



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

Amir's health stable

The health condition of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah remains stable, said the Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Tuesday.

Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah expressed wishes of good health and rapid recovery for His Highness the Amir.

Opinion

This is the state of our country

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

LEADERSHIP, the Chinese philosopher Confucius said, "There is no poverty under a good government, and there is no wealth under a bad government." Perhaps there is a lot of idealism in this phrase, but it is a reality that must be worked upon. This is what we miss in Kuwait since the infiltration of alien political customs into our society, and strange political traditions, which have become our reality.



Al-Jarallah

Therefore, over the past three decades, instead of learning from the very harsh lesson of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, our officials worked on encouraging an internal invasion, represented by mismanagement, the failure of the economy, and the spread of corruption, until this vice contaminated the harmony of our families.

It is true that Kuwait has gone through many crises over the past four centuries, but it has emerged stronger from them, except in the past three decades. Therefore, what we are experiencing today is the result of that stage, which must be dealt with realistically in order to realize the cause of the mistakes and work on addressing them.

The Chinese philosopher said, "A man who has committed a mistake and does not correct it is committing another mistake."

Unfortunately, this is what previous governments did, and these mistakes increased due to the bad practices of the parliamentarians, especially in the past few years.

In the last 15 years or so, Kuwait witnessed four prime ministers, more than 350 ministers, four speakers of the National Assembly, and about 500 MPs. Despite all this army, the legislative results and projects are equal to zero.

If we think well about it, the rate of productivity is equivalent to about three percent. On the other hand, due to the systematic effort to sabotage the administration, turn differences in viewpoints into political battles between the two authorities, and plunder the state, corruption rates in various institutions increased by about 56 percent compared to what it was before the invasion.

In fact, what is worse is that an elite group of Kuwaiti minds migrated abroad, and the economy is shackled with restrictions that are not at all consistent with the slogan "Kuwait is a global financial and commercial center". Rather, today it is more like a farm dominated by chaos.

All of this is due to the absence of justice in equal opportunities.

When a parliamentarian uses his immunity and constitutional tools to impose pressure on a frightened minister who is hesitant to pass his demands, and works on appointments that

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Day by Day

THE wise often advise to be in the company of those who open windows of life to your soul — those who make days enjoyable, troubles seem light, sorrows fleeting, and instill a sense of mighty hope and forthcoming good tidings.

Surround yourself with those who speak of beauty, tranquility, and serenity, and who, when sitting with you, illuminate your soul with radiant lights. Seek companions who paint a pure smile on the face of life.

In today's world, does such companionship still exist, or has resentment, conflict, and gossip become more prevalent?

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Parliament approves bill to amend Criminal Trials Law

MPs simplify regulations for global investors

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The National Assembly has approved the proposal to amend Procedures and Criminal Trials Law number 17/1960 in its two readings during the ordinary session on Tuesday.

In the first reading of the bill, the number of votes in favor reached 49 and 12 voted against; while the second reading got 48 votes in favor, 12 voted against and one abstained.

The ratified bill stipulates reducing the rehabilitation period for an individual sentenced to imprisonment from 10 years to the number of years in prison. For example, an individual

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Breakthrough near in Filipino domestic worker file

By Fares Al-Abdan
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The recruitment of Filipino domestic workers is expected to resume soon, that is, once the Kuwaiti and Filipino sides finalize agreement on some points.

Reliable sources revealed that a breakthrough in the file of Filipino domestic workers is expected to happen soon; indicating a delegation from the Department of Migrant

Workers in the Philippines arrived in the country on Tuesday. Sources said the delegation will hold meetings with the concerned Kuwaiti authorities on Wednesday and Thursday; indicating the authorities will likely agree to reopen recruitment on Thursday or next week.

Sources disclosed that the most important points of discussions between the authorities are those related to the shelter center and work contracts. They added the Philippine side requested

expanding the center's procedures in dealing with workers and establishing an approved work mechanism.

Source added the Philippine side will propose the idea of receiving the domestic workers at the embassy and then handing them over to the shelter officially; so that the related procedures can be completed and the workers' dues will be settled or referred for deportation.

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Kuwait rejects fossil fuel phase-out call

'Economic risks'



The National Assembly's regular session, chaired by Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun, commenced on Tuesday, addressing a diverse range of issues.

Airstrikes kill 22 Palestinians in Gaza

Kuwait demands halt to Israeli aggression

NEW YORK, Dec 12, (Agencies): The State of Kuwait renewed its call for the international community to put an end to the brutal assault carried out by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people especially in the Gaza Strip.

This call came from Ali Behbahani -- diplomatic attache at the Kuwaiti permanent delegation to the United Nations headquarters in New York -- at the UNGA meeting on urgent humanitarian assistance held late Monday.

Behbahani said that crises caused by armed conflicts and natural disasters had resulted in great suffering, requiring urgent relief aid and assistance.

In this regards, the Israeli occupation's brutal assault on the Gaza Strip is threatening relief aid operations and UN staff tasked with this humane mission, he said.

Behbahani affirmed that the State of Kuwait was heavily involved in humanitarian aid and relief missions worldwide, providing in this regard assistance to those affected by wars and natural disasters.

The Kuwaiti diplomat had mentioned Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) in which he said that the fund had provided loans, grants and technical assistance to all those who were eager to seek development and progress.

The Kuwaiti diplomat also touched on Kuwait's charitable efforts, noting that the GCC country was amongst the chief contributors to regional and international relief aid efforts, mak-

Kuwaiti academic calls for AI legislation amid concerns

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): It is important to apply legislative laws concerning misuse of artificial intelligence (AI), said a Kuwaiti academic on Tuesday.

Necessity of the new laws was underlined by Dr. Jameela Al-Otaibi, a faculty member of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training Basic Education College, in a lecture titled "The Use of Artificial Intelligence under Current Legislations" in the third day of The Library & Information Association of Kuwait cultural

training season. The activity was held under auspices of Minister of Information and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

Dr. Al-Otaibi touched on positive side of using AI for various purposes such as scientific, medical and technological progress and economic growth. However, she cautioned of looming risks and issues in this regard, like privacy concerns, security breaches and even identity theft.

Affirming hazards of mis-

using the AI, Dr. Al-Otaibi emphasized that there are currently six laws associated with different aspects of technology, thus she suggested special legislations and laws for the newest electronic technology.

The lecture came as a part of The Library and Information Association of Kuwait's training season titled "Artificial Intelligence in Libraries and Information Centers" that commenced on the 10th of this month and would conclude on the 14th.

ing sure that urgent assistance would swiftly reach those in need.

On the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres invoking article 99 of the UN Charter, Behbahani said that the disastrous situation in the Gaza Strip required the UNSC to impose an immediate ceasefire in the war torn region.

It is imperative for the world to put an end to the Israeli occupation's bloodlust actions against

the Palestinian people to ensure peace in the Middle East and the world.

Meanwhile, the State of Kuwait determinedly backs the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and an independent state with East Jerusalem being its capital, said a Foreign Ministry official Monday.

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Houthi missile hits Norwegian tanker

DUBAI, Dec 12, (AP): A missile fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels slammed into a Norwegian-flagged tanker in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen near a key maritime chokepoint, the rebels and authorities said Tuesday.

The assault on the oil and chemical tanker Strinda expands a campaign by the Iranian-backed rebels targeting ships close to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait into apparently now striking those that have no clear ties to Israel. That potentially imperils cargo and energy shipments coming through the Suez Canal and further widens the international impact of the Israel-Hamas war now raging in the Gaza Strip.



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (center), walks with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Ky. (left), and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of NY (right), during a visit to Capitol Hill in Washington, Dec 12, 2023. (AP) — See Page 6

OAPEC okays next meeting in Kuwait

DOHA, Dec 12, (KUNA): The Council of Ministers of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) approved on Tuesday, holding its next meeting in Kuwait at the end of 2024.

In a statement, OAPEC said that the agreement came during the discussion of the 111th agenda Ministerial Council, which was related to the work and activity of the organization in Doha, in the presence of the oil and energy ministers of the member states.

CAIRO: The West's position on the ongoing Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip shows absolute "racism", said Secretary-General of the Arab League, Ahmed Aboul-Gheit, on Tuesday.

In statements to reporters after casting his vote in the presidential elections in Egypt, Aboul-Gheit stressed that the West revealed its "ugly face" by supporting the Israeli occupation aggression against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. (KUNA)

BEIRUT: Jordanian troops clashed Tuesday with dozens of drug smugglers along the country's northern border with Syria, leaving several dead including one soldier while another was wounded, the army said.

The smugglers were trying to bring into Jordan "large amounts of drugs" while taking advantage of fog and low visibility, a statement by the Jordanian Armed Forces said. It said some of them were killed and the others fled. (AP)

Newswatch

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Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:08 Asr 14:32
 Sunrise... 06:33 Maghrib .. 16:51
 Zohr 11:42 Isha 18:12

Local

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

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: A significant decrease in temperature and cloudy to partly cloudy with light southeasterly wind changing to light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind, with speed of 10-42 km/h with a chance for rain that

Weather

might be thundery at times.

By Night: Rather cold to cold with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas northwesterly wind, with speed of 12-45 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	30	17
Kuwait Airport	30	12
Abdaly	31	12
Jahra	30	15
Salmiyah	26	19
Nuwaib	27	15
Wafra	31	12

'Medicine shortage crisis headache for MoH'

Disbursing front-line bonus...elusive issue, fails to see light of day

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: As the year 2023 approaching its end, the health sector is facing many challenges in the new year, most notably the faltering projects of the annual development plan, the delay in disbursing front-line rewards, the shortage of medicines, controlling the prices of health services in the private sector, and the high number of complaints and reports submitted to the agency responsible for health and medicine, in addition to the issues of supervisory functions and the observations of the State Audit Bureau, especially the low rates of spending on health projects and the delay in implementing some of them for more than ten years.

At the forefront of the State Audit Bureau's observations for this year is the decline in spending rates on seven projects within the Ministry of Health's annual development plan for the 2022/2023 fiscal year by 54.5 percent. The amount approved after the amendment is KD 163, 621,306, which negatively affects the development of health services in the country.

The bureau said this indicates the ministry's lack of seriousness in expediting the implementation of the projects included in the development plan in the ministry's budget.

It highlighted the continued severe delay in implementing the work of the project to design, construct and equip the Kuwait Cancer Center.

The completion of its work until February 2023 reached 63.9 percent, despite the passing of nearly nine years since the start of implementation, equivalent to twice the contractual implementation period, and without the ministry signing the contractual fines owed to the company, which are estimated at approximately KD 17 million and 296 thousand.

Also, the delay in disbursing the front-line bonuses is like an elusive issue that has not yet seen the light of day, despite the passing of nearly three years since the COVID-19 crisis.

However, the Ministry of Health has not yet found its way to solve the crisis on the front-liners. The Health Committee of the National Assembly is still studying the reasons for the health department's delay in disbursing the compensation to the complainants. The State Audit Bureau continues to record violations and observations year after year regarding the health's mismanagement of this file.

It has been more than a year and a half since 185 department heads, preventive

doctors, and technicians from the category of health inspectors complained about the distribution of front-line bonuses, and confirmed the existence of financial discrepancies and disparities in the distribution of bonuses.

Nevertheless, the Ministry of Health did not take any action, which prompted those in charge of the Health Committee to examine the reasons for the health department's failure to solve this problem, especially since 76 percent of the complainants are Kuwaiti doctors and technicians.

In this regard, the problem of medicine shortages in Kuwait was a major focus of discussions by the Health Committee of the National Assembly, and an existing issue of debate between the legislative and executive authorities.

This comes despite the confirmation of the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi that there is no shortage of medicines for cancer patients (adults and children) in the country. He also confirmed that the ministry pays great attention to the medicine security system and works to provide medicines, including cancer medicines, despite their specificity and diversity between chemical, immunological, and others.

The medicine shortage crisis has caused headaches and chronic insomnia for the Ministry of Health, especially after repeated parliamentary criticism of the Health Committee regarding this issue after announcing the allocation of KD 250 million as a budget to provide medicines and medical supplies.

Despite the Health Ministry's continuous attempts and efforts to remedy the crisis and despite its confirmation that the medicine shortage crisis is global and not limited to Kuwait, the problem is still an item on the agenda of the Health Committee of the National Assembly.

The problem of exaggeration in the prices of health services in the private medical sector is one of the biggest challenges facing citizens and residents in the country. It takes up a large area of discussion by citizens and residents on social networking sites.

Many have called for tightening control over the prices of private clinics, especially psychiatric clinics where the price of a single visit ranges from KD 50 to KD 300.

This sparked the anger of the concerned public and they demanded that the health care authorities and others reconsider the prices of health services in the private sector and adopt a list of prices for health services provided in order to confront the greed of some facilities.

In the context of achievements, health services in the country witnessed a significant expansion through electronic platforms during the year 2023, as well as progress towards digital transformation.

To be continued

Timings of labor medical exams centers extended

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: As part of regulatory measures and to enhance visitor convenience, Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanaad, the official spokesperson for the Ministry of Health, announced an extension of operating hours in three labor examination centers. This directive, issued by Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, covers the labor examination centers in Al Sabah Al-Salem suburb (Umm Al-Hayman), Al-Jahra, and Shuwaikh, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Dr. Al-Sanaad explained that these centers will now operate from 7:30 am to 1:30 pm in the morning and from 2 pm to 6 pm in the evening on official working days from Sunday to Thursday. Notably, no prior appointment is required for examining domestic workers at any expatriate labor examination center, as long as the sponsor is present. However, a prior appointment is necessary for other cases.

This extension aims to alleviate pressure on the centers, reduce waiting times, bring appointments closer, and enhance service accessibility for valued visitors. Dr. Al-Sanaad expressed appreciation for the efforts of the public health sector in overcoming workflow challenges and implementing suitable solutions.



Al-Sanaad



Photo by Rizk Taufiq

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during the Assembly session on Tuesday, Dec 12.

Crackdown on drugs intensifies

Hackers of WhatsApp are back

By Munaif Nayef/Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: As part of the successive strikes by the General Department of Coast Guard to thwart the smuggling of illegal drugs into the country under the directives of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, Coast Guard officers were able to seize 40 kilograms of hashish worth KD 150,000.

According to a security source, the Coast Guard officers received a tip off about five sailors - the captain of the boat being Egyptian and remaining four Indians - carrying narcotic substances in a boat within the territorial waters of Kuwait.

The officers went to the site and seized the boat, inside which they found about 40 kilograms of narcotic cannabis worth KD 150 thousand.

When questioned, they revealed that they received the drugs from Iranian smugglers in the territorial waters.

The suspects were referred with the seized contraband to the concerned authority for necessary legal measures.

The General Department of the Coast Guard, led by their director Major General Talal Al-Munis, had directed two strikes against drug traffickers in less than seven days.

The first strike was against five Iranians and two Indians for attempting to smuggle 100 kilos of "Shabu", and the second strike was the latest seizure of 40 kilos of hashish.

In a related context, the Directorate General of Security Relations and Media stated that, as part of the Ministry of Interior's efforts to confront drug dealers and smugglers and control criminal networks that attempt to introduce drug toxins into the country, the General Department of Coast Guard's Maritime Security Department was able to thwart a smuggling operation of narcotic and arrest five suspects.

It stated, "Information was received about the presence of a quantity of prohibited materials in a boat inside the Kuwaiti territorial waters. A team was formed from the Maritime Security Department to monitor and investigate the boat.

When the boat was seized from within the territorial waters and searched, a barrel was found containing about 40 kilograms of hashish worth an estimated market value of KD 150,000.

When the culprits were confronted about the seized drugs, they confessed to their attempt at smuggling the drugs into the country. They are being referred to the concerned authority to take necessary legal measures."

The Ministry of Interior confirmed that security efforts are continuing to arrest anyone who attempts to smuggle and trade in narcotic substances and to protect and preserve society from these dangerous scourges.

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Hackers are back: Hackers of WhatsApp are back in the headlines as they have been sending links via WhatsApp and those who assess those links end up getting their WhatsApp accounts hacked, after which their unsuspecting friends and relatives are asked for money.

A number of people have lately been subjected to these hacks again after a decrease in such attempts over the past two years. This time they returned with force, as the hackers obtained sums of money by sending links from the victim's phone under the guise of being the account holder who was seeking money from a friend or relative. When the money is sent, the hacker collects the amount.

Informed sources warned against accessing unreliable links, even if they are from someone who is known.

They said, "You should contact them to verify before accessing these links, which have become a danger to WhatsApp users, their phones, and their bank balances."

□ □ □

KD 18 mln laundered: The Criminal Court has set the session of February 5, 2024 to issue its verdict in the case filed against two individuals who are accused of laundering about KD 18 million obtained from the victims after tricking them into importing luxury cars from abroad.

One of the defendants asked the court to unfreeze his bank accounts in order to settle the matter with the victims.

One of the victims, a lady in her twenties, confirmed to the court that the suspects defrauded her after she obtained a bank loan to buy a German-made car worth KD 50,000.

The Public Prosecution had charged the defendants with committing the crime of laundering about KD 17 million and 500 thousand by deliberately acquiring and possessing that money, knowing that it was the proceeds of the crime subject to the accusation described in Clause Two, after the victims were deceived into thinking that they are purchasing cars that are imported from abroad, and the cars would be delivered during the agreed-upon period, and they ended up depositing the agreed amount in the company accounts.

The two defendants began the activity under the name of a company and shifted the money between their personal accounts through a group of banking operations, after which the money was transferred via an exchange company to external entities, to cover and hide its illicit source.



Some of those arrested recently for smuggling of drugs.

4,317 Kuwaitis issued 'Cascade-type' visas

'Bilateral ties to expand further'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: French Ambassador to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher praised the positive dynamics of bilateral relations between France and Kuwait, stressing that such a relationship continues and remains all-encompassing, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Speaking to the daily, Le Flecher asserted that France considers Kuwait a necessary partner in maintaining regional stability and providing solutions to regional issues, particularly in the context of the tragedy in Gaza.

She said Kuwait participated in the Paris International Humanitarian Conference for the Civilian Population of Gaza on Nov 9, as well as the follow-up conference on Dec 6.

On security and defense affairs, she cited the visit of French Minister of Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu to Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah on Sept 9, 2023. "This event, which took place in Kuwait City, gave both ministers the opportunity to have a frank and open exchange on various topics including regional security, and express their satisfaction over the high level French-Kuwaiti defense

relationship.

"It also allowed a review of the major activities which took place in 2022 and 2023, including the Pearl of the West and Arabian Breeze exercises and further training of Kuwaiti military personnel by France in the years to come," she added.

On the political level, she highlighted the launching of the Franco-Kuwaiti Friendship Society in Paris, jointly with Chairman Mohammed Al-Saqr. She pointed out "this is an important milestone in the history of our people-to-people relations that we want to deepen further."

She affirmed that France and Kuwait also cooperate on culture and education, indicating a delegation of 17 top-tier French higher education institutions visited Kuwait recently. This led to the establishment of partnerships with Kuwaiti counterparts, proving the vibrant education and technical cooperation, she stressed.

She revealed that "the consular links between our nations are fully living up to their potential, pointing out that since Sept 12, we have delivered a total of 4,317 'Cascade'-type visas; 1,706 of which have a five-year duration. A five-year visa can only be delivered if the passport's validity does not expire before, in that case, a shorter visa is delivered depending on the expiry date of the document."

Approved caravans list published

Hajj rates start from KD1,590 – 3,950

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Hajj and Umrah Affairs Department at the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs has published the list of approved Hajj caravans and companies operating for the Hajj season 1445 AH including the prices ranging from KD1,590 to KD3,950, reports Al-Anba daily.

In accordance with the decision of the Supreme Committee for Hajj and Umrah to approve the classification of Kuwaiti Hajj caravans into three categories of main services for the pilgrims covering the aviation, accommodation and transportation fields.

The first category includes transporta-

tion on Kuwaiti or Saudi airlines or private flights, five-star hotels overlooking the Holy Mosque as per the classification of the Public Authority for Tourism and Antiquities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and year-model (new) transport vehicles.

The second category features five-star hotels but not overlooking the Holy Mosque according to the classification of the Public Authority for Tourism and Antiquities; and the third category includes three or four-star hotels as per the classification of the Public Authority for Tourism and Antiquities, in addition to residential buildings.



KUNA photo

Kuwaiti Ambassador to Singapore Ahmad Abdulrahman Al-Shuraim presents his credentials to Singapore's President Tharman Shanmugaratnam during an official ceremony in the Istana Presidential residence.

Kuwait envoy takes charge

Kuwaiti Ambassador to Singapore Ahmad Abdulrahman Al-Shuraim presented his credentials on Tuesday to Singapore's President Tharman Shanmugaratnam during an official ceremony in the Istana Presidential residence.

The ambassador relayed the greetings and well wishes of Kuwait's leadership to the President of Singapore, and congratulated him on his win in the recent Presidential elections.

Moreover, he wished the Republic of Singapore more progress and prosperity, said Kuwait's embassy in Singapore in a statement obtained by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

The ambassador praised the good relations tying Kuwait to Singapore for over 38 years, stressing the importance of working together to further improve relations in different sectors, to serve both countries. (KUNA)

Intensify efforts, UN urges world

'Corruption dents people's hopes'

WASHINGTON, Dec 12, (KUNA): UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called on enhancing international cooperation to fight corruption.

Corruption does not only affect resources but also people's hopes, said Guterres in a video call at the opening of the 10th session of the UN Convention against Corruption, held in Atlanta city, in Georgia, US late Monday, until December 15.

The Secretary General noted that despite the progress made in the convention, corruption is still a big threat around the world.

On her part, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Ghada Waly said that fighting corruption is

everyone's responsibility, calling on international organizations to unite against corruption.

The convention is a guideline for legal and institutional reforms in many countries, said Waly. Since approving the agreement, it saw an international commitment to it as 190 countries joined the convention, she added.

There are over 2,000 participants of governments and regional and international organizations taking part in the event, as well as corruption-fighting experts and NGOs representatives.

Kuwait is taking part in the conference, represented by a delegation from the Anti-Corruption Public Authority, headed by chairman Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim.

The event, held every two years, will discuss progress in implementing the convention's articles, international challenges, enabling women and allowing youth to take part in leadership for transparency in the future.



Guterres

'Hidden hands impede transplants'

Save lives by organ donation: Dr Al-Moussawi



Organ transplant operation in progress.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The doctors have warned of hidden agenda to distort Kuwait's reputation in the field of organ transplantation, saying the attack by one of the MPs and his statements about organ transplant has abruptly ended cooperation with "Cleveland Clinic, Abu Dhabi" for liver transplant, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The President of the Kuwaiti Society for Organ Transplantation, Dr. Mustafa Al-Moussawi, and Head of the Organ Provision Unit at the Ministry of Health, added the Society leaves nothing unturned to encourage organ donation and works under the supervision of the concerned authorities, saying some with ulterior goals falsify facts and hurl arbitrary accusations.

Al-Moussawi told the daily that cooperation with the Cleveland Clinic, Abu Dhabi for liver transplant stopped after one of the MPs announced filing of a complaint by the Organ Transplantation Society accusing it of trafficking in organs following which the Public Prosecution said it is investigating the issue.

Specialized doctors stressed the need to support and develop organ transplantation operations in Kuwait to reduce the state's burdens, support patients, and save lives through organ donation.

He spoke of 130 kidney transplant operations in the country during 2023, half of which will be from post-mortem donors.

He touched on the spread of organ donation after death, indicating that the total number of donors in Kuwait after death has begun to increase, and there are 2,000 young men and women who have registered to donate organs after death during the current year, expressing a categorical rejection of exploiting health issues for electoral gain.

Operations

Al-Moussawi stated that organ transplant operations include the heart, lung, liver, pancreas, intestines for children, corneas, and parts of arteries.

He revealed a meeting he had with the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, and we asked to form a committee that includes all specialties in the field of organ transplantation, and the Minister of Health agreed to that, pointing out that the association aims to educate citizens about the importance of organ transplantation for patients in need, and to urge them to donate them in accordance with the provisions of applicable laws and regulations while highlighting the opinion of religion and law in this aspect.

He pointed out that since the start of the program to provide organs from deaths, Kuwait, through the Ministry of Health, has been sharing organs that are not transplanted in Kuwait with organ transplant centers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since 1996, and then with the United Arab Emirates since the end of 2021, and that instead of burying it because it is not needed.

For his part, Kuwait University Professor and Consultant Surgeon, Dr. Muhammad Jamal, said due to the accusations of a member of the National Assembly about the organ provision program, cooperation between Kuwait and the Gulf countries has stopped, and the last two cases whose organs were donated were the liver, heart, and lungs.

Al-Moussawi said after the widespread interaction and tweets supporting organ transplant operations, the Ministry of Health moved and contacted the UAE Ambassador to continue the cooperation program after a temporary halt "due to the representative's accusations."

He added there is a memorandum of understanding regarding cooperation in the field of organ transplantation that was presented by the UAE ambassador to Kuwait to the Minister of Health, and we expect this memorandum to be signed to cover any pretexes.

MP Shuaib Sha'aban stressed the necessity of strengthening cooperation between Kuwait and the Gulf countries in organ transplantation and completing the steps that were begun in this regard.



Dr Al-Moussawi

Forensics to the fore in theft case lodged

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Deputy Public Prosecutor has instructed a forensic team to collect fingerprints from inside a car to identify its occupants and determine whether anyone other than the owner had used it, reports Al-Anba daily.

This happened after a report was filed on the same day by the owner, who reported the theft of the vehicle and car break-in. The two cases, interconnected but categorized differently and classified as a felony at Al-Mutla'a police station, and the theft of a vehicle reported at Jahra police station, classified as a misdemeanor.

The complaint was filed by a Gulf national born in 1967 who reported that while he was at the farmhouse at the pilgrims' rest house in the afternoon, he saw a man carrying a sheep from inside his tent.

The thief wearing national dress, escaped leaving behind a green four-wheel-drive and a mobile phone after placing the stolen sheep in his vehicle.

