



HH Amir's state visit to Bahrain strengthens bilateral relations

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AMIR SPONSORS, ATTENDS CADET OFFICERS GRADUATION



KUNA photo
A newly graduated cadet shares a heartfelt moment, kissing his mother on the forehead, during the Ali Al-Sabah Military Academy's 23rd batch commencement ceremony.



KUNA photo
Overwhelmed with joy, a cadet is caught in a heartfelt and emotional moment.



Amiri Diwan photo
His Highness the Amir acknowledges the crowd with a wave during the graduation ceremony of the 23rd batch of cadet officers at Ali Al-Sabah Military Academy on Monday.

Opinion

For more than three decades, ministers have been MPs' Trojan horses

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

ONE of the most vital elements of the administration's success is the selection of assistants. This is an art that cannot be mastered by a moron, or someone who relies on "wasta", especially when it comes to the executive administration of the state, given that it is his duty to achieve several elements. These elements include enacting laws that serve the future, striving for advancement through industrial and food self-sufficiency, preventing abuse of authority, and ensuring the state is open to others in order to benefit from their expertise and economics, until the state achieves social stability.

Therefore, the most important element that the executive leader relies on is doing the right thing so that the administrative system becomes sound. Unfortunately, this has been lacking in the State of Kuwait for about 30 years, especially in recent years when the encroachment of parliamentarians on the powers of the Council of Ministers worsened.

This is why we saw "wasta" become the upperhand of the leaders who followed what the parliamentarians dictated for them, instead of serving the interests of the state and society.

On this basis, let us consider the example of the law that was imposed to ban co-education. It was aimed at "purifying" society based on a backward and outdated ideological plan, which is an attempt to transfer the "Qandahari-Taliban" experience to Kuwait. This was helped by the weakness of successive Cabinets, which worked to establish strict legislation, including the so-called negative phenomena, prohibiting parties and occasions of joy, and demolishing entertainment facilities and preventing the construction of new ones.

This also led to the exodus of millions of money to neighboring countries during each holiday in order for people to enjoy a joyous moment that is forbidden to them in Kuwait. On the other hand, crimes, social violence, the rate of people addicted to drugs, travel bans and physical coercion in the name of preserving rights have increased.

Citizens no longer have an outlet to release their stress. For instance, it is a laughing matter that Kuwaiti physical education teachers in government schools are the highest in number but the rate of obesity among Kuwaiti children is also the highest in the world due to the lack of facilities that will help them in finding entertainment.

The rate in music lessons is close to its sports counterpart but the law prohibits musical concerts. As for the numbers in Islamic education, it is almost close to the two above mentioned rates.

Also, we have the highest rate of certificate forgery in the world. Fraud is almost sweeping through all Kuwaiti schools. Employee attrition and lack of employee productivity are prevalent in this government systematics.

This indicates a systematic industry of backwardness that was established by the fanatic movement when it took control of the laws and made the ministers its Trojan horses to work according to its visions.

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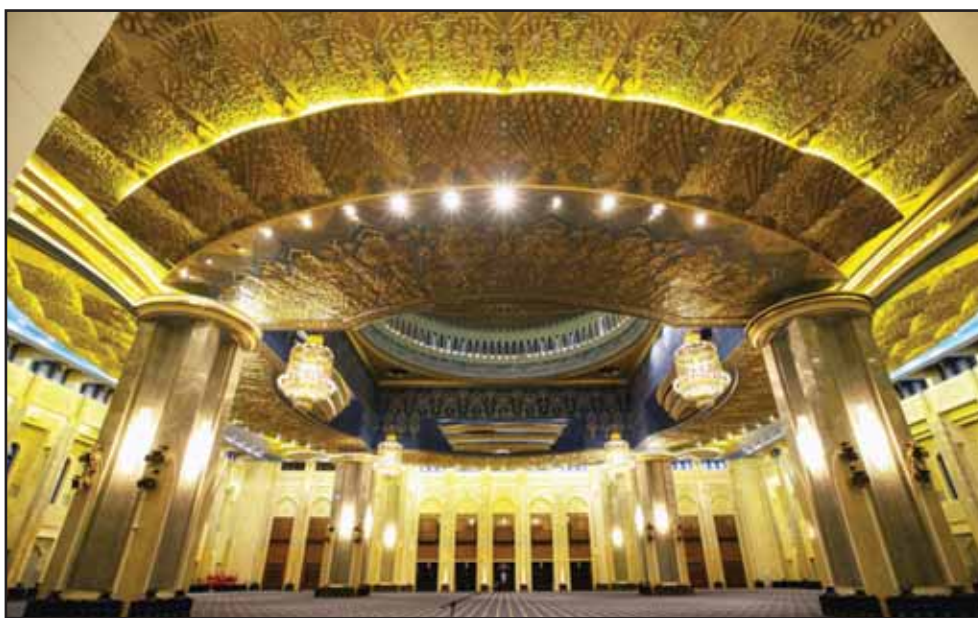
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MPs to dissect delayed registration of medicine

Committee tackles state budget



KUNA photo
With a soaring capacity for 10,000 individuals, the main hall of Kuwait Grand Mosque stands at an impressive height of 43 meters above the ground. — See Page 2

Day by Day

OUR ancestors imparted timeless wisdom, advising us to be discerning in our choice of friends. They emphasized the importance of companions who safeguard our secrets, highlight our virtues, and shield our flaws. If such a friend proves elusive, they counseled self-reliance rather than settling for unsuitable companionship.

They said: No one is ahead of you, nor are you ahead of anyone. Everyone is moving towards his destiny, and what you missed was not created for you, and what was created for you will not miss you, so stick to your path, and know that everything comes in its time, and patience is the key to relief.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

UK minister to seek Gaza truce, Kuwait key stop in Mideast tour

LONDON, Feb 12, (KUNA): British Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and the UN, Lord Tariq Ahmed, is heading to Oman Monday on a tour that includes Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, said UK Foreign Ministry.

In a statement, the British Minister stated that he aims for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, stressing that the escalation and instability in the region are not in anyone's interest.

"The Middle East's partners, including Oman, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, are crucial in achieving a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and enhancing regional security," he added.

The statement mentioned that Lord Ahmed is set to discuss strategies during the tour to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza, including implementing an immediate truce and

a permanent ceasefire.

Lord Ahmed has visited Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to urge an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, allowing for humanitarian aid and the release of prisoners.

Elsewhere, the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, met President of Palestine Mahmoud Abbas, at the Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim majlis in the Qatari Amiri Diwan, Monday.

In a statement, the Qatari Amiri Diwan said that during the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations and ways to enhance them, the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, the expanded cycle of violence in the region, in addition to its repercussions on regional and global security and stability.

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The National Assembly will hold its ordinary sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday to continue discussing the MPs' response to the Amiri speech during the inaugural session of the second year of the 17th parliamentary term.

The Assembly will also deliberate on the following:

- Work program of the government for the period starting from 2024 until 2027.
- Incoming letters.
- Report on the financial status of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) for fiscal 2019/2020.
- Semi-annual report of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) for fiscal 2020/2021.

Meanwhile, the reports of parliamentary committees about the bills were removed from the agenda, as per the request of the government to postpone the discussion of these reports for one month for further study.

On the other hand, six parliamentary committees met on Monday to discuss various items in their agendas.

The Complaints and Petitions Committee tackled the complaints of several citizens in order to find solutions in coordination with the concerned institutions.

The Foreign Affairs committee discussed the current regional and international issues.

The Budgets and Final Accounts Committee discussed the estimated budget of the State for the next fiscal year, including the estimated revenues and the estimated budget under Chapter One: Salaries for Public Sector Employees.

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'Cope with changes'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, sponsored and attended on Monday graduation of the 23rd batch of cadet officers at Ali Al-Sabah Military Academy.

His Highness the Amir, upon arrival at venue of the celebration, was greeted by Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah, Defense Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah, Kuwait Army Acting Chief of General Staff Major General Dr. Ghazi Hassan Jazzaa, Commander of Ali Al-Sabah Military Academy Brigadier General Khaled Shujaa Faihan, and the academy commanders.

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NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's Foreign Affairs Minister and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Al-Sumait Prize for African Development **Abdullah Al-Yahya** met Monday with Director General of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), **Dr. Ameenah Farhan**.

During the meeting, they discussed the latest developments related to Al-Sumait Prize and the topics on the agenda of the Board of Trustees for this year.

They reviewed ways of enhancing cooperation between the ministry and KFAS in the fields of scientific research and studies through the implementation of joint scientific and research projects with **Saudi Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Institute**, in cooperation with international universities and institutes specialized in the field of training, to serve mutual interests and support national initiatives as well. (KUNA)

NEW DELHI: Qatar has freed eight retired Indian navy officers whose death sentences for alleged spying were commuted last year, **India's** Foreign Ministry said Monday.

The eight men were accused of spying while working at Al Dahra, a consulting company in the oil-rich Gulf state that advises the Qatari government on submarine acquisitions. (AP)

WASHINGTON: Iraq and the U.S.-led military coalition resumed meetings Sunday on how to draw down troops who have been deployed there for years combating the Islamic State.

The first long-awaited meeting took place Jan. 27, but had since been put on pause after **Iran-backed** militants struck a U.S. outpost in **Jordan** the very next day with a drone that killed three U.S. service members.

In the weeks since, the U.S. has launched multiple retaliatory strikes in Iraq and Syria including a strike last week that killed a high-ranking commander of the powerful Kataib Hezbollah militia who the U.S. said is responsible for "directly planning and participating in attacks" on American troops in the region. (AP)

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:10 Asr 15:11
 Sunrise .. 06:30 Maghrib .. 17:35
 Zohr 12:02 Isha 18:53

Local

BIOMETRIC/FINGERPRINT APPOINTMENT: <https://meta.e.gov.kw/En/>

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Warm and partly cloudy with light variable wind changing to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h.

By Night: Rather cold to cold with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-30 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas and some scattered clouds will appear.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	22	15
Kuwait Airport	23	14
Abdaly	21	11
Jahra	22	14
Salmiyah	20	15
Nuwaib	23	16
Wafra	24	14

Trip to further strengthen historic ties: Kuwaiti ambassador

HH Amir to visit Kingdom of Bahrain, Tuesday, on state visit

By Amna Al-Shammari/Khuloud Al-Enezi

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will head to the Kingdom of Bahrain, Tuesday, on a state visit.

Kuwaiti Ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain, Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said on Monday that the upcoming visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Bahrain would further strengthen the historical ties between the two nations.

Sheikh Thamer told KUNA that His Highness the Amir's visit would be within the framework of enhancing cooperation and coordination in all fields, which serves the interests of both countries.

He noted that the relations were deep-rooted and harmonious as they go back generations and exceed all political and diplomatic rhetoric.

Sheikh Thamer said that the visit of His Highness the Amir to the Kingdom of Bahrain and the expected meeting with King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa would surely add to another milestone in the Kuwaiti-Bahraini ties.

Meanwhile, Bahraini Ambassador to Kuwait Salah Ali Al-Malki on Monday stressed the importance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to Bahrain and his planned meeting with King of



Sheikh Thamer

Bahrain Hamad bin Essa Al Khalifa and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Malki noted that this visit is a consolidation of the bilateral ties, and the historical brotherhood, and it will undoubtedly strengthen further bonds of interdependence between the two countries and develop the strategic partnership in various fields.

This is the first visit to be made by His Highness to Bahrain after assuming office.

The Kuwaiti-Bahraini relations has always been described as strong, as the two ruling families are linked together which is a reflection of the strong relation between their people.

The history between both countries goes back and is known for the agreement and visions of their political leadership regarding their firm stance on regional and international issues based on the rational approach and the principle of dialogue.

The official visits aim to enhance the bilateral relation in various fields of common interests including trade, economy, cybersecurity and others, noting that the most recent visit was when the Bahraini King offered his condolences on the passing of the late Amir.

Bahrain's honorable stand was evident during the Iraqi invasion in 1991, when their leadership and people stood with the Kuwaiti right by welcoming their citizens and providing them with all necessities, as well as contributing to the liberation of Kuwait.

In recent years, the two countries witnessed important events, including the signing of eight cooperation documents in April 2019, in fields of electronic commerce, customs affairs, exchange of information and news, environmental protection, culture, arts, agriculture, marine resources, and the development of trade relations.

Kuwait and Bahrain also signed agreements in the field of education to enhance cooperation, enhance expertise and benefit from experiences, while their universities attract students majoring in different fields from both countries.

And, Chairman of Bahrain Shura Council Ali Al-Saleh underscored Monday that the historic bonds and strong relations between Bahrain and Kuwait are getting stronger through deeply rooted partnerships and closeness that influence the progression of the two countries.

Al-Saleh, in a press conference, expressed pride in the longstanding successes and achievements of Bahrain and Kuwait. He commended the strong support from King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Highlighting the deep bonds of love, kinship, and shared destiny between the two nations, he emphasized the strategic partnership across various fields like economy, politics, and commerce.

Al-Saleh also lauded the historical significance of Bahraini-Kuwaiti relations and their continued efforts in joint development programs for mutual prosperity stressing their exemplary model within the Gulf Cooperation Council.



The Grand Mosque – an aesthetic monument that expresses the authenticity of Islamic architecture.

KUNA photo

'Capacity for 70,000 worshippers'

Grand Mosque ... eye-catching architectural landmark

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): The State Grand Mosque, situated in the heart of the Kuwaiti capital, is a distinguished Islamic edifice, with diverse ornamentations and artistic shapes, opposite the sea panorama.

Skilled architects joined hands to build the large mosque in response to an order by the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Construction started in 1979 and the mosque was inaugurated in 1987.

It is one of the largest mosques in Kuwait, occupying a 45,000 square meters land plot opposite the seaside Seif Palace. It includes 20,000 uncovered spaces with water canals and green and tree-shaded patches. It can accommodate 70,000 people.

The mosque includes three prayer halls; the main hall, the daily one, and the women section, in addition to the Amiri Hall, said Ali Shedad, the mosque director, in an interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

A huge dome is in the center of the 10,000 people's capacity. It is 43 meters above the ground. There is a dome in its center; adorned with Allah's Husna Names in Kufi calligraphy and blended with Quranic verses spanning for 80 meters.

The large dome is surrounded by Allah's Husna Names. It is also surrounded by four small domes, decorated with engraving's made from Moroccan gypsum and four dangling chandeliers.

Light seeps into the inner part of the mosque through 144 windows, in addition to the light emitted by the four large chandeliers -- each contains 102 bulbs, in addition to wall chandeliers.

The large dome is surrounded by four 22-m-high columns, covered with Italian marble. In the lower section, there are wooden oriel ventilation windows.

The main prayer section includes several mihrabs (prayer niches), covered with Moroccan zellij (mosaic tilework) and Islamic engravings topped with Quranic verses. The mosque's 22 doors are made from the Indian saaj wood, decorated with Quranic verses.

The women prayer section, with surrounding mashrabiyas, is located above the main one. It can accommodate some 1,000 worshippers.

The daily prayers hall accommodates 500 individuals. The minaret is surrounded by four 72-m-high columns.

The Amiri Hall, adjacent to the main prayer place, was built two years after completing the mosque construction. The Amir receives well-wishers on religious occasions at this section.

KUNA training program attracts employees from QNA

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The KUNA Center for Media Capacity Development recently hosted a comprehensive training program titled 'Data Analysis and Documentation,' attracting participation from several quarters including employees of the Qatar News Agency (QNA), reports Al-Jarida daily.

Led by esteemed experts Dr. Abdullah Badran, Ibtihal Al-Muzaini, and Hanadi Al-Sanafi from KUNA's Information and Research Center, the program provided invaluable insights into the functions and departments of the center.

The training initiative which runs until February 15, encompasses a broad spectrum of topics, including the responsibilities and objectives of the Information Department, along with the intricacies of daily operations documentation. Additionally, participants delve into the role and operational mechanisms of the Scout Department, focusing on news material archiving and documentation techniques.

The program incorporates interactive workshops, allowing attendees to gain practical experience in handling documentary materials, news reports, and analyses published by

KUNA. Moreover, participants benefit from guided tours of the Information and Research Center and its various departments, complemented by a field visit to the Kuwaiti Research Center.

Established in December 1995, the KUNA Center for Media Capacity Development has emerged as a vital institution for media training initiatives. With a rich history of conducting diverse training programs across multiple media domains, the center remains committed to enhancing the personal and professional capabilities of individuals engaged in media work.

Bid to mitigate housing crisis

Effectiveness of law remains uncertain

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Since the implementation of the anti-monopoly law on vacant lands in late November, discussions have arisen within real estate circles and among citizens regarding its potential impact on addressing the housing issue, reports Al-Qabas daily.

More than two months into its enactment, questions persist about the law's efficacy in curbing residential property speculation, particularly as the number of pending residential applications exceeds 91 thousand. While some view the law as a positive step, others argue that it needs to be accompanied by supportive legislation such as mortgage laws, developer regulations, and housing city initiatives.

The anti-monopoly law imposes an annual fee on unbuilt private housing plots exceeding 1,500 square meters, incrementally rising to deter land speculation. However, its impact remains subject to debate, with some expecting a decline in property prices while others maintain that it alone will not alleviate the housing crisis.

Ibrahim Al-Awadi, head of the Real Es-

tate Union, emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach, suggesting taxation on multiple property owners and promoting real estate development and mortgage systems.

Suleiman Al-Dulajjan, a real estate expert, expresses skepticism about the law's effectiveness, arguing that supply and demand dynamics are primary drivers of market fluctuations.

Imad Haider, head of the Real Estate Brokers Union, criticizes the law's focus on individual landowners, advocating for market regulation instead.

Abdulaziz Al-Daghishim, another real estate expert, predicts potential loopholes and unintended consequences of the law.

Tawfiq Al-Jarrah, also a real estate expert, calls for government intervention to regulate the real estate market and provide affordable land options to citizens.

While the anti-monopoly law represents a step towards addressing land speculation, its effectiveness in mitigating the housing crisis remains uncertain without complementary measures and broader economic reforms.

MoH okays staff list for 'excellent' bonus

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Ministry of Health (MoH) approved the lists of employees eligible for excellent performance bonus among those who submitted grievances after completing the inventory – around 6,000 employees, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources from the health sector.

Sources told the daily that the bonus will be deposited into the accounts of the beneficiaries this week or next week at the latest. Sources confirmed that the Committee for Consideration of Excellent Performance Bonus Grievances exerted tremendous efforts in sorting and reviewing the grievances, and it excluded those found to have violated the conditions.

Sources said the conditions for submitting excellent performance bonus grievances are: the employee nominated for the bonus must have served in the ministry no less than one calendar year starting from Jan 1, 2023 to Dec 31, 2023; must not have been subjected to disciplinary action in 2023; have not exceeded the specified sick leave days in 2023 – 15 days excluding hospitalization; duration of actual work during the calendar year should be 70 percent of the number of shift days for employees under the shift system and 180 actual work days for the rest of the categories; and their rank must be included the general salary scale.

Speaker condoles with Bahrain, UAE

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Sa'adoun sent Sunday two cables of condolences to Bahraini Shura Council President Ali Al-Saleh and Parliament Speaker Ahmad Al-Mussalam.

In his cable, Speaker Al-Sa'adoun expressed condolences over the "terrorist" attack on a military base in Somalia that left a Bahraini soldier dead.

UAE

Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker

Ahmad Al-Sa'adoun also sent a cable of condolences on Sunday to his counterpart in the UAE Saqr Ghobash following a terror attack that afflicted Emirati military personnel in Somalia resulting in their martyrdom.

In his cable, Al-Sa'adoun conveyed his deepest sorrows and grief over the tragic attack.

Earlier, UAE Ministry of Defense reported that three Emiratis and one Bahraini soldier were killed in Somalia after a terror attack.

'Stick to working hours, no plan to deduct pay'

Deserving to get top posts: CSC

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has requested for the fingerprint attendance records of directors, observers and heads of departments in the Ministry of Education "to use as guide for the evaluation of their candidacy for leadership positions", reports Al-Anba daily quoting a reliable source.

According to the source, this step is crucial in either moving forward with the promotion or cancelling it once proven that one of the conditions is not met in order to ensure justice for everyone.

Meanwhile, the source denied the alleged plan to deduct salaries; but CSC Director Dr Issam Al-Rubaian issued two circulars, the first of which calls on all employees to adhere to the official working hours, while the direct supervisor must monitor the employees' attendance at work and the next superior must follow it up.

It also mandated the Inspection and Audit Office to conduct routine, announced and professional visits to the workplaces in coordination with the managers and direct superiors to guarantee strict compliance with the working hours regulation and a note should be left on the concerned employee's office in case of absence. The employee and his direct supervisor must respond to this note and confirm the employee's presence at the workplace.

The second circular is on compliance of the departments and sectors with the mandates assigned to each of them in accordance with

Minister gives nod to open Al-Maqwa road

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Committee for the Development of Southern and Remote Regions, under the leadership of Ministers of Oil and Works Imad Al-Ateeqi and Noura Al-Mashaan, has given preliminary approval for the opening of Al-Maqwa Road, which links to the Seventh Ring Road, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This decision, announced during a joint press conference by MPs Majid Al-Mutairi, Abdul Hadi Al-Ajmi, and Muhammad Al-Huwaila, signifies a crucial step towards enhancing connectivity in these regions.

Additionally, a specialized committee will be established to conduct a thorough feasibility study within a month, with the objective of overcoming any existing obstacles to the project's implementation.

the approved organizational structure. It states the following: "In view of the administrative, regulatory and legal implications of the bulletins issued by the sectors and departments about the need for each sector and department to adhere to the limits of the specializations approved and assigned to them in accordance with the organizational structure of the CSC and in the interest of work, all those occupying leadership positions are requested to take into account the following:

- Each sector and department shall be restricted within the limits of its jurisdiction to prevent overlapping.
- It is not permissible to cancel a letter issued by the CSC regarding a specific sector or department by another sector or department.
- Both the Director and the Undersecretary of the CSC have the authority to cancel the bulletins issued by various sectors and departments."

Kuwait International Pharmacy Conference 8th edition kicks off

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The eighth edition of the Kuwait International Pharmacy Conference held under the theme 'Developments in Drug Discovery, Delivery, and Clinical Pharmacy: Be Inspired' commenced yesterday at the Kuwait University Conference Center, organized by the University's College of Pharmacy, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In his opening speech, Dr. Mishari Al-Harbi, the acting director of Kuwait University and the conference's sponsor, reiterated the university's commitment to societal responsibilities. He emphasized the College of Pharmacy's ambitious plan to support community development and medical education, striving to enhance healthcare services for Kuwaiti citizens.

Dr. Al-Harbi underscored the significant achievements of the College of Pharmacy in academia, research, and

community service. He highlighted the importance of such conferences in fostering collaboration among researchers and academics to generate joint research projects beneficial to pharmaceutical sciences.

Acting Dean of the College of Pharmacy, Dr. Maitham Khaja, emphasized that the conference serves as a vital platform to showcase the latest scientific research and advancements in basic and clinical pharmaceutical sciences. The aim is to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and skills to enhance research quality in academic institutions, research centers, and medical services catering to the community.

