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16 Real exact revenge on City; Bayern heads past Arsenal



Curbs on overseas hiring eased

New first-time fee of KD 150 • Transfer allowed only after 3 years or by paying KD 300

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sports authority director suspended

KUWAIT: Minister of Youth Dawood Maarafi suspended the director general of the Public Authority for Sports and referred him to investigations regarding his alleged failure to follow up on his tasks pertaining to preparations for Kuwait to host the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup. "We cannot allow showing that the state has failed in hosting the tournament," Maarafi wrote in a post on X, adding that the deputy director for financial and administrative affairs has been assigned to take over the director general's post on an interim basis.

Google fires 28 anti-Zionist workers

NEW YORK: Google fired 28 employees following a disruptive sit-down protest over the tech giant's contract with the Zionist government, a Google spokesperson said Thursday. The Tuesday demonstration was organized by the group "No Tech for Apartheid", which has long opposed "Project Nimbus", Google's joint \$1.2 billion contract with Amazon to provide cloud services to the government of the Zionist entity. Video of the demonstration showed police arresting Google workers in Sunnyvale, California, in the office of Google Cloud CEO Thomas Kurian. Kurian's office was occupied for 10 hours, the advocacy group said. Workers held signs including "Googlers against Genocide", a reference to Zionist attacks on Gaza. — AFP

UNRWA warns against its dismantling

UNITED NATIONS: Dismantling the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, as sought by the Zionist entity, would accelerate Gaza's slide into famine and doom generations of children to despair, the organization's head warned Wednesday. The agency is the backbone of UN humanitarian operations in Gaza, its director Philippe Lazzarini told the UN Security Council. Referring to the Zionist entity, he said there is an "insidious campaign" underway to dismantle UNRWA and that this would have lasting consequences. Humanitarian officials are warning that famine is a very real possibility in northern Gaza as food supplies dwindle. — AFP

New term for air-transmitted pathogens

GENEVA: The World Health Organization on Thursday announced a new, catch-all terminology for pathogens that transmit through the air, erasing a distinction that caused dangerous confusion during the COVID pandemic whether the SARS-CoV-2 virus spread through droplets or through an aerosol mist. The WHO said that after more than two years of consultations, it had been agreed that all pathogen particles transmitted through the air, regardless of size, should be referred to as "infectious respiratory particles", or IRPs. The new terminology will apply not just to the COVID virus, but to other respiratory infections such as tuberculosis, influenza and measles. The WHO said it did however maintain the distinction between two types of through-the-air transmission. The first was airborne transmission or inhalation, while the second was direct deposition. — AFP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of Manpower announced on Thursday the reopening of recruitment of expat manpower from outside the country from June 1 in a move aimed at reducing the cost of labor in the domestic market and fighting trafficking in persons. The authority said the decision was taken during a meeting headed by Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and acting Interior minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, who also chairs the authority, and the decision becomes effective from June 1.

The new decision ends a previous decision that imposed restrictions on employers to recruit expat

manpower from outside the country in order to force them to look for workers from the domestic market as part of measures to rebalance the ratio of citizens and expats, who currently are at least double the size of Kuwaitis. Kuwaiti employers were allowed to recruit manpower from outside Kuwait under strict conditions and when the needed workers were not available in the country.

These restrictions have dramatically increased the cost of hiring expat laborers from the local market, which indirectly impacted prices of services in the local market, the authority said in a statement. The decision imposes a fee of KD 150 on recruitment for the first time for each worker. It also bans the transfer

of recruited expat workers to other employers before the completion of three years or paying a fee of KD 300 with the approval of their current employers.

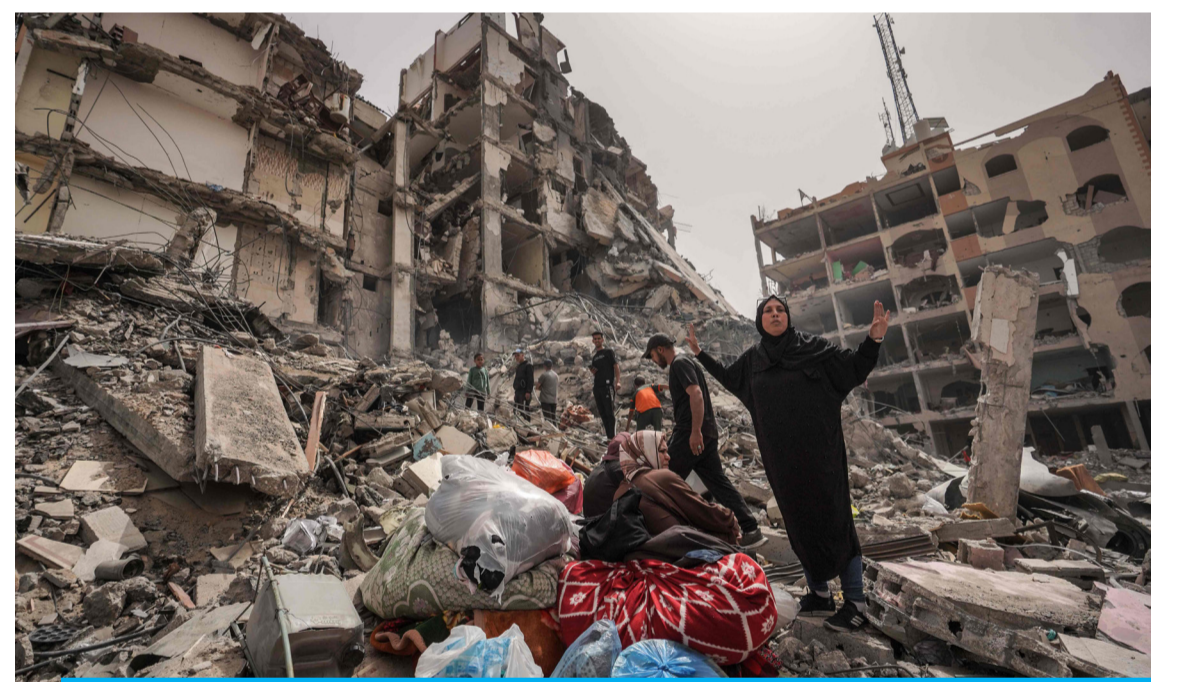
The authority also said the decision aims to fight human trafficking and to help employers carry out their activities with ease. It also aims at reducing the cost of workers in the domestic market, especially in the contracting and construction sectors. Since the arrival of this government, currently functioning in the capacity of a caretaker Cabinet, about three months ago, it has opened visit visas for expats and also resumed issuing dependent visas for families of expats working in Kuwait, but after raising the minimum salary condition.

Mideast on brink amid 'humanitarian hellscape' in Gaza

GAZA: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday painted a dark picture of the situation in the Middle East, warning that spiraling tensions over the war in Gaza and Iran's attack on the Zionist entity could devolve into a "full-scale regional conflict". Guterres also said the Zionist military offensive in the Gaza Strip had created a "humanitarian hellscape" for civilians trapped in the besieged Palestinian territory.

Meanwhile, the Zionist entity launched more deadly strikes on besieged Gaza on Thursday as Western governments unveiled sweeping sanctions against Iran's military drone program. Further stoking tensions, Iran warned on Thursday that if the Zionist entity struck Iranian atomic sites during its expected retaliation, Tehran would in turn target Zionist "nuclear facilities".

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: Palestinians inspect the damage to a building in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip on April 18, 2024. — AFP

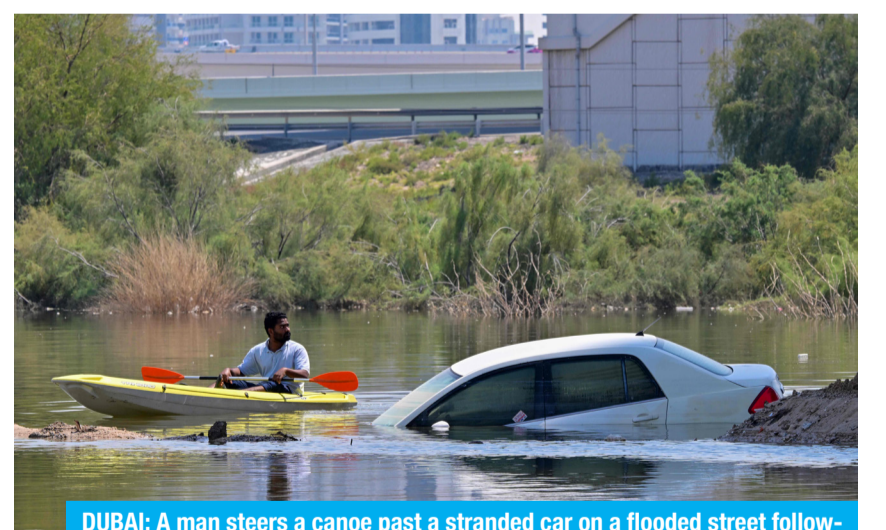
Recovery slow as flooding still plagues Dubai

DUBAI: Dubai's airport, one of the world's busiest, witnessed major disruption for the third day in a row on Thursday after the heaviest rains on record drenched the desert United Arab Emirates. Emirates, Dubai's state-owned flagship airline, and sister carrier flydubai resumed check-ins after telling passengers to stay away on Wednesday, when thousands of stranded passengers clogged the airport.

Some 1,244 flights were cancelled and 41 diverted on Tuesday and Wednesday, after torrential rains flooded the Middle East financial centre including its runways and highways. Traffic congestion remained severe on Thursday, two days after the storms, with at least one major highway completely blocked by water and multiple other junctions and routes also cut off by flooding.

Dubai airport, which carries more international passengers than any other, has witnessed chaotic scenes with thousands of marooned travellers clamouring for information about their flights. Dubai Airports warned of a "high volume" of people at Terminal 3, which serves Emirates and flydubai, and urged passengers to stay away.

Continued on Page 6



DUBAI: A man steers a canoe past a stranded car on a flooded street following heavy rains on April 18, 2024. — AFP

Tsunami threat after Indonesia volcano erupts

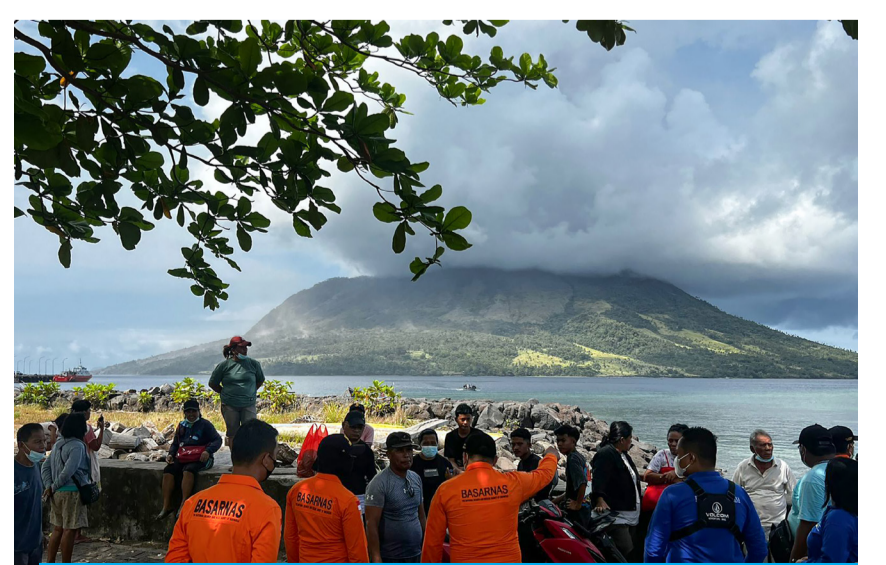
MANADO, Indonesia: Indonesian rescuers raced to evacuate thousands of people Thursday after a volcano erupted five times, forcing authorities to close a nearby airport and issue a warning that the crater collapsing into the sea could cause a tsunami. Mount Ruang's crater flamed with lava against a backdrop of lightning bolts overnight after eruptions pushed an ash column more than a mile into the sky and forced authorities to raise their alert to the highest level of a four-tiered system.

Taka, a local fisherman who only

gave one name, was at sea helping people to safety by boat when the crater unleashed a fiery orange column. "There was a mix of fire and rocks. Lava flowed in various directions," he told AFP. The volcano sits on a remote island in Indonesia's outermost region and has a peak 725 m above sea level. It was still billowing a column of smoke up to 800 m high on Thursday morning, officials said.

Houses on Tagulandang, another remote island nearby, were riddled with holes from falling volcanic rocks on Thursday, rescuers said, and residents were preparing to leave at least temporarily. "The road condition... is covered by volcanic material," rescuer Ikram Al Ulah told AFP by phone from the Tagulandang seaport. "Many people are still wandering around."

Continued on Page 6



SITARO, Indonesia: People in North Sulawesi look at the Mount Ruang volcano as it spews smoke on April 18, 2024. — AFP



KPC launches a unified e-commerce platform

First phase of 'smart purchasing' initiative

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) launched a unified electronic commerce platform for the oil sector to facilitate and develop relations between the corporation and its subsidiaries on the one hand and its partners inside and outside on the other. Speaking at a festival organized by the corporation in Ahmadi City, CEO of KPC Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah said the platform is the first phase of the "smart purchasing" initiative. He added that it is a digital transformation initiative aimed at embodying the corporation's vision to benefit from innovation and the optimal use of technology while maximizing profitability.

The corporation has worked for years to set up a technological and innovative plan, as he said, noting that the initiative established a unified system through which digitalization and import operations are provided. He elaborated that the initiative also seeks to reduce risks and ensure information and data in purchases.

The success of digital transformation projects depends on three factors: the ability to manage changes, teamwork, and excellence, Sheikh Nawaf said. He stressed that such factors ensure supporting and developing the national economy through innovation and technology in the gas and

oil industries. He lauded the action system that made this progress, mainly the supreme purchase committee, which played a great role in developing the commercial sector, and Kuwait National Petroleum Company.

Meanwhile, Kholoud Al-Mutairi, deputy CEO and head of the high guidelines committee, said work on implementing this huge project started in 2022. The project included 158 workers within 26 teams and committees, while the number of users of this system hit 7,000, she noted. The festival witnessed a short documentary on the challenges facing the team and how they overcame them. — KUNA



CEO of KPC Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah



KUWAIT: Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi meets officers and personnel at Mubarak Al-Abdullah Joint Command and Staff College. — KUNA photos



GCC chief underlines Gulf response to challenges

KUWAIT: Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Jassem Al-Budaiwi, said on Thursday that it is essential to keep pushing joint Arab action forward and harness political, economic, and military capabilities to address various challenges. Al-Budaiwi made the remark while giving a lecture at Mubarak Al-Abdullah Joint Command and Staff College in the presence of several high-ranking army officers, according to a Kuwaiti Army statement.

He reviewed the crucial role of the GCC member countries amid global changes and polarizations that have contributed to cementing and solidifying the Gulf bloc, stressing that the GCC has always been keen on serving the interests of its



countries and people and promoting its strategic partnerships in all fields. For his part, Commander of Mubarak Al-Abdullah Joint Command and Staff

College Maj. Gen. Fahad Fahiman said the GCC chief's lecture is part of the college's program for students from sister countries. — KUNA

Kuwait presents vision, vital projects for British investors: Ambassador

LONDON: Kuwait presented in a panel discussion in London on Wednesday its vision, vital projects, and the opportunities it offers to foreign investors in an effort to attract British private sector investors. In remarks to KUNA, Kuwait's Ambassador to the UK, Bader Al-Awadhi, noted that he presented, during a roundtable discussion panel hosted by the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce, a brief of Kuwait's vision and its vital projects.

The ambassador called on British companies to contribute, participate, and invest in the projects available in Kuwait, he added. He pointed to the interest of the attendees, their satisfaction with the information he presented, and their keenness to learn about the investment opportunities available in Kuwait.

For his part, the Secretary-General and CEO of the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce, Bandar Redha, praised the opening of the discussion with Ambassador Al-Awadhi in a transparent manner about clarifying the basic points of investment opportunities in Kuwait, as he referred to 26 projects for the period 2024-2025. Chief Strategy Officer at the Gulf Energy Company in Kuwait, Paul McKay, said that the discussion panel reviewed the investment opportunities available in several sectors, especially infrastructure, energy, oil and gas. — KUNA

Saudi podcasts take the lead in the region

JEDDAH: Since its launch, the podcast content industry has witnessed huge development, constant growth, and strong competition in the Arab region in the last few years, with some of the leading ones being Saudi-based podcasts. Saudi podcasts excelled in the Arab region in terms of the number of viewers and ideas presented, as well as the diversity and quality of the themes addressed. A joint study by Northwestern University and the Doha Film Institute shows that three out of ten Arab citizens, aged between 18 and 45, listen to podcasts.

Saudi Arabia ranked first in the Arab region in regards to the number of podcast listeners per population with a rate of 56 percent, followed by Oman with 14 percent, and then the UAE with six percent, as shown in the study. According to multiple interviews KUNA conducted with Saudi podcast presenters, the quality of the content provided and how much it matters to people are important factors in the popularity of the podcast.

The presenter of Socrates, Omar Al-Jeraisy, has revealed that podcasts accommodate everyone. It is a platform that helps create rich and sensational stories and hold discussions, making it popular among many viewers. He has also pointed to the Socrates podcast being distinguished among other identical Saudi programs because it hosts government leaders and officials, giving it reliability and attraction. Story-telling and conducting dialogue is an inherent part of Saudi culture, which explains the popularity of podcasts, he has pointed out, also noting that not all the Saudi podcasts are special but the ones that have become so because they address the Saudi audience.

Al-Jeraisy believes companies' entry into the sector of producing and publishing podcasts has made it easy for so many people to make a podcast without any difficulties. Editor-in-Chief of Independent Arabia Adhwan Al-Ahmari has confirmed that Saudi Arabia is considered one of the most important Arab countries with a media influence, adding that it has become home to the most famous Arabic and English podcast programs in the Middle East.

Al-Ahmari pointed out that Saudi Arabia owns the two largest media groups, MBC and the Saudi Research and Media Group (SRMG), indicating that the largest advertising share is taken from the Saudi market. He has also stated that the spread of podcasts is not surprising but has happened gradually, adding that podcasts can be watched at any time. According to the presenter of the (Jawalan) podcast, Mohammad Al-Shathri, what distinguishes podcasts in particular is the availability of a number of them in different genres — something for everyone.

