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**Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait - Egypt Achieves 137% Growth in Net Profit to EGP 6.6 Billion in 2024**

Ali Marafi: The robust growth rates achieved is attributed to the Bank's prudent strategy and agile operating model Page 11



## Opinion



### Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

I WISH those who boast about the naive saying "born of her womb" (referring to original native Kuwaiti citizens) would take the time to understand its meaning, why it was used in some neighboring countries, and for what purpose.

This boastful attitude should ideally serve Kuwait, its people, and its history. However, the reality is that it is a hollow boast, one that does more harm than good. It divides rather than unites and reflects a complete disregard for the spirit of tolerance on which Kuwait was built 400 years ago.

Kuwait has long strived to instill a sense of humanity, which has grown into a rich cultural tradition. These values of openness and Kuwait's cultural message to the Arab world are what we should truly take pride in.

From a sociological standpoint, every person born on a particular land is considered a "child of that land" if the reference is to the place of birth, not nationality. This is why the universal legal principle holds that "everyone born in the airspace of any country or on board any aircraft acquires its nationality."

Unfortunately, some ignorant statements have recently gained traction, threatening to tear apart the social fabric and undermine national unity. This is happening at a time when we need solidarity and unity the most, not division, especially amid extremely sensitive international and regional circum-

stances, where major powers are actively seeking to fragment the region.

Meanwhile, these ignorant voices are creating a rift within society. They have ignored the principles laid out by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad in his inspiring speeches about the importance of national unity. They also fail to recognize the implications of their words.

Kuwait is home to citizens of nearly 200 nationalities, with hundreds of individuals born here each year. All of these individuals can be described as "born in Kuwait" since they were born here, but they hold the nationalities of their respective countries.

That is why we must put things into perspective and speak frankly.

When the new era began its efforts to purify national identity, the lofty goal was never to oppress anyone, but rather to establish justice and uphold the

law. The aim was to halt the downward trend caused by tampering with identity documents and to limit those who obtained Kuwaiti citizenship through fraudulent means for personal gain, not for the benefit of the country. As a result, we have seen cases of dual nationals, forgers, and pretenders who sought citizenship using false information and fraudulent registration of children who were not biologically theirs. These cases, however, remain rare, regardless of their number.

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# Call for reforms as Kuwait divorce rate surges 84,442

Raising marriage age to 18 gains support

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 22:** With the number of divorces among Kuwaitis rising to 84,442 according to official statistics at the end of December last year, several lawyers and human rights experts have called for amendments to the Personal Status Law, particularly with regard to alimony and child visitation.

They emphasized the need for return of visitation location to the courts and the imposition of harsher penalties for those who fail to comply with the requirements.

While several lawyers have indicated that refining the current law has long been overdue and has led to family disintegration, others have called for raising the marriage age for both men and women to 18 years, enabling women to complete their education, exercise their right to choose a suitable spouse and bear the consequences of marriage.

Attorney Fawaz Al-Shallahi support the Ministry of Justice's move to refine the Personal Status Law, believing this step is long overdue and should have been decided years ago.

He said the new law must include amendments to the articles pertaining to divorce to impose numerous restrictions in order to curb the rising divorce rate in the country, taking into consideration the remarkable increase in recent years.

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Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

A powerful lightning bolt lights up the sky over Hawally as a fierce thunderstorm rolled through Kuwait on Friday evening.



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

The Grand Mosque comes alive with devotion as worshippers unite in prayer on the 22nd night of Ramadan.

## Mosques in Kuwait overflow with devotion as worshippers observe 22nd Ramadan night

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 22:** Mosques continued to welcome a large number of worshippers on the 22nd night of Ramadan; as both the mosques and their courtyards are brimming with people performing Qiyam prayer.

These people gathered seeking for mercy,

forgiveness and protection from Hellfire; making the most of the blessings of this sacred time.

As the blessed nights progressed, mosques in various parts of the country became places of spiritual devotion; filled with worshippers reciting prayers, clinging to the hope of witnessing the Night of Decree (Laylat Al-Qadr) -- the holiest night of the year.

Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi visited several mosques during these nights, including Bilal bin Rabah Mosque, which is under the Hawally Governorate Mosques Administration; as well as Ibn Taymiyyah Mosque and Wabisah bin Ma'bad Mosque in Sabah Al-Ahmad.

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## Kuwait Airways resumes Heathrow flights following power outage crisis

**KUWAIT CITY, March 22,** (Agencies): Kuwait Airways (KAC) said Friday it will be resuming flights to and from Heathrow Airport Saturday after a power outage forced suspension of air traffic at Europe's busiest airport.

The flag carrier's flights KU101 and

KU107 will take off as per schedule, while the flight KU103 from Heathrow to Kuwait, originally slated for Friday, has been rescheduled for the early morning of Saturday.

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Travellers check the information board in London, Saturday, March 22, 2025, as Heathrow Airport slowly resumes flights after a fire cut power to Europe's busiest airport. (AP)

## Schools face surge in student absenteeism

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 22:** Although the educational districts have taken various measures and implemented regulations to curb student absenteeism, schools in various educational districts reported alarmingly high absenteeism rates on Thursday.

Some schools witnessed up to 50 percent of students absent, while others recorded a rate as high as 90 percent. Notably, this trend was not observed in the schools for girls at the same extent.

This recurring issue, particularly prevalent before holidays and exams, prompted school administrations to take immediate action. In many cases, they allowed the few students who attended to leave early and contacted parents to arrange for their return home. The overwhelming absence of students rendered it impractical for schools to continue the day's activities.

Despite the educational districts' tremendous efforts to address absenteeism; the phenomenon continues to worsen, especially during certain periods like the days leading up to official holidays and exams. This has forced educational authorities to take additional measures to mitigate its impact on students' academic progress.

In response, the General Administration of the Jahra Educational District issued an official circular, a copy of which was obtained by the newspaper, addressing all educational levels and kindergartens.

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## Cabinet okays amendments to criminal procedures law

**KUWAIT CITY, March 22,** (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet has approved the proposed amendments to Articles (188) and (230) of the Criminal Procedures and Trials Law, which address practical issues affecting the course of justice.

In a press statement on Thursday, Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait said that amending Article (188) would include electronic notification of judgments in absentia, allowing for more speedy notification, thus reducing the length of litigation.

He added that amending Article (230), addressing the accumulation of criminal fines, would enable the Public Prosecution to collect the fines directly from the convicted person or by deducting an amount not exceeding a quarter of his salary, with the possibility of paying the amount in installments over a period of up to five years.

Al-Sumait pointed out that these amendments would protect the public fund, enhance the ability to enforce judgments, prevent convicts from escaping punishment, consolidate the rule of law, and take into account the human and realistic dimensions of convicts.

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## 8 Markaz Real Estate products deliver high performance and returns for 2024



## 9 Gulf Bank approves the distribution of 10% cash dividends and 5% bonus shares for 2024



## 10 Kuwait International Bank holds AGM and EGM with 76.6% shareholder attendance

### Ramadan Timings

Iftar ..... Sunday ..... 18:02  
Imsak ..... Monday ..... 04:27

### NewsWatch

**KUWAIT CITY:** Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi held a meeting on Thursday with the relevant medical teams to discuss and approve the necessary preparations and arrangements in mosques during the last 10 days of the holy month of Ramadan.

A statement by the Ministry of Health said that this comes within the framework of the Ministry's commitment to ensuring worshippers' health and safety during the holy month of Ramadan and confirms its ongoing efforts since the beginning of this blessed month.

The statement noted that during the meeting, the Minister listened to a detailed explanation from the specialized medical teams about the approved medical emergency plan.

The plan aims to enhance medical preparedness and ensure the provision of services with the highest standards of quality and efficiency, ensuring a rapid response to emergency health cases. (KUNA)

## Prayer Timings

Fajr .....	04:30	Asr .....	15:23
Sunrise ..	05:50	Maghrib ..	18:01
Zohr .....	11:55	Isha .....	19:17

# Local

## Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Warm with moderate to fresh northwesterly wind, with speeds of 20-55 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas and some scattered clouds will appear.

**By Night:** Rather cold with light

## Weather

to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas northwesterly wind, with speeds of 15-55 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	25	15
Kuwait Airport	24	14

Abdaly	25	14
Bubyan	25	16
Jahra	26	16
Failaka Island	25	16
Salmiyah	23	16
Ahmadi	22	10
Jal Aliyah	25	14
Nuwaisib	25	18

## 'Quality care for children with Down Syndrome'

Kuwait proud to undertake national duty: Dr Al-Huwailah

**KUWAIT CITY, March 22, (KUNA):** Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs **Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah**, emphasized on Friday that the State of Kuwait's dedication to providing quality care for children with Down Syndrome demonstrates a profound humanitarian commitment. This commitment reflects Kuwait's unwavering belief in justice, equal opportunities, and the preservation of human dignity.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on the occasion of World Down Syndrome Day, which is observed annually on March 21, Al-Huwailah highlighted that under the guidance of Kuwait's wise leadership and its national institutions, the country continues to advance its system of services and comprehensive care for individuals with Down Syndrome. This initiative aims to address their diverse needs while ensuring their psychological and social stability, as well as enhancing their quality of life, alongside that of their families.

The Minister further pointed out that the Public Authority for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities is constantly improving its specialized rehabilitation programs and updating

its services to align with international best practices. Moreover, it is intensifying efforts in collaboration with various governmental and civil organizations to ensure that beneficiaries have efficient and effective access to these services.

Al-Huwailah also praised the dedicated efforts and fruitful cooperation of families, civil society organizations, and national professionals working in this sector. She noted that this collective effort reflects the exceptional solidarity and compassion embedded in Kuwaiti society. She reaffirmed that Kuwait will always remain committed to its noble humanitarian mission, prioritizing humanity above all.

In conclusion, Al-Huwailah stressed that caring for individuals with Down Syndrome is a national duty that Kuwait is proud to undertake. She reiterated the country's ongoing commitment to ensuring a bright future for children with Down Syndrome, rooted in Kuwait's steadfast humanitarian vision and moral responsibility to every citizen.

Kuwait on Friday marked the World Down Syndrome Day, aiming at raising public awareness of Down Syndrome and supporting those with it. Down Syndrome occurs when an individual has an extra partial (or whole) copy of chromosome 21, causing an increase in the number of chromosomes from 46 to 47. It is not yet known why this syndrome occurs, but Down Syndrome has always been a part of the human condition.

Adequate access to health care, to early intervention programs, and to inclusive education, as well as appropriate research, are vital to the growth and development of the individual. On Kuwaiti health services in this regard, Head of the Kuwait Medical Genetic Center (KMGC) Dr. Laila Bastaki told KUNA that the center provides those with Down Syndrome with integrated services based on pre-implantation genetic testing.

They also include fetal abnormality detection, postpartum diagnosis and intensive and continued follow-up for babies, she said, adding that follow-up is meant to prevent and detect relevant complications.

She elaborated that Down Syndrome occurs due to an abnormal number of chromosomes during the division of embryo cells immediately following the fertilization of the egg into the uterus.

This happens, she added, when a child is born with 47 chromosomes in lieu of the normal 46, due to an extra copy of chromosome 21, which can cause the body and brain to develop differently than a child without the Syndrome.

Dr. Bastaki said that the Down incidence rate increases when the mother is over 40 years old and that the estimated incidence of Down Syndrome is one in 800 children. However, one in 32 children is born with Down syndrome if the mother is over 45 years old, while one in 2,000 children has the problem when the mother is less than 32 years old.

She explained that symptoms mainly include facial abnormalities, delayed mental and physical growth, not to mention some complications bearing on heart, thyroids and intestines.



Dr Al-Huwailah



Event flyer

## Tajikistan, Kuwait mark 30 years of fruitful ties of friendship, fraternity



Ambassador of Tajikistan to Kuwait Zubaydullah Zubaydov and other ambassadors at the cake-cutting ceremony.



Ambassador of Tajikistan to Kuwait Zubaydullah Zubaydov poses for a picture with the ambassadors.

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 22:** Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Tajikistan to Kuwait Zubaydullah Zubaydov said the holy month of Ramadan and the spring holiday (Nowruz) this year coincide with Tajikistan's celebration of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Kuwait marking 30 years of cooperation, friendship and joint work in political, economic and cultural fields.

In a speech during the Ramadan Ghabqa he organized at the embassy, Zubaydov stressed "we have built bridges of trust and mutual respect. The scope of understanding has expanded in regional and international forums, in addition to strengthening trade and investment partnerships. Today, as we celebrate this achievement, we look forward to further strengthening our integrated relations and intensifying our efforts to achieve stability, peace and prosperity for our people. Our collective celebration of these auspicious occasions demonstrates the pivotal role that lofty humanitarian principles play in advancing peace and development in the world. The values we draw from Ramadan and the spring



UK Ambassador to Kuwait and other ambassadors at the event.

festival 'Nowruz' urge us to unite and demonstrate true solidarity in facing common challenges."

He confirmed the commitment to continue the close cooperation between Tajikistan and Kuwait in regional and international forums, while enhancing coordination to achieve stability, security and sustainable development.

He extended his deepest thanks and appreciation to the Kuwaiti government and people for the warm welcome and generous hospitality he received during his visits to Kuwaiti diwanis during the holy month of Ramadan, "reflecting the depth of the ancient traditions and values of brotherhood and solidarity deeply rooted in the conscience of this generous country."

He explained that Nowruz is an international holiday celebrated by the United Nations, pointing out that the conjunction of Ramadan with Nowruz increases the joy of the meeting and gives it unique spiritual and cultural dimensions. Nowruz is the holiday of the arrival of the spring season in many agricultural societies and the beginning of the harvest season traditionally. It is celebrated internationally on March 21 of each year, as declared by the United Nations in honor of its ancient history and humanitarian dimensions.

### Workers city, sewage project hot on agenda

## Kuwait-China bolster ties, implement major projects

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 22:** Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Samih Hayat has confirmed that consultations between the Kuwaiti and Chinese governments take place almost daily to guarantee the successful implementation of the agreements signed during His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to China.

Hayat made this announcement in a press briefing on the sidelines of his annual Ramadan Ghabqa -- a dinner held in honor of the heads of diplomatic missions of Asian countries in Kuwait, which took place at his diwanis recently.

He stressed that three out of the seven agreements signed between the two countries have been completed, with three others currently in the process of being signed. The seventh agreement is on cooperation between 26 Kuwaiti and 26 Chinese entities, focusing on strengthening coordination between the two governments. He also affirmed Kuwait's commitment to advance this coordination.

He added that his visit to China was aimed at fostering progress and engaging in consultations with the Chinese side on major projects.

He revealed that a Chinese government-nominated company will visit Kuwait to discuss the implementation of a sewage project with the

Ministry of Public Works on March 22 and 28; while the Chinese assistant transport minister is scheduled to visit Kuwait from April 6 to 18. "The company nominated for the Mubarak Port project is affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Transport," he added.

Regarding the workers and residential cities project, Hayat indicated "we are awaiting the Chinese government's nomination of a State-owned company with the expertise and proven success in delivering large-scale projects."

He said "Kuwait has long sought to strengthen ties with the Far East and the time has come to move forward with the projects that have been signed, especially since all the necessary approvals have been obtained. The executive memoranda of understanding and detailed roadmaps for some of these initiatives will be signed soon."

On the Ghabqa, he explained that this blessed tradition aims to familiarize ambassadors with Kuwaiti customs and heritage; offering a unique opportunity to engage with them outside the formal setting of official meetings.

**KUNA adds:** Arab ambassadors to Beijing stressed the im-

portance on strengthening China-Arab relations in various fields.

The remarks were made in statements the ambassadors made during an annual iftar banquet at Kuwait House, hosted by Kuwaiti Ambassador to China **Jassim Al-Najem**.

The Ambassadors emphasized the importance of the China-Arab summit scheduled to be held in Beijing next year, 2026, which will discuss many important issues for both Arab and Chinese sides at the regional and international levels.

They emphasized that China attaches great importance to Middle Eastern issues, as reflected in numerous joint initiatives, particularly its positive stance on the Palestinian conflict, and its opposition to actions and behaviors that violate international law and international humanitarian law.

Kuwaiti Ambassador to Beijing Al-Najem praised the outcomes of the Arab-Chinese summit hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2022 and welcomed the holding of the second Arab-Chinese summit next year.

Ambassador Al-Najem emphasized that the State of Kuwait and Arab countries attach top priority to strengthening their strategic partnership with China in various fields through establishing sustainable partnerships.

Previously, the State of Kuwait has submitted a bid to host the third Arab-Chinese Summit in 2030.



Samih Hayat

## MoSA to fill vacant supervisory positions after Eid break

**KUWAIT CITY, March 22:** The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) will fill vacant supervisory positions after the Eid Al-Fitr holidays, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

They explained that several supervisory em-

ployees had resigned from various sectors of the ministry, including six department directors, supervisors, and section heads.

The ministry had previously filled vacancies caused by retirements. The ministry plans to appoint young individuals to all po-

sitions, in order to transform the Ministry of Social Affairs into a fully youth-driven entity that keeps pace with developments and modern trends, in line with the regulations and conditions set by the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

### AL marks 80th anniversary

## Arab League has done well to promote Arab causes globally



KUNA photo  
Kuwait's Permanent Delegate at the Arab League Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi.

**CAIRO, March 22, (KUNA):** The State of Kuwait's Permanent Delegate at the Arab League Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi has affirmed that the organization throughout eight decades has proven capable of leading the joint Arab action and mirroring the real status of Arab causes.

Ambassador Al-Mutairi, in a statement to KUNA marking the league's 80s anniversary, said the organization is a basis for the multi-party joint Arab action, noting its noticeable presence on the international arenas through cooperation with regional and international organizations.

Joining the Arab League was one of the first steps that had been taken by the State of Kuwait after independence out of its advocacy of the necessity to join such a coalition that expresses the Arab identity and brings peoples of the region together, he said.

Kuwait's joining the league has paved the way for it to join the international community, obtain membership of regional and international organization, thus directly contributing to the manifestation of its real status, namely the great potentials for supporting the joint Arab action. Al-Mutairi added.

Kuwait hinges on the Arab League as the main umbrella for the peoples of the Arab region, he said, affirming that it has succeeded in defending the Arab causes.

The Arab League was established on March 22, 1945. Its charter was signed at the time by Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen.

# diwaniya

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## Is it better to adopt backward, medieval designs by Houthis?

“YEMEN suffered from the recurring civil wars. In the northern part of the country, the religious movement was dominant, while in the South, the regime was secular and Marxist. The two sides clashed, leading to civil wars in 1972 and 1979.” **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.



Al-Dawas

“A series of failed Yemeni governments emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, and the country descended into civil war in the 1990s. In the North, the Houthis (named after their leader, Hussein Al-Houthi, and a Zaidi sect that makes up less than half of Yemen’s population) felt that their government did not care about their well-being and had marginalized them.

“When the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ erupted in 2011, the Houthis were emboldened and established their own mini-state in Saada in North Yemen, with its own executive system, schools and police. They even went as far as to demand a change in the Yemeni government, ignoring the human and material losses resulting from their dangerous behavior. The government proposed a federal system, but the Houthis rejected it because it would grant them a region with limited resources and no access to the sea, and would deprive them of government positions.

“The Houthis took up arms and overthrew the legitimate Yemeni government, which relocated to Aden. They occupied Sana’a, ministries, official buildings, the airport and military bases. They seized control of three cities in West Yemen: Saada in the North, Sana’a in the center, and Taiz in the South. Their control extended to the Red Sea, where they occupied the port of Hodeidah and used it to smuggle weapons sent to them from Iran. They had no plan for governing Yemen or a political agenda.

“The legitimate Yemeni government requested assistance from neighboring countries. Saudi Arabia formed a coalition in March 2015, including Arab forces, to fight against the Houthis. The Houthis then began attacking coalition ships in the Red Sea with Iranian-made missiles and launched missiles at Saudi cities over a period of time. They also rejected United Nations mediation to achieve peace in the region.

“On April 9, 2020, Saudi Arabia proposed a ceasefire initiative, but the Houthis continued to use drones to bomb Saudi cities in the Eastern Province and Riyadh. On March 22, 2021, Saudi Arabia proposed a peace initiative to end the war in Yemen. This initiative was welcomed internationally, as Saudi Arabia is a peace-loving country. However, the Houthis ignored this initiative and bombed Abu Dhabi on Jan 17, 2022, resulting in deaths and injuries.

“When Hamas launched an attack against Israel on Oct 7, 2023, Israel destroyed the Gaza Strip and killed thousands of Palestinians. The Houthis then began attacking Israeli and American ships with drones. Foreign ships, fearing the Bab Al-Mandab Strait to cross to the Suez Canal, chose to sail through the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. Egypt suffered severely, losing approximately \$800 million per month, previously earned from ships passing through the Suez Canal. Recently, US President Donald Trump ordered the bombing of Houthi strongholds.

“The Houthis are a gang of ignorant, foolish people who destroyed their country. Wouldn’t they have been more likely to consider rebuilding their country with Gulf funds?”

“To this extent, they are followers of Iran, which also missed the opportunity to develop its internal situation with investments from the Gulf states, America and Europe. Is it better to adopt backward, medieval ideas?”

**Also:**

“International sustainability expert Dr. François Farah expressed his hope for the passage of some policies to activate the role of Kuwait University in advancing sustainable development on the sidelines of our participation in the main session of the Scientific Research Conference and its Impact on the State’s Development Planning.” sustainability expert **Dr. Sami Mohammad Al-Adwani** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“I found the opportunity on the sidelines of the opening of the exhibition accompanying the conference and with the help of Dr. Nouriya Al-Kandari whom I am grateful to,

when I met the university’s director, Dr. Dina Al-Mailam, who just assumed her position. Within minutes, her eloquence and focus enabled her to offer a series of straightforward pieces of advice, which were listened to and heeded by her team despite their busy schedule.

“Universities face growing challenges in reality. They represent the cornerstone of any society striving to achieve sustainable development; as they contribute to knowledge production, promotion of scientific research and the development of human capital.

“However, Peter Fleming pointed out in his book, ‘Dark Academia: How Universities Die?’, that these institutions no longer play their traditional role, but have instead adopted a commercial model that reflects free market values. This led to decline in the quality of education and scientific research and negatively impacted the mental health of their employees.

“In this article and the next, I will review the most important ideas discussed in the book, linking them to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that seek to achieve quality education, stable societies and social justice; leading to the sustainable model he proposes at the end of the book.

“First: The ‘Commoditization’ of Education: Between Quality and Profit (Goal 4: Quality Education)

“Fleming proposes that universities are no longer centers of knowledge, but rather profit-seeking institutions, where students are viewed as ‘customers’ who pay fees to obtain a degree, rather than focusing on the quality of education itself.

“In this context, the quality of academic programs is determined by their ability to generate profits, leading to the shrinkage of unprofitable disciplines like Philosophy and Humanities despite their importance in building critical awareness within societies.

“This shift contradicts Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which aims to ensure inclusive and quality education for all, regardless of financial means.

“Commercial universities contribute to deepening educational gaps, as financially able students receive better education, while others suffer from massive debts and lack adequate job opportunities.

“Second: The Academic Crisis: Psychological and Mental Balance, and Wage Inequality (Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth)

“The book addresses how academicians are under immense pressure due to neoliberal administrative policies. Universities demand that they produce a large volume of research, achieve strict performance indicators such as the h-index, and sometimes secure external funding. This requires them to conform to other people’s agendas, far removed from academic concerns, leaving them under constant pressure.

“The book highlights real cases, such as the suicide of Stephen Grimm, a Toxicology professor at Imperial College, who asked in a letter before his death: Why is a professor treated this way? He also cited the case of Thea Hunter, a PhD graduate from Columbia University, who died due to her inability to afford medical treatment after becoming a low-income earner.

“These practices directly contradict Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), which calls for providing a safe and stable work environment for employees. The financial and psychological pressures faced by academicians create an unsustainable work environment, negatively impacting the quality of education and leading to a decline in scientific research.

“Dark Academia: How Universities Die?” warns about the negative transformations that higher education is facing in the modern era. Instead of being engines of sustainable development, universities have become stressful and competitive environments that prioritize profit over knowledge, and bureaucracy over creativity.

“In the next article, I will expand on the author’s discussion of the privatization of universities, the decline of social justice, and how administrative and bureaucratic constraints have impacted academic innovation. I will conclude with the sustainable model he proposes in his book, hoping this approach will help drive informed discussion and debate.”

— **Compiled by Mahmoud Attiyeh**



A volunteer helps out an old woman in a wheelchair.



Police presence increases during last ten days of Ramadan.

## Security presence enhanced around mosques

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: The Ministry of Interior (MoI) confirmed that it has increased its security presence around mosques by deploying patrols and security personnel, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The ministry explained that this stems from its commitment to ensuring the safety and security of worshippers, managing traffic, ensuring smooth flow, and preventing congestion.

# Court refuses to release ex-MP in vote-buying; hearing April 9

Expat acquitted in arson blame lawsuit

By **Jaber Al-Hamoud**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

**KUWAIT CITY, March 22: The Court of Appeals refused to release a former MP from the Fifth Constituency accused of vote-buying and adjourned the session for sentencing until April 9.**

The Criminal Court had earlier sentenced the former MP to two years in prison with hard labor for buying votes during the 2023 National Assembly election.