Dr. Khaja further highlighted the conference's focus on the evolving role and significance of pharmacists, especially amidst the growing interest in pharmacy across various specialties. Pharmacists play a crucial role in healthcare teams, leveraging their expertise to provide up-to-date information based on robust scientific evidence, ensuring the safe and appropriate use of medication.



Dr. Al-Rubaian



Dr. Al-Harbi

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Nothing much has changed in Kuwait of yesterday and today

"THE Kuwait of today is not the Kuwait of yesterday. Most of the successive ministries reflect the reality of the situation, and it is also a natural reflection of the outcomes of the Kuwaiti Parliament. The tribal, sectarian, partisan, and family quotas still reveal every ministerial formation and there is no consideration for a country that has suffered for many years from infrastructure, service, and other priorities." **Dr. Saud Mohammad Al-Asfour** wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"In light of the financial savings that had been made available to any other country in light of justice, integrity, and the requirements of excellence, it would have been at the forefront of similar countries.

"Corruption has affected most ministries and government institutions, stopped the wheel of development in most directions, and presented Kuwait in its shattered streets with an appearance that is completely unbecoming of its Gulf, Arab and international status, not to mention its backwardness in other areas.

"Anyone who observes everything that is happening in the political arena notices the continuation of the previous approach with its mistakes and negatives. The President, despite his righteousness, integrity, and genuine love for Kuwait and its people in terms of affiliation and patriotism, is faced with a difficult choice.

"Kuwait is loyal to those who adhere to it as a beacon for all in light of justice, equality, financial transparency, and concern for everything that guarantees Kuwait's present and future prosperity and progress.

"Every time there are calls at the beginning of every new election for good choices, but far from it, in light of Kuwaiti society, its characteristics have changed in light of a demographic structure that has suffered from many imbalances and through it the rooting of tribalism, partisanship, sectarianism and familism has emerged.

"Optimism is required, but the reality is bitter in light of political tensions and constant conflict between some in the executive authority on the one hand, and members of the National Assembly, despite their insistence that they are in familiarity, love, and concern for the public interest, but this is not the case.

"The part is a habit and adopting reason and rationality first is a demand for everyone, and history records the extent of each individual's keenness to fulfill what he pledged to himself, that he first represents the nation, and this representation is not sufficient with verbal expressions, but rather with clear useful action and transparent disclosure that obliges every individual to be good in himself and in front of him and others in word and deed.

"May God help His Excellency our virtuous Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, who has firm principles and high morals to shoulder responsibility and adopt an approach that is compatible with the requirements of the new phase, justice, development, transparency, fighting the sources of corruption, and uprooting its origins."

Also:

"Some believe that the ambiguity in a person's personality gives him a kind of strength and distinction, and that his personality should not be an open book that everyone enjoys reading. As they say, 'Men's hearts are locked boxes'. This group of people believes in secrecy, privacy and ambiguity in personality," columnist **Dr. Muhammad Al-Duwaihis** wrote for Al-Jarida daily.

"One of the secrets of a person's success in life is that those who do not have mystery in their personalities lose the charm and distinctiveness of the personality, and the poet's saying applies to them: 'Be a sea whose secret people do not know; If he is attacked, he will hide the secret; On the opposite end of this concept, we find that the second group believes that the secret to success lies in clarity, transparency, ease of reading the personality, simplicity in behavior, spontaneity in its actions, and lack of affectation.

"They believe that the more ambiguous the personality is, the more difficult it is to deal with it and the greater the degree of distance from it as much as possible, because man does not want more ambiguity in his life and his dealings with other human beings, because correct and sound human relationships are based on clarity, transparency, understanding, cooperation, and good intentions, and are not based on ambiguity, deception, and cleverness, even if cleverness and deception have been successful in relationships between individuals and human groups for a period of time. It will not last long and may result in unpleasant effects for both parties in the relationship!!

"There are people who have an ambiguous personality and try to stay away from sharing the opinions of others because they see that their principles and ideas do not suit everyone, so they flee from confrontation and rely on introversion. I believe that this behavior is marred by a grave mistake and a misunderstanding, because a person cannot.

"To convince all people of his opin-

ions and ideas because people are different by nature, as are their circumstances and interests, and there are individual differences between one person and another in understanding, perception, intelligence, abilities, skills, intentions, the nature of the surrounding environment, time, place, and data in different situations.

"The pinnacle of humanity and its sublimity is how to deal with these people under these circumstances and work to convince them of his ideas and visions and try to direct them as much as possible to the right path and the best way for peaceful coexistence among people and work to find ways of cooperation between human beings for the good of humanity and reduce the possibilities of conflict and the intensity of conflict. And pave the way for love, tolerance and familiarity among human beings as much as possible.

"Escaping from peaceful and logical confrontation is a loss of good and constructive human interaction, and gives the opportunity to those who are not logical, wise and rational to take control of the situation and persuade and direct humanity towards a destination that is not necessarily sound, and may conflict with human values and principles and harm humanity and its sound values.

"God Almighty created humans to worship Him, to populate the earth, and to get to know each other among the sons of Adam, not for distance and isolation. Negativity, indifference to the injustice befalling man, and ignoring the problems that occur in society are undesirable matters, and the one who is silent about the truth is a mute devil.

"Likewise, it is not wise to stir up controversy and discussion in every trivial matter. Rather, discretion and security in some circumstances and sometimes is required. Ignoring some issues, as well as ignoring the actions of some people at times, is desirable and required behavior.

"Therefore, I believe in moderation, so that a man's personality and privacy should not be a "watershed" exposed to what comes and goes! Nor a book locked with padlocks and hieroglyphs that make people struggle just to know the "title of the book" and its color! I hope that the message has reached both parties, and I hope that we do not burden things more than they can bear and do not burden ourselves with more than we can handle!"

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"Peace be upon prestige ... If the news that has spread is true, then peace be upon the State's prestige. The news says that a group of 'Interior' officers approached more than one member of the National Assembly, demanding that the members file a complaint against acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef after he took strict measures to stop the laxity in some departments at the Interior Ministry in a bid to restore the prestige of police stations on which the State flag is raised. It was an attempt to reset and reconnect!" columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"The behavior of the officers is a serious violation, for which they will be held accountable as per the law. The punishment could reach expulsion from the honorable military service! At this point, we must mention those with dull memories, including members of the National Assembly and the current Interior officers, especially the one dismissed by the minister for disrupting public order for his personal benefit and wreaked havoc in the Ministry of Interior and others.

"He stormed into a police station more than once and a defendant was forcibly removed from the police station. Police vehicles have been broken into and a convict was smuggled out of them by force.

"Crowds had earlier hurled stones at police vehicles, the military personnel were prevented from performing their duties by force, and the citizens and expatriates no longer give consideration to the police patrol.

"It is worse that information is leaked from police station records, to the point that the civil status book itself was photographed and leaked. If any well-known person visits a police station for causing a traffic accident, the news is leaked, until there is neither confidentiality nor protection of people's honor.

"What has been happening in terms of traffic, smuggling in prisons, poor performance of service centers and the loss of prestige on the street made the minister, who fights against negative phenomena and tries to implement reforms, negligent. Should he be held accountable? Should the representatives be incited against him?

"The current minister expelled a group of the 'sons of Kuwaiti women married to Kuwaitis' from the honorable service. They have become a burden on the Interior Ministry and an evil for the citizens. Basically, their entry into the military service is a big mistake, for which we, the citizens, are paying double the price due to the hatred of some of them, except those who are grateful, may Allah have mercy on them.

"As for the rest, their first and last understanding is to punish the Kuwaiti in any way they can. The hands of Minister Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef must be freed to save what can be saved, starting with the young members ... Good."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

Legal help, family support pledged

Indian party takes up case of 3 fishermen

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: An Indian political party has taken up the cause of three fishermen who fled aboard a Kuwaiti fishing vessel. As the controversy unfolds, with allegations and denials swirling between India and Kuwait, the situation has garnered attention from both countries, reports local Arabic daily Al-Seyassah.

In response to claims made by the Indian press, Abdullah Al-Sarhid, a member of the Kuwaiti Fishermen's Union and the owner of the boat in question, vehemently denied accusations of mistreatment and withholding wages

from the fishermen. He labeled the allegations as fabrications, asserting that the three individuals were not victims but rather described them as "thieves" with a history of alcohol-related issues. Al-Sarhid presented documents, including receipts and court orders, to support his stance, indicating that the fishermen had received salaries and that two of them were legally prohibited from traveling due to prior legal issues.

On the Indian side, "The Hindu" newspaper reported that a prominent member of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam

(AIADMK) party, Thalavi Sundaram, visited the families of the fishermen. Sundaram assured support for the fishermen, stating that legal assistance would be provided, and their families' expenses covered until their rights are vindicated.

Meanwhile, the Indian police apprehended the fugitive fishermen, charging them with theft of the boat, illegal departure from one country, and unauthorized entry into another. The situation continues to unfold as both sides present their perspectives and pursue legal recourse.

Jail & KD 4mln fine maintained in Bnaider network gang conviction

Tunisians detention extended again in 'terror' case

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The detention renewal judge in the High Court, for the second time in a row, had yesterday decided to extend for 14 more days the detention of three Tunisian defendants until a court hearing is scheduled for them.

These defendants were charged with belonging to a banned organization (ISIS), carrying out a hostile act against Kuwait, and planning to commit operations against places of worship for the Shiite sect in the country. However, they denied all the charges leveled against them.

The legal counsel representing the defendants had demanded that they be released with any guarantee the court deems appropriate until the investigations into the case are completed, stressing that they do not fear fleeing the country due to the issuance of travel ban orders against them by the Public Prosecution.

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Jail, fine maintained: The Court of Cassation presided over by Judge Sultan Buresli rejected the petition to reconsider the ruling that sentenced 16 members of the Bnaider network gang to prison and imposed a fine of KD 4 million after they were convicted of money laundering and forgery.

It ruled to imprison the defendants, including an Iranian expatriate, in the Bnaider Network case, after convicting them of money laundering and forging official documents.

The Court of Cassation overturned the ruling of the Court of First Instance and the Court of Appeals, which acquitted the defendants of money laundering, and decided to sentence 13 of them to ten-year imprisonment, and the rest to five-year imprisonment with hard labor, impose a fine of a total of more than KD 4 million on all of them, and confiscate the cars, jewelry, and watches retrieved from the site of the incident.

The court upheld the first-degree ruling to imprison the Iranian expatriate for 4 years for the crime of forging a vehicle license, bringing his total years of imprisonment to 14 years with hard work, followed by his deportation from the country.

It is worth highlighting that the Public Prosecution had accused the suspects of committing money laundering crimes,



Drugs concealed in sheep stomach.

Big quantity of drugs found in sheep belly

By Munif Nayef

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: In a recent crackdown on drug smuggling, law enforcement authorities, led by Major General Hamid Al-Dawas, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Criminal Security Affairs, and Brigadier General Muhammad Qabazard intercepted a shipment of narcotics.

The operation thwarted the smuggling attempt of 5 kilos of shabu, one kilo of hashish, and 20,000 narcotic pills concealed inside live sheep skins arriving from Iran via the Doha Port.

Following intelligence reports received by the Ministry of Interior regarding a shipment of sheep suspected of containing drugs, a security team was assembled to monitor the situation.

Upon the shipment's arrival at Doha Port, destined for an unidentified person linked to a criminal syndicate comprising three individuals of Asian descent, the suspects were picked up from a suburb in Kabad.

Upon investigation, it was revealed that the defendants had ingeniously hidden the drugs inside the entrails and skin of the sheep.

The seized contraband with a street value of thousands of dinars and the suspects were handed over to the concerned authorities.



An abandoned SUV is carried away by a Municipality truck.

19 abandoned vehicles lifted

Field trips conducted by the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Municipality Branch's Public Cleanliness and Road Works Department yielded the removal of 19 abandoned vehicles, boats, groceries, and commercial containers, reports Al-Rai daily.

Throughout these excursions, 42 stickers were affixed to abandoned items, signaling their impending removal once the

specified grace period elapsed. Additionally, 30 outdated containers were replaced with new ones over the past week.

Emphasizing the ongoing commitment of the supervisory team, a spokesperson highlighted their proactive approach in enforcing public cleanliness and road works regulations, underscoring their dedication to taking all necessary legal actions against violators.

stressing that they had recycled the amounts seized from the Ports Authority fund. The defendants were a businessman and a Russian expatriate who were both sentenced to 15 years in prison with hard labor.

The Court of First Instance had acquitted the defendants of money laundering charges due to the lack of connection between them and the funds confiscated by the defendants. Therefore, it ruled that the Iranian suspect be imprisoned for only four years, a ruling that was upheld by the Court of Appeals. However, the Court of Cassation canceled that acquittal.

Earlier, the security services arrested an Iranian expatriate who owned a chalet in Bnaider. After confiscating his vehicles, they found large sums of money in the chalet.

They also followed the movement of his bank accounts and discovered that they were linked to a number of businessmen, one of whom had previously been accused in the case of seizing the funds of the Ports Fund, to which the two social security institutions contribute.

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Lawyer suspended: The Lawyers'

Disciplinary Department at the Court of First Instance ruled the suspension of a lawyer for six months after he failed to attend investigations with his client and neglected to defend him prior to his imprisonment.

It also ordered the suspension of a lawyer for one month because he failed to oppose a judgment in absentia for his client.

It also decided to suspend a lawyer who failed to handover the key to a property to the court treasury and incurred rents even though he did not use the rented property.

It is noteworthy that the Kuwait Lawyers Society referred the lawyers to the Disciplinary Department of the Court of First Instance and recommended their disbarment due to their repeated professional breaches of the profession's charter.

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'Shooter' stays in jail: The detention renewal judge ordered to extend for another two weeks the detention of an officer accused of shooting a Kuwaiti citizen in Abu Fatira due to a financial dispute.

The officer submitted a waiver from the complainant to the renewal judge after he denied the charges leveled against him.

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29th Qurain Cultural Festival inaugurated

Abdulaziz Al-Babtain memorialized

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): Representing His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi inaugurated on Sunday the 29th Qurain Cultural Festival Sunday at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.

The festival will last until February 22.

The Minister said in an opening speech, "I am honored to represent the Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah to open the 29th Qurain Cultural Festival which coincides with Kuwait's National celebrations."

He praised "the efforts of the Kuwaiti pioneers who celebrated today and received the State Appreciation Award for the year 2023 in recognition of their creative cultural, artistic and media careers."

The minister added that these pioneers and their contributions left a great imprint and a distinct impact through their works that influenced the cultural, intellectual, artistic and literary movement, alongside the creators who won the State Encouragement Award in the fields of arts."

The minister noted the efforts exerted by National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) and their strategy is keen to develop and enrich intellectual production, disseminate rich knowledge, provide the appropriate climate for artistic and literary creativity, choose means of disseminating culture and fine arts, and strengthen ties and connections with Arab and foreign cultural organizations.

The Agenda of this year's Festival includes 30 activities covering a wide range of types of cultures and arts.

"Celebration of 50 Years" is a two-day interactive show that highlight the achievements of NCCAL over the past five decades.

Qurain Cultural Festival is keen to choose the personality of each version of the festival from creative people with clear finger-



Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi during his opening speech at the event.

prints in the literary and cultural field.

In addition, this year's version is named after the great late poet Abdulaziz Al-Babtain honoring his efforts and impact on the Arabic and Foreign cultural field.

A national musical performance entitled (Echo of Poets), led by Maestro Dr. Amer Jaafar, and the performance of an orchestra from Uzbekistan led by Maestro Kamal Al-Din Oren Yaf, with the participation of artist Jassim Al-Nabhan, to tell the role of the pioneer poets in Kuwait and their echo in the Arab world, who influenced our lives with their words and pens.

The band also played musical pieces of Kuwaiti songs with the participation of Kuwaiti choral voices and the distinguished participation of the Qatari Nahham Mansour Al-Muhannadi, who entertained the audience.

It also played enthusiastic pieces in a solidarity stance at the festival in support of the Palestinian cause.

The show concluded with a Kuwaiti patriotic song and the national anthem.

The festival will include many events and activities during the period of the festival and the public could enjoy the festival's events by booking the tickets through the links in NCCAL official account on Instagram.



This year's version is named after the great late poet Abdulaziz Al-Babtain.



Creators honors the State Encouragement Awards



A national musical performance.



February

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Activation starts March 1

Ministry of Health starts distribution of Afiya cards to new beneficiaries

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Ministry of Health Sunday began distributing Afiya health insurance cards to the new beneficiary segments with the date of insurance coverage or card activation for the new beneficiary segments starting from March 1.

The Assistant Undersecretary for External Health Services Affairs and Supervisor of Afiya Insurance Dr. Hisham Kalanda said after adding three new categories, there are more than 200,000 beneficiaries of health insurance services, according to law No. 71/2023.

He explained that the health insurance cards were delivered to the new categories benefiting from insurance from 18 locations identified by the Ministry of Health in all governorates of the country.

The segments to which the provisions of the new law No. 71/2023 apply after amending article 2 of the previous law No. 114/2014 are:-

1. Retired citizens registered with the Public Institution for Social Security,
2. A married Kuwaiti woman subject to the public assistance law,
3. A Kuwaiti widow subject to the public assistance law, or a Kuwaiti widow who receives her share from her deceased husband according to the law on the Public Institution for Social Security Law, and is not less than 50 years of age.

4. A divorced Kuwaiti woman who is subject to the public assistance Law and is not less than 50 years old.

Dr. Kalanda indicated that the number of people who are benefiting from this law after the new segments were

New juvenile care operation delayed

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The inauguration of the new juvenile care home complex in Sulaibiya by Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Child Affairs, marked a significant milestone four months ago. However, the commencement of operations at the facility is still pending due to unresolved technical observations, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Despite the delay, the Ministry of Social Affairs remains proactive in addressing these issues. Efforts are underway within the planning, administrative development, and social care sectors of the ministry to rectify the outstanding notes recorded on the building.

Once these technical observations are addressed and resolved, the ministry will assume responsibility for the facility. Subsequently, the gradual transfer of male inmates from the Sulaibikhat complex to the new facility will be facilitated. However, female inmates will continue to reside at the current complex until further notice.

added exceeds 40,000, and they will enjoy coverage of up to KD 15,500, adding that there are more than 400 service providers, including hospitals, centers, clinics and pharmacies affiliated with the private health sector.

Panel to tackle vital issues

KU to host Committee of Deans meet

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12:

The College of Medicine announced the thirty-seventh meeting of the Committee of Deans of Colleges of Medicine at Universities and Higher Education Institutions in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries will be held on Feb 15 at the Kuwait University, under the auspices of the KU's Acting Director, Dr. Mishari Al-Harbi, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The college said in a press statement that the committee will discuss many important issues on the agenda, including education, health, and student exchange, and also to exchange ideas and proposals that would develop and raise the level of the educational process as well as creating generations of doctors armed with medical sciences and distinguished research capabilities.

Assistant undersecretary 'appointment' cancelled

By Abdul Rahman Al-Shammari
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: In confirmation to the report published by Al-Seyassah daily in December about the State Audit Bureau's request to the Minister of Education to cancel the appointment of the legal representative working at the National Center for Educational Development for violating the law, the Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Adel Al-Adwani responded to the bureau's request and issued a decision to cancel the appointment of the assistant undersecretary for Legal Affairs, and return her to her previous work at the National Center for Educational Development.

Minister Al-Adwani appointed the director of Administrative Affairs in the Ahmadi Educational Zone to carry out the work of the assistant undersecretary for Legal Affairs in addition to his work.

Major victory for Agility

ICSID Cmte makes rare annulment of previous judgment, only 5% of annulment applications granted in the history of ICSID, Agility will refile claims against Iraq

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Three years ago, an international arbitration tribunal constituted under the auspices of the International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) denied claims filed by Agility that Iraqi officials had expropriated more than \$380 million invested by Agility in an Iraqi telecom company. On Thursday (8 February 2024), an annulment committee of ICSID upheld Agility's challenge to the original award and partially annulled it. The annulment committee agreed with Agility that the original Tribunal had erroneously shielded Iraq's actions from scrutiny, thereby failing to examine whether Iraq's actions and omissions violated the protections afforded to Agility under the BIT.

As a result of this award, Agility will now refile its claims before a freshly-constituted arbitral tribunal who will be able to determine Agility's claims.

Background to the case

In February 2017, Agility filed its claims with ICSID, a World Bank organization that serves as a forum for investor-state dispute resolution. Iraq expropriated its investment in Korek Telecom, and denied it due process and fair and equitable treatment in breach of the Kuwait-Iraq bilateral investment treaty.

Agility's indirect investment in Korek had been approved by Iraq's Communications and Media Commission in 2011 but, after many hundreds of dollars had been invested (including by way of license fees paid to the CMC), three years later in 2014 the CMC unilaterally decided to annul its own prior approval and declare Agility's transactions as null and void. That decision of the CMC was then forcibly implemented in 2019 by Iraq stripping Agility's indirect shareholding in Korek and transferring its stake to Iraqi shareholders including Sirwan Saber Barzani.

The original ICSID tribunal was comprised of Chairman Cavinder Bull and members John Beechey and Sean Murphy.

In the original ruling, the tribunal failed to exercise jurisdiction over Iraq's implementation of the CMC decision despite clearly having jurisdiction and it failed to answer whether the manner in which Iraq implemented the CMC decision violated the Kuwait-Iraq bilateral investment treaty. The original decision was obviously flawed.

As a result of the self-evident error in the original ruling, Agility applied for annulment before an ad hoc committee constituted by ICSID. The members of the annulment committee comprised Professor Ricardo Ramirez (President), Professor Hi-Tak Shin, and Dr. Jaemijn van Haersolte van Hof.

Annulment of the original ruling

On 8 February, 2024, the Annulment Committee (by majority) upheld Agility's challenge to the original award and partially annulled it. The Annulment Committee agreed with Agility that the original Tribunal had erroneously shielded Iraq's actions from scrutiny, thereby failing to examine whether Iraq's actions and omissions violated the protections afforded to Agility under the BIT. In so doing, and in failing to state the reasons on which its decision was based, the original Tribunal committed an annulable error pursuant to Article 52(1)(b), as well as Article 52(1)(e), of the ICSID Convention.

The committee stated, "By focusing solely on the 'expropriation claims that arise solely as a result of the faithful implementation of the CMC Order,' the Tribunal failed to address or scrutinize the way in which the CMC Order was implemented by Iraq and, thus, committed an excess of powers."

The Committee went further to state, "The Committee considers that this finding is reinforced by the fact that, not exercising jurisdiction over the con-

sistency with the BIT in terms of the expropriation claims had also rippling effects on the other claims raised by Agility, which ultimately rendered all of them unresolved."

As a result of this award, Agility will now have the opportunity to re-file its claims before a freshly-constituted arbitral tribunal at ICSID who will be able to determine Agility's claims relating to Iraq's expropriation of Agility's investment, its failure to treat Agility fairly and equitably, and its failure to accord Agility with full protection and security as required by the BIT.

