cathedral or Church of Our Saviour in Nuuk, Greenland, on March 4, 2025.

Trump offered only passing lines on world affairs in his speech, focusing on his domestic goals like rounding up undocumented immigrants and slashing government spending. But he repeated his aspirations to take Greenland and claimed an initial victory on retaking control of the Panama Canal.

Trump said he had a message for the "incredible people" of Greenland. "We strongly support your right to determine your own future, and if you choose, we welcome you into the United States of America," he added. But he made clear he would not give up if persuasion fails, saying: "One way or the other we're going to get it." "We will keep you safe, we will make you rich, and together, we will take Greenland to heights like you have never thought possible before."

'Won't happen'

Denmark, of which self-governing Greenland is part, also rebuffed Trump's aspirations to take the

island, with China and Russia increasingly active in the Arctic, as climate change opens up sea routes. In Copenhagen, Danish Defense Minister Troels Lund Poulsen told public broadcaster DR that US annexation of Greenland "won't happen". "The direction that Greenland wants to take will be decided by Greenlanders," he said.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen called for cool heads to prevail. "I think everyone, including us, should be cautious about having all kinds of opinions about the future" of Greenland, he told Danish television TV2. US threats to take Greenland would once have been unthinkable, with Denmark a treaty ally of the United States under NATO.

But Trump has made clear he has little patience for European allies, which he again denounced for not spending more on their militaries, with Trump instead seeing a return to an era of big powers taking what they want. He has similarly vowed to take back the Panama Canal, the crucial link between the

support and resources to a designated foreign terrorist organization resulting in death."

The Justice Department said Wednesday the operative admitted to FBI Special Agents "to helping prepare" for the attack, "including scouting a route near the airport for an attacker." "This evil ISIS-K terrorist orchestrated the brutal murder of 13 heroic Marines," Attorney General Pam Bondi said in a statement.

Sharifullah also admitted to involvement in several other attacks, the Justice Department said, including the March 2024 Moscow Crocus City Hall attack in which he said "he had shared instructions on how to use AK-style rifles and other weapons to would-be attackers." In Tuesday's speech, Trump took a swipe at his predecessor Joe Biden's oversight of the "disastrous and incompetent withdrawal from Afghanistan" and thanked Pakistan "for helping arrest this monster."

The United States withdrew its last troops from Afghanistan in August 2021, ending a chaotic evacuation of tens of thousands of Afghans who had rushed to Kabul's airport in the hope of boarding a flight out of the country. Images of crowds storming the airport, climbing atop aircraft — and some clinging to a departing US military cargo plane as it rolled down the runway — aired on news bulletins around the world. In

Atlantic and Pacific oceans that the United States handed to Panama at the end of 1999.

'Taking it back'

Trump declared triumph after Hong Kong firm CK Hutchison decided to sell its Panama ports to a US-led consortium. Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio had complained that rival China had gained too much influence over the canal and could shut it down in a conflict with the United States. "To further enhance our national security, my administration will be reclaiming the Panama Canal, and we've already started doing it," he said, as he mentioned the port deal. "We didn't give it to China. Gave it to Panama — and we're taking it back," he said.

Trump had earlier not ruled out military force to seize either the Panama Canal or Greenland. Trump has paradoxically sought to cast himself as a peacemaker. He has vowed to end the war in Ukraine and has rattled allies by suspending aid to the country, which Russia invaded three years ago.

Trump and Vice President JD Vance berated Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky when he visited the White House on Friday, calling him ungrateful. Addressing Congress, Trump read a message from Zelensky in which the Ukrainian leader sought to repair the damage and voiced a willingness to sign a deal in which the United States would take much of Ukraine's mineral wealth. "It's time to end this senseless war. If you want to end wars, you have to talk to both sides," Trump said. The Trump administration at the same time has cancelled more than 90 percent of US development assistance, traditionally a key source of US non-military influence. Trump has described aid as not in the US interest. — AFP

April 2023, the White House announced that an Islamic State official involved in plotting the attack at the airport's Abbey Gate had been killed in an operation by Afghanistan's new Taliban government.

'Leverage US concerns'

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif thanked Trump for "acknowledging and appreciating Pakistan's role and support" in counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan. "We will continue to partner closely with the United States in securing regional peace and stability," he wrote on social media platform X. Pakistan's strategic importance has waned since the US and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan, which has seen violence rebound in the border regions.

Tensions between the neighboring countries have soared, with Islamabad accusing Kabul of failing to root out militants sheltering on Afghan soil who launch attacks on Pakistan. The Taliban government denies the charges and in a statement said the arrest of the ISK operative Sharifullah "is proof" that the group's hideouts are on Pakistani soil.

ISK, which has claimed several recent attacks in Afghanistan, has staged a growing number of bloody international assaults, including killing

Russia: 4 militants affiliated with IS killed in Dagestan

MOSCOW: Russian counter-terrorism forces killed four militants affiliated with the Islamic State jihadi group who were plotting an attack in the mainly Muslim region of Dagestan, Russian security services said on Wednesday. Intelligence services have been alarmed by an upswing in militant Islamist activity and plots in Russia and Central Asia from where thousands travelled to join jihadi groups fighting in the Syrian civil war.

Islamic State-Khorasan, or ISIS-K, claimed responsibility for the 2024 Crocus City Hall attack in Moscow which left at least 145 people dead, and there have been a number of Islamic State-linked plots foiled in the Muslim regions of southern Russia and in the former Soviet republic of Central Asia. Russian security services said the militants in Dagestan had been plotting to attack a regional branch of the interior ministry. "Grenade launchers, improvised explosive devices, grenades, machine guns, a pistol and ammunition for them were found at the site of the clash and in a nearby cache," said Russia's National Anti-Terrorism Committee. "According to available evidence, the gang's activities were coordinated by members of the Islamic State, an international terrorist organization banned in Russia." — Reuters

IS militant behind Kabul attack on US troops arrested: Trump

WASHINGTON: An Islamic State operative who allegedly planned the 2021 suicide bombing outside Kabul airport during the chaotic US military withdrawal has been arrested, President Donald Trump has said. The bomber detonated a device among packed crowds as they tried to flee Afghanistan, killing 170 Afghans and 13 US troops securing the perimeter, days after the Taliban seized control of the capital.

In his first address to Congress since returning to the White House, Trump announced on Tuesday that Pakistan had assisted in the arrest of "the top terrorist responsible for that atrocity." The Justice Department named the man as Mohammad Sharifullah, also known as Jafar, and said he is expected to appear in a Virginia court on Wednesday. Sharifullah, who is a leader of the Islamic State Khorasan branch in Afghanistan and Pakistan, has been charged with "providing and conspiring to provide material



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump arrives at the House Chamber for his address to a joint session of Congress at the US Capitol in Washington, DC, on March 4, 2025. — AFP

more than 90 in an Iranian bombing last year. Michael Kugelman, South Asia Institute director at The Wilson Center, said on X that Pakistan was trying to "leverage US concerns about terror in Afghanistan and pitch a renewed security partnership." "Pakistan's help catching the Abbey Gate attack plotter should be seen in this context," he added. — AFP

International

Record rain offers relief as Japan battles worst wildfire in 50 years

Blaze raging for more than a week kills one, forces 4,000 people to evacuate



OFUNATO, Japan: Firefighters battle a wildfire in Ofunato city of Iwate Prefecture in this handout photo taken on March 4, 2025 from Japan's Fire and Disaster Management Agency. — AFP photos

OFUNATO, Japan: Japan battled its worst wildfire in half a century on Wednesday in a region hit by record-low rainfall, as wet weather gave hope for some relief. The blaze around the northern city of Ofunato has raged for more than a week, killing one person and forcing nearly 4,000 residents to evacuate their homes. It has engulfed about 2,900 hectares (7,170 acres) — around half the size of Manhattan — making it the largest wildfire since at least 1975, when 2,700 hectares burnt in Hokkaido. Columns of white smoke billowed from a mountain through the rain and snow on Wednesday, AFP reporters saw. More wet weather was forecast through Thursday. “The fire was like nothing I’ve seen before. It was towering and spreading fast,” said Mitsuo Otsubo, 85, who fled his home to stay with a relative. “It didn’t rain or snow at all this year... Thank goodness it rained today though. I can only hope it will help contain the situation,” the seaweed and scallop farmer said.

Japan endured its hottest summer on record last year as climate change pushes up temperatures worldwide. Ofunato received just 2.5 millimeters (0.1 inches) of rainfall in February — breaking the previous record low for the month of 4.4 millimeters in 1967 and well below the average of 41 millimeters.

‘Don’t know where to run’

Makeshift tents were being set up at a city hall where around 270 people were taking shelter, with bottles of water and food supplies spread out on tables. “Fires are the scariest disaster, because they spring from one place to another, so you don’t know where to run,” 69-year-old evacuee Fumiko Tanaka told AFP. “I can only hope the fires won’t reach my house.”

Tanaka and her husband, a fisherman, “feel the effect of climate change every year” as rising ocean temperatures affect what they are able to catch, she said. At least 84 buildings are believed to have been



A woman walks past tents occupied by people who were evacuated from their homes due to a wildfire at an evacuation center in Japan's city of Ofunato.

damaged, although details are still being assessed, according to the fire agency. The owner of an “onsen” hot spring inn voluntarily opened his facility for free to evacuees. “Not being able to bathe yourself on top of dealing with the chaos of life in a shelter definitely wears you down,” 60-year-old Toyoshige Shida, of Ofunato Onsen, told AFP. He said he built the inn after seeing how people suffered in the wake of a huge earthquake and tsunami in 2011 that killed at least 340 people in Ofunato alone.

Dry weather

The number of wildfires in Japan has declined since its 1970s peak. However, there were about 1,300 in 2023, concentrated in the period from February to April when the air dries out and winds pick up. Greg Mullins, formerly fire and rescue commissioner for the Australian state of New South Wales, told AFP this fire and the recent Los Angeles wildfires were “highly unusual” because they were in

winter. “In both cases the fires were preceded by hot summers, which increased evaporation and drying of vegetation, followed by large rainfall deficits that parched the landscape,” he said. “This is a common by-product of climate change,” said Mullins, a founder of the Emergency Leaders for Climate Action group. “As the planet warms further we can expect to see fires in places where they have never before been a problem.”

Around 2,000 firefighters, most deployed from other parts of Japan, including Tokyo, have been working from the air and on the ground. “The fact that teams of firefighters are being reinforced every day, and that the fire has been going on for a week, shows the extent of the dry weather and the difficulties we are facing,” Ofunato Mayor Kiyoshi Fuchigami told reporters. The topography of the mountainous coastal area, with steep slopes and narrow and winding roads, was hampering the fire-fighting operation. — AFP

Kuwait urges Arab unity on Gaza...

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III the Crown Prince urged all UN member states that have not yet recognized Palestine to do so and to support Palestine’s bid for full UN membership.

Additionally, he stressed the importance of uniting Palestinian ranks, strengthening governance in Gaza, and reinforcing Arab unity to protect regional security. Kuwait also called for increased financial and political support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and rejected any attempts to diminish its role.

His Highness reaffirmed Kuwait’s unwavering stance that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace can only be achieved through internationally agreed-upon resolutions, leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state along the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Arab leaders endorsed on Tuesday a plan to rebuild the Gaza Strip under the future administration of the Palestinian Authority, presenting an alternative to US President Donald Trump’s widely condemned proposal to take over the territory and displace its people. The prospect of the Palestinian Authority (PA) governing Gaza remains far from certain, however, with the Zionist entity having ruled out any future role for the body, and Trump having closed the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) liaison office in Washington during his first term while stepping up support for the Zionist entity.

Trump triggered global outrage by suggesting the United States “take over” the Gaza Strip and turn it into the “Riviera of the Middle East”, while forcing its Palestinian inhabitants to relocate to Egypt or Jordan. Tuesday’s Arab League summit in Cairo — a day after Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated his support for Trump’s proposal — offered an alternative with the adoption of a “comprehensive Arab plan”.

It announced the establishment of a trust fund to pay for the territory’s reconstruction and urged the international community to back it. “All these efforts are proceeding in parallel with the launch of a political track” towards Palestinian statehood, it added, an ambition that Zionist leaders have opposed. The statement welcomed “the Palestinian decision to form a Gaza administration committee under the um-

brella of the Palestinian government”. The summit also called on Palestinian representation to be unified under the PLO, an umbrella group that is the dominant political force within the Palestinian Authority — and which excludes Hamas. The PA had previously governed Gaza before losing power there in 2007 to Islamist Hamas. Hamas said it welcomed the summit’s plan and the proposed formation of a temporary committee “to oversee relief efforts, reconstruction and governance”. But it was unclear how willing Hamas would be to relinquish control of Gaza.

“The current proposal does not address the reality that Gaza is currently uninhabitable and residents cannot humanely live in a territory covered in debris and unexploded ordnance,” White House spokesman Brian Hughes said when asked whether Trump would support the Arab leaders’ plan. “President Trump stands by his vision to rebuild Gaza free from Hamas,” he said.

The Zionist entity meanwhile said the Arab leaders’ proposal failed “to address the realities” and criticized its reliance on both the PA and the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA. Palestinians, Arab states and many European governments have rejected Trump’s proposal for US control of Gaza, opposing any efforts to expel its people. Trump has recently appeared to soften his stance, saying he was “not forcing” the plan, which experts have said could violate international law.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi said the plan would ensure Palestinians “remain on their land”, but was careful not to criticize Trump. The summit’s final communique warned against “sinful attempts to displace the Palestinian people”, saying they would “usher the region into a new phase of conflicts”.

For Palestinians, any forced displacement evokes memories of the “Nakba”, or catastrophe — the mass displacement in the war that led to the Zionist entity’s creation in 1948. Sisi said Tuesday that the new management committee, composed of Palestinian technocrats, was aimed at “paving the way for the return of the Palestinian Authority to the Strip”.

Veteran Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, also addressing the summit, said a working committee had been formed to prepare for the PA resuming its role in Gaza. UN chief Antonio Guterres endorsed the initiative in Cairo to rebuild Gaza, adding the world body was prepared to “fully cooperate”.