The second case involves a citizen born in 1998 reporting the theft of his SUV, which also had his mobile phone inside. Interestingly, this stolen vehicle was the same one used in the earlier sheep theft incident. The owner claimed that two individuals, riding in a white SUV, were responsible for the theft. Though the case is intricate, the security source mentioned that detectives have the capability to unravel it.

The owner of the stolen vehicle might be innocent, considering the possibility that his car was genuinely stolen and used in the Al-Mutla'a case. However, there's also a chance that the car owner was involved and filed a report to avoid punishment.

The forensic evidence report and police investigations will play a decisive role. If it is established that the car owner was not complicit in the theft incident, efforts will be intensified to apprehend the actual culprits.

Crane arm kills man: An unidentified worker died in a bizarre accident when the arm of a crane crushed him to death in the suburb of Al-Rahiya, reports Al-Rai daily.

After a report was received by the Operations Department of the Ministry of Interior saying a worker was seriously injured, paramedics were dispatched to the site of the accident who upon arrival confirmed the victim had succumbed to his injuries.

The security forces discovered the crane arm fell on the worker after the cable connecting the arm snapped.

The driver of the crane has been charged with manslaughter. The remains of the victim have been referred to Forensics.

Mixer driver arrested: Personnel from the Criminal Investigation Department have arrested the driver of a cement mixer for unloading remains of the cement mix in an open area in Al-Mutla'a desert, reports Al-Anba daily.

The daily added, the arrest came after a Kuwaiti uploaded a video clip of the incident on the social media, following which the company owning the mixer was identified, the driver arrested and the mixer impounded.

During interrogation the driver said he was unaware that he was violating the environment protection laws.

It is noteworthy that the perpetrators of such practices are punished by imprisonment for a period of not less than 3 years and not more than 10 years and a fine of not less than 20 thousand dinars and not more than 200 thousand dinars.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Gaza fighters are soldiers of Ashkelon, they will win'

"THE events of the 'Al-Aqsa Flood' were not expected by the killers of women and children. The security and military services were unable to repel this violent attack on the Zionist entity. The high-tech and well-armed Merkava tanks did not succeed in withstanding the Al-Yassin 105 missiles. The enemy aircraft were unable to break the resolve of the heroic fighters and force them to surrender," columnist **Mufareh Al-Enezi** wrote for Al-Anba daily.

"As for the Zionist entity itself, it has lost many of its soldiers. The real numbers of enemy deaths are much higher than what is announced, the Zionist currency has lost much of its value, schools and stores have been closed since October 7, reverse migration has increased, and the situation within the entity's government is moving from bad to worse, especially with regard to the issue of prisoners and material losses. And the morale loss incurred by the enemy as a result of the war with Gaza.

"As for Netanyahu, he has begun to complain publicly about the defections of his team, and he has exhausted his reserve of lying to his people, to the international media that is dissatisfied with him and his army, and also to his allies who are fed up with his continuous lies to them.

"Also, the world of all its races and religions hated the Zionists who were cruel to humanity, and there were those who sympathized with the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler because of his position on the forefathers of the occupying Zionist entity after he discovered their betrayals and deceit against the German people, but today because of the crimes this entity committed against defenseless civilians, especially killing of women and children in Gaza only a few of the supporters of this entity remain, and one of the strangest coincidences is that those who say they are the children of the victims of the German Holocaust created a new Palestinian Holocaust after they took from Germany compensation for their ancestors who said they were the victims of the German Holocaust.

"If the occupying and dehumanizing entity wants to lose many of its soldiers, it must continue its incursion into Gaza so that its soldiers will face the Yassin missiles that will be fired at its army vehicles from everywhere. The military reality is that urban warfare is one of the most difficult types of wars and the most dangerous for the attacking ground forces.

"There is no doubt that the combat morale of the occupation army has reached a very low level, as the place is not suitable for fighting with tanks, the land is not their land, and its soldiers are not fighting with a doctrine.

"On the other hand, they find that the Gaza resistance fighters are fighting with the doctrine of Islamic jihad, which is based on two things that they have no third place, which are either victory or martyrdom. As for the morale of the resistance fighters in Gaza, it is very high because it depends on defending their homeland, and despite the destruction that befell Gaza, we find them looking forward to liberating all the lands of beloved Palestine.

"They are the soldiers of Ashkelon, whom the Messenger Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, told about and praised in his hadith, and they will be victorious, God willing. The truth is with them, and God is with them, and there is no victor but God, and we will soon see, God willing, God's command over them."

Also:

"Have you heard a single Gazan hold Hamas responsible for the destruction happening in Gaza?! Have you heard a statement from an association, club, or association, or any of the civil society institutions present in Gaza, demanding that 'Hamas' stop the resistance?" columnist **Mubarak Fahd Al-Duwailah** wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"Are we, who are safe in our homes

and enjoying a comfortable life, more sensitive to pain and suffering than the widows, orphans and bereaved, whose homes fall on their heads daily as a result of the brutal Zionist aggression against Gaza? Have we heard any of these people lamenting their misfortune and bashing and cursing the resistance that caused their suffering?!"

"A fair and rational person realizes that the people of Gaza are all resistance and they are all supporters of Hamas and what Hamas is doing.

"Only a rational and fair person knows the reason for this heroic stance of the people of Gaza, because they realized that calls for peace and normalization with the Zionists will only lead to more loss of the land and the continuation of its rape, and that remaining silent about the daily violations of the occupation will only result in more humiliated living and slavery that is unacceptable to the honorable people.

"Yesterday, one of the Zionists came out to us and said to those who support the Palestinian resistance: Why don't you and your children go to Gaza and fight with the Jews? He is well aware that all the countries surrounding Palestine prevent the entry of those wishing to wage jihad into Palestine, and if a door was opened in one of these countries, you would find thousands flocking to the land of Rabat and Jihad seeking victory or martyrdom.

"Perhaps we have an example and evidence of what happened when the door to jihad was opened in Afghanistan. And when the banner of jihad was raised in the Levant, regardless of our position on the development of events there and their outcome, the evidence is that there are thousands of young men among the Arabs and Muslims who would not hesitate to wage jihad in Palestine if the borders were opened to them.

"The aggression will continue, the resistance will continue, the steadfastness of the Palestinian people will continue, and many will continue in their failure, but the voice of resistance will continue to sweep the feelings of millions of people, which will continue to sweep the streets of global cities until God permits victory. They entered it the first time and that they may purify themselves from what they have ascended." God Almighty has spoken the truth."

□ □ □

"Submit your resignation... How many Kuwaiti leaders or officials are sincere in serving Kuwait? How many have arrived in their offices only to receive a call saying, 'Submit your resignation,' without knowing the reason. Then, they become frustrated and disappointed as they have been receiving honors or praise since they started serving the nation. They encounter a sad reality that reflects negatively on them for the rest of their lives," columnist **Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Is there an administrative theory that we do not know, explaining the logic of this to us? Or, did we suddenly discover the incompetence of the official? Is it a new equation in the balance of power in the government and the National Assembly? If any of these is the case, then what is the fault of the helpless official in a new political equation in which he has no 'female camel'?"

"This sad scene has been repeated many times at many levels and fields, up to the point of asking: Why did this happen to officials in Kuwait who dedicated themselves to serving their country, only to become out of service and without working overnight despite their great ability to serve?"

"The manner and method of this change raises astonishing questions. Is it acceptable that an official is ordered to submit his resignation immediately, without any warning? What will be his position in front of his co-workers, acquaintances and relatives? What will he say except complain to God?"

"The truth is that I have pondered on this a lot. If it is for the sake of change for the better through new, qualified and more capable leaders with experience, this justification can be accepted, albeit reluctantly. However, it is noted that most of the alternative leadership appointments are not better in terms of experience, education and training in management.

— Compiled by Mai Elsoukay

Other Voices

Cancer ... & a prayer for travel

By Ahmad alsarraf

It was stated in the religious supplement of a local newspaper by Dr. Mahmoud Gad Abdel Rahim, that there is a program for cancer prevention in religion. It has been proven that honey, dates, and milk help cure cancer. The aswak and black seed also have great benefits in increasing immunity, and it has been discovered that 85% of women with cervical cancer are caused by their husbands being uncircumcised.

The above statement, which does not even deserve to be confirmed as incorrect, was stated in an article I wrote on November 27, 1994, that is, 30 years ago.

What is more painful than the above statement is that our "religious culture" was not satisfied with stagnation, but was characterized by decline, and we became at the forefront of delay and stagnation.

We issue reprehensible fatwas, the more strange and extremist they are, and the more extremist their speaker is, the greater the number of believers in them, and the longer the queue of listeners to them!

All of this is happening while we are very close to having artificial intelligence technologies explode in our faces, turning our lives upside down. This is what the advanced West thinks and fears, and we cling to the pinnacles of our backwardness and weakness, and I do not know how we failed, not only to advance intellectually, at least, rather, we have become more backward, and our situation has deteriorated and slipped to the bottom in every field. The reason is known, the cause is known, and the treatment is also known.

A tweet about a paragraph from a distinguished university professor, which he said in a symposium held in a Gulf country, related to the wisdom behind Kuwait Airways' broadcast of the lengthy travel prayer. The tweet was widely spread, as is the case with any criticism of behavior or words related to religion!

I researched the origin of the sup-

plication and found that the topic goes back a few decades when a Kuwaiti captain, at the height of his religious extremism, decided to recite the travel supplication, in his loud voice, before taking off on his plane.

After some passengers were surprised by the matter, as it was the only plane to do this, the captain was investigated, and he insisted on his position! As usual, when it came to religious matters, the captain's behavior was overlooked, and over time, broadcasting prayers became a custom on all Kuwait Airways flights, and moved to other airlines.

Although the "religious mood" of the person who came up with the idea of broadcasting the supplication changed after years, the supplication has remained to this day, and has become longer than before, knowing that the supplication is available in its text, and better and more than it, on every passenger's mobile phone, and he can listen to it or read it with ease.

The story of the survival of the supplication, and the change in the "mood" of those behind its imposition, brought to mind the incident of our American friend who insisted on cutting off the tail and head of the fish before putting it in the oven, despite her husband and guests' protests and their ridicule of her behavior.

Her insistence came under the pretext that this was what her mother used to do. When the latter was contacted and asked about the reason for insisting on cutting off the tail and head of the fish, she said that she was doing what her mother used to do, and when the grandmother was asked, she answered, with shocking simplicity, that the small oven she had was not large enough to put a medium-sized fish inside it!

How many things, customs, and rituals we do not really know why we do them, and we often do them based on those who came before us.

The era of jet planes came, and we were happy to ride them, and we were confident that they were the safest and most comfortable means of travel, but the dangers of riding camels in the barren desert, and the 'depressingness' of what befalls them. Looking, the horrors and dangers of death on the road remained firmly established in our minds!

□ □ □

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alsarraf

Blogger fined

Exam cheats get jail

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: In the case of leaking the question papers of the second-term secondary school exams, the Criminal Court sentenced a Kuwaiti citizen to ten-year imprisonment with hard labor, and a Kuwaiti woman to seven-year imprisonment with hard labor. The court also sentenced another citizen and an expatriate to one-year imprisonment with hard labor.

The Public Prosecution had leveled a number of charges against the two defendants, including a State Security charge of money laundering, which was discovered after seizing and freezing bank accounts and tracking large sums of money that were found to have been obtained by the defendants from test-leaking groups, selling fraudulent earphones, and other acts that are considered illegal by the law.

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Blogger fined: The Court of Appeals, presided over by Counselor Fahad Abu Salib, upheld the conviction of an individual who was accused of publishing medical reports, insulting Dr. Obaid Al-Wasmi, and influencing the elections.

The Court of First Instance had imposed a fine of KD 2,000 on a Twitter user for publishing confidential medical and treatment records of former MP Dr. Obaid Al-Wasmi and spreading incorrect news to influence his voters in the elections. The court ordered the civil case to be referred to the concerned civil court. According to the case file, the suspect had published on social media a medical report on Al-Wasmi's treatment at the expense of the United States Department of Health, with the intention of defaming him. He had also misused his mobile phone for this purpose.

□ □ □

Bombs in manhole: Personnel from the General Department of Weapons Investigation said the weapons, explosives, and smoke bombs have been recovered from sewage manhole near a boys' secondary school in the Sabah Al-Salem, reports Al-Anba daily.

20 fined KD5,000 in 'by-polls' case

By Jaber Al-Hamoud
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Court of Appeals upheld the verdict issued by the Criminal Court in the case of by-elections organized by the Ghanem tribe in the Second Constituency, which imposed a fine of KD 5,000 each on 20 defendants who organized and participated in the by-elections, and acquitted 94 others who were accused of organizing and participating in the elections.

The security services had arrested the defendants in accordance with Law No. 35/1962 regarding elections for members of the National Assembly and its amendments.

The fifth paragraph of Article 45 stipulates that a person shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years and/or a fine of between KD 2,000 and KD 5,000 for organizing, participating in organizing, or calling for by-elections, which are held unofficially before the date set for the elections to choose one or more from among those belonging to a specific group or sect.

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Over 1,000 Kuwait children in need of palliative care: expert

Dr Al-Sayer opens 'Heartful Charitable Art Exhibition & Auction'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: More than 1,000 children in the country are in need of palliative care, reports Al-Qabas daily quoting President of Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospitals (KACCH) and Bayt Abdullah Children's Care Hospice (BACCH) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer.

According to Al-Sayer, BACCH provides services at different stages; pointing out that about 100 children are being treated at home in addition to those being treated in hospitals.



Dr. Al-Sayer

He made the statement during the opening of the 'Heartful Charitable Art Exhibition and Auction' at the BACCH building recently. The event is a unique blend of local artistry and charitable effort. It features the exquisite works of 45 outstanding artists with each piece being a testament to the rich tapestry of artistic expression that graces the community, contributing to its cultural mosaic.

He talked about the services that BACCH provides to sick children, as well as the home services, physical therapy, hydrotherapy and music therapy. He affirmed that BACCH is keen on integrating children with society, supporting them and their families to adapt to changes in their

'From Kuwait We Start, In Kuwait We End' National confab to honor top Kuwaiti figures

By Danah Al-Shehabi

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): The 22nd "From Kuwait We Start, In Kuwait We End" conference will be held on December 19th, Tuesday, to honor past Kuwaiti prominent figures who excelled in different disciplines and fields, said a Kuwaiti official on Tuesday.

The conference will be held under the auspices of Sheikh Abdullah Mishal Mubarak Al-Sabah, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of De-

health condition, and encouraging them to participate in various aspects of life as much as possible and for as long as possible. He pointed out that palliative care is a rare specialization in the country, so "we are working to raise public awareness on its importance".

Meanwhile, Margaret Al-Sayer, Co-Founder and Founding Director of KACCH and BACCH said: "As we embark on this artistic journey, let us be mindful of the exhibition's purpose -- to raise awareness about the importance of psychosocial support for children in hospitals, ensure the delivery of crucial palliative care for children with life-limiting conditions, and raise essential funds for the sustainability of KACCH and BACCH's free pediatric services."

Dr and Mrs Al-Sayer extended heartfelt gratitude to the talented artists, sponsors, contributors, curating team Maha Alasaker and Yousif Abdulsaid, online exhibitor Gallery Bawa, dedicated team, volunteers

fense, revealed Attorney Yousef Al-Yassin, Chairman of the Supreme Supervisory Committee of the annual National Conference.

The venue of the event will be the theater of Al-Babtain Central Library for Arabic Poetry, next to the Grand Mosque and it will begin at 5:30 pm local-time, he added.

Al-Yassin reiterated that the conference would be honoring a group of important Kuwaiti figures in various fields of national and humanitarian work.

He stated the general goal of the conference was to boost patriotism and spreading the meaning of moderation in all sectors of Kuwaiti society by remembering the biographies and role models of national figures who lived to serve their country.

Al-Yassin thanked all those who took part in the organization of the upcoming event and also the sponsors, hoping that the conference would add its legacy of promoting Kuwait's brightest and finest.

and every participant for their valuable contributions.

Established in 1989, KACCH has been a cornerstone in providing psychosocial services for children and families in government hospitals. This commitment has evolved into eight Child Life programs in governmental hospitals, dedicated to meeting the unique emotional, developmental, and social needs of each child and family.

Specialized

BACCH was founded in 2012 as an extension of KACCH. It focuses on providing specialized care for children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions. The 2020 merger of KACCH and BACCH consolidated their efforts into a unified organization, creating a streamlined approach to their shared mission.

Both institutions rely on the community's generous donations to sustain their mission. All services provided to children and families are

free of charge, while emphasizing the community's integral role in ensuring the well-being and care of those in need.

Meanwhile, Dr Tala Jamal Al-Dabbous, CEO and Director for Clinical Services at BACCH, emphasized the importance of psychological, social and medical care, which are considered among the most prominent comprehensive services provided by BACCH to improve the quality of life of a sick child.

Al-Dabbous indicated that BACCH provides free palliative care for 106 children; while about 1,500 children need palliative care annually, explaining that some services are provided to patients inside BACCH, and chalets along the sea are available for the families of sick children to rest after their hardship in taking care of their sick children, in addition to services for patients in their homes through home visits and those confined in government hospitals.

Crown Prince and PM send greetings

Amir congratulates Kenyan president on National Day

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday a cable to President of Kenya Dr. William Samoei Ruto, congratulating him on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished President Dr Ruto good health, and Kenya more progress and prosperity.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-

Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to President Dr Ruto, congratulating him on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince wished President Ruto good health and wellness.

Also, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to President Dr Ruto on his country's National Day.



KUNA photo

Officials from the Public Authority of Manpower and Kuwait University at the exhibition.

Authority takes part in Hayat Ghalia fair

Media role important in raising social awareness, says PAM

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): The Public Authority of Manpower stressed on Tuesday the important role of media by participating in varieties of exhibitions and conferences to raise social awareness for different groups of people.

The authority said in a statement on the sideline of the Hayat Ghalia (your life is important) exhibition at Kuwait University Al-Shadadiya that they made sure to

be present at media exhibitions to support the youth and students by supporting their goals and providing them with guidance.

The authority added their responsibility to give attention to students and find ways to increase students' creativity, innovations, success, and scientific developments..

The Public Authority of Manpower participated in the exhibition to raise awareness about drugs and their effects on youth and society.

Council holds its 10th regular session

Municipal Council approves two-week spring break for members from Jan 7

By Inass Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Municipal Council, during its tenth regular session of the second term Sunday, headed by Abdullah Al-Mahri, approved the two-week spring break for its members from January 7 to January 22, 2024.

The following are the items approved by the Municipal Council during its session:

■ The letter submitted by the residents of Adailiya Residential area to stop the commercial exploitation of the Kuwait Football Association site in Adailiya.

■ Two proposals from member Abdulatif Al-Daei - the first regarding developing the main coastal road in Kuwait and making it attractive and suitable for pedestrians and cyclists, and the second regarding approving the traffic study before submitting the transaction to the Municipal Council.

■ The proposal submitted by member Sharifa Al-Shalfan for developing a strategy to illuminate Kuwait City and the Gulf Street, and reorganizing part of Qibla block 1.

■ The two proposals submitted by member Dr. Hassan Kamal, first regarding the establishment of service areas at the Kuwaiti border posts, and the second concerning the allocation of land for storage.

■ The request of the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) to amend the decision taken on 21/11/2004 by the committee tasked with carrying out the powers of the Municipal Council to license more than one place for one activity for each of the activities permitted in the capital's slaughterhouse and the central livestock market, and amend the names of activities to comply with the names of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

■ The annual statistical report for the fiscal year of 2022-2023

Approved

The Municipal Council decided to approve the objection of the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and the Minister of State for Communications Fahad Al-Shoula to nine articles related to the list of advertisements approved by the Council, and record the abstention of member Dr. Hassan Kamal.

In this regard, Dr. Kamal stressed that the minister's objection "is not permissible in this way, as there must be reasons that necessitate clarification of the reasons".

He said the minister has the right to refuse on the condition that he clarifies the details of the regulation, especially since the council members spent several months studying it to have it approved after its approval.

Dr. Kamal highlighted the members' keenness for the list to be issued in the correct manner, considering that using Article 25 would disrupt it, so he abstained from voting because of the minister's objections to it.

Also, a member Fahad Al-Abduljader affirmed that the minister's objections nullified the regulation entirely, saying, "Either Article 25 is activated or it passes without exaggerated objections".

A member Sharifa Al-Shalfan commented that, "the minister's objections contradict the methodology that was worked on by the committee for three months". He expressed his surprise at the rejection of some items.

Meanwhile, the Municipal Council referred to the executive branch of Kuwait Municipality the

proposal submitted by member Fahad Al-Abduljader regarding abandoned properties. It rejected the letter submitted by some residents regarding amending the status of their properties located in Sharq.

In addition, the representative of the technical office affiliated with the Office of the Minister of Municipality said, "The list of advertisements requires precise details. We appreciate the effort of the council members in approving it in the previous days.

The technical office tried as much as possible to issue the list in agreement with the Municipal Council, but there are some minute details. The technical office is ready to follow them up according to what the municipal council deems appropriate."

The Municipal Council retained the draft budget of the Kuwait Municipality for the fiscal year 2024-2025 on the table, as well as the question related to the allocation and licensing of cooking sites. It was satisfied with responding to member Kamal's question regarding the application of the advertising regulations.

Furthermore, the Municipal Council, during the meeting, decided to return to the Technical Committee a proposal from member Sharifa Al-Shalfan for preparing a building dismantling regulation based on a field study of the types of construction extracted and the local market, with the need to notify the executive body about this.

Evaluation

It also referred to the Reform and Development Committee the question submitted by member Ismail Behbehani about the evaluation criteria for highway projects "development and upgrading".

The Municipal Council referred to the executive branch, to update the response thereon, the proposal submitted by its Chairman Abdullah Al-Mahri regarding unifying the uses of the plots overlooking the main streets in Kuwait City.

It returned to the Technical Committee the proposal submitted by some members regarding the transfer of the use and ownership of some residential plots in Salmiya, Blocks 12, 66, 80 and 227.

The Municipal Council referred to the executive body to update the response to the proposal submitted by member Alia Al-Farsi regarding transferring and allocating a new site for uses and activities in Sharq and Dajeej, as well as South Khaitan suburb and north of the Amiri base at the airport.

It reserved for the next session the draft regulation regulating the cultivation of state-owned squares adjacent to private and model residential homes, but provided it with illustrative plans.

The Municipal Council also returned to the executive body the proposal for increasing the registration fees in the register of bidders and reconsidering the fees for selling auction documents and company qualification brochures, while obliging to prepare a technical study regarding it.

After merging the two transactions, the Municipal Council referred to the executive body the letter submitted by the Kuwait Association for Small and Medium Enterprises, in addition to excluding these projects from municipal fees for public road occupancy in order to prepare a technical and legal study regarding it.



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LOCAL



Above: Some photos from the 'shadow boxing' session.



Photos by Sameer Shiqer

Chinese 'shadow boxing' gains popularity in Kuwait

Director of the Chinese Cultural Center in Kuwait, Xia Jianfeng, says shadow boxing, or mock fighting, which is one of the most prominent elements of Chinese culture, and is part of the Chinese sport of Kung Fu, is becoming widely popular among the Kuwaitis, reports Al-Rai daily.

He pointed out this sport contributes to the mental and physical build-

up of those who practice it, and achieves harmony between humans and the environment.

On the sidelines of the lecture and presentation on the sport of shadow boxing, he said, this is the second event since the official opening of the center, pointing out that the Chinese Cultural Center seeks to introduce Chinese culture through its various activities.

He explained besides "shadow boxing", Kuwaitis, he feels are becoming more and more interested in Chinese culture and traditions, adding, "Next year we will have a series of diverse cultural events."

He pointed out that the second project is teaching the Chinese language, and "we hope that a large number of Kuwaitis will participate in learning our language."

40 tons of various supplies sent

Kuwait's 39th Gaza relief aid heads to Egypt

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12, (KUNA): The 39th Kuwait Gaza humanitarian aid airplane took off, Tuesday, to Egypt's Al-Arish airport carrying 40 tons of various supplies including four ambulances, food supplies and blankets.

Director of Public Relation and Media Department at Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Khaled Al-Zaid said in

a statement to KUNA that the society objective has always been to aid those in need, specially the people in Gaza.

Al-Zaid reminded people to donate through the society's website to help aid people in Gaza.

He added, that the KRCS would continue to send humanitarian aid to meet the needs of people in Gaza as well as

to support them against the Israeli occupation forces' continuous bombardment.

He praised the cooperation of both Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Foreign Affairs for providing all the necessary aircrafts, and making this procedure run successfully in stance with people of Gaza.

This is the

Continued from Page 1

lack the minimum limits stipulated in the law, this will undermine the work in the institutions, and will make the minister more like an employee of the parliamentarians.

People have become exhausted to-day financially, politically, and even socially. If the successive governments bear responsibility, the absence of an executive decision in the Council of Ministers, and the consolidation of the encroachment of parliamentarians on the government's powers have led to an increase in the paralysis of most, if not all, sectors of the state.

We are at the bottom of development in the failed sectors of education, health, sports, and economy. The neighboring countries have surpassed us by light years in development and progress in these sectors.

O leadership, this is the state of our country today, and it is capable of getting out of the impasse if it has the determination and the ability to carry out reform painfully and quickly without haste.

We pray, "Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from You. Truly, You are the Giver."

Breakthrough near

Continued from Page 1

Sources pointed out that the Kuwaiti side will confirm that the State of Kuwait is one of the countries that treats all workers in a humane manner, and that workers' rights are preserved in all aspects, and legal authorities often represent workers to obtain their entitlements and demands and provide everything they need.

Sources also confirmed that Kuwait is one of the countries protecting workers' rights and does not discriminate between one worker and another, and everyone is treated equally, and if there is an error committed by the employer, the necessary measures are taken regarding it.