The court also sentenced two other defendants to two years in prison with hard labor and another defendant to four years in prison with hard labor; in addition to imposing a fine of KD 2,000.

The former MP was referred to trial after the Public Prosecution charged him with secretly agreeing with two brokers to buy votes and giving money to one defendant to buy votes in his favor.

**Man absolved in arson:** The Criminal Court has abstained from imposing punishment on an

expatriate accused of intentionally setting fire to a vehicle, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Instead, the court mandated that the defendant submit a pledge of good conduct for one year, along with KD100 bail, and to comply with the condition of not repeating the offense.

The complainant, a compatriot of the accused, filed a report alleging that his German-made vehicle was deliberately set on fire in the early hours by someone who poured a highly flammable substance on it while it was parked near his residence.

When asked about the perpetrator, the complainant named an individual he knew, attributing the act to personal disputes, including his recent loss in a lawsuit the day before the incident.

In court, Attorney Fahad Al-Enezi contended that the accusation was malicious and emphasized that his client consistently denied any involvement since the start of the investigation. He also



Al-Enezi

criticized the investigation process, indicating that the detectives’ efforts were flawed and the evidence was insufficient.

Al-Enezi requested that the lawsuit be dismissed, arguing that the complainant lacked standing to file the complaint, as the vehicle was registered in the name of another individual, with no proof of ownership by the complainant.

**Deadline overshoot:** The Government Performance Follow-up Agency (GPFA) stated that the construction, completion, maintenance, and furnishing of the new building for the General Department of Criminal Evidence in South Surra is a vital project for Kuwait, emphasizing its importance as an important step toward enhancing the national security system, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

In a brief report, GPFA explained that work on the building began on October 15, 2017, with the completion date, as per the contract and after extending the construction period, set for the end of August 2022. The planned completion rate by the end of December was 100 percent, but the actual completion rate was approximately 67 percent.

## Kuwaiti arrested in murder of grocery worker

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: Jahra detectives affiliated with the Criminal Security Sector successfully closed the case of the murder of a grocery store worker who was run over in Mutla’a about a week ago, reports **Al-Anba** daily quoting informed security sources.

They explained that the detectives had intensified their efforts based on the instructions of Deputy Director of the Criminal Security Sector Major General Hamad Al-Dawas. They tracked down and arrested the suspect, who was found to be a Kuwaiti citizen. Investigations revealed the accused had been involved in similar crimes in the past, but those previous incidents resulted in scattered injuries to grocery store workers, not fatalities.

On March 14, the daily reported that an unknown individual in a four-wheel-drive vehicle called out to a grocery store worker in Mutla’a and ordered some items. After the worker handed the items to the accused, he fled without paying

for the items. The worker grabbed onto the vehicle, but the perpetrator accelerated, causing the worker to fall and be run over, resulting in severe injuries. The worker later died from the injuries.

**PADA ruling overturned:** The Court of First Instance overturned the decision of the specialized medical committee at the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs (PADA) which reclassified a citizen’s disability from ‘moderate permanent impairment’ to ‘mild visual impairment’, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The court also ordered the Authority to cover the associated expenses.

The plaintiff sought the help of Attorney Faisal Saqr Al-Rashidi, who represented him in the case. Al-Rashidi appealed the decision made by the committee, arguing that his client met the criteria for disability as per Law No. 49/1996 and its amendment – Law No. 8/2010. He pointed out that

providing care for individuals with disabilities is not a favor, but a societal and governmental duty.

He requested that his client be evaluated by committees from the Ministry of Health, along with a committee of forensic doctors – a request that the court approved.

These committees’ reports concluded that the plaintiff is blind in his right eye due to an old injury, and that his cornea had become opaque.

Based on the findings of the committees and the arguments presented by Al-Rashidi, the court ruled that the Authority must amend the classification of the plaintiff’s disability.

The ruling underscored that caring for people with disabilities is a societal duty and a State obligation, as this group has equal rights with others, irrespective of their disabilities. To support these rights, the court referenced Law No. 49/1996 on the Care of the Disabled, followed by Law No. 8:2010.



Maj Gen Talal Al-Roumi chairs the meeting.

### Two hurt in fire

## KFF chief praises firemen efforts in ensuring safety

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Chief Major General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi on Thursday met with the leaders and officers tasked to prepare and secure the mosques during the last 10 days of the holy month of Ramadan.

He discussed the progress of work and the tasks assigned to the teams to implement safety and fire prevention regulations.

He praised the efforts and preparedness of the firefighters in ensuring the safety and security of worshippers in the places of worship, in cooperation with their colleagues from the government and volunteer agencies.

**2 hurt in flat fire:** Fire broke out in an apartment in Hawally, resulting in injuries and burns to two individuals, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily. Firefighters from Hawally and Salmiya fire stations rushed to the location and extinguished the fire. The two casualties were handed over to paramedics for treatment.



## Ramadan Iftar Buffet

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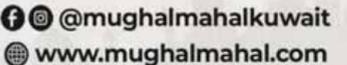
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Experts offer free consultations on obesity risks and treatments

# Kuwait Obesity Association holds awareness event

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: Kuwait Obesity Association (KOA) is holding a two-day event at the Avenues Mall, aimed at raising awareness about the dangers of obesity.

The event features a team of medical professionals like endocrinologists, diabetes specialists, bariatric surgeons and therapeutic nutritionists.

Dr. Asrar Al-Sayed Hashem – an endocrinologist and diabetes consultant, as well as the head of the Association – explained that the goals are to provide medical consultations, inform the public about available treatment options, raise awareness about obesity, and stress the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Hashem added the initiative is part of the ongoing efforts of the association to increase community awareness

about the dangers of obesity and the preventive measures; given the prevalence of obesity among both children and adults in Kuwait, which is a big public health challenge.

Meanwhile, Dr. Shaima Al-Asfour, Vice President of the association, underscored the need for a multifaceted approach to tackle obesity; combining awareness campaigns, health education, and appropriate medical and surgical treatments for

individual cases.

She affirmed that the event provides a unique opportunity for the community to engage directly with specialists and gain insights into the latest medical advancements and recommendations. Secretary of the association Dr. Khalifa Malallah said the bariatric surgeons are presenting surgical treatments as an option for patients who have not achieved successful weight control through other methods.

# Kuwait, China strengthen renewable energy co-op in strategic agreement

Deal targets 7,600 MW production by 2030

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 22: “The signing of an agreement between Kuwait and China on technical arrangements for joint cooperation in the field of renewable energy on March 17 is an important step toward enhancing energy security in the country, in compliance with the high directive to accelerate the implementation of major development projects,” say reliable sources who also revealed that the renewable energy production strategy targets a production of 7,600 megawatts by 2030.**

Sources confirmed this strategy is being implemented through the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy that recently signed an agreement with the Chinese side to implement the renewable energy project for the third and fourth areas in Shagaya and Abdaliya;

with a production capacity of approximately 3,500 megawatts and the possibility of increasing it to 5,000 megawatts in the future.

Sources described the agreement as strategic and investment-based; indicated that 1,600 megawatts are allocated to the Public-Private Partnership Authority (PPPA) -- 1,100 megawatts in the first phase of Shagaya housing project and 500 megawatts in the second phase.

Sources said PPPA has made significant progress in tendering and qualifying companies to begin implementing the first and second phases of the Shagaya project, which coincide with the first and second phases of the electricity project that is expected to enter service in 2030.

Sources revealed that another project included in the strategy is the purchase of renewable energy from third parties in quantities reaching 2,500 megawatts.

Sources stated that the ministry has taken several steps to complete the project, including surveys and financial studies, in addition to legal aspects related to the project, which have been completed. “There is also coordination with the Legal Advice and Legislation Department in this regard. Teams are cooperating with other government agencies, including the Public Authority for Civil Informa-

tion (PACI), to determine the locations and types of plots, so that the website contains all the necessary data,” sources clarified.

Sources went on to say that the move toward renewable energy production in the country aims to strengthen a sustainable energy economy and implement the strategy to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060, as announced at the Sharm Al-Sheikh Summit (COP 27).

Meanwhile, the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) approved the request of the ministry to extend the contract for major maintenance works on the National Control Center and two sub-control centers in Jabriya and Shuaiba, confirming its no-objection status for a period of six months. The contract is valued at KD 1.361 million.

This extension is part of the commitment of the ministry to ensure the continued efficiency of the main control centers, which play a pivotal role in managing and distributing electricity nationwide, especially during peak summer periods.

Through this maintenance contract, the ministry will the develop control systems and improve their technical readiness to guarantee the stability of the electricity grid and reduce emergency breakdowns -- part of its strategic plans to enhance the reliability of the electricity and water sectors.

Crown Prince, PM extend greetings

## Kuwait’s Amir congratulates Prez of Namibia on Nat’l day

KUWAIT CITY, March 22, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated on Friday the President of Namibia Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah on her country’s national day.

His Highness the Amir wished, in the cable addressed to President Nandi-Ndaitwah, more success and welfare and her people development and progress.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled AlHamad Al-Sabah congratulated in a cable the President of Namibia Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah on her country’s national day.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah also sent a cable to the President of Namibia Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, congratulating her on her country’s national day.

## Envoy affirms strong partnership

Germany commits to bolster ties with Kuwait amid GCC presidency

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: German Ambassador to Kuwait Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reibnitz has affirmed that Germany and Kuwait are reliable partners, indicating the desire to strengthen cooperation between the two countries.

In a press statement during an Iftar banquet organized by the German Embassy recently, Reibnitz congratulated the Kuwaiti government on assuming the presidency of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) at the end of 2024 despite the extremely complex challenges and circumstances.

He pointed out that continuing steadfastly on the right path is the key element at this stage, expressing his appreciation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his government for assuming this responsibility with full awareness of the surrounding risks.

He added that reliability is the cornerstone of the GCC and a fundamental pillar of international relations. “This stems from our deep belief that there is no alternative to a rules-based global order,” he explained.

He stated that steering the economy during crises requires a clear vision of achievable goals. “Kuwait needs partners to achieve its ambitious Vision 2035 and build a sustainable national economic base for the coming years. I welcome the close economic cooperation between Germany and Kuwait within the framework of cooperation between the European Union (EU) and the GCC. I look forward to German companies joining their European partners in the business forum that will be held in conjunction with the EU-GCC ministerial meeting later this year,” he elaborated.

He expects Kuwait to host the next meeting of the Kuwait-Germany Joint Economic Committee in due course. “We should explore opportunities for cooperation to serve our common interests. German companies are ready to support these efforts,” he suggested.

He went on to say that “as we all celebrate Ramadan in Kuwait, a month of mercy and solidarity, I am hopeful that the Kuwaiti government’s humanitarian efforts will continue to alleviate the suffering of those affected by conflict,



KUNA photo Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reibnitz, German Ambassador to Kuwait

war, famine and displacement; particularly in Gaza, Syria and Sudan. Germany, like many other countries, has expressed its support for the Arab plan for Gaza and remains one of the largest contributors of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. We support any effort to extend the ceasefire and find solutions to meet the needs of the affected civilian population. We are closely monitoring the developments in Syria. We are ready to support any political solution that contributes to achieving stability in the country and ensures the participation of all Syrians in shaping their future; regardless of their beliefs, ethnic background, or gender.

Humanitarian aid alone is not enough, as it only addresses the symptoms, while the root causes of the problems that humanity is currently facing remain unresolved. The increasing use of violence and aggression to achieve certain interests has made the world more dangerous.”

He also stressed that “while the peaceful settlement of conflicts remains the ultimate goal, Germany and Kuwait are committed to protecting the international order based on the rules and fundamental principles of international law; foremost among which are the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. The dominance of force over the fate of the world will only lead to further chaos. Germany stood with Kuwait as part of the international coalition in 1990/1991 when it was a victim of aggression. It will continue its support for Ukraine today for the same reasons and in accordance with the same principle.”

## Al-Roumi calls for Kuwaitization of oil sector

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: Oil Minister Tariq Al-Roumi has stressed the need to Kuwaitize the oil sector in the coming years, particularly since the nationals working in the sector are creative and excellent.

Sources disclosed that the min-

ister made the statement two days ago, during his meeting with the Board of Directors of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) Workers Union. Sources said the minister also underscored the importance of creating a good work environment for nationals. Sources affirmed that the minister listened to the demands of the employees through their union.

Sources added the minister praised the efforts exerted by the nationals working in the oil sector --whether at KOC or elsewhere; stressing these employees are the nation’s real wealth, especially since they are the foundation of the future. Sources also quoted the minister as saying that all the demands of the workers will be met.

## Kuwait, Costa Rica strengthen ties

KUWAIT CITY, March 22, (KUNA): Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya discussed with Costa Rican counterpart Arnoldo Andre Tinoco on Friday over the phone strong bilateral relations and recent regional and international developments, according to a ministry statement.

## MoH advises diabetics to avoid strenuous exercise before iftar

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: The Ministry of Health has advised diabetic patients using insulin or sulfonylurea tablets to avoid strenuous physical activities before iftar during the holy month of Ramadan to prevent low blood sugar levels, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In an awareness post shared on its official X platform account on Friday, the ministry stated, “Diabetic patients taking insulin or sulfonylurea tablets should refrain from engaging in strenuous physical exertion in the final hours of fasting to reduce the risk of hypoglycemia.”

## Healthcare project nears tender stage

# MPW finalizes Children’s Hospital design

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: The Ministry of Public Works is finalizing the design for the world’s largest children’s hospital, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, in preparation for the tender process as part of the development plan projects, reports Al-Anba daily quoting informed sources.

It confirmed that the project has entered its final phase before the tender is floated, and is currently in the fourth phase of document prepara-

tion. This is part of the ministry’s plan for the fiscal year of 2025/2026, as one of the strategic projects in the development plan and the government’s work program.

The hospital, located in the Al-Sabah Health Zone, will have a capacity of 800 beds and will offer a wide range of medical specialties tailored to children’s healthcare needs.

It will be equipped with the latest medical technology and smart infrastructure, adhering to the highest in-

ternational standards. This will make it a qualitative addition to Kuwait’s healthcare sector, marking a major advancement in the medical services available for children.

The sources indicated that the project is in line with the government’s vision to enhance health infrastructure and elevate the quality of medical services, adding that the design incorporates the latest standards, with future expansion capabilities in mind to meet growing demands.

### News in Brief

Product contaminated with plastic pieces

## Iceland vegetable lasagne recalled

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) has urged consumers to avoid the consumption of Iceland vegetable lasagne with the expiry dates of July 23, 2026, and July 30, 2026, for the 400-gram package, and to discard the product if they currently have it, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

It confirmed that the product is contaminated with plastic pieces, due to which the authority is actively working to remove the product from the markets.

□ □ □

**Lane closure on Road 30:** The General Traffic Department announced the closure of the right lane on King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud Road (Road 30) opposite Jabriya for drivers traveling from Kuwait City towards Fahaheel. The lane was closed from Friday, 2:00 am until Saturday afternoon, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

□ □ □

**Electricity demand soars:** As the temperature rose to 35 degrees Celsius in some areas recently; the country’s electricity load index continued to

rise, approaching 9,000 megawatts, as 8,918 megawatts was recorded in the afternoon and more than 8,900 megawatts a day before, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting sources from the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy.

Sources said the index is expected to rise further in the coming days, especially in the afternoon; indicating the gradual rise in temperatures heralds the approach of the extremely hot summer months.

In this context, the ministry urged the public to rationalize electricity consumption and take the necessary measures to reduce pressure on the electricity grid; stressing the importance of using electrical appliances efficiently and avoiding operating them during peak hours.

Furthermore, the ministry is participating in various meetings of the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority in Saudi Arabia, under the patronage of Undersecretary of the Ministry Dr. Adel Al-Zamil. “Plans to enhance cooperation between GCC countries in the field of energy and improve the efficient use of electrical resources are discussed,” sources added.



The Kuwaiti Direct Aid Society distributed 1,900 food baskets to war victims in Sudan. KUNA photo

## 3,800 Yemeni families receive iftar meals

# Kuwaiti Direct Aid Society distributed food baskets to war victims in Sudan

PORT SUDAN, Sudan, March 22, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Direct Aid Society distributed 1,900 food baskets on Thursday to support thousands of people affected by the war in Sudan’s Red Sea, Kassala, and South Kordofan States.

The country director of the Direct Aid Society in Sudan, Ahmed Al-Sheikh, stated that the new aid included 1,300 food baskets distributed to displaced individuals in Port Sudan and Kassala State in eastern Sudan, and 600 food baskets in Dilling, South Kordofan State.

Al-Sheikh explained that this aid will benefit more than 10,000 people, with each basket sufficient to cover a family’s needs for one month.

He added that each basket consists of 10 kilograms of sugar, 10 kilograms of corn flour, 5 kilograms of wheat flour, 4 liters of cooking oil, and other essential food supplies.

He further emphasized the society’s commitment to reaching as many beneficiaries as possible amid the ongoing security challenges in the country. He also expressed gratitude to Kuwait for its continuous humanitarian support.

The aid also covered the expatriate camp in Umm Al-

Qura, Red Sea State, as part of the association’s initiative to support displaced persons in affected areas.

This initiative is part of the Direct Aid Society’s broader humanitarian programs, which include providing meals for fasting individuals during Ramadan, as well as other emergency relief efforts such as distributing food baskets to those affected by the war and those in need.

Also:

**ADEN:** Kuwait’s Direct-Aid Society’s office in Yemen launched a project to provide iftar (fastbreaking) meals to 3,800 families in need in three Yemeni governorates, as part of the “Kuwait Is by Your Side” campaign.

In a press statement on Thursday, the office’s regional chairman **Ali Butait** said the project includes distributing 3,800 food baskets containing essential items for 26,600 individuals, until the end of the the holy month of Ramadan.

He thanked philanthropists and donors who supported the project to ease the suffering of thousands of families, during the unstable economic and social conditions in Yemen.

## 'Kuwait-US ties grows stronger'

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: American Deputy Chief of Mission in Kuwait Steven Butler has stressed the importance of strengthening bilateral relations between the United States of America and Kuwait, affirming these relations are based on shared values, mutual respect, and economic and strategic cooperation.

In his speech at a Ramadan Ghabqa hosted by the American Business Council in the country with a number of ambassadors and diplomats in attendance; Butler pointed out that the holy month of Ramadan entails reflection, compassion and brotherhood. He considers the gathering an opportunity to strengthen the spirit of unity and cooperation.

He expressed his happiness over the growing relations between the United States and Kuwait, which continue to flourish through economic partnerships and a shared vision for achieving stability and prosperity in the region.



Butler

# Kuwait's educational reforms struggle to translate 'global agreements' into action

Experts warn that lack of clear leadership and vision holding back progress

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 22: "Real investment in education is not only in the form of pumping funds into studies and agreements, but also in translating them into clear executive policies that benefit students and all aspects of the educational process," say sources from the educational sector.**

Sources revealed that over the past two decades, the Ministry of Education has been keen on developing the educational system through a series of agreements with global entities and organizations specializing in educational reform.

Sources said one of the most important of these initiatives was the diagnostic study conducted by the Singaporean team in 2013, which aimed to assess the state of education and propose solutions for improving it. "This diagnostic study resulted in a 190-page report containing recommendations," they disclosed.

According to the sources, the ministry also

concluded agreements with the World Bank at a total value of about \$39 million to develop curricula and improve the quality of education at various educational levels. "These efforts have not stopped there, as the ministry is currently seeking to finalize a contract with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to benefit from its expertise in developing educational systems," sources added.

Sources indicated that despite the magnitude of these projects and the allocated funds, the implementation of the recommendations stated in these agreements has remained stalled, without any clear impact on the level of education in the country.

Sources attributed this to several reasons, including the lack of continuous supervisory and leadership cadres responsible for monitoring the implementation of studies and agreements, which has led to weak oversight and evaluation of the development plans. They also cited administrative bureaucracy, which hinders the rapid implementation of reform decisions. "Any structural changes require lengthy and complex procedures, delaying actual implementation," they explained.

Sources also mentioned the ambiguous vision for educational reform, as the results of the studies and recommendations have not been translated into specific implementation steps with a

clear timetable. "This is in addition to weak communication regarding the implementation of the reforms as required, which has created a gap between theoretical plans and field implementation. Challenges related to curricula have not been addressed to keep pace with modern educational requirements despite the agreements signed for this purpose," sources pointed out.

Sources questioned the feasibility of signing agreements and investing millions in studies that never see actual implementation. "Despite limited benefits from some recommendations, student achievement has not seen substantial improvement," they added.

Sources asserted that the educational sector in the country continue to face challenges, ranging from poor academic achievement to the country's declining ranking in global education indicators. They underscored the importance of focusing on implementing what has been agreed upon rather than concluding new agreements. "This can be achieved by establishing a clear mechanism for implementing recommendations and assessing their impact on the educational field. It includes providing qualified leadership and supervisory cadres capable of monitoring the implementation of educational projects; strengthening cooperation between the ministry, teachers and administrators to ensure effective implementation of reforms; and reviewing and updating curricula to

meet modern educational requirements," sources stated.

Sources also pointed out that efforts to develop the education system are scattered and incomplete; indicating that the implementation of the recommendations in previous agreements should be a top priority rather than continuing to sign new agreements without achieving tangible results.

Sources raised serious questions about the feasibility of any upcoming agreement or conference to develop education unless concrete steps are taken to ensure implementation. "These steps include establishing independent oversight mechanisms to monitor the implementation of recommendations, holding responsible parties accountable for any shortcomings, allocating sustainable budgets to ensure the implementation of development plans, enhancing the participation of civil society and the private sector in education reform to ensure the continuity of efforts, and involving teachers and students in the development process to ensure acceptance and engagement with new changes," sources suggested.

Sources indicated that without a radical change in the way reform recommendations are handled, the agreements will remain mere archival documents that will not translate into tangible reality; which could contribute to real progress in the system and pillars of the educational process.



Photos during the prestigious gathering that brought together esteemed guests from various sectors.

## Harvard Club of Kuwait hosts Global Networking Night

The Harvard Club of Kuwait, the official representative of Harvard University in Kuwait, successfully hosted its annual Global Networking Night (GNN). A prestigious gathering that brought together a distinguished audience, including ambassadors, diplomats, ministers, and esteemed

guests from various sectors.

The event served as a platform for meaningful discussions, professional networking, and cultural exchange, reinforcing Harvard's legacy of excellence and global impact. The Harvard Club of Kuwait remains committed to

fostering connections among alumni and thought leaders, further strengthening the intellectual and professional landscape in Kuwait.

Stay tuned for more enriching events that bring together leaders, changemakers, and visionaries!

## Continued from Page 1

## Naive people

On this basis, it is shameful that this issue has become a source of societal division. Instead, it should serve as a lesson in strengthening national unity, not as a catalyst for hateful incitement. People must refrain from using offensive labels to describe others.

The truth is, many of those who have lived on this land have served Kuwait more than those who boast of being "born in its womb". In fact, some of those who lived on Kuwaiti soil sacrificed their blood for it, never claiming to be "born in its womb". In moments of sacrifice, all souls are equal.

When many defended Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion, working tirelessly for seven months until it was liberated, they did not inquire about a person's sect or whether they were from within or outside the walls of Kuwait. They were defending a homeland they believed in.

Yes, Kuwait's liberation was not the result of boasting about being a "born child", but rather due to Kuwait's long standing tolerance toward all, the good it has shared with the world, its relief of injustice for the needy, and its establishment of relations with the entire world based on non-interference in the affairs of others.

In addition, Kuwait's Constitution prohibits discrimination in all its forms. Article 29 states: "All people are equal in human dignity and are equal before the law in public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination among them on the basis of race, origin, language, or religion."

Today, we must manage our affairs in a way that keeps Kuwait apart from the conflicts in the region and the world. With a population of only 1.2 million, we are a small country facing many challenges that must be addressed together.

We must also remember that this population is supported by 3.5 million expatriates. In every household, there are five or six non-Kuwaitis working to serve its people. They manage basic services like electricity and water, as well as the medical, commercial, investment, and other sectors. They are residents, unlike those who claim to be "born of her womb" and sit comfortably, categorizing others based on ignorance, which is rejected by all human values.

Justice, which involves granting people their rights without discrimination, is the hallmark of the new era.

So, where did this naive, foolish, and divisive statement come from? The question remains: What have you, the naive ones, offered Kuwait to be distinguished from others?

## Cabinet okays

Meanwhile, the Cabinet has expressed Kuwait's strong condemnation of attacks launched by the Israeli occupation forces on Syria and Gaza.

In its weekly meeting held at Saif Palace under the chairmanship of Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah on Thursday, the Cabinet stated the attacks on Gaza killed and wounded dozens of people, mostly children, women and elderly.

This military escalation in the Gaza Strip is a flagrant violation of the Gaza ceasefire, and it ignores deliberately international laws and charters, mainly the UN Security Council and the quartet partners of the ceasefire.

The Cabinet called on taking an urgent and decisive move to stop Israeli occupation forces' attacks and protect Palestinian people as well as ensure implementing relevant international commitments, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji said in a statement after the meeting.

The ministers further affirmed Kuwait's stance calling for respecting Syria's unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, he added.