He also pointed to statistics conducted by Radio Eight in 2020, showing that the number of Arabic podcasts reached 500, adding that this number had doubled since then. Al-Ahmari has reaffirmed that podcasts have contributed to raising awareness, as evidenced by the entry of government agencies into the realm nowadays because they have become an influential platform. — KUNA



Regional Office of the World Organization for Science and Technology for MILSET Asia launches the activities of the third session of the "Scientific Conference" for outstanding students at the secondary stage in Kuwait.

MILSET Asia kicks off third conference for excellent students

KUWAIT: The Regional Office of the World Organization for Science and Technology for MILSET Asia revealed the launch of the activities of the third session of the "Scientific Conference" for outstanding students at the secondary stage in Kuwait, in cooperation with the General Technical Guidance for Science at the Ministry of Education.

It included the participation of 108 male and female students, including students of special needs, in the four fields of science (chemistry, physics, biology and geology). The conference will be held on Wednesday, April 24, at Ruqayya Intermediate School for Girls in Al-Umariya area. The General Director of Science, Mona Al-Ansari said preparations for the pre-conference training workshops were completed, with seminars having been held for students over four continuous days, beginning April 15, 2024, at the headquarters of the World Organization Office.



It aims to enhance ways of communication between students and exchange views and experiences, and each day allocated a specific field of the four scientific fields included in the conference." Ansari said the seminars tackled topics, including the opportunities available to outstanding students and the obstacles facing them, the skills they need and the factors that contribute to their continuous academic success. They also explored how to develop a scientific culture among students.

Dawood Al-Ahmad, an official with MILSET Asia, said the programs provided by the organization in collaboration with the education ministry aim at "investing in outstanding students and harnessing their energy for the advancement and development of the country," he said. The two institutions work together to provide programs and activities to develop the skills and creativity for outstanding students, he added.



Local

Kuwait modernizes, enhances renewable energy efficiency

Gulf state affirms outstanding role in a zero-carbon future

ABU DHABI: Kuwait on Wednesday declared updating its renewable energy goals and enhancing strategies for energy efficiency, affirming its outstanding role in a zero-carbon future in line with continued commitments to sustainability and renewable energy. This came in a speech delivered by the Director General of the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), Dr. Mashan Al-Otaibi, who is leading Kuwait's delegation to the 14th international forum of renewable energy legislators organized by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) in Abu Dhabi, titled "Infrastructure, Policies, and Skills for Tripling Renewables and Accelerating the Energy Transition."

Al-Otaibi reviewed efforts made by Kuwait to double renewable energy production from 15 to 30 percent by 2030 to 50 percent by 2050. These goals are part of the strategy

of the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy announced by Minister Salem Al-Hajraf in March, he said, adding that the step is also in line with Kuwait's policy aiming to enhance the sustainable energy economy. Kuwait is working to carry out some policies and provide advantages to curb growing demand for energy, reducing it by 10 percent by 2030 compared to 2020, he stated.

In this context, Kuwait announced the start of the second and third phases of the Shagaya renewable energy project, which aims to add 5,000 megawatts to the national network of energy in addition to 2,500 megawatts of energy systems, he said. He reiterated that Kuwait is committed to achieving neutral carbon by 2060, as announced by Egypt's Sharm El-Sheikh COP 27. The Kuwaiti delegation includes some officials and researchers from the ministry and KISR. — KUNA



Director General of KISR Dr. Mashan Al-Otaibi attends the event.

Envoys congratulate PM



Anne Koistinen
European Union Ambassador

Ambassador Anne Koistinen extends her heartfelt congratulations to HH Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on his appointment as the Prime Minister of Kuwait. "We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on his appointment as the new Prime Minister of Kuwait. As the Ambassador of the European Union to Kuwait, I look forward to working closely with the Prime Minister to further strengthen the close ties between the State of Kuwait and the European Union."



Belinda Lewis
British Ambassador

On behalf of the United Kingdom, I would like to congratulate HH Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on his appointment as Prime Minister, and extend my sincere best wishes to him as he forms his Cabinet. This year is a landmark one in UK and Kuwait's shared history as we celebrate 125 years of partnership. I look forward to working with the new Prime Minister and his team to ensure our ties continue to grow from strength to strength.



Miguel Moro Aguilar
Spanish Ambassador

My warm congratulations to HH Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on his appointment as Prime Minister of Kuwait with my best wishes for his mandate, to the benefit of Kuwait and the Kuwaiti people, as well to the continuous progress in the bilateral relations between both friendly nations - Spain and Kuwait.



Chung Byung-Ha
South Korean Ambassador

On behalf of the government and the people of the Republic of Korea, I have the great honor to convey our sincere congratulations to HH Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on his appointment to the post of the Prime Minister. We recall, with great pride, his official visit to Korea in September 2004 while (then) serving as the Minister of Communications, Minister of Planning, and Minister of State for Administrative Developments Affairs, which greatly contributed to deepening the partnership between our two friendly countries. I am confident that HH Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah would be a great contributor to steering Kuwait's march towards the fulfillment of the Kuwaiti peoples' expectations for greater prosperity and progress. I wish the Prime Minister all the success in his future endeavors.

News in Brief

Angry workers demand salary

KUWAIT: A group of expatriate laborers stormed their workplace and assaulted the financial manager, leading to their arrest by the police. The incident involved 14 workers demanding payment of overdue salaries. The official filed a complaint at Salhiya police station, stating he had sustained injuries including bruises on his neck, a head injury and scratches.

Assailants attack man

KUWAIT: A 33-year-old man visiting a building to rent a flat was ambushed on the sixth floor by three people and the building's haris. The assailants restrained him and forcibly took his ATM card, withdrawing KD 40. The incident has been classified as forgery and armed robbery.

Cable thieves apprehended

KUWAIT: Authorities in the Surra apprehended a gang of four involved in stealing ministry of electricity cables with tools used to cut the stolen materials. Further collaboration between Surra and Rawda detectives led to the discovery of a substantial quantity of stolen goods, intended to be altered and sold as raw copper in Khaitan. Efforts are underway to locate a fifth suspect.

Weekend 'will be warm'

KUWAIT: The Meteorological Center said on Thursday that the forecast weekend weather would fluctuate between warmness and hotness amid moderate humidity and upcoming rain expected by Sunday. The center director, Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, said in remarks to KUNA that the country is under the effect of a high altitude coupled with warm and relatively wet winds, along with unsteady southeasterly blows. Heat will range between 34 and 26 degrees, and the weather at night will be moderate amid some humidity. On Friday, the forecast heat is at 35-37 degrees, and the nighttime conditions will be largely identical to those of the night before. The weather on Saturday will be hot amid unsteady winds, and the temperature will jump to 39 degrees, one degree below the high heat threshold (40 degrees). But the night brings with it lower heat, forecast at 22-24 degrees. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Winners of the competition pose for a picture with the organizers. — KUNA photos

DJI-Kuwait announces 'aerial photography competition' winners

KUWAIT: The DJI-Kuwait company announced the winners of the aerial photography competition in a ceremony held at Salwa Al-Sabah Hall in Salmiya and attended by Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information Saad Al-Azmi. This edition, held under the patronage of Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, included the participation of all Gulf Cooperation Council member states, and photos were taken only in these states to highlight their seas, lands, and skies' beauty.

The top ten photographers qualified for the competition, which involves more than 1,000 photos in three categories. In the black-and-white category, Saudi Arabia's Abdullah Al-Aydi won the excellence award, Oman's Ahmad Al-Tawqi won the first place prize, followed by the UAE's Salem Al-Awadhi and Saudi Arabia's Abdulrahman Said, respectively. In the wildlife category, Qatar's Azzam Al-Manaie has an excellence award, while Oman's Humoud bin Hamel won the first place prize, Oman's Al-Tawqi came in second, and Kuwait's Mahdi Gholoum ranked third.

In the cities section, Kuwait's Mohammad Al-Qattan had the excellence award, Qatar's Ali Said El-Din came in first, Oman's Qassem Al-Farsi won second place, and Kuwait's Mohammad Al-Sultan obtained third place. The company is



pioneering across the globe in manufacturing and developing commercial drones for aerial photography and videography. It is one of the largest competitions in the Gulf and Arab worlds in terms of the value of awards and the number of participants. — KUNA



The audience watches a drone show as part of the award ceremony.

Kuwait, Boeing launch technical complex for entrepreneurship

KUWAIT: Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and Minister of State for Communications Affairs Dawood Maarafi said that the Kuwait technical complex for entrepreneurship will build the capacity of Kuwaiti entrepreneurs in the technological and technical areas. The minister praised the partnership between the state ministry of youth affairs and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), on the one hand, and Boeing, on the other.

He made the press remarks while attending the signing ceremony of a partnership agreement between the Youth Public Authority and Boeing to launch the complex in Mubarak Al-Abdullah neighborhood on Wednesday. YPA was represented by its acting director general, Mosaed Al-Keribani, and the managing director of Boeing Kuwait, Mosaed Al-Hauli. The complex will provide Kuwaiti youth with digital systems, labs, programs, and innovative solutions that will create a suitable environment for the projects of entrepreneurs, Maarafi pointed out.

The planned specialized programs, including the Aerospace Xelerated (AX), will help transfer technology and experience to Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, he said, noting that the programs focus on fostering the skills of entrepreneurs and emerging companies. The programs also include a package of workshops to improve the technical skills of entrepreneurs. Today's agreement will be followed by another one on the building of the headquarters of the complex, which is scheduled to go operational later this year, the minister added. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Deputy PM and Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah receives Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika. The Indian ambassador thanked Kuwait's Deputy PM for the expatriate-friendly measures instituted during his tenure and apprised him of developments related to the Indian community.

Arab League praises journalists' sacrifices in ongoing Gaza war



GAZA: Palestinians gather around a huge crater following overnight Zionist bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on April 18, 2024. — AFP

CAIRO: The Arab League praised on Wednesday the journalists' great sacrifices in the ongoing Zionist occupation war against the Gaza Strip. In a statement, Assistant Secretary General and League's Head of the Media and Media Communication Sector Ambassador Ahmad Khattabi said on Arab Media Day, April 21st, that commemorating this occasion comes in an exceptional context with the continued aggression against Gaza, the catastrophic humanitarian crisis of Gaza residents, and Palestinians' persistence in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, against settlement practices and repeated incursions.

Khattabi added that the Zionist occupation's aggression caused destruction by targeting residential areas, civil, educational, and hospital facilities, as well as public facilities and places of worship, a situation that worsened with the occupation's obstruction of the entry of humanitarian aid and relief teams. He announced that the League will host, on April 22nd, a meeting of the assessing committee for the eighth session of the Media Excellence Award, which was allocated this year to Crisis, Disaster, and Risk Media.

Nearly 100 works submitted by member states and media unions to obtain this award dealt with the remnants and tragic narratives of the aggression against the Gaza Strip, noted Khattabi. Arab Media Day is commemorated on April 21st yearly, in accordance with the resolution issued by the 46th session of the Council of Arab Information Ministers, in line with the objectives of the Arab League's Charter, the terms of reference for joint Arab media work, and the implications of encouraging innovation. — KUNA

NBK complements its Ramadan calendar with engaging content on social media

Showcasing the activities, initiatives of 'Do Good Deeds in Ramadan' campaign

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK)'s social media platforms have succeeded in playing a powerful role in increasing interaction of a wide segment of the public in Kuwait with the bank's distinguished Ramadan calendar aiming to strengthen its relationship with society. The bank utilized its social media accounts to showcase its various activities and volunteering initiatives during Ramadan, as part of its annual philanthropic program, "Do Good Deeds in Ramadan", embodying its CSR commitment and dedication to deliver its deeply rooted mission of serving the society. Throughout Ramadan, NBK provided active coverage of the different events, activities and initiatives implemented through the month on all its social media platforms.

Iftar meals, dates and water

These initiatives included providing Iftar meals, dates and water, as volunteers from NBK employees made extensive field trips to distribute thousands of breakfast meals in many areas of Kuwait during Ramadan, in addition to visiting many entities to share breakfast meals with their employees. Like every year, volunteers from different NBK branches distributed dates and water before Iftar time at different areas in Kuwait, to reduce traffic accidents that may occur due to overspeeding to get to their destination by the Iftar time.

Promoting sustainability

Following its annual practice, NBK organized a campaign to promote sustainable practices in collaboration with "Omniya" initiative to collect plastic water bottles from 280 mosques in Kuwait for recycling, thus saving space in landfills. This helps reduce the negative effects of this waste on the environment and health, as the bio-



Abdulmohsen Al Rushaid

degradation of plastic is a slow, long process that may take hundreds of years.

Unique content and duaa videos

During Ramadan, NBK also generated unique content with celebrities and influencers to leverage TikTok and Instagram to reach a larger audience. The bank also shared duaa videos in a fast-paced, visually captivating manner designed by Kuwaiti photographer Faisal Al-Karam that resonated well on social media.

Competitions and prizes

During Ramadan, NBK utilized social media engagement to host competitions aimed at boosting follower participation, ultimately increasing engagement and potential customer loyalty during the holy month. The total engagement in these competitions exceeded half a million, with cash prizes ranging from KD 50 to KD 250.

Ranking first in awareness

Throughout Ramadan, NBK implemented various fraud prevention measures to keep customers' accounts and money safe, such as raising awareness about common scams and providing tips for online and offline security. NBK covered various topics in terms of fraud protection for customers, including secure online banking practices, how to detect phishing emails and scams, the importance of safeguarding personal information, and how to report any suspicious activity. The bank also provided tips on how to keep account information and financial details safe to prevent fraud and identity theft. It also hosted Q&A initiatives to test customer/non-customer knowledge on fraud related situations.

Additionally, recognizing its efforts to promote the "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness Campaign launched by Central Bank of Kuwait in KBA and local banks, NBK ranked first among all banks in Kuwait, further demonstrating its commitment to ensuring the safety and security of customers' financial transactions. Overall, NBK is committed to educating and equipping customers with the necessary tools to stay protected against potential fraud threats, especially in a busy time such as Ramadan.

Innovative interactive presentations

Commenting on the activities and initiatives covered on social media platforms during Ramadan, Abdulmohsen Al Rushaid, AGM, Head of Digital Communications at National Bank of Kuwait said, "NBK always seeks to strengthen its presence on social media during different occasions and seasons all year round by introducing innovative interactive presentations, and covering all events organized by the bank to reach the largest audience." "Our social media provide a large platform to interact with customers, including updating them with the latest offers, responding to their inquiries, and fulfilling their needs, while providing them with the latest news and developments related to the



bank and its business on a regular basis," he noted.

It is worth mentioning that by the end of 2023, NBK continued to lead the social media scene among all banks in Kuwait, whether in terms of the number of followers, interaction and engagement across all platforms. By the end of last year, the total number of followers of NBK's social media accounts exceeded 2.2 million, whereas it received 3.2 million interactions and increased the number of followers by 160,000 on all platforms including Instagram, X, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube.

Agency (QNA), and some members of the Kuwaiti public and private sectors. Member of the Media Council at the British Association of Journalists Ahmad Al-Sheikh told KUNA that the course, launched on April 14, would serve the interests of most media outlets eager to implement artificial intelligence (AI) in their news operations.

The latest developments of AI in news were discussed during the course, he affirmed, adding that AI was important in running algorithms on social media networks and digital platforms. The KUNA Center for the Development of Media Skills was established in 1995 to train media personnel and elevate their skills. — KUNA

KUNA Center concludes AI content creation course

KUWAIT: The KUNA Center for the Development of Media Skills concluded on Thursday the AI social media content creation course. The course saw the participation of KUNA employees and counterparts from the Saudi Press Agency (SPA), Qatar News



KUNA Center for the Development of Media Skills concludes the AI social media content creation course. — KUNA

Kuwait relocates consulate in the United States

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya revealed to Arabic media that the Kuwaiti consulate in New York will shut down and relocates to Houston. It's part of a plan aimed at rearranging

work to cover the largest possible geographical area of the US. The new site will provide services to Los Angeles, Houston, the permanent delegation in New York and Washington.

Yahya explained that the closure of some missions comes within the first phase of a long-term plan that prioritizes the interests of Kuwait. There will also be a second phase that includes opening new sites in the countries in which the Kuwait Fund for Development is located. These embassies can cover the fund's operations in these countries instead of sending a special diplomatic mission.



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At G7, Blinken seeks European support for pressure on China

Prince William back to public duties

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KHAN YUNIS: People walk amid the rubble of buildings destroyed during Zionist bombardment in Khan Yunis. — AFP

Gazans search for remains, memories under rubble

Zionists kill tens in Rafah strikes, 'completely obliterate' Khan Yunis

RAFAH: Birds sang and planes rumbled overhead as Abdeljabbar Al-Arja dug the remains of his dead neighbors from the rubble in Gaza. An overnight Zionist strike hit the home where a displaced Palestinian family was sheltering in the southern city Rafah, relatives and neighbors told AFP as they scraped at the soil with their hands.

Arja said the blast killed at least 10 people. "We retrieved the remains of children and women, finding arms and feet. They were all torn to pieces." "This is horrifying, it's not normal," he said, hauling concrete and broken olive branches from the wreckage. "The entire world is complicit."

Soon after the war began on October 7, the Zionist entity told Palestinians liv-

ing in the north of Gaza to move to "safe zones" in the territory's south like Rafah. But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has since vowed to invade the city, where around 1.5 million people live in shelters, more than half the territory's population.

"How is Rafah a safe place?" said Zeyad Ayyad, a relative of the victims. He sighed as he cradled a fragment of the remains. "I heard the bombing last night and then went back to sleep. I did not think it hit my aunt's house."

'Struck without any warning'

The search for remains was long and painful. The strike left a huge crater and children picked through the rubble while neighbors removed debris, tarpau-

lin, a pink top. "We can see them under the rubble and we're unable to retrieve them," Al-Arja said. "These are people who came from the north because it was said the south is safe." "They struck without any warning," he said.

In a separate strike on a house in Rafah's Al-Salam neighborhood overnight on Tuesday, rescue crews recovered the corpses of eight family members including five children and two women, Gaza's civil defense service said.