Following the recent annulment decision, Agility said: "Three years ago, the ICSID tribunal clearly got it wrong. They shielded from review Iraqi conduct that plainly violated the basic assurances against expropriation and unfair and inequitable conduct enshrined in the bilateral investment treaty between Kuwait and Iraq; protections of which Agility was the beneficiary. We are cognizant that less than 5% of BIT awards are annulled, and are incredibly thankful to Professor Ricardo Ramirez (President) and Professor Hi-Tak Shin for their courage in annulling this patent travesty of justice."

To date, there have been four claims against Iraq filed with the ICSID. Three of those claims have been in connection with the actions of the CMC, and three stem from investments in companies based in the semi-autonomous Kurdish area of northern Iraq. Separately, Agility is also moving expeditiously to enforce its arbitral award of more than US\$1.6 billions directly against Korek, Sirwan Barzani and others.

This action is a bellwether of whether there is a true rule of law for those who invest in Iraq.



A group photo from the event.



Part of the participants in the conference.

Ministry of Information's Al-Mutairi plans overhaul of local cultural body

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12, (KUNA): Kuwait's Information Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi said on Monday he plans to transform the works of a national cultural council through putting in place a program for structural changes within the body.

The program, christened, "Managing Change," a collaborative effort with Kuwait's Boubyan Bank, entails a "complete transformation" of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) the minister said during talks with officials from the local body.

The primary goal of the initiative is to bring to light the "exceptional talent" within the ranks of the NCCAL,

the minister underlined, saying that such skills would further be honed and properly exploited when the program ultimately comes to fruition.

When putting together a strategy for broad development within the NCCAL, it is only appropriate that such a plan is "assembled internally," he explained, pointing out that extensive discussions and meticulous planning preceded the start of the initiative.

Bringing about palpable change can only be achieved when one ventures "out of their comfort zone," added the minister, citing "determination and change" as among the key attributes needed to achieve such a transformation, besides the will to succeed, he said.

Joining this initiative is tantamount to a "national and social obligation," said Boubyan Bank's chief executive Abdullah Al-Mehri, emphasizing that broad development within NCCAL is a step towards depicting national culture in a positive light.



Al-Mutairi

For more

Continued from Page 1

This is why the most important role of successful leadership has been absent from successive governments, which is - "Do not wait for leadership to be given to you; rather train and learn how to bear responsibility."

This is what it has failed to do in the past three decades, because it did not train officials to take responsibility and be creative at work, but was just content with "this is our son" and with appointing cronies.

Because of all this, when any observer looks at Kuwait and compares its condition today with the condition prior to the Iraqi invasion, they will realize that Kuwait is today a country that is isolated from the world, closed to the people, and lacks social or even national immunity.

This is due to the fact that when a society closes in on itself, sectarian and tribal diseases, bribery and quotas begin to take root. This is because the citizens fall under material and moral pressure as a result of the deprivation of one of their basic rights, which was imposed on them by a law that is completely contrary to nature.

For all this, the most important role for reform is to choose a good team of assistants, as well as for people to choose parliamentarians who are not saboteurs who destroy Kuwait.

MPs to

Continued from Page 1

The parliamentary committee tasked to investigate the items included in the grilling motions filed against former Minister of Public Works Amani Bugamaz continued their investigations in the presence of Bugamaz.

The Financial and Economic Affairs Committee discussed five bills on adjusting fees for services.

The Disabled Affairs Committee talked about its task to follow up on the enforcement of the Disabled Law by the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs (PADA) and other concerned institutions.

MPs Hamad Al-Matar, Hani Shams, Badr Nashmi, Mehalhal Al-Mudhaf and Saad Al-Khanfour sent an in-

coming letter to the Assembly to be included in the agenda of the session scheduled for Tuesday. They requested the Assembly to assign the Health, Social and Labor Affairs Committee to study the delayed registration of new medicines and medical equipment by the Ministry of Health. They pointed out that such a delay deprives the patients of their right to benefit from the new medicines and medical equipment made by the concerned companies and research centers. They said the committee's report should include the procedures and average time needed for the registration of one new medicine, reasons behind the delay and recommendations to shorten the period.

MPs Osama Al-Shaheen, Hamad Al-Obaid, Badr Nashmi, Abdullah Fahad and Shuaib Shaaban submitted a bill on amending Housing Welfare Law No. 48/1993. The bill stipulates amending Clause One of Article 29bis to allow the citizens who sold their houses three times to obtain a housing loan from Kuwait Credit Bank (KCB). The current law states that only those who sold their houses once can obtain a housing loan from KCB.

In another development, MP Muhammad Al-Mahan said he met with Chairman of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Hassan Al-Fagam to discuss the establishment of PAAET's headquarters in the South. He affirmed that preparation of the tender for the project is ongoing. He added an agreement was reached not to use the buildings of special needs schools as temporary headquarters, because these schools are needed.

He also contacted Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education Anwar Al-Hamdan to inquire about the vacant schools in the South, which can be used as temporary headquarters for PAAET. He is following up the renewal of contracts for transporting students from the South to the schools in the other parts of country.

MP Shuaib Shaaban forwarded queries to Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Yusuf Al-Sabah about the latter's visit to Al-Rabia Police Station on Feb 1, 2024. He asked if the minister ordered the detention of a securityman for being tardy, if this is a legal procedure and if the military personnel are imprisoned without investigation or trial.

According to sources, Shaaban is

preparing a two-point grilling motion against the minister; but the lawmaker has yet to confirm this.

AMIR SPONSORS,

Continued from Page 1

The ceremony was attended by National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Chief of the Supreme Judicial Council and Head of the Court of Cassation Justice Dr. Adel Majed Boursli, senior State officials, a large crowd of the graduates' families and citizens.

It kicked started with tunes of the National Anthem, Quranic verses, then the academy commander addressed the crowd with a speech, noting the national need for coping with rapid changes worldwide, calling for this purpose to be attained to overhaul the educational system, promote scientific culture, creativity, innovation and setting up the adequate environment for the progress.

In the shadow of the rapid development in the military sector, namely production of state-of-art weapons, the academy has been keen on qualifying the cadet officers to cope with challenges of military and security tasks by means of harnessing "the technology as a strategic option to serve the academic and training realms."

The national military educational system has been overhauled, "turning into a distinguished sample based on creativity, rationality, acquiring skills and expertise," he said.

Following the speech, military personnel paraded, flag of the academy was swapped among personnel. Then, the graduates were dismissed and military formations paraded.

Names of the graduates were declared by the assistant commander of the academy, Brigadier General Fahad Khaled Faisal, then, His Highness the Amir handed over the trophies to the excellent graduated officers and high-record students at the academy.

The director of educational and legal affairs, Brigadier General Yusuf Abdullah Idress, took the legal oath, declared end of the military parade amid tunes of the National Anthem.

His Highness the Amir was awarded a memorial on the occasion before he departed the ceremony venue.

Gulf solidarity in the field of healthcare response praised



Dr. Ahmad Al-Shatti with Dr. Marai Al-Qahtani and Musallam Al-Nabit during the ribbon cutting.



Dr. Ahmad Al-Shatti and Musallam Al-Nabit in a discussion with health care sector.

'Kuwait successfully overcomes COVID-19 crisis'

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Director of the Medical Emergency Department Dr. Ahmad Al-Shatti affirmed that Gulf solidarity in the field of health care helped in successfully overcoming the COVID-19 crisis without falling into the trap of pressure on health services and facilities that many countries of the world suffered from.

In a press statement issued after the opening of the GCC Quality and Safety of Medicines, Devices and Medical Care Conference yesterday, Dr. Al-Shatti expressed his pride in Kuwait passing the COVID-19 pandemic period successfully.

He indicated that Kuwait had a surplus of clinical capacity of about 25 percent compared to some developed countries around the world, which were subjected to severe pressure on health services during the pandemic period.

Dr. Al-Shatti stressed the importance of highlighting the regulatory and supervisory frameworks in ensuring the safety and security of medicine, devices and medical care, as well as the importance of strengthening oversight over them and supporting and localizing the pharmaceutical industry.

In a speech he delivered during the conference, he explained that such GCC medical conferences work to create a participatory platform to present successful experiences and exchange experiences among the GCC countries, and seek to achieve medicine security, and strengthen joint cooperation between the Gulf countries in a way that serves the health system.

The conference serves as a platform for scientific and practical discussion, during which the latest technical and scientific developments in the areas of safety and quality of medicines, devices and medical care are presented, in addition to transferring and localizing expertise, enriching knowledge with pharmaceutical education, and digitizing the



Photos by Mohammad Morsi
Photos from the event.

medical devices sector.

Furthermore, the Assistant Director General of the Primary Health Care Corporation in Qatar Musallam Al-Nabit said, "Our participation in the conference comes from our belief in the importance of enhancing the digital transformation of the medical and pharmaceutical sector in the GCC countries. We are participating in finding solutions and modern technologies in the pharmaceutical sector, medical devices and equipment, and health care that GCC countries need.

Al-Nabit highlighted the scientific and technical developments and digital transformation witnessed in the past period, which necessitate attracting important solutions and expertise from countries around the world to meet the

region's technical and technological needs in the field of medical progress, treatments, and smart systems.

Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary for Contracts and Supply in the Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia Dr. Marai Al-Qahtani said in his speech that the conference witnessed a review of Saudi Arabia's experiences, and discussions on several important axes in raising the level of supply and organization of medical supplies, in line with national strategies to achieve the security and availability of medical supplies.

He praised the level of health that Saudi Arabia has reached, stressing that prevention, public health, innovation and sustainability are four priorities that the health sector transformation program places at the forefront of its goals, and it works to expand the provision of e-health services and digital solutions and improve the quality of health services while adhering to the highest international standards in providing health services.

Dr. Al-Qahtani explained that Saudi Arabia is one of the first countries to establish independent bodies such as the Food and Drug Authority, which is concerned with monitoring, registration and safety of medicines.

It also established an electronic tracking system called "Rasd" for pharmaceutical preparations as part of its plan to contribute to achieving the New Kuwait 2030 vision by adopting the latest technical means and using them to track and trace all human medicines manufactured within Saudi Arabia or imported from abroad.

This system contributes to strengthening the authority's role in protecting society, enhancing oversight, and ensuring the safety of medicines by knowing their source and the stages they went through from manufacturing until they reach the consumers.

Dr. Al-Qahtani highlighted the establishment of the Health Holding Company, which handles about 23 health clusters and more than 300 hospitals.

He also highlighted the existence of the National Unified Purchasing Company, stressing the importance of cooperation among the GCC countries in this aspect, and unifying procurement processes for government programs for the health sector through the Gulf Health Council.

World News Roundup

Europe

Tusk heads to France

Ex-PM Stubb wins Finnish presidency

HELSINKI, Feb 12, (AP): Finland has a new president after former Prime Minister Alexander Stubb narrowly won a runoff vote Sunday for the key post in this Nordic country. Stubb, who takes over in March, will steer Finland's foreign and security policy, including integrating the NATO newcomer into the alliance's core structures.

The final tally shows Stubb, of the center-right National Coalition Party, had 51.6% of the votes, while independent candidate and former Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto from the green left got 48.4% of the votes. The two were the contenders in the second round of the election. Haavisto had served as Finland's top diplomat in 2019-2023.



Haavisto

Stubb is taking over from the hugely popular President Sauli Niinistö, whose second six-year term expires next month and who wasn't eligible for reelection.

A runoff was required after none of the original nine candidates got a majority of the votes in the first round on Jan. 28. In tradition with consensus-driven Finnish politics and no below-the-belt attacks during the campaign, Stubb visited Haavisto's election party event late Sunday after the result was clear.

Tusk heads to France, Germany: Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk was traveling to Paris and Berlin on Monday in a diplomatic effort to rebuild key alliances as fears grow that former US president Donald Trump could return to power in the United States and give Russia a free hand to expand its aggression in Europe.

The meetings on Monday come after Trump shocked many in Europe on the weekend by inviting Russia to invade any NATO member not spending enough on its own defenses.

"These comments are irresponsible and even play into Russia's hands," German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said Monday during a visit to Cyprus, remarks carried by the German dpa news agency. "And no one in our alliance can have an interest in that."

The words were particularly shocking for front-line NATO countries like Poland, which has endured Russian control and occupation, and where anxieties run high over the war just across its eastern border in Ukraine.

'Plan incompatible with human rights': The British government's plan to send some asylum-seekers on a one-way trip to Rwanda is "fundamentally incompatible" with the U.K.'s human rights obligations, a parliamentary rights watchdog said Monday, as the contentious bill returned for debate in the House of Lords.

Parliament's unelected upper chamber is scrutinizing a bill designed to overcome the U.K. Supreme Court's ruling that the Rwanda plan is illegal. The court said in November that the East African nation is not a safe country for migrants.

The Safety of Rwanda Bill pronounces the country safe, makes it harder for migrants to challenge deportation and allows the British government to ignore injunctions from the European Court of Human Rights that seek to block removals.

King Charles III attends church: King Charles III cheerfully waved to well-wishers on Sunday as he left church services near his country estate in eastern England, making his first public appearance since his cancer diagnosis was announced last week.

Wearing a tan overcoat against the February chill and carrying a rolled-up umbrella, Charles was joined by Queen Camilla at StMary Magdalene Church, just a few hundred yards from Sandringham House where the king is recuperating after his first treatment for an unspecified form of cancer.

The 20,000-acre Sandringham estate, some 110 miles (180 kilometers) north of London, is a favorite refuge of the king's and offers a place of shelter where he can isolate from the risk of infection.

Fire breaks out at water park: A fire broke out Monday at a waterpark under construction at one of the Nordic region's biggest amusement parks, sending a huge plume of black smoke drifting over Goteberg, Sweden's second-largest city.

The blaze spread across several yet-to-be-opened waterslides at Liseberg park, and police and fire officials could not immediately say whether there were any casualties.

The fire department urged people in the area affected by the smoke to "go indoors and close doors, windows and ventilation" and listen to the local radio.

Shooting at Greek shipping co kills 4: Three people were fatally shot Monday in the offices of a shipping company near Athens and the suspected gunman also took his life as police special forces prepared to confront him, authorities said.

The shooting occurred in the shipping company office in Glyfada, a seaside suburb of the capital. The alleged gunman, an unidentified company employee, entered the building armed with a shotgun and handgun, according to several witnesses.

Police spokesperson Consantia Dimoglidou said the owner of the company was among the victims.

"The suspected perpetrator, who worked for the family, was found dead in a different area from the three deceased people at the company. He had his assault weapon next to him and appears to have shot himself in the head," Dimoglidou said.

She said police and special forces officers had entered the building before the suspected shooter was found and had been making sure other employees were moved safely out of the building.

Greek authorities rescue 84 migrants: Greek authorities found 84 migrants arriving by sea and arrested four individuals, accusing them of being the traffickers that transported them, the coast guard said Sunday.

Both incidents occurred early Saturday, it said. In the first incident, the coast guard was alerted to a boat drifting, due to mechanical failure, at sea, 46 nautical miles (85 kilometers) south of the island of Crete.

A Greek Navy frigate found the boat and rescued a total of 72 individuals, 58 of them men and 14 minors, transporting them to Crete.



National Coalition Party candidate Alexander Stubb celebrates after winning the second round of the presidential election during an election party night, on Feb 11 in Helsinki. Stubb has narrowly won Finland's presidential election runoff on Sunday against former Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto. (AP)

Politics

GOP works to recruit female, minority candidates

Will Biden, Trump face one another in debates?

WASHINGTON, Feb 12, (AP): Nikki Haley is challenging Donald Trump to debate. Trump is challenging Joe Biden to debate. And Biden is laughing Trump off, at least publicly.

But there are real questions about whether any of them will confront each other on a stage this year.

Biden's reelection campaign has repeatedly declined to commit to joining debates with Trump, his likely opponent in the November general election. Trump, meanwhile, has feuded with the Republican National Committee and refused to join its primary debates. In 2020, he objected to the rules of the nonpartisan commission that has hosted general election debates since 1976.

While any disputes could be resolved by the fall, the uncertainty reflects how both Biden and Trump are increasingly choosing to reach voters in environments they control at the expense of nonpartisan interviews or events where they might face unfriendly questions. Both the 81-year-old Biden and 77-year-old Trump have at times confused names and countries and face widespread doubts from voters about their age and readiness.

There's also lingering animosity over how their debates went four years ago.

Chaotic

Sen Chris Coons of Delaware, a longtime Biden confidant, noted that he was in the room for the chaotic September 2020 debate when Trump repeatedly interrupted Biden and moderator Chris Wallace.

Lowering his voice to a whisper, Coons said: "That was bad."

He then questioned whether a general election debate this year would be worth it.

"It's challenging to imagine, given that the RNC and the Trump campaign have said they will have nothing to do with the Commission on Presidential Debates and given his previous conduct, it's hard to imagine it being productive," Coons said. "But this is ultimately a judgment call for President

Biden."

Debates are not mandatory, but they are considered a traditional test for candidates where they have no aids or teleprompters. The first televised presidential debate was in 1960 between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy, but it didn't become a recurring event until 1976 when the League of Women Voters began sponsoring presidential debates. They are now sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates, a nonprofit established in 1987 that outlines the rules for each debate and selects the location, dates and moderators.

Frank Fahrenkopf, co-chair of the commission, says it's too early to entirely write off the prospect of debates in 2024.

Expect

"There's a history of candidates not being happy," he said. "Despite that, it's been part of American culture since 1976. There's no question the American people expect the men and women who want to be president of the United States to appear on the stage and answer questions and debate."

Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.), a member of the Biden campaign's national advisory board, also said Biden and Trump should debate.

"They're about democracy," Khanna said of the debates. "And it's important for the American people to understand the different visions of the candidates. Absolutely, the president should debate in the three fall debates that are traditional, and Donald Trump should debate and not be afraid of that."

While many political observers are looking ahead to a Biden-Trump rematch, Haley is still trying to get the former president's attention in the Republican primary. The former UN ambassador has challenged Trump to "man up" for what she calls the "ultimate mental competency test," referencing the exam for early onset dementia and other cognitive disorders that he took while in the White House. Her campaign has had some-

one dressed in an inflatable chicken costume appear at events holding a sign reading, "Trump Too Chicken To Debate."

But the Republican National Committee stopped scheduling primary debates after the fourth debate in Alabama in December. The last one-on-one debate between Haley and Florida Gov Ron DeSantis was hosted by CNN on Jan 10 in Iowa.

Sen Mitt Romney of Utah, who was the GOP's 2012 nominee and participated in three debates against President Barack Obama, said "of course" Trump and Biden should debate.

Also:

WASHINGTON: House Republicans are critical of diversity and inclusion programs within the federal government and elsewhere, but they see recruiting women and minority candidates, along with veterans, as key to expanding their slim majority in November.

Rep. Richard Hudson, the chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, recently listed for reporters a slew of candidates that he described as fitting the "formula" for the GOP expanding their ranks in November.

There was Pransath Reddy, a cancer doctor who immigrated to the US from India and joined the military after the Sept 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. He's running for a congressional seat in northeast Kansas. Then there was Alison Esposito, a gay former police detective running for a seat in New York.

Another example Hudson cited was George Logan, whose parents came to the US from Guatemala and is running for a seat in Connecticut. Also, there's Kevin Lincoln, an African-American and Hispanic mayor in Stockton, Calif., and Mayra Flores, who is making another run. She made history by becoming the first Mexican-born congresswoman, but she subsequently lost in the 2022 mid-terms.

"These are not run-of-the-mill generic Republicans," Hudson said.



People wait outside Lakewood Church, Feb. 11, 2024, in Houston, after a reported shooting during a Spanish church service. (AP)



Kirby



Austin

America

'Officer killed in stabbing': A New Mexico police officer died after he was stabbed by a suspect, who was shot and killed by a witness to the attack on Sunday evening, police said.

Las Cruces Patrol Officer Jonah Hernandez was stabbed at least once shortly before 5 p.m. after responding to a report of a trespasser on South Valley Drive, the Las Cruces Police Department said in a statement posted on social media.

A witness to the attack used the officer's police radio to call for help after the stabbing, but Hernandez died after he was transported to MountainView Regional Medical Center in Las Cruces, police said.

The suspect, a 29-year-old man, was believed to have been shot and killed by the same witness, according to police, who did not release the suspect's identity pending notification of his next of kin. (AP)

Woman killed in shooting: A woman in a trenchcoat opened fire with a long gun Sunday inside celebrity pastor Joel Osteen's megachurch in Texas, sending worshippers rushing to find safety while two off-duty officers confronted and killed the shooter. Two other people were shot and injured, including a 5-year-old boy who was in critical condition.

The violence erupted shortly before the Houston church's 2 pm Spanish service was set to begin, just as the rest of the country was preparing for the Super Bowl. The woman entered the enormous Lakewood Church - a building with a 16,000-person capacity that was previously an arena for the NBA's Houston Rockets -- with the boy who was later hurt in the shootout with police. A man in his 50s was also wounded.

Details of the confrontation remain unclear in the hours after the tragedy, and police have not released the woman's identity or a possible motive. It's also unknown what relationship, if any, the woman had to the boy, and who actually shot him and the man. (AP)

Austin hospitalized: US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin delegated his duties to deputy secretary of defense, Kathleen Hicks, after he was hospitalized, the Pentagon said.

Pentagon spokesman Major General Patrick Ryder said in a press conference that Secretary Austin transferred the functions and duties of the office on Sunday to

the Deputy Secretary of Defense who has assumed functions and duties.

He added that the United States Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the White House and Congress have been informed and that Secretary Austin remained in



Poll workers empty the ballot boxes at polling station 317 in the Carl von Ossietzky-Gymnasium during the vote count in Berlin, on Feb 11. A partial rerun of Germany's 2021 election in Berlin brought a decline in support for the governing parties and cost one of them a seat in parliament, but led to no significant overall change, official results showed Monday. (AP)

hospital and receiving treatment.

On December 22, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin underwent surgery which led to infections and serious complications and was hospitalized again in January but the White House was not notified until three days later.

The failure to notify the White House and the public raised strong criticism, which led the White House to conduct a review of protocols and the Secretary of Defense issued a statement announcing his readiness to take responsibility. (KUNA)

Kirby gets expanded role: John Kirby, President Joe Biden's national security spokesman, is getting an expanded role at the White House, according to a US official.

Kirby will have a new title, White House national security communications adviser, and will be named an assistant to the president, the official said Sunday. The official was not authorized to speak about an appointment that has not been publicly announced and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. Details of the expanded role were first reported by Reuters.

Kirby came to the White House in 2022 as the National Security Council coordinator for strategic communications, not long after Karine Jean-Pierre was named White House press secretary, after the departure of former press secretary Jen Psaki. Previously, the NSC didn't have anyone in such a role. (AP)

Lat/Am

Rights activist held

Venezuela defends its military buildup

CARACAS, Venezuela, Feb 12, (AP): The government of Venezuela accused neighboring Guyana Sunday of granting illegal oil exploration concessions in territory the two nations are disputing. Venezuela said it would reserve the right to take any diplomatic actions necessary.