They stressed the need for the UN Security Council to assume its responsibilities and put an end to flagrant violations committed by the Israeli occupation forces. The Cabinet also lauded His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's speech during his visit to the Supreme Judicial Council last Sunday.

His Highness the Amir was accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Acting Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir expressed

pride for Kuwait's fair, efficient and professional judicial system, urging the judicial authority to speed up Kuwaitization of judicial jobs.

His Highness the Amir also called for putting fear of Allah above anything else, affirming that the issue of nationality is a state sovereignty right.

His Highness the Amir appealed to the judicial authority to act impartially, uphold the rule of law, and ensure the rights and freedoms of everybody, away from any personal considerations.

The ministers were informed about the visits paid by His Highness the Amir, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince and Acting Prime Minister, to Nabat Poets' Diwaniya, Kuwait Sport Club for Deaf and Kuwait Blind Association on Monday and Tuesday.

The Cabinet also reviewed the recommendations sent by the ministerial committee for legal affairs regarding the bill to amend some provisions of criminal procedures law, and approved and referred them to His Highness the Amir.

In addition, the Cabinet listened to a presentation made by Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi on the ministry's plan during the last ten days of Ramadan, in coordination with the Ministry of Interior and Islamic Affairs, to ensure providing medical services at mosques across the country.

The Cabinet affirmed the need for governmental bodies to play their roles in providing the best services and preparing mosques to offer comfort to worshippers during the last ten days of Ramadan. It also reviewed several other topics on the agenda and approving them.

## Kuwait Airways

A statement from the airline urged the passengers to update their date and make sure of their respective bookings and their correct phone numbers.

For any inquires, the passengers are wisely advised to contact KAC via the phone number 171 from inside Kuwait or the international line 00965-24345555, or WhatsApp 00965-22200171.

Meanwhile, London Heathrow Airport said it was "fully operational" on Saturday, after an almost daylong closure sparked by an electrical substation

fire. But airlines warned that severe disruption will last for days as they scramble to relocate planes and crews and get travelers to their destinations.

The airport's boss said he was proud of Heathrow's response to the incident. But inconvenienced passengers, angry airlines and concerned politicians sought answers about how one seemingly accidental fire could shut down Europe's busiest air hub.

## Call for

He stressed the importance of the new law; citing flexibility regarding child visitation rights after divorce and tougher penalties for those who fail to comply with visitation requirements.

Hamdan Al-Namshan, lawyer and legal advisor to the National Human Rights Office, underscored the need to amend the articles related to alimony in order to be reasonable, as some women are unable to remarry after divorce due to the exaggerated child support costs. "Therefore, separation hinders marriage, which Allah has permitted," he argued.

He pointed out that working women may seek a divorce in order to enjoy their salary and child support, and therefore refuse to marry in order to obtain the exaggerated child support. He explained that alimony is the right of children from both Islamic and legal perspectives, but exaggerating it harms men and may deprive them of the right to marry.

He expressed support for the idea of increasing the marriage age for both boys and girls, particularly since this is consistent with international human rights principles. "Marrying a girl under the age of 18 prevents her from choosing a suitable husband, deprives her of completing her education, and excludes her from childhood, which extends until the age of 18," he added.

Attorney Dr. Salem Al-Kandari clarified that the issue of visitation is somewhat arbitrary, so he called for "the return of the place of visitation to the courts, rather than its current isolation." He advocated for raising the marriage age to prevent marriage registration until both spouses reach

the age of 18. "This is in line with the Constitution, which stipulates the cohesion and preservation of the family," he asserted.

He explained that a wife, even when she is a child, may be exposed to early violence and suffer from numerous marital problems. "Furthermore, her young age undermines her right to choose her life partner. Raising the marriage age takes into account Kuwait's international obligations, particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which defines a child as anyone under the age of 18. Marrying at a young age deprives her of her childhood and poses a threat to her life and the lives of her children in the future," he concluded.

## Schools face

The circular underscored the importance of regular school attendance, warning that frequent absences negatively affect student performance and disrupt educational goals.

The circular called for strict adherence to attendance policies and the establishment of daily absence records to counter the rising absenteeism rate, which is increasingly inconsistent with existing rules and regulations. It also provides a series of directives for schools, including ensuring consistent student attendance throughout the week, not being lenient with absence records, and permitting early departures in accordance with official procedures and after consultation with the relevant authorities.

In addition, the circular stressed that students should not be allowed to skip school before official holidays or final exams unless they present valid excuses. Parents are urged to support school attendance by encouraging their children to attend classes regularly and maintaining consistent communication with school authorities.

Furthermore, the circular stressed the importance of monitoring curricula and adhering to educational plans to ensure continuous learning despite student absences. Schools are instructed to take strict administrative and regulatory measures against unex-

cused absences in line with established guidelines.

It reiterated that these measures are part of a broader effort to improve the quality of education and minimize the adverse effects of absenteeism on students' academic success. Parents are urged to cooperate with school administrations to maintain discipline in the educational process and help achieve the desired outcomes, it asserted.

It also clarified that daily absenteeism reports must be submitted to the educational districts, and schools are expected to fully comply with the guidelines stipulated in the circular to avoid legal repercussions.

## Mosques in

During his visit, the minister assessed the preparations and ensured readiness to accommodate worshippers during the last 10 nights of Ramadan.

Al-Wasmi praised the ministry for the successful organization of prayers and events throughout the holy month, affirming that all the necessary preparations were completed well before the start of Ramadan. "We are grateful to Allah for seeing this remarkable readiness in place today," he said.

According to the minister, the Ramadan centers -- a long-standing initiative by the ministry -- have grown year after year, and are now capable of hosting thousands of worshippers each night. "This success reflects the ministry's dedication to organizing these nights for the benefit of the Muslim community," he stressed.

He also encouraged mosque workers and volunteers to continue their efforts, urging them to strive for rewards from Almighty Allah.

"The air during these nights is thick with the sounds of supplication and humility, as worshippers embody the spirit of faith and tranquility that defines this month of blessings. From the early evening hours, people rushed to the mosques, eager to secure a spot in the front rows. The courtyards are equally packed -- a testament to the devotion and faith of the Muslims who sought to maximize their worship during these precious nights," he disclosed.

## 'We're going to write the next generation of modern aerial warfare with this'

# Eyeing China threat, Trump announces Boeing wins contract for future fighter jet

WASHINGTON, March 22, (AP): US President Donald Trump announced Friday that Boeing will build the Air Force's future fighter jet, which the Pentagon says will have stealth and penetration capabilities that far exceed those of its current fleet and is essential in a potential conflict with China.

Known as Next Generation Air Dominance, or NGAD, the manned jet will serve as quarterback to a fleet of future drone aircraft designed to be able to penetrate the air defenses of China and any other potential foes. The initial contract to proceed with production on a version for the Air Force is worth an estimated \$20 billion.

The 47th president, who announced the award at the White House with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Air Force leadership, said with a grin that the new fighter would be named the F-47.

Gen David Allvin, chief of staff of the Air Force, said, "We're going to write the next generation of modern aerial warfare with this." And Hegseth said the future fleet "sends a very clear, direct message to our allies that we're

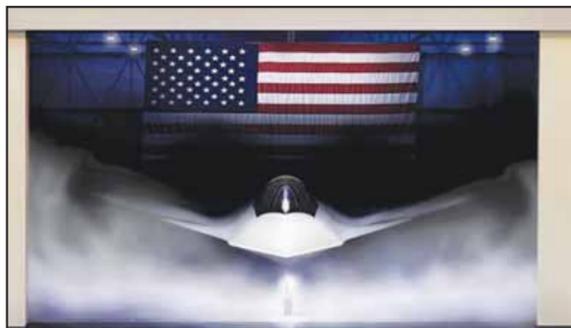
not going anywhere."

Critics have questioned the cost and the necessity of the program as the Pentagon is still struggling to fully produce its current most advanced jet, the F-35, which is expected to cost taxpayers more than \$1.7 trillion over its lifespan. In addition, the Pentagon's future stealth bomber, the B-21 Raider, will have many of the same cutting edge technologies in advanced materials, AI, propulsion and stealth.

More than 1,100 F-35s have already been built for the US and multiple international partners.

A fleet of about 100 future B-21 stealth bombers at an estimated total cost of at least \$130 billion is also planned. The first B-21 aircraft are now in test flights.

With evolving drone and space warfare likely to be the center of any fight with China, Dan Grazier, a military procurement analyst, questions whether "another exquisite manned fighter jet really is the right platform going forward." Grazier, director of the national security reform program at the Stimson Center, said \$20 billion is



This graphical rendering provided by the US Air Force shows the Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) Platform, the F-47. On March 21, US President Donald Trump announced that the Air Force had selected Boeing to produce the next generation fighter jet. (AP)

"just seed money. The total costs coming down the road will be hundreds of billions of dollars."

Few details of what the new NGAD fighter would look like have been public, although Trump said early versions

have been conducting test flights for the last five years. Renderings by both Lockheed Martin and Boeing have highlighted a flat, tail-less aircraft with a sharp nose.

The selection of Boeing, which has

faced intense pressure from Trump over cost overruns and program delays on Air Force One, came after an independent analysis by the Air Force, an official said on the condition of anonymity to provide additional details on the selection. The Boeing offer was still determined to be the "best overall value to the government," the official said.

The Air Force has not specified how many aircraft will be produced. In a statement, however, Allvin said there would be more F-47s produced than F-22s, the advanced fighter jet it's replacing. There are now about 180 F-22 fighter jets in service.

The Air Force later issued a statement saying the number 47 was chosen for a number of reasons: "It honors the legacy of the P-47, whose contributions to air superiority during World War II remain historic. Additionally, the number pays tribute to the founding year of the Air Force, while also recognizing the 47th President's pivotal support for the development of the world's first sixth-generation fighter."

A separate Navy contract for its version of the NGAD fighter is still under

competition between Northrop Grumman and Boeing.

Last year, the Biden administration's Air Force secretary, Frank Kendall, ordered a pause on the NGAD program to review if the aircraft was still needed or if the program, which was first designed in 2018, needed to be modified to reflect the past few years of warfighting advances.

That review by think tanks and academia examined what conflict with China would look like with NGAD and then without it - and determined that NGAD was still needed. Kendall then left the decision on which firm would build the fighter jet to the incoming Trump administration, a defense official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to provide details on the decision-making.

NGAD will bring "an entirely different level of low observability," the official said. It will also have a much longer range than the F-35 or other current fighter jets, so it will require less refueling. A future unmanned version of NGAD also is planned as the Pentagon improves the AI for the aircraft, the official said.

## Trump administration cuts legal help for migrant children traveling alone



Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem speaks at US Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak during a tour on March 17, in Kodiak, Alaska. (AP)

WASHINGTON, March 22, (AP): The Trump administration ended a contract that provides legal help to migrant children entering the country without a parent or guardian, raising concerns that children will be forced to navigate the complex legal system alone.

The Acacia Center for Justice contracts with the government to provide legal services through its network of providers around the country to unaccompanied migrant children under 18, both by providing direct legal representation as well as conducting legal orientations - often referred to as "know your rights" clinics - to migrant children who cross the border alone and are in federal government shelters.

Acacia said they were informed Friday that the US Department of Health and Human Services was terminating nearly all the legal work that the center does, including paying for lawyers for roughly 26,000 children when they go to immigration court. They're still contracted to hold the legal orientation clinics.

"It's extremely concerning because it's leaving these kids without really important support," said Ailin Buigues, who heads Acacia's unaccompanied children program. "They're often in a very vulnerable position."

People fighting deportation do not have the same right to representation as people going through criminal courts, although they can hire private attorneys.

But there has been some recognition that children navigating the immigration court system without a parent or guardian are especially vulnerable.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2008 created special protections for children who arrive in the US without a parent or a legal guardian.

Emily G. Hilliard, deputy press secretary at Health and Human Services, said in an emailed statement that the department "continues to meet the legal requirements established" by the Act as well as a legal settlement guiding how children in immigration custody are being treated.

The termination comes days before the contract was to come up for renewal on March 29. Roughly a month ago the government temporarily halted all the legal work Acacia and its subcontractors do for immigrant children, but then days later Health and Human Services reversed that decision.

The program is funded by a five-year contract, but the government can decide at the end of each year if it renews it or not.

A copy of the termination letter obtained by The Associated Press said the contract was being terminated "for the Government's convenience."

Michael Lukens is the executive director of Amica, which is one of the providers contracting with Acacia in the Washington, D.C. area. He said with the renewal date swiftly approaching, they had been worried something like this would happen.

He said they will continue to help as many kids as they can "for as long as possible" and will try to fight the termination.

"We're trying to pull every lever but we have to be prepared for the worst, which is children going to court without attorneys all over the country. This is a complete collapse of the system," he said.

Meanwhile, the Department of Homeland Security is making cuts to three key offices that oversee civil rights protections across its broad mission, suggesting that they were impeding immigration enforcement efforts.

## European Union presses on with steel 'porcupine strategy' for Ukraine



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, (center), speaks with Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz during a round table meeting at an EU summit in Brussels on March 20. (AP)

BRUSSELS, March 22, (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin's key peace demand that Western allies stop providing military aid and intelligence to Ukraine is quietly being ignored by the European Union.

As US-led talks with Russia and Ukraine progress, without the Europeans at the table, the 27-nation bloc is pressing ahead with a steel "porcupine strategy" aimed at building the Ukrainian armed forces, and the country's defense industry, into an even more formidable opponent.

At an EU summit German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that it's "central" that Ukraine should remain an independent democratic nation that can continue its journey toward EU membership and "that it also has a strong army of its own after a peace agreement."

"For us, it will be important to continue to support Ukraine significantly - as the European Union as a whole, as allies and friends and as individual countries," Scholz told reporters in Brussels. A few hours after he spoke, Scholz's EU counterparts - with the exception of Hungary, which opposes the bloc's "peace through strength" stance - called on member countries "to urgently step up efforts to address Ukraine's pressing military and defence needs."

Mindful of Russian deception in the past - the "little green men" who annexed the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, or the troop buildup in 2021 that Moscow denied would lead to any invasion - the Europeans are deeply skeptical about Putin's intentions and whether he would accept any peace terms.

With the U.K. and other partners, some European countries are working on a deterrence force to police any future peace. At the same time, Ukraine's best security guarantee, apart from the NATO membership that the U.S. refuses, is that its own army is strong and well supplied.

In a defense blueprint unveiled on Wednesday, the European Commission set out how it plans to meet Ukraine's security needs, with EU money available to help bolster its defense industry, which produces arms and ammunition more cheaply and closer to the battlefield.

"Ukraine is currently the front line of European defense, resisting a war of aggression driven by the single greatest threat to our common security," the document says. "The outcome of that war will be a determinative factor in our collective future for decades ahead."

At the heart of the EU's strategy is a commitment to provide air defense systems and missiles - including long-range precision warheads. In groups, countries would jointly purchase the equipment and financially back Ukraine's own effort to obtain them.

Drones are a major advantage on the battlefield, and the EU intends to back Ukraine's procurement of them and help it build its own production capacity, including through joint ventures between European and Ukrainian industries.

Another aim is to provide at least 2 million rounds of large-caliber artillery shells each year, and to continue a training effort that has helped to prepare more than 75,000 Ukrainian troops so far. In return, European troops will learn from Ukraine's front-line experience.

Ukraine would also be able to take part in the EU's space program, with access to the services provided by national governments in the area of global positioning, navigation, surveillance and communications. Financially, and beyond the estimated 138 billion euros (\$150 billion) already provided to Ukraine, the government in Kyiv would be able to secure cheap loans for defense purposes - as can EU countries and Norway - from a new fund worth 150 billion euros (\$162 billion).

## Europe

### Thaci visits father's tomb:

Hashim Thaci, a former president of Kosovo who is facing war crime charges, was temporarily released from custody at a court based in the Netherlands on Friday to visit the tomb of his father who died last weekend.

Thaci, 56, wasn't allowed to attend Tuesday's funeral, which leaders and local politicians from Kosovo and neighboring Albania were present for. Kosovo Justice Minister Albulena Haxhiu complained to the Kosovo Specialist Chambers in The Hague that Thaci was barred from going.

"I was the last to come, dad," Thaci wrote on the wreath he put at his father's tomb on Friday in the village of Buroje, 70 kilometers (44 miles) west of the capital, Pristina. He was accompanied by police officers from the Kosovo-based European Union Rule of Law mission, known as EULEX.

Thaci was then taken to his house, where only close relatives could meet with him. It wasn't immediately clear when he would be returned to the custody of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers court in The Hague.

His father, Haxhi Thaci, died on March 16 at age 87. Three days before his father's death, Hashim Thaci was allowed to visit his father for about three hours at a public hospital in Pris-

tina accompanied by close family members.

Thaci and other senior leaders of the Kosovo Liberation Army, or KLA, which waged Kosovo's 1998-99 war for independence from Serbia, have been in custody in The Hague since November 2020. They face charges including murder, torture and persecution during and after the war. (AP)

### Poland charges ex-official:

Polish prosecutors filed charges Friday against a former defense minister, accusing him of exceeding his powers when he declassified parts of a plan for national defense that had been prepared years before under an earlier government led by Prime Minister Donald Tusk.

Tusk's government has accused the former defense minister, Mariusz Blaszczak, of betraying national interests by revealing military secrets for political gain ahead of a national election.

"If we were to imagine the basic task of a spy in Poland, the theft of defense plans would be his priority, but no one predicted that such a role could be played by the minister of national defense," the current deputy defense minister, Cezary Tomczyk, said last month in parliament.

Blaszczak served as defense minister in a national conservative government that held power from 2015-2023. In 2023 he made public parts of a military defense plan that had been drawn up in 2011. The document laid out plans for the Polish army to retreat westward to the Vistula River, which runs through the center of Poland, in case of an invasion from the east by Russia.

Blaszczak was read the charges at the District Prosecutor's Office in Warsaw on Friday, he told reporters afterward, according to the state news agency PAP. (AP)

## Cyprus still pushes back migrant boats, says UN refugee agency

NICOSIA, Cyprus, March 22, (AP): Cyprus and the United Nations agency for refugees clashed over allegations that the east Mediterranean island nation continues to engage in so-called pushbacks against boats loaded with migrants departing from neighboring Syria or Lebanon.

The clash, which unfolded on the state broadcaster Thursday, came a few days after Cyprus authorities recovered two survivors and seven bodies in international waters off Cyprus after their boat apparently sank in rough seas.

Emilia Strovolidou, spokeswoman for the UN High Commission for Refugees, told the state broadcaster that Cyprus police intercepted three boatloads of migrants inside Cypriot territorial waters on between March 13-14 but prevented them from disembarking at Larnaca port, making them

turn back to Syria from where they departed.

Cypriot Justice Minister Marios Hartsiotis vociferously disputed Strovolidou's claims, saying Cypriot patrol vessels intercepted two - not three - boats near Lebanon's territorial waters within Cyprus' search and rescue area of responsibility.

He said Cypriot authorities requested Lebanon's assistance - in line with a bilateral agreement - to turn the boats back to the Lebanese coast from where they set sail. Hartsiotis insisted Cyprus does not engage in pushbacks and abides by its international legal obligations, adding that a "serious organization" such as the UNHCR "must substantiate its claims."

He said any relevant information should be forwarded to Cypriot police for a proper investigation.



Migrants aboard a Cyprus marine police patrol boat are brought to a harbor after being rescued from their own vessel off the Mediterranean island nation's southeastern coast of Protaras, Cyprus, on Jan. 14, 2020. (AP)



A body of a person lies on a street after a Russian drone strike on a residential neighbourhood in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine on March 21. (AP)

## 3 killed and 12 injured in Russian attacks on Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia

KYIV, Ukraine, March 22, (AP): Russia launched a drone attack on the Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia, killing three people and wounded 12, Ukrainian officials said Saturday, despite agreeing to a limited ceasefire.

Zaporizhzhia was hit by 12 drones, police said. Regional head Ivan Fedorov said that residential buildings, cars and communal buildings were set on fire in the Friday night attack. Photos showing emergency services scouring the rubble for survivors.

Ukraine and Russia agreed in principle Wednesday to a limited ceasefire after U.S. President Donald Trump spoke with the countries' leaders, though it remains to be seen what possible targets would be off limits to attack.

The three sides appeared to hold starkly different views about what

the deal covered. While the White House said "energy and infrastructure" would be part of the agreement, the Kremlin declared that the agreement referred more narrowly to "energy infrastructure." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he would also like railways and ports to be protected.

The dead in Zaporizhzhia included three members of one family. The bodies of the daughter and father were pulled out from under the rubble while doctors unsuccessfully fought for the mother's life for more than 10 hours, Fedorov wrote on the Telegram messaging app.

The Ukrainian air force reported that Russia fired a total of 179 drones and decoys in the latest wave of attacks overnight into Saturday. It said 100 were intercepted and another 63 lost, likely having been electronically jammed.

'Promote mutual understanding and trust'

## Japan, China, S.Korea discuss trilateral cooperation

TOKYO, March 22, (AP): Foreign ministers from Japan, China and South Korea reaffirmed the importance of denuclearization on the Korean peninsula and sought trilateral cooperation on common ground in areas like aging, low birth rates, natural disasters and cultural exchange at a meeting that took place at a time of growing tensions.

At a joint news conference after the talks, Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya said he, his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi and South Korea's Cho Tae-yul agreed on the need to promote mutual understanding and trust, while tackling shared and multi-generational concerns to gain wider support for trilateral cooperation.

Iwaya emphasized his concerns about North Korea's nuclear and missile development and cooperation with Russia as regional threats, and stressed the importance of pursuing the North's full denuclearization under the UN Security Council resolutions.

Iwaya reiterated Japan's condemnation of Russia's war on Ukraine, adding that there is no place in the world for unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, a subtle message about China's growing assertiveness in the region.

Wang said that China supports the formation of a mutual regional economy and proposed further efforts toward resuming talks on an economic framework for the three countries and promoting an expansion of the 15-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, or RCEP.

Wang said trilateral cooperation in a range of areas including technology, climate exchange and other issues will "serve as key driving force for East Asian cooperation."

The meeting on Saturday focuses on plans for a trilateral leaders' summit later this year amid growing political and

economic uncertainty at home and challenges from US President Donald Trump.

The three-way meetings are an accomplishment for Japan, which has historical and territorial disputes with both China and South Korea. Iwaya said he hoped to accelerate efforts toward achieving a leaders' summit in Japan later this year. An earlier trilateral meeting was held in South Korea last year.

Cho, whose country chaired their leaders' first summit after a four-and-a-half-year hiatus due to the pandemic, said the ongoing global crisis makes trilateral cooperation more important than ever.

Later Saturday, delegations from Japan and China met separately to hold their first high-level economic dialogue since April 2019, attended by dozens of officials from economy, transportation, environment, health and labor as well as the finance ministries.

In his opening remarks, Wang said expanding cooperation into new areas and strengthening of communication are key to promoting comprehensive and mutually strategic relations between the two countries.

But he said that there is a long way for the recovery of the global economy, and noted that the global economy is facing serious changes, as unilateralism and protectionism has accelerated and politicizing of science and technology, as well as expansion of national security have become rampant.

Discussions at the economic dialogue were to include China's ban on Japanese seafood imports since the start in August 2023 of discharges of treated radioactive wastewater into the sea from the tsunami-hit Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, (center left), Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya, (center), and South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul, (center right), attend a joint press conference at the trilateral foreign ministers' meeting in Tokyo on March 22. (AP)

Senator Marcos seeks clarity on Duterte's ICC arrest

## US Defense Secretary Hegseth to make first visit to Philippines and Japan

MANILA, Philippines, March 22, (Agencies): US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is scheduled to visit the Philippines, the first stop in his first trip to Asia next week, for talks that will include increasing deterrence against aggression in the disputed South China Sea, a Philippine official said Friday.

Hegseth will be in Manila on March 28-29 to meet his Philippine counterpart, Gilberto Teodoro, and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Talks will touch on increasingly assertive actions by Beijing in the South China Sea and "more significant support" to Philippine security forces by the Trump administration, Philippine Ambassador to the U.S. Jose Manuel Romualdez told The Associated Press.

In the U.S. chief Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell later said Hegseth will visit Hawaii to meet civilian and military leaders in the Indo-Pacific Command then tour US military facilities in Guam and receive briefings on capabilities before flying to the Philippines and Japan.

Hegseth would "advance security objectives with Philippine leaders and meet with US and Philippine forces. In Japan, he would participate in a ceremony marking the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima and meet with Japanese leaders and US military forces, Parnell said and added without elaborating that "as always, the secretary looks forward to some great PT (physical training) with the troops!"

"These engagements will drive ongoing efforts to strengthen our alliances and partnerships toward our shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific," he said. The trip "comes as the United States builds on unprecedented cooperation with like-minded countries to strengthen regional security."

Trump's "America First" foreign policy thrust has triggered concerns about the scale and depth of U.S. commitment to the region under his new term.

"It's a strong message to China on solid bilateral relations" between the U.S. and the Philippines," Romualdez said of Hegseth's upcoming visit.