"(A Zionist) rocket hit a house of displaced people," said resident Sami Nyrab. "My sister's son-in-law, her daughter and her children were having dinner when a Zionist missile demolished their house over their heads."

Jamalat Ramadan said she woke "to the sound of girls shouting 'mama, mama, mama' and children calling each other's names." They fled the carnage stumbling over "body parts and corpses scattered all over the place," she said.

'Memories beneath the rubble'

The Zionist entity's offensive has killed at least 33,970 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, the territory's health ministry said. The United Nations and aid agencies say the entity's siege has left northern Gaza on the brink of famine, and concern is growing over the humanitarian crisis in the south, where hundreds of thousands are living in makeshift shelters. The Zionist army pulled out of south-

ern Gaza's main city Khan Yunis earlier this month and thousands of displaced Palestinians have returned to find their homes in ruins. "We lost everything — our home, our safe haven — after it was bombed and completely obliterated," said Shams Majid, 22.

Her father died shortly before the war and her family now lives in a tent in nearby Al-Mawasi. "I held onto every last remnant of his existence — his favorite belongings meticulously stored in an old cigarette box, the last money hiding in his clothes, his scent lingering in his perfumes — but now none of it remains," she said. "Our land has been razed, our home demolished by air strikes, and our memories buried beneath the rubble." — AFP



DEIR EL-BALAH: A Palestinian youth plays with a dog on the beach in Deir El-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on April 17, 2024. — AFP photos



Palestinians play volleyball on the beach.

Beach offers rare respite for weary Gazans

DEIR EL-BALAH: Hundreds of Gazans found rare respite at the beach this week from more than six months of traumatizing Zionist bombardments in the Palestinian territory. After temperatures suddenly soared, children paddled in the sea and their friends played ball games on the sand around Deir El-Balah in the center of the coastal strip — but the war was never far away. Deir El-Balah city became a focus of the Zionist war in Gaza, with Zionist bombardments leaving children dead and wounded.

"The children were happy and this was our first goal — to get them out of the destruction, killing, and the atmosphere of war, even though they hear explosions every moment and planes in the air," said

Naji Abu Waseem, displaced from Gaza City in the territory's north. "God willing, this war will end and we will return to Gaza City, even to the rubble."

Many at the beach are living in makeshift shelters nearby. They are among the 1.7 million people the United Nations says have been uprooted by Gaza's war and left struggling for food, water and other essentials. "The tent was like an oven," said Mahmud al-Khatib, 28, also displaced from Gaza's north. "The sea was the only option," where he took his wife and children. "There's no infrastructure, no life, everything is nonexistent," Khatib said on Wednesday with the arrival of summer-like temperatures. Groups of men lay in the sand looking at the waves as children played in the water. Women and girls in tunics and hijabs took photographs.

'Fear and terror'

More than 70 percent of those killed in the war are women and children, according to the health ministry in the territory. The Zionist entity's relent-

less military offensive, which it alleges is aimed at destroying Hamas, has killed at least 33,899 people in Gaza, the territory's health ministry said.

Yunis Abu Ramadan, displaced with his family from the Gaza City area, said that, "with shooting everywhere," it is impossible to forget the war. "We live in fear and terror and wish to return to our homes in Gaza," he said. Still, his wife, Umm Ramadan, said the beach was a welcome break from their cramped life in an overcrowded tent. "We're packed like sardines," she said. "We do not know comfort or calm due to the (Zionist) air strikes and the fear and anxiety of the children."

Worry persisted even at the water's edge, Ramadan added. "We saw all the people in the tents had reached the sea like us because the weather was very hot," she said. "But we were afraid that we would be bombed while we were by the sea too, as (Zionist) boats were close to the shore," Ramadan added. "We hope the war will end and we will return to our homes." — AFP

Human cases of bird flu a huge 'concern': WHO

GENEVA: The World Health Organization voiced alarm Thursday at the growing spread of H5N1 bird flu to new species, including humans, who face an "extraordinarily high" mortality rate. "This remains I think an enormous concern," the UN health agency's chief scientist Jeremy Farrar told reporters in Geneva.

The current bird flu outbreak began in 2020 and has led to the deaths of tens of millions of poultry, with wild birds also infected as well as land and marine mammals. Cows and goats joined the list last month — a surprising development for experts because they were not thought susceptible to this type of influenza.

The A (H5N1) strain has become "a global zoonotic animal pandemic," Farrar said. "The great concern of course is that in ... infecting ducks and chickens and then increasingly mammals, that virus now evolves and develops the ability to infect humans and then critically the ability to go from human to human."

So far, there is no evidence that the influenza A(H5N1) virus is spreading between humans. But in the hundreds of cases where humans have been infected through contact with animals, "the mortality rate is extraordinarily high," Farrar said.

From 2003 to April 1 this year, the WHO said it had recorded 463 deaths from 889 human cases across 23 countries, putting the case fatality rate at 52 percent. In a worrying development, US authorities earlier this month said a person in Texas was recovering from bird flu after being exposed to dairy cattle. It was only the second case of a human testing positive for bird flu in the country and came after the virus sickened herds that were apparently exposed to wild birds in Texas, Kansas and other states. — AFP

International

Prince William back to public duties

Future king receives get well soon cards for Kate, Charles on first official outing in weeks

LONDON: Prince William returned Thursday to official duties, visiting a food charity and youth center, in his first public engagements since his wife Catherine revealed a shock cancer diagnosis. Heir to the throne as King Charles III's eldest son, William, 41, has been largely out of sight since Catherine, Princess of Wales, announced last month that she was undergoing preventative chemotherapy.

The revelation that the 42-year-old was receiving treatment for a cancer discovered following abdominal surgery triggered a wave of support from global leaders, family members, media and the public. Charles had only weeks earlier revealed he was being treated for an unspecified cancer, leaving the British monarchy in crisis with two of its most senior members simultaneously fighting serious illness.

Carrying out royal duties for the first time in weeks, William went to a surplus food redistribution charity in Surrey, southwest of London, before heading to the youth hub in the west of the capital. At the Surplus to Supper charity, the prince was photographed meeting volunteers and joining chefs in the kitchen to help prepare meals.

He received two get well soon cards from one of the volunteers — one for Kate and one for Charles — and could be heard saying "you're very kind" as he thanked her for them. Although not at official engagements, William has been seen in public in recent weeks, most recently at an Aston Villa football match

last week with his 10-year-old son Prince George.

The future king has attended events in an official capacity sporadically so far this year, amid the royal health woes. In mid-January, Kensington Palace said he was postponing upcoming public engagements to be at his wife's side at the London clinic where she underwent surgery and to help care for their three children.

William then returned to some frontline duties after Kate, as she is widely known, left hospital that month. But he heightened speculation around her health in February by abruptly pulling out of attending a memorial service, citing a "personal matter". Within weeks, the princess had revealed her cancer diagnosis in a video message, and William again largely disappeared from public view. Kate has asked for "time, space and privacy" as she completes her treatment.

The couple were notable absentees when senior royals, including Charles, gathered for an Easter church service in Windsor, a long-standing annual tradition for the family. The service was the king's most high-profile public appearance since Buckingham Palace announced his cancer diagnosis in February.

He had been admitted for surgery for a benign prostate condition the month before but was subsequently diagnosed with an unrelated cancer. The 75-year-old monarch has been continuing behind-the-scenes work and holding some in-person meetings and increasingly attending official events. — AFP



SUNBURY: Britain's Prince William, Prince of Wales cuts celery as he helps to make a bolognese sauce during a visit to Surplus to Supper, a surplus food redistribution charity, on April 18, 2024. — AFP

Biden to receive Kennedy family backing against RFK

WASHINGTON: The legendary Kennedy clan will endorse US President Joe Biden during a campaign trip to Philadelphia Thursday — underscoring the election threat posed by family black sheep and independent candidate Robert F Kennedy Jr. Fifteen members of the politically influential family will back Biden amid fears that a strong showing by conspiracy theorist and vaccine-skeptic "RFK Jr" could tilt the victory to Donald Trump in November's US presidential vote.

The environmental lawyer is the son of Robert F Kennedy Sr, who served as attorney general under assassinated president John F Kennedy, and was himself shot dead in 1968 during his own presidential bid.

The candidate's sister Kerry Kennedy is set to introduce Biden at the event, which will be the crowning moment of a three-day swing through the crucial battleground state of Pennsylvania. "President Biden has been a champion for all the rights and freedoms that my father and uncles stood for," Kerry Kennedy was expected to say, according to excerpts of her remarks released by the Biden campaign.

"I can only imagine how Donald Trump's outrageous lies and behavior would have horrified my father," the remarks continued. "A vote for Joe Biden is a vote to save our democracy and our decency." Biden will also speak at a grassroots event, introduced by RFK Jr's nephew, Joe Kennedy III, who serves as Biden's special envoy to Northern Ireland for economic affairs, before family members go out door knocking.

Robert F Kennedy Jr said he respected their decision to back his electoral rival. "I hear some of my family will be endorsing President Biden today. I am pleased they are politically active — it's a family tradition," he said on X. "We are divided in our opinions but united in our love for each other."

The endorsement will not be the first show of force



PITTSBURGH: US President Joe Biden boards Air Force One at Pittsburgh International Airport in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on April 17, 2024. — AFP

in support of Biden by America's most mythologized political family. Dozens of Kennedys posed with President Biden in a photo in the Rose Garden of the White House to mark Saint Patrick's Day in March as they celebrated their shared Irish heritage.

And Biden has long channeled the Kennedys in his own political narrative. The 81-year-old has a bronze bust of Robert F Kennedy Sr in the Oval Office that can be seen behind him in photos whenever he meets foreign dignitaries at the White House.

Biographies of Biden say he had long aimed to emulate the soaring rhetoric of John F Kennedy, the young Democratic president shot down in his prime in 1963. Armed with the storied surname, Robert F Kennedy's

wildcard shot for the presidency risks being a spoiler for Biden's hopes of a second term in the White House.

Kennedy, a vaccine skeptic who has spread misinformation downplaying the 2021 insurrection at the US Capitol, is boasting double-digit support in polls with the election less than seven months away.

Democrats have learned to fear long-shot outsiders after George W Bush and Trump won tight elections in 2000 and 2016, buoyed by Green Party candidates siphoning votes from Al Gore and Hillary Clinton. Kennedy, 70, started his White House bid as a Democrat, but exited the primary after complaining of bullying tactics by Biden allies seeking to keep him out of contention. — AFP

Taleban pull 2 TV channels for breach of Islamic rules

KABUL: Two Afghan television channels have been taken off the airwaves for "violations against Islamic and national values", a Taleban government spokesman said Thursday. Rights monitors warn Taleban authorities have been cracking down on media freedoms since their return to power in 2021 as they enforce an austere vision of Islamist rule.

Ministry of Information and Culture spokesman Khubaib Ghufuran said the "Barya" and "Noor" TV channels had been suspended on Tuesday for failing to abide by "journalistic principles". "They had programs creating confusion among the public and their owners are abroad," he told AFP. "The media violation commission suspended their operations."

He said "their owners have even taken stands as opponents" of the Taleban government and "until their owners come here, and answer the questions posed to them, their operations will be suspended". The Afghanistan Journalists Center (AFJC) said in a statement Afghanistan's media commission had repeatedly warned "Barya" for airing remarks by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a once-powerful warlord and former prime minister, about the Taleban government. "Noor" had received warnings because it broadcast music and the uncovered faces of female presenters, the AFJC said. The "Barya" channel is owned by Hekmatyar's son Habiburrahman Hekmatyar.

"Barya had religious and national values in mind, not Taleban values," Habiburrahman Hekmatyar, who lives in exile and whose father has increasingly found himself at odds with Taleban authorities, said on social media platform X. "The only thing you won't see from us is silence," he said.

The "Noor" channel is owned by Salahuddin Rabbani, who also lives in exile and served as Afghanistan's foreign minister under the former US-backed government from 2015 to 2019. His father, Burhanuddin Rabbani, was president of Afghanistan in the 1990s but fled the country as the Taleban surged to power for the first time and ruled from 1996 to 2001. — AFP

Mideast on brink amid 'humanitarian...'

Continued from Page 1

"The Middle East is on a precipice. Recent days have seen a perilous escalation — in words and deeds," Guterres told a high-level Security Council meeting, with several foreign ministers present, including from Jordan and Iran. "One miscalculation, one miscommunication, one mistake, could lead to the unthinkable — a full-scale regional conflict that would be devastating for all involved," he said, calling on all parties to exercise "maximum restraint".

Iran unleashed a barrage of missiles and drones on the Zionist entity over the weekend, after an attack on its consulate in Damascus widely blamed on the Zionist entity. Zionist officials have not said when or where they would retaliate, but the country's military chief has vowed a response.

Guterres condemned both the consulate attack and the flurry of drones, saying that the latter constituted a "serious escalation". "It is high time to end the bloody cycle of retaliation," he said. "It is high time to stop. The international community must work together to prevent any actions that could push the entire Middle East over the edge, with a devastating impact on civilians. Let me be clear: the risks are spiraling on many fronts."

For Guterres, de-escalation of the situation would begin by ending fighting in Gaza, where at least 33,970 people have been killed, according to the health ministry in the territory. "I reiterate my calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the immediate release of all hostages held in Gaza," Guterres said. "In Gaza, six and a half months of (Zionist) military operations have created a humanitarian hellscap, he lamented, and while he said the Zionist entity had made "limited progress" on allowing more aid into the territory, he called for more to be done. "Our aid operations are barely functional. They cannot operate in an organized, systematic way; they can only seize opportunities to deliver aid whenever and wherever possible," he said. "Delivering aid at scale requires the Zionist entity's full and active facilitation of humanitarian operations."

Guterres's speech came as the Security Council was poised later in the day to vote on a Palestinian bid for full UN membership — an initiative that seemed destined for failure in the face of opposition from the veto-wielding United States. The UN secretary-general also called on the Zionist entity to put a stop to settler violence in the occupied West Bank, after Zionist attacks in dozens of Palestinian villages. "I call on (the Zionist entity), as the occupying power, to protect the Palestinian population of the occupied West Bank against attacks, violence and intimidation," he told the Security Council.

And more than six months into the bloodiest-ever Gaza war, the Zionist army said it had bombed dozens of targets in the territory, as Qatar said efforts to broker a truce have stalled. Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has stressed that the Zionist entity "reserves the right to protect itself" against Iran.

The United States, the Zionist entity's top ally and military supplier, has made clear it won't join any Zionist attack on Iran, instead unveiling new sanctions on Thursday against the country's military drone program. "We are holding Iran accountable," US President Joe Biden said, adding that he had discussed ramping up economic pressure on Tehran with other leaders at a G7 meeting in Capri, Italy.

The US sanctions target 16 people and two entities involved in producing the drones used in Iran's attack, as well as companies providing parts to the country's steel industry. Washington added that the United Kingdom would impose sanctions on Iran's drone and missile program, which was also the target of promised sanctions announced by the European Union on Wednesday.

The Zionist entity has yet to reveal how or when it will carry out its promised retaliation against Iran. US broadcaster ABC News, citing three unnamed Zionist sources, reported the Zionist entity had "prepared for and then aborted retaliatory strikes against Iran on at least two nights this past week". Among the range of possible responses considered by the Zionist entity were an attack on Iranian proxies in the region or a cyberattack, the sources told ABC.

A high-ranking Iranian general warned the Zionist entity against attacking Iran's nuclear sites. If this did happen, then "the nuclear facilities of the regime will be targeted and operated upon with advanced weaponry," said Ahmad Haghtalab, the head of Iran's Nuclear Protection and Security Corps. However, Tehran has also sought to calm tensions through indirect diplomatic channels with its other major adversary, the United States. Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, in New York for a UN meeting, said Iran had "tried to tell the United States clearly" that it is "not looking for the expansion of tension in the region".

Iran's attack on the Zionist entity "is succeeding in taking the focus, particularly the media spotlight, off of the Gaza famine and the Gaza war," Roxane Farmanfarmaian, a Middle East and North Africa specialist at Cambridge University, told AFP. Gaza's civil defense said Thursday it had recovered 11 more bodies in the southern city of Khan Yunis during the night.

Also bombed by the Zionist entity was the far-southern city of Rafah, where Gaza rescue teams recovered the corpses of eight family members, including five children and two women, from a single house, the civil defense service said. "All of a sudden, a missile hit them," said neighbor Abdeljabbar Al-Arja, who spoke of finding the arms and feet of women and children. — Agencies

Recovery slow as flooding still...

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unless their departure was confirmed. "There may still be delays to arriving and departing flights," an Emirates statement said, warning that the "airport remains congested". "Our teams are working hard to restore our scheduled operations as soon as possible," it added. Nearly 200 departures were listed as delayed or cancelled on Dubai airport's website on Thursday. Many passengers, unable to take their flights or leave the airport on the flooded roads, have been forced to sleep at the airport, which has been badly understaffed with workers unable to arrive.

One elderly couple's 14-hour flight from Brisbane took 24 hours on Tuesday after it was diverted, and they were then unable to reach their hotel because of the flooding. "It's just the start of our holiday and

I feel like going home — and I don't know how to do that either," Julie, 72, told AFP through tears, as she tried to navigate the partly suspended metro system to reach her hotel. "When they landed the plane on this airfield that was deserted, there was no terminal, there were no other planes and I thought we had been hijacked by terrorists," she added, without giving her surname.

Two top Indian wrestlers have been "sleeping on the floor" at Dubai airport, Indian media reported. The Indian Express newspaper said Paris Olympics hopeful Deepak Punia and fellow wrestler Sujet Kalkal had been stuck at the airport since Tuesday while en route to Bishkek for the Asian Olympic Qualifying Tournament.

Kalkal's father said the athletes were hoping to get on a flight from Dubai late on Thursday to make it in time for their bouts, scheduled in Bishkek for Friday. "They have been sleeping on the floor of the terminal and have not been able to eat proper food. They are in a terrible situation," the newspaper quoted Kalkal's father Dayanand as saying. — AFP

Tsunami threat after Indonesia...