The comments Sunday came after Guyana said Saturday that it has satellite imagery showing Venezuelan military movements near the South American country's eastern border with Guyana.

Venezuela's statement did not deny Guyana's claim of a military and infrastructure buildup. Rather, it said it was within its rights to beef up its border forces.

Venezuela claimed Guyana had granted "illegal oil concessions ... in a maritime area that is indisputably Venezuelan."

Oil giant ExxonMobil has said it will keep ramping up production in offshore fields off Guyana despite the escalation of the territorial dispute.

The two sides have feuded over border lines for decades. Venezuela has been laying claim to the mineral-rich Essequibo region, which covers about two thirds of Guyana's surface area.

Both sides accused the other of breaching a peace agreement signed in the Caribbean in December to ease tensions over border demarcation lines.

Under the Argyle Agreement signed on the island of St. Vincent in December, the two countries agreed not to use force or to threaten each other. The talks were brokered by Brazil and Caribbean governments.

The latest developments came hours after satellite images posted by the US Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) showed Venezuela is extending its base on Ankoko Island, half of which Venezuela seized from Guyana in the mid-1960s, and nearby Punta Barima, less than 50 miles (80 kilometers) from the Guyana border.

Improvement

The images showed significant infrastructure improvement of roads and other facilities near the two areas, the CSIS said. Foreign Secretary **Robert Persaud** noted that "Guyana will continue to respect the Argyle Declaration and hopes that Venezuela will do the same."

Guyana argues that an 1899 international boundary commission settled the border demarcation once and for all.

But for more than 60 years Venezuela has accused the commission of cheating it out of the Essequibo region.

Guyana has taken the issue to the World Court in the Netherlands for a definitive ruling, while Venezuela has said it prefers direct bilateral talks as the way forward.

On Friday, the Venezuelan defense ministry accused Guyana of threatening the St. Vincent agreement by irresponsible actions and media deception, maintaining that the "Essequibo is ours."

It also said that ExxonMobil, which is producing 645,000 barrels of offshore oil daily from Guyana, is collaborating with the government and the US military to exploit oil and gas resources in waters claimed by Venezuela.

Guyanese President Irfaan Ali is expected to meet his Venezuelan counterpart, Nicolás Maduro in March for a second summit on the border issue.



Human rights activist held: The administration of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has arrested human rights activist Rocio San Miguel, the government confirmed Sunday.

Tarek William Saab, Venezuela's attorney general, wrote in his social media accounts that San Miguel had been arrested on charges of conspiracy against Maduro, but did not offer any details of the supposed case against her.

San Miguel, 57, is a lawyer and rights activist who has specialized in studying Venezuela's shadowy, often corrupt armed forces.

Saab claimed San Miguel had been linked to a plot to kill Maduro or other officials and attack the armed forces.

San Miguel was arrested Friday at an airport in Caracas, and rights activists say they do not know where she was taken.

"We do not know where she is now," said Gonzalo Himob, a leader of the rights and civic group Foro Penal, which estimates the Maduro regime is holding 261 political prisoners.



Woman killed in apparent crossfire: An American woman and a man from Belize have been killed in what appears to have been a dispute between drug dealers at a beach club in the Mexican resort city of Tulum, officials confirmed Sunday.

Prosecutors in the Caribbean coast state of Quintana Roo stressed the American woman had no connection to an alleged drug dealer also killed in the shooting Friday night. Prosecutors didn't provide the woman's name or hometown, and the US Embassy did not respond to a request for comment.

The woman may have simply been caught in the crossfire. Prosecutors denied reports in local media that the two may have been a couple, saying a photo of the Belizean man showed him with a completely different woman.

The Central American country of Belize shares a border with Mexico on the Caribbean coast. Tulum is located south of Cancun and Playa del Carmen, closer to Belize.



Plane crash kills one: A plane carrying four Canadian skydivers came down on a beach Sunday in southern Mexico, killing one man who was on the beach.

There was no immediate information on why the plane went down, but it appeared to have made a forced landing and was largely intact.

However, it fell in a relatively populated section of the beach at the Pacific coast town of Puerto Escondido, and landed almost on top of the victim, whose nationality was not disclosed.

The four Canadians and one Mexican man aboard the small aircraft were removed from the plane and taken for treatment. The Oaxaca state civil defense office said they were in "stable" condition.

There was no immediate information on the names or hometowns of the Canadians.

The office said the dead man's wife had been nearby but was unharmed.



Indonesia's Presidential candidate Ganjar Pranowo (center), waves to his supporters during a campaign rally in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia, on Jan 28. Indonesians on Feb 14 will elect the successor to popular President Joko Widodo, who is serving his second and final term. It is a three-way race for the presidency among current Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto and two former governors, Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo. (AP)

Asia

Philippine landslide death toll rises to 54

Myanmar military govt activates conscription law

BANGKOK, Feb 12, (AP): Myanmar's military government on Saturday activated for the first time a decade-old conscription law that makes young men and women subject to at least two years of military service if called up, effective immediately. The announcement of the measure on state television amounts to a major, though tacit, admission that the army is struggling to contain the nationwide armed resistance against its rule.

Under the 2010 People's Military Service Law, passed under a previous military government, men aged 18 to 45 and women 18 to 35 can be drafted into the armed forces for two years, extendable to five years during national emergencies. The upper age of people in the population at large subject to conscription is 35 for men and 27 for women, and the higher age ranges apply to men and women in certain professional categories, such as medical doctors and engineers, and their service term is three years.

Ruling

The current ruling military council, called the State Administration Council, came to power in 2021 after ousting the elected civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

The law has been activated in the wake of the army's biggest setbacks since the countrywide conflict erupted after the takeover. A surprise offensive launched last October by an alliance of armed ethnic organization in less than three months captured a large swathe of territory in northeastern Myanmar along the Chinese border.

The rout inspired resistance forces in other parts of the country to launch their own attacks. In recent weeks, fighting in the western state of Rakhine caused hundreds of state security personnel to flee into neighboring Bangladesh.

The army faces two enemies, the pro-democracy forces formed after the army takeover, and better-trained and equipped ethnic minority armed groups that have been battling for greater autonomy for decades. There are alliances between the resistance groups.

Evading conscription is punishable by three to five years in prison and a fine. Members of religious orders are exempt, while civil servants and students can be granted temporary deferments.

Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, the spokesperson of the military government, said in the statement phoned to MRTV state television that the law has been applied

due to Myanmar's current situation.

He said activating the law could help preventing war through a show of strength to enemies.

"So what we want to say is that the responsibility of national defense is not only the responsibility of the soldier. It is the responsibility of all people in all parts of the country. National security is everyone's responsibility. That is why I would like to tell everyone to serve with pride under the enacted law of people's military service," Zaw Min Tun said.

Also: **MANILA, Philippines:** The death toll from a massive landslide that hit a gold-mining village in the southern Philippines has risen to 54 with 63 people still missing, authorities said Sunday.

The landslide hit the mountain vil-

lage of **Masara in Davao de Oro** province on Tuesday night after weeks of torrential rains.

Davao de Oro's provincial government said in a Facebook post that 54 bodies had been recovered. At least 32 residents survived with injuries but 63 remained missing, it said. Among those missing were gold miners who had been waiting in two buses to be driven home when the landslide struck and buried them.

The search operation has been hampered by poor weather and fears of more landslides. More than 1,100 families have been moved to evacuation centers for their safety, disaster response officials said.

The area has been swamped by heavy rains in the weeks before the landslide struck. Earthquakes also damaged houses and buildings in the region in recent months, officials said.



In this Feb. 9, 2024 handout photo from Municipality of Monkayo, rescuers recover bodies at the landslide-hit village of Maco in Davao de Oro province, southern Philippines. The death toll from a massive landslide that hit a gold-mining village in the southern Philippines has risen to 54 with 63 people still missing, authorities said on Feb 11. (AP)



Touray



Wigwe

Africa

Nigeria mourns Wigwe's death: Nigerian leaders Sunday mourned the death of the CEO of one of the country's largest banks after he and five others were killed Friday in a helicopter crash in Southern California's Mojave Desert.

Herbert Wigwe, chief executive of Access Bank, and his wife and son were among the six people on board when the aircraft went down shortly after 10 p.m. near Interstate 15. All six people were killed, including two pilots and Bamofin Abimbola Ogunbanjo, former chair of NGX Group, the Nigerian stock exchange.

Nigeria's president, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, grieved the deaths in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"Their passing is an overwhelming tragedy that is shocking beyond comprehension," he wrote. "I pray for the peaceful repose of the departed and ask God Almighty to comfort the multitude of Nigerians who are grieving and the families of the deceased at this deeply agonizing moment."

The death of Wigwe, 57; his wife, Chizoba; and son, Chizi, shocked many in Nigeria and in the banking sector. He was widely seen as an industry leader, having been involved in two of the country's biggest banks, including Guaranty Trust Bank, where he was previously executive director. (AP)



Ghana artifacts returned: Seven royal artifacts looted 150 years ago by British colonial forces from Ghana's ancient Asante kingdom and kept by a United States museum have been returned and presented to the kingdom on Thursday, the latest of a series of stolen treasured items being repatriated to several African countries.

Looted from British-colonized Ghana in the 19th century before being transferred to Fowler Museum at the University of California, Los Angeles, in the 1960s, the artifacts included an elephant tail whisk, an ornamental chair made of wood, leather and iron, two gold stool ornaments, a gold necklace and two bracelets.

"We are here ... (because) the white man came into Asanteman to loot and destroy it," Otumfuo Osei Tutu, the king of the Asante kingdom in Ghana's largest city of Kumasi, said at a presentation ceremony that brought joy and relief to the kingdom.

After decades of resistance from European and Western governments and museums,

of reach. (AP)



Nations hurry to leave bloc: The coup-hit



Asante King Otumfuo Osei Tutu II greets delegates from the Fowler Museum at the Manhyia Palace in Kumasi, Ghana, on Feb 8. Seven royal artifacts which were looted by British forces from Ghana's ancient Asante kingdom in the 19th century were returned by UCLA's Fowler Museum, the latest of a series of stolen treasured items now being repatriated to several African countries. (AP)

nations of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger in haste to quit West Africa's regional bloc without following its rules of exit, the body said as its ministers met to deliberate on growing division and political tension in the region.

At the ministerial meeting in the Nigerian capital of Abuja, the bloc known as ECOWAS faulted claims made by the countries' juntas that their unprecedented decision to withdraw their membership was because of the coup-related sanctions the bloc imposed on their countries instead of supporting their development and peace efforts.

The three juntas announced late last month that they were quitting ECOWAS after the coups they staged soured ties with the bloc and international partners.

It's the first time in the bloc's nearly 50 years of existence that its members have withdrawn in such a manner. Analysts say it's an unprecedented blow to the group that could threaten efforts to return democracy and help stabilize the increasingly fragile region.

The president of the ECOWAS Commission, **Omar Alieu Touray**, told reporters at the meeting that the countries' "hasty decision" did not follow the requirements stated by the association's protocol, including a one-year notice period before such a process could be completed.

"More importantly, the three member states have not really reflected on the implications of this decision on the citizens," Touray said. (AP)

gold prices stabilize at \$2,024 per ounce

Gold prices stabilized at \$2,024 per ounce by the end of last week's trading, accompanied by a slight dip in futures prices, as reported by Kuwaiti company Dar Al-Sabaek, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In the local market, the report indicated that 24-karat gold was priced at 20.2 dinars (approximately \$61.60) per gram, while 22-karat gold stood at 18.5 dinars (around

\$56.4) per gram. Silver closed at 268 dinars (about \$817) per kilogram.

It's important to note that an ounce, a standard unit of mass measurement, equates to 28.349 grams, but in the realm of precious metals, it is typically considered as 31.103 grams.

The report highlighted a 0.45 percent decline in gold futures contracts for April delivery, set-

ting at \$2,038 per ounce.

Traders await the release of the US consumption index data scheduled for Tuesday, which is expected to influence the future trajectory of gold prices.

Analysts are closely monitoring the anticipated US interest rate cut, slated to commence in March, which is expected to bolster gold prices post-implementation.

Kuwait's GDP drops by 11.7% in Q3 2023

Data released by the Central Administration of Statistics reveals a significant downturn in Kuwait's gross domestic product (GDP) during the third quarter of 2023, plunging by approximately 11.7% compared to the same period in the previous year, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to the report, the GDP value at current prices plummeted to 12.7 billion dinars in Q3 2023, down from 14.3 billion di-

nars in Q3 2022. This decline is largely attributed to a staggering 22.1% decrease in the value added of the oil sector, propelled by a downturn in global oil prices.

However, amidst this downturn, the non-oil sector witnessed a 2.4% growth at current prices in Q3 2023 compared to the same quarter of 2022, reaching a value of 6.2 billion dinars. Nevertheless, the GDP at constant prices experienced a 3.7%

decline in Q3 2023, totaling 9.8 billion dinars, with the oil sector's added value decreasing by 9% while the non-oil sector's added value expanded by 2.8%.

Analyzing specific economic activities, oil and natural gas extraction activities and related services continued to dominate GDP contributions at current prices, albeit with a reduced relative share from 57.6% to 50.8% compared to the previous year.

Market Movements

12-02-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts				
SAUDI	-	Tadawul	+86.85	12,295.91	PHILIPPINES	-	PSEI	-42.34	6,807.82
UAE	-	DFM	+27.10	4,210.96	PAKISTAN	-	KSE 100	-1,763.13	61,279.32
JAPAN	-	Nikkei	+34.14	36,897.42					
EGYPT	-	EGX 30	+295.68	28,494.72					

Business

Consumer prices in China suffered biggest drop since 2009

US service sector picks up, labor market maintains resilience

By National Bank of Kuwait

Highlights

- US service sector growth picked up in January, with the non-manufacturing PMI increasing to 53.4 from 50.5 in December.
- Data in the last two weeks continues to illustrate a robust US labor market. The unemployment rate has remained below 4% for two consecutive years while wage growth continues to run ahead of the 3-3.5% range.
- Consumer prices in China suffered the biggest drop since 2009, with the CPI dropping by 0.8% y/y in January. The weak figure is likely due to distorted figures as January 2023 coincided with the Lunar New Year.
- The Reserve Bank of Australia held its policy interest rate steady at 4.35%, adding that overall inflation is still high at 4.1% however is on track to reach the 2-3% target band by 2025.
- The greenback is trading at a 2-month high and has gained significant strength against the Japanese yen which has suffered a 6.2% drop year-to-date. Meanwhile the euro and pound are trading just below the 1.08 and 1.27 marks.

United States

Service Sector Picks Up, Labor Market Maintains Resilience

Growth in the US services sector picked up in January amid an increase in new orders and a rebound in employment. However, suppliers fell behind, resulting in input prices rising to an 11-month high. The Institute for Supply Management said its non-manufacturing PMI increased to 53.4 last month from 50.5 in December, indicating growth in an industry which accounts for more than two-thirds of the economy.

The data is in-line with the prior week's employment figures which revealed acceleration in January's job growth and wages by the most in nearly two years. The unemployment rate has remained below 4% for two consecutive years - the longest stretch in more than 50 years. Meanwhile, wage growth is running ahead of the 3-3.5% range that policymakers view as consistent with the Federal Reserve's 2% inflation target. Overall, Janu-

Rates - 11th February 2023

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0782	1.0721	1.0794	1.0782	1.0715	1.0900	1.0825
GBP	1.2631	1.2515	1.2642	1.2619	1.2530	1.2780	1.2635
JPY	148.33	147.62	149.57	149.30	147.95	151.80	147.29
CHF	0.8662	0.8657	0.8762	0.8745	0.8700	0.8900	0.8668

ary's powerful job report eliminated prospects of a rate cut next month, and the odds of a May cut were lowered.

More labor data revealed the number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits fell slightly more than expected last week, illustrating underlying labor market strength despite a recent surge in layoffs mostly in the technology industry. Initial claims decreased by 9,000 to 218,000 in the week ending February 3rd, according to the Labor Department. Continuing claims dropped to 1.87 million in the week that ended on January 27th. While the labor market has proved remarkably robust in recent months, powering consumer spending, recent high-profile job-cut announcements from companies across the tech industry may signal slower demand for workers in the coming months.

Asia-Pacific

China Sinks Deeper into Deflation

Consumer prices in China slid deeper into deflationary territory last

month, suffering the biggest drop since the global recession in 2009. The country's Consumer Price Index dropped by 0.8% y/y in January, marking the steepest fall since September 2009 and marks a fourth consecutive month of decline.

The National Bureau of Statistics attributes the weak figure to the strong demand in January 2023 for the Lunar New Year when CPI rose 2.1%. This year the Lunar New Year falls in February, causing distortions to the base. Beijing is currently struggling to revive both consumer and investor confidence as it faces many challenges, including a real estate slump, stock market meltdown and weaker exports. Nevertheless, many analysts believe consumer prices are likely to rise from February onwards.

Reserve Bank of Australia cites "Uncertain" Outlook

The Reserve Bank of Australia held its policy interest rate steady at 4.35% in a widely anticipated decision which followed 13 consecutive rate hikes since 2022. It noted that goods inflation was lower than forecast, but that services inflation remained high, with overall inflation at 4.1%.

RBA Governor Michelle Bullock held a press conference after the meeting stating that the country was on track to get inflation within the bank's 2% to 3% target band by 2025, and to reach the midpoint of that range by 2026.

Bullock added that while there were "encouraging signs," the RBA remains "vigilant" to upside risks that would make it difficult to achieve its target. In its statement announcing its decision, the RBA said it didn't exclude further rises. "We're not ruling in or out anything," Bullock said. "We are focused on bringing inflation down. We still think the risks are balanced but, as you would know, the further out we go with our forecasts, the more uncertainty there is around them."

Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30780.

Boursa Kuwait experiences positive growth amid rising trading activity

General index jumps 77.5 points to 7,333

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Kuwait Stock Exchange concluded its trading session yesterday on a high note, with the general index surging by 77.5 points to reach 7,333 points, marking a 1% increase.

A total of 243 million shares were traded through 14,404 cash deals, amounting to 80.4 million dinars (approximately 245 million dollars). This led to a rise in the market value of the stock exchange to 542 million dinars (1.76 billion dollars), reaching 43.307 billion dinars compared to the previous session's 42.849 billion dinars.

Notably, the main market index climbed 24.3 points to reach 5,943 points, reflecting a 0.4% increase, with 103 million shares traded through 6,856 cash transactions worth 20 million dinars (about 61 million dollars). Additionally, the primary market index rose by

96.5 points, reaching 8,058 points, a 1.2% increase, with 139.6 million shares traded through 7,548 transactions valued at 60.4 million dinars (approximately 184 million dollars).

The Main 50 index witnessed a 0.2% increase, rising by 13 points to reach 5,875 points, with trading activity involving 75.4 million shares through 4,235 cash deals worth 16 million dinars (around 48.8 million dollars).

The session observed a positive performance in 9 sectors, notably in consumer services, which surged by approximately 2.41%.

Conversely, 3 sectors, primarily consumer goods, experienced a decline of 11.66%, while the healthcare sector remained stable. Among individual stocks, 70 saw gains, with "Nakheel" leading the pack with a remarkable increase of 126.97%, while 47 stocks, led by "Unicap," declined by about 8.85%. Meanwhile, the prices of 6 stocks remained unchanged.

Trading activity was dominated by "KFH" stock, which rose by 2.19%, accounting for a volume of 33 million shares and liquidity of 26.05 million dinars.

'SMEs vital for Kuwait's progress'

Kuwaiti government praised for supporting private sector

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Bashar Hussein Al-Qattan, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Green Flame Gas Company, has expressed gratitude for the Kuwaiti government's commitment to fostering the private sector, in line with the directives of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Sabah Al-Salem, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

He emphasized the importance of addressing challenges faced by small and medium enterprises (SMEs), highlighting their pivotal role in advancing Kuwait's development and positioning it among developed nations.

Al-Qattan underscored the Prime Minister's vision by advocating for the opening of work visas to reputable companies engaged in projects aimed at elevating Kuwait's stature within the Gulf and Arab world.

He emphasized the significance of facilitating visa issuance and streamlining security procedures for certain nationalities, enabling Kuwaiti companies to recruit skilled workers, engineers, and technicians from their branches

across the region. These individuals would undergo rigorous technical and professional training in Kuwait, ultimately becoming ambassadors for Kuwaiti companies globally.

Commending the government's decision to permit commercial visits to Kuwaiti companies and hotels, Al-Qattan highlighted existing challenges, such as security approvals and restrictive university qualification requirements hindering talent acquisition.

He called for the digitalization of commercial visit applications, akin to the online process implemented in the hotel sector, to enhance efficiency and accessibility for private sector entities.

Al-Qattan emphasized the vital role of private sector companies as catalysts for economic growth, contributing substantially to national income and the general budget. Recognizing their pivotal role in Kuwait's journey to become a global commercial and financial hub, he emphasized the importance of leveraging the country's strategic location in the region.

'50% of global growth comes from China and India'

WGS creates new priorities for governments

DUBAI, Feb 12, (KUNA): Chairman of the World Governments Summit (WGS) Mohammad Al-Gergawi said on Monday that 50 percent of global growth comes from China and India and that those countries would shape the future of global economic growth.

Al-Gergawi added during the opening speech of the WGS 2024 in Dubai that the global economy compass point to China and India, the rest of Asia-Pacific region would contribute up to 25 percent of global growth, meaning that more than 70 percent of global economic growth will come from the East, questioning how can humanity cooperate to benefit from this rising global economic engine.

The summit, which began today, focused on opportunities and vast areas of growth and

development as governments always need a pause to arrange their priorities and direct their energies towards building a better future for the upcoming generations.

The participants of the summit included 85 important international organization, 120 governments, more than 25 heads of state and government, 700 heads of major international companies and more than 4,000 specialists and officials.

Al-Gergawi reviewed four indicators of positives the world experiences today, the first of which is the doubling of human life and health, as human lifespan has doubled in the last 200 years.

The second indicator was the continuous decline in poverty, the number of poor countries has shrunk by half in just 20 years,

and poverty rates have been reduced by 50 percent in 25 other countries.

The third of indicator was the large breakthrough of knowledge, where 120,000 new books get published every month and 6 million articles are posted on blogs daily, illiteracy has been eradicated in 86 percent of people, and the world has registered 33 million patents within one decade, and education has become transcontinental, regardless of age and time.

The fourth indicator was the easy interconnection and ability to travel, the creation of hundreds of millions of new jobs and connected millions of people to each other, as the size of the global logistics sector has reached about eight trillion dollars.

Al Gergawi expressed his hope that The WGS would achieve ex-

ceptional success in creating new priorities for governments and redirect the world's attention towards new and great opportunities that benefit everyone.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received a letter that included an invitation to attend the summit from the UAE's Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammad Al-Maktoum.

Kuwait News Agency was represented by Director General Dr. Fatma Al-Salem.

The summit represents a valuable opportunity for the region to explore future opportunities, stay up to date and catch up with global developments in various sectors, and reduce the gap with the world in vital fields, especially the scientific and technological fields.

