



Amir's health remains 'stable': Amiri Diwan

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7, (KUNA): The health condition of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah remains stable, said the Amiri Diwan on Thursday.

In a statement, Amiri Diwan Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah also prayed to Almighty Allah to bestow good health and swift recovery upon His Highness the Amir.

Opinion

This is the story of the Gulf Cooperation Council

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

AS I was watching the proceedings of the Gulf Cooperation Council Summit in Doha the day before yesterday, my memory took me back to the year 1980 when the Arab Summit was held in Amman, Jordan.

On that day, the late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad saw that the situation was unsettling, and sent a piece of paper to the then Saudi Crown Prince the late Fahad bin Abdulaziz, stating that the Gulf states must have a council or an assembly to protect their national security.

The Saudi Crown Prince quickly responded by accepting this idea, and held a meeting in the evening to ponder over it. About a year later, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) emerged at the Gulf Summit in Abu Dhabi.

For 42 years, the GCC has gone through many tests, but it has proven that it is a political, economic, and military force that can withstand storms.

It is true that each country has its own point of view on some agreements, but most of them have been implemented or are on their way to implementation. Nevertheless, the experience is intensifying daily, and these six countries stand united in the face of adversity.

Therefore, the "Peninsula Shield" represented a GCC safeguard. It proved its strength, during the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the events in Bahrain, and the Houthi aggression against the Gulf States.

The opening of markets and movement for citizens of the six countries has enhanced trade exchange between them. The monetary union and the central bank are still waiting for agreement on some formalities, but the electricity connection and the Gulf railway plan are proceeding according to what was agreed upon.

The GCC nationals have proven that they are no less capable than the Europeans and Americans in seeking the unity stipulated in the charter approved in 1981.

On the other hand, there have been attempts over the past years to undermine the GCC through either the neighboring countries that have their own agenda, or the world that built its vision on thwarting all forms of Arab attempts for solidarity and unity.

To this day, 42 years later, and with the 44th summit held in the Qatari capital, there is a popular determination to complete the process.

All the storms that passed through the GCC did not destroy its leaders or its people, but rather increased their unity. A testimony of this aspect is the bitter experience in 1990, and how the Kuwaitis felt that hearts were opened to them before homes in all the GCC countries because the Gulf spirit is essentially one, irrespective of how many personalities there are.

In the year 2004, the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz proposed the implementation of what was stipulated in the charter regarding the Gulf federation. This undoubtedly requires the completion of some procedures that were delayed, especially since the events that the region witnessed in the past two decades and the current regional situation have begun imposing greater unity of ranks.

That is why we say - It is better late than never. The changes that the world is witnessing are forcing the GCC people to be united.

The poet Al-Muhallab bin Abi Sufra was right when he said, "All of you my sons, when it comes to problems, do not separate. Spears refuse to break when held together, but when separated, they break."

Do GCC officials realize the importance of their unity?

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Day by Day

THE unscrupulous person finds his essence severed, relying on ill-gotten money for sustenance. His wife, who has fled the country, and his children, living off stolen wealth, will find no true happiness in the fraudulent teachings of their corrupt patriarch.

No refuge lies in the web of lies and fabricated tales he weaves, and his life will not be one of contentment. Much like the melting snow and fading meadow, the stories spun through deceit will eventually be exposed and circulated among the people.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Nearly 100% compliance with financial disclosures: Nazaha

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7, (KUNA): Head of the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim announced, Thursday, that around 99.6 percent of those under its financial disclosure regulations have submitted their documents in reflection of the country's improved anti-corruption protocols and rankings.

In his speech at Nazaha's third forum commemorating the International anti-Corruption Day, to be marked on December ninth, Al-Ibrahim stated that Nazaha has succeeded in implementing and improving laws that would help Kuwait to better counter corruption.

Al-Ibrahim said new laws contributed to further promotion of transparency and cracking down on corruption, citing laws on restricting conflict of interest and amending the legislative elections' law.

He also mentioned that Kuwait was awarded two points in the International ranking for combating corruption "the Corruption Perceptions Index".

He said that one point was added to Kuwait for holding the second place in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in the World Justice Project (WJP) and the other for going up eight ranks

FM receives credentials of new US Ambassador

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Thursday a copy of the credentials of new US Ambassador to the country Karen Sasahara.

The Foreign Minister wished the new ambassador good luck in her mission and further cooperation between the two friendly countries.

Latest regional and international developments were discussed during the reception.

in the International Institute for Management (IMD) compared to their first year of membership.

International organizations, government institutions and private sectors entities all participated in the third forum, along with a representative from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).



MoFA photo
Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives new US Ambassador to the country Karen Sasahara.

MP seeks tourism boost

Legislative stir

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: MP Jarrah Al-Fawzan has unveiled his plan to submit a bill on tourism, including the establishment of Kuwait Tourism Company, urging the government to adopt his proposal.

He highlighted the essential role of tourism in enhancing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country, providing non-oil revenues and generating a huge number of job opportunities. He said Kuwait has all the abilities needed to be a pioneer tourism country; especially since it has the largest number of islands among the neighboring countries, long coast, capable human resources and favorable financial conditions. He pointed out that the tourism revenues of Bahrain reached KD 1.2 billion in 2022.

He added his bill stipulates the establishment of the Ministry of Tourism and appointment of a competent tourism minister who will lay down the strategy for the development of the tourism sector and put Kuwait on the touristic destinations map.

In addition, MP Muhammad Al-Mahan submitted a proposal to establish a central agency for disasters and crises. He said the agency will conduct studies to determine potential crises or disasters, specify the vision to deal with them, and identify and address the current crises. He added the agency will also provide consultations and coordinate with the concerned institutions in dealing with crises and disasters.

On the other hand, MP Marzouq Al-Ghanim forwarded queries to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd about the arrest of a citizen identified as Turkey Al-Anzi. He asked if it is true that this citizen was lured into his arrest while he was in his office and detained at the Intelligence General Department in the Ministry of Defense from Dec 3-4, 2023 during which he was tortured in order to force him to admit crimes he did not commit.

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Google ups global AI race stakes with Gemini launch

NEW YORK, Dec 7, (AP): Google took its next leap in artificial intelligence with the launch of project Gemini, an AI model trained to behave in human-like ways that's likely to intensify the debate about the technology's potential promise and perils.

The rollout will unfold in phases, with less sophisticated versions of Gemini called "Nano" and "Pro" being immediately incorporated into Google's AI-powered chatbot Bard and its Pixel 8 Pro smartphone.

With Gemini providing a helping hand, Google promises Bard will become more intuitive and better at tasks that involve planning. On the Pixel 8 Pro, Gemini will be able to quickly summarize recordings made on the device and provide automatic replies on messaging services, starting with WhatsApp, according to Google.

Gemini's biggest advances won't come until early next year when its Ultra model will be used to launch "Bard Advanced," a juiced-up version of the chatbot that initially will only be offered to a test audience.

The AI, at first, will only work in English throughout the world, although Google executives assured reporters during a briefing that the technology will have no problem eventually diversifying into other languages.

Other Voices

By The Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown and Yasmine Sherif

'The one international language the world understands,' wrote Eglantyne Jebb, founder of Save the Children, "is the cry of a child," and the evidence is accumulating that children are not only the innocent victims of conflict whose pleas need to be heard, but also the most vulnerable victims of climate change.

The climate crisis is an education crisis. Right here, right now, climate change is robbing millions of children and adolescents of their right to learn, their right to play and their right to feel safe and secure.

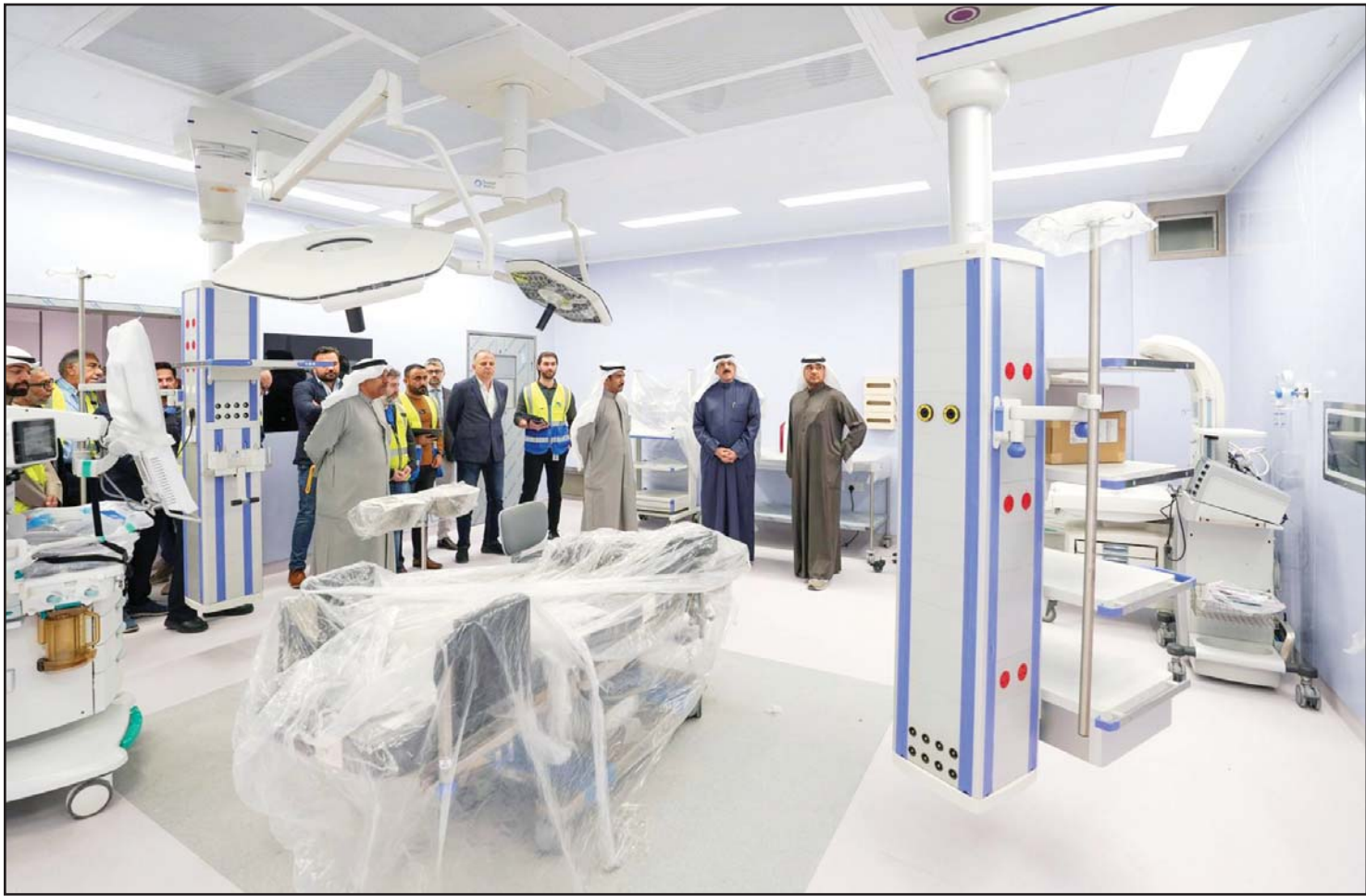
In Pakistan deadly floods destroyed or damaged over 26,000 schools last year. This exposed over 600,000 adolescent girls to higher risks of school dropout, gender-based violence, and child marriage. In Ethiopia, girls like Mellion are going hungry and risk dropping out of school forever as a result of the ongoing drought.

While the climate crisis threatens the rights

of every person on the planet, those who are enduring the brunt of its impact are the most vulnerable girls and boys already living in protracted crises settings due to armed conflicts, forced displacement and other crises. For them and their communities, climate change is already a daunting reality that can mean the difference between life and death, between war and peace, between the chance to learn or not.

Today, there are more than 224 million crisis-impacted children worldwide who urgently need education support. New analysis by Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises, hosted by UNICEF, has found that 62 million of these

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KUNA photo
Kuwait's Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Jassim Al-Ostad inspecting the new delivery rooms during a tour of the expansive new maternity hospital.

Minister tours state-of-the-art facility

Maternity hospital nears completion

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Jassim Al-Ostad, conducted an on-site inspection of the nearing completion of the expansive new maternity hospital, a flagship healthcare project in the region with a potential capacity of 789 beds. Minister Al-Ostad personally toured the hospital's sections, scrutinizing delivery rooms, laboratories, and the central radiology unit.

The visit also encompassed the inspection of 9-meter-long bridges, equipped with electric walkway services, connecting various project buildings. According to a press statement from the Ministry, the project, designed and imple-

mented in adherence to the highest international standards, represents a cutting-edge medical facility.

With a completion rate of 99 percent, the hospital is anticipated to open soon, featuring three towers for inpatient care, outpatient clinics, and a multi-storey parking lot.

The hospital boasts a capacity of 789 beds, including specialized maternal care and intensive care units, along with a comprehensive outpatient clinic building. The project covers a vast area in the Al-Sabah Medical District, strategically positioned on the coast of Kuwait City, offering scenic views of the Arabian Gulf.

'Hunger war begins'

Battle in Gaza blocks aid

RAFAH, Gaza Strip, Dec 7, (AP): Israeli troops battled Hamas militants Wednesday in the center of the Gaza Strip's second-largest city, the military said. The ground offensive has sent tens of thousands of Palestinians fleeing to the territory's southernmost edge and prevented aid groups from delivering food, water and other supplies.

Two months into the war, Israel's offensive into southern Gaza was bringing to Khan Younis the same fierce urban fighting and intensified bombardment that obliterated much of Gaza City and the north of the territory in recent weeks.

But in the south, the areas where Palestinians can seek safety are rapidly shrinking. Ahead of the assault, Israel urged residents to evacuate Khan Younis, the childhood home of two

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Palestinians try to rescue a woman stuck under the rubble of a destroyed building following Israeli airstrikes in Khan Younis refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip, Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023. (AP)

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	05:05	Asr	14:31
Sunrise ..	06:29	Maghrib ..	16:50
Zohr	11:39	Isha	18:11

Local

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

Weather			
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:			
By Day: Warm and clouds will increase gradually with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speed of 06-26 km/h.			
By Night: Rather cold to cold and partly cloudy with light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speed of 06-26 km/h forming over some areas.			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait City	26	16	
Kuwait Airport	29	11	
Abdaly	28	10	
Jahra	29	13	
Salmiyah	21	18	
Nuwaisib	28	12	
Wafra	29	10	

HH Crown Prince suspends public servants’ hiring, promotion, secondment

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7, (KUNA): Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has issued a decree suspending public servants’ appointment, promotion, transfer and secondment for three months, subject to renewal.

The decree was published in an addendum to the official gazette (Kuwait

Today) on Wednesday, December 6.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Wednesday a phone call from Qatar’s Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to ask about the health condition of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In his call, the Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim wished His Highness the Amir everlasting wellbeing.

His Highness Sheikh Meshal thanked the Qatari Amir for his sincere, fraternal sentiments and good gesture. He also wished Sheikh Tamim everlasting wellbeing and further progress and prosperity for the State of Qatar.

GCC Supreme Council nods unified tourist visa for Gulf

Steps underway to implement move



The Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with the Italian envoy.



KUNA photos of the Minister of Foreign Affairs receiving a copy of the credentials of the new Tunisian ambassador to the State of Kuwait.

FM receives envoys credentials

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Thursday a copy of the credentials of new Italian Ambassador to the country Lorenzo Morini.

The Foreign Minister wished the new ambassador good luck in his mission and further cooperation between the two friendly countries.

Latest regional and international developments were discussed during the reception. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received the credentials of the new Tunisian ambassador to Kuwait. (KUNA)

Bid to streamline payment of dues

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy has disclosed the successful integration of the treated water request service with the Ministry of Public Works, reports Al-Rai daily.

The ministry emphasized that the primary goal of this linkage is to streamline the payment of state dues owed to ministries by individuals requesting treated water.

These sources elaborated that the electronic linkage with the Ministry of Works goes beyond just the treated water service, saying the MEW is actively pursuing electronic integration to facilitate the transfer of all its transactions and communications with other state agencies.

Moreover, efforts are underway to develop electronic payment systems at the Ministry of Works, enhancing efficiency in financial transactions.

Dr. Jassim Al-Ostad, the Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, highlighting the issue has issued directives to connect the services offered by the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fisheries Resources (PAAAFR). Currently, a system is in development to streamline the connection process for the Authority.

The Electricity Authority is concurrently working on enhancing its systems for collecting various dues, ensuring compatibility with the latest technological advancements for easy customer access through diverse channels, including electronic payment methods.

Regular meetings are reported to be taking place among competent departments within relevant ministries, aiming to facilitate all transactions submitted by these ministries.

The ministry is committed to expediting the completion of these transactions, eliminating the documentary cycles of the past, whether on paper or through the use of CDs, to transfer and circulate information among its various ministries, sectors, and departments.

Wafra producers, SME owners taking part

Huge turnout at Kuwait Farmers Union market

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: The second seasonal market of the Kuwait Farmers Union in Wafra witnessed a great turnout of consumers, individuals and families due to its unique location at the old entrance to Wafra, the well-organization of its stalls, and the large supply of many agricultural and food products.

The market will be open until the end of May 2024 with a large number

of Wafra producers and small business owners participating. Its doors will be open seven days a week to Wafra pioneers and visitors.

In this regard, Atef Shaaban, the supervisor of the market from the Kuwaiti Farmers Union, explained that the seasonal agricultural market of the Kuwait Farmers Union is open every day from 2:00am to 8:00pm. It is well protected from rain and sun. Many Wafra farmers participate in it with their various products, which include fresh Kuwaiti fruits, vegetables and

plants, as well as various shrubs for decoration and production in private gardens, approved food products from field fruits such as oils and olives, and Kuwaiti and Arab fungal and healthy plants.

The market has opened its doors this season to small business owners in Kuwait to encourage them, the most important of which are projects to manufacture sweets, pickles, dairy products, cheeses, and juices extracted from fruits, such as Kuwaiti strawberry juice.



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

The drill in progress on the last day.

GCC armed forces cooperation stressed

‘Takamul One’ joint military drill concludes

By Munaif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd has stressed the importance of cooperation between the armed forces of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries; which brings them greater understanding, integration and harmony, and contributes to raising the level of their readiness and combat efficiency to maintain the security and stability of countries in the region, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd made the statement at the culmination of Takamul One joint military exercises in Al-Adiraa Square in the northwest part of the country. These exercises started on Nov 26, 2023 with the participation of the Kuwaiti Army Ground Force and the Joint Peninsula Shield Forces under the patronage of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd who affirmed that the Takamul One Exercise greatly contributed to improving the efficiency of the armed forces.

He disclosed this is the first ‘Peninsula Shield’ joint exercise since the establishment of the unified military command. “Cooperation between the armed forces of the Gulf countries is a model of excellence and support for the security and stability of the whole region,” he affirmed.

He praised the high morale and outstanding performance of the forces participating in the exercise, which reflects the level of readiness and field skill they possess.

He said: “Cooperation between the armed forces of the GCC countries is an ideal model of integration and excellence in joint Gulf action. I implore God Almighty to protect our countries from all forms of harm and to perpetuate the blessing of security, safety and stability under the wise leadership and sound directives of the leaders of the GCC countries.”

Upon his arrival at the closing ceremony, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd listened to the explanation of Land Force Commander and Director of Takamul One Exercise Major General Mohammad Al-Dhafiri. He reviewed the nature, course and scenario of the final exercise; capabilities of participating forces; and the most important tactical positions that will permeate all stages.

Al-Dhafiri explained that the exercise and the multiple stages he witnessed contribute to strengthening aspects of cooperation between the Kuwaiti Land Force and the Joint Peninsula Shield Forces. “It also achieved full familiarity and understanding of the tasks and duties assigned to these forces, and enhanced the chances of implementing them with the highest levels of efficiency and mastery,” he stressed.

Present at the closing ceremony were GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi, Ministry of Defense Undersecretary Sheikh Dr Abdullah Al-Mishaal, Commander of the Unified Military Command Lieutenant General Eid Al-Shalawi, Chief of the General Staff of the Army by designation Major General Engineer Dr Ghazi Al-Shammari, ambassadors of the GCC countries to the State of Kuwait, a number of senior army commanders and military commanders in the armies of participating countries.

Takamul One Exercise in figures:

- Participation of all GCC countries
- Duration is 12 days
- 10,840 participants
- 816 machinery and vehicles
- Four convoys arrived through the land port
- Troops arrived through the sea port – three trips
- Troops arrived through the airport – four flights

Travel ban unit at airport

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: Head of the Implementation General Department at the Ministry of Justice Judge Abdullah Al-Othman recently issued an administrative decision regarding the travel ban section at Kuwait International Airport, reports Al-Anba daily.

The decision states that the unit offers the following services:

- Travel ban order inquiry through the computer.
- Calculate the corresponding amounts for those who wish to pay in whole or in part.
- Travel ban is lifted after completing the procedures under Code 0210 and photographing the lifting report in the scanner system (EMG).
- Issue a notice of execution of judgment under Code 765 and photographing it in the scanner system (EMG).
- Issue ‘To Whom It May Concern’ certificate under Code 980.
- Payments received outside the department under Code 745 and the creditor is required to appear in person.
- Lift the vehicle seizure after paying the amounts due under Code 650.
- Proof of case under Code 710 is made in relation to the abovementioned procedures only.

11-13 seen Friday night

Warm mornings, cold evenings in weekend

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7, (KUNA): Kuwaiti weather expected to have warm mornings with cloudy and cool temperatures in the evenings over the weekend, said Kuwait Meteorology Department Thursday.

The department director, Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, said in a statement that the weather maps’ data indicated humidity and increasingly patchy, cloudy skies on Friday evening in addition to mild southeastern winds.

Thursday morning would be warm with light southeastern winds ranging between 6-25 km/h with temperature highs between 27 and 29 degrees Celsius, and the sea tides ranging between 1-3 feet.

Al-Qarawi added, Thursday evening, however, would lean towards unstable winds and cooler low temperatures ranging nine and 11 degrees with sea tides between 1-3 feet.

Al-Qarawi also mentioned the weather on Friday morning would be warm and cloudy with unstable winds ranging between 6-24 km/h and temperature highs between 27 and 29 degrees, with sea tides with between 1-3 feet.

Although, Friday evening would see cooler temperatures between 11 and 13 degrees, with tides between 1-4 feet.

Saturday morning would see warm and cloudy with light south and southeastern winds 12 and 35 km/h with a chance of light showers and temperature highs ranging between 26 and 28 degrees, and tides 1-4 feet high.

Meanwhile, Saturday evening would lean towards cooler temperatures, clearer skies, and a shift in wind direction becoming northwestern between 8-32 km/h with a chance of rain, and temperature lows ranging between 10-12 degrees with sea tides between 1-4 feet, Al-Qarawi said.

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PAAET wins title: The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) walked away with the open championship title for debates among higher education institutions conducted in the Arabic language during its seventh edition, reports Al-Rai daily.

The final round took place at Kuwait Technical College, with the presence of professors and officials from diverse higher education institutions in Kuwait.

Under the guidance of team leader Dr. Rasha Ashkanani, the PAAET team emerged victorious beating 22 rival teams.

In the same tournament, Kuwait University’s Team 2 secured the second and third places and earned the opportunity to participate in the World Championship scheduled for May 2024 in Qatar.

Notably, the university team produced the tournament’s two best speakers, Nour Al-Salwadi from the College of Assistant Medicine and Yasmine Al-Azmi from the College of Medicine.

DGCA clinches deals, MoUs at (ICAN2023)

By Khaled Al-Shemmari

RIYADH, Dec 7, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Thursday signed agreements and MoUs with a number of countries on the sidelines of the 15th ICAO Air Services Negotiation (ICAN2023), held in Riyadh.

Speaking to KUNA, DGCA’s Acting Director General Emad Al-Jluwi said Kuwait’s participation in the conference, held from December 3-7, proved fruitful, considering that partaking in the event was a good opportunity for national air carriers to broaden the scope of their operational network plans and keep abreast of rapid air transport advancement.

For his part, DGCA’s Air Transport Department Director Abdullah Al-Rajhi told KUNA that the agency had clinched aviation transport deals and MoUs with Ethiopia, Togo, Zimbabwe, Cameroon Gabon, Seychelles, Nigeria, Turkiye, Russia, Italy, Iceland, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Suriname and Haiti during the ICAN20.

The 15th ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization)’s ICAN2023 concluded in Riyadh earlier in the day.

The five-day event is the world’s largest platform for countries to negotiate aviation transport arrangements and agreements.

See Also Page 8

Other Voices

What is the better approach to living?

By Ahmad alsarraf

In life, making the right decision among various fateful options is a challenging task, especially when it involves the future or the fate of our loved ones, the state's economy, and the daily challenges we encounter with ourselves and others. This dilemma persists across different levels of our lives. The question arises: what is the better approach to living?



alsarraf

On one hand, there's the option to embrace the pleasures of life, seizing whatever we desire without much concern for the risks that the future may hold. On the other hand, there's the cautious path, where we deprive ourselves of certain pleasures to safeguard against the uncertainties of time. Should we spend recklessly, disregarding the future's unpredictability, or should we save diligently, preparing for the uncertainties that may lie ahead?