Continued from Page 1

Maybe to evacuate precious goods from their house." There were no reports of deaths or injuries but authorities said they were rushing to evacuate more than 11,000 residents from the area around Tagulandang, home to about 20,000 people. Tourists and residents were warned to remain outside a six-kilometer exclusion zone. Some residents were already trying to flee in a panic, according to officials. "People evacuated on their own... due to the volcano's eruption and small rocks that fell," local search and rescue agency official Jandry Paendong said in a statement Thursday. "The people scattered to find evacuation routes."

He said 20 staff were helping evacuate residents along the coastline near the volcano on rubber boats. Authorities also evacuated a prison on Tagulandang, ferrying 17 inmates along with 11 officials and 19 residents by boat to Likupang seaport in northern Sulawesi island, according to Ikram. More than 800 people were initially taken from Ruang to Tagulandang after the first eruptions overnight Tuesday, before further eruptions on Wednesday prompted evacuations from that wider zone.

Those displaced gathered at temporary shel-

ters on Tagulandang and were given mats, blankets and masks by authorities. The navy sent a warship to deliver aid and help the evacuation effort, it said Thursday, while North Sulawesi police sent dozens of officers. The warship evacuated 195 people from Tagulandang to Bitung, a coastal city in North Sulawesi, on Thursday evening, a navy spokesperson told AFP.

Authorities also warned of a possible tsunami as a result of the eruptions. "The communities in Tagulandang island (need) to be on alert for... (a) tsunami caused by the collapse of the volcano's body into the sea," volcanology agency head Hendra Gunawan said in a statement Wednesday. The authorities' fears were compounded by previous experience. The crater of Mount Anak Krakatoa between Java and Sumatra islands partly collapsed in 2018 when a major eruption sent huge chunks of the volcano sliding into the ocean, triggering a tsunami that killed more than 400 people and injured thousands.

Indonesia, a vast archipelago nation, experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire". Mount Ruang's eruption led to the closure of Sam Ratulangi International Airport in Manado city, located more than 100 km from the volcano, until midnight Thursday. The airport hosts airlines that fly to Singapore, South Korea and China. Budget airline AirAsia said it also canceled flights to and from nine airports in eastern Malaysia and Brunei until Friday morning. — AFP

International

At G7, Blinken seeks European support for pressure on China

US accuses China of providing backdoor support for Russia in its war on Ukraine

CAPRI: As G7 foreign ministers meet in Capri, the United States is hoping to persuade the Europeans to increase pressure on China, which Washington accuses of helping Russia's military expansion. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who arrived on the Italian resort island on Wednesday, was to raise his concerns during a working session Thursday devoted to Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

The Americans hope in particular that European nations will pressure China to reduce military support for Russia, at a time when, according to Washington, Russian forces are gaining ground in Ukraine. In addition to the United States, the G7 countries include Canada, Britain, France, Germany, Japan and Italy, which holds the presidency this year.

"What we have seen over the past months, is that there have been materials moving from China to Russia that Russia has used to rebuild their industrial base and produce arms that are showing up on the battlefield in Ukraine, and we are incredibly concerned about that," US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said this week.

On Thursday, after meeting with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, Blinken stressed the "urgent" need to step up support for Ukraine, after another Russian strike on Wednesday left 18 people dead.

The US House of Representatives is expected to vote Saturday on new military aid including some \$61 billion in long-delayed support for Ukraine.

"This is a matter of death and life," Kuleba said, adding that he would be working at the G7 meeting to secure more air defense support, which he said was of "fundamental importance".

Blinken and China

Washington has set a red line for Beijing — not to supply weapons to Russia for its war in Ukraine. And so far it has not presented proof that this has been crossed. But the United States is increasingly denouncing what it says is China's backdoor support for Moscow. The US pressure comes as Blinken prepares to visit China, a trip Washington says will come in the "coming weeks".

In Beijing on Tuesday, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said he had asked Chinese President Xi Jinping to pressure Moscow to stop its "senseless" war in Ukraine. The question of military support for Russia was also discussed in a recent conversation between President Joe Biden and Xi.

A senior US official said last week that China was helping Russia undertake "its most ambitious defense expansion since the Soviet era and on a faster timeline than we believed possible" early on the Ukraine conflict.

Unveiling US findings, officials said China was helping Russia on a range of areas including the joint production of drones, space-based capabilities and exports vital for producing ballistic missiles. China has been the key factor in revitalizing Russia's defense industrial base "which had otherwise suf-



CAPRI: (From left) British Foreign Secretary David Cameron, European Union foreign policy Chief Josep Borrell, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, French Foreign Minister Stéphane Sejourne, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly, Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock attend the G7 foreign ministers meeting on April 18, 2024. — AFP

fered significant setbacks" since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a senior US official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

Washington said that China provided

more than 70 percent of the \$900 million in machine tools — likely used to build ballistic missiles — imported in the last quarter of 2023 by Russia. US officials

also said that 90 percent of Russia's microelectronics imports last year — used to produce missiles, tanks and aircraft — came from China. — AFP

No end in sight to Libya crisis as UN envoy quits

TRIPOLI, Libya: The abrupt resignation of the United Nations special envoy for Libya, Abdoulaye Bathily, is the latest sign of the failure of reconciliation efforts in the war-torn North African country, analysts told AFP. The Senegalese diplomat, who on Tuesday tendered his resignation after only 18 months at the helm of the UN support mission UNSMIL, has repeatedly accused rival leaders of perpetuating divisions to serve their own interests.

Libya is still struggling to recover from years of war and chaos after the 2011 overthrow of longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi, and the country remains split between a UN-recognized government based in Tripoli and a rival administration in the country's east. Speaking to reporters after submitting his resignation to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who accepted it, Bathily said the situation has deteriorated in recent months. Taking aim at leaders in the country that has seen repeated cycles of violence since 2011, the diplomat decried a "lack of political will and good faith by the major Libyan actors who are comfortable with the current stalemate".

General elections scheduled for December 2021 were postponed indefinitely amid persistent disagreements between Abdelhamid Dbeibah's Tripoli-based government and the eastern-based administration backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar. "The selfish resolve of current leaders to maintain the status quo through delaying tactics and maneuvers at the expense of the Libyan people must stop," Bathily said, also condemning the foreign backers of both camps without naming them.

To Jalel Harchaoui, an associate fellow at British think-tank Royal United Services Institute, Bathily's resignation did not come as a shock "for the simple reason that the process he was leading had been completely defunct for several months".

'Inflection point'

Harchaoui said that Bathily's efforts have been undermined by Egypt, which alongside the United Arab Emirates is the main power supporting the Haftar-backed administration. The western-based authorities are most notably backed by Turkey. "This situation is the result of numerous factors, including Egypt's policy of systematically contradicting the relatively coherent logic that Bathily was trying to instill," the Libya expert said.

And faced by "sabotage" from Cairo, "the great Western democracies like the United States or France have never supported Bathily in any authentic manner, preferring to passively avoid offending the Egyptian giant", argued Harchaoui.

Emad Badi, a Libya expert at the Atlantic Council, said that "Bathily's departure comes at an undeniable inflection point whereby the veneer of stability that prevailed in Libya over the past couple of years is vanishing." Until a successor is named, US diplomat Stephanie Khoury, who in March was named Bathily's deputy for political affairs, will serve in an interim capacity — a repeat of the scenario that unfolded after former envoy Ghassan Salame's resignation in 2020.

Stephanie Williams, also from the United States, was able to bring together Libyan representatives in February 2021, while she was serving as an interim replacement for Salame. That meeting, in Geneva, saw representatives agree on an interim authority to organize the presidential and parliamentary elections which were due to be held at the end of 2021.

Harchaoui said it was "quite likely" that Khoury would "emerge as an interim special envoy", allowing "the United States to lead UNSMIL without having to face a Russian veto at the Security Council". — AFP

Generation War: Sudan's children facing 'catastrophe'

PORT SUDAN: Amna Ishaq can no longer feed her children "more than once a day and sometimes not at all" after nearly a year of devastating war in Sudan. "We are all sick, along with our children. We have nothing to eat and the water we find is polluted," Ishaq told AFP at a camp for the displaced in Darfur.

The vast western region is no stranger to war, suffering devastation in a deadly conflict that began in 2003 and which also sparked a hunger crisis. With war returning to Sudan last April, the United Nations has warned that "an entire generation could be destroyed".

The world body says millions of displaced children are starving, have been forced into marriage or become child soldiers and threatened with death. When the fighting broke out on April 15, 2023 between Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan's army and Mohammed Hamdan Daglo's Rapid Support Forces (RSF), diplomats and aid workers left Sudan in droves, effectively ceasing to serve those most vulnerable.

Looting, fighting, air strikes and roads cut by warring factions have isolated every region of Sudan, a north-east African country more than three times the size of France. The UN says it has been able to reach only 10 percent of Sudan's 48 million people, with the country on the brink of famine.

At Otach, a displacement camp set up two decades ago in South Darfur where Ishaq has taken refuge with her family, rations of maize porridge no longer arrive. About "222,000 children could die of starvation within a few weeks or months" and "more than 700,000 this year", according to the UN.

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said that at least one child dies every two hours at North Darfur's Zamzam displacement camp alone. And at Kalma camp in South Darfur, the aid group Alight said that "more than two children are dying every 12 hours".

Children have been sold

Medical journal The Lancet has reported that the small Al-Buluk pediatric hospital in the capital Khartoum admits "about 25 children for severe acute malnutrition. Each week, two or three of them die." Overall, nearly three million children are suffering from malnutrition and

Germany arrests 2 over allegedly spying for Russia

FRANKFURT: Investigators have arrested two German-Russian men on suspicion of spying for Russia and planning attacks in Germany — including on US army targets — to undermine military support for Ukraine, prosecutors said Thursday.

The pair, identified only as Dieter S and Alexander J, were arrested in Bayreuth in the southeastern state of Bavaria on Wednesday, federal prosecutors said in a statement. The main accused, Dieter S, is alleged to have scouted potential targets for attacks, "including facilities of the US armed forces" stationed in Germany. Police have searched both men's homes and places of work. They are suspected of "having been active for a foreign intelligence service" in what prosecutors described as a "particularly serious case" of espionage.

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser likewise called the allegations "a particularly serious case of suspected agent activity for (Vladimir) Putin's criminal regime". "We will continue to thwart such threat plans," she said, reiterating Germany's steadfast support for Ukraine. The foreign ministry in Berlin said it had summoned the Russian ambassador following the arrests. "We will not allow Putin



GEDAREF: Displaced Sudanese children play near tents at a camp in southern Gadaref in war-torn Sudan, on March 20, 2024. — AFP

19 million are no longer in school, according to Save the Children, endangering the future of a nation where 42 percent of the population is under 14 years old. Even before this war, nearly half of Sudan's children had severely reduced growth and 70 percent were unable to read and understand a simple sentence, the charity says. Adam Regal, spokesman for independent Sudanese aid group General Coordination for Refugees and Displaced Persons in Darfur, said he has seen dozens of children die. He blamed "the stubbornness" of the warring parties, telling AFP that "food and humanitarian aid no longer arrive" because of a lack of access. A Khartoum factory that produced nutritional supplements for children has been destroyed by bombing and vaccine factories for newborns have been looted. Cholera, measles and malaria prevail in eastern parts of the country. Adding to the health crisis are the horrors of war.

More and more Sudanese organizations are warning that to feed their children parents are resorting to "selling" some of them. One local charity reported that a father sold his 15-year-old daughter for a few bags of grain at a market. The UN has also recorded child marriages in response to "family separations" — mothers or fathers who have lost their spouses or

children while fleeing violence in panic — or because of "gender-based and sexual violence including rape and unwanted pregnancies".

Rape and child soldiers

The UN said young girls and women have been the victims of "abductions, forced marriages, and sexual violence related to the conflict in Darfur and in the state of Al-Jazira" south of Khartoum, where many displaced people are. Experts from the UN Human Rights Council say they have gathered "information on women and young girls sold as slaves in markets in areas under the control of the RSF and other armed groups, particularly in North Darfur".

The dangers facing boys are different: both the army and the paramilitaries, but also tribal and ethnic militias, "recruit and use children in Darfur, Kordofan, Khartoum, and in the east of the country", the experts said. Some parties even force "children from a neighboring country to actively participate in hostilities", they added. Since the early days of the war, videos uploaded by soldiers and paramilitaries regularly show teenagers on military pickup trucks or with automatic rifles in hand. It's the "catastrophe of a generation", UN officials said. — AFP

to bring his terror to Germany," Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said subsequently on X, formerly Twitter.

US army facilities targeted

According to prosecutors, Dieter S had been exchanging information with a person linked to Russian intelligence services since October 2023, discussing possible acts of sabotage. "The actions were intended, in particular, to undermine the military support provided from Germany to Ukraine against the Russian aggression," prosecutors said.

The accused allegedly expressed readiness to "commit explosive and arson attacks mainly on military infrastructure and industrial sites in Germany". Dieter S collected information about potential targets, "including facilities of the US armed forces".

Fellow accused Alexander J began assisting him from March 2024, they added. Dieter S scouted potential targets by taking photos and videos of military transport and equipment. He then allegedly shared the information with his contact person. Der Spiegel magazine reported that the military facilities spied on included the US army base in Grafenwoehr in Bavaria. "Among other things, there is an important military training area there where the US army trains Ukrainian soldiers, for example on Abrams battle tanks," Der Spiegel wrote.

Dieter S faces an additional charge of belonging to a "foreign terrorist organization". Prosecutors said they suspect he was a fighter in an armed unit of eastern Ukraine's self-proclaimed pro-Russian "People's Republic of Donetsk" in 2014-2016. Germany is Ukraine's



GRAFENWOHR, Germany: US soldiers take part in the 'Dynamic Front 23', the US Army-led NATO and Partner annual artillery exercise in Europe in this file photo. — AFP

second-largest supplier of military aid, and news of the spy arrests came as Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck was on a visit to Kyiv. "We will continue to provide Ukraine with massive support and will not allow ourselves to be intimidated," Interior Minister Faeser said.

Germany has been shaken by several cases of alleged spying for Russia since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, amid suggestions that some German officials have been too sympathetic with Moscow in the past. A former German intelligence officer is on trial in Berlin, accused of handing information to Moscow that showed Germany had access to details of Russian mercenary operations in Ukraine. He denies the charges. — AFP

FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2024

Brazil, France renew push for 'fairer' international taxation

Finance minister backs calls for crackdown on tax avoidance

WASHINGTON: The international community must do more to make the world's richest companies and individuals pay their "fair" share of taxes, Brazil and France's finance ministers said Wednesday. Brazil, which is chairing the G20 this year, has been pushing for the group of nations which together account for 80 percent of the world's economy to adopt a shared stance on preventing tax-dodging by billionaires by the summer.

"Fair international taxation is not just a topic of choice for progressive economists, but a key concern at the very heart of macroeconomic management today," Brazilian finance minister Fernando Haddad said during an IMF event in Washington. "Without international cooperation, there is a limit to what states can do, both rich and developing ones," he added. Haddad called on countries to "enhance revenue mobilization through fair, transparent, efficient and more progressive tax systems" to make the system "fairer."

France backs minimum tax

Sitting alongside Haddad at the IMF event, French finance minister Bruno Le Maire renewed his calls for a global minimum tax—and backed calls for a crackdown on tax avoidance. France is among the world's advanced economies that have thrown their support behind a 15 percent global minimum tax rate, and has already implemented a minimum tax on the world's tech giants.

"The future of the world cannot be a race to the bottom," Le Maire said. "This is true also of taxation." In January this year, the European Union introduced a 15 percent minimum tax for multinational companies active in the 27-member trading bloc. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a global minimum tax could bring in an additional \$200 billion in revenues per year.

Billionaire tax

Le Maire also called on the world's richest individuals to pay more in tax, outlining a series of



WASHINGTON: Queen Maxima of the Netherlands (2nd right) meets with International Monetary Fund (IMF) Director Kristalina Georgieva (4th left) at the IMF headquarters in Washington, DC. — AFP

steps to boost transparency and information-sharing between countries in order to better determine the correct amount of tax that the world's super-rich should pay. "Digital taxation, minimum taxation on corporate tax—now comes the taxation on the wealthiest individuals," he said. "Everybody has to pay their fair share of taxation," he added. Given that there are about 3,000 US-dollar billionaires glob-

ally, a two percent wealth tax would generate about \$250 billion in additional tax revenue worldwide, according to the French economist Gabriel Zucman. "The Democratic popular demand for this form of taxation is overwhelming," he said during an event at the IMF later on Wednesday.

"It's feasible and we understand how it can be done very quickly," he added. A wealth tax could be

a key source of revenue for states to finance the trillions needed for the climate transition, the non-governmental organization (NGO) Global Citizen said in a report published Wednesday. According to the report, the wealth of the richest people has collectively increased by \$2.7 billion a day since 2020, and they emit on average a million times more carbon dioxide than the average person. — AFP

Stock markets rise as traders consider US rate outlook

LONDON: Major stock markets in Asia and Europe mostly rose Thursday with traders mulling the outlook for US interest rates as Federal Reserve officials questioned the need for a cut anytime soon. Oil prices extended the previous day's losses, fuelled by data indicating softer demand in the United States and fading fears of a regional war in the Middle East. Investors looked past a sell-off on Wall Street Wednesday when tech firms were hit by worries that borrowing costs would be kept elevated longer than expected. Comments from Fed officials reinforced the view that sticky inflation and a resilient US economy will keep the bank from easing monetary policy anytime soon.

A rally across global markets, which saw some hit record highs this month, has given way to concerns that valuations may be overdone, and analysts said the current earnings season is key to maintaining momentum. Expectations for US rate cuts in 2024 have fallen from six predicted at the start of the year to just two, while some analysts have even warned of a possible hike. "The US central bank remains on track to cut rates twice this year, most likely starting at its September meeting," said Solita Marcelli at UBS Group AG.

Oil dropped further after losing more than three percent Wednesday on figures showing a forecast-busting build-up in US stockpiles that raised questions about demand in the world's top economy. Relief that the Zionist entity had held off any retaliation for the weekend's missile attack by Iran - soothing fears of a conflict between the Middle East foes - also weighed on oil prices. Foreign exchange markets are also being closely followed after the dollar pushed uncomfortably higher against its peers.