Parliament approves

Continued from Page 1

servicing a three-year term must be rehabilitated for three years before he is allowed to resume his job and exercise his political rights like voting and standing for elections. This is applicable to those who already served prison time, granted amnesty or if the ruling is nullified due to seniority.

The amendment also stipulates that those ordered to pay fines are considered rehabilitated upon payment of the fine, granted amnesty or if the ruling is nullified due to seniority.

After completing half of the required rehabilitation period, those convicted are allowed to file an appeal to cancel the remaining period provided they exhibited good conduct during half of the rehabilitation period.

MP Muhammad Al-Sayer clarified that the bill has two sides -- political and social; indicating the beneficiaries are not only those convicted for political reasons but also the ordinary inmates who are suffering along with their families due to the long period of rehabilitation.

The bill has been ratified and referred to the government, but the latter is expected to refer the bill back to the Assembly considering it voted against the bill despite its previous announcement of support for the bill.

In addition, the Assembly discussed the report of the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee on amending Public Tenders Law number 49/2016 and Commercial Law number 68/1980.

The aim of the amendment is to cancel the requirement for foreign investors and international companies to

have local agents in order to participate in public tenders and engage in business activities in the country.

Article 31 of the current law number 49/2016 states that foreign investors and international companies can participate in public tenders provided they have a Kuwaiti partner or agent and they must be registered in the commercial log. These conditions are cancelled in the proposed amendment.

The proposal was approved in the first and second readings with 57 votes in favor and one against (MP Jenan Bu Shehri)

Rapporteur of the committee MP Abdulkareem Al-Kandari has affirmed the importance of the amendment as it will end the disruption of the implementation of development projects and higher cost compared to the neighboring countries. He pointed out that the local agents produce nothing, as they only take money from the producer and the consumer; hence, the prices of most commodities in Kuwait are higher compared to the prices in neighboring countries even though Kuwait does not impose any tax.

On the other hand, Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun called for a closed door session to discuss the resignation of acting Chairman of the State Audit Bureau (SAB) Adel Al-Saraawi.

Article 34 of SAB Law number 30/1964 states that the "chairman of the bureau should be appointed through an Amiri decree as per the nomination of the Assembly speaker, and that the nomination should be done behind closed doors."

Meanwhile, the Assembly approved the following incoming letters:

- Request of Petitions and Complaints Committee Chairman MP Hamdan Al-Azmi to refer complaint number 222 to the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee;

- Request of Values Enhancement and Combating Negative Phenomena Committee Chairman MP Muhammad Hayef for the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee to hand over the bills in its agenda to his committee as per Article 88 of the National Assembly Law;

- Request of MP Mehalhal Al-Mudhaf for the Environment, Food and Water Security Affairs Committee to submit a report on the negative effects of burning oil on the environment and compliance with the relevant international treaties;

- Request of Financial and Economic Affairs Committee Chairman MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri for one month extension of the grace period given to the committee to complete its report about the bills on developing the North Economic Zone;

- Request of MP Badr Sayyar for the Health, Social and Labor Affairs Committee to investigate the repeated complaints of citizens regarding the Health Office in London and submit its report to the Assembly within a couple of weeks;

- Request of Disabled Affairs Committee Chairman MP Soud Al-Asfour for his committee to present a report on the enforcement of Article 42bis of the Disabled Affairs Law stipulating the retroactive payment of the indemnity, as well as the classification of disabilities, especially for cases like having one eye or one ear;

- Request of MP Shuaib Shaaban for the Public Facilities Committee to investigate the obstacles to the construction plan for Jaber Al-Ahmad Residential City and Northwest Sulaibikhat and submit its report to the Assembly within three months;

- Request of MP Shuaib Shaaban for the Environment, Food and Water Security Affairs Committee to investigate the complaints of residents in Jaber Al-Ahmad City and Northwest Sulaibikhat about the high rate of pollution and environmental violations;

- Request of MPs Hamad Al-Matar and Shuaib Shaaban for the Public Facilities Committee to coordinate with the concerned institutions in order to solve the traffic problem caused by the wrong location of the main entrance to Jaber Al-Ahmad City and submit its report to the Assembly within three months, as well as conduct a study on

the bad conditions of the roads in Jaber Al-Ahmad City;

- Request of Chairman of the parliamentary committee tasked to investigate the armament deals (Eurofighter and Caracal helicopters) MP Adel Al-Damkhi to allow him to present the report of the committee to the Assembly's Secretariat General for the MPs to view in preparation for discussion in the upcoming session;

- Request of MP Mehalhal Al-Mudhaf for the Environment, Food and Water Security Affairs Committee to discuss the issues stated in the letter about the climate and environment in the country;

- Request of Parliamentary Priorities Committee Chairman MP Abdullah Fehad to discuss the reports of the committees on various bills before discussing the response to the Amiri speech and postpone discussion of the latter until Dec 13; in addition to discussing the reports on bills about the cost of living allowance and zero interest loans in the session slated for Dec 19, Foreigners Residency Law and real estate financing in the session scheduled for Dec 20, and to hold a special session on Dec 21 to finalize deliberations and voting on these bills;

- Request of MPs Hamad Al-Matar and Shuaib Shaaban for the Environment, Food and Water Security Affairs Committee to meet with the concerned institutions in order to discuss the issue of planting trees in Jaber Al-Ahmad City and Northwest Sulaibikhat and submit its report to the Assembly within three months;

- Request of Disabled Affairs Committee Chairman MP Soud Al-Asfour for his committee to investigate the rationale behind the exclusion of certain disabilities from the permanent disabilities stipulated in the relevant law.

Kuwait demands

Continued from Page 1

Elsewhere, up to 22 Palestinian civilians -- including children and women -- were killed, and others were injured Tuesday in the ongoing Israeli occupation forces' bombing of homes in the Rafah and Khan Yunis governorates in southern Gaza Strip.

Palestinian News Agency (Wafa) said that 20 civilians were killed, and dozens were injured, when occupation warplanes bombed a number of homes in Rafah, as there are still missing people under the rubble.

Two citizens were also killed, and two others were injured, in an Israeli artillery shelling on Khan Yunis, it said.

Kuwait rejects

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait is keen on joint Arab cooperation, said Al-Barrak who indicated that his country was one of the founding members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and also hosted the headquarters of the prestigious organization.

He affirmed that Kuwait's energy policy took into consideration the local and international aspects of the energy market, saying that as a founding member of the Organizations of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC), the State of Kuwait was keen on the stability of prices and the balance of global demand and supplies.

On the national level, Al-Barrak revealed that Kuwait was keen on safeguarding its petroleum resources, developing them to meet Kuwait's needs and income as well as providing topnotch products to the world.

He affirmed that there were strategies adopted by Kuwait to nationalize advance petroleum technologies and train national staff and labor to handle operations within Kuwait and abroad in addition to involve the private sector in the various stages of the petroleum industry.

MoE plans to open accounts clerk position in all schools

Bid to up internal control over fund, cafeteria

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Ministry of Education has started procedures to open accounting positions in public, private, religious and special education schools, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources from the academic sector.

Sources disclosed the ministry intends to open the accounts clerk position in every school with the approval of the Civil Service Commission (CSC). Sources explained there are several reasons for taking this step; including the fact that most school principals and assistant principals are not familiar with Ministerial Resolution number 197/2000, which regulates the school fund, disbursement and settlement operations, bank settlement account, and increased work load for principals and assistant principals, which affects the smooth functioning of schools.

Sources showed the effects of adding the accounts clerk position in schools and kindergartens; such as tightening internal control over the fund and school cafeteria, addressing comments of financial observers and the State Audit Bureau (SAB) regarding the assignment of accounting staff to workplaces that do not require accounting work.

Sources added the tasks of the accounts clerk in schools and kindergartens are to carry out work related to the financial fund, the school cafeteria, and all accounting work, including depositing amounts and reviewing invoices in accordance with the decisions regulating that, in coordination with the Financial Affairs Department.

Sources said the Administrative Affairs and Administrative Development Sector has asked the CSC to consider adding the clerk position in accordance with Ministerial Resolution number 20/2004 stating the definition, titles and conditions for filling up positions in the Administrative Department.

Drive to 'uncover' building violations

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: In implementation of the instructions of the Minister of State for Municipal and Communications Affairs Fahd Al-Shoula and Director General of Kuwait Municipality Eng Saud Al-Dabbous to intensify inspection campaigns by the municipal oversight bodies on building violations in private housing areas, the Public Relations Department, in coordination with the engineering audit and follow-up departments in the six governorates, organized an inspection campaign in the city of Al-Mutlaa to uncover construction work violations for the month of December, reports Al-Anba daily.

This campaign is aimed at ensuring the commitment of business owners and contractors tasked to implement projects, construction, restoration and excavation works to the regulations on obtaining licenses and other related rules.

Director of the Transactions Department in the Jahra branch of the Municipality Faisal Al-Budaivi clarified such campaigns are within the framework of the directives of the Municipality's senior management to implement the building regulations, reduce building violations in private housing areas and take measures against violators; stressing that the type of transactions carried out will be verified.



KUNA photos

Top and above: Some of the pavilions of companies participating in the exhibition.

'Mirzaam' Expo for interior design opens

By Abdullah Al-Khateeb

"Mirzaam" Expo -- the largest platform for decor and interior design in Kuwait -- began on Tuesday at Kuwait International Fair (KIF) in Mishref with the participation of more than 230 local and international companies.

The exhibition, which will con-

clude on December 16, encompasses more than 300 unique booths spanning over 30 categories of interior designs and decor.

Mirzaam Expo visitors are encouraged to buy what they need in one place from interior and exterior finishes, furniture, home accessories, kitchens, and all home supplies. (KUNA)

'Discover Vietnamese Cuisine' launched

Envoy eyes direct Vietnam flight in bid to attract Kuwaiti tourists

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: "Food is one of the most important elements of cultural exchange that provides a distinct mutual understanding between countries", reports Al-Qabas daily quoting Vietnamese Ambassador to Kuwait Ngo Thuan Thang.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 'Discover Vietnamese Cuisine' event recently, Thang pointed out that "people get to know each other better through food diplomacy."

A large group of citizens and members of the Vietnamese community in the country attended the event, in addition to a number of diplomats and media practitioners.

Through this event, Thang wants to

"introduce Kuwaitis to our food and help them understand our culture; so they can taste, experience and understand what Vietnamese food looks like, and then when they travel to Vietnam they will not find any difficulty in trying our cuisine."

Regarding direct flights between the two countries, the ambassador stated that "we do not have direct flights now, so those wishing to travel from Kuwait to Vietnam must travel via Dubai or Doha and then to Bangkok in Thailand, and then to Vietnam."

He disclosed that he is currently coordinating with Kuwait Airways about operating direct flights to his country, indicating "travel time from Kuwait to Vietnam is seven and a half hours, which is the same from Kuwait to Bangkok. Therefore, we are seeking to open a direct flight line between the two countries to attract Kuwaiti tourists." He added that "transit flights between Kuwait Airways and Vietnam Airlines via Bangkok will begin in March."



Thang

'Al-Zour Refinery ops resume following abrupt shutdown'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) has announced the resumption of operations for most units at the Al-Zour Refinery, following an abrupt shutdown caused by a gas leak incident in the second week of November last year, reports Al-Qabas daily.

KIPIC's spokesperson, Abdullah Fahad Al-Ajmi, mentioned that certain manufacturing units remained inactive

for operational reasons.

Additionally, KIPIC initiated scheduled maintenance activities on specific units of the Al-Zour Refinery, marking the first such maintenance since its commencement of operations in November of last year.

The maintenance work, the daily said, encompasses the primary atmospheric waste desulfurization unit (second track), the second unit (first track),

the first hydrogen production unit, and the gases desulfurization unit.

It is noteworthy that in early December, KIPIC successfully and safely completed the operation of certain units in the third and final refinery within the Al-Zour Petroleum Complex. This achievement aligns with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's 2040 strategy, marking a significant milestone for KIPIC.

World News Roundup

Europe

Challenges ahead

Newly elected Polish PM pledges 'strong' alliance

WARSAW, Poland, Dec 12, (AP): Poland's newly elected prime minister, **Donald Tusk**, vowed Tuesday that his government will be a stable ally of the United States and NATO and that it would work to mobilize the Western world to keep helping Ukraine.

In a wide-ranging inaugural speech to parliament, Tusk called on the nation's fractious political class to unite, saying it cannot afford divisions at a time when Russia is waging a war of aggression across Poland's border in Ukraine which many fear could spread if Moscow prevails.

"Poland's task, the new government's task, but also the task of all of us, is to loudly and firmly demand the full determination from the entire Western community to help Ukraine in this war," Tusk said in a ceremonial address attended by Ukraine's ambassador and former Polish presidents, including the anti-communist freedom fighter Lech Walesa. "I will do this from day one."

Tusk was elected by parliament on Monday and faces many challenges, from restoring democratic standards in his own country, working for the release of EU funding frozen due to democratic backsliding by his predecessors and facing the implications of the war just across Poland's and EU's eastern border in Ukraine.

Tusk said it hurts him to hear that Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has to keep trying to persuade world leaders about the need to continue supporting Kyiv's struggle against Russia. Ukraine's troubles are deepening as winter sets in and allies are growing tired of funding its defense.

"They say it to President Zelenskyy's face that they no longer have the strength, that they are exhausted," Tusk said.



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Harvard President Claudine Gay, left, speaks as University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill listens during a hearing of the House Committee on Education on Capitol Hill, Tuesday, Dec 5, 2023 in Washington. Gay will remain leader of the prestigious Ivy League school following her comments last week at a congressional hearing on antisemitism, the university's highest governing body announced Tuesday, Dec 12. (AP)

Harvard board keeps president as leader of Ivy League school

Harvard President Claudine Gay will remain leader of the prestigious Ivy League school following her comments last week at a congressional hearing on antisemitism, the university's highest governing body announced Tuesday.

"Our extensive deliberations affirm our confidence that President Gay is the right leader to help our community heal and to address the very serious

societal issues we are facing," the Harvard Corporation said in a statement following its meeting Monday.

Only months into her leadership, Gay came under intense scrutiny following the hearing in which she and two of her peers struggled to answer questions about campus antisemitism. Their academic responses provoked backlash from Republican op-

ponents, along with alumni and donors who say the university leaders are failing to stand up for Jewish students on their campuses. At issue was a line of questioning that asked whether calling for the genocide of Jews would violate the universities' code of conduct. At the hearing, Gay said it depended on the context, adding that when "speech crosses into conduct, that violates our policies." (AP)

Politics

Biden's aid package for Ukraine risks collapse

Zelenskyy arrives to grim Capitol Hill

WASHINGTON, Dec 12, (AP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived Tuesday on Capitol Hill to a darker mood than when he swooped in last winter for a hero's welcome, as the Russian invasion is grinding into a third year and U.S. funding hangs in the balance.

Zelenskyy's visit to Washington comes as President Joe Biden's request for an additional \$110 billion U.S. aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other national security needs is at serious risk of collapse in Congress. Republicans are insisting on strict U.S.-Mexico border security changes that Democrats decry as draconian in exchange for the overseas aid.

"It is maddening," said Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., a close ally of Biden. "A very bad message to the world, to the Ukrainian people."

The White House said the time was right for Zelenskyy's trip to Washington as Biden pushes lawmakers to approve the aid package before the year-end holidays. A top spokesman said the U.S. can't let Ukraine aid lapse, especially as the Israel-Hamas war has taken attention, and that the president was willing to make compromises with Republicans.

"This additional funding will absolutely help Ukraine claw back even more of their territory and kick the Russians right out of Ukraine," said the White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby on NBC.

But the prospects for a deal on Ukraine funding turned grim at the Capitol on the eve of Zelenskyy's arrival.

He made no comments as he entered

a private meeting with senators. He was next scheduled to visit new House Speaker Mike Johnson, then talk with Biden at the White House as the once robust bipartisan support for Ukraine was slipping further out of reach.

Ahead of Zelenskyy's high-stakes meetings, the White House late Monday pointed to newly declassified intelligence that shows Ukraine has inflicted heavy losses on Russia in recent fighting along the Avdiivka-Novopavlivka axis - including 13,000 casualties and over 220 combat vehicle losses. The Ukrainian holdout in the country's partly-occupied east has been the center of some of the fiercest fighting in recent weeks.

U.S. intelligence officials have determined that the Russians think if they can achieve a military deadlock through the winter it will drain Western support for Ukraine and ultimately give Russia the advantage, despite the fact that Russians have sustained heavy losses and have been slowed by persistent shortages of trained personnel, munitions and equipment.

"It is more critical now than ever that we maintain our support for Ukraine so they can continue to hold the line and regain their territory," said White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson. She added that Russian President Vladimir Putin "is clearly watching what happens in Congress - and we need Congress to act this month to support Ukraine in its time of need."

Republicans in Congress, fueled by Johnson's far-right flank in the House, have taken on an increasingly isolationist stance in U.S. foreign policy, demanding changes to American bor-

der and immigration policies in exchange for any funds to battle Putin's war in Ukraine.

Biden has expressed a willingness to engage with the Republicans as migrant crossings have hit record highs along the U.S.-Mexico border, but Democrats in his own party oppose proposals for expedited deportations and strict asylum standards as a return to Trump-era hostility towards migrants.

With talks at a standstill, one chief Republican negotiator, Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma, said there was nothing Zelenskyy could say during his visit with the senators to sway the outcome.

"Hey, pay attention to us, but not your own country? No," Lankford told reporters. "We've got to be able to deal with all these things together."

Zelenskyy, who visited Washington just months ago in September when the aid package was first being considered, is making his third trip to the Capitol since the war broke out in February 2022.

His surprise arrival days before Christmas last December was Zelenskyy's first wartime trip out of Ukraine and he received thunderous applause in Congress. Lawmakers sported the blue-and-yellow colors of Ukraine, and Zelenskyy delivered a speech that drew on the parallels to World War II as he thanked Americans for their support.

But 2023 brought a new power center of hard-right Republicans, many aligned with Donald Trump, the former president who is now the GOP front-runner in the 2024 race for the White House.



Russian national Maria Butina attends a meeting on human rights at the State Duma in Moscow, Russia, on Nov 22, 2019. Butina is a former covert Russian agent who spent more than a year in prison in the United States after admitting she sought to infiltrate conservative U.S. political groups and promote Russia's agenda around the time that Donald Trump rose to power. (AP)



Giuliani



DeSantis

America

Judge scolds Giuliani: The judge overseeing a Georgia election workers' defamation case scolded **Rudy Giuliani** on Tuesday for comments made outside the courthouse in which he insisted his false claims about the women were true.

U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell warned Giuliani's lawyer that the remarks his client made to reporters about Ruby Freeman and her daughter, Wandra "Shaye" Moss when leaving the courthouse a day earlier amounted to "defamatory statements about them yet again." The judge appeared incredulous, asking Giuliani's lawyer about the contradiction of his opening statements calling Freeman and Moss "good people" but then the former mayor repeating unfounded allegations of voter fraud.

"How are we supposed to reconcile that?" she asked the lawyer. Giuliani's lawyer, Joseph Sibley, conceded her point and told the judge he discussed the comments with his client, but added: "I can't control everything he does." He also argued that the mayor's age and health concerns make long days in court challenging. (AP)

DeSantis seeks dismissal: Attorneys for Gov. **Ron DeSantis** are asking a federal judge on Tuesday to dismiss a free speech lawsuit filed by Disney after the Florida governor took over Walt Disney World's governing district in retaliation for the company opposing a state law that banned classroom lessons on sexual orientation and gender identity in early grades.

The planned hearing is the first time oral arguments are being made in federal court in Tallahassee over Disney's claim that DeSantis used state powers to punish the entertainment giant in violation of the First Amendment. The governor's attorneys are arguing that the case should be dismissed, claiming DeSantis is immune since he doesn't enforce any of the laws that removed supervision of the government from Disney supporters. (AP)

Beshear sworn in for 2nd term: Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear renewed his oath of office early Tuesday during a ceremony

at Kentucky's Capitol, launching his second term after notching a convincing reelection victory that could offer a roadmap for his party's broader efforts to make inroads in

Republican strongholds. Beshear, 46, was sworn in shortly after midnight before a gathering of family, friends and supporters - a Bluegrass State ritual every four years to ensure continuity at the head of state government.

In a speech meant to resonate beyond Kentucky's borders, Beshear called for a governing style that embraces "compassion and empathy" and that rejects the politics of anger and division. (AP)

Prosecutors drop murder charges: Texas prosecutors have dropped murder charges against two people in the fatal stabbing of a 23-year-old Seattle woman as a trial continues with the third defendant.

The 2020 killing of Marisela Botello-Valadez drew international attention last year when two of the people arrested in her killing cut off their ankle monitors and left the country while free on bond.

The dismissal of charges comes only days after a Texas man who cut off his ankle monitor went on a shooting rampage, drawing renewed attention to questions about the use of technology in freeing people ahead of their trials.

The trial of Lisa Dykes, who still faces murder charges, began last week and continued Monday. But newly public court records show that a judge approved prosecutors' Friday motions to dismiss the murder charges against the other woman and a man also charged in Botello-Valadez's killing "in the interest of justice." (AP)



Abortion-rights supporters chant their objections at the Kentucky Capitol, April 13, 2022, in Frankfort, Ky. A pregnant woman in Kentucky who filed a lawsuit demanding the right to an abortion has learned her embryo no longer has cardiac activity, her attorneys said Tuesday, Dec 12, 2023. Her attorneys didn't immediately comment on what effect the development would have on the lawsuit filed last week in a state court in Louisville. (AP)

Lat/Am

'Useless and costly'

Mexico's Obrador plans to scrap regulatory agencies

MEXICO CITY, Mexico, Dec 12. (AP): Mexico's president vowed to try to eliminate almost all remaining government oversight and regulatory agencies before he leaves office on Sept. 30, claiming they are "useless" and cost too much.

"There are a lot of wasteful agencies that do not serve any purpose," President **Andrés Manuel López Obrador** said. "All of these supposedly autonomous agencies have to disappear."

He vowed to send a bill to Congress to eliminate the federal anti-monopoly commission and agencies regulating telecommunications, the energy market and access to government information.

The president has accused the anti-monopoly commission of trying to block his efforts to increase the power of government-owned oil and energy companies. He has claimed the information access agency processes too many freedom of information requests from the public.

It is unclear whether López Obrador has the votes in Congress to make the changes. Most of the agencies are enshrined in the Constitution, and changing it requires a two-thirds vote.

López Obrador's dislike of any kind of oversight, including separation of powers, has been a hallmark of his administration.

He has sought to cut funds for the judicial branch and eliminated requirements for environmental impact statements on government projects. He cut funds for the electoral watchdog organization and sought to limit its powers to enforce electoral rules.

López Obrador had previously mentioned his desire to eliminate external oversight agencies in 2020.

The watchdog groups were created by López Obrador's predecessors, often to regulate areas that were once state-dominated, like the oil and electricity industries. Those sectors were opened to private competition, something López Obrador also opposes.



Obrador

Guzmán's mother reported dead: The mother of convicted drug lord Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán has died in the northern state of Sinaloa, according to local media reports. Mexico's president acknowledged her death Monday and offered his "respect" to the family.

The head of Mexico's state media agency, Jenaro Villamil, wrote in his social media accounts that Consuelo Loera died Sunday. He did not state a cause of death and was not immediately available for comment.

Local media reported Loera died at a private hospital in Culiacán, Sinaloa, which is home to the cartel of the same name that her son helped to lead for about two decades before his arrest and extradition to the United States in 2017. The hospital declined to comment when contacted by The Associated Press.

Neither of the lawyers who have represented the drug lord's relatives in the past wished to comment to the AP on reports of Loera's death, but one of them, José Luis González Meza, confirmed it to CNN and Telemundo.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador expressed his "respect" to the family at his daily news briefing but did not confirm any details. "I was reading that she was quite old, and I don't have any further comment," he said.

Often criticized for his frequent trips - about five so far - to the drug lord's home township of Badiraguato, Sinaloa, López Obrador added that "any human being who dies deserves respect and consideration for their family."

Loera reportedly led a quiet life including frequent religious activities, but she rose to fame after she shook hands with López Obrador during an impromptu meeting on his visit to Badiraguato in 2020. She also won the president's support for her request in 2019 to get a visa to visit her son, who is serving a life sentence in the United States.

López Obrador said he helped her "like any mother asking me for support for her son."

In a March 2020 letter, Loera wrote that she was 92 years old at the time, which would have put her current age at 95. In the letter, she pushed for her son to be returned to Mexico to serve out his sentence.

López Obrador has been largely unwilling to speak ill of Mexico's drug lords and their families, saying they "may have been forced to take the wrong path of anti-social activities because of a lack of opportunities" but were deserving of consideration and respect.

Guyana-Venezuela leaders to meet: The leaders of Guyana and Venezuela have expressed their intentions to cooperate as they prepare to meet this week to address an escalating dispute over a region rich in oil and minerals. But their diametrically different positions over the role the International Court of Justice should have in the disagreement appeared impossible to reconcile on Monday.

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and other officials insist the world court cannot settle the century-old dispute. Guyana President Irfaan Ali said Sunday the tribunal is the appropriate venue to solve the matter.

Guyana presented the case to the court in 2018, but Venezuela insists that was a violation of a 1960s agreement between the neighboring South American countries.

In a letter Monday to Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which will host the high-level meeting on Thursday, Maduro said that imposing the International Court of Justice as an authority in seeking a solution to the dispute was a violation "of the principle of mutual consent already agreed upon between the parties."

This threatens to cause a "deterioration of the situation," Maduro wrote.

The dispute over Essequibo, which represents two-thirds of Guyana and borders Venezuela, worsened after Venezuela's Dec. 3 referendum on claiming sovereignty over the region located near massive oil deposits.

Venezuela maintains Essequibo was within its boundaries during the Spanish colonial period, and rejects the border drawn by international arbitrators in 1899, when Guyana was under British rule. Venezuelan officials also argue that a 1966 agreement between their country, Britain and the colony of British Guiana effectively nullified the original arbitration.