Reflecting on the lives of millions after their passing, we observe a division between those who chose the first approach and those who opted for the second. Some who saved and spent sparingly may have lived a frugal life only to pass away as millionaires.

Others, who chose to live for the moment, enjoying their wealth, may have faced financial difficulties and humiliation in their later years. There is no universally agreed-upon theory or method for striking the right balance between these two approaches.

Often, we confront this dilemma after reaching adulthood, and the prospect of changing our established character becomes a daunting challenge. Balancing financial prudence with enjoying life's pleasures remains a personal struggle, with no one-size-fits-all solution.

Life insurance companies utilize tools, such as mortality tables, to calculate an individual's life expectancy based on various factors, including age and gender. These tables provide information on mortality rates at different ages, indicating the number of deaths per thousand individuals at a specific age. Life expectancy, a statistical estimate of the average years a person is anticipated to live, relies on actuarial data.

When purchasing a life insurance policy at a young age, the cost is typically lower due to the longer life expectancy, reducing the insurance company's risk in paying death benefits. Several factors influence life expectancy, including date of birth, gender, personal health, family medical history, lifestyle habits such as smoking and drinking, occupational hazards, level of physical activity, and more.

Over the past 200 years, life expectancy has notably increased, particularly in developing countries. Monaco leads with an average of 87 years, followed by Hong Kong at 85, Japan at 84, and the United States with women at 79.1 years and men at 76.1 years. However, the U.S. recently experienced a decrease to 73 years due to factors like drug-related deaths, road accidents, homicides, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

In Kuwait, the average life expectancy surpasses 81 years for women and reaches 77 years for men, potentially ranking among the highest in Arab countries.

It is unfortunate what we see in the indifferent and irresponsible way in which the National Assembly deals with social insurance funds, as if the state is disappearing tomorrow, just to please some voters, at the expense of the public interest.

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Diagram showing the broken pipe point.

Seafarers cautioned

The General Administration of the Coast Guard called on seafarers to exercise caution in the area extending between the Sabah Al-Ahmad Naval Base and the northern pier at the following coordinate location: '29°09.173N 48°07.862E,' noting that a broken pipe was spotted under the surface of the water which poses a danger to them, reports Al-Rai daily.

The daily added, coordination is underway with the competent authorities to take the necessary measures.



Municipality inspectors supervising the removal of illegal livestock pens.

Animal pens razed

Encroachments targeted

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: The Public Relations Department in the Kuwait Municipality has announced that the supervisory team in the Violations Removal Department at the Jahra Governorate branch of the Municipality removed the encroachments on a State property in the governorate, reports Al-Anba daily.

It has been discovered that the encroachments disrupted the implementation of South Saad Al-Abdullah Housing Project. The removal operation is being carried out in coordination with the Public Authority for Housing Welfare and the company implementing the project.

Head of the Violations Removal Department Mohammad Fadah revealed that the team has started removing the obstacles, with 35 animal pens and 10 camps removed on the first day.



Relief goods for Gaza Palestinians is loaded on the Kuwait Air Force cargo plane.

36th flight for Gazans help

Tents, 4 ambulances on board

By Salman Al-Mutairi

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7, (KUNA): Kuwaiti humanitarian aid airplanes took off Thursday to Al-Arish airport carrying 40 tons of various supplies to provide relief to people in Gaza Strip including 130 tents and four ambulances, bringing the total number of Kuwaiti air bridge flights to 36.

The planeload will be delivered to the Egyptian Red Crescent in Al-Arish airport, near Rafah crossing border, which in turn will deliver it to the Palestinian Red Crescent, stated deputy director of Kuwait Society for Relief Omar Al-Thuwaini to KUNA.

He noted that this is the eleventh flight of the society within the Kuwait air bridge, supervised by other participating Kuwait Charity Societies, saying that so far it carried 290 tons of humanitarian aid, 165 tons of medical supply, 60 tons of mobilized clinics including 31 ambulances, 75 tons of flour, dates and canned food, in addition to 49 of shelter supply.

Al-Thuwaini commended the efforts made by Kuwaiti governmental authorities, Charities and everyone who donated to meet the urgent needs of Gazans.

On his part, Head of Kuwaiti Charitable Societies Union Dr. Nasser Al-Ajmi said to KUNA that this is the union's first participation in the 36th aid flight, through which it sent part of the aid it's providing and will continue to send the rest in the upcoming flights.

Al-Ajmi noted that the Union allocated an amount of KD 160,000 (about USD 528,000) provided by Kuwaiti charitable organizations and associations, indicating that there are 80 charitable societies and organizations working under the Union's umbrella.

He praised the cooperation of the Kuwait Food Federation in this relief flight by contributing various long-term food supplies to meet the needs of the people in Gaza, commending donors, Kuwaiti charitable societies and official authorities for making the air bridge a success.

KPC continues to reform its bloated admin sector

Foreign training courses to resume

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: As part of the ongoing modernization efforts within the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's extensive administrative structure, specifically focusing on executive roles, such as the deputy managing director in the human resources sector, which encompasses administrative affairs, training, and relations, CEO Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah has issued an administrative circular outlining organizational amendments, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The circular, in reference to the Board of Directors Resolution No. 2023/129 of Nov 22, 2023, has approved organizational changes within the corporation's sectors, with the following key adjustments:

- Renaming the Human Resources Sector to the Human Resources and Comprehensive Services Sector. The job title for the Managing Director of the sector becomes Managing Director of Human Resources and Comprehensive Services, and Hisham Ahmed Al-Rifai continues in this position.
- Groups affiliated with the Human Resources and Comprehensive Services Sector (Human Resources Group): Changing the name of the Administrative Affairs Group to the Human Resources Group; merging the Training Group with the Administrative Affairs Group to create the position of Deputy Managing Director for Human Resources, held by Abdul Latif Eid Al-Azmi.
- Amending the departments' affiliation to the Human Resources Group to include various departments related to human resources and development.
- Comprehensive Services Group (Changing the job title for the Deputy Managing Director for Relations to Deputy Managing Director for Comprehensive Services.)
- Amending the departments' affiliation to the comprehensive services group to include the Relations Department, the Commercial and Services Department, and the Health, Safety, Security, and Environment Department.

The circular becomes effective from

January 1, 2024 and according to informed sources, the previously vacant position of Deputy Managing Director for Training, once held by Hisham Al-Rifai before his promotion, has been renamed Deputy Managing Director for Human Resources.

Training courses

The CEO of the KPC has issued a circular concerning the resumption of external training courses, which had been halted vide a circular issued on February 27, 2020 temporarily stopping all training courses and employee enrollment programs for training in international companies, reports Al-Rai daily.

The recent circular announces the decision to resume the involvement of employees within the institution and its subsidiaries in external training courses and international enrollment programs with companies abroad.

The resumption is subject to adherence to the budgetary constraints specified for such initiatives. The circular emphasizes the necessity of adhering to the unified list of approved external training bodies, comprising two sections: one for foreign training bodies and another for Arab training bodies.

The circular outlines specific considerations to be observed, including:

- Implementation of the form for evaluating and reporting participation in external training programs, along with the form detailing the requirements from the organizing body when registering an employee for external training. This measure aims to monitor and measure the efficiency of the training.
- Establishment of a permanent committee at the oil sector level, tasked with reviewing the approved list. The committee's objective is to ensure its currency by incorporating new training bodies or removing those that are no longer deemed suitable. This approach is intended to enhance the effectiveness of the outcomes derived from external training programs.

The position of Deputy Managing Director for Comprehensive Services, formerly Relations, is now available for promotion following a budget-related adjustment involving OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al-Ghais.

Notable candidates for this position include Shamael Al-Sharekh, the Director of the Corporation's Relations Department, and Salah Al-Hajri, the Director of the Commercial and Services Department.

KD45 worth fuel stolen

Thief hits petrol station 12 times

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: In an unusual incident, an unidentified motorist intentionally frequented a gas station in the Maidan Hawalli area using the same vehicle on 12 occasions, the most recent being on November 30. Each time, he approached the attendant, requesting to know something about his car's license plate, and fled after filling the tank with petrol, reports Al-Rai daily.

Furthermore, the surveillance cameras, documenting the suspect's actions have been appended to the case file.

According to a security source, a concerned citizen, acting as the representative of the aggrieved company, has filed a report about the fuel theft by an unknown individual

driving a blue vehicle, and provided the relevant details.

The source elaborated saying the accused during the 12 visits to the station is said to have stolen fuel worth 45 dinars.

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Drug addict held: The Jahra police have arrested a thirty-year-old drug addict and seized from him a piece of hashish and drug paraphernalia, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security source said the man was initially stopped on suspicion in a suburb of Sa'ad Al-Abdullah.

He has been handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Struggle' between Arab existence, Zionist entity

"IN the 16th year after Hijra (AH), Caliph Al-Farouq Omar bin Al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him, arrived in Jerusalem to receive its keys following its peaceful surrender to the Muslim army. He issued the "Omari Covenant," a historical document reflecting Muslim tolerance towards Jews, Christians, and adherents of other religions. The covenant guaranteed religious freedom and the protection of places of worship for both Christians and Jews in the city," columnist **Sultan Ibrahim Al Khalaf**, wrote for Al-Rai daily.



Al-Khalaf

"Jerusalem holds immense significance for Muslims due to its sacred status, encompassing the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the initial qiblah, and the third of the Two Sanctuaries, with the surrounding lands deemed blessed by God.

"In 1187 AD, Saladin al-Ayyubi reclaimed Jerusalem from Crusader occupation, emphasizing his loyalty to Islam over ethnic affiliations. His Kurdish background did not hinder his commitment to protecting Muslim sanctuaries.

"The responsibility of safeguarding Jerusalem passed from the non-Arab Mamluks to the Ottoman Turks. However, following the Ottoman defeat in World War I, the English occupied Palestine and facilitated the influx of foreign Zionist Jews, leading to the displacement of Palestinians through terrorist actions.

"Examining modern history reveals a shift in the narrative of the conflict with Zionists. Initially rooted in pan-Arabism, it transformed into a perceived "Palestinian-Zionist conflict," diminishing the Arab and Islamic significance.

"The Zionists sought normalization with Arabs, influencing changes in educational curricula to promote coexistence and even proposing an alternative to Islam with the invention of the Abrahamic religion, as revealed in a recent conversation between Netanyahu and Elon Musk.

"The Arabs should not be deceived by Zionist attempts to narrow the conflict to Palestinian resistance. It is an existential battle between Zionists and the entire Arab population.

"The demographic reality poses a challenge that the Zionists cannot predict, as reflected in the recent "Al-Aqsa Flood" operation."

Also:

"Yesterday is a lesson, today is experience, and tomorrow is a correction step," columnist **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"This is the state of the world. Every day that passes in it carries within it experiences, mistakes, and corrections, lessons, groans, remorse, stupidity, and intelligence.

"The world we live in is made up of pages. At the end of the night, a page is turned to open a new page with the dawn of a new day.

"It is very nice not to turn the page of yesterday unless lines or words have been crossed out from it, and the situation may come to the point of cutting the entire page and tearing it apart.

"The pages of our new life, every day can be pushed for the better, after we consider what has passed in our lives, bringing people closer to us who were somewhat far away, and distancing others who were closer than they were supposed to be.

"Kuwait's past is beautiful, but it is not the past of a year or two. Rather, it is the past of true statesmen whom we miss more and more day after day, and the weaker the strength of those in the same positions, especially those in important positions in our lives and paths, then surely we are heading down an unknown path.

"The successes and distinction of the period of these elites were only due to certain specifications, specific and known proportions, and experiences that had no beginning or end, which resulted in decisions that took place, serving today and tomorrow.

"There are some specifications that unfortunately we have lost sight of today, and we are still searching for them day after day, when the product has become weak and has no taste or smell.

"It is natural for production to be far below standard, if the lack of serious-

ness in choosing the right man in the right place continues, then we will have wasted our energy and money without achieving the desired result, or at least not at the level of ambition.

"I say it, unfortunately, that our day is worrying, and our future will be even more worrying, if we continue to deal with the issues of our daily lives with intentions that are far from independence, personalism or self-interests and private ambitions, a lack of seriousness in many of the details of our political, economic, and even social life, which has unfortunately spread throughout the world. Some areas of our lives, especially those that decide the fate of our nation, I liken them to Kuwait today, as someone who claims to be skilled in cooking, but it is far from that he deals with ingredients that have nothing to do with the required cooking in a way that loses the flavor and taste of the desired product.

"He mixes sugar with salt and black pepper, and if he realizes that the taste is starting to lose something, he adds a pinch of red hot pepper with a few cardamom seeds, then he tastes again, and feels that the taste can be corrected somewhat, and all he finds in front of him is a few grains of lentils and chickpeas, and he throws them in, and perhaps the result will certainly be "tamarind milkshake".

"Yesterday is an example, today is experience, and tomorrow is supposed to be a corrective step, because we are fed up and tired of not benefiting from our mistakes, especially those related to the homeland.

"We in Kuwait may be on the cusp of a new phase, and this confirms the need for yesterday to be an example, today an experience, and tomorrow a corrective step."

□ □ □

"In Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, there is a market called 'the thieves' market', in which everything that is prohibited and everything that is expired are sold in front of the eyes of the government. Whenever the items are removed, they are returned in a clear and blatant violation of the State's prestige. Likewise, there are random markets in Khaitan, Mahboula and Jahra. There are stalls near the mosques on Fridays, and stalls in the Capital – behind the complexes where there are a lot of workers, yet the Kuwait Municipality does not attack them from near or from afar!" columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"As for the Abdally market for Kuwaiti products, it is being removed by the Municipality in a manner like saying: 'Only my father can control my mother.' It is done under false pretexts like harboring illegal workers or selling products that are not produced by Abdally farms, as if they cannot violate whoever deserves it and arrest the illegal expatriate workers. Therefore, they geared towards completely shutting down the market, killing the ambition of the Kuwaiti farmers, and wasting the opportunity to shop and enjoy the weekend trip to Abdally for families – Kuwaitis and expatriates – who want to buy their weekly needs from the farmers market! The problem is when the official authorities are unable to prosecute violators, they remove an entire market that opens on weekends and turn it into a Kuwaiti popular festival!

"It could be said that this market is unlicensed. Does the Kuwaiti citizen now need a license to sell a chicken, a duck or a box of tomatoes at a low price, produced by his farm in his homeland, to his people?"

"Fear God, encourage your people, support their products, buy from them, and let the people enjoy the weekend inside Kuwait, instead of traveling outside to engage in unjustified spending. The law you are talking about means 'we who interpret it in our own way and whenever we want to find a loophole.' We found it to be in the interest of the farmers, and we let them market their goods until the season ends. In the worst case scenario, we impose a nominal fee on each stall, as we do with the Friday market, and we leave things to go smoothly and without complication!"

"Finally, if the 'senior' officials were kind enough to visit Abdally and the farmers' market, they would have sympathized with the people of Abdally and their visitors who look forward to the 'Abdally outing' at the end of every week. As for the matter of enforcing the law, where is the law regarding the thieves' markets... Good?"

— Compiled by Mai Elsoukary

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Al-Jada'an chairs meeting of Council's Hawally Governorate Committee

'Awqaf' requests OK'd to allocate sites for mosque, secondary transfer station

By Inass Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: The Municipal Council's Hawally Governorate Committee, during its meeting yesterday headed by Nasser Al-Jada'an, approved two out of nine items on its agenda, namely the request of the

Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to allocate a mosque site within the site of the Public Authority for Quran, Sunnah and its Sciences in South Surra, and the request for the allocation of a site for the construction of a secondary transfer station with an area of 12.5m x 16.5 m in Jabriya Block 12.

The committee referred to the executive branch of the municipality the proposal regarding the establishment of a pedestrian bridge on Al-Taawoun Street between the Salwa and Anjafa beach areas, in order to address the Ministry of Interior and urgently update the response. It also referred to the executive

branch of the municipality the letter submitted by a Kuwaiti citizen with a request to amend the Municipal Council's decision to carry out the activity of a historic hotel or Kuwaiti restaurant in an old Kuwaiti house in Salmiya Block 11 (Maidan Hawally), Uhud Street, No. 10. In addition, the committee re-

ferred to the executive branch of the municipality the transaction related to a Kuwaiti citizen's property in Othman Commercial Street, block 185, plots 19, 20 and 21. The committee did not approve the letter submitted by a Kuwaiti woman for increasing the mezzanine floor in the building she owns.

It reserved the proposal regarding developing and expanding the Beirut Street exit on King Fahad Expressway in Hawally, and the proposal submitted by member Alia Al-Farsi regarding the traffic congestion in Jabriya and Surra, with the invitation of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation.

Kuwait's Al-Sanad presents credentials to Pope Francis

GENEVA, Dec 7, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait Ambassador to the Swiss Federation and Liechtenstein Yaqoub Al-Sanad presented his credentials as non-resident envoy to Pope Francis at the Vatican Apostolic Palace on Thursday.

In a statement to KUNA, Ambassador Al-Sanad said Kuwait is keen on bolstering relations with the Holy See, as he conveyed best wishes of the political leadership to the Pope, who wished abundance of health to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Pope Francis also extended warm greetings to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people.

In his address, the Holy Father said that the current time is "particularly troubled" and marked by major outbreaks of armed conflict.

Given the global dimensions of the conflicts in course, the international community is challenged, through the peaceful means of diplomacy, to seek global solutions to the grave injustices that so often are the cause of those conflicts, a statement by the



KUNA photo
The non-resident ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the Vatican presents his credentials to Pope Francis.

Holy See press office said, quoting Pope Francis.

The Holy See is also particularly concerned for the future of (our) common home and specifically the effects of climate change and the devastation of the natural environment on the most vulnerable mem-

bers of (our) human family. May the United Nations Conference on Climate Change, COP28, meeting in these days in Dubai, represent a historic step forward in responding with wisdom and foresight to these clear and present threats to the universal common good, it noted.

Climate crisis

Continued from Page 1

children have been impacted by climate hazards such as droughts, floods, cyclones and other extreme weather events since 2020. That's close to the total populations of several G7 nations such as the United Kingdom, France or Italy.

While these children have contributed least to the issue of climate change, they have the most to lose. Furthermore, over the last ten years, 31 million school-aged children have been displaced by the climate crisis, with 13 million in the last three years alone.

The climate crisis poses a real and present threat to global security, economic prosperity and the very fabric of our societies. Climate impacts could cost the world economy US\$7.9 trillion by 2050, according to the World Bank, and could force up to 216 million people to move within their own countries by 2050.

Cyclones, typhoons, floods and droughts are increasing in severity and intensity. The number of disasters driven, in part, by climate change has increased five-fold in the past 50 years. Climate hazards are driving displacement directly, but also driving competition over scarce resources and threatening fragile peace in many parts of the world. Over 70% of refugees and internally displaced people on the move due to conflict and violence originally came from climate change hotspots.

Taken together, these intersecting crises of climate change, displacement and conflict are having a profound effect on education opportunities for millions of children and adolescents around the world.

As we look toward this year's Climate Talks in Dubai (COP28) and the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva, we must connect the dots between climate action and education action. It's our investment in our people, our planet and our future.

To rise to this challenge, ECW is calling on donors, the private sector and other key partners to urgently mobilize US\$150 million in additional resources. This is an important contribution towards ECW's overall resource mobilization target of US\$1.5 billion toward the Fund's 2023-2026 strategic plan.

We all know that education has a sound return on investment. Long-term investments in human capital – including education, skills training and overall health and well-being – offer 10 times more return on investment than investments in physical capital. By investing in education today, we are investing in economic and social prosperity tomorrow, we are investing in an end to displacement and hunger, we are investing in a better world and children's futures.

The climate crisis threatens to end human civilization as we know it today. Now is our time to address this issue head on, and education plays a key role. By ensuring learning continuity for the most vulnerable children– and connecting quality education with climate action– we can equip an entire generation of climate stewards with the skills to adapt to the changing environment and pave the way to a better future.

In the eye of the storm, we are calling on new and existing donors to stand with us. We are appealing to you to act: right here, right now. Will you take up this challenge?

About the Authors

The Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown is the UN Special Envoy for Global Education and Chair of the Education Cannot Wait High-Level Steering Group.

Yasmine Sherif is the Executive Director of Education Cannot Wait, the global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises.

MP seeks

Continued from Page 1

The lawmaker wants to know if an arrest warrant was issued by any investigation unit at the Ministry of Defense; if the citizen was previously reported to the authorities for engaging in an act punishable by law; if the citizen was exposed to physical, moral or sexual abuse; if he was blindfolded and cursed during the interrogation to force him to confess or reveal certain information; and if any official at the State Security General Department was asked to participate in the operation to arrest and interrogate the citizen.

MP Meteb Ayed Al-Anzi asked Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and acting Minister of Public Works Jassem Al-Ostaid about the number of employees appointed at the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) since June 1, 2023 till date; including their names, qualifications and jobs.

Moreover, MP Hamad Al-Matar released a press statement, expressing his concerns about the future of Kuwait's foreign affairs; disclosing he is afraid that a new Middle East is being prepared in the absence of Kuwait. He said he obtained information about the serious attempts to divide Sudan into small states.

He cited the visit of the Japanese Prime Minister to three countries in the region, excluding Kuwait although Japan is the biggest importer of Kuwaiti oil. He added that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited regional countries where he signed a number of treaties and agreements and launched joint development projects, but he did not visit Kuwait despite the historical ties and distinguished relations between the two friendly countries.

He also pointed out that Kuwait recently renewed a bank deposit amounting to \$2 billion in Egypt, but the latter rejected the Kuwaiti demand for KD 1 million in the form of administrative fees.

He stressed the need to revive the Kuwaiti diplomatic stand and take advantage of the diplomatic heritage which, he thinks, has started to corrode. He added he intends to sound the alarm in order to figure out where the nation is headed.

MP Soud Al-Asfour forwarded queries to Minister of Health Ahmed Al-Awadhi and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah about the medical errors that Muhammad Sayer Al-Shemmari, a Kuwaiti, suffered when he underwent treatment at Wellington Hospital in London. He quoted Al-Shemmari's family as saying that the medical errors were serious, so they filed a case against the hospital. He added that the patient's family holds both the Kuwait Health Office and Kuwaiti Embassy in London accountable for what happened to Al-Shemmari.

He asked Al-Awadhi if the health office in London followed up the case of Al-Shemmari to verify if he was a victim of medical errors at Wellington Hospital. If yes, he wants to know the measures taken in this regard. If no, he asked about the reasons for not taking the necessary measures. He inquired if the relevant regulations mandate the health offices abroad to follow up such cases and take legal action against the erring person or entity; and if the health office in London is aware that the patient's family has taken legal action.

He also asked Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah about the steps that the Kuwaiti Embassy in London took to address the issue, if it refused to issue legal authorization to the patient's brother to file the lawsuit, and if it provided legal advice to the patient's brother concerning the case he filed against Wellington Hospital.

National Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun invited the MPs and government to the ordinary sessions scheduled for Dec 12-13, 2023 to deliberate on the following:

- Resignation of the deputy chairman of the State Audit Bureau;
- Response to the Amiri Speech delivered by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the inaugural session of the National Assembly on Oct 31, 2023;
- Parliamentary queries;
- Reports of the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee on amending Penal Code number 17/1960;
- First report of the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee on amending the Central Agency for Public Tenders Law;
- Reports of the Oil and Energy Committee on the proposed establishment of a shareholding company for advanced petroleum industries;
- Ninth report of the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee about the bill on transforming Kuwait Airways Corporation into a shareholding national company;
- Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth reports of the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee on amending National Assembly Law number 12/1962;
- Report of the Interior and Defense Affairs Committee on the Traffic Bill of the government;
- Fourth report of the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee the proposed amendment of the Public Institution for Social Security Law to increase the social and children allowances of employees;
- Report of Interior and Defense Affairs Committee on granting civil and social rights to Bedouins;
- Report of the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee on not obligating the heirs of borrowers to pay the remaining installments for loans obtained from Kuwait Credit Bank upon the death of the borrower.
- 10th report of the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee on amending the Public Institution for Social Security Law to increase the amount of loans granted to retirees, as well as the zero interest loans.

Battle in

Continued from Page 1

top Hamas leaders. But much of the city's population remains in place, along with large numbers who were displaced from northern Gaza and are unable to leave or wary of fleeing to the disastrously overcrowded far south.

Cut off from outside aid, people in United Nations-run shelters in Khan Younis are fighting over food, said Nawraz Abu Libdeh, a shelter resident who has been displaced six times.

"The hunger war has started," he said. "This is the worst of all wars."

The U.N. says some 1.87 million people - over 80% of the population of 2.3 million - have already fled their homes, many of them displaced multiple times. Almost the entire population is now crowded into southern and central Gaza, dependent on aid.