The Zionist military offensive in Gaza has killed at least 48,405 people, mostly civilians. The war has devastated Gaza and created a dire humanitarian crisis. — Agencies

pointment of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a Messenger of Allah (SWT) was indeed a blessing and mercy from Allah (SWT) to the whole world.

A rational and intelligent love is one that involves the good and interest of the entire mankind and not a limited number of people. One can do many things to bring good to individuals or groups that spread evil among mankind. For example, if a judge releases a guilty and unremorseful criminal, he might have done something good to that person, but a great harm will have been inflicted upon the society and the ideal of justice. One should not let his affections hide the truth. If our beloved child needs an injection or operation, we should not let our love and passion for him prevent us from getting him the treatment he badly needs.

Love is universal...

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people of good will, and at the same time, combating evil, corruption, and oppression — among others. Of course, in Islam, love is universal and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not sent except as a mercy to all creatures.

Almighty Allah said in the Holy Quran: “And We did not send you (O Muhammad) except as a mercy to the worlds.” (Al-An’biya’a 21: 107) Commentary: This verse (107) can also be translated as: “We have sent you only as a blessing and mercy for the people of the world”. In both cases, it means that the ap-

‘America is back,’ Trump declares in...

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SpaceX and Tesla tycoon Musk, who stood up to salute Congress. But protests also began within minutes. One Democratic congressman, Al Green, was ejected because he refused to stop heckling Trump over healthcare programs and shaking his walking stick at the president. Other Democrats silently held up placards including “False” and “Musk steals” and “That’s a lie!” And at one moment, numerous Democrats yelled “January 6!” at Trump, referring to his supporters’ violent attack on the Capitol in 2021 after he refused to concede his election loss.

The 78-year-old president was undeterred, hailing his first six weeks and vowing to press on with his polarizing bid to reshape the US government and end the Ukraine war — whatever the cost. Trump reverted to his tried-and-tested reality TV instincts. At one point he called attention to a boy with brain cancer who — in front of Congress — was handed an official ID by the head of the Secret Service.

But in what mostly sounded like a campaign speech rather than an address to the nation, Trump made no attempt to reach out to opponents and at times mocked them. To cheers of “USA” and “Trump,

Trump, Trump”, he proclaimed that his culture war on diversity programs and transgender rights meant “our country will be woke no longer”. He claimed that he was trying to resolve an “economic catastrophe”, despite inheriting the strongest developed economy in the world from his Democratic predecessor Joe Biden.

He defended his disruptive economic moves — even as the trade war he launched against Canada, China and Mexico is prompting jitters on world markets. “We have been ripped off for decades by nearly every country on earth,” Trump said. After a torrent of warnings that tariffs will badly hurt US exporters, including politically powerful farmers, he conceded they would bring “a little disturbance”.

And after enumerating a series of murders committed by migrants, Trump got big applause when he vowed to “wage war” on Mexican drug cartels. Well before he had finished, dozens of Democrats had already walked out. Trump is pushing to extend presidential power to its limits, with the popular vote behind him and a Republican-controlled House and Senate doing his bidding.

Aided by Musk, Trump has cracked down on the federal bureaucracy, firing thousands of workers, shuttering entire agencies and decimating foreign aid. “The days of rule by unelected bureaucrats are over,” Trump said. But there are early signs in the polls that Trump’s sweeping cuts and his failure to tackle inflation are hitting his popularity. — AFP

Pro-Palestinian protest held at...

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None of the individual protesters at the event, many of whom wore masks or traditional Palestinian keffiyehs, agreed to speak with AFP journalists.

Police at the scene worked to separate the protest from a small group of pro-Zionist counter-demonstrators nearby, though the two demonstrations passed without any incident.

The protest was held at the same time as US

President Donald Trump’s administration threatened federal funding for the New York university over an antisemitism row.

The federal government on Monday said it was considering ending contracts it has with Columbia worth over \$50 million, blaming it for failing to protect its Jewish students from antisemitism amid the protests. “All Federal Funding will STOP for any College, School, or University that allows illegal protests,” Trump wrote Tuesday on his platform Truth Social. “Agitators will be imprisoned/or permanently sent back to the country from which they came. American students will be permanently expelled or, depending on ...the crime, arrested,” the post continued. — AFP

Children, soldiers among 18 killed...

Continued from Page 1

different directions and, after an intense operation lasting several hours until this morning, all attackers were eliminated,” provincial minister Pakhtoon Yar Khan told AFP, adding that four children and three women were killed.

Plumes of grey smoke rose into the air after the two explosions, with gunfire heard throughout the night. “In this intense exchange of fire, five brave soldiers, after putting up a heroic resistance, embraced martyrdom in the line of duty,” the military said in a statement on Wednesday, adding that 13 civilians were also killed. The statement said 16 “terrorists”, including four suicide bombers, were killed, while a nearby mosque and residential area were severely damaged.

Thousands of people, including security officials, attended funerals for 12 of the civilians held at a sports complex in Bannu on Wednesday afternoon. Prime

Minister Shehbaz Sharif denounced the attackers as “cowardly terrorists who target innocent civilians during the holy month of Ramadan” and said they “deserve no mercy”.

Abdullah Khan, a 46-year-old resident of Banu who runs a livestock business said it was the largest funeral ever seen in the town. Riaz Wazir, a 46-year-old shopkeeper, who also attended the funeral, said that, in addition to the loss of life, the blasts had caused substantial damage and financial loss. “Buildings that have fallen are destroyed. Those that have not fallen are dangerous because of explosions, any accident can happen,” he said.

The attack was claimed by a faction of the Hafiz Gul Bahadur armed group, which actively supported the Afghan Taliban in its war against the US-led NATO coalition between 2001 and 2021. “The force of the explosion threw me several feet away... The explosion was so intense that it caused significant damage to the neighborhood,” Nadir Ali Shah, 40, told AFP from hospital as he received treatment for head and leg wounds. “It was a scene of apocalyptic devastation.” — Agencies

International

Zionist attacks on Lebanon health sector possible war crimes: Amnesty

Zionist entity launched 67 attacks on hospitals, targeted 256 emergency vehicles, killing more than 200

BEIRUT: Amnesty International said on Wednesday that the Zionist entity's attacks on ambulances, paramedics and health facilities during its recent war with Hezbollah should be investigated as war crimes. A November 27 truce agreement largely halted more than a year of hostilities between Hezbollah and the Zionist entity, including two months of full-blown war in which the entity sent in ground troops.

During the conflict, the Zionist entity's military accused the Iran-backed group of using ambulances belonging to the Hezbollah-affiliated Islamic Health Committee for transporting fighters and weapons, accusations the group denied. According to Amnesty, "the (Zionist) military's repeated unlawful attacks during the war in Lebanon on health facilities, ambulances and health workers, which are protected under international law, must be investigated as war crimes."

It urged the Lebanese government to provide the International Criminal Court with "jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute crimes within the Rome Statute committed on Lebanese territory, and ensure victims' right to remedy". The Zionist entity's military did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment on Amnesty's report.

In December, Lebanon's then health minister Firass Abiad said that during the hostilities, there were "67 attacks on hospitals, including 40 hospitals that were

directly targeted", killing 16 people. "There were 238 attacks on emergency response organizations, with 206 dead," he said, adding that 256 emergency vehicles including fire trucks and ambulances were also "targeted".

Amnesty said it investigated four Zionist entity attacks on health facilities and vehicles in Beirut and south Lebanon from October 3 to 9 last year that killed 19 healthcare workers, wounded 11 and "damaged or destroyed multiple ambulances and two medical facilities". "Amnesty International did not find evidence that the facilities or vehicles were being used for military purposes at the time of the attacks," the statement said.

The rights group said it wrote to the the Zionist military in November with its findings but had not received a response by the time of publication. "The (Zionist entity) military has not provided sufficient justifications, or specific evidence of military targets being present at the strike locations" to account for the "repeated attacks, which weakened a fragile healthcare system and put lives at risk", Amnesty said.

According to Lebanese authorities, more than 4,000 people were killed in the hostilities. Swathes of the south and east and parts of Beirut's southern suburbs were heavily damaged in the Zionist bombardment, with reconstruction costs expected to top \$10 billion, Lebanese authorities have said. — AFP



ADAISSAH, Lebanon: People inspect their destroyed homes in this southern village on Feb 18, 2025, following the withdrawal of Zionist troops. — AFP

New Delhi vows to flatten monster garbage pile

NEW DELHI: India's capital New Delhi has vowed to clear one of its largest trash piles by next year as part of a plan to eradicate unsightly landfills dotting the megacity's skyline. Around 32 million people live in greater Delhi, where a slipshod approach to waste management has left numerous landfills with garbage piled up to 60 meters (200 feet) high and visible from miles away. Regular spot fires during the capital's long and intense summer see the trash mounds turn into toxic conflagrations spilling dangerous chemical fumes into nearby neighborhoods.

Delhi environment minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa told reporters Tuesday that work was underway to process and dispose of waste at one of the city's biggest trash piles. By the end of the year, waste at the Bhalswa dump on the city's northern outskirts "will be reduced to a point where it will no longer be visible" from a distance, he said. "Our ultimate aim is to ensure that no new garbage mountains are formed," he added.

Local neighborhoods around the Bhalswa landfill are home to thousands of Delhi's poorest residents who have migrated from grinding rural poverty in search of work. Sirsa said the Bhalswa site would be cleared by March next year with similar remediation work to follow at Delhi's other two main garbage dumps.

According to last reported estimates from 2023, Delhi generates more than 11,000 tons of solid waste each day, according to official estimates in 2023. More than four million tons of waste sit at the Bhalswa dump according to official estimates. Un-



NEW DELHI: A residential area is seen near the Bhalswa landfill in New Delhi on March 5, 2025. — AFP

treated domestic waste burns in the landfills during the hot summer months, producing excess methane which further pollutes India's already smog-choked urban centers. — AFP

War and peace in Ukraine

By Mykola Dzhydzhora
Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy of Ukraine in the State of Kuwait

Ukraine, more than any other country, aspires for the war to end and for peace to prevail. However, in order for a just and lasting peace to be achieved, it would be vital for Ukraine to be offered guarantees that the war will not be rekindled again in a few years time. Since 2014, when Russia occupied Crimea, Luhansk, and Donetsk, Ukraine has engaged in over 200 rounds of negotiations with Russia and reached approximately 20 ceasefire agreements. Despite these efforts, which aimed to bring about peace, Russia launched on February 24, 2022, a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

There have been a number of resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2022 and supported by a majority of states including Kuwait, which makes it undoubtedly clear that Russia violated the UN Charter and international law by invading Ukraine. Ukraine's neutrality, enshrined in its national law since 2010, and the presence of the Russian military base in Crimea, did not protect it from the Russian full-scale invasion. Furthermore, Ukraine relinquished its nuclear weapons to Russia in exchange for guarantees of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. These assurances were provided by Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, as per the Budapest Memorandum signed on December 5, 1994. Despite being one of the signatories, Russia violated it by occupying Ukrainian territories rich in natural resources.

We view the United States as an essential partner whose support has been, and continues to be, critical for our struggle to defend the people of Ukraine. However, to secure a lasting peace, we need the unwavering support of our partners, along with strong security guarantees. This is the primary message that the President of Ukraine conveyed during his recent visit to Washington. We are grateful to the USA, United Kingdom, France, and many other countries, which have stood with Ukraine and helped the Ukrainian people, both in defending our rights and in providing humanitarian support.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the friendly State of Kuwait for the support we received at the United Nations after the Russian full-scale invasion, including Kuwait's support for the key United Nations resolutions in this regard, its principled position in recognizing Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and its provision of humanitarian aid to the Ukrainian people.

Ukraine now seeks peace, but for peace to last, it should remain a strong country and with solid guarantees that such a war will never happen again, instead of a temporary ceasefire that would allow the war to restart. History has taught us that the aggressor must be stopped. As the entire civilized world came together in 1990 to defend Kuwait's sovereignty and territorial integrity for the sake of world peace and order; it is doing the same for Ukraine.



Pope's illness spreads doubt at Vatican

VATICAN CITY: St Peter's Square is bustling, but behind the Vatican's walls, activities have slowed as the Catholic Church grapples with the uncertainty caused by the absence of Pope Francis. Tourists take photos in the spring sunshine and streams of pilgrims marking the Catholic "Holy Year" head to the basilica, while journalists from around the world file reports on the 88-year-old's health.

Inside the tiny Vatican city state, however, departments running the pope's notoriously packed daily schedules lie quiet. "We are at minimum service," Corporal Eliah Cinotti, spokesman for the Swiss Guard, which handles the pope's security, told AFP. "Extraordinary services — masses, audiences, receptions of ambassadors and heads of state — are in free fall," he said, with cardinals stepping in to lead some masses, but most events cancelled. "It's a period of dormancy" that recalls "the end of COVID, when everything was running at a slow pace", he added, referring to the coronavirus pandemic.

Activity within the Roman Curia — the government of the Holy See, which oversees the Church's global activities — has not been as affected.

Though Francis's portrait hangs on the walls of the dicasteries, or ministries, the work is not directly dependent on the Argentine pope. But the severity of his condition, and his doctors' unwillingness to give a medical prognosis, make it difficult to make medium-term plans. The pontiff has not appeared in public since February 14, when he was admitted to the Gemelli hospital in Rome with breathing difficulties, which developed into double pneumonia. The window of the Apostolic Palace from which he recites the weekly Angelus prayer has remained closed for three Sundays in a row — a first since his election as head of the world's nearly 1.4 billion Catholics in 2013.

Day by day

Instead, the days are marked by two medical bulletins issued by the Vatican in a rare effort at transparency. One in the morning describes how Francis's night went, followed by a more detailed evening update. In the press room just off St Peter's Square, reporters used to tackling the subtitles of church law



ROME: A couple lays flowers in front of the statue of John Paul II outside the Gemelli University Hospital where Pope Francis is hospitalized with pneumonia, in Rome on March 05, 2025. — AFP

are fast becoming experts in medical terms instead.

