



Kuwait's Traffic Law hits multilingual lane

New campaign aims to reduce violations and accidents through education

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Kuwait's General Department of Public Relations and Security Media has rolled out a comprehensive, multilingual awareness campaign to inform both citizens and expatriates about the latest amendments to the Traffic Law.

The initiative is part of a broader effort by the Ministry of Interior to improve road safety and reduce violations and accidents across the country.

To ensure accessibility, traffic regulation updates are also being shared in six key languages: English, Persian, Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, and Tagalog.

These languages were selected to effectively reach Kuwait's diverse population and provide clear, understandable guidance on the new traffic regulations.

The campaign aims to enhance public understanding of traffic rules, legal responsibilities, and the recent legislative changes. Residents are encouraged to access the translated information by scanning the QR code provided by the Ministry, available through official communication channels.

The Ministry of Interior urged all residents to familiarize themselves with these regulations to avoid penalties and contribute to safer roads in Kuwait.



Scan QR code to access multilingual awareness campaign.

Key Traffic Violations and Penalties:

■ **Failure to Wear Seatbelt:**
Fine of KD 30; after court referral, penalty may include up to 1 month imprisonment and a fine between KD 50 and KD 100.

■ **Reckless Driving:**
Fine of KD 150; after court referral, imprisonment of 1 to 3 years and a fine between KD 600 and KD 1,000.

■ **Using a Mobile Phone While Driving:**
Fine of KD 75; after court referral, up to 3 months imprisonment and a fine between KD 150 and KD 300.

■ **Unauthorized Vehicle Racing:**
Fine of KD 150; after court referral, imprisonment of 1 to 3 years and a fine between KD 600 and KD 1,000.

■ **Parking in Spaces for the Disabled:**
Fine of KD 150; after court referral, imprisonment of 1 to 3 years and a fine between KD 600 and KD 1,000.

■ **Driving Without a License or with Invalid/Suspended License:**
Fine of KD 75; after court referral, 3 months imprisonment and a fine between KD 150 and KD 300.

Sun out, breeze on for weekend

KUWAIT CITY, April 17, (KUNA): The Meteorological Department has forecast warm daytime temperatures and moderate conditions at night during the weekend, as the country is affected by an extension of a high-pressure system that is leading to stable weather conditions.

Acting Director of the department Dharar Al-Ali told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that winds are expected to be northwesterly to variable in direction, light to moderate in speed, with occasional gusts and a chance of dust in open areas.

The weather during the day on Friday will be relatively hot, with variable to northwesterly winds at light to moderate speeds, ranging between 8 and 28 km/h. The expected maximum temperature will range between 30 and 32 degrees Celsius, and with light to moderate sea conditions and wave heights ranging from 1 to 4 feet.

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Zero tolerance

US increases visa scrutiny

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Official Spokesperson of the American Embassy in Kuwait Stuart Turner reaffirmed the commitment of his country to the highest standard of national security and public safety in its visa issuance process, stressing that protecting the homeland and its citizens remains a top priority for the US government.

While citing privacy and confidentiality constraints that prevent discussion of individual cases, Turner stated that the US maintains a zero tolerance policy toward non-citizens who violate its laws.

"This policy applies to all visa holders, including students, who may face serious consequences such as

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Photo by Mohammad Morsi

Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Ali pose for a group photo with other officials and participants of a joint security exercise at Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base on Thursday.

Security agencies flex muscles in hijack simulation

'Jabriya 1' showcases Kuwait's crisis readiness

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Ali on Thursday underscored the importance of strengthening integration and coordination among State institutions in managing crises and emergency security situations.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the 'Jabriya 1' joint security exercise at Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base, Sheikh Abdullah praised the high level of preparedness demonstrated by the participating entities; indicating the drill is a "model of successful cooperation" between military, police and civilian agencies.

The exercise, which was organized by Kuwait Air Force, included contributions from the Ministry of Interior, National Guard (as observers), 25th Commando Brigade, Ministry of Health, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGC) and Kuwait Airways.

Sheikh Abdullah commended the professional performance and morale of the participants, stating that such exercises play a vital role in reinforcing comprehensive national readiness and commitment to develop security and defense systems. He concluded with prayers



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

Part of the hijack simulation.

for the continued peace and stability of the country.

The 'Jabriya 1' scenario simulated the terrorist hijacking of a Kuwait Airways passenger jet, with hijackers demanding the release of prisoners and ransom money. The drill tested crisis communication, negotiation strategies and rapid response capabilities. After negotiations led to the aircraft's return to the tarmac; security forces stormed the plane, arrested the hijackers and rescued the hostages.

The exercise brought together specialized units from the Special

Security Forces General Department and Helicopter Aviation General Department at the Ministry of Interior, as well as the Air Force and Special Forces Brigade at the Ministry of Defense; while Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), the Medical Emergency Department, DGCA and Kuwait Airways provided the necessary support.

Deputy Chief of Staff of Kuwait Army Major General Sabah Al-Jaber stressed that the ultimate aim of the drill is to foster unified efforts among various agencies. "The 'Jabriya 1' exercise embodies the

concept of teamwork and enhances the spirit of collaboration in crisis response," he said.

Major General Abdullah Saffah, Assistant Undersecretary for Special Forces Affairs at the Ministry of Interior, described the exercise as a milestone for inter-agency collaboration. He then announced plans to develop future drills, including the creation of a joint operations room to handle emergency situations.

"We have a highly capable aircraft protection department with outstanding personnel --including female officers -- who regularly participate in specialized training," Saffah told reporters, adding that all Special Forces departments continue to see steady development.

Present at the event were high-ranking officials; such as Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the National Guard Lieutenant General Engineer Hashem Al-Rifai and Major General Abdullah Saffah.

Other dignitaries present were KFF Director General Major General Talal Al-Roumi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, DGCA Director General Sheikh Hamoud Mubarak Al-Sabah, and Kuwait Airways Chairman Captain Abdulmohsen Salem Al-Faqan.

Belt and Road momentum builds

Strategic port visit highlights growing Kuwait-China collab

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan conducted an official visit to the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project site on Bubiyan Island on Thursday, along with senior Kuwaiti and Chinese officials.

Chinese Deputy Minister of Transport Fu Xueyin, Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei, Deputy Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Sameeh Jawhar Hayat, and representatives from the China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) joined the minister in touring the project site.

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MPW photo

The Minister of Public Works and the Chinese Deputy Minister of Transport conduct a field visit to the site of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project on Boubyan Island in northern Kuwait.

9 Zain launches 'Bede' Fintech platform in Sudan



Portrait of Palestinian boy who lost both arms wins Photo of the Year

NewsWatch

962 individuals lose Kuwaiti citizenship

KUWAIT CITY, April 17, (KUNA): The Supreme Committee on Kuwaiti citizenship announced on Thursday the stripping of citizenship from 962 individuals with the matter referred to the Cabinet.

The decision was made during the committee's meeting on Thursday chaired by Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

A statement by the Ministry of Interior revealed that 13 individuals had their Article (11) of the citizenship law stripped of due to dual citizenship, 186 people had their Article (21 bis A) citizenship stripped of due to forgery, fraud, and attaining the document via affiliation. While 82 individuals had their Article (13) citizenship stripped of due to forgery, fraud, and attaining the document via affiliation.

Some 681 individuals who obtained their citizenship through recognition of valuable services had their Article (13) citizenship stripped of.

Kuwait Customs goes digital to empower small businesses

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC), as part of its efforts to promote digital transformation and enhance the business environment, has announced the launch of an electronic link with the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development for facilitating customs procedures and expediting the services provided to small and medium enterprises, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Director General of KGAC Mutlaq Al-Enezi explained that this development marks a qualitative shift in the development of customs operations, and contributes to empowering small and medium enterprises, which play a vital role in the national economy.

The new system allows for the immediate verification of data related to projects registered with the Fund. This helps in reducing reliance on paper-based documents, accelerates customs clearance processes, and enhances transparency.

He affirmed that digital transformation has become a national imperative, requiring collaborative efforts among various government agencies.

Al-Enezi also highlighted that KGAC continues to expand the scope of electronic linkages to improve operational efficiency and strengthen trust with the business community.

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Pact to power projects, talent development

Kuwait, ICAO partner on aviation growth

KUWAIT CITY, April 17, (KUNA): Kuwait's aviation regulator and the UN's International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) signed on Wednesday a memorandum of cooperation that entails ratcheting up dialogue over developments in the aviation industry, in addition to suggestions and plans on the matter.

The deal, co-signed by Kuwaiti Directorate General of Civil Aviation head Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Sabah and ICAO President Salvatore Sciacchitano, aims to bolster Kuwait's rapport with global aviation bodies, which subsequently leads to the development of national skills, said the Kuwaiti aviation chief.

The agreement is expected to give impetus to vital aviation projects in the works, including the sprawling new Terminal 2 and the ambitious "Air Cargo City" project, he added, underlining the enhancement of security and safety standards, in addition to greater efficiency in the local aviation industry, as a by-product of the deal.

He went on to hail the deal as a major step



KUNA photo

Kuwaiti Directorate General of Civil Aviation head Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Sabah and ICAO President Salvatore Sciacchitano.

forward towards greater growth in the national aviation industry, saying that Kuwait, which joined the UN aviation agency as a member back in 1960, stands to gain from the knowledge exchange with "experienced" bodies such as ICAO.

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Prayer Timings			
Fajr	03:58	Asr	15:22
Sunrise ..	05:20	Maghrib ..	18:15
Zohr	11:48	Isha	19:36

Local

Weather			
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:			
By Day: Rather hot with light variable wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h.			
By Night: Mild with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h.			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait Airport	30	17	
Abdaly	30	12	
Jahra	31	17	
Salmiyah	27	20	
Jal Aliyah	29	14	
Nuwaisib	28	16	
Wafra	30	13	

AI Council unveiled as key step towards flexible curricula and tech innovation

Abdullah Al-Salem University launches first Higher Education Summit

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Abdullah Al-Salem University on Wednesday launched the first Higher Education Summit titled, "Higher Education in the Age of Innovation: Benefits, Challenges and Functions."

A large number of academic experts and representatives of the public and private sectors attended the event.

In his speech, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal confirmed that the summit is an embodiment of the national ambition to develop the higher education system in order to keep pace with the rapid developments being witnessed in the digital age.

He said "the State of Kuwait, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, believes that education is the foundation of human development and that innovation is the gateway to progress. The rapid global transformation driven by artificial intelligence (AI) requires us to reshape higher education and transform it into a dynamic and smart environment



Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal during his speech.

based on modern technologies, flexible curricula, and effective partnerships with the public and private sectors and innovation centers."

He stressed the importance of keeping pace with this transformation and activating the role of higher education institutions as the main driver for building a knowledge-based economy.

He pointed out that the summit highlights education governance in the digital age, addressing cybersecurity and data privacy issues, as well as mechanisms for funding scientific research and developing national competencies, in light of the accelerating use of AI tools.

In the meantime, Chairperson

of the Founding Board of Directors of the university Dr. Moudi Al-Hamoud pointed out that the summit is being held at a critical time; which requires academic institutions to reconsider their educational philosophy to keep pace with digital transformations.

Al-Hamoud announced the launching of the Artificial Intelligence Council in the country, indicating this is a national strategic initiative included in the government's work program with the aim of strengthening Kuwait's position as a regional center for modern technologies and smart education.

She said "the benefits that can be achieved from integrating AI, augmented reality (AR) and data analytics technologies into education open broad horizons for developing flexible and interactive educational environments capable of meeting the needs of learners and keeping pace with the evolving labor market."

She cited the anticipated challenges along this path, particularly cybersecurity and data privacy. She stressed the need to adopt flexible educational strategies and develop academic programs to suit future jobs and the acquisition of advanced skills through collaboration with government and private entities.



Photos during the launch of the first Higher Education Summit.

Photos by Rezk Tawfik

Kuwait-Bangladesh relations deepen, contributions lauded

Embassy marks 54 years of Independence

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait reaffirmed the deep-rooted and long-standing relations between Kuwait and the Republic of Bangladesh, indicating this is a partnership that has spanned five decades.

Speaking on the sidelines of a reception hosted by the Embassy of Bangladesh to celebrate the 54th Independence and National Day of the country; Al-Sumait praised the contributions of the Bangladeshi community in Kuwait which, he pointed out, is the third-largest expatriate group in the country, numbering more than 300,000.

"Their heroic role during the brutal Iraqi invasion remains etched in our memory," Al-Sumait said; recalling the efforts of Bangladeshi nationals in clearing landmines and their sacrifices, including those who lost their lives. "Kuwait will never forget this favor. Our hands, both the government and people, are always extended to them."

Commenting on reforms within the judicial system of Kuwait, Al-Sumait referred to the recent steps taken by the Ministry of Justice in line with the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

"Inspired by His Highness' Ramadan speech during his visit to the Supreme Judicial Council, we translated his vision into the new Judicial Organization Law. This comprehensive legislation consists of several vital reforms and is currently in its final drafting stage at the Legal Advice and Legislation Department. We expect completion within a few months," he disclosed.

He also affirmed the ministry's emphasis on gender inclusion in the judiciary, adding that more than 20 women now serve as judges in Kuwait. "For the



Bangladesh Ambassador and Minister of Justice cut cake at ceremony.

first time, we have four female directors of public prosecution out of the 14 total. They have proven their capability and receive our full support. New female prosecutors are appointed annually," he said.

Responding to questions regarding citizenship revocations under Article Eight of the Nationality Law; Al-Sumait clarified that while he is not part of the Nationality Committee, the ministry supports implementation efforts.

"His Highness the Amir has issued clear instructions that women whose citizenship was revoked under Article Eight should be treated as Kuwaiti citizens, but this should be done within certain regulatory frameworks. As a result, 25 female lawyers previously stripped of citizenship have been reinstated and have resumed their professional duties. Their home ownership rights also remain intact," he stressed.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Ambassador to Kuwait, Major General Syed Tariq Hossain affirmed Kuwait's early recognition of Bangladesh following its 1971 independence. He praised the long-standing diplomatic ties established in 1974 and expressed optimism about continued bilateral cooperation, under the wise leadership of HH the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and visionary leadership of His Excellency the Chief Advisor of Bangladesh and Nobel Laureate Dr. Mohammad Yunus.

"Our collaboration covers politics, trade, labor, education, and defense. Recent achievements in social and economic development have positioned Bangladesh as a growing regional force," he disclosed.

He cited the July-August 2024 youth-led uprising in Bangladesh, crediting it with advancing democratic values and accountability. He also talked about the success of the recent investment summit in Dhaka, held on April 7-10, 2025; which witnessed the participation of 415 delegates from 50 countries.

He extended an invitation to Kuwait and other nations to invest in the special economic zones in is country and promoted its tourism potential. "Bangladesh is a land of natural beauty and hospitality. I encourage everyone to experience it firsthand," he stated.



The Bangladesh Ambassador and Minister of Justice pose for a group photo during the celebration

Photos by Mohammad Morsi

Other Voices

Acceptance of others ... The path to peace

By Ahmad alsarraf

Many people use the title "scientist" to refer to a cleric or someone who studies religious subjects, which can imply that religion is also a science. However, this is a misconception.

Religion is a belief system, not a science. Science is an evidence-based approach to understanding the natural world through observation, experimentation, analysis, and scrutiny. Disciplines such as chemistry, biology, and astronomy are examples of science, as they seek to expand our knowledge of the universe and explain the phenomena around us.

Physics, for example, has enabled humans to understand the motion of objects and the orbits of planets. This is how science, in its various forms, has transformed our lives. Those who work in these fields are considered scientists, according to the widely accepted global understanding. It is important to reserve the title "scientist" for those within these domains out of respect for those genuinely advancing scientific knowledge. Some argue that even social studies, while important, do not fall under the category of pure sciences.

Religion, on the other hand, consists of a set of beliefs, practices, and spiritual and moral values that guide human life within society and shape their relationship with their Creator and the universe. It involves belief in a higher power or deity, sacred texts, specific rituals, attitudes, and the interpretation of various phenomena from a religious perspective.

Over time, religious organizational structures and institutions have evolved, providing believers with a framework for understanding life, the

afterlife, and their place in the world. Religion thus forms a significant part of individuals' cultural and personal identities.

Thus, the phenomenon of an increase or decrease in the number of followers of a particular religion or denomination cannot be explained in the same way as the cause of rainfall or the reason an apple falls from a tree. In the first case, we may have many explanations for the rise or fall in followers, none of which are universally agreed upon. However, in the case of rain and other cosmic phenomena, we find clear, agreed-upon explanations that are not linked to the supernatural. These are established rules of the universe, not open to debate, as they are subject to laboratory experimentation, something that cannot be applied to matters of faith.

Therefore, it is deeply troubling to witness such cruelty, rigidity, and stubbornness from one group or another in an attempt to prove the superiority of their faith over others. It is akin to trying to convince people who are distant from us in culture, geography, and thought that the food we have grown accustomed to since childhood is more delicious than theirs. If they reject this idea, they are deemed ignorant, and in some extreme cases, may even be considered deserving of being killed.

Therefore, we must be more open to the world, more tolerant in our understanding of our faith, and more accepting of differences with others. We should aim to coexist with them, rather than seek to eliminate them. Even the United States of America, with all its strength and unity today, failed to exterminate the Native Americans, despite their weakness and backwardness. These attempts began with the arrival of Christopher Columbus over 520 years ago and continue in various forms to this day.

Wise individuals learn the lessons that life offers.

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KPC denies court verdict reports linking employees involved in fake work orders

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) categorically denied the information circulating on some websites regarding a court ruling against some of its employees accused of facilitating the misappropriation of public funds through fake work orders, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press release issued on Wednesday, KPC clarified that the news refers to an incident involving former employees of one of its subsidiaries.

It stressed that these employees were dismissed immediately after the investigation into the incident in 2020. The subsidiary had reported the two employees to the Public Prosecution to protect public funds.

KPC urged everyone to exercise caution, verify the accuracy of news, and rely only on official sources within the corporation.

According to a report published by

Al-Jarida daily, the Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Nasr Al-Haid with judges Saud Al-Sanea and Tariq Jad as members, sentenced engineers from Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) to seven years in prison on charges of facilitating the embezzlement of public funds through the issuance of fictitious work orders.

The Public Prosecution charged one engineer from KOC and two engineers from KPC with facilitating the embezzlement of KD 228,864,815 by two general trading and contracting companies. The convicted individuals were found to have signed 73 fake work orders, while the two companies carried out no actual work.

Investigations revealed that the first company received KD 183,259,315 for 46 fake work orders, while the second company received KD 45,605,500 for 27 fake work orders.

When Moroccans annihilated the Spanish and Portuguese armies

“SINCE the fall of Andalusia in 1492 AD, the migration of Andalusians to Maghreb, Egypt, the Levant, and the Ottoman Empire, and the attacks of the Spanish, Portuguese and Crusader powers; the beginning of the 16th century witnessed a major transformation, with the Ottomans becoming the most powerful Islamic State at the time, especially during the reigns of Selim First and Suleiman the Magnificent,” **Mohammad Al-Fawzan** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“The Ottoman Sultan assumed the titles ‘Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques’ and ‘Caliph’, which made Moroccans realize that the aspiration for this great sultanate was inevitable, in order to repel the Spanish, Portuguese and colonial powers from Maghreb.



Al-Fawzan

“The Ottomans then quickly advanced at the request of the Hafids, rulers of the Lower Maghreb, and the Zayanids, rulers of the Central Maghreb. The Hafsid Sultan granted them the La Goulette region, and the Ottoman Sultan Selim I sent them an annual tribute, supplies and Ottoman currency. From that time on, Tunisian and Algerian cities saw the Turkish presence as a bulwark, having been forced to pay tribute to the Spanish following the Oran disaster in 1509, when the Spanish defeated the Zayanids, rulers of those regions. The Zayanid Sultan, Abu Hammu III, declared his allegiance and submission to Spanish sovereignty.

“In the Far Maghreb, the coasts were subjected to fierce raids by the Portuguese and the Spanish since the beginning of the 15th century. These raids began with a dispute between them over ownership of the Canary Islands, which both sides considered a launching pad for expansion into West Africa.

“Due to the importance of these islands, neither side was willing to cede them to the other. The Papacy intervened to resolve this dispute. In 1454, Pope Nicholas V granted the Portuguese a patent granting Ceuta and other possessions they had conquered in West Africa to the Portuguese crown.

“The Pope urged the Portuguese and Spanish not to hesitate in their war against the Muslims. A few years later, the Portuguese occupied the Moroccan city of Al-Qasr Al-Saghir, located on the Straits of Ceuta and Tangier, in October 1458. The Portuguese King, Afonso V, led the campaign. The Portuguese then launched attacks on other cities, culminating in the capture of Asilah in August 1471. This strengthened their position in northern Morocco, and they aspired to use these northern coastal centers as a launchpad for their offensive move into the country and occupy it.

“The most serious conflicts that befell the interior regions and countries of Morocco began with the end of the Marinid era and their Wattasid successors, the new rulers of the country between 1472 and 1552, and the foreign occupation of the country’s northern and western coasts.

“This led to the spread of chaos and strife, and the fragmentation of Morocco into semi-independent units, some of which were dictated by the necessity of jihad and fighting the occupying enemy.

“Due to these conflicts and internal fragmentation, and the Wattasids’ inability to resolve matters, lead the country or confront the enemy; two trends emerged. The first was represented by those with narrow and personal interests in the regions close to the Portuguese enemy, who saw it as an advantage and a necessity to obey, appease, and draw closer to the Portuguese enemy. This benefited the occupier.

“Another trend was among honorable believers who were pained by the decline, dispersion and occupation their countries were experiencing. This new call was evident in the southern regions of Morocco, in the Sous region. This call saw those who accepted Portuguese protection as being outsiders of Islam.

“Tribal leaders, prominent sheikhs and scholars began searching for the most capable figure to shoulder the responsibility of defending Islam and protecting Moroccan soil from decline, fragmentation, and occupation it had reached at the time.

“The leading figures in the Sous region saw the most capable person to carry this trust and lead this mission as a noble man: Sharif Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Hasani, who lived with his people in the Draa area of the Sous region. He was renowned for his vast knowledge and ‘adherence to the ways of the righteous predecessors in enjoining good and forbidding evil,’ as al-Zayani describes in his book, ‘Morocco in the States of the East and the West.’

“Since 1510, the Saadi dynasty emerged. The Saadis were able to eliminate the Wattasid rule, resist Portuguese influence, and regain some of their northern fortresses and ports, such as Santa Claus. They opened their arms to the Ottomans, their neighbors in Algeria and Tlemcen, to cooperate against the Spanish and Portuguese occupiers. They were also able to regain the cities of

Asilah and Ksar El-Kebir from the Portuguese occupation and unify large parts of Morocco. They even expanded until they were able to control Fez itself in January 1554.”

“Charity work and social responsibility have always been two fundamental pillars in building cohesive and sustainable communities. These principles extend beyond temporary acts of philanthropy, forming an integrated system that continually strives for comprehensive development,” **Adnan Abdullah Al-Othman** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

“A closer look at the concept of social responsibility in various disciplines reveals it as a vital mechanism for achieving progress through collective effort of everyone for the greater good of society.

“Historically, the Waqf (endowment) system has been a pioneering model in embodying these values, with its activities covering all social, economic, and cultural dimensions. In the modern era, there are many impactful Waqf initiatives that help to revive and expand this developmental role, utilizing both material and moral resources.

“One such example is the endowment of the late Abdullah Al-Othman. He shouldered the responsibility of actively building a cohesive and sustainable society, based on the firm belief that charitable work is not just about providing temporary aid, but rather a comprehensive system designed to bring about positive and lasting changes for individuals and society as a whole.

“Today, by the grace of God, we have taken an important step in supporting emergency healthcare services through the establishment of the Al-Othman Ambulance Center at the Al-Othman Commercial Center in Hawalli. This project is the result of constructive collaboration between the Al-Othman Group and the Ministry of Health.

