



Arab Energy Conference advocates harnessing carbon resources for sustainable development

KPC charts ambitious course with 2040 energy transition strategy

Amir's health condition remains 'stable': Diwan

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA): The health condition of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah remains stable, said the Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Wednesday.

Opinion

Where are those who wrote the Constitution?

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

IN the romantic concept of democracy, 51 percent of voters are considered as the ruling majority, ignoring the other 49 percent by describing them as the minority.

Unfortunately, this sophisticated concept is not applied in Kuwait, because the basis here is that society was not ready for this form of governance due to its nature, culture, and inherited traditions.

This problem is the reason for the defects we are witnessing in the legislation and systems through which the dominant currents in the National Assembly work to subjugate society based on their vision and agendas, instead of the aspirations of people.

This is done through strict laws, or by burdening public finances with a deficit through collective bribery of citizens, and changing the traditions and customs of society. They are limited to conditions that serve the interests of a specific minority, namely the parliamentarians, even if they are covered with a veneer of justice.

Therefore, the largest segment of the population has, to a large extent, ended up suffering from a deficit, either in living conditions, or constitutionally guaranteed natural rights, even in the freedom of expression.

Nonetheless, over the past three decades, Kuwait has witnessed a lot of soft repression. Some articles, as well as posts on Twitter later, were criminalized, with sentences reaching up to 70 years in prison, leading to the flight of many Kuwaitis abroad.

In this regard, it must be emphasized that it was the integrity of the judiciary and the mercy of the judges that prevented thousands of Kuwaitis from being thrown into prison because the parliamentary majority with multiple agendas drafted these laws to prevent their private parts from being exposed.

Hence, a serious question must be asked - How did one-eyed democracy benefit us? Did it really serve Kuwait, or was it a path towards backwardness and self-isolation, that contributed to undermining the economic concept upon which Kuwait was founded since ancient times?

On the other hand, haven't countries that differ from us in their ruling system flourished and witnessed a great renaissance, because they quietly worked according to what their people required, and without the interference of personal and partisan agendas, due to which they enjoyed security, safety, and economic freedom?

It is true that when the late Abdullah Thunayan presented the draft of the Constitution to the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, he said, "This is what the people of Kuwait agreed upon" but those men who were the protectors of the Constitution left, and others came who implemented a different Constitution and practiced various types of political fraud to impose their agendas?

In this regard, the impasse that Kuwait has been experiencing since 1986, which became entrenched after the liberation, has led to corruption being widespread to the extent that the breach has widened.

This is a natural result of misunderstanding a democratic practice that the New Zealand scholar Brian Ruber said, "It is a form of government that provides significant ways through which the majority of citizens can exercise a significant influence in decision-making and policies". Unfortunately this did not happen in Kuwait.

Therefore, salvation from the impasse comes through a strong hand that puts things right, and does not cause a parliamentary majority to practice systematic abuse against the government, which is a minority in the simple sense of democracy. It also controls the people who are today being consumed by the fire of parliamentary tyranny.

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Day by Day

THE picturesque coastal landscapes of Kuwait are being exploited, either through leasing at minimal costs or purportedly "for free," only to be subsequently sold at exorbitant prices, in contradiction to the agreements with state property.

The initial intent behind establishing maritime cities was to offer opportunities to those who missed out on them.

However, in instances like these, undue influence, often characterized as the "leaf of the lizard," operates at the highest echelons, manipulating individuals in positions of decision-making power to sanction actions that flout legal constraints.

... Yet tomorrow is another day

Zahed Matar

DOHA, Dec 13, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr. Saad Al-Barrak has said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) 2040 strategy program is robust and ambitious about energy transition and carbon emission reduction.

Addressing a ministerial debate of the 12th Arab Energy Conference in Doha, the minister, who doubles as Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs, said the region's countries are serious about the issue of renewable and clean energy, boasting that Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, UAE, Jordan and Algeria are leading this transition.

Al-Barrak, also KPC's Board Chairman, said the Middle East and North Africa countries, though rich in oil and gas resources, have boosted their renewable energy capabilities to 57 percent between 2022 and 2023.

Pointing out attempts to reduce reliance on oil as a source of energy, the minister wondered about the insistence on depriving many peoples and countries, mostly developing countries, of being the source of an economy that can take them within 30 years to come to a life where they can enjoy welfare, security and stability.

He added that Africa needs around USD 25 billion annually for investment in energy until 2030, noting that many African peoples and others are still without access to electricity.

For his part, Bahraini Minister of Oil and Environment Mohammad bin Daina said that energy transition is not meant to serve the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, but to serve peoples.

He added that fuel is a basic part of some countries' economies and incomes so it should be maintained and consumed in a balanced way.

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Kuwait signals end to expats family visa ban

Ban takes toll on labor market: MP Al-Essa

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Chairman of the Human Resources Development Committee in the National Assembly MP Abdulwahab Al-Essa disclosed that he met with Minister of Interior

Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah recently, during which the latter informed him that the decision to ban the family visa for expatriates will be lifted once the bill on amending the Foreigners Residency Law is ratified.

He then told the minister about the negative consequences of the enforcement of the decision to ban family visa; such as turning Kuwait into a center for bachelors, increasing the cost of hiring laborers, especially in the construction field and the fact that the competent expatriate laborers are waiting for a chance to leave Kuwait in order to go to any neighboring country where they can work and stay with their families.

He disclosed: "I submitted a request to the Assembly to study the impact of this decision on the private sector, small enterprises and the market in general." He warned the decision affects the continuity of the service of competent expatriates who usually leave Kuwait immediately after obtaining a job opportunity in other Gulf countries or other parts of the world.

He pointed out that the rising number of unmarried expatriates negatively affects the social and security conditions in the country, as well as the economy. He also confirmed receiving complaints from several young Kuwaitis, who are currently constructing their houses in Mutla'a City. He asserted the citizens are the ones suffering the consequences of the exaggerated restrictions imposed on expatriate workers, considering the rising cost of hiring laborers.

He continued saying that Chairman of the Interior and Defense Affairs Committee MP Muhammad Al-Mahan affirmed that the committee will finalize its report on the bill to pave way for its inclusion in the agenda of the next session. In addition, the Assembly approved the proposed establishment of a Kuwaiti shareholding company for advanced petroleum industries in its first reading on Wednesday, with 49 votes in favor, one voted against and one abstained.