The Vatican has been through periods like this before. Between May and August 1981, Pope John Paul II spent 77 days at the Gemelli after an assassination attempt. But the longer it goes on, the more Francis's hospitalization — already the longest of his papacy — weighs on morale. "There is a slowdown due to the fact that we do not know what tomorrow will bring. We live day-by-day, we do not take holidays," said a Vatican source who wished to remain anonymous. "There are times when we are very afraid, others when we say to ourselves 'he is getting back on track'. It is a rollercoaster, and it is very stressful," the source said.

Crisis mode

Francis's health woes have long fueled speculation he might one day resign and his critical illness has prompted some to prepare for the next conclave — the meeting of cardinals which votes in a new pope. But in an absolute monarchy, venturing to discuss the future while the pope is still alive is taboo. "It

would be considered inappropriate," an anonymous official from the Secretariat of State said. "The truth is that no one knows anything."

Italian Vatican expert Marco Politi agreed "it is a strange situation". "This is not the time for the cardinals to meet in secret, to plan the future," he said, because it would undermine the "elegance of the great Catholic hierarchy". And yet, as the faithful pray every evening in St Peter's Square, behind the scenes preparations are inevitably being made for all possible eventualities. "We are in crisis mode," said a diplomatic source from a European embassy to the Holy See, admitting that he had "updated the files for the conclave".

Francis has sent signals that he remains in charge, receiving aids and working from his hospital suite on the days he feels well enough. But Ash Wednesday celebrations, marking the beginning of the religious season of Lent, will take place without him. And no-one knows whether he will be present at Easter, the biggest event in the Catholic calendar, in 40 days time. — AFP

South Sudan general, oil minister arrested, threatening peace deal

JUBA: South Sudan troops have arrested the oil minister and deputy head of the armed forces, both allies of Vice-President Riek Machar, as fears grew on Wednesday for the country's fragile peace agreement. South Sudan, the world's youngest country, ended a five-year civil war in 2018 with a power-sharing agreement between bitter rivals, President Salva Kiir and his deputy, Machar. But growing unrest in Upper Nile state in the country's northeast has threatened to undo their unity government, with the army accusing Machar's allies of supporting rebels in the region.

General Gabriel Duop Lam, a close ally of Machar,

was arrested on Tuesday, according to a statement from Machar's spokesman. Machar's residence in the capital Juba was also surrounded by troops of the South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF), the regular army allied to Kiir, according to the statement.

Petroleum Minister Puot Kang Chol, another Machar ally, was arrested overnight. "Puot Kang Chol, several family members, and his bodyguards were arrested at his residence in Juba. The operation was conducted by personnel identified as members of the National Security Service," his press secretary wrote in a statement on Facebook.

The civil war between Kiir and Machar began in 2013 just two years after the country gained independence from Sudan, and left some 400,000 people dead. Many steps of the peace agreement have remained unfulfilled, including writing a constitution, holding elections and unifying their armed forces — while the country remains mired in poverty despite significant oil deposits.

Machar's spokesperson Pal Mai Deng said in a state-

ment that the general's arrest on Tuesday "violates" the peace deal and called for an intervention by international partners. "This act puts the entire agreement at risk," he said. "We take this opportunity to call upon the guarantors of the Agreement and partners to intervene in order to avoid a return to full-scale violence."

The immediate trigger has been the mounting unrest in Upper Nile state. The SSPDF has accused Duop Lam and his troops of working with the so-called White Army rebels in the region, who are predominantly from the same ethnic Nuer community as the general. The UN Mission in South Sudan last month reported increased fighting between the army and "armed youth" in Nassir county in Upper Nile, involving "heavy weaponry which has, reportedly, resulted in deaths and injuries to civilians as well as armed personnel".

On Wednesday, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, a bloc of eight regional countries, expressed "deep concern" about the violence. — AFP

THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2025

Trump: Tariffs will bring 'a little disturbance' to US economy

Trade tensions flare after sweeping levies on Mexico, Canada and China



LONG BEACH: Shipping containers are stacked high at the Port of Long Beach, California on March 4, 2025, as US President Donald Trump's tariffs on Canada and Mexico take effect. — AFP

WASHINGTON: The US economy is set to experience some "disturbance" from tariffs, President Donald Trump said Tuesday, as trade tensions flare after he imposed sweeping levies on Mexico, Canada and China. Trump's address to a joint session of Congress came after he pushed forth with tariff hikes on the three countries over illegal immigration and drug trafficking.

This drew a sharp rebuke from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and retaliatory levies. China responded too with countermeasures, while Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum similarly promised pushback. "Tariffs are not just about protecting American jobs. They're about protecting the soul of our country," Trump said Tuesday.

"There'll be a little disturbance, but we're okay with that. It won't be much," he added. Earlier Tuesday, a furious Trudeau accused Trump of trying to cause the collapse of Canada's economy to make it easier for the United States to annex his country, and blasted Washington for targeting a close ally while "appeasing" Russia over Ukraine. Fears that the tariff spat is

devolving into a brutal trade war sent global markets lower, with major Wall Street indexes tumbling.

Trump's 25 percent duties on Mexican and Canadian imports affect everything from avocados to the lumber crucial for building US homes, snarling supply chains for key sectors like automobiles. Canadian energy resources face a lower rate. Multiple Canadian provinces have since banned the sale of US alcohol products, as part of a broad national retaliation.

Trump also inked an order Monday to increase a previously imposed 10 percent tariff on China to 20 percent—piling atop existing levies on various Chinese goods. Beijing condemned Washington's "unilateral imposition of tariffs," filing a complaint with the World Trade Organization and unveiling 10-15 percent levies on a range of agricultural imports from the United States.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick however said Tuesday that Trump could dial down hefty levies on Canada and Mexico this week, while maintaining pressure on China. "I think he's going to work something out with them," Lutnick told Fox

Business, adding the announcement would probably come on Wednesday.

"Somewhere in the middle will likely be the outcome, the president moving with the Canadians and Mexicans, but not all the way," he said. On Tuesday, Trump also took aim in his speech at the European Union and countries including Brazil, India and South Korea over what he called "unfair" practices.

He said reciprocal tariffs tailored to US trading partners would "kick in" on April 2. Analysts and businesses have warned that higher import costs could raise prices for consumers, and this may complicate efforts to bring down inflation—one of the issues that got Trump elected.

Mexico supplied 63 percent of US vegetable imports and nearly half of fruit and nut imports in 2023, according to the US Department of Agriculture. Brian Cornell, chief executive of US retail giant Target, said Tuesday the company could be forced to raise the cost of some fruits and vegetables over the coming days. "The short-term effect of any tar-

iff clearly is inflation," Charles van der Steene, the North America president for shipping giant Maersk, told CNBC. "It's inflationary in its essence."

Housing costs could also be hit. More than 70 percent of imports of two key building materials—softwood lumber and gypsum—come from Canada and Mexico, according to the National Association of Home Builders. Ottawa's retaliatory 25 percent tariffs on CAN\$30 billion (\$20.8 billion) of goods took effect early Tuesday. Trudeau said tariffs on an additional CAN\$125 billion of US goods will come into force in 21 days. Addressing the US president, Trudeau said that while he thinks Trump is a "smart guy," the tariffs are a "very dumb thing to do."

China said its tariffs against the United States will come into effect next week and will impact tens of billions of dollars in imports, from soybeans to chicken. Beijing also announced that imports of US lumber have been suspended, and that soybean shipments from three American exporters have been halted. China's foreign ministry vowed to fight the US trade war to the "bitter end." — AFP

Europe to protect auto sector from 'mortal danger': EU

BRUSSELS: Europe's carmakers are in "mortal danger", EU industry chief Stéphane Sejourne warned as the bloc launched a much-vaunted plan Wednesday to rescue its auto sector. The sector is the jewel in Europe's industrial crown, employing around 13 million people and contributing some seven percent to the European Union's economy.

But with factory closures in Europe and US President Donald Trump's tariffs threatening to upend the global trading system, the industry faces rising risks—and has demanded Brussels act urgently.

"This is a pivotal moment for this industry," Sejourne told AFP in an interview marking the rollout of the plan. The project includes boosting demand for electric vehicles (EV) by accelerating uptake in corporate fleets and providing more support for "Made in Europe" batteries.

"The European Commission is letting go of its naivety, protecting the sector, giving it the opportunity to become more competitive," said Sejourne, before heading to a Renault factory in northern France for the launch. The auto push forms part of the EU's pivot to bolstering the bloc's competitiveness and protecting its industry as rivals speed ahead in the United States and China. Europe has "not lost" the battle for electric cars, Sejourne insisted, as the bloc's industry faces fierce competition from Chinese EV makers.

Concerns have grown over the uptake of electric cars after their market share in the EU fell for the first time in 2024, to 13.6 percent. Brussels is considering what "obligations" to impose on companies to force them to buy more electric cars, Sejourne said. There could be quotas imposed in a text presented by the end of the year, and the EU wants member states to offer "tax incentives" to businesses to encourage sales. Company vehicles are a powerful lever because they represent nearly 60 percent of new registrations in Europe. — AFP

Trudeau slams Trump's 'dumb' tariffs

OTTAWA: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Tuesday angrily denounced Donald Trump's "dumb" tariffs and accused the US president of seeking to collapse Canada's economy in order to annex its northern neighbor. The extraordinary warning about Trump's threat to Canadian sovereignty came as the US president delivered on his vow to impose 25 percent tariffs on all Canadian goods. Canada immediately retaliated, triggering a trade war between previously close allies and threatening future commerce across a border that regularly sees billions of dollars in daily trade.

During a fiery speech in the Canadian capital, Trudeau addressed Trump directly, saying that while he thinks Trump is a "smart guy," the tariffs are a "very dumb thing to do." Trump has said the measures are necessary to force Canadian action against what he describes as the flow of undocumented im-

Trump hails 'reclaiming' of Panama Canal after BlackRock deal

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has hailed a deal led by US firm BlackRock to buy most of the \$22.8 billion ports business of Hong Kong conglomerate CK Hutchison which includes assets along the Panama Canal. The deal will give the US consortium control of key Panama Canal ports amid White House calls to remove them from what it says is Chinese ownership. The high purchase price sent CK Hutchison's stock up more than 20 percent. "My administration will be reclaiming the Panama Canal, and we've already started doing it," Trump told the US Congress.

"Just today, a large American company announced they are buying both ports around the Panama Canal and lots of other things having to do with the Panama Canal and a couple of other canals." The deal with the BlackRock-led consortium includes 90 percent of Panama Ports Company, which has operated the Balboa and Cristobal ports at each end of the canal



OTTAWA: Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks during a news conference about the US tariffs against Canada on March 4, 2025. — AFP

grants and the drug fentanyl across the border.

Trudeau has maintained that Canada is not a significant contributor to either problem in the United States, and on Tuesday called Trump's fentanyl justification "completely false." Asked about Trump's motivations for imposing tariffs, Trudeau said the US president, who has spoken often of making Canada the 51st American state, "wants to see a collapse of

for over two decades, said CK Hutchison.

In total, the consortium, which includes Terminal Investment and Global Infrastructure Partners, will control 43 ports comprising 199 berths in 23 countries, the conglomerate said. CK Hutchison's stock closed up 21.9 percent on Wednesday, outpacing a 2.8 percent rise in Hong Kong's broader Hang Seng Index. Its price is now the highest since August 1, 2023. The sale involves CK Hutchison's 80 percent stake in Hutchison Ports with an equity value of \$14.21 billion. However, the conglomerate will receive more than \$19 billion following repayment of some shareholder loans.

Goldman Sachs is advising CK Hutchison on the deal, two sources with knowledge of the deal said. Goldman Sachs declined to comment. The size of the proceeds would be similar to CK Hutchison's entire Hong Kong market value prior to Wednesday's share rally. The remainder of Hutchison Ports is owned by Singapore's PSA International.

About 12,000 ships used the Panama Canal last year that connects 1,920 ports across 170 countries. Its position is strategic for the US as more than three-quarters of vessels passing through originate in or are bound for the United States. "I would like to stress that the transaction is purely commercial in

the Canadian economy because that would make it easier to annex us."

"The United States launched a trade war against Canada," Trudeau said. "Canadians are reasonable. We are polite. We will not back down from a fight." As part of its response to the US levies, Canada will initiate dispute cases at the World Trade Organization and through the United States-Mexico-Canada (USMCA) trade agreement negotiated during Trump's first term, Trudeau said.

Canada's retaliatory tariffs will remain in place until the US levies are withdrawn, he added. "We don't want this," Trudeau said. Addressing Americans directly and warning that a trade war with Canada would lead to economic pain in the United States, Trudeau said: "Your government has chosen to do this to you." Trudeau, who has been in power since 2015, is due to be replaced as the leader of the governing Liberal Party on Sunday. He has said he will step down as prime minister when the party's new leader is chosen. Canada has tried to address Trump's concerns on migrants and fentanyl, in hopes of avoiding the tariffs that came into force on Tuesday. Canada has pushed through a costly new border security plan and named a fentanyl czar to lead the effort against the drug. — AFP



PANAMA CANAL: A cargo ship and tugboat sail through the Cocoli Locks at the Panama Canal, in Panama. — AFP

nature and wholly unrelated to recent political news reports concerning the Panama Ports," CK Hutchison co-managing director Frank Sixt in a statement. The conglomerate had been waiting for Panama Supreme Court to make a final ruling about the legal status of its government contract to operate the ports after the local attorney general determined the contract "unconstitutional." — Reuters

Business

Mind the wage gap: China's subway farmers highlight growing inequality

Despite urbanization, rural residents still make up 33% of China's population

CHONGQING, China: Elderly Chinese farmers carrying enormous baskets of vegetables squeezed into a subway station as its doors opened before dawn on Wednesday, on the outskirts of megacity Chongqing.

As the economy took center stage at a key political meeting in the capital Beijing thousands of kilometers away, the pensioners went about their daily rush into the city center to sell chives, lettuce and goose eggs for meager earnings. Despite a persistent property sector crisis, weak consumer demand and geopolitical turmoil, China's leaders announced a growth target for this year of around five percent on Wednesday.