“The inauguration was held under the patronage and in the presence of the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi. Hawally Governor Ali Salem Al-Asfar was also present at the event, along with Acting Director-General of the Public Authority for Minors’ Affairs Engineer Dalaal Al-Nouri, and members of the Trustees Committee of the late Abdullah Abdulatif Al-Othman estate.

“This milestone represents an important move toward strengthening and expanding emergency medical services in Kuwait and increasing the number of ambulance centers for ensuring a faster and more efficient response to urgent medical cases.

“The support provided by the Al-Othman Group for this project went beyond donating the designated site at the Al-Othman Commercial Center. It extended to fully developing the center in line with the highest standards of interior design and furnishing, tailored to meet the specific needs of emergency medical services.

“The center was designed to include specially designated ambulance parking areas, equipped with modern canopies, lighting, and power outlets to charge devices used in the ambulances. Internally, the space was restructured to suit the operational requirements of emergency medical teams. This included the construction of a storage room for equipment and supplies, as well as private offices for the medical staff, each fully equipped with the necessary facilities for ensuring residents of these and other areas receive the necessary ambulance services quickly and efficiently.



Al-Jazzaf

“It is important to note that the site was carefully selected based on several strategic and critical considerations. This center is the only one of its kind in the densely populated Hawally area, with its services extending to key locations such as Hawally and Maidan Hawally, and also offering support to neighboring areas including Qadisiya, Dahia, and Shaab.

“The center is equipped to handle approximately 20 percent of the total emergency cases in the Hawally Governorate.

“Through this unique initiative, the late Abdullah Al-Othman Foundation is fulfilling its role in establishing a true model of social responsibility, one that goes beyond theoretical concepts to tangible, impactful implementation.

“I extend my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, Hawally Governor and my dear friend Ali Al-Asfar, acting Director-General of the Public Authority for Minors’ Affairs Eng. Dalal Al-Nouri, and everyone who contributed to bringing this project to life, whether from the Ministry of Health or the dedicated team managing the Al-Othman Group.

“I conclude by saying, if this center saves even one life, then we will have achieved our goal. Kuwait always deserves the best!”

— **Compiled by Mahmoud Attiye/Simi K. Kutty**

‘Driving without a phone’

Mol holds traffic safety awareness drive at KU

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: As part of the activities of the Unified Gulf Traffic Week Committee under the theme “Driving Without a Phone”, the committee organized an awareness lecture on Wednesday at the College of Education in Kuwait University, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The lecture aimed to enhance traffic awareness and promote legal culture among various segments of society.

The event was attended by several senior officers from the Ministry of Interior, along with faculty members and students.

The recent amendments to the Traffic Law were highlighted, along with the importance of adhering to traffic rules to protect lives and property.

The speakers at the lecture affirmed the significance of community partnerships between the Ministry of Interior and educational institutions, stressing that such awareness-raising sessions play a vital role in increasing traffic awareness among young people and achieving the objectives of Traffic Week.

This event was part of a series of activities and programs organized by the Ministry of Interior in collaboration with various entities, in response to the directives of senior leadership to instill a culture of traffic safety.



Mol photo

Part of the awareness lecture.

Fashion influencer involved in Abu Futaira collision; 4 injured

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: A collision occurred in Abu Futaira involving a four-wheel-drive vehicle driven by a well-known fashion influencer and social media personality, reports Al-Rai daily.

A security source stated that upon receiving information about the accident, the Operations Unit at the Ministry of Interior dispatched security personnel and paramedics to accident site.

He said initial investigation revealed that four individuals sustained injuries as a result of the accident. He disclosed the injured

include a Kuwaiti, a Nicaraguan and two Indians. Two of the victims suffered serious injuries, including fractured ribs, and all of the injured were transported to the hospital, he added.

The security source confirmed that the driver was referred for investigation. Following her initial questioning, authorities decided to detain her pending the completion of the final medical reports for all parties involved, the source elaborated.

Meanwhile, detectives are continuing their investigation and reviewing CCTV footage that captured the incident, the source said.



KFF photo

Photo during the inspection campaign in Al-Rai.

KFF conducts inspection in Al-Rai

Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) carried out an inspection campaign on Tuesday morning in Al-Rai, in collaboration with several government agencies.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the campaign was aimed at identifying buildings and

establishments that were not in compliance with fire safety and prevention regulations. Several establishments were found in violation and faced administrative closures due to their failure to meet the safety standards set by KFF and other relevant authorities.

Young man wanted by law arrested in Jahra

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: A young man, wanted by law for evading a three-year prison sentence, was arrested in Jahra.

According to a police source, the young man has been wanted for three years. The detectives spotted the suspect in Jahra, leading to his arrest to implement the three-year prison sentence imposed on him in a drug-related case.

Power cut in Firdous: The Public Relations Department at Kuwait Municipality announced that recent field inspections carried out by regulatory teams in Farwaniya Governorate led to the disconnection of electricity to 12 properties in Firdous that housed bachelors, and the issuance of 12 citations, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The department called on citizens and residents to cooperate with the relevant municipal authorities by reporting the presence of bachelors in private residential areas.

It stressed that such reports would help the municipality take necessary measures in accordance with regulations that prohibit bachelors from residing in family residential zones.

Arab worker dies: An Arab died when he fell from the third floor of an under construction building in Nuzha, reports Al-Anba daily quoting a security source.

According to the source, the authorities were informed about the incident on Tuesday, with emergency responders arriving at the scene immediately after the fall. The victim, born in 1998, was pronounced dead at the site.

Investigators have launched a probe to determine the circumstances surrounding the fall. Colleagues of the deceased are being questioned to establish whether safety violations or other factors contributed to the incident.

Arab arrested with drugs: Rescue police officers arrested an Arab for the possession of narcotic pills, Shabu and drug paraphernalia at a checkpoint in Maidan Hawally, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security source revealed that rescue police officers were manning a checkpoint in the area when they noticed a vehicle attempting to make a sudden U-turn upon approaching the checkpoint. The officers quickly intercepted the vehicle and apprehended the driver, who appeared to be under the influence of narcotics, the source added.

The source said a preliminary investigation confirmed that the Arab was under the influence of methamphetamine. A precautionary search of the vehicle led to the discovery of an undisclosed quantity of narcotic pills, multiple packs of Shabu and various drug-related tools, the source revealed.

The source then confirmed that the suspect was taken into custody and referred, along with the seized substances, to the Drugs Control General Department (DCGD) at the Ministry of Interior.

Abusive mother’s sentence upheld

Lover receives 15 years for his role

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The Court of Cassation upheld the prison sentence that a lower court imposed on 47-year-old woman who injected her 13-year-old daughter with insulin with the intent to kill her.

Case files indicate that the woman also made it easy for her boyfriend to rape the victim after she discovered their illicit relationship

and deprived her children of their basic rights.

The Court of Cassation also sentenced the mother’s lover to 15 years in prison with hard labor.

The mother stated during the investigation that she committed the act out of revenge on her daughter as she discovered her illicit relationship with her lover. As a result, she deprived all her children of their basic rights.

In its indictment, the Public Prosecution demanded the maximum penalty to be imposed on the defendants (the mother and her lover) as they committed one of the most heinous crimes against humanity.

MoSA suspends new nursery licenses pending registration

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The Ministry of Social Affairs has suspended the transactions for opening private nurseries until further notice, pending the completion of all existing licenses.

In an announcement, the ministry urged the owners of all types of private nurseries (regular and special needs) to register their data through its official website or the Sahel-My Nursery app to facilitate tracking of their transactions until May 13.

It stressed the need to register nursery data in all branches according to the specified fields in the system, ensuring the accuracy of the data.

It confirmed that license cancellation transactions will continue through the system after the registration process is approved.

“License renewal transactions will also continue through the system after the registration process is approved, provided that renewal applications are submitted three months before the license expiration date,” the ministry added.

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Rigorous evaluations introduced

MoE launches electronic transfer system for supervisory positions

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Minister of Education Dr. Jalal Al-Tabtabaei issued a ministerial decision, stipulating the conditions and regulations for filling supervisory teaching and technical guidance positions in the academe.

This coincides with the launching of the electronic transfer system for members of the teaching and supervisory staff, which opened the door for transfer applications starting on April 20 until May 8.

These positions include the technical supervisor, head of the department for a subject, director, assistant director of schools and kindergartens, technical advisor and senior technical advisor.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the decision whose Article Two stipulates the necessity of adhering to the conditions stated in the job description cards for each position, in addition to meeting the academic qualifications and years of experience specified in the attached tables. It also indicates the method of calculating years of experience in accordance with the decisions of the Civil Service Commission



Dr. Al-Tabtabaei

(CSC), excluding absences or leave days not counted as part of experience.

The required qualifications and years of experience are as follows:

Educational supervisory positions (director, assistant director, department head, technical supervisor, technical supervisor and technical guide):

■ A university degree matching the position

■ Years of experience vary depending on the position, including years in the field of specialization or in supervisory positions

The decision also specified the nomination process, which is conducted electronically through the official website of the ministry.

Candidates must pass written tests, personal interviews and specialized training courses; upon which, their competency will be evaluated 100 percent based on several criteria like academic qualification, work experience, training and tests.

The decision also emphasized that supervisory positions may not be transferred between educational levels, and that retirees or resigned employees will only be reappointed to a teaching position upon their return.

The ministry underscored the need for educational districts and the concerned departments to circulate the announcement of the opening of nominations, and ensure that applicants meet all conditions to ensure fairness and transparency in the selection process.

Awqaf Ministry launches energy-saving measures in mosques amid summer peak

Directive limits A/C use, adjusts prayer times

By Mohammad Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has taken proactive steps to address the pressing issue of electricity and water conservation.

In a comprehensive directive issued to mosques nationwide, the ministry has outlined a series of measures aimed at optimizing energy usage. Imams and muezzins have been instructed to implement these measures to promote efficient consumption of essential resources.

A key directive is the adjustment of Dhuhr and Asr prayer durations. While maintaining their sanctity, the ministry has decided to shorten these prayers to conserve energy.

Additionally, the five daily prayers will be conducted in the mosque courtyard, reducing the need for extensive air conditioning. The mosque grounds will remain closed to the public to further minimize electricity and water usage.

These actions follow the scheduled power outages that were initiated in mosques two days ago.

The circular also addresses the Grand

Mosque, which will now only be open for Friday prayers. Air conditioning in the Grand Mosque will be set at 22°C in “auto” mode, effective from the evening prayer on Thursday through to the conclusion of Friday prayers.

Furthermore, all women’s prayer areas will be closed, except for those hosting ministry-approved educational sessions. Air conditioning in these areas will be set at 25°C in “auto” mode.

These measures reflect the ministry’s commitment to responsible resource management and environmental sustainability, ensuring that mosques contribute to the country’s efforts to conserve electricity and water.

In response to reports circulating on social media, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs has denied claims regarding the closure of women’s prayer rooms. Al-Seyassah daily, which first reported the ministry’s circular, emphasized the need for the ministry to address the practicality of these measures.

The circular outlines the following key points:

■ The larger front section of mosques will be closed. The five daily prayers will take place in the smaller rear section of the mosque.

■ Air conditioning will be set at 25°C (77°F) in “auto” mode.

- The front section of the mosque will be opened only for Friday prayers, with air conditioning set to 22°C (72°F) in “auto” mode from after the Isha prayer on Thursday until after Friday prayers.

■ Women’s prayer areas will be closed unless they host ministry-approved educational sessions, with air conditioning set to 25°C (77°F) in “auto” mode. These areas will be closed after the session ends.

The ministry also confirmed that coordinated power outages will take place in mosques across all six governorates, beginning Wednesday, as follows:

■ The power will be cut 30 minutes after Dhuhr prayer and will last until 15 minutes before Asr prayer.

■ The outage will resume 30 minutes after Asr prayer and continue until 5:00 pm.

The ministry stressed the importance of minimizing the time between the call to prayer and the start of the prayer (iqamah) to avoid unnecessary prolongation.

Just hours after issuing the circular, Ahmad Majed Al-Nuwa, Supervisor of the Hawally Mosques Department, requested the suspension of the measures until further notice.

Health minister enforces energy, water cuts

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi issued a circular requiring all sectors and departments of the ministry to implement effective measures to rationalize electricity, energy, and water consumption, in line with the state’s efforts to protect the environment and enhance operational efficiency, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Dr. Al-Awadhi affirmed that rationalization is both a national and moral duty, as it reflects a sense of responsibility and helps create a more sustainable and environmentally conscious work environment.

The circular outlined practical measures in four main areas: lighting, air conditioning, electrical appliances, and preventive maintenance, along with strict monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance.

The minister highlighted the importance of raising awareness and involving employees in resource conservation efforts, adding that these actions are in line with Kuwait’s vision for sustainable development and a more efficient environment.

The circular also included provisions for conducting surprise inspection visits to assess adherence to the guidelines.

New contracts secure benefits as directed

Ministry safeguards rights of female employees with revoked citizenship

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The Ministry of Education has started implementing the decisions of the Council of Ministers and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) regarding the amendment of the status of female employees whose Kuwaiti citizenship was revoked in accordance with Article Eight of the Nationality Law.

This is done by coordinating with the concerned sectors to arrange new employment contracts that guarantee the continuation of their financial and employment benefits; similar to those enjoyed by their Kuwaiti colleagues such as vacation days, allowances, bonuses and incentives.

The move is in compliance with governmental directives to ensure that the employment rights of these women are not infringed upon during the performance of their duties.

Acting Assistant Undersecretary for

Administrative Affairs and Administrative Development Mansour Al-Dhafiri issued a circular to all sectors requesting them to follow up the amendment of the status of female employees whose Kuwaiti citizenship was revoked as per Article Eight of Nationality Law No. 15/1959 and its amendments.

This circular is based on letters from the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers and the CSC; stressing the importance of working in accordance with the decision, circulating it to the relevant educational authorities and implementing its provisions.

The circular was issued as per the letter of Secretary General of the Council of Ministers Saleh Sulaiman Al-Mulla to Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei. The newspaper obtained a copy of the letter, which underscored the necessity of implementing the decision of the Council of Ministers that government agencies must rectify the status of these female employees.

MEW sees KD50mn revenue boost

CAPT approves tender for 900MW gas turbines at Subiya Power Plant

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy announced that the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) has approved a tender for the supply, installation, operation, and maintenance of combined-cycle gas turbine units.

The ministry explained that the tender is part of the fourth phase of the Subiya Power and Water Distillation Plant project, which will have a production capacity of 900 megawatts.

This project is a part of the ministry’s strategy to enhance Kuwait’s electricity production capacity in order to meet the growing demand, particularly during peak periods.

The project’s implementation period is 36 months, starting from the date of contract signing.

The project will use combined-cycle technology, which is an advanced system that improves overall production efficiency, reduces fuel consumption, lowers operating costs, and decreases harmful emissions resulting from the power generation process.

Meanwhile, as per the budget report; the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy estimated revenues of KD793 million for fiscal 2025/2026 -- an increase of KD50 million compared to the previous year’s estimate of KD743 million.

Projected revenues from electricity sales amounted to KD538 million -- KD500 million from electricity fees and KD35 million from electricity connections. The remaining amount is from ancillary sources like wages, equipment and meter utilization.

Water revenue projection stand at KD255 million, primarily generated from fresh water sales (KD250 million), water connections (KD3 million) and associated connection costs (KD 2 million).

The ministry is a distinguished governmental entity in revenue generation through the provision of electricity and water, as well as associated services.

Sources said this achievement is attributed to the provision of modern electronic services and significant advancements in the use of smart metering technology.

Minister of higher education emphasizes energy conservation at Kuwait University

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal affirmed the importance of rationalizing energy consumption in educational institutions, stressing that this initiative is part of Kuwait’s commitment to promoting environmental sustainability, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

He stressed the need for institutions to work together to raise environmental awareness among students and the academic community.

He gave this statement during his visit to Kuwait University accompanied by Director of Kuwait University Professor Dina Al-Mailam to review ongoing preparations and follow up on the initiatives launched by the university last year under the title “Let’s Be Partners in Saving Electricity.”

The inspection tour included Central

Station Building No. 3 and the main control room in the administrative building.

Dr. Al-Jalal highlighted that the university’s preparations are focused on continuing to implement the initiative and increasing the rationalization level, which has currently reached approximately 15 percent.

Meanwhile, Kuwait University affirmed that it is actively implementing an energy conservation system in its air conditioning plants and is finalizing a study aimed at decommissioning some buildings and placing them in “sleep mode” during the summer. This approach is in line with the decline in academic activities and teaching loads, which decrease by half during the summer season. These measures are expected to raise the rationalization rate to 20 percent.

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5-in-one: Officials explore multi-license business rule

Bid to curb fake addresses, spur entrepreneurship

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: As part of a regulatory initiative to improve the local business environment and boost Kuwait’s standing in global competitiveness indices, officials from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry are working with relevant government bodies to study a proposal that would permit up to five commercial licenses to be held at a single office, provided they are owned by the same entity, reports Al-Rai daily quoting informed sources.

They explained that officials from the ministry held discussions with senior representatives from the Kuwait Municipality, the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), and the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) regarding the possibility of exempting business owners with more than one commercial license from certain requirements stipulated in the executive regulations of the Commercial Establishments Li-

censing Law, which govern the conditions for licensing business premises.

The sources highlighted a proposal that would allow a maximum of five commercial licenses to be registered at a single company headquarters, provided that all the licenses (five or lesser) are owned by the same entity or by an individual with significant ownership stakes.

They said this initiative aims to streamline business operations, support entrepreneurial projects, and combat the black market for fake business addresses.

The sources explained that relevant government agencies are still exploring solutions to the legal and procedural challenges raised by each authority involved. Among the most pressing concerns is how to handle violations, specifically, whether the main office should be closed if one of the associated licenses is found to be in breach of regulations, and whether it is appropriate in this case to close the main office, as it is the collector of the violating license.

In light of ongoing procedural developments, closures can be carried out using an alternative mechanism. Due to the established interconnectivity between various government entities, it is possible to suspend a specific license and freeze all relat-

ed transactions in relevant agencies during the closure period, effectively enforcing the penalty without the need to shut down the main office. This approach will help expedite the handling of recorded violations and ensure the quick reactivation of the company’s file once the issue is resolved, restoring the effectiveness of the company’s file.

Ongoing discussions included a legal concern raised by PACI regarding the mechanism for registering the addresses of multiple licenses under a single headquarters. Under the current system, each commercial license is assigned a unique number. This raises a challenge when attempting to register five licenses at the same location, as assigning a single number to multiple licenses complicates legal processes such as litigation and official communication.

A proposal has been put forward suggesting the use of supporting mechanisms to resolve the legal ambiguity. One proposed solution involves assigning a shared number to the group of five licenses, and registering a dedicated, official mailing address for each license within that number. This would ensure that each license can be individually identified and held accountable for violations, communication, and legal action.



Ministry of Interior photo
Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah receives the President of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Salvatore Sciacchitano and the ICAO Regional Director for the Middle East Office, Mohammad Abubakar Abdullah Farea.

Top Kuwaiti officials meet ICAO leaders

Kuwait committed to safer skies: Acting PM

KUWAIT CITY, April 17, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah reaffirmed Kuwait’s commitment to supporting international efforts aimed at developing the civil aviation sector and enhancing cooperation with specialized organizations to promote safety, security, and sustainable growth in this field.

His remarks came following a meeting at Bayan Palace with President of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Salvatore Sciacchitano and the ICAO Regional Director for the Middle East Office,

Mohammad Abubakar Abdullah Farea.

The meeting was also attended by Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah and head of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Sheikh Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Sabah.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to strengthen cooperation between Kuwait and ICAO in areas of aviation and air safety, and also reviewed recent developments and key issues in the civil aviation sector on both regional and international levels.



Photos during the Spring Fine Arts Exhibition.

Photos by Mohammad Morsi

Six years silent ... one grand return

Art blooms again in Kuwait as spring exhibition makes comeback

By Medhat Allam
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: After a six-year hiatus, the Spring Fine Arts Exhibition made a triumphant return; rekindling the artistic spirit and showcasing the vibrant talents of Kuwaiti and international artists.

This prestigious exhibition, which was first launched in 1959, has played a pivotal role in shaping Kuwait’s fine arts landscape and fostering a deeper appreciation for artistic expression.

Organized by the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) as part of the Kuwait Capital of Arab Culture and Media events; the exhibition was held under the patronage of Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Chairman of NCCAL Abdul-

rahman Badah Al-Mutairi.

The exhibition featured a diverse range of artistic styles and trends, showcasing the works of 80 Kuwaiti artists and 13 international artists.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Assistant Secretary General for the Arts Sector Musaed Al-Zamel, who represented the minister, at the Museum of Modern Art.

The opening ceremony was a well-attended affair; drawing a diverse crowd of fine artists, art enthusiasts and members of the public who follow the fine arts movement.

The opening ceremony commenced with a celebratory presentation by Dalal Abel, followed by the screening of a short film that chronicled the rich history of the Spring Fine Arts Exhibition.

Al-Zamel then delivered a speech, warmly welcoming the guests and emphasizing the profound significance of fine

arts in capturing the essence of civilizations and reshaping perspectives on life.

Kuwaiti artist Sami Mohammed, speaking on behalf of the participating artists, expressed gratitude to the minister, NCCAL and the Fine Arts Department for their unwavering support and dedication in organizing the exhibition.

The ceremony also featured a special tribute to Sami Mohammed, who was honored as the ‘Personality of the Year’ at the exhibition.

Visual artist Abbas Al-Moussawi also addressed the audience, representing visual artists from outside Kuwait.

Wael Khaled Al-Jaber, Director of the Fine Arts Department, is elated over the successful staging of the exhibition and highlighted the introduction of new administrative and financial regulations for this year’s edition.

He pointed out that the exhibition shifted its focus from

awarding prizes to a more holistic evaluation of the submitted artworks by a specialized committee.

The exhibition featured a wide array of artistic creations by more than 80 Kuwaiti artists and 13 international artists, fostering a dynamic exchange of artistic ideas and perspectives.

The Spring Fine Arts Exhibition’s return after a six-year hiatus was met with resounding success, reaffirming its significance as a cornerstone of Kuwait’s cultural scene.

The exhibition not only provided a platform for established and emerging artists to showcase their talents, but also served as a catalyst for artistic dialogue and cross-cultural exchange. As Kuwait continues to position itself as a hub for arts and culture in the region, the Spring Fine Arts Exhibition is poised to play an even greater role in enriching the nation’s artistic landscape and inspiring future generations of artists.



Kuwait’s Namaa charity delivers healthcare, food aid across northern Gaza and to Syrian displaced families.



KUNA photos

Kuwait-based charity delivers healthcare, food aid

Kuwait’s Namaa charity on Wednesday provided urgent healthcare aid for patients suffering from chronic conditions in the northern Gaza Strip.

The initiative, held in conjunction with El-Wafa Charitable Society based in the Palestinian enclave, is part of a broader humanitarian campaign carried out by the Kuwaiti charity, its development and projects department chief Waleed Al-Bassam told KUNA.

The “catastrophic” healthcare conditions in Gaza require urgent humanitarian aid, the official said, citing data from the World Health Organization and the Palestinian health ministry. On the Palestinian society’s rapport with the Kuwaiti charity, the former’s director Marwan Muhaisin spoke of Kuwait’s “pioneering role” in the field of humanitarian work, citing the flow Kuwaiti aid into the Gaza Strip

in spite of the “difficult conditions” there.

Kuwait’s Namaa Charity also doled out Wednesday some 200 baskets carrying food aid for displaced families across northern Syria, an initiative it said was meant to alleviate their suffering.