The Assembly decided to postpone voting on the second reading of the bill in order to give time to the MPs who want to make amendments or present their comments. This came after the Assembly discussed the third report of the Oil and Energy Affairs Committee about the proposal submitted by 15 MPs.

Chairman of the committee MP Hassan Jawhar disclosed that the report is the conclusion of a series of meetings and intensive discussions with the concerned parties; stressing the importance of establishing the shareholding company to increase oil revenues since oil is the main source of national income. Rapporteur of the committee MP Osama Al-Zaid said the first part of the report highlighted the obstacles to the development of the oil sector as follows:

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Philippine delegation and counterparts in Kuwait at the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) shelter.

Philippine delegation visits PAM shelter

In response to Al-Seyassah/Arab Times recent article on "Breakthrough near in Filipino domestic worker file," a delegation from the Philippines, including representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Migrant Workers, and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, visited the Public Authority for

Manpower (PAM) shelter. This visit, conducted earlier Wednesday, aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the care and services provided to the center's residents.

Throughout the visit, both the Filipino delegation and members of the local community expressed satisfaction and

appreciation for the facilities and services available.

Sources close to the situation confirmed to Al-Seyassah/Arab Times daily that a positive atmosphere characterized the meetings between the visiting Philippine delegation and their counterparts in Kuwait.

Palestinian militants kill 9 Israeli soldiers

Kuwait urges action on Gaza crisis at UNCAC

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Ministry of Justice signed an agreement with the representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Gulf Cooperation Council Countries to prevent human trafficking and immigrant smuggling.

This strategy is going to be implemented by a national committee, chaired by Minister of Justice and Public Authority for Housing and Welfare Faleh Al-Ruqba, said the ministry in a statement.

Deputy Minister of Justice Hashem Al-Qallaf affirmed that this cooperation was part of Kuwait's 2035 vision, which called for more partnerships with regional and international organizations including UN bodies. (KUNA)

WASHINGTON, Dec 13, (Agencies): President of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Abdulaziz Al-Ebraheem has urged the international community to double down on efforts to halt the Israeli occupation aggression on the besieged Gaza Strip.

In an address to the 10th Conference of the States Parties (COSP10) to United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in Atlanta city, he said, "No sooner had we emerged from the grinding challenges of Covid-19 and other disasters worldwide, than we were shocked by the mass killing of our brothers in Gaza who lack access to the basics of living, such as food, water and electricity."

"The international community must adopt a firm response to the persistence by the Israeli occupation forces in their serious violations of the international humanitarian law and killing thousands of innocent lives.

"All efforts must focus on reaching a durable ceasefire, ensuring unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid and preparing the ground for a comprehensive and permanent solution to the conflict," Al-Ebraheem stressed.

On the agenda of the COSP10, he said the State of Kuwait has continued upgrading its national legislations to ensure effective implementation of the UNCAC provisions since the previous session of the

conference. In this context, Kuwait has adopted a new law to prevent conflict of interest, and amended the penal code to make it easy to specify the legal liability of artificial persons in graft charges, he pointed out.

New legislations were also adopted to specify the rules of National Assembly elections, and identify the true beneficiaries in the framework of auditing parameters, Al-Ebraheem went on.

As part of its national strategy to combat money laundering and financing for terrorism (2022-2027), the State of Kuwait established the financial action taskforce (FATF) to strengthen the fight against corruption and trans-border crime.

The State of Kuwait spares no effort in implementing the content of the declaration of principles adopted by the UN General Assembly Special Session against Corruption, as well as the declarations of Marrakesh, Abu Dhabi and Sharm El-Sheikh, he added.

Led by Al-Ebraheem, Nazaha's delegation to the COSP10 includes Assistant Secretary-General for Auditing Sector Abrar Al-Hammad, Office Director of Nazaha President Khaled Al-Rumaihi and Head of International Organizations and Conferences Affairs Dept. Dhari Buyabes

Continued on Page 5

RIYADH: Members of the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) approved in their administrative meeting Wednesday, State of Kuwait's presidency of the organization for 2025.

This came in the DCO second administrative video meeting, headed by Chairperson of the Digital Cooperation Organization and Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications of Kingdom of Bahrain Mohammad Al-Kaabi and with the presence of ministers and officials from representatives of member states and the Secretary-General of the Organization, Deemah Al-Yahya. (KUNA)



The process of preparing a nanoemulsion from frankincense oil in the laboratory.

Frankincense nanoemulsion reveals cancer-fighting edge in Omani study

MUSCAT, Dec 13, (KUNA): On Tuesday, Al Sharqiya University in the Sultanate of Oman proudly announced the success of an Omani research team in developing a cost-effective and straightforward method for preparing a nanoemulsion from frankincense oil. This groundbreaking achievement is geared towards the treatment of breast and lung cancer within a comprehensive project focusing on the extraction

of frankincense oil and the examination of its impact on cancer cells in laboratory settings.

Dr. Raya Al-Balushi, the head of the Department of Basic and Applied Sciences at the university, shared insights on the outcomes of the study. She stated, "The results of this study revealed that frankincense extract contains a spectrum of potent plant chemicals with robust natural anti-cancer properties."

## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 05:08 Asr ..... 14:32  
 Sunrise .. 06:33 Maghrib .. 16:51  
 Zohr ..... 11:42 Isha ..... 18:13

# Local

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

## Weather

## Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Mild with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind, with speed of 12-45 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

**By Night:** Rather cold to cold with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas

northwesterly wind to westerly wind, with speed of 12-45 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

**Station** **Max Exp** **Min Rec**  
 Kuwait City 24 19

Kuwait Airport	25	15
Abdaly	25	14
Jahra	24	15
Salmiyah	23	20
Nuwaisib	24	14
Wafra	25	15

## 'Cancer-hit Kuwaiti, Bedoun, expat children exempted from fees'

# 'Citizens, residents can ill-afford high private sector services fees'

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: 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.

This happened by adding many health services on the unified government application for electronic services called Sahel, and by continuing efforts towards unified automated connectivity between different sectors, in addition to expanding health projects.

In terms of digital statistics, the number of visitors to primary health care centers during the year reached about 19 million visitors.

Also, a total of 131 kidney transplant operations were carried out by the ministry this year.

The year witnessed many movements in the Ministry of Health, the exclusion of some segments from health services fees, and the improvement of services provided in the country.