Particularly in focus are the yen and won after US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen joined her Japanese and South Korean counterparts in saying they were keeping an eye on movements. The statement came after South Korea's Choi Sang-mok and Japan's Shunichi Suzuki shared "serious concerns" on the recent weakness of their currencies and agreed to take "appropriate actions" to counter extreme volatility. Analysts said the statement with Yellen suggested Washington would not push back against intervention by the countries. The yen has lost almost nine percent this year and the won about seven percent. — AFP

Going 'backwards'? Whistleblowers slam Boeing safety culture

NEW YORK: Witnesses at a US Senate hearing on Boeing drew a disturbing picture Wednesday of an aviation giant that blows off safety questions and sidelines critics as it chases faster production and bigger profits. "The attitude from Boeing from the highest level is just to push the defective parts, regardless of what it is," Boeing engineer Sam Salehpour told lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

Salehpour, who has worked at Boeing for 17 of his 40 years in aerospace, said he became a whistleblower after he was punished for raising safety questions about the top-selling 787 Dreamliner and 777. He testified that he was blackballed by company higher-ups and feared for his personal well-being after raising concerns about safety. He maintains that the Dreamliner could show premature signs of fatigue, resulting in a catastrophic accident because of excessively large gaps in the plane's assembly. He likened it to a paper clip that is bent repeatedly.

"You do it once or twice, it doesn't break, but it breaks at some time," said Salehpour, who has said the entire 787 fleet should be grounded for investigation. Boeing acknowledged imperfections, but said it was making progress. "We know we have more work to do and we are taking action across our company," the company said after the hearing.

US to reimpose sanctions on Venezuela's crucial oil

WASHINGTON: The United States said Wednesday it will snap back sanctions on Venezuela's crucial oil industry after President Nicolas Maduro's government continued its repression of opponents. President Joe Biden's administration suspended some sanctions after Maduro's government and the opposition agreed in Barbados last October to hold a free and fair vote in 2024 under the watchful eye of international observers. But the thaw ended when Maduro's opponents were not allowed to run against him in elections, and the United States said Caracas had now failed to make progress ahead of an April 18 deadline.

"We are concerned that Maduro and his representatives prevented the democratic opposition from registering the candidate of their choice, harassed and intimidated political opponents, and unjustly detained numerous

political actors and members of civil society," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement. "We again call on Maduro to allow all candidates and parties to participate in the electoral process and release all political prisoners without restrictions or delay." Oil companies would have a winding-down period until May 31 to comply with the sanctions, Miller said.

However Washington would "continue to assess sanctions policy" based on the Maduro government's actions leading up to the election, the State Department said. Venezuela has the largest proven oil reserves in the world, but production has plummeted after years of mismanagement and crushing sanctions. Caracas vowed its oil sector would keep going regardless of US policy. "We will not stop, with or without a license," Petroleum Minister Pedro Tellechea told reporters ahead



WASHINGTON: US Senator Roger Marshall, Republican of Kansas, holds up a graphic illustrating quality issues with a Boeing 787 planes during a US Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Investigations hearing on "Examining Boeing's Broken Safety Culture: Firsthand Accounts," at Capitol Hill on April 17, 2024. — AFP

pointing to an uptick in its "Speak Up" portal to field employee input. Boeing has pushed back against Salehpour's allegations about the 787, pointing to extensive testing that shows no signs of fatigue.

It also said that it had addressed the gap issue during a period when it slowed production and suspended deliveries -- a process tightly overseen by the Federal Aviation Administration. The FAA said in response to Salehpour's claims that the 787s currently flying are in compliance. The aircraft also received an endorsement Wednesday from United Airlines Chief Executive Scott Kirby, who told CNBC

he was "totally confident the 787 is a safe airplane."

Lawmakers expressed alarm at testimony about alleged widespread manufacturing and quality control problems throughout Boeing's fleet, as well as the overly deferential approach of the FAA, which one witness described as "captive" to Boeing. "This requires a full-blown investigation," said Republican Senator Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, calling for future hearings to hear from pilots, the airlines and other witnesses. Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, who chaired the hearing, said representatives of Boeing and the FAA were already scheduled to appear.

The hearing comes as regulators escalate scrutiny of Boeing in the wake of a near-disastrous January 5 Alaska Airlines flight, in which a 737 MAX was forced to make an emergency landing after a fuselage panel blew out in mid-flight. The incident revived major questions around Boeing's safety practices that had initially arisen following two fatal crashes in 2018 and 2019, but which had subsided following a lengthy grounding of the 737 MAX.

In late March, Boeing announced a leadership shakeup that included the retirement of Chief Executive Dave Calhoun at the end of 2024 and the replacement of Chair Larry Kellner with former Qualcomm CEO Steve Mollenkopf. In a recent message to shareholders, Mollenkopf pledged to "take the necessary steps to regain the trust lost in recent times." "Boeing must commit to real and profound improvements and we will hold them accountable every step of the way," the FAA said in a statement, reiterating the need for aviation employees to be able to speak up without fear of reprisal. — AFP



PAMPATAR: Tugboats mobilize the Crude Oil Tanker President, anchored in Pampatar Bay two years ago in Margarita Island, Nueva Esparta state, Venezuela. — AFP

of Washington's announcement. The sanctions move is not without risk for Biden as he makes his own bid for reelection this year.

Venezuelan authorities have previously threatened to hit Biden in the sensitive area of migration. More than seven million Venezuelans have fled over the past decade, with many coming to the United States. Caracas has

previously warned it will cancel migrant repatriation flights which started under the October deal if Washington continues with its "economic aggression." Sanctions could also hit oil prices just as Americans face growing costs at the pump and rising inflation, and polls show that US voters are not buying Biden's sunny messages about the economy. — AFP

Business

EU, US reindustrialization accelerates

Europe, US companies plan to invest \$3.4 trillion

PARIS: Companies in Europe and the United States are set to plough more money into bringing manufacturing home after the COVID-19 pandemic and Russian invasion of Ukraine disrupted the global economy, a study published Thursday found. The report by consulting firm Capgemini found that companies in 13 industrial sectors in 11 countries in Europe and the United States plan to invest \$3.4 trillion over the next three years on bringing manufacturing home or to a nearby country. That is up from \$2.4 trillion in the past three years. "The rapidity with which reindustrialization has taken hold is remarkable," said the report. "Driving this is the imperative to promote supply chain resilience and flexibility; increase both the availability and appeal of skilled manufacturing jobs; meet cli-

mate targets; re-establish national security in strategic sectors, and regain the manufacturing might that the industrial powerhouses of Europe and North America once enjoyed," it added.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted global supply chains, making many companies want to regain greater control over raw materials and components. The Russian invasion of Ukraine brought to the fore the national security aspect of having control over essential supplies and the necessary manufacturing capacity. "We were surprised by the magnitude of the phenomenon" of relocalization of manufacturing, one of the report's authors, Etienne Grass, told AFP.

He noted that the investment represents an average allocation of around 8.7 percent of revenue of the

companies it surveyed. "That's really a considerable" amount, Grass said. Some 1,300 senior executives of industrial firms with more than a \$1 billion in annual revenue were interviewed for the survey in February. The companies were located in Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United States.

The top reason cited by companies for reindustrialization was to strengthen their supply chains, followed by the importance of establishing a domestic manufacturing infrastructure to ensure national security. In third place was reducing greenhouse gas emissions, followed by taking advantage of financial incentives to reindustrialize offered by their governments. While US companies have the largest reinvestment plans in ab-

solute terms at \$1.4 trillion, it trails companies in other nations in terms of percentage of gross domestic product, said Grass.

The German reindustrialization effort is equivalent to 20 percent of GDP and the French effort is 13 percent, compared to five percent for the United States despite the generous subsidies offered under the Inflation Reduction Act. In addition to bringing production back or near home, companies are also reducing their dependence on China by investing in other emerging market nations, the report found. "To this end, businesses are distributing their critical assets (such as production facilities, warehouses, and logistics centers) across geographies such as India, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Mexico," it said. —AFP



SCRANTON: Workers handle 155 mm caliber shells post-manufacturing, preparing them for shipment at the packaging area of the Scranton Army Ammunition Plant (SCAAP) in Scranton, Pennsylvania. - AFP photos



SCRANTON: An employee checks 155 mm caliber shells after the manufacturing process at the SCAAP in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

In Scranton, ageing US factory makes shells for Ukraine

SCRANTON: In brick buildings that are more than a century old in Joe Biden's Rust Belt hometown of Scranton, Pennsylvania, dated machinery continues to churn out machinery for modern conflicts - especially the war in Ukraine. The Scranton Army Ammunition Plant (SCAAP) is making steel tubes for 155 mm caliber shells, which are crucial to Kyiv's efforts to face down Moscow's invasion. The tubes are then sent to Iowa, where they are loaded with explosives.

"The fuse is installed in the field... for security reasons," Richard Hansen, a retired US Navy veteran who

has been in charge of the facility since 2009, explained to AFP on Tuesday during a tour for a small group of journalists. The site, initially built in 1908 to construct and maintain steam locomotives, started its new life in munitions after being purchased by the US government in 1953.


Back then, it was used to make ammunition for use in the Korean War. Some of the manufacturing equipment in use today dates back nearly to that time. The buildings, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, are hardly the picture of 21st century high-tech efficiency. There is no computer-aided automated production here. AI? Forget about it. The red-hot steel tubes, just formed in three successive forges, are cooling for three hours in racks hanging from a conveyor belt in the factory's basement, before the next phase of production. The basement is a maze of dark nooks and crannies - lit up from time to time by flame or searing metal. Visitors have to pay close attention not to tumble

into disused pits or trip on narrow staircases, all while enduring deafening noise - despite earplugs - and the smell of hot steel. The tubes are then treated in a variety of ways - heat, ultrasound, polishing and submersion in oil, among others - to remove the tiniest flaw, inside and out, and identify any defects. Measurements are checked from all angles several times, using tools that seem like they could be on display in a museum of antique hardware.

'Remove before firing'

At the end of the lines, the tubes are painted, to prevent them from rusting out in storage, and are then assigned a batch number for tracing and identification. The final touch? A label that says "Remove before firing." "Never any incident with a shell has been traced back to this facility," Hansen notes. While Hansen is happy to talk about the plant's history or the production process, he is more tight-lipped about the num-

ber of tubes produced and how they are used on the battlefield. The current contract is to make 24,000 tubes a month in three factories in eastern Pennsylvania, and runs until the end of 2027, but production can vary. The terms of the original contract signed in 2019 were not disclosed. SCAAP is still owned by the government, which signed a contract with US defense and aerospace giant General Dynamics, which has two sites of its own not far from Scranton where 155 mm caliber shells and mortars are manufactured. Another General Dynamics facility should be up and running in Texas this summer, a representative of the group told AFP during the visit, on condition of anonymity. The three operational sites in Pennsylvania employ a total of 900 people. "Production has not been increased because of the war in Ukraine," Hansen said, though he added that the plant had "a modernization plan to increase production" before the conflict erupted in 2022, set to wrap up in about two years. —AFP



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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 18 APRIL 2024

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	925	849	872	841	31	31,158,637	-23	-2.64%	-0.29%	846	860	13.7	1.71	3.9%	1.03
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	282	262	264	255	9	19,273,760	1	0.38%	-2.10%	261	270	13.7	1.27	4.4%	1.28
104	Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait	Banking	262	243	248	235	13	5,949,794	10	4.29%	4.29%	233	244	12.9	0.91	3.8%	0.94
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	167	156	160	152	8	24,895,755	-4	-2.62%	7.12%	156	162	17.0	0.60	3.1%	1.07
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	205	179	189	172	17	8,669,880	-11	-5.55%	9.27%	176	185	18.4	0.62	3.3%	1.31
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	746	727	731	706	25	76,932,489	-4	-0.55%	9.15%	725	745	20.4	2.11	2.6%	1.14
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	627	618	622	608	14	10,649,912	3	0.49%	3.00%	616	627	32.7	2.42	1.3%	1.14
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	197	171	187	166	21	8,003,371	-15	-8.06%	34.65%	160	178	13.0	0.79	5.7%	2.04
204	National Investments	Financial Services	283	243	256	239	17	11,679,611	-8	-3.19%	1.67%	242	248	46.2	1.10	11.7%	2.09
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	128	126	128	117	11	46,983,614	4	3.28%	20.00%	122	126	NM	0.68	0.0%	0.96
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	213	189	191	182	9	4,616,510	-1	-0.53%	-10.00%	186	192	21.2	1.14	2.1%	1.27
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	181	162	168	160	8	25,409,358	-6	-3.57%	-6.90%	158	163	8.7	1.10	4.6%	1.63
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	52.2	45.7	48.0	43	5	10,180,794	-1.1	-2.35%	-19.12%	44.8	46.0	NM	0.32	0.0%	1.34
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	229	218	224	215	9	7,201,697	-7	-3.11%	6.34%	214	220	17.8	1.36	1.3%	1.14
404	Salhia Real Estate	Real Estate	469	411	457	407	50	4,717,310	2	0.59%	0.59%	398	416	15.7	1.40	3.4%	0.56
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	811	780	799	776	23	12,334,207	-16	-2.01%	-1.92%	778	799	16.8	1.76	1.7%	0.97
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	129	127	128	122	6	15,268,290	-2	-1.55%	24.51%	125	133	15.4	0.75	3.2%	0.63
501	National Industries	Financial Services	230	214	216	207	9	15,247,846	-2	-0.93%	4.90%	206	217	19.7	0.95	2.3%	1.61
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,465	1,250	1,340	1,244	96	1,564,596	-50	-3.85%	-4.58%	1,226	1,260	12.7	1.16	5.1%	1.07
506	HEISCO	Industrials	844	813	824	787	37	905,745	-14	-1.69%	-0.85%	793	815	20.4	1.96	3.7%	0.95
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	612	613	620	606	14	3,831,876	-12	-1.92%	4.79%	604	633	12.8	1.26	9.9%	0.94
603	Agility	Industrials	339	326	489	280	209	403,051,892	17	5.38%	15.11%	298	330	9.2	0.43	3.3%	1.76
605	Zain	Telecommunications	504	490	493	468	25	27,140,678	11	2.30%	-3.35%	487	495	9.7	1.68	7.2%	0.59
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,365	3,349	3,393	3,312	81	594,854	-36	-1.06%	-1.47%	3,315	3,350	10.2	3.37	10.5%	0.62
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	210	212	214	209	5	1,791,373	0	0.00%	17.78%	210	213	NM	0.93	0.0%	1.23
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,144	1,181	1,181	1,126	55	1,383,040	0	0.00%	-14.97%	1,100	1,204	41.3	9.92	2.4%	1.29
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	87.0	77.5	79.2	76.1	3.1	18,214,687	-2.1	-2.64%	1.57%	76.6	79.0	9.5	0.99	5.8%	1.40
821	Warba Bank	Banking	193	180	183	176	7	14,641,551	-4	-2.17%	-3.23%	169	181	22.1	0.94	1.6%	1.08
822	Kuwait Telecommunications	Telecommunications	599	536	584	531	53	2,439,088	-27	-4.80%	-4.80%	530	548	16.3	2.19	6.6%	0.72
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	621	725	770	690	80	4,744,135	22	3.13%	26.09%	718	735	19.4	2.02	1.7%	0.42
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	525	518	525	484	41	3,260,166	18	3.60%	1.57%	505	520	31.2	2.03	3.0%	0.74
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,120	1,852	1,999	1,836	163	949,322	-26	-1.38%	7.42%	1,840	1,872	23.4	5.75	4.0%	1.42
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,176	1,091	1,165	1,081	84	1,531,183	-49	-4.30%	3.31%	1,069	1,123	10.5	3.64	6.4%	0.78

* As of end of week closing

Act fast or fall behind China, US for good, EU leaders told

Europe's economy yet to recover from series of back-to-back challenges

BRUSSELS: The European Union must act fast or risk falling perilously behind the economies of China and the United States, EU leaders heard Thursday as they headed into summit talks on how to leverage the bloc's huge market to stem its decline. From supply chain disruptions following the coronavirus pandemic to an energy crisis after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Europe's economy has yet to recover from a series of major, back-to-back challenges.

But it may yet face its biggest: the clean energy and digital transitions that Brussels has made its priority in the coming years will require additional annual investment of nearly 620 billion euros (\$660 billion), according to the European Commission. "Competitiveness is a fundamental issue. We face complicated challenges," EU chief Charles Michel told reporters at the Brussels talks got underway, pointing to the climate, the digital transition and security.

The EU has a population of 450 million and is home to some of the world's biggest economies including Germany and France. But from artificial intelligence to solar panels, from computer chips to batteries, the EU is fast losing ground on innovation to other global powers. The EU has been put further on the back foot as China and the United States have poured in billions of dollars of state aid to prop up their critical industries.

"There's no time to waste. The gap between the European Union and US in terms of economic performances is becoming bigger and bigger," Enrico Letta, the author of a long-awaited report into the future of the single market, told reporters. Official EU data shows the bloc's economic stagnation has lasted more than 18 months. While the United States grew by 2.5 percent and China by 5.2 percent in 2023, Eurostat data last month showed the EU economy grew by only 0.4 percent. The Brussels summit

began with a presentation by Letta, whose report identifies as a key issue the absence of a properly integrated EU-wide financial market.

Although the EU has a single currency, its start-ups cannot raise the jaw-dropping amounts their US competitors can, and Europeans currently find it more rewarding to pour more than 300 billion euros of their savings into US markets each year. Michel pointed to the "gigantic volume" of savings by citizens, of which a "substantially large part leaves the EU and is not mobilized to support innovation". The debate comes as the EU seeks to define the strategic priorities for the European Commission's next five-year mandate following elections across the bloc in June.

Internal debates

The leaders' gathering gives fresh impetus to the idea of a Capital Markets Union - or what Letta is dubbing a "savings and investment union". But the issue - which is far from new - has been mired in technical talks for 10 years because of national divisions that remain hard to overcome. While France has strongly insisted on greater integration, the EU's smaller countries have pushed back against a centralized, European supervision of markets being thrust upon them.