The aid comes as part of the charity’s efforts to continuously monitor the “humanitarian situation” there, its relief department chief Khaled Al-Shamri told KUNA, saying that similar endeavors will follow suit in a bid to provide aid for the most vulnerable.

The initiative is a collaborative effort between Kuwait’s Al-Namaa charity and the International Society for Solidarity and Development, with the latter’s chairman Issa Barmaksiz praising Kuwait as having set a “precedent” in the field of humanitarian work. (KUNA)

Envoys discuss strategic vision at Kuwaiti embassy

Kuwaiti ambassador meets GCC peers in Jordan

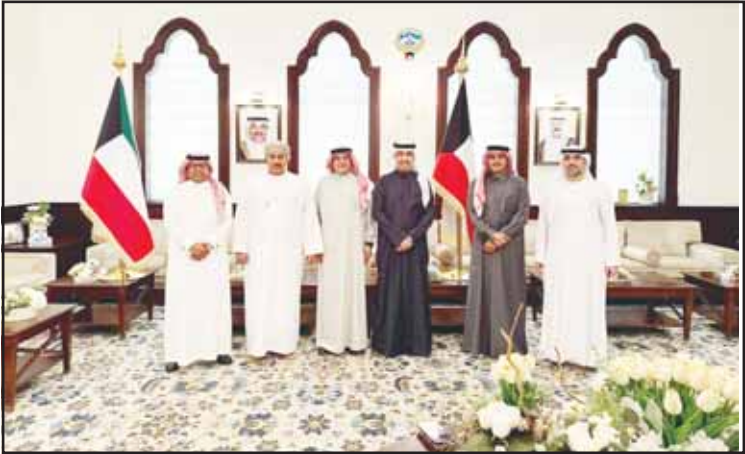
AMMAN, April 17, (KUNA): The ambassadors of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to Jordan convened Wednesday at the Kuwaiti Embassy in Amman on an invitation from Ambassador Hamad Al-Marri.

Al-Marri chaired the meeting since his country holds the current presidency of the GCC.

The purpose of this meeting was to consult on future visions to achieve strategic goals and common interests of the GCC countries, he told KUNA.

He emphasized that such meetings provide an opportunity for the GCC countries to discuss and collaborate on shared issues and enhance future partnership opportunities.

The ambassadors examined the strong relations between the GCC countries and Jordan, exploring



KUNA photo
Kuwait’s Ambassador to Jordan poses for a group photo with GCC counterparts.

ways to develop these ties across various fields.

Additionally, they discussed re-

gional issues and the cooperation between the GCC countries and Jordan.

Strategic port

They personally looked into the progress of the pre-construction study, design and services contract for the next phase of the port development. The contract, which commenced on March 16, is considered an important phase in the implementation of the strategic infrastructure project.

In a press statement, Al-Mashaan pointed out the visit of Fu Xueyin underscores the high-level political attention the project is receiving in Kuwait and China. “The visit aimed to strengthen bilateral cooperation and ensure the project is completed as per the world-class standards in commercial port design and technology,” she

explained.

Officials discussed collaborative efforts to align the project with the long-term development visions of both nations. The port is considered a cornerstone of the integration of Kuwait into the Belt and Road Initiative of China.

The current contract is part of a bigger framework established through the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in September 2023, which involves refining the specialized designs of the port; while laying down a comprehensive plan for its implementation and operation.

The port is envisioned as a vital regional hub, reinforcing the strategic maritime role of Kuwait and fostering stronger economic ties with China.

Sun out,

The weather on Friday night will be moderate, with northwesterly to variable winds, light to moderate in speed, ranging between 8 and 32 km/h. The expected minimum temperature will be between 17 and 19 degrees Celsius, with light to moderate seas and waves ranging from 1 to 4 feet high.

On Saturday, the weather will be relatively hot, with northwesterly to variable winds, light to moderate in speed, ranging between 8 and 28 km/h. The expected maximum temperature will range between 32 and 34 degrees Celsius, with light to moderate seas and waves ranging from 1 to 3 feet high.

The weather on Saturday evening will be moderate, with northwesterly

to variable winds, light to moderate in speed, ranging between 6 and 28 km/h. The expected minimum temperature will be between 18 and 20 degrees Celsius, with light to moderate seas and wave heights ranging from 1 to 3 feet.

Kuwait Customs

In conclusion, he reaffirmed that KGAC operates under an integrated vision to provide smart customs services designed to reduce costs, save time, and enhance the investment environment, particularly for small and medium enterprises, which are important contributors to economic development.

Kuwait, ICAO

Expressing his elation over the agreement with Kuwait, the UN aviation agency’s chief expected the deal to broaden the scope of bilateral cooperation through a series of special training courses, coupled with ICAO’s backing for strategic development projects in Kuwait, he said.

As he toured major facilities across Kuwait International Airport, the visiting UN aviation agency president said that development projects represent a major “pillar” of the growth process, praising the upward trajectory Kuwait’s aviation industry has seen.

US increases

visa denial, revocation or removal from the country,” he warned.

He affirmed that the US State Department has a robust and continuous review process for all visa holders. “If new information emerges indicating that an individual is ineligible under US Immigration Law or poses a potential risk to public safety, his visa might be revoked even after issuance,” he explained.

He said the grounds for visa revocation are broad and not limited to specific violations. “These may include arrests, criminal convictions, overstaying the permitted duration, or engaging in activities inconsistent with the visa’s terms,” he elaborated.

Continued from Page 1

San Francisco’s new mayor starts to unite fractured city

SAN FRANCISCO, April 17, (AP): Democrats nationally may be in turmoil, but liberals in San Francisco are hopeful the new mayor’s collaborative approach will help solve entrenched problems in a city recently known for its bitter infighting and chaotic streets.

Daniel Lurie, an heir to the the Levi Strauss fortune and anti-poverty nonprofit founder with no elected experience, beat out incumbent London Breed in November after spending nearly \$10 million of his own money. Voters embraced his promise to make government work again after years of San Francisco attracting national attention for its empty downtown, open-air drug use and sprawling tent encampments.

Earnest and affable, Lurie is often outside City Hall, talking to merchants and residents, both housed and unhoused. He’s reached out to supervisors, including those who feuded with Breed, asking questions and inviting input on thorny topics.

In an interview marking 100 days in office, Lurie said San Francisco is cleaning up its act with safer streets. He brushed off concerns over the involvement of corporate executives in his administration and declined to talk about Republican President Donald Trump’s potential impact on San Francisco.



San Francisco Mayor Daniel Lurie speaks at a rally of city leaders opposing President Trump’s immigration crackdown on the steps of City Hall on Jan 28, in San Francisco. (AP)

cisco.

“I was elected to turn this city around,” Lurie said. “And I want everybody in San Francisco to know that their mayor is focused on getting results for San Franciscans.”

Ex-Michigan health officer El-Sayed enters Democratic Senate race

LANSING, Mich., April 17, (AP): A former Michigan public health official and Democratic candidate for governor entered the race for the state’s open US Senate seat on Thursday.

Abdul El-Sayed, 40, is the second Democrat to put his name in the running in what could be one of the most watched races in the 2026 midterm elections. He’s also the second candidate this week to launch a campaign to replace Democratic Sen Gary Peters, who is not seeking reelection.

“It’s way too hard to survive here in the richest, most powerful country in the world and it should not be this hard to get by,” he told The Associated Press.

El-Sayed ran for governor in 2018 as a progressive Democrat and was endorsed by Sen. Bernie Sanders. He came in second in the Democratic primary, losing to Gretchen Whitmer by more than 20 points and beating now US Rep Shri Thanedar by more than 12 points. Whitmer went on to win the general election and is in the midst of a second term. She can’t run again because of term limits.

A resident of Ann Arbor, El-Sayed recently served as director of the Department of Health, Human & Veterans Services in Wayne County, home to Detroit. Before that, he was the public health director of the city after it declared bankruptcy in 2013.



Abdul El-Sayed, Democratic candidate for Michigan governor, visits his Detroit field office to thank all of the volunteers for their hard work on the campaign, Aug 7, 2018, in Detroit. (AP)

El-Sayed said he’s inspired to run for Senate after the overhaul of the federal government brought on by President Donald Trump and Elon Musk, including changes and cuts made at the nation’s top health agencies. But he said Democrats must do more than just run on the opposite of Republican policies.

“You have to come with your own

torney General Dana Nessel.

Also:

WASHINGTON: Rep Elise Stefanik, a member of House Republican leadership and onetime nominee for US ambassador to the United Nations, is considering a run for New York governor, according to a person close to her.

The person was granted anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. The state’s current governor, Democrat Kathy Hochul, was elected in 2022 and is running for reelection next year.

Stefanik, a close ally and fierce defender of President Donald Trump, had been nominated to represent the US at the United Nations. But her nomination was pulled last month amid concerns about leaving a Republican House seat vacant when the party has such a narrow majority in the chamber.

Trump, in a Wednesday morning post on his social media platform Truth Social, wrote, “Congresswoman Elise Stefanik is GREAT!!!!” In recent days, Stefanik has been encouraged to run by major New York donors, state Republican officials and White House officials, according to the person close to her. She considered running for governor in 2022 and will make a decision on a candidacy this time around in the coming months.

Trump administration takes aim at Harvard’s int’l students

International students file legal challenges over widespread US visa revocations

WASHINGTON, April 17, (AP): Several international students who have had their visas revoked in recent weeks have filed lawsuits against the Trump administration, arguing the government denied them due process when it suddenly took away their permission to be in the US.

The actions by the federal government to terminate students’ legal status have left hundreds of scholars at risk of detention and deportation. Their schools range from private universities like Harvard and Stanford to large public institutions like the University of Maryland and Ohio State University to some small liberal arts colleges.

At least 901 students at 128 colleges and universities have had their visas revoked or their legal status terminated since mid-March, according to an Associated Press review of university statements and correspondence with school officials.

In lawsuits against the Department of Homeland Security, students have argued the government lacked justification to cancel their visa or terminate their legal status.

Visas can be canceled for a number of reasons, but colleges say some students are being singled out over infractions as minor as traffic violations, including some long in the past. In some cases, students say it’s unclear why

they were targeted.

“The timing and uniformity of these terminations leave little question that DHS has adopted a nationwide policy, whether written or not, of mass termination of student (legal) status,” ACLU of Michigan attorneys wrote in a lawsuit on behalf of students at Wayne State University and the University of Michigan.

In New Hampshire, a federal judge last week issued a restraining order in the case of a Dartmouth College computer science student from China, Xiaotian Liu, who had his status terminated by the government. Attorneys have filed similar challenges in federal court in Georgia and California.

Homeland Security officials did not respond to a message seeking comment.

In some high-profile cases, including the detention of Columbia University activist Mahmoud Khalil, President Donald Trump’s administration has argued it should be allowed to deport noncitizens over involvement in pro-Palestinian activism. But in the vast majority of visa revocations, colleges say there is no indication affected students had a role in protests.

“What you’re seeing happening with international students is really a piece of the much greater scrutiny that the Trump administration is bringing to bear on immigrants of all different



Students walk on the Stanford University campus, March 14, 2019, in Santa Clara, Calif. (AP)

categories,” said Michelle Mittelstadt, director of public affairs at the Migration Policy Institute.

Students in other countries must meet a series of requirements to obtain a student visa, usually an F-1. After gaining admission to a school in the US, students go through an application and interview process at a US embassy or consulate abroad.

international students’ legal status is overseen by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program under the Department of Homeland Security.

Also:

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump’s administration has escalated its ongoing battle with Harvard, threatening to revoke the university’s ability to host international students as the president called for withdrawing Harvard’s tax-exempt status.

The Department of Homeland Security ordered Harvard late Tuesday to turn over “detailed records” of its foreign student visa holders’ “illegal and violent activities” by April 30. International students make up 27% of the campus.

The department also said it was canceling two grants to the school totaling \$2.7 million.

The moves deepen the crackdown on Harvard, which on Monday became the first university to openly defy the administration’s demands related to activism on campus, antisemitism and diversity. The federal government has already frozen more than \$2 billion in grants and contracts to the Ivy League institution.

Trump suggested Tuesday on social media that Harvard should lose its tax-exempt status “if it keeps pushing

political, ideological, and terrorist inspired/supporting ‘Sickness?’”

The hold on federal money for research at Harvard marked the seventh time the administration has taken such a step at one of the nation’s most elite colleges. The government is attempting to force compliance with Trump’s political agenda at schools he accuses of pushing “woke” policies and allowing antisemitism to fester.

In a letter to Harvard on Friday, Trump’s administration called for broad government and leadership reforms at the university, plus changes to its admissions policies. It also demanded that the university audit views of diversity on campus and stop recognizing some student clubs.

Harvard President Alan Garber said Monday that the university would not bend to the government’s demands. Later that day, the White House announced the freeze of more than \$2.2 billion in multi-year grants and \$60 million in contracts.

Conservative strategist Christopher Rufo said the government should respond to Harvard’s defiance by cutting all federal money and stripping nonprofit status at Harvard and other Ivies that defy federal orders. Rufo urged the government to use the same tools it used during the Civil Rights Movement to force desegregation.

Ukraine’s future at center of talks in Paris with Rubio and top European officials

PARIS, April 17, (AP): Paris was hosting a series of talks Thursday about Ukraine and its security, including US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and presidential envoy Steve Witkoff, French President Emmanuel Macron and top Ukrainian officials.

Rubio arrived in Paris on Thursday morning. Rubio and Witkoff will have “talks with European counterparts to advance President Trump’s goal to end the Russia-Ukraine war and stop the bloodshed,” State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce said.

The meetings come as concerns grow about Trump’s readiness to draw closer to Russia as he seeks to broker a ceasefire in Ukraine and his administration’s other moves, from tariffs on some of its closest partners to rhetoric about NATO and Greenland.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Andrii Yermak, Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiba and Defense Minister Rustem Umerov also arrived in Paris on Thursday to take part in the talks.

Yermak described them as “a series of bilateral and multilateral meetings with representatives of the states of the coalition of the willing that are able



Germany national security advisor Jens Plotner, (left), and US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff, (second left), meet French President diplomatic advisor Emmanuel Bonne, (third right), at the Elysee Palace in Paris on April 17. (AP)

to guarantee security.” The Ukrainian delegation is also to meet with U.S. officials, Yermak said.

Around 30 countries led by Britain and France have been discussing a possible coalition to police any future

peace agreement with Russia. The success of the coalition’s operation hinges on U.S. backup with airpower or other military assistance, but the Trump administration has made no public commitment to provide support.

Italy’s Meloni to test mettle as EU-US bridge when PM meets Trump in WH

MILAN, April 17, (AP): Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni will test her mettle as a bridge between the EU and the United States when she meets with US President Donald Trump in the White House on Thursday, the first European leader to have a face-to-face with Trump since he announced, and then suspended, 20% tariffs on European exports.

Meloni secured the meeting at a critical juncture in the trade war as Italy’s leader, but she also has, in a sense, been “knighted” to represent the European Union. She has been in close contact with EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen ahead of the trip, and “the outreach is ... closely coordinated,” a commission spokeswoman said this week.

“We know we are in a difficult moment,” Meloni said this week in Rome. “Most certainly, I am well aware of what I represent, and what I am defending.”

The European Union is defending what it calls “the most important commercial relationship in the world,” with annual trade reaching



Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni holds a year-end press conference in Rome on Jan 9. (AP)

1.6 trillion euros (\$1.8 trillion).

Trade negotiations fall under the European Commission’s authority, which is pushing for a zero-for-zero tariff deal with the US. However, Trump administration officials in talks with the EU have yet to publicly show signs of relenting on Trump’s insistence that a baseline

10% tariff be charged on all foreign imports. He paused for 90 days a retaliatory increase to 20%.

The pause has raised some hopes for negotiations, and Meloni’s margins for progress are more in gaining clarity on Trump’s goals rather than outright concessions, experts say.

Greece announces plans on maritime use

ATHENS, Greece, April 17, (AP): Greece on Wednesday announced plans for managing human activities in maritime areas, such as tourism, offshore energy drilling, fishing and environmental protection, irking neighboring Turkey, which said the plans encroach on its jurisdiction.

The announcement about Greece’s Maritime Spatial Planning came after the country was rebuked by the European Court of Justice earlier this year for failing to submit the plans to the European Commission, as all coastal European Union member states are required to do. Spatial planning for sea areas is considered necessary for the sustainable use of marine resources, setting out where activities such as transport, tourism, fishing and renewable energy projects can take place, and for the protection of marine environments.

But Turkey’s Foreign Ministry said some of the areas specified in Greece’s plan “violate our country’s maritime jurisdiction areas in the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean.”

Although NATO allies, Greece and Turkey have been at loggerheads for years over boundaries in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean, with escalating tension bringing them close to war several times in recent decades.



The abandoned Dimitrios shipwreck lies rusted and since 1981 at Valtaki beach near Gythio, southern Greece, on April 15, 2025. (AP)

One of the main contentions between the two is the delineation of the continental shelf - the proportion of the seabed that belongs to each country, as well as with the boundaries of each one’s exclusive economic zone.

Greece has agreements in place delineating its exclusive economic zones with Italy and with Egypt, but not with Turkey.

“We would like to remind the need

to avoid unilateral actions in enclosed or semi-enclosed seas such as in the Aegean and the Mediterranean,” Turkey’s Foreign Ministry said in a statement, adding that “international maritime law encourages cooperation between coastal states in the seas in question, including concerning environmental issues, and that in this context, our country is always ready to cooperate with Greece in the Aegean Sea.”

Slovak lawmakers loyal to prime minister approve law critics say will harm civil groups

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia, April 17, (AP): Slovakia’s parliament on Wednesday passed legislation that critics say will be detrimental for many nongovernmental organizations.

It was drafted by coalition lawmakers and approved by the government of populist Prime Minister Robert Fico, who has frequently attacked NGOs.

The organizers of a protest rally this month in Bratislava against the legislation claim the draft bill looked inspired by Russian law, which they said “makes it possible to liquidate the civil sector and turn into a criminal anyone who is not loyal to those in power.” The government has said the law is meant to the financing and functioning of civic groups more transparent.

Lawmakers loyal to Fico made last-minute concessions removing some controversial parts of the draft, including the provision that NGOs would be considered lobbyists without giving a clear definition of what lobbying is.

An analysis by Via Iuris, a nonprofit organization, said the law violates the constitution, including the right to privacy, freedom of expression and the

right to freely associate, as well as European Union rules. Its aim is to “stigmatize and limit the activities of civic groups,” according to the analysis.

Fico, who is a divisive figure at

home and abroad, returned to power in 2003 after his leftist Smer (Direction) party won a parliamentary election on a pro-Russia and anti-American platform.



People march during a protest to condemn a draft legislation that critics consider ‘liquidating’ for many non-government organisations in Bratislava on April 3. (AP)

Malaysia, China sign 31 MoUs for strategic cooperation

China’s leader Xi arrives in Cambodia to wrap up 3-nation Southeast Asia tour

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, April 17, (Agencies): Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Cambodia on Thursday for a two-day state visit that serves as an opportunity to further strengthen already robust relations.

The visit, Xi’s first since 2016, will conclude a three-nation Southeast Asian tour that included stops in Vietnam and Malaysia. China has been increasing its influence in the region over the past decade, largely by exercising its substantial economic leverage.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet recently described Beijing as “an important and indispensable friend of Cambodia that has helped support the country’s economic and social development.”

Xi was formally greeted at the airport in Cambodia’s capital Phnom Penh by head of state King Norodom Sihamoni. During his visit, Xi is also scheduled to meet Prime Minister Hun Manet and Senate President Hun Sen, who is Hun Manet’s father and predecessor as prime minister.

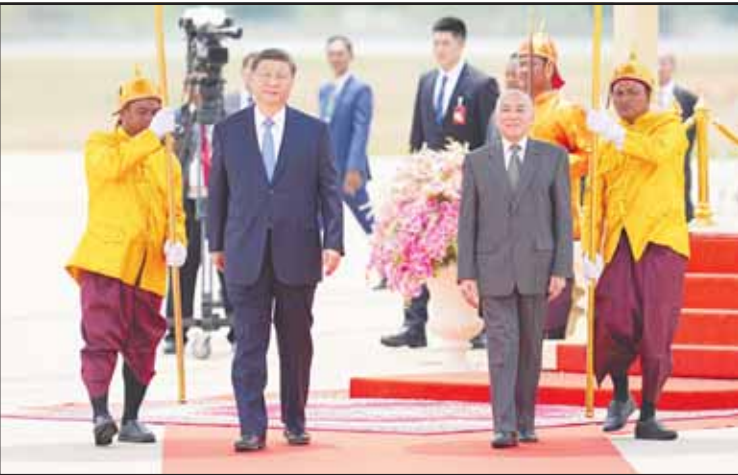
In a statement at Phnom Penh International Airport after his arrival on his presidential aircraft, an American-made Air China Boeing 747, Xi said he was “delighted” to visit again.

“Cambodia is a priority in China’s neighborhood diplomacy. China will unswervingly support Cambodia in upholding strategic autonomy and in pursuing a development path suited to its national conditions,” he said according to a transcript of his remarks distributed by the Chinese embassy.

Trade will likely be a major topic of Xi’s discussions in Cambodia, which faces among the highest tariff rates proposed by Washington. In addition to Trump’s universal 10% tariff, the country faces the threat of a 49% tax on exports to the US once his 90-day pause expires. In addition to discussions on strengthening bilateral ties and regional and international issues, several agreements are expected to be signed on cooperation in various sectors.

In both countries, Xi emphasized strengthening ties, particularly in trade and investment, amid global economic uncertainties and the backdrop of trade tensions with the United States. He underscored the need to oppose unilateralism and protectionism and uphold the multilateral trading system.

China is presenting itself as a source of stability and certainty as Southeast Asia scrambles to respond to tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump, which



In this photo released by Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP), Cambodia’s King Norodom Sihamoni, (center right), and Chinese President Xi Jinping, (center left), attend a welcome ceremony at Phnom Penh International Airport in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on April 17. (AP)

threaten the region export-oriented economies whose largest markets are generally the United States.

The visit comes on the 50th anniversary of the April 17, 1975 takeover of Cambodia by the communist Khmer Rouge, which imposed a reign of terror with Maoist-inspired policies that saw an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians die of starvation, overwork or executions.

Beijing was the main foreign backer of the Khmer Rouge and supported the group in carrying on a guerrilla war after it was ousted from power in 1979 by an

invasion from Vietnam, though such history is rarely discussed by either country.

Cambodia’s rapid growth in recent decades has been fueled largely by Beijing. In Hun Manet’s remarks earlier this month at the inauguration of a Chinese-funded road, he called China “a first-class partner country,” pointing to achievements like the inauguration of the Chinese-named Angkor Siem Reap Airport and a Phnom Penh ring road named after Xi as evidence of continued strong relations and gratitude, and noted China’s continued ranking as the top investor in Cambodia in 2024.

China is Cambodia’s largest trading partner, surpassing \$15 billion in 2024 and representing nearly 30% of Cambodia’s total trade volume, though greatly in Beijing’s favor.

Beijing also helped fund an expansion of the Ream Naval Base on Cambodia’s southern coast, raising worries it could become a strategic outpost for the Chinese navy in the Gulf of Thailand. Cambodia has repeatedly denied any agreement granting China special privileges or the establishment of a foreign military base.

Also:

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia and China on Wednesday signed 31 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) across various “strategic” fields of cooperation, including security, development, trade, agriculture, education and digital technology, and more.

This came during talks between Malaysian Prime Minister **Anwar Ibrahim** and Chinese President **Xi Jinping**, who is on a three-day state visit to Malaysia at the invitation of **Sultan Ibrahim**, King of Malaysia.

A MoU was signed between both countries’ foreign and defense ministries and a mutual visa exemption agreement for holders of public affairs and ordinary passports was inked.