But the incongruous image of farmers hauling their wares on foot past Chongqing's futuristic skyscrapers is a reminder that for many—especially rural residents and the elderly—making a living is still a struggle in the world's number two economy. Wu Baixing, a 71-year-old villager from the city's outskirts, told AFP she often walks for an hour to the nearest subway station in order to sell vegetables in the city center.

"I believe that God sees everything we do," Wu, a devout Christian, said of the physically strenuous task of dragging dozens of kilograms of vegetables on and off public transport. Wu's trips into the city supplement her monthly pension of under 200 yuan (\$27.53) -- a typical amount for someone classified as a rural resident, and much lower than that received by urban retirees under the country's two-tier household registration system.

But selling vegetables has been far from lucrative, she said, because "there are a lot of vegetables and a lot of farmers selling them". Braving persistent drizzle, a group of farmers began waiting at Shichuan station in northeast Chongqing more than two hours before the first train at 6.30am on Wednesday.

While many carried woven baskets on their backs or pushed them on carts, others balanced two baskets on bam-

boo yokes on their shoulders. As the sleek subway train made its way from the farmland to the city's densely populated urban core, dozens of farmers took over the carriages, their produce filling up the aisles.

Those aged 65 or over ride for free on the subway, making it an affordable alternative to hiring or owning a car. However, trips to market often involve changing between lines and can be up to two hours long. Xiong, a 69-year-old farmer, was part of a group who took three different trains on Wednesday to reach Minsheng Market in central Chongqing.

The group squeezed through station crowds as their journey stretched into rush hour, running between escalators to make connecting trains.

After arriving at their destination, they wove through traffic to reach the indoor market, where Xiong quickly laid out his harvest of Chinese lettuce. Liu Guiwen, 72, told AFP she makes only around 30 yuan a day selling produce in the city. "When I was young I didn't grow vegetables, when I was young I worked," she said. In the work report released at Wednesday's Two Sessions political meeting, China's leaders pledged to "take solid steps to advance rural reform and development" and "provide multi-tiered, categorized assistance for low-income rural residents". Urbanization has been increasing, but rural residents still made up 33 percent of China's population last year, according to the government. Liu Lu'an, 63, said he was glad his children had escaped their farming background, and now worked in factories in the city.

"Young people nowadays wouldn't want to come back to work as farmers. They have jobs with benefits," Liu said. He used to make more doing odd jobs, but "now I'm over 60, and no one wants to hire us for labor anymore". Liu and his wife lugged about 40 kilograms of vegetables to market that day. "I just do it as long as I don't owe any debts and there is food to eat," he said. "I don't want to get rich from work." — AFP



CHONGQING: Xiong (center), a 69-year-old farmer, travels on the subway train to sell vegetables in southwestern China's Chongqing on March 5, 2025. — AFP

Canada files WTO complaint against US tariffs

GENEVA: Canada has filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization against the United States over President Donald Trump's dramatic tariff increases, the WTO confirmed on Wednesday.

Late Tuesday, Canadian ambassador to the WTO Nadia Theodore wrote on LinkedIn that "the US decision leaves us with no choice". She said she had, "on behalf of the government of Canada, requested WTO consultations with the gov-

ernment of the United States in regard to its unjustified tariffs on Canada".

A WTO official confirmed to AFP that "Canada initiated dispute proceedings yesterday against the US at the WTO on the additional tariffs", following a similar complaint filed by Beijing over fresh US levies on Chinese goods. Shortly after Trump returned to office on January 20 he announced—and then paused—blanket 25 percent tariffs on imports from major trading partners Canada and Mexico, accusing them of failing to stop illegal immigration and drug trafficking.

He pushed ahead with them Tuesday, citing a lack of progress on both fronts. And after Canada retaliated, Trump quickly threatened to hit Canada again. US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, however, said lat-

er that he thought Trump would "work something out" with Mexico and Canada.

Trump also inked an order Monday to increase a previously imposed 10 percent tariff on China to 20 percent—piling atop existing levies on various Chinese goods.

Shortly after the tariffs on Canadian goods took effect, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau attacked Washington's "dumb" trade war, and accused Trump of trying to cause the collapse of Canada's economy to make it easier for the United States to annex his country. In her message, Theodore said she had filed her country's complaint while wearing "my suit from Anishinaabe and Canadian fashion designer Lesley Hampton". And she signed off with "Elbows up"—the rallying cry of Canada's national sport hockey. — AFP

Invitation

Invitation to the 66th Ordinary General Assembly Meeting of Gulf Bank (KSCP) Shareholders

Gulf Bank K.P.S.C. is pleased to invite its esteemed shareholders to its sixty-six meeting of the Ordinary General Assembly, to be held at the Bank's Head Office located in Sharq, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Street, at 2:00 pm on Saturday, 22 March 2025, to discuss the items listed on the below agenda.

Agenda of the Ordinary Annual General Assembly Meeting No. 66 of Gulf Bank (KSCP) Shareholders:

- Presenting & ratifying the Board of Directors Report for the FY ended on 31/12/2024.
- Presenting & ratifying the Auditors Report for the FY ended on 31/12/2024.
- Presenting the violations report and penalties imposed by regulatory authorities on Gulf Bank during the FY ended on 31/12/2024.
- Discussing & approving the Financial Statements for the FY ended on 31/12/2024.
- Approving the deduction of 10% to be transferred to the Statutory Reserve in the total amount of KD 6,324,000 (Six Million, Three Hundred and Twenty-Four Thousand Kuwaiti Dinars).
- Discussing the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute dividends for the FY ended on 31/12/2024 as follows:
 - A. Cash dividends at 10% (Ten percent) i.e., 10 (Ten Fils) per share after excluding the treasury shares. The shareholders registered in the company's records as of the end of the record day, set as 10/04/2025 are entitled to these cash dividends.
 - B. 5% free bonus shares (five percent) of issued and paid-up capital, by issuing 190,125,104 new shares to be distributed as bonus shares to the shareholders registered in the company's records as of the end of the record day, set as 10/04/2025, each according to their percentage of ownership (by five shares per each 100 shares). This is based on the Board of Directors' resolution dated 14/01/2025 to increase the bank's issued and paid-up capital from KD 380,250,209,900 (Three Hundred and Eighty Million, Two Hundred Fifty Thousand, Two Hundred and Nine Kuwaiti Dinars and 900 Fils), to KD 399,262,720,300 (Three Hundred and Ninety-Nine Million, Two Hundred Sixty-Two Thousand, Seven Hundred and Twenty Kuwaiti Dinars and 300 Fils) and cover the amount of increase resulting from the issued and paid-up capital amounting to KD 19,012,510,400 (Nineteen Million and Twelve Thousand and Five Hundred and Ten Kuwaiti Dinars and 400 Fils) from the retained earnings account as of 31/12/2024, then registering the increase in the issued and paid-up capital in the commercial registry and completing the registration procedures by amending article (4) of the Memorandum of Association (MOA) and Article (5) of the Articles of Association (AOA) of the Bank, and authorizing the Board of Directors to dispose of the remaining fractional shares after distribution as well as to dispose of any fractional shares and/or fractional earnings which could have been distributed in previous financial years to the favor of the Bank.

Cash dividends to be distributed and bonus shares distribution to be included in the bank's shareholders records based on the following timetable:

Cum Date (The final trading day of a stock loaded with dues)	07/04/2025
Ex Date	08/04/2025
Record Date	10/04/2025
Distribution Date	15/04/2025

Authorizing the Board of Directors to amend these foregoing dates in case they are not confirmed at least eight working days prior to the record date.

- Discussing the authorization of the Board of Directors to distribute Semi-Annual dividends for the FY ending 31/12/2025, according to the same applicable standards in the annual dividend distributions, determining their amount and percentage, carrying out all procedures and obtaining all other necessary approvals from regulatory authorities or others, and determining the timetable for this distribution whenever it deems appropriate, provided that this distribution is based on real profits and in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles, and that it has no effect on the company's paid-up capital. Authorizing the Board of Directors to amend this timetable if not confirmed at least eight working days prior to the record date.
- Discussing the disbursement of the Board Members' remuneration (Independent and Non-Independent) of KD 240,000 (Two Hundred and Forty Thousand Kuwaiti Dinars Only) for the FY ended on 31/12/2024.
- Discussing the authorization of the Board of Directors, for a period of 18 months, to buy, sell or dispose of a maximum of 10% (ten percent) of the Bank's total shares, in accordance with the controls and terms stipulated by the relevant law, regulations, resolutions and instructions of regulators in this respect.

- Discussing the authorization of the Board of Directors to: a) issue bonds of all types (whether directly, or indirectly via a special purpose vehicle(s) established inside or outside Kuwait) in Kuwaiti Dinars or any other foreign currency as they deem appropriate, including without limitation, the issuance of perpetual bonds, in and/or outside the State of Kuwait, without exceeding the maximum limit permitted by law, or the equivalent in foreign currencies, in accordance with all applicable instructions, directives and/or regulations of the Central Bank of Kuwait, b) enter into any relevant transaction documentation related to the issuance of the bonds (including, where applicable, the granting of guarantees to support issuance of the bonds or assume any obligations thereunder), c) determine the type of those bonds to be issued, their currency, duration, nominal value, rate of interest thereon, repayment maturity, means of coverage, rules of offering and depreciation, and all terms and conditions thereof, d) obtain any and all relevant approvals from the competent regulators (whether located in or outside of Kuwait, as applicable), and e) agree to the choice of arbitration as a method of dispute resolution in any of the transaction documentation in relation to the issuance of the bonds and any other documents ancillary thereto. The Board of Directors may delegate their authority to any third party, as they deem appropriate, to implement all the above or part thereof.
- Reviewing the transactions concluded with the related parties during the FY ended on 31/12/2024 and authorize the Board of Directors to deal with related parties during the FY ending 31/12/2025, up to the date of convening the annual ordinary general assembly of the Bank's shareholders that will review the ordinary agenda for the FY ending on 31/12/2025.
- Discussing the release of the Board of Directors with respect to their financial, legal, and administrative actions during the FY ended on 31/12/2024.
- Appoint/re-appoint the auditors of the Bank for the FY ending 31/12/2025 and authorize the Board to determine their fees.
- Elect the Independent and Non-Independent Members of the Bank's new Board of Directors for three-year period.

Esteemed shareholders wishing to attend are kindly requested to contact the Shares Unit - Head Office on the following numbers: 22082246 – 99509132, to receive their invitation cards, Powers of Attorney, a copy of the Bank's financial statements for the financial year ending 31 December 2024 and the meeting's agenda during the official working hours. Based on the instructions of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the invitation cards delivered by hand will be given only to the shareholder in person or his representative by means of a written letter from the respective shareholder. In the event that the shareholder is a company, the invitation shall be delivered to the company's representative by means of an official letter signed by one of the company's authorized signatories and stamped with the company's seal.

Esteemed shareholders wishing to participate through the electronic system - as per policies and procedures manual of the eAGM Platform - are kindly requested to visit the website of Kuwait Clearing Company (www.maqasa.com) and carry out the necessary actions to subscribe to the eAGM in preparation for their participation and electronic voting on the two agendas' items.

AGM Right of Attendance Schedule

Attendees' Cum Date	Sunday 09 March 2025
Right of Attendance Date	Wednesday 12 March 2025
AGM Date	Saturday 22 March 2025

In the event where quorum for any of the ordinary general assembly meeting could not be achieved, the meeting shall be postponed for a period of one week whereby such postponed meeting is held on March 29, 2025 at the same place mentioned above at 2:00 pm and after. This Announcement shall be considered an invitation to the postponed meeting without the need for any new invitation, in accordance with Article (143) of Law No. (1) of 2016 promulgating the Companies Law.

Chairman of the Board



Business

China sets an ambitious 5% annual growth target despite US trade war

Beijing vows it will fight a trade war to the 'bitter end'

BEIJING: China set an ambitious annual growth target of around five percent on Wednesday, vowing to make domestic demand its main economic driver as an escalating trade war with the United States hit exports. Beijing also announced a rare hike in fiscal funding, allowing its budget deficit to reach four percent this year as it battles stuttering employment for young people, stubbornly low consumer demand and a persistent property sector debt crisis.

The headline growth figure announced by Premier Li Qiang at an annual Communist Party conclave was broadly in line with an AFP survey of analysts, although experts say it is ambitious considering the scale of China's economic challenges. Some 12 million new jobs will be created in Chinese cities under the plans as Beijing pushes for two percent inflation this year.

A government work report vowed to make domestic demand the "main engine and anchor" of growth, adding that Beijing should "move faster to address inadequate domestic demand, particularly insufficient consumption".

And in a rare move, Li said China would hike its fiscal deficit by one percentage point—its highest level in well over a decade—which analysts have said will give Beijing more latitude to tackle its economic slowdown. The growth target will be "tough but possible", said Dylan Loh, an assistant professor at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University.

He said low consumption was a "confidence issue", adding that "if people are, in their own calculations, worried about spending—especially on big-ticket items—it is far harder to address".

Another analyst said Beijing's policies were not yet "big enough to really significantly drive up the consumer sentiment". "We need to see a very broad-based recovery of employment, income as well as the property market before we can really see a change in consumption patterns and retail sales trend," Yue Su, Principal Economist at The Economist Intelligence Unit, told AFP.

Major Asian markets traded up on Wednesday, reversing their losses a day after US President Donald Trump imposed more blanket tariffs on Chinese



BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping applauds during the opening session of the National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing on March 5, 2025. — AFP

imports following a similar move last month.

US tariffs are expected to hit hundreds of billions of dollars in total trade between the world's two largest economies. "Internationally, changes unseen in a century are unfolding across the world at a faster pace," the government work report said. "Unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise," it warned. "Domestically, the foundation for China's sustained economic recovery and growth is not strong enough," the report said. Chinese exports reached record levels last year. Sentiments were clouded by a broadening trade war under Trump as thousands of delegates congregated in Beijing's opulent Great Hall of the People for the opening session of the National People's Congress, the second of China's "Two Sessions" political meetings this week.