Panel stresses on economic obstacles

Kuwait participates in 113th session of Arab League Economic Committee

CAIRO, Feb 12, (KUNA): The economic committee of the Economic and Social Council of the Arab League held meetings on Monday in preparation for the councils 113th session set to be held on Thursday.

Consultant Muhammad Ghash, Jordan representative and meeting director, affirmed in his opening statement of the meeting the importance of overcoming the obstacles that hinder economy, investments and developments in different sectors of the Arab society.

He added that the economic and social council made immense developments in the economic field by cooperating with related regional and international economic mechanisms.

The committee will discuss the agenda of the 113th session, which includes the hardships of Palestinians and a joint Arab economic workforce, and a follow-up of the councils decisions during its previous session.

The two-day meeting will also discuss the economic and social file of the Arab League Council at the sum-

mit level in its next 33rd session scheduled in Bahrain in 2024, which will discuss the topic of the free trade area in the Arab area and the Arab Customs Unions developments.

The meeting's agenda also includes discussions on investments in Arab countries, the two Arab electricity common market agreements, the 2024 unified Western economic report, and the amended Arab agreement of taxes and customs duties exemptions on Arab air transport.

Tunisia's proposal of establishing an Arab Housing and Development bank will be discussed, as well as a number of topics received from the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development.

The meetings of the Social Committee of the Council were held on Sunday, to prepare for the 113th session in regards to the social file.

Kuwait is partaking in the meetings with a delegation headed by the acting assistant undersecretary for economic affairs Talal Al-Nimsh and several other officials.

External shocks likely to trigger downturn

Majority of analysts predict no recession in US this year

WASHINGTON, Feb 12, (AP): Just a quarter of business economists and analysts expect the United States to fall into recession this year. And any downturn would likely result from an external shock - such as a conflict involving China - rather than from domestic economic factors such as higher interest rates.

But respondents to a National Association of Business Economics survey released Monday still expect year-over-year inflation to exceed 2.5% -- above the Federal Reserve's 2% target - through 2024.

A year ago, most forecasters expected the U.S. economy - the world's largest - to slide into a recession as the Fed raised interest rates to fight a burst of inflation that began in 2021. The Fed hiked its benchmark rate 11 times from March 2022 to July 2023, taking it to the highest level in more than two decades.

Inflation has fallen from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022 to 3.4% in December. But the economy unexpectedly kept growing and employers kept hiring and resisting layoffs despite higher borrowing costs.

The combination of tumbling inflation and resilient growth has raised hopes - reflected in the NABE survey - that the Fed can achieve a so-called soft landing: vanquishing inflation without the pain of a recession.

"Panelists are more optimistic about the outlook for the domestic economy," said Sam Khater, chief economist at mortgage giant Freddie Mac and chair of the association's economic policy survey committee.

The Fed has stopped raising rates and has signaled that it expects to reduce rates three times this year.

But a growing share of business forecasters worry that the Fed is keeping rates unnecessarily high: 21% in the NABE survey called the Fed's policy "too restrictive," up from the 14% who expressed that view in August. Still, 70% say the Fed has it "about right."

What worries respondents are the chances of a conflict between China and Taiwan even if it isn't an outright war: 63% consider such an outcome at least a "moderate probability." Likewise, 97% see at least a moderate chance that conflict in the Middle East will drive oil prices above \$90 a barrel (from around \$77 now) and disrupt global shipping.

Another 85% are worried about political instability in the United States before or after the Nov. 5 presidential election.

The respondents are also increasingly concerned about U.S. government finances: 57% say budget policies - which have created a huge gap between what the government spends and what it collects in taxes - need to be more disciplined, up from 54% in August.

They say the most important objectives of government budget policy should be promoting medium- to long-term growth (cited by 45% of respondents) and reducing the federal deficit and debts (42%). Coming in a distant third - and cited by 7% -- is the goal of reducing income inequality.

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait announces strong financial performance in 2023 with 40 percent increase in net profit to KD 45.2 million

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is pleased to announce strong financial results for the financial year 2023. The Bank has demonstrated outstanding performance, reflecting its resilience and dedication to customers and stakeholders.

Key Financial Highlights

ABK reported a Net Profit of KD 45.2 million, representing a 40% increase in comparison to 2022. This is in addition to a rise in Earnings per share (EPS) of 46% from 13 fils to 19 fils, reflecting the Bank's strong profitability and shareholder value creation.

Operating Profit also witnessed an increase of 7%, reaching KD 97.1 million. Total Assets stood at KD 6.28 billion, indicating ABK's healthy financial position and robust balance sheet.

ABK has also maintained steady growth in Loans and Advances, which amounted to KD 4.25 billion, a growth of 5%, while Customer Deposits stood at KD 3.83 billion, affirming the Group's reputation as a trusted financial partner. Moreover, the Bank's Non-Performing Loan (NPL) ratio stood at 1.33%, with NPL Coverage at 445%, Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) at 16.74%, and Shareholders' Equity at KD 619.55 million, further underscoring ABK's financial stability.

In response to the impressive results, Mr. Talal Behbehani, Chairman of ABK, expressed his satisfaction, stating, "The growth of our net profits by 40% in 2023 reflects our success in navigating the evolving banking sector. We have executed concise and comprehensive plans to strengthen our competitive position in Kuwait and the regional markets where we operate, including Egypt and the United Arab Emirates."

Emphasizing ABK's commitment to innovation and customer-centric initiatives, Mr. Behbehani discussed the ongoing implementation of the Bank's transformation strategy aimed at enhancing operational processes across all divisions. This approach includes the development of innovative banking services, products, and solutions tailored to meet customers' dynamic needs.

Mr. Behbehani expressed the Group's commitment to delivering enhanced value to all stakeholders, highlighting the Board's proposal to distribute cash dividends of 9% equivalent to 9 fils per share, as well as bonus shares of 5% equivalent to 5 shares for every 100 shares. These recommendations are subject to the approval of the Annual General Assembly.

Furthermore, Mr. Behbehani emphasized that the proposed distribution of dividend and bonus shares reflects the Group's strong financial solvency. He noted that the past year witnessed several pivotal measures aimed at bolstering the Bank's position, including a successful increase in capital by KD 100 million through a subscription process



Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani
Chairman of ABK



Abdulla Al Sumait
Acting GCEO of ABK

Mr. Talal Behbehani: We have executed concise and comprehensive plans to strengthen our competitive position in the Kuwaiti and regional markets where we operate

Mr. Abdulla Al Sumait: Our financial indicators for 2023 underscore the ongoing expansion witnessed in the Group's operations. This showcases our ability to adapt to economic shifts and effectively tackle local, regional, and global challenges

that garnered substantial interest, exceeding the required amount by approximately 3.3 times from shareholders and investors.

Strong Ratings

Mr. Behbehani affirmed that the Group has upheld its investment grade ratings from global rating agencies. Notably, ABK secured an A rating from Fitch and A2 rating from Moody's, reflecting the significant confidence the Group enjoys across various facets of its operations.

Seizing Opportunities

Looking ahead, Mr. Behbehani affirmed, "ABK remains committed to seizing distinctive opportunities within Kuwait, as well as other markets. The Group is prepared to engage in financing major development projects in alignment with New Kuwait

Vision 2035."

Closing his statement, Mr. Behbehani expressed gratitude to all regulatory entities, including the Central Bank of Kuwait, Boursa Kuwait, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Capital Markets Authority, and the central banks in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, for their steadfast support.

Continued Growth

On his part, Mr. Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group CEO at ABK, affirmed, "Our financial indicators for 2023 underscore the ongoing expansion witnessed in the Group's operations. This showcases our ability to adapt to economic shifts and effectively tackle local, regional, and global challenges."

Mr. Al Sumait confirmed the Group's sustained

efforts in implementing digital transformation plans. Particularly, the inauguration of the first hologram-powered digital branch in the Kuwaiti market signifies the Group's commitment to leveraging cutting-edge banking technologies. Moreover, the Group plans to roll out additional digital branches in the future, aimed at providing seamless service to customers round the clock.

Regional Presence

Expanding its regional presence, Mr. Al Sumait emphasized that the Group has bolstered its footprint in Egypt. This expansion includes opening four new branches equipped with state-of-the-art technologies, aligning with the Group's strategy to fortify its presence and cater to customers across Egypt.

Our geographical footprint is instrumental in driving revenue, facilitating loan distribution, and gathering deposits. This success underscores the trust garnered from international companies and investors, reflecting the Group's growing influence and credibility in the global financial landscape.

In recognition of 2023's accomplishments, Mr. Al Sumait commended all employees, emphasizing their pivotal role in the Group's success. He emphasized, "At ABK, we consistently focus on enhancing the capabilities and skills of our workforce and recognize the positive impact this development has on both employees and the overall operations of the Group."

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)

The Group understands the increasing significance of ESG principles for investors and all stakeholders. As such, it has integrated them into its operations to contribute to sustainable development and long-term growth.

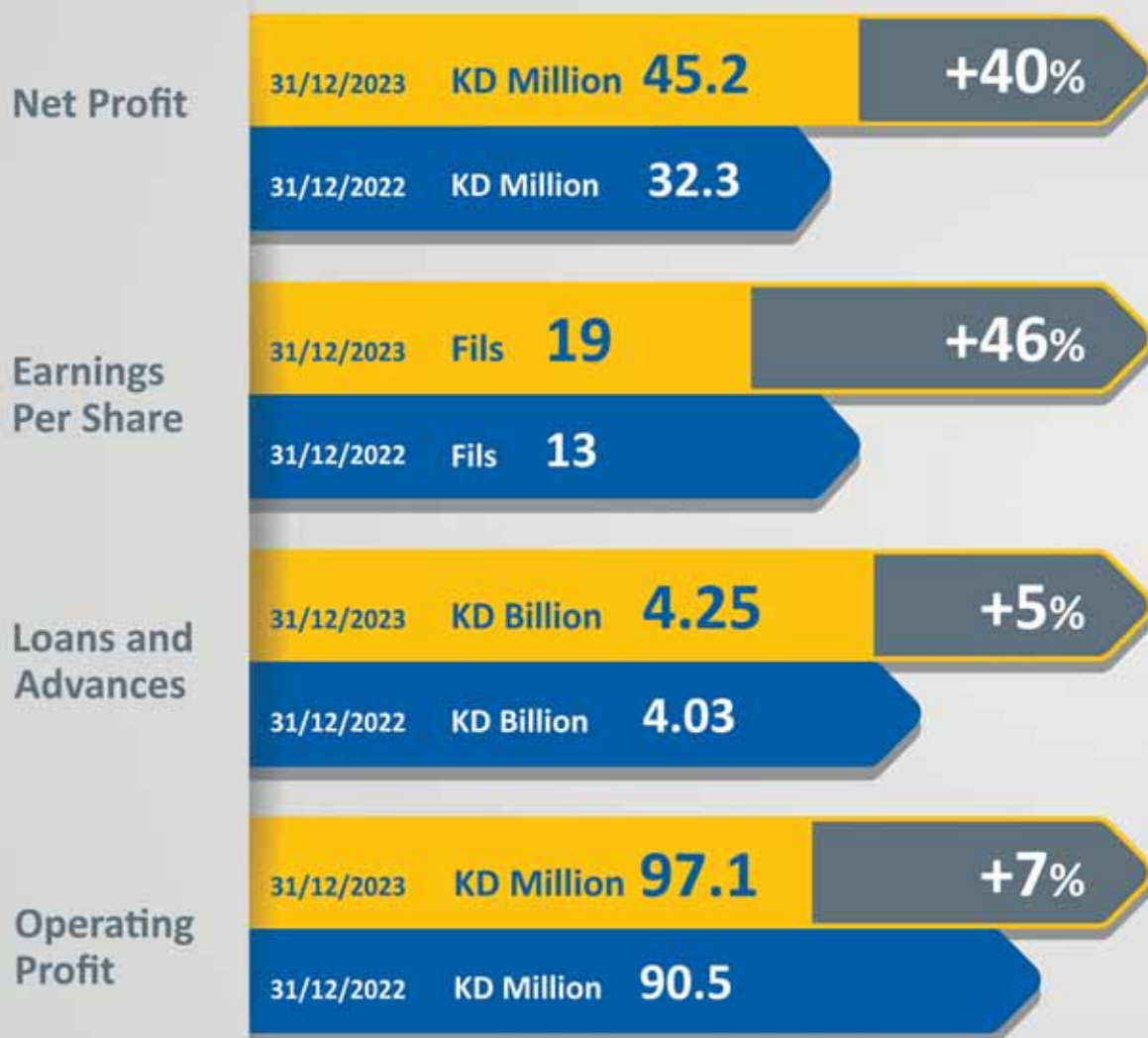
Corporate Social Responsibility

The Group has emphasized its prominent role in corporate social responsibility, encompassing support, sponsorship, and implementation of initiatives, activities, and events across various domains. Furthermore, it actively participates in university job fairs to promote education and support students, along with an array of sports activities.

The Bank also maintains its commitment to supporting the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' financial awareness campaign. This initiative aims to enhance financial awareness and banking literacy within the community.

ABK's exceptional financial performance in 2023 not only demonstrates its resilience, but also highlights its unwavering commitment to delivering sustainable growth and value for its stakeholders. As ABK continues to strengthen its position in the market, it remains dedicated to driving innovation and meeting the evolving needs of its customers across regions.

2023 Financial Results



MOODY'S A2 FitchRatings A



Al-Roshood: KFH leads competition, expands its customer base and market share

KFH holds earnings webcast for FY-2023

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) held the earnings webcast for highlighting the Bank's financial performance during the fiscal year 2023.

AbdulWahab Al-Roshood, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer

AbdulWahab Al-Roshood, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at KFH said "By the grace of Allah, KFH has reported a record net profit for its shareholders of KD 584.5 million for the year ended 31 December 2023, an increase of 63.4% compared to last year.

Earnings per share reached 38.49 Fils; an increase of 29.6% compared to last year. KFH's remarkable performance in 2023 was crowned by record annual financial results."

Al-Roshood added that KFH reported the best profit rate and the highest ratios in all key indicators, improved asset quality, operating profits, and diversified the revenues. These achieved financial solidity and sustainable growth.

"KFH services expanded to include new strategic countries, including UK, Egypt, and others following the acquisition of AUB-Bahrain which proved successful during its first year. We also successfully completed the conversion of AUB-Bahrain's conventional banking services to be compliant with Shariah principles. The Bank officially received the approval from the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) as a licensed Islamic Bank", added Al-Roshood.

He explained that KFH enjoys strong credit ratings, high liquidity ratios and a healthy capital buffer to support business growth and expansion both locally and globally. In addition, KFH Group Treasury investment transactions exceeded USD 13 billion in the Primary and Secondary markets. KFH also continued to continuously expand its short-term Sukuk trading in the IILM program. Group Treasury maintained its position as a Main Market Leader in the short-term IILM Sukuk Market.

Al-Roshood said that KFH continued its role in providing financing to corporate and mega projects, especially in the region. These mega deals confirm the high financing capability and financial strength KFH enjoys. KFH plays a significant role in supporting and financing SMEs as a strategic partner in society.

He added "leading the competition and expanding its customer base and market share in the retail banking sector, KFH is moving forward with its digital transformation strategy, launching innovative digital financial solutions through KFHOnline (mobile application and website), XTMs and KFH-GO. KFH launched Tam, the first Islamic digital bank in Kuwait and Zabej digital platform, in addition to several innovative banking solutions."

Al-Roshood pointed out that KFH continued its efforts in sustainability and promoting green financing products, at both the retail and corporate levels. It also played an important role in ESG by linking its financial transactions to sustainability. Additionally, KFH participated in the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai. KFH continues to play exceptional role in social commitment and executing strategic community initiatives inside and outside Kuwait.

Eng. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem, Group Chief Strategy Officer

Meanwhile, Eng. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem, Group Chief Strategy Officer covered highlights of the Kuwait operating environment with an overview on KFH. He also shared KFH's strategy, as well as Full Year-2023 results.

Al-Mukhaizeem explained that in 2023, Kuwait's Central Bank (CBK) increased its discount rate by 75 basis points to 4.25%, as part of its efforts to preserve monetary and financial stability, boost the growth of the various economic sectors, especially the non-oil sectors, contain local inflationary pressures, and maintain the competitiveness and attractiveness of the national currency.

Al-Mukhaizeem added "Kuwait's GDP was estimated to reach KWD 39.6 billion in 2023 and increase to KWD 40.8 billion in 2024 according to the most recent International Monetary Fund (IMF) report released in October 2023. It is also expected that the annual average inflation rate to decline to 3.4% in 2023. Kuwait's crude oil price stood at USD 79.6 pb as of the end of December 2023, down by 0.72% from the same period of the previous year."

He pointed out that Kuwait's economic development in 2023 was driven by its diversification efforts, infrastructure investments, and commitment to sustainability. As the country continues to work on attracting foreign investment, fostering non-oil sectors, and prioritizing sustainable practices, Kuwait is well-positioned to achieve long-term economic prosperity. The leadership shifted smoothly, after the passing of the Late Amir, His Highness Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah – May Allah have Mercy on his soul – to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Shaikh Meshal Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah in December of 2023, May Allah protect him. This contributes to the stability of the local environment in addition to the formation of a new government led by His Highness the Prime Minister Shaikh Dr. Mohamed Sabah AlSalem Al Sabah to complete the development path.

Nevertheless, it is imperative for Kuwait to continue work on improving the business environment and investing in human capital to



AbdulWahab Al-Roshood



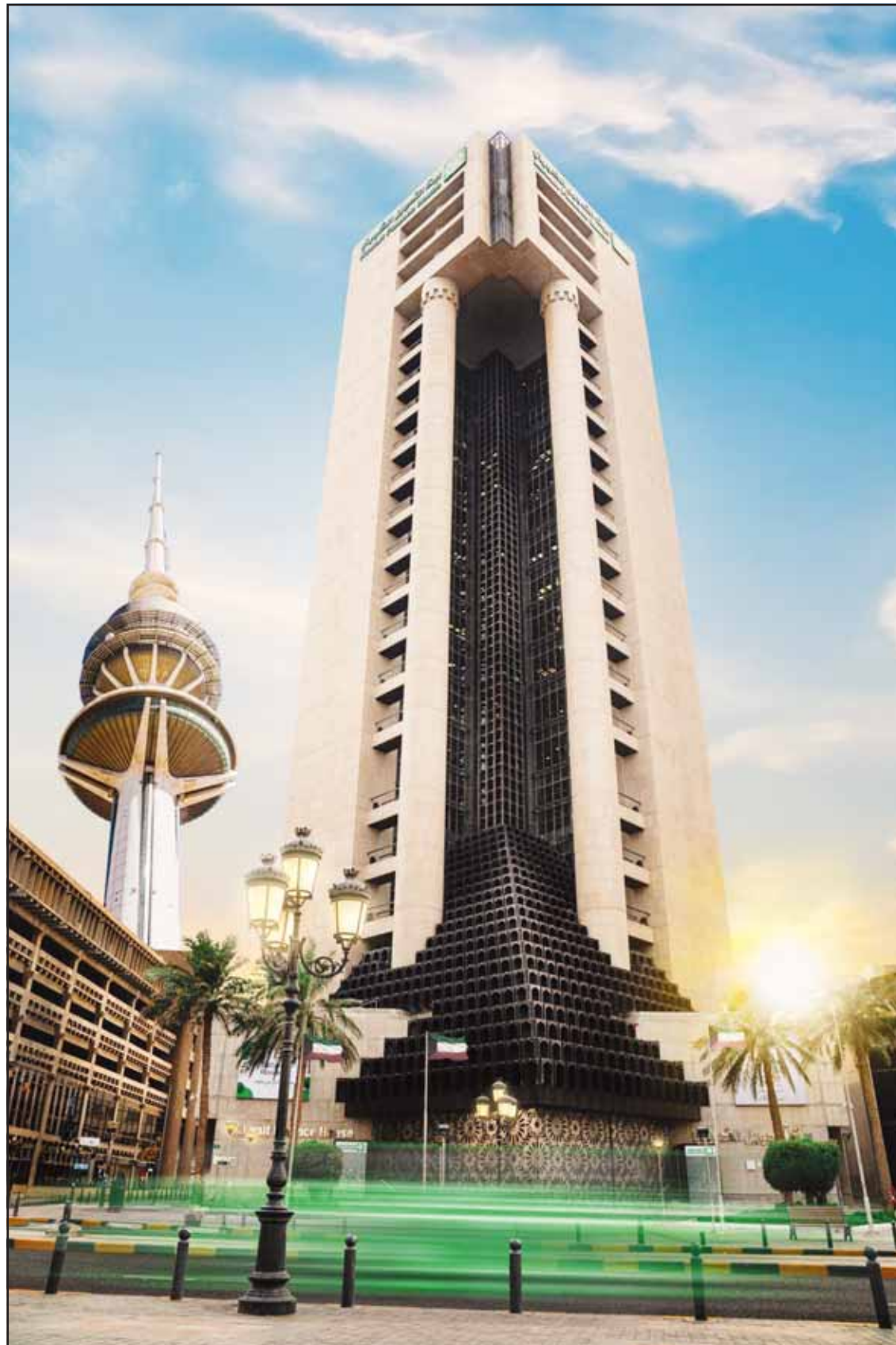
Fahad Khaled Al-Mukhaizeem



Jamal Al-Humairi

Al-Mukhaizeem: KFH ranked first among the largest listed companies on Bursa Kuwait

Al-Humairi: Net operating income increased by 30.7% to KD 945.4mn



KFH headquarters

ensure sustainable growth. With the right strategies in place, Kuwait can successfully navigate the dynamic global economic landscape and

emerge as a model for economic development in the region.

Al-Mukhaizeem said that KFH's long term

credit rating stands at (A) by Fitch with Stable Outlook, and at (A2) by Moody's with Stable outlook.

Furthermore, KFH successfully achieved the key goals of Group strategy, strengthened its leading position, and overcame different challenges and operating difficulties. Additionally, high liquidity ratios, solid capital base, and strong operating performance resulted in growth in operating income, profits, financings portfolio, and all key financial indicators.

He mentioned that KFH won 26 prestigious awards such as the "World's Best Islamic Financial Institution 2023" award from Global Finance and "Bank of the Year- Kuwait" from The Banker. Moreover, Euromoney Magazine has ranked Kuwait Finance House (KFH) as a Market Leader- Kuwait in five categories: Digital Solutions, Corporate Banking, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Investment Banking and Islamic Finance. The awards were in appreciation of KFH's excellence, innovation, and its advanced services and products.

Al-Mukhaizeem pointed out that KFH ranked first among the largest listed companies on Bursa Kuwait in terms of a market capitalization approximately KWD 10.6 BLN as of the end of December 2023.

Jamal Al-Humairi, Acting Group Chief Financial Officer (AGCFO) and General Manager Financial Control and Regulatory Reporting

Jamal Al-Humairi, Acting Group Chief Financial Officer (AGCFO) and General Manager Financial Control and Regulatory Reporting presented the financial performance of KFH group for the year ended 31 December 2023.