In the digital arena, two MoUs were signed between the Malaysian Digital Ministry and China’s National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), focusing on collaboration in AI and the digital economy.

The Chinese president is in Malaysia as part of an Asian tour that also includes **Vietnam** and **Cambodia**. It comes amid mounting geopolitical and economic challenges.

62 Taiwanese military members found with Chinese residency permits: Koo

TAIPEI, Taiwan, April 17, (AP): At least 62 active-duty Taiwanese military members have been found holding Chinese residency permits, the self-ruled island’s Defense Ministry said, in the latest revelation of Chinese influence in the Taiwanese armed forces.

Since splitting amid civil war in 1949, China has considered Taiwan a renegade province and increasingly relied on “gray area” tactics to undermine Taiwan’s will to resist on top of its threat of a military invasion.

Such residency permits give the holder the right to reside in China, potentially an option in case of an outbreak of hostilities. China, which does not recognize Taiwan passports, also issues a special document allowing Taiwanese to visit the mainland. Holding such documents is legal in Taiwan, but can affect access to sensitive information. The 62 active-duty service members will be barred from handling intelligence and confidential data, Defense Minister Wellington Koo told a legislative hearing on Wednesday.

Koo said no service members were found to have a Chinese passport or resident identity card, which would denote Chinese citizenship



This image released by the Taiwan Ministry of National Defense shows China’s Shandong aircraft carrier sailing near Taiwan on Monday, March 31. (AP)

and force them to give up their Taiwanese citizenship, which entails visa-free status in many countries and access to Taiwan’s generous welfare benefits. Taiwan has 150,00 active military personnel and another 1.6 million in the reserves.

Taiwan’s population of 23 million includes around 2 million who fled or whose parents or grandparents fled to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists ahead of the takeover of mainland China by Mao Zedong’s

Communists. One of Mao’s key strategies was to infiltrate the Nationalist troops and officer corps with men and women loyal to him.

Many still maintain emotional or financial ties to the mainland, making the formation of a coherent Taiwanese identity a constant challenge, although the vast majority of the population favors the current status of de-facto independence along with a strong defense, aided by close partner the United States.

N.Korea threatens response to US flying long-range bombers over South Korea

SEOUL, South Korea, April 17, (AP): North Korea on Thursday threatened unspecified retaliation after the US flew long-range bombers over South Korea during training with South Korean warplanes, which North Korea views as practice for an attack against it.

The US flew the B-1B bombers Tuesday to train with other US and South Korean fighter jets. South Korea’s Defense Ministry had said the drill was meant to show the two countries’ combined deterrence capability against North Korea’s advancing nuclear program.

The US and South Korea routinely hold joint military exercises that they describe as defensive in nature. But North Korea regards them as an invasion rehearsal and is particularly sensitive to the U.S. mobilization of strategic assets such as long-range bombers, aircraft carriers and nuclear-powered submarines.

“The recent military move of the US and the ROK is an open threat to the security of our state and a grave provocation that raises the military tension in the region to an extreme dangerous level,” an unidentified spokesperson for North Korea’s Defense Ministry said in a statement carried in state media.



South Korean army soldiers patrol along the barbed-wire fence in Paju, South Korea, near the border with North Korea, on Feb 18. (AP)

ROK stands for the Republic of Korea, South Korea’s formal name.

The statement warned that North Korea “will deter by dint of powerful force the US aggressive attempt to permanently fix the malignant instability element in the security environment of the region.”

North Korea often test-launches missiles in response to the US flyovers of B-1B bombers, which is capable of

carrying a huge payload of conventional weapons.

In a development that could further anger North Korea, South Korea’s air force announced later Thursday that it was beginning its large-scale biannual aerial exercise with US forces from Thursday. The air force said the two-week “Freedom Flag” exercise would involve 90 aircraft and other aerial assets from South Korea and the U.S.



Family members and colleagues wait to welcome released prisoners outside the main gate of Insein prison as the head of Myanmar’s military government granted amnesty to thousands of prisoners to mark the country’s traditional New Year on April 17 in Yangon, Myanmar. (AP)

Myanmar’s military leader in Thailand for talks on quake relief

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and the leader of Myanmar’s military government, Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing, visited the Thai capital on Thursday for diplomatic talks widely assumed to focus on efforts to restore peace in war-torn Myanmar.

Authorities said the talks would focus on humanitarian assistance following an earthquake in March that devastated Myanmar, and to promote the extension of a fragile ceasefire to facilitate aid delivery.

Anwar also met with Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who said they discussed issues of bilateral interest, including development along their mutual border and how nations in the region can respond to the new tariff

policies of US President Donald Trump. There was scarce official news of Min Aung Hlaing’s activities on Thursday.

Also:

BANGKOK: The head of Myanmar’s military government granted amnesty to around 4,900 prisoners to mark the country’s traditional new year, state-run media reported Thursday, and an independent watchdog said they included at least 22 political detainees.

At least 19 buses with prisoners aboard left Yangon’s Insein prison and were welcomed outside the gate by excited family members and friends who had been waiting since early morning. (AP)

Tunisia dramatically expands use of politically motivated arrests: report

TUNIS, April 17, (AP): Tunisia has dramatically expanded the use of politically motivated arrests and prosecutions to intimidate and silence critics, according to a Human Rights Watch report released Wednesday.

In what the group describes as a sweeping rollback of freedoms won during Tunisia’s 2011 revolution, authorities in recent years have targeted lawyers, judges, journalists and activists in a crackdown on critics of President Kais Saied.

“Not since the 2011 revolution have Tunisian authorities unleashed such repression,” Bassam Khawaja, the group’s deputy Middle East and North Africa director, said in a statement. “Saied’s government has returned the country to an era of political prisoners, robbing Tunisians of hard-won civil liberties.”

More than 50 people are currently detained on political grounds, Human Rights Watch said, citing a January tally. Of those, 22 are held arbitrarily, while 14 face charges that could carry the death penalty if convicted.

Tunisian authorities have not responded to the allegations detailed in the report, which draws a direct line between the judicial system and actions that Saied has taken to consolidate



Leader of Tunisia’s Islamist Ennahda party House Speaker Rached Ghannouchi, (center), flashes a victory sign as he arrives for questioning at the judicial police headquarters in Tunis, Tunisia, April 1, 2022. (AP)

date power since 2021. At the time, citing the COVID-19 pandemic and domestic political crises, he suspended parliament, rewrote the constitution to consolidate his power and began to exert more control over the judiciary.

“The authorities’ stranglehold on the judiciary, following repeated attacks

on its independence, raises serious concerns about fair trial guarantees for those detained,” the new report says.

Saied was reelected in a landslide last October after a campaign during which his most prominent challengers were imprisoned, kept off the ballot or jailed.

Officials demand answers

Power blackout hits Puerto Rico again

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, April 17, (AP): Crews worked early Thursday to restore power to Puerto Rico after a blackout across the entire island that affected the main international airport, several hospitals and hotels filled with Easter vacationers

The outage that began past noon Wednesday left 1.4 million customers without electricity and 328,000 without water. At least 175,000 customers, or 12%, had power back at the end of the day. Officials expected 90% of customers to have power back within 48 to 72 hours after the outage.

“This is a shame for the people of Puerto Rico that we have a problem of this magnitude,” said Gov. Jennifer González, who cut her weeklong vacation short and returned to Puerto Rico on Wednesday evening.

The blackout snarled traffic, forced hundreds of businesses to close and



Vehicles navigate a dark street in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico, during an island-wide blackout on April 16. (AP)

left those unable to afford generators scrambling to buy ice and candles.

It’s the second islandwide blackout to hit Puerto Rico in less than four months, with the previous one occurring

ring on New Year’s Eve.

“Why on holidays?” griped José Luis Richardson, who did not have a generator and kept cool by splashing water on himself every couple of hours.

The roar of generators and smell of fumes filled the air as a growing number of Puerto Ricans renewed calls for the government to cancel the contracts with Luma Energy, which oversees the transmission and distribution of power, and Genera PR, which oversees generation. González promised to heed those calls.

“That is not under doubt or question,” she said, but added that it’s not a quick process. “It is unacceptable that we have failures of this kind.”

González said a major outage like the one that occurred Wednesday leads to an estimated \$230 million revenue loss daily.

Boat capsizes in Congo, 50 killed

KINSHASA, Congo, April 17, (AP): A boat has capsized after catching fire in northwestern Congo, leaving at least 50 people dead and hundreds missing, a local official said on Wednesday.

Dozens were saved following the accident on the Congo River late on Tuesday night, many of them with bad burns. The search for the missing was underway Wednesday with rescue teams supported by the Red Cross and provincial authorities.

The motorized wooden boat with about 400 passengers caught fire near the town of Mbandaka, Compétent Loyoko, the river commissioner, told The Associated Press. The boat, HB Kongolo, had left the port of Matankumu for the Bolomba territory.

About 100 survivors were taken to an improvised shelter at the Mbandaka town hall. Those with burn injuries were taken to local hospitals.

The incident began while a woman was cooking on board, Loyoko said. Several passengers, including women and children, died after jumping into the water without being able to swim.



Maryland Sen Chris Van Hollen speaks to the press in La Libertad, El Salvador, where he arrived regarding Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a Salvadoran citizen who was living in Maryland and deported to El Salvador by the Trump administration on April 16. (AP)

US senator, El Salvador VP meet

Maryland Sen Chris Van Hollen traveled to El Salvador on Wednesday and met with the country’s vice president to push for the release of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a man who was sent there by the Trump administration in March despite an immigration court order preventing his deportation.

Van Hollen said at a news conference in San Salvador that Vice President Félix Ulloa said his government could not return Abrego Garcia to the United States and declined to allow Van Hollen to visit him in the notorious gang prison where he is being held. (AP)

Kuwait crude rises to \$69.14 pb

KUWAIT CITY, April 17, (KUNA): Kuwait crude oil gained 11 cents Wednesday to reach USD 69.14 per barrel compared with USD 69.03 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Thursday. Brent futures rose USD 1.18 to USD 65.85 pb and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) was USD 1.14 higher to USD 62.47 pb.

Kuwait pledges 150 bpd

OPEC+ countries agree on voluntary oil adjustments

VIENNA, April 17, (KUNA): The OPEC Secretariat received on Wednesday updated compensation plans from Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Kazakhstan and Oman. As agreed during the virtual meeting held by the eight members of the OPEC+ alliance on April 3, the plans include additional volun-

tary adjustments to maintain the balance of the oil market. The updated compensation plans show Iraq pledging 1,934 bpd - the biggest volume for April-June period, followed by Kazakhstan - 1,299 bpd, Russia - 691 bpd, UAE - 387 bpd, Oman - 97 bpd, Kuwait - 150 bpd, and Saudi Arabia - 15 bpd.

Bank steps up human capital investment

Gulf Bank reduces daily hours to support ‘work-life’ balance

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: As part of its ongoing efforts to create an ideal work environment that reflects its deep commitment to employee wellbeing and work-life balance, Gulf Bank has announced a reduction in daily working hours by half an hour. This change will take effect starting May 1, 2025, and stands as a testament to the Bank’s continued dedication to fostering a supportive and balanced workplace.



Salma Al-Hajjaj

On this occasion, Mrs. Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, stated: “We firmly believe that achieving a healthy balance between professional and personal life is a key factor in enhancing employee performance and productivity. This initiative reflects the Bank’s genuine care for the physical and mental wellbeing of its employees.”

Mrs. Al-Hajjaj emphasized that this change will not affect branch operating hours, which will continue as per the existing schedule, ensuring uninterrupted services and a consistently high standard of customer experience.

She added: “Recent studies have shown that shorter working hours contribute to higher job satisfaction and help reduce stress and fatigue—an outcome that Gulf Bank actively strives for, as our employees are the backbone of our success and a core part of our reputation as a leading bank in the Kuwaiti banking sector.”

She further noted that this step reinforces the Bank’s commitment to building a supportive work culture, where every employee feels valued and respected and is given the space to grow both professionally and personally.

“We believe that when employees feel fulfilled and supported, they’re empowered to be more innovative, engaged, and productive. That’s why we remain committed to introducing initiatives that enrich our workplace culture and inspire our

teams to reach their full potential,” she explained. Mrs. Al-Hajjaj concluded: “At Gulf Bank, we take great pride in being a leader in human capital investment—whether through cultivating a positive work environment or through the continuous development of our employees. By partnering with top local and international institutions, we ensure our teams receive world-class training and access to the latest industry knowledge, equipping them to thrive amid the dynamic changes shaping the banking sector both locally and globally.”

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait’s leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the Bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience.

In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, “New Kuwait,” and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The Bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.

KFH participates in ‘Partners in Employing Them’ career fair

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: As part of its leadership in social responsibility and commitment to supporting and empowering people with special needs, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the “Partners in Employing Them” career fair, organized in collaboration with the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA).

The two-day event was held at the Cultural Center of Kuwait University under the patronage and in the presence of Kuwait Minister of Social Affairs, Children and Family Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah.

At KFH’s booth, a dedicated team from the Human Resources Recruitment Department explained the available employment opportunities for people with special needs. KFH is keen to participate in such initiatives to help employ this special segment into the banking sector and encourage them to be part of the workforce.

KFH is committed to creating inclusive employment opportunities and launching various initiatives aimed at helping people with special needs join the job market.

In collaboration with the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (KSH), KFH annually recruits a group of individuals with special needs to train and work across different depart-



Minister Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah at the Kuwait Finance House pavilion.

ments. This initiative, the first of its kind in the Kuwaiti banking sector, recently concluded its fourth edition, underscoring KFH’s leading role in sustainability and its dedication to the principles of inclusion and diversity.

Believing in the importance of supporting all segments of society, KFH

strives to foster talent development and provide the ideal environment for success. Additionally, the Bank is committed to enhancing the skills and capabilities of people with special needs, empowering them to integrate into society and acquire new professional skills.

KFH continues to provide special-

ized services to customers with special needs across various levels, including sign language-trained staff at branches, designated parking spaces, wheelchairs, accessible entrances, ATMs equipped with accessibility features such as audio assistance, and Braille-printed account opening forms and contracts.

Kuwaitis now exempt from visa entry to Kazakhstan

Kazakh FM visits KCCI to boost economic ties with Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) received the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Murat Nurtulu, and his accompanying delegation on Tuesday, April 15.

According to a press release issued by KCCI, the meeting was also attended by the Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Kuwait, Azamat Berdibey.

KCCI welcomed Minister Nurtulu and his delegation, and praised the remarkable economic development and growth Kazakhstan is currently experiencing, particularly since it is rich in natural resources such as oil, gas, minerals, livestock, and agricultural crops.

KCCI stressed the need for concerted efforts to enhance freight transport operations between the two countries, particularly in the livestock sector, which plays a critical role in developing new income sources and boosting national food security.

It expressed its willingness to cooperate with its Kazakh counterpart by renewing the joint cooperation agreement, hosting Kazakh economic delegations, and holding bilateral meetings with the Kuwaiti business sector.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Berdibey



KCCI hosts Kazakh foreign minister and ambassador.

thanked KCCI for the warm welcome, affirming that this visit reflects the determination of both friendly nations to strengthen their economic relations.

He highlighted that Kazakhstan possesses significant trade potential due to its strategic geographical location as a link between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Russia, and China.

Ambassador Berdibey explained that 85 percent of goods transported from

East Asian countries to Africa and Europe pass through Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan has developed legislation and offers incentives in line with international standards to encourage investment, such as tax exemptions, the provision of land at low prices, and the development of necessary infrastructure.

He highlighted that the Kazakh government has made significant strides in improving the business environment by digitizing e-government services,

achieving a 95 percent implementation rate.

Ambassador Berdibey encouraged the Kuwaiti business sector to invest in Kazakhstan in several sectors, including tourism, agriculture and food processing, the digital economy, communications and information systems, logistics services, and more.

He stated that Kuwaiti citizens are now exempt from the visa requirement to enter Kazakhstan.

Boursa Kuwait closes higher

General index gains 0.71%

KUWAIT CITY, April 17, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Thursday’s trading session on a positive note, with the general index climbing 55.64 points, or 0.71%, to settle at 7,868.98 points. A total of 236.8 million shares changed hands through 20,093 transactions, with a trading value of KD 86 million (approximately \$263.16 million).

The Main Market Index posted a strong performance, rising 74.70

points, or 1.05%, to reach 7,220 points. Trading volume hit 158.5 million shares via 9,141 transactions, valued at KD 22.4 million (around \$68.5 million).

Meanwhile, the Premier Market Index gained 53.63 points, or 0.64%, closing at 8,419.61 points. It saw 168.2 million shares traded through 10,952 deals, worth KD 63.5 million (about \$194.3 million).

The Main 50 Index also ended in the green, up 59.38 points, or 0.85%, to close at 7,013.90 points, with 138 million shares traded in 7,678 transactions, totaling KD 20.5 million (around \$62.7 million).

Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman report strong profit growth

GCC Q4-2024 profits decline 5% quarter-on-quarter

By Kamco Invest

Quarterly net profits reported by companies listed on GCC exchanges continued to report a sequential decline and reached a three-quarter low level during Q4-2024. Aggregate profits during the quarter declined by 5.0% q-o-q to reach USD 57.3 Bn after a broad-based decline in profits across most exchanges more than offset a growth in profits reported by companies listed on Dubai and Abu Dhabi. In terms of y-o-y trend, however, aggregate profits during the quarter witnessed a marginal growth of 2.0% after healthy growth in profits for most exchanges was partially offset by a decline in aggregate profits for companies listed on the Abu Dhabi exchange.

At the country level, profits growth was highest for companies listed on the Oman exchange, registering a y-o-y increase of 83.4% during Q4-2024 followed by Bahrain and Kuwait with profit growth of 43.2% and 37.1%, respectively. Saudi-listed companies posted a marginal y-o-y profit growth of 3.1%, while the growth registered by corporates in Dubai and Qatari were around 20%.

In terms of sector performance, the biggest y-o-y decline was reported by companies in the Energy sector with aggregate profits down by 16.6% or USD 5.1 Bn to reach USD 25.7 Bn in Q4-2024. The Utilities sector also affected aggregate profit at the GCC level with an aggregate net loss of USD 1.3 Bn for the sector during Q4-2024 as compared to a profit of USD 338.9 Mn during Q4-2023. The loss mainly reflected a bigger net loss reported by Saudi Electricity Co. during Q4-2024 at USD 2.0 Bn vs. a net loss of USD 539.3 Mn during Q4-2024. The GCC F&B sector recorded the third-biggest y-o-y drop in net profits by 12.0% or USD 0.6 Bn during Q4-2024 reaching USD 4.2 Bn as compared to USD 4.7 Bn during Q4-2023. On the other hand, the GCC Telecom sector recorded the biggest absolute y-o-y profit growth during Q4-2024 with an increase of 171.0% or USD 3.4 Bn to reach USD 5.3 Bn mainly reflecting the extraordinary profits recorded by Saudi Telecom Co. Banks also showed higher y-o-y profits during Q4-2024 registering an increase of 16.2% or USD 2.0 Bn to reach USD 14.4 Bn.

In terms of full year performance, aggregate net profits reported by GCC-listed companies declined for the second straight year to reach USD 241.1 Bn in 2024, registering a decline of USD 3.4 Bn or 1.4% as compared to USD 244.4 Bn in 2023. The decline reflected mixed trend at the country level with aggregates for Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, Oman and Bahrain showing a decline, partially offset by a growth in profits recorded for Dubai, Qatar and Kuwaiti-listed companies.

In terms of sector performance, a decline in profits mainly for the Energy, Utilities and F&B sectors more than offset an increase in profits for most sectors on the exchange. Net profits for the Energy sector was affected by a steep decline in profits for the regional exploration and production companies, reflecting a decline in volume as well as prices of crude oil, in addition to lower refining margins. This included companies like Saudi Aramco with a profit decline of USD 15.7 Bn or 13.0% to reach USD 105.0 Bn as well as Oman’s OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP) that recorded a profit decline of 48.2% during 2024.

On the other hand, net profits for the GCC Banking sector showed the biggest abso-

lute increase of USD 5.6 Bn or 10.3% to reach a record high net profit of USD 60.1 Bn during 2024 followed by Telecom and Materials sectors with profit growth of USD 3.5 Bn and USD 1.9 Bn, respectively. Within the Banking sector, the growth in profits was broadbased with all country aggregates showing growth during 2024, barring Bahraini banks that registered a decline in profits. Net profits for banks listed in Oman showed the biggest growth of 15.2% during the year to reach USD 1.4 Bn closely followed by banks in Abu Dhabi with a profit growth of 15.1% to reach USD 10.2 Bn. Banks in Saudi Arabia and Dubai also reported double-digit net profit growth of 13.8% and 11.1%, respectively. In the Telecom sector, net profit growth was led by companies listed in Saudi Arabia, specifically STC, which registered a profit growth of 85.7% to reach USD 6.6 Bn reflecting gain from sale of asset during the year. Net profits for Mobily also surged 39.2% during the year while profits for Dubai-based telco, du, grew by 49.1% to reach USD 677.3 Mn during 2024.

Kuwait

Boursa Kuwait-listed companies reported a y-o-y net profit growth of 37.1% during Q4-2024 that reached USD 2.3 Bn compared to USD 1.7 Bn during Q4-2023. In terms of FY-2024 profits, Boursa Kuwait listed companies reported a gain of 7.1% during the year with profits reaching USD 9.1 as compared to USD 8.5 Bn during FY-2023. The biggest impact on aggregate earnings during the year came from the Banking sector which showed a 5.4% growth in profits that reached USD 5.4 Bn in FY-2024 from USD 5.1 Bn in FY-2023. Diversified Financials, Capital Goods and Real Estate sectors also contributed to earnings growth during the year.

Within the Banking sector, NBK reported a net profit of USD 2.0 Bn for FY-2024 up by 7.0% vs. USD 1.8 Bn in FY-2023 mainly led by higher net operating income and lower provision for impairment losses, partly offset by higher operating expenses. CBK reported a net profit of USD 512.2 Bn for FY-2024 up by 41.4% vs. USD 361.6 Mn in FY-2023 mainly due to higher net interest income and higher loan loss recoveries during the year resulting from a legal verdict partially offset by higher operating expenses. Meanwhile, Gulf Bank reported a net profit of USD 196.1 Mn during FY-2024 as compared to a profit of USD 231.7 Mn during FY-2023, down by 15.5%. The decrease was primarily caused by higher provisions and impairment losses. However, net profit for the bank increased by 14.8% during Q4-2024 to USD 64.9 Mn compared to USD 56.6 Mn in Q4-2023.

Aggregate profits for the Telecom sector declined by 10.0% y-o-y in FY-2024 to reach USD 940.0 Mn down from USD 1.0 Bn in FY-2023. Within the sector, net profits reported by Ooredoo reached USD 161.0 Mn during FY-2024 against a profit of USD 236.9 Mn in FY-2023. The decrease in the net income is mainly due to a one-off gain related to a regulatory tariff court case that the telco won against Kuwait’s ministry of communication resulting in a gain of KWD 43.8 Mn in Q1-2023. Excluding the impact of the above adjustment, the net profit would be higher by 70% led by the improved operating revenues. Similarly, Zain posted a decline of 4.0% in its yearly net profit that reached USD 676.8 Mn in FY-2024 compared to USD 701.0 Mn during FY-2023.

Kuwait commercial real estate sees zero activity in early April

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Commercial real estate was notably absent from real estate trading activity in Kuwait during the first 10 days of April, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Weekly statistical reports on real estate trading activity issued by the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Departments recorded a total of 137 real estate transactions, amounting to approximately KD 81.4 million.

The reports confirmed a complete absence of activity in the commercial real estate sector, including showrooms, warehouses, banks, and shops, during the period. In contrast, there was a noticeable increase in transactions involving residential,

investment, craft, and coastal real estate.

Residential real estate accounted for 76 percent of the total transactions (104 deals), with a combined value of KD 46.4 million, representing 57 percent of the overall trading volume.