Ali said he would travel in good faith to St. Vincent, an island in the eastern Caribbean. Guyana will not negotiate with Venezuela, he added, insisting the case be heard by the International Court of Justice in the Netherlands as planned.

"The world is behind us," he said.



An army soldier examines damages on the site of a bombing at a police station on the outskirts of Dera Ismail Khan, Pakistan, Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2023. A suicide bomber detonated his explosive-laden vehicle at a police station's main gate in northwest Pakistan on Tuesday, killing several policemen and wounding more than dozens others, officials said. Some militants also opened fire and a shootout between them and security forces was still ongoing, police officer Kamal Khan said. (AP)

Suicide bomber attacks police station in northwest Pakistan, killing 23 officers and wounding 32

A suicide bomber detonated his explosive-laden vehicle at a police station's main gate in northwest Pakistan early Tuesday, killing at least 23 troops and wounding 32 others, and causing a part of the building to collapse upon impact, the military and officials said.

The suicide attack - one of the deadliest attacks since January - led to "multiple casualties," Pakistan's army said in a statement. It added that six militants also opened fire and a shootout ensued for hours between them and security forces before "the terrorists" were gunned down. Local police officials

also confirmed all six attackers were dead. Separately, the statement said that "troops killed 27 insurgents" in multiple operations in the same region.

The death toll from Tuesday's attack was likely to rise as some of the officers were in critical condition, authorities said. The bodies of the 23 security forces killed were transferred to a hospital, Mohammad Adnan, a senior police official told reporters.

The attack targeted the Daraban police station in Dera Ismail Khan, a city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

province bordering Afghanistan, local police officer Kamal said. The province is a former stronghold of the militant Pakistani Taliban group, also known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP.

The newly formed militant group Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan, or TJP - believed to be an offshoot of the TTP - claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement, saying it targeted the officers who were at the police station. The statement also claimed that 20 officers were killed. However, this couldn't be independently verified. (AP)



Rina Ganoi, former member of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Forces, speaks to the media after a ruling at the Fukushima District Court in Fukushima, northeastern Japan, Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2023. A Japanese court on Tuesday convicted three former soldiers in a sexual assault case that authorities had dropped until the victim, a former service member, came forward demanding a reinvestigation, prompting a military-wide harassment probe. (AP)



Misuzulu



Ramaphosa

Africa

SA overturns recognition of Zulu: A South African court has overturned President **Cyril Ramaphosa's** decision to recognize **Misuzulu kaZwelithini** as the king of the country's 15 million-strong Zulu nation in what may spark a lengthy battle for the throne.

Ramaphosa has now been ordered to launch an investigation into objections by some members of the Zulu royal house that the correct processes were not followed in selecting kaZwelithini as the rightful heir to the throne.

KaZwelithini was chosen as the new king last year after the death of his father, King Goodwill Zwelithini.

He was recognized by Ramaphosa as the new king and handed a recognition certificate, but some of his siblings have challenged the process and insisted that he is not the rightful heir to the throne and that due processes were not followed in choosing him. (AP)

Terrorism charges for fire suspect: A man charged with terrorism and other offenses over a 2022 fire that badly damaged South Africa's historic Parliament complex in Cape Town was declared unfit to stand trial by a court on Monday.

Zandile Mafe was diagnosed with schizophrenia by an expert panel in a report, and a judge in the Western Cape High Court ruled that he agreed with the assessment. Judge Nathan Erasmus said that Mafe wasn't able to understand the charges against him.

Mafe has said he's fit to stand trial and has admitted in previous court hearings to starting the blaze in January 2022. He said he did it in protest against Parliament, the local government in Cape Town and the national government. He said all of them have failed South Africa's people. (AP)

Asia

Record-low voter numbers in Hong Kong elections

China's Xi in Vietnam to boost ties

HANOI, Vietnam, Dec 12. (AP): Chinese leader Xi Jinping arrived in Vietnam on Tuesday seeking to further deepen ties with the Southeast Asian nation, weeks after it elevated its diplomatic relations with Western-aligned countries.

In his first visit since 2017, Xi will meet with Communist Party General Secretary **Nguyen Phu Trong**, President **Vo Van Thuong** and Prime Minister **Pham Minh Chinh**, Vietnam's Foreign Ministry said.

"This reflects Beijing's concerns about Hanoi's advances with the West," said **Nguyen Khac Giang**, a visiting fellow with the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore. "Concerns that Vietnam may join an anti-China alliance and gang up against China."

The Chinese leader received a red carpet welcome as **Chinh** greeted him on the tarmac. Dozens of Chinese and Vietnamese nationals gathered at the airport, waving Chinese and Vietnamese flags to welcome Xi and his wife, **Peng Liyuan**, who accompanied him on the visit.

Xi's visit marks 15 years of China being a "comprehensive strategic partner" of Vietnam, the highest official designation for a diplomatic relationship.

Vietnam plays an increasingly important strategic role in security and the economy in Southeast Asia. Ideologically, Vietnam is closer to Beijing. It is run by a Communist Party with strong ties to China. But in recent months, Vietnam has signaled closer ties with Western countries.

In September, U.S. President **Joe Biden** visited Vietnam to mark the U.S. being elevated to the same diplomatic status as China. Biden asserted that the stronger ties were not about countering China, though U.S. diplomacy across Asia and the Pacific has been focused

on improving defense ties with countries to do just that.

In November, Japan and Vietnam boosted their economic and security ties, citing a "free and open Indo-Pacific," with Japan being given the same diplomatic status as China and the U.S. Japan has been rapidly developing closer ties with Vietnam and is its third-largest foreign investor.

Experts say Vietnam is hedging against its large neighbor and its geographical claims. "You can see that they're flexible and balancing big powers," said **Nguyen Thanh Trung**, a professor of Vietnamese studies at Fulbright University Vietnam.

Vietnam is one of several countries to clash with China in the disputed South China Sea, particularly on two archipelagos, the Spratlys and the Paracel Islands. It has faced off with China's coast guard in the past in the disputed waters. Vietnam usually does not publicize the confrontations.

In October, Xi told the Vietnamese president that amid "changing international landscapes" the two nations should continue to develop their "traditional friendship."

The two spoke after attending China's Belt and Road Forum. Vietnam is likely to sign some infrastructure agreements with Beijing, as it has paid close attention to the development of the Chinese-built high-speed rail in Laos, completed in 2021.

"The Vietnamese prime minister wants to focus on more infrastructure," said **Nguyen**, the professor. "He thinks it's key to economic growth."

China has been Vietnam's largest trading partner for several years, with a bilateral trade turnover of \$175.6 billion in 2022. Imports from China, including crucial inputs for Vietnam's manufacturing sector, make up 67%,

according to Vietnam customs data cited by Vietnamese state media.

However, the trade is at a deficit in China's favor.

China has over \$26 billion invested in Vietnam, with more than 4,000 active projects.

Also:

HONG KONG: Hong Kong leader **John Lee** on Tuesday praised the 27.5% voter turnout in the city's weekend election, a record low since the territory returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Sunday's district council election was the first held under new rules introduced under Beijing's direction that effectively shut out all pro-democracy candidates.

"The turnout of 1.2 million voters has indicated that they supported the election, they supported the principles," Lee said at a news conference.

"It is important that we focus our attention on the outcome of the election, and the outcome will mean a constructive district council, rather than what used to be a destructive one," he said.

Sunday's turnout was significantly less than the record 71.2% of Hong Kong's 4.3 million registered voters who participated in the last election, held at the height of anti-government protests in 2019, which the pro-democracy camp won by a landslide.

Lee said there was resistance to Sunday's election from prospective candidates who were rejected under the new rules for being not qualified or lacking the principles of "patriots" administering Hong Kong.

"There are still some people who somehow are still immersed in the wrong idea of trying to make the district council a political platform for their own political means, achieving their own gains rather than the district's gain," he said.

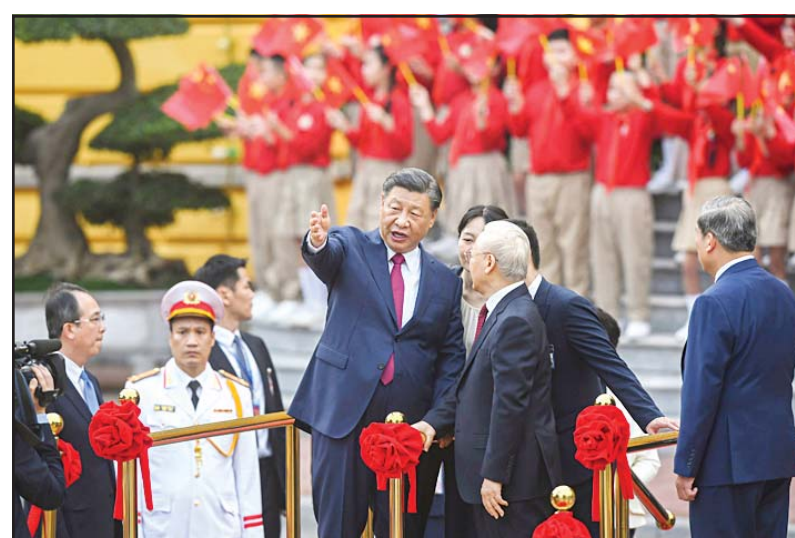
Congo-Rwanda tensions escalate:

Tensions between Congo and Rwanda have escalated, heightening the risk of a military confrontation that could draw in Burundi, the top U.N. official in Congo warned the Security Council on Monday.

Special representative **Bintou Keita's** warning came shortly before the ambassadors from Congo and Rwanda traded accusations in the council, and nine days ahead of Congo's Dec. 20 presidential election, in which President **Felix Tsh**

isekedi is seeking a second term against two dozen candidates.

As voting nears, Congo's government is also doubling down on a push to have regional and international peacekeeping forces withdraw, including the U.N.'s more than 17,700-member force. A regional force of officers from East African countries began leaving eastern Congo's largest city, Goma, last week. (AP)



China's President Xi Jinping, center left, and Vietnam's Communist Party General Secretary **Nguyen Phu Trong**, center right, attend a welcome ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Hanoi, Vietnam, Tuesday Dec. 12, 2023. (AP)

UN Mali mission ends: The United Nations ended its 10-year peacekeeping mission in Mali on Monday following the government's request that alleged the force was inadequate to respond to growing violent extremism in the West African nation.

"The Malian terrain was vast and difficult," the commander of the 13,000-strong force, **Maj. Gen. Mamadou Gaye**, told the closing ceremony in Bamako, the capital.

The U.N. effort in Mali has been the deadliest peacekeeping mission in the world, with more than 300 personnel killed.

Landlocked Mali has struggled to contain an Islamic extremist insurgency since 2012. Extremist rebels were forced from power in northern cities the following year with the help of a French-led military operation. But rebels regrouped in the desert and began launching attacks on the Malian army and its allies - which soon included the U.N. force. (AP)

USD stable

The exchange rate of the US Dollar on Tuesday stood at KD 0.308 and the Euro at KD 0.331, compared to Monday's rates.

The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said in its online daily bulletin that the British Pound Sterling went up to KD 0.387, the Swiss Franc to KD 0.351, while the Japanese Yen firmed at KD 0.002. (KUNA)

oil price up

The Kuwait oil price rose 67 cents to USD 79.49 per barrel on Monday, as opposed to USD 78.82 pb last Friday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday.

In international markets, Brent crude went up by 19 cents to USD 76.03 per barrel and West Texas Intermediate rose nine cents to USD 71.32 pb. (KUNA)

In a strategic move toward harnessing the untapped potential of Iraq's solar landscape, Sungrow is taking the lead in shaping the nation's green energy sector. Iraq's Minister of Oil, Ihsan Abdul Jabbar, stressed the importance for Arab countries to prioritize high-efficiency, low-cost energy production to foster a modern economy. The country has set a target to install 12 gigawatts of renewable energy, accounting for 33% of the country's electricity by 2030.

Spearheading this initiative, Lei Wu, the Acting Chief Operating Officer of Sungrow MENA

Sungrow spearheads Iraq's renewable energy revolution

region, emphasized the significance of bringing cutting-edge technology to tackle Iraq's long-standing electricity shortage, ultimately enhancing the availability of reliable and high-quality electricity for its residents. Iraq faces a substantial electricity shortage, with nearly one-third of its supply coming from imports, including natural gas, according to Reuters.

With 8 to 10 hours of daily sunshine and an annual average of 3,000 to 3,650 hours, the region is poised for large-scale PV deployment. Wu outlines three key avenues for PV expansion in Iraq: utility-scale power plants,

commercial and industrial (C&I) installations, and residential solutions.

Iraq's \$680 million fund for clean energy development supports these efforts, demonstrating the government's ambition to build a green economy and foster international cooperation aiming for this goal.

As the demand for solar power grows in Iraq, Iraq emerges as a burgeoning solar market. However, the underdeveloped power grid in Iraq presents challenges that demand higher standards for both products and technologies. (PR Newswire)

Market Movements

12-12-2023

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts		
JAPAN	- Nikkei	+51.90	32,843.70	EGYPT	- EGX 30	-110.40	24,071.66
PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	+402.61	66,390.63				
PHILIPPINES	- PSEI	+64.10	6,292.39				
SAUDI	- Tawadul	+14.05	11,395.00				
UAE	- DFM	+2.76	3,937.28				

Business

Kuwait telephone device imports surge in Q2 2023

Land vehicles and jewelry among key imports

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: During the second quarter of 2023, Kuwait experienced a noteworthy increase in the import of telephone devices, with the total value reaching 108.76 million dinars. This reflected a 5.2% surge, amounting to an additional 5.4 million dinars compared to the same period in 2022 when the figure stood at 103.29 million dinars, as reported by the Central Administration of Statistics.

The broader data on merchandise imports to Kuwait during the same quarter demonstrated a relatively modest uptick of 12 million dinars. The overall value rose from 2.859 billion dinars in the second quarter of 2022 to 2.871 billion dinars in the second quarter of 2023. Notable items in Kuwait's import portfolio included motor vehicles for transporting people, valued at 396 million dinars. Additionally, the country imported jewelry and its parts amounting to 108 million dinars. The import of various land vehicles, such as cars, tractors, and bicycles, totaled approximately 488 million dinars during the second quarter of 2023.

Imports

Specifically, Kuwait's import of gold experienced a decrease, totaling about 63.5 million dinars in the second quarter of 2023, representing a decline of 46.6 million dinars compared to the same period in 2022 when the figure stood at 110 million dinars. Other noteworthy imports during this quarter included cosmetics, valued at 29.8 million dinars, an increase from 28.8 million dinars in the same period the previous year. Additionally, T-shirts worth 17.4 million dinars were imported during the second quarter of 2023, a decrease from 24.4 million dinars in the corresponding period of 2022.

The merchandise imports of Kuwait during the second quarter of 2023 covered a diverse range of items. Notably, imports of natural or cultured pearls, precious and semi-precious stones, precious metals, and ordinary metals coated with precious metals amounted to 176.23 million dinars. The country also imported dairy products and dairy derivatives, with a total value of 57.1 million dinars during the period from April to June 2023.

Exports

Contrastingly, the total value of Kuwait's exports during the second quarter of 2023 reached approximately 6.1 billion dinars. Among these exports, petroleum oils and oils extracted from nearby minerals "raw" contributed about 3.7 billion dinars. Other significant exports included petroleum oils and oils extracted from non-ore minerals, amounting to 1.7 million dinars, and propane exports totaling 124 million dinars.

Despite the notable surge in imports, Kuwait's trade balance surplus in the second quarter amounted to about 3.2 billion dinars. However, this indicated a decrease compared to the second quarter of 2022, which witnessed a surplus of 5.8 billion dinars.

Analyzing the countries contributing to Kuwait's imports, China emerged as the leading exporter during the second quarter of 2023, with the volume of Kuwait's imports from China reaching approximately 569.6 million dinars. The United Arab Emirates followed in second place with an export value of 274.9 million dinars, succeeded by the United States of America with an export value of 266.9 million dinars. Japan secured the fourth position with a value of 197.66 million dinars.

On the flip side, Kuwait's exports to America were ranked sixth among Gulf countries, with a value of \$57 million in October 2023. This marked a decline from \$261 million during the same period in 2022. Concurrently, the value of Kuwait's imports from the United States amounted to about \$231.9 million, showcasing a decrease from \$297 million in the corresponding period of the previous year.

First funding under chips act

Biden administration allocates \$35 mln incentive for military chips production

WASHINGTON, Dec 12, (AP) - The Biden administration said it would provide \$35 million to BAE Systems to increase production at a New Hampshire factory making computer chips for military aircraft, including F-15 and F-35 jets.

This is the first allocation of incentives from last year's bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act, which provides more than \$52 billion to boost the development and manufacturing of semiconductors in the United States.

The Commerce Department's choice of a military contractor instead of a conventional chip manufacturer reveals the national security focus of the law, as more and more weapons systems depend on advanced chips that could be decisive in both preventing and fighting wars.

President Joe Biden signed the incentives into law in August 2022 partly out of concerns that a military attack on Taiwan could deprive the world of advanced computer chips and plunge the U.S. into a recession.

"We can't gamble with our national security by depending solely on one part of the world or even one country for crucial advanced technologies," said Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, who called the investments a "once in a generation opportunity to advance our national and economic security and create a thriving, long-lasting domestic semiconductor manufacturing industry."

The coronavirus pandemic revealed the fragility of computer chip supplies as a worldwide shortage curbed U.S. auto production and pushed up prices around the start of Biden's presidency.

Biden in a statement said the incentives his administration is providing have already led to more than \$230 billion in planned investments in semiconductors and electronics.

Potential heir apparent to CEO

Boeing promotes Pope to COO

ARLINGTON, Dec 12, (AP) - Boeing has promoted the head of its services business to chief operating officer, putting the female executive in discussion as a potential heir apparent to CEO David Calhoun in a male-dominated industry.

Boeing said Monday that Stephanie Pope's elevation to the job, which includes the title of executive vice president, takes effect Jan. 1.

Pope has spent nearly 30 years at Boeing, holding down key financial jobs in the company's defense, commercial airplanes and services divisions. She became CEO of the services unit last year.

Some industry observers were quick to tap Pope, 51, as a contender to become the aerospace company's next CEO. Richard Aboulafia, managing director of aerospace consultant AeroDynamic Advisory, named Pope and Chief Financial Officer Brian West as potential successors to

Calhoun.

Calhoun, 66, has held the top job since January 2020, when he replaced Dennis Muilenburg, who was fired during the fallout from two fatal crashes involving Boeing 737 Max jets. Calhoun, however, has shown no indication that he plans to retire anytime soon.

Days after Calhoun turned 64 in 2021, Boeing raised the retirement age for CEO from 65 to 70 - he won't reach that age until early 2028. In February of this year, the company board gave Calhoun a \$5.3 million retention grant that doesn't vest until 2025.

Boeing has struggled with manufacturing and supply-chain problems that have interrupted production of the Max and a larger airliner, the 787 Dreamliner. It has also suffered setbacks in military programs, including a contract with the U.S. Air Force to build two new presidential jets.

Biden has gone to a planned Intel factory in Ohio and a new Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. plant in Arizona, as well as touted in New York investments by IBM. The president has made these financial commitments part of his pitch to voters ahead of the 2024 elections, saying his policies have energized the U.S. economy.

"Over the coming year, the Department of Commerce will award billions more to make more semiconductors in America, invest in research and devel-

opment capabilities to keep America at the forefront of new technologies," Biden said in a statement.

Government officials said the investment in the BAE Systems' facility will ultimately save money for taxpayers. The money being paid out as the company hits benchmarks will help quadruple the plant's production capacity, helping to halve the price of making the chips and leading to net savings for the federal agencies buying the chips.



People walk in front of an electronic stock board showing Japan's Nikkei 225 index at a securities firm Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2023, in Tokyo. Asia markets opened higher following a positive close on Wall Street. Investors are eagerly awaiting a crucial U.S. inflation report later in the day, which will likely set the tone for the Federal Reserve's final meeting of the year on Wednesday. (AP)

Falling gas prices offset rising food costs, inflation at 3.1%

US inflation 'slows' in November as Fed prepares to assess interest rates

WASHINGTON, Dec 12, (AP) - This year's steady slowdown in U.S. inflation likely continued in November, though the latest data may also point to steadily higher prices in some areas of the economy.

Tuesday's inflation report from the Labor Department is expected to show that businesses kept overall prices unchanged for a second straight month.

Falling gas prices, in particular, are thought to have offset a rise in food costs from October to November. And compared with a year earlier, inflation is expected to ease to 3.1% from 3.2% in October, according to a survey of economists by FactSet.

But a closely watched category called "core prices," which excludes volatile food and energy costs, is predicted to rise 0.3% from October to November - a monthly pace that far outpaces the Federal Reserve's 2% annual inflation target. On a year-over-year basis, core prices are expected to increase 4%, the same as in October.

The Fed considers core prices to be a better guide to the likely path of inflation. Analysts say that increases in the costs of hotel rooms, airfares and possibly used cars might have accelerated core prices in November.

Gas prices, by contrast, have tumbled since September, having reached a national average of about \$3.35 a gallon in mid-November, from a peak of \$5 about a year and a half ago, according to AAA. The national average has since fallen further and hit \$3.15 a gallon Monday.

Grocery store inflation has proved especially persistent and a drain on many households' finances. Food prices remain about 25% higher than they were two years ago.

If core prices did rise 4% in November from a year earlier for a second straight month, it would provide support for the Fed's expected decision Wednesday to keep

its benchmark interest rate unchanged for a third straight time. Chair Jerome Powell and other Fed officials have welcomed inflation's steady fall from 9.1% in June 2022 to 3.2% in October. But they have cautioned that the pace of price increases is still too high for the Fed to let down its guard.

As a result, even if the central bank is done raising rates, it's expected to keep its benchmark rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, at a peak for at least several more months.

Powell has even warned that the Fed might decide to raise rates again if it deems it necessary to defeat high inflation. The Fed raised its key short-term rate 11 times starting in March 2022, to 5.4%, the highest level in 22 years. Its goal has been to increase the costs of mortgages, auto loans, business borrowing and other credit to slow spending enough to further cool inflation.

Inflation has eased much faster this year than economists and Fed officials had expected. According to a separate inflation gauge that the Fed prefers, core prices rose 3.5% in October compared with 12 months earlier. That was less than the central bank's forecast of 3.7% for the final three months of this year.

Inflation's steady decline has sparked speculation about interest rate cuts next year, with some economists floating the potential for cuts as early as March. The Fed's preferred inflation gauge has increased at an annual pace of just 2.5% in the past six months.

But Powell has so far brushed aside the idea that the Fed might cut rates anytime soon. He is expected to say so again Wednesday.

"It would be premature," Powell said earlier this month, "to speculate" on the possibility of Fed rate cuts.

Powell downplays imminent rate reduction

WASHINGTON, Dec 12, (AP) - With inflation edging closer to the Federal Reserve's 2% target, its policymakers are facing - and in some cases fueling - hopes that they will make a decisive shift in policy and cut interest rates next year, possibly as soon as spring.

Such a move would reduce borrowing costs across the economy, making mortgages, auto loans and business borrowing less expensive. Stock prices could rise, too, though share prices have already risen in expectation of cuts, potentially limiting any further rise.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell, though, has recently downplayed the idea that rate reductions are nearing. With the central bank poised to keep its key short-term rate unchanged when it meets this week, Powell hasn't yet signaled that the Fed is conclusively done with its hikes. Speaking recently at Spelman College in Atlanta, the Fed chair cautioned that "it would be premature to conclude with confidence" that the Fed has raised its benchmark rate high enough to fully defeat inflation.

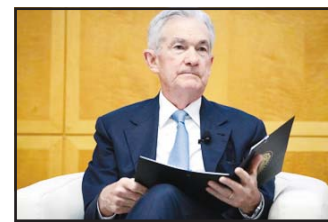
But the Fed's two-day meeting that ends Wednesday will mark the third straight time that its officials have kept their key rate unchanged, lending weight to the widespread assumption that rate hikes are over.

The economy, after all, is headed in the direction the Fed wants: On Tuesday, when the government releases the November inflation report, it's expected to show that annual consumer price increases slowed to 3.1%, according to a survey of economists by FactSet, down sharply from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022.

And job openings have declined, which means companies are less desperate to hire and feel less pressure to sharply raise wages, which can accelerate inflation. Consumers are still spending, though more modestly, and the economy is still expanding.

Such trends suggest progress toward what economists call a "soft landing," in which inflation reaches the Fed's 2% target without causing a recession. Analysts are increasingly encouraged by what they say is an unusually smooth adjustment to lower inflation.

That sunnier outlook represents a shift in thinking. Last year, many economists had insisted that defeating inflation would require a sharp



Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell is introduced at the Jacques Polak Research Conference at the International Monetary Fund, Thursday, Nov. 9, 2023, in Washington. The Fed is set to leave interest rates unchanged while facing speculation about eventual rate cuts. (AP)

recession and high unemployment. In fact, falling inflation, without an accompanying recession or job losses, is "historically unprecedented," economists at Goldman Sachs wrote in a recent note.

Austan Goolsbee, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, said in an interview with The Associated Press last month that the United States is on track this year for the fastest annual drop in inflation on record. If so, Goolsbee said, the result could be a "bigger soft landing than conventional wisdom believes has ever been possible."

That said, a soft landing is hardly a sure thing. If, for example, the Fed miscalculated and kept interest rates too high for too long, it could eventually derail the economy and tip it into a recession.

Recession

"There's more risk of a recession than a re-acceleration in inflation at these interest rates," said Julia Coronado, president of MarcoPolicy Perspectives, an economic research firm. "So ultimately, the next move is likely to be a cut because of that."

The timing of any rate cuts will depend on the health of the economy. A recession - or the threat of one - would likely prompt more, and earlier, interest rate reductions by the Fed.