He said that the Group has achieved Net Profit After Tax attributable to Shareholders for the year ended 31st December 2023 of KD584.5mn higher by KD 226.8mn or 63.4% compared to 2022 of KD 357.7mn.

The higher profit is mainly from increase in total operating income, lower provision and lower net monetary loss that resulted from the application of IAS-29 "Financial reporting in Hyperinflationary Economies" on the financial statements of Kuwait Turkish Participation Bank (KTPB). Partly offset by an increase in operating expenses and taxation.

Al-Humairi explained that financing income has increased by KD 871.9mn or 65.9% compared to last year due to consolidation of AUB for full year 2023 and increase in yield and average profit earning assets.

Net financing income at KD 965.9mn increased by KD 165.4mn or 20.7% compared to last year mainly due to an increase in financing income by KD 871.9mn offset by increase in finance cost and distribution to depositors by KD 706.4mn.

Net Operating income at KD 945.4mn increased by KD 221.1mn or 30.7% compared to last year; mainly from increase in net financing income by KD 165.4mn, increase in Investment income by KD 140mn, increase in Net gain from foreign currencies by KD 46.8mn and increase in fees and commissions by KD 46.2mn offset mainly by increase in operating expenses by KD 166.5mn.

He added that the total Operating Expenses at KD 515.4mn is KD 166.5mn or 47.7% higher than last year primarily due to consolidation of AUB and increase due to high inflation mainly in Turkey.

Average Yielding Assets is up by 25.9% compared to FY2022 and 69.6% compared to 2021, mainly from the growth in Financing receivables and debt securities.

Looking at provisions and impairments, Al-Humairi pointed out that the Group total impairment charge for 2023 at KD 44.4mn decreased by KD 17.7mn or 28.5% compared to last year.

Al-Humairi said that KFH cautious approach towards provisioning have contributed to credit provision balance exceeding ECL required as per CBK IFRS 9 by KD 548mn as of 31 December 2023.

Al-Humairi highlighted that total Assets at KD 38bn increased by KD 1.04bn or 2.8% in 2023.

Net financing receivables at KD 19.4bn increased by KD 625mn or 3.3%.

Investments in debt securities at KD 7bn has increased by KD 921mn or 15.1%

Additionally, deposits for 2023 at KD 21.8bn are higher by KD 782mn or 3.7% compared to FY 2022.

The contribution from CASA deposits to total group customer deposits as at the end of 2023 is 42.1% and on overall basis group continues to benefit from a large pool of low-cost deposits.

Contribution of customer deposits to total funding is 71.7% compared to 71.4% in 2022.

In the last slide looking at the key financial ratios which mainly reflects improvement in profitability as explained earlier.

- ROATE from 16.48% to 20.51%
- ROAA from 1.69% to 1.82%
- EPS from 29.71fils to 38.49 fils

Group NPL ratio reached 1.51% (as per CBK calculation) in 2023.

Provisions Coverage ratio for Group is 308% in 2023.

12 fils proposed cash dividends and 5% bonus shares

Gulf Bank records net profit of KD 71.2 mln in '23, increase of 15.2% over '22

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Gulf Bank K.S.C.P. ("Bank") announced its financial results for the year ended 2023. The Bank reported a net profit of KD 71.2 million, an increase of 15.2% compared to the year 2022.

Gulf Bank recorded an operating profit before provisions and impairments of KD 103.4 million for the year 2023, an increase of 9.0% compared to the year 2022.

Earnings per share were up 13.2% to 21 fils and the Board of Directors is recommending a distribution of a cash dividend of 12 fils per share, representing a 57% cash payout ratio, in addition to 5% bonus shares, for shareholders' approval at the Annual General Meeting to be held in March 2024.

The increase in the net profit was mainly driven by KD 8.2 million or a 5.8% increase in net interest income, a 2.5% or KD 1 million improvement in non-interest income, and a decline of 4.7% or KD 1.4 million in total provisions and impairments.

As for asset quality, the non-performing loans (NPL) ratio stood at 1.2% as of 31 December 2023, compared to the prior year level of 1.1%. Additionally, the Bank continues to have significant non-performing loans coverage ratio of 466% including total provisions and collateral.

Total credit provisions ended 2023 at KD 312 million whereas IFRS 9 accounting requirements (i.e., ECL or expected credit losses) were KD 187 million. So, the Bank has very healthy excess provisioning level of KD 125 million, above and beyond what is required by the IFRS9 accounting requirements.

Compared to 31 December 2022, total assets increased by 4.7% to KD 7.2 billion, loans and advances climbed by 1.3% to KD 5.2 billion, and shareholders' equity increased by 13.4% to reach KD 817 million. In addition, total deposits increased by 6.9% to reach KD 5.4 billion for the year ended 2023.

Looking at the Bank's regulatory capital ratios as of 31 December 2023, Tier 1 ratio was 15.8%, that is 3.8% above the regulatory minimum of 12% and the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) was 18.0%, that is 4.0% above the regulatory minimum of 14%.

Strong Performance

Commenting on the results, Mr. Jassim Mustafa Boodai, Gulf Bank's Chairman said: "Our 2023 performance demonstrates excellent results with Gulf Bank delivering strong and consistent net profit growth momentum. Our strong balance sheet fundamentals and resilient asset quality profile position us very well to achieve our strategic aspirations." Mr. Boodai added "We remain focused on generating consistent and sustainable long-term value to all our stakeholders."

Operational Excellence

The operational success of Gulf Bank during 2023 and prior years reflects its strong brand presence and branch network in Kuwait. Mr. Boodai added: "The Bank is reaping the benefits of its Kuwait focused strategy and making tremendous strides towards its key strategic priorities centered around digital transformation and customer centricity. The aim of our strategy is to improve customer experience, accelerate business development and drive operational efficiencies." One of the key milestones during the year 2023 was the implementation of phase 1 of the new core banking system. This achievement represents a major leap in the Bank's digital transformation journey and will enable Gulf Bank to streamline operations and optimize processes to further solidifying its position as a trusted financial partner. In addition, the launch of the latest version of the Gulf Bank mobile application during the year provides customers with a seamless user experience while incorporating advanced security features to safeguard customer data and financial transactions.

Value Creation

During the year 2023, Gulf Bank has successfully completed a capi-



Jassim Mustafa Boodai, Gulf Bank's Chairman

Jassim Mustafa Boodai:

- Our 2023 performance demonstrates excellent progress to our diversified and client centric business model approach, delivering a strong and consistent net profit growth.
- The operational success of Gulf Bank during 2023 and prior years reflects our strong brand presence and branch network in Kuwait.
- We remain focused on generating consistent and sustainable long-term value to all our stakeholders.
- Moody's "Positive" outlook upgrade is an acknowledgement of Gulf Bank's sound capitalization, improving profitability and strong asset quality.
- The Bank is reaping the benefits of its Kuwait focused strategy and making tremendous strides towards its key strategic priorities centered around digital transformation and customer centricity.
- The 7 times capital increase oversubscription reflects shareholders' confidence in Gulf Bank's potential capabilities and future growth opportunities.
- The consolidated investment activities of "Invest GB" will positively enhance the fees and commission income of the Bank in the future.

tal increase of KD 60 million. The proceeds of the capital increase aim to strengthen the Gulf Bank's capital base, enhance regulatory capital ratios, and enable the pursuit of future growth opportunities aligned with the Bank's long-term strategy. The total capital increase was approximately seven times oversubscribed. The significant over subscription reflects shareholders' confidence in Gulf Bank's potential capabilities.

Invest GB

Furthermore, the Bank has obtained the final necessary regulatory approvals to license Gulf Capital Investment Company, known as "Invest GB" to operate officially as a wholly owned investment subsidiary. The investment subsidiary services will complement the Bank's core business while enhancing customer offerings predominantly for its private and the corporate banking clients. The consolidated investment activities will positively enhance the fees and commission in-

come of the Bank in the future.

Positive Credit Outlook

Gulf Bank continues to be well recognized in terms of its creditworthiness and financial strength internationally. During the year 2023, Moody's Investor Services has affirmed the 'A3' long-term deposit ratings of Gulf Bank and changed the outlook to "Positive" from "Stable". This upgrade is an acknowledgement of Gulf Bank's sound capitalization, improving profitability and strong asset quality.

In addition, Fitch Ratings affirmed the Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A' with a 'Stable' Outlook and a Viability Rating of 'bbb-'. The Bank has also an affirmed Long-term Foreign Currency Rating of 'A+' with a 'Stable' Outlook from Capital Intelligence Ratings.

Commitment to Sustainability

Sustainability is an important and complementary part of Gulf Bank's strategy. On Gulf Bank's commitment towards Sustainability, Mr. Boodai commented: "We believe that integrating sustainability and ESG considerations into our practices and activities will enable us to further strengthen our customer experience, offering sustainable products and services for the market, and positioning us as a key leader of sustainability initiatives amongst local and regional financial institutions. We remain committed towards our stakeholders, community, and the overall Kuwaiti economy."

Recognition

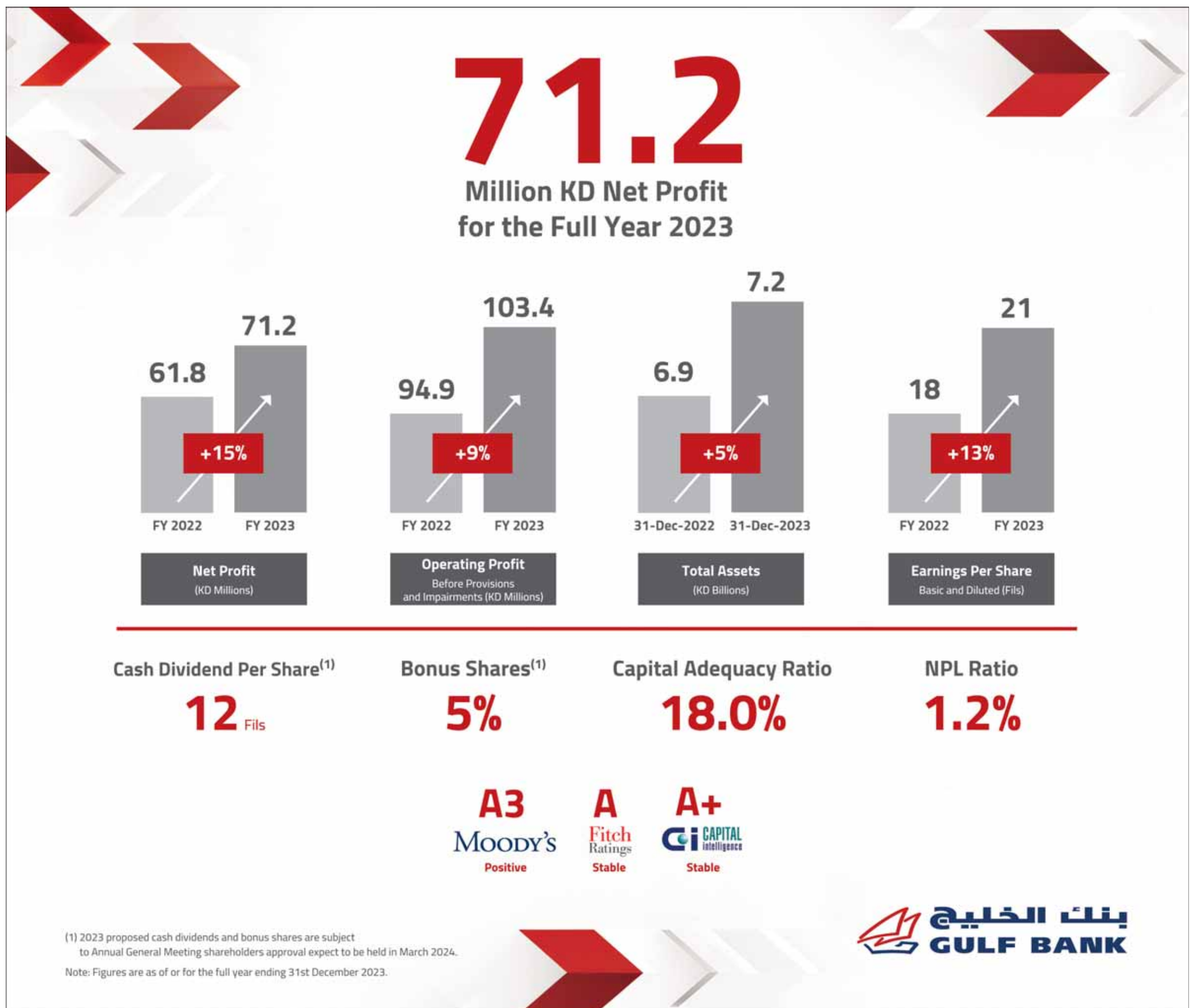
During 2023, Gulf Bank was recognized by several prestigious organizations. Gulf Bank was awarded with "Best Prepaid Card Program in Kuwait" award for 2023 during the Mastercard MENA East Business Forum, for the Gulf Bank Mastercard Prepaid Card. In addition, Gulf Bank was awarded two awards for "Best Training and Development" and "Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion" by the Middle East and North Africa Human Resources Management Summit 2023 signifying Gulf Bank's outstanding efforts in enhancing its employees' skills and achievements in promoting sustainability principles within the workplace. Furthermore, Gulf Bank was awarded "The Prestigious Excellence in Data Innovation" award by the 2023 Finnovex Awards Summit in recognition of its excellence in leveraging data to drive transformative change and create new opportunities in the banking industry.

Appreciation

Mr. Boodai concluded his remarks by stating: "On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank our shareholders for their ongoing trust, and our employees for their commitment and dedication. I would also like to thank the Regulatory Authorities for their continuous support. Finally, I want to thank our customers for their loyalty, and reiterate our commitment to offering them the best banking experience."

Key positive indicators:

- 2023 net profit of KD 71.2 million, an increase of 15.2% over the year 2022.
- 2023 earnings per share were up 13.2% to reach 21 fils.
- 12 fils Proposed Cash Dividends and 5% Bonus Shares.
- Total Assets grew by 4.7% to reach KD 7.2 billion.
- Non-performing loan ratio for the year end 2023 was 1.2%, with a strong non-performance loan coverage ratio of 466%.
- Tier 1 ratio was 15.8%.
- Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) was 18.0%.
- 13.4% increase in shareholders' equity to reach KD 817 million.
- 7 times capital increase oversubscription.



People & Places

Music

Rockstar & reformist

Kramer's legacy of music and activism

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 12, (AP) — The tributes that poured in following Wayne Kramer's death last week came from musicians praising the MC5 guitarist's contributions to rock music, as well as from prison reform advocates who extolled his legacy of bringing music to incarcerated people.

Kramer, who died Feb. 2 at age 75 of pancreatic cancer, influenced generations of artists with his screaming guitar chords on hardcore anthems like 1969's "Kick Out the Jams."

Rage Against the Machine guitarist Tom Morello said MC5, with an uncompromising sound that fused music to political action, "basically invented punk rock."



Kramer

Not long after the band broke up in 1972, Kramer was arrested on drug charges and spent two years in prison. Determined to straighten out his life while maintaining his activism, Kramer co-founded Jail Guitar Doors USA, based on a British charity that provided inmates with musical instruments. Kramer's nonprofit is named after a Clash song that refers to his struggles: "Let me tell you 'bout Wayne and his deals of cocaine."

Kramer recruited famous friends like Morello, Slash and Perry Farrell to perform concerts at prisons in California and his home state of Michigan, where he would leave behind guitars.

Gradually he began spending one-on-one time with inmates, helping them craft their own songs and "watching the creative lights go on in their heads," said Jason Heath, a close friend and executive director of Jail Guitar Doors USA.

"Working with inmates was cathartic for him because music had saved his life when he was inside," Heath said this week.

"Creativity is the solution for the challenges we face," Kramer told Mojo magazine in December.

Mentorship

His group ultimately distributed thousands of instruments and created a songwriting mentorship program that expanded to lockups nationwide. Its work was cited in research by University of San Francisco professor Larry Brewster that found introducing arts to incarcerated people led to fewer disciplinary actions, increased self-esteem, improved emotional health and reduced rates of recidivism.

"He invited people to tell their story via music, that was Wayne's gift," said Elida Ledesma, director of the California-based nonprofit Arts for Healing and Justice Network. "He knew that everyone was worthy of respect and dignity."

In recent years, Jail Guitar Doors USA spun off a partner nonprofit, the Community Arts Programming and Outreach Center. Its headquarters in Hollywood include a recording studio and teaches multimedia production to young people recently released from custody and trying to start their lives over. A federally approved apprentice program for formerly incarcerated people offers a 2 1/2 year curriculum for audio recording and a shorter one for film editing.

One of the young apprentices, 24-year-old Joseph Jimenez, said it never occurred to him that he could be a filmmaker after spending more than five years in juvenile halls and other correctional facilities. One day, he tagged along to the center with one of the residents of his halfway house.

"They handed me a camera, and I just started learning," Jimenez said.

He recently shot and produced a music video for a rap song written, performed and recorded by him and fellow students. He said the program has instilled in him an ambition he didn't know he possessed.

"Now I want to have my own production company," Jimenez said. "I want to do independent film."

Jack Bowers, who ran the arts project at California's Soledad prison for 25 years, credits Kramer with helping restore funding for cultural programs in state lockups. Amid a budget crisis in 2003, the state slashed all money for arts within the California corrections system. Nine years later, a group of nonprofits including Jail Guitar Doors started lobbying for restoration. Kramer eventually delivered testimony before a joint committee on the arts, along with actor Tim Robbins and others.

"Wayne just gave this moving speech about how important it was to have music and arts in prisons," said Bowers, who's now a mentor at the William James Association Prison Arts Project. "Because he had been incarcerated, he understood it from the point of view of somebody who was inside. His voice carried a tremendous amount of weight."

It was out of that meeting that the program was restored, Bowers said. The state provided \$1 million in 2014, and the prison arts budget has since been increased to \$8 million, he said.

Heath said the next steps for the Community Arts Programming and Outreach Center is to provide on-site housing for the paid apprentices, where they can focus on the work to avoid the temptations of repeating behaviors that got them in trouble.

"We can sign the youths up while they're still incarcerated. Then when they're released they go straight to the house, where they have a place to live, and straight to the center, where they've got a job," he said. "That puts them on the right path."

Jimenez, the young apprentice, admits that as a hip-hop fan he didn't realize that Kramer, the unassuming guy mentoring people and running the program at the center, was a rock star.

"I Googled him, and it kind of blew my mind," Jimenez said. "He was so cool and so down to earth with the work that he did with us. He's a legend."

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Blackberry Smoke - a Georgia-based band that has been together for 24 years and seven studio albums - makes a strong return with "Be Right Here," blending blues, Southern rock and Americana. The album contains the arena country "Hammer and the Nail," the rocking "Little Bit Crazy" and the driving, bluesy "Dig a Hole." The band goes more acoustic with the wistful "Azalea," about a loved one making a wrong decision, with the lyrics "Coming back don't mean you're leaving here was wrong/Sorry ain't the same as moving on."



Usher, (left), and Alicia Keys perform during halftime of the NFL Super Bowl 58 football game between the San Francisco 49ers and the Kansas City Chiefs on Sunday, Feb. 11, in Las Vegas. (AP)

Super Bowl

Show highlights iconic hits and star-studded lineup

Usher shines on halftime throne

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 12, (AP) — Usher emerged at Las Vegas' Allegiant Stadium for the Super Bowl halftime show seated on a throne, joined by a marching band and a trove of Vegas performers - but stayed its center.

It was an immediate confirmation of his position as the ideal halftime performer: one with timeless, well-known hits, masterful choreography, and a devoted audience.

He started with "Caught Up," moving into "U Don't Have to Call," "Superstar," and "Love in the Club."

Then Alicia Keys joined in front of bright red piano for her song "If I Ain't Got You," which morphed into "My Boo." Usher losing a glove in an apparent tribute to Michael Jackson - notable for a performance during Black History Month.

"They said I wouldn't make it," he told the crowd, dedicating the set to his "mama."

Across 13 minutes during the halftime show sponsored by Apple Music, Usher brought out a number of guests including H.E.R., Jermaine Dupri, Lil Jon (for "Turn Down for What," which became "Yeah!" - and included a guest appearance from Ludacris).

Across three decades, the R&B superstar had an endless treasure trove of hits to pull from - and did so with costume changes, and a rolling performance of "OMG" while wearing roller skates - at one moment, sliding between will.i.am's legs.

His album "Confessions" ranks among one of the best-selling music projects of all time and turned 20 this year; "Burn" became an easy performance highlight.

Over the past two years, Usher, 45, has made Vegas a home for his unique talents, with his sold-out residency, "Usher: My Way," at Dolby Live at Park MGM making him the perfect pick for Sunday's game.

The eight-time Grammy award winner is also no stranger to the Super Bowl stage - he made a guest appearance with Black Eyed Peas frontman will.i.am in 2011.

"I got a chance to see a bit of what it felt like," Usher told The Associated

Press in a recent interview. In his first Super Bowl performance, he descended from the stadium ceiling to perform "OMG" in Arlington, Texas.

"Don't take the moments for granted because you only get 13 of them," he said in advance of his 2024 performance, referring to the usually allotted 13-minute run time. "The hardest part is trying to figure out how to squeeze it all in when you actually have a large catalog, or a lot of records people celebrate and love."

With a doubt - he figured out exactly how to do just that.

The Kansas City Chiefs were crowned victorious over the San Francisco 49ers in this year's Super Bowl - and, off the field, big-name advertisers competed for viewers' attention with celebrity-filled, glitzy messages.

Reunions

Beyoncé broke the internet yet again in a Verizon ad, which was soon followed by a viral music drop. Lionel Messi's showed off his apparent loyalty to Michelob Ultra. And T-Mobile, e.l.f. cosmetics, Uber Eats and more offered a slew of mini TV show reunions, bringing together cast members from "Suits" to "Friends."

Despite being an election year in the US, there was very little to show for it on Sunday besides an ad by American Values 2024, the super PAC backing Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s presidential run. It ran a 30-second, retro-styled spot that attempted to lean into his family's legacy. Kennedy launched his independent bid for the White House last year.

Airing a Super Bowl commercial is no easy feat. On top of the reported \$7 million price tag for a 30-second spot during the game, brands enlist the biggest actors, invest in dazzling special effects and try to put together an ad that more than 100 million expected viewers will like - or at least remember.

"Advertisers this year are doing everything they can to try to break through the clutter," Northwestern University marketing professor Tim Calkins said. "They're pulling out all the stops."

On Sunday, scores of advertisers tapped into light humor and nostalgia to give game breaks a mostly "feel good," whimsical energy. Still, there were also a few serious and somber moments.

Kris Jenner "twists on it" with Oreo. The face behind Pringles' iconic mustache is unveiled to be none other than Chris Pratt. And Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez returned for Dunkin' cameos, while Ice Spice sips on Starry.

In typical Super Bowl fashion, an array of companies' adverts were adorned by stars - often with numerous celebrities stuffed in a single spot. T-Mobile, for example, showcased big names like Bradley Cooper, Common, Jennifer Hudson, Laura Dern and "Suits" stars Gabriel Macht and Patrick J. Adams all in one ad for its "Magenta Status" customer appreciation program.