Perhaps the development of the digital health file is one of the most prominent health achievements this year, after adding new health services to the previous services of the "Kuwait Health" program through the "Sahel" application, such as adding a certificate of preventive and routine vaccinations for children and other vaccinations for the user of the application, either for himself or for any of his children who are under 16 years old.



Dr. Al-Awadhi

The Ministry of Health has launched a service for obtaining sick leave via electronic platforms. This will reduce the number of visitors and the waiting period, and reduce the possibility of requesting unnecessary laboratory tests and dispensing medications without actual medical reasons in order to preserve the medicine stock.

It is also important for the health care sector to activate the patient's electronic file in all 117 primary health care centers (dispensaries), and to operate it in a number of hospitals, by linking the dispensaries and hospitals that activated the electronic file system in the ministry, so that it allows the treating physician to follow up the patient's data from any location.

Also, this year, the Ministry of Health witnessed the issuance of a number of decisions that were described as "humanitarian" such as exempting Kuwaiti, expatriate and Bedoun children who suffer from cancer from paying fees and charges for the health services provided by the ministry in all hospitals and specialized medical centers for the treatment and follow-up of cancer and related diseases. However, non-Kuwaiti children are required to provide the initial diagnosis inside Kuwait, and have a valid residence permit. Also, the child's age at the time of the initial diagnosis should not be more than 16 years, and the exemption will continue until he reaches 18 years of age.

### Sick leave

The Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi granted pregnant Kuwaiti women whose pregnancy reached 30 weeks, sick leave for the remainder of the pregnancy, without the need for presenting to a specialized committee in the obstetrics and gynecology departments, provided that the pregnancy term is completed.

In terms of exceptional decisions, the Ministry of Health suspended six Kuwaiti doctors from work, and carried out a number of transfers and appointments between heads of health and administrative departments and health attachés abroad.

It adopted a list of requirements and controls that must be in place in private health facilities, and other decisions that received a clear difference in reactions between supporters and opponents.

Perhaps tightening control over the private medical sector is one of the most thorny health issues during the year, as Minister Al-Awadhi closed about 65 private medical facilities for violating administrative and advertising regulations. This sparked the anger of some, and prompted the Union of Medical Profes-

sionals to move quickly to find a new means or mechanism to gradually impose penalties, especially after receiving hundreds of complaints in this regard.

The Minister of Health's decision to withdraw the licenses of more than 60 private pharmacies also sparked widespread anger in pharmaceutical circles, and prompted those affected to file an urgent lawsuit against the health decisions. They actually succeeded in obtaining a ruling to stop the health decisions and return licenses to pharmacists.

The year 2023 also witnessed the opening of dozens of health centers and clinics, and conferences and workshops, as well as the expansion of health projects that represent a qualitative addition to the health system and improvement of the quality of health services in implementation of the pillars of the development plan and the "New Kuwait 2035" vision.

During the year, the Ministry of Health launched the third and fourth operational phases of the new Farwaniya Hospital, which included the obstetrics and gynecology wards, premature infants, the maternal and fetal clinic, obstetrics and gynecology units, and a number of departments and wings, in addition to moving the administration headquarters and transferring and operating the emergency department.

The ministry opened the Kuwait Poison Control Center, which is the first of its kind in the country and specializes in following up cases related to poisoning.

This year also witnessed the organization of a number of new health conferences, such as the first regional conference for pediatric dermatology, and the first conference for gynecologic oncology, as well as the continuation of previous events and activities, including the fifth conference on developments in hematology.

The Fifth Kuwait Conference for Primary Care and dozens of various scientific activities and events contributed to raising health awareness in society and refining the skills of medical and technical personnel in the country.

The country witnessed a large demand for the vaccination against winter diseases this year, with about 110,000 people vaccinated within three months.

The Ministry of Health also succeeded in introducing a new vaccination against COVID-19, which is the mono-valent Moderna vaccine that is compatible with new strains of the virus.

In addition, it launched a campaign for vaccination against the human papilloma virus in about 50 prevention centers distributed throughout all areas of Kuwait, in preparation for introducing it into the main vaccination schedule in the country.

# 'Family disputes cause of 60% child abuse lawsuits'

'Sexual assault, beatings rampant'

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Director of the Child Protection Office at the Ministry of Health Dr. Mona Al-Khawari announced that 145 cases of sexual assault on children were recorded in the last three years.

In a press statement issued yesterday, she indicated that coordination with the concerned authorities in the Ministry of Interior are ongoing to deal with such cases.

Dr. Al-Khawari explained that these cases are received not only through the custodians, but also through the official authorities in the Ministry of Interior, as the office is in constant communication with the Public Prosecution in the Ministry of Interior to deal with cases of sexual assault both inside and outside the family.

About 800 reports of child abuse are received annually, of which 400 reports (50 percent) are transferred to protection teams to investigate and identify the origin of the problem. The reports are diverse in nature, including physical and sexual violence, neglect, and psychological violence practiced on children.

There are multiple cases of violence and psychological abuse, making it difficult to measure or diagnose. Nevertheless, 60 percent of the cases that reach the office result from family disputes such as guardianship, custody, and so on. These disputes directly affect the psychological state of the child.

The office is in the process of introducing preventive programs to protect children within the age group of two to nine years. Various studies and statistics have revealed that children in this age group are most vulnerable to violence of all kinds. Therefore, the Child Protection Office is keen to introduce the "Preventive Parenting" program to develop the skills of parents in caring for their children, and to introduce ways to protect them psychologically and physically.

Dr. Al-Khawari revealed that the office seeks to prepare a study with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education to monitor cases of violence among school students in order to identify the extent of the problem and ways to confront it.

She stressed that it seeks statistical expansion in monitoring and recording reports of violence against children.

## DGCA, French company ink weather survey deal

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA): The Kuwait Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) signed a contract with the French company (STERELA) to implement the automatic weather monitoring system at Kuwait International Airport at a value around KD 6.2 million.

The contract was signed by the Kuwaiti side, Acting Director-General of Civil Aviation Emad Al-Jalawi, and by the Frenchman, CEO of STERELA'S Robert Bousquet.

Deputy Director General for Planning and Project Affairs at DGCA Saad Al-Otaibi told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after signing the contract that the project, which has a completion period of 1,095 days followed by 4 years of warranty and maintenance, aimed to develop the country's air and marine navigation systems.

Al-Otaibi explained that the project was a system to provide meteorological information such as temperature, wind direction speed, humidity, air quality, measuring tides and sea temperature.