Beijing announced its own measures on Tuesday in retaliation for Washington's latest tariff hike and vowed it would fight a trade war to the "bitter end". The moves will see China impose levies of up to 15 percent on a range of US agricultural products including soybeans, pork and wheat starting from early next week. Beijing's countermeasures represent a "relatively muted response" in comparison to



CHONGQING: A vendor waits for customers at the Minsheng rural supermarket in southwestern China's Chongqing on March 5, 2025. — AFP photos

Trump's all-encompassing tariffs, wrote Lynn Song, chief economist for Greater China at ING.

"The retaliation could have been a lot stronger, and with every further escalation the risks are also rising for a stronger response," he said. Analysts say authorities could announce further plans to boost the economy this week, adding to a string of aggressive support measures announced late last year.

China also disclosed on Wednesday a 7.2 percent rise in defense spending in 2025, as Beijing rapidly modernizes its armed forces in the face of regional tensions and strategic competition with the United

States. However, online comments bemoaned the spending rise as "too little".

Another wrote: "We must strengthen ourselves to achieve world peace." Geopolitical tensions between Beijing and Washington are set to intensify this year, analysts say. The status of self-governed Taiwan—claimed by China as part of its sovereign territory—is chief among the sources of friction.

The defense spending will finance Beijing's frequent dispatches of military aircraft around Taiwan, intended to put pressure on authorities in the democratic island. — AFP

News in Brief

Tesla sales fall in Germany

BERLIN: Tesla sales in Germany recorded another drop last month, official data showed Wednesday, after billionaire owner Elon Musk vocally backed the far-right AfD during the country's recent election campaign. Just 1,429 of the US group's electric vehicles were registered in Europe's biggest auto market in February, down over 76 percent year-on-year, the KBA federal transport authority said. — AFP

Tariffs to lift prices: Adidas CEO

HERZOGENAURACH, Germany: Further US tariffs on imports would cause prices to rise and consumers to buy fewer products, Adidas chief executive officer Bjorn Gulden said on Wednesday as the business navigates higher levies implemented by President Donald Trump's administration on China, Canada, and Mexico. Adidas has not estimated the potential impact of US tariffs on Vietnam, its top manufacturing country, which President Donald Trump has threatened with higher levies, Gulden said. — Reuters

PowerChina unit sues Laos utility

BEIJING: A unit of China's state-owned Power Construction Corp of China (PowerChina) has sued Laos utility Electricite du Laos (EdL) in Singapore claiming \$555 million in unpaid dues from a hydropower project, according to an arbitration filing reviewed by Reuters. The claim stems from electricity generated by the \$2.73 billion Nam Ou River Cascade Hydropower project - operated by PowerChina unit Nam Ou Power - with a capacity of 1.27 gigawatts (GW) from its seven cascades along 350 km (217 miles) of river in the Southeast Asian country. — Reuters

India curbs platinum alloy imports

MUMBAI: India moved platinum alloy imports to the restricted category from the previously free category, except for 99 percent pure platinum alloy imports, the government said in a notification on Wednesday. The decision to restrict platinum imports by the world's second largest gold consumer comes as some importers were masking gold imports as platinum to avoid higher import duties. — Reuters

Italian economy records Q4 growth

MILAN: Italy's economy grew by 0.1 percent in the fourth quarter of 2024, the national statistics office said Wednesday as it revised its previous estimate of zero growth. The improved picture was attributed to an increase in household consumption and investments. Across the whole of 2024, the Italian economy grew by 0.7 percent, the Istat statistics agency had said earlier this week. This is lower than the one percent forecast by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's government, putting pressure on Rome to alter its tax and spending plans. — AFP



Gulf Bank distributes food packages in Jahra in partnership with City Hypermarket

KUWAIT: As part of its Ramadan program "Our Traditions Always Bring Us Together," Gulf Bank has distributed food packages to underprivileged families in Al-Jahra. This initiative was made possible through a partnership with City Hypermarket.

Every year, Gulf Bank remains dedicated to organizing meaningful initiatives and activities

throughout the holy month of Ramadan, reinforcing our commitment to sustainability and community support."

The Bank praised its partnership with City Hypermarket in supporting individuals and families facing difficult circumstances. By distributing Ramadan food packages, they aim to alleviate the financial burden on families, particularly amid rising living costs. Each package contains a variety of essential food items, providing sustenance for several days.

This initiative is one of many charitable efforts Gulf Bank organizes during Ramadan, reflecting the Bank's long-standing commitment to the Kuwaiti community. For over 60 years, Gulf Bank has remained an integral part of Kuwait's economic and social development, consistently contributing to the well-being of society.

Gulf Bank continues to uphold its strong commitment to sustainability across social, economic, and environmental levels through carefully curated initiatives that positively impact both the Bank and the community. These efforts support the Bank's 2025 strategy, align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and contribute to Kuwait Vision 2035. Notably, in the days leading up to Ramadan, Gulf Bank distributed food packages to visitors at Lulu Hypermarket and Al-Shamiya Co-operative Society over two days. Additionally, the Bank participated in the "Joy Land" initiative, which provided household essentials and Eid clothing to low-income families. This initiative aimed to enhance the quality of life for underprivileged families during Ramadan by addressing their basic needs and spreading joy.

Malaysia signs deal with Arm to bolster chip ambitions

KUALA LUMPUR: British chip giant Arm Holdings signed an agreement with Malaysia on Wednesday to bolster the Southeast Asian country's efforts to produce high-end semiconductors amid the US-China tech trade war. Malaysia is a key player in the vital chips sector but has been largely focused on packaging, assembly and testing services—the lower end of the market.

The agreement will see Softbank-owned Arm provide chip designs and other technology, helping Malaysia to move into more value-added production such as wafer fabrication and integrated circuit design. The Southeast Asian nation is paying \$250 million over a decade to receive support from the British company, journalists were told at a briefing by Malaysia's economic ministry.

"Through a comprehensive partnership with Arm, we have conceived one of the most ambitious technological plans Malaysia has ever seen—to pioneer Made-by-Malaysia AI chips," Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said in remarks before witnessing the signing.

"These chips will be designed, manufactured, tested and assembled here, and sold to the rest of the world." In addition, Arm will also establish its first office in Southeast Asia in Kuala Lumpur, aiming to expand the company's reach in the region as well as Australia and New Zealand, Anwar said.

"We won't let you down. This is going to be an extremely exciting 10 years and more," said Arm chief executive Rene Haas.

Malaysian Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli said



KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim (center) and British chip giant ARM Holdings CEO Rene Haas (second right) give a thumbs up at a ceremony for the launch of a collaboration between Malaysia and ARM Holdings in Kuala Lumpur on March 5, 2025. — AFP

the collaboration would enable Malaysia and Arm "to build a complete supply chain in advanced industries such as AI (artificial intelligence) data servers, autonomous vehicles, IoT (internet of things), robotics and others." He said that around 10,000 local semiconductor engineers would be trained under the deal. Dedi Iskandar, Asia Pacific regional director at datacenterHawk, said the agreement would make Malaysia "as one of the elite countries in Asia Pacific that possess advanced AI chip design capabilities other than Taiwan, and Singapore." "Malaysia is laying the red carpet and showing the world that they are serious in this tech war," he told AFP.

Tensions between Washington and Beijing over advanced tech, especially semiconductors, in recent

years have forced many firms to look into relocating their manufacturing from China to other countries including Malaysia, Vietnam and India. "This deal creates equilibrium to the region as Taiwan is always a sore thumb between China and US tech war, and Malaysia are friends to both of them," added Dedi.

A prominent player in the industry for decades, Malaysia accounts for an estimated 13 percent of global back-end manufacturing, according to German tech firm Bosch.

Malaysia's northern island of Penang, home to a number of facilities, is often dubbed the country's Silicon Valley. And in April 2024, Anwar announced plans to build a massive semiconductor design park, an effort to move Malaysia beyond chips production. — AFP

THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2025



In this file photograph participants compete in a Scrabble championship organized by the Pakistan Scrabble Association (PSA) at the Beach Luxury hotel in Karachi.



Professional Scrabble coach Waseem Khatri competes against Pakistani prodigy Bilal Asher, world under-14 Scrabble champion.



Pakistani prodigy Bilal Asher, world under-14 Scrabble champion, competes against professional Scrabble coach Waseem Khatri.



Students compete in an inter-school Scrabble championship organized by the Pakistan Scrabble Association (PSA), at Bai Virbajji Soparivala (BVS) Parsi school in Karachi.



Student Mohammad Hamza bites his nails as he competes in an inter-school Scrabble championship.



Pakistani prodigy Bilal Asher (left), world under-14 Scrabble champion, competes against professional Scrabble coach Waseem Khatri during an event organized by the Pakistan Scrabble Association (PSA).

Pakistan's old English manners spell youth Scrabble success

"Dram", meaning a measure of whisky. "Turm", describing a cavalry unit. "Taupie", a foolish youngster. Not words in a typical teen's vocabulary, but all come easily to Pakistani prodigy Bilal Asher, world under-14 Scrabble champion. Despite a musty reputation, the word-spelling game has a cult youth following in Pakistan, a legacy of the English language imposed by Britain's empire but which the country has adapted into its own dialect since independence.

In the eccentric field of competitive Scrabble, Pakistan's youngsters reign supreme - boasting the current world champion and more past victors than any other nation since the tournament debuted in 2006. "It requires a lot of hard work and determination," said 13-year-old Asher after vanquishing a grey-bearded opponent. "You have to trust the process for a very long time, and then gradually it will show the results."

'English in taste'

Karachi, a megacity shunning off its old definition as a den of violent crime, is Pakistan's incubator for talent in Scrabble - where players spell words linked like a crossword with random lettered tiles. Schools in the southern port metropolis organize tutorials with professional Scrabble coaches and grant scholarships to top players, while parents push their kids to become virtuosos.

"They inculcate you in this game," says Asher, one of around 100 players thronging a hotel function room for a Pakistan Scrabble Association (PSA) event as most of the city dozed through a Sunday morning. Daunters (meaning intimidating people), imarets (inns for pilgrims) and trienes (chemical compounds containing three double bonds) are spelled out by ranks of seated opponents.

Some are so young their feet don't touch the ground, as they use chess clocks to time their turns. "They're so interested because the parents are interested," said 16-year-old Affan Salman, who became the world youth Scrabble champion in Sri Lanka last year. "They want their children to do productive things - Scrabble is a productive game."

English was foisted on the Indian subcontinent by Britain's colonialism and an 1835 order from London started to systematize it as the main language of education. The plan's architect, Thomas Macaulay, said the aim was to produce "a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect".

It was instrumental in creating a colonial civil service to rule for Britain according to Kaleem Raza Khan, who teaches English at Karachi's Salim Habib University. "They started teaching English because they wanted to create a class of

lonial era." PSA youth program director Tariq Pervez. "That is our main link".

'Language of learning'

The English of Pakistani officialdom remains steeped in anachronistic words. The prime minister describes militant attacks as "dastardly", state media dubs protesters "miscreants" and the military denounces its "nefarious" adversaries. Becoming fluent in the loquacious lingo of Pakistani English remains aspirational because of its association to the upper echelons. In Pakistan more than a third of children between the ages of five and

America's Great Depression by an unemployed architect - is an informal training program for success in later life. "The main language of learning is English," said Pervez.

"This game has a great pull," he added. "The demand is so big. So many kids want to play, we don't have enough resources to accommodate all of them." At the youngest level the vocabulary of the players is more rudimentary: toy, tiger, jar, oink. But professional Scrabble coach Waseem Khatri earns 250,000 rupees (\$880) a month - nearly seven times the minimum wage - coaching some 6,000



Students compete in an inter-school Scrabble championship organized by the Pakistan Scrabble Association (PSA) at Bai Virbajji Soparivala (BVS) Parsi school in Karachi.

people, Indian people, who would be in the middle of the people and the rulers," said Khan, whose wife and daughter are Scrabble devotees.

British rule ended in the bloody partition of 1947 creating India and Pakistan. Today there are upwards of 70 languages spoken in Pakistan, but English remains an official state language alongside the lingua franca Urdu, and they mingle in daily usage. Schools often still teach English with verbose colonial-era textbooks. "The adaptation of English as the main language is definitely a relation to the co-

16 are out of school - a total of nearly 26 million, according to the 2023 census.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif declared an "education emergency" last year to address the stark figures. "People are interested in Scrabble because they can get opportunities for scholarships in universities or for jobs because it provides the vocab," said Asher's sister Maana. But the 14-year-old reigning female number one in Pakistan warned: "You've got to be resilient otherwise Scrabble isn't right for you." In the Karachi hotel, Scrabble - invented in the 1930s during

students across Karachi's school system to up their game.

In Pakistani English parlance "they try to express things in a more beautiful way - in a long way to express their feelings," said 36-year-old Khatri. "We try to utilize those words also in Scrabble." But when Asher wins he is overwhelmed with joy, and those long words don't come so easily. "I cannot describe the feeling," he says. - AFP

Police, art sleuth crack case of Brueghel stolen in Poland in 1974

With the help of an art detective and some journalists, Dutch police say they have cracked the case of the mysterious disappearance of a Brueghel painting from a Polish museum 50 years ago. "Woman Carrying the Embers", also known as "Woman Moving A Bonfire", painted by Flemish-Dutch master Pieter Brueghel the Younger around 1626, vanished from the National Museum in Gdansk during communist times in 1974. Its whereabouts sparked rumors - including involvement by the Polish secret service - in a story worthy of a spy novel.

The round painting, measuring just 17 centimeters (6.6 inches), disappeared but is now under lock and key at a museum in the Dutch province of Limburg, said Richard Bronswijk of the Dutch police's arts crime unit. "We are 100 percent sure that it's the same painting that disappeared from the National Museum in Gdansk back in 1974," Bronswijk told AFP. Polish authorities

too confirmed the painting's recovery, saying "we are in constant contact with Dutch authorities, including the Dutch police, regarding the case."

'It's a match!'

Arthur Brand, a well-known Dutch art detective, said suspicions were raised when journalists from the Dutch arts magazine "Vind" spotted the painting at an exhibition last year. Billed as "not being seen for the past 40 years", the painting was loaned to the Gouda Museum from a private collection. "A magazine contributor, John Brozius, did some research and stumbled upon an article on a Polish website with an old black-and-white picture," Brand told AFP.