Late Wednesday, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres used a rarely exercised power to warn the Security Council of an impending "humanitarian catastrophe" in Gaza and urged members to demand a cease-fire. He invoked Article 99 of the U.N. Charter, a step no U.N. chief has taken in half a century, which says the secretary-general may inform the council of matters believed to threaten international peace and security.

Israel accused the U.N. chief of "a new moral low" and "bias against Israel." The United States signaled it would not support Security Council action.

MoH to discuss concept of health promoting schools

60 doctors to participate in workshop

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: The Ministry of Health announced the launch of the "Health Promoting Schools Initiative" workshop next Tuesday under the patronage of the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, with the participation of 60 doctors from the school health program, and in the presence of the Assistant Undersecretary for Health Care Dr. Nadia Jumaa.

In a press statement, Director of the School Health Department and Chairman of the workshop Dr. Wafa Al-Kandari explained that the workshop will be held over a period of three days. Several topics will be covered in the workshop including introduction to the concept of health-promoting schools as one of the basic preventive health pillars.

Enhance

Its importance is to enhance student health and introduce health-enhancing school standards and components to achieve a healthy model in the school environment as a curriculum and a way of life.

The workshop will serve as a platform for exchanging knowledge, experiences and best practices related to implementing the initiative.

Dr. Al-Kandari highlighted the extensive participation of officials and specialists, led by the Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities in the Ministry of Education, members of the World Health Organization, directors of Technical Guidance in the educational zones and the curriculum and research sector, and representatives of several departments and various sectors of the Ministry of Health including the healthy cities office, the Department of Prevention of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases, the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, and the Environment Public Authority.

She revealed that the workshop will be hosted by a representative of the School Health Department in the Sultanate of Oman with the aim of presenting Oman's experience with health-promoting schools, and transferring their expertise and experiences to benefit from them in the country.

Dr. Al-Kandari affirmed that the workshop follows the continuing medical education program and gives participants 12 points from the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specializations.

News in Brief

Isra and Mi'raj holidays: The Isra and Mi'raj holiday falls on a Thursday — Feb 8, 2024 and the ministries, establishments and institutions will be closed on this date, as the holiday will not be postponed to another day based on the decision stipulating that the date of the Isra and Mi'raj holiday will be postponed to the Thursday immediately following it if the holiday falls between two business days, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Based on this, the Isra and Mi'raj holiday will be three days — Thursday, Friday and Saturday (Feb 8, 9 and 10).

Sources added that the National Day and Liberation Day holidays will fall on Sunday and Monday — Feb 25 and 26, so the holiday will become four days, with the addition of Friday and Saturday — Feb 23 and 24.

Mol warns about fraudsters: The Ministry of Interior has warned citizens and expatriates about the fraudulent operations recently carried out by unscrupulous individuals outside the State of Kuwait who impersonate security personnel using Kuwaiti phone numbers and electronic communication programs, reports Al-Anba daily.



A section of the audience.

'Exploring unique Korean storytelling'

Embassy holds Korean Movie Night '23

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: The Embassy of the Republic of Korea to the State of Kuwait, in collaboration with the Korean Film Council and Kuwait National Cinema Company, held the 'Korean Movie Night 2023' at Cinescape, Al-Muhallab Mall, Hawalli, from December 5 to 6. This event celebrated the ever-increasing interest in Korean culture in Kuwait as well as globally, living up to the rising popularity of K-pop, K-food, the Korean language, and notably, Korean dramas and films.

Ambassador Chung Byung-ha in his opening address, introduced the global appeal of Korean dramas and films, attributing their success to compelling and unique narratives. He elaborated that these storylines are rooted in the rich history of Korea, echoing the nation's journey of overcoming challenges and achieving rapid development from being a war-stricken, impoverished country to a developed nation. This history is intricately woven into the storytelling, reflecting the introspection and aspirations of the Korean people. Highlighting the cultural resonance in Kuwait, Ambassador Chung pointed out the significant presence of Korean dramas on Netflix Kuwait. He noted a remarkable increase from 17 dramas in the weekly top 10 rankings in 2022 to 26 in 2023, signifying a surge in their popularity.



Chung Byung-ha

This year's Korean Movie Night 2023 showcased the Korean movie 'Concrete Utopia,' which has drawn public attention by winning Best Director and Best Actor awards at a prestigious Korean film festival this year. 'Concrete Utopia' is a work that proves the resilience of the humanity in the face of adversity. Despite being set in an evident disaster and apocalyptic situation, the film includes the paradoxical word 'Utopia' in its title and explores themes such as human nature, coexistence, and hope, resonating deeply with viewers.

Municipality to issue citations electronically within 6 months

By Inass Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: Director General of Kuwait Municipality Saud Al-Dabbous issued an administrative circular on Tuesday to permanently abolish paper-based citations and switch to electronic versions within a period of six months.

The administrative circular included the automation of violations of municipal regulations that are recorded by inspectors through the establishment of an electronic platform for municipal violations. This is aimed to ensure that they are issued in accordance with the rules, data, laws, and provisions of the municipal regulations in order to control citations and the integrity of the procedures followed in writing them.

The goal of creating an electronic platform for municipal violations is to prove violations and send warnings through an electronic device linked to this platform, and an automated program that includes the stages of controlling and writing citations and the following procedures for writing them.

The process starts with the organizational unit and then it is referred to the Legal Department, and from there to the Investigations Department and linking this automated notification to the Sahel and My ID apps. This would end the era of issuing paper warnings and citations.

The administrative circular stated that the Development and Information Sector was assigned to prepare a proposal for forming a work team to prepare the program at all stages of proving violations electronically, and linking it to the Sahel and My ID apps.

It also specified a period of two months to prepare a plan to link violations on smart devices, including the name and other details of the inspector and the type of violation control list (judicial police status), in addition to the specific location of the inspector according to the nature of his specialization and work station, the specified time for the inspector's work time, on the basis of which he is allowed to practice his work, and listing all the violations mentioned in each regulation separately within this program.

وزارة التجارة والصناعة

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World News Roundup

Europe

Russia to hold presidential election in March '24: Russian lawmakers on Thursday set the date of the country's 2024 presidential election for March 17, moving **Vladimir Putin** a step closer to a fifth term in office.

Members of the Federation Council, Russia's upper house of parliament, voted unanimously to approve a decree setting the date.

"In essence, this decision marks the start of the election campaign," said Valentina Matviyenko, speaker of the Federation Council. Russia's central election commission is to hold a meeting on the presidential campaign on Friday.



Putin

Putin, 71, hasn't yet announced his intention to run again, but is widely expected to do so in the coming days now that the date has been set.

Under constitutional reforms he orchestrated, he is eligible to seek two more six-year terms after his current one expires next year, potentially allowing him to remain in power until 2036.

Having established tight control over Russia's political system, Putin's victory in the March election is all but assured. Prominent critics who could challenge him on the ballot are either in jail or living abroad, and most independent media have been banned.

Who would challenge him on the ballot remains unclear. Two people have announced plans to run: former lawmaker Boris Nadezhdin, who holds a seat on a municipal council in the Moscow region, and Yekaterina Duntsova, a journalist and lawyer from the Tver region north of Moscow, who once was a member of a local legislature. (AP)

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Russia intensifies attacks on Ukraine facilities: Intensifying Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy facilities are worsening humanitarian conditions across the war-torn country, where heavy snow and freezing temperatures have already arrived, UN officials said Wednesday.

Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenca told the UN Security Council that Russia's continuing daily attacks on Ukraine's critical civilian infrastructure have resulted in civilian casualties, and Moscow recently escalated its barrages in populated areas including the capital, Kyiv.

"All attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure must stop immediately," he said. "They are prohibited under international humanitarian law and are simply unacceptable."

Jenca also raised the risks to all four of Ukraine's nuclear power plants.

The Zaporizhzhia plant, which is Europe's largest, suffered its eighth complete off-site power outage since the invasion on Saturday, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency, Jenca said. (AP)

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War crime charges filed against Russians: Four Russian men accused of torturing an American during the invasion of Ukraine have been charged with war crimes in a case that's the first of its kind, the Justice Department announced on Wednesday.

It marks the first prosecution against members of the Russian armed forces in connection with atrocities during their war against Ukraine and the first time the Justice Department has brought charges under a nearly 30-year-old statute that makes it a crime to commit torture or inhumane treatment during a war.

The charges are largely symbolic for now given the unlikely prospects of the Justice Department bringing any of the four defendants - currently all fugitives - into custody. But US officials described the case as a history-making moment in their ongoing investigation into Russian war crimes, and they foreshadowed the potential that more charges could be coming. (AP)

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UK minister resigns over govt bill: UK Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick resigned Wednesday over the government's bill to deport illegal migrants to Rwanda, saying "it does not go far enough."

Jenrick called "stronger protections" to end "the merry-go-round of legal challenges which risk paralysing the scheme", the BBC reported.

In his resignation letter to the prime minister, Jenrick said: "I am unable to take the currently proposed legislation through the Commons as I do not believe it provides us with the best possible chance of success."

He added that the bill was "a triumph of hope over experience".

Jenrick said the emergency legislation was the "last opportunity" to prove the government would do "whatever it takes" to stop small boat crossings.

He had previously suggested the government could quit the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). (KUNA)

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UK apologizes to families of soccer fans: The British government has apologized to the families of 97 Liverpool soccer fans killed in a stadium crush 34 years ago for its delay in responding to a 2017 report meant to ensure the official cover-up in that case isn't repeated in other tragedies.

Six years after the report highlighted the "burning injustice" families faced in the wake of the tragedy, the government said it is introducing a charter, among other measures, aimed at preventing cover-ups of missteps by police or other public authorities.

However, it refused to back calls from campaigners to legally require public bodies, including police, to tell the truth and proactively cooperate with official investigations and inquiries into disasters.

The Hillsborough disaster unfolded on April 15, 1989, when more than 2,000 Liverpool fans were allowed to flood into a standing-room section behind a goal at Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield with the 54,000-capacity stadium already nearly full for a match against Nottingham Forest. The victims were smushed against metal anti-riot fences or trampled underfoot, and many suffocated.

An original inquest in 1991 recorded verdicts of accidental death, which the families of the victims refused to accept. (AP)

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New Dutch parliament sworn in: A new lower house of the Dutch parliament was sworn in Wednesday, two weeks after the far-right party of lawmaker Geert Wilders won a general election in a seismic shift that reverberated through Europe.

While the newly configured Second Chamber is now installed, talks to form a new ruling coalition remain at an early stage, with a "scout" still talking to leaders about possible combinations to succeed the last four-party administration led by Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

The scout is expected to send a report to parliament before a debate, likely next week, on the next step in the coalition formation process.

Rutte, the Netherlands' longest serving premier, will remain in office until a new coalition is formed and sworn in. Talks to form Rutte's final coalition took some nine months, a record.

Wilders' anti-immigration Party for Freedom won 37 seats in the 150-seat Second Chamber of Parliament in the Nov 22 election, putting him in pole position to succeed Rutte. (AP)

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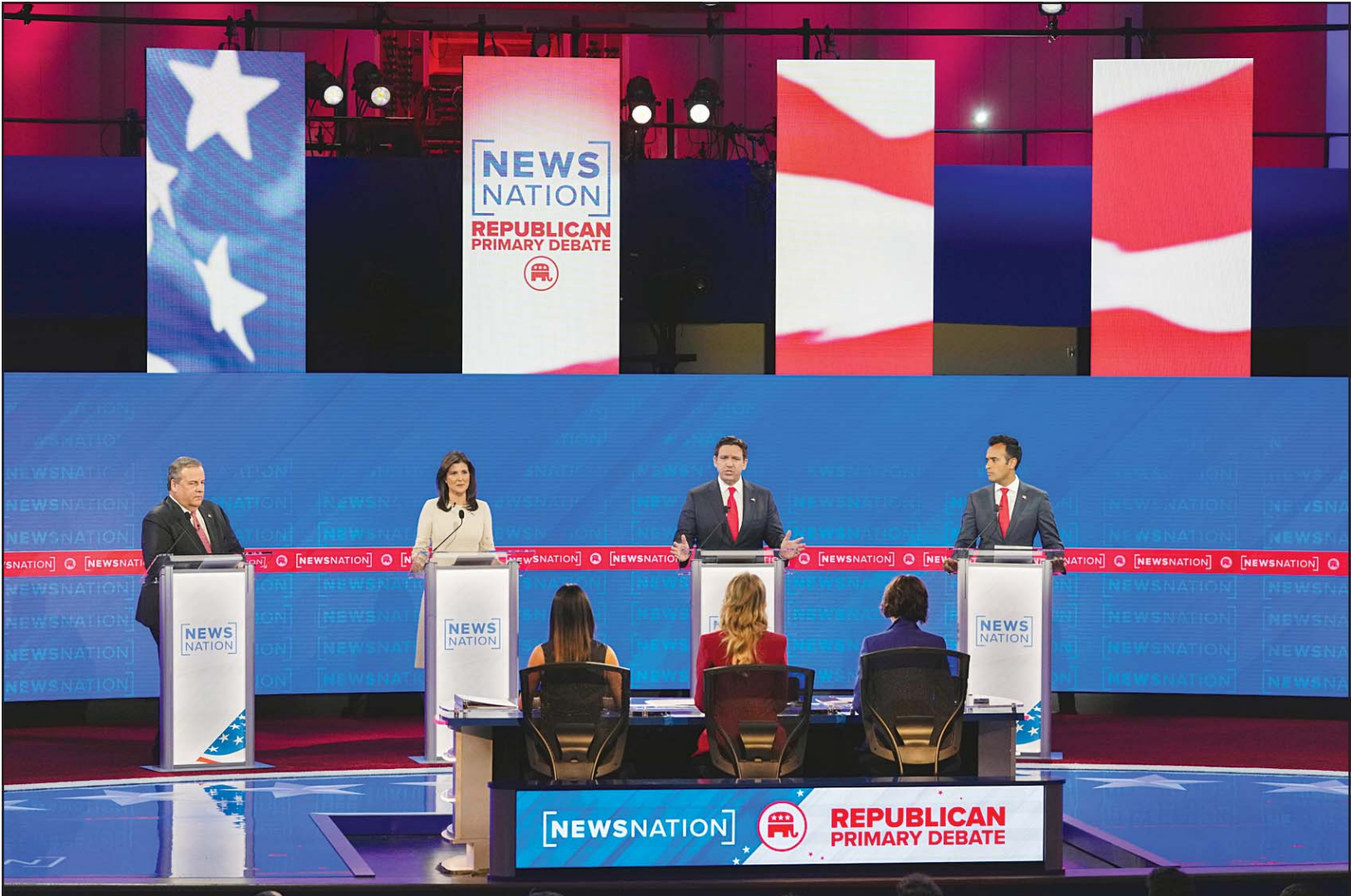
47 migrants hiding in truck heading for UK: Dutch military police found 47 illegal migrants hidden in a truck that was about to board a ferry to the United Kingdom, the force said Wednesday.

The men, women and children of various nationalities were discovered Tuesday night in the port town of Hook of Holland after a dog trained to sniff out people alerted officers, the Marechaussee force said in a statement.

The Dutch truck driver was detained on suspicion of people smuggling, and his illicit passengers will be handed over to migration authorities in the Netherlands, according to the statement.

Interceptions of such large numbers of migrants are rare in the Netherlands, but further along the North Sea coast, thousands of people from around the world travel to northern France each year in hopes of crossing the English Channel to the UK.

More than 27,300 have done that this year, a decline on the 46,000 who made the journey in all of 2022. (AP)



US Republican presidential candidate Florida Gov Ron DeSantis (third from left), speaks as former New Jersey Gov Chris Christie (left), former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley and businessman Vivek Ramaswamy (right) watch during a Republican presidential primary debate hosted by NewsNation on Dec 6, at the Moody Music Hall at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Ala. (AP)

Politics

'Candidates too timid to take on Trump'

Rivals target Haley in GOP debate

WASHINGTON, Dec 7, (AP): Four Republican presidential hopefuls - Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy and former New Jersey Gov Chris Christie - were on stage for Wednesday night's debate in Alabama. The early front-runner for the GOP nomination, former president Donald Trump, held a fundraiser in Florida instead.

Haley was a top target of her rivals Wednesday night.

Christie is doubling down on his criticism that his fellow Republican presidential candidates are too timid to take on Trump and his legal troubles.

The former New Jersey governor said after Wednesday's debate that the other three candidates on stage in Tuscaloosa were "pretending we're the only four candidates in the race."

Christie noted that Haley remained silent through an extended discussion of Trump's fitness for office, given multiple pending indictments on charges stemming from his behavior in office and after leaving the White House.

If Haley, DeSantis and others are afraid to take on Trump, Christie said they aren't up to being head of state and sitting across the table from other world leaders.

But he quipped that "at least the moderators asked some Trump questions," unlike some previous debates.

Lead

Though the candidates spent more time talking about Trump or responding to his comments and his commanding lead than in past debates, there were a few subjects the Republicans did not touch on Wednesday.

Despite two high-profile shootings leading up to the debate with a gunman killing three people and wounding a fourth at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas on Wednesday and a Texas man who killed his parents and four others in a trail of violence Tuesday, the candidates did not discuss gun violence or mass shootings in America.

Abortion, which was a big issue in last year's midterm elections and is expected to play a prominent role in next year's elections, was also conspicuously missing from the fourth debate. The candidates spent months on the campaign trail this year discussing - or sometimes sidestepping - questions on abortion, which they all oppose.

Climate change also did not receive much of a mention Wednesday night besides in Ramaswamy's closing statement, when he said the "climate change agenda is a hoax" and "one of the most important topics that needs to be discussed."

Trump's super PAC said at the conclusion of the fourth presidential debate that it's time for Republicans to unify around the former president.

Karoline Leavitt, a spokesperson for Make America Great Again Inc., said Wednesday night that "The battle for second place has become the biggest waste of time, money, and energy that politics has ever seen." She accused the four candidates on stage of "putting up a fake fight to satisfy their egos and please their billionaire puppet masters."

Attention

Trump skipped the fourth presidential debate, as he had the previous three, saying he didn't want to give his lower-polling rivals any attention.

None of the four Republicans challenging Trump for the GOP nomination named him as inspiration for their possible future administrations.

Christie said he would draw inspiration from Ronald Reagan, saying he has been working on a book about the president he called a "slave to the truth."

Haley named both George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, the latter of whom she said led the nation through the division of the Civil War.

DeSantis named Calvin Coolidge, saying that "silent Cal knew the proper role of the federal government."

Ramaswamy, the stage's youngest candidate, said he would take inspiration from Thomas Jefferson, who

wrote the Declaration of Independence at just 33 years old.

While discussing terrorist threats, Haley says Iran knows "the easiest way" to enter the United States is through the southern border.

But reports of terrorists entering the United States by land from Mexico are almost unheard of.

Alex Nowrasteh of the pro-immigration Cato Institute documented nine foreign-born terrorists who entered the United States illegally from 1975 through last year. Three entered Mexico in 1984 when they were 5 years old or younger and were convicted of plotting to attack Fort Dix, New Jersey, in 2007. The other six entered through Canada.

Strikes

Iran has not been linked to funding terrorist attacks in the United States, like the 2001 strikes on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

DeSantis drew loud cheers when he said parents "do not have the right to abuse" their kids in response to Christie's remarks about signing legislation as governor of New Jersey to provide guidance for schools to protect transgender students.

Christie said he stood up for parents. "The minute you start to take those rights away from parents, you know, that's a slippery slope," Christie said. "What rights are going to be taken away next?"

Saying "as a parent, you do not have the right to abuse your kids," DeSantis said, "This is mutilating these minors. These are irreversible procedures."

Guidelines call for thorough assessments to confirm gender dysphoria before starting any treatment.

That treatment typically begins with puberty-blocking medication to temporarily pause sexual development while giving youngsters time to mature enough mentally and emotionally to make informed decisions about whether to pursue permanent treatment. Puberty blockers may be used for years and can increase risks for bone density loss, but that reverses when the drugs are stopped.

District Attorney's Office said. (AP)

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Search for boy suspended: Authorities have suspended the search for the 12-year-old boy still missing following a deadly landslide in the southeast Alaska community of Wrangell.

Five people have been confirmed killed in the landslide and their bodies recovered: Otto Florschutz, Timothy and Beth Heller and two of the couple's children, Kara Heller, 11, and Mara Heller, 16. Derek Heller remains missing following the Nov. 20 landslide that came down into the path of three homes, one of which was unoccupied. Florschutz's wife, Christina Florschutz, survived. (AP)

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Military grounds Osprey fleet: The military announced late Wednesday it was grounding all of its Osprey V-22 helicopters, one week after eight Air Force Special Operations Command service members died in a crash off the coast of Japan.

The Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps took the extraordinary step of grounding hundreds of aircraft after a preliminary investigation of last week's crash indicated that a materiel failure - that something went wrong with the aircraft - and not a mistake by the crew led to the deaths. (AP)



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak waves as he leaves 10 Downing Street to attend the weekly session of Prime Minister's Questions in Parliament in London, on Dec 6. (AP)



Salazar



McMahill

America

'Vegas shooter was a professor': Terrified students and professors cowered in classrooms and dorms as a gunman roamed the floors of a University of Nevada, Las Vegas building, killing three people and critically wounding a fourth before dying in a shootout with police.

The gunman in Wednesday's shooting was a professor who had unsuccessfully sought a job at the school, a law enforcement official with direct knowledge of the investigation told The Associated Press. He previously worked at East Carolina University in North Carolina, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to release the information publicly.

Lessons learned from that shooting - the deadliest in modern US history - helped authorities to work "seamlessly" in reacting to the UNLV attack, Sheriff **Kevin McMahaill** said at a news conference. (AP)

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Man killed parents, 4 others: A Texas man killed his parents and four others and wounded two police officers in a daylong trail of violence stretching from San Antonio to Austin, authorities said Wednesday.

Shane James, 34, of San Antonio, was charged with two counts of capital murder after separate attacks in Austin and San Antonio that began Tuesday morning and ended with James crashing his car that evening during a police pursuit.

James has a history of mental health problems and a prior arrest on charges of assaulting family members, authorities said.

His parents, Phyllis James, 55, and Shane James Sr. 56, were found dead in their home in the San Antonio area, Bexar County Sheriff **Javier Salazar** said at a news conference. Four more people were found dead in two homes in Austin, more than 80 miles (130 kilometers) away, officials said. (AP)

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California inmate charged: A twice-convicted killer has been charged with



Police work the scene of a shooting at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, campus on Dec 6 in Las Vegas. Terrified students and professors cowered in classrooms and dorms as a gunman roamed the floors of a University of Nevada, Las Vegas building, killing three people and critically wounding a fourth before dying in a shootout with police. (AP)

Lat/Am

‘Arrest oppn members’

Former Peru prez freed from prison

LIMA, Peru, Dec 7, (AP): Peru’s former president **Alberto Fujimori** was released from prison Wednesday on humanitarian grounds, despite a request from a regional human rights court to delay his release.

Fujimori, 85, was serving a 25-year sentence in connection with the slayings of 25 Peruvians by death squads in the 1990s. Peru’s constitutional court ordered his immediate release on Tuesday, but the Inter-American Court of Human Rights asked for a delay to study the ruling.

Fujimori, who governed Peru from 1990 to 2000, was sentenced in 2009 on charges of human rights abuses. He was accused of being the mastermind behind the slayings of the 25 Peruvians while the government fought the Shining Path communist rebels.

Fujimori, wearing a face mask and getting supplemental oxygen, walked out of the prison door and got in a sport utility vehicle driven by his daughter-in-law. He sat in the backseat with son and daughter, right-wing career politician Keiko Fujimori.

Dozens of supporters awaited him outside the prison and swarmed the vehicle as it attempted to move. It moved slowly through the streets of the prison’s neighborhood as people chanted and banged on the windows.

Fujimori was expected to live at this daughter’s house.

Pardon

Peru’s Constitutional Court on Tuesday ruled in favor of a humanitarian pardon granted to Fujimori on Christmas Eve in 2017 by then-President Pablo Kuczynski. The country’s Supreme Court overturned the pardon under pressure from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2018 and ordered the former strongman returned to prison to serve out his sentence.

In Tuesday’s ruling, the magistrates explained that while “the seriousness of the crimes for which (Fujimori) was sentenced is evident,” they cannot “ignore... the humanitarian pardon” granted to the former president in 2017 and upheld by their court in 2022.

Juanita Castro, sister of Cuban leaders dies: Juanita Castro, the sister of Cuban rulers Fidel and Raúl Castro who worked with the CIA against their communist government, has died in Miami at 90. Florida had been her home since shortly after fleeing the island nearly 60 years ago.

Journalist Maria Antonieta Collins, who co-wrote Juanita Castro’s 2009 book, “Fidel and Raúl, My Brothers. The Secret History,” wrote on Instagram that she died on Monday.

“Juanita Castro was ahead of us on the path of life and death, exceptional woman, tireless fighter for the cause of her Cuba that I love so much,” Collins wrote.

The Cuban government and media had not mentioned her death as of Wednesday.