It is noteworthy that the system provides this data through 38 land and sea stations distributed throughout the country and its territorial waters, said Al-Otaibi.

He also pointed out that this information was used for the safety of air and marine navigation and for the safety of citizens and residents. This data is also provided to various parties in the country.



Photo by Samer Shaqir

Editor-in-Chief of the Arab Times and Al-Seyassah Ahmed Al-Jarallah, CEO Mishaal Al-Jarallah, Jordanian ambassador, deputy ambassador Jordanian embassy and Saud Al-Farhan.



Photo by Samer Shaqir

Editor-in-Chief of the Arab Times and Al-Seyassah Ahmed Al-Jarallah, the Jordanian ambassador and the deputy ambassador Jordanian embassy.

## Editor-in-Chief receives Jordanian ambassador

Editor-in-Chief of the Arab Times and Al-Seyassah Ahmed Al-Jarallah, met in his office with the Jordanian Ambassador to Kuwait, Sinan

Al-Majali, and the Counsellor and Deputy Ambassador of the Jordanian Embassy in Kuwait, Rahfa Al-Awaisheh.

Present during the meeting were the Arab Times and Al-Seyassah CEO Mishaal Ahmed Al-Jarallah and colleague Saud Al-Farhan.

## 'Prestigious, brilliant event'

# Gold, jewelry exhibition kicks off in Mishref

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Today morning, the International Fairgrounds, Mishref inaugurated the launch of the 20th International Gold and Jewelry Exhibition, which is being organized by the Kuwait International Fair Company and continues until December 18, reports Al-Anba daily.

The Executive Director of the Marketing and Sales Sector at the Kuwait International Fair Company, Basma Al-Dahim, said that the Exhibition, exclusively sponsored by Burgan Bank, is one of the most prestigious, successful and brilliant annual specialized jewelry exhibitions in the Middle East region, and provides entrepreneurs and designers a platform to display the latest designs of diamonds, gold, silver, precious metals, gemstones and pearls.



Al-Dahim

## TV producer lures woman

# 5-years jail in rape attempt

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The Criminal Court sentenced a producer working for Kuwait TV to five-year imprisonment for indecently assaulting a Kuwaiti woman after luring her to his private studio with the intention of conducting radio interviews in his private studio. The court ordered that the civil case be referred to the competent civil court.

According to the case file, the suspect tricked the victim by inviting her to his studio for recording some clips, as he worked for Kuwait TV. However, his intentions turned out to be evil.

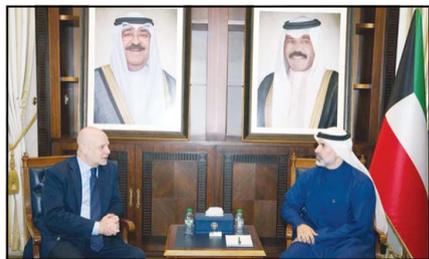
The Public Prosecution charged

him with sexual harassment and attempted rape.

**Appeals rejected:** The Constitutional Court ruled to reject appeals against ending of child custody in Ja'afari personal status case, exams cheating cases, and the sports arbitration commission.

A Kuwaiti citizen had appealed the unconstitutionality of the penalties for cheating in exams. Another citizen appealed the unconstitutionality of adults choosing a mother or father in Ja'afari cases.

The head of the Al-Arabi Club also appealed the terms of reference and formation of the National Sports Arbitration Authority



KUNA photo

The Deputy Foreign Minister meets with the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Iraq.

## Deputy FM meets UN Iraq rep

Deputy Foreign Minister, Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Wednesday met with Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq Claudi Cordon.

Sheikh Jarrah and Cordon discussed ways of cooperation and coordination between Kuwait and United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), a foreign ministry statement said.

Deputy Foreign Minister, ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired on Wednesday the border committee meeting held in the ministry's headquarters to discuss latest development related to the issues discussed by committee members. (KUNA)



Public entering the park.

# TEC declares South Sabahiya Park open

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The Tourism Enterprises Company (TEC) inaugurated yesterday the South Sabahiya Park, which is considered an integrated entertainment monument that will be an outlet for visitors and reflect the cultural face of Kuwait, reports Al-Anba daily.

The company's CEO, Fadel Al-Dousari, said in a press statement on the sidelines of the opening that the park includes integrated entertainment and entertainment services for visitors and more than 60 recreational activities over a total project area of 107,000 square meters.

Al-Dousari explained that the company has allocated a special website (application) for reservations to organize entry, noting that there are 136 investment activities, including groceries, restaurants and cafés, and the park is developed by the Tourism Projects Company saying entry for physically challenged people is free. The facility will remain open from 3:30 pm to 11:30 pm, seven days a week, and can accommodate about 10,000 visitors per day.

It is worth noting that the Tourism Enterprises Company is wholly owned by the state and is concerned with the operation, development and management of tourism, leisure and recreational facilities to promote the tourism and entertainment industry in Kuwait.

Director of Corporate Relations Department at Zain Kuwait, Hamad Al-Musaibih, said that "Zain" sponsored the opening of Al-Sabahiya Park and "Winter Wonderland" and other facilities in Kuwait in partnership with "Tourism Projects" and includes several activities and events for the patrons of the Sabahiya Park. At the same time, there will be a PlayStation tournament for children, and activities and prizes will be presented to all patrons.

# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## 'O, Gaza people, endure, persevere, unite and victory is yours'

"DESPITE the deliberate targeting of children, women, the elderly, and civilians, the number of martyrs has surpassed 18,000, and 50,000 are wounded and injured," columnist **Abdulaziz Al-Fadhli**, wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

"Homes and buildings have been demolished, schools and hospitals bombed, water and electricity cut off, and access to food and fuel prevented, leading to the tragic deaths of many in the Strip.

"Yet, to our resilient people and brothers in Gaza, we declare: you are the victors despite this overwhelming pain!

"Today, you engage in jihad, an esteemed act and the pinnacle of commitment in Islam. You are in a bond, where enduring for a day and night surpasses fasting and praying for a month, and you have persevered in this bond for 17 years.

"In your struggle, you aim for one of two noble outcomes: victory or martyrdom. If victory prevails, believers will rejoice in God's triumph; if martyrdom is destined, those martyrs will live with their Lord, provided for, and their souls will reside in the crops of green birds sheltering in lanterns hanging from the throne in Paradise.