"The article was about a theft that took place in Gdansk in 1974 in which two artworks were stolen: 'The Crucifixion', a sketch by Anthony van Dyck, and a Brueghel the Younger painting," he said. "Although the people from 'Vind' were not sure, it looked pretty similar to the Brueghel on display in Gouda," Brand said.

The painting depicts a peasant woman holding tongs with smoldering embers in one hand and a cauldron of water in the other. It appears to refer to an old Dutch proverb: "Never believe a person who carries water in the one hand and fire in the other", or beware of duplicity. The painting's value is unknown, but Brueghel the Younger's works generally sell for millions of dollars, according to the auction house Christie's. Brand,

nicknamed the "Indiana Jones of the Art World" for his high-profile recoveries of stolen pieces, was called in for help.

With Dutch police, Brand investigated the identity of the painting, which in the meantime had been moved to a museum in Venlo, in the south of the Netherlands. Brand also scoured Interpol's database, which had an "alert" for the Brueghel painting. "I concluded that

the painting listed by Interpol and the one on display was one and the same," he told AFP. "We have checked and rechecked, including information on the back of the painting. It's a match!" added Bronswijk.

Dutch police have informed Polish authorities, who said Monday they were "taking all possible measures to return the artwork to its original collection."

Once the relevant procedures had been completed, "we will provide information for the transfer of the painting," the Polish culture ministry told AFP. Asked about the discovery of the Brueghel, Gouda Museum's arts curator Ingmar Reensing said the museum was "very surprised" when it learned about the painting's history. "But... it's great for the art world that the work has resurfaced after all these decades," he told AFP.

'Belongs in a museum'

The theft was first discovered on April 24, 1974, when a museum worker accidentally knocked the Brueghel off a wall. "Instead of the original work by the famous Flemish painter, a reproduction cut out of a magazine fell out of the frame," stolen Polish arts expert Mariusz Pilus wrote in "Arts Sherlock" in 2019.

Days later, a Polish customs officer who had reported the illegal export of artworks through the Baltic port of Gdynia, is said to have been set alight and killed, shortly before he was to be interviewed by police. Investigations into the death and the paintings' disappearance were shut down shortly after, Polish reports said. Dutch police are now investigating how the painting ended up in a private Dutch collection. Brand said he hoped the Brueghel could soon be returned to Gdansk, "to be put on display, in a museum, where it belongs." — AFP



This undated handout photo shows the painting entitled "Woman Carrying Embers", also known as "Woman Moving A Bonfire", by Flemish-Dutch master Pieter Brueghel the Younger circa 1626, shown at an exhibition at the Museum Gouda, in Gouda. - AFP



Model behavior

India's anti-cruelty robot elephants

Workers push a finished model of a robotic elephant outside a workshop in Thrissur.

It flaps its ears and squirts water from a waving trunk, but this elephant is a life-size mechanical replica rolled out to replace the endangered animals in India's Hindu temples. Made of fibreglass and rubber, and trundling on a wheeled metal frame strong enough to hold a rider, the model is one of dozens that animal rights campaigners are trumpeting as an alternative to keeping elephants in captivity in India.

a former official at the popular Chakkamparambu Bhagavathy temple in India's southern Kerala state. "We are capturing it and torturing it. It's totally unethical". Prakash was instrumental in bringing the robot elephant to the temple. It was donated by the Voice for Asian Elephants Society, which said it would aid "cruelty-free temple traditions".

'Remain with their families'

Campaigners from the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India say the more than 2,700 captive elephants in the country often face "severe physical and psychological stress". Despite being herd animals, they are often kept alone and chained up for much of the day. PETA has funded more than a dozen models since 2023, donated on the condition that temples move their elephants to approved sanctuaries. "Mechanical elephants help retain age-old traditions in a modern way," said PETA's Khushboo Gupta.

"They help ensure real elephants can remain with their families in their natural jungle habitats". Like the real thing, models are draped with a golden headdress and bedecked with flower garlands. Modelmakers say a luxury version — complete with electric motors powering a nodding head, rolling eyes and a life-like swishing tail — can cost more than \$5,500.

Professional model maker Prasanth Prakasan, 42, said he and three friends began making elephant models as an art project, but are pleased they are now helping protect real animals. "What we are doing is saving elephants, and we are happy about it," he said.

The team has made nearly 50 such elephants — with a production line at the workshop building several more. For those keen on an elephant at their wedding, models can be rented without the cumbersome permits required for a costly real one, he pointed out.



In this picture taken on February 24, 2025, school boys look at the trunk of a robotic elephant newly provided by the Voice for Asian Elephants Society (VFAES), outside the Chakkamparambu Bhagavathy temple in Thrissur in India's Kerala state.

Elephants are used during many Hindu temple ceremonies, paraded through packed crowds with flashing lights, thumping drums and ear-splitting music. Deadly attacks by panicked pachyderms are common. "It is a wild animal, it likes to live in jungles," said C.G. Prakash, 68,



« A worker gives final touches to a robotic elephant model.

'Exploited'

Accidents involving spooked elephants trampling crowds are common and some temples switching to models cite the safety of their worshippers. In February alone, PETA recorded inci-



Workers assemble a robotic elephant model (center), newly donated by the Voice for Asian Elephants Society (VFAES) for religious rituals at the Chakkamparambu Bhagavathy temple in Thrissur, in India's Kerala state. — AFP photos



An eye of a finished model of a robotic elephant is pictured at a workshop in Thrissur.



A worker gives final touches to a model of a robotic elephant.

dents in Kerala involving nine captive elephants losing control, with five people killed. In one, an elephant at a festival was spooked by fireworks, jabbed its companion with a tusk and triggered a stampede that killed three people and injured dozens. "Those who take care of them, many don't follow the rules", said V.K. Venkitachalam, 60, from the Heritage Animal Task Force rights group.

Animal welfare is also gaining growing attention. In November, Kerala's High Court issued guidelines for the better

treatment of captive elephants. "Their use is often sought to be justified on the touchstone of tradition and religious practice," the court wrote. But "animals are being commercially exploited without any care or concern for their well-being", it said. The guidelines were later stayed by the Supreme Court saying guidelines were impractical.



Women dressed in traditional attires dance in front of adorned robotic elephants newly provided by the Voice for Asian Elephants Society (VFAES), outside the Chakkamparambu Bhagavathy temple in Thrissur.



Customers sit next to an elephant model placed inside a coffee shop in Thrissur.



A worker crafts a model of a robotic elephant at a workshop in Thrissur.



A worker gives final touches to the tusks of robotic elephants.

Lifestyle



People look at the trunk of a robotic elephant newly provided by the Voice for Asian Elephants Society (VFAES).



A worker paints a robotic elephant model at a workshop in Thrissur.

'Non-violence'

There are fewer than 50,000 Asian elephants in the wild, according to the World Wildlife Fund, the majority in India, with others in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. The species is endangered, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature. As elephant habitats shrink, conflict between humans and wild elephants has grown - 629 people were killed by elephants across India in 2023-2024, according to parliamentary figures.

Over the same period, 121 elephants were killed - the vast majority by powerful electric fences, as well as by poaching, poisoning, and being hit by trains. For animal rights activists, the model elephants are a safe solution



Workers engage in fiber moulding process of a robotic elephant at a workshop in Thrissur.

that fits with religious principles. "This initiative honors ahimsa, or non-violence, a tenet of Hinduism", PETA's Gupta told AFP. Among some worshippers, the placid models are a relief.

"When it is a live elephant, there's a fear amongst us. What if it runs amok?" 58-year-old teacher Jayasree Sivaraman Narayaneeya said. "Since it's a robotic elephant, we feel much safer." — AFP



An adorned robotic elephant is placed inside the Chakkamparambu Bhagavathy temple.



Workers engage in fiber moulding process of a robotic elephant at a workshop in Thrissur.



A worker paints a robotic elephant model at a workshop in Thrissur.



Moulded impressions of eyes designed for robotic elephants are kept at a workshop in Thrissur.

Rare Banksy painting sells for \$5.5 million at London sale

A rare painting by street artist Banksy which reimagines Jack Vettriano's famous "The Singing Butler" sold for nearly 4.3 million pounds (\$5.5 million) at an auction in London, Sotheby's said on Tuesday. The sale of Banksy's "Crude Oil (Vettriano)" comes a day after the death of Scottish painter Vettriano, 73, was announced. Vettriano's "Singing Butler" depicts a couple in



A woman visits a gallery where an exhibition of the famous elusive artist Banksy is displayed in Belgrade on February 26, 2025. — AFP

evening dress dancing on a windswept beach accompanied by a butler and a maid holding umbrellas. It set a Scottish record when it was sold at auction in 2004 for £744,800.

It became the UK's best-selling print reproduction, outselling Monet and Van Gogh and inspiring Banksy to subvert its romantic narrative for his own painting. In "Crude Oil (Vettriano)", which is sometimes called "Toxic beach," Banksy reworks the scene to add a sinking oil liner and two men in hazmat suits wheeling a barrel of toxic waste onto the beach. The painting was sold at Sotheby's by US musician and re-

cord producer Mark Hoppus, co-founder of pop-punk band Blink-182.

"Banksy used his trademark humour and irony to produce an image that tackles pressing issues of the 21st century - such as the environment, pollution and the capitalist landscape," Sotheby's said ahead of the auction. The work felt "more relevant today than ever before given the increasing frequency of natural disasters", it added. The painting was first exhibited in Banksy's landmark 2005 exhibition "Crude Oils: A Gallery of Re-mixed Masterpieces, Vandalism and Vermin".

'Laughter and tears'

Hoppus said his family had loved the Banksy painting ever since they bought it. "It's seen laughter and tears and parties and arguments. Our son has grown up in front of it," he said. But he wanted now to use some of the proceeds from the sale to "buy works from younger, upcoming artists". The sale coincided with tributes to the self-taught Vettriano, whose famous fans included Hollywood actor Jack Nicholson. Vettriano's body was discovered at his flat in Nice, southern France, at the weekend, his publicist said.

Scotland's First Minister John Swinney said he had overcome humble beginnings to become a household name and produce "iconic" paintings that had "graced the walls of homes and galleries around the world". Brought up in poverty in an industrial seaside town in eastern Scotland, Vettriano left school at 15 to become a trainee mining engineer.

He took up art after a girlfriend gave him a box of watercolors for his 21st birthday. But despite commercial success, Vettriano failed to find favor with the art world elite. In 2015, he dismissed critics who had panned his work as "brainless" and "dim erotica", telling one interviewer they didn't like an artist "who is as popular as me because it takes away part of their authority".

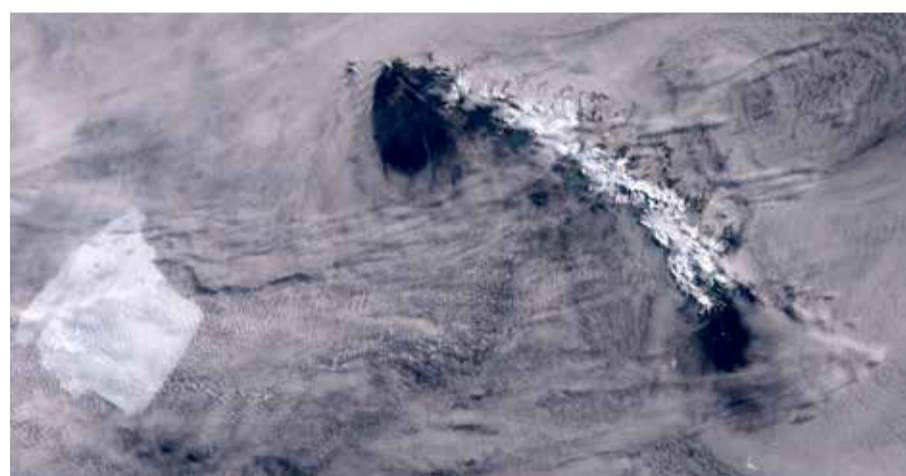
Banksy - whose identity has not been publicly revealed - is best known for his hard-hitting murals, often using a distinctive stencilling style that frequently pop up on buildings and walls. The enigmatic artist boasts an A-list client lineup and has sold his works for tens of millions of dollars at auction since the early 2000s. Hoppus will donate a portion of the proceeds to two Los Angeles medical charities and the California Fire foundation, following devastating wildfires there in January, Sotheby's said. — AFP

World's biggest iceberg runs aground, sparing wildlife haven island

The world's biggest iceberg appears to have run aground roughly 70 kilometers from a remote Antarctic island, potentially sparing the crucial wildlife haven from being hit, a research organization said Tuesday. The colossal iceberg A23a - which is more than twice the size of Greater London and weighs nearly one trillion tons - has been drifting north from Antarctica towards South Georgia island since 2020. This had raised fears it could collide with the island or run aground in shallower water near it, potentially disrupting the ability of adult penguins and seals to feed their young.

"Potentially, it could interrupt the pathway to feeding sites and force the adults to expend more energy to travel around it," the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) said. "This could reduce the amount of food coming back to pups and chicks on the island, and so increase mortality." However, the iceberg has been stuck 73 kilometers (45 miles) from the island since March 1, according to the BAS. "If the iceberg stays grounded, we don't expect it to significantly affect the local wildlife," BAS oceanographer Andrew Meijers said.

"In the last few decades, the many icebergs that end up taking this route through the Southern Ocean soon break up, disperse and melt," added



This handout satellite image released by Copernicus Sentinel Data 2025, shows A23A iceberg getting closer to the South Georgia Island in the Weddell Sea in Antarctica on February 24, 2025. — AFP photos

Meijers, who encountered A23a in late 2023 and has tracked its fate via satellite ever since. "Commercial fisheries have been disrupted in the past however, and as the berg breaks into smaller pieces, this might make fishing operations in the area both more difficult and potentially hazardous."