Yet Friday's jobs report for November showed that businesses are still adding jobs at a healthy pace, and the unemployment rate dropped to a low 3.7% from 3.9%. Such figures suggested that the most-anticipated recession in decades is not imminent. Investors have since pushed back their expectations for the first Fed rate cut

from March to May.

The Fed could cut rates this year even if the economy plows ahead, as long as inflation kept falling. A steady slowdown in price increases would have the effect of raising inflation-adjusted interest rates, thereby making borrowing costs higher than the Fed intends. Reducing rates, in this scenario, would simply keep inflation-adjusted borrowing costs from rising.

Yet economists say any rate cuts in response to lower inflation may take longer than Wall Street expects because the Fed will want to be sure inflation is in check before making such a move.

Jim Bullard, former president of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and now dean of Purdue University's business school, said that while he thinks the Fed is on track for a soft landing, the policymakers must be cautious about rate cuts.

"I don't think you want to be too early on that, because if you start the process of cutting the policy rate and then inflation goes back up, I think that could cause a lot of problems," Bullard said. Such premature cuts have been blamed for the Fed's failure to quell inflation in the 1970s.

And if job gains and economic growth remain healthy, then perhaps rate cuts aren't needed anytime soon, Bullard added.

"Why lower the policy rate if the real economy is doing just fine?" he asked. "You might as well just sit back and enjoy the disinflation."

Either way, when the Fed issues its quarterly economic projections Wednesday, they will include a forecast of where its policymakers think their key rate will be at the end of 2024. Coronado expects only two rate cuts to be penciled in - half the number that financial markets now expect.

If the Fed does cut rates twice in 2024, the first one may not occur until as late as fall. Nancy Vanden Houten, lead U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, says her firm doesn't expect the first rate cut until the third quarter of the year.

"The Fed is going to want to see a bit more progress before contemplating rate cuts," she said. "Financial markets have gotten pretty ahead of themselves in our view. We think rate hikes are done, but it's going to be many months before the Fed starts cutting rates."

BUSINESS

Hasbro cuts 1,100 jobs, or 20% of its workforce

Toy maker Hasbro said Monday it is cutting about 1,100 jobs, or 20% of its workforce, as the malaise in the toy business extends through another holiday shopping season.

The nearly century-old Rhode Island-based company behind Monopoly, Play-Doh and My Little Pony toys disclosed the layoffs in a memo to employees published in a regulatory filing. The Wall Street Journal first reported the news.

The company said that the reductions are on top of 800 job cuts that have been taken so far in 2023 as part of moves announced last year to save up to \$300 million annually by 2025. As of year-end 2022, the company said it had 6,490 employees.

Like many toy companies, Hasbro is struggling with a slowdown in sales after a surge during pandemic lockdowns when parents were splurging on toys to keep their

children busy. Last holiday season, many toy companies had to slash prices to get rid of merchandise due to weak demand. And the challenges have continued. Toy sales in the U.S. were down 8% from January through August, based on Circana's most recent data.

"The market headwinds we anticipated have proven to be stronger and more persistent than planned," Hasbro CEO Chris Cocks wrote in the memo. (AP)

Sinopec highlights CCUS achievements at COP 28

China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation's (Sinopec) has highlighted the key achievements in carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) and released the first 10-year performance report supporting the "Belt and Road" Initiative ("BRI") at the "Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage Progress in China" and "The World Conference on Best Practicing of Carbon Neutrality" on China Pavilion side events host-

ed during the COP28 held from November 30 to December 12 in Dubai, showcasing Sinopec's green and low-carbon actions.

CCUS is the carbon reduction process of capturing and making effective use of CO2 from industrial-sourced emissions, a technology with the potential to significantly reduce emissions on a large scale and be a key component on the path to achieve carbon neutrality.

In 2022, Sinopec officially started to operate the megatonne Qilu-Shengli CCUS project, a milestone for China's CCUS industry phasing in mature commercial operation. It is China's first megatonne CCUS demonstration project and is estimated to reduce carbon emissions by 1 million tonnes per year, the equivalent of planting nearly 9 million trees. (PRNews-wire)

Agreement seen as a watershed moment

Belgian, Port Houston and Partners sign MoU on energy transition co-op

HOUSTON, Dec 12, (BUSINESS WIRE): H.E. Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister of Belgium, witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Energy Transition Cooperation between three Belgian and three Houston-based partners to boost transatlantic cooperation on the green transition. The Center for Houston's Future, Waterstofnet, Port Houston, the Port of Antwerp-Bruges, Exmar, and the Blue Sky Maritime Coalition agreed to explore a win-win partnership around an import-export coalition for renewable and low-carbon molecules, a green shipping corridor and the exchange of best practices, knowledge and research.

The changing regulatory landscape and ambitious climate targets on both sides of the Atlantic provide the background for ambitious cooperation. The Greater Houston area is home to some of the biggest energy producers in the world, and the increase in the production of renewable and low-carbon energy offers perspectives for future export.

Belgium is a strategic energy hub in the heart of Europe, including for the import and transit of renewable and low-carbon molecules, with the Port of Antwerp-Bruges as a crucial gateway with extensive storage capacity and connectivity to European markets and huge off-take.

Houston and Antwerp are the biggest petrochemical clusters in the world; many Belgian and US companies are present on both sides, and the long-standing commercial maritime connection between both ports is a backbone for cooperation.

The signing of this Memorandum of Understanding is a first step in solidifying such a partnership between crucial stakeholders based in countries that are strate-

gic allies. Other stakeholders on both sides are welcome and encouraged to join as partners start working on a roadmap for implementation.

"The Center for Houston's Future, building on our recent trade mission to Germany and Poland in which we explored developing a transatlantic clean hydrogen alliance, was excited to welcome Prime Minister De Croo as he participated in a clean energy roundtable hosted by the Greater Houston Partnership," said Center CEO Brett Perlman. "The discussion highlighted opportunities for collaboration, while the MOU creates a framework for deeper engagement with our colleagues in Belgium."

"We are pleased to be a signatory to this MOU, which helps further strengthen Port Houston's mission to drive job creation and economic prosperity for our region," said Port Houston Chairman Ric Campo. "Our history of collaboration between Port Houston and Port of Antwerp-Bruges, and between Texas and Belgium, is a century in the making."

"This agreement is a watershed moment to expand that cooperation and continue growing both relationships and critically important energy-related trade," said Port Houston's Chief Commercial Officer John Moseley.

"Today's agreement advances our shared goals of growing prosperity through economic impact and environmental sustainability," added Port Houston, Chief Infrastructure Officer Rich Byrnes.

Blue Sky Maritime Coalition brings together more than 120 member organizations, including leadership of the green shipping corridor from the American Bureau of Shipping (ABS), to work on maritime decarbonization and transportation

of clean energy fuels with the other partners.

The signing of this Memorandum of Understanding is a first step in solidifying such a partnership between crucial stakeholders based in countries that are strategic allies. Other stakeholders on both sides are welcome and encouraged to join as partners start working on a roadmap for implementation.

EXMAR is a Belgian provider of floating solutions for the operation, transportation and transformation of gas and has a fleet of more than 40 gas carriers and floating gas terminals. EXMAR creates economically viable and sustainable energy value chains in long-term alliances with first-class business partners. Being the world's largest independent transporter of ammonia and building upon the experience and knowledge gained from more than 4 decades of gas shipping, EXMAR supports the decarbonization of the energy supply chains by way of renewable and low carbon molecules.

For more than 100 years, Port Houston has owned and operated the public wharves and terminals along the Houston Ship Channel, including the area's largest breakbulk facility and two of the most efficient container terminals in the country. Port Houston is the advocate and a strategic leader for the Channel. The Houston Ship Channel complex and its more than 200 private and eight public terminals is the nation's largest port for waterborne tonnage and an essential economic engine for the Houston region, the state of Texas and the U.S. The Port of Houston supports the creation of nearly 1.5 million jobs in Texas and 3.37 million jobs nationwide, and economic activity totaling \$439 billion in Texas and \$906 billion in economic impact across the nation.

New Mexico braces for end to income bonanza

SANTA FE, N.M., Dec 12, (AP): A windfall in government income from petroleum production is slowing down but far from over in New Mexico as the nation's No. 2 oil production state grapples with how much it can effectively spend - and how to set aside billions of dollars for the future in case the world's thirst for oil falters.

The state is headed for a \$3.5 billion general fund surplus for the year running through June 2025, according to a new forecast Monday. New Mexico's annual state government income has swelled by nearly 50% over the past three years, driven largely by oil and natural gas production in the Permian Basin, the most prolific shale-oil producing region in the country that extends across southeastern New Mexico and portions of western Texas.

The state will draw in a record-setting \$13 billion - exceeding annual spending obligations by one-third, economists from four state agencies said in a presentation to a legislative panel. Monday's forecast anticipates 2.2% growth in state government income, on top of 10.2% growth during the current budget year.

The estimate of government income sets a baseline for budget negotiations when the Democratic-led Legislature convenes in January, and could extend efforts to set aside money to ensure critical programs endure when oil income falters. The forecast cautions that slowing oil production and lower prices are expected to generate significantly less federal payments next year and beyond.

By the end of the decade, oil income is likely to begin a long, steady decline, "becoming a drag on revenue growth as global demand wanes," the report states.

Permian Basin production and revenue would be lower in the future if countries "make good" on their promises as part of the Paris Agreement, said Daniel Raimi, a fellow at the Washington-based nonpartisan economics group Resources for the Future, which does not advocate on energy policies. In 2015, countries at the United Nations climate conference signed onto the agreement to limit the average warming across the globe to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 F) and pursue efforts to cap warming to 1.5 degrees (2.7 F).

"It really hinges a lot on the different policies that governments around the world implement."

About half of the New Mexico's general fund revenue can be traced to the oil and natural gas sector through an array of taxes and royalties on petroleum production that takes place largely on public lands - and distributions that flow from the state's \$28 billion land grant permanent fund for education, which is nurtured by oil income and investment earnings.

New Mexico's largest source of income is tethered to decisions across the globe about renewable energy production, adoption of electric vehicles, and new applications for nuclear power that could reduce fossil fuel use.

The state is looking for new revenue streams that shift the state's dependence on oil, including Lujan Grisham's proposal last week to help preserve freshwater aquifers with a \$500 million initiative to underwrite the treatment of fracking wastewater. Early critics fear the plan might only spur more drilling for petroleum.

"We put a ton of money into funds," New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said from the United Nations climate conference in the United Arab Emirates, where calls to phase-out the use of fossil fuels have been on prominent display. "But you also have to create revenue streams that go into those funds that are reliable."

Meanwhile, the growth in government income has allowed the state to expand agency budgets, scale back taxes, and offer new support to families, while bolstering spending on public education and colleges that account for roughly 58% of annual state general fund spending.

It's more money in many instances than school districts and state agencies can effectively spend, as lawmakers push to bring average high school graduation rates and academic attainment up to national averages.

"All the resources have been there to pay the teachers more, to do the afterschool programming to provide the tutoring and support," said Charles Sallee, director of the Legislature's budget and accountability office, at a recent community presentation. "It's the ability of the bureaucracy to organize and use those resources. In many cases it's strained at capacity."

China's C919 aircraft arrives in HK

HONG KONG, Dec 12, (AP): A Chinese C919 jet arrived in Hong Kong on Tuesday in the Chinese-made plane's first foray outside of mainland China as its manufacturer prepares to take on Airbus and Boeing in the market for single-aisle commercial aircraft.

The C919 and another Chinese-made aircraft, an ARJ21, will be on display at Hong Kong's international airport until Sunday.

The C919 is due to perform a fly-past over the city's scenic Victoria

Harbor on Saturday.

The maker of the C919, the Commercial Aircraft Company of China, or COMAC, designed many of the C919's parts, but some of its key components are still sourced from the West, including its engine.

The narrow-bodied airliner was in development for 16 years and received certification in 2022. It has a maximum range of about 3,500 miles (5,630 kilometers) and is designed to carry 158-168 passengers.



The Chinese-made C919 arrives at the Hong Kong International Airport in Hong Kong, on Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2023. The Chinese C919 commercial passenger jet has arrived in Hong Kong in the Chinese-made aircraft's first foray outside of mainland China. The C919 plane and another Chinese-made aircraft, an ARJ21, landed Tuesday and will be on display at Hong Kong's international airport until Sunday. (AP)

Epic Games wins 'antitrust' suit brought against Google

Dispute over barriers to co's Android app store

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec 12, (AP): A federal court jury has decided that Google's Android app store has been protected by anticompetitive barriers that have damaged smartphone consumers and software developers, dealing a blow to a major pillar of a technology empire.

The unanimous verdict reached Monday came after just three hours of deliberation following a four-week trial revolving around a lucrative payment system within Google's Play Store. The store is the main place where hundreds of millions of people around the world download and install apps that work on smartphones powered by Google's Android software.

Epic Games, the maker of the popular Fortnite video game, filed a lawsuit against Google three years ago, alleging that the internet search giant has been abusing its power to shield its Play Store from competition in order to protect a gold mine that makes billions of dollars annually. Just as Apple does for its iPhone app store, Google collects a commission ranging from 15% to 30% on digital transactions completed within apps.

Apple prevailed in a similar case that Epic brought against the iPhone app store. But that 2021 trial was decided by a federal judge in a ruling that is under appeal at the U.S. Supreme Court.

The nine-person jury in the Play store case apparently saw things through a different lens, even though Google technically allows Android apps to be downloaded from different stores - an option that Apple prohibits on the iPhone.

Just before the Play store trial started, Google sought to avoid having a jury determine the outcome, only to have its request rejected by U.S. District Judge James Donato. Now it will be up to Donato to determine what steps Google will have to take to unwind its illegal behavior in the Play Store. The judge indicated he will hold hearings on the issue during the second week of January.

Epic CEO Tim Sweeney broke into a wide grin after the verdict was read and slapped his lawyers on the back and also shook the hand of a Google attorney, whom he thanked for his professional attitude during the proceedings.

"Victory over Google!" Sweeney wrote in a post on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter. In a company post, Epic hailed the verdict as "a win for all app developers and consumers around the world."

Google plans to appeal the verdict, according to a statement from Wilson White, the company's vice president of government affairs and public policy.

"Android and Google Play provide more choice and openness than any other major mobile platform," White said.

Depending on how the judge enforces the jury's verdict, Google could lose billions of dollars in annual profit generated from its Play Store commissions. The company's main source of revenue - digital advertising tied mostly to its search engine, Gmail and other services - won't be directly affected by the trial's outcome.

The jury reached its decision after listening to two hours of closing arguments from the lawyers on the opposing sides of the case.

Epic lawyer Gary Bornstein de-



The Google sign is shown over an entrance to the company's new building in New York on Sept. 6, 2023. A federal court jury has decided that Google's Android app store has been protected by anticompetitive barriers that have damaged smartphone consumers and software developers, dealing a blow to a major pillar of a technology empire. (AP)

Amsterdam & Partners LLP gets job

DRC appoints law firm to probe laundering of critical minerals

LONDON, Dec 12, (BUSINESS WIRE): His Excellency Mr. Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, has met in Kinshasa with members of the law firm Amsterdam & Partners LLP, which has been retained by the Government of the DRC in order to conduct investigations, pursuant to Congolese and international law, concerning the supply chain of 3T minerals (tin, tungsten, and tantalum) sourced from Congolese territory and illegally exported through money laundering operations on an international scale.

Following its investigations, the firm is determined to engage, if appropriate, in litigation internationally on behalf of the DRC against individuals and companies involved, willingly or unwillingly, in the chain of extrac-

tion, supply and commercialization of products of the pillaging of natural resources and minerals from the DRC. Indeed, the scale and duration of these activities have contributed to unfathomable harm and caused untold suffering endured by civilian populations in the local communities affected. Furthermore, these activities fuel the perpetual cycle of violence and of conflict, forced child labor, environmental devastation, and the enrichment of violent militias and terrorist groups in the region.

International observers have documented numerous schemes supporting a massive enterprise of money laundering through illegal trade in conflict minerals sourced from Congolese territory. These observers have also highlighted the relationships of close dependence

between perpetrators of this looting and the major producers of mass-produced consumer electronics, from mobile telephones to computers, automotive and aviation systems, as well as renewable energy infrastructure.

Robert Amsterdam, founding partner of Amsterdam & Partners LLP, stated that "this activity by some of the largest technology companies in the world, which seriously harms the future of the people and economy of the DRC, has nevertheless been ignored and passed over in silence for far too long." He further stated in this regard: "Our firm will collaborate with a team of lawyers both inside and outside the DRC, to address the scourge of the predation of the country's resource wealth, and this work will set an example for the Global South."

depicted Google as a ruthless bully that deploys a "bribe and block" strategy to discourage competition against its Play Store for Android apps. Google lawyer Jonathan Kravis attacked Epic as a self-interested game maker trying to use the courts to save itself money while undermining an ecosystem that has spawned billions of Android smartphones to compete against Apple and its iPhone.

Much of the lawyers' dueling arguments touched upon the testimony from a litany of witnesses who came to court during the trial.

The key witnesses included Google CEO Sundar Pichai, who sometimes seemed like a professor explaining complex topics while standing behind a lectern because of a health issue, and Sweeney, who painted himself as a video game lover on a mission to take down a greedy tech titan.

In his closing argument for Epic,

Bornstein railed against Google for exploiting its power over the Android software in a way that "has led to higher prices for developers and consumers, as well as less innovation and quality."

Google has staunchly defended the commissions as a way to help recoup the more than \$40 billion that it has poured into building into the Android software that it has been giving away since 2007 to manufacturers to compete against the iPhone.

"Android phones cannot compete against the iPhone without a great app store on them," Kravis asserted in his closing argument. "The competition between the app stores is tied to the competition between the phones."

But Bornstein ridiculed the notion of Google and Android competing against Apple and its incompatible iPhone software system. "Apple is not the 'get out of jail for free' card that Google wants it

to be," Bornstein told the jury.

Google also pointed to rival Android app stores such as the one that Samsung installs on its popular smartphones as evidence of a free market. Combined with the rival app stores pre-installed on devices made by other companies, more than 60% of Android phones offer alternative outlets for Android apps.

Epic, though, presented evidence asserting the notion that Google welcomes competition as a pretense, citing the hundreds of billions of dollars it has doled out to companies, such as game maker Activision Blizzard, to discourage them from opening rival app stores. Besides making these payments, Bornstein also urged the jury to consider the Google "scare screens" that pop up, warning consumers of potential security threats when they try to download Android apps from some of the alternatives to the Play Store.

'Staying informed on AI is essential for tech and business'

Kamco Invest hosts an insightful discussion on Artificial Intelligence

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: Kamco Invest, a regional non-banking financial powerhouse with one of the largest AUMs in the region, recently organized an exclusive event centered around artificial intelligence, uniting industry leaders, experts, and investors to delve into the transformative influence of AI on contemporary investment strategies.

Esteemed fund managers, specializing in investments within the artificial intelligence sector, generously shared their insights and expertise with the participants. Engaging in in-depth discussions on the cutting-edge developments in AI, they covered innovative investment strategies that are actively shaping the dynamic landscape of today's financial markets.

Mohammad F. Al Othman, Executive Director of Alternative Investments, highlighted in his welcome message the importance of artificial intelligence in reshaping industries across sectors including education, banking and finance, healthcare, amongst others.

AlOthman commenced the discussion with an overview of the dynamic and transformative artificial intelligence landscape marked by unparalleled growth and innovation. The convergence of AI with technologies such as the Internet of Things and big data analytics is driving the development of advanced applications, including predictive analytics and autonomous systems. Despite its potential benefits, the rapid evolution of AI raises ethical considerations, requiring a delicate balance between innovation and societal concerns. Staying informed about these developments is crucial as AI continues to reshape possibilities in technology and business.

Fahad AlSharekh, General Partner of The JEDI Fund, moderated the discussion between Pamela Vagata, Founding Member of OpenAI & General Partner of Pebblebed, Keith Adams, Co-founder of Facebook AI Research & General Partner of Pebblebed, and Jake Zeller, Founder & General Partner of PowerSet & Advisor to The JEDI Fund.



Mohammed Al Othman



Speakers photo

AlSharekh highlighted the strategic partnership with top-tier venture capital fund managers. Today, we are privileged to host managers boasting an exceptional track record, particularly specialized in the dynamic field of artificial intelligence. These managers exclusively collaborate with us in the region, reflecting our commitment to fostering expertise and excellence within the realm of AI-focused investments.

The audience's keen interest in AI investment platforms, such as EQT's Motherbrain, InReach, and Signalfire's platforms, sparked engaging discussions. Experts delved into the unique features and opportunities presented by these platforms.

Furthermore, participants explored the intriguing risks

and opportunities associated with the current compute shortage, particularly examining its impact on early-stage investors. Insights were shared on navigating challenges and capitalizing on opportunities within this evolving landscape.

Vagata believes that AI is the next ubiquitous computing platform, much like the internet and computers before it. Every tech company is now an AI company, facing a huge need for skilled people, more computing power, and tons of data. The businesses that are set to win in this game are the ones thinking outside the box to meet these challenges, whether they're fresh startups or established giants.

A thought-provoking discussion unfolded on the strategic considerations of building around APIs, developing custom

models, and utilizing open-source models. Experts provided valuable insights on choosing the most effective approach in the context of AI investment.

Adams showcased their investment journey in the dynamic AI field that has been greatly enriched by the collaboration with Kamco Invest. He emphasized that patience, wisdom, and unwavering support have been pivotal to their efforts. He highlighted the true significance of AI that lies not just in its ability to transform industries and advance technology, but in its profound capacity to augment human potential.

Addressing the question of whether "incumbents" always prevail, the panel explored the circumstances and sectors where startups hold a competitive edge. Valuable insights were shared on the dynamic interplay between established players and emerging startups.

The panel delved into leveraging AI for venture capital investments, emphasizing the intersection of basic data science and contemporary AI techniques. Two key aspects were explored: (1) leveraging data to inform portfolio construction and (2) leveraging data to identify investment opportunities. Challenges faced by early-stage firms in securing investments were discussed, offering a nuanced perspective on competition within the sector.

Zeller expressed his gratefulness to have invested in several promising companies in the emerging AI landscape. AI enables us to unlock new frontiers of innovation and shape a future where possibilities are limitless.

Al Othman concluded the session by underscoring Kamco Invest's commitment to offering clients access to top-tier opportunities, particularly in asset classes like Venture Capital and sectors like Artificial Intelligence. The Company's dedication to facilitating open discussions aligns with the goal of providing investors with valuable insights from experienced industry professionals, shedding light on the diverse opportunities present in the contemporary investment landscape.



Al Gharabally and Al Dousari with Zain and TEC executives.

Park covers 107,000m2, welcomes 10k visitors daily

Zain Platinum sponsor of South Subahiya Park

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: In continuation of its strategic partnership with the public sector to support the nation's biggest entertainment projects, Zain has announced its platinum sponsorship of South Subahiya Park in collaboration with the Touristic Enterprises Company (TEC). The Park, considered Kuwait's newest and most anticipated entertainment destination, offers the community a thrilling world-class experience throughout the winter and spring seasons.

The sponsorship agreement was signed at TEC headquarters in Shuwaikh, attended by Zain Kuwait's Acting Chief Executive Officer Nawaf Al Gharabally, Touristic Enterprises Company's Chief Executive Officer Fadhel Al Dousari, along with the management teams from the two partners.

Zain is proud of its strategic partnership with TEC, which recently covered some of the nation's biggest recreational projects. Zain has found immense interest from the public sector to bring to life a number of major plans that present the best experiences to the Kuwaiti community. The company is committed to being a main partner in realizing this vision, thus reflecting the key role played by the private sector in achieving the nation's various developmental goals.

South Subahiya Park is Kuwait's latest and most anticipated theme park, and Zain was keen on being among the first of its supporters to help bring an exceptional entertainment destination to families and young people in the community. The Park covers 107,000 square meters and can welcome 10,000 visitors per day.

The Park boasts four adventurous zones, each inspired by one of four natural elements: water, wind, earth, and fire. It includes over 40 rides, attractions, and facilities designed with the highest safety and quality standards in mind, including 21 outdoor rides, 12+ skill games, a children's playground, a videogames area, along with over 45 food and beverage stations.

Every year, the community anticipates Zain's participation in the biggest social and entertainment events, and this time the company has prepared a number of surprises and activations at South Subahiya Park for the opportunity to make the most wonderful memories with the public. Through its dedicated booth at the park, Zain will share the joys of various occasions with families, children, and young people, reflecting its brand values "Zain A Wonderful World".

Through its extended partnership with the Touristic En-



Nawaf Al Gharabally and Fadhel Al Dousari sign the sponsorship agreement.

terprises Company, Zain has contributed to bringing the best world-class entertainment destinations to the community. This collaboration has also vitalized the local touristic, economic, and social scenes, supported local entrepreneurs and startup owners, and drove the progress of the national economy.

Zain and TEC's partnership covered some of the biggest recent entertainment projects, including the first season of Winter Wonderland Kuwait, which came all the way from London to Kuwait for the first time, bringing with it a unique thrilling experience for the whole family.

During the national holidays season, Zain also collaborated with TEC to present a national celebration like no other. Leveraging on its tech innovation leadership, Zain presented spectacular aerial shows using 2000 of its drones that lighted up the skies above the Green Island with the most wonderful images of Kuwait's leaders, landmarks, and cultural symbols.

In a recent and ongoing collaboration with TEC, Zain also sponsors K-Land, a new entertainment family destination that offers an enjoyable and entertaining experience that celebrates Kuwait's rich cultural heritage. Behind K-Land's success story is a creative team of national talents that worked tirelessly to bring it to life, offering a unique opportunity to enjoy the winter and spring seasons in its beautiful outdoor site located at the Arabian Gulf coastline.

'Abu-Ghazaleh Global' partakes in 'Open Science in Arab Region' Forum in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Global (TAG Global), represented by Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Global University (TAG-GU) and TAGEPEDIA Knowledge Platform, participated in the 'Open Science in the Arab Region' Forum, organized by the Arab Open University (AOU) under the theme 'Future Prospects for Open Science in the Arab Region'. The Forum was held in partnership with the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and in cooperation with the Kuwait National Commission for Education, Science and Culture at the University's headquarters in Kuwait.