Further headaches stem from suggestions to harmonize taxation and bankruptcy regulations at the EU level - which have thus far faced insurmountable blocks. "We must avoid over-bureaucratizing, over-regulating and over-centralizing everything, which some countries are in favor of," Luxembourg Prime Minister Luc Frieden said on Wednesday, calling for a "pragmatic approach".

'Radical change' needed

Letta's report is not the only one leaders will be leaning on. Ex-European Central Bank chief Mario



VIDIN: Trucks queue to enter the Vidin-Calafat border point between Bulgaria and Romania, near Vidin, Bulgaria. — AFP

Draghi, increasingly touted as a potential successor to commission president Ursula von der Leyen, will present his report on the EU single market in the summer. Draghi gave a taste of what to expect as he called for "radical change" during a speech in Belgium on Tuesday. "Our major competitors are taking advantage of the fact that they are continental-sized economies. We have the same natural size advantage in Europe, but fragmentation is holding us back," Draghi said.

Spurring the sense of urgency is the colossal scale of the sums needed: on top of the hundreds of billions required to fund the green transition, as war rages in Ukraine the EU needs tens of billions of euros more to help Kyiv. French President Emmanuel Macron proposed in January taking on joint EU debt to raise money, like Europe did during the pandemic, but that idea has been given short shrift by the leaders of the so-called frugal countries, including Germany. — AFP

Cost-cutting boosts Nokia earnings in first quarter

HELSINKI: Cost-cutting helped Finnish telecoms equipment maker Nokia on Thursday report a 52-percent rise in first-quarter net profit to 438 million euros even though sales plunged nearly 20 percent. Nokia posted sales of 4.67 billion euros, down by a fifth from a year ago in a "challenging environment". It mobile networks activity was hit by operators' declining investments in North America and India.

The firm announced in October it would cut up to 14,000 jobs out of 86,000 employees due to weakening demand for 5G equipment in the two key markets. "As expected, the ongoing market weakness drove a 19 percent year-on-year constant currency decline in net sales in the first quarter", Nokia chief executive Pekka Lundmark said in a statement. However, Nokia saw "continued improvement in order intake, meaning we remain confident in a stronger second half and achieving our full year outlook."

Nokia shares were stable in morning trading on the Helsinki stock exchange. Atte Riikola, analyst with Finnish market research firm Inderes, told AFP Nokia's sales were a concern however. "Nokia had expected that the start of the year would be bad, but it was a little bit worse than expected, especially in the mobile networks business", he said. Riikola added that a substantial "turnaround in net sales" was required for a market recovery in the second half of 2024, but there were no "clear signs of the market improving" at present.

"On the network infrastructure side there are more concrete signs of improvement but the biggest question mark remains the mobile networks", he said. Nokia reported a six-percent fall in operating profit to 400 million euros. However, comparable operating profit rose by 25 percent to 597 million euros, in line with analysts' expectations, according to Factset. The difference primarily related to restructuring effects and higher sales of technology licenses. — AFP

Beef consumption in Argentina plummets

Buenos Aires: Beef consumption in Argentina - one of the world's top producers and consumers of the meat - has fallen to near-record levels amid a biting economic crisis, an industry body said. In the first quarter of 2024, beef consumption dropped to its lowest level in three decades, according to the CICCRA meat industry chamber. This amounted to nearly 10 kilograms (22 pounds) less per person, per year. According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, Argentina has some of the world's most carnivorous inhabitants - until recently consuming nearly 50 kilograms (110 pounds) per person, per year.

The South American country is battling an economic crisis that has seen purchasing power slashed in four months under self-declared "anarcho-capitalist" President Javier Milei and his budget-cutting measures. Poverty affects nearly 60 percent of Argentina's population. Year-on-year inflation is at more than 280 percent. For beef, the annual price increase was 278 percent in March.

Butcher Carlos Principe told AFP in Buenos Aires he now sells more cheap cuts of meat and said his sales dropped by 25 percent in the first quarter of this year. "Consumption went down a



Buenos Aires: A butcher cuts beef for 'milanesas' (breaded filets) at a shop in the Central Market of Buenos Aires. — AFP

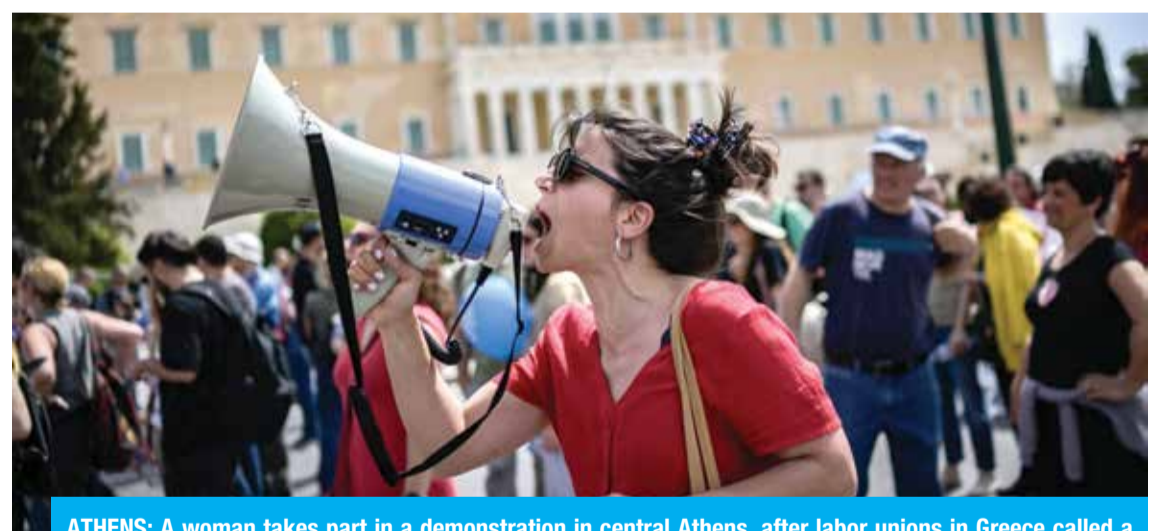
lot," the 75-year-old said. Argentine beef exports, meanwhile, increased by 22.9 percent in March from the year before. Beef consumption in Argentina has been declining year after year

from about 78 kilograms (172 pounds) per capita in the 1980s. Meanwhile, consumption of cheaper meats such as pork and poultry has doubled in the last 30 years. — AFP

New strike hits public transport in Greece

ATHENS: Greece's largest union on Wednesday staged a 24-hour walkout that hit public transport and ferry services to the islands. The General Confederation of Greek Workers called the strike to protest the cost of living and demand higher wages and the restoration of collective bargaining. The action knocked out ferry services to the Aegean and Ionian islands, and the Athens metro. Police estimated around 4,000 people also demonstrated in central Athens in support of the strike. Hospital doctors also went on strike, while taxis and buses held work stoppages in support.

Another strike by civil servants has been called on May 21. This was the second such strike in six weeks, with social discontent against the conservative government of Kyriakos Mitsotakis mounting less than a year after the re-election of his



ATHENS: A woman takes part in a demonstration in central Athens, after labor unions in Greece called a 24-hour nationwide strike to protest against the rise of the cost of living. — AFP

New Democracy party. Union leaders have criticized ongoing labor market deregulation and low wages at a time when the economy is growing.

But the ruling party remains ahead of the opposition in the polls, less than two months before June 9 European Parliament elections. — AFP

Germany dodges recession at start of the year

FRANKFURT: The beleaguered German economy likely expanded slightly at the start of the year, dodging a recession, due to improvements in manufacturing and exports, the country's central bank said Thursday. But the Bundesbank warned that a "far-reaching recovery is not yet assured" in Europe's biggest economy, which has faced high inflation, a slowdown in its factories and weak demand from abroad. Output shrank at the end of 2023 and the central bank had previously predicted a second consecutive quarter of contraction, which would have led to a technical recession.

But, in its monthly report, the bank said the picture had now "brightened somewhat". "Real gross domestic product is likely to have increased slightly in the first quarter," said the Bundesbank.



ORANIENBURG: A woman with an umbrella walks past a social housing complex in Oranienburg, north of Berlin, Germany. — AFP

The report put this down in part to rising industrial output. An "exceptionally strong" performance in the construction sector due to mild weather had

also provided support, it said. Improving exports, which jumped far more than expected in January, also provided a boost, it said.

But it warned that industrial production remained weak in many sectors, demand for German exports was still tepid and consumer spending was languishing. "Overall, there is still no sign of a sustained improvement in the German economy," it said. Preliminary first quarter growth data will be released on April 30. After its key manufacturers were hit by surging energy prices when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Germany has struggled to revive the economy in the face of a host of other challenges.

These range from shorter-term woes, such as problems in key export destination China, to deeper structural problems like an ageing population and a shortage of skilled workers. The economy shrank 0.3 percent last year, and the recovery is set to be slower than once hoped for. The International Monetary Fund this week slashed its growth forecast for the country, predicting it will only manage a weak recovery of 0.2 percent this year, due to poor consumer sentiment. The German government also downgraded its forecasts in February and sees output expanding by the same figure. — AFP

Business

Behind the growth, Ivory Coast's debt fuels debate

Rampant development has not masked stark inequality

ABIDJAN: Abidjan's soaring Alassane Ouattara bridge lit up at night in the colors of the national flag is Ivory Coast's jewel in the crown after years of investment. Roads, tower blocks, the installation of electricity, bridges - the economic capital today is barely recognizable from 10 years ago. Robust economic growth has again made Ivory Coast a regional heavyweight - but, with levels of debt that spark fierce debate. Named after the president, the cable-stayed bridge, inaugurated last year, was the last in a string of major construction projects.

When Ouattara came to power in 2011, Ivory Coast was emerging from a post-electoral crisis that had left more than 3,000 people dead. It had to convince investors to bet on the return of what was once known as the engine of West Africa. But under the former International Monetary Fund (IMF) economist, confidence has returned and with it, growth. Since 2011, the economy of the world's leading cocoa producer has grown by more than seven percent a year on average, driven in part by the agricultural sector made up largely of cocoa exports.

Its hosting of the Africa Cup of Nations at the beginning of the year also prompted more spending on infrastructure. Roads and motorways were built to link up the main cities. The rampant development, however, has not masked stark inequality. While the poverty rate dropped from 55 percent in 2011 to 39.5 percent in 2018, it was still at just over a third of the population in 2020. "GDP (gross domestic product) has doubled under Ouattara, that's to his credit. But it's not an indicator which shows how the wealth is shared," Ivorian economist Seraphin Prao told AFP.

The population of Abidjan has mushroomed from three million to six million between 1998 and 2021,

according to the National Institute of Statistics. Poor districts with insanitary housing are still commonplace, although some have been demolished to make way for new infrastructure. Underscoring the gulf between rich and poor, trendy neighborhoods with brand new villas have sprung up sometimes next door to shantytowns. With Ivory Coast still largely dependent on foreign aid, the amount of debt it now faces divides economists and often comes under attack by the opposition.

'Nothing to worry about'

"Debt in itself isn't a bad thing but we are facing in Ivory Coast's case unproductive debt," Ahoua Don Mello, vice president of the BRICS group of emerging nations, said. "Out of the 2023 budget, nearly 42 percent is own resources, all the rest is financed by debt infusion," added Don Mello, who is also deputy head of the opposition Party of African Peoples-Ivory Coast. Current debt - owed principally to Western lenders and China - represents 58 percent of GDP, up from 38 percent in 2019. But economists disagree on how sustainable that level is.

Blaise Makaye, an economics researcher at Bouake university, said the recommended ratio of debt to GDP was between 60 and 70 percent. "We haven't exceeded 60 percent, there's nothing to worry about," he said, calling the Ivorian ratio "well below" those of developed countries such as France. But Prao, the economist, says that according to the IMF, for small economies like Ivory Coast, going above 49-percent debt "can be dangerous". He is worried by the country's "high" interest rates and "fragile" economic foundations. "Growth is on credit, civil servants are paid on credit," Prao said.



ABIDJAN: Men sit in front of the Cocody fruits and vegetables market in Abidjan. - AFP

Masking the problems

Economy Minister Adama Coulibaly insists there is no risk of Ivory Coast being unable to repay its debt. He has said that the IMF - which approved \$3.5 billion in loans last May - and the World Bank have described the country's debt as sustainable. He also says neighbors such as Senegal and fellow cocoa producer Ghana have higher debt levels. In 2011, lenders reduced Ivory Coast's external debt by

about 25 percent to help it recover from the crisis.

"That should have made it possible to assign the state's own resources to education and health. But, our resources are not even enough today to cover current expenditure of the state," opposition figure Don Mello said. As long as money continues to be available "on a drip", the problems will not be seen, he added. "But if the infusion is taken away, you'll see there is no longer means to feed the state budget." - AFP

Drought-hit Colombia halts electricity exports to Ecuador

BOGOTA: Colombia has halted electricity exports to neighboring Ecuador as its hydropower plants reach near-critical levels due to a biting drought, the government in Bogota said. The severe dry spell, associated with the El Nino climate phenomenon, has also led to water rationing that is affecting 10 million people in the capital Bogota and surrounding areas.

Mining and Energy Minister Andres Camacho told journalists the country, which gets most of its energy from hydroelectric sources, was taking "all measures" to avoid energy cuts. "Since Easter week, we limited energy exports to Ecuador. Right now, we are not exporting any electricity," Camacho said. Water reservoirs currently stand at 29.8 percent of their capacity, according to the XM national electricity operator. A level of 27 percent is considered critical.

Camacho said that rains were expected soon to break the dry spell and high temperatures which also led to hundreds of forest fires in the country earlier this year. The measure was set to worsen electricity woes in Ecuador, whose President Daniel Noboa on Tuesday declared an emergency in the sector and replaced the energy minister. "I have declared an emergency in the electricity sector, I have asked for the resignation of the Minister of Energy (Andrea Arrobo) and we have begun an investigation into sabotage in certain areas and power plants," Noboa wrote on X.

Arrobo was replaced by transport minister Roberto Luque. Noboa did not give details on what the sabotage entailed, but slammed the "inefficiency and corruption of a few miserable people." On Monday night, Ecuador's energy ministry announced "temporary rationing" due to the drought and asked the population to "reduce energy consumption in this critical week." However, Noboa overrode the order, and announced "we are not going to have more blackouts this week." He also said household electricity bills would be halved this month. - AFP

Taiwan's chip giant TSMC profits surge on AI demand

TAIPEI: Taiwanese semiconductor giant TSMC announced Thursday a nearly 9 percent increase in net profits in the first quarter of 2024, buoyed by global demand for its microchips used to power everything from mobile phones to AI technology. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company - whose clients include Apple and Nvidia - controls more than half the world's output of silicon chips, which have been called the "lifeblood" of the modern world. The company said Thursday its net profit increased 8.9 percent on-year in January-March to NT\$225.4 billion (\$6.97 billion) compared to NT\$206.9 billion in the same period last year. First-quarter revenues also rose 13 percent year-on-year to \$18.87 billion, it said.

CFO Wendell Huang also said during an earnings call Thursday that TSMC expects its second-quarter revenues to increase by 27.6 percent. TSMC, which produces some of the most advanced microchips in the world, dominates the chip-making industry, as well as its customer US-based Nvidia. The bulk of its fabrication plants making its most high-tech products are based in Taiwan, a self-ruled island that is claimed by neighboring China - which has in recent years ramped up political and military pressures on Taipei.



KENDAL, South Africa: This aerial view shows Eskom Kendal power station in Kendal, near Emalaheni. - AFP

World Bank aims to connect Africans to energy grid

WASHINGTON: The World Bank has significantly scaled up its ambition to connect Africans to the electricity grid by 2030, from 100 million to more than 250 million, the Bank's president said Wednesday. The development lender has estimated that around 600 million people in Africa do not currently have access to affordable, reliable electricity—a key factor hampering job creation and economic development on the African continent.

"Back in COP28, the World Bank made a commitment to connect 100 million Africans to affordable energy by 2030," World Bank president Ajay Banga told an event at the Bank's headquarters in Washington. "We're going to multiply that commitment to 250 million people out of that 600," he added.



HSINCHU: A worker walks past the construction site of the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) Research and Development Center at the Hsinchu Science Park in Hsinchu. - AFP

With a supply chain so vulnerable to shocks, customers - as well as governments concerned about critical supplies - have called for the firm to move more chip production lines off the island, which is also prone to natural disasters like earthquakes. Earlier this month, a massive magnitude-7.4 quake hit Taiwan and "a certain number of wafers in process were impacted and had to be scrapped", Huang said. "But we expect most of the lost production to be recovered in the second quarter and thus minimum impact to the second quarter revenue," he said.

Tesla, Starlink on agenda as Musk heads to India

MUMBAI: Tech billionaire Elon Musk is set to visit India as his businesses seek new markets in the world's most populous nation, with electric carmaker Tesla—suffering a sales downturn in the United States—reportedly scouting factory locations. Another Musk-owned business, satellite internet operator Starlink, is set to receive initial approvals to operate in India, a government source told AFP.

Also likely to be on the agenda for the self-described "free speech absolutist" is the large number of content takedowns orders India's government imposes on X, the social media platform he took over in 2022. "Looking forward to meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India!" Musk wrote on X last week without giving a date for the visit. Indian media reports suggest the trip will begin as soon as Sunday and last two days, coming after months of aggressive courtship between the billionaire and Modi.

The two met last June in New York, after which Musk said Modi had pushed the entrepreneur to "make significant investments in India"—something he said his companies intended to do. Tesla is currently battling increased Chinese competition and a demand slump in the United States, with reports claiming the company plans to slash its workforce. Musk, who has described himself as a Modi fan, also said India "has more promise than any large country in the world".

But India often struggles to attract foreign direct investment, even as multinational companies seek alternatives to China, and Musk's admiration has not yet translated into multibillion-dollar commitments. India's steep import taxes for electric vehicles—Musk once complained that they were among the "highest in the world"—have prevented Tesla from making inroads in the absence of local manufacturing. And in 2021, the communications ministry delivered a rare public rebuke to Starlink when it claimed the company had started "preselling" its services in India without a license to operate.

Red carpet

This year though, the government has eased regulations in the hope of attracting greater foreign investment ahead of national elections that will last six weeks beginning Friday. Last month it cut import taxes on electric vehicles for global automakers that committed to invest \$500 million and start local production within three years. The new policy allows companies to import up to 8,000 electric vehicles priced at \$35,000 or higher every year with greatly reduced import duties of 15 percent.