China claims virtually the entire South China Sea, a major security and global trade route. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also lay overlapping claims to the resource-rich and busy waters, but confrontations have particularly spiked between Chinese and Philippine coast guard and naval forces



US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth responds to questions from reporters during a meeting with Britain's Defense Secretary John Healey at the Pentagon, on March 6, in Washington. (AP)

in the last two years. In his first telephone talk with Teodoro last month, Hegseth "reaffirmed the ironclad U.S. commitment to the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty and its importance for maintaining a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific," according to a readout provided by Pentagon spokesperson John Ulloty after the Feb. 5 call. "The leaders discussed the importance of reestablishing deterrence in the South

China Sea, including by working with allies and partners," Ulloty said. "They also discussed enhancing the capability and capacity of the Armed Forces of the Philippines." After major territorial faceoffs between Chinese and Philippine forces in the disputed waters, the previous Biden administration had repeatedly warned that the U.S. is obligated to help defend the Philippines under the treaty if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under an armed attack in the Pacific, including in the South China Sea.

Beijing has warned Washington, in return, to stay out of what it calls a purely Asian dispute and stop actions that endanger regional harmony and stability.

Also:

**MANILA:** Philippine Senator Imee Marcos said on Saturday that she is still studying whether to conduct another Senate committee hearing on the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte.

Marcos, chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, told a forum that there are calls for a second hearing, saying that some volunteers want to voice their opinions.

"I think some more studies are still required given that international laws are involved, the Philippine Constitution and the rights of the accused and the bill of rights are also involved, as well as many laws that in many cases have not been tried or tested before," Marcos said. Marcos, an elder sister of Philippine President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos, said the committee is in "a mad rush" to come up with a report for Thursday's hearing.

"(The committee), like the rest of the Philippines, want clarity and action on this," she said. "We are carefully studying these laws, line by line, including the jurisdiction of the ICC (International Criminal Court). But the Philippine Constitution must prevail."

Marcos questioned in the first hearing if the "Philippines has become a province of The Hague," lamenting that the 79-year-old former president was made to answer to a foreign court.

Kim reaffirms support for Moscow's war in Ukraine

## North Korea leader meets Russia's top official: state media

SEOUL, South Korea, March 22, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un expressed his unwavering support for Russia's war in Ukraine during a meeting with a top Russian security official in Pyongyang, North Korean state media said Saturday.

Friday's meeting between Kim and Sergei Shoigu, Russia's Security Council secretary, followed a South Korean intelligence assessment in late February that North Korea had likely sent additional troops to Russia after its forces suffered heavy casualties fighting in the Russian-Ukraine war. Ukraine and Russia agreed in principle Wednesday to a limited ceasefire after US President Donald Trump spoke with the two countries' leaders, though it remains to be seen when it might take effect and what targets would be off-limits.

North Korean and Russian state media said Kim and Shoigu discussed various issues, including



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, Russia's Security Council Secretary, Sergei Shoigu, left, and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un walk together during their meeting in Pyongyang, North Korea on March 21. (AP)

Russia's war in Ukraine, Moscow's administration and the security situation on the Korean Peninsula. They re-

affirmed the willingness of the two countries' leaders to "unconditionally" uphold a major mutual defense treaty reached at a summit last year in Pyongyang, which pledges mutual assistance if either country faces aggression, according to the reports.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim during the meeting said his government will "invariably support Russia in the struggle for defending the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and security interests."

Shoigu conveyed a message from Russian President Vladimir Putin, who extended his greetings to Kim and vowed to give "utmost attention" to implementing agreements reached in their recent summits. He expressed gratitude for North Korea's "solidarity with Russia's position on all critical geopolitical issues, particularly on the Ukrainian issue," according to his televised comments.

## US imposes travel ban on Argentina's former leader

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, March 22, (AP): The State Department has banned former Argentine President Cristina Fernández from entering the United States, accusing her of involvement in "significant corruption" while in office.

The State Department also banned Fernández' planning minister Julio Miguel De Vido and their families.

Kirchner and De Vido "abused their positions by orchestrating and financially benefiting from multiple bribery schemes involving public works contracts, resulting in millions of dollars stolen from the Argentine government," Secretary of

State Marco Rubio said in a statement released Friday. He noted that multiple courts had convicted the pair on corruption charges. Fernández has been a dominant political leader in recent years in the South American country.

"The United States will continue to promote accountability for those who abuse public power for personal gain," Rubio said. "These designations reaffirm our commitment to counter global corruption, including at the highest levels of government."

In November, a tribunal in Argentina upheld a six-year prison sentence and a lifetime ban from holding public office against Fernández. The former President was convicted and sentenced in 2022 by a three-judge panel for a fraud scheme that embezzled millions of dollars through public works projects during her presidency. She appealed, but the higher tribunal ratified the original ruling.



Fernández



Sudan's army soldiers celebrate after they took the Republican Palace in Khartoum, Sudan on March 21. (AP)

## Sudan's military retakes Republican Palace

CAIRO, March 22, (AP): Sudan's military on Friday retook the Republican Palace in Khartoum, the last heavily guarded bastion of rival paramilitary forces in the capital, after nearly two years of fighting.

The seizure of the Republican Palace, surrounded by government ministries, was a major symbolic victory for Sudan's military against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces - though it likely doesn't mean the end of the war as the RSF holds territory in Sudan's western Darfur region and elsewhere.

Social media videos showed Sudanese soldiers inside the palace, giving the date as the 21st day of Ramadan, the holy Muslim fasting month, which corresponds to Friday. A Sudanese military officer wearing a captain's epaulettes made the announcement in the video and confirmed the troops were inside the compound.

The palace appeared to be in ruins, with soldiers' step-

ping on broken tiles. Troops carrying assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers chanted: "God is the greatest!"

Khaled al-Aiser, Sudan's information minister, said the military had retaken the palace in a post on the social platform X.

"Today the flag is raised, the palace is back and the journey continues until victory is complete," he wrote.

Later, curious residents wandered through the palace. Walls stood pockmarked by rifle rounds. Smears of blood led to dead bodies, covered haphazardly with blankets.

The fall of the Republican Palace - a compound along the Nile River that was the seat of government before the war erupted and is immortalized on Sudanese banknotes and postage stamps - marks another battlefield gain for Sudan's military, which has made steady advances in recent months under army chief Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan.

## 44 civilians killed in western Niger

DAKAR, Senegal, March 22, (AP): An attack by a jihadi group on a village in western Niger has killed 44 civilians, the country's Interior Ministry said.

The attack took place on Friday afternoon in the village of Fambita in the rural commune of Kokorou, near the tri-state border with Mali and Burkina Faso, the ministry said in a statement. It blamed the attack on the Islamic State in the Great Sahara, or EIGS.

The Associated Press was not able to reach out to the EIGS for comment.

"Around 2 pm, while Muslim worshippers were performing Friday prayers, these heavily armed terrorists surrounded the mosque to carry out their massacre of rare cruelty," the statement read. The gunmen also set fire to a market and houses before retreating, it added.

The provisional death toll is at least 44 civilians, with 13 severely injured, the ministry said. It declared three days of national mourning Niger, along with its neighbors Burkina Faso and Mali, has for over a decade battled an insurgency fought by jihadi groups, including some allied with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group. Niger's leader is Gen Abdourahmane Tiani.

Following military coups in all three nations in recent years, the ruling juntas have expelled French forces and turned to Russia's mercenary units for security assistance.



Tiani



Namibian president-elect Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, of the ruling SWAPO Party, at a news conference in Windhoek, Namibia on Dec 5, 2024 after the election results were made official. (AP)

## Nandi-Ndaitwah sworn in as Namibia's first female leader

WINDHOEK, Namibia, March 22, (AP): Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah was sworn in as Namibia's first female president on Friday, reaching the highest office in her land nearly 60 years after she joined the liberation movement fighting for independence from apartheid South Africa.

The 72-year-old Nandi-Ndaitwah won an election in November to become one of just a handful of female leaders in Africa after the likes of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, Joyce Banda of Malawi and Samia Suluhu Hassan of Tanzania.

Sirleaf and Banda, now former

leaders of their countries, and current Tanzania President Hassan all attended Nandi-Ndaitwah's inauguration.

Nandi-Ndaitwah's swearing-in coincided with the 35th anniversary of Namibia's independence, but the ceremony was switched from a soccer stadium where thousands were due to attend to the official presidential office because of heavy rain.

The new president made her pledge to defend, uphold and support the constitution in front of other visiting leaders from South Africa, Zambia, Congo, Botswana, Angola and Kenya.

## Kuwaiti oil price rises to \$76.60 pb

KUWAIT CITY, March 22, (KUNA): Kuwaiti oil price rose 89 cents to USD 76.60 per barrel in Friday's trading compared to Thursday's rate of USD 75.71 pb, reported Kuwait Petroleum Cor-

poration (KPC) on Saturday. In global markets, Brent crude futures went up by 16 1.22 to USD 72.16 per barrel, as West Texas Intermediate also rose by 21 cents to reach USD 68.28 pb.

# Business

Net profit reaches KD 10.9 million, earnings per share at 59.1 fils

## Kuwait Insurance Company reports KD 12.5 million profit for 2024

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: Kuwait Insurance Company announced its results for the period ending on 31/12/2024, where the total profit achieved for the current period amounted to KD 12.5 million (40.7 million USD) with earnings per share of 67.9 fils (22.1 cents USD).

The net profit reached KD 10.9 million (35.5 million USD) with earnings per share of 59.1 fils (19.3 cents USD), after deducting the revenue from the sale of investments achieved during 2024, amounting to KD 1.6 million (5.2 million USD), which is directly recorded in retained earnings and not included in the income statement as per IFRS 9 standard.

The Board of Directors recommended a cash dividend distribution to shareholders at a rate of 40%, amounting to 40 fils per share, subject to approval by the company's General Assembly.

The total premiums written for the current period reached KD 68.6 million (223.5 million USD), compared to KD 61.8 million (201.3 million USD) for the same period last year, marking an increase of KD 6.8 million (22.1 million USD), or 11%.

Insurance revenues for the current period amounted to KD 69.5 million (226.4 million USD), compared to KD 53.7 million (174.9 million USD), reflecting an increase of KD 15.8 million (51.5 million USD), or 29%.

The net operating income reached KD 5.6 million (18.2 million USD).

Net investment income for the current period amounted to KD 5.5 million (18 million USD), compared to KD 5.4 million (17.6 million USD) for the same period last year, representing an increase of 1.2%.

Retained earnings rose to KD 85.5 million (278.5 million USD) during 2024, compared to KD 80.5 million (262 million USD) for the previous year, reflecting an increase of KD 5 million (16.3 million USD), or 6.2%.

The CEO of the company, Mr. Sami Sharif, stated that the successes achieved are the result of significant efforts made in previous years to build the foundations that allow sustainable growth in profits and premiums. The company enjoys a



Ali M. Behbehani



Sami Sharif

strong and stable financial base. The company was awarded the "Most Trusted Insurance Company" title by "The Global Economics" magazine, a foundation specializing in launching annual rankings in economics and business for 2024.

Mr. Sharif added that in addition to profits and premiums, the company maintains an excellent credit rating from AM Best and Moody's at A- and A3, respectively, with a stable outlook. We are proud to continue receiving these ratings, placing us among the leading local and regional companies in the insurance services sector.

On another note, we have made significant progress in our digitization project, where customers can easily upload some insurance documents via mobile phones by scanning a barcode. Other insurance documents will soon be available for customers to upload, in line with the new amendments required by the Insurance Regulatory Unit. Additionally, we launched a travel insurance campaign coincid-

ing with the summer season, which was promoted through social media channels and at Kuwait International Airport - Pearl Hall.

In line with our social responsibility principle, Kuwait Insurance Company signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Talent to contribute to sponsoring specialized and diverse programs in the fields of science and technology for children and youth, to hone their skills and develop their talents and abilities. The company also collaborated with Tawdir to collect and recycle electronic waste as part of its commitment to applying sustainability principles and solutions in all its forms. The company also sponsored the Kuwait Sustainability Exhibition to promote sustainability culture in society and raise awareness of the importance of building a sustainable community for future generations. Additionally, for the second consecutive year, the company, in cooperation with the Kuwait Food Bank and Relief, launched its charitable campaign "Iftar for the Fasting," distributing Iftar meals to fasting individuals from workers and low-income groups.

Kuwait Insurance Company is also focused on the continuous investment and development of its employees through providing training and educational programs to develop individuals in offering insurance services to institutions, individuals, and stakeholders, thereby serving the interests of society and the State of Kuwait.

We continue to look forward to much more work to be done in the coming period and take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to achieving our goals, from the Board of Directors, shareholders, and employees.

In conclusion, Mr. Sami Sharif expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Insurance Regulatory Unit for developing and organizing the insurance sector in Kuwait and raising its standards globally, as well as to the Capital Markets Authority, the Ministry of Commerce, and all regulatory bodies in Kuwait for their active role in enhancing the professional working environment.

### Other Voices

#### 'Shale oil prices drop'

## US president aims to lower oil prices amid uncertainty

By Kamel Al-Harami  
Independent Oil Analyst

WITH the US president pledging to bring oil prices down, and the current price level remaining unstable, the possibility of prices dropping below \$70 seems feasible.

Many oil companies are increasing exploration and production efforts, pushing for more crude oil extraction nonstop. Regardless of the price level, the message is clear: "Dig, baby, dig," a famous quote from US President Trump.

However, it is also possible that oil prices may stabilize on their own, or OPEC+ may intervene and reduce its production quota in an effort to maintain stable prices.

Despite the fact that shale oil prices have decreased from their original equilibrium of \$70 in 2010 to the \$45-\$50 range today, it remains clear that such low prices are not sustainable long term for low-cost producing oil wells.

US oil companies are currently pushing for higher production volumes, regardless of future oil prices. They may hope that prices will eventually stabilize or that they can find ways to reduce costs, even if oil drops to \$50 per barrel. Alternatively, companies might pursue further cost-cutting measures, potentially including layoffs, in an effort to lower the

cost of producing a barrel of oil.

With the US administration advocating for lower oil prices and making more federal land available for oil exploration, US production has reached 13.6 million barrels per day. US oil companies are pushing forward with the goal of increasing production to 15 to 20 million barrels per day within the next five years.

In their pursuit of lowering oil prices, companies must also work harder to reduce their costs in order to make \$50 per barrel viable and affordable for consumers. In the meantime, they will continue to push for further cost cuts. However, the question remains: at what point have they exhausted all possibilities for reducing production costs?

Some, if not all, are determined to continue extracting oil, as long as it remains sustainable, and they will persist in their efforts to secure rewards and an acceptable level of return on investment.

Competing with OPEC+'s crude oil production costs is hard and difficult, but the reality is that most OPEC+ countries desperately need oil prices above \$90 to balance their budgets. This makes the economics of US oil production more favorable, as US companies must consider the \$90+ price point required by OPEC+ when determining their investment costs.

Therefore, US shale oil producers and their shareholders need not worry excessively about production costs, as long as OPEC+ requires oil prices in the \$90 range. So the "dig, baby, dig" approach remains a sustainable, realistic, and viable cost strategy.

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Kamel Al-Harami

'Rebalancing your portfolio to maintain diversification'

## The psychology of investing: Managing fear and greed

By NBK Wealth

How do your investments make you feel? This might seem like an odd question, but it is a crucial one. Emotions play a significant role in investment decisions, often influencing outcomes more than we realize. Among the many emotions investors experience, fear and greed are perhaps the most dominant forces shaping investor and market behavior.

"I will tell you how to become rich. Close the doors. Be fearful when others are greedy. Be greedy when others are fearful." - Warren Buffet

Fear can lead to panic selling and missed opportunities, while greed can drive reckless risk-taking and speculative bubbles. For long-term investors, understanding these emotions is key to building wealth.

#### Fear in Investments

One of the most common expressions of fear in investing is "loss aversion" the tendency for individuals to feel the pain of losses more intensely than the pleasure of equivalent gains. This psychological bias can lead investors to hold onto losing positions for too long, hoping to recover losses rather than making rational choices based on market conditions. During periods of heightened market volatility or economic uncertainty, fear can drive investors to panic sell, locking in losses rather than maintaining a long-term perspective. This behavior exacerbates market downturns, as widespread fear-driven selling accelerates price declines. A classic example of this was the 2008 financial crisis, when many investors liquidated their portfolios at or near the market bottom, missing out on the subsequent recovery.

Beyond loss aversion, fear also manifests as the "fear of missing out" (FOMO). This psychological trigger compels investors to chase after trending stocks or other speculative



NBK Wealth logo

assets without due diligence. FOMO fuel impulsive decisions, often based on hype rather than sound fundamentals.

Understanding these fear-based biases is crucial for building a successful long-term financial strategy.

#### Greed in Investments

While fear drives investors to sell at the worst times, greed has the opposite effect—it encourages excessive risk-taking in pursuit of quick profits. Greed can manifest in different ways, including speculative trading, overleveraging, and chasing unsustainable returns. One of the most destructive consequences of greed is the formation of asset bubbles, where investors irrationally inflate prices to unsustainable levels. The dot-com bubble of the late 1990s and the housing bubble of the mid-2000s are prime examples of greed-driven markets. During the dot-com bubble, companies with no earnings or a clear business plan saw their stock prices skyrocket, fueled by speculative turmoil. Investors, lured by the promise of exponential gains, ignored fundamental valuation metrics and poured money into assets with little intrinsic value(1).

When reality set in, the resulting crashes wiped out trillions in market value.

Beyond asset bubbles, greed also manifests in the dangerous practice of overleveraging. Investors borrow excessively to amplify potential returns. While leverage can enhance profits in a rising market, it significantly increases the risk of substantial losses during downturns.



QR-code

#### Measuring Fear and Greed in the Market

To better measure and understand how fear and greed drive market behavior, investors can consider several indicators that measure sentiment:

The Volatility Index (VIX) - Often referred to as the "fear gauge," the VIX measures expected volatility in the S&P 500 stock market over the next 30 days. A high VIX indicates heightened investor anxiety, while a low VIX suggests complacency.

Fear & Greed Indices(2) - A composite measure of market sentiment that aggregates various indicators. It aims to measure the overall emotional state of investors and determine if the market is driven by fear or greed.

Investor Surveys and Sentiment Reports - Surveys such as the AAI (American Association of Individual Investors) Investor Sentiment Survey(3) measures the percentage of individual investors who are bullish, bearish, or neutral on the stock market. By tracking these indicators, investors can gain insights into market psychology.

#### Key considerations: How to Manage Fear and Greed in Investing

Managing fear and greed requires self-awareness, discipline, and a structured investment approach. While emotions cannot be complete-

ly removed, they can be controlled through effective strategies:

1. Know Yourself and Your Risk Tolerance Investors should assess their risk tolerance based on their financial situation, investment goals, and emotional resilience. The risk tolerance should then guide the construction of the investor's portfolio so that losses are likely to be within an acceptable range.

2. Follow a Disciplined Investment Strategy

Having a well-defined investment plan, investing continuously (dollar-cost averaging)(4), ensuring an adequate level of diversification, and an asset allocation that reflects the investor's risk tolerance will all help mitigate emotional decision-making.

3. Avoid Market Timing

Consistently predicting market tops and bottoms is nearly impossible. Instead of trying to time the market, investors should focus on long-term wealth accumulation and staying invested during market fluctuations.

4. Rebalance Your Portfolio Regularly

Rebalancing involves periodically adjusting a portfolio to maintain the desired asset allocation. This practice forces investors to reduce their exposure to assets that may have become overvalued and buy undervalued assets.

5. Seek Professional Guidance

A financial advisor or investment professional can provide objective insights and help investors avoid the pitfalls of emotionally driven choices.

6. Adopt a Long-Term Perspective

Short-term market fluctuations are inevitable, but successful investors focus on long-term trends and fundamental value. Ultimately, successful investing is not just about choosing the right assets, it is also about mastering our own emotions and the psychology of investing.

MREF achieved a total return of 12.8%

## Markaz Real Estate products deliver high performance and returns for 2024



Milad Elia



Abdullatif Al-Nusif



Markaz MREF 2024 performance.



QR-Code

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" concluded 2024 with a positive performance in the real estate sector, driven by the solid results of its investment solutions and in particular the flagship Markaz Real Estate Fund (MREF). MREF achieved a total return of 12.8% in 2024.

As one of Kuwait's first real estate funds, MREF has consistently delivered stable returns over its 22-year history, achieving an impressive 7.7% IRR per annum. This track record reflects Markaz's extensive expertise in real estate investment and wealth management, built over the past five decades. This has helped Markaz garner awards and accolades from prestigious publications such as Euromoney, EMEA Finance, MEED, Global Finance, and Global Investor, further solidifying its reputation as a trusted partner in wealth creation.

Markaz continues to offer stable investment opportunities through its real estate products, which are now available for all residents in Kuwait, from across all nationalities, in accordance to the new law on foreigner investments in Kuwait. MREF pays monthly cash dividends and provides platform for real estate investment in Kuwait through properties spanning various sectors and geographies, and sector diversification with Sharia compliance.

Executive Vice President of MENA Real Estate at Markaz, Mr. Milad Elia commented: "As one of the longest-standing real estate funds in Kuwait, MREF has

consistently delivered stable returns through a well-diversified portfolio of local properties, in compliance with Islamic Shariah principles. Our team efficiently manages the portfolios, ensuring sustainable levels of occupancy and net rental income rates, further enhancing the Fund's resilience and steady returns. MREF has been resilient across various economic cycles, due to its diversified prime assets, stable rental income, proactive asset management, conservative financial strategy, market adaptability and strong governance."

Managing Director of Wealth Management and Business Development at Markaz, Mr. Abdullatif Al-Nusif said: "At Markaz, we have remained committed to delivering high-yield investment opportunities that provide stable and consistent monthly distributions, ensuring long-term value for our investors. Our ability to navigate market trends, backed by the expertise of our dedicated team, allows us to continuously refine our strategies and optimize returns. The inclusion of real estate in asset allocation is critical for portfolio diversification, and Markaz's real estate products provide investors with access to different asset classes and stable income streams. As we build on our strong legacy, we remain focused on offering innovative solutions that empower our clients and strengthen Markaz's position as a leader in wealth management."

Real estate investment through the MREF Fund pro-

vides the investors with access to select portfolio of properties. Unlike direct property ownership, investing in real estate funds encompasses professional management of the Fund, and the underlying investments are monitored by the Fund and property manager. Additionally, the Fund structure is per regulatory guidelines and has its own auditors, custodian, investment controller and registrar. This structure helps mitigate investors' exposure to operational risks and other challenges associated with direct ownership in real estate. Furthermore, investment in real estate funds offers diversification of the properties, reducing risk by spreading investment across multiple selected properties.

Subscription is based on unit selection, offering a liquid investment structure, with the flexibility to increase investments in small or large amounts. Investors can also benefit from the power of compounding with regular contributions. Digital subscription to the Fund can be completed through the iMarkaz app for a seamless onboarding process. MREF's assets under management (AUM) currently stand at KD 79 million, while Markaz's MENA Real Estate portfolio's AUM totals KD 298 million. This growth has been achieved due to Markaz's hands-on approach to managing income-generating and value-add properties across Kuwait and the MENA region.

Important info  
Fund manager: Kuwait Financial Centre K.P.S.C

"Markaz". Kuwait City, Al Mirqab, Al Soor Street, Burj Alshaya, Floor 8, Tel: +965 2224 8000, P.O. Box 23444, Safat 13095, State of Kuwait

Fund Executive Committee Members: Ghazi Al Osa-imi, Milad Elia, Khaled Al-Mubarak

To get a copy of the Fund's Articles of Association, the subscription form and the financial statement of the fund, please visit our website: [www.markaz.com](http://www.markaz.com)

#### Disclaimer

This announcement is prepared for promotional purposes and has been approved by Markaz. This announcement does not disguise, diminish, or obscure important items from the investment subject of promotion. Investments in funds are subject to market risks. There can be no assurance or guarantee that the investment will produce any returns. Prospective Investors must therefore be aware of and understand that such investment carries a significant degree of risk of loss of their capital; the dividend rate cannot be predicted or guaranteed. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance. Before investing, prospective investors must carefully examine the Articles of Association and all Fund-related documents to be aware of the investment methods, including the merits and risks involved.



Group photo of the Board of Directors and Executive Management.

# Gulf Bank approves the distribution of 10% cash dividends and 5% bonus shares for 2024

The Ordinary General Assembly was held with a quorum of 77.3%



Ahmad Mohammed Al-Bahar, Gulf Bank's Chairman

**Ahmad Mohammad Al-Bahar:**

- Gulf Bank continues to strengthen its position as a leading financial institution in Kuwait despite challenging and volatile markets.
- We are committed to maintaining the Bank's strong financial position and delivering consistent returns to our shareholders.
- We will continue the feasibility and procedures of converting Gulf Bank's into a Sharia-compliant Bank with the aim to achieve sustainable growth for all stakeholders.
- We are confident that our strategic initiatives supported by strong Governance and sound Risk Management will ensure our continued success.

**KUWAIT CITY, March 22: Gulf Bank held its Ordinary General Assembly Meeting Saturday with a quorum of 77.3% ,approving a cash dividend of 10% per share and bonus shares of 5% for the financial year ended 31 December 2024.**

In his statement to the shareholders, Gulf Bank's Chairman, Mr. Ahmad Mohammed Al-Bahar said: "Gulf Bank has continued to strengthen its position as a leading financial institution in Kuwait, delivering many achievements at multiple levels and indicators, despite market challenges and volatility."