Researchers are keen to study how the iceberg could affect the local ecosystem. In its current location, there could even be an upside to its presence. "Nutrients stirred up by the grounding and from its melt may boost

food availability for the whole regional ecosystem, including for charismatic penguins and seals, Meijers said. The world's biggest and oldest iceberg calved from the Antarctic shelf in 1986. It remained stuck for over 30 years before finally breaking free in 2020, its lumbering journey north sometimes delayed by ocean forces that kept it spinning in place. A 19-kilometre chunk of the iceberg broke off in January. — AFP



This handout image released by EYOS Expeditions on January 19, 2024, shows an aerial view of the A23a iceberg in the waters of The Southern Ocean off Antarctica on January 14.

Sports

Virat Kohli leads India to Champions Trophy final with win over Australia

Kohli arguably the best chaser the game has seen: Smith

DUBAI: Virat Kohli produced a trademark innings with a polished 84 as India pulled off a tense chase to beat Australia by four wickets in the first semi-final of the Champions Trophy on Tuesday. Set 265 for victory, India lost the 36-year-old Kohli in the closing overs but KL Rahul's unbeaten 42 steered the team home with 11 balls to spare at the Dubai International Stadium.

They will face South Africa or New Zealand in the final on Sunday in Dubai, with India playing all their matches at the venue after they refused to tour hosts Pakistan for the eight-nation event. Lahore was the alternative venue for the final had India missed out. "This game is all about pressure, especially in big games like semis and finals," said player of the match Kohli.

"If you go deep into the innings and have wickets in hand, the opposition usually gives in and the game becomes easier. It is very important to control your impulses while the game is going on." Australia elected to bat and posted 264 all out after strong knocks from captain Steve Smith, who made 73, and Alex Carey, who hit 61.

In reply India lost two early wickets before Kohli and Shreyas Iyer, who made 45, put the chase back on track in their partnership of 91. "I take pride in doing what my team wants," added the 36-year-old Kohli. "Those things (individual records) don't matter anymore for me. It's just about stepping out and hopefully doing the job for the team."

Smith said of Kohli: "He's arguably the best chaser the game has seen. He's done it numerous times against us. He controls the tempo of the game really well, plays to his strengths and takes the game deep."

Cooper Connolly, in the team in place of the injured Matthew Short who was forced out of the tournament on Monday, trapped skipper Rohit Sharma lbw on 28 for his first ODI wicket.

Kohli and Iyer then took stock against an inexperienced Australian attack missing fast bowlers Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood to injuries and Mitchell Starc for personal reasons. But leg-spinner Adam Zampa bowled Iyer before Nathan Ellis rattled the stumps of Axar Patel for 27.

Maxwell drops Kohli

Kohli, who hit an unbeaten 100 in India's group-stage win over arch-rivals Pakistan, stood firm in another stand with Rahul. Kohli was dropped by Glenn Maxwell off Connolly on 51 but Zampa denied him another ton when he clubbed a googly to Ben Dwarshuis at long-on to leave India at 225-5 and give Australia a glimmer of hope.

But Rahul kept calm and with Hardik Pandya, who hit three sixes in his 28, put on 34 off 31 balls to ease the pressure. Ellis removed Pandya, via another catch at long-on, but Rahul hit the winning six as a largely Indian crowd roared in delight.

"I thought the bowlers did a really good job," said Smith. "They worked hard throughout, the spinners squeezed and enabled us take the game a bit deeper than potentially could have done." Earlier, Australia lost regular wickets but kept fighting back with 50-plus stands between Smith and Marnus Labuschagne, who made 29, and then the captain and Carey.

India's pace spearhead Mohammed Shami stood out with figures of 3-48 as Australia's innings lasted 49.3 overs. Spinners Varun Chakravarthy and Ravin-



DUBAI: India's Virat Kohli watches the ball after playing a shot during the ICC Champions Trophy one-day international (ODI) semi-final cricket match between Australia and India at the Dubai International Stadium in Dubai. — AFP

dra Jadeja took two wickets each. Opener Travis Head gave the team a quick start with his 39 after losing his partner Connolly for a nine-ball duck.

India calmly knocked off the runs though, gaining

a measure of revenge against Australia for their 2023 World Cup final defeat in Ahmedabad. The second semi-final between South Africa and New Zealand is on Wednesday in Lahore. — AFP

Countdown to Red Bull Flying Day 2025 begins!

KUWAIT: Red Bull Flying Day Kuwait 2025 has officially entered its next phase, as we unveil the top 40 teams whose creative and ambitious sketches have secured them a spot in the competition.

Following an extensive selection process based on creativity, feasibility, diversity, and the ability to fly, these teams will now embark on a thrilling journey — turning their imaginative designs into real flying crafts. The building phase kicked off on February 12 and runs until April 15, as teams bring their sketches to life in preparation for the ultimate test: Red Bull Flying Day on April 18 at Marina Beach!

On event day, teams will be judged on:

- Creativity — How unique and original is their fly-machine?
- Team Performance — How well do they entertain the crowd?



• Flight Distance — How far can they fly above the water?

Epic prizes await the top teams:

- 1st Place — A trip to Hangar-7 Museum & Helicopter Ride in Salzburg, Austria.

2nd Place — An exclusive Red Bull Racing Garage Tour at the Abu Dhabi GP.

3rd Place — A Skydiving experience in Al Khairan, Kuwait with a Red Bull athlete. The countdown has begun! Stay tuned as the excitement takes off!

Steve Smith retires from ODI cricket after semi-final loss

SYDNEY: Steve Smith has retired from one-day internationals following the defeat to India in the Champions Trophy semi-finals, Cricket Australia said on Wednesday.

The 35-year-old batsman, who led the team in the absence of regular skipper Pat Cummins, will continue to play Tests and T20 internationals. Smith told his team-mates of his decision to retire immediately after Australia's four-wicket defeat in Dubai on Tuesday, having top-scored with 73 in his side's 264 all out.

"It has been a great ride and I have loved every minute of it," Smith said in a Cricket Australia press release. After making his debut against the West Indies in 2010 as a leg-spinning all-rounder, Smith went on to play 170 ODIs, scoring 5,800 runs at an average of 43.28.

He smacked 12 centuries and 35 half-centuries, and was a member of Australia's 2015 and 2023 World Cup-winning teams. "There have been so many amazing times and wonderful memories," Smith said. "Winning two World Cups was a great highlight along with the many fantastic team-mates who shared the journey."

"Now is a great opportunity for people to start preparing for the 2027 World Cup so it feels like the right time to make way. "Test cricket remains a priority and I am really looking forward to the World Test Championship Final (in June), the West Indies in the winter and then England at home."

"I feel I still have a lot to contribute on that stage." Smith, who also took 28 wickets at 34.67,



Australia's captain Steve Smith

was the Australian men's ODI player of the year in 2015 and 2021. He was also in the ICC men's ODI team of the year in 2015.

"We fully understand and support Steve's decision," said Australia's chairman of selectors George Bailey. "Steve has said on many occasions he is approaching the remainder of his playing career on a series-by-series basis, a position which hasn't changed and one Cricket Australia supports."

"His record as a batter... is exemplary and to leave the format as a two-time World Cup winner cements his legacy as one of the great Australian ODI players." Todd Greenberg, Cricket Australia chief executive, stressed that Smith still had a big role to play in red-ball and T20 cricket.

"We're fortunate Steve still has much to offer in the Test and T20 arenas and I look forward to witnessing the next stage of one of cricket's great careers," he said. — AFP

Masters 1000 tournament that starts Wednesday alongside a WTA 1000 tournament.

"This tournament, every time that I come here, I enjoy so much practicing, playing. Everything for me here is so easy. "So I will try not to think about it, just flow and see how it's going to be, the tournament. But it is something that for me would be great to achieve."

Alcaraz, coming off a quarter-final defeat in the Qatar Open, is seeded second behind Germany's Alexander Zverev, who finished runner-up at the Australian Open to Italian world number one Jannik Sinner. Sinner last month accepted a belated three-month ban after testing positive a year ago for traces of banned Clostebol.

The case initially saw him exonerated when authorities accepted his explanation that the drug entered his system when a physiotherapist using it

Gavaskar backs Rohit after fat-shaming row

DUBAI: Batting great Sunil Gavaskar backed India skipper Rohit Sharma after a fat-shaming post by an Indian politician, saying cricket is about skill not "modelling". Rohit's India beat Australia in the Champions Trophy semi-final on Tuesday in Dubai but a social media comment on the Indian captain's bodyweight overshadowed the build-up.

Shama Mohamed, a spokeswoman for India's opposition Congress party, posted on X: "Rohit Sharma is fat for a sportsman! Need to lose weight! And of course the most unimpressive Captain India has ever had!" Mohamed came under fire for the post — later deleted — from media, pundits and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. "I have always said, if you want only slim guys, then you should go to a modelling competition and pick all the models. It's not about that," Gavaskar told India Today. Gavaskar spoke about how Indian batsman Sarfaraz Khan had also been "vilified" for his weight issues, but said it was performances that mattered.

"I don't think size has anything to do with it," said Gavaskar. "It's your mental strength, whether you can last the distance, that's the most important thing. Bat well, bat for long, and score runs." Rohit had previously been ridiculed for his visible "paunch" in the Indian Premier League but the 37-year-old has ignored his critics. The swashbuckling opener hit a quickfire 28 in the first semi-final as India started their chase of 265 against Australia before Virat Kohli set up victory with his 84. Both Rohit and Kohli were recently criticized for their lack of runs in Test cricket and came into the 50-over tournament with retirement rumours swirling. — AFP

to treat a wound gave him a massage. The World Anti-Doping Agency appealed, the case dragging on through Sinner's triumph at the Australian Open this year. Alcaraz said Sinner's absence doesn't change his approach "at all". "I mean, Jannik's not playing, but there are a lot of the best players in the world (that) are playing here," he said. "I think the draw is really open."

"I'm just focused on my things, on myself, and I try to play good tennis here." The Spaniard could face a formidable quarter-final test in Djokovic, who owns five Indian Wells titles overall. Serbian superstar Djokovic leads their career head-to-head 5-3, including a quarter-final triumph in four sets at the Australian Open. All 32 seeded players receive a first-round bye, and Djokovic could face a tricky second-round opener against Nick Kyrgios. The Australian, who fell to Djokovic in the 2022 Wim-

No Champions Trophy final deals one last blow to hosts Pakistan

LAHORE: Pakistan cricket fans and former players seethed Wednesday after the host country's already disappointing Champions Trophy suffered one last blow: no final. "It's totally unfair," said Moeed Ali Khan, a private car driver outside Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium to watch the second semi-final between South Africa and New Zealand.

"I am disgusted, neither our team is in the final nor is the final in Pakistan." Pakistan celebrated on February 19 when the country began staging its first major international cricket tournament in three decades. But it was all downhill after that.

The hosts lost the opening match to New Zealand and their title defence was over with a comprehensive defeat to arch-rivals India. Their dead-rubber final group match, against Bangladesh, was washed out. This Sunday's final was scheduled for Lahore, but with one big caveat: Not if India reached the title decider. By defeating Australia in the first semi-final on Tuesday, India did just that. India have played all their games, including the Australia clash, in Dubai after refusing to visit neighboring Pakistan because of political tensions.

The final will also be at Dubai International Cricket Stadium. Pakistan only agreed to the so-called hybrid model of hosting on the condition that they will also not send their team to India for upcoming ICC events. The arrangement, which saw other teams shuttle in and out of the UAE while India stayed put, underlined India's outsized influence over cricket. "We accepted this arrangement, so what is the fuss?" asked Abdul Samad, a cricket fan. "When you do not have power you have to bow down and this is the bargain Pakistan had to do. "No regrets for me. Our team and our cricket is lagging behind so we had to make a compromise."

Others in Pakistan are not so pragmatic. "No final in Pakistan after such a heavy investment on the venues is a blow," former captain Rashid Latif told AFP. "Pakistan is at the lowest level in terms of finances and team-wise as well, which is a double loss." Pakistan reportedly spent the equivalent of 16 million dollars to upgrade the three venues in Lahore, Karachi and Rawalpindi. The country will reportedly get six million dollars in hosting fees from the ICC.

But finances could be hit with the lack of interest in the 50-over tournament after the home team's early exit. Three of the matches in Pakistan were hit by bad weather and empty seats at games were noticeable. "India have improved enormously and that has been evident in this event," said Latif, reflecting on what has happened on the pitch. "But I think politics has lowered the cricket a great deal." He added: "I think had they come to Pakistan and lifted the trophy in Lahore it would have been great." Latif says the repercussions of the split hosting will last beyond the Champions Trophy. "This problem of one team not coming to another country and in future Pakistan not going to India will hit world cricket badly," he said. "It needs to be addressed quickly." — AFP

Alcaraz chases third straight Indian Wells title

INDIAN WELLS: Carlos Alcaraz will take a softly-softly approach as he vies to become just the third man to win three straight titles at Indian Wells, where he could find a member of that exclusive club, Novak Djokovic, standing in his way in the quarter-finals.

"I will try not to think about it," Alcaraz said of his bid to match the treble feat achieved by Djokovic in 2014, 2015 and 2016 and Roger Federer in 2004, '05 and '06. "I will try just to enjoy it." Alcaraz told reporters Tuesday as he prepped for the elite ATP



Carlos Alcaraz

bledon final, will open against a qualifier. Top-seeded Zverev is chasing a first Indian Wells title while third-seeded American Taylor Fritz lifted the trophy in the California desert in 2022. — AFP

Sports

Diaz earns Real Madrid lead on Atletico in CL derby clash

Our objective was to take a small advantage and we did it: Ancelotti

MADRID: Real Madrid claimed a small edge on city rivals Atletico Madrid with a tight 2-1 Champions League last-16 first leg win on Tuesday. Julian Alvarez levelled for Atletico after Rodrygo Goes sent the hosts ahead, but Brahim Diaz stroked home the winner for the record 15-time winners to delight the Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

"I think we played a complete game today, (my) goal was good and it earned us the win, but it's not over," Diaz told Movistar. "There's still the second leg and we have to give everything, like we did today."