TAG Global's participation in the Forum underlines the importance of such a global gathering of experts and academics specialized in promoting open science practices, and attributed to the fact that it is considered a platform for exchanging ideas and experiences in the field of open science worldwide.

The Forum was held with the aim of reviewing local, regional, and international efforts and knowledge in advancing open science and related fields in the Arab region, providing initiatives and solutions to promote open science to bridge digital gaps, protect intellectual property rights and open licenses, and foster Arab and global cooperation in the open science domain.

TAGEPEDIA Platform Executive Director, Mr. AlaTurani, stated that the participation of TAG Global's relevant firms in the Forum was driven by the Organization's belief in the significance of shifting to open science, especially considering the challenges the education in the Arab countries is currently facing.

He went on to say that various ministries, institutions and educational bodies are forced today to exert further efforts to



Photo from the event.

improve the level of education in general and open education in particular to meet the requirements and the necessities of sustainable development.

It is worth mentioning that TAGEPEDIA Knowledge Platform is a platform that combines learning and training programs from the world's top universities. These programs have been categorized on the platform in a way that facilitates easy and quick access. Learning programs have been classified according to different academic degrees (PhD, Master's, Bachelor's, and Diploma). Training programs have been categorized in cooperation with specialized international institutions based on the required technical, technological, managerial, and linguistic skills.



Zeyad Al Omar with trainees and officials from the KSH and KFH.

Trainees concluded 100 training hours

KFH honors trainees of society for handicapped

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has concluded the third edition of the training program that focused on training students with special needs at various KFH departments in collaboration with the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (KSH).

The training program encompassed various practical aspects to upskill trainees' talents and improve their skills by working in different departments at KFH.

During the program, the trainees concluded 100 training hours in different departments (HR, branches, Cards, Products). Additionally, Several KFH employees conducted brief training sessions to familiarize trainees with the diverse skills that define KFH human talents, such as photography and public speaking. The trainees found these courses enjoyable, and they experienced increased confidence and potential as a result.

KFH has taken the advantage of this initiative, which is the first of its kind at the banking sector level in Kuwait, to grant students with special needs the opportunity to engage with society, learn new skills, and gain experience through direct interaction with employees and customers.

Group Chief Human Resources and Transformation Officer, Zeyad Al Omar expressed his happiness with the huge effort made by the trainees during their training period. He addressed his speech in the ceremony to them and their parents: "This year, we are honored to have trained 10 participants with special needs who have made an influential presence across KFH departments," said Al Omar. "Undoubtedly, these initiatives contribute to creating employment opportunities that offer wellbeing and financial stability due to the support they receive from KFH colleagues and KSH."

He emphasized KFH's commitment to annually renewing the strategic partnership with KSH, aiming to support individuals with special needs and provide them training aligned with the highest standards.

Thanks to its leading standing as the largest Islamic bank in Kuwait and the second largest bank in the world, Al Omar affirmed KFH's continued promise to offer the support needed at all levels for people with special needs as part of the Bank's strategy.

"At KFH, we strongly believe that training opportunities like this initiative can hone personal skills and potential of individuals with special needs. It is a strategic step towards integrating them into the society and labor market," said Al Omar.

He highlighted KFH's dedication to initiatives that extend its array of services for people with special needs. The Bank takes pride in organizing specialized training for its staff, including Sign Language courses, to facilitate communication with this unique customer segment. Additionally, KFH dedicated a branch in each governorate equipped with the required tools and resources to serve them.

Meanwhile, Chair of the Board of Kuwait Society for the Handicapped, Sabeka Al-Jasser, lauded KFH's dedicated en-

AI can teach math teachers how to boost student skills

By Yasemin Copur-Gencturk
University of Southern California

When middle school math teachers completed an online professional development program that uses artificial intelligence to improve their math knowledge and teaching skills, their students' math performance improved.

My colleagues and I developed this online professional development program, which relies on a virtual facilitator that can - among other things - present problems to the teacher around teaching math and provide feedback on the teacher's answers.

Our goal was to enhance teachers' mastery of knowledge and skills required to teach math effectively. These include understanding why the mathematical rules and procedures taught in school work. The program also focuses on common struggles students have as they learn a particular math concept, and how to use instructional tools and strategies to help them overcome these struggles.

We then conducted an experiment in which 53 middle school math teachers were randomly assigned to either this AI-based professional development or no additional training. On average, teachers spent 11 hours to complete the program. We then gave 1,727 of their students a math test. While students of these two groups of teachers started off with no difference in their math performance, the students taught by teachers who completed the program increased their mathematics performance by 0.18 of a standard deviation more on average. (AP)

deavors and interest in supporting KSH members.

She expressed her sincere gratitude for the remarkable improvement towards integrating individuals with special needs into the community and strengthening cooperation ties with KFH to better serve this segment of society.

Al-Jasser commended KFH's outstanding efforts that are evident each year in developing and adding services, as well as recruiting competent talents that contribute to increasing the effectiveness of the program and enhancing the skills of trainees to hire them for future employment opportunities.

Future Eye Theatre Kuwait elects new committee

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The annual general body meeting of Future Eye Theatre Kuwait (FET) was held on December 1st, 2023, at Kala Auditorium, Mangaf. The meeting was attended by the members and saw the election of the new committee for the next tenure.

Outgoing president Mr. Vattiyoor-kavu Krishnakumar presided over the meeting and gave the welcome speech. Later, the General Secretary, Mr. Unni Kaimal presented the annual report for the year 2021-2023 and the Joint Treasurer Mr. Sushil Kattampalli tabled the accounts for the current year in the absence of Treasurer Mr. Sarath Nair.

Mr. Shemej Kumar the Patron of FET announced the new committee members after the unanimous election and approval by the general body member as follows.

President Mr. Santhosh Kumar Kut-tath, Vice President, Mr. Sushil Kattampalli, General Secretary, Mr. Unni Kaimal, Joint Secretary, Mrs. Remya



Photo from the event.

Ratheesh, Treasure, Mr. Pramod Me-non, Lady Coordinator, Mrs. Sajini Serin Varghese, Media Coordinator, George Mathew and Patrons, Mr. Shemej kumar K.K and Mr. Vattiyoor-kavu Krishnakumar.

The executive members selected for the new committee is as follows. Mr. Bivin Thomas, Mr. Sarath T.P.,

Mr. Geejo Varghese, Mr. Aziz Thik-kodi, Mrs. Shabila Razal, Mr. Chandramohan, Mr. Prem Sreedharan, Mr. Bony Kurian, Mr. Praveen Krishnan, Dr. Abraham Thomas, Mr. Sajeesh Govind Santha and Mr. Shyam Nair.

The AGM and election were held with a high level of professionalism and efficiency.

Israel-Hamas war among top internet searches of the year

NEW YORK, Dec 12, (AP) — Your Google search history for 2023 has arrived.

Well, actually, the world's. On Monday, the California-based tech giant released its "Year in Search," a roundup of 2023's top global queries, ranging from unforgettable pop culture moments (hello, Barbenheimer), to the loss of beloved figures and tragic news carrying worldwide repercussions.

The ongoing Israel-Hamas war topped news trends in 2023, per Google's global data, followed by queries related to the Titanic-bound submersible that imploded in June, as well as February's devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.

Damar Hamlin was Google's top trending person on search this year. A safety with the NFL's Buffalo Bills, Hamlin experienced a near-death cardiac arrest on the field during a January game, but has since completed a celebrated comeback. Actor Jeremy Renner, who survived a serious snowplow accident at the start of 2023, followed. Meanwhile, the late Matthew Perry and Tina Turner led search trends among notable individuals who passed away.

In the world of entertainment, "Barbie" dominated Google search's movie trends this year - followed by Barbenheimer co-pilot "Oppenheimer" and Indian thriller "Jawan." In TV, "The Last of Us," "Wednesday" and "Ginny and Georgia" were the top three trending shows in 2023.

Yosobri's "(Idol)" was Google's top trending song on search. Jason

Aldeen's "Try That In A Small Town" - which soared in the charts after controversy this summer - and Shakira and Bizarrap's "Bzrp Music Sessions, Vol. 53" followed.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg for Google's 2023 global search trends. Bibimbap was the top trending recipe. Inter Miami CF, the new home of Argentine soccer superstar Lionel Messi, led Google's sports teams trends. And in the US specifically, many consumers spent 2023 asking why eggs, Taylor Swift tickets and sriracha bottles were so expensive - while "rizz" (recently named Oxford's word of the year) was a frontrunner for trending slang definition inquiries.

Trends

You can find more data, including country-specific lists and trends from years past, on Google's "Year in Search" archive. The company says it collected its 2023 search results from Jan. 1 through Nov. 27 of this year.

Google isn't the only one to publish annual data as 2023 draws to a close - and from dictionary lookups to music streams, chances are, you've probably seen other lists recapping online activity this year. Last week, for example, Wikipedia released its year-end list of most-viewed entries - with its article about ChatGPT leading the pack.

To mark the search engine's 25th birthday, Google also released top search data "of all time" across various specific categories. Since 2004 (when the company's trends data first became available globally), the

most-Googled Grammy winner of all time has been Beyoncé, for example, while Portuguese soccer great Cristiano Ronaldo is the highest-searched athlete, and the most-searched movie or TV cast is "Harry Potter."

Also:

NEW YORK: Remember what you searched for in 2023? Well, Wikipedia has the receipts.

English Wikipedia raked in more than 84 billion views this year, according to numbers released recently by the Wikimedia Foundation, the non-profit behind the free, publicly edited online encyclopedia. And the most popular article was about ChatGPT.

Since its launch just over a year ago, OpenAI's ChatGPT has skyrocketed into the public's consciousness as the technology makes its way into schools, health care, law and even religious sermons. The chatbot has also contributed to growing debates about the promise and potential dangers of generative AI, much of which is documented on its Wikipedia page.

The second most-read article on Wikipedia in 2023 was the annual list of deaths, which sees high traffic year after year - taking the #4 and #1 spots in 2022 and 2021, respectively. Individual entries for notable figures who passed away also garnered significant interest this year, including pages for **Matthew Perry** and **Lisa Marie Presley**.

Online

Variety



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Cillian Murphy in a scene from 'Oppenheimer.' (AP)

Film

Lupita Nyong'o to head the jury at Berlin film festival

Let 'Barbenheimer' awards season begin

NEW YORK, Dec 12, (AP) — Early honors in Hollywood's unfurling awards season have gone to films like Celine Song's tender relationship drama "Past Lives," Jonathan Glazer's piercing Holocaust film "The Zone of Interest" and Martin Scorsese's sprawling Osage murders epic "Killers of the Flower Moon."

But a showdown was always brewing. "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer," those summer sensations united in release date if little else, have loomed as perhaps the most potent Oscar contenders of the year. When the Golden Globes on Monday announced picks for its 81st awards, the scandal-plagued, comeback-seeking Globes put their full weight behind the twin phenomena of the movie year.

Greta Gerwig's "Barbie" landed nine nominations, tied for second-most in Globes history. (Only Bob Fosse's "Cabaret" has matched it and Robert Altman's "Nashville" exceeded it.) Its edge over "Oppenheimer" was slight; Christopher Nolan's massive J. Robert Oppenheimer biopic took in eight nominations.

Though the Globes will separate the competition in some categories, keeping "Barbie" in comedy and "Oppenheimer" in drama, the two films will go head-to-head in many key races. Gerwig or Nolan for best director? Ryan Gosling or Robert Downey Jr. for best supporting actor?

Each has their own captivating narratives. Nolan, seen by many as the most talented big-screen artist of his generation, has never won the Oscar for directing, and his films have never won best picture. Gerwig and "Barbie" are at the forefront of a sea change in a long male-dominated Hollywood. Each film managed to do something spectacularly original in a movie industry where sequels and reboots reign - while making a combined \$2.4 billion in the process.

These debates will surely continue until the Academy Awards on March 10. But the Globes on Monday made it clear: Barbenheimer, phase two, has begun.

The central presence of those two films will surely help the Globes, which are seeking stability after years of turmoil. The Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which was known for some wacky nominations in years past (remember "Salmon Fishing in Yemen"?), has been disbanded.

A new voting body of about 300, more than three times the size of the HFPA, picked this year's nominees. After The Los Angeles Times reported the press association had no Black members, Hollywood boycotted, the 2022 awards weren't broadcast and now the newly for-profit Globes owned by Dick Clark Productions and Eldridge Industries have set up shop at CBS after decades at NBC. (The ceremony is Jan. 7.)

Many questions remain. No host has yet been named, just a litany of reported passes from A-listers. But by the low-bar of Globes respectability, Monday's nominations didn't do anything to bring further scorn. The reception was much as it always was: some low-key celebration from nominees and gentle mockery for an awards show with a checkered history.

Categories

The Globes expanded their categories from five to six nominees, which meant far fewer snubs than there might have been. Still, the morning's most surprising omission was "The Color Purple," Blitz Bazawule's Oprah-produced show-stopping musical, which was left out of the best comedy or musical category.

Films like "The Color Purple" that have not yet opened widely in theaters generally had a tough time. Michael Mann's "Ferrari" and Ava DuVernay's "Origin" were both shut out.

Instead, the Globes closely followed the buzz. That included making room for Time Magazine's Person of the Year, Taylor Swift, in the new cinematic and box office achievement award. (To be eligible, a film must have grossed \$150 million, including \$100 million in the U.S., or been a hit on streaming.) Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour passed that mark, giving the Globes a chance to substantially boost the star power of its broadcast with Swift, a pop star with growing moviemaking ambitions.

That new award follows similar efforts by the Academy Awards, which in 2018 proposed a "popular film" award that prompted an immediate backlash from academy members that torpedoed it. Both broadcasts have seen ratings dwindle in recent years, and strived to get box-office hits into the show. Last year's Globes were watched by just 6.3 million.

This year, though, the Globes and the Oscars probably don't need to tweak anything to get blockbusters into the mix. While a number of acclaimed films have entered the fray - among them "Killers of the Flower Moon" (7 nominations), Yorgos Lanthimos' warped fantasy "Poor Things" (7 nominations), "Past Lives" (5 nominations), Alexander Payne's "The Holdovers" (3 nominations) - nothing has emerged as clear favorite over "Barbie" or "Oppenheimer."

Their road ultimately to best picture at the Oscars may not be as smooth as it currently seems. Not since Ben Affleck's "Argo" (2012) has a best picture winner grossed more than \$100 million domestically. In recent years, so-called saviors of cinemas like "Top Gun: Maverick" and "Avatar: The Way of Water" have fizzled as contenders for Hollywood's top award, while smaller, independently produced films like "Everything Everywhere All at Once" and "CODA" have triumphed.

But Monday's nominations suggested, this year, "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" are the movies to beat. Pick your color palette now.

Also:

BERLIN: Oscar-winning actor **Lupita Nyong'o** will head the jury at the Berlin International Film Festival in February, organizers announced Monday.

The 2024 Berlinale, the first of the year's major European film festivals, will run from Feb. 15-25. It will be the last edition under the current leadership duo of executive director **Mariette Rissenbeek** and artistic director **Carlo Chatrjian**.

Nyong'o "embodies what we like in cinema: versatility in embracing different projects, addressing different audiences, and consistency to one idea that is quite recognizable in her characters, as diverse as they may look," the directors said in a statement.

Nyong'o said she was "deeply honored" to serve as president of the international jury and looks forward to "celebrating and recognizing the outstanding work of filmmakers from around the world."

The Mexican-born daughter of Kenyan parents has directed and produced as well as acted, and is the author of a children's book, "Sulwe."

NEW YORK: Ousted Fox News host **Tucker Carlson** is starting his own streaming service, promising to "tell the unadorned truth" to fans for \$72 a year, he announced Monday.

Commentary, interviews, Carlson-flavored news reports and documentaries, even an advice show will be offered on the Tucker Carlson Network, which is essentially staffed by the people who used to work for him at Fox.

The new venture comes more than seven months after Fox abruptly fired Carlson, its most popular host. Fox never publicly explained the firing, and Carlson said on Monday that "it really is one of those mysteries that I'll probably never get to the bottom of."

"I want to wake up and say to myself, 'You can say whatever you want,'" Carlson said, announcing his streaming service on The **Megyn Kelly Show**, a podcast and radio show hosted by fellow Fox News refugee Kelly, who has remade her career as an independent commentator.

"I'm going to do it without interference, period," Carlson said. "I'm going to tell the unadorned truth - I hope gently and in the least offensive way as I possibly can. But I'm going to tell the truth until the day I die."

Before being booted, less than a week after Fox agreed to pay Dominion Voting Systems \$787 million to settle a lawsuit over coverage of the 2020 election, Carlson hosted what The New York Times said may be the most racist show in cable TV history, but by some measures the most successful.

He averaged 3.2 million viewers a night for the first three months of 2023, according to the Nielsen company. Fox's ratings plunged immediately following his exit. Replacement Jesse Waters built the audience to 2.6 million in November in Carlson's old time slot, and Fox said Waters has gained advertisers who didn't want their commercials with Carlson.

Now Carlson enters the world of subscription services with a variety of products on his own network.

"The Tucker Carlson Encounter" will be a long-form conversation show, with singer **Kid Rock** and golfer **John Daly** among the

first guests. "The Tucker Carlson Interview" will be a more formal question-and-answer session, like one he conducted recently with former President **Donald Trump**. (AP)

MEXICO CITY: The director of the Miss Nicaragua pageant,



Carlson



Palacios

Karen Celebertti, on Monday announced her retirement from the organization, nine days after the Nicaraguan police accused her of "conspiracy" and other crimes along with her husband and son, who are detained.

"The time has come for my retirement," Celebertti wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "I know that

there will always be more opportunities for us."

It was Celebertti's first public statement after the scandal that followed the coronation of **Sheynnis Palacios** as Miss Universe on Nov. 18 in **El Salvador**.

The businesswoman said that she worked for 23 years "with zeal and effort" until Nicaragua

won the world beauty crown this year, which she described "as an achievement for everyone" and "for every Nicaraguan, without political distinction."

Palacios' surprise victory in the contest unleashed demonstrations of joy in the streets of Nicaragua, prompting criticism by the government of **Daniel Ortega**. (AP)

People & Places

Books

Grant's legacy

Chandler's hidden grief in 'Requiem'

NEW YORK, Dec 12, (AP) — Near the end of 1954, the wife of **Raymond Chandler** died after a long battle with lung disease. The famed crime novelist fell into near-suicidal depression from which he never recovered. He drank heavily and died just five years later, at age 70.

Chandler completed no major books after the death of Cissy Pascal Chandler, but he did summon a brief, unpublished work, in a format he was not known for mastering: poetry. Written during the year following Cissy's death, the 27-line "Requiem" is a grieving fatalist's tribute to his longtime spouse, with opening lines that have the aura of a crime scene - and of a final glance at the victim.



Chandler

There is a moment after death when the face is beautiful
When the soft, tired eyes are closed and the pain is over,
And the long, long innocence of love comes gently in
For a moment more, in quiet to hover.
Chandler's poem appears in the winter edition of Strand Magazine, which has published rare pieces by William Faulkner, John Steinbeck and Tennessee Williams among others. Strand editor-in-chief Andrew Gulli says he found the poem in a shoe box at the University of Oxford's Bodleian Library.

"I liked this departure from the wise cracking tales" of Chandler sleuth Philip Marlowe, Gulli says of "Requiem."

Chandler, known for such classic novels as "The Long Goodbye" and "The Big Sleep," had released poems early in his career that Charles Ardai, a crime writer and founder of the imprint Hard Case Crime, calls "juvenile." But Ardai praised "Requiem" as "heartfelt and lovely and observed as only a longtime spouse recently bereaved could."

"This is a mature poem, a legitimate addition to Chandler's body of work. I'm very glad it has been found," Ardai says.

Separation

According to Tom Williams, whose Chandler biography "A Mysterious Something in the Light" came out in 2012, the author met Cissy Pascal some time before World War I, corresponded with her while he was serving overseas and married her in 1924. Chandler was in his mid-30s at the time they wed, Cissy was nearly 20 years older.

Biographers have long speculated about their bond, whether the Chandlers' age difference or their frequent changes of residence or their brief separation in the early 1930s. They did reconcile and remain together, in part so Chandler could care for his ailing wife.

"I think they needed one another," Williams said. "He would never leave her and certainly felt that he owed her a duty of care when she was sick."

"Requiem" includes a surprising twist. Resigned to the loss of his wife, to the end of the "long, wild dream," Chandler consoles himself with the letters that recall "the long, long innocence" of their feelings for each other.

I hold them in my hand, tied with green ribbon
Neatly and firmly by the soft, strong fingers of love.
The letters will not die.

But the letters apparently did die; Chandler is believed to have destroyed them.

"We know that Chandler was a man who flirted with self destruction - he attempted suicide several times, including at least once after his wife's death," Ardai says. "Perhaps destroying the letters he so clearly cherished came out of the same self-destructive impulse. Or maybe he simply knew he was dying and had limited time left and felt that the letters were intensely private."

Admirers forgot neither Chandler nor his wife. Because Chandler never got around to processing the necessary documents, Cissy did not have a formal burial; her remains were stored inside a mausoleum in San Diego, where the couple had lived in their later years. But Chandler fan Loren Latker led an effort for a posthumous reunion. In 2011, a judge approved and Cissy was interred alongside her husband at San Diego's Mount Hope Cemetery - on Valentine's Day.

Ulysses S. Grant's standing among the presidents has improved in recent years, with critically acclaimed biographies by **Ron Chernow** and others offering a new perspective on his time in the White House.

But the 18th president who led the Union armies to victory in the Civil War still leaves a complicated legacy, especially when it comes to his relationship to slavery. That relationship is the centerpiece of **John Reeves'** enlightening "Soldier of Destiny: Slavery, Secession and the Redemption of Ulysses S. Grant."

Biography

Reeves' book isn't a comprehensive biography, and it doesn't cover Grant's time in the White House. But it gives readers an enlightening look at how he benefited from slavery years before he helped end the institution.

Reeves traces the evolution of Grant from someone who "actively participated in the slave culture of St. Louis" before the Civil War. Reeves is fair and blunt in depicting the role slavery played in Grant's life as he tried to provide a "respectable middle-class lifestyle" for his family before the war.

"And this lifestyle, it must be remembered, was dependent on the ownership of human property," Reeves writes. He also points out the ambivalence Grant displayed about slavery before the Civil War.

But he also examines the characteristics and skills that it took for Grant to go from an officer who was forced to resign from the Army to one of the most revered military heroes in history. This includes a detailed look at the key battles he faced during the Civil War.

Reeves doesn't shy from highlighting the stains upon Grant's military legacy including the reports of drinking that dogged Grant throughout the years. He also devotes a chapter to the order Grant issued expelling Jewish people from a military district he oversaw, an effort that was intended to halt illegal cotton speculation and remains a "black mark on his character," Reeves writes.

Reeves manages to stitch Grant's flaws and virtues into a thought-provoking portrait of a key historical figure who never lost faith in himself or his country.



Mariah Carey performs at the New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square, Dec. 31, 2017, in New York. Billboard has posted a list of top seasonal hits since 2010, and Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You" has been No. 1 for 57 of the 62 weeks it has run, said Gary Trust, chart director. The Luminate data company said the song peaked at 387 million streams in 2019, the song's 25th anniversary, although last year it had 353 million. (AP)

Music

'That song is just embedded in history now'

Carey's 1994 hit rules holiday music

NEW YORK, Dec 12, (AP) — If anything about Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You" annoys you, best to avoid shopping malls now. Or the radio. Maybe music altogether, for that matter.

Her 1994 carol dominates holiday music like nothing else.

The Christmas colossus has reached No. 1 on Billboard's Hot 100 chart the past four years in a row - measuring the most popular songs each week by airplay, sales and streaming, not just the holiday-themed - and it's reasonable to assume 2023 will be no different. One expert predicts it will soon exceed \$100 million in earnings. Even its ringtone has sold millions.

"That song is just embedded in history now," says David Foster, the 16-time Grammy-winning composer and producer. "It's embedded in Christmas. When you think of Christmas right now, you think of that song."

Yet the story behind "All I Want for Christmas is You" is not all holly and mistletoe.

The song's co-authors, Carey and Walter Afanasieff, are in a mystifying feud. The authors of a different song with the same title have sued seeking \$20 million in damages. While Carey calls herself the Queen of Christmas, her bid to trademark that title failed.

Every year on Nov. 1, the song's hibernation ends when Carey posts on social media that "it's time" to play it again. This year's message depicted her being freed from a block of ice to make the declaration.

In both music and lyrics, the song was perfectly engineered for success, says Joe Bennett, musicologist and professor at the Berklee College of Music. And it came from an artist who was at the top of her game at the time.

"All I Want for Christmas is You" works as a love and holiday song. Carey sets it up: She doesn't care about all the holiday trappings, she has one thing - one person - on her mind. She sprinkles in specific holiday references, from Santa Claus to mistletoe.

The instruments and brisk arrangement recall Phil Spector's 1965 album, "A Christmas Gift for You," itself a holiday classic. To top it off, part of the melody slyly references "White Christmas," Bennett says.

"That was my goal, to do something timeless," Carey explained in a recent "Good Morning America" interview.

Billboard has produced lists of top seasonal hits since 2010, and "All I Want for Christmas is You" has been No. 1 for 57 of the 62 weeks it has run, said Gary Trust, chart director. Will Page, Spotify's former chief economist and author of the book "Pivot," estimates the song will exceed \$100 million in earnings this holiday season.

"By most objective measures," Bennett says, "it's the most successful Christmas song of all time."

Melodic

As Afanasieff has told it, much of the work on "All I Want for Christmas is You" was done by him and Carey working in a rented house in the summer of 1994. The team had a history, working on Carey's albums "Emotions" and "Music Box."