He added: "We are eager to continue advancing the growth of the bank's performance as one of our strategic priorities, while enhancing service quality and enriching the customer experience. At the same time, we remain dedicated to maintaining the bank's strong financial position and consistently delivering meaningful returns to our shareholders."

"As we move forward into 2025, we will continue to pursue our strategic initiatives, mainly the feasibility and procedures of converting Gulf Bank's conversion into a Sharia-compliant Bank, with the aim to achieve sustainable growth for all stakeholders. We are confident that our strategic initiatives, supported by strong governance and sound risk management, will ensure our continued success."

**Financial Growth**

Gulf Bank's Acting Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Waleed Khaled Mandani, stated that: "2024 was a year of notable progress for Gulf Bank, highlighting the Bank's key financial indicators during the past year."

He stated: "The Bank achieved a net profit of KD 60.2 million last year, while the operating income increased by 5% to KD 199 million and operating profit by 3% to KD 107 million compared to last year."

He added: "In comparison to 31 December 2023, Gulf Bank's total assets increased by 4.4% to reach KD 7.5 billion, with net loans and advances rising by 5.2% to KD 5.5



Ahmad Mohammed Al-Bahar, Gulf Bank's Chairman with Gulf Bank's Acting Chief Executive Officer, Waleed Khaled Mandani next to him.



Waleed Khaled Mandani, Gulf Bank's Acting Chief Executive Officer.

**Waleed Khaled Mandani:**

- 2024 was a year of notable progress for Gulf Bank marking a net profit of KD 60.2 million.
- We continued to focus on enhancing and personalizing our customer experience while anticipating further progress this year.
- Total assets increased by 4% to KD 7.5 billion and shareholder equity by 2.1% reaching KD 834 million.
- Capital Adequacy Ratio stood at 17.3%, well above the regulatory minimums and our NPL ratio stood at 1.3%, one of the lowest in the sector.



Section of the audience.

billion. Additionally, total deposits grew by 4.3% to reach KD 5.6 billion, while shareholders' equity increased by 2.1% to reach KD 834 million for the year ended 2024."

He stated that the Bank's capital remained robust, as the Capital Adequacy Ratio stood at 17.3% compared to the regulatory minimum of 14%; the NPL ratio was one of the lowest in the sector at 1.3%, with a coverage ratio of 340%, including total provisions and collateral.

On the other hand, Mr. Mandani stated: "In 2024, Gulf Bank continued to focus on its key objective of enhancing and personalizing customer experience post the completion of Phase II of the core banking system upgrade, and we are anticipating further progress this year."

**Cadre 1**

**Board of Directors Elections**

The Ordinary General Assembly of Gulf Bank elected the Board of Directors for the next three years, consisting of Mr. Ahmad Al-Bahar, Mr. Ali Behbehani, Mr. Omar Al-Essa, Mr. Abdullah Al-Sayer, Dr. Fawaz Al-Awadi, Mr. Muath Al-Rayes, and Ms. Dalal Al-Rayes.

Additionally, it elected the independent members: Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Taweel, Mr. Talal Al-Sayegh, Mr. Majeed Al-Ajeel, and Mr. Eid Al-Rasheedi.

**Cadre 2**

**Dividends Payment Date on April 15th**

The Bank's shareholders registered in the company's

records as at the end of the record date, set on April 10th, are entitled to cash dividends and bonus shares, whereby the payment date is set on April 15th.

**Cadre 3**

**Among Top 100 listed Companies in the region**

Forbes magazine ranked Gulf Bank among the top 100 listed companies in the region, and The Banker magazine named it one of the top 100 Arab Banks for 2024. Gulf Bank remains "A" rated bank by the three leading credit rating agencies, with total assets of KD 7.5 billion as at December 2024.

**Cadre 4**

**Eco-friendly Branches**

The Bank continues to implement its ambitious plan to transform its branch network across various parts of Kuwait into environmentally friendly branches with a new identity. Last year, the new branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City was opened, and six branches were renovated and reopened. These branches are equipped with energy-saving technologies and sustainable materials, reflecting our commitment to environmental responsibility. By prioritizing innovation and customer convenience, the new branch design enhances the client experience while contributing to a greener future.

**Cadre 5**

**Invest GB Commenced Operations**

After receiving regulatory approvals, InvestGB, the

fully owned investment arm of Gulf Bank, is now successfully positioned as one of the leading firms in Kuwait's investment sector within its first year. Through several strategic partnerships with prominent global companies, InvestGB is able to offer its clients exceptional services and unique investment opportunities.

**Cadre 6**

**13 Global and Regional Awards**

Gulf Bank received 13 global and regional awards during 2024 in recognition of its personalized customer service excellence, as well as its distinguished role in corporate social responsibility and in the empowerment of women and youth.

**Cadre 7**

**A New Brand Identity for Private Banking**

Gulf Bank has introduced a new brand identity for its Private Banking Services, rooted in three core principles: long-term wealth growth, asset protection, and seamless wealth transfer. This initiative redefines the private banking experience, ensuring that clients receive personalized, comprehensive financial solutions aligned with their aspirations.

**Cadre 8**

**Special thanks to Bader Al-Kharafi**

Mr. Ahmad Mohammad Al-Bahar expressed his appreciation and gratitude to Gulf Bank's former Chairman of the Board, Mr. Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, for his valuable efforts and wise leadership throughout his tenure, wishing him success in his future endeavors. He also extended his appreciation to all members of the Board, the Executive Management and Gulf Bank employees for their commitment and contribution to the bank's success.

**Cadre 9**

**Acknowledgment and Appreciation**

Mr. Ahmad Al-Bahar stated: "On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express my appreciation to the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Capital Markets Authority and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for their relentless efforts in supporting and promoting the Kuwaiti banking sector. My appreciation goes out as well to our esteemed customers, partners, and shareholders, for their trust and support."



Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah, Raed Bukhamseen, and Mohamed El Saka during the general assembly.



Part of the general assembly.

**Bank approves 5% cash dividend and 5% bonus shares for shareholders**

**Kuwait International Bank holds AGM and EGM with 76.6% shareholder attendance**

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on Thursday, 20 March 2025, with 76.6% of shareholders in attendance. The AGM approved the agenda items of both the ordinary and extraordinary General Assembly meetings, among which was the commenda-tion to distribute cash dividends at a rate of 5% of the nominal value per share (5 fils per share) and 5% bonus shares (5 shares per 100 shares) from the issued and paid-up capital.

While giving an overview of the KIB Group's financial performance and achievements, Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, Chairman of KIB, stated: "Despite global economic challenges, we have thankfully achieved strong results, thanks to the capabilities we have built over the years. Today, we boast advanced digital capabilities, flexible business models, a highly skilled workforce, a passionate executive management team, and an ambitious strategic plan."

He added: "Our focus is on strengthening our financial position, enhancing and developing asset quality, diversifying revenue streams, and expanding our operations. Additionally, we are advancing cybersecurity and reinforcing our commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles."

Al-Jarrah pointed to the prudent policies of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) mitigating the impact of global economic fluctuations on the country's banking and financial sector. He also highlighted that economic challenges, rapid technological advancements, and the on-going AI revolution are intensifying pressures on the operating environment. With customer preferences shifting rapidly and expectations rising, new challenges have emerged, requiring well-crafted strategies to navigate them effectively.

Commenting on the most important results based on its financial statements, Al-Jarrah explained that for the year ended 31 December 2024, KIB Group recorded a net profit attributable to shareholders of KD 23.1 million, reflecting a 21% year-over-year growth, with 11.04 fils earnings per share (EPS). Meanwhile, total operating income increased by 26% compared to 2023, reaching KD 91.4 million in 2024. This increase was primarily driven by 29% growth in net financing income which rose to KD 68 million, in addition to the increase in fees and commission income by 43% to reach KD 17.4 million.

Discussing the Bank's strategy, Al-Jarrah said: "We have developed our new and ambitious strategic plan to bring us closer to realizing our vision of becoming the Islamic bank of choice in Kuwait. Our strategic mission for 2024-2028 is to revitalize performance across our core businesses and expand into new growth avenues, forging a unique and invaluable market position as a profitability leader. We are committed to achieving this mission while upholding our core values: teamwork, efficiency, and customer centricity."



Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah chairs the general assembly.



Raed Bukhamseen during the general assembly.



Mohamed Said El Saka during the general assembly.

He further explained: "We have identified key strategic pillars as comprehensive areas for improvement. For each pillar, we have established clear strategic objectives, further broken down into specific initiatives, targeted outcomes, and predefined timelines spanning three phases over the next five years."

Al-Jarrah added: "In the coming years, we will focus on strengthening and expanding our business relationships with both existing and future customers by growing core banking activities and developing innovative, customer-centric financial products and services. We will implement continuous, transformative enhancements to the customer experience, build agile business models that adapt to market dynamics, and invest in advanced technology and digitalization to support our operations. These efforts will enhance operational efficiency, accelerate transaction processing, and elevate service quality. Additionally, we remain committed to investing in our people, nurturing promising national talent, and preparing the next generation of leaders to drive sustained growth into the future."

**Enhancing efficiency and expanding digital horizons**  
From his side, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of KIB, said: "The year 2024 saw significant achievements and strong growth across all our business sectors. Our banking operations experienced robust expansion in assets and deposits, while strategic partnerships with leading companies contributed to higher financing and non-financing revenues. We also enhanced corporate and individual service quality by streamlining processes, reducing transaction times, improving operational efficiency, and strengthening relationships with key customers."

Regarding the Bank's financial position, Bukhamseen highlighted that the total assets grew by 9%, reaching KD 3.92 billion, compared to KD 3.62 billion at the end of 2023. This increase was primarily driven by a 14% expansion in the financing portfolio, which rose to KD 2.85 billion by the end of 2024, up from KD 2.49 billion in 2023. Additionally, the

investments portfolio, primarily concentrated on high-quality Sukuk, recorded a notable 42% increase, rising by KD 150.7 million to reach KD 513.4 million at the end of 2024, compared to KD 362.7 million in 2023.

Bukhamseen added that depositors' accounts grew by 30%, reaching KD 2.75 billion by the end of 2024, up from KD 2.12 billion in 2023. Meanwhile, shareholders' equity increased by 4% to KD 348 million.

He also highlighted that KIB maintained high levels of total capital adequacy ratio, in compliance with Basel III regulations, standing at 18.38% as of 31 December 2024, while maintaining adequate liquidity ratios for all regulatory ratios issued in this regard by the Central Bank of Kuwait and in compliance with Basel III regulations.

Bukhamseen underscored KIB's notable achievements during 2024, including the successful issuance of a USD300 million Additional Tier 1 Sukuk (AT1) with an expected profit rate of 6.625%. The issuance saw investor demand exceeding twice the original size of the issued Sukuk, with final pricing achieving the tightest spread ever achieved on an AT1 Sukuk globally at the time of issuance, at 195 basis points above US Treasury.

The strong demand for the Sukuk reflects confidence in the strength and durability of the Kuwaiti banking sector in general, and Islamic banking operations and KIB in particular. It is also a clear indication and confirmation of the confidence that both local and international investors have placed in KIB's strategy and its distinguished and sustainable financial performance.

It is worth noting KIB's impressive track record in sukuk issuances. Through its investment arm, KIB Invest, KIB participated in the successful issuance of a USD1.25 billion, seven-year sovereign sukuk issued by the Government of Bahrain at the end of 2024, serving as Joint Lead Manager (JLM).

Bukhamseen also noted that KIB's subsidiaries continue to achieve tangible achievements in diversifying and developing their products and services, targeting all companies across

various sectors to provide innovative and advanced services.

Bukhamseen reaffirmed KIB's optimistic outlook for the future, emphasizing its strong commitment to investing in human capital as a key strategic priority. This includes comprehensive training programs and opportunities for national talent, aimed at cultivating a new generation of qualified leaders.

**Outstanding performance**  
On his part, Mohamed Said El Saka, KIB's Deputy CEO, said: "The 2024 end-of-year results represented a significant milestone in the Bank's journey, as it continued to achieve its strategic objectives centered on innovation and sustainable growth. This approach has notably enhanced the Bank's competitiveness by expanding its financing portfolio and adopting cutting-edge digital solutions that align with evolving market demands."

El Saka added: "In the realm of digital services, we enhanced our online banking platform and mobile app for corporate customers. KIB has also made a significant advancement in the retail banking sector by leveraging digital capabilities. The Bank introduced numerous new features and services across its digital channels. Furthermore, KIB has invested in innovative digital solutions for the real estate sector. These initiatives have contributed to business growth, increased revenues, and diversified income streams. Additionally, we expanded our investments in real estate research and development."

El Saka emphasized KIB's continued efforts to strengthen its distinctive position in the sector. This was exemplified by the Bank receiving several prestigious awards in 2024, including "Best Real Estate Solutions Provider - MENA 2024" from Capital Finance International (CFI) magazine, "Best Retail Banking Product 2024" from World Finance magazine, recognizing the comprehensive upgrade of the KIB Mobile App, and "Excellence in FinTech Innovation & Digital Leadership in Kuwait for 2024" by the World Union of Arab Bankers (WUAB).

He added that these awards reflect KIB's unwavering commitment to delivering innovative, high-quality services to its customers and

reinforce its leadership in digital and real estate banking solutions.

**ESG activities**  
In 2024, while implementing its strategic plan initiatives, KIB simultaneously reinforced its commitment to ESG practices and CSR, integrating them into the Bank's broader strategic initiatives.

KIB also developed a dedicated ESG strategy and launched initiatives to promote energy conservation, encourage recycling, and reduce paper-based transactions. Additionally, it signed cooperation agreements with universities to provide training programs for students and introduced entrepreneurship training programs through the KIB Mubader Center.

Throughout 2024, the Bank remained focused on ensuring that all strategic initiatives align with regulatory requirements and implementing best-in-class cybersecurity practices to safeguard the Bank's assets and customers.

Overall, KIB strives to balance strategic growth with social and environmental responsibility, while maintaining strict regulatory and security compliance.

**Acknowledgments and appreciation**

In his final remarks, Al-Jarrah extended his sincere thanks and appreciation to all shareholders, members of the Board of Directors, and the Executive Management for their continuous support to the Bank, and to everyone who supported its journey. He also expressed gratitude to the Central Bank of Kuwait for its ongoing support, commending its distinguished regulatory and supervisory role. Additionally, he thanked the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for its relentless efforts in supporting commercial and economic activities in the country, and the Capital Markets Authority for its supervisory and regulatory role in supporting an attractive and competitive investment environment in Kuwait.

Al-Jarrah also thanked the esteemed members of KIB's Sharia Supervisory Board, as well as the Bank's employees for their outstanding efforts, and its valued customers for their trust and continuous support of its journey and their effective contribution to its achievements. He also commended the efforts made by the State of Kuwait, its leadership and its people, to maintain the stability and security of the country.

**Election of the KIB's board members**

The Ordinary General Assembly of KIB's shareholders elected 11 members to the Bank's Board of Directors for the next three years. The non-independent members elected were Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, Mr. Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, Mr. Anwar Jawad Bukhamseen, Mr. Jassim Hassan Zainal, Dr. Abdullah Abdul Samad Marafi, Mr. Saleh Sulaiman Al-Trad, and Mr. Marzouq Khaled Yousef Al-Marzouq. The independent members were Mr. Abdul Razzaq Salah Al-Mutawa, Mr. Jassim Mohammed Al-Wazzan, Mr. Jihad Mohammed Ahmed Al-Qabandi, and Mr. Salem Falah Al-Hajraf.

**10% of VISA purchases donated for Eid gifts**

**Warba launches 'Basma' in partnership with Dabdoob to bring joy to orphans on Eid Al-Fitr**

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: As part of its commitment to social responsibility and promoting the values of giving during the Holy Month of Ramadan, Warba Bank launched the "Basma" campaign in partnership with Dabdoob, a leading toy platform, to bring joy and happiness to orphans during Eid Al-Fitr. The campaign encourages Warba Bank VISA cardholders to use their cards for purchases throughout Ramadan, with 10% of the purchase value donated by the bank to buy Eid gifts for orphans, at no additional cost to customers.

Speaking about the campaign, Mr. Muhannad Issa Burhama, Director of Product Development and Customer Segments at Warba Bank, said: "Ramadan is a month of generosity and giving, a time when people actively engage in charitable acts such as providing Iftar meals and food baskets to those in need. At Warba Bank, we wanted to introduce a different initiative this year, one that goes beyond fulfilling basic needs and brings joy to children who may not have anyone to surprise them with a gift on Eid Al-Fitr. The 'Basma' campaign is designed to spread happiness in a unique way."

Burhama added that spending in supermarkets and cooperatives naturally increases during Ramadan, as individuals and families purchase larger quantities of daily necessities. This observation inspired the "Basma" campaign, linking everyday shopping with an effortless way to give back.

He explained: "The more you shop, the more you contribute to bringing joy to orphans. This year, instead of focusing solely on providing food, we decided to complement the spirit of giving with something that embodies the joy of Eid: Surprising children with



Muhannad Issa Burhama

gifts. Giving is not just about meeting needs; it's about creating happy memories. Imagine a child waking up on Eid morning to find a new gift waiting for them and knowing that someone thought of them and wanted to make them happy."

The "Basma" campaign is exclusive to Warba Bank VISA cardholders, including VISA Signature, VISA Platinum, and VISA Prepaid cards. Customers simply use their VISA cards for everyday purchases, and Warba Bank donates 10% of the transaction value towards buying Eid gifts for orphans. There's no additional cost to customers as all gift costs are fully covered by Warba Bank, and no fees are deducted from customers' accounts. Customers contribute by simply using their cards for daily purchases.

The campaign extends from March 1, 2025 to March 31, 2025 and gifts will be distributed in the final days of Ramadan, ensuring children receive their gifts in time for Eid. To enhance customer engagement, Warba Bank

sends weekly alerts updating participants on the campaign's impact, fostering an emotional connection between them and this meaningful initiative.

The "Basma" campaign reflects Warba Bank's values, combining banking innovation with social responsibility. It strengthens the bank's role in supporting the community and bringing joy to orphans, ensuring they too experience the joy and celebration of Eid.

On his part, Mr. Hamad Al-Salmi, Head of Marketing and Public Relations at Dabdoob, expressed his enthusiasm for this partnership, stating: "At Dabdoob, we are committed to spreading joy among children, and partnering with Warba Bank on the 'Basma' campaign reflects our dedication to social responsibility. Eid is a special occasion that all children look forward to, and this initiative ensures that orphaned children receive their share of happiness and celebration."

**Warba Bank: Investing in the Community**

The "Basma" campaign is part of Warba Bank's ongoing commitment to social initiatives. The bank actively adopts programs that promote solidarity and encourage giving, aligning with Islamic values while providing innovative banking solutions that allow customers to engage in charitable efforts effortlessly.

In addition to this Ramadan initiative, Warba Bank continues to support education, environmental sustainability, health and youth empowerment as its strategy aligns with Kuwait Vision 2035. The bank's social responsibility strategy is designed to create a positive and sustainable impact on society.



Khaled Alshamlan and Ahmad Alhammad with the honorees and the Talent Development Management team.

**KFH partakes in the 'Innovation Challenge' with KFAS**

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) successfully concluded its participation in the "Innovation Challenge 2024" program, organized by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) in collaboration with IE Business School in Madrid. This three-month initiative, overseen by a group of university professors and innovation development experts, aimed to stimulate and enhance the innovative capabilities of private sector institutions.

A team from KFH, comprising Faisal Al Mulla, Faisal Al Mutairat, Mona Baidas, and Yousef Yousef, delivered a comprehensive presentation on their innovative project to KFH Group Chief Executive Officer Khaled Yousef Alshamlan and the executive management. The presentation highlighted the project's significance, customer value, process streamlining, and implementation challenges.

The project, which utilizes artificial intelligence to improve customer experience across banking sectors, has received recognition and praise from the CEO and executive management, who commended the KFH team's creativity and innovative ideas.

**Group Chief Executive Officer, Khaled Yousef Alshamlan**

On this occasion, Group CEO Khaled Yousef Alshamlan congratulated the

KFH team participating in the "Innovation Challenge 2024". He commended their innovative ideas, which consistently demonstrate the remarkable capabilities of young Kuwaiti talent within KFH. Their ability to propose novel concepts significantly contributes to enhancing development, improving performance, and elevating the quality of customer service.

Alshamlan added that enabling KFH employees to convert their creative and innovative ideas into tangible results significantly contributes to the bank's success. This initiative boosts morale, strengthens workplace engagement, increases accountability, and empowers them to drive change and address challenges. This will enhance the qualifications of future leaders, enabling them to guide KFH on its continued path to success.

Alshamlan emphasized that KFH is particularly committed to fostering a culture of innovation and development within the bank, making it a core component of the work ecosystem.

**Acting Group Chief Human Resources and Transformation Officer - Ahmad Alhammad**

Acting Group Chief Human Resources and Transformation Officer at KFH, Ahmad Alhammad said: "Our team's creative capabilities and commitment to unconventional problem-solving, as demonstrated in the "Innovation Challenge 2024", affirm the success of our efforts to attract and re-

tain top talent. We are dedicated to enhancing their skills, refining their potential, and fostering a culture of development within our workforce."

He added: "There is no doubt that KFH's commitment to participating in such ambitious initiatives, which enhance the ongoing professional development of its employees, positively strengthens the workforce's skills, thereby supporting KFH's leading position both locally and globally."

Alhammad emphasized that KFH has successfully established a model for a work environment that prioritizes investment in talent. This has been achieved through various comprehensive initiatives and programs in collaboration with prestigious universities and academic institutions, such as Harvard Business School, INSEAD, IMD, and IE Business School, aimed at developing talent and preparing leaders capable of driving positive change.

The Innovation Culture  
KFH annually holds a group-wide innovation competition. All entries undergo a thorough evaluation by a specialized committee, and the top three winners share a \$45,000 prize pool. The bank's goal for this competition is to motivate employees and utilize their expertise to develop innovative services and solutions that improve systems and enhance customer experience.

Bank also strengthened its financial position, with total assets rising 45%

## Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait – Egypt achieves 137% growth in net profit to reach EGP 6.6 billion for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2024

### Strong Financial Results

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait - Egypt (ABK-Egypt) delivered record financial results for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2024, underscoring its robust business growth and expanding customer base. The Bank achieved a 137% increase in net profit in 2024, reaching EGP 6.6 billion, compared to EGP 2.8 billion in 2023. Net interest income reached EGP 6.5 billion compared to EGP 4.1 billion in 2023, reflecting an increase of 59%, while net income from fees & commissions surged by 24% to reach EGP 1.5 billion compared to EGP 1.2 billion at the end of 2023. Profit before tax recorded EGP 8 billion, a growth rate of 112% compared to EGP 3.8 billion in 2023, reflecting the Bank's strong financial performance and strategic execution.

The Bank also strengthened its financial position, with total assets rising 45% to reach EGP 141.6 billion compared to EGP 97.6 billion in 2023. Total customer deposits increased by 44% to reach EGP 119.9 billion compared to EGP 83.1 billion in 2023, while the Bank's gross loan portfolio expanded by 40% to EGP 69.3 billion compared to EGP 49.5 billion in 2023. Asset quality remained strong, with the non-performing loan (NPL) ratio standing at 1.74% as of December 2024.

Commenting on the results, Mr. Ali Marafi, Chairman of ABK-Egypt, expressed his gratitude for the Bank's outstanding performance in 2024, stating, "The robust growth rates achieved across all financial indicators is attributed to the Bank's prudent strategy and agile operating model that kept pace with the changes in the local and global economic landscapes. It is also a reflection of our relentless efforts to strengthen our position in the banking sector as well as our team's ability to deliver value to customers and shareholders."

### Positive Outlook

Mr. Marafi also commended the leading role played by the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) and the Egyptian government and their ongoing efforts in supporting the banking sector, which were instrumental in navigating turbulent market conditions and withstanding economic challenges. He said, "Our future outlook remains very positive, and we will continue on our growth path setting additional focus on enhancing operational efficiency, achieving growth across all profitability mattresses. This is all while maintaining the quality of our credit portfolio, investing in our human capital, and elevating customer service to provide an exceptional banking experience to our customers. These set objectives will ensure that the Bank continues to achieve its ambitious goals and strengthen its market position. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to our Board of Directors, our shareholders, and our customers for their continued trust in our bank."

### Ambitious Strategy and Team

On his part, Mr. Khaled El Salawy, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of ABK-Egypt, commented on the exceptional results



Mr. Ali Marafi, Chairman of ABK-Egypt



Mr. Khaled El Salawy Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director ABK-Egypt

achieved by the Bank in 2024. He said, "These remarkable results were founded on an ambitious vision and an integrated business strategy that were both laid to achieve sustainable growth and fortify the Bank's position in the Egyptian banking sector. The Bank was able to achieve record results despite a very challenging economic environment as we were keen on taking solid steps towards expanding our business through focusing on key sectors to grow our corporate banking arm, enhancing our portfolio of offerings, and raising our operational efficiency to ensure maintaining a competitive edge in the market. We also continued to support all CBE endeavors towards digital transformation by providing innovative banking solutions tailored to meet the rising needs of all customer segments."