Real estate trading during the period from April 2–10 included 27 investment property transactions, representing 19.7 percent of the total deals, with a trading value of KD 25.7 million, equivalent to 31.6 percent of the total trading volume.

Industrial real estate recorded four transactions valued at KD 4.9 million, while the coastal strip saw two deals worth KD 4.4 million.

Japan’s exports rise 3.9%

Kuwait’s trade surplus with Japan drops 80.3% in March

TOKYO, April 17, (KUNA): Kuwait’s trade surplus with Japan plunged 80.3 percent from a year earlier to JPY 20.9 billion (USD 146 million) in March, down for the second straight month due to slow exports, government data showed Thursday.

However, Kuwait posted black ink with Japan for 17 years and two months, as exports still outpaced imports in value, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report.

Overall exports from Kuwait to Japan plummeted 55.2 percent year-on-year to JPY 57.5 billion (USD 403 million), down for the second month in a row. Imports from Japan surged 64.8 percent to 36.6 billion (USD 256 million), up for the fourth consecutive month.

Middle East’s trade surplus with Japan shrank 29.0 percent to JPY 566.2 billion (USD 4.0 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region sliding 14.8 percent from a year earlier. Crude

oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which made up 94.1 percent of the region’s total exports to Japan, declined 16.3 percent. The region’s overall imports from Japan grew 17.1 percent on demand for automobiles and motors.

The world’s third-biggest economy logged a global trade surplus of JPY 544.1 billion (USD 3.8 billion) in March for the second straight month. Exports increased 3.9 percent from the year before, thanks to sales of vehicles, chip-making equipment and non-ferrous metal. Imports rose 2.0 percent chiefly due to higher bills for pharmaceutical products, communication devices such as smartphones, and clothes.

China remained Japan’s biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors.

‘Major leap towards achieving digital transformation’

Zain launches ‘Bede’ Fintech platform in Sudan



Officials pose for group photo after the launch.



BEDE in Sudan

PORT SUDAN/KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Zain Fintech, the financial services arm of Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, has launched the ‘Bede’ Digital Wallet in Sudan.

The safe and secure platform will empower Zain customers in Sudan to carry out a wide range of financial transactions directly via their mobile phones, without the need for a traditional bank account or card. Significantly, the service is designed to work across different phone types, including basic feature and smart phones, catering for the needs and requirements of the Sudanese community.

The initial launch phase of the service includes core transactions such as money transfers, airtime top-ups, bill payments, merchant purchases, and cash deposits and withdrawals through a broad network of certified agents operating across neighborhoods and market locations.

The launch ceremony held in Port Sudan was attended by

- Sudan is the Group’s 2nd key market to introduce ‘Bede’, reflecting a vital part of Zain’s ‘4WARD’ strategy in driving financial inclusion and contributing to the evolution of the region’s digital ecosystem
- Service enables a wide range of financial transactions for all Zain Sudan customers on any type of phone without the need for a bank account
- Bede stems from Arabic meaning of “in my hand”, along with the slogan “When you get more, you do more”

representatives of the Sovereign Council, federal and state ministries, ambassadors, Zain management as well as industry specialists, banking partners, and media representatives.

Malek Hammoud, Zain Group Chief Investment and Digital Officer commented, “The launch of ‘Bede’ marks a major leap towards achieving digital transformation, enhancing financial inclusion, and empowering families, women and youth in Sudan. The wallet’s role is to simplify everyday financial interactions and support citizens’ daily lives. Bede has already been successfully deployed in Bahrain and the

dynamic platform has gained a strong reputation for its efficiency, ease of use, and high reliability. We expect to replicate this performance in Sudan and other Zain markets.”

Hammoud continued, “Bede aims to allow everything to be made in the palm of one’s hand, catering to consumers’ lifestyles and emerging demands beyond basic telecom services. The introduction of Bede in Sudan represents a major step in Zain’s strategic ‘4WARD-Progress with Purpose’ aspirations to expand its regional leadership in the fintech arena supported by our footprint, customer base, and leading technologies.”

The rollout of Bede in Sudan is set to occur in three phases. The first involves the initial offer of the service, while the second phase incorporates its integration with additional banks in Sudan and the addition of services including electricity purchases and access to various government transactions. The third phase will introduce banking services, international remittance services, savings and financing products, and full interoperability with all banks operating in Sudan.

Bede operates under robust strategic partnerships and in full alignment with the policies of the Central Bank of Sudan, which regulates and supervises digital wallet activities through clear legal frameworks and governance policies. Several banks oversee the management of Bede’s trust accounts, ensuring accurate settlements and transparent financial reporting.

Bede complies with national standards for anti-money laundering, anti-corruption, customer data protection, and financial transparency, with the wallet also offering a secure and integrated digital financial experience that prioritizes data security and user privacy.

Exemption of smartphones & electronic devices from Chinese tariffs brings calm to tech market

US move said to be strategic

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The recent strategic move of America to exempt smartphones and electronic devices from Chinese tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump on technology goods has brought calm and stability to the technology market in general.

It is expected that the withdrawal of these tariffs will have a positive impact on investors in the technology sector.

Two economic experts told the newspaper that the United States’ decision to withdraw these exorbitant tariffs was due to pressure from the American people, who are the primary beneficiaries of this move, especially since the prices of smartphones and computer equipment have increased due to Trump’s escalatory decisions.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Future Foresight Center for Consulting and Studies and economic expert Qais Al-Shatti confirmed that the recent US move to exempt China from additional tariffs on smartphones and computers came out of fear of negative repercussions for the American mobile phone industry and all other technological means.

He pointed out “this is true since labor costs in China are much lower than those in the US. Therefore, the US should not be overly optimistic, as this step does not appear to be a preliminary step toward flexibility, as it is rather a regression in calculations.”

He indicated that while the US economy is the strongest in the world, China is also one of the largest economies and a force to be reckoned with.

He said the current US trade war has prompted some countries to side with US economic policies and others with China, especially since the countries that will be harmed by the increase in US tariffs will deal with the US in kind. “This will disrupt global economic activity, including transportation and shipping,” he warned.

He added the US agenda is currently clear in its efforts to consolidate its economic power, to show the world that it is

the single greatest power. “It is amending and imposing new agreements. These policies are not in the world’s interest,” he asserted.

In light of the decline in oil prices and a significant economic slowdown, he called on Kuwait and the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to adopt a hedging policy, especially since they import at least 90 percent of their needs. “This requires redrawing the economic policies of the Gulf countries to enable them to withstand any current or future economic challenges, considering the current international trade war crisis will not be the last,” he added.

Economic expert and Vice President of the Electronic Media Union Abdullah Al-Gharib hopes that the United States will amend its economic policy, which increased tariffs on countries, particularly China.

He pointed out that the recent move to exempt China from increased tariffs on technology products, including electronic devices and mobile phones, aims to protect the American people from rising prices of technology products manufactured in the United States; given that the tariff increase imposed by Trump was 145 percent on Chinese products and 10 percent on products from other countries.

He said such exaggerated tariffs have strongly shaken global markets, particularly the stock market, particularly since the largest global technology companies have strong trading activity.

He stated that the US imports massive quantities of smartphones from China, valued at more than \$40 billion in 2024. He added the US itself imports computer technology and other devices from China, estimated at \$36 billion in 2024.

He asserted that the US-China economic war, if it continues, will disrupt the global economy, considering China is currently consulting with the Asian Tigers and European Union countries to strike similar blows to US economic policies.

He explained that developing countries will bear the brunt of the conflict between the major powers, emphasizing the importance of the Kuwaiti government taking all the necessary measures to protect its economy by relying on the electronics and technology industry through cooperation with the private sector, which possesses capital.

He believes “this will boost the performance of the local economy, so that it does not remain dependent on a single-income commodity indefinitely.”

Nikkei 225 gained 1.3%

Asian shares mostly gain despite anxiety over Trump’s trade war

TOKYO, April 17, (AP): Asian shares mostly rose Thursday, despite the continued fretting over President Donald Trump’s trade war, with all eyes on negotiations that just began between the administration and Japan.

Japan’s benchmark Nikkei 225 gained 1.3% to 34,343.11 in afternoon trading.

Honda stock price jumped 2.1% after the Japanese automaker said it plans to move its production of the five-door Civic hybrid electric vehicles for the U.S. market from Japan to the company’s plant in Indiana.

Honda Motor Co. didn’t say the move was in response to Trump’s tariff policies but stressed it moves production to where there is demand. Production of the U.S.-bound five-door Civic HEV began at the Yorii plant outside Tokyo in February. So far 3,000 vehicles have been produced there for the U.S. market.

Trump joined Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick in the talks with the Japanese delegation in Washington. “Hopefully something can be worked out which is good (GREAT!) for Japan and the USA!” Trump wrote in a social media post ahead of the

meeting. Australia’s S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.7% to 7,813.00. South Korea’s Kospi edged up 1.0% to 2,471.51. Hong Kong’s Hang Seng added 1.0% to 21,271.39, while the Shanghai Composite was little changed, slipping less than 0.1% to 3,274.68.

U.S. stocks fell Wednesday after Nvidia warned new restrictions on exports to China will chisel billions of dollars off its results. The S&P 500 sank 2.2% after falling as much as 3.3% earlier. Such an amount would have vied for one of its worst losses in years before the historic, chaotic swings that have upended Wall Street in recent weeks.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 699 points, or 1.7%, and the Nasdaq composite sank a market-leading 3.1%.

Many investors are bracing for a possible recession because of Trump’s tariffs, which he has said he hopes will bring manufacturing jobs back to the United States and trim how much more it imports from other countries than it exports. A survey of global fund managers by Bank of America found expectations for recession are at the fourth-highest level in the last 20 years.



Dealers watch computer monitors near the screens showing the Korea Composite Stock Price Index (KOSPI) and the foreign exchange rate between U.S. dollar and South Korean won at a dealing room of Hana Bank in Seoul, South Korea, Thursday, April 17, 2025. (AP)

Trump joins tariff talks with Japan as US seeks deals amid trade wars

WASHINGTON, April 17, (AP): US President Donald Trump on Wednesday inserted himself directly into trade talks with Japanese officials, a sign of the high stakes for the United States after its tariffs rattled the economy and caused the administration to assure the public that it would quickly reach deals.

The Republican president attended the meeting alongside Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, top economic advisers with a central role in his trade and tariff policies.

“Hopefully something can be worked out which is good (GREAT!) for Japan and the USA!” Trump wrote in a social media post ahead of the meeting.

Afterward, he posted: “A Great Honor to have just met with the Japanese Delegation on Trade. Big Progress!”

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba told reporters Thursday in Tokyo that his chief trade negotiator, Ryosei Akazawa, told him from Washington that the talks were “very candid and constructive.”

“Of course the talks are not easy, but



Japan's chief trade negotiator and Economic Revitalization Minister Ryosei Akazawa, center, speaks to reporters before this departure for the U.S., at Haneda airport in Tokyo, Wednesday, April 16, 2025. (AP)

President Trump stated his intention to make this negotiation a top priority,” Ishiba said. “I believe we had talks that lead to a next step.”

Ishiba said he will closely watch

how ministerial talks go and plans to visit Washington to meet with Trump at an appropriate time.

Trump’s choice to get directly involved in negotiations points to his de-

sire to quickly finalize a slew of trade deals as China is pursuing its own set of agreements. It’s an open test of Trump’s reputation as a dealmaker as countries around the world seek to limit the potential damage unleashed by his import taxes.

The sweeping tariffs that Trump announced on April 2 triggered panic in the financial markets and generated recession fears, causing the U.S. president to quickly put a partial 90-day hold on the import taxes and increase his already steep tariffs against China to as much as 145%.

The pause temporarily spared Japan from 24% across-the-board tariffs, but there continues to be a 10% baseline tariff and a 25% tax on imported cars, auto parts, steel and aluminum exports.

With Japan charging an average tax rate of 1.9% on other countries’ goods and having a longstanding alliance with the U.S., the talks on Wednesday are a crucial indicator of whether the Trump administration can achieve a meaningful deal that reassures the markets, American voters and foreign allies.

ECB cuts interest rates for the 7th time as global trade tensions escalate

FRANKFURT, Germany, April 17, (AP): The European Central Bank cut interest rates Thursday for the seventh time to counter worries about economic growth fueled by President Donald Trump’s tariff onslaught.

The bank’s move should support economic activity in the 20 countries that use the euro currency by making credit more affordable for consumers and businesses.

ECB President Christine Lagarde said at a post-decision news conference that “the major escalation in global trade tensions and the associated uncertainty will likely lower euro area growth by dampening exports.”

“And it may drag down investment and consumption,” she said.

The bank’s rate-setting council decided at a meeting in Frankfurt to lower its benchmark rate by a quarter percentage point to 2.25%. The bank has

been steadily cutting rates after raising them sharply to combat an outbreak of inflation from 2022 to 2023.

Now that inflation has fallen, growth worries have taken center stage. The economy in the 20 countries that use the euro grew a modest 0.2% in the last three months of 2024. Inflation was 2.2% in March, close to the bank’s target of 2%.

The cut was widely expected by analysts given the sudden shadow cast over the eurozone’s growth outlook by Trump’s April 2 announcement of unexpectedly high tariffs, or import tax, on goods from other countries starting at 10% and ranging as high as 49%. The European Union faces a 20% tariff.

At the bank’s last meeting on March 6, Lagarde had raised the possibility of an upcoming “pause” in the bank’s series of rate cuts. But that option was practically eliminated by Trump’s announcement.

The bank’s benchmark steers rates throughout the

economy. Lower interest rates make it less expensive to borrow money and buy goods ranging from homes to new factory equipment. That supports spending, business investment and hiring.

Trump has suspended the tariffs for 90 days, but the possibility of the 20% tariff rate he has proposed for Europe left economists and policymakers concerned that the higher costs will weigh on business activity - and lead to slower growth or even a recession if he carries through. The U.S. is Europe’s largest trade partner with some 4.4 billion euros (\$5 billion) in goods and services crossing the Atlantic every day in both directions.

Uncertainty is another factor that could slow the economy since Trump’s pause for negotiations leaves it unclear where the tariff rate will actually settle. Businesses may hold off on making decisions if they don’t know what their costs will be.

What's On



13th AAM Medical Camp provides free healthcare services to expatriates.



AAM hosts 13th Free Medical Camp in Kuwait with over 500 participants

The Anti Alcoholism Movement (AAM), a spiritual wing of the St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Maha Edavaka, Kuwait, successfully organized its 13th Free Medical Camp on Friday, 4th April 2024, from 8 AM to 2 PM at the Indian Central School, Abbassiya.

The event was held in collaboration with the Kuwait Medical Association, Indian Doctors Forum (IDF), Indian Dentists' Alliance Kuwait (IDAK) and Kuwait Heart Foundation. The camp was officially inaugurated by Dr. Sameer Humad, President of the Indian Doctors Forum, who highlighted the importance of serving the underprivileged in the community and reaffirmed IDF's continued support for AAM's future initiatives.

In his keynote address, Rev. Fr. Dr. Biju George Parakkal, Vicar, Kuwait St. Gregorios Maha Edavaka, extended his heartfelt congratulations to the doctors, nurses, and volunteers for the success of the event.

Felicitations were offered by Dr. Rayavaram Raghunandan, Secretary, Community Services - IDF, Dr. Prasanthy Sreejith, Chair, Community Welfare Committee - IDAK, Rev. Fr. Mathew Thomas, Associate Vicar, Maha Edavaka, Mr. Samuel Kattoorkaleeckal, Lay Vice President, AAM, Mr. Deepak Alex Panicker, Maha Edavaka Trustee, Mr.

Jacob Roy, Maha Edavaka Secretary.

Mr. Ebey Samuel, Medical Camp Coordinator for AAM, warmly welcomed the participating medical professionals, while Mr. Roy N.K., Secretary of AAM, extended sincere gratitude to IDF, IDAK, the Kuwait Heart Foundation, and all doctors, nurses, and volunteers whose efforts ensured the event's success.

Over 40 doctors from various specialties, including General Medicine, Pediatrics, Gynecology, Oncology, Dentistry, Dermatology, Cardiology, Orthopedics, ENT, Ophthalmology, and Gastroenterology were joined by 35 nurses and 35 AAM volunteers to provide free healthcare services. The camp offered a range of diagnostic tests such as blood sugar, cholesterol, blood pressure, ECG, ultrasound scans, dental checkups, and eye exams.

The camp drew participation from over 500 individuals of different nationalities. The overwhelming success of the 2025 AAM Medical Camp reaffirmed AAM's strong commitment to social responsibility and its ongoing mission to support and uplift the underprivileged members of the expatriate community.

Large turnout for health screenings

IDAK & Partners conduct successful medical and dental screening camp



KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The Indian Dentists Alliance in Kuwait (IDAK), along with IDF and Kuwait Heart Foundation, collaborated with the Anti Alcoholism Movement (AAM), an affiliation of St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox Indian church, Kuwait to conduct a medical and dental screening camp on Friday, 4th April 2025.

Rev. Dr. Biju George Palackal, visionary of the AAM mission was present for the event and inaugurated the event by lighting the lamp.

The well organised camp, conducted at Indian Central School, Jleeb Al Shuyoukh, witnessed a large number of people showing up to get themselves screened. IDAK's team of doctors, led by Dr. Prashanth R, CWC Chair and Dr. Ajay Vazhiyodan, CWC Co-Chair and supported by Dr. Valentina Fernandez,

Dr. Jubin George and Dr. Gagandeep Singh, successfully carried out the dental screening.

During the felicitation speech, Dr. Prashanth R addressed the audience, drawing attention towards April being the month of Oral Cancer Awareness. She emphasized the importance of not ignoring any abnormal lesions in the oral cavity, undergoing oral cancer screening and maintaining healthy lifestyle.

Furthermore, the IDAK CWC distributed dental kits comprising of oral health guide, oral handbook, tooth brush and toothpaste to all the attendees.

IDAK, in being committed to serving its social responsibility, expresses its gratitude to AAM for the invitation, camp coordinator Mr. Ebey Samuel for the professional planning and execution of the event.



Photos during the screening camp

Distinguished dignitaries attend KMWA's Annual Eid Get-Together

KMWA hosts successful Eid Get-Together '25 in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The Karnataka Muslim Welfare Association (KMWA) – Kuwait successfully hosted its flagship annual event, Eid Get-Together 2025, on Friday, April 11th, at Rajdhani Palace Restaurant, Khaitan. The gathering witnessed a vibrant turnout of community members and leaders, fostering a spirit of unity, communal harmony, spiritual reflection, and cultural exchange.

The event was honoured by the gracious presence of distinguished dignitaries and Prominent Leaders like the Presidents, General Secretaries and other Office Bearers from various Karnataka-based Associations in Kuwait, representing GSB Sabha Kuwait, Mogaveera Association Kuwait, Tulu Koota Kuwait, KCWA, Billava Sangha, Bantara Sangha Kuwait and Kuwait Kannada Koota etc.

These dignitaries commended KMWA's ongoing efforts to promote inter-community harmony and highlighted Eid as a festival symbolizing peace, compassion, and coexistence.

The keynote address was delivered by Br. B.S. Sharafuddin, a renowned speaker, who eloquently spoke on the essence of Eid and the importance of communal unity. His thought-provoking message resonated deeply with the audience.

The event featured a spiritually uplifting Qur'an recitation and translation by Br. Atheeq Bayazeed, who also conducted an engaging and informative quiz, energizing the gathering with interactive participation.

A standout feature of the evening was the Islamic Model Making Competition for children, which showcased young talents and creativity, while deepening awareness of Islamic history. This initiative, meticulously coordinated by the KMWA Ladies Wing, received heartfelt appreciation for its success and impact.

The smooth and dynamic execution of the event reflected the hard work and dedication of the KMWA Core Team and volunteers who contributed selflessly to the success of the event.

In his concluding address, KMWA President Mr. Jameel Ahmed extended a warm vote of thanks to all dignitaries, participants, and the larger community. He emphasized, "Eid is a celebration of togetherness, and unity in diversity remains our greatest strength."

The evening concluded with a delightful community dinner, heartfelt conversations, and strengthened bonds of brotherhood – perfectly capturing the spirit of Eid.

KMWA, a subsidiary and regional unit of IMA Kuwait which is a prominent Indian socio-religious organization operating under the patronage of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Kuwait, continues to serve expatriates by organizing events that enhance their spiritual and social well-being. It looks forward to hosting more impactful programs in the future, catering to the needs of the Indian expatriate community in Kuwait.



Photos during the Eid Get-Together.

TEF hosts 3rd Technical Seminar & Curtain Raiser for TICE & EEA-2025

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The Tamilnadu Engineers Forum (TEF) successfully hosted its 3rd Technical Seminar and Curtain Raiser for the much-anticipated 16th Technological Innovations Conference and Exposition (TICE) and the 9th Engineering Excellence Awards (EEA) at the Al Hashemi Grand Ballroom, Radisson Blu Hotel. The event brought together industry leaders and technical experts in a dynamic session aimed at setting the stage for one of the most significant engineering and energy events of the year.

The evening began with the Tamil anthem "Tamil Thai Vaazhu," followed by a safety moment and a Thirukkural reading by Engineers Rajnarayanan and Suresh Anand. The cordial welcome address by Eng. Middleton set the tone for the evening, emphasizing knowledge-sharing and meaningful dialogues.

Eng. Maniyarasu introduced the first speaker of the evening, Mr. Konstantin Makarov, MEA Process Product Manager from HACH, USA. Mr. Makarov's session on "Industrial Water Cycles & Hach Online Equipment" highlighted innovative solutions for optimizing water usage across various industrial applications.

At 7:00 PM, the official curtain raiser event commenced with the playing of both the Kuwait and Indian national anthems. The President of TEF, Eng. Raja, and General Secretary Eng. Balasubramanian officially welcomed distinguished

guests with bouquets. Eng. Raja then delivered the Presidential Address, reiterating TEF's commitment to advancing engineering excellence and promoting sustainable practices.

The event was further graced by the presence of Mr. Salem Al Ajmi, former consultant to the H.E. Minister of MEW and CEO of the Sustainability Institute and Sustainable Solutions Co., as well as several other esteemed guests of honor, including Mr. Saleh Nasser Al Jateli, Manager - Technical Services, MAA Refinery; Mr. Ahmad Ismail Ali Mohd Dashti, Manager - Maintenance, MAA Refinery; and Mr. Sabah Al Shammari, Director, Golden Palm.

A special moment followed as Joint Secretary Eng. Periyasamy presented the Journey of TICE & EEA. Mr. Al Ajmi officiated the release of the TICE & EEA-2025 brochures, marking the official countdown to the event, which is set to take place on October 9, 2025, at the Al Barakka Ballroom, Crowne Plaza.

In his compelling keynote address, Mr. Al Ajmi discussed the importance of green energy in shaping the future and praised TEF for selecting the timely theme of "The Rise of Green Engineering: Advancing Sustainability Through Technology."

The event also featured the honoring of distinguished guests with shawls, garlands, and mementos by the TEF committee members. The ceremony was skill-

fully anchored by Eng. Gen Prasanna and Eng. Middleton.

The second technical seminar, titled "Role of Over-Pressure Protection Devices in Process Optimization," was delivered by Mr. Irfan Shaikh, Managing Director, and Mr. Neerav Vadagama, Product Manager from Groth & CDC Corporation. Their session provided valuable insights into improving operational safety and efficiency using advanced pressure management technologies. Eng. Vadivelan introduced the speakers before the session.

An engaging Q&A session followed, providing the attendees with the opportunity to interact with the experts, enriching their understanding of the topics discussed.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks from Eng. Subbu, followed by a networking dinner that encouraged collaboration and connection among professionals.

The entire event was anchored by Eng. Anandraj and Eng. Senthilkumar, ensuring a smooth and engaging experience for all attendees.