And the "Suits" homecoming didn't stop there. In another ad stuffed with celebrity cameos - including "Judge Judy" Judy Sheindlin - e.l.f. cosmetics brought together Gina Torres, Rick Hoffman and Sarah Rafferty in a courtroom spoof.

NBC sitcoms had quite a few reunion moments during the game. In an Uber Eats ad, which shows people forgetting things so they remember Uber Eats can deliver a wide variety of items, Jennifer Aniston seemingly forgets she ever worked with her "Friends" co-star David Schwimmer. And in an ad for Mtn Dew Baja Blast, Aubrey Plaza says she can have a "Blast" doing anything - including reuniting with her "Parks and Rec" boss Nick Offerman as they fly on dragons.

Although star power in Super Bowl commercials isn't new, it did feel especially heightened this year. "It used to be that you'd have a celebrity pop up that would sort of be the spokesperson of the commercial," said Virginia Commonwealth University Brandcenter's Jessica D. Collins. "Now you're seeing collaborations of celebrities... all in the same commercial, even (when) they have absolutely nothing to do with each other."



Actor Zoey Deschanel poses backstage at the 76th DGA Awards, Saturday, Feb. 10, in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)



Fauci



F. Smith

Variety

LEXINGTON, Ky.: Wilhelmina Wiggins Fernandez Smith, a renowned soprano known for her performance in the 1981 French cult-classic film "Diva" and who sang through the US and Europe during her operatic career, has died at age 75.

Funeral services were held Friday for Fernandez Smith at a church in Lexington, Kentucky, where she had moved after residing for years in her native Philadelphia. She died of cancer Feb. 2 at her home in Lexington, daughter Sheena Maria Fernandez told The Philadelphia Inquirer.

Billed as Wilhelmina Wiggins Fernandez, she opened the movie directed by Jean-Jacques Beineix wearing a white gown and singing in an aging theater the aria "Ebben? Ne andrò lontana" from the opera "La Wally." It became the signature aria of her 25-year career that took her to the great opera houses in Europe and made her the centerpiece of gala occasions.

She graduated from the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia and continued her education at the Juilliard School in New York. Filmmakers for "Diva" approached her while she sang "La bohème" in Paris, leading to a film shoot for the thriller that would change her life, the Inquirer reported.

"The film gave me an exposure that I could not have imagined, and I had to catch up with my own fame when the floodgates opened to do countless operas," she recalled. "My repertory simply wasn't that great, and there was so much expectation to do everything well." (AP)

NEW YORK: Dr. Anthony Fauci has a memoir coming out in June, a look back at his long career as an infectious disease expert and the many outbreaks he contended with, from HIV/AIDS to the COVID-19 pandemic that made him famous.

Viking announced Thursday that Fauci's "On Call: A Doctor's Journey in Public Service" will be published in June 18.

"I hope that this memoir will serve as a personalized document for the reader to understand better the daunting challenges that we have faced in public health over the past 40 years," Fauci said in a statement released Thursday by Viking. "I would also like to inspire younger individuals in particular to consider careers in public health and public service."

Fauci, 83, was director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health for

nearly 40 years, and was President Joe Biden's chief medical advisor until his retirement, in 2022. Fauci served under seven presidents, starting with Ronald Reagan, but he is best known for his time during Donald Trump's administration, when he and the White House often clashed over how to respond to the coronavirus.



Lana Del Rey, (second from left), Taylor Swift, RIOTUSA, Ashley Avignone Ice Spice, and Blake Lively watch the first half of the NFL Super Bowl 58 football game between the San Francisco 49ers and the Kansas City Chiefs on Sunday, Feb. 11, in Las Vegas. (AP)

Millions regarded Fauci, with his raspy voice and plainspoken style, as the government's trusted point man during the heights of the pandemic. But he would become increasingly estranged from Trump, who favored a faster return to normal life and advocated unproven treatments. (AP)

NEW YORK: "The Girl on the Train" author Paula Hawkins has a new thriller out this fall, and will release it through a new publisher.

Mariner Books, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, announced Wednesday that Hawkins' "The Blue Hour" is scheduled for Oct. 8. Hawkins sets the story on a remote Scottish island, home to a famous artist who was abandoned by her husband and otherwise carries with her a complicated past.

"The Blue Hour" explores the tension between the need to belong and the desire to be free of the demands and expectations of others," Hawkins said in a statement.

"I wanted to think about what the effect of being untethered from the world might be, how that might shape a person's psyche. At the novel's heart is an artist and her work, so I'm also dealing with perception and the search for meaning, how we interpret or misinterpret what we see in front of us, and the dark places toward which those ideas might lead." (AP)

23rd Kuwait Ophthalmology Conference to start on Thursday

Conference to showcase cutting-edge developments in eye care

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The 23rd Kuwait Ophthalmology Conference is set to commence from February 15 to 17, as announced by Dr. Ahmed Al-Foudari, the Chairman of the Council of Ophthalmology Departments in the Ministry of Health. The conference, under the patronage of Health Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, will serve as a platform for discussing the latest advancements in ophthalmology and surgery.

Dr. Al-Foudari highlighted that the event will feature the participation of 46 experts from various countries worldwide, including the United States, Canada, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Britain, India, and Japan. Additionally, regional experts from countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman will contribute to the conference. Leaders of the Gulf Ophthalmology Associations and the Egyptian Ophthalmology Society will



Dr. Ahmed Al-Foudari

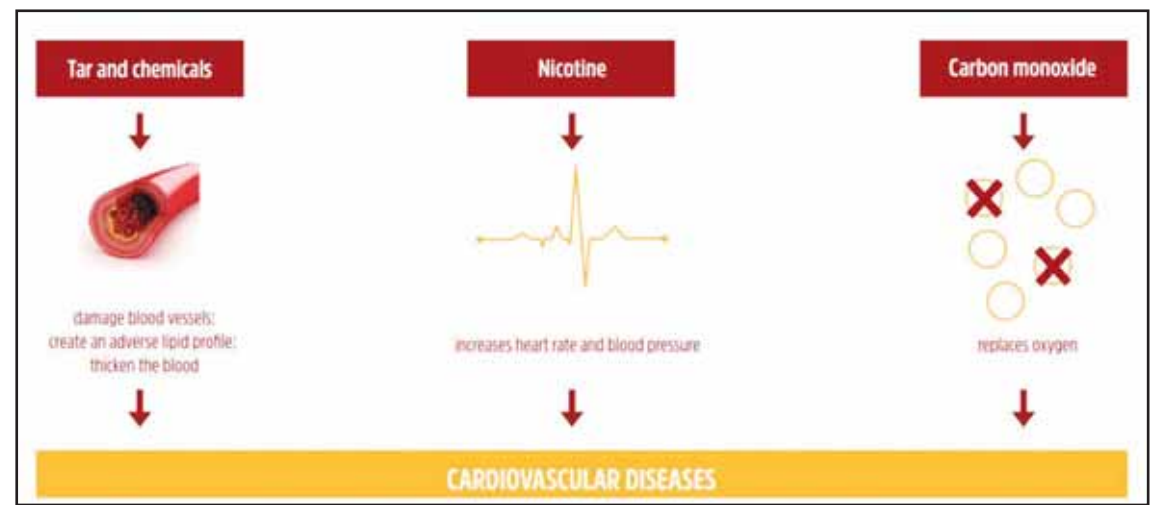
also be present.

Emphasizing the significance of the conference, Dr. Al-Foudari underscored its role in facilitating the

exchange of scientific expertise among international doctors and staying abreast of the latest medical protocols in ophthalmology and surgery.

The conference agenda will encompass lectures and workshops covering a wide range of topics related to eye diseases and surgeries. These include emergency eye injuries, cataract surgery, valve implantation for high intraocular pressure, and the utilization of Botox injections in treating certain eye conditions.

Notably, the conference will introduce a novel feature for the State of Kuwait - a system of dual lectures on two audio channels discussing diverse specializations in ophthalmology. This innovation aims to enhance the educational experience by accommodating a greater number of lecturers and sessions across various specialties, encompassing areas such as cornea, cataract, retina, eye pressure, pediatric ophthalmology, strabismus, and more, including discussions on the eye socket, eyelids, tear ducts, and eye nerves.



Call to promote tobacco cessation strategies

Impact of 'e-cigarettes' on heart health a growing concern: expert

By Arab Times/Al-Seyassah staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: In a recent interview with Dr. Rajesh RANJAN, we delved into the impact of e-cigarettes on cardiovascular health. Dr. Rajan, an esteemed figure overseeing various clinical research registries focused on heart failure, has played a pivotal role in this field.

E-cigarettes have gained popularity in recent years, with a significant increase in usage among adults and young individuals. However, concerns regarding the adverse effects of e-cigarettes on cardiovascular health have been raised. This article aims to provide an overview of the current research on the cardiovascular impact of e-cigarettes, highlighting the need for further investigation and the importance of promoting tobacco cessation strategies.

Cardiovascular effects of e-cigarettes:

Numerous studies have shown that e-cigarette use can have acute adverse effects on cardiovascular health. The inhalation of e-cigarette aerosols exposes users to potentially harmful substances, including nicotine, aldehydes, and fine particles. These substances have been implicated in various pathophysiological pathways of cardiovascular disease, such as endothelial dysfunction, oxidative stress, inflammation, sympathetic overdrive, and arterial stiffness.

Short-term effects:
A randomized controlled study called VESUVIUS assessed the vascular effects of switching from tobacco consumption to e-cigarette use. The study found significant improvements in endothelial function (flow-mediated



dilation) within just one month of switching to e-cigarettes, particularly among women. These findings suggest that e-cigarettes may serve as a smoking cessation adjunct for tobacco cigarette smokers.

Long-term effects:
While short-term studies have shown some positive effects of switching to e-cigarettes, the long-term cardiovascular impact of e-cigarette use is not fully understood. Epidemiological studies focusing specifically on the cardiovascular effects of e-cigarettes are still relatively scarce. However, early evidence suggests a potential association between e-cigarette use and an increased risk of adverse cardiovascular events.

Recommendations:
Given the emerging public health challenge posed by e-cigarettes, it is crucial to implement evidence-based tobacco cessation strategies and regulate the sales of nicotine-related products. Healthcare professionals should provide necessary support to individu-

als trying to quit smoking. Additionally, conducting larger population-based studies to assess the safety and long-term effects of e-cigarettes on cardiovascular outcomes is essential.

While e-cigarettes have been marketed as a safer alternative to traditional tobacco smoking, their impact on cardiovascular health is a growing concern. The inhalation of potentially harmful substances through e-cigarette aerosols can lead to various cardiovascular complications. Further research is needed to fully understand the long-term effects of e-cigarettes on cardiovascular health. In the meantime, promoting evidence-based tobacco cessation strategies and closely monitoring e-cigarette use patterns are crucial steps in safeguarding cardiovascular health.

Dr. Rajan is a renowned Indian cardiologist at Al Amiri Hospital Kuwait and Chairman of the Indian Association of Clinical Cardiologists. Dr. Rajan also holds prestigious positions as the current President of the Association of MD Physicians and the Managing Editor of the esteemed Annals of Clinical Cardiology Journal by Wolters Kluwer. His contributions to the medical community are highly regarded, with notable achievements that include the invention of the RHF Risk Score calculator for heart failure patients and the development of Rajan's and Kotevski's modified Lipton's classification. Beyond his groundbreaking research, Dr. Rajan has garnered recognition through various Fellowships from esteemed institutions such as the Royal College of London, Edinburgh, Ireland, and Glasgow. Moreover, he has been honored as a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology, the European Society of Cardiology, and the American Heart Association, further highlighting his expertise and commitment to cardiovascular health.

A mother's gift and a daughter's miracle: Power of organ donation

RIYADH, Feb 12, (KUNA): Najlaa Al-Sudairi, a consultant in international media relations, never thought that she would one day embark on two different journeys: donate an organ to one of her closest relatives, or she would have to wait for a donor to save her beloved daughter.

These two experiences turned her life upside down.

More than two decades ago, Najlaa, who was leading a normal life like any other girl, found herself compelled to make a life-saving decision at a young age. She decided to donate her kidney to her sister, Seetah, who was suffering from kidney failure. Despite her fear of hospitals and doctors, and her limited understanding of organ transplantation, Seetah's struggle with dialysis and the hardships she endured day after day made Najlaa opt for the only choice that would put an end to her sister's tragedy: donate a kidney.

"When I underwent examinations at the hospital, all my previous fears vanished completely, and I began to live with hope, envisioning my sister Seetah leading a normal life. And that is exactly what happened," Najlaa said.

"The operation was successful, thank God, and I felt an indescribable sense of fulfillment for relieving my sister's suffering. Witnessing her full recovery filled me with immeasurable joy," she added.

After all these long years, fate decided last year that Najlaa would have to go through another bitter experience: having to wait for a donor to save her daughter Sultanah, whose liver functions had failed. Sultanah's condition was critical, and her health deteriorated significantly.

While desperately searching for a donor to save her daughter's life, Najlaa endured unimaginable agony and pain every time she helplessly looked at her beloved daughter. However, the Most Merciful granted Sultanah, who could die any time, a brand new life.

In another case, Abdullah Al-Tamimi, a liver cirrhosis patient, he described his experience as "life after death."

Suffering from organ failure, he

was frequenting hospitals, clinging to life. As his condition worsened, a liver transplant became necessary to save him.

"I am a man who is satisfied with Allah's fate and decree, and my concern was not so much for myself but for my family, who needed me. I constantly prayed to Allah to take care of them after I go," Abdullah said, recalling the bleak times.

"After going through utter darkness, a glimmer of light shone upon my life and the lives of my family. Allah blessed me with recovery after I received the liver of a brain-dead patient through the Saudi Center for Organ Transplantation," he said with visible relief.

Initiative

The Saudi Center for Organ Transplantation (SCOT), a beacon of hope for patients in need of organ transplant.

The history of organ transplantation in Saudi Arabia dates back to 1979, when the first kidney transplant was performed at Prince Sultan Military Medical City. It is, however, the establishment of the National Kidney Center, through an initiative by King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud when he was governor of the Riyadh Region, that marks the actual beginning of the organ donation and transplantation program in the Kingdom.

A Royal Decree was issued establishing the National Kidney Center. Another decree changed its name to SCOT.



The Saudi Center for Organ Transplantation (SCOT), a beacon of hope for patients in need of organ transplant.

SCOT regulates the practice of organ donation and transplantation in the Kingdom. It sets policies and procedures for donation, standards and conditions for licensing transplant operations, monitors and evaluates facilities, registers and follows up on cases of patients with organ failure before and after transplantation, is informed about cases of brain death, and supervises waiting lists and determines the priority of those who are eligible.

Over the past 40 years, organ donation and transplantation has grown significantly throughout the Kingdom, with transplant centers spread across the country and performing various types of organ transplants, such as kidney, heart, liver, lung, pancreas, intestine, and tissues such as bones and corneas.

The Kingdom ranks second globally in organ donation among living people, according to the Global Observatory on Donation and Transplantation statistics for 2022.

The center launched the Athar electronic platform to digitize donation procedures and the organ supply chain, employ Artificial Intelligence (AI) to match tissues between donor and potential recipient, get easy access to therapeutic procedures, and equal opportunities in obtaining services, and calculate performance indicators on the donation and organ transplantation journey.

The platform also enables electronic connectivity and integration with health information systems, and follows up on the status of donation from the time a case is reported until the completion of the donation procedures, in a digital form, providing a value-added service to donors. The first phase of the platform was launched on January 7, 2024.

Regarding the sequence of case follow-up at SCOT, clinical organ transplantation coordinator Dr. Khaled Al-Ruqi said that it starts with the reception of a report from a hospital that has a potential brain death case. Once the report is received, the follow-up process commences with the involvement of attending and monitoring doctors who oversee the diagnosis of brain death and ensure its accuracy.

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SPORTS



Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum makes a basket during the first half of an NBA basketball game against the Miami Heat, Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, in Miami. (AP)

Thunder defeat Kings for 1st time this season

Celtics withstand late rally, beat Heat

MIAMI, Feb. 12. (AP): Jayson Tatum had 26 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists and the Boston Celtics withstood a late rally to beat the Miami Heat 110-106 on Sunday.

Kristaps Porzingis had 25 points, Jaylen Brown had 20 points and Jrue Holiday scored 15 for Boston, which hit 16 of 39 3-point attempts.

BASKETBALL

The Celtics have won all three matchups with the Heat this season and have won six of the last seven games against them. The loss came in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference finals last season, when Boston forced the deciding game after losing the first three.

"Late-game execution, you've got to set the table," Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said. "I think our guys did that."

Tyler Herro had 22 of his 24 points in the second half, Bam Adebayo scored 22 and Duncan Robinson and Caleb Martin finished with 15 points each for the Heat - who were short-handed to start the game and even more so by the end.

The Heat were without leading scorer Jimmy Butler, who was granted a leave of absence because of the death of a family member.

Miami lost Terry Rozier and Josh Richardson to injuries. Rozier, who finished with 13 points, landed awkwardly on his right leg after driving to the basket midway through the third quarter, clearly favoring his knee. Both players will have MRI exams on Monday, coach Erik Spoelstra said.

"It's tough to see guys like that go down," Robinson said. "And then Jimmy dealing with what he's dealing with is unfortunate, to put it lightly."

Richardson exited in the second quarter because of a right shoulder injury. He slumped to the floor in pain after his unsuccessful attempt to strip Tatum of the ball.

"I felt my shoulder pop out on the floor and then it popped back in laying on the ground, so thank goodness for that," Richardson said. "I'll know more tomorrow."

Robinson also favored his left shoulder after Brown pushed him off into the stands when both tangled for position early in the fourth quarter. Brown

and Robinson exchanged words and Brown was assessed a flagrant 1 foul.

Miami rallied from a 15-point deficit in the third quarter and cut it to 106-104 on Herro's 3-pointer with 1:49 remaining. But Porzingis and Tatum each converted two free throws to secure the win.

Thunder 127, Kings 113

In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 38 points and Jalen Williams scored 32 as Oklahoma City beat Sacramento for the first time in three meetings this season.

Williams also had nine assists and seven rebounds. Lu Dort had 17 points and nine rebounds and Chet Holmgren added 14 points for the Thunder. Oklahoma City bounced back from a 146-111 loss at Dallas on Saturday.

Domantas Sabonis had 21 points, 14 assists and 11 rebounds for the Kings. Malik Monk led the team with 26 points. Sacramento leading scorer De'Aaron Fox was held to 15 points on 6-for-17 shooting.

Pan swims fastest 100m in 'history' as China win gold

Italy finish a second behind

DOHA, Qatar, Feb. 12, (AP): Despite the absence of many of the sport's biggest names, the first day of the swimming events saw a world record at the World Aquatics Championships on Sunday.

Teenager Pan Zhanle swam the fastest 100 meters in history as he led off China's gold medal-winning 4x100 freestyle relay team.

His time of 46.80 seconds - with a split time of 22.26 - took six hundredths off Romanian David Popovici's world record from 2022 and established the 19-year-old as one to beat in swimming's marquee race at this year's Paris Olympics.

SWIMMING

"Actually, I wasn't feeling in great form," Pan said. "I would've been happy with just getting on the podium. This morning (in heats), the U.S., Great Britain and Italy were all quicker than us, and I just wanted to focus on doing my job well."

"I told myself, 'Just swim hard.' I was shocked when I saw the time, I wasn't expecting to break the record now - I wanted to leave it for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games."

China won the relay in 3:11.08. Italy finished a second behind, with the United States rounding off the podium in 3:12.29.

Erika Fairweather became New Zealand's first ever gold medalist at a World Aquatics Championships by winning the women's 400 freestyle.

Fairweather, who claimed bronze behind Ariane Titmus and Katie Ledecky at last year's swimming worlds, won in a time of 3:59.44 seconds, 2.18 ahead of Li Bingjie of China.

Germany's Isabel Gose was third, 2.95 behind Fairweather, who also broke her national record on her way to victory.

With open water, artistic swimming and diving events all completed in Doha, the focus shifted to the Aspire Dome and eight days of racing in the pool.

Titmus and Ledecky were just



Marrit Steenbergen of the Netherlands swims in a women's 200-meter medley semi-final at the World Aquatics Championships in Doha, Qatar, Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024. (AP)

two of the sport's biggest names skipping the worlds, with the Olympics starting in Paris in just over five months. It is the first time in history a longcourse world championships has been held in the same year as an Olympics.

The men's 400 free final was also without a defending champion but for a different reason as Ahmed Hafnaoui was surprisingly eliminated in the heats earlier in the day, finishing two seconds off the pace.

Kim Woo-min won in a personal best of 3:42.71 to claim South Ko-

rea's first medal in the discipline since 2011.

He edged out 2022 champion Elijah Winnington of Australia by 0.15 and Germany's Lukas Martens by 0.25.

In the 4x100 women's free relay, the Netherlands took the gold in 3:36.61, with Australia earning the silver (3:36.93) and Canada the bronze (3:37.95).

In men's water polo Sunday, Italy edged the United States 13-12 to reach the quarterfinals. Croatia, France and Montenegro also advanced.

Hoshino of Japan captures his first European tour title

Taylor outlasts Hoffman at Phoenix Open

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz., Feb. 12, (AP): Nick Taylor made an 11-foot birdie putt to beat Charley Hoffman on the second hole of a playoff after birdieing three of the last four in regulation Sunday, capping another wild week at the Phoenix Open with his second memorable victory.

Taylor closed with a 6-under 65 to reach 21-under 263, with the 35-year-old Canadian forcing the playoff with a 9-foot birdie putt on the par-4 18th. Last year, he took the Canadian Open with a 72-foot eagle putt on the fourth playoff hole to become the first Canadian in 69 years to win his national open.

Both players birdied the extra hole and hit the green on No. 18 a second time - Taylor from the right rough, Hoffman from the left fairway bunker. Hoffman left his birdie putt short and Taylor birdied the hole for the third time in less than an hour as the sun dipped below the horizon.

Taylor won his fifth PGA Tour title to end a chaotic week of weather delays and the rare decision to close the gates - and, gulp, cut off liquor sales - when things started to get out of hand Saturday.

Taking advantage of the first pleasant day of the week in the desert, Hoffman moved into contention by finishing off a 64 on TPC Scottsdale's Stadium in the morning to complete his weather-delayed third round. He was 4 under in a three-hole stretch on the back nine and had a three-shot lead when he finished.

Taylor shot a course-record 60 in the opening round. He finished off a third-round 68 in Sunday morning.

Two-time defending champion Scottie Scheffler shot a 66 to tie Sam Burns for third at 18 under. Rikuya Hoshino of Japan captured his first European tour title by closing with a 4-under 68 to win the Qatar Masters by one shot.

The 27-year-old Hoshino rolled in a par putt from 5 feet at the 18th hole and punched the air after holding off playing partner Ugo Coussard, who made birdie at the last for a 69 to finish alone in second place.