"For the wounded, every injury carries a reward. On the Day of Resurrection, the color will be that of blood, and the fragrance will be that of musk. Hunger, thirst, fatigue, and pain, all serve to expiate sins and elevate ranks, as God does not squander the reward for good deeds.

"Those who save lives -- doctors, paramedics, medical staff, and civil defense personnel -- are blessed, for God's saying applies to them: 'And whoever saves a life, it is as if he saved all mankind.' Those who generously embrace displaced brothers from across Gaza, sharing their homes, food, and drink, are akin to the Ansar.

"To mothers who endure the loss of their children, your patience and gratitude for God's decree resemble the steadfastness of Khansa'a, who lost four sons in one battle and thanked God Almighty. Such mothers earn God's command for angels to construct a house for them in Paradise, known as the 'House of Praise.'

"To our people in Gaza, endure, persevere, unite, and victory will undoubtedly be yours, by the will of God. The night will clear, the shackles will break, and the enemy will be defeated. Be patient and stand firm -- victory is on the horizon."

Also:

"The ongoing situation in Palestine is being characterized by some as a form of genocide, particularly due to the impact on children," columnist **Dr. Zahir Hadi Al Markaz**, wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"The recent bombing of Gaza's major hospital and the use of internationally prohibited phosphorus are cited as examples of the severity of the conflict. Despite the significant casualties, the war persists, with Hamas announcing the formation of the Al-Aqsa Vanguard Brigades in Lebanon, indicating a substantial expansion of fronts.

"There are concerns about a potential escalation in Lebanon, coordinated with Hezbollah. The recent destruction of tanks in northern Gaza has result-

ed in casualties among soldiers, leading to the dismissal of Defense Minister Yoav Galant. The resistance remains a deeply held value among Palestinians, who are prepared for revenge after numerous massacres against children and attempts to push civilians towards the Egyptian border.

"While influential figures worldwide, including within Jewish communities, have condemned Israel's actions and called for accountability, questions persist about why Israel is not being held responsible for its perceived crimes. Criticism includes the dismissal by the U.S. State Department of evidence indicating civilian targeting and calls for referring the occupying state to the International Criminal Court."

□ □ □

"For or against ... It is, by God, a sad matter, and a source of regret and frustration that officials in State institutions and agencies are classified on the basis of 'for or against'. Whoever is for us, may his eyes be approved and remain in his position, and whoever is against us, may go home and be satisfied with his retirement salary, which is an unjust standard, and even destructive for institutions. The State deprives itself of the leadership evidence accumulated over decades," columnist **M. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"How many officials have spent their lives serving the country and its people, and have accumulated experience that the country needs, especially at this stage? Yet, this ends with a call to submit their resignation due to being classified as 'against' or 'neutral', and the alternative must be 'for'.

"It is a whirlpool in which the State's officials and technocrats who have no camel and no sentence have been thrust into the conflict of the axes whose wheels have been turning for years, and for which the country and its people have paid a heavy price, in which the standards of experience, competence, and the spirit of responsibility have been lost, and in which political and personal classifications have become the standard and the master of the situation.

"I have no doubt that this is a violation of the discourse on the New Testament, and the lofty values and trends it established that we all adhere to, and is even far removed from the ambitions and aspirations of our leadership for reform and development, which I affirmed with determination and sincerity.

"At the same time, it contradicts every correct conception of 'correcting the course', because how can correction be achieved without the people of experience and knowledge along with the professional technical officials?"

"Yes, some have had no significant achievement or contribution. They are few and these must be evaluated according to fair and objective criteria, so the decision to replace them will be an objective and fair decision, provided those who replace them are more capable and competent, and the result of an accurate and transparent evaluation, not the standard 'for us' or 'against us', which harmed us greatly.

"Is it required that the technocratic officials are part of one political team? If another team comes, is it permissible for it to bring those with it? Will the State become a State if we accept that and practice it? Will it not lead to being loyal to the dominant team instead of loyalty to one homeland?"

"The damage has been done, but despite this, we still see a light at the

end of the tunnel. We have high hopes for HH the Prime Minister to take the initiative to correct this situation, with the sincerity and desire for reform we know about him, and to set objective, fair and strict standards to evaluate those who have been appointed, according to the standard equation. Vacant leadership and supervisory positions must be filled based on the principles of equal opportunities, competence, experience and loyalty to Kuwait, not loyalty to one person or a team."

□ □ □

"Tampering is prohibited ... Not all aspects are dark, as some in our country, Kuwait, try to portray. There are many bright aspects. But unfortunately, we only look at the dark side or those on the surface. People see them, up to the point that some of us began to feel extreme fear for our country, then for ourselves, and for our families, as we listen, read and follow up what has been happening in the political arena," columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Hundreds of millions were looted from the State coffers. It is not known where they went and money laundering is in every corner of the country. From time to time, a new millionaire appears and he does not ask where you got the money.

"Conflicts on the political stage are for the sake of private interests. Wars are waged by some on behalf of others who move the political scene from behind a cover and order this to attack that.

"A group takes revenge on another group. Sometimes, revenge is in the name of patriotism, and in the name of human rights at other times. If you are not with this, then you are with that. It is forbidden for them to be with you, as they are the only owners of the country!"

"Wars on social media are waged under fictitious names and slander. They do not fear God and the victim is the ordinary citizen who becomes more and more afraid as these wars intensify!"

"This is not the Kuwait we know, this is just the dark side, but there is a bright side that makes us reassured. When we are sure that there is a safety valve for this country, which monitors and follows up developments, and then intervenes at the appropriate time to restore things to normal, his word is the final decision.

"When political chaos prevailed, the effects of which we are still suffering from, and we talked about part of it, and chaos spread, then the Decree of Firmness Law was issued, and the dry leaves fell, and only what was useful to the people remained.

"According to what is expected, the matter will not stop there, as there are many important issues that are frequently talked about, and are still pending, waiting for the appropriate time. Then, they will be resolved, and all of them will -- God willing -- be in the interest of the Kuwaiti citizen.

"An important issue remains -- the deliberate tampering with national identity called 'retrieving withdrawn nationalities'. If their withdrawal was in accordance with the law, then why were they returned, and if withdrawing them was unjust and unfair, then why not hold accountable the one who ordered the withdrawal?"

"This is dear Kuwait, gentlemen, and tampering is prohi bited."