‘We take this threat very seriously’: Guyana’s president told The Associated Press on Wednesday that his country is taking every necessary step to protect itself from Venezuela, which has ordered its state-owned companies to explore and exploit oil and minerals in the vast Essequibo region, which Guyana considers its own.

When asked if he has requested military assistance, President Irfaan Ali said his government is reaching out to allies and regional partners, some of which Guyana has defense agreements with, to protect Essequibo. The region makes up two-thirds of the country.

“We take this threat very seriously, and we have initiated a number of precautionary measures to ensure the peace and stability of this region,” Ali said in the brief phone interview. He noted that Guyana’s Defense Force also is speaking with counterparts in other countries but did not say which ones.

Helicopter carrying 5 officials missing: A military helicopter carrying seven people vanished Wednesday near Guyana’s border with Venezuela, with authorities saying there was bad weather in the area and stressing there was no indication it may have been hit by hostile fire as tensions escalate between the countries.

Two crew members aboard the helicopter were taking five senior officers on an inspection of troops guarding a border area that Venezuela claims as its own, according to Army Chief Brig. Gen. Omar Khan.

Venezuelan troops with heavy equipment and machinery have been amassing on the border in recent weeks, leading to speculation of an imminent invasion. Guyana’s President Irfaan Ali told The Associated Press earlier Wednesday that he was taking all necessary steps to defend his country.

48 Haitian migrants detained: US federal authorities said Wednesday that they detained 48 Haitian migrants who were abandoned by smugglers on an uninhabited island between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

US Customs and Border Protection said park rangers on Mona Island alerted authorities to the arrival of 41 men and seven women.

Haitian migrants are increasingly being dropped off on the rugged island surrounded by treacherous waters as they flee poverty and gang violence consuming their country.

In June 2022, at least five Haitian migrants died and 68 others were rescued after authorities said smugglers dropped the group off in waters near Mona Island.

AG orders arrest of oppn members: Venezuela’s top prosecutor on Wednesday ordered the arrest of a dozen opposition members, including former National Assembly leader Juan Guaidó and three campaign staffers of presidential candidate Maria Corina Machado.

Attorney General Tarek William Saab accused them of conspiring against the referendum the government held Sunday to claim sovereignty over a large swath of neighboring Guyana that Venezuela has long argued was stolen when the border was drawn more than a century ago.

Saab did not present any evidence during the nationally televised announcement of treason, conspiracy and other charges against the 12 government adversaries, only three of whom now live in Venezuela. He also linked to the case Savoi Jadon Wright, a US citizen arrested Oct 24 during a visit to Venezuela.



In this photo released by the official Facebook page of the Ream Naval Base, Cambodian navy crew stand on a patrol boat at the Ream Naval Base in Sihanoukville, southwest of Phnom Penh, Cambodia on Dec 3. (AP)

China navy ships 1st to dock at new pier at Cambodia naval base linked to Beijing

Chinese naval vessels have become the first ships to dock at a new pier at a Cambodian naval base that the United States and some international security analysts say is destined to serve as a strategic outpost for Beijing’s navy.

The docking of the two ships, which received little publicity, coincided with an official visit to Cambodia this week by China’s top defense official, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission He Weidong.

News of at least two Chinese ships docking at the Ream Naval Base on the Gulf of Thailand came out indirectly, through a Facebook post on Sunday by Cambodian Defense Minister Tea Seha. It said he visited the base to see preparations for Cambodian navy training and to inspect progress on infrastructure construction, but did not mention China by name.

He also posted photos showing Cambodian officials with Chinese Ambassador Wang Wentian,

and reviewing Chinese sailors. At least two warships could be seen in the photos, one whose gangway identified it as the Chinese navy corvette Wenshan.

Controversy over Ream Naval Base initially arose in 2019 when The Wall Street Journal reported that an early draft of a reputed agreement seen by U.S. officials would allow China 30-year use of the base, where it would be able to post military personnel, store weapons and berth warships. (AP)

Asia

Nat’l security advisers of US, SKorea, Japan to meet

Australia, PNG sign security pact

CANBERRA, Australia, Dec 7, (AP): The Australian government signed a security pact with its nearest neighbor Papua New Guinea on Thursday that strengthens Australia’s place as the preferred security partner in a region where China’s influence is growing.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his Papuan counterpart James Marape signed the agreement in Australia’s Parliament House six months later than initially planned.

The June date was abandoned after a security deal struck between the United States and Marape’s government sparked protests in the South Pacific nation in May over concerns that it undermined Papua New Guinea’s sovereignty.

Agreement

Marape said the agreement with Australia respects both nations’ sovereignty and was initiated by his government.

He said the security agreements with Australia and the United States did not mean he was siding with those nations in their strategic competition against China.

“Our major foreign policy as friends to all, enemies to none remains. And it’s never picking sides,” Marape told reporters.

Albanese said both Australia and Papua New Guinea’s negotiators achieved what they wanted in the agreement.

“This is a comprehensive and a historical agreement,” Albanese said. “It will make it easier for Australia to help PNG address its internal security needs and for Australia and Papua New Guinea to support each other’s security and the region stability.”

Both governments have committed to release full details of the agreement but have yet to do so.

The agreement is less significant than the treaty-level pact proposed early in the year, but the differences are not yet apparent.

Papua New Guinea is a diverse, developing nation of mostly subsistence farmers with 800 languages in a strategically important part of the South Pacific.

With 10 million people, it also the

most populous South Pacific nation after Australia, which is home to 26 million.

Papua New Guinea is a near-neighbor of the Solomon Islands where the government sent shock waves through the Pacific last year by striking a security pact with China. The pact raised fears of a Chinese naval base being established there.

Also:

SEOUL, South Korea: The national security advisers of the United States, South Korea and Japan will meet in Seoul this week to discuss North Korea’s growing military threat and other regional security issues as they continue to promote trilateral cooperation in Asia.

South Korea’s presidential office said its national security office director, **Cho Tae-yong**, will host a three-way meeting in Seoul on Saturday with U.S. national security adviser **Jake Sullivan** and Japanese National Security Secretariat Secretary General **Takeo Akiba** for in-depth discussions on North Korea and other matters related to security, technology, and trade. Cho will also hold bilateral meetings with Sullivan and Akiba on Friday.

White House National Security Council spokesperson **John Kirby** said the meetings will be driven by a “robust agenda of discussions of regional issues of mutual concerns, particularly in the security environment” as the countries continue to build on an August summit between their leaders in **Camp David**, where they vowed to deepen three-way security and economic cooperation.

Japan’s prime minister’s office said the discussions on North Korea will include that country’s recent launch of its first military reconnaissance satellite, a device North Korean leader **Kim Jong Un** described as crucial for monitoring US and South Korean military movements and enhancing the threat of his nuclear-capable missiles.

There are also broader concerns about a potential arms alignment between North Korea and **Russia**, in which the North provides badly needed munitions to fuel Russian President

Vladimir Putin’s war on **Ukraine** in exchange for possible Russian technology assistance to advance Kim’s nuclear-armed military.

BANGKOK: Pro-democracy activist **Agnes Chow**, who left Hong Kong for Canada and doesn’t plan to return to fulfill her bail conditions, said Thursday she still feels under the watch of the Chinese territory’s police after moving to Toronto.

Chow is one of Hong Kong’s most prominent young activists and was arrested in 2020 under a Beijing-imposed national security law that was enacted following 2019 anti-government protests. While she has not been charged and was released on bail, police confiscated her passport before returning it to her this year under certain conditions, including a visit to mainland China with authorities.

Chow said in an interview with The Associated Press that Hong Kong’s national security police called her twice to ask her about her status after she left the city to pursue further studies in September.

“They keep trying to make me feel like I’m under their eyes,” she said.

The intimidation of Hong Kong dissidents like Chow reflects the severe erosion of the freedoms promised to the former British colony when it returned to China in 1997. But both the Beijing and Hong Kong governments have hailed the security law, saying it brought back stability to the city.

On Tuesday, Hong Kong leader **John Lee** hit out at Chow’s decision to not return to Hong Kong to meet her bail conditions. He called Chow a “liar” and said attempts by police to offer her lenient treatment eventually led to them being deceived. Chow will be pursued for life unless she turns herself in, he said.

Chow rejected the government’s claim that police had offered her leniency, insisting her personal safety and freedom had been infringed. She said the restrictions imposed by the authorities on her daily life had badly affected her mental health.



Rescuers carry the body of a hiker killed in the eruption of Mount Marapi in Agam, West Sumatra, Indonesia on Dec 6. The search has ended for any more victims among climbers who were caught by a weekend eruption of Indonesia’s Mount Marapi volcano that killed 23 people and injured several others, officials said on Dec 7. (AP)



Blinken



Al-Bashir

Africa

State of emergency in Seychelles:

Authorities in Seychelles declared a state of emergency Thursday after a blast at an explosives store caused “massive damage” in an industrial area also facing flooding amid heavy rainfall, according to the presidency.

The blast happened on Wednesday night in the Providence area of Mahe, the largest and most populous island of the Seychelles.

“Everyone is being asked to stay at home,” the presidency said in a statement. “All schools will be closed. Only workers in the essential services and persons traveling will be allowed free movement.”

Emergency services were at work in the area, the statement said. There was no immediate word on any casualties from the blast.

Much of East Africa is getting heavy rainfall that has caused deadly flooding in countries ranging from Somalia to Tanzania. (AP)

‘Both sides committed atrocities’:

The Biden administration said Wednesday it has determined that both sides in the ongoing conflict in Sudan have committed atrocities in the African nation’s western region of Darfur and elsewhere, saying the fighting “has caused grievous human suffering.”

The State Department said the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces are responsible for either war crimes or crimes against humanity, or both, in Darfur, where fighting that began in the capital earlier this year has descended into ethnic violence in recent weeks.

“Based on the State Department’s careful analysis of the law and available facts, I have determined that members of the SAF and the RSF have committed war crimes in Sudan,” Secretary of State **Antony Blinken** said in a statement. “I have also determined that members of the RSF and allied militias have committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.”

The finding does not include sanctions being imposed on leaders or members of either side but creates the authority for the US to impose them.

The Biden administration has already imposed sanctions on RSF and Sudanese army

officials for their actions in other parts of the country, including Khartoum, the capital.

On Monday, the administration imposed sanctions on three Sudanese men accused of undermining “peace, security and stability.” Those sanctions freeze all property

and assets held by Taha Osman Ahmed al-Hussein, Salah Abdallah Mohamed Salah and Mohamed Etta al-Moula Abbas in US jurisdictions.

All three held senior government positions under former autocratic President



Peru’s former president Alberto Fujimori, 85, (center) is driven out of prison by his children Keiko, (center right), and Kenji, (center left), after being released from prison in Callao, Peru on Dec 6. The country’s constitutional court ordered an immediate humanitarian release on Tuesday for the former leader who was serving a 25-year sentence for human rights abuses. (AP)

USD stable

The exchange rate of the US Dollar against the Kuwaiti Dinar remained stable on Thursday at 0.308, while the exchange rate of the Euro fell by 0.30 percent to KD 0.331 compared to Wednesday.

The Central Bank of Kuwait said in its daily bulletin on its website that the exchange rate of the Pound Sterling fell KD 0.386, the Swiss Franc KD 0.352 Dinars, while the Japanese Yen stable at KD 0.002. (KUNA)

oil slips

Price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 94 cents to USD 80.43 per barrel on Wednesday, as opposed to USD 81.37 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Thursday.

In global markets, Brent crude futures dropped USD 2.90 to USD 74.30 a barrel, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate fell USD 2.94 to USD 69.38 pb. (KUNA)

Kuwait supports OPEC+ decision

Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil, Dr. Saad Al-Barak, has reaffirmed Kuwait's support for the OPEC+ alliance's decisions regarding the reduction of oil output. He emphasized the country's commitment to an additional voluntary cut of 135,000 barrels per day (bpd) starting from January 1 until the end of March 2024.

This decision will bring Kuwait's total oil output down to 2.413 million bpd, as announced in a press conference on Wednesday.

Dr. Al-Barak, who also serves as the Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs and is the Chairman of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) board, praised the precautionary measures taken during the recent OPEC and non-OPEC ministerial meeting. These measures aim to uphold the balance and stability of the oil market.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr. Saad Al-Barak

Market Movements 7-12-2023

		Change	Closing pts			Change	Closing pts
SAUDI	Tadawul	+51.33	11,225.35	UAE	DFM	-12.91	3,956.26
PAKISTAN	KSE100	+978.48	64,757.23	JAPAN	Nikkei	-587.59	32,858.31
				EGYPT	EGX 30	-17.39	24,686.16
				PHILLIPINES	PSEI	-71.08	6,234.77

Business

Kuwait real estate contracts surge to 295.68 mln dinars in November

Diverse trading activity across Kuwait's six governorates

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: In November 2023, the total value of real estate contracts and agencies registered with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Justice reached approximately 295.68 million dinars. According to statistics from the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Department, this trading activity involved 384 contracts across the six governorates, totaling 290.2 million dinars.

The breakdown of contract trading for the month includes approximately 265 private contracts valued at 114.75 million dinars, 102 investment contracts amounting to 69.42 million dinars, and 13 commercial contracts with a value of 97.21 million

dinars. Additionally, two contracts were registered in the coastal strip worth 5.71 million dinars, a craft contract valued at 1.15 million dinars, and another in warehouses amounting to 1.96 million dinars. On the agency front, nine agencies were implemented in private real estate, totaling 2.63 million dinars, and two in investment real estate with a value of 2.85 million dinars.

For the week of November 26 to 30, 2023, the total value of contracts and real estate agencies registered with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Justice was approximately 137.65 million dinars. During this period, 103 contracts were traded across the six governorates, with a value of 134.34 million dinars. The week saw the registration of 64 private real estate contracts worth 28.93 million dinars, 31 investment properties valued at 28.88 million dinars, and six commercial properties totaling 70.38 million dinars. A warehouse real estate deal was recorded for 1.96 million dinars, and another in the coastal strip worth 4.21 million dinars, while craft, exhibition, or industrial real estate did not witness any movement during the week.

Four agency contracts were registered, two for private real estate with a combined value of 425.3 thousand dinars, and two for investment properties totaling 2.85 million dinars.

In terms of real estate credit, during the third quarter of 2023, credit directed to the real estate and construction sectors slightly increased by 0.4% from the end of the second quarter, reaching over 11.8 billion dinars, constituting 25% of the overall credit balance granted. Credit directed to individuals at the end of the third quarter reached about 18.7 billion dinars, increasing by less than 1% from the end of the second quarter of 2023 and 2.5% higher than the end of the third quarter of 2022. The balances of credit facilities directed to real estate activity, including credit granted to the real estate sector, construction activity, and installment facilities for private housing, approached 27.8 billion dinars, representing 58.8% of the credit facilities granted by the local banking sector. The overall annual increase rate slowed to 3% from the end of the third quarter of 2022.

Emphasis on manpower & revenue boost

Kuwait's DGCA affirms keenness on developing air transportation

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7, (KUNA): The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) affirmed Thursday its willingness to develop adequate infrastructure for air transportation that meets modern international standards.

This came in a statement to KUNA by the Deputy Director-General of Civil Aviation Saad Mohammed Al-Otaibi on occasion of the International Civil Aviation day, which falls on the commemoration of the Convention of International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention) signed on December seventh, 1944.

Al-Otaibi also said that the DGCA adopted a strategy that is future proof and compatible with the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) policies, assuring the importance of strengthening national manpower and boosting state revenue from this sector.

He pointed out the importance of Kuwait participating in celebrating this day in representation of Civil Aviation.

Al-Otaibi indicated that the DGCA continues to support the ICAO's program and policies, and keeping up the



Saad Al-Otaibi

best international practices.

He further expressed his hopes of the DGCA to become an independent technical committee private, which he believes will achieve the strategic objectives successfully.

The ICAO was founded in April 1948, its one of the United Nations organizations and its main headquarters is in Montreal, Canada, its objective is to develop air navigation technologies, and air transportation industry to maintain its safety.

Outlook changed to positive from stable

Moody's affirms deposit rtg of Gulf Bank at A3/Prime-2 (P-2)

LIMASSOL, Dec 7: Moody's Investors Service ("Moody's") has today affirmed the long-term and short-term foreign and local currency deposit ratings of Gulf Bank K.S.C.P (Gulf Bank) at A3/Prime-2 (P-2) and changed the outlook on the long-term deposit ratings to positive from stable. Concurrently, Moody's has affirmed the Baseline Credit Assessment (BCA) and the Adjusted BCA of Gulf Bank at ba1, long-term and short-term foreign and local currency Counter-party Risk Ratings at A2/P-1, and long-term and short-term Counter-party Risk Assessments at A2(cr)/P-1(cr).

Ratings Rationale Affirmation of BCA and deposit ratings

The affirmation of Gulf Bank's ratings reflects the bank's strong asset quality, sound profitability and loss absorption capacity and healthy liquidity buffers. These strengths balance the bank's borrower and depositor concentration risks. The affirmation also takes into consideration Moody's unchanged assumption of the very high probability of support from the Government of Kuwait (A1 stable) for Gulf Bank's depositors at times of stress.

Strong asset quality

Gulf Bank's asset quality is strong and compares favorably with the system. The bank's non-performing loans (NPLs) stood at around 1% (1.2% for Q3 2023) for the past five years reflecting resiliency of the bank's asset quality. Loan loss provisions have significantly improved and stood at 0.5% of average gross loans as of end-September 2023 compared to 1.4% during the pandemic in 2020. Going forward the agency expects the bank's asset quality to remain strong supported by the bank's improved underwriting standards, positive migration in portfolio staging (higher stage 1 at 94.4% of total loans as of end-September 2023 compared to 92.7% in 2020) and favorable operating conditions for banks in Kuwait.

Sound capital and provision buffers supported by improving profitability

Gulf Bank capitalization is sound compared to its risk profile. The bank's tangible common equity / risk weighted asset ratio of 13.7% as of end-September 2023 compares favorably with the average for Kuwait banks. The bank has consistently maintained this ratio at or above 13% and the agency expects the same going forward. In November 2023, Gulf Bank completed a rights issue for KD 60 million which will further enhance the bank's capitalization.

The bank's loss absorption capacity is also supported by the sizeable loan loss reserves which at 438% of problem loans at end-September 2023 also compare favorably with the average for Kuwaiti banks and provide a substantial cushion to absorb expected losses.

Gulf Bank's profitability is

sound and improving and now is back to its pre-pandemic level. Return on assets improved to 1% for first nine months of 2023 compared to 0.5% for the full year 2020. Lower provision cost has been the key driver for recent improvement in profitability as net interest margin remained largely stable around 2% since 2020. The banks profitability is slightly below the average for Kuwaiti banks while its efficiency remains also below peers with cost to income ratio at 46% as of end-September 2023, higher than its pre-pandemic levels.

Moderate reliance on market funding

Gulf Bank's reliance on market funding is limited (13% as of end-September 2023) albeit on increasing trend in recent years. The bank remains largely deposit funded with customer deposits funding 61% of the bank's total assets while deposit from non-bank financial institutions funding a further 12%. Like other Kuwaiti banks, Gulf Bank's funding exhibits high concentration, especially in the form of deposits from government entities and government-related companies. However, these deposits have been stable mitigating to some extent the concentration risks.

The bank's ample liquidity buffers also partially mitigate reliance on market funding and deposit concentration risks. As of end-September liquid banking assets stood at 23% of tangible banking assets. While the bank has good buffers, they are lower compared to their historic average of around 30%.

Unchanged very high government support assumption

The affirmation of the bank's deposit ratings reflects Moody's unchanged assumption of a very high probability of support from the Government of Kuwait (A1 stable). This continues to result in four notches of uplift from the bank's ba1 Adjusted BCA reflecting the authorities' strong track record of supporting all banks in case of need.

Rationale for positive outlook

The change of the long-term deposits outlook to positive captures the agency's expectation that the bank's strong asset quality, recovering profitability and stronger capital position, if sustained could drive an upgrade of Gulf Bank's ratings and assessments.

Factors that could lead to an upgrade or downgrade of the ratings

The bank's ratings could be upgraded if it maintains its strong asset quality and low provision costs and at the same time, profitability and capital buffers remain sound.

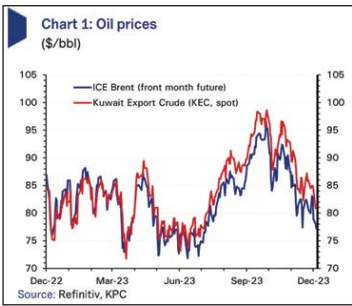
Given the positive outlook there is currently no downward pressure on Gulf Bank's ratings. The long-term deposits outlook would be revised to stable if the recent improvement in profitability reverses or asset quality weakens, or capital levels decline.

By National Bank of Kuwait

Brent futures closed lower for a second month in a row in November, dropping 5.2% m/m (-3.6% ytd) to settle at \$82.8/bbl amid weaker sentiment linked to ongoing concerns over global economic growth and a potential oil market surplus in 2024. (Chart 1.) Even OPEC+’s end-month announcement of deeper supply cuts in Q1 2024, which took the markets by surprise after the meeting was delayed due to disagreements over African members’ quota reductions, was not able to arrest the decline; prices instead retreated further following a convoluted explainer and skepticism that the cuts would be enacted given that they were largely voluntary and not group-wide. Local marker Kuwait Export Crude (KEC) closed -7% m/m at \$84.9/bbl (+3.5% ytd).

November saw a marked build-up of bearish positions in the futures market as speculators reckoned on a weaker outlook with US Fed rate policy remaining tight, underwhelming Chinese data and flatlining European activity. Commercial crude inventories in the US were also on a run of six consecutive weekly increases, implying that oil consumption was being outpaced by supply. By 21 November in the futures and options markets, there were almost twice as many ‘shorts’ (contracts betting on prices falling) as there had been a month earlier. Net length, (the difference between the number of ‘longs’ and ‘shorts’ had consequently receded to its lowest level in six weeks.

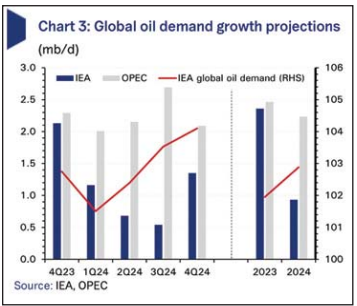
In terms of market fundamentals, however, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA), oil demand growth is on track to record a robust 2.4 mb/d in 2023, upwardly revised by 100 kb/d in November’s IEA monthly



report. (Chart 3.) This is in large part due to stronger-than-expected demand in China, which accounts for a massive 75% (1.8 mb/d) of demand growth. China set a new consumption record in September of 17 mb/d. Total global demand is about 102 mb/d.

The IEA’s view for 2024, however, is less upbeat, with global demand growth slowing to 930 kb/d, a very steep deceleration. China once again accounts for 75% of the growth (+700 kb/d). The IEA’s estimate for demand growth is not shared by other energy reporting agencies, however, most divergently by OPEC, which pegs growth in 2024 more than twice as high at 2.2 mb/d (from 2.5 mb/d in 2023). That said, with OPEC+ not only rolling over but deepening production cuts for 2024 ostensibly to prevent stocks building, for the sake congruity, its oil demand growth projections for next year will likely have to be pared back substantially in its upcoming December oil market report.

On the supply side, combined data from OPEC secondary sources and S&P Global show aggregate OPEC+ production (quota-bound members) rising to 36 mb/d (+106 kb/d m/m) in October. Gains were driven by Kazakhstan, Angola (+51 kb/d) and Nigeria (+17 kb/d to 1.42 mb/d), the latter punching through



its downwardly revised quota of 1.38 mb/d for 2024 — a major bone of contention between the African producer and the OPEC Secretariat — for the second month in a row. Meanwhile, Iraq, at 4.33 mb/d, stood out once again as the least compliant OPEC member, producing 109 kb/d (+2.6%) above its quota. Outside of quota-bound members, Iran, skirting US sanctions, continued its output-raising course, pumping 3.12 mb/d in October, a fresh 5-year high. The Islamic Republic has brought back more than 1 mb/d of crude since early 2021 and has proven to be an increasingly consequential mitigator of OPEC+’s supply tightening efforts.

Further complications for OPEC+ supply management were in evidence ahead of last week’s ministerial meeting, with Nigeria and Angola rejecting OPEC’s June 2023 decision to reduce their output quotas for 2024 (to reflect eroded production capacity). The disagreement forced a delay to the meeting, and the issue remains unresolved for Angola, which saw its 2024 quota subsequently reduced further. Nigeria appears to have accepted an upwardly revised quota of 1.5 mb/d.

The meeting ended with the announcement that 8 OPEC+ members including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE,

Iraq and Russia had agreed to deepen and/or extend their voluntary cuts from this year into Q1 2024. Total ‘cuts’ committed are about 2.2 mb/d, though only Algeria, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kuwait and Oman will be required to lower output in Q1—by about 533 kb/d of physical crude barrels in aggregate. For the other participants: Saudi Arabia’s cut is actually a rollover of its 1 mb/d ‘lollipop’ from July 2023; the UAE’s nominal 163 kb/d cut commitment is offset by an increase of 200 kb/d to its quota for 2024, agreed to in June 2023 (resulting in a net increase in output of 37 kb/d in Q1); and Russia’s pledge of 500 kb/d, of which 300 kb/d is an extension of its existing crude cut and 200 kb/d is a new cut on refined products, is calculated off of exports not production.