As TEF looks forward to the TICE & EEA-2025, the evening was a testament to the forum's commitment to innovation, sustainability, and the continued advancement of engineering excellence.



Photos during the event.

Obituary

‘Her talent and passion shaped generations’

Nora Aunor, one of Philippines’ biggest stars, dies at 71

MANILA, Philippines, April 17, (AP): Nora Aunor, who became one of the biggest stars of Philippine cinema during a career that spanned seven decades, has died.

Aunor died Wednesday, according to social media posts from her children. She was 71. No further details on the cause or place of her death were immediately given.

Filipina actor Lotlot de León said on Instagram that her mother “touched generations with her unmatched talent, grace, and passion for the craft. Her voice, presence, and artistry shaped a legacy that will never fade.”

De León said funeral plans and other details will be shared later.

Aunor, born Nora Cabaltera Villamayor to an impoverished family in eastern Camarines Sur province, sold water in a train station in her hometown in her youth.

She first gained fame in her teens as a singer in the 1960s before moving on to movies. She amassed more than 200 credits in film and television that included many classics of Philippine cinema, and won dozens of acting awards.

Memorable roles included 1976’s “Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos” (“Three Years Without God”), 1984’s “Bulaklak sa City Jail” (“Flowers of the City Jail”) and 1995’s “The Flor Contemplacion Story.”

She swept best actress awards in the country for her performance in 1990’s “Andrea, Paano ba ang Maging Isang Ina?” (“Andrea, What is It Like to be a Mother?”) and won best actress at the Asian Film Awards for her portrayal of a midwife in 2012’s “Thy Womb.”

Aunor was still acting as recently as last year, starring in the film “Mananambal” (“The Healer”) and appear-

ing on the TV series “Lilet Matias, Attorney-at-Law.”

Aunor was named a National Artist for Film and Broadcast Arts - the country’s biggest honor for actors - in 2022. In 2014, then-President Benigno Aquino III had denied her the honor because of a previous drug arrest in the U.S., provoking broad outcry.

Aunor’s lawyer said the 2005 arrest at the Los Angeles airport came because of a pipe found in a bag she did not pack, noting she was traveling with four assistants at the time. The charges were dropped in 2007 after she completed a diversion program, her lawyer said in 2014.

Aunor was married to actor Christopher de León from 1975 until 1996.

She is survived by their children Lotlet, Ian, Matet, Kiko and Kenneth de León.



Actress Nora Aunor appears during the photo call for the film ‘Sinapupunan’ (Thy Womb) at the 69th edition of the Venice Film Festival in Venice, Italy, on Sept. 6, 2012. (AP)

People

Hospital stay?

9 jurors picked in Weinstein retrial

NEW YORK, April 17, (AP): Nine jurors were picked Wednesday on the second day of jury selection in **Harvey Weinstein’s** #MeToo rape retrial.

At the same time, the disgraced movie mogul’s lawyers asked a judge to allow him to spend his nights at a New York City hospital instead of jail for the duration of the trial, citing his many health issues including cancer and problems walking that require the use of a wheelchair to get in and out of court.

The jurors - five women and four men - were picked from a group of 25 prospective jurors who spent the past two days answering questions from prosecutors and Weinstein’s lawyers to gauge their ability to be impartial. They are the first jurors picked after none were chosen on Tuesday.

Jury selection will resume Thursday with a fresh group of about 80 prospective jurors to begin the screening process anew. Judge Curtis Farber has said a total of 12 jurors and six alternates will be picked.

The prosecution and defense each used seven of their allotted 15 peremptory challenges to reject potential jurors on Wednesday, leaving eight per side.

Justice

Two other candidates were removed from consideration by the judge. One had expressed dismay about the justice system and complained that wealthy people avoid culpability for wrongdoing. Another initially indicated he could be fair but then returned to the courtroom and said he didn’t think he could.

“Defense counsel asked my reaction to the defendant’s name, and the first word that came to mind was negative,” said the man, who works as an investment banker. “And I apologize, but I feel a great sense of responsibility as a citizen, and I take this stuff seriously.”

Weinstein, 73, has pleaded not guilty and denies raping or sexually assaulting anyone.

He leaned back in his wheelchair, peering at prospective jurors as they answered questions that touched on everything from their impressions of #MeToo - a movement spawned by scores of allegations in 2017 against the ex-studio boss - to what they like to do in their spare time.

An accounting consultant rejected by the prosecution said he had “negative feelings” about the movement because his high school classmates had been wrongly accused of sexual assault. A lawyer who works in cryptocurrency compliance countered that “not enough has been done” as a result of #MeToo. She was rejected by Weinstein’s side.

In seeking to relocate Weinstein for the trial, his lawyers argued that his stay at the city’s notorious Rikers Island jail complex is exacerbating his health issues and that he’d be better off in the prison ward at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan. Weinstein has been back and forth numerous times to Bellevue in recent months for treatment of various maladies.

The Oscar-winning producer has numerous health conditions, including chronic myeloid leukemia, heart issues, diabetes, sleep apnea and sciatica.

Film



This image released by Warner Bros Pictures shows Michael B. Jordan portraying two characters in a scene from ‘Sinners.’ (AP)

Coogler delivers a pulsating, vein-bursting masterpiece

Jordan takes on double duty in ‘Sinners’

LOS ANGELES, April 17, (AP): It’s gotta be something in the water. How else to explain the plethora of A-list twins on Hollywood screens lately?

In the last few months alone, we’ve had Robert Pattinson, Theo James and the great Robert De Niro playing opposite each other on screen. But now we have by far the most creatively ambitious, culturally layered, artistically bold twin-led cinematic outing yet - if this sentence feels like a lot, get ready for the movie! - with Michael B. Jordan on double duty in “Sinners.”

And while the Jordan-Jordan pairing is front and center and full of charisma, Jordan himself would probably agree the most important pairing here is the one between him and Ryan Coogler. The supremely talented writer-director turns once again to Jordan - star of all four of his previous films - for his first completely original movie. Both men are firing on all cylinders.

So what exactly is “Sinners,” shot on large-format film (including IMAX 65 mm and Ultra Panavision 70) befitting the size of its vision, about? Depends which layer you’re looking at.

The outer layer is a story of two brothers coming home to Mississippi in 1932 to launch a juke joint after spending time on the German front in World War I and then learning from Al Capone in gangland Chicago. Peel away, and it’s a story about music, especially the transporting power of the blues. It’s also about love: love that’s lost, love that’s found, love that’s impossible. And it’s about the tenuousness of life in the Jim Crow South.

And then ... it turns into a full-on, gore-spewing, guts-spilling vampire film, one of the scariest ones you’ll see in a very long time.

It’s soon clear the only thing small about this

film is the timeline - one day, unless you want to count the afterlife, which is fair. How Coogler pulls everything off at once - and makes it cohere, mostly - is a sight to see.

And even more, to feel. With a crowd you don’t know, as Coogler intends it. At my screening there was frequent laughter, both joyous and nervous, some screams and not a few jumps, including one where I felt my own self leaving my seat, pens and notepad tumbling. Coogler grew up loving the jumpy moments in movies like “Jurassic Park,” and wanted to recreate the feeling.

Horror

We begin our 24 hours in Clarksdale, Mississippi, with skinny Preacher Boy, aka Sammie (exciting 19-year-old newcomer Miles Caton), bloody and barely alive, staggering into a church. His father, the pastor, urges him to drop the twisted vestige of a guitar he carries. We see lightning-quick flashbacks to scenes of horror - way too quick to settle in our brains. Coogler will take his time. You got somewhere you need to be?

We then rewind, to one day earlier.

Twin brothers Smoke and Stack - Jordan and Jordan, who frequently share the screen, seamlessly - have arrived with a truckful of Irish soda from Chicago. Handing wads of cash to a white owner for an old mill and its land, the brothers tell the man they’ll “kill any of your Klan buddies” if they come around. “The Klan don’t exist no more,” the oily character replies.

The plan is to open that same night. The brothers separate to rally staff, supplies and food. They also need music. Young cousin Sammie turns out to have a soulful voice and prodigious talent on the blues guitar. They pick up a harmonica and piano player (the wonderful Delroy Lindo) by

promising all the Irish soda he wants.

We also meet the love interests. Stack is the slicker of the two brothers, much quicker to smile, if not happier, with a red brimmed hat and a few gold-rimmed teeth. He’s soon approached by his ex, Mary (Hailee Steinfeld, poignant), the young white woman he loved and left. She’s angry. It won’t be ‘til later that we learn he was only trying to keep her safe.

As for Smoke, more somber in a blue cap, he reunites with a soulful medicine woman, with whom he’s shared past grief. He convinces Annie - played by Wunmi Mosaku with a serene grace - to come cook at the joint.

The place opens. The food’s flowing and the dance floor hopping. Sammie and Pearline (Jayme Lawson), a married woman who’s caught his fancy, hook up. It’s the best night of his young life.

And then come the vampires.

Remmick (Jack O’Connell), a spindly and scruffy villain, first shows up at a farm couple’s home, their Klan hood visible in the back. A red-eyed group now numbering three, the vampires head to the juke joint for the bloody final act.

It’s a doozy, and the less said the better. Well - we will say that perhaps only Coogler would think of a lusty group of vampires singing old Irish folk songs. In any case, the climactic confrontation is what we’re waiting for, and pays off.

But please don’t leave once the credits start rolling: Coogler has more gifts up his sleeve. His very long, ever-growing sleeve.

“Sinners,” a Warner Bros. Pictures release, has been rated R by the Motion Picture Association “for strong bloody violence, sexual content and language.” Running time: 137 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four.

Actor’s cause of death updated

Trachtenberg died of complications from diabetes

NEW YORK, April 17, (AP): Actor Michelle Trachtenberg died as a result of complications from diabetes, New York City’s medical examiner said Wednesday.

The office said in a statement that it amended the cause and manner of death for the 39-year-old New York City native following a review of laboratory test results.

Trachtenberg, who was known for “Gossip Girl,” “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” and “Harriet the Spy,” was found unconscious and unresponsive in her luxury apartment tower in Manhattan in February.

Officials at the time said no foul play was suspected, and the medical examiner’s office had listed her death as “undetermined.”

Trachtenberg’s family had objected to an autopsy, which the medical examiner’s office honored because there was no evidence of criminality.

Her representative didn’t immediately respond

to an email seeking comment Wednesday.

Sarah Michelle Gellar, Taylor Momsen and Blake Lively were among the celebrities who



Michelle Trachtenberg appears at the premiere of ‘Defiance’ during AFI Fest 2008 in Los Angeles, Nov. 9, 2008. (AP)

mourned Trachtenberg when her Feb. 26 death was announced.

Trachtenberg was 8 when she began playing Nona Mecklenberg on Nickelodeon’s “The Adventures of Pete & Pete” from 1994 to 1996 and then starred in the title role in the film adaptations of “Harriet the Spy” and “Inspector Gadget,” opposite Matthew Broderick.

In 2000 Trachtenberg joined the cast of “Buffy,” playing Dawn Summers, the younger sister of the title character played by Gellar between 2000 and 2003.

Trachtenberg went on to recurring roles on “Six Feet Under,” “Weeds” and “Gossip Girl,” where she played the gang’s scheming nemesis, Georgina Sparks. She was one of the original series’ stars to return for a pair of guest appearances in the 2021 “Gossip Girl” revival.

Trachtenberg’s later credits included the 2004 teen comedy “EuroTrip” and 2009’s “17 Again” with Zac Efron and Leslie Mann.

Variety

NEW YORK: Attorneys for hip-hop producer **Sean “Diddy” Combs** asked a federal judge in New York on Wednesday to delay his May 5 sex-trafficking trial by two months so they can better prepare a defense.

The lawyers said in a letter to Judge Arun Subramanian that prosecutors have been slow to turn over some potential evidence for review, making it difficult to be ready in three weeks.

Prosecutors oppose the request, the lawyers said. A spokesperson for prosecutors declined comment.

Subramanian wrote in an order responding to the delayed-trial request that he will address the issue during a hearing scheduled for Friday.

Pending the conference, the judge wrote, both sides should proceed as if the early May trial remains in place.

Combs, 55, has been held without bail since his September arrest. He has pleaded not guilty to multiple crimes that prosecutors say occurred over a two-decade period.

In their letter, defense lawyers cited a failure by prosecutors to turn over potential trial evidence in a timely matter, including materials relating to a superseding indictment returned by a grand jury earlier this month.

For instance, the lawyers wrote, prosecutors have said they will not meet a Wednesday deadline to turn over exhibits and a witness list.

Some evidence yet to be turned over includes materials related to a count in the indictment that carries a 15-year mandatory minimum prison sentence if a conviction is secured, the lawyers said. (AP)

SAN MIGUEL ESCOBAR, Guatemala: Stitch by stitch, artisans have worked for months on the elaborate garments that will debut this week in Holy Week processions across Guatemala and beyond.

The hefty velvet cloaks, finely embroidered with gold thread will cover the wooden Virgin Mary and Christ figures carried by the faithful down cobblestone streets lined by thousands.

Palm Sunday commemorates the Christian belief in the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, when he was greeted by cheering crowds waving palm branches that they set out on the ground along his path, according to the Bible. The most sacred week of the Christian year also includes the Good Friday re-enactment of Jesus’ crucifixion story and death, and their belief in his resurrection on Easter.

At Alejandro Juárez Toledo’s María Auxiliadora workshop about 25 miles (41 kilometers) southwest of Guatemala City, 28 artisans - mostly women - lean over yards of rich velvet spread across tables, hand-stitching the cloaks, embroidering gold floral designs. The dormant Volcano of Water, one of Guatemala’s highest, acts as an impressive backdrop to their workshop.

A cloak for the Virgin Mary can measure 4 square yards (about 3 meters) and weigh more than 50 pounds, requiring a metal frame to support the weight of the fabric without damaging the wooden figure. (AP)



Combs



White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt speaks with reporters in the James Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House, Tuesday, April, 15, in Washington. (AP)

US government tightens grip on press access

New White House policy curtails press access to Trump

WASHINGTON, April 17, (AP): Fresh from a courtroom loss over The Associated Press’ access to the presidency, the White House on Tuesday put forward a new media policy that sharply curtails access to Donald Trump by news agencies that serve media outlets around the world. It was the latest attempt by the new administration to control coverage of its activities.

The move would block the AP and other wire services that serve billions of readers through thousands of news outlets. It comes after a judge ruled the White House had violated the organization’s free speech by banning it because it disagreed with the outlet’s decision not to rename the Gulf of Mexico.

While outlining a new “pool coverage” policy for small spaces like the Oval Office and Air Force One, the White House also said it will ultimately give press secretary Karoline Leavitt the final say over who gets to question her boss, according to people who have seen the plan.

The White House did not return messages for comment on Tuesday evening.

A federal judge last week ruled the White House improper-

ly punished the AP for refusing to rename the Gulf of Mexico by blocking its reporters and photographers from covering the events. US District Judge Trevor N. McFadden ordered the administration to treat the AP as it does other news organizations.

A day after defying McFadden’s ruling and continuing AP’s ban when Trump and El Salvador President Nayib Bukele met with reporters in the Oval Office, the White House leaked a new policy to selected journalists.

For many years, the White House Correspondents Association has run the pool for the limited space events, and each time it has included reporters from the wire services AP, Reuters and Bloomberg. One print reporter was also allowed, selected on a rotating basis from more than 30 news outlets.

The White House now says it will lump the three wire services with print reporters for two slots - meaning roughly three dozen reporters will rotate for two regular slots. Wire services typically report and write stories that are used in multiple locations around the country and the planet.

Even with the rotation, the White House said Trump’s

press secretary “shall retain day-to-day discretion to determine composition of the pool.” The new policy says reporters will also be allowed in “irrespective of the substantive viewpoint expressed by an outlet.”

In a statement, the AP’s Lauren Easton said the outlet was deeply disappointed that rather than restore the AP’s access, the White House instead chose restrictions over all of the wire services.

“The wire services represent thousands of news organizations across the US and the world over,” said Easton, an AP spokeswoman. “Our coverage is used by local newspapers and television stations in all 50 states to inform their communities.

“The administration’s actions continue to disregard the fundamental American freedom to speak without government control or retaliation,” Easton said Tuesday night.

The independent White House Correspondents’ Association said the administration’s insistence on retaining control over who covers the president shows that it is unwilling to guarantee that it would not continue “viewpoint discrimination.”

Variety

INDIANAPOLIS: Rob Gronkowski will have an entertainment role for his first Indianapolis 500 next month, serving as the grand marshal for the “Snake Pit,” the infield party that takes place during “The Greatest Spectacle in Racing.”

Gronkowski played 11 seasons in the NFL before retiring after the 2021 season. He now serves as an NFL studio analyst for FOX, which has taken over as the exclusive broadcaster of the IndyCar Series and the Indy 500.

“This is one of the coolest combinations of sports and music out there and in the ultimate venue,” Gronkowski said in a statement Wednesday. “I’m ready to get the party started and celebrate the biggest race in the world.”

Dance producer Illenium will headline a lineup of global electronic music artists in the Snake Pit in Turn 3 of Indianapolis Motor Speedway during the May 25 race. Sammy Virji, Two Friends, Kayzo and Oliver Heldens are scheduled to perform.

Gronkowski’s fellow FOX analyst, Michael Strahan, is scheduled to drive the pace car for the 109th running of the Indy 500. (AP)

LAS VEGAS: As wrestling fans prepare to descend upon Las Vegas for WWE’s WrestleMania 41, demand has steadily grown so much over the years that it’s now bulked up into a dayslong event.

While WrestleMania matches will be held on April 19 and 20, a flurry of activities will take place in the days before and after, including meet and greets with wrestlers, a WWE Hall of Fame ceremony, matches for weekly television shows including “Smackdown,” “Raw,” and “NXT” and a Roast of WrestleMania hosted by comedian Tony Hinchcliffe.

The build-out of activities is similar to what the NFL does for the Super Bowl, which hosts meet and greets with current and former football players, flag football clinics, food experiences and other events.

WrestleMania has come a long way since its start in March 1985. Back then it was a one-night event that focused primarily on the wrestling matches, with celebrities like Mr. T, Liberace and Muhammad Ali sprinkled in.

By 2016 there were more than 100,000 fans in attendance for WrestleMania 32 in Arlington, Texas. The annual event was expanded in 2020 to two days of wrestling matches with WrestleMania 36.

WrestleMania 41 is being held at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas, the same location where the Super Bowl was held last year. Similarly, WrestleMania 42 will be held at Caesars Superdome in New Orleans in 2026. That’s where this year’s Super Bowl was held. (AP)

NEW YORK: Spotify experienced a widespread outage Wednesday - with tens of thousands of users reporting problems with the popular music and audio streamer. But the platform said it was back up and running hours later.

“All clear - thanks for your patience,” Spotify wrote on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, just after noon E.T. The company pointed to its support account, @SpotifyCares, for users who might need further assistance.

Earlier in the day, many Spotify users said that they were having difficulty loading both the app and desktop site, playing or hearing songs and using its search function. In addition to loading and playback issues, downtime updates noted that some users were also having problems accessing the platform’s support site.

Spotify told The Associated Press that the outage began around 6:20 a.m. ET on Wednesday - but said it was “back up and functioning normally” by 11:45 a.m. ET.

Outage reports appeared to peak just after 9:30 a.m. ET, when more 48,000 users shared problems with Spotify, per data from Downdetector. As of the early afternoon, just under 1,500 reports lingered. (AP)

World Press Photo

Portrait of Palestinian boy who lost both arms wins Photo of the Year



This image provided by World Press Photo and taken by Samar Abu Elouf, for The New York Times, won the World Press Photo Award of the Year and shows Mahmoud Ajjour (9), who was injured during an Israeli attack on Gaza City in March 2024, finds refuge and medical help in Doha, Qatar, 28 June 2024. (AP)

‘How will I hug you?’

THE HAGUE, Netherlands, April 17, (AP): A portrait of a young Palestinian boy who lost both arms as a result of an Israeli attack in Gaza was honored Thursday as World Press Photo of the year.

The photo, taken by Qatar-based Palestinian photographer Samar Abu Elouf for The New York Times shows 9-year-old Mahmoud Ajjour with his arms missing just below each shoulder.

“One of the most difficult things Mahmoud’s mother explained to me was how when Mahmoud first came to the realization that his arms were amputated, the first sentence he said to her was, ‘How will I be able to hug you?’” Abu Elouf said in a statement released by the World Press Photo organization.

The winner of the 68th edition of the prestigious photojournalism contest was selected from 59,320 entries submitted by 3,778 photographers from 141 countries.

“This is a quiet photo that speaks loudly. It tells the story of one boy, but also of a wider war that will have an impact for generations,” said World Press Photo Executive Director Joumana El Zein Khoury.

In a statement, the organization said that Ajjour was injured while fleeing an Israeli attack in March 2024.

“After he turned back to urge his family onward, an explosion severed one of his arms and mutilated the other,” according to the World Press Photo citation.

“This young boy’s life deserves to be understood, and this picture does what great photojournalism can do: provide a layered entry point into a complex story, and the incentive to prolong one’s encounter with that story,” said jury chair Lucy Conticello, who is Director of Photography for French newspaper Le Monde’s weekend magazine.

Winning photographer Abu Elouf was evacuated from Gaza in December 2023 and she now lives in the same apartment complex as Ajjour in Qatar’s capital, Doha.

Israel launched its devastating attack on Gaza after Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023 attack, in which thousands of militants stormed into southern Israel from Gaza, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza says over 51,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli offensive. It does not differentiate between civilians and militants, but says that over half of the dead were women and children, including at least 876 infants under 1. It says over 116,000 people have been wounded.

Israel blames Hamas for the heavy civilian toll because the group carries out attacks and other military activities from residential areas and civilian buildings.

Competition organizers also named two World Press Photo finalists that highlighted the issues of migration and climate change.

A dark photo by John Moore for Getty Images shows Chinese migrants warming themselves after crossing the US-Mexico border, and a picture by Musuk Nolte for Panos Pictures, Bertha Foundation, of a young man carrying food across a dried up river bed in Brazil’s Amazon basin region.

In regional results announced earlier by the World Press Photo Foundation, The Associated Press was among winners in the Asia-Pacific and Oceania region. Photographer Jae C. Hong won in the Singles category with an image titled Korea Adoption Fraud and Noel Celis won in the Stories category for photos from the Philippines titled Four Storms, 12 Days.

Media

Columnist’s opinion

Disagree? LA Times adds AI-driven counterpoints

NEW YORK, April 17, (AP): In a colorful commentary for the Los Angeles Times, Matt K. Lewis argued that callousness is a central feature of the second Trump administration, particularly its policies of deportation and bureaucratic cutbacks. “Once you normalize cruelty,” Lewis concluded in the piece, “the hammer eventually swings for everyone. Even the ones who thought they were swinging it.”

Lewis’ word wasn’t the last, however. As they have with opinion pieces the past several weeks, Times online readers had the option to click on a button labeled “Insights,” which judged the column politically as “center-left.” Then it offers an AI-generated synopsis - a CliffsNotes version of the column - and a similarly-produced opposing viewpoint.

One dissenting argument reads: “Restricting birthright citizenship and refugee admissions is framed as correcting alleged exploitation of immigration loopholes, with proponents arguing these steps protect American workers and resources.”

The feature symbolizes changes to opinion coverage ordered over the past six months by Times owner Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong, who’s said he wants the famously liberal opinion pages to reflect different points of view. Critics accuse him of trying to curry favor with President Donald Trump.

Soon-Shiong, a medical innovator who bought the Times in 2018, blocked his newspaper from endorsing Democrat Kamala Harris for president last fall and said he wanted to overhaul its editorial board, which is responsible for researching and writing Times editorials.