Diego Simeone's Atletico, who lost in the 2014 and 2016 finals against their bitter rivals, kept stars Vinicius Junior and Kylian Mbappe quiet but still came up short. The Rojiblancos played it safe in the final stages, seeming to accept their one-goal disadvantage for the second leg derby clash at home next week. "For a moment we had the game under control, but we knew that it would not be an easy match, because they were at home and they have great players," said Alvarez.

"But we know there are 90 minutes to go... it's one goal, and another game, at home with our fans," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti opted for Morocco international Diaz in midfield to replace the suspended Jude Bellingham and selected Fede Valverde at right-back after he was passed fit to play. The Italian had demanded his side show a better attitude and more commitment than during their La Liga defeat by Real Betis on Saturday and his charges delivered.

"The second half was better (than the first), we worked hard, defended well, our objective was to take a small advantage and we did it," said Ancelotti. Rodrygo pounced after just four minutes, slipping inside Javi Galan to collect Valverde's teasing pass before firing home with his left foot across Jan

Oblak and inside the far post.

It was the Brazilian winger's fifth strike of the tournament, habitually shining on the European stage for Madrid, where he boasts 25 goals in 61 appearances. His compatriot Vinicius came close to netting Madrid's second as he surged into the box but Jose Gimenez blocked his shot well.

'We're alive'

Atletico began to create danger of their own and Valverde hacked away Giuliano Simeone's whipped ball from under his own crossbar under pressure from Samuel Lino. Alvarez levelled with a brilliant individual goal, dancing away from Eduardo Camavinga on the left of the box and curling his shot past Thibaut Courtois into the top corner.

The former Manchester City striker has been in sublime form in the past few weeks, notching 10 goals in 14 matches and proving why Atletico made him their second most expensive signing of all-time last summer. "They started better... I think the big plus from our team was that we didn't give up, we didn't get stage fright after conceding so early," said Simeone.

"We started to play, to get into the game, and to own the ball more, and play more in their half." Antoine Griezmann and Rodrigo De Paul helped Atletico keep control for long periods, with Madrid finding it hard to take the ball back from their rivals.

That made it all the more surprising when Diaz restored Los Blancos' lead in the 55th minute. The midfielder left Gimenez on the floor with some quick footwork and carved out the space for a tidy low finish, before leaping into the crowd to celebrate.

Griezmann fired wide and Gimenez over as Atletico looked for a response and Ancelotti brought on 39-year-old midfielder Luka Modric in search of more control. The Croatian delivered just that and



MADRID: Real Madrid's French forward #09 Kylian Mbappe (C) is challenged by Atletico Madrid's Uruguayan defender #02 Jose Gimenez (R) and Atletico Madrid's Slovenian goalkeeper #13 Jan Oblak during the UEFA Champions League Round of 16 first leg football match between Real Madrid CF and Club Atletico de Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. — AFP

neither side threatened in the final half hour of the match until stoppage time, when Madrid might have secured a third.

Mbappe's cut-back from the right was behind Vinicius who was waiting for a tap-in, and Oblak saved from Modric in the aftermath. Atletico host

Real Madrid next week at the Metropolitano stadium, with the winner facing Arsenal or PSV Eindhoven in the quarter-finals.

"We're alive (in the tie) and we have to correct the mistakes we made and go for it in the second leg," said Atletico midfielder Marcos Llorente. — AFP

Seven-goal Arsenal crush PSV in CL last-16 first leg

EINDHOVEN: Arsenal's talented teenage duo Myles Lewis-Skelly and Ethan Nwaneri combined on Tuesday to help the Gunners to an imperious 7-1 Champions League last-16 first leg advantage over a shambolic PSV Eindhoven. The Premier League side were on a different level to the struggling Dutch champions, who were condemned to their worst-ever defeat in European football. "The standard was way too high for us tonight," admitted PSV's French defender Olivier Boscagli. "They were way better in every situation... every time they got into our box, they scored."

"No chance. Outplayed. Bad," said PSV coach Peter Bosz, summing up his team's performance. Arsenal dominated from the outset. Declan Rice's powerful shot into the PSV net on 11 minutes was chalked off for a narrow offside, but it was a taste of what was to come.

Against the run of play, PSV should have taken the lead after a quarter of an hour but Ismael Saibari somehow contrived to hit the bar from close range with goalkeeper David Raya already beaten. Arsenal made the hosts pay for their profligacy two minutes later. Rice was afforded far too much space in the PSV box, allowing him to chip a cross to the far post, gratefully headed home by Arsenal's own flying Dutchman, Jurrien Timber.

The visitors doubled their lead shortly afterwards following more generous Dutch defending. Lewis-Skelly, the 18-year-old English defender, found himself in acres of space in a dangerous area, squaring to fellow teenager Nwaneri, who smashed the cross into the top corner.

PSV's shambolic defending turned to embarrassment as Arsenal made it three after just over half an hour played. The defence squandered four chances to make an easy clearance, the ball eventually falling to makeshift striker Mikel Merino, who rolled past Walter Benitez.

The shellshocked fans in the Philips Stadion received a glimmer of hope however just before half-time, PSV winning a penalty after Thomas Partey needlessly wrapped his arms around striker Luuk de Jong's head.

Netherlands international winger Noa Lang made no mistake from the spot, smashing the ball into the top corner,



EINDHOVEN: Arsenal's Ukrainian midfielder #17 Oleksandr Zinchenko (C) fights for the ball with PSV Eindhoven's Dutch midfielder #20 Guus Til during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 first leg football match between PSV Eindhoven (NED) and Arsenal FC (ENG) at the PSV Stadion, in Eindhoven. — AFP

giving Raya no chance. It was a lifeline for the Dutch champions, who went into half-time 3-1 down after a breathless first 45 minutes.

Lewis-Skelly meanwhile had been substituted, arguably fortunate to escape a second yellow card after a clumsy challenge on Richard Ledezma.

Record defeat

Any hope for the home fans was quickly snuffed out, as Arsenal scored twice in the first three minutes of the second half. Nwaneri broke impressively down the right, squaring a cross that Benitez could only palm into the path of Martin Odegaard.

By now, it was all too easy for Arsenal. With 49 minutes gone, Riccardo Calafiori eased past the left side of the PSV defence, finding Belgium forward Leandro Trossard, who

their last-16 tie on Tuesday. Two late goals, including a Marco Asensio penalty, gave Villa the victory in Belgium to puncture the hopes of the hosts who performed so well for so long. Leon Bailey's early opener for Villa at the Jan Breydelstadion was soon cancelled out by a Maxim De Cuyper leveller.

Club Brugge had been more than a match for their Premier League visitors, but Brandon Mechele's 82nd-minute own goal restored Villa's lead. Asensio, on as a substitute, then converted an 88th-minute penalty, his fifth goal in four games wrapping up the victory which puts the 1982 Euro-

pean Cup winners in a very strong position.

"Today I am happy but calm," Emery said. "We are not in the quarter-finals. There are still 90 minutes to play and we are ready in case we need extra time and a penalty shoot-out because I know how many difficulties there can be in each match."

If Emery's team complete the job at Villa Park next Wednesday, their reward will be a quarter-final against Paris Saint-Germain or Liverpool. Villa qualified directly for this stage after finishing eighth in the league phase, but they had lost 1-0 in Bruges in early November, a game from which Emery learned lessons. — AFP

Dortmund held by Lille in Champions League first leg

DORTMUND: Borussia Dortmund were held to a 1-1 home draw by Lille in their Champions League last-16 first leg on Tuesday after a second-half equalizer from visiting midfielder Hakon Haraldsson. Last season's losing finalists were in control after Karim Adeyemi opened the scoring on 22 minutes, thumping in a low shot from the edge of the box.

But Lille striker Jonathan David took advantage of some sleepy Dortmund defending in the 68th minute, threading a ball through to Haraldsson, who was one-on-one with goalkeeper Gregor Kobel and poked home. "The second half was not good at all. Too little intensity off the ball and too little ball possession," Dortmund captain Emre Can told Amazon Prime.

"It wasn't good enough today. But we can do better and we will." Dortmund will need to win in northern France next week should they wish to stay in Europe and salvage what has so far been a disappointing season. "We should have done it here in front of the fans, who were really up for it," said Adeyemi.

For Lille, the result boosts their hopes of reaching a first-ever Champions League quarter-final. "We played a good game today, especially in the second half," said Lille coach Bruno Genesio. "The 1-1 draw has put us in a very good position for the second leg. But we will have to deliver a very big game at home if we want to reach the quarter-finals."

Dortmund fall

After a surprise run to Wembley last season, Dortmund have fallen back to earth this campaign. Sitting 10th in the Bundesliga, they needed to navigate a two-legged play-off against Sporting Lisbon to reach the Champions League last 16. With pre-season appointment Nuri Sahin sacked as coach in January, Dortmund have improved under former Bayern Munich, Monaco and Croatia boss Niko Kovac.

In six games under Kovac, Dortmund had kept four clean sheets and won back-to-back games in the league for the first time this term. Lille's reward for an incredible group phase, with wins over both Madrid clubs and Feyenoord and a draw with Juventus, was a trip to Dortmund.

Bidding to make the last eight for the first time in their history, Lille handed Ethan Mbappe, brother of Real Madrid superstar Kylian, his first start in the competition. Fresh off a goal and an assist against St Pauli on Saturday, Adeyemi was again Dortmund's main man and put the hosts in front midway through the opening period. Adeyemi skimmed a low shot into the bottom corner after Can diverted a corner in his direction. — AFP

Late goals put Villa in command against Club Brugge

BRUGES: Aston Villa manager Unai Emery insisted his team still have work to do to reach the Champions League quarter-finals despite a commanding 3-1 victory away to Club Brugge in the first leg of

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134

Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
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Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465501
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

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Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
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Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
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Change of Name

I, Mohammed Sahib, holder of Indian passport no. Z3199942 having permanent address 19-2-21/11/25, Indira Nagar Tadban, Hyderabad, Telangana 500064, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Mohammed Saheb (given name).
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IN THE COURT OF THE ADDITIONAL SUBORDINATE JUDGE OF HOSUR I.A. No. 1/2019
IN O.S.No.102/2012
H. Sreenivasa Reddy, S/o. Hanumantha Reddy, Halanayakanhalli Village, Karthur Hobli, Caramelaram Post, Bangalore East Taluk, Bangalore -560 035, Karnataka State. Petitioner/Plaintiff
VS
Mr. Gopinath Sagarnath S/o.S. Gopinath, Post Box No. 3860, Safat, Kuwait-13039 ... Respondent/Proposed Party to be implemented
NOTICE
The above suit is filed for declaration of title, permanent injunction and for other reliefs and the petitioner herein filed the above I.A. No. 1/2019 to impound you as party defendant in the suit. The above petition is posted on 28.03.2025 for your appearance. If you have got any objection, you can do so either in person or through your advocate, failing which order will be passed against you in the above petition.
/BY ORDER OF COURT/
Advocate for the Petitioner/Plaintiff.
R.VENKATASWAMY, B.Sc.,LL.B.
KRISHNAGIRI 035 002
Cell: 9443237293

LeBron scores 50,000 career points in NBA history, Curry sparks Warriors

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James became the first player in NBA history to score 50,000 career points on Tuesday, extending his lead as the league's all-time record scorer by reaching a milestone tally that may never be surpassed. The Los Angeles Lakers superstar went into the game against the New Orleans Pelicans with 49,999 regular and postseason points after a 17-point performance in Sunday's win over the Los Angeles Clippers.

It did not take long for the 40-year-old NBA icon to get the solitary point needed to reach the 50,000-point barrier. James, who is in dazzling form in the 22nd season of a glittering career, gathered a pass from Luka Doncic and unfurled a sublime 25-foot three-pointer to move to 50,002 points with the Crypto.com Arena crowd roaring their acclaim.

James finished with 34 points, eight rebounds and six assists while Doncic delivered another impressive display with 30 points and 15 assists as the Lakers went on to win 136-115 -- their seventh straight victory. "I'm not going to sugar-coat it—it's a hell of a lot of points," James said afterwards when asked about his 50,000-point scoring milestone. "I'm super blessed to be able to put up that many points in my career in the best league in the world and against the best players in the world—it's pretty special."

James had passed Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's previous all-time regular-season scoring record of 38,387 points in 2023 --



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James #23 and Luka Doncic #77 of the Los Angeles Lakers high five during the game against the New Orleans Pelicans at Crypto.Com Arena in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

itself a record that had stood for 39 years. James is now nearly 6,000 points clear of Abdul-Jabbar's total career points tally of 44,149, with Karl Malone third (41,689 points) and the late Kobe Bryant fourth with 39,283 points.

Michael Jordan is fifth on the all-time scoring list with 38,279. Among active NBA players, only Kevin Durant with just over 35,000 points—roughly 15,000 points behind James—makes the top 10. Lakers legend Earvin Magic Johnson led the tributes to James' achievement.

"Congratulations to the King LeBron James for becoming the only player in NBA history to score 50,000 regular season and playoff points!" Johnson wrote on X. James' scoring milestone on Tuesday came hours after he clinched another NBA record after being named as Western Conference Player of the Month for February—making him the oldest player to win a player of the month award. James was instrumental in leading the Lakers to a 10-2 record in February, averaging 29.3 points, 10.5 rebounds and 6.9 assists. — AFP

Al-Qadsia beat Al-Nasr in Gulf Club League

DUBAI: Kuwait's Qadsia SC on Tuesday beat hosts UAE's Al-Nasr 1-0 in the first leg of the Gulf Club Champions League semi-finals At Al-Maktoum Stadium in Dubai.

Qadsia's Ismail Khafi led his team to a valuable victory by scoring the only goal of the match in the 39th minute with a powerful shot from outside the penalty area. The match witnessed strong performances from both teams

as UAE's Al-Nasr tried to equalize the score in the second half but were confronted by a strong defense and a brilliant goalkeeper from Qadsia, who managed to maintain their lead until the final whistle. With this victory, Kuwait's Qadsia SC strengthens its chances of qualifying for the final match, which will be decided in the second leg of the semi-finals next Tuesday in Kuwait. — KUNA



DUBAI: Qadsia and Al-Nasr players fight for the ball during the match. — KUNA

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