Markets were not impressed, neither with the convoluted cuts explainer nor the voluntary nature of the cuts, which left them to the discretion of members rather than collective OPEC+ cuts. As Saudi Prince Abdulaziz hinted, however, these supply reductions could be extended beyond Q1, which may need to happen to balance the market amid expectations of softer demand growth. The net effect of these cuts should see the market revert to a deficit in Q1, of just under 0.4 mb/d (assuming full compliance and production among non-quota-bound members remains at October 2023 levels), but this could slip back into a surplus in Q2 if the cuts are not extended.

Overall, with the expectation of a tighter market, backstopped by OPEC+ supply cuts once again, oil prices should find more support going forward. Oil demand growth is softening, however, and non-OPEC supply especially in the US is gaining, so the tussle between bullish and bearish impulses looks set to continue into 2024. Market volatility looks par for the course.

Republicans skeptical of CEOs' mixed public policy positions

Big bank leaders sound alarm on over-regulation threat

NEW YORK, Dec 7, (AP): The heads of Wall Street’s biggest banks used an appearance on Capitol Hill on Wednesday to plead with senators to stop the Biden administration’s proposed changes to how banks are regulated, warning that the new proposals could negatively impact the economy at a time of geopolitical turmoil and inflation.

Wall Street’s most powerful bankers have regularly appeared in front of Congress going back to the 2008 financial crisis. Among those testifying before the Senate Banking Committee included JPMorgan’s Jamie Dimon, Bank of America’s Brian Moynihan, Jane Fraser of Citigroup and Goldman Sachs’ David Solomon.

Whereas in previous years the bank CEOs used the hearing to highlight the industry’s good deeds, this year they warned about the potential dangers of over-regulating the industry.

The banks are adamantly against a number of proposed regulations that could hit their profitability, including new rules from the Federal Reserve that would require big banks to hold additional capital on their balance sheets. The industry says the new regulations, known as the Basel Endgame, would curtail lending and weaken bank balance sheets at a time when the industry needs more flexibility.

There are also proposals coming from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau that would rein in overdraft fees, which have also been a longtime source



Charles W. Scharf, CEO and President, Wells Fargo & Company; Brian Thomas Moynihan, Chairman and CEO, Bank of America; Jamie Dimon, Chairman and CEO, JPMorgan Chase & Co.; Jane Fraser, CEO, Citigroup; Ronald O’Hanley, CEO, State Street; Robin Vince, CEO, BNY Mellon; David Solomon, CEO, Goldman Sachs; James P. Gorman, CEO, Morgan Stanley, stand and are sworn in during a Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee oversight hearing to examine Wall Street firms on Capitol Hill on Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023, in Washington. (AP)

of revenue for the consumer banks.

“I’ve been at this for a long time. I’ve sat on the board of the New York Federal Reserve. I’ve seen a lot of rules, and (this proposal) just doesn’t make sense,” said James Gorman, CEO of Morgan Stanley, in response to a question.

The other seven CEOs were uniform in their comments in both their prepared remarks and answers to Senators’ questions.

“(The regulations) were not thoughtfully done and should be relooked at,” Dimon said.

The industry’s opposition has saturated the Washington media market over the last several weeks, which came up in senators’ remarks during the hearing.

“You should stop pouring money into lobbying against efforts to protect the taxpayers who subsidize your entire industry,” said Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio and the committee chairman.

Brown, a longtime big bank critic, is unlikely to be persuaded by the CEOs’ comments. Instead the CEOs were aiming to reach more moderate Democratic members of the committee. Only

a handful of Democrats asked questions in support of the new regulations, while most Republicans did appear to be against the rules.

Even Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Massachusetts, who typically is among the most combative with Dimon and the other CEOs at these hearings, avoided the topic. Warren asked the CEOs for support for her cryptocurrency anti-money laundering bill. Longtime critics of crypto, the CEOs were more than happy to publicly support her bill.

Italy drops out of China Belt and Road initiative

Italy has formally withdrawn from China's global Belt and Road initiative that seeks to deepen relations with foreign countries through infrastructure investments, Italian media reported on Wednesday. Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni had previously signaled Italy's intention to withdraw from the agreement, which was up for renewal. The Milan newspaper Corriere della Sera reported that a letter with the formal notice had been delivered to Beijing in recent days. Meloni's office declined to comment on the report.

Italy became the first G7 country to sign on to the initiative in 2019, when the populist, anti-establishment Five Star Movement party-led government promoted it as a way of increasing trade with China while getting investments in major infrastructure projects.

Neither appeared. In the intervening years, Italy's trade deficit with China has ballooned from 20 billion euros to 48 billion euros (\$21.5 billion to \$51.8 billion.) And investments in Italian ports that were trumpeted in newspaper headlines were never achieved.

Meloni, in opposition at the time, was against the deal from the start. Her foreign minister, Antonio Tajani, said this summer that Italy had not "obtained great results" from the pact. (AP)

BoE will review risks that AI poses to UK financial stability

The Bank of England, which oversees financial stability in the U.K., said Wednesday that it will make an assessment next year about the risks posed by artificial intelligence and machine learning.

In its half-yearly Financial Stability Review, the bank said it was getting advice about the potential implications stemming from the adoption of AI and machine learning in the financial services sector, which accounts for around 8% of the British economy and has deep-rooted global connections.

The bank's Financial Policy Committee, which identifies and monitors risks, said it and other authorities would seek to ensure that the U.K. financial system is resilient to risks that may arise from widespread use of AI and machine learning.

"We obviously have to go into AI with our eyes open," bank Gov. Andrew Bailey said at a press briefing. "It is something that I think we have to embrace, it is very important and has potentially profound implications for economic growth, productivity and how economies are shaped going forward."

Over the past year, the potential benefits and threats of the new technologies have grown. (AP)

Volkswagen releases report of commissioned audit

Audit finds no signs of forced labor at plant in China's Xinjiang region

BEIJING, Dec 7, (AP) — An audit commissioned by Volkswagen has found no indication of forced labor at its plant in China's Xinjiang region, where Western governments have accused the Chinese government of human rights violations against the Uyghur ethnic minority.

The German automaker has come under fire for operating in Xinjiang, a remote western region that borders Central Asia. The U.S. government has blocked imports from Xinjiang unless it can be proven that the products were not made with forced labor.

The auditor, Loening - Human Rights and Responsible Business, conducted 40 interviews and was able to inspect the factory freely, said Markus Loening, a former German human rights commissioner who founded the consultancy. "We could not find any indications or evidence of forced labor among the employees," he said in remarks provided by Volkswagen from a media briefing in Germany on Tuesday.

China launched a harsh crackdown in Xinjiang around 2017 in response to a series of bombings, knifings and other attacks by Uyghurs unhappy with the communist-ruled government's policies toward their ethnic group. Analysts estimate that a million or more people have been detained in what China has called vocational training and education centers. The government denies any human rights violations and says the measures successfully eliminated a terrorist threat.

Jim Wormington, a senior researcher at Human Rights Watch, said Wednesday that the risk of reprisals against auditors and workers in Xinjiang means that "no audit can credibly claim to have investigated labor conditions at factories in the region."

He added that the summary of the audit provided by Volkswagen made it difficult to assess its methodology and findings. The automaker did not release the full report.

Adrian Zenz, a scholar who has studied the forced labor issue in Xinjiang extensively, said on Wednesday that new evidence from Xinjiang police files showed that Uyghurs were sent from re-education camps directly to vocational institutions that organized job fairs with Volkswagen as a typical work destination.

"The ramifications is that re-educated and coerced Uyghurs can likely end up working for larger companies such as FAW-Volkswagen in Xinjiang," said Zenz, China director and senior fellow in China studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. "This risk cannot be ascertained through audits, since Uyghurs are not free to speak about camp or re-education experiences, or about other coercive and repressive state measures in their lives."

Loening acknowledged the difficulty of conducting audits in China. "The situation in China and Xinjiang and the challenges in collecting data for audits are well known," he said.

The Volkswagen plant in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, is no longer assembling vehicles and functions only as a distribution hub. About 10,000 vehicles a year undergo quality checks before they are delivered to dealers in the region.

China's exports in Nov edged higher for the 1st time in 7 mths

HONG KONG, Dec 7, (AP) — China's exports rose in November, the first increase since April, while imports fell, according to customs data released Thursday.

Exports rose 0.5% from a year earlier to \$291.9 billion, a sign that demand may be picking up after months of decline. But imports fell 0.6%, to \$223.5 billion, after they climbed 3% in October.

China has been grappling with sluggish foreign trade this year amid slack global demand and a stalled recovery, despite the country's reopening after its strict COVID-19 controls were lifted late last year.

The trade surplus of \$68.4 billion was up 21% compared to October's \$56.5 billion.

Some economists said they doubt the rise, fueled mainly by exports of vehicles and ships, will continue for long.

"Looking forward, the resilience of exports is unlikely to last. The recent strength is at least partly fueled by exporters slashing prices to gain market share," Zichun Huang, a China economist with Capital Economics wrote in a note, describing the reduction of prices as "unsustainable."

"Without the support of price cuts, exports are unlikely to defy the slowdown in growth among China's major trading partners, which we expect to continue in the first half of next year," Huang said.

Trade with Japan, Southeast Asian countries, the European Union and the U.S. has declined this year.

Demand for Chinese exports has been weak since the Federal Reserve and central banks in Europe and Asia began raising interest rates last year to cool inflation that was at multi-decade highs.

China's property sector remains a drag on the economy, with sales slumping and developers struggling to repay massive amounts of debt.

The central bank has eased borrowing rules and cut mortgage rates for first-time home buyers while providing some tax relief measures for small businesses. Late last month, it announced plans to issue 1 trillion yuan (\$330 billion) in bonds for infrastructure projects and disaster prevention, dipping deeper into deficit to try to nudge the economy into higher gear.

Thursday's data was released as President Xi Jinping was meeting with EU leaders. EU leaders were expected to discuss the large regional trade deficit with China and other issues including climate change and the Russia-Ukraine war.

Exports to the EU fell 11% from a year earlier to \$38.3 billion in November compared. Imports slid 1% to \$23.2 billion.

Company cites expensive network fees

Twitch withdrawing from S. Korean mkt

SEOUL, South Korea, Dec 7, (AP) — Twitch, a popular video service, will shut down its struggling business in South Korea, a decision its chief executive blamed on allegedly "prohibitively expensive" costs for operating in the country.

In a blog post announcing the company's plan this week, Dan Clancy said the network fees the company has been paying to South Korean internet operators were 10 times more than in most other markets. He did not provide specific numbers to back such claims.

"We've made the difficult decision to shut down the Twitch business in Korea on Feb. 27, 2024," Clancy said in the post. Twitch was able to lower costs by limiting video quality, he said, but "our network fees in Korea are still 10 times more expensive than in most other countries."

A platform popular with video game fans, Twitch downgraded the quality of its video services in South Korea to a resolution of 720 p from 1080 p in September 2022, citing a need to reduce costs. Later that year it blocked South Korean streamers from uploading video-on-demand content.

The moves drew vehement complaints from South Korean users and are thought to have encouraged many to switch to other services like YouTube or South Korean streaming sites like Afreeca TV.

Twitch likely would have faced tougher competition in South Korea next year with Naver, the biggest domestic internet company, reportedly planning to launch live streaming services for online video game leagues.

The planned withdrawal from South Korea is the latest sign of business struggles at Twitch, which announced in March that it was laying off 400 employees, saying that its "user and revenue growth has not kept pace with our expectations."

"Twitch has been operating in Korea at a significant loss, and unfortunately there is no pathway forward for our business to run more sustainably in that country," Clancy wrote in his blog post.

South Korean telecommunications companies that operate internet networks have feuded in recent years with global content providers like Network and Google, which complained of excessively high charges. There are similar conflicts between those companies and internet providers in Europe.

In September, Netflix said it reached an agreement with SK Broadband, a South Korean internet provider, to end a legal dispute over network fees. The companies did not release the terms of their settlement.

Jung Sang-wook, an official from the Korea Telecommunications Operators Association, an industry lobby compromised of the country's major telecommunications providers, said he had no way of verifying Clancy's claims about network fees, which are negotiated individually between companies and sealed with non-disclosure agreements.

"Similar services like Afreeca TV have been enjoying profits, so Twitch's decision could be based on the company's broader management problems," Jung said. The association in October issued a statement last year criticizing Twitch's decision to lower the resolution of its videos, saying that caused many users to complain to telecom providers that were "providing services smoothly without any problems."

Project to be completed in three years

In the salt deserts bordering Pakistan, India builds its largest renewable energy project

KHAVDA, India, Dec 7, (AP) — Rising from the bare expanse of the large salt desert that separates India from Pakistan is what will likely be the world's largest renewable energy project when completed three years from now.

The solar and wind energy project will be so big that it will be visible from space, according to developers of what is called the Khavda renewable energy park, named after the village nearest to the project site.

At the site, thousands of laborers install pillars on which solar panels will be mounted. The pillars rise like perfectly aligned concrete cactuses that stretch as far as the eye can see. Other workers are building foundations for enormous wind turbines to be installed; they also are transporting construction material, building substations and laying wires for miles.

When completed, the project will be about as large as Singapore, spreading out over 726 square kilometers (280 square miles). The Indian government estimates it will cost at least \$2.26 billion.

Shifting to renewable energy is a key issue at the ongoing COP28 climate summit. Some leaders have voiced support for a target of tripling renewable energy worldwide in any final agreement while curbing use of coal, oil and natural gas, which spew planet-warming gases into the atmosphere.

What makes this heavy industrial activity peculiar is that it's taking place in the middle of the Rann of Kutch in western India's Gujarat state. The Rann is an unforgiving salt desert and marshland at least 70 kilometers (43.5 miles) from the nearest human habitation but just a short army truck ride away from one of the world's most tense international borders separating the two South Asian nations.

Ground zero of India's clean energy transition

When The Associated Press visited the renewable energy park, two days of unseasonal heavy rains had left the ground muddy and water logged since the only escape for water in this rough terrain is evaporation. This made it even harder for the workers to do their job.

Notwithstanding the tough conditions, an estimated 4,000 workers and 500 engineers have been living in makeshift camps for the better part of the past year toiling to get this project up and running.

Once completed, it will supply 30 gigawatts of renewable energy annually, enough to power nearly 18 million Indian homes.

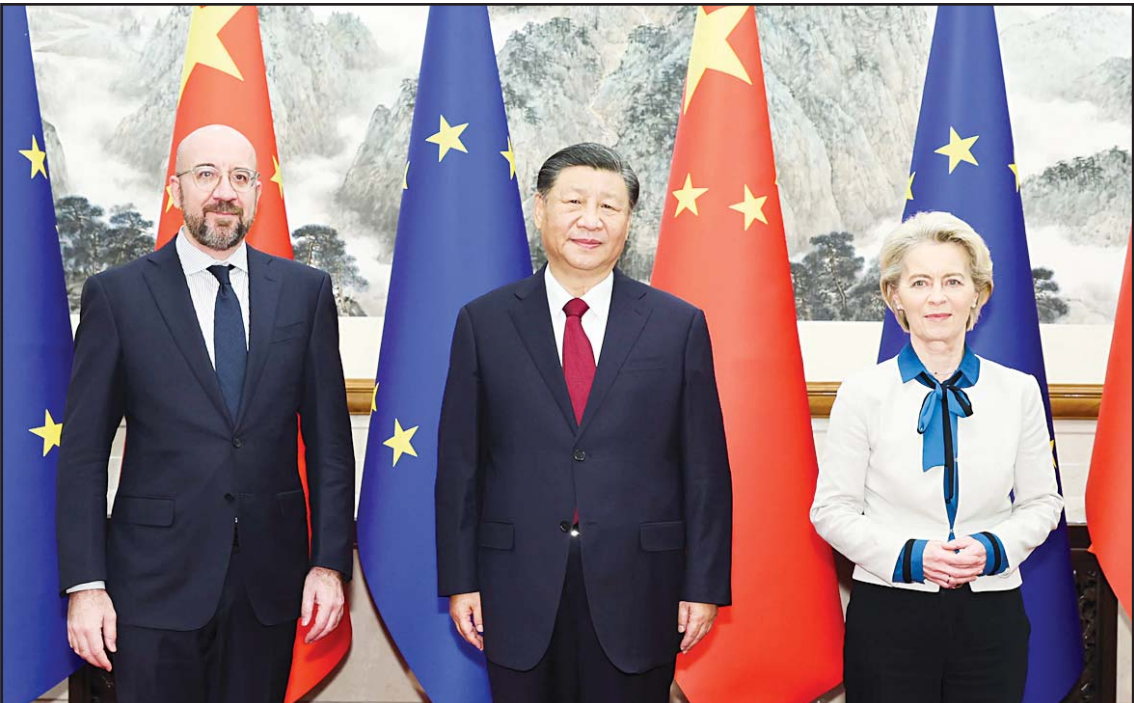
As India aims to install 500 gigawatts of clean energy by the end of the decade and to reach net zero emissions by 2070, this project site will likely contribute significantly to the world's most populous country's transition to producing energy from non-carbon spewing sources.

As things stand, India is still mostly powered by fossil fuels, especially coal, which generate more than 70% of India's electricity. Renewable energy currently contributes about 10% of India's electricity needs. The country is also currently the third-largest emitter of planet-warming gases behind China and the United States.

The number of workers has fallen to 197 from about 650 between 2015 and 2019, Volkswagen said. Of the total, 47 are Uyghurs and 150 are from China's Han majority. "The employees are paid above average and have little to do," Loening said.

A law firm in Shenzhen, an industrial hub in eastern China, carried out

Divisions over trade, Ukraine are in focus



In this photo released by Xinhua News, Agency, Chinese President Xi Jinping, center, stands for a group photograph with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, right, and European Council President Charles Michel prior to their meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023. The leaders of China and the European Union were holding wide-ranging talks Thursday that included their disputes over trade and a deep divide on the war in Ukraine. (AP)

EU and China's leaders meet in Beijing

BEIJING, Dec 7, (AP) — A top European Union official told Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Thursday that China and the EU must address both the imbalances in their trading relationship and Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The two are divided on both issues. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, meeting Xi in the Chinese capital, said they need to manage their differences responsibly.

"China is the EU's most important trading partner," von der Leyen said in opening remarks posted on the commission's website. "But there are clear imbalances and differences that we must address."

Xi said that China and the EU should handle their differences through dialogue, and pushed back against what his government sees as a shift in European policy on China toward a more strident and competitive approach.

The two sides "should not regard each other as rivals because of different systems, reduce cooperation because of competition, and confront each other because of differences," he said, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Von der Leyen and Charles Michel, the president of the EU Council, met Xi in the morning and were meeting with China's No. 2 leader, Premier Li Qiang, later in the day. Von der Leyen, as commission president, heads the day-to-day business of the EU, while Michel chairs the summits of EU leaders.

The European Union is calling on China to improve market access for products from its 27 member countries to address an annual trade imbalance of more than \$200 billion. China exported \$458.5 billion worth of goods to the EU in the first 11 months of this year and imported \$257.8 billion, according to Chinese customs data released Thursday.

The EU has angered China by launching an investigation into the latter's subsidies for electric vehicles to determine whether they give manufacturers in China an unfair competitive advantage in European markets.

"China has never deliberately pursued a trade surplus," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said ahead of the summit. He noted recent import and supply chain expos that he said encourage foreign companies to sell to the Chinese market of 1.4 billion people.

Wang also took aim at possible EU restrictions on technology exports to China. "I'm afraid it's unreasonable if the EU imposes strict restrictions on the export of high-tech products to China while expecting a significant increase in exports to China," he said.

The EU is looking for better market access for a range of products including cosmetics, infant formula, wine and other alcoholic beverages.

China has angered the EU by taking a neutral stance in what most European countries see as a Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The EU is calling on China to use its influence with Russia to end the invasion, ensure that exports from or via China are not aiding Russia's war effort and support Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's peace formula.

Von der Leyen said the EU and China have global responsibilities as major powers and a shared interest in peace and security.

"That is why it is essential to put an end to the Russian aggression against Ukraine and establish a just and lasting peace consistent with the U.N. Charter," she said.

Xi said China and the EU should promote political settlements of international hot-spot issues, according to CCTV, which did not include any specific mention of the wars in Ukraine or Gaza.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Business Plus



Chaos at OpenAI puts spotlight on corporate governance, fuels regulation debate

EU grapples with tech giants in final AI act talks



The OpenAI logo appears on a mobile phone in front of a screen showing part of the company website in this photo taken on Nov. 21, 2023 in New York. Negotiators will meet this week to hammer out details of European Union artificial intelligence rules but the process has been bogged down by a simmering last-minute battle over how to govern systems that underpin general purpose AI services like OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Bard chatbot. (AP)

6 Rather than the AI Act becoming the global gold standard for AI regulation, there's a small chance but growing chance that it won't be agreed before the European Parliament elections ,

LONDON, Dec 7, (AP): Hailed as a world first, European Union artificial intelligence rules are facing a make-or-break moment as negotiators try to hammer out the final details this week - talks complicated by the sudden rise of generative AI that produces human-like work.

First suggested in 2019, the EU's AI Act was expected to be the world's first comprehensive AI regulations, further cementing the 27-nation bloc's position as a global trendsetter when it comes to reining in the tech industry.

But the process has been bogged down by a last-minute battle over how to govern systems that underpin general purpose AI services like OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Bard chatbot. Big tech companies are lobbying against what they see as overregulation that stifles innovation, while European lawmakers want added safeguards for the cutting-edge AI systems those companies are developing.

Meanwhile, the U.S., U.K., China and global coalitions like the Group of 7 major democracies have joined the race to draw up guardrails for

the rapidly developing technology, underscored by warnings from researchers and rights groups of the existential dangers that generative AI poses to humanity as well as the risks to everyday life.

"Rather than the AI Act becoming the global gold standard for AI regulation, there's a small chance but growing chance that it won't be agreed before the European Parliament elections" next year, said Nick Reiners, a tech policy analyst at Eurasia Group, a political risk advisory firm.

He said "there's simply so much to nail down" at what officials are hoping is a final round of talks Wednesday. Even if they work late into the night as expected, they might have to scramble to finish in the new year, Reiners said.

When the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, unveiled the draft in 2021, it barely mentioned general purpose AI systems like chatbots. The proposal to classify AI systems by four levels of risk - from minimal to unacceptable - was essentially intended as product safety legislation.

Brussels wanted to test and certify the

information used by algorithms powering AI, much like consumer safety checks on cosmetics, cars and toys.

That changed with the boom in generative AI, which sparked wonder by composing music, creating images and writing essays resembling human work. It also stoked fears that the technology could be used to launch massive cyberattacks or create new bioweapons.

The risks led EU lawmakers to beef up the AI Act by extending it to foundation models. Also known as large language models, these systems are trained on vast troves of written works and images scraped off the internet.

Foundation models give generative AI systems such as ChatGPT the ability to create something new, unlike traditional AI, which processes data and completes tasks using predetermined rules.

Chaos last month at Microsoft-backed OpenAI, which built one of the most famous foundation models, GPT-4, reinforced for some European leaders the dangers of allowing a few dominant AI companies to police themselves.

While CEO Sam Altman was fired and swiftly rehired, some board members with deep reservations about the safety risks posed by AI left, signaling that AI corporate governance could fall prey to boardroom dynamics.

"At least things are now clear" that companies like OpenAI defend their businesses and not the public interest, European Commissioner Thierry Breton told an AI conference in France days after the tumult.

Resistance to government rules for these AI systems came from an unlikely place: France, Germany and Italy. The EU's three largest economies pushed back with a position paper advocating for self-regulation.

The change of heart was seen as a move to help homegrown generative AI players such as French startup Mistral AI and Germany's Aleph Alpha.

Behind it "is a determination not to let U.S. companies dominate the AI ecosystem like they have in previous waves of technologies such as cloud (computing), e-commerce and social media," Reiners said.

A group of influential computer scientists published an open letter warning that weakening the AI Act this way would be "a historic failure."

Executives at Mistral, meanwhile, squabbled online with a researcher from an Elon Musk-backed nonprofit that aims to prevent "existential risk" from AI.

AI is "too important not to regulate, and too important not to regulate well," Google's top legal officer, Kent Walker, said in a Brussels speech last week. "The race should be for the best AI regulations, not the first AI regulations."

Foundation models, used for a wide range of tasks, are proving the thorniest issue for EU negotiators because regulating them "goes against the logic of the entire law," which is based on risks posed by specific uses, said Iverna McGowan, director of the Europe office at the digital rights nonprofit Center for Democracy and Technology.

The nature of general purpose AI systems means "you don't know how they're applied," she said. At the same time, regulations are needed "because otherwise down the food chain there's no accountability" when other companies build services with them, McGowan said.