Mr. El Salawy attributed the results achieved in 2024 to the hard work and commitment of the executive management and the relentless efforts of all Bank employees. He emphasized, "Our stellar team possess exceptional capabilities, allowing us to adapt to changing market conditions and adjust our business plans to respond swiftly to market needs. This helped us seize opportunities, thus earning the confidence of our customers and partners and stressing the Bank's ability to compete in the Egyptian banking sector."

### Further Achievements

Over the course of 2024, ABK-Egypt remained focused on contributing to the growth of the national economy across all sectors. The Bank's corporate banking and syndications arm played a pivotal role in affirming

the Bank's position as a lead player in the Egyptian market. The Bank was keen on expanding its business by focusing on key sectors and providing integrated services that supported the growth of these businesses. It also signed a number of cooperation protocols and alliances to grant credit facilities to large institutions from various sectors, which positively impacted ABK-Egypt's corporate portfolio.

In 2024, the bank's corporate loans portfolio grew by EGP 15.87 billion compared to December 2023 to reach EGP 46.19 billion, showing a noteworthy growth rate of 52%. This was made possible by the skilled calibers who were able to meet the rising needs of corporate clients from across all sectors and help them cope with challenging economic conditions by extending professional advice and availing financing solutions that ensure these institutions grow their revenues, expand their businesses, and achieve their strategic goals.

On the retail banking side, individual deposits grew by 58% to reach EGP 33.9 billion and individual loans portfolio recorded a growth rate of 37% to reach EGP 22.9 billion. Meanwhile, the Bank's credit card portfolio grew by 60% to reach EGP 862 million.

Digital banking services and alternative channels recorded remarkable performance over the course of the year with digital transactions showing an exceptional hike of over 80% compared to previous year. This reaffirmed ABK-Egypt's commitment to providing secure and seamless banking services that simplify and enrich customers' lives in line with the Bank's digital transformation and financial inclusion strategies set to prioritize offering innovative banking solutions.

### Financial Inclusion and Corporate Social Responsibility

In line with ABK-Egypt's commitment to supporting national goals of promoting financial inclusion and transforming into a cashless society, the Bank conducted a series of financial literacy seminars under the auspices of CBE targeting unbanked segments across all governorates. These efforts focused on raising financial awareness, encouraging saving, and promoting the benefits of financial services offered by the banking sector.

ABK-Egypt understands the critical role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in community development. The Bank launched various social initiatives across Egyptian governorates in partnership with specialized non-profit organizations. These initiatives aim to support to families in need through by improving access to healthcare, education, food, clothing, and shelter, and by assisting underprivileged segments, such as youth, women, and individuals with disabilities.

The Bank consistently aligns its CSR vision and agenda with Egypt's Vision 2030. In 2024, ABK-Egypt actively participated in several humanitarian projects, including the recent presidential initiative, 'A New Beginning for Human Building.' This aims to enhance the capabilities of Egyptian citizens in various sectors of life and promote human development to enhance the lives of underprivileged families in Egypt.

Trump's trade tariffs chill markets, upset businesses, consumers

BEIJING, March 22, (Xinhua): U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff measures have served to not cheer but chill the capital market, businesses and consumers.

The intensive and drastic shift in the White House's economic policies since Trump took office targeted its immediate neighbors (Canada and Mexico), Europe and China. Trump also imposed a 25 percent tariff on steel and aluminum imports. Trump's moves have triggered immediate retaliatory tariff hikes and other countermeasures, bringing chaos to the global economic landscape. The term "Trumpcession" has been coined to warn against the consequences.

### Will extra tariffs work?

Will Trump's tariffs help stimulate the U.S. economic growth or work otherwise? U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said early this month that the U.S. economy might slow down during a transition time he described as a "detox period" before longer-term gains. On Sunday, he told NBC News that there were "no guarantees" there would not be a recession in the United States during Trump's four-year term.

Meanwhile, Bessent called recent volatilities in the stock market healthy adjustments. However, the capital market follows its own rules. Stocks on Wall Street registered sharp falls for several consecutive sessions, indicating declining confidence in investors and increasing concerns about economic prospects.

Preliminary data showed University of Michigan consumer sentiment for the U.S. plunged to 57.9 in March, the lowest since November 2022 amid mounting inflation, marked in part by continuous surges in egg prices.

In the opinion of Martin Wolf, chief economics commentator at the Financial Times, U.S. tariff hikes are expected to drive up prices, with Trump's goal of a shift to domestic production hardly attainable in the near term.

Also, retaliatory tariffs by other countries are leading to a loss of overseas market profits for U.S. companies and a loss of domestic jobs, with American farmers bearing the brunt, a recent analysis by The New York Times said.

### Uncertainties cloud U.S., Global economy

A recent co-survey on 49 economists by the Financial Times put the U.S. growth at 1.6 percent for 2025, down from 2.3 percent reported in December, while revealing a near consensus that the unpredictability of U.S. economic policies would repress growth due to resulting declines in consumer and corporate spending.

In a broader sense, Trump's tariff measures are creating trade barriers and immense uncertainties disrupting the operation of the multilateral trading system and global economy, experts have said.

On Monday, an Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development outlook report revised global growth down to 3.1 percent for 2025 and 3.0 percent for 2026 from last December's forecasts, citing increased trade barriers and uncertainties in government policies as major contributing factors.

# Tariffs will be flexible, Trump declares

New Canadian leader says Trump will want trade talks as Americans suffer from trade war

WASHINGTON, March 22, (Agencies): US President Donald Trump has declared that there will be flexibility on his reciprocal tariff plan, even as he seemed to oppose the idea of making exceptions for the forthcoming duties.

"People are coming to me and talking about tariffs, and a lot of people are asking me if they could have exceptions," said Trump who speaking at the Oval Office, late on Friday. "And once you do that for one, you have to do that for all," he said.

"I don't change. But the word flexibility is an important word," he said. "Sometimes its flexibility. So there'll be flexibility, but basically its reciprocal."

Trump has issued a flurry of tariff announcements since retaking the White House, boosting prospects of a trade war with commercial partners, namely the Europeans and Chinese.

Meanwhile, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said Friday U.S. President Donald Trump will ultimately respect Canada's sovereignty and be ready for comprehensive trade talks because Americans are going to suffer from Trump's trade war.

Carney said talks with Trump will not happen "until we get the respect we deserve as a sovereign nation. By the way, this is not a high bar."

Trump kept up his near-daily attacks



A customer shops at a Target store in Rosemead, Los Angeles County, California, the United States, on March 4, 2025. Target Corporation, one of the largest retailers in the United States, warned of price hikes on produce after U.S. President Donald Trump's 25 percent tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada took effect on Tuesday. (Xinhua)

on Canada on Friday, repeating that the country should be the 51st state and that the U.S. keeps Canada "afloat."

"When I say they should be a state, I mean that," the American president said.

Carney met with Canada's provincial leaders at the Canadian War Museum

in Ottawa, where he announced relief packages for workers and businesses hurt by the trade war and announced moves to expedite resource projects.

Carney, sworn in last Friday, still hasn't had a phone call with Trump. Trump mocked Carney's predecessor, Justin Trudeau, by calling him Govern-

nor Trudeau, but he has not yet mentioned Carney's name.

The new prime minister said he wants a comprehensive discussion on trade and security with the Americans and not a one-off tariff discussion.

"In the end, Americans are going to lose from American trade action and

that's one of the reasons I am confident that there will be that discussion with the appropriate amount of respect and the breadth," Carney said. "I am ready for it anytime they are ready."

Trump put 25% tariffs on Canada's steel and aluminum and is threatening sweeping tariffs on all Canadian products as well as all of America's trading partners on April 2.

Carney became Prime Minister after winning a Liberal Party leadership race triggered by Trudeau's decision to step down earlier this year. He's expected to trigger the process for early parliamentary elections this Sunday, with a vote expected before April 28.

The governing Liberals appeared poised for a historic election defeat this year until Trump declared a trade war and upended Canadian politics.

The almost daily attacks on Canada's sovereignty have infuriated Canadians, who are canceling trips south of the border and avoiding buying American goods when they can. The surge in Canadian nationalism has bolstered Liberal poll numbers.

Carney said the premiers of Canada's provinces had agreed to work on a plan to develop a national trade and energy corridor in an effort to diversify trade.

He said that could mean an oil pipeline from oil-rich Alberta to Eastern Canada. Quebec has previously opposed a pipeline, but Premier François Legault now says opinions are changing because of Trump's threats. Carney said Quebec uses about 350,000 barrels of oil daily and 70% of that comes from the U.S.

# World financiers bullish on Global South development

BEIJING, March 22, (Xinhua): The main forum of the three-day 2025 Global South Financiers Forum kicked off here Thursday, gathering experts, industry leaders and government officials from the financial sector across the world.

Financiers at the forum shared insights on the economic and financial development of the Global South, and expressed confidence in a promising prospect for South-South cooperation and the development of the Global South.

"Global South has achieved a great significance in the global economic system," said Inayat Hussain, executive director of State Bank of Pakistan. "The countries of the Global South have contributed to more than half of the world's growth in recent years, intra-south trade accounts for more than a quarter of all world trade, and

the outflows of foreign direct investment from the South represent a third of the global flows."

Calling the Belt and Road Initiative a great example of South-South cooperation, he said Chinese financial resources and technical assistance are helping the development of many countries in the Global South, including Pakistan, where the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a project under the initiative, has promoted local infrastructure development through financial cooperation and technical assistance.

South-South cooperation "has a very high potential to address complex challenges of the developing world because countries in the Global South -- though on different stages of economic development -- can better understand the resource constraints and capacity challenges faced by their

Global South peers," Hussain said, adding that the cooperative mechanism can lead to more effective coordination that is mutually beneficial for all participants.

The Banker magazine of the Financial Times Group monitors around 4,000 banks worldwide. It has witnessed the growth of the Global South over the past two decades, with Chinese bankers dominating the top of its annual ranking, said the magazine's Editor-in-Chief Silvia Pavoni.

The growth of the Global South is mirrored and complemented by the growth of their banking sectors, Pavoni said, particularly in a time full of challenges such as climate change and new geopolitical maneuvering.

Noting that the United States has unilaterally created the longest economic, commercial and financial

blockade in history, Yamile Berra Cires, the first vice president of the Central Bank of Cuba, said, "Cuba agrees on the need to reform the international financial architecture and strengthen financial cooperation among the Global South countries based on non-discriminatory treatment and inclusive strategies."

She said the New Development Bank provides an alternative for member and participating countries to strengthen their economic functioning, expressing hope for more initiatives to boost financial mechanisms that facilitate the development of countries like Cuba.

The world is navigating through an unprecedented time with challenges of rising economic crises, geopolitical tensions and climate change, said Jonathan Titus-Williams, deputy minister of planning and economic devel-

opment of Sierra Leone.

"These challenges demand innovative, flexible and collaborative approaches to financing" tailored to each country's unique needs and circumstances, he said.

"A unified Global South effort, and the globe in general, will be essential to confronting the pressing issues that no nation can solve alone... Through diverse and creative financing options, we can create a more equitable, sustainable and resilient world," Titus-Williams said.

South-South financial cooperation has funded critical infrastructure including ports, roads and bridges in developing countries, and boosted regional economic integration, said Mohammad Nazmul Haque, executive vice president of Infrastructure Development Company Limited of Bangladesh.

# Canada's oldest company to liquidate all but 6 stores starting Monday

TORONTO, March 22, (AP): An Ontario court on Friday gave Hudson's Bay, Canada's oldest company, permission to start liquidating all but six of its stores on Monday.

The approval from Ontario Superior Court Judge Peter Osborne allows the retailer, which dates back to 1670, to begin selling off inventory at most of its 80 Hudson's Bay stores, three Saks Fifth Avenue locations and 13 Saks Off 5th shops in Canada.

"This is the art of the possible and we are where we are today.

In my view, there is no other alternative," Judge Osborne said.

The Canadian retail icon retailer was founded as a trading firm for furs and other goods. The company became part of Canada's social fabric, and was famous for its trademark product: a thick, wool blanket that has warded off frigid Canadian winters for hundreds of years.

It is part of the national lore of rugged "voyageurs" exploring the vast landscape while fighting and trading with Indigenous people.

The six stores being saved from the liquidation sale include the flagship on Yonge Street in Toronto, as well as a store in the city's Yorkdale mall and another farther north in Hillcrest Mall in Richmond Hill, Ontario. The remaining three span Montreal, the Carrefour Laval mall and Point-Claire, Quebec.

The company didn't say how deep discounts will be during the liquidation running until June 15. It will vacate all liquidating stores by June 30.

The move could save some of the 9,364 jobs that would have been lost had the company moved to liquidate all of its stores, which was the plan until recent sales exceeded expectations, allowing for it to keep six alive.

"If a solution can be found, there is an opportunity to pull additional stores out of the liquidation, but if a restructuring solution is not found very quickly, (the six) will be added to the liquidation sale," Hudson's Bay lawyer Ashley Taylor said in court Friday.

## 'I Said I Love You First' breaks romantic clichés

### Gomez and Blanco's love album is more than syrup

LONDON, March 22, (AP): A lot can go wrong when a couple teams up for a collaborative album. The myopia of romance could make for unrelatable, navel-gazing music - the kind that should stay between partners instead of being shared with the world.

But from the get-go, recently engaged pair Selena Gomez and Benny Blanco have managed to avoid cliché. Their joint release, "I Said I Love You First," is not the saccharine project many might've expected.

(But if you love love, this is still the ideal listen for you. It's just also so much more than that.)

The album opens with the voice recording of a teary, young Gomez saying goodbye to the cast and crew of the Disney show that made her a household name, "Wizards of Waverly Place," as cameras click. Slowly, a melancholic piano chimes in the background, bleeding into the first song: "Younger and

Hotter Than Me."

Gomez, in her whisper-sprechgesang (speak singing), instills that too familiar feeling of not fitting in, something she's vocalized throughout her career. "All of the girls at this party / Are younger and hotter than me," she laments. "And I hate what I wore / But I hate myself more."

#### Delicate

It's a delicate single, a vulnerable mirror to another previously released track, the dreamy "Scared of Loving You." With a heartfelt vocal performance, acoustic guitar and a lullaby-like melody, the cozy track is a gooeey reflection of the duo's love. An album's worth of these songs would be far too syrupy, but Gomez and Blanco flip the script by playing with different music genres and adding surprising collaborations with other beloved artists.

That's evidenced in the playful pop-rock

single "Call Me When You Break Up" featuring Gracie Abrams and the liquid electro hyperpop "Bluest Flame" co-written by Charli xcx. "BRAT" summer continues.

Elsewhere, Gomez and Blanco lean into an easy, suggestive sensuality, like on "Sunset Blvd." "Bury me with roses / I know you're awfully shy / But I can't wait to hold it, to hold that / Big, Big / Hard heart," sings a breathy and cheeky Gomez.

It is followed by the slower and sexier "Cowboy," a lusty, Lana Del Rey-channeling bedroom track that raises the heat of the album. "Put your hands on me / Ride it like a cowboy," Gomez sings. "Run you out of town, boy / Good Lord, baby, please."

"I Said I Love You First" extends beyond the famous couple's relationship and explores various forms of love and life - the sexy, fun, despairing and messy parts of it, even performed in Spanish on "Ojos Tristes" - distilled into an amusing pop album.



This album cover image released by Interscope Records shows 'I Said I Love You First' by Selena Gomez and Benny Blanco. (AP)

#### Song original

### 'Carey did not steal Xmas hit'

LOS ANGELES, March 22, (AP): A federal judge in Los Angeles has ruled that Mariah Carey did not steal her perennial megahit "All I Want for Christmas Is You" from other songwriters.

Judge Mónica Ramírez Almadani granted Carey's request for summary judgment on Wednesday, giving her and co-writer and co-defendant Walter Afanasieff a victory without going to trial.

In 2023, songwriters Andy Stone of Louisiana - who goes by the stage name Vince Vance - and Troy Powers of Tennessee filed the \$20 million lawsuit alleging that Carey's 1994 song, which has since become a holiday standard and annual streaming sensation, infringed the copyright of their country 1989 song with the same title.

Their lawyer Gerard P. Fox said he's "disappointed" in an email to The Associated Press.

Fox said it is his experience that judges at this level "nearly always now dismiss a music copyright case and that one must appeal to reverse and get the case to the jury. My client will make a decision shortly on whether to appeal. We filed based on the opinions of two esteemed musicologists who teach at great colleges."

#### Structure

Stone and Powers' suit said their "'All I Want For Christmas Is You' contains a unique linguistic structure where a person, disillusioned with expensive gifts and seasonal comforts, wants to be with their loved one, and accordingly writes a letter to Santa Claus."

They said there was an "overwhelming likelihood" Carey and Afanasieff had heard their song - which at one point reached No. 31 on Billboard's Hot Country chart - and infringed their copyright by taking significant elements from it.

After hearing from two experts for each side, Ramírez Almadani agreed with those from the defense, who said the writers employed common Christmas clichés that existed prior to both songs, and that Carey's song used them differently. She said the plaintiffs had not met the burden of showing that the songs are substantially similar.

Ramírez Almadani also ordered sanctions against the plaintiffs and their lawyers, saying their suit and subsequent filings were frivolous and that the plaintiffs' attorneys "made no reasonable effort to ensure that the factual contentions asserted have evidentiary support."



Mariah Carey performs during a concert celebrating Dubai Expo 2020 One Year to Go in Dubai, United Arab Emirates on Oct. 20, 2019. (AP)

#### Film



This image released by Disney shows Rachel Zegler in a scene from 'Snow White.' (AP)

There is no poisoned apple but it doesn't whistle

## Modern 'Snow White' lacks classic charm

LOS ANGELES, March 22, (AP): Mirror mirror on the wall, what's the fairest Disney live-action remake of them all?

Wait, mirror. Hold on a second. Maybe choosing from the likes of "Alice in Wonderland" (2010), "Mulan" (2020) and "The Lion King" (2019) isn't such a good idea. Mirror, on second thought, what's on Netflix?

Even the most devoted fans would have to acknowledge that these have not been the most illustrious illustrations of Disney magic. At their best ("Pete's Dragon"? "Cinderella"?") they breathe life into old classics that could use a little updating. At their worst, well, blue Will Smith.

Given the rapacious rate of remakes in modern Hollywood, it's remarkable that it's taken nearly 90 years for Disney to return to "Snow White." It means going back to the very foundation of the Mouse House. The 1937 "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" was Disney's first animated feature; its grosses paid for the studio's Burbank lot.

That legacy of "Snow White," by comparison, doesn't do any favors to Marc Webb's inevitably lesser, inert live-action reread.

Good intentions, like swirling bluebirds, flutter through this "Snow White": to give its singing protagonist (Rachel Zegler) more agency; to expand that notion of "fair" beyond skin tone; to reframe that problematic prince.

But all that updating adds up to a mishmash of a fable, caught in between now and once upon a time.

It wouldn't be an earthshattering observation to note that a 1930s cartoon, let alone a 19th century German folk tale, might not be entirely in line with contemporary culture.

Most of these Disney live-action remakes have carried with them more than a few notes of correction and atonement for the past - a laudable goal that means a generation of kids might

not need a brief history lesson to go along with an old classic.

But it's a tricky thing reworking a fable that's been around two centuries, and that's doubly true when leaping from the two-dimensional fantasy realm of animation to the more complicated land of flesh and bone. Webb's "Snow White" has been a veritable case study for the headaches that can arise when a window into the real world is cracked open.

Everything from Israel's war in Gaza (Zegler and her co-star Gal Gadot, who plays the wicked stepmother, have differing opinions), the humanity of little people (there's a reason "and the Seven Dwarfs" has been stripped from the title) and the alleged "woke"-ness of the production have been fuel for what we can gently refer to as online debate.

#### Gloriously

Despite some gloriously lush production design, "Snow White" - innocent of most of those backlashes though not all - can't quite thread the needle. Even the new songs (by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul) that are good ("Waiting on a Wish") struggle to fit in alongside old standbys. Zegler does a spirited job remaking a classic Disney princess into a more modern woman; when she sings, the movie gets a lift.

The last thing that's wrong with this "Snow White" is Zegler's casting.

But like scaffolding that's been left up too long, the strain of renovation shows in Webb's film, particularly in its awkward handling of Dopey, Sneezey and company.

The seven dwarfs, like the fawns and squirrels, are rendered in CGI. You could argue that this acknowledges the artificiality of a dated and offensive trope. But it also gives "Snow White" an uncanny quality, with all human characters but the dwarfs being played by real people.

As if to Band-Aid over this, one of the woodsmen is played by an actor of short stature (George

Appleby) whose presence seems like yet another atonement, only one for this "Snow White," not 1937's.

You might be thinking: But what about the movie? The problem with "Snow White" is that you never stop thinking about these much-strategized and sometimes superficial efforts to recontextualize the original movie.

Erin Cressida Wilson's screenplay remakes Snow White's story as less a princess awaiting her Prince Charming (the song "Someday My Prince Will Come" has been jettisoned) than an heir to a throne who loses her gumption.

Though taught as a child to be "fair" as a leader by her father king (Hadley Fraser), Snow White has lost any ambition by the time Gadot's Evil Queen takes over the kingdom.

Gadot sinks her teeth into the Evil Queen, a spiky, slinky villain who moves with a metallic rustle (the costumes are by Sandy Powell). But she feels cut off from the movie, without the lines that would elevate her flamboyant performance into something memorable.

The prince has been altogether scrubbed; instead Andrew Burnap plays the blandly cocksure bandit Jonathan who encourages Snow White not to wait for her father's rescue.

Presumably one of the reasons to bring actors into remakes of animated classics would be to add a warm-blooded pulse to these characters. Zegler manages that, but everyone else in "Snow White" - mortal or CGI - is as stiff as could be.

You're left glumly scorekeeping the updates - one win here, a loss there - while pondering why, regardless of the final tally, recapturing the magic of long ago is so elusive.

"Snow White," a Walt Disney Co. release is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for violence, some peril, thematic elements and brief rude humor. Running time: 109 minutes. Two stars out of four.

#### Mo3's death

### Rapper faces murder charge

HOUSTON, March 22, (AP): Dallas rapper Yella Beezy has been arrested and charged with capital murder in the shooting death of fellow rapper Mo3 on a busy interstate in 2020, according to court records.

Yella Beezy, 33, whose real name is Markies Conway, was indicted by a Dallas County grand jury on Tuesday on a charge of capital murder while remuneration. The indictment accuses Conway of hiring a man named Kewon White to murder Mo3, whose real name was Melvin Noble.



Yella Beezy

The indictment did not provide information on why authorities believe Conway hired White to shoot Noble, who also lived in Dallas.

Court records did not list an attorney who could speak on behalf of Conway. Calls and emails to representatives for Conway were not immediately returned.

In a Facebook post after Conway's arrest, Noble's mother, Nichole Williams Noble wrote, "Justice for my baby!!!!"

The 28-year-old Noble was driving on Interstate 35 in south Dallas on Nov. 11, 2020, when authorities allege White drove up next to him and got out of his vehicle with a gun in his hand. Noble got out of his vehicle and began running south on the freeway as White shot at him, authorities said. Noble and a bystander who was inside a car were shot by White, police said. The bystander survived but Noble died at a hospital.

The Los Angeles County district attorney said Friday that his office will not file sexual assault charges against movie producer David Guillod, more than four years after his arrest.

District Attorney Nathan Hochman said in a statement that there was insufficient evidence to prove a case against Guillod beyond a reasonable doubt.

The announcement came nearly three years after a judge rejected similar charges against Guillod in Santa Barbara County.

An email seeking comment from an attorney who has represented Guillod was not immediately answered. Guillod has denied all of the allegations.

Guillod, a talent manager and producer whose credits include 2017's "Atomic Blonde" and 2020's "Extraction," was originally arrested in 2020 and charged with rape and sexual assault involving six women between 2014 and 2020 in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara counties. Authorities chose to try the cases jointly in Santa Barbara County, where a judge at a 2022 preliminary hearing found that there was insufficient evidence for Guillod to go to trial on charges involving four of the women.

#### Variety

NEW YORK: A lawsuit filed late Friday accuses the Trump administration of unlawfully shutting down the Voice of America (VOA) and asks a federal court to restore the outlet that for decades has supplied news about the United States to nations around the world - including many that lack a free press of their own.

The case, filed in US District Court in New York, was brought by VOA reporters, Reporters Without Borders and a handful of unions against the US Agency for Global Media and Karl Lake, the agency Arizona candidate who is President Trump's representative there.

"In many parts of the world, a crucial source of objective news is gone, and only censored state-sponsored news media is left to fill the void," the lawsuit said.

Lake has described the broadcast agency as a "giant rot" that needs to be stripped down and rebuilt.

Voice of America dates to World War II as a source of objective news, often beamed into authoritarian countries. Funded by Congress, it is protected by a charter that guarantees its



Trump

product pass muster for journalistic rigor.