— Compiled by **Mai Elsoukary**



Al-Fadhli



alsarraf

### Other Voices

## Ministry chair and café chair

By **Ahmad alsarraf**

Not much beyond the age of sixty, he retired from a prestigious government job. Departing with a substantial golden handshake, along with accrued salaries and a sizable inheritance from his father, he exchanged the plush ministry chair for a wooden one in a contemporary café where he joined friends who had retired before him.

His wife suggested venturing into business or purchasing a farm for leisure, but he declined both ideas, having no inclination for trade or understanding of agriculture.

After deliberations and visits to travel agencies, he embarked on a cruise trip, but boredom set in within a month. The idea of establishing a "non-profit" humanitarian project began to take shape, inspired by his father's prolonged illness and his sister's care giving responsibilities, which impacted her personal life.

Identifying a coastal piece of land, close to chalets, he faced authorities rejecting its licensing as a shelter for the elderly, despite the state's need for such facilities due to the growing elderly population burdening hospitals.

Determined to proceed independently, he located suitable land and commissioned a consulting company for a feasibility study, revealing the need for 500 inmates for sustainability.

Considering government support in the form of long-term leased land, he initiated the project, establishing a company with substantial capital.

However, bureaucratic hurdles ensued, requiring the rental of a store, hiring personnel for government transactions, dealing with various departments, setting up communication infrastructure, and navigating through the municipality's outdated online system.

About a year into the project, he realized he had spent approximately fifty thousand dinars, and progress was slow. The cumbersome government red tape ultimately compelled him to abandon the idea, reverting to sitting with friends in the familiar wooden café chair.

□ □ □  
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### Wanted man arrested

## Public takes to task fraudster

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: An unidentified masked man disguised as police officer, was allegedly involved in illicit activity yesterday and initiated video calls with citizens and residents urging unsuspecting individuals to provide updates of their banking information and even requested them to pull out their bank cards for visual inspection, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Subsequently, the perpetrator covertly extracted sensitive card details, laying the groundwork for an impending criminal scheme aimed at pilfering bank balances.

In response to the masked man's solicitation, several citizens and residents reacted with disdain, hurling insults at him.

The public's astute handling of such criminal encounters reflects the efficacy of awareness campaigns conducted by the Ministry of Interior, particularly through its security media, spearheaded by Major General Tawhid Al-Kandari.

Emphasizing the importance of non-compliance with such illicit requests, a security source underscored that legitimate banks and authorized security

personnel never solicit banking information or passwords over the phone. Instead, if a bank requires updated information, they send official messages prompting individuals to visit the bank in person rather than updating details remotely.

□ □ □  
**Wanted man arrested:** Personnel from the Criminal Investigation Department have arrested an unidentified person who is in his forties for reckless driving, putting his life and the lives of others at risk.

The **Al-Seyassah** daily said police later discovered the man was wanted by law in connection with several cases.

The daily added, when a police patrol on routine duty saw the reckless driver doing stunts in the suburb of Firdous, he was ordered to pull over, but instead he stepped on the gas pedal in a vain attempt to escape and ended up colliding with an electric police on the side of the road.

A security source said at the time of the arrest he was in abnormal condition. He has been handed over to the concerned authorities.

# 60,000 driving licenses axed

'Deportations alter demographic structure'

By **Munaif Naif**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: With the year 2023 on the verge of ending, Al-Seyassah reviewed the achievements made by ministries and government agencies in the last 12 months, and presented to officials the issues and challenges that loom on the horizon of the new year in developing the country and achieving the aspirations of citizens.**

In today's article we review the achievements of the Ministry of Interior and the files that await the new year's resolution.

In terms of achievements, the ministry implemented a biometric fingerprint system and dealt painful blows to drug traffickers, as it was able to seize 15 million narcotic pills.

It has also come a long way in amending the demographic structure by deporting thousands of violators and canceling 66,000 driving licenses of expatriates.

The ministry, under the directives from the First Deputy Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, continues to pursue violators and drug dealers.

Several important files remain open before the ministry, the most important of which is the filling of leadership positions in all sectors, approving the traffic law, and continuing the electronic transformation of all services, especially for issuing entry visas for expatriates, opening visit and family visas.

The achievements that received great popular reaction include the fight by the Criminal Security Sector led by Major General Hamid Al-Dawas, the Drug Control General Department led by Brigadier General Muhammad Qabazard, and the General Department for Coast Guard led by Major General Talal Al-Munis, against drug traffickers by land, sea and air.

### Painful blows

The ministry dealt successive painful blows to drug traffickers, most notably by seizing 15 million Lyrica tablets and more than half a ton of raw Lyrica powder, in the largest drug bust in the history of Kuwait. These drugs would have flooded the country and caused devastating damage.

The security services were able to arrest many drug dealers and drug users, and put them in prison. The drugs that were seized were estimated at millions of dinars.

In terms of demographics, the achievements of the Ministry of Interior continued with direct field follow-up by the Undersecretary of the ministry Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Barjas and Major General Abdullah Al-Rujaib in prosecuting violators of the residency and labor laws in the country.

Security campaigns by the Residence Affairs Investigation Department resulted in the arrest of thousands of residency and labor law violators. They were deported from the country in major security campaigns in all governorates.

On the traffic side, the Ministry of Interior's General Traffic Department canceled 66,000 driving licenses of expatriates who left the country but their licenses were still valid.

A committee was also formed to examine driving licenses to verify compliance with the conditions for expatriates to obtain them, and withdraw the licenses from those who do not meet the conditions, in addition to stopping the issuance of paper licenses to expatriates and issuing digital licenses only through the "My Identity" application.

In the field of digital transformation, the ministry was able to convert most of its services to digital in all its security sectors, including the renewal of citizens' passports at the airport within less than half an hour, and the opening of new buildings for the ministry, including the Nationality and Passports Building, which is an integrated model building, in addition to collecting the pending traffic fines from expatriates and Gulf nationals before they leave the country.

The link between the Ministry of Interior and the various ministries is an important achievement in terms of collecting the ministries' debts from public funds, in addition to collecting fines worth millions of dinars for the traffic violations.



The overturned truck held up the traffic.

### Accident disrupts traffic

## Drugs with youth held at checkpoint

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Patrol men supporting the Jahra Security Directorate have arrested an unidentified person in his twenties for possessing and consuming drugs, says **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The **Al-Seyassah** daily said the man was arrested at a checkpoint in Al-Oyoun and seized from him a cocktail of narcotic substances and drug paraphernalia.

He was found to be carrying a sachet containing shabu, chemical substance, a piece of hashish, 4 narcotic pills.