Altman has proposed a U.S. or global agency that would license the most powerful AI systems. He suggested this year that OpenAI could leave Europe if it couldn't comply with EU rules but quickly walked back those comments.

Aleph Alpha said a "balanced approach is needed" and supported the EU's risk-based approach. But it's "not applicable" to foundation models, which need "more flexible and dynamic" regulations, the German AI company said.

EU negotiators still have yet to resolve a few other controversial points, including a proposal to completely ban real-time public facial recognition. Countries want an exemption so law enforcement can use it to find missing children or terrorists, but rights groups worry that will effectively create a legal basis for surveillance.

EU's three branches of government are facing one of their last chances to reach a deal Wednesday.

Even if they do, the bloc's 705 lawmakers still must sign off on the final version. That vote needs to happen by April, before they start campaigning for EU-wide elections in June. The law wouldn't take force before a transition period, typically two years.

If they can't make it in time, the legislation would be put on hold until later next year - after new EU leaders, who might have different views on AI, take office.

"There is a good chance that it is indeed the last one, but there is equally chance that we would still need more time to negotiate," Dragos Tudorache, a Romanian lawmaker co-leading the European Parliament's AI Act negotiations, said in a panel discussion last week.

His office said he wasn't available for an interview.

"It's a very fluid conversation still," he told the event in Brussels. "We're going to keep you guessing until the very last moment."

Hybrid governance under scrutiny

OpenAI's unconventional model faces criticism, redemption

6 In hybrid governance models, the board has to ensure that market pressures to make money for investors and shareholders don't override the organization's mission - a risk known as mission drift ,

By Alnoor Ebrahim
Tufts University

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

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The board of OpenAI, creator of the popular ChatGPT and DALL-E artificial intelligence tools, fired Sam Altman, its chief executive officer, in late November 2023.

Chaos ensued as investors and employees rebelled. By the time the mayhem had subsided five days later, Altman had returned triumphantly to the OpenAI fold amid staff euphoria, and three of the board members who had sought his ouster had resigned.

The structure of the board - a nonprofit board of directors overseeing a for-profit subsidiary - seems to have played a role in the drama.

As a management scholar who researches organizational accountability, governance and performance, I'd like to explain how this hybrid approach is supposed to work.

Altman co-founded OpenAI in 2015 as a tax-exempt nonprofit with a mission "to build artificial general intelligence (AGI) that is safe and benefits all of humanity." To raise more capital than it could amass through charitable donations, OpenAI later established a holding company that enables it to take money from investors for a for-profit subsidiary it created.

OpenAI's leaders chose this "hybrid governance" structure to enable it to stay true to its social mission while harnessing the power of markets to grow its operations and revenues. Merging profit with purpose has enabled OpenAI to raise billions from investors seeking financial returns while balancing "commerciality with safety and sustainability, rather than focusing on pure profit-maximization," according to an explanation on its website.

Major investors thus have a large stake in the success of its operations. That's especially true for Microsoft, which owns 49% of OpenAI's for-profit subsidiary after investing US\$13 billion in the company. But those investors aren't entitled to board

seats as they would be in typical corporations.

And the profits OpenAI returns to its investors are capped at approximately 100 times what the initial investors put in. This structure calls for it to revert to a nonprofit once that point is reached. At least in principle, this design was intended to prevent the company from veering from its purpose of benefiting humanity safely and to avoid compromising its mission by recklessly pursuing profits.

There are more hybrid governance models than you might think.

For example, the Philadelphia Inquirer, a for-profit newspaper, is owned by the Lenfest Institute, a nonprofit. The structure allows the newspaper to attract investments without compromising on its purpose - journalism serving the needs of its local communities.

Patagonia, a designer and purveyor of outdoor clothing and gear, is another prominent example. Its founder, Yvon Chouinard, and his heirs have permanently transferred their ownership to a nonprofit trust.

All of Patagonia's profits now fund environmental causes.

Anthropic, one of OpenAI's competitors, also has a hybrid governance structure, but it's set up differently than OpenAI's. It has two distinct governing bodies: a corporate board and what it calls a long-term benefit trust. Because Anthropic is a public benefit corporation, its corporate board may consider the interests of other stakeholders besides its owners - including the general public.

And BRAC, an international development organization founded in Bangladesh in 1972 that's among the world's largest NGOs, controls several for-profit social enterprises that benefit the poor. BRAC's model resembles OpenAI's in that a nonprofit owns for-profit businesses.

The primary responsibility of the nonprofit board is to ensure that the mission of the organization it oversees is upheld. In hybrid governance models, the board has to ensure that market pressures to make money for investors and shareholders don't override the organization's mission - a risk

known as mission drift.

Nonprofit boards have three primary duties: the duty of obedience, which obliges them to act in the interest of the organization's mission; the duty of care, which requires them to exercise due diligence in making decisions; and the duty of loyalty, which commits them to avoiding or addressing conflicts of interest.

It appears that OpenAI's board sought to exercise the duty of obedience when it decided to sack Altman. The official reason given was that he was "not consistently candid in his communications" with its board. Additional rationales raised anonymously by people identified as "Concerned Former OpenAI Employees" have not been verified.

In addition, board member Helen Toner, who left the board amid this upheaval, co-authored a research paper just a month before the failed effort to depose Altman. Toner and her co-authors praised Anthropic's precautions and criticized OpenAI's "frantic corner-cutting" around the release of its popular ChatGPT chatbot. (AP)

editor's choice



Taylor Swift named Time magazine’s person of the year

NEW YORK, Dec 7, (AP): Is the year of Taylor Swift over now? Not yet.

Time magazine named Swift its person of the year on Wednesday, a week after Spotify announced she was the most-played artist on the streaming platform.

Swift was picked from a group of nine finalists that included Barbie, King Charles III, and OpenAI chief executive Sam Altman, among others.

“While her popularity has grown across the decades, this is the year that Swift, 33, achieved a kind of nuclear fusion: shooting art and commerce together to release an energy of historic force,” Time said about her selection.

Her year included the wildly popular Eras Tour and concert movie, the release of her reimagined ‘1989’ album, and her closely watched relationship with Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce. She’s even the subject of college courses.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was Time’s 2022 person of the year.

At a **Frank Sinatra**-themed restaurant in the lobby of Encore, a luxury hotel and casino on the Vegas strip, Colombian musician J

Balvin sat down to discuss his interest in Formula One.

Balvin was the only artist at last month’s Las Vegas Grand Prix to perform twice doing their motorsport weekend - for him, it was an opportunity to participate in a global sport as a global musician. It also allowed him to tease his latest single, the reggaeton track “Amigos,” on the Sphere, the largest LED screen on Earth.

A one point during the week, an ad with a photo number projected on the Sphere read “J Balvin doesn’t need more friends.”

Fans could’ve misinterpreted it as a response to a verse on Bad Bunny’s track “Thunder y Lightning.” On it, the Puerto Rican star says “Ustedes me han visto con los mismo mientras ustedes son amigo de todo el mundo como Balvin.” In English, it translates to “You guys have seen me with the same people while you all are friends with the whole world like Balvin.”

Personal

Balvin says “Amigos” has nothing to do with Bad Bunny. “I ain’t got time for that. I got a lot of love for the guy,” he says. “The friend that I know at the time was amazing, you know? So, like, he might be going through something.

“I see him as like a little brother, so it’s like being mad at your little brother, so, like, I’m not going to take it personal” “Amigos,”

he said, “is not a response.”

The reality is that “Amigos” is a return to what Balvin calls “romantic reggaeton,” the music that made his fans fall in love with him in the first place. He says that when he dropped the fiery “Dientes” in September, the ‘00s club-inspired Latino urbano track which interpolates **Usher**’s “Yeah!,” his fans were expecting reggaeton - his “original sound,” as he puts it. Now, he’s given them exactly what they want.

Balvin sings “Fue la culpa de la rutina, de que lo nuestro se jodiera. Yo, tuve que soltarte aunque eso me doliera” on the sentimental single, which translates in English to “It was the fault of routine, that what we had was messed up. I had to let you go enough though it hurt.”

With “Amigos,” J Balvin says he’s “going back to his roots.” Thematically, it is about how “routine can kill the love,” he says - that sometimes a relationship can become more like a friendship, and “the passion is gone, and that is something that happens to everyone.”

“But the fact is, you can also reverse that and make it work once again,” he adds - and he hopes that everyone likes it. “Music doesn’t have a formula. It’s the only business that you drop the product before anyone tastes them. So it’s a risk, but it is part of the game.”

Variety



This image released by Netflix shows Mahershala Ali, (left), and Julia Roberts in a scene from ‘Leave the World Behind.’ (AP)

Film

‘Killers of the Flower Moon’ named best film

A haunting drama in ‘World Behind’

NEW YORK: Jonathan Majors’ former girlfriend testified Wednesday about the “substantial” pain she suffered after he allegedly assaulted her in the backseat of a cab this spring, as photos of the woman’s injuries were shared with a **Manhattan** jury for the first time.

In her second day on the witness stand, **Grace Jabbari** wiped away tears as she recounted the alleged attack by Majors that left her hair caked with blood, her ear swollen, and middle finger “more or less black.”

“When I was trying to sleep, I was very aware that I couldn’t lie on the right side of my head,” she said. “It was an everything hurts situation.”

Jabbari, a 30-year-old British choreographer, documented her bruised finger and reddened ear in text messages she sent to a friend, which were presented in the courtroom on Wednesday. Majors sat stoically throughout the proceeding, looking at Jabbari at times, but appeared to avert his gaze from the photos.

The actor was arrested last March following a dispute with his girlfriend in the backseat of a chauffeured car that began when Jabbari read a “romantic” text message sent to Majors’ by another woman. After Jabbari snatched his phone, Majors allegedly grabbed her finger, twisted her arm behind her back, and struck her head on the back of the head in an effort to wrestle away the device.

Once the driver pulled over and the couple exited the vehicle, Majors picked her up and threw her back in the car, Jabbari testified, slamming her head on the doorframe of the SUV.

Majors has pleaded not guilty to the charges of assault and harassment. His attorney has claimed that Jabbari was the instigator, telling a jury on Wednesday that he emerged from the car scratched and bloodied.

The arrest has upended Majors’ fast-rising career, throwing his future as a lynchpin of the Marvel multiverse - he was set to reprise his role as the supervillain Kang the Conqueror in two upcoming Avengers films - into doubt. The release of “Magazine Dreams,” in which Majors earned critical accolades for his role as an aspiring body-builder, was also postponed from its scheduled opening this week. (AP)

NEW YORK: A woman sued the hip-hop mogul **Sean “Diddy”**

LOS ANGELES, Dec 7, (AP): Imagine that it’s close to midnight and there’s a knock at the door of your luxurious weekend rental home. A man is standing there, calmly apologizing. He says it’s his home and that he and his daughter need your help. He’s also dressed immaculately in a tux.

What would you do?

Did the tux make a difference? Would the man’s race?

That early scene is when Netflix’s “Leave the World Behind” really kicks into gear and never slackens as this terrific, apocalyptic, psychological thriller races to its conclusion, exploring race, affluence and responsibility along the way.

The luxurious home becomes a castle of sorts as the outside world crumbles. The man who says he’s the owner tries to explain why he’s turned up. “Under the circumstances, we thought you’d understand,” he says. But understanding is in short supply here.

Adapted from Rumaan Alam’s acclaimed novel, the movie is set against an end-of-days disaster in which technology - Wi-Fi, TV, phones, internet - has gone silent due to a cyberattack and there’s been a massive blackout.

Well-to-do Amanda (a tart Julia Roberts) and her Atlantic magazine-quoting husband Clay (a handdog Ethan Hawke) must work with the even-more-well-off G.H. (a calmly sophisticated Mahershala Ali) and his savvy daughter Ruth, (a superb Myha’la). The racial divide easily swamps their joint class affiliation.

Also along for the disaster are Amanda and Clay’s children, a “Friends”-obsessed daughter (a soulful Farrah Mackenzie, who even wears her hair in a “Rachel” ‘do) and her older, slightly bratty 16-year-old brother (a brooding Charlie Evans).

It’s a story brilliantly adapted and directed by Sam Esmail, showrunner of “Mr. Robot,” who has made “Leave the World Behind” into a homage of Alfred Hitchcock, complete with the image of a man trying to outrun a crashing plane and using the master’s discordant loud music. Esmail, who manages to make a

group of deer appear sinister, even makes a Hitchcockian cameo as a corpse on a beach.

The director paces the deepening dread flawlessly and there are visual delights throughout, like when the family starts off on their adventure with their car exiting at “Point Comfort.” The camera often swirls and soars through glass cracks or holes in roofs like an uneasy bird, or parks itself at strange angles.

The mysterious catastrophe - ships beach themselves, driverless cars crash like lemmings - sloughs away any pretense at civility, leaving the adults and children to turn on each other. Amanda, in particular, reveals a dark side and her husband - before the disaster, a can’t-we-all-get-along bro - abandons a hysterical survivor by the side of the road. Community is shattered, guns come out and protect-at-all-costs is the motto of the day.

Secrets

The acting is first rate and it needs to be - this is a drama of manners and secrets, and each sigh or glance reveals so much. We haven’t seen a nasty Roberts character in a while and Ali balances sophistication and slyness artfully. Together, they have some of the film’s best scenes.

But a warning of sorts: It’s best to click play on your remote knowing that the movie is more a satire than a true action-survival movie - the open-ended ending may divide viewers. Click anyway because the journey never drags. And don’t be surprised if there’s a jump in sales of survival tools this holiday season.

“Leave the World Behind,” a Netflix release that starts streaming Friday, is rated R for “some sexual content, brief bloody images, language and drug use.” Running time: 141 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four.

Also:

NEW YORK: “Killers of the Flower Moon” was named the best film of the year by the National Board of Review, adding to the early awards-season haul of **Martin Scorsese**’s Osage epic.

The National Board of Review, a long-running organization comprised of film enthusiasts and academics, also on Wednesday named Scorsese best director and **Lily Gladstone** best actress. That follows recent honors for the film and for Gladstone from the New York Film Critics Circle and the Gotham Awards.

“Killers of the Flower Moon is a stunning masterpiece from one of our greatest filmmakers, Martin Scorsese. The NBR is proud to award this complex, important, and deeply resonant epic as our best film and Scorsese as our best director,” Annie Schulhof, president of the board, said in a statement.

Alexander Payne’s “The Holdovers” was also roundly honored by the group, which named **Paul Giamatti** best actor, **Da’Vine Joy Randolph** best supporting actress and **David Hemingson**’s script best screenplay. Payne’s film is set at a **New England** boarding school over the holiday break in the 1970s.

Yorgos Lanthimos’ dark fantasy “Poor Things” came away with multiple awards, too. **Mark Ruffalo** was named best supporting actor, while **Tony McNamara**’s script, from Alasdair Gray’s 1992 novel, was honored for best adapted screenplay.

Bradley Cooper, star, co-writer and director of the Leonard Bernstein biopic “Maestro,” will be given the NBR Icon award. The awards will be presented to winners in a New York ceremony on Jan. 11, hosted by **Willie Geist**.

Other winners include: **Teyana Taylor** (“A Thousand and One”) for breakthrough performance; Celine Song (“Past Lives”) for directorial debut; “Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse” for animated feature; “Anatomy of a Fall” for international film; “Still: A Michael J. Fox Movie” for documentary; and the cast of “The Iron Claw” for best ensemble.

Additionally, **Rodrigo Prieto**, the cinematographer of both “Killers of the Flower Moon” and “Barbie,” will be honored for outstanding achievement in cinematography.

Last year, the National Board of Review named “Top Gun: Maverick” best film.

Combs on Wednesday, claiming he and two other men raped her 20 years ago in a New York City recording studio when she was 17.

The woman, whose name wasn’t disclosed in the court filing, is the fourth person to file a lawsuit accusing Combs of sexual assault in recent weeks.

The lawsuit alleges that



Majors



Combs

Combs, **Harve Pierre**, the former president of Combs’ Bad Boy Entertainment, and an unnamed man gave the accuser drugs and alcohol and then taking turns raping her inside Daddy’s House Recording Studio, a studio owned by Combs and Bad Boy, in 2003.

Combs, 54, denied the allegations in a statement. A request for

comment from Pierre was sent to Bad Boy Entertainment.

According to the lawsuit, Pierre met the teenager in **Michigan** and flew with her on a private plane to meet Combs.

“As alleged in the complaint, Defendants preyed on a vulnerable high school teenager as part of a sex trafficking scheme that

involved plying her with drugs and alcohol and transporting her by private jet to New York City where she was gang raped by the three individual defendants at Mr. Combs’ studio,” the accuser’s attorney, **Douglas Wigdor**, said in a statement. “The depravity of these abhorrent acts has, not surprisingly, scarred our client for life.” (AP)

People & Places

Film

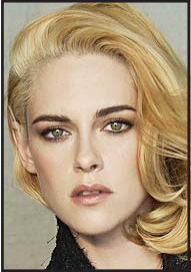
Stewart’s dual roles

Sundance ’23 unveils star-studded lineup

LOS ANGELES, Dec 7, (AP): **Kristen Stewart** and Steven Yeun co-star in a love story about a satellite and a buoy, Chiwetel Ejiofor directs a film about the life of Rob Peace and Will Ferrell takes a road trip with his best friend who is transitioning in three of the films premiering at the Sundance Film Festival in January.

Organizers announced on Wednesday a diverse and robust lineup of 82 feature-length films from 24 countries for the 40th edition of the festival, which includes the return of one of Sundance’s original prodigies, Steven Soderbergh.

In 1989, Soderbergh helped put Sundance on the map with “Sex, Lies, and Videotape.” This year he’ll premiere his new genre film “Presence,” about a family who suspects they’re not alone in their suburban home, starring Lucy Liu and Julia Fox.



Stewart

“That was one of the exciting discoveries of this year,” said Kim Yutani, the festival’s director of programming. “It’s funny to say discovery around Steven Soderbergh because he is such an independent film and now studio film stalwart... ‘Presence’ is a really wildly creative film.”

Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden, who launched “Mississippi Grind” at Sundance and went on to direct “Captain Marvel,” are also back with “Freaky Tales,” set in 1987 Oakland and following four interconnected tales. It stars Pedro Pascal, Jay Ellis and Ben Mendelsohn.

Festival organizers are looking forward to looking back, to celebrate 40 years, with an opening night event that honors another Sundance alum, Christopher Nolan, whose breakthrough “Memento” received their screenwriting award in 2001. “Past Lives” filmmaker Celine Song, the big breakout of the 39th festival, is also being honored.

“It’s not really an anniversary, it’s the 40th edition,” said Sundance Institute CEO Joana Vicente. “Really it gives you an opportunity to reflect on the legacy, but also be excited about the possibilities and the new talent that we will be launching this year.”

Discoveries

It’s the synthesis of having the veterans standing next to the first and second timers, the discoveries that the festival is famous for, that is most exciting, Yutani added.

Programmers culled through over 17,000 submissions (a record) from more than 150 countries and territories to select the feature films, shorts and episodic series that will be featured across the 10-day festival, which will kick off in Park City, Utah, on Jan. 18 and run through Jan. 28.

“There is such boldness and adventurousness and risk taking and such big swings happening in the lineup this year,” said festival and public programming director Eugene Hernandez. “These films, they’re entertaining, they’re moving, they’re provocative.”

Films selected will bring various White Lotus alums to the mountains, including Aubrey Plaza (“My Old Ass”), Murray Bartlett (“Ponyboy”), Will Sharpe (“A Real Pain”) and Meghann Fahy (“Your Monster”), and see “The Worst Person in the World” stars Renate Reinsve and Anders Danielsen Lie together again in “Handling the Undead.” Reinsve will also appear with Sebastian Stan in “A Different Man,” about an actor who dramatically transforms his appearance.

Kristen Stewart, no stranger to Sundance, has two films: The buoy/satellite love story “Love Me” and “Love Lies Bleeding,” which Yutani called two of the most surprising films of the festival.

“I think both of these films just show what an eye Kristen Stewart has for choosing roles and working with directors who are completely bold, wild geniuses,” Yutani said.

Jesse Eisenberg also has two: “A Real Pain,” which he wrote and directed and stars in with Keirnan Culkin, and David and Nathan Zellner’s “Sasquatch Sunset,” alongside Riley Keough.

“Jesse is continuing to use his creative connections and curiosities and power to illuminate some really fun and creative and moving stories,” Hernandez said. “He’s such a unique, distinctive American artist.”

Justice Smith is another with a double bill. The “Dungeons & Dragons” actor will be in “The American Society of Magical Negroes,” a debut feature, and the midnight film “I Saw the TV Glow,” with Fred Durst and Danielle Deadwyler, that Yutani said shows “a real range.”

Performances

Other performances that could have people talking are Alicia Silverstone in a midnight film called “Krazy House,” Carol Kane in Nathan Silver’s “Between the Temples,” and 93-year-old June Squibb playing opposite the late Richard Roundtree in “Thelma,” a thriller in which she takes to the streets after getting duped by a phone scammer.

In addition to the very familiar names on the lineup, Sundance will also feature up and comers and other artists diving into new areas. Painter Titus Kaphar is making his feature debut with “Exhibiting Forgiveness,” starring André Holland, Andra Day and Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor, and Lucy Lawless directs “Never Look Away” about CNN camerawoman Margaret Moth. Ejiofor also directs Jay Will, Mary J. Blige and Camila Cabello in “Rob Peace,” based on Jeff Hobbs’ biography.

Sundance has many buzzy nonfiction offerings too, including one about WNBA star Sue Bird, another about Christopher Reeve and one diving into the music festival Lollapalooza.

A documentary that Yutani thinks is going to make a lot of waves at the festival is “Will & Harper” about Will Ferrell and his friend of 30 years who has transitioned.

“They take this really beautiful road trip across the country and it is enlightening on so many levels,” Yutani said.

In the episodic section, Debra Granik has “Conbody vs Everybody,” about a former convict who starts a gym, and Richard Linklater has a three-part documentary series “God Save Texas.”

Amanda McBaine and Jesse Moss also return with their “Boys State” follow-up “Girls State,” an opening day film that Yutani said “sets the tone for how we want our festival to be seen.”

“It’s such a rich, rich combination of films that I think exhibit some really wild and adventurous creativity,” Hernandez said. “To have that same level of creativity and ingenuity happening, the same creativity and ingenuity that drew us all to the festival when we started going back in the 90s...it’s really exciting.”



Honoree Norman Lear makes his speech at ‘The Paley Honors: A Special Tribute to Television’s Comedy Legends’ at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, Thursday, Nov. 21, 2019, in Beverly Hills, Calif. Lear, the writer, director and producer who revolutionized prime time television with such topical hits as ‘All in the Family’ and ‘Maude’ and propelled political and social turmoil into the once-insulated world of sitcoms, has died, Tuesday, Dec. 5. He was 101. (AP)

Obituary

An influential liberal advocate

TV icon Norman Lear dies at 101

LOS ANGELES, Dec 7, (AP): Norman Lear, the writer, director and producer who revolutionized prime time television with “All in the Family,” “The Jeffersons” and “Maude,” propelling political and social turmoil into the once-insulated world of TV sitcoms, has died. He was 101.

Lear died Tuesday night in his sleep, surrounded by family at his home in Los Angeles, said Lara Berghold, a spokesperson for his family.

A liberal activist with an eye for mainstream entertainment, Lear fashioned bold and controversial comedies that were embraced by viewers who had to watch the evening news to find out what was going on in the world. His shows helped define prime time comedy in the 1970s, launched the careers of Rob Reiner and Valerie Bertinelli and made middle-aged superstars of Carroll O’Connor, Bea Arthur and Redd Foxx.

Lear “took television away from dopey wives and dumb fathers, from the pimps, hookers, hustlers, private eyes, junkies, cowboys and rustlers that constituted television chaos, and in their place he put the American people,” the late Paddy Chayefsky, a leading writer of television’s early “golden age,” once said.

“All in the Family” was immersed in the headlines of the day, while also drawing upon Lear’s childhood memories of his tempestuous father. Racism, feminism, and the Vietnam War were flashpoints as blue collar conservative Archie Bunker, played by O’Connor, clashed with liberal son-in-law Mike Stivic (Reiner). Jean Stapleton co-starred as Archie’s befuddled but good-hearted wife, Edith, and Sally Struthers played the Bunkers’ daughter, Gloria, who defended her husband in arguments with Archie.

By the end of 1971, “All In the Family” was atop the ratings and Archie Bunker was a pop culture fixture, with President Richard Nixon among his fans. Some of his putdowns became catchphrases. He called his son-in-law “Meathead” and his wife “Dingbat,” and

would snap at anyone who dared occupy his faded orange-yellow wing chair. It was the centerpiece of the Bunkers’ rowhouse in Queens, and eventually went on display in the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History.

Hits continued for Lear and then-partner Bud Yorkin, including “Maude” and “The Jeffersons,” both spinoffs from “All in the Family,” with the same winning combination of one-liners and social conflict. In a 1972 two-part episode of “Maude,” the title character (played by Arthur) became the first on television to have an abortion, drawing a surge of protests along with high ratings. And when a close friend of Archie’s turned out to be gay, Nixon privately fumed to White House aides that the show “glorified” same-sex relationships.