The lawsuit charges that the Trump administration has effectively shut it down unlawfully in the past week. Republicans have complained that the news source is infected by left-wing propaganda, a contention its operators say isn't backed up factually. (AP)

NEW YORK: Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett has a book coming out in September that her publisher is billing as an invitation for "readers to see the Supreme Court through the lens of her experience."

"Listening to the Law: Reflections on the Court and Constitution" will be released Sept. 9, according to Sentinel Books, a conserva-

tive imprint of Penguin Random House.

"In 'Listening to the Law,' Justice Barrett illuminates her role and daily life as a justice, touching on everything from her deliberation process to dealing with media scrutiny," Friday's announcement by Sentinel reads in part. "With the warmth and clarity that made her a popular law professor, she brings to life the making of the Constitution and lays out her approach to interpreting its text, inviting readers to wrestle with questions of originalism and to embrace the rich heritage of the Constitution."

In a statement issued through Sentinel, Barrett said, "The process of judging, which happens behind closed doors, can seem like a mystery. It shouldn't."

Her signing with Sentinel was first reported in 2021, and financial documents released the following year showed Barrett receiving a \$425,000 advance as part of a reported \$2 million deal.

Other current justices have published books in recent years, including Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, Justice Sonia Sotomayor and Justice Neil Gorsuch.

Barrett, 53, is the youngest member of the court, which she joined in 2020 just weeks after the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The third justice appointed by President Donald Trump, Barrett solidified a conservative majority that has overturned abortion rights, broadened religious rights and ended affirmative action in college admissions. (AP)

## Teens need more sleep than adults

## Insomnia can lead to heart issues, expert suggests solutions

By Julio Fernandez-Mendoza

Prof. Penn State College of Medicine

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

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About 10% of Americans say they have chronic insomnia, and millions of others report poor sleep quality. Ongoing research has found that bad sleep could lead to numerous health problems, including heart disease.

Dr. Julio Fernandez-Mendoza is a professor of psychiatry and behavioral health, neuroscience and public health sciences at Penn State College of Medicine. He discusses the need for sleep, why teenagers require more sleep than adults, and how you can get a good night's sleep without medications.

The Conversation has collaborated with SciLine to bring you highlights from the discussion that have been edited for brevity and clarity.

Question: How much sleep is enough for adults and for adolescents?

Julio Fernandez-Mendoza: Adults who report getting about seven to eight hours of sleep per night generally have the best health, in terms of both physical and mental health, and longevity.

But that recommendation changes with age. Adults over age 65 may need just six to seven hours of sleep per night. So older people, if otherwise healthy, should not feel anxious if they're getting just six hours. Young people need the most - at least nine hours - and some younger children may need more.

Q: How can insufficient sleep harm our health?

Fernandez-Mendoza: Our team was the first to show that those complaining about insomnia - difficulty falling or staying asleep - were more likely to have high blood pressure and be at risk for heart disease.

In both teens and adults, we found that insomnia and shortened sleep may lead to elevated stress, hormone levels and inflammation. These problems tend to show up before you develop heart disease.

Q: What about people who have more serious sleep problems?

Fernandez-Mendoza: Good sleep hygiene habits include cutting down on caffeine and alcohol, quitting smoking and exercising regularly. I also recommend not skipping meals, not eating too late at night and not eating too much.

But people with a persistent sleep problem may need to make more behavioral changes. Research studies point to a set of six rules that can improve your sleep. You can follow these changes consistently in the short term, and then choose how to adapt them into your lifestyle down the road.

## Sleep

First, get up at the same time no matter what. No matter how much sleep you get. This will anchor your sleep/wake cycle, called your circadian rhythm.

Second, do not use your bed for anything except sleep. Third, when you can't sleep, don't lie in bed awake. Instead, get out of bed, go into another room if you can, and do an activity that's enjoyable or relaxing. Go back to bed only when you're ready to sleep.

Fourth, get going with daily activities even after a poor night's sleep. Don't try to compensate for sleep loss. If you have chronic insomnia, don't nap, sleep in, or doze during the day or evening even after poor sleep the previous night.

Fifth, go to bed only when you're actually sleepy enough to fall asleep.

And sixth, start with the amount of sleep you're now getting - with the lowest limit at five hours - and then increase it weekly by 15 minutes.

These six rules are evidence-based and go above and beyond simple sleep hygiene habits. If they don't work, see a provider who can help you.

Q: Do you have advice specifically for adolescents?

Fernandez-Mendoza: Adolescence is a unique developmental period. It's not just the obvious physical, emotional and behavioral changes that occur during adolescence and puberty - there are changes in a teenager's brain that can alter their sleep patterns.

When an adolescent goes through puberty, their internal clock changes so that their sleep schedule shifts to later hours. While it's true that adolescents are more engaged at

night because of their social relationships, there's also biology behind why they want to stay up late - their internal clocks have shifted. It's not just choice.

School start times for most adolescents are at odds with that biological shift. So they don't get enough sleep, which affects their performance in school. Research suggests that schools with later start times are more closely aligned with the science on child development and don't put adolescents at risk by making them wake up earlier than their bodies are biologically inclined to.

Parents can help their teens get better sleep. Set a time for kids to stop doing homework and put away electronics. Instead, they can watch TV with the family or read - something relaxing and enjoyable that will help them wind down before bed.

You can also gradually move back their wake-up time. Start on weekends, waking them up 30 minutes earlier every day, including school days, until the child reaches the desired wake-up time. Don't try to reshift them suddenly - for example, waking up a teenager at 5 a.m. like it's the military - because that doesn't work. They won't get used to it, since it's at odds with their internal clock. So, do it little by little. If that doesn't work, see a clinical provider.

What kind of treatments can a sleep clinician provide?

Fernandez-Mendoza: People should get help if they feel they sleep poorly, if they're fatigued during the day, or if they snore or grind their teeth. All these issues deserve attention.

Some people may think a sleep provider just prescribes expensive medication, but that's not true. There are behavioral, non-drug-based treatments that work. Cognitive behavioral therapy is the first-line treatment recommended for insomnia. Light therapy may also help, which is the use of a bright light therapy lamp at a given time during the day or evening, depending on the person's sleep problem.

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SciLine is a free service based at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a nonprofit that helps journalists include scientific evidence and experts in their news stories. (AP)

## A low-cost solution

## New hair loss treatment is 1990s repurposed drug

WASHINGTON, March 22, (AP) - The latest trend in treating hair loss may sound familiar - essentially, it's a repurposed drug first popularized in the 1990s.

Back then, TV viewers were inundated with ads for Rogaine, a sticky topical solution that could help treat thinning hair when applied to the scalp.

Now dermatologists are increasingly prescribing the drug, known generically as minoxidil, in low-dose pills to help men and women maintain or regrow hair.

The practice follows several recent studies suggesting the ingredient works as well - or possibly better - when swallowed, rather than applied to hair follicles on the head. Telehealth companies are also driving new demand by offering a quick, easy way to get a prescription and have the pills shipped directly to customers' doors.

Here's a look at the drug:

## Developed

Minoxidil was originally developed as a pill to treat high blood pressure in the 1970s. Researchers noticed that some patients taking it experienced increased hair growth as a side effect.

Rogaine was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 1988, the first drug to win the agency's endorsement for male pattern baldness. Studies showed that men on the medication, which was applied directly to the scalp, had a slower rate of hair loss and, in some cases, regrew hair.

Starting in 1991, a lower dose was approved for women and the brand was aggressively marketed as an over-the-counter medication on TV and in print.

The drug's ability to slow hair loss is likely related to its effect on blood circulation, according to experts. "By increasing blood flow to the scalp it signals hairs to stay in their growth phase for longer," said Dr. Adam Friedman, chair of dermatology at George Washington University. "We're trying to keep those hairs in that growth phase as long as possible."

A recent consensus paper by more than 40 U.S. and international dermatologists concluded that minoxidil pills are effective and often more convenient and affordable than the liquid formulation.

There's little research comparing the two forms of minoxidil, but many

dermatologists believe the drug works better as a pill.

At a chemical level, minoxidil is absorbed more directly when digested in the gut than when applied to the hairline. It's also more convenient, with patients taking the drug by mouth once a day, instead of applying the liquid once or twice daily using a dropper.

"As you can imagine, that can be rather onerous," said Dr. Susan Taylor of the University of Pennsylvania. "Although people often enthusiastically begin therapy - and even see results - after a while there are many who drop off."

The doses prescribed for oral use are also very low. Dermatologists often direct men to take one half of the lowest-dose pill; women may only need a quarter of a pill.

Those low doses can also reduce the chances for side effects, which can include dizziness, rapid heartbeat and swollen legs. The drug isn't recommended for people with a history of heart issues or who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

The only other FDA-approved medication for hair loss is finasteride, sold under the brand name Propecia, a drug that blocks a byproduct of testosterone that triggers hair loss in men. That drug is generally considered more effective than minoxidil, but it can occasionally cause troubling sexual side effects, including erectile dysfunction. For optimal results, some dermatologists prescribe the two drugs in combination.

In short, because there's very little money to be made.

Minoxidil's patent has expired and it is now available as a low-cost generic medication. That means drugmakers have little financial incentive to spend millions on the new studies that would be needed to win FDA approval for hair loss.



A barber cuts a client's hair at a barber shop in Chattanooga, Tenn., on Tuesday, March 17, 2020. (AP)

## Medical crisis escalates after bombings

## Gaza hospitals overwhelmed by surge in wounded children

CAIRO, March 22, (AP) - When the first explosions in Gaza this week started around 1:30 a.m., a visiting British doctor went to the balcony of a hospital in Khan Younis and watched the streaks of missiles light up the night before pounding the city. A Palestinian surgeon next to him gasped, "Oh no. Oh no."

After two months of ceasefire, the horror of Israeli bombardment was back. The veteran surgeon told the visiting doctor, Sakib Rokafiya, they'd better head to the emergency ward.

Torn bodies soon streamed in, carried by ambulances, donkey carts or in the arms of terrified relatives. What stunned doctors was the number of children.

"Just child after child, young patient after young patient," Rokafiya said. "The vast, vast majority were women, children, the elderly."

## Chaotic

This was the start of a chaotic 24 hours at Nasser Hospital, the largest hospital in southern Gaza. Israel shattered the ceasefire in place since mid-January with a surprise barrage that began early Tuesday and was meant to pressure Hamas into releasing more hostages and accepting changes in the truce's terms. It turned into one of the deadliest days in the 17-month war.

The aerial attacks killed 409 people across Gaza, including 173 children and 88 women, and hundreds more were wounded, according to the territory's Health Ministry, whose count does not differentiate between militants and civilians.

More than 300 casualties flooded into Nasser Hospital. Like other medical facilities around Gaza, it had been damaged by Israeli raids and strikes throughout the war, leaving it without key equipment. It was also running short on antibiotics and other essentials. On March 2, when the first, six-week phase of the ceasefire technically expired, Israel blocked entry of medicine, food and other supplies to Gaza.

Nasser Hospital's emergency ward filled with wounded, in a scene described to The Associated Press by Rokafiya and Tanya Haj-Hassan, an American pediatrician - both volun-



Injured Palestinians wait for treatment at the hospital following Israeli army airstrikes in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, Tuesday, March 18. (AP)

teers with the charity Medical Aid for Palestinians. Wounded came from a tent camp sheltering displaced that missiles set ablaze and from homes struck in Khan Younis and Rafah, further south.

One nurse was trying to resuscitate a boy sprawled on the floor with shrapnel in his heart. A young man with most of his arm gone sat nearby, shivering. A barefoot boy carried in his younger brother, around 4 years old, whose foot had been blown off. Blood was everywhere on the floor, with bits of bone and tissue.

## Overwhelmed

"I was overwhelmed, running from corner to corner, trying to find out who to prioritize, who to send to the operating room, who to declare a case that's not salvageable," said Haj-Hassan.

"It's a very difficult decision, and we had to make it multiple times," she said in a voice message.

Wounds could be easy to miss. One little girl seemed OK - it just hurt a bit when she breathed, she told Haj-Hassan - but when they undressed her they determined she was bleeding into her lungs. Looking through the curly hair of another girl, Haj-Hassan discovered she had shrapnel in her brain.

Two or three wounded at a time were squeezed onto gurneys and sped

off to surgery, Rokafiya said.

He scrawled notes on slips of paper or directly on the patient's skin - this one to surgery, this one for a scan. He wrote names when he could, but many kids were brought in by strangers, their parents dead, wounded or lost in the mayhem. So he often wrote, "UNKNOWN."

Dr. Feroze Sidhwa, an American trauma surgeon from California with the medical charity MedGlobal, rushed immediately to the area where the hospital put the worst-off patients still deemed possible to save.

But the very first little girl he saw -- 3 or 4 years old -- was too far gone. Her face was mangled by shrapnel. "She was technically still alive," Sidhwa said, but with so many other casualties "there was nothing we could do."

He told the girl's father she was going to die. Sidhwa went on to do some 15 operations, one after another.

Khaled Alser, a Palestinian surgeon, and an Irish volunteer surgeon were doing the same. There was a 29-year-old woman whose pelvis was smashed, the webbing of veins around the bones was bleeding heavily. They did what they could in surgery, but she died 10 hours later in the intensive care unit.

## Oral health key

## A Happy Mouth is a Happy Mind

GENEVA, March 22, (AP) - How does oral health affect mental well-being? This World Oral Health Day (WOHD), the FDI World Dental Federation (FDI) aims to answer that question with a catchy new song, now available on all streaming platforms. The song invites people worldwide to sing along and raise awareness about the powerful connection between oral health and mental well-being.

The WOHD campaign continues its three-year "A Happy Mouth Is..." theme, shifting from the mouth-body connection in 2024 to the mouth-mind connection in 2025, encapsulated in the tagline, "A Happy Mouth Is a Happy Mind." This year's theme emphasizes that caring for the oral cavity not only supports overall health but also boosts self-esteem, enhances confidence, and improves quality of life.

The heart of the campaign is its lively new anthem and an accompanying video, featuring Toothie, FDI's beloved oral health mascot. The song is designed to inspire people worldwide from individuals to communities and policymakers to prioritize oral health. After all, everyone deserves a healthy mouth, free from oral disease.

## Privilege

"Oral health is a right, not a privilege," says FDI President Dr. Greg Chadwick. "Yet, for many people around the world, access to essential dental care remains out of reach. Despite progress, oral health inequalities persist globally. Many underprivileged communities and vulnerable groups face significant barriers to accessing affordable, quality dental care, leaving them at greater risk of preventable diseases. As oral health is a key pillar of universal health coverage, FDI continues to advocate for comprehensive and inclusive healthcare policies."

In this context, WOHD serves as a powerful opportunity to unite and amplify voices, urging governments to take decisive action.

"That is why we are incredibly proud to partner with organizations like Haleon, Dentsply Sirona, Solventum, and Smile Train," continues Dr. Chadwick. "Through these collaborations, we extend our reach, raise awareness, and empower individuals to take control of their oral health. Together, we can reduce the global burden of oral disease and improve access to quality oral health."

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## SPORTS

## Formal handover is on Olympic Day, June 23

## IOC President Coventry faces leadership challenges after historic election

COSTA NAVARINO, Greece, March 22, (AP) — After enjoying a stunning election win comes the sober business of leading the International Olympic Committee for Kirsty Coventry.

The first woman president elected in the IOC's 131-year history began in a breakfast meeting with Thomas Bach to start their transition. The formal handover is on Olympic Day, June 23.

They agreed Coventry will take precedence in major IOC decisions in the next three months.

The 41-year-old sports minister of Zimbabwe will soon resign her government position and plans to move with her family in April to the Olympic home city, Lausanne in Switzerland.

Here's a look at some of the issues ahead:

Coventry's victory is the biggest statement of Bach's consistent policies to promote women in Olympic sports and politics.

Can the next layer below the IOC - governing bodies of Olympic sports, national Olympic committees - also make progress? "You realize that there is still a lot to do," Bach said on Friday.

He noted that from next month just one of those sports will have a woman president: IOC member Petra Sörling in table tennis.

Coventry has pledged to protect women's sports and athletes. She explained on Friday how as the sports minister in Zimbabwe she removed the national soccer federation's board after women referees

reported being sexually harassed.

It helped to push FIFA to suspend Zimbabwean soccer citing government interference in the sport and she has no regret.

"There are certain things close to my heart that I will never tolerate," she said.

Coventry wants the IOC to take "more of a leading role" on gender eligibility and will create a taskforce to analyze the issue. The newly recognized World Boxing body, which was not involved in the Paris Olympics, is separately updating its rules this year.

A win for Coventry looks favorable toward being an ultimate victory for India and its influential IOC member Nita Ambani. The two women are reportedly close.

The Ambani family, the richest in Asia, hosted the IOC annual meeting in 2023 in Mumbai that promoted ambitions for India to host the Summer Games.

A key decision for the Coventry-led IOC is finding a host for 2036. One rival to India is Qatar, whose ruling Emir has been an IOC member for 24 years, and which has been overlooked three times before.

An announcement expected soon is to confirm India's first top-tier Olympic sponsorship that was all but promised last August in Paris. There, Ambani hosted a hospitality house to promote Indian culture and sports.

There is no set timetable for a decision on 2036. Bach's signature policy on choosing hosts ended an

era of blockbuster campaigns and contested votes.

Now, a favored bid that effectively and discreetly lobbies the IOC can be fast-tracked into exclusive negotiations.

It is unclear how and when athletes might get a better deal within the IOC's strict commercial rules. They have long protected exclusivity for rights-holding Olympic broadcasters and sponsors.

One of Coventry's beaten election rivals, Sebastian Coe, leads World Athletics. It broke an Olympic taboo by paying \$50,000 prize money for track and field champions in Paris last year. In Los Angeles in 2028, silver and bronze medalists also will be rewarded.

Coe said his election pledges for athletes would include "sharing their data, giving them better access to sponsorships, and being more liberal, and making sure the (Olympic) brand was more accessible to them."

The election runner-up, Juan Antonio Samaranch, promised letting athletes use clips of their Olympic performances and help them be social media influencers.

Coventry did not have those kinds of ideas in her election platform, nor advanced them when she represented athletes on the IOC executive board from 2018-21.

However, she pledged to work with election rivals to see which of their policies can make progress.



Kirsty Coventry reacts after she was announced as the new IOC President at the International Olympic Committee 144th session in Costa Navarino, western Greece. (AP)

## Oregon routs Liberty 81-52

## UConn's bid for 3rd straight title endures with latest win

RALEIGH, N.C., March 22, (AP) — A third straight national title for UConn may be improbable, but it's still possible.

Alex Karaban came through with a critical 3-pointer and a floater in the lane during a late run that helped the Huskies hold off Oklahoma 67-59 on Friday night in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

"Somebody's going to have to put us down in this tournament for us to go away," UConn coach Dan Hurley said of his team, which had a rocky regular season and even fell out of the AP Top 25.

Karaban had 13 points and seven rebounds for the Huskies (24-10), the No. 8 in seed in the West Region. They extended their March Madness winning streak to 13 games, tied with Duke from 1991-93 for the second-longest without missing a tournament.

Jackson Shelstad scored 15 of his 17 points in the first half, and fifth-seeded Oregon routed No. 12 seed Liberty 81-52 to advance to the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

Oregon (25-9) goes on to face Arizona in the East Region on Sunday. Arizona routed Akron 93-65 in an earlier game, setting up the second-round meeting between the two former Pac-12 schools.

Oregon's 7-foot center Nate Bit-

tle finished with 14 points and 10 rebounds and the Ducks led by as many as 34 points. Coach Dana Altman had pulled all his starters with 3:44 to go.

Zach Cleveland had 10 points and was Liberty's lone player in double figures. The Flames made just eight of 37 3-point attempts (22%) and had their lowest scoring output of the season.

With their distinct size advantage, the Ducks jumped out to an 18-2 lead after TJ Bamba's fast-break layup.

Shelstad was key to that fast start with got eight points within the first five minutes. The Ducks went on to a 44-20 lead at the break.

Coen Carr came off the bench and had a career-high 18 points and nine rebounds as second-seeded Michigan State rolled to a 87-62 victory over No. 15 seed Bryant in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

Jase Richardson added 15 points for coach Tom Izzo's Spartans (28-6), who trailed for most of the first 15 minutes before taking control.

Michigan State, which has one of the deepest squads in the 68-team field, had five players score in double figures.

Michigan State will face 10th-seeded New Mexico on Sunday in the second round of the South Region. The Lobos advanced with a 75-66 victory over Marquette.



Dallas Mavericks guard Klay Thompson drives during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Dallas, Texas. (AP)

## Cavaliers' slump continues as Suns keep play-in hopes alive

VanVleet scores 37 as surging Rockets beat sliding Heat

PHOENIX, March 22, (AP) — Kevin Durant scored 42 points and the Phoenix Suns defeated the suddenly struggling Cleveland Cavaliers 123-112 on Friday night.

It was the Suns' third straight win and kept them in a tie with Dallas for the final play-in spot in the West at 34-37.

Devin Booker scored 17 points and Tyus Jones scored 16. Royce O'Neale had 15 points on five 3-pointers for Phoenix.

Cleveland, which saw its 16-game winning streak snapped by Orlando on Sunday, has now lost a season-high four in a row to fall two games behind Oklahoma City for the NBA's best record. Their 56-14 mark still leads the East comfortably.

Darius Garland scored 18 points for Cleveland. Evan Mobley had 16 points and 12 rebounds and former Sun Ty Jerome also scored 16 for the Cavs. All-Star Donovan Mitchell scored just seven points.

The Suns were without Bradley Beal (hamstring) and their top two centers, Nick Richards (calf) and Mason Plumlee (quad). Third-stringer Oso Ighodaro played a game-high 44 minutes and had a team-high 13 rebounds.

**Rockets 102, Heat 98**

In Miami Fred VanVleet scored 37 points and the surging Houston Rockets won their ninth straight, beating the Miami Heat.

VanVleet shot 13 for 17 from the field and made a season-high 9 of 11 3-pointers as the Rockets extended the league's longest active winning streak. Houston also snapped a nine-game

skid against Miami, which lost its 10th straight. It is the Heat's longest skid since they lost 11th straight in 2007-08.

Amen Thompson returned after missing the last six games because of a sprained left ankle and finished with 18 points and seven steals while Dillon Brooks and Jabari Smith each added 11 points for the Rockets. Houston rallied from an 11-point deficit early in the third quarter and got to 80-78 on Jalen Green's jumper to close the period.

**Thunder 141, Hornets 106**

In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 30 points and the Oklahoma City Thunder won their fifth in a row, over the Charlotte Hornets.

Gilgeous-Alexander, the NBA's top scorer at 33.0 points per game, returned to the lineup after sitting out Wednesday night's lopsided win against Philadelphia. He made 13 of 18 shots to go with six rebounds and nine assists before sitting out the fourth quarter.

Chet Holmgren added 14 points, five rebounds and three blocks for Oklahoma City, which clinched the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference for the second consecutive season when Milwaukee beat the Lakers on Thursday.

Isiah Hartenstein had 12 points and 10 rebounds for the Thunder, who played without injured starters Lu Dort and Jalen Williams.

**Trail Blazers 128, Nuggets 109**

In Portland, Deni Avdija had 36 points, eight rebounds and seven assists to lead the Portland Trail Blazers to a win over the Denver Nuggets, who were without star center Nikola Jokic for the third straight game.

Shaodon Sharpe added 23 points as the Trail Blazers dominated the second half (74-50) to cruise to their fourth straight victory. Portland remained two games be-

hind Dallas and Phoenix for 10th place in the Western Conference and the final spot in the play-in tournament.

Aaron Gordon scored 23 points for Denver, which lost its second straight and is a half-game behind the Los Angeles Lakers for third place in the West.

**Clippers 128, Grizzlies 120**

In Inglewood, James Harden scored 30 points, Kawhi Leonard added 23 points and 10 rebounds, and the Los Angeles Clippers used a big second half to beat the Memphis Grizzlies 128-108 on Friday night for their fifth straight win.

Ivica Zubac had 17 points and 10 rebounds and Bogdan Bogdanovic added 16 points for Los Angeles. The Clippers scored 68 points in the second half to turn a six-point halftime deficit into a 20-point victory.

Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 23 points to lead the Grizzlies, who lost their third straight. Santi Aldama added 16 points and Scotty Pippen Jr. and Luke Kennard each had 15 points.

The Clippers were without head coach Tyronn Lue (back pain) for the fifth time in seven games. They improved for 4-1 under assistant coach Brian Shaw.

**Celtics 121, Jazz 99**

In Salt Lake City, Kristaps Porzingis scored 27 points and Jayson Tatum added 26 to lead the Boston Celtics to a victory over the Utah Jazz.

Porzingis added 10 rebounds and six assists, and Tatum chipped in six boards, six assists, and three steals as Boston won its four straight and ninth in its last 10 games.

Collin Sexton led Utah with 30 points on 12-of-15 shooting. Keyonte George added 19 points and seven assists as the Jazz lost for the seventh time in their last eight games.

**Mavericks 123, Pistons 117**

In Dallas, Spencer Dinwiddie scored a season-high 31 points while P.J. Washington Jr. added 27, with a season-high five 3-pointers, as the Dallas Mavericks beat the Detroit Pistons.