Hoshino previously won six times on the Japan Golf Tour. This was his 34th appearance on the European tour and he already two runner-up finishes this season, at the Australian Open and the Australian PGA Championship.

He is the fourth Japanese winner in European tour history, after Isao Aoki, Hideki Matsuyama and Ryo Hisatsune.

In Bogota, Colombia, Kevin Veloz won the Astara Golf Championship for his first Korn Ferry Tour title, taking advantage of Brian Campbell's late collapse to get into a playoff that he took with a birdie on the first



First-place individual champion captain Dustin Johnson, of 4Aces GC, poses with the trophy after the final round of LIV Golf Las Vegas at Las Vegas Country Club, Saturday, Feb. 10, 2024, in Las Vegas. (AP)

hole.

Campbell went out in 30, highlighted by an eagle on the par-5 eighth, and led by four with two holes left. He made a double bogey on 17, a three-shot swing when Velo made birdie. Velo birdied the par-5 18th, and Campbell made par. They each shot 5-under 66 to

GOLF

finish at 22-under 261 at Bogota Country Club, playing three rounds on the 7,237-yard Lagos course and one on the 6,254-yard Pacos layout.

The week was marked by two sub-60s rounds at Pacos - Cristobal Del Solar with a Korn Ferry Tour-record 57 on Thursday, Aldrich Potgieter with a 59 on Friday. Del Solar closed with a 63 and finished fifth. Potgieter went 73-71 on the weekend and tied for 20th.

Shannon Tan became the first player from Singapore to win on the Ladies European Tour when she closed with a 3-under 70 for a four-shot victory in the Magical Kenya Ladies Open. ... Mikael Lindberg of Sweden closed with a 5-under 67 and defeated Ryan Van Velzen in the Bain's Whisky Cape Town Open in a tournament co-sanctioned by the Challenge Tour and then Sunshine Tour. ... Kazuma Kobori of New Zealand won for the third time in four weeks on the Webex Players Series, posting a 6-under 66 for a one-shot victory at Castle Hill in Sydney on the PGA Tour of Australasia.

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'No words to explain the loss'

Marathon world record-holder Kiptum, who was set to be a superstar, has died

NAIROBI, Kenya, Feb 12, (AP): Marathon world record-holder Kelvin Kiptum, who was set to be a superstar of long-distance running and was a top contender for gold at the Olympics in Paris this year, was killed along with his coach in a car crash in Kenya.

Their vehicle was the only one involved in the crash late Sunday and Kiptum was driving when it veered off a road and into a ditch before hitting a tree, police said.

Kenya's Kiptum was 24 and one of the most exciting prospects to emerge in road running in years, having broken the world record in only his third appearance in an elite marathon. His record, set at last year's Chicago Marathon, was ratified by international track federation World Athletics just last week.

His death reverberated through Kenya, where runners are the biggest sports stars. Kenyans have also gotten used to tragic tales involving their top athletes after a number have died in road crashes, other accidents and domestic violence cases. "He was only 24," Kenyan President William Ruto said in a statement offering his condolences. "Kiptum was our future."

Kiptum and his Rwandan coach, Gervais Hakizimana, were killed in the crash at around 11 p.m., police said. It happened near the town of Kaptagat in western Kenya, in the heart of the high-



In this file photo, Men's race winner Kelvin Kiptum of Kenya holds a trophy together with women's race winner Sifan Hassan, unseen, of the Netherlands after the London Marathon in London. (AP)

altitude region that's renowned as a training base for the best distance runners from Kenya and across the world.

Kiptum was born and raised in the area.

A third person, a 24-year-old woman, was also in the car and was taken to a hospital with serious injuries, police said. Kiptum and Hakizimana died at the scene.

Athletes and family members, including Kiptum's father, gathered at the hospital mortuary where the bodies of Kiptum and his coach were taken. One of the athletes, former women's steeplechase world champion Milcah Chemos, struggled to speak while breaking down in tears.

"I have no words to explain the loss of Kelvin," she said.

Mini Goal extravaganza: Palestine Cup debuts in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Hassan Al-Khawaja, the head of the "Mini Goal" game committee under the Kuwait Olympic Committee, has officially declared the inaugural Palestine Cup championship. The event is scheduled to take place from the 14th to the 17th of this month, featuring competitions

SOCCER

in both adult and children's categories at the late Samir Saeed Stadium, located at the headquarters of the Social Cultural Committee in Maidan Hawalli, Kuwait. Sixteen teams will compete in the adult category, while eight teams will vie for victory in the children's category.

Al-Khawaja expressed the overwhelming official, popular, and sport-

Kenneth Kimaiyo, a friend of Kiptum, said he arrived at the crash scene soon after it happened and Kiptum had been thrown out of the car. Photos showed the silver car with a badly mangled roof and the windshield crushed flat.



Officials address the press during the launch of the Palestine Cup in Kuwait.

ing support for this pioneering tournament, marking its inaugural edition.

In terms of rewards, the top-performing team in the adult category will be awarded 600 dinars for the first place, 300 dinars for the second place,

and 100 dinars for the third place. Similarly, in the children's category (under 11 and 13 years old), the first-place holder will receive 300 dinars, and the second-place team will be rewarded with 100 dinars.

Kiptum was the first man to run the marathon in under 2 hours, 1 minute in an official race when he set the world record of 2:00.35 in Chicago in October, beating the mark of fellow Kenyan and marathon great Eliud Kipchoge, who is the reigning two-time Olympic champion.

Kiptum and Kipchoge were expected to provide an enticing all-Kenyan battle for marathon gold in Paris and Kiptum was due to start his season at the Rotterdam Marathon in April, which would have been his first event since breaking the world record.

Argentina secure spot at Paris Olympics



The two teams pose for a group photo before their exhibition match.

Kuwait Cricket Club organizes T20 exhibition match between KCC Board President XI, British Embassy XI

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: Kuwait Cricket Club is the official governing body for the game of cricket in association with Public Authority of Sports, Olympic Committee of Kuwait and the International Cricket Council (ICC - the world's governing body for cricket) and Asian Cricket Council (ACC - Operating under ICC)

Recently, at Sulaibiya Cricket Ground, a T20 exhibition match was organized by Kuwait Cricket between the Kuwait Cricket Board President XI led by Fahad Bastaki and British Embassy XI led by James Culley in order to

CRICKET

strengthen the bilateral ties between the British Community residing in Kuwait and the Kuwait Cricket fraternity.

KCC Board President XI led by Fahad Bastaki batted first and posted 187 runs in 20 overs, with Abdulrahman Al Kendari scoring a brilliant 52, Fahad Bastaki contributing 25, and the evergreen Saud Qamar smashing 42 runs in the lower middle order. For the British

Embassy XI, Henry Bowden took 3 wickets and Rayman Rahman claimed 2 wickets.

Chasing the target, the British Embassy XI team fell short by 17 runs, with Stu Cross scoring a magnificent 83 runs and Henry Bowden adding 38 runs to the total. The standout bowlers for KCC were the senior board member Mahmoud Bastaki and Kuwait National Team Manager Naveen Jayan, who both took 2 wickets each.

KCC Board President Mr. Haider Farman made a special appearance during the innings break at the Sulaibiya Cricket Ground and met with both the participating teams and encouraged them all to continue playing such exhibition matches and to build on this tradition. During the pre-match address, the Director General of KCC, Mr. Sajid Ashraf, expressed KCC's interest in converting this one off game every year into a best of 5 series throughout the year and also expressed interest in organizing similar matches with other embassies making it into a triangular and or a quadrangular series. This indicates KCC's commitment to fostering friendly relations and promoting sports diplomacy through cricket with all the leading communities residing in the State of Kuwait.

Saudi Sports for All Federation welcomes more than 20,000 participants

Record Saudis take part in Riyadh Marathon

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, Feb 12, (AP): More than 20,000 participants from 125 countries, including a record 60% Saudi nationals, took part in the third edition of the Riyadh Marathon on February 10 - an increase of more than 33%, with 15,000 runners in 2023.

For the first time, the start and finish line, and the accompanying Marathon Village, were located next to Kingdom Arena and Boulevard World. From there, competitors of all ages and abilities could enjoy one of four races - the full marathon (42.2km), half marathon (21.1km), 10km, and 4km family run. Across the four races, there were more than 20,000 participants, with a significant increase in female runners, exceeding 7,200. In total, 64% were males, with 36% female.

The top three elite male marathon runners were Kigen Wilfred Kirwa of Kenya, Tilahun Abe Gashahun of Ethiopia, and El Ghouz Anouar of Morocco, who were awarded US\$30,000, US\$20,000, and US\$10,000 respectively. The top three female elite marathon runners, receiving the same amounts, were Badane Bedatu Hirpa, Desta Nigist Mu-

luneh, and Jebesa Zenebu Fikadu, all from Ethiopia. Prizes for elite runners in the half marathon starting at US\$5,000 for first place.

SFA President HRH Prince Khaled bin Alwaleed bin Talal Al Saud said: "In line with the mandate of the Saudi Vision 2030 initiative, events such as this are building a healthier, happier population. And with increasing numbers of participants from abroad, we are raising Saudi Arabia's profile as a sporting nation."

SFA Managing Director Shai-

MARATHON

ma Saleh Al-Husseini said: "The remarkable figure of 36% female participation underscores our concerted efforts to empower women through sports, and helps to realize the ambitious goals of Saudi Vision 2030. This milestone achievement heralds a brighter, healthier future."

Organized by the Saudi Sports for All Federation (SFA), in collaboration with the Ministry of Sport, the Saudi Arabian Olympic & Paralympic Committee, and the

Saudi Arabian Athletic Federation, the event sponsors included Saudi Awwal Bank, and headline sponsors ROSHN, PepsiCo, ASICS, Twauniya, Genesis, and Al Arabia, with a total of US\$197,000 in cash prizes awarded to winners. The event was also sponsored by JPMorgan, Hisamitsu, Activia, L'Oréal, GSK, CALO, Kudu, Delta Sports, and MDLBeast.



Burgan makes a goal attempt against Al-Qurain. Photo by Mahmoud Jadeed

Countdown to Gulf Cup

Burgan handball team heads to Manama for 'intensive' training

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The delegation from Burgan Handball Club is scheduled to depart at 3:30 this afternoon for the Bahraini capital, Manama, embarking on an external training camp until the 23rd of this month. This preparation aims to gear up for the Gulf Cup Winners' Club Championship, hosted by Al-Arabi Qatari Club from the 25th of this month to the 5th of March.

Leading the Burgan delegation is the game director, Mohamed Nasser, accompanied by his assistant, Abdulaziz Najeb, the administrator, Abdullah Al-Yousifi, coach Saeed Hegazy, and assistants Khaled Melhem, Elias Al-Bastanji, and specialist Mohamed Amin. The squad includes 20 players, and they are set to depart directly for Qatar on the 23rd of this month.

Burgan Club will field its current professionals, Orange Semedo and Egyptian Mustafa Bashir, along with a third local or Gulf professional, adhering to the tournament regulations. The third player is expected to take up the goalkeeper position.

Meanwhile, the second Kuwaiti hand representative in the tournament, "Al-Kuwait" team, will not conduct a training camp. National coach Haitham Al-Rashidi will focus on current league matches, having played against Al-Arabi yesterday and scheduled to face Al-Qurain and

Al-Sulaibkhat in the next two rounds. The "Al-Abyad" delegation is set to depart for Doha on the 21st of this month.

In recent league action, Burgan's player Hussein Karam secured a crucial goal in the last six seconds against Al-Qurain, resulting in a 29-29 draw. In another match during the same round, Khaiteh defeated Al-Sahel with a score of 40-30. Currently, Burgan and Al-Qurain hold one point each, Khaiteh has two points, and Al-Sahel has none.

Assistant coach of the Burgan,

HANDBALL

Khaled Melhem, explained the team's initial performance challenges in the league. He cited various factors, including the Algerian coach Saeed Hegazy's recent involvement with the national team in external matches, only taking charge of the Burgan team in the last ten days. Additionally, the late entry into training of Burgan's Orange professional, Samido, and the Egyptian professional Mustafa Bashir, who resumed training a day before the match following recovery from an ankle injury, contributed to the team's readiness issues. Furthermore, the absence of Mohamed Al-Erian due to injury impacted the squad's preparedness.

Brazil eliminated

CARACAS, Feb 12, (AP): Brazil will not defend its Olympic men's soccer title in Paris after losing 1-0 to its regional rival Argentina on Sunday.

In the decisive South American Olympic qualifier, Luciano Gondou scored the winner for the Argentina under-23 team coached by Javier Mascherano. He headed a cross from Valentin Barco past goalkeeper Mycael in the 78th minute at the Brigido Iriarte Stadium in Caracas.

Brazil won gold at men's soccer in the Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo Olympics.

South America's Olympic qualifying for men's soccer offered two spots in Paris, where the men's tournament starts July 24. Paraguay ended on the top of the table of the final group stage with seven points in three matches after its 2-0 win

SOCCER

on Sunday against host Venezuela.

The Paraguayan team, which didn't have star players like its two bigger continental rivals, also beat Brazil to secure its spot for France.

Argentina finished the tournament with five points, two more than Brazil, which only managed to beat Venezuela in the final stage.

Argentina had the upper hand in the first half but the defensive stance of Brazil, coached by Ramon Menezes, didn't help bring much emotion to the match. World Cup winner Thiago Al-mada hit the post in the 16th minute.

Argentina's Leandro Brey made the best save of the game in the 61st, when substitute Gabriel Pec struck hard from close range. Brazil did not keep up the pressure, with striker Endrick once more playing below par. And then Gondou's header made the difference between the two teams.

"We deserved this. We didn't lose a single match at the qualifying," said Gondou, who scored four goals in the tournament in Venezuela. "We suffered, we waited for this goal, but at the end we got it."

Brazil last failed to make the men's soccer Olympic tournament in 2004.

"It is a very bad feeling, we prepared well for this," Brazil midfielder Andrey Santos said. "We struggled to keep the ball throughout the tournament. It didn't go as we expected."

Argentina won the gold at men's soccer at the games in Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008, with Lionel Messi leading the team in Beijing.

Paraguay's surprising spot in Paris came after Diego Gómez scored from the spot early in the second half and Marcelo Pérez pushed the ball with his head to an empty goal in the 75th minute after a bizarre mistake of the Venezuelan defense.

Paraguay's men's soccer team has given the small South American nation one of its few medals in Olympic history; a silver in 2004 after losing the final against Argentina.



Argentina's Luciano Gondou (right), scores the opening goal against Brazil during South America's under-23 pre-Olympic tournament soccer match at Brigido Iriarte stadium in Caracas, Venezuela. (AP)



Ivory Coast's Sebastien Haller (right), scores his side's second goal during the African Cup of Nations final soccer match between Ivory Coast and Nigeria, at the Olympic Stadium of Ebimpe in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. (AP)

Sports

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Resilient Ivory Coast win Africa Cup of Nations



Ivory Coast's Max-Alain Gradel raises the trophy after the African Cup of Nations final soccer match between Ivory Coast and Nigeria, at the Olympic Stadium of Ebimpe in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. (AP)

Party begins as Elephants rally past Nigeria for 3rd title

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast, Feb 12, (AP): Let the party begin.

Sebastien Haller scored late to lead host nation Ivory Coast to a remarkable Africa Cup of Nations title with a 2-1 victory over Nigeria in the final.

Haller fired in from close range in the 81st minute to complete the turnaround after Franck Kessié drew the Elephants level in the 62nd.

It was Ivory Coast's third title after wins in 1992 and 2015, both won on penalties.

Veteran Ivory Coast midfielder Max Gradel, now 36, was part of the 2015 championship team.

"Representing the national team is everything, and to have brought joy to all Ivorians with what I've done is even more incredible," Gradel said

Al-Qadisiya Vice President receives a stadium ban until the end of season



Al-Qadisiya Vice President Sheikh Fahd Talal Al-Fahd.

the knockout stage, before Haller fired the team into the final with the winning goal against Congo in the semifinals.

Ivory Coast's unlikely progression through the knockout stage as it overcame setback after setback convinced many devout Ivorians that God was on the team's side.

"It was an extraordinary tournament," said interim coach Emerse Faé, the previous assistant who took over on his 40th birthday.

Nigeria conceded as many goals in the final as it had in all its previous games in the tournament. Coach José Peseiro had banked on a mean defense to earn what would have been the Super Eagles' fourth title.

"We played a fantastic tournament, but today Côte d'Ivoire was better," Peseiro said. The Portuguese coach said the pressure got to his players and commended the home team for showing none.

In the final, Ivory Coast's pressure finally paid off when Kessié's header to Aningra's corner set off a tumult of joy in the 60,000-capacity Alassane Ouattara Stadium. Kessié ran to the corner and raised his hand to his forehead in salute as the sea of orange-clad fans rippled in delight.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 12: The Football Association's Disciplinary Committee has taken strict actions against individuals associated with Al-Qadisiya Club following the controversial events during the semi-finals of the Amir Cup. Vice President Sheikh Fahd Talal Al-Fahd faces a stadium ban until the end of the season along with a 10,000 dinars fine. Additionally, Al-Qadisiya Club itself incurs a 10,000 dinars fine.

Further sanctions include Saud Abu Al-Hassan, Head of the Marketing Committee, receiving a stadium ban until season-end and a 2,000 dinars fine. Muhammad Al-Awadi, a member of the Al-Qadisiya General Assembly, is prohibited from entering stadiums along with a 2,000 dinars fine.

The Disciplinary Committee just-

SOCCER

fied these penalties by citing the events surrounding the Al-Qadisiya versus Al-Arabi match during the Amir Cup semi-finals, emphasizing that they were deemed insults to the sports system in Kuwait. The committee referenced Articles 61, 70, and 79 of the Disciplinary Regulations as the basis for these actions.

In a separate incident, Al-Qadisiya manager Abdullah Al-Haqqaan is forbidden from accompanying the team for two matches, coupled with a 500 dinars fine, due to his remarks directed at the refereeing team during the Amir Cup quarter-finals against Al-Fahaheel.

Additional fines were imposed on Kuwait Club coach Nabil Maaloul, who received a 500 dinars penalty for verbal abuse against the referee. Firas Al-Khatib, was also given a 1,000 dinars fine and a two-match suspension for similar actions. Hussein Al-Asfour, the director of professionalism in Al-Fahaheel, also received disciplinary measures.

Al-Rayyan beat Kuwait Club to defend title

Bouffin, Kazemi named among best performers in the West Asian Club Volleyball Championship



Top players display their awards on the podium during the closing ceremony.

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

MUSCAT, Feb 12: The West Asian Club Championship for Men, concluded recently in Sohar Sports City, witnessed the Kuwait Club volleyball team's Abdullah Bouffin being named the "best server," and Iranian player Sar Kazemi securing the title of the best player in position 2, both earning spots in the tournament's ideal squad.

The distinguished squad also featured Bilal Nabil "Al-Rayyan" as the best player in position 3, with teammates Suleiman Saeed awarded as the best libero, Olivier Fino recognized as the best overall player, Ibrahim Saeed "Al-Arabi" as the best player in posi-

tion 3, Renan Ribeiro as the best player in position 4, and Nasser Annan "Al-Ahly" as the best player in position 4.

The championship concluded with a repeat of the first edition, as Al-Rayyan of Qatar claimed the title for

VOLLEYBALL

the second consecutive time, defeating "Al-Kuwait" in three clean sets (25-18, 25-22, 25-13). "Al-Kuwait" secured the runner-up position for the second time in a row. Al-Arabi of Qatar clinched the third spot by defeating Al-Ahli of Bahrain, securing fourth place with a 3-0 victory. Other rank-

ings include Al-Seeb of Oman in fifth place, Qadisiyah of Kuwait in sixth, Sohar of Oman in seventh, Baniyas of the Emirates in eighth, Al-Ibtisam of Saudi Arabia in ninth, and Shabab Al-Hussein of Jordan in tenth.

Musleh Al-Rashidi, the Director of Volleyball at Kuwait Club, commended the high level displayed by the "Al-Kuwait" players in the championship. Despite reaching the final match for the second consecutive time, he acknowledged their inability to secure the title. Al-Rashidi stated, "We have turned the page on the tournament and will now focus on preparing for the remaining postponed local league matches, followed by the semi-finals as we strive to defend the title we achieved last season."

Unbeaten Australia win under-19 cricket World Cup

BENONI, South Africa, Feb 12, (AP): Harjas Singh top-scored with 55 runs as Australia finished unbeaten to win the men's under-19 World Cup after beating India by 79 runs in the final.

After electing to bat, Australia scored 253-7 in its 50 overs. The Australians then bowled India out for

CRICKET

174 with player of the match Mahli Beardman (3-15) and Raf MacMillan (3-43) the leading bowlers for the winners.

Opener Ardah Singh led India with 47 runs while Murugan Abhishek added 42. Raj Limbani took 3-38 to lead the Indian bowlers.

It was Australia's fourth under-19

men's World Cup victory and its first since 2010 when current internationals Mitch Marsh and Josh Hazlewood were members of the squad.

"We knew this was going to be a tough tournament given the standard of some of the teams and to go through undefeated says a lot about the talent we have in our squad and the excellence of our planning and preparation," said Australia captain Hugh Weibgen, who scored 48 runs in the final.

Also:

DHAKA: Najmul Hossain Shanto has been appointed captain of the Bangladesh cricket team in all three formats for one year, the Bangladesh Cricket Board said Monday.

Shanto replaces Shakib Al Hasan, who has been suffering from a vision problem caused by an issue with the retina of his left eye.



Australia U19's Harry Dixon plays a shot during the ICC U19 men's Cricket World Cup Final between India and Australia, in Benoni, South Africa. (AP)

Fans jeer Barcelona after high-scoring draw

MADRID, Feb 12, (AP): Barcelona heard from its fans again after its chances of successfully defending the Spanish league title took another hit.

Barcelona was jeered at home following a 3-3 draw against second-to-last Granada, a setback that saw the Catalan club move 10 points behind leader Real Madrid, which defeated second-place Girona 4-0.

Barcelona trails Girona by five points and is three ahead of fourth-place Atletico Madrid, which lost 1-0 at Sevilla earlier Sunday.

The draw is likely to add more pressure on Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez, who recently said he will not return after the end of the season.

"It was already tough for us in the league, and now it's two points tougher," Xavi said. "It's a big gap but we are not going to throw in the towel. We have to stop making mistakes."

Barcelona was heavily favored to

win against a Granada team that has only one win in its last 13 matches in all competitions. Teenager Lamine Yamal was the man of the match for Barcelona, scoring twice.

"We tried until the end but couldn't

SOCCER

get the win," the 16-year-old Yamal said. "It's another missed opportunity but we have to keep fighting. There are still many matches remaining and the teams at the top could still stumble."

Lamal opened the scoring in the 14th minute before Granada rallied with goals by Ricard Sánchez in the 43rd and Facundo Pellistri in the 60th.

Robert Lewandowski equalized in the 63rd and Ignasi Miquel put the visitors ahead again in the 66th before Yamal leveled the match with low shot into the corner in the 80th.