“If you just have the one side, it’s just going to be an echo chamber,” Soon-Shiong told Fox News last fall. He said broadening the outlook is “going to be risky and it’s going to be difficult. I’m going to take a lot of heat, which I already am, but I come from the position that it’s really important that all voices be heard.”

Decision

Three of the six people who researched and wrote Times editorials, including editorials editor Mariel Garza, resigned in protest after the Harris non-endorsement. The other three have since left with the last holdout, Carla Hall, exiting after writing a last column that ran March 30 about homeless people she met while covering the issue. Soon-Shiong’s decision caused a similar unrest with subscribers as happened when Washington Post owner Jeff Bezos decided the newspaper would not back a presidential candidate.

The Times used to run unsigned editorials - reflecting a newspaper’s institutional opinion - six days a week. The paper lists only two editorial board members, Soon-Shiong and executive editor Terry Tang. They’re usually too busy to write editorials. Soon-Shiong has said he will appoint new board members, but it’s unclear when.

He also said he was seeking more conservative or moderate columnists to appear in the paper. Lewis, a self-described Reagan Republican who just began as a columnist, believes he’s part of that effort. Soon-Shiong has also brought up CNN commentator Scott Jennings, a Republican consultant who has already contributed columns for a few years.

Los Angeles Times spokeswoman Hillary Manning was asked recently about editorial policy, but reportedly lost her job

in a round of layoffs before she could answer. There has been no reply to other attempts at seeking comment from Times management, including how readers are responding to “Insights.”

There were some initial questions about whether a “bias meter” as described by Soon-Shiong would apply to news articles as well as opinion pieces. But the publisher told Times reporter James Rainey in December it would only be included on commentary, as it has remained since “Insights” was introduced to readers on March 3.

In practice, the idea feels like a gimmick, Garza, the former editorials editor, said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Categorized

“I think it could be offensive both to readers ... and the writers themselves who object to being categorized in simple and not necessarily helpful terms,” she said. “The idea of having a bias meter just in and of itself is kind of an insult to intelligence and I’ve always thought that the readers of the opinion page were really smart.”

The online feature created problems instantly when it was applied to columnist Gustavo Arellano’s piece about the little-noticed 100th anniversary of a Ku Klux Klan rally that drew more than 20,000 people to a park in Anaheim, California.

One of the AI-generated “Insights” said that “local historical accounts occasionally frame the 1920s Klan as a product of ‘white Protestant culture’ responding to societal changes rather than an explicitly hate-driven movement.” Another said that “critics argue that focusing on past Klan influence distracts from Anaheim’s identity as a diverse city.”

Some at the Times believe an ensuing backlash - Times defends Klan! - was inaccurate and overblown. Still, the perspectives were removed.

Often, “Insights” have the flat, bloodless tone of early AI. After contributor David Helvarg’s column about potential cuts to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, the opposing viewpoint noted that Trump supporters “say it aligns with broader efforts to shrink government and eliminate programs deemed nonessential.”

A better way to improve opinion offerings is to hire more journalists and put them to work, said Paul Thornton, former letters editor for the Times’ opinion section.

Media columnist Margaret Sullivan argued in The Guardian that Soon-Shiong talks about promoting viewpoint diversity but really wants to push the newspaper toward Trump. “His bias meter should - quickly - go the way of hot type, the manual typewriter and the dodo,” Sullivan wrote.

Soon-Shiong, in his interview with Rainey, dismissed claims that he was scared of Trump or trying to appease him. People need to respect different opinions, he said. “It’s really important for us (to) heal the nation,” he said. “We’ve got to stop being so polarized.”

One writer who doesn’t mind “Insights” is Lewis - with one caveat.

“I like it,” he said. “I didn’t know what to expect but I was pretty pleasantly surprised. It does provide additional context for the reader. It provides counterpoints, but I think they’re very fair counterpoints.”

Lewis, who once worked for Tucker Carlson’s “Daily Caller,” was amused to see “Insights” judge his most recent column as “center-left.” He figured it was because he was critical of Trump. Instead, Lewis said it points to the relative meaninglessness of such labels.

“I guess I’m a center-left columnist,” he said. “At least for a week.”

From desert to diversity

Qatar makes bold push to protect its natural legacy

This is the last in a series of articles on State of Qatar's nature reserves, environment and sustainability.

Al-Kuwari pointed out that the reserves are being used as educational centers for environmental awareness, providing educational programs to raise awareness of the importance of preserving the environment and biodiversity, in addition to supporting eco-friendly tourism activities such as bird watching, camping in wildlife reserves, and eco-safaris.

He reviewed Qatar's key efforts to protect wildlife and propagate endangered species, noting that the State of Qatar is implementing a range of programs and projects to protect wildlife, including breeding and propagation programs for the Arabian Oryx and Al-Reem Gazelle, with large numbers of these species being reintroduced into open reserves. Meanwhile, Qatar launched a marine turtle protection project to protect and monitor turtles that breed on Qatar's beaches.

He emphasized that Qatar is also working to propagate mangrove plants, which play a significant role in purifying water and supporting marine life.

He also emphasized that the state is implementing programs to monitor marine species, such as whale sharks and dugongs, to study their movements and behavior and protect them from environmental hazards.

Biodiversity

The Director of the Natural Reserves Department at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change pointed out that Qatar has launched a biodiversity strategy and plans for ecosystem sustainability. This strategy forms an essential part of the country's plans to preserve the environment and achieve sustainability, within the framework of Qatar National Vision 2030.

He said that Qatar has been preparing its national biodiversity strategy since 2004, with the aim of protecting endangered species and rehabilitating natural habitats. It also recently participated in the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP16) to strengthen its environmental commitments at the international level.

He added that, as part of this strategy, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change is working to implement plans to rehabilitate natural environments by protecting natural meadows, cleaning beaches, and preserving coral reefs. These efforts also include monitoring marine organisms such as whale sharks and dugongs and managing invasive alien species that could affect the ecological balance. He indicated that through these plans, Qatar is ensuring the sustainability of ecosystems and promoting a balance between environmental and economic development.

He pointed out that, in the context of these commendable efforts, Qatar's wildlife is subject to continuous monitoring, with periodic studies conducted to monitor the numbers of living organisms in nature reserves, with the aim of assessing their environmental

status and the success of breeding and protection efforts. For example, the Al-Reem Reserve is home to increasing numbers of Arabian Oryx and Al-Reem Gazelle, and efforts are underway to reintroduce them to suitable habitats to ensure their natural reproduction.

Al-Kuwari said that regarding marine reserves, studies indicate the presence of large concentrations of sea turtles in the Al-Thakhira Reserve, in addition to increasing numbers of whale sharks in Qatari waters, reflecting the success of the country's wildlife protection programs.

Wildlife

Given this interest in developing nature reserves, preserving wildlife, and reducing the environmental impact of economic activities, the question arises as to how to achieve a balance between preserving natural and cultural heritage and sustainable development, all of which are key objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030.

Commenting on this, Al-Kuwari emphasized that Qatar relies on several strategies to ensure this balance, including the development of nature reserves such as the Al-Reem Reserve, which represents a model for preserving environmental and cultural heritage, as it encompasses unique historical and geological areas, in addition to its rich biological diversity.

Qatar also adopts policies aimed at reducing the environmental impact of economic activities by promoting the sustainable use of natural resources and encouraging investment in environmental projects, such as clean energy and waste recycling.

At the same time, emphasis is placed on raising environmental awareness among individuals and institutions to ensure the continued preservation of our natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

He pointed to the challenges facing biodiversity and climate change in Qatar and other countries, which require intensive efforts to confront and address them. Al-Kuwari stressed that Qatar, like other countries, faces environmental challenges related to the loss of biodiversity and climate change, which require intensive efforts to address them.

The key challenge is rapid urban expansion, which may lead to the loss of some natural habitats, in addition to the overfishing of some land and marine species. He indicated that rising temperatures affect coral reefs and marine life, posing a threat to coastal ecosystems.

The Director of the Natural Reserves Department at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change said that in confronting these challenges, the State of Qatar has adopted the National Climate Change Plan, which aims to reduce carbon emissions, promote renewable energy, and increase green areas. It also implements programs to rehabilitate natural environments, such as protecting natural meadows and planting local trees, in addition to ongoing efforts to monitor and observe wildlife in natural reserves to ensure their sustainability.

Concluded

Experts urge routine health screenings

Kuwait hosts heart failure conference to advance care

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Secretary General of Kuwait Heart Society Dr. Rashid Al-Owaish inaugurated the Second Kuwait Heart Failure Conference, which is being held through the coordinated efforts of the Society and Sabah Al-Ahmad Cardiac Center.

In a press statement, Al-Owaish disclosed that the conference contributes to improving health services in the country by discussing the latest research findings in the field of heart disease, specifically heart failure.

He said the conference brings together a large group of cardiologists, particularly those specialized in heart failure. He revealed it will discuss this year's medical cases of certain patient groups;

such as diabetics, obese patients and pregnant women suffering from heart failure, in addition to some rare heart diseases and very advanced cases of heart failure.

He added the conference is witnessing a large participation of doctors from around the world, in addition to cardiologists from various health centers in Kuwait.

He asserted that since its inception, the Society has been keen on raising public awareness about heart diseases. He advised the public to undergo regular screening for the early detection of these diseases.

Chairman of the conference Dr. Bassam Bou Albanat revealed that the first Heart Failure Conference, launched last May, was a tremendous success at various levels. "Therefore, the conference organizers were keen to guarantee the success of

the second edition. At the end of the conference, we will hold a competition between cardiologists on the Kuwaiti Board and physicians registered in Kuwaiti hospitals to review the latest research findings in heart disease. Board physicians are the cornerstone and they will bear the responsibility in the future.

Head of the Cardiology Unit at Sabah Hospital and a member of the Society Dr. Musa Akbar stated that "the conference is held under the management and supervision of Amiri Hospital and the Society.

He revealed that he will deliver a lecture on the impact of excess weight or obesity on the heart and the heart muscle, comparing obesity in Kuwait with global obesity rates. He added the rate of obesity in Kuwait is high, especially among women.

Mindful eating key

Slow down your meals for better health, weight-loss

LONDON, April 17, (AP): You can have your cake and eat it too - just do it slowly.

Experts tend to focus on the kinds of foods you can eat to improve your health. But the speed at which you devour your dinner matters just as much. There are risks with eating too fast - think stuck food and the potential to overeat before your brain tells you to stop. (Inhaling your food also risks annoying your slower-paced dining companions or the person who took the time to cook your meal.)

Here are some tips from scientists on how to slow down and take a more mindful approach to consuming your diet.

If you're the kind of person who can regularly polish off breakfast, lunch or dinner in less than 20-30 minutes, you are eating too fast.

"It takes about 20 minutes for the stomach to communicate to the brain via a whole host of hormonal signals that it's full," said Leslie Heinberg, at the Center for Behavioral Health at the Cleveland Clinic. "So when people eat rapidly, they can miss these signals and it's very easy to eat beyond the point of fullness."

Indigestion

People who eat quickly are likely to swallow more air, Heinberg said, which could lead to bloating or indigestion. Not chewing your food properly can also compromise digestion, meaning you won't get all of the nutrients from your food. Unchewed pieces of food also could get stuck in your esophagus.

Some previous studies have suggested that people who eat quickly have the highest risk of obesity, while the slowest eaters were the least likely to be obese.

For starters, turn off the TV and put down your phone.

"If you're eating while you



Salmon poached in green salsa and topped with baked chips are displayed for a photo in Concord, N.H. (AP)

watch TV, people tend to eat until there's a commercial or the show is over," Heinberg said, adding that people are less inclined to pay attention to the body's own signals that it's full. "When we do things while we're eating, we're eating less mindfully. And that often causes us to eat more."

She said that when people focus exclusively on eating, they tend to enjoy the meal more and eat less.

Change

Heinberg also acknowledged the pace at which you eat is often an ingrained habit, but said change is still possible. She suggested things like using your non-dominant hand to eat, trying utensils you might not ordinarily use like chopsticks or taking a deliberate break to drink water when your plate is partially empty.

If you have a busy life, it might be unavoidable to eat lunch at a work meeting or snack while running errands. But Sarah Berry, chief scientist at the British nutritional company ZOE, said when possible, "be mindful of what the food tastes and feels like."

"If we're not fully present, it's very easy to eat more quickly and not notice how much we've consumed," Berry said.

One of the simplest things to do is to increase the number of bites you take, said Helen McCarthy, a clinical psychologist with the British Psychological Society.

"If you chew each mouthful a little bit longer, that will slow down your eating," she said.

The kind of food you eat may also make a difference, pointing out that it's much easier to eat ultra-processed or fast foods quicker, because they typically have a softer texture.

"It's hard to eat vegetables and protein at the same rate as something that's highly processed and requires less chewing," McCarthy said.

Some of her patients also reported an unintentional side effect once they began eating more slowly, referencing one woman who often ate a tube of potato chips every evening. When McCarthy told her to slow down and eat every single chip individually, her patient told her "it was like having a mouthful of claggy chemicals."

"She didn't find (the chips) enjoyable anymore," McCarthy said.



A health worker prepares a yellow fever vaccine to inoculate travelers at the bus terminal in Bogota, Colombia, Wednesday, April 16. (AP)

Travel jabs urged

Experts recommend RSV and meningitis vaccines

ATLANTA, April 17, (AP): A federal panel of medical experts on Wednesday recommended an expansion of RSV vaccinations for adults and a new combination shot as another option to protect teens against meningitis.

The 15-member panel typically makes recommendations to the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on how vaccines should be used.

But in a break from decades of practice, the person evaluating Wednesday's recommendations won't have a background in medicine: The agency is without a permanent director, so an ex-prosecutor now at the CDC will make the call.

The decision will fall to the CDC's chief of staff, Matthew Buzzelli, said Department of Health and Human Services spokesperson Andrew Nixon.

Buzzelli is not a physician. His CDC bio touts his experience as an attorney, including as a federal prosecutor.

The scientific panel's recommendations on Wednesday were:

■ People 50 to 59 should be able to get vaccinated against respiratory syncytial virus have risks including heart disease, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder.

■ Endorsement of a new combination shot made by GSK that protects against five strains of meningococcal bacteria, including a strain that caused a spate of outbreaks on college campuses about 10 years ago.

It would join other products that also target the germs.

■ Adding a second chikungunya vaccine to the options for Americans age 12 and older who are traveling to countries where outbreaks of the mosquito-borne illness are occurring. About 100 to 200 cases are reported annually among U.S. travelers.

■ Adding a new precaution for the older chikungunya vaccine that uses weakened but live virus: People 65 and older should weigh the risks of benefits of that version of the shot, the panel said. The precaution was added after panel members heard about an investigation into six reports of people 65 and older - most of them with other medical problems - who became ill with heart or brain symptoms less than a week after vaccination. The investigation is continuing.

It's not clear how quickly Buzzelli will decide whether to accept the recommendations.

The Trump administration named Susan Monarez as acting CDC director in January, and last month picked her to lead the agency. But while she's awaiting Senate confirmation, she has essentially recused herself from regular duties because of federal law around vacancies, according to two CDC officials speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss agency matters and feared being fired.

Monarez holds a doctorate in microbiology and immunology.

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Match played as Cyclone Tam blasts Auckland

Blues beat Waratahs to win first Women’s Super Rugby Champions final

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, April 17, (AP): Breakout star Braxton Sorenson-McGee scored two tries as the Auckland-based Blues overcame a tropical cyclone to beat the New South Wales Waratahs 36-5 in the first-ever Women’s Super Rugby Champions final on Thursday.

The final brought together the champions of Australia’s Super W competition and New Zealand’s Super Rugby Aupiki. The Waratahs beat the Queensland Reds 43-21 on Saturday to win their sixth Australian title in eight years while the Blues beat Matatu 26-19 to win back-to-back New Zealand titles.

Thursday’s match was played as Cyclone Tam blasted Auckland with torrential rain and high winds. At times in driving rain it was as hard to see the ball as it was to catch it. But the Blues produced superb handling in those conditions, running in six tries to nil.

The Blues won the toss and chose to run into the gale in the first half, indicating an intention to keep the ball in hand. That was borne out throughout the match.

The Blues scrum was dominant and they were able to pick off Waratahs lineup throws. New Zealand women’s captain Ruahei Demant controlled the game superbly from flyhalf for the Blues.

Sylvia Brunt was outstanding at the breakdown and scrumhalf Tara Turner ran strongly around the fringes.

Sorenson-McGee scored the opening try in the 10th minute, coming into the backline from fullback. She stepped out of one tackle, cut infield and beat three defenders for her fifth try of the season.

She added her sixth in the 27th minute at the end of a sprawling movement which started deep inside the Blues’ half. In between, Elizabeth Moimoi scored the Blues’ second try after a scrum tighthead.

The Blues led 19-0 at halftime and added to that score in the 53rd when veteran Portia Woodman-Wickliffe carried five defenders over the line in the left corner.

Cheyenne Tuli-Fale and Krysten Cottrell scored late tries for the Blues while winger Desiree Miller scored a consolation try for the Waratahs.

“I just feel so proud right now,” Blues captain Maiakawanakaulani Roos said. “We’ve worked so hard all season and to have an opportunity to play against our Australian sisters was great and a big step in growing the game.”

Club unbeaten in nine games

Rosenior driving Strasbourg’s Champs League bid in France

PARIS, April 17, (AP): Strasbourg’s push for a Champions League place is peaking at the right time under English coach Liam Rosenior.

The Alsace-based club is unbeaten in nine games ahead of Saturday’s trip to Monaco, which is second in Ligue 1. A victory for sixth-place Strasbourg would move it level on points with Monaco.

The top three teams in the France league earn an automatic place in Europe’s elite club competition while the side finishing fourth enters qualifying for the Champions League. A complication for Strasbourg is being owned by Chelsea, setting up a breach of UEFA rules on multi-club ownership in its competitions.

“I’ve felt for a while that this group has something,” special, Rosenior said Wednesday.

Strasbourg’s rise in the standings reflects Rosenior’s ability to produce a balanced and dynamic lineup.

The attack is led by Dutch striker Emanuel Emegha, whose 13 league goals are as many as Paris Saint-Germain forward Bradley Barcola’s total, while influential Brazilian midfielder Andrey Santos has scored nine times for Strasbourg.

Strasbourg’s well-organized defense has kept six clean sheets in the past nine games - including a run of five straight games without conceding a goal.

Rosenior is ready for the latest challenge.

“We know Monaco is a team which likes to play. We’re keeping the same course, we’re not changing anything,” Rosenior said. Strasbourg “has lost only one (league) match in 2025.”

Strasbourg goalkeeper Dorde Petrović will be tested at Stade Louis II by a Monaco attack which is firing again.

Mika Biereth has 12 goals in 12 games for Monaco and is particularly strong at home, where he has three hattricks. He is combining well with Switzerland striker Breel Embolo and Japan’s Takumi Minamino. Attacking midfielder Maghnes Aklouché has shown his creative ability with eight assists so far - the second-best tally in the league behind Barcola.

If Monaco drops points against Strasbourg, Marseille could reclaim second place with a home win against last-place Montpellier, which has lost its last 10 league games.

It has been a remarkable first season for 40-year-old Rosenior, who played in the Premier League for Fulham, Reading and Hull as a defender. His father Leroy Rosenior was a bustling striker with Fulham and West Ham in the 1980s.

Rosenior’s coaching career started three years ago with a brief stint at English club Derby and he then took charge of Hull. He was among the nominees last season for manager of the year in England’s second-tier Championship.

Few observers gave him a chance of doing so well in his first season in charge in France, especially as he only had two weeks to prepare with his players.

“Pre-season preparation was short, some players arrived late,” Rosenior said. “We never really had all the players together.”

Chelsea’s holding company BlueCo bought into Strasbourg in 2023. UEFA has rules aiming to protect competition integrity that two clubs in the same ownership cannot play in the same competition.

Chelsea is currently sixth in the Premier League and the top five will enter the Champions League. Chelsea and Strasbourg could both qualify together for the Champions League or second-tier Europa League.



Delhi Capitals’ KL Rahul plays a shot during the super over of the Indian Premier League cricket match between Delhi Capitals and Rajasthan Royals at Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi, India. (AP)

Starc inspires Delhi to tense win against Rajasthan in super over

NEW DELHI, India, April 17, (AP): Fast bowler Mitchell Starc inspired table-toppers Delhi Capitals to a tense victory in the super over against Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League.

Starc forced the game into the super over with a brilliant eight-run 20th over as Rajasthan finished at 188-4 in reply to Delhi’s 188-5.

Two run-outs in Starc’s super over limited Rajasthan to 11-2 before Lokesh Rahul and Tristan Stubbs smashed Sandeep Sharma’s first four balls for 13 runs and took Delhi on top of the points table with five wins from six games.

Rajasthan has plenty to catch-up as they dropped to No. 8 with just two wins from seven games.

Rajasthan seemed to have controlled the chase until Starc nailed a perfect yorker to half century-maker Nitish Rana (51) in the 18th over and had the left-hander plumb leg before wicket.



Delhi Capitals’ Mitchell Starc bowls a delivery during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Delhi Capitals and Rajasthan Royals at Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi, India. (AP)

Starc bowled four more yorkers in the final over and with two needed on the final ball, Dhruv

Jurel drove Starc to mid-wicket but got run out while going for the winning run.

Rajasthan had an injury scare when their captain Sanju Samson walked off with a side strain after he had provided a brisk start with Yashasvi Jaiswal (51).

Samson clutched his left side in pain after hitting three sixes and two boundaries in his 19-ball knock of 31 balls as he walked off in the sixth over with Rajasthan cruising to 61-0.

Delhi captain Axar Patel finally got his first wicket of the season when he clean bowled Riyan Parag for 12 and Jaiswal holed out at long-on soon after completing his third half century of the season.

Patel should have dismissed Rana on 20 in the 15th over but Stubbs dropped a sitter at long-on before Rana eased the target by smashing Kuldeep Yadav for a six and a four in the next over.

However, Starc turned the tide in his return spell with flurry of yorkers and pushed the game into the

super over.

Opening batter Abishek Porel smashed fast bowler Tuskar Deshpande for four boundaries and a six in the second over but Jake Fraser-McGurk’s poor season continued when he holed out in Jofra Archer’s second over after scoring nine off six balls.

Rahul and Porel put on 63 runs off 57 balls, but the slowness of the wicket didn’t allow them to accelerate against either spin or pace.

Rahul was eventually dismissed in the 13th over when he pulled Archer to mid-wicket where Shimron Hetmyer took a good low catch and Porel got dismissed by Wanindu Hasaranga when he holed out at long-off after scoring 49 off 37 balls as Delhi slipped to 4-105.

But Patel and Stubbs provided late flurry by contributing 34 runs each. Axar countercharged against Hasaranga and smashed 34 off 14 balls while Stubbs, dropped on 18 off Hasaranga, consumed 18 balls for his unbeaten 34 as the last three overs provided Delhi 42 runs.



In this file photo, Joe Dumars, then-Detroit Pistons’ president of basketball operations, speaks during a news conference in Auburn Hills, Mich. (AP)

‘This is truly a full circle moment’

Pelicans tap Joe Dumars to lead basketball operations

NEW ORLEANS, April 17, (AP): The New Orleans Pelicans have hired Joe Dumars - a former NBA champion as both a player and an executive with the Detroit Pistons - as their executive vice president of basketball operations.

Dumars, 61, takes over for David Griffin, who was fired on Monday after a six-year stint that coincided with the drafting of power forward Zion Williamson in 2019.

“I have a great deal of respect for what Joe has already accomplished as a player and executive, but more importantly, I admire his character and leadership,” Pelicans owner Gayle Benson, who also owns the NFL’s New Orleans Saints, said in a written statement coinciding with Wednesday’s announcement. “His vast experience and relationships throughout the NBA, along with his strong leadership qualities, will have a tremendous impact on our organization.”