Eleven of Dinwiddie's points came at the free-throw line, where Dallas hit 27 of 36 to Detroit's 14 of 19.

Klay Thompson scored 20 and Naji Marshall had 19 points and 11 rebounds for the Mavericks, who snapped a four-game losing streak and won for only the second time in 11 games as they battle to earn a play-in berth after playing in last year's NBA Finals.

**Timberwolves 134, Pelicans 93**

In Minneapolis, Julius Randle had 20 points, six rebounds and five assists and the Minnesota Timberwolves avoided losing to one of the Western Conference's worst teams for the second time in three days with a 134-93 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans.

Jaden McDaniels and Anthony Edwards each scored 17 points, and Rudy Gobert had 13 points and 12 rebounds for Minnesota, which moved back with in a game of Golden State for the No. 6 seed in the Western Conference with 10 games left in the regular season.

**Magic 120, Wizards 105**

In Washington, Paolo Banchero scored 30 points and the Orlando Magic eased to a victory over the Washington Wizards.

Wendell Carter Jr. had 16 points and 12 rebounds, and Franz Wagner added 21 points for the Magic, who have now alternated wins and losses over their last seven games.

Orlando began the night in eighth place in the Eastern Conference, 1 1/2 games behind Atlanta and two in front of Chicago in the battle for NBA play-in tournament seeding.

## China comes from behind to defeat Iraq in extra time

BANGKOK, March 22, (Xinhua) — China came from behind twice to defeat Iraq 3-2 after extra time in its second Group B match at the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup 2025 in Pattaya, Thailand, on Saturday.

Both teams were under pressure after losing their opening matches, with China falling 5-3 to Saudi Arabia and Iraq also suffering defeat.

Iraq opened the scoring in the fourth minute when Chinese goalkeeper Guo Wei

spilled a long-range effort, allowing his opponent to tap in from close range. China found the equalizer just before the end of the first period, as Wang Jun capitalized on a defensive error during a corner, sending the ball home to make it 1-1.

The second period saw limited chances for both sides, but Iraq retook the lead in the 23rd minute through a powerful free-kick that found the top corner.

China responded early in the third period. Hao Minhui struck a volley from a

throw-in to level the score again at 2-2.

With the two teams deadlocked at the end of regulation time, the match went into extra time, the first of the tournament to do so. Less than a minute into extra time, Liu Yisi intercepted a pass, drove forward, and smashed a shot into the top corner, sealing a dramatic victory for China.

China will face Japan in its final group match on Monday, while Iraq will take on Saudi Arabia.

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Oregon forward Brandon Angel, right, drives against Liberty forward Zach Cleveland during the first half in the first round of the NCAA college basketball tournament in Seattle. (AP)

## Mexican team Leon kicked out of Club World Cup over multi-club ownership

MEXICO CITY, March 22, (AP) — Mexican team Leon was kicked out of the Club World Cup on Friday after FIFA's appeals committee upheld a decision that it violated a rule that forbids multi-club ownership.

Leon and fellow Mexican club Pachuca both qualified for this summer's Club World Cup in the United States but have the same owner, Grupo Pachuca.

"After having evaluated all evidence on file, the chairman of the FIFA appeal committee has decided that CF Pachuca and Club León failed to meet the criteria on multi-club ownership," FIFA said in a statement.

Leon's replacement was yet to be announced. At the appeal, Grupo Pachuca argued that the clubs operated independently. It also promised to sell Leon but has not done so.

The group said in a statement on Friday that it will appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

"We are dissatisfied with this decision and will appeal it to the fullest extent possible since all the evidence that proves our administrative independence was presented in a timely and transparent manner," the group said. "We will defend what was won on the field."

Leon recently signed Colombian midfielder James Rodriguez in an attempt to be more competitive in Group D of the Club World Cup

alongside Brazil's Flamengo, Tunisia's Espérance Sportive Tunis and England's Chelsea.

In Mexico, beside Leon and Pachuca, another two companies own two or more clubs in the first division. Grupo Caliente owns Tijuana and Queretaro, while Grupo Orlegi controls Atlas and Santos. TV Azteca owns Mazatlan and has partial ownership of Puebla.

Before FIFA announced the Club World Cup rules last November, the Mexican league owners voted to eradicate multi-ownership but they gave the team owners until 2027 to finish the selling process.

The participation of two clubs that belong to the same owner was questioned by Costa Rican club Alajuelense, which asked FIFA to enforce the rule that forbids clubs from the same ownership from appearing in the tournament.

"FIFA's decision confirms what we have been denouncing from day one: Competition must be fair and transparent. This ruling reinforces our arguments and validates our position," Alajuelense said in a statement. "We remain steadfast in the proceedings before the CAS, waiting for justice to be done and for the regulations to be respected."

CONCACAF qualified four teams in the Club World Cup: Seattle Sounders, Monterrey, Leon and Pachuca. Lionel Messi's Inter Miami was invited by FIFA.

Event encourages participants of all ages to embrace an active lifestyle

## stc hosts sports challenges under its strategic partnership with Flare Fitness this Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, continued organizing initiatives this Ramadan under its strategic partnership with Flare Fitness for the 4th consecutive year. The initiatives included hosting the ‘Your calories = internet’ activity, the Mishref Walkathon, a fitness challenge. stc’s collaboration with Flare Fitness aligns with the objectives set under its 2025 Ramadan campaign as well as the Company’s extensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability frameworks, which aim to spread a positive impact in the community.

Through its collaboration, stand Flare Fitness organized several events throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan to engage with the community and encourage individuals to stay fit while supporting a good cause. One of the activities, titled ‘Your steps equal internet’, encouraged participants to move their bodies and record as many steps as they could. In return, stc pledged to donate free data and voice line to families in need based on the number of steps taken in collaboration with Tarahom Volunteer team. Proven by its success in previous years, stc organized this initiative once again given its impact on participants and the meaningful support it provides to families in need, reinforcing the power of collective movement for a greater cause.

As part of the collaboration, stc sponsored the Mishref Walkathon, held on March 13th to 14th, which brought together fitness enthusiasts and families to promote an active lifestyle. The event encouraged participants of all ages to embrace an active lifestyle while enjoying a community-driven experience. Adding to the festivities, stc organized entertainment activities for children as they celebrated Gergean, creating a joyful environment filled with laughter, games, and the traditions of Ramadan during this time.

stc’s collaboration with Flare Fitness throughout Ramadan reflects the Company’s commitment to promoting a balanced and healthy lifestyle while emphasizing the importance of community engagement. By integrating fitness activities and giving back to those in need, stc continues to inspire individuals to stay active and support the community, aligning with the Company’s broader objectives defined under its CSR and sustainability programs.

In a statement, stc thanked Flare Fitness and all the organizers who played a role in achieving the successful outcomes witnessed throughout all the initiatives. The Company highlighted that supporting the community in various ways, especially encouraging a well-balanced lifestyle is an essential aspect of life, especially during the Holy Month of Ramadan. Through these initiatives, stc aims to empower the community, especially the younger generation, by encouraging them to adopt



A group photo of the stc and Flare Fitness teams.

positive habits that contribute to both physical and mental well-being.

As part of its ‘With good, we go further’ campaign, stc will continue to introduce various initiatives throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan that embody the

values of physical and mental health, generosity, and social responsibility. These efforts aim to strengthen bonds with the community while creating opportunities for positive engagement that align with the essence of the Holy Month.

# Tuchel begins England tenure on winning note

Poland and Finland start campaigns with narrow wins

**LONDON, March 22, (AP): Thomas Tuchel kicked off his England reign with a 2-0 win against Albania at Wembley Stadium and immediately demanded more from his players.**

Poland and Finland made winning starts in Group G. Robert Lewandowski’s goal in the 81st sealed a 1-0 win for Poland at home to Lithuania, while Finland also won 1-0 against 10-man Malta.

Bosnia-Herzegovina beat Romania 1-0 in Group H, which was topped by Cyprus after a 2-0 win against San Marino.

Myles Lewis-Skelly and Harry Kane ensured a winning start for Tuchel in the World Cup qualifier but the German coach sounded far from satisfied with his first game in charge.

“(We) can do better. We have to do better,” Tuchel said.

He added the team was too slow in the second half and lacked aggression in attack.

Tuchel became the 11th straight England manager to win on his debut. But his frank assessment of the performance was evidence of the standards he wants to set after being charged with ending the team’s decades-long wait for a major trophy.

His first job is to secure qualification for the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico and this was a straight forward win for No. 4-ranked England in its first qualifier.

England dominated possession and chances against 65th-ranked Albania.

It took 20 minutes for the first goal of the Tuchel era and it was delivered by debutant Lewis-Skelly, who became the youngest player to score on his first



England’s Harry Kane heads the ball during a World Cup qualifying soccer match between England and Albania at Wembley stadium in London. (AP)

England appearance at 18 years, 176 days. He was younger by 33 days than Marcus Rashford was against Australia in May 2016.

Kane added a record-extending 70th England goal in the 77th.

Tuchel is the third foreign coach to take charge of England after the late Sven-Goran Eriksson, a Swede, and Fabio Capello, an Italian.

His appointment last October was greeted with outrage in some sections of the English media, likely due to England’s long-standing rivalry with

Germany. He said last week he would not sing the national anthem, explaining he had to

Ultimately, he will be judged on results and whether he can end England’s search for a first trophy since the World Cup in 1966. Tuchel has told the players it is his job to add a second star above the national badge, which represents the number of World Cups won.

He has big shoes to fill in replacing former manager Gareth Southgate, who led England to back to back finals in the

European Championship and the semi-finals of the 2018 World Cup.

Tuchel is a far more decorated coach than Southgate, having been a serial winner with Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Bayern Munich, with league titles and the Champions League on his resume.

Only so much can be drawn from his first game but Lewis-Skelly was a clear positive in his goal-scoring debut. The left back fired through the legs of Albania goalkeeper Thomas Strakosha after Jude Bellingham’s incisive pass.

## Hegazi returns to Kuwait Club

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyessah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: The Board of Directors of Kuwait Club has appointed Algerian coach Said Hegazi to lead the first-handball team for the remainder of the 2024-2025 season.

Hegazi, known as the ‘‘Championship Hunter,’’ is recognized as one of the most successful coaches in handball. He previously coached the ‘‘White Castle’’ handball team, a period that marked the club’s golden age, where he guided them to numerous local championship victories.

Hegazi began his coaching career in the Kuwaiti league with Al-Sulaybiqhat Handball Club, where he led the team from 2004 to 2008, winning two league titles, one Federation Cup, one Al-Kharafi Cup, and one Gulf Cup. He then moved on to coach Al-Fahaheel, claiming two league titles and one cup before joining Al-Kuwait for seven successful seasons from 2012 to 2019. During his time at Al-Kuwait Club, Hegazi won seven league titles, six cup titles, finished third in the Asian Cup, and was runner-up in the Arab Club Championship. He later coached Al-Arabi and Burgan before returning to Kuwait SC.

Hegazi expressed his enthusiasm about returning to Kuwait Club, thanking the board of directors, led by Chairman Khaled Al-Ghanim, for their trust. He commented, ‘‘We will



Said Hegazi

collaborate with the coaching staff and players to improve the team, knowing that change is possible, and those who perform best will remain with the team.’’

On the subject of young players, Hegazi stated that their participation in the league is a possibility, and any player deemed important by the technical staff will be included in the upcoming matches.

Meanwhile, two matches are scheduled for today in the 12th round of the ‘‘Merged’’ Handball League. Al-Sahel, with zero points, will face Al-Arabi, who has 14 points, at 9:00 PM. At 10:30 pm, Al-Qadisiya (12 points) will play Kazma, the Super Cup champion with 19 points, at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex.

In the previous round, Al-Sulaybiqhat triumphed over Al-Fahaheel 38-21, and Al-Nasr defeated Al-Qurain 37-34.

## Al-Enezi in talks with Kazma

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: Former Al-Qadisiya, Al-Arabi, and Dhofar player Sultan Al-Enezi shared that ‘‘negotiations with Kazma FC for a potential move next season are ongoing.’’

Sultan joined Dhofar last summer after ending his contract with Al-Arabi.

Speaking about the possibility of returning to Al-Qadisiya, following his recent strong performance with the Blues, Sultan stated, ‘‘Al-Qadisiya is my first home. It’s the club that made me who I am and gave me my reputation. I would have no problem defending the yellow jersey again.’’



Sultan Al-Enezi

## Red Bull’s Verstappen lines up fourth

# Piastrri takes 1st F1 pole at Chinese GP as sprint winner Hamilton starts fifth

SHANGHAI, March 22, (Agencies): McLaren’s Oscar Piastrri took pole position for Sunday’s Chinese Grand Prix, edging Mercedes’ George Russell by 0.082s to top Saturday’s Qualifying session.

A fresh layer of tarmac and warm and dry conditions contributed to a grippy surface at the Shanghai International Circuit, and Piastrri’s pole time of 1:30.641 was over three seconds quicker than Max Verstappen’s benchmark from 2024.

Piastrri had finished second in the F1 Sprint earlier in the day, and the Australian was in confident mood after notching his first ever Grand Prix pole position.

Behind Piastrri, Russell was equally impressive in qualifying second ahead of Piastrri’s teammate Lando Norris, who had finished a disappointing eighth in the Sprint, and aborted his final qualifying run after a couple of small mistakes.

Red Bull’s Verstappen will line up fourth, ahead of Sprint winner Lewis Hamilton in the first of the Ferraris. Hamilton’s teammate Charles Leclerc qualified sixth, ahead of Racing Bulls’ Isack Hadjar in an excellent seventh place.

Russell’s teammate Kimi Antonelli was eighth, with Hadjar’s



McLaren driver Oscar Piastrri of Australia steers his car during qualifying session for the Chinese Formula One Grand Prix at the Shanghai International Circuit, Shanghai. (AP)

teammate Yuki Tsunoda ninth after a good session for Racing Bulls, and Alex Albon 10th, with the Williams driver punching the air in delight at having progressed to the top 10 shootout.

A solid session from Haas’ Esteban Ocon sees the Frenchman start 11th, with Sauber’s Nico Hulkenberg sharing row six with him.

The two Aston Martins of Fer-

nando Alonso and Lance Stroll qualified 13th and 14th, ahead of a disappointing Carlos Sainz, who does not yet appear fully confident in his Williams.

Onto the drivers knocked out in Q1, Pierre Gasly lines up 16th for Alpine, with Ocon’s teammate Oliver Bearman 17th.

Gasly’s teammate Jack Doohan will start 18th, ahead of the second

Sauber of Gabriel Bortoleto, with Verstappen’s under-fire teammate Liam Lawson starting 20th and last, just as he had in Sprint Qualifying.

The New Zealander is the latest driver to struggle in the second Red Bull alongside Verstappen, and has appeared to lack confidence in his RB21 so far this season.

Hamilton won his first race for Ferrari, securing Saturday’s Sprint victory from pole position following an early duel with Red Bull Racing’s Max Verstappen at the Chinese Formula 1 Grand Prix.

Hamilton got a great start to take the lead into turn one, and managed the gap to Verstappen, until the Dutchman was passed for second on lap 15 by McLaren’s Piastrri into the back straight’s hairpin.

Ferrari’s new recruit was then able to stretch his legs all the way to his maiden Sprint win, with the Brit coming home almost 6.9 seconds ahead of Piastrri - for eight points (nine overall) and a three-place jump to seventh in the standings.

‘‘The last like five laps or something I was in a really pretty comfortable position. It’s hard to put into words what it feels like,’’ Hamilton said.

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Grant Holloway, of the United States, celebrates after winning the gold medal in the men's 60 meters hurdles final at the World Athletics Indoor Championships in Nanjing, China. (AP)

# Sports

## Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr congratulates Al-Otaibi for winning gold in Greece

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: The President of the Kuwait Aquatics Federation Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr Al-Sabah congratulated Kuwaiti swimmer Khaled Al-Otaibi for winning the gold medal in the 400m individual medley at the International Championships in Greece, and securing qualification for the World Championships to be held in Singapore.

In a press release, Sheikh

Khaled Al-Badr praised the positive atmosphere at the tournament and the great efforts exerted by the technical and administrative staff of the age-group teams to properly prepare athletes for the upcoming World Championship qualifiers.

He emphasized that the Kuwait Aquatics Federation is committed to providing full support and overcoming any challenges faced by both male and

female athletes, particularly the youth, who represent the future of aquatics in Kuwait.

Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr highlighted that the Kuwait Aquatics Federation is making steady progress toward achieving accomplishments for Kuwait.

He affirmed the importance of collaborating with relevant authorities, particularly the Public Authority for Sports, to ensure the necessary resources are provided for training and qualifying

national teams. This will help them succeed in Gulf, Arab, continental, and international sports competitions.

Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr highlighted the guidance of the political leadership in prioritizing sports and athletes in Kuwait, and in tackling obstacles that hinder their success, with the ultimate goal of raising the Kuwaiti flag on prestigious sports podiums.



Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr



Khaled Al-Otaibi

### Pizzi expresses pride in team despite conceding a late equalizer

## Kuwait's Nasser and Al-Fadhli out for pivotal WCup qualifier against Oman

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyessah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 22: Kuwait will be without striker Yousef Nasser and goalkeeper Abdulrahman Al-Fadhli for their crucial match against Oman on Tuesday in the eighth round of Group B in the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup.

The team resumed training at Kuwait Club Stadium on Sunday, just a day after returning from Basra, where they secured a 2-2 draw against Iraq in the seventh round. Most players took part in the session, including Hassan Hamdan, who had missed the previous match due to injury.

The Blues now face a must-win situation against Oman – or at least a draw – to keep their hopes alive for a fourth-place finish and progression to the next round. Kuwait currently sits in fifth place with five points, ahead of Palestine (3 points), while Oman holds fourth place with seven points. Iraq and Jordan are tied in second place with 12 points, while South Korea leads the group with 15 points.

Argentinian coach Juan Pizzi praised his players' performance against Iraq, despite the disappointment of conceding a late equalizer.

"It was a tough and competitive match, as expected, but I'm very proud of my

players. They put in a great effort regardless of the result, and I thoroughly enjoyed their performance," Pizzi said.

He acknowledged the frustration of conceding in the final seconds but emphasized the need to stay positive.

"The late equalizer was painful, but we remain optimistic and focused. Now, our priority is to prepare well for the next match."

Pizzi also highlighted the importance of recovery, noting that some players are carrying injuries while others are at risk of suspension. However, he expressed confidence that the team has sufficient time to recover before facing Oman.

"We've been working on improving the team's overall performance for the past seven months, and we've seen significant progress. Additionally, we're integrating young players, as we saw today with Jassim Matar," he added.

Before training, Federation Board members Osama Hussein and Ayman Al-Husseini met with the squad, commending their efforts against Iraq and encouraging them to give their all against Oman.

Meanwhile, the Omani national team began training at Nasser Al-Osaimi Stadium immediately after arriving from Beijing on a private flight. Oman enters the match on the back of a 1-1 draw with Group B leaders South Korea in the seventh round.



Osama Hussein and Ayman Al-Husseini address the players before training.

# Argentina on verge of World Cup spot

### Ecuador moves into second place

MONTEVIDEO, March 22, (AP): Argentina didn't miss Lionel Messi, Lautaro Martínez and other key players and beat Uruguay away 1-0 in convincing fashion in their South American World Cup qualifying match.

Thiago Almada scored the winner with a powerful curled shot from the edge of the box, putting the defending champions one point away from its direct spot in the tournament next year.

Argentina leads the round robin competition with 28 points after 13 matches, and could secure its place with a home draw with Brazil on Tuesday. The team of coach Lionel Scaloni already has 15 points ahead of 7th-placed Bolivia, with only five rounds to the end of the competition.

The last time the two soccer powerhouses clashed, Argentina won 1-0 at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro.

Earlier, Ecuador defeated Venezuela 2-1 and moved into second place in South American World Cup, edging close to reaching the tournament once again.

Brazil is third with 21 points, one ahead of Uruguay and Paraguay. Colombia, with 19 points, has the sixth position.

The top six teams will secure direct berths to the tournament in the United States, Mexico and Canada. The seventh-place team among the 10 of the region will still have a chance to qualify through an international playoff.

Argentina had to accommodate key absences beyond Messi. Lautaro Martínez, Lisandro Martínez, and Rodrigo De Paul did not play in Montevideo. So coach Lionel Scaloni gave a place to Giuliano Simeone in the starting lineup, with Julián Álvarez and Thiago Almada up front.

Uruguay, playing in a full Centenario Stadium against its archrival, took the initiative and had the clearest chances in the first half. But Argentina managed to hold its ground and started getting the better opportunities after halftime.

Almada's goal in the 68th minute, after Argentina had wasted several other opportunities in front of goalkeeper Sergio Rochet, still didn't push Uruguay forward as Marcelo Bielsa's team finished the match with only four shots on goal.

"I was a little anxious, very willing to play and to show why I was making the squad," said Almada, a world champion with Argentina in 2022. "Now we have to rest and wait for this match against Brazil, they will rest one more day than us."

Argentina's Nico González will miss the match against Brazil. He was sent off after a challenge against Nahitan Nández in injury time.

Brazil has selection problems of its own for Tuesday's match at the Monumental de Nunez Stadium, as starting goalkeeper Alisson, defender Gabriel Magalhães and midfielder Bruno Guimarães are all ineligible to play.

Argentina coach Scaloni celebrated his team's performance despite so many absences.

"We made a complete match, we



Ecuador's Enner Valencia, right, and Venezuela's Nahuel Ferraresi vie for the ball during a qualifying soccer match for the FIFA World Cup 2026 at Rodrigo Paz Delgado stadium in Quito, Ecuador. (AP)

absorbed the pressure. When we had to play, we did it. And when we had to defend, we did it too," Scaloni said in a press conference. "I am happy not only for our win, but also for how the team behaves."

Uruguay will have a chance to recover against Bolivia on Tuesday. If the Bolivians fail to beat the Uruguayans, Argentina will qualify for the World Cup even if it loses against Brazil.

Enner Valencia, Ecuador's all-time

top goal-scorer, added another two to his tally on Friday.

The striker broke through the Venezuelan defense in the 39th minute and scored with a powerful right-footed shot from an acute angle. In the first

minute of the second half, he added the second after a run on the left flank ended in a classy poach over goalkeeper Rafael Romo.

Valencia could have had a third from the spot in the 69th but he missed it.

## Foreman, fearsome heavyweight champion, dies at 76



In this file photo, former heavyweight boxing champion George Foreman tells a story to the audience at the Sports Illustrated Legacy Awards in Louisville, Ky. (AP)

WASHINGTON, March 22, (AP): George Foreman became the heavyweight champion of the world in his 20s, only to lose his belt to Muhammad Ali in perhaps the most memorable fight in boxing history.

A full 20 years later in 1994, the 45-year-old Foreman became the oldest man to win the heavyweight championship, throwing one perfect combination to steal Michael Moorer's title in an epic upset.

Few fighters ever had more big moments than Big George Foreman - and even after he finally left the ring, he was only getting started.

The fearsome heavyweight, who lost the "Rumble in the Jungle" to Ali before his inspiring second act as a surprising champion and a successful businessman, died Friday night. Foreman was 76.

Foreman's family announced his death on social media, not saying how or where he died.

"A devout preacher, a devoted husband, a loving father and a proud grand- and great-grandfather, he lived a life marked by unwavering faith, humility and purpose," his family wrote. "A humanitarian, an Olympian and two-time heavyweight champion of the world, he was deeply respected. A force for good, a

man of discipline, conviction, and a protector of his legacy, fighting tirelessly to preserve his good name for his family."

A native Texan, Foreman began his boxing career as an Olympic gold medalist who inspired fear and awe as he climbed to the peak of the heavyweight division by stopping Joe Frazier in 1973. His formidable aura evaporated only a year later when Ali pulled off one of the most audacious victories in boxing history in Zaire, baiting and taunting Foreman into losing his belt.

Foreman left the sport a few years later, but returned after a 10-year absence and a self-described religious awakening.

The middle-aged fighter then pulled off one of the most spectacular knockouts in boxing history, flooring Moorer - 19 years his junior - with a surgical right hand and claiming Moorer's two heavyweight belts. Foreman's 20 years is easily the longest gap between heavyweight title reigns.

Foreman's transformation into an inspirational figure was complete, and he fought only four more times - finishing 76-5 with 68 knockouts - before moving

onto his next career as a genial businessman, pitchman and occasional actor.

Outside the ring, he was best known as the face of the George Foreman Grill, which launched in the same year as his victory over Moorer. The simple cooking machine sold more than 100 million units and made him much wealthier than his sport ever did.

"George was a great friend to not only myself, but to my entire family," Top Rank president Bob Arum said. "We've lost a family member and are absolutely devastated."

In the first chapter of his boxing career, Foreman was nothing like the smiling grandfather who hawked his grills on television to great success.

Foreman dabbled in petty crime while growing up in Houston's Fifth Ward, but changed his life through boxing. He made the U.S. Olympic team in 1968 and won gold in Mexico City as a teenager, stopping a 29-year-old opponent in a star-making performance.

Foreman rose to the pinnacle of the pro game over the next five years, but was also perceived as an aloof, unfriendly athlete, both through his demeanor and through the skewed racial lenses of the time.