The Financial Times reported earlier this month that Tesla would send a team to scout locations in at least three states for a factory. Indian media has reported that Tesla will first look to import cars from its Berlin factory until it takes a final decision on where to set up a production line. Experts say it's unlikely the Indian market will be an immediate shot-in-the-arm for the company, mostly due to the high price tag of its cars. - AFP



AUSTIN: A Tesla dealership is seen in Austin, Texas. Tesla is planning to lay off more than 10 percent of its employees as the company continues to see a decrease in sales. - AFP

'Significant progress'

The firm had also earlier this month announced plans to build a third semiconductor factory in Arizona - adding to the two fabrication units already in progress there. The preliminary agreement with the US Commerce Department - tied to a major investment law called the Chips and Science Act - would see TSMC receiving up to \$6.6 billion in direct funding from the US government. That would raise its total investment in the United States to \$65 billion. "In Arizona, we have received the strong commitment and support from our US customers and plan to build three fabs... We have made significant progress in our first fab, which has already entered engineering wafer production in April," said CC Wei, the company's CEO.

"We are well on track for volume production in first half of 2025." He added that the second fab in Arizona has been upgraded "to utilize 2-nanometre technologies to support the strong AI-related demand in addition to the previously announced 3-nanometre" chips. TSMC's projects in Arizona have faced some obstacles in the past year, which the company had attributed to a lack of human resources, as making microchips requires a highly specialized skillset. But if successful, the TSMC fabs in Arizona would be the "first time" that super-advanced chips will be made on American soil, said US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo earlier this month. The company had also in February launched a new \$8.6 billion plant in the southern Japanese island of Kyushu - a coup for Japan as it vies with the United States and Europe to woo semiconductor firms with huge subsidies. - AFP

Weekender

FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2024



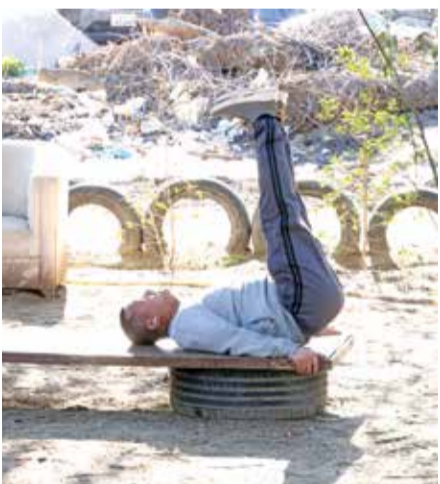
COMMUNITY INGENUITY

Innovative Mahboula residents set up DIY gym from recycled materials



By Faten Omar

The global COVID-19 pandemic undeniably brought about widespread negative impacts on various facets of life. However, amidst the adversity, there have been instances of individuals turning the challenges into opportunities, with lasting effects. One such example emerged in response to the closure of gyms during the pandemic. Some resourceful individuals in Mahboula took it upon themselves to create an outdoor gym using recycled materials with people benefiting from it until now.



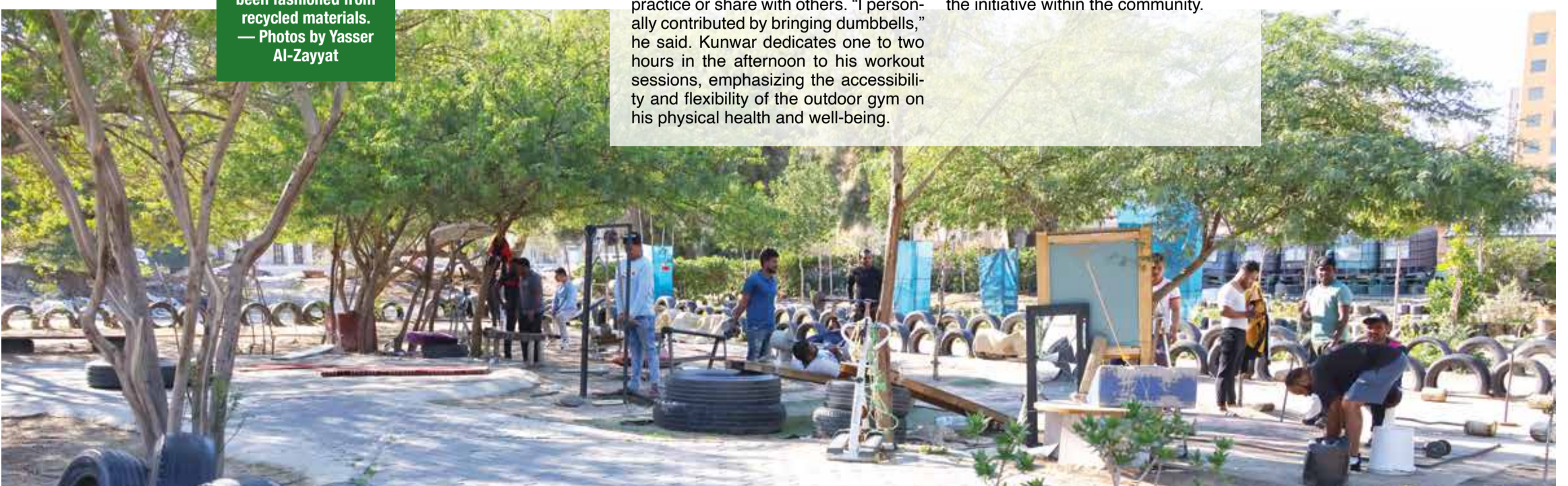
People work out at a makeshift outdoor gym in Mahboula, where all equipment has been fashioned from recycled materials. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

In the middle of an empty yard amid trees and bushes, the outdoor gym was set up by residents, who saw it as a chance to get in shape and participate in learning new techniques on training equipment fashioned from old tyres, cement blocks, broken bicycles, wooden beams and other scrap material. Mangal Singh told Kuwait Times how the outdoor gym provided him with an opportunity to practice his fitness routine in his spare time during Ramadan before iftar. "I have been in Kuwait for five years, and I have been using this gym for the past year," he said.

Krishna Kunwar said he found this hidden gem four months ago, describing it as an excellent place to enhance fitness and shape up. He highlighted the inclusive nature of the space, where individuals are encouraged to bring their own sports and fitness equipment to practice or share with others. "I personally contributed by bringing dumbbells," he said. Kunwar dedicates one to two hours in the afternoon to his workout sessions, emphasizing the accessibility and flexibility of the outdoor gym on his physical health and well-being.

Priyank Patel told Kuwait Times he started training at the outdoor gym in April last year, noting he comes here to exercise and pass his time after work at 4 pm. He said the makeshift gym allows him to enjoy time with friends while having a better lifestyle and better health. He revealed this gym was set up during the COVID-19 pandemic, and provides a cheaper option for Mahboula's residents.

Ratul Ahmed Raton expressed his admiration for the concept of the outdoor gym, acknowledging its popularity among many people. However, he noted the anonymity surrounding the founder of the gym, highlighting the mystery behind its creation. Despite the lack of recognition for the individual or group responsible for establishing the gym, there is no denying the positive impact and widespread acceptance of the initiative within the community.





MAHBOULA

The melting pot of Kuwait

By Chidi Emmanuel

Foreigners often choose to live in areas with other expats or in close proximity to international schools, healthcare facilities and other amenities that cater to their needs. For many expats in Kuwait, Mahboula has become their new home. Some call it the “Chicago of Kuwait”, while others see it as “Little Africa” or “Dubai of Kuwait”.

“I feel at home here. This is like Chicago. I have been living here for the past 12 years. Unlike other parts of Kuwait, Mahboula is exclusive and unique,” Hudson Smith, an American expat, told Kuwait Times as he was strolling with his colleagues near a fitness center in block 1. “It is better here, unlike where we used to stay before in Salmiya. Mahboula is closer to our workplace, and the flats here are cozier and bigger. “This is a Chicago extension,” Smith’s friend Oliver Williams concurred.

In Mahboula, expat communities often arrange events and social gatherings to help individuals and families build connections and make new friends. “We have many African communities here. We organize meetings and football competitions here. Even Africans living elsewhere will have one or two things to do here in Mahboula. There are African restaurants, salons, sporting activities and even a Friday Market here. We live like families, and we feel at home,” Mairam Kojo, a Ghanaian hairstylist, told Kuwait Times.

“Living in a residential area with other foreigners can provide a strong sense of community and support for those adjusting to a new culture. Here, in Mahboula, Africans find com-



fort and familiarity in sharing their experiences, overcoming language barriers and navigating cultural differences with others who are in a similar situation. This sense of belonging can help individuals and families feel more at ease in their new environment. Mahboula for us is like a ‘Little Africa’, just like you have a ‘Little Manila’ in Salmiya,” explained Isaac Adjo, a teacher.

Shared experiences

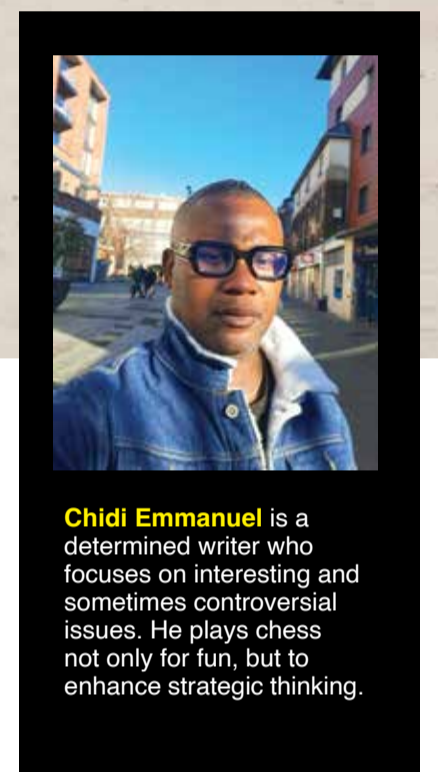
Mahboula is a district on the Arabian Gulf, 36 km south of Kuwait City. It is located in Ahmadi governorate between Fintas and Abu Halifa. In the mid-2000s, Mahboula was essentially uninhabited, with only a few old buildings. During the COVID pandemic, Mahboula, along with Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, was locked down for an extended period, which led to a mass exodus of

residents, but has since recovered and shed its pariah tag.

Reginald Aku explored the social benefits of living in Mahboula. “Living among members of your community has a lot of advantages. Expats can lean on each other for advice and support. We shared experiences dealing with bureaucratic challenges to celebrating our cultural festivals. Additionally, expat communities often organize events and social gatherings to facilitate connections and foster friendships among residents. These opportunities for social interaction can be invaluable in helping expats build a new network of friends and acquaintances,” Aku, a Nigerian engineer, said.

“The issues of language barriers and cultural differences can be a challenge when living in other parts of Kuwait. However, most people speak English, and there are many international communities in the area,” Aku added.

“Living among expats in a residential area offers both benefits and challenges for individuals and families navigating life in a foreign country. While a sense of community, shared experiences and social opportunities can be invaluable, expats must be mindful of the potential limitations on cultural immersion and integration. By striking a bal-



Chidi Emmanuel is a determined writer who focuses on interesting and sometimes controversial issues. He plays chess not only for fun, but to enhance strategic thinking.

ance between comfort and exploration, expats can make the most of their experience abroad and create lasting connections with both expats and locals in their new home,” Caroline Abdoulaye, a Cameroonian expat, advised.

“Unlike other areas in Kuwait, Mahboula is a relatively modern area with a number of international schools catering to students in the area. There is a mix of apartments and villas, many of which are equipped with modern amenities like swimming pools and gyms. The area is also home to several shopping malls, restaurants and cafes, which cater to the needs of the population, so it shouldn’t take you long to feel at home,” Indian expat Anand Kumar told Kuwait Times. “Mahboula is like the Dubai of Kuwait. There are open areas where we can do some sporting activities. I play cricket on Fridays. It has that Dubai-like nature — more foreigners and fewer locals,” Kumar’s friend Das pointed out.



Residents spend their free time strolling and playing sports in the open yards of Mahboula. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Book Review

The Midnight Library by Matt Haig



Matt Haig

By Ghadeer Ghouloum

The Midnight Library" explores the concept of human existence through the lens of quantum physics, which gives this book a unique plot. Following the life of Nora Seed, the protagonist who finds herself in a library that enables her to undo her regrets and take her on a journey through the infinite possibilities of lives she could have lived, the book seamlessly weaves together the complexities of quantum physics.

Through portraying the choices that the protagonist makes, creating the kind of life she lives, The Midnight Library invites readers to think about the interconnectedness of the potential outcomes of their choices. Readers examine questions about the idea of the multiverse, regret, choice, destiny, cause and effect and the nature of



satisfaction and conviction. The book illustrates how each choice we make has the power to shape our reality, prompting us to reflect on our own path and consider the impact of our choices, while embracing the uncertainties and possibilities that reside within ourselves.

"Every universe exists over every other universe. Like a million pictures on tracing paper, all with slight variations within the same frame. The many-worlds interpretation of quantum physics suggests there are an infinite number of divergent parallel universes. Every moment of your life you enter a

new universe. With every decision you make. And traditionally it was thought that there could be no communication or transference between those worlds, even though they happen in the same space, even though they happen literally millimeters away from us." (Haig, 2020).

This book lingers with its readers as it explores deep, unanswered questions of human existence, the intangible and the unknown by exploring quantum physics, which may find an answer to such questions.

Who is the author?

Matt Haig is a British author who is known for his works in both fiction and non-fiction. He has penned several bestselling books. His writing usually explores the human existence and experiences.



What's cooking in our kitchens

Food has the magical ability to bring people together. Cooking with others or sharing recipes close to one's heart can be a great way to get to know people and appreciate different cultures. If you're craving a comforting hug in the form of food, you might be in for a treat this week. In this edition, our staff share two nostalgic household favorites from southwestern India and Egypt. The dishes are not short on flavor, either, with spices and aromatics granted to boost your mood and make your tastebuds sing.

ALEXANDRIAN KOSHARY

By Passant Hisham



While I have always been a top fan of the traditional Egyptian koshary, one day it came to my surprise that there was another koshary recipe that few people are familiar with. Named after my beloved hometown, Alexandria, the flavor of Alexandrian koshary never fails to transport me back to the sound of the sea and the blissful cool breeze that I used to experience there.

I recall the innocent smile that would naturally draw on my face whenever I knew my mother was preparing it for lunch, a smile that still lingers as soon as the first spoonful touches my lips. Once I started to learn how to cook, this was one of the very first recipes that I was eager to try myself. Below is the recipe which my mother and I have adopted.

**Ingredients**

- 1 onion
- 2 cups of white rice
- 2 cups red lentils
- Boiled eggs
- Oil
- Salt and pepper
- Cumin
- Ghee

How to make it

1. Peel and chop the onion.
2. Heat two tablespoons of oil in a pot over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and sauté until softened.
3. Add the rice to the pot and stir carefully to coat it with the oil and onions.
4. Pour in enough water to cover the rice by about 2 cm. Cover the pot and bring it to a boil.
5. Once boiling, lower the heat and add the red lentils to the pot. Sprinkle in a pinch of salt and cumin, then gently stir to combine all the ingredients.

6. Cover the pot and allow the mixture to cook until the rice is fluffy, and the lentils are soft.
7. While the rice and lentils cook, prepare the fried eggs (depending on the quantity that you need). Heat two tablespoons of ghee in a frying pan over medium heat. Add the boiled eggs and sauté until they are golden brown all over. Remove and place them on paper towels to drain any excess oil. Then sprinkle in a pinch of salt and pepper if desired.

Optional

Prepare the fried onions in the same frying pan used for the eggs, add a small cup of oil, then add sliced and salted onion and cook until golden brown and crispy.

To serve

Place a generous portion of the rice and lentil mixture on a plate. Top with caramelized onions and serve the fried eggs on the side.

GOAN FISH MASALA - RECHEADO

By Antonio Coelho



Goa is a small coastal state on the southwest coast of India south of Bombay. It was colonized by the Portuguese. Recheado is the Portuguese word that means stuffed and masala is the Indian word for paste. The paste is often stuffed inside fish like mackerels and pomfrets, sometimes even in veggies like okra. It is spicy with a distinct taste of vinegar. In fact, it is a must-have masala in every Goan household.

Recheado masala, also known as Goan Raechad masala is a fiery and tangy paste. It has a variety of spices, a rich red color and is made with chilies, spices and vinegar. It's my family's favorite recipe and also Goans' favorite. Its rich color and hot and tangy taste will infuse your tastebuds for a long time. It's best eaten with steamed rice, sourak (plain coconut curry) or daal.

Ingredients

20 to 25 Kashmiri red chilies or smoked sweet paprika (Kashmiri red chilies have a beautiful rich red color similar to smoked sweet paprika)

- 10 cloves garlic
- 3-inch fresh ginger
- 10 cloves
- 10 peppercorns or 1 tsp pepper powder
- 1 large cinnamon stick (3-inches)
- 4 green cardamoms
- 1 tsp cumin (jeera)
- 2 tbsp jaggery (Jaggery adds a nice flavor from the coconut sap but you can also use brown sugar or white sugar.)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp tamarind paste (or small golf size ball of fresh tamarind)
- 1/2 cup white vinegar palm



- ¼ cup coconut vinegar or any vinegar available in supermarkets in Kuwait. (Traditionally, this paste is made with coconut vinegar and palm vinegar. But, white vinegar works just as well.)
- 1 large onion
- 1 tbsp cooking oil

How to make it**The masala paste**

1. Soak the chilies in vinegar for 15 minutes. This will soften them and make them easier to grind.
2. To make the masala paste less spicy, deseed the chilies. The seeds are usually spicy so taking them out will reduce the spiciness.

3. Slice onions and sauté them in the oil until caramelized.
4. Place all the ingredients, along with the soaked chilies, spices, and cooked onions in the blender, food processor, or mixer.
5. Grind until smooth adding the vinegar, little at a time. Adding vinegar gradually will give a smoother consistency to the paste. No water must be added.