“Controversy suggests people are thinking about something. But there’d better be laughing first and foremost or it’s a dog,” Lear said in a 1994 interview with The Associated Press.

Showcase

Lear and Yorkin also created “Good Times,” about a working class Black family in Chicago; “Sanford & Son,” a showcase for Foxx as junkyard dealer Fred Sanford; and “One Day at a Time,” starring Bonnie Franklin as a single mother and Bertinelli and Mackenzie Phillips as her daughters. In the 1974-75 season, Lear and Yorkin produced five of the top 10 shows.

All along, he was an active donor to Democratic candidates and founded the nonprofit liberal advocacy group People for the American Way in 1980, he said, because people such as evangelists Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson were “abusing religion.”

“I started to say, ‘This is not my America. You don’t mix politics and religion this way,’” Lear said in a 1992 interview with Commonweal magazine.

The nonprofit’s president, Svante Myrick, said “we are heartbroken” by Lear’s death. “We extend our deepest sympathies to Norman’s wife Lyn and

their entire family, and to the many people who, like us, loved Norman.”

With his wry smile and impish boat hat, the youthful Lear created television well into his 90s, rebooting “One Day at a Time” for Netflix in 2017 and exploring income inequality for the documentary series “America Divided” in 2016. Documentarians featured him in 2016’s “Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You,” and 2017’s “If You’re Not in the Obbit, Eat Breakfast,” a look at active nonagenarians such as Lear and Rob Reiner’s father, Carl Reiner.

Lear’s business moves, meanwhile, were almost consistently fruitful. By 1986, Lear was on Forbes magazine’s list of the 400 richest people in America, with an estimated net worth of \$225 million. He didn’t make the cut the next year after a \$112 million divorce settlement for his second wife, Frances. They had been married 29 years and had two daughters.

He married his third wife, psychologist Lyn Davis, in 1987 and the couple had three children.

Lear was born in New Haven, Conn. on July 27, 1922, to Herman Lear, a securities broker who served time in prison for selling fake bonds, and Jeanette, a homemaker who helped inspire Edith Bunker. Like a sitcom, his family life was full of quirks and grudges, “a group of people living at the ends of their nerves and the tops of their lungs,” he explained during a 2004 appearance at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston.

Lear began writing in the early 1950s on shows including “The Colgate Comedy Hour” and for such comedians as Martha Raye and George Gobel. In 1959, he and Yorkin founded Tandem Productions, which produced films including “Come Blow Your Horn,” “Start the Revolution Without Me” and “Divorce American Style.” Lear also directed the 1971 satire “Cold Turkey,” starring Dick Van Dyke about a small town that takes on a tobacco company’s offer of \$25 million to quit smoking for 30 days.



Lupita Nyong'o poses at the premiere of the film ‘The Color Purple’ at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, Wednesday, Dec. 6, in Los Angeles. (AP)



Miller



Goodson

Variety

NEW YORK: Chanel Miller’s next book after her prize-winning memoir “Know My Name” will help fulfill a longtime dream - to write and illustrate children’s stories.

Philomel Books, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers, announced Wednesday that Miller’s “Magnolia Wu Unfolds It” will be released April 23. The publisher is calling the book a “funny and poignant story of friendship and community” centered on a New York City laundromat, a 10-year-old detective and the timeless mystery of missing socks.

“I crafted these characters because I was longing to move freely through the world with fearless curiosity, to refocus on life’s funny little miraculous moments,” Miller said in a statement. “I was craving joy and they helped me find it.”

The book will feature Miller’s black and white drawings.

Miller was first known to the public as “Emily Doe,” the anonymous victim of sexual assault whose widely read impact statement came out on the day in 2016 that her convicted attacker, Stanford University student Brock Turner, was sentenced to prison.

By 2019, she had revealed her name and completed her memoir, which won the National Book Critic Circle Award among other honors. (AP)

WOODSTOCK, Ala.: A man featured in the hit podcast “S-Town” that chronicled events in a rural Alabama community was shot and killed by police during a weekend standoff in the town, authorities said.

Joseph Tyler Goodson, 32, of Woodstock, was shot by officers after he barricaded himself inside a home and “brandished a gun” at officers early Sunday, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency said. Bibb County Coroner Patrick Turner said that Goodson was pronounced “brain dead” Tuesday night at a hospital.

The agency’s statement said the Woodstock Police Department had initially responded to a “call for service” early Sunday and the standoff ensued. Multiple law enforcement agencies converged on the home. The statement said Goodson was shot by officers during the confrontation and was subsequently pronounced dead.

The state agency did not describe what led to the initial call to the home. “Police bout to shoot me down in my own yard,” a message posted early Sunday

on Goodson’s Facebook account read, news outlets, WIAT and al.com reported. The state agency is reviewing the shooting and will turn its findings over to the



Steven Spielberg, (left), and Oprah Winfrey, (center), producers of ‘The Color Purple,’ pose with Warner Bros. Discovery CEO David Zaslav at the premiere of the film at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, Wednesday, Dec. 6, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Bibb County district attorney. (AP)

RICHMOND, Va.: Virginia’s state-run fine arts museum has begun the process of returning 44 pieces of ancient art to their countries of origin after law enforcement officials presented the institution with what it called “irrefutable evidence” that the works had been stolen or looted.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts announced in a news release Tuesday that it had “safely delivered” the pieces to the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office in New York, which it said had conducted an inquiry into the artworks as part of a broader investigation, along with the Department of Homeland Security. The DA’s office will facilitate the return of the objects to Italy, Egypt and Turkey, according to the Richmond museum.

“The clear and compelling evidence presented to VMFA left no doubt that the museum does not hold clear title for these 44 works of ancient art,” Michael R. Taylor, the museum’s chief curator and deputy director for art and education, said in a statement. “Stolen or looted art has no place in our galleries or collection, so we are delighted to return these works to their countries of origin.”

Among the returned works was a bronze Etruscan warrior that the museum said was stolen from an archaeological museum in Bologna, Italy, in 1963. (AP)

The Conversation

Patients experience at least 50% reduction in symptom severity

Electric shock therapy heals depressed person’s brain

By Sydney E. Smith
University of California, San Diego

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

When most people hear about electroconvulsive therapy, or ECT, it typically conjures terrifying images of cruel, outdated and pseudo-medical procedures. Formerly known as electroshock therapy, this perception of ECT as dangerous and ineffective has been reinforced in pop culture for decades - think the 1962 novel-turned-Oscar-winning film “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest,” where an unruly patient is subjected to ECT as punishment by a tyrannical nurse.

Despite this stigma, ECT is a highly effective treatment for depression - up to 80% of patients experience at least a 50% reduction in symptom severity. For one of the most disabling illnesses around the world, I think it’s surprising that ECT is rarely used to treat depression.

Contributing to the stigma around ECT, psychiatrists still don’t know exactly how it heals a depressed person’s brain. ECT involves using highly controlled doses of electricity to induce a brief seizure under anesthesia. Often, the best description you’ll hear from a physician on why that brief seizure can alleviate depression symptoms is that ECT “resets” the brain - an answer that can be fuzzy and unsettling to some.

As a data-obsessed neuroscientist, I was also dissatisfied with this explanation. In our newly published research, my colleagues and I in the lab of Bradley Voytek at UC San Diego discovered that ECT might work by resetting the brain’s electrical background noise.

To study how ECT treats depression, my team and I used a device called an electroencephalogram, or EEG. It measures the brain’s electrical activity - or brain waves - via electrodes placed on the scalp. You can think of brain waves as music played by an orchestra. Orchestral music is the sum of many instruments together, much like EEG readings are the sum of the electrical activity of millions of brain cells.

Activity

Two types of electrical activity make up brain waves. The first, oscillations, are like the highly synchronized, melodic music you might hear in a symphony. The second, aperiodic activity, is more like the asynchronous noise you hear as musicians tune their instruments. These two types of activities coexist in the brain, together creating the electrical waves an EEG records.

Importantly, tuning noises and symphonic music shouldn’t be mistaken for one another. They clearly come from different processes and serve different purposes. The brain is similar in this way - aperiodic activity and oscillations are different because the biology driving them is distinct.

However, the methods neuroscientists have traditionally used to analyze these signals are unable to differentiate between the oscillations (symphony) and the aperiodic activity (tuning). Both are critical for the orchestra, but so far neuroscientists have mostly ignored - or entirely missed - aperiodic signals because they were thought to be just the brain’s background noise.

In our new research, my team and I show that ignoring aperiodic brain activity likely explains the confusion behind about how ECT treats depression.

It turns out we’ve been missing this signal all along.

Since the 1940s, ECT has been associated with increases in slow oscillations in the brain waves of patients. However, those slow oscillations have never been linked to how ECT works. The degree to which slow oscillations appear is not consistently related to how much symptoms improve following ECT. Nor have ideas about how the brain produces slow oscillations connected those processes to the pathology underlying depression.

Because these two types of brain waves are difficult to separate in measurements, I wondered if these slow oscillations were in fact incorrectly measured aperiodic activity. Returning to our orchestra analogy, I believed that scientists had misidentified the tuning sounds as symphony music.

To investigate this, my team and I gathered three EEG datasets: one from nine patients with depression undergoing ECT in San Diego, another from 22 patients in Toronto receiving ECT and a third from 22 patients in Toronto participating in a clinical trial of magnetic seizure therapy, or MST, a newer alternative to ECT that starts a seizure with magnets instead of electricity.

Function

We found that aperiodic activity increases by more than 40% on average following ECT. In patients who received MST treatment, aperiodic activity increases more modestly, by about 16%. After accounting for changes in aperiodic activity, we found that slow oscillations do change much at all. In fact, slow oscillations were not even detected in some patients, and aperiodic activity dominated their EEG recordings instead.

But what does aperiodic activity have to do with depression?

A long-standing theory of depression states that severely depressed patients have too few of a type of brain cell called inhibitory cells. These cells can turn other brain cells on and off, and maintaining the balance of these on and off states is critical for healthy brain function. This balance is particularly relevant for depression because the brain’s ability to turn cells off plays an important role in how it responds to stress, a function that, when not working properly, makes people particularly vulnerable to depression.

Using a mathematical model of cell type-based electrical activity, I linked increases in aperiodic activity, like those seen in the ECT patients, to a huge change in the activity of these inhibitory cells. This change in aperiodic activity may be restoring the crucial on and off balance in the brain to a healthy level.

Even though scientists have been recording EEGs from ECT patients for decades, this is the first time that brain waves have been connected to this particular brain malfunction.

Altogether, though our sample size is relatively small, our findings indicate that ECT and MST likely treat depression by resetting aperiodic activity and restoring the function of inhibitory brain cells. Further study can help destigmatize ECT and highlight new directions for the research and development of depression treatments. Listening to the nonmusical background noise of the brain could help solve other mysteries, like how the brain changes in aging and in illnesses like schizophrenia and epilepsy. (AP)

From practicing CPR to receiving it

Nurse suffered cardiac arrest during training; fellow nurses saved her life

CONCORD, N.H., Dec 7, (AP): Andy Hoang eagerly began her first nursing job this year in New Hampshire, with a desire to specialize in cardiac care.

She was excited about attending a November practice session on how to respond to someone in cardiac arrest. But as things were getting under way at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Hoang, 23, started to feel dizzy and nauseated. She felt she needed to sit down.

“That’s the last thing I remember,” she told The Associated Press in an interview. “I woke up to a room full of doctors and nurses.”

It turned out that she, herself, had gone into cardiac arrest and needed help immediately. Her colleagues sprung into action - instead of practicing chest compressions on a mannequin in a simulated environment, they went to work on her.

“One checked her carotid, one her femoral (arteries), and she did not have a pulse,” instructor Lisa Davenport said.

The nurses started CPR and a “code blue,” or medical emergency, team was called.

“What was really stressful about the situation was that we never had a real code blue in the center,” Davenport said. “We train for them all the time.”

Critical

Davenport shouted for help. Luckily, the Lebanon hospital’s critical care team was nearby, attending a separate session. More nurses came in, hooked Hoang up to defibrillator for monitoring, inserted an IV line and placed her on oxygen. A doctor and nurse from another department rushed in with crash carts.

Hoang was waking up by the time an emergency team arrived. Davenport estimated 15 minutes passed from the time Hoang slumped over to when they got her on a stretcher and sent her to the emergency department. But it felt longer.

“It worked out, but it was pretty frightening for all of us,” she said. “You just don’t expect that to happen with someone as young as Andy.”

Charmaine Martin, one of the nurses at the scene, agreed it was a scary moment, but also one “where I saw and felt supported and we all worked as a



Andy Hoang, a recent nursing graduate, poses with a training mannequin in a patient bedroom training lab at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2023, in Lebanon, N.H. Hoang, 23, started to feel dizzy and nauseous during the recent cardiac training session at the hospital and needed help immediately. Instead of practicing chest compressions on a mannequin in the simulated environment of their training, her four colleagues sprung into action and went to work on her. (AP)

team,” she said in a statement. Hoang, who recently returned to work, couldn’t believe what had happened either.

“I would say I’m your pretty average healthy 23-year-old,” she said. She goes to the gym four times a week, runs, and eats well. “I’m on my feet 12, 13 hours a day at work, so I want to make sure that I’m in shape for that.”

Cardiac arrest - the sudden loss of heart function - causes more than 436,000 deaths in the United States each year, according to the American Heart Association. It is different from a heart attack, which happens when blood flow to the heart is blocked.

A person can suffer cardiac arrest after having a heart attack, but the association says other conditions can also disrupt the heart’s rhythm and lead to cardiac arrest, including having a thickened heart muscle or cardiomyopathy, heart failure, arrhythmias and more.

According to information compiled by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, a person’s risk of cardiac arrest increases with age. It is rare in someone younger than 30. Genetic ar-

rhythmias, problems with the structure of the heart or coronary arteries, heart inflammation and substance abuse are the main risk factors in younger people. Most cardiac arrests also occur in men and women’s risk increases after menopause.

Hoang said before the day she suffered cardiac arrest, she had passed out twice before. The first time, she hadn’t eaten and her blood sugar was low. The second time was preceded by a sharp pain in her abdomen.

“So, nothing like this, nothing to this extent,” she said.

Hoang, who grew up in Vietnam and came to the United States in 2016 as a student, said her family has no history of heart problems. She had been living with a family in Montana before she got her nursing degree in Michigan, and then headed to New Hampshire.

While recovering, Hoang wore a patch that recorded the electrical activity of her heart. Doctors hope to learn more from the data.

The experience has strengthened her relationship with the other nurses - Hoang now regards them as best friends. “We basically went through this whole life-or-death experience,” she said.

Concerns raised

US ‘delays’ ban of menthol cigs

WASHINGTON, Dec 7, (AP): White House officials will take more time to review a sweeping plan from US health regulators to ban menthol cigarettes, an unexpected delay that anti-tobacco groups fear could scuttle the long-awaited rule.

Administration officials indicated Wednesday the process will continue into next year, targeting March to implement the rule, according to an updated regulatory agenda posted online. Previously, the rule was widely expected to be published in late 2023 or early January.

The Food and Drug Administration has spent years developing the plan to eliminate menthol, estimating it could prevent 300,000 to 650,000 smoking deaths over several decades. Most of those preventable deaths would be among Black Americans, who disproportionately smoke menthols.

Previous FDA efforts on menthol have been derailed by tobacco industry pushback or competing political priorities across several administrations. The latest delay comes amid lingering worries from some Democrats about President Joe Biden’s prospects in a rematch against Donald Trump.

Anti-smoking groups have spent years backing the effort. And some warned on Wednesday that the proposal, which would give cigarette companies one year to phase out the flavor, could be held up indefinitely.

Promise

“Any delay in finalizing the FDA’s menthol rule would be a gift to the tobacco industry at the expense of Black lives,” said Yolanda Richardson, CEO of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. “We urge the administration to keep its promise and issue a final rule by the end of this year.”

Menthol is the only cigarette flavor that wasn’t banned under the 2009 law that gave the FDA authority over tobacco products. The flavor’s cooling effect makes it easier to start smoking and harder to quit, driving menthol’s popularity. An estimated 85% of Black smokers buy menthols.

FDA officials sent their final version of the regulation to the White House’s Office of Management and Budget in October, typically the last step before a rule is released. But the White House has agreed to hold dozens of meetings with groups opposing the rule, including civil rights advocates, business owners and law enforcement officials. In nearly all cases, the groups opposing the ban have received donations from tobacco companies.

More than 60 meetings on the rule have been scheduled with budget office staffers, with discussions set to stretch into January, according to a government website. Only three of the meetings thus far have been with health groups, records show.

Rising cases add to nation’s health crisis

Dengue fever claims over 20 lives in Mali

BAMAKO, Mali, Dec 7, (AP): Authorities say dengue fever is on the rise in Mali, posing a new threat to the West African nation struggling with extremist attacks and political turbulence.

The director general of health and public hygiene, Dr. Cheick Amadou Tidiane Traore, told The Associated Press in an interview Wednesday that his department had counted 21 deaths and 600 cases of the disease as of Monday.

Dengue is a viral infection spread by mosquitoes that mostly causes flu-like

illness. In severe cases, it can cause joint pain, swollen glands, bleeding and death. There is no specific treatment, but two vaccines have been recommended by the World Health Organization for countries that suffer regular outbreaks.

Epidemic

Mali’s government has not officially released any figures on the disease to the public, nor has it announced whether it has requested aid from the WHO. With the country in political transition and facing the threat of fight-

ers linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group, a new epidemic of dengue fever risks worsening the humanitarian situation especially among the large population of displaced people.

“Dengue fever is also present in Burkina Faso and Senegal, and we need to raise public awareness,” Traore said.

The virus typically emerges in more tropical environments but was first detected in comparatively arid Mali in 2008. Reports of the virus reemerged in 2017 and 2019. There is little long-term data on its prevalence.

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No. 3 Houston rolls to win over Rice

Marquette cruises past Texas, Colorado State stays unbeaten

HOUSTON, Dec 7, (AP): L.J. Cryer scored 15 points, Emanuel Sharp added 12 and No. 3 Houston beat Rice 75-39 Wednesday night.

Cryer, who hit five 3-pointers, has scored in double-figures in eight straight games. Sharp had nine points in first half, all in a 22-4 run that gave the Cougars (9-0) a 30-13 lead with five minutes remaining in the first half. Houston led 34-18 at halftime.

Ja’Vier Francis and Damian Dunn each scored 10 points for Houston, which shot 47% and 8 of 22 on 3-pointers.

Houston won its 10th straight home game dating to last season and opened 9-0 for the second straight season.

Alem Huseinovic scored 10 points, and Keanu Dawes added seven points for Rice (3-6). The Owls shot 29% and were 5 of 21 on 3s.

BASKETBALL

Marquette 86, Texas 65

In Milwaukee, Tyler Kolek had 28 points, eight rebounds and six assists as Marquette drubbed Texas in a Big East-Big 12 Battle matchup.

Kam Jones added 17 points for Marquette (7-2), which rebounded from a 75-64 loss Saturday at in-state rival Wisconsin and gave coach Shaka Smart an emphatic win against his former team. Smart faced the Longhorns for the first time since spending six seasons at Texas, where he went 109-86 from 2015-21 but did not win an NCAA Tournament game.

Max Abmas led Texas (6-2) with 25 points.

Colorado State 90, Denver 80

In Fort Collins, Colo., Patrick Carter scored 19 points, Nique Clifford started a pivotal run late in the second half and Colorado State rallied past Denver to remain unbeaten.

The Rams (9-0) never could gain much separation from the pesky Pioneers (6-4). Clifford paced a 7-0 run with a 3-pointer and a thunderous dunk that fueled the frenzied crowd at Moby Arena. Denver was called for a late intentional foul on a fast-break and a late technical that allowed the Rams to stretch the lead.

Isaiah Stevens overcame a sluggish start to finish with 18 points and nine



Rice guard Mekhi Mason (2) passes behind Houston forward Ja’Vier Francis (5) during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game at the Fertitta Center, Wednesday, Dec 6, 2023, in Houston. (AP)



Marquette’s Oso Ighodaro gets past Texas’s Dillon Mitchell during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game Wednesday, Dec 6, 2023, in Milwaukee. (AP)

assists. Tommy Bruner, the Summit League peak performer of the month, had 28 points and eight assists for Denver. The Pioneers, who led by as many as four in the second half, haven’t

beaten a ranked team on the road since knocking off No. 13 Oregon in 1971.

Miami 97, LIU 49

In Coral Gables, Fla., Norchad Omier had 17 points and 13 rebounds, Matthew Cleveland scored 15 and Miami posted its largest margin of victory since 2016.

The Hurricanes (7-1) scored 21 straight points to start the game and led 53-18 at halftime.

Poplar finished with 14 points on 5-of-6 shooting and Pack had 13 for the Hurricanes, who scored 21 points off turnovers in the first half.

It was the Hurricanes’ largest margin of victory since they beat Western Carolina 92-43 in November 2016.

Tai Strickland and Andre Washington finished with 14 points apiece for the Sharks (1-7).

Texas A&M 89, DePaul 64

In College Station, Texas, Jace Carter scored 14 points and Wade Taylor IV and Henry Coleman III added 13 each as Texas A&M raced to a 32-point halftime lead and cruised past DePaul.

The Aggies made 14 3-pointers, which is tied for second-most in school history.

Texas A&M (7-2) led 62-30 at halftime for its most points in a first half since scoring 65 against Grambling in 2006.

Hayden Hefner added 10 points and Andersson Garcia scored nine for the Aggies.

DePaul (1-7) was led by Chico Carter Jr., who had 21 points. The Blue Demons lost their fifth straight and for the seventh time in eight games this season.

Clemson 72, South Carolina 67

In Clemson, S.C., Chauncey Wiggins scored 13 of his career-high 15 points in the second half and Ian Schieffelin had 12 points and 12 rebounds in Clemson’s win.

The game marked the first time in the 173-game series between the in-state rivals - dating to the 1912-13 season - that both teams went in 7-0.

Schieffelin hit a 3-pointer, grabbed a rebound on the other end and then threw down a contested two-hand dunk in a 29-second span to give Clemson a 59-56 lead with 4:53 to play. Schieffelin’s steal led to a Chase Hunter layup with 3:04 left. After PJ Hall missed the second of two free throws, Schieffelin sent the offensive rebound to Hunter who gave the Tigers a 65-59 lead with 1:52 remaining.

Hall had 14 points, eight rebounds and four blocks, Joseph Girard III added 12 points for Clemson (8-0) and Hunter scored all of his 10 points in the second half.

Meechie Johnson hit 6 of 10 from 3-point range and led South Carolina with 26 points. B.J. Mack had 10 points and seven rebounds and Stephen Clark - who left the game due to an injury with about 7 minutes to play and did not return - also scored 10.

Olympics Roundup

Refugee athlete gets 3-year doping ban

Biden supports Indigenous lacrosse team for 2028 Los Angeles Olympics

WASHINGTON, Dec 7, (AP): President Joe Biden is pushing to allow the Indigenous nation that invented lacrosse to play under its own flag when the sport returns to the Olympics in 2028.

Biden’s position, announced Wednesday at the White House Tribal Nations Summit, is a request for the International Olympic Committee to allow the Haudenosaunee Nationals to compete as its own team at the Los Angeles Games.

“Their ancestors invented the game. They perfected it for a millennium,” Biden said. “Their circumstances are unique and they should be granted an exception to field their own team at the Olympics.”

That would require the IOC to make an exception to a rule that permits teams playing only as part of an official national Olympic committee to compete in the Olympics. The Haudenosaunee have competed as their own team at a number of international events since 1990.



In this, July 24, 2022 file photo, Lois Garlow of the Haudenosaunee Nationals lacrosse team heads toward the sideline during a match against Canada at the World Games in Birmingham, Alabama. (AP)

“We’re hopeful the IOC will see it our way, as well,” Tom Perez, the White House senior adviser and director of intergovernmental affairs, told The Associated Press. “If we’re successful, it won’t simply be the flag of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy that marches in the Olympics, it will be the flag of Indigenous people across the world.”

The Haudenosaunee, formerly known as the Iroquois, is a collection of six Indigenous nations whose territory covers upstate New York and adjacent sections of Canada.

A refugee athlete on an International Olympic Committee scholarship to prepare for next year’s Paris Games has been given a three-year doping ban after he admitted using the banned substance EPO, the Athletics Integrity Unit said on Wednesday.

Fouad Idbafdil gave a sample in August that later came back positive and admitted using EPO, which can boost the blood’s ability to transport oxygen, while preparing for the world championships in Budapest, the AIU ruling said. The 35-year-old runner was eliminated in the heats of the 3,000-meter steeplechase at the championships.

The IOC said last December that Idbafdil was among more than 50 refugee athletes getting financial help in their host countries to prepare for Paris. The IOC said Idbafdil is originally from Morocco.

The Refugee Olympic Team debuted at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro

Games and a team of 29 athletes went to the Tokyo Games held in 2021.