Dumars’ decision to join the Pelicans represents a homecoming of sorts. He grew up in Natchitoches, Louisiana, and played college basketball for McNeese State in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

“This is truly a full circle moment,” Dumars said in a written statement released by the Pelicans. “I grew up as a Saints fan and the first AAU basketball team I played on at 16 years old was based in New Orleans, so this opportunity is very special to me on a personal level.”

Dumars comes to the Pelicans after three years in the NBA office, serving as an executive vice president and helping to oversee, among other things, player discipline.

“Joe brought tremendous credibility to his role at the league office and is one of the most genuine and respected people in all of basketball,” NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. “His exceptional playing career and tenure as an executive provided him with an elite understanding of the game and strong relationships around the NBA. We are grateful for Joe’s leadership over the past three years and wish him well as he begins his new role with the Pelicans.”

Dumars’ first order of business will be to decide whether to retain coach Willie Green, who has a year remaining on his contract. Next, he’ll have to decide whether the Pelicans continue to build around the injury-plagued Williamson - who has missed more games than he’s played - or deal him elsewhere and move in a new direction.

When he plays, the 6-foot-6, 284-pound Williamson has been as dazzling and productive as expected when he was drafted first overall out of Duke. He has averaged 24.7 points in 214 games. But injuries have sidelined him for 258 regular season games, as well as every postseason contest New Orleans has played since he was drafted.

“There is a lot of talent on this roster,” Dumars said. “My vision is to build a disciplined team that is built on toughness, smart decision-making and a no-excuses mindset.

“I am proud to have grown up in Louisiana and know how passionate, resilient and tough we are as a community,” Dumars added. “Those characteristics will be the foundation of our team’s culture.”

Dumars played guard for the Detroit teams that won NBA titles in 1989 and 1990. He also ran the Pistons’ front office when they won another title in 2004. He was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2006.

Rose coping with ‘torment’ of Masters close call

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C., April 17, (AP): The farther Justin Rose drove from Augusta National only made him realize how close he came to winning the Masters.

His phone kept buzzing on the way to Hilton Head Island, one text after another, all of them with the same message that applauded his remarkable rally and offered commiseration and condolences for his runner-up finish to Rory McIlroy.

Rose started the final round seven shots out of the lead, too far back to think about winning. He made a 20-foot birdie putt on the 18th for a 66. He was in a sudden-death playoff. He lost on a great shot by McIlroy, who hit gap wedge to 3 feet for birdie.

It was a lot to process.

“A lot of outpouring from people with a lot of positive comments coming at me, so trying to absorb that, trying to absorb the week,” Rose said Wednesday at the RBC Heritage.

“But at the same time, looking at my phone and just wishing there was a different message there.”

This is a path he knows well.

Rose had a two-shot lead with six holes to play in the 2017 Masters when Sergio Garcia - like McIlroy, a good friend - made a most improbable rally to force a playoff and beat Rose on the first extra hole.

Rose was classy in defeat that day in 2017. He lovingly patted Garcia’s cheek, they embraced, and then Rose tapped Garcia on the heart. He knew



Justin Rose hits from the bunker on the second hole during the final round at the Masters golf tournament in Augusta, Ga. (AP)

what it meant for a talented Spaniard who had played 70 majors before winning.

He was equally gracious on Sunday, telling McIlroy when it was over he was happy to witness such a momentous occasion of the career Grand Slam. It still hurts.

He searched for the right words. Rose was proud of how he played to match the low score of the final round with a 66. In one of those must-make moments in a major, he poured in a birdie on the last hole. There was a lot that went right. But there was no green jacket.

“Just sort of ... don’t know what

the right word is,” he said. “Tormented, probably, by the thought of what might have been.”

He joined Ben Hogan as the only player to lose a playoff twice at the Masters, and it might have stung worse for Rose because both his losses were in sudden-death. He now has had at least a share of the lead after 12 rounds at the Masters, fourth on the list behind Jack Nicklaus (19), Arnold Palmer (18) and Gary Player (12), who have combined to win 13 green jackets.

He has 23 wins worldwide, including a major at the U.S. Open and an Olympic gold medal in Rio de Janeiro. He also has the distinction of

Inter eliminates Bayern to set up clash with Barcelona



Inter Milan's Francesco Acerbi, right, in action with Bayern's Leroy Sane during the Champions League quarterfinal second leg soccer match between Inter Milan and Bayern Munich at the San Siro Stadium in Milan, Italy. (AP)

Pavard scores against old club

MILAN, April 17, (AP): Former Bayern Munich defender Benjamin Pavard scored against his old club to help Inter Milan to a 2-2 draw against the German team, sending the Nerazzurri through to the Champions League semifinals 4-3 on aggregate.

It was Pavard's first goal for Inter, after the France international joined from Bayern in 2023.

"There's certainly a lot of emotions as it's my first goal, moreover, it's at San Siro," said Pavard, who last scored almost exactly two years ago to the day. "So there were a lot of emotions, but I had to stay in the match, I couldn't think of the goal, I had to remain focused."

Harry Kane had leveled the quarterfinal early in the second half, but Inter swiftly turned the game around with goals from Lautaro Martínez and Pavard on a blustery night in Milan.

Eric Dier headed in the equalizer on the night, in the 76th minute, to set up a nervy finale.

Inter will face Barcelona in the semifinals. It beat the same opponent in the final four in 2010 on its way to winning the Champions League and securing the treble under José Mourinho

Simone Inzaghi's men are in contention to repeat that feat this season.

"We're not putting limits on ourselves," Pavard told broadcaster Amazon Prime. "We have a great team, we have really great players, with staff who have been working well for two years."

The other semifinal pits Paris Saint-Germain against Arsenal, which won 2-1 at Real Madrid on Wednesday to advance 5-1 on aggregate.

Inter had stunned Bayern last week, winning 2-1 to inflict the German team's first home defeat in the competition in almost four years.

Bayern coach Vincent Kompany said he had "some regrets" over the two legs, with his team missing several chances and thus missing out on the possibility of lifting the Champions League trophy in its own stadium on May 31.

"The hard reality is that we're not going to play the Champions League final at home," Kompany said. "That's the hard reality. We can't change it. The other side is the performance side. We know we did enough to win these two games."

It was a wet and windy night at San Siro, and the gusts caused some misplaced passes.

The visitors had a few early opportunities, with Pavard charging down an effort by Michael Olise and Alessandro Bastoni timing a sliding tackle to perfection to also deny Olise, who had gone clear on goal. Inter managed to slow things

down after the frantic start and began to have opportunities of its own.

Hakan Çalhanoğlu went closest in the 33rd minute with one of his trademark shots from distance that flew just wide of the right upright.

There was panic in the Inter area moments later and Bayern's first-leg goalscorer Thomas Müller had a shot charged down by Matteo Darmian and Leroy Sané saw the follow-up saved by Yann Sommer.

However, Bayern broke the deadlock and leveled the quarterfinal seven minutes into the second half. Inter failed to properly clear a cross, and the ball came out to Leon Goretzka, who fed Kane, and the England forward steadied himself before firing past Federico Dimarco and into the far bottom corner.

But Inter equalized just seven minutes later. Lautaro - Inter's all-time leading scorer in the competition - miscontrolled a corner but was quickest to react and managed to bundle it into the bottom left corner.

The Argentina World Cup winner leapt onto the advertising hoardings in front of the Inter fans and stretched out his arms.

There were even more rapturous celebrations three minutes later when Pavard headed in another corner.

The Inter fans were in for a nervy final 14 minutes, however, as Serge Gnabry's cross found Dier at the byline, and his header strangely looped into the far top corner from the tightest of angles.



Inter Milan players celebrate at the end of the Champions League quarterfinal second leg soccer match between Inter Milan and Bayern Munich at the San Siro Stadium in Milan, Italy, Wednesday, April 16, 2025. (AP)

Kuwait Club aims to stay unbeaten against Qadsia

By Khaled Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Basketball fans are set for a thrilling showdown tonight at 6:30 PM at the Basketball Association Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex, where Kuwait Club faces off against Qadsia in the final game of the second division of the Merger League.

Despite both teams already securing their spots in the semi-finals – alongside Kazma and Al-Qurain – this encounter promises excitement and high-level performance. Kuwait Club enters the match unbeaten, topping the standings with 29 points after a flawless run. Qadsia, meanwhile, sits second with 27 points, having suffered losses to Al-Qurain (80-96), Al-Sulaibikhat (97-101), and Kazma (94-104).

Regardless of tonight's result, Qadsia is set to face Kazma in the semi-finals, while Al-Qurain, in fourth, will take on reigning champions Kuwait in a best-of-three playoff series.

Qadsia's Spanish head coach Javier Munoz sees tonight's clash as a vital tune-up ahead of their semi-final bout. He's counting on key local talents such as Abdulaziz Al-Humaidi, Abdulmohsen Al-Moussawi, Abdullah Tawfiq, Rashed Al-Rabah, Saud Al-Ibrahim, and veteran Mohammed Ashkanani, in addition to foreign stars David Elono, Cedric Henry, and Jonathan Williams.

On the other side, Kuwait Club's



Players battling for the ball in this file photo.

Serbian coach Oliver Kostic has led his team through a dominant campaign, employing a deep rotation that includes standouts Hamad and Mohammed Adnan, Hussein Al-Khabbaz, Turki Hamoud, Musaed Al-Otaibi, Alexander Al-Ghais, Imran Johar, and Yousef Al-Hamdan. The trio of professionals – Jakar Sampson, Augustin Orbet, and Robert Lowry – has also played a key role in their success.

While tonight's result won't alter the semi-final matchups, the historic rivalry between Kuwait Club and Qadsia ensures a highly competitive and unpredictable encounter.

Player transfer deals start to surface as season nears end



Hamad Harbi vies for the ball.

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: As the sports season draws to a close, player transfer deals are beginning to take shape.

Kazma's Hamad Harbi has completed a transfer to Al-Arabi for the upcoming season. The versatile international player, known for his ability to excel in multiple roles, whether in defense, midfield, or on the wings, will bring valuable experience to his new team.

In other transfer news, Sultan Al-Enezi is on the verge of joining Kuwait Club, while Kazma has secured the services of Al-Abyad's Ahmed Al-Dhafiri. Sources reveal that Sultan made the move to Kazma after terminating his contract with Oman's Dhofar SC. This decision came after Al-Enezi ended his contract with Al-Arabi SC due to unpaid financial dues owed by the club.

Hamdan discharged after injury

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: Al-Arabi will resume training this evening following their return from Turkmenistan. The team was eliminated from the AFC Challenge League after suffering a 3-0 loss to Arkadag in the second leg of the semi-final.

Looking ahead, Al-Arabi is preparing to face Al-Salmiya in the second round of the Zain Premier League Championship Group Stage, scheduled for the day after tomorrow.

Currently, Al-Arabi sits in second place in the league with 46 points, just four points behind leaders Kuwait Club, with four rounds remaining.

In other news, Al-Akhdar defender Hassan Hamdan has been discharged from the hospital after being admitted following a head injury during Al-Arabi's match against Arkadag. Hamdan lost consciousness early in the match



Hassan Hamdan

and was rushed to the hospital by ambulance. According to Al-Arabi's official website, Hamdan underwent necessary tests which revealed a mild concussion.

Magpies earn 6th straight win

Newcastle routs Palace to move into 3rd place

LONDON, April 17, (AP): Newcastle thrashed Crystal Palace 5-0 for its second big win in four days and climbed to third place in the Premier League. Four of the goals came in the first half at St. James' Park, through Jacob Murphy, Harvey Barnes, Fabian Schar as well as an unfortunate own-goal by Marc Guehi.

Sandwiched between them was a lazily taken penalty for Palace by Eberechi Eze that was saved by Newcastle goalkeeper Nick Pope.

Alexander Isak added a fifth goal in the 58th minute - for his 21st of the campaign - as Saudi-controlled Newcastle followed up its 4-1 hammering of Manchester United on Sunday

to make it six wins in a row in all competitions. That streak included a victory over Liverpool in the English League Cup final for a first major trophy in 70 years.

Newcastle jumped above Nottingham Forest and within four points of second-place Arsenal, and looks in good shape for a return to the Champions League next season.

The Premier League will have five representatives and Newcastle is five points clear of sixth-place Chelsea with six games remaining.

The dominant display will have made for good viewing for Newcastle manager Eddie Howe, who is recovering in the hospital after being diagnosed with pneumonia. Howe also missed the Man United match - and Newcastle is doing just fine without him at the moment.

"Everyone has shared texts with him (Howe) and he's on the road to recovery," said Murphy, who had the goal of the night with a fierce, rising drive from an acute angle to set Newcastle on its way.

Palace conceded five goals for the second straight game, having lost 5-2 at Manchester City on Saturday.

"We've changed nothing but things aren't working anymore," Palace manager Oliver Glasner said. "We have to be very honest - we're Crystal Palace and if we don't perform at our top level, Newcastle and Manchester City are better than us."

Things might have been different had Eze converted the penalty - awarded after Pope missed the ball when attempting to punch clear and barged into Palace defender Chris Richards - when the score was 1-0.



Newcastle United's Fabian Schar, left, and Crystal Palace's Tyrick Mitchell battle for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match at St. James' Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, England. (AP)

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Miami Heat center Bam Adebayo, left, battles for a loose ball against Chicago Bulls guard Josh Giddey during the second half of an NBA Play-In Tournament basketball game in Chicago. (AP)

Sports

Ancelotti's future uncertain

No historic comeback for Madrid as Arsenal seals semifinals spot

MADRID, April 17, (AP): Arsenal defeated defending champion Real Madrid 2-1 on Wednesday to reach the Champions League semifinals for the first time since 2009 in a match where VAR played a key role in two penalty decisions.

Arsenal advanced 5-1 on aggregate after winning 3-0 in London last week, keeping alive its chances of winning Europe's top club competition for the first time. It will face Paris Saint-Germain in the semifinals.

There was no historic comeback for Madrid this time. No late goals, no high drama, no magic at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

The 15-time European champion fell short of the last four for the first time since 2020, ending its shot at a third Champions League title in four seasons.

"There was a lot of talk coming here about (Real Madrid) coming back, because they've done it so many times before, but we had so much belief and confidence from that first game to come here and win," Arsenal's Declan Rice said. "We had it in our minds and now we've done it in real life."

Madrid's hopes of staging another comeback took a big hit when a five-minute VAR review overturned a pen-

alty for a hold on Kylian Mbappé in the first half with the game tied 0-0.

Arsenal had earlier been awarded a penalty after a video review, but Bukayo Saka missed his spot kick.

Saka was able to put Arsenal ahead from inside the area after Mikel Merino's pass in the 65th minute, and Madrid couldn't manage more than an equalizer by Vinicius Junior a couple of minutes later after a defensive blunder by William Saliba.

Gabriel Martinelli completed the scoring three minutes into stoppage time, also after an assist by Merino.

"This is one of the best nights in my football career, for sure," Arsenal coach Mikel Arteta said. "It's a really special one against a team that has been an inspiration for a lot of us in this competition. To win this tie in the manner that we have, we can be very proud."

Mbappé was replaced by Brahim Diaz in the 75th minute with an apparent injury, and part of the crowd at the Bernabeu jeered the France star when his substitution was announced. It was another lackluster performance for Mbappé, who is yet to win a Champions League title.

"It's a tough moment," Madrid's Lucas Vazquez said. "We tried, but in

the end we couldn't achieve our goal. We'll come back stronger. Madrid always does."

It was a tough assignment for Madrid from the start. Arsenal hasn't lost by a three-goal margin in nearly three years, and only four times has a home team erased a first-leg deficit of three goals or more in the Champions League era, according to UEFA.

Arsenal hadn't lost to Madrid in the teams' three previous meetings. It also overcame Madrid in the Champions League knockout stage in 2005-06, when it reached the final and eventually lost the title to Barcelona.

"We have to hold our heads high because we did very well in this competition in recent years," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "This year, we have to endure and suffer. In sport, this can happen because there are no invincible teams. I was clear with my players. We have to keep our heads up, we have to learn from it and fight for the next game."

Ancelotti said he didn't know if the loss would mean his last Champions League match with Madrid.

"Maybe the club will decide to make a change. It could be this year or next year, when my contract runs out," he said. "The day I finish here, I can only



Arsenal's Mikel Merino jumps for the ball in Arsenal's box during the Champions League quarterfinals second leg soccer match between Real Madrid and Arsenal at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. (AP)

do one thing, and that is to thank this club. It could be tomorrow, in 10 days, or in a year, and the only thing I will do

is thank the club."

Backed by a raucous crowd at the Bernabeu, Madrid tried to get off to a

strong start. It found the net in the second minute, but Mbappé's effort was disallowed for a clear offside.

Kuwait clinches gold as Gulf tennis champ'ship wraps up



Kuwait team with other teams on the podium during the awarding ceremony.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar complete the podium in General Category

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The curtain came down on the Gulf Tennis Championship for national teams in the under-12, under-16, and general age categories, held at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex. The tournament organized and hosted by the Kuwait Tennis Federation from April 11 to 16, featured spirited participation from all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations.

The event concluded with high drama as Kuwait's national team triumphed in the general age category, defeating Saudi Arabia 2-1 in a gripping final match played in front of an enthusiastic home crowd.

In the final, Issa Qabazard gave Kuwait the early lead by overcoming Ammar Al-Haqbani in a tight three-set singles match. Saudi Arabia leveled the tie as Saud Al-Haqbani beat Bader Al-Qahtani in straight sets. The decider came down to

the doubles match, where Qabazard and Al-Qahtani teamed up to defeat the Al-Haqbani brothers in straight sets, securing the gold medal for Kuwait.

Saudi Arabia finished as runner-up, while Qatar claimed third place in the general category.

In other age groups: Bahrain won the under-16 title, with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia placing second and third respectively.

Saudi Arabia secured gold in the under-12 category, followed by Kuwait (silver) and Bahrain (bronze).

The tournament also recognized outstanding individual performances: Ilias Thamer Al-Ghaffi (Saudi Arabia) received the Best Player award in the under-12 category.

Ahmed Al-Sayed and Marwan Al-Janahi (Bahrain) shared the award in the under-16 category.

In the general category, Saud Al-Haqbani (Saudi Arabia) and Issa Qabazard (Kuwait) were both honored for their exceptional performances.

The championship highlighted the growing talent in Gulf tennis and celebrated a week of high-level competition, sportsmanship, and regional unity.

Miami dominates Bulls

Mavs top Kings to advance in the Play-In Tournament

SACRAMENTO, Calif., April 17, (AP): Klay Thompson scored 16 of his 23 points in Dallas' dominant second quarter to get redemption for his dud in Sacramento a year ago, helping the Mavericks beat the Kings 120-106 on Wednesday night to advance in the Play-In Tournament.

One year to the day when Thompson missed all 10 shots in his final game for Golden State in a play-in loss in Sacramento, Thompson fueled the win with four 3-pointers in Dallas' 44-point second quarter. That turned the game into a laughter and kept the Mavericks' chaotic season alive for at least one more game.

"Human nature, when you end a season on a sour note like that you want to come out and prove people wrong," Thompson said. "But I thought I did a good job to start the game of trying to dish, rebound, play defense. The shots came to me after that."

Dallas advanced to play at Memphis on Friday night for the chance to get into the playoffs as the eighth seed in the West. The winner of that game will open the playoffs on Sunday at top-seeded Oklahoma City.

As for the Kings, soon after the game, the team and general manager Monte McNair agreed to part ways. A person familiar with the decision said the sides mutually agreed on the breakup. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the team hadn't announced the move.

The Mavs have undergone a rough season after trading young superstar Luka Doncic to the Los Angeles Lakers in a seismic trade that brought Anthony Davis to Dallas and vitriol from the fan base to the organization.

Star point guard Kyrie Irving went down with a season-ending knee injury shortly after that trade, ending any realistic hopes of another deep playoff run after making it to the NBA Finals last season.

"We've had a tumultuous season to say the least," Thompson said.

Dallas opened the second quarter with a 20-6 run fueled by back-to-back 3s from Thompson. Thompson hit two more 3s later in the quarter as the Mavs built the lead to 23 points at the half, removing any drama. DeMar DeRozan scored 33 points for the Kings, and Zach LaVine added 20.

It was a disappointing ending to an underwhelming season for the Kings, who fired coach Mike Brown in De-



Dallas Mavericks forward Anthony Davis (3) blocks a shot by Sacramento Kings forward Keegan Murray (13) during the first half of an NBA Play-In Tournament basketball game in Sacramento, Calif. (AP)

cember and traded star point guard De'Aaron Fox to San Antonio in February. It all led to Sacramento missing the playoffs for the 18th time in 19 seasons, raising questions about the team's future.

"This is where I want to be," interim coach Doug Christie said. "You guys know that. I need to finish what I started."

Tyler Herro scored 38 points, and the Miami Heat dominated the Chicago Bulls 109-90 to advance in the Play-In Tournament.

Herro scored 23 points as Miami grabbed a 71-47 halftime lead, and the Heat knocked the Bulls out of the Play-In for the third year in a row. They play at Atlanta on Friday for a chance to meet top-seeded Cleveland in the first round of the Eastern Conference playoffs. The Hawks lost to Orlando on Tuesday.

Herro made his first eight shots and was 13 of 19 in the game. The All-Star guard nailed three 3-pointers.

Andrew Wiggins had 20 points and nine rebounds. Bam Adebayo added 15 points and 12 rebounds, and the Heat got payback for a three-game sweep in the regular season.

Josh Giddey had 25 points and 10 rebounds for Chicago. Coby White scored 17, though he shot 5 of 20. Nikola Vucevic finished with 16 points and 12 rebounds.



Players in action during league match.

Kazma and Al-Nasr battle relegation fears

Kuwait eyes title glory against Fahaheel

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 17: The Zain Premier League enters a crucial stage this weekend, with Kuwait Club inching closer to securing the championship title, while Kazma and Al-Nasr face decisive clashes in the relegation group.

Kuwait Club, currently leading the championship group with 50 points, will take on Al-Fahaheel tomorrow (Saturday) at 6:45 pm at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium in the second round of the title race. The reigning champion is eyeing its fourth consecutive league title—and the 20th in the club's history.

Buoyed by a strong 3-0 win over Al-Tadamon in the first round and a convincing Amir Cup quarter-final qualification after defeating Al-Jazeera 3-0, the

Whites are riding a wave of high morale. They'll also look to maintain their dominance over Al-Fahaheel, having beaten them twice this season with identical 3-0 scorelines.

However, any slip-up could open the door for second-placed Al-Arabi, who trail by four points with three rounds to go.

Meanwhile, fifth-placed Al-Fahaheel (29 points) still harbors hopes of finishing in the top three. After holding Al-Arabi to a 1-1 draw in the last round, it aims to upset another title contender and leave their mark on the competition.

In the relegation group, today's matchups are critical for survival. Kazma faces Yarmouk at 5:25 pm at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium, while Al-Nasr meets Khaitan at 7:50 PM at Al-Sadaka Wal Salam Stadium.

Kazma tops the relegation standings with 19 points and needs just one point from their remaining three

matches to secure their Premier League status. Having defeated Yarmouk three times this season—twice in the league (2-0) and once in the Crown Prince Cup (3-1)—Kazma enters the match as the clear favorite, despite recent instability, including a surprise exit from the Emir's Cup at the hands of Al-Jahra.

For Yarmouk, the path to survival is a near-impossible mission. With just 6 points, they must win all their remaining matches and hope today's Al-Nasr vs. Khaitan game ends in a draw. They would also need both teams to drop points in the final two rounds to keep their slim hopes alive.

Al-Nasr (12 points) and Khaitan (11 points) are neck and neck, making tonight's clash a pivotal showdown. The winner will take a crucial step toward retaining their place in the top flight, while the loser will face increasing pressure as the final rounds approach.