He has been handed over to the Directorate-General for Drugs Control.

□ □ □  
**Mishap disrupts traffic:** The Public Relations and Media Department of the Directorate-General of Fire Department (DGFD) announced the Ardiya Center Division dealt with a truck that overturned on the Fifth Ring Road Monday afternoon, carrying equipment and diesel barrels, reports **Al-Rai** daily.



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# MoJ, UNODC ink deal to combat human trafficking in GCC region

Al-Qallaf meets with visiting regional director of UN Office

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA):** On Wednesday, the Ministry of Justice announced the signing of a declaration of intent agreement with the representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in the Gulf Cooperation Council region.

The purpose of this agreement is to advance the strengthening of future partnerships between the two entities in the realm of combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling. According to a press statement by the ministry, the permanent national committee responsible

for implementing this strategy, led by Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Faleh Al-Ruqabah, is dedicated to executing the national strategy aimed at preventing human trafficking and migrant smuggling. Of particular emphasis is the third axis, which involves fostering partnerships and promoting internal, regional, and international cooperation.

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice Hashem Al-Qallaf discussed Tuesday with the visiting Regional Director of the GCC Office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Hatem Ali frameworks for broadening cooperation.

Al-Qallaf, emphasized in the statement that this collaboration is aligned with the State of Kuwait's (2035) vision, aiming to fortify cooperation frameworks and establish partnerships with international and regional organizations. The focus is particularly on engagement with the United Nations and its diverse agencies. This collaboration is viewed as the initial foundation for broadening the prospects of future cooperation in this domain.

### Dedicated

Al-Qallaf further stated that Kuwait is dedicated to combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling through various measures. The country enacted Law No. 91 of 2013 specifically addressing these issues. Subsequently, in 2018, the Council of Ministers endorsed the national strategy to prevent human trafficking and migrant smuggling, following the prescribed directives.

He clarified that the establishment of a permanent committee overseeing its execution led to the issuance of the national referral system in 2019. This system aims to prevent human trafficking and migrant smuggling and involves several phases. These stages begin with the identification and documentation of victims, followed by their referral to competent authorities for investigation.

Subsequently, a public lawsuit is initiated to prosecute the perpetrators in accordance with stringent legal provisions. The final stages encompass reintegration or voluntary return. Emphasizing the importance of these efforts, he noted that the committee, in its eighth meeting, hosted the delegation from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for the Gulf Cooperation Council region. The meeting underscored the imperative nature of implementing the strategy and the national referral system to counter human trafficking in a manner befitting Kuwait's international standing, particularly following its membership in the Human Rights Council. This membership signifies the culmination of Kuwait's endeavors to uphold the principles and values of human rights while preserving human dignity.



KUNA photo

Justice official signing the agreement with UNODC's Hatem Ali.

### 12pc hike in passenger traffic seen

'982,741 travelers used Kuwait airport in Nov'

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13:** The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has announced that the number of passengers to and from Kuwait International Airport in November totaled 982,741, reports Al-Rai daily.

Acting Director General of DGCA Imad Al-Jalawi revealed that Kuwait International Airport witnessed an increase in passenger traffic by 12 percent and an increase in aircraft traffic by 10 percent, while air cargo traffic increased by 15

percent in November compared to the same month last year.

Al-Jalawi said the number of arriving passengers reached 413,860; the number of departing passengers reached 568,881 and the number of transit passengers reached 186,018.

He added the total aircraft movement operated to and from Kuwait International Airport in November reached 10,591 flights; compared to 9,582 in the same month last year.

### Contribution to supporting refugees hailed

## UN refugee agency honors chairman of Kuwait charity

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA):** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on Tuesday honored the chairman of the Kuwait's Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society Jamal Al-Nouri.

The honoring came at the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva in recognition of the Kuwaiti charity's contribution to supporting refugees and displaced persons through its three-year partnership with the UNHCR.

Speaking to KUNA by phone, Al-Nouri said that the awarding by High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, reflects both sides' joint efforts of humanitarian partnership and giving.

He underlined commitment to maintaining partnership and communication with major humanitarian agencies, chiefly the UNHCR.

For his part, the Kuwaiti charity's Director-General Waleed Al-Seif said the awarding has capped the society's efforts and cooperation with the UN agency to support refugees and displaced persons in Jordan and Lebanon.

It also mirrors Kuwait's record of charitable and humanitarian initiatives and endeavors aiming at providing aid for all those in need across the world, he added.

Bilateral partnerships were made in two phases: the first was during the winter of 2021 amid the outbreak of the corona virus epidemic, benefitting around 2,053 Syrian refugee families in Jordan, while a six-month agreement signed in 2022 served 2,082 families, at a value of USD 500,000, he said.



KUNA photo

The UNHCR honoring the Chairman of Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society, Al-Nouri.

The late agreement of 2023 aimed at offering cash aid to more than 2,200 Syrian refugee families living at unplanned refugee camps in Lebanon, he said.

He noted that his charity's projects are meant to serve UN sustainable development goals, mainly the eradication of poverty and famine and the provision of health care, good education, clean water, suitable jobs and sustainable cities.



Participation of Kuwaitina factory.



KUNA photos

Participation of Al-Ameed Bin Mills.

### Pavilion includes 12 factories

## Kuwait's pavilion at 'Food Africa 2023' exhibition attracts visitors, specialists

By Islam Abdulfattah

**CAIRO, Dec 13, (KUNA):** Kuwait's special pavilion at the eighth session of the 'Food Africa 2023' exhibition in Cairo has attracted the interest of food industry specialists and visitors interested in Kuwaiti products.

The pavilion included 12 factories specialized in the food sector including dairy,

bakery, packaging, roasting and grinding of fine coffee, spices of all kinds, natural oil, sweets and food supplies.

The exhibition takes place at Egypt's international exhibitions center and its activities will continue until December 14 with the participation of more than 900 companies represented by 32 countries, including the State of Kuwait, the "official partner of the exhibition."

### Municipal Council's joint panel meets

## Regulations, specifications for private and model housing buildings discussed

By Inass Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13:** The Chairman of the Joint Committee of the Technical, Financial and Legal Committees of the Municipal Council Dr. Hassan Kamal said the committee, at its meeting recently, completed the discussion of building regulations, requirements and specifications for private and model housing buildings.