He started with a boogie-woogie piano, tossing out melodic ideas that Carey would respond to with lyrics, he said on last year's podcast, "Hot Takes & Deep Dives with Jess Rothschild" (Afanasieff did not return messages from The Associated Press). Later, Carey completed the lyrics herself and Afanasieff recorded all the instruments, he said.

Then things became complicated. Carey was married at the time to Tommy Mottola, head of Sony Music. They broke up in 1997 and her relationship with Afanasieff, who kept working for Mottola, became a casualty of that fractured marriage. Afanasieff said they've spoken once in more than 20 years, and it his contributions have been written out of Carey's telling of the song's creation.

On "Good Morning America" last month, she said, "I was working on it

by myself so I was writing on this little Casio keyboard, writing down words and thinking about, 'What do I think about Christmas? What do I love? What do I want? What do I dream of?'" she says. "And that's what started it."

Afanasieff sounds almost bewildered by the turn of events. He told Variety in 1999 that every holiday season he has to defend himself against people who don't believe he co-wrote the song.

"Mariah has been very wonderful, positive and a force of nature," he told Variety. "She's the one that made the song a hit and she's awesome. But she definitely does not share credit where credit is due."

Last month, songwriters Andy Stone and Troy Powers sued Carey and Afanasieff in federal court in California, seeking \$20 million in copyright infringement and citing their own 1989 country song, "All I Want for Christmas is You."

Their song has a similar theme, with a narrator desiring a love interest before Christmas comforts. The writers cite an "overwhelming likelihood" that Carey and Afanasieff had heard their song.

The two songs have no musical similarities, Berklee's Bennett says, and the theme is hardly unique. He pointed out Bing Crosby's "You're All I Want for Christmas," Carla Thomas' "All I Want for Christmas is You" and Buck Owens' "All I Want for Christmas, Dear, is You."

Says the musicologist: "It's nonsense."

In his podcast appearance, Afanasieff noted how Foster once told him that "All I Want for Christmas is You" was the last song to enter the Christmas canon and "that vault is sealed."

Foster told AP he exaggerated a little, but not a lot. Writing a new holiday song is brutally hard, since you're competing with not just current hits but hundreds of years of songs and memories. The old classics never go away.



Chloe Cherry attends the premiere of 'The Iron Claw,' Monday, Dec. 11, at the DGA Theater in Los Angeles. (AP)



Rondo



Harry

Variety

SAVANNAH, Ga.: The rapper **Quando Rondo** has been indicted on federal drug charges in Georgia, where he also faces state gang and drug charges filed six months ago.

Chatham County jail records show the 24-year-old rapper, whose real name is **Tyquan Terrel Bowman**, was booked in the federal case Saturday after being arrested in his hometown of Savannah. He was scheduled to appear Tuesday before a magistrate judge in US District Court.

A federal indictment unsealed Monday charges Bowman with conspiring with others to possess and distribute drugs including methamphetamine, fentanyl, cocaine and marijuana. The charge carries a sentence of up to 20 years in federal prison. The indictment doesn't accuse Bowman of directly possessing or selling illegal drugs.

Bowman was already facing state charges in Chatham County Superior Court, where a grand jury indicted him in June. He's charged in the state case with being a manager of an illegal street gang and conspiring to sell marijuana and buy pills of the opioid hydrocodone. (AP)

PRETORIA, South Africa: Grammy Award-winning rapper **Kendrick Lamar** has drawn raves in South Africa as a headliner at a music festival there over the weekend.

Lamar told the crowd at the Hey Neighbor festival that his 2015 album *To Pimp a Butterfly* was inspired by his first visit to South Africa.

"It was 2014 when I first came to South Africa, right, and that inspired a particular album, one of my most favorite albums," he said.

Lamar also performed in the Rwandan capital of **Kigali** last week.

"It is not just music, it is poetry," festival attendee **Tshepo Sedikwe** said of the rapper. (AP)

LONDON: A judge ordered **Prince Harry** on Monday to pay nearly 50,000 pounds (more than \$60,000) in legal fees to the publisher of the Daily Mail tabloid for his failed court challenge in a libel lawsuit.

The Duke of **Sussex** is suing Associated Newspapers Ltd. over an article that said Harry tried to hide his efforts to retain publicly funded protection in the UK after leaving his role as a working member of

the royal family.

Justice **Matthew Nicklin** ruled Friday in the High Court in London that the publisher has a "real prospect" of showing that statements issued on Harry's behalf were misleading and that the February 2022 article reflected

an "honest opinion" and wasn't libelous.

"The defendant may well submit that this was a masterclass in the art of 'spinning,'" Nicklin wrote, in refusing to strike the honest opinion defense.

Harry has claimed the article was "fun-

damentally inaccurate" and the newspaper defamed him when it suggested he lied in his initial public statements over efforts to challenge the government's decision to strip him of his security detail after he and his family moved to the US in 2020.

Harry, 39, the younger son of **King Charles III**, also has a lawsuit pending against the government's decision to protect him on a case-by-case basis when he visits **Britain**. He claims that hostility toward him and his wife on social media and relentless hounding by the news media threaten their safety. (AP)

BUCHAREST, Romania: A court in Romania on Monday rejected a request by influencer **Andrew Tate** to return assets that were seized during investigations into the case in which he is charged with human trafficking, rape and forming a criminal gang to sexually exploit women.

The Bucharest Tribunal's decision can be appealed within 48 hours. Tate's lawyer, **Eugen Vidineac**, told The Associated Press he has applied to appeal.

The decision comes nearly a year after Tate, his brother **Tristan** and two Romanian women were arrested near Bucharest. Romanian prosecutors formally indicted all four in June. They have denied the allegations. (AP)



Grammy award-winning rapper Kendrick Lamar performs at the inaugural Hey Neighbour Festival in Pretoria, South Africa, Saturday, Dec. 9. (AP)

Dehydration, fatigue, ear issues, bloating and viral infections and more

5 ways air travel affects body, expert tips to minimize them

CLEVELAND, Dec 12: Environmental factors in an airplane cabin and the process of traveling itself can affect the body's normal functioning, but there are several precautions that can be taken to minimize the impact, says an expert from global health system Cleveland Clinic.

"The pressure, temperature and oxygen levels in the cabin fluctuate, and the humidity level is lower than it is at sea level," says Cleveland Clinic family medicine physician **Matthew Goldman**, MD. "All of these can mess with some of your body's normal functions. Then, there's the actual process of traveling, which could involve switching time zones and coming in contact with dozens or even hundreds of other people."

Dr. Goldman points out that even the stress associated with travelling can take its toll, and recommends individuals plan ahead to minimize this. "People could, for example, head to the airport early to avoid the stress of unexpected traffic and queues. Those who need to take medications could pack these in carry-on luggage for easy access, while individuals with diabetes or other health conditions can book special dietary meals ahead of time."



Goldman

Inflammation

Dr. Goldman adds that if individuals are not feeling well, it might be worth putting off air travel. "If your eustachian tubes are clogged by inflammation from a cold or allergies, your ears might not be able to 'pop' during take-off and landing, which could cause pain and even damage the ear," he says.

According to Dr. Goldman, there are five common ways that air travel can affect the body, and there are steps individuals can take to minimize the impact of each.

1. Dehydration risk

Airplane cabins have very low humidity levels because about 50% of the air circulating in the cabin is pulled from the outside, and at high altitudes, the air is almost completely devoid of moisture, Dr. Goldman says. This might cause a person's throat, nose, eyes and skin to feel dry so he suggests carrying an empty water bottle that can be refilled after clearing security and packing small bottles of lotion, eye drops or nasal sprays in hand luggage. People could also try wearing glasses instead of contacts to help prevent the discomfort of dry eyes.

2. Energy depletion

"Air pressure is lower at higher altitudes, which means your body takes in less oxygen," says Dr. Goldman. "Airlines 'pressurize' the air in the cabin, but not to sea-level pressures, so there's still less oxygen getting to your body, which can make you feel drained or even short of breath. Dehydration and sitting for long periods of time can make it worse, as can traveling to a different time zone."

Hydration is key to combatting this problem, says Dr. Goldman. He also recommends getting up and walking around on longer-haul flights, and performing stretches while seated, for example, lifting the feet off the ground and flexing and pointing toes, to keep blood flowing. For those traveling to a different time zone for just a day or two, Dr. Goldman recommends trying to keep sleep schedules on home time zones.

3. Stress on ears and motion sickness

According to Dr. Goldman, "The pressure in the cabin changes, the air pressure inside your inner ears tries to adjust with it — this equalization is what helps you maintain your balance. Stress is placed around the middle ear tissue and eustachian tubes when the outside pressure changes quickly during takeoff and landing, which is why your ears may adjust by popping."

This imbalance can also contribute to motion sickness, says Dr. Goldman. He explains that motion sickness occurs when the brain receives conflicting messages about motion and the body's position in space delivered from the inner ear, eyes, and skin receptors and the muscle and joint sensors.

Dr. Goldman suggests swallowing or yawning to open the eustachian tubes, which control the pressure in the middle ear, during takeoff and landing. To minimize motion sickness, he suggests choosing a window seat over the wing, where the degree of motion is lowest and the passenger may be able to view the horizon.

4. Bloating

Airplane pressure changes also cause gas inside the stomach and intestines to expand, which is why people may feel bloated, says Dr. Goldman. He advises avoiding any foods that are known to make gas worse before and during a flight.

5. Exposure to germs

"You might think that recirculating air in the cabin would make you prone to getting sick, but commercial airlines actually have advanced filtering systems that remove most bacteria, fungi and viruses from the air," says Dr. Goldman. "It is the close proximity with so many other people that is more likely to make you sick."

Dr. Goldman further suggests having vaccinations up to date before flying, carrying a small bottle of sanitizer, and washing hands thoroughly throughout the journey.

The Conversation

Unmasking the web of deceit

Disinformation rampant on social media: expert decodes tactics used against youBy H. Colleen Sinclair
Louisiana State University

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

Information warfare abounds, and everyone online has been drafted whether they know it or not.

Disinformation is deliberately generated and misleading content disseminated for selfish or malicious purposes. Unlike misinformation, which may be shared unwittingly or with good intentions, disinformation aims to foment distrust, destabilize institutions, discredit good intentions, defame opponents and delegitimize sources of knowledge such as science and journalism.

Many governments engage in disinformation campaigns. For instance, the Russian government has used images of celebrities to attract attention to anti-Ukraine propaganda. Meta, parent company of Facebook and Instagram, warned on Nov. 30, 2023, that China has stepped up its disinformation operations.

Disinformation is nothing new, and information warfare has been practiced by many countries, including the US. But the internet gives disinformation campaigns unprecedented reach. Foreign governments, internet trolls, domestic and international extremists, opportunistic profiteers and even paid disinformation agencies exploit the internet to spread questionable content. Periods of civil unrest, natural disasters, health crises and wars trigger anxiety and the hunt for information, which disinformation agents take advantage of.

Certainly it's worth watching for the warning signs for misinformation and dangerous speech, but there are additional tactics disinformation agents employ.

Hahaganda is a tactic in which disinformation agents use memes, political comedy from state-run outlets, or speeches to make light of serious matters, attack others, minimize violence or dehumanize, and deflect blame.

Challenged

This approach provides an easy defense: If challenged, the disinformation agents can say, "Can't you take a joke?" often followed by accusations of being too politically correct.

Rumor-milling is a tactic in which the disinformation agents claim to have exclusive access to secrets they allege are being purposefully concealed. They indicate that you will "only hear this here" and will imply that others are unwilling to share the alleged truth - for example, "The media won't report this" or "The government doesn't want you to know" and "I shouldn't be telling you this ..."

But they do not insist that the information be kept secret, and will instead include encouragement to share it - for example, "Make this go viral" or "Most people won't have the courage to share this." It's important to question how an author or speaker could have come by such "secret" information and what their motive is to prompt you to share it.

Often disinformation has no real evidence, so instead disinformation agents will find or make up people to support their assertions. This impersonation can take multiple forms. Disinformation agents will use anecdotes as evidence, especially sympathetic stories from vulnerable groups such as women or children.

Similarly, they may disseminate "concerned citizens'" perspectives. These lay-

Safety tech: Is your car spying on you?

By M. Hadi Amini

Florida International University

Depending on which late-model vehicle you own, your car might be watching you - literally and figuratively - as you drive down the road. It's watching you with cameras that monitor the cabin and track where you're looking, and with sensors that track your speed, lane position and rate of acceleration.

Your car uses this data to make your ride safe, comfortable and convenient. For example, the cameras can tell when you've been distracted and need to bring your attention back to the road. They can also identify when you are speeding by verifying the speed limit from your GPS position or traffic signs along the road and warn you to slow down. Some carmakers are also beginning to incorporate similar features for convenience, such as unlocking your car by scanning your face or fingerprint. Your car may also transmit some of this data to the manufacturer's data centers, where the company uses it to improve your driving experience or provide you with personalized services.

In addition to providing these benefits, this data collection is a potential privacy nightmare. The information can reveal your identity, your habits when you're in your car, how safely you drive, where you've been and where you regularly go. A report by the Mozilla Foundation, a nonprofit technology research and advocacy organization, found that carmakers' privacy policies are exceedingly lax. The study identified cars as the "worst category of products for privacy that we have ever reviewed." US Sen. Ed Markey wrote a letter to US automakers on Nov. 30, 2023, asking a lengthy set of questions about their data practices.

Today's smart cars present drivers with a trade-off between convenience and pri-

privacy, assuming drivers have the option of improving the data privacy of their cars. As a computer scientist who studies cybersecurity and resilience in transportation, I see several technological routes to getting the best of both worlds: cars that make use of this collected data while also preserving users' privacy.

Today's cars use a wide range of sensors to understand the environment, analyze the data and ensure the safety of passengers. For instance, cars are equipped with sensors that measure brake pedal position, vehicle speed, driver's movements, surrounding vehicles and even traffic lights. The collected data is transmitted to the car's electric control units, the computers that operate the car's many systems.

Sensors

There are two types of sensors that continuously monitor and predict a driver's drowsiness. The first is vehicle status monitoring sensors such as lane detection and steering wheel position tracking. This data is not directly related to a specific person and can be considered not personally identifiable information unless it is correlated with other data that identifies the driver.

The second type of sensors tracks drivers themselves. This category includes things like cameras to track the driver's eye movements to predict fatigue. This second group of sensors is directly related to the driver's privacy because they collect personally identifiable information, such as the driver's face.

There is a trade-off between the quality of the driving experience and the privacy of drivers, depending on the level of services and features. Some drivers may prefer to share their biometric data to facilitate accessing a car's functions and automating a major part of their driving experience. Others may prefer to manually control the car's systems, sharing less personally identifiable

information or none at all.

At first glance, it seems the trade-off of privacy and driver comfort cannot be avoided. Car manufacturers tend to take measures to protect drivers' data against data thieves, but they collect a lot of data themselves. And as the Mozilla Foundation report showed, most car companies reserve the right to sell your data. Researchers are working on developing data analytics tools that better protect privacy and make progress on eliminating the trade-off.

For instance, over the past seven years, the concept of federated machine learning has attracted attention because it allows algorithms to learn from the data on your local device without copying the data to a central server. For instance, Google's Gboard keyboard benefits from federated learning to better guess the next word you are likely to type without sharing your private data with a server.

Research led by Ervin Moore, a Ph.D. student at Florida International University's Sustainability, Optimization, and Learning for Interdependent Networks laboratory, and published in IEEE Internet of Things Journal explored the idea of using blockchain-based federated machine learning to improve the privacy and security of users and their sensitive data. The technique could be used to protect drivers' data. There are other techniques to preserve privacy as well, such as location obfuscation, which alters the user's location data to prevent their location from being revealed.

While there is still a trade-off between user privacy and quality of service, privacy-preserving data analytics techniques could pave the way for using data without leaking drivers' and passengers' personally identifiable information. This way, drivers could benefit from a wide range of modern cars' services and features without paying the high cost of lost privacy. (AP)

person experts present their social identity as providing the authority to speak on a matter; "As a mother ...," "As a veteran ...," "As a police officer" Convert communicators, or people who allegedly change from the "wrong" position to the "right" one, can be especially persuasive, such as the woman who got an abortion but regretted it. These people often don't actually exist or may be coerced or paid.

If ordinary people don't suffice, fake experts may be used. Some are fabricated, and you can watch out for "inauthentic user" behavior, for example, by checking X - formerly Twitter - accounts using the Botometer. But fake experts can come in different varieties.

■ A faux expert is someone used for their title but doesn't have actual relevant expertise.

■ A pseudoexpert is someone who claims relevant expertise but has no actual training.

■ A junk expert is a sellout. They may have had expertise once but now say whatever is profitable. You can often find these people have supported other dubious claims - for example, that smoking doesn't cause cancer - or work for institutes that regularly produce questionable "scholarship."

■ An echo expert is when disinformation sources cite each other to provide credence for their claims. China and Russia routinely cite one another's newspapers.

■ A stolen expert is someone who exists, but they weren't actually contacted and their research is misinterpreted. Likewise, disinformation agents also steal credibility from known news sources, such as by typosquatting, the practice of setting up a domain name that closely resembles a legitimate organization's.

You can check whether accounts, anecdotal or scientific, have been verified by other reliable sources. Google the name. Check expertise status, source validity and interpretation of research. Remember, one story or interpretation is not necessarily representative.

Conspiratorial narratives involve some malevolent force - for example, "the deep state" - engaged in covert actions with the aim to cause harm to society. That certain conspiracies such as MK-Ultra and Watergate have been confirmed is often offered as evidence for the validity of new unfounded conspiracies.

Nonetheless, disinformation agents find that constructing a conspiracy is an effective

means to remind people of past reasons to distrust governments, scientists or other trustworthy sources.

But extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. Remember, the conspiracies that were ultimately unveiled had evidence - often from sources like investigative journalists, scientists and government investigations. Be particularly wary of conspiracies that try to delegitimize knowledge-producing institutions like universities, research labs, government agencies and news outlets by claiming that they are in on a cover-up.

Disinformation often serves the dual purpose of making the originator look good and their opponents look bad. Disinformation takes this further by painting issues as a battle between good and evil, using accusations of evilness to legitimize violence. Russia is particularly fond of accusing others of being secret Nazis, pedophiles or Satanists.

Meanwhile, they often depict their soldiers as helping children and the elderly.

Be especially wary of accusations of atrocities like genocide, especially under the attention-grabbing "breaking news" headline. Accusations abound. Verify the facts and how the information was obtained. (AP)

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SPORTS

Cagliari's late goals ensure victory as Empoli and Lecce share 'spoils'

Bilbao mourn fan loss as Granada secure draw

ROME, Dec 12, (AP): Empoli drew at home to Lecce 1-1 and extended the visitor's winless run to 10 matches in Serie A on Monday.

Also, Cagliari scored twice in injury time to beat visiting Sassuolo 2-1 and move out of the relegation places into 16th place, one behind Sassuolo.

It was the fourth game in a row Lecce drew and it moved to 17 points, five ahead of Empoli, which sat one place above the relegation zone.

It could have been different for Lecce after it took the lead in the 64th minute thanks to a goalkeeping error by Etrit Berisha. Zambian winger Lameck Banda tried his luck from almost 30 meters out, and although the shot ap-



Erlic

SOCCER

peared to pose little danger it bounced right in front of Berisha and between his legs.

Empoli, though, struck back seven minutes later with an equally fortunate goal. Defender Hamza Rafia stuck out a leg to stop a cross from the right but the ball hit his knee and deflected in over his own keeper.

Sassuolo scored against Cagliari after seven minutes thanks to a Martin Erlic header, and was managing well even after a red card for defender Ruan Tressoldi 17 minutes into the second half.

But injury time was action-packed. Just seconds after Sassuolo saw a second goal ruled out for offside, Gianluca Lapadula equalized. Then, with almost the last kick of the game, Leonardo Pavonetti scored from an overhead kick to put Cagliari ahead and give the Sardinian side only its third win of the league.

Inter Milan leads the league, two points ahead of Juventus.

In Madrid, Granada came from behind to draw with Athletic Bilbao 1-1 in a La Liga game that was restarted, a day after a fan died in the stands.

The game was suspended on Sunday



Cagliari's Gaetano Oristanio, foreground right, in action during the Serie A soccer match between Cagliari Calcio and Sassuolo Calcio at the Unipol Domus stadium in Cagliari, Italy on Dec. 11, 2023. (AP)

after 17 minutes when Athletic goalkeeper Unai Simón alerted the referee to a problem with one of the supporters at Estadio Los Cármenes.

Doctors from both teams helped but the fan who suffered a cardiac arrest could not be resuscitated. The teams left the field and agreed to continue the match on Monday.

Both clubs laid flowers on the fan's

seat and held a minute's silence before kickoff in the 17th minute.

Athletic was leading 1-0 thanks to a sixth-minute goal from Iñaki Williams and he almost got a second before half-time only to hit the bar.

The visitors were superior throughout the first half but they paid for their profligacy 10 minutes into the second period when Granada drew level.

Friendship tested on greens

Oosthuizen pips Schwartzel, wins Alfred Dunhill Championship title

MALELANE, South Africa, Dec 12, (AP): Louis Oosthuizen came out on top in his final-round duel with close friend and fellow South African Charl

Schwartzel to win the Alfred Dunhill Championship on Monday for his first European tour title in five years.

Oosthuizen closed with a 3-under 69 to win by two strokes, but only after a nervy finish that saw him make bogey at No. 17 and roll in a long par putt at the par-5 18th hole after hitting his drive into water.

"Just got lucky on this one," said the 2010 British Open champion, who finished on 18-under 270. The climax to the tournament was pushed back a day after much of Sunday's play was wiped out because of stormy weather.

Oosthuizen and Schwartzel, major champions and friends since their days playing junior golf, resumed on the eighth hole in a tie for the lead - three strokes clear of their nearest challenger, Christian Beuzidenhout - and with puddles dotted around the course at Leopard Creek Country Club because of heavy rain on Sunday.

They were still tied with six holes to play, when Oosthuizen made birdies from 10 feet, 30 feet and 6 feet to move into a three-shot lead.

He gave one back on No. 17 and arrived at the 72nd hole with a two-stroke lead over Schwartzel, only to push his tee shot into a water hazard. He took a drop, chipped into the fairway and hit his fourth shot to about 25 feet, with Schwartzel on the green for a birdie opportunity from closer in. However, Oosthuizen holed his putt and pumped his fist, knowing he'd



Oosthuizen

GOLF

claimed a 10th win on the European tour and a first since the South African Open in December 2018.

Schwartzel, who was looking to win the event for a fifth time, shot 71 and finished in second place, two strokes clear of Beuzidenhout. "I knew I needed to play well - Charl plays really well around this place," Oosthuizen said.

Bostick guides Matadors over Utah Tech 80-75

Gonzaga rolls past Mississippi Valley State

SPOKANE, Wash., Dec 12, (AP): Braden Huff scored 17 points, Graham Ike added 13 points and eight rebounds, and No. 10 Gonzaga cruised to a 78-40 victory over Mississippi Valley State on Monday night.

The Bulldogs (8-2) earned their 11th straight home win and bounced back from a 78-73 loss on the road to Washington last Saturday.

"Nobody was too happy with how things went (against Washington), so to get that bad taste out of our mouths and play 48 hours later was nice for us to kind of get this one done," Huff said.

Ben Gregg added 11 points and four rebounds off the bench for the Bulldogs. Anton Watson had eight points, four rebounds and three assists.

Mississippi Valley State (0-10) was led by Rayquan Brown, who finished with 19 points and nine rebounds. Brown was the only Delta Devils player who scored more than five.

CSUN 80, Utah Tech 75

In Northridge, Calif., Donte Bostick scored 19 points to lead all five starters in double figures and Cal State Northridge defeated Utah Tech 80-75.

Bostick made 6 of 11 shots with three 3-pointers for the Matadors (7-3). Keonte Jones finished with 16 points, six rebounds and six assists and five blocked shots. De'Sean Allen-Eikens had 13 points and Dearon Tucker scored 11. Jordan Brinson pitched in with 10 points and six assists.

BASKETBALL

Noa Gonsalves had 18 points to lead the Trailblazers (5-5). Tanner Christensen and freshman Aric Demings both scored 13. Christensen had eight rebounds, while Demings added seven assists and five boards. Jaylen Searles made 3 of 4 from 3-point range and scored 11. Hamed Olayinka contributed 10 points, six rebounds and five blocked shots off the bench.

San Francisco 85, New Orleans 72

In San Francisco, Marcus Williams scored 28 points and San Francisco beat New Orleans 85-72.

Williams made 11 of 21 shots with two 3-pointers for the Dons (7-3), adding four assists. Stefan Todorovic had 13 points and Ndededo Newbury scored 12. Jonathan Mogbo totaled 10 points and 12 rebounds for his fourth double-double of the season.

Swiatek first woman since Williams to win WTA Player of Year twice in a row

ST. PETERSBURG, Florida, Dec 12, (AP): Iga Swiatek's second consecutive season-ending No. 1 ranking helped her collect a second consecutive WTA Player of the Year award on Monday, making her the first woman since Serena Williams to claim that honor twice in a row.

Williams, who retired last year, was the WTA Player of the Year every season from 2012-15, the final four of the seven total times the American claimed that award.

Swiatek went 68-11 in 2023 with a tour-leading six titles, including at the French Open in June. That was Swiatek's third championship at Roland Garros and fourth overall at a Grand Slam tournament.

The 22-year-old from Poland wrapped up the season with an un-

defeated run at the WTA Finals in Cancun, Mexico, last month, which allowed her to overtake Aryna Sabalenka atop the rankings. Swiatek held the No. 1 spot from April 2022 until this September, before regaining it to close the year.

In other WTA awards announced Monday, Zheng Qinwen of China was the Most Improved Player of the Year, Mirra Andrejeva of Russia was

TENNIS

the Newcomer of the Year, Elina Svitolina of Ukraine was chosen for the Comeback of the Year and Tomasz Wiktorowski - who works with Swiatek - was the Coach of the Year.