The fish

1. Clean and slit the fish (such as mackerels, pomfret or salmon, seabass). Pat them dry.
2. Season with salt and pepper. Then spread a generous amount of the masala in between the gap as well as all around. 3. Coat the fish in flour or bread crumbs and pan fry with little oil until cooked.

Other ways to enjoy the masala

You can also use this masala with shrimps or squids then coat them with flour. Dip them in beaten eggs followed by dry bread crumbs. Deep or shallow fry until cooked.

For a vegetarian option, you can use this masala to fill okra or stuff in small split eggplants. Cook in a little oil until tender.



Event: Macbeth by William Shakespeare
Location: DAI
Date: April 19- 20, 2024

Event: Architecture Discussion
Location: ASCC
Date: April 20, 2024
Time: 10 am to 12 pm

Event: Sadu Embroidery Workshop
Location: Sadu House
Date: April 22, 2024
Time: 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

Event: Metaphysical Archeology
Location: CAP
Date: April 30, 2024

Event: Spring Festival Bazaar
Location: PSA in Bayan
Date: April 27, 2024

Event: Saracen Kids Race 2024
Location: Marina Beach
Date: April 20, 2024

Sports

'Champion mindset' as Pant-inspired Delhi hammer Gujarat Titans in IPL

Pant has scored 210 runs, including two half-centuries to boost his chances to T20 WCup

AHMEDABAD: Sharp glove work by skipper Rishabh Pant and some inspired bowling set up a crushing six-wicket win for Delhi Capitals after Gujarat Titans fell to their IPL lowest of 89 on Wednesday. Medium-pace bowler Mukesh Kumar stood out with figures of 3-14 to help bundle out Gujarat in 17.3 overs and Delhi raced to their target in 8.5 overs in Ahmedabad. Delhi, who were without injured David Warner, registered just their third win and second successive of this season to jump three places to sixth in the 10-team table. Pant, who returned to this year's IPL after surviving a horror car crash, stood unbeaten on 16 after Australian batter Jake Fraser-McGurk made a brisk 20.

The 26-year-old Pant, a left-hand batsman, has scored 210 runs, including two half-centuries, in a boost to his chances of a return to the T20 World Cup in June. "Lots of things to be pleased about," said man of the match Pant. "We spoke about champion mindset and our team spoke about it."

On his performance after his recovery, Pant added: "The only thought process before coming to the field is that I wanted to come in a better way, that's the only thought when I was going through my rehab. "Each and every match I am loving the process and being on the ground."

Pant suffered multiple injuries when his Mercedes rammed into a barrier, flipped and caught fire in December 2022. He was hospitalized before being airlifted to Mumbai for further treatment and surgery.

India fast bowler Ishant Sharma dismissed captain Shubman Gill for eight in the second over of the match and Gujarat kept losing wickets to some disciplined bowling. The fielding remained impressive after Sumit Kumar sent back Sai Sudarshan for 12 with a direct throw at the non-striker's end.

Pant was nimble behind the stumps and started with a diving catch to dismiss David Miller off Ishant. The wicketkeeper affected two stumpings when his quick work sent back Abhinav Manohar, for eight, and Shahrulh Khan, for a duck in the space of three balls off South African spinner Tristan Stubbs.

Gujarat slipped to 66-7, but Rashid Khan resisted from one end with his gritty 31 off 24 balls before he fell caught behind with Pant taking a regulation catch behind the stumps. "Our batting was very average, but it's important to move on and come back strong," said Gill. "The wicket was alright, if you see some of the dismissals, it had nothing to do with the pitch."

Gujarat's total is the lowest this season in a contrast to some big scores including two record highs of 277 and then 287 by Sunrisers Hyderabad. — AFP



AHMEDABAD: Delhi Capitals' captain Rishabh Pant (R) plays a shot during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Delhi Capitals and Gujarat Titans at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. — AFP

McKeown swims fourth fastest 400m medley ever

GOLD COAST: A red-hot Kaylee McKeown swam the fourth fastest women's 400m medley in history Thursday but said she did not plan to race it at the Paris Olympics. The 22-year-old, who owns world records in all three backstroke disciplines, displayed her versatility at the Australian championships on the Gold Coast to hit the wall in 4min 28.22sec.

It shattered the Australian record set by Stephanie Rice at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and was nearly six seconds quicker than anyone else this year. Only Canada's Summer McIntosh and Hungary's Katinka Hosszu have gone faster.

It came a day after McKeown became only the fifth woman to dip under 2:07 in the 200m medley, again breaking Rice's long-time Australian record.

But while the 200 is set to be on her Paris schedule, along with the backstroke events, she said the 400 would not despite being a serious medal prospect. "Nope," she said poolside when asked if she would swim the 400m at Australia's Olympic trials in June. "One and done, that's me."

"I've done it and I'm glad I've done it. It's good to challenge yourself." In focusing on the 400m medley, McKeown was a no-show in the 100 backstroke despite being Olympic champion.

In her absence, Mollie O'Callaghan, who led home a world-class 100m freestyle final on Wednesday, touched first in a personal best 58.09

Only McKeown and American rival Regan Smith have gone faster this year. "I would like to go 57, but swimming backstroke out here is very hard," said O'Callaghan, who confirmed she would contest the event at the Olympic trials.

Reigning Olympic champion Zac Stubblety-Cook took out the 200m breaststroke in a race boasting three former world record holders. He came home by a fingertip in 2:07.50 ahead of Japan's Ippei Watanabe (2:07.62), who was racing on an invitation. Stubblety-Cook lost his world record to China's Qin Haiyang last year and said he wanted it back. "Absolutely. You get to the top and realise how good it is and you desperately want to get back there," he said. — AFP



SOUTHPORT: Australia's Kaylee McKeown reacts after winning the women's open 200m individual medley during the 2024 Australian Open Swimming Championships at Gold Coast Aquatic Centre in Southport on April 17, 2024. — AFP

Kuwait table tennis team in Amman

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Disabled Table Tennis team arrived in Amman, Jordan to participate in the 15th Al-Watani International Table Tennis Championship to be held from April 18th until 23rd with more than 90 players participating from 16 countries. Kuwait's delegation is headed



Kuwait National Disabled Table Tennis team

Korda chases LPGA history at Chevron Championship

LOS ANGELES: World number one Nelly Korda will be chasing a record-equalling fifth straight LPGA triumph when the Chevron Championship, the first women's major of the year, tees off on Thursday in Texas.

The American, who pushed her 2024 winning streak to four tournaments with a victory in the LPGA Match Play in Las Vegas this month, could match the five-tournament streaks achieved by Nancy Lopez in 1978 and Annika Sorenstam in 2005.

But the 25-year-old said she'll be focusing only on the task at hand — adding a second major victory to the Women's PGA Championship she won in 2021. "I'm so in the present that I don't let myself think about (the streak) too much," Korda said. "I feel like that just comes with a little bit more added pressure."

Instead Korda was concentrating on conquering the par-72 course in The Woodlands in suburban Houston, which is now home to the championship long-staged at Mission Hills in Rancho Mirage, California.

Ireland's Leona Maguire got a close-up view of Korda's dominant form as she fell to the American 4&3 in the Match Play final two weeks ago. "Obviously Nelly is

by Duaij Al-Hajiri, with Ahmad Al-Khalidi as official and Abdurraheem Ali as coach.

Kuwait team players are: Awadh Al-Harby, Mohammad bin Jabal, Hassan Ibrahim, Ali Al-Sanie, Mohammad Al-Rashidi, Anfal Al-Dhafaeri and Bader Al-Nima.

Al-Hajiri said "our table tennis team seeks to win several medals despite the expected tough competition", adding that this international participation is the first for the team this season, and players were prepared well through a local tournament during the month of Ramadan.

Inter seeking Milan derby Serie A title

MILAN: Inter Milan can secure their 20th Serie A title on Monday by piling on more humiliation on AC Milan in one of the most hotly-anticipated city derbies in years. Milan derbies are always big events as two of Europe's grand old clubs do battle in one of the world's most recognizable and atmospheric stadiums.

But Monday night's clash has even more at stake than usual as Inter can ram their superiority down Milan's throats by claiming both local bragging rights and the Scudetto with five matches of the season to spare. Regardless of what happens Inter should beat Milan to a 20th league crown as they have a near unassailable 14-point lead over their city rivals.

But a sixth straight derby victory would further highlight the football power shift in Italy's economic capital, where two teams who have been crowned European champions a combined 10 times are locked on 19 Serie A titles.

It would also be sweet revenge for Milan beating Inter to the 2022 Scudetto on the final day, when many observers agreed Simone Inzaghi had thrown away the chance to claim his first league title as a coach.

Inzaghi had been labelled a cup manager throughout his career. However, after losing to Manchester City in last season's Champions League final his Inter team — helped by some judicious moves in the summer transfer market — have kicked on to become Italy's dominant team.

Inter will have a full squad available and a full week's rest in preparation for the derby while Milan will try to pull back a 1-0 deficit against Roma in the Europa League quarter-finals on Thursday night.

Also on Monday Bologna will continue their bid for a first ever appearance in the modern Champions League when they travel to Roma. Seven-time Italian champions Bologna have only played one round in the old European Cup in the 1964, the same year they last won the Scudetto, but are fourth and have a great chance to reach Europe's top club competition.

With a top-five finish almost guaranteed to secure a spot in the Champions League Bologna are eight points ahead of sixth-placed Atalanta, who are at Monza on Sunday but also have a game in hand to play against Fiorentina.

If Thiago Motta succeeds in guiding his Bologna team to a Champions League spot it will be without his Scottish captain Lewis Ferguson, who will miss Euro 2024 with a knee ligament injury suffered last weekend.

Ferguson being out is a huge blow for Bologna as he was key to the running of their midfield. Roma have done so well under Daniele De Rossi that on Thursday the club announced he would be staying on "for the foreseeable future" after revitalizing the capital club since taking over when Jose Mourinho was sacked in January.

Since De Rossi took charge Roma have only lost twice, against Inter and Brighton when their last-16 Europa League tie had already been put to bed in the first leg. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

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

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, Mohammed Irshad Mohammed Ramzan Kureshi Holder of Indian Passport No. M2286361 & Aadhar No. 9117 0717 4008, having permanent address, Room no 403/C MK NAGAR 48/A-B-C Navpada Bandra East Mumbai -400051 Maharashtra India, residing in Kuwait at hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as : Given name : Irshad Ramzan and Surname : Qureshi. (#5195) 19/04/2024

Andhra Pradesh, India residing In Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as : given name Mohammed Waseem and surname Shaik. (#5196) 19/04/2024

I, Waseem Shaik, Holder of Indian Passport No. V7777213 having permanent address 20-1235-3, Municipal Quarters Meeramohiddin Darga Kotam, Potti Sriramulu Nellore, Pin: 524001,

I, Sukhpreet Singh Brar, holder of Indian Passport No. T4011071 having permanent address Vill Rataul Rohi Po Sodhiwala The Zira, Ferozepur, Pin: 142050, Punjab, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: given name Sukhpreet Singh. (#5196) 19/04/2024

Real exact revenge on Man City to reach Champions League semis

Madrid will face Bayern Munich in the last four



MANCHESTER: Real Madrid's German defender #22 Antonio Rudiger celebrates with teammates after scoring the penalty shootout during the UEFA Champions League quarter-final second-leg football match between Manchester City and Real Madrid, at the Etihad Stadium, in Manchester. — AFP

MANCHESTER: Real Madrid exacted revenge on Manchester City to reach the Champions League semi-finals 4-3 on penalties after withstanding a barrage at the Etihad on Wednesday. Rodrygo gave the visitors an early lead before Kevin De Bruyne hit back for the holders to leave the match level at 1-1 on the night and 4-4 on aggregate.

However, City's defence of the competition came to an end after Bernardo Silva and Mateo Kovacic saw spot-kicks saved by Madrid's unlikely hero Andriy Lunin. The Ukrainian, who has deputised this season for the injured Thibaut Courtois, had been at fault for City's early opener in a thrilling first leg but more than made amends.

Madrid will face Bayern Munich in the last four after the German giants beat Arsenal 3-2 on aggregate. City had not lost at home in the Champions League since 2018 but the holders were held at bay by a heroic defensive effort by the 14-time European champions despite having 34 attempts on goal.

"It's so difficult. They are continuously probing with the ball and move you around. Most teams would fall apart when City get on top of you but we stood up really well," said Madrid midfielder Jude Bellingham. "Today it came down to mentality."

City also edged a semi-final first leg thriller 4-3 on home soil two years ago only to be stunned by a late Madrid fightback in the return leg. "In other sports for the stats we would win but football is like this and it's marvellous," said Guardiola.

"Congratulations to Madrid because their capacity to resist and defend till the end, they did so fantastically. We didn't manage to score in the final pass or final shot. "I don't have any regrets. Always we try to create more and concede less (than the opponent) and we did everything."

Carlo Ancelotti's men flipped the script on Wednesday with an assured start that was rewarded in the opening goal. Bellingham plucked the ball out of the sky with an immaculate touch to set Real

roaming down the right. Vinicius Junior picked out the unmarked Rodrygo and he tapped in the rebound after his first effort was parried by Brazilian international teammate Ederson.

Doku makes difference

If City were slow to warm to their task they quickly had Madrid penned against the ropes but failed to land a telling blow for 76 minutes. Erling Haaland failed to score for a fourth consecutive clash between the sides but has rarely come up closer than when his looping header came back off the crossbar and left Silva no time to adjust to turn in the rebound.

Lunin was forced to turn behind De Bruyne's shot from outside the box and the tenacious Antonio Rudiger deflected Jack Grealish's effort into the side-netting. The Madrid goalkeeper saved two more efforts from Grealish at the start of the second half before Guardiola sacrificed the England international for the extra pace of Jeremy Doku.

That proved an inspired change as Rudiger failed to deal with a Doku cross and presented the ball perfectly for De Bruyne to smash into the roof of the net 14 minutes from time. De Bruyne should have turned the tie around single-handedly as he then blazed a glorious chance over. However, City's threat was blunted during extra-time as both Haaland and De Bruyne had to be replaced. It was Real who had the best chance of the extra 30 minutes when Rudiger sliced over with a clear sight of goal after staying forward from a rare Madrid corner.

But the German defender was still to have the decisive say as he slotted in the final penalty of the shootout. Ederson's save from Luka Modric had given City an early lead. But Lunin calmly collected Silva's attempted chip down the middle and then denied Kovacic low to his right. Bellingham, Lucas Vazquez and Nacho put Madrid on the brink before Rudiger landed the fatal blow to City's hopes of a second consecutive treble. — AFP



Kuwaiti taekwondo team clinch 11 more medals at GCC games

ABU DHABI: Kuwait's male and female taekwondo players continued victories at the First Youth GCC Games adding 11 medals to their tally on Wednesday. Kuwait's tally of medals rose to 27 - eight gold, eight silver and 11 bronze on the second day of the games.

Of the 11 new medals, Abdulaziz Emad clinched a gold, Othman Al-Enzi, Khaled Talal, Abdul Rahman Al-Oseimi, Hoda Al-Amar, Fatema Hani, Shahd Al-Ajmi and Hawra Al-Damkhi won silver medals each,

and Youssef Al-Shemmeri, Rakan Al-Ajmi and Othman Talal won bronze each.

Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Al-Sabah, vice-president of Kuwait Olympic Committee and head of the country's mission to the games, welcomed the achievements of the taekwondo team so far, wishing the other teams of the country follow suit.

Sheikh Mubarak thanked, in a press statement, the UAE for hosting and neatly organizing the games. President of Kuwait Taekwondo Federation Hani Al-Mershad took pride in the results made by the national team in the first two days of the games, saying that the results signal that taekwondo bears great promise as a popular game for Kuwaiti youth. The First Youth GCC Games opened yesterday and continues until May 2 with 210 players from the GCC member states vying for medals in 19 competitions. — KUNA

Bayern past Arsenal into Champions League semis

MUNICH: A 63rd-minute Joshua Kimmich header gave Bayern Munich a 1-0 win over Arsenal and a place in the Champions League semi-finals on Wednesday. The 3-2 aggregate quarter-final victory means Bayern return to the last-four for the first time since winning the title in 2020.

Bayern will face either Manchester City or Real Madrid for a place in the final. The result continues a poor week for Arsenal, who conceded top spot in the Premier League table on Sunday with their first league loss of 2024.

"We can enjoy this one. The first half was cagey and then we upped the tempo," Bayern striker Harry Kane told TNT. "These games are tough and we had to find our way through them. "It's going to be a tough semi final whoever we play." Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta said his side had "wanted it so badly". "However, you can see with many other clubs that sometimes it takes six or seven years to get to that stage. We were very close, that is the reality."

Unlike last week's four-goal spectacle in London, Wednesday's match was a cagey affair, with few clear chances for either side in a testy opening half. Midway through the second-half and with extra-time on the horizon, Kimmich burst through the Arsenal box and headed in a perfect Raphael Guerreiro chip.

Guerreiro, pushed from wing-back to the forwards due to Bayern's injury woes, impressed as a creative presence when freed up from his usual defensive duties. Six-time Champions League winners Bayern join fellow Bundesliga side Borussia Dortmund, who face Paris Saint-Germain, in the semi-



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's Moroccan defender #40 Noussair Mazraoui (R) and Arsenal's English midfielder #07 Bukayo Saka vie for the ball during the UEFA Champions League quarter-final second leg football match between FC Bayern Munich and Arsenal FC in Munich, southern Germany. — AFP

nals. Hit by injuries to several first-team attackers including former Arsenal winger Serge Gnabry—who scored along with Kane in the first leg—and Kingsley Coman, Tuchel pushed Guerreiro into an unfamiliar advanced role.

The move worked early, with the Portuguese finding space down the left flank and linking well with Jamal Musiala in the centre. Arteta opted for the defensive stability of Takehiro Tomiyasu in place of Jakub Kiwior at left-back to neutralise Leroy Sane but the Japanese, who was making his first start since December, notably lacked rhythm.

Tomiyasu completely misjudged a Musiala pass early, allowing Sane to stroll through the Arsenal box and force a corner. Gabriel Martinelli was the visitors' most dangerous player in the opening half. He scuffed a curling ball just wide of the post after seven minutes and then shot directly at Manuel Neuer with the goal beckoning on the half-hour mark. — AFP