South Korea’s Olympic committee is pushing to send hundreds of athletes to a military training center to enhance their mental toughness for the Paris Olympics, a move that’s been criticized as outdated and regressive.

The Korean Sport & Olympic Committee advised domestic associations last week to send athletes to the Korea Marine Corps camp in the southeastern port city of Pohang for three days of training this month, according to some associations.

About 320 athletes, including women, are expected at the boot camp, committee officials said on Thursday. Sports associations have previously asked their athletes to take marine-style training ahead of big sports events but it’s the first time the Olympic committee has recommended it, committee officials added.

Italy’s sports minister is “more than confident” that ice sliding events at the 2026 Winter Olympics will take place in Cortina d’Ampezzo, despite the IOC’s insistence that organizers should seek an existing venue outside the country.

Organizers of the Milan-Cortina Olympics acknowledged in October that bobsled, luge and skeleton events were set to be raced in neighboring Austria or Switzerland after scrapping a delayed and increasingly costly plan to revive the storied and scenic Cortina sliding track.

Clark helps No. 4 Iowa escape Iowa State 67-58

South Carolina women rout Morgan State

COLUMBIA, S.C., Dec 7, (AP): Tessa Johnson had a career-high 16 points and MiLaysia Fulwiley scored 14 as No. 1 South Carolina made easy work of overmatched Morgan State 104-38 on Wednesday night.

The Gamecocks improved to 8-0 for the third straight season.

South Carolina had six players in double figures, with Te-Hina Paopao and Raven Johnson scoring 12 apiece and Kamilla Cardoso and Sania Feagin each finishing with 10.

Chloe Kitts had a game-high 14 rebounds, the best performance of her career.

Iowa 67, Iowa State 58

In Ames, Iowa, Caitlin Clark scored 35 points but it was her passing that helped fourth-ranked Iowa pull away from rival Iowa State and secure the win.

Nine F1 teams deny they asked for ‘probe’ into Toto Wolff and his wife

PARIS, Dec 7, (AP): Nine Formula One teams released nearly identical statements Wednesday denying they complained to governing body FIA about an alleged conflict of interest between Mercedes head Toto Wolff and his wife, who works for F1’s management group.

The flurry of statements followed a Wednesday appearance by Red Bull team principal Christian Horner on Sky Sports in which he denied the three-time reigning world champions instigated the investigation.

“We have a big rivalry on track, but we haven’t raised any official

complaint about either Susie, or Toto or Mercedes to the FIA,” said Horner, who added Red Bull has worked closely with Susie Wolff in her role as managing director of the all-female series F1 Academy.

“We, like others, were quite surprised by the (FIA) statement, but it certainly wasn’t instigated or required or set off by Red Bull,” Horner said.

The nine remaining teams on the grid all attempted to distance themselves from the investigation into the Wolffs in statements released almost simultaneously.

BASKETBALL

The Hawkeyes (9-1) were trailing 55-54 midway through the fourth quarter, before Clark made a pair of nifty assists to Kate Martin, who converted them into layups that gave Iowa the lead with just over 3 minutes remaining.

Audi Crooks led the Cyclones (4-4) with 15 points and 10 rebounds.

Texas 106, LBSU 62

In Austin, Texas, Taylor Jones scored 21 points and had 10 rebounds and Texas defeated Long Beach State to continue its undefeated start to the season.

Rori Harmon scored 17 points and made six steals for the Longhorns (10-0). Backup guard Ndjakalanga Mwentanda scored 14 of her 16 points in the second half. Madison Booker led Texas with seven assists, and she made three steals.

Savannah Tucker led Long Beach State (3-3) with 22 points. She hit 5 of 7 3-point shots.

Kansas State 101, McNeese St 39

In Manhattan, Kansas, Gabby Gregory scored 16 points, Ayoka Lee added 15 and Kansas State coasted to a win over McNeese State.

Alva Mofalk and Emily Tenbrock both had 10 points for the Cowgirls (3-6), who shot 26%, were outrebounded 58-27 and had 24 turnovers.

Notre Dame 96, Lafayette 42

In South Bend, Ind., Hannah Hidalgo



Iowa guard Caitlin Clark (22) shoots between Iowa State guard Hannah Belanger (13) and guard Arianna Jackson (2) during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game, Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023, in Ames, Iowa. (AP)

scored 26 points, Maddy Westbeld had 17 points and 10 rebounds, and Notre Dame dismantled Lafayette.

Hidalgo, a freshman guard, is the sixth leading scorer in the nation, averaging 23.3 points per game coming in. She also had six rebounds and four assists. Kylee Watson added 14, Natalija Marshall had 12 and Anna DeWolfe scored 10 for Notre Dame (7-1).

Virginai Tech 98, Long Island 50

In Blacksburg, Va., Cayla King scored 21 points, Elizabeth Kitley and Georgia Amore had double-doubles and Virginia Tech coasted to a win over Long Island.

King had seven 3-pointers and the Hokies went 17 of 35, one short of the school record for made 3s.

Kitley had 17 points and 10 rebounds. Amore had 10 points and 14 assists, surpassing 500 for her career, as the Hokies had 30 helpers on 37 baskets.

UConn 90, Ball State 63

In Storrs, Conn., Aaliyah Edwards scored 18 points and grabbed 12 rebounds and a 37-point first quarter propelled No. 17 Connecticut over Ball State.

Freshman Ashlynn Shade added 17 points, a career best, for the Huskies (5-3). Paige Bueckers scored 15 and Aubrey Griffin had 14. Edwards also had three assists, three steals and two blocks while shooting 8 of 11.

N. Carolina 81, UNCG 66

In Chapel Hill, N.C., Lexi Donar-ski scored 22 points and made 6 of 8 3-pointers. Alyssa Ustby added 13 points, and No. 24 North Carolina beat UNC Greensboro.

North Carolina (6-3) had six players score in double figures. Deja Kelly and Maria Gakdeng each scored 12, and Nivar and Anya Poole added 11 apiece.

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Al Muzaini Exchange, Kuwait Cricket Club official and players pose for a group photo after the signing of 3-year partnership deal.

A three-year contract signed

Al Muzaini Exchange renews partnership with Kuwait Cricket

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: Al Muzaini Exchange is delighted to announce that the company has signed a 3-year partnership deal with Kuwait Cricket Club (KCC) as the Powered by sponsor of Kuwait Cricket, which includes being the Main sponsor of the Kuwait Women's National cricket team and the official sleeve sponsor of the Kuwait Men's National Cricket Team for the years 2024, 2025 and 2026.

The KCC Board President, Mr. Haider Farman and Mr. Hugh Fernandes signed the board to officially kick start the new partnership after a successful and fruitful engagement in the previous year.

The sign off ceremony took place in the Sulaibiya Cricket Ground on December 5th, 2023 in the presence of key players from the Kuwait National men's and women's team, the head coach and coaching staff, esteemed members of management and a list of delegates from Al Muzaini, as well as Kuwait Cricket.

CRICKET

Mr. Sajid Ashraf, the Director General of the KCC Board initiated the grand ceremony by announcing that Al Muzaini is now the Powered by sponsor for Kuwait Cricket for the next 3 years in a historic partnership.

The number one exchange company in Kuwait is proud to be a part of the journey and believes that the possibilities are limitless as Kuwait Cricket keeps taking rapid strides towards becoming a quality associate cricket nation.

Mr. Hugh Fernandes, The General Manager of Al Muzaini said "This is an incredible moment for us, to be a part of the Kuwait National Cricket dream has always been something we wanted and when the opportunity presented itself, we were ecstatic. I believe that it won't be long before we see the country participate in major tournaments with millions around the globe watching and being entertained by the extremely talented players of Kuwait.

Moreover, we are immensely happy and proud to be the main sponsor of the Kuwait National Women's cricket team. Al Muzaini Company believes in the power of young women and know that they are capable of incredible achievements.

Al Muzaini looks forward to having a great relationship with Kuwait Cricket and shall actively participate in activities associated with the growth of the sport.

Al Muzaini, always near you!

Palmeiras win title, Santos relegated

SÃO PAULO, Dec 7, (AP): One of the most exciting seasons of the Brazilian league ended Wednesday with the most stable team of the year defending its title and the club that was home to the late Pelé relegated for the first time.

Palmeiras drew 1-1 at Cruzeiro to be crowned Brazilian champion for the 12th time. The 18-year-old Endrick scored his 11th goal of the season to give Palmeiras an early lead and Nikao equalized in the 80th minute at the Mineirão Stadium in Belo Horizonte.

Santos' relegation following a 2-1 home loss to Fortaleza was another setback for the club at the stadium where Pelé's funeral took place in January.

This year's title went to Palmeiras after striker Endrick, set to join Real Madrid, scored several key goals and rival Botafogo squandered a 13-point lead in the standings.

"People said I won this, but I wouldn't be able to do this by myself," Endrick told journalists after his second Brazilian league title with Palmeiras. "At the beginning of the year I cared too much about what people said, I was angry. Later I noticed I shouldn't do that. I aged a little."

Endrick is expected to join Real Madrid for the next season.



Al Abdulrazzaq raising the Kuwaiti flag on the first-place podium.

Kuwaiti athlete brought home two titles

Zain proud to support jet ski world 'champion' Yousef Al Abdulrazzaq

Thrilling heights await

Abdulaziz Al-Masaieed Show Jumping Course 'commences'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: The inaugural session of the Abdulaziz Al-Masaieed Show Jumping Equestrian Course is set to commence today at 1:30 pm at the Kuwait Equestrian Center in the Sabhan area. The event anticipates a robust participation of both male and female riders representing various local clubs.

Today's competitions will feature challenges at heights of 50, 70, 90, 105, 115, 125, and 135 cm. The competition will resume tomorrow at 11:00 am with five additional rounds, presenting heights of 110, 120, and 130

cm. The grand prize event will culminate at a height of 140 cm, concluding with an entertaining final round.

Generous prizes totaling over 11 thousand dinars await the triumphant participants securing first place in the competition.

EQUESTRIAN

Farah Al-Sarraj, a Kuwaiti equestrian and member of the organizing committee, highlighted that the tournament serves as a tribute to the late uncle Abdulaziz Al-Masaieed, a distinguished figure in Kuwaiti press. The event is conducted with the patronage of Nasser Al-Masaieed, the tournament's sponsor, and features comprehensive support from the Kuwait Equestrian Center.

Al-Sarraj noted that the arbitration committee, led by Kuwaiti court judge Sharon Al-Qaoud, includes members Nadhar Al-Mustafa, Lama Abdel-Al, Nada Al-Awadi, and Julia Voronko. The meticulously designed course is credited to Frank Rothenberger, with assistance from Yaqoub Al-Nasrallah, and the warm-up field will see the presence of Awad and Farah Al-Sarraj. The entire team is dedicated to ensuring the success of this significant sporting event.



Abdulaziz Al-Masaieed

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: Reflecting its endless commitment to support national talents and empower Kuwaiti athletes, Zain continues to sponsor Kuwaiti jet ski world champion Yousef Al Abdulrazzaq, who recently brought home two top titles from the UIM World Jet Ski Championship 2023 held at Lake Toba, Indonesia.

Zain has been supporting Al Abdulrazzaq's professional career for the past 15 years, and the company is both thrilled and proud of the recent achievements by the world champion. Throughout his glittering career, Al Abdulrazzaq has attained a long list of titles and accolades from local, regional, and international arenas, competing with the best pro racers from around the world.

During his recent spell at the UIM World Championship 2023 at Lake Toba, Indonesia, Yousef Al Abdulrazzaq won the first-place title in the SLALOM GPI category and the third-place title in the overall points standings in the RUNABOUT GPI category. He competed with 25 pro racers representing 22 nations.

Al Abdulrazzaq is currently preparing to join several notable championships and competitions in powerboating throughout the remaining season. Zain wishes the champion all the best in his upcoming regional and international participations, where he will surely raise the Kuwaiti flag high in the biggest sporting arenas.

JET SKIING

Throughout his professional career, Al Abdulrazzaq achieved many notable accolades in the biggest events organized by the Union Internationale Motonautique (UIM), the world's governing body of powerboating. The company is proud to support him for over 15 years, reflecting its endless confidence in the talents of local athletes.

As a private sector leader, Zain constantly looks to identify and support excellence across the local sports sector. The company continues to put Kuwaiti sports and athletes at the forefront of its priorities and pledges to continue motivating them to achieve all the recognition and support they deserve.

Al-Kuwait halt Al-Qadsia run

Al-Qurain rout Al-Tadamon

By Hassan Musa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: Al-Qadsia experienced its first setback in the Kuwait Basketball League, succumbing narrowly to Al-Kuwait with a scoreline of 97-94. Simultaneously, Al-Qurain secured a convincing victory over Al-Tadamon, concluding with a score of 87-67.

Despite this defeat, Al-Qadsia maintained its position at the summit of the standings with 15 points, just one point ahead of Al-Kuwait, which has played one less match. Meanwhile, Al-Qurain climbed to fifth place with 10 points, and Al-Tadamon sits in ninth place with 8 points.

The tournament format dictates that the top four teams in the preliminary round will advance to the semi-finals, utilizing a "play-off" system consisting of three matches, with the winner securing qualification in two.

The clash between Al-Qadsia and Al-Kuwait showcased intense competition, with Al-Qadsia holding the ad-

vantage for the majority of the game. They even led by 7 points two minutes before the final whistle. However, Al-Kuwait, leveraging the experience and prowess of its players, managed to snatch victory in the closing moments.

Al-Qadsia players demonstrated exceptional proficiency in three-point shooting during the first quarter, finishing with a 23-18 lead. Although the yellow team widened the gap early in the second quarter, establishing a 31-21 lead in the initial two minutes, the white team swiftly regained composure, narrowing the deficit to 3 points by the quarter's end, with a score of 41-44.

BASKETBALL

The third quarter unfolded with heightened excitement, witnessing an exchange of scoring between the two teams. Al-Kuwait managed to edge ahead, concluding the quarter with a 69-65 lead.

Both teams maintained their competitive edge in the fourth quarter, as Al-Qadsia surged ahead by 7 points in the final two minutes. However, Al-Kuwait swiftly responded with two consecutive attacks, featuring three-pointers from Hamad Adnan and Turki Hamoud. They maintained control of the match, ultimately securing a 97-94 victory.



Al-Kuwait's Anthony Carr outjumps Al-Qadsia players to score.

Queiroz fired as Qatar head coach

DOHA, Dec 7, (AP): Carlos Queiroz was fired as Qatar's head coach just over a month before the nation hosts the Asian Cup.

Queiroz, former coach of Real Madrid, Portugal and Iran, was appointed on a four-year contract in February after Felix Sanchez left the position. Sanchez was in charge at the 2022 World when Qatar, as host, lost all three games.

SOCCER

The football federation issued a statement Wednesday saying "Queiroz's tenure as head coach of the Qatar national team has ended amicably by mutual agreement."

"The QFA expresses its sincere gratitude to coach Queiroz for his unwavering dedication, leadership, and contributions during his tenure as the head coach of the national team."

No official reason was given for the decision, although there were

concerns locally over the perceived defensive style of play adopted by Queiroz and his failure to bring young players from the country's Aspire Academy into the senior roster.

Queiroz rejected that speculation. He was in charge for just 11 games, including wins at the start of qualification for the 2026 World Cup in November over Afghanistan and India.

Just minutes after news of Queiroz's departure became official, the QFA announced Spanish coach Marquez Lopez had been hired as a replacement. The former Espanyol boss has also worked in Qatar's Aspire Academy and leaves Qatar Stars League club Al-Wakrah to take over the national team.

"The QFA expresses gratitude and appreciation to Al-Wakrah Sports Club for their cooperation and consent in facilitating coach Marquez Lopez's appointment as the national team head coach for the upcoming period," the QFA said.



Liverpool's Harvey Elliott and Sheffield United's John Fleck battles during the English Premier League soccer match between Sheffield United and Liverpool at Bramall Lane in Sheffield, England. (AP)

Sports

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Adieu to Serbian coach Bunjak

Maaloul takes reins at Al-Kuwait as Al-Abyad departs to Jordan for Al-Wehdat showdown

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: The Kuwaiti Club, revealed the signing of a contract with Tunisian coach Nabil Maaloul to lead the team. Maaloul takes over from Serbian coach Boris Bunjak, whose contract was terminated by the administration following a decline in the team's performance.

Nabil Maaloul, accompanied by his assistant Nader Daoud, arrived and attended the match between Al-Kuwait and Al-Nasr at the Friendship and Peace Stadium, marking the ninth round of the Zain Premier League. Maaloul had previously coached the team in the season before last and has notable experience, including coaching the Kuwaiti national team in 2015 and leading the Tunisian national team in the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

His most recent coaching position was with Esperance of Tunisia last season. Maaloul has agreed to a season-and-a-half term with Al-Kuwait, and at 60 years old, he aims to reorganize the team. His first challenge will be against Al-Wehdat, a team he previously managed a season and a half ago, bringing familiarity with many aspects of the team.

In a related context, Kuwait bid farewell to Serbian coach Boris Bunjak with a celebration before the training

session the day before yesterday. Bunjak was thanked for leading the team to victory in the Amir Cup and Premier League titles last season. The Serbian coach expressed gratitude to everyone he worked with, praising the players, their cooperation, and the support staff during his tenure. He also commended the club management for their outstanding support, wishing them success in the future.

Meanwhile, the "Al-Abyad" delegation is set to depart for Jordan today in preparation for the upcoming match

SOCCER

against Al-Wahdat on Monday, the final sixth round of the second group of the AFC Cup. Kuwait aims to secure points in the match to enhance its chances of qualifying for the semi-finals of the tournament for West Asian teams, considering the withdrawal of the Palestinian Jabal al-Mukaber team, which could positively impact Kuwait's standing. The team is in great readiness, with the exception of the suspended trio Youssef Nasser, Ibrahim Kamil, and Dhari Al-Otaibi.

Man U ease pressure on Erik as City falter again

Liverpool trim Arsenal lead

MANCHESTER, Dec 7, (AP): Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag has spent the majority of the season in apparent crisis.

Pep Guardiola, meanwhile, spoke this week of his confidence that Manchester City would win an unprecedented fourth Premier League title in a row.

How quickly fortunes can change in

soccer. Just three points now separate the rivals after United beat Chelsea 2-1 and the defending champions lost 1-0 at Aston Villa to extend their winless run in the league to four games.

"We are on a journey. We keep calm... We are going in the right direction," Ten Hag said after he put a difficult few days behind him with a morale-boosting win.

The Dutch coach had gone into the game on the back of a 10th defeat of the season at Newcastle over the week-end and reports of player unrest in the locker room.

"(We) Don't get distracted from criticism around us, but we are very critical of ourselves," he said. "We know we are not satisfied and happy. We always want to do things better."

Two goals from Scott McTominay secured the win and moved United up to sixth - three points off fourth-placed City.

Ten Hag will likely face much greater tests than a Chelsea team that is still struggling from the hangover of a cha-

SOCCER

otic first season under the ownership of Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital. Not least against Bayern Munich next week, with a place in the Champions League knockout stage hanging by a thread.

But United's manager would still welcome the change of mood around the club after such a troubled campaign, saying "we wanted to send this message to crowd."

Now it is Guardiola who is facing tough questions as he was left to assess a winless run that saw City overtaken by Villa after Leon Bailey's 74th-minute winner. City's previous three games in the league ended in draws, allowing leader Arsenal to extend a six-point lead over it in the standings after a 4-3 win against Luton.

"In these years we have found a way to win games, but we struggled a bit and we have to find a way," Guardiola said. "It is my job to find a solution. The dynamic changes by winning games."

Villa's win saw it move up to third, two points ahead of last season's treble winners. Second-placed Liverpool trails Arsenal by two points after a 2-0 victory at Sheffield United.

Jürgen Klopp's Liverpool spoiled Chris Wilder's homecoming party at Sheffield United.

Wilder returned to the relegation-threatened club, having taken the team up to English soccer's top division in 2019 and to a ninth-place finish in the 2019-20. But he has a fight on his hands to avoid the drop. Goals from Virgil van Dijk and Dominik Szoboszlai consigned last-place Sheffield United to a 12th defeat of the season that leaves it four points from safety.

Nottingham Forest may be six points above the drop zone, but a 5-0 rout by Fulham has heaped the pressure on manager Steve Cooper.

Forest has lost five of its last six games in the league and only won one in its last 11.



Kuwait Club celebrates Serbian coach Boris Bunjak.

Clippers snap eight-game skid against Nuggets

Embiid has season-high 50 pts in 76ers win over Wizards

WASHINGTON, Dec 7, (AP): Joel Embiid scored a season-high 50 points and had 13 rebounds to help the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Washington Wizards 131-126 on Wednesday night.

Embiid reached 50 points for the sixth time in his career. He had a career-best 59 on Nov. 13, 2022, against Utah.

The reigning NBA MVP was 19 of 24 from the field, making a 3-pointer on two attempts, and hit 11 of 13 free throws. He also had seven assists and six turnovers in just over 38 minutes.

Mavericks 147, Jazz 97

In Dallas, Luka Doncic had 40 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists playing only three periods after the first first-half triple-double of his

and NBA-leading Minnesota held on to beat San Antonio for its fifth straight victory and the Spurs' 15th loss in a row.

Mike Conley added 18 points, Anthony Edwards had 17 and Naz Reid 15. Karl-Anthony Towns finished with 14 points and 10 rebounds to help Minnesota improve to 16-4. Edwards returned after missing two games because of a right hip pointer, but went 4 of 17 from the field.

Clippers 111, Nuggets 102

In Los Angeles, Paul George scored 25 points and Los Angeles rallied to beat Denver and snap an eight-game skid against the defending NBA champion Nuggets.

Jamal Murray scored 23 points for Denver. Jokic had a triple-dou-

ble with 22 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists. It was Denver's first loss to the Clippers since Jan. 11, 2022. The Nuggets fell to 5-8 on the road after blowing a 15-point lead in the opening quarter.

Nets 114, Hawks 113

In Atlanta, Mikal Bridges hit the deciding fadeaway jumper with 4.5 seconds remaining and scored 32 points in Brooklyn's victory over Atlanta.

There were 43 lead changes and 11 ties, with Bridges hitting the decisive shot to give the Nets their fifth win in six games. Atlanta has lost four of five. Trae Young had 30 points for Atlanta.

Warriors 110, Trail Blazers 106

In San Francisco, Stephen Curry

overcame a slow start to score 31 points, Jonathan Kuminga dazzled off the bench for 13 points and Golden State rallied to beat Portland.

Kuminga dunked on a pretty alley-oop from Draymond Green with 1:03 left and made all six of his field goals. Kuminga also stole the ball from Toumani Camara with 29 seconds to go and his team ahead 105-104, leading to a 3 by Curry.

Heat 112, Raptors 103

In Toronto, Caleb Martin had a season-high 24 points and a career-best 12 rebounds, Duncan Robinson scored 21 points and Miami beat Toronto.

Jimmy Butler scored 19 points, Orlando Robinson had 15 points and 12 rebounds and Jaime Jaquez Jr. added 15 points to help the Heat win for the second time in six games.

Pascal Siakam scored 30 points for Toronto.

Rockets 110, Thunder 101

In Houston, Dillon Brooks scored 23 points and Houston beat Oklahoma City to end a three-game losing streak.

Aaron Holiday scored a season-high 22 points off the bench and matched a career best with six 3-pointers. He also had six rebounds in 27 minutes.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led Oklahoma City with 33 points on 13-of-18 shooting.

Bulls 111, Hornets 110

In Chicago, DeMar DeRozan scored 29 points and Chicago beat short-handed Charlotte for its third straight victory following a five-game skid.

Nikola Vucevic had 20 and 11 re-

bounds for the Bulls and and Coby White added 19 points.

Gordon Hayward scored 27 points for Charlotte, and Terry Rozier had 25.

Cavaliers 121, Magic 111

In Cleveland, Donovan Mitchell scored 35 points, Darius Garland added 26 and Cleveland overcame Paolo Banchero's 42-point night to beat Orlando.

The No. 1 overall pick in the 2020 draft, Banchero went 16 of 26 from the field for Orlando, which lost for just the second time in 11 games.

National Sports Arbitration Authority declares elections of Kuwait Tennis Federation invalid

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 7: The National Sports Arbitration Authority has declared the elections of the Kuwait Tennis Federation, which transpired last April, as null and void. The final arbitration decision, issued by the authority on Wednesday, following a sports dispute lodged by the former president of the federation, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber.

TENNIS

Jaber, against the current board of directors, deemed the electoral process marred by violations.

The arbitration chamber of the National Authority unanimously acknowledged the dispute formally and, in substance, declared the nullification of the invitation to the Federation's Board of Directors meeting held on April 9, 2023, along with its repercussions. Notably, this includes the invalidation of the Fed-



Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber

eration's electoral general assembly convened on April 27, 2023, and all decisions emanating from this assembly. This encompasses the decision to elect a new Board of Directors for the Federation for the upcoming term (2023-2027) and its associated implications.