Storm Hunter of Australia and Elise Mertens of Belgium earned Doubles Team of the Year, Ons Jabeur of Tunisia was the recipient of both the Karen Krantzcke Sportsmanship Award and the Peachy Kellmeyer Player Service Award, and Jessica Pegula of the U.S. was given the Jerry Diamond ACES Award for her off-court promotional and charitable activities.



Swiatek



Gonzaga forward Graham Ike (13) shoots while pressured by Mississippi Valley State forward Reginald Reynolds, left, during the second half of an NCAA college basketball game, Dec. 11, 2023, in Spokane, Wash. (AP)

Jordan Johnson had 28 points to lead the Privateers (4-6). He made 8 of 15 shots with two 3-pointers and 10 of 11

free throws. Tyson Jackson scored 18 with five rebounds. Khaled Wilson-Rouse added 12 points and five boards.

Spithill retires from SailGP

DUBAI, Dec 12, (AP): Jimmy Spithill announced his retirement from SailGP racing after the Australian catamaran he was helming was edged by trans-Tasman Sea rival New Zealand's Peter Burling in a photo finish at the Emirates Dubai Sail Grand Prix on Sunday.

Burling poked his 50-foot foiling catamaran across the line just a few feet ahead of the Aussies' "Flying Roo" after a tense final mark rounding on the Persian Gulf that included Canada's Phil Robertson drawing a penalty.

It was Burling's first win since the Season 4 opener in Chicago and denied the three-time defending SailGP champion Aussies their first victory.

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Champions League future on the line

Newcastle's rise under Saudi ownership faces big test

LONDON, Dec 12, (AP) — Newly flush with Saudi cash, Newcastle has chosen to tread a strategic and methodical path in its bid to reach the summit of European game under the richest owners in soccer. The club is encountering some teething problems by playing the slow game.

Qualifying for the Champions League last season arguably came ahead of schedule for Newcastle and manager Eddie Howe, and they're struggling to juggle the demands of playing in Europe's top competition while also keeping up with their rivals in the Premier League.

With a relatively shallow squad hit by a spate of injuries and running on empty amid a packed fixture schedule, the team has dropped to seventh in the league following back-to-back losses last week and, on Wednesday, faces the very real prospect of being eliminated from the Champions League before the knockout stage.

Newcastle hosts AC Milan with both teams on five points, two behind second-place Paris Saint-Germain and five adrift of already-qualified Borussia Dortmund. Newcastle needs a win

at St. James' Park and for PSG to draw or lose against Dortmund in Germany to seal a top-two finish and advance to the last 16.

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Lose and Newcastle would be out of Europe completely, not even dropping into the Europa League playoffs courtesy of a third-place finish in the group. It's a huge night, then, for the north-

east team and its Saudi ownership - the Public Investment Fund - following the 300-million-pound (then \$409 million) purchase of the club in 2021.

Failing in the Champions League, the biggest show in club soccer, would be an early blow to its new-found status as a major disruptor for the established elite.

Maybe it shouldn't come as a surprise, though.

After all, Newcastle was placed with three storied opponents in the toughest group in the Champions League, mean-

ing every match has been a big occasion for a club playing in the competition for the first time in 20 years.

Coupled with that is an absentee list of which Howe has never seen the likes before. Sven Botman, Dan Burn, Callum Wilson, Harvey Barnes, Sean Longstaff, Jacob Murphy, Nick Pope and Elliot Anderson are among those who are or have been injured, while offseason signing Sandro Tonali was banned for 10 months in October for breaching betting rules.

Against Tottenham on Sunday,

Newcastle fielded the same 10 outfield players for the fifth straight game and looked to be running on empty as it slumped to a 4-1 loss.

Given their wealth, they could be. All the talk after the 2021 takeover was which of soccer's so-called "galacticos" would be heading to Newcastle. Kylian Mbappe? Erling Haaland? Neymar?

When Manchester City came under Abu Dhabi ownership in 2008, its first signing was a jaw-dropper - Robinho, a flamboyant Brazil winger at the time.

Al-Kuwait turn focus on Al-Jahra after Cup exit

Maaloul attributes elimination to physical challenges

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

AMMAN, Dec 12: Nabil Maaloul, the Tunisian coach of Kuwait Club attributed their exit from the AFC Cup to the physical challenges faced against Jordanian side Al-Wahdat.

Al-Kuwait, "Al-Abyad," alongside Al-Arabi, was eliminated from the AFC Cup group stage, settling for a 1-1 draw with Al-Wahdat in the final round in Amman. This result placed them in third position, eliminating the chance to qualify as the best runner-up in the West Asian teams' three groups. Al-Wahdat topped the group with 10 points, while Kuwait had 7 points and Iraqi Electricity secured 13 points.

During the post-match press confer-

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ence, Coach Maaloul acknowledged the evident physical decline of his team, expressing the need to address and find solutions to this issue. He emphasized the challenges faced in the match against Al-Wahdat, stating that both teams were in search of victory. Despite the physical condition of the players, he praised the team's effort to maintain their goal of progress. The absence of several attackers due to various circumstances posed an additional challenge.

Maaloul highlighted the intense pressure from Al-Wahdat in the final period, resulting in a goal that concluded Al-Abyad's journey in the tournament. The team is set to resume training in preparation for their upcoming match against Al-Jahra in the Zain Premier League.

On the other side, Al-Wahdat coach Rashid Jaber noted that his team played with an offensive strategy from the start, aiming to score, but they struggled with the final touch. Despite having several opportunities in the last 20 minutes, they failed to capitalize, impacting the match result. He explained the cautious approach in managing player Bahaa Faisal's participation to ensure his return in optimal condition.



Al-Kuwait coach Nabil Maaloul.



A file photo of Sheikh Ahmed Al Jaber with winners.

Inter Miami to play 2 matches in Saudi Arabia

Messi, Ronaldo to renew rivalry in Riyadh Season Cup

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla., Dec 12, (Agencies) — Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo will meet in Saudi Arabia after all.

Inter Miami confirmed Monday that it will take part in the Riyadh Season Cup - something that was announced by Saudi officials on Nov. 21. Inter Miami said the reports at that time were inaccurate.

Inter Miami will play Al-Hilal on Jan. 29 and Al Nassr - Ronaldo's team - on Feb. 1. Those two clubs lead the Saudi Pro League and Ronaldo is that league's leading scorer.

"These matches will offer important tests for our team, which will benefit us as we approach the new season," Inter Miami sporting director Chris Henderson said. "We're excited for our group to get the chance to go up against teams with as much quality as Al-Hilal and Al Nassr."

Messi and Ronaldo have faced off 35 times between matches for club and country, Inter Miami said, with Messi's teams winning 16, Ronaldo's teams winning 10 and the sides settling for a draw on the other nine occasions. Messi has 21 goals and 12 assists in those matches; Ronaldo has 20 goals and one assist.

Messi has promoted tourism in

Saudi Arabia and in May was suspended by former club Paris Saint-Germain for making an unauthorized trip to the country. He also played in this year's Riyadh Season Cup when PSG was the guest team. Saudi Arabia has made a major push to be a big player in world soccer by signing some of the game's biggest

players amid allegations of sportswashing. But it couldn't lure Messi

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to the oil-rich kingdom when he left PSG at the end of last season, with

the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner opting to move to Major League Soccer instead.

Messi and Ronaldo are widely considered to be two of the greatest players of all-time and competed against each other for soccer's biggest prizes during their prime years at Barcelona and Real Madrid, respectively.

Inter Miami now has four preseason matches announced, with one against the El Salvador national team on Jan. 19 and a match against a team of top players in Hong Kong on Feb. 4. The MLS schedule is expected to begin in late February.

□ □ □

Al-Nasr, Al-Hilal, and Al-Khaleej clubs secured their spots in the semi-finals of the King's Cup. The fourth qualifying team is yet to be determined, as the Jeddah Union's match against Al-Faisaly has been postponed until December 19. This delay is attributed to Jeddah Union's engagement in the Club World Cup.

In their respective matches, Al-Nasr triumphed over Al-Shabab with a 5-2 score, Al-Hilal secured a 3-0 victory against Al-Taawoun, and Al-Khaleej emerged successful with a 2-1 win over Abha.



In this file photo, Argentina's Lionel Messi, celebrates scoring his side's first goal against Ecuador during a qualifying soccer match for the FIFA World Cup 2026, at Monumental stadium in Buenos Aires, Argentina. (AP)

Best of the Rest

Clemson 'edges' Notre Dame for program's 4th men's soccer title

LOUISVILLE, Dec 12, (AP) — Seniors Brandon Parrish and Ousmane Sylla each scored, and No. 9 Clemson held off No. 2 Notre Dame 2-1 on Monday night to claim the program's second national championship in three seasons.

Clemson (15-3-5), making its sixth championship game appearance in school history and second in three seasons, has won titles in 1984, 1987 and 2021. The Tigers also knocked off Notre Dame in the 2021 semifinals.

Notre Dame (13-3-6) was seeking its second championship in program history after winning the College Cup in 2013.

Parrish scored his eighth goal of the season for 1-0 lead in the 27th minute. Parrish chested a clearance attempt and sent a deflected shot from distance past a diving Bryan Dowd.

Clemson improved to 11-0-1 when leading at the half this season.

Parrish also cleared the ball off the goal line in the 58th to maintain a 1-0 lead.

Sylla, named the offensive most outstanding player, scored his 13th goal of

the season, to go with 10 assists, in the 70th for a 2-0 lead. Sylla played it out wide near the midfield circle to Alex Meinhard, who dribbled in space to get into the box for a cross to the penalty spot for a wide-open finish.

Joseph Andema nearly recorded his fifth straight shutout in the NCAA Tournament until Tyler Trimmel was whistled for a handball in the 89th minute and Paddy Burns converted the

SOCCER

penalty kick.

Burns also had a good scoring chance in the 56th when he was left wide open at the back post, but his off-balance shot went off the crossbar.

Andema made three saves for Clemson, which allowed 18 goals in its first 18 games of the season and just one in the last five. The Tigers went 449 minutes without giving up a goal in the tournament - nearly becoming the sixth champion to not allow a post-season goal.

'Mirpur pitch unsatisfactory': The Mirpur pitch, which hosted the second and final test match between Bangladesh and New Zealand, has received one demerit point after the International Cricket Council rated it as unsatisfactory.

ICC match referee David Boon in his assessment said that "the pitch may have been under prepared" and that "deliveries from spin bowlers often went over the batter's shoulder when playing forward and then occasionally stayed very low." New Zealand won the match by four wickets to level the two-match series, thanks to Glenn Phillips' all-round performance.

The match overall saw just 178.1 overs of action over the course of 3 1/2 days after all of Day 2 and some sizable chunks of the first and third days got chopped off due to rain and wet outfield, making it the shortest ever test in Mirpur. A total of 36 wickets fell in that period.

The report has been forwarded to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), which now has 14 days to appeal against the sanction. (AP)

□ □ □

Holdener has ankle surgery: Wendy Holdener could miss the rest of the season after having surgery on an ankle injury Tuesday, leaving Mikaela Shiffrin without one of her main slalom rivals.

Holdener crashed into safety nets while training in Italy and fractured her left ankle, the Swiss ski federation said. The two-time Olympic slalom medalist was due to be

operated on Tuesday in Zurich and faces being off skis for about two months, the team said.

Holdener is set to miss at least six World Cup slaloms with two more scheduled in March.

She placed third when Shiffrin won the most recent slalom last month at Killington, Vermont. It was the 30-year-old racer's 35th podium finish in World Cup slaloms, which includes two wins. She took silver at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics and bronze four years later at Beijing.

She also has two world championship titles in combined events, and helped Switzerland win Olympic gold in the team event in 2018. (AP)

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Sky Sports to show martial arts events: One Championship announced a partnership with Sky Sports on Tuesday to carry the Asia-centered martial arts promotion on Sky's broadcast and digital platforms in Britain and Ireland.

The first event under the agreement is One Fight Night 18, which will be held Jan. 13 in Bangkok and headlined by a bout between flyweight kickboxing world champion Superlek Kiatmou9 and Elias Mahmoudi.

Athletes representing more than 80 countries compete in One Championship events in mixed martial arts, Muay Thai, kickboxing, submission grappling and other disciplines. "This deal marks an important milestone for the celebration of martial arts and the continued expansion of One Championship's global footprint," One chairman and CEO Chatri Sityodtong said. (AP)

□ □ □

Exciting tennis action

Arab Elite Championship returns to Qatar

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The announcement of the upcoming third Arab Elite Championship was made by Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Tennis Federation. The tournament is scheduled to take place in the Qatari capital, Doha, from December 23 to 28. Notably, the event

is sponsored by Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait and KGL, with the participation of top Arab players.

Sheikh Al-Jaber disclosed that the Qatari Tennis Federation has granted approval for Doha to host the third edition, with matches set to be held at the Khalifa International Tennis Complex. Emphasizing the continued organiza-

tion of the tournament, he cited the substantial successes and accomplishments of the first two editions hosted by Kuwait at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Complex in 2021 and 2022.

Expressing anticipation for another chapter of success and creativity in Doha, Sheikh Al-Jaber acknowledged

the city as a sports hub and a favored destination for athletes globally. He extended gratitude to Nasser Al-Khelaifi, the President of the Qatar Tennis Federation, for his warm welcome and approval to host the tournament, commending Qatar's outstanding track record in organizing major sporting events.

The President of the Arab Federation lauded the pivotal role played by the Qatari Federation in promoting and advancing tennis in both Qatar and the broader region. He highlighted Doha's reputation for hosting major tennis tournaments featuring some of the sport's brightest stars.

Sheikh Al-Jaber underscored Qatar's extensive experience in host-

TENNIS

ing international tournaments, noting the country's commitment to delivering top-tier organization, services, and facilities for athletes. He expressed confidence that this commitment would positively impact the Third Arab Elite Tennis Championship.

Acknowledging the continuous support of Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait and KGL, the main sponsors for the third consecutive year, Sheikh Al-Jaber extended appreciation to national federations for their collaborative efforts in enhancing Arab tennis.

Simon 'relinquishes' CEO duties, Lawler is leaving

WASHINGTON, Dec 12, (AP) — Steve Simon will relinquish his CEO duties at the women's tennis tour while staying on as Executive Chairman under an organizational restructuring of the WTA announced Tuesday that he said has been in the works for several months and is not connected to player complaints that emerged during the season-ending championships last month.

The upcoming changes in leadership will include the hiring of a new CEO who will report to Simon - as will the CEO of WTA Ventures, the commercial enterprise with CVC Capital Partners that was formed this year - and the departure of President Micky Lawler, who will not be replaced.

Simon said he thinks "our preference is" to "find a female candidate" for the CEO position.

He has led the WTA since succeeding Stacey Allaster in 2015; Lawler was in her role since 2014.

"My focus will go to, obviously, governance. Managing the respective boards and councils. Working directly with the

TENNIS

CEOs of the daily business of the tour. I'll be able to spend more time on the geopolitical issues that remain very prevalent to the sport and do affect the business," Simon said in a video interview with The Associated Press and BBC from the WTA offices in St. Petersburg, Florida. "I will spend more time working on the strategic direction of the organization and the challenges that face the organization."

He said that women's tennis has seen significant financial growth during his tenure.

"I believe we were a \$64 million business in '16, and we'll be a \$128 million business this year," Simon said. "And we're due to double that by 2027 with our current business plan projections."

There also have been difficult issues, such as the suspension - and, later, return - of events in China over concerns about the well-being of former player Peng Shuai; the coronavirus pandemic; and ongoing uncertainty about the staging of the WTA Finals.

During this year's edition of that event, which was held in Cancun, Mexico, from Oct. 29-Nov. 6 after the site was not announced until September, players complained about the temporary outdoor court created for the competition. Then-No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka calling the conditions "another level of disrespect."



Denver Nuggets forward Peyton Watson (8) and Atlanta Hawks guard Dejounte Murray (5) dive for the ball during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Atlanta. (AP)

Sports

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MEW claims men's Futsal Super Cup

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: The Ministry of Electricity and Water clinched the Men's Futsal Super Cup for the League of Ministries, Bodies, and Government Institu-

FUTSAL

tions by defeating the Ministry of Education team 5-3. The match took place at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Halls Complex, where the champion asserted its dominance, securing both the Super Cup and the league title from the previous edition. The Ministry of Education team, unfortunately,

claimed the cup's loser title.

Simultaneously, the kickoff for the first round of the second group in the League of Ministries, Institutions, and Governmental Bodies for Football is set for today, featuring three matches. The Public Authority for Industry, the runner-up in the previous edition, will face the Ministry of Interior at 4:00 pm at Surra Square Stadium. Concurrently, the Ministry of Education team will compete against the Ministry of Endowments, and at Sulai-bikhat Square, Fahaheel Square will host the match between National Petroleum and the General Administration of Customs.

Pacers 'rebound' from final loss, send Pistons to 20th straight loss

Spurs losing streak hits franchise-record 17 games

DETROIT, Dec 12, (AP): Benedict Mathurin scored 30 points and the Indiana Pacers handed the Detroit Pistons their 20th straight loss, 131-123 on Monday night.

Tyrese Haliburton had 14 points and 16 assists for Indiana in its first game since Saturday's 123-109 loss to the Los Angeles Lakers in the NBA In-Season Tournament final. Miles Turner added 23 points.

Detroit's losing streak is the longest single-season stretch in franchise history and matches the NBA's longest since the Houston Rockets lost 20 straight in 2020-21. Detroit lost 21 straight between the end of the 1979-80 season and the start of 1980-81.

The Philadelphia 76ers hold both NBA records, setting the single-season mark at 26 in a row in 2013-14 and the overall mark at 28 at the end of 2015-16 and start of 2016-17.

Cade Cunningham scored 23 points and Ausar Thompson had 20 for the Pistons, who have dropped 44 of their last 48 games dating to last season's trading deadline.

Rockets 93, Spurs 82

In Houston, Tari Eason had a season-high 18 points and 14 rebounds off the bench as Houston dealt San Antonio its franchise-record 17th consecutive loss.

Top overall pick Victor Wembanyama had 15 points, 18 rebounds and five blocks, along with an overpowering dunk over Houston's Alperen SenGUN in the third period, but it wasn't enough to get the Spurs back in the win column.

BASKETBALL

San Antonio hasn't won since a 132-121 victory over Phoenix on Nov. 2.

76ers 146, Wizards 101

In Philadelphia, Tyrese Maxey made three 3-pointers in a game-opening 14-0 run that helped Philadelphia to a 29-point lead at halftime and Joel Embiid had 34 points and 10 rebounds in lopsided win over Washington.

The hapless Wizards (3-19) had seen this before. The 76ers led 75-46 at halftime Monday night, the second time this season they scored 75 points by the break. The other came on Nov. 6 against the Wizards.

Heat 116, Hornets 114

In Charlotte, Duncan Robinson had five 3-pointers and scored 24 points, Kevin Love provided a big boost off the bench with a season-high 19 points and Miami overcame a huge game from Charlotte's Terry Rozier for the win.

Jimmy Butler added 23 points and eight assists and Caleb Martin had 20 points and nine rebounds for Miami, which entered the game having lost five of its last seven. Jaime Jaquez chipped in with 18 points before fouling out late.

Bucks 133, Bulls 129, OT

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 32 points and 12 rebounds to lead Milwaukee past Chicago in overtime.

Brook Lopez and Malik Beasley each had 19 points and Bobby Portis scored 17 for the Bucks.

DeMar DeRozan had 41 points and Coby White scored 33 for Chicago, which had won four straight.

Magic 104, Cavaliers 94

In Orlando, Paolo Banchero scored 20 points and Franz Wagner scored 19 for Orlando as Cleveland failed to recover from a dismal third quarter.

Darius Garland scored 36 points for the Cavaliers, who made only two of 17 shots in the third and scored 15 points. Donovan Mitchell added 22 points for the Cavaliers, who had won four straight on the road.

Knicks 136, Raptors 130

In New York, Julius Randle scored 34 points, Quentin Grimes had a season-high 19 and New York shook off some bad injury news to beat Toronto.

RJ Barrett added 27 points and Jalen Brunson had 21 points and nine assists for the Knicks, who had a new starting center for the first time this season after Mitchell Robinson sustained a stress fracture in his left ankle. The injury will require surgery for the NBA leader in offensive rebounds and a recovery of at least two months.

Nigerian stars Osimhen, Oshoala shine

Atlas Lions and Al-Ahly win big at CAF awards

RABAT, Dec 12, (KUNA): Morocco clinched the prestigious National Team of the Year Award, and Egypt's Al-Ahly claimed the Club of the Year honor at the annual 2023 Confederation of African Football (CAF) Awards Ceremony. In the individual awards category, Nigerian players dominated, with Victor Osimhen of SSC Napoli being named the Player of the Year for 2023. As for the Women's Players of the Year, Asisat Oshoala from Club Barcelona received the accolade for the sixth time.

The Atlas Lions secured the Men's National Team of the Year Award, triumphing over Senegal and Gambia due to their remarkable performance in the 2022 World Cup, where they reached the semifinals.

Morocco's Yassine Bounou, the

goalkeeper for Al-Hilal, received the Goalkeeper of the Year Award, surpassing competition from Andre Onana of Cameroon and Egypt's Mohammed Al-Shenawy.

Walid Regragui, the head coach

SOCCER

of Morocco's men's national team, claimed the Coach of the Year award, outshining his Algerian and Senegalese counterparts.

Egypt's Al-Ahly was named Club of the Year, earning recognition for their outstanding achievements in the Northeastern African region. Additionally, Mahmoud Abdulmunem, a player from Al-Ahly, secured the Goal of the Year award.



Men's Futsal Super Cup champion, Ministry of Electricity and Water celebrate with officials.

Back-to-back victories for men's, women claim inaugural title

Gulf University for Science and Technology dominates League

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12: Gulf University for Science and Technology asserted its dominance in both the men's and women's padel competitions during the Warba Padel League within the third Higher Education Sports Games, organized by the Kuwait School Sports and Higher Education Federation.

In the men's category, Gulf University students secured their title for the second consecutive year. They clinched victory in a thrilling match against the General Authority for Applied Education and Training, maintaining a high level of excitement and competition throughout. The event drew a large audience from both sides, receiving encouragement until the very end. Officials from Warba Bank, universities, and members of the school union's board of directors and organizing committee were also in attendance.

In a parallel achievement, the female team from Gulf University emerged victorious in the inaugural edition of the Warba Bank Women's Paddle League. They defeated Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences in the final, while Kuwait College of Science and Technology secured the third position.

PADEL

Shifting focus to the Warba Bank Turf Football League, two matches unfolded within the fourth group. The American University of Kuwait, leading with 3 points after a 13-0 triumph over the College of Technology and Aviation, aimed for a second victory against Kuwait College of Science and Technology. Simultaneously, the American International University faced the College of Technology and Aviation in the second match.

In the Warba Futsal League, Kuwait University's women's team secured a spot in the semi-finals, where they will face the Public Authority for Applied Education. The Australian University and the American University will clash in another semi-final, with the winners meeting in the final and the losers contending for third place.

Referee punched at match

Club president arrested, league games suspended

ANKARA, Turkey, Dec 12, (AP): Turkish authorities on Tuesday arrested the president of top-flight soccer club after he punched a referee in the face at the end of match, prompting the Turkish Football Federation to suspend all league games.

MKE Ankaragucu president Faruk Koca attacked referee Halil Umur Meler on the pitch late Monday after the final whistle, following a 1-1 draw in a Super Lig game against Caykur Rizespor.

The referee, who fell to the ground, was also kicked in a melee that occurred after fans also invaded the pitch after Rizespor scored a last-minute equalizer.

The federation announced it suspended all league games indefinitely after an emergency meeting held to discuss the violence.

Meler was hospitalized with a slight fracture near his eye but was not in a serious condition. He was expected to be discharged on Wednesday.

Koca, who was considered to be at risk of a heart attack, was also hospitalized overnight. He was ordered arrested pending trial on charges of injuring a public official after questioning by prosecutors, Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc announced on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter.

Two suspects accused of kicking Meler were also arrested while three others were freed from custody on condition that they report regularly to police.

During his questioning, Koca denied causing any injury, insisting that he merely slapped the referee, according to HaberTurk television. The club president also blamed the incident on Meler, whom he accused of "wrongful decisions" and provocative acts, the station reported, citing unnamed judicial officials.

"This attack is unfortunate and shameful in the name of football," federation chief Mehmet Buyukkeski said after the emergency meeting.

"We say enough is enough," he added, insisting that all involved in the violence would be punished.

Buyukkeski also blamed the attack on a culture of contempt toward referees in Turkey.

"Everyone who has targeted referees and encouraged them to commit crimes is complicit in this despicable attack," he said. "The irresponsible statements of club presidents, managers, coaches and television commentators targeting referees have opened the way for this attack."

Speaking to reporters after visiting Meler in hospital, Buyukkeski said he hoped the incident would become a "milestone" for change for soccer in Turkey, which has been selected to co-host the 2032 European Championship with Italy.

Buyukkeski said the violence would not affect the league championship, adding that he had received a telephone call from UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin who voiced his support.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also condemned the attack while his ruling party initiated procedures for Koca - a former member of parliament - to be expelled from the political party.

"Sports means peace and brotherhood. The sport is incompatible with violence. We will never allow violence to take place in Turkish sports," Erdogan wrote on X.

Violence in soccer is commonplace in Turkey and some other European countries despite efforts to crack down on it, although direct attacks on top-level referees are rare.

On Monday, Greece announced that all top-flight soccer matches would be played without fans in the stadiums for the next two months following a sport-related riot last week that left a police officer with life-threatening injuries.

Earlier this month, France's sports minister called for "a global and extraordinarily determined response" to violence in soccer after the death of a fan. Ameli Oudea-Castera said the measures could include routine bans on fans traveling to away matches that present a risk of violence.



Gulf University for Science and Technology players raise the championship trophy.