He highlighted the most prominent items that were discussed based on the amendments submitted by the executive branch related to building heights in private housing, including the height of an entire building, height of each floor, the additional structures in some floors, the criteria for calculating those heights in the building, and the distribution of spaces in each floor in private and typical housing.

In a press statement, Kamal explained that there is a vision for allowing the freedom to distribute the areas and components of a single plot in rooms, halls, and ancillary services, in addition to discussing the item related to preparing stairs in each of them, and elevators in private and model housing buildings.

### Decisions

The committee has taken some decisions regarding elevators in buildings with an area of less than 950 square meters and plots with an area of more than 750 square meters for private housing, taking into account the actual need for elevator distribution sites for some existing buildings and future buildings that will need special elevators for the disabled and people with special needs.

On a related level, the Municipal Council member Munira Al-Amir called for rejecting the amendment to increase any fees charged to citizens in exchange for the services provided by the municipality to the public, without any real study about its direct impact on all parties.

She stressed that no increase will be passed unless it is supported by a detailed and realistic study.

Al-Amir said, "I reviewed what was stated in the transcripts regarding increasing fees, and I thank the members of the Legal and Financial Committee for the efforts they made to submit this proposal. It is in line with the state's approach to increasing its resources in accordance with global practice, in exchange for the services it provides to citizens to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of services."

The state agencies directed the responsible sectors to study the ideas they presented regarding amending the fees without excessiveness or prejudice. They noticed the complete absence of any technical study supporting the value of the proposed fees.

### Proposals

This matter was evident during the discussion of many requests and proposals containing an increase in fees. Does it make sense to target the citizens and companies that represent a major part of the Kuwaiti economy in this way, and to raise the fees without providing a study on the value that should be requested in exchange for the service?"

She emphasized the need for submitting a request to change the cost of any service to coincide with the existence of a technical study on the price, which allows them to discuss the effectiveness and reasons for the values required for the services and approve them.

Al-Amir also elaborated her observation that there is a large difference of up to double between the minimum and maximum proposed for increasing fees in some transactions.

She demanded that the differences be closer and more realistic so that what is appropriate can be chosen and discussed in accordance with the implications accompanying the decision.



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## Move to salvage various sectors in Palestine in discussion

# IICO holds forum in support of Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA): The International Islamic Charity Organization held a forum Wednesday in support of Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa mosque, and participants were to discuss how to salvage various sectors in Palestine.

Kuwait government and people have been supporting the Palestinian cause politically and recently sent numerous humanitarian aid in planes to help the Palestinian people, stated Dr. Abdullah Al-Maatoq, Chairman of IICO, in the opening speech of the forum, the first

of its kind.

Al-Maatoq reaffirmed that the role of the "Tarahom" volunteers' continued in offering humanitarian and psychological aid to impacted countries with a holistic approach, highlighting the role of the IICO, charities and organizations in support of Gaza.

He said that the suffering of the Palestinian people continues due to the Zionist occupation's policies that stripped them of their human rights, threatening their safety and security, adding that Kuwait, under the leader-

ship of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, wished to alleviate their suffering.

Tarahom team leader Nasser Al-Bassam told KUNA the team is working under the umbrella of IICO, to help different sectors in Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa mosque.

The purpose of the forum is to raise money and awareness, with the continuous efforts of Kuwait-based IICO to safely deliver assistance in all forms, including implementation of projects for the Palestinian people.



Former Assembly speaker Marzouk Al-Ghanim talking with Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun during the Wednesday's session

## Kuwait signals

Continued from Page 1

- No clear vision,  
- Constant change of oil ministers that led to the instability of this essential sector and hindered its development.

- Excessive interference of irrelevant institutions and parties in the oil sector.

- Low number of foreign investors,  
- Not taking advantage of available national human resources despite the fact that Kuwait has been producing oil for more than 70 years.

- Failure to lay down the required strategy that led to the failure of development efforts.

- Global tendency to depend on alternative sources of energy and the European plan to stop using oil engine vehicles starting from 2035.

- Inaccurate data making it too difficult to give the right opinion.

- Only 62 percent of the oil strategy and 25 percent of the gas strategy of Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) for 2040 have been achieved so far.

- KNPC admitted facing financial problems due to the unpaid debts of the government estimated at KD3 billion which is urgently needed for the implementation of development projects.

- Continuous negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the oil prices.

Al-Zaid added the committee also recorded comments regarding the Supreme Oil Council; which is supposed to meet at least four times a year, but it has not held any meetings in the last few years. He pointed out that the powers granted to the council do not match those granted to the boards of directors of oil companies. He confirmed that bureaucracy in the oil sector led to huge losses, citing the environmental fuel project that was approved in 2006 at an estimated cost of KD245 million but it was implemented only 15 years later at a total cost of KD4.6 billion. He also stated that Zour Refinery was approved in 2004 but it was launched 19 years later, indicating the difference between the estimated and actual costs is more than KD3 billion. He asserted that Kuwait is the only Gulf country without global partners and it continues to face the lack of cash problem due to the huge losses incurred by the Vietnam Oil Refinery.

During the discussion, the MPs expressed support for the proposal due to the expectation that it will greatly contribute to the improvement of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and generate job opportunities for citizens.

MP and former Minister of Oil Badr Al-Mullah stressed the need for an advanced mechanism for the enforcement of the bill, while MP Hamad Al-Matar stressed that the big problem of the oil sector is bad administration. He added the bill does not provide technical details.

MP Ahmed Lari affirmed the bill, once approved, will provide an important source of income for the nation as it entails fully benefiting from oil.

Meanwhile, 41 MPs submitted a proposal to include the bill on amending the relevant law in order to allow public sector employees to pursue higher studies while working in the agenda of the session scheduled for Jan 9, 2024.

In another development, the Assembly also tackled the parliamentary queries forwarded to ministers. MP Muhammad Al-Sayer commented on the response of the ministers to his queries about the number of terminated expatriate consultants in each ministry. He said he was informed about the number, but the issue is that no Kuwaiti consultant has been appointed so far. He clarified that the aim of replacing expatriates with nationals is not to get rid of the expatriates but to generate job opportunities for nationals and to benefit from their experience. He expressed concern that the ministers are hesitant to appoint Kuwaiti consultants because the latter could prove their capabilities and then replace the ministers.

MP Hamad Al-Elyan asked Minister

of Justice and State Minister for Housing Affairs Faleh Al-Raqaba about the request of some employees at the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to amend their annual job performance assessment results in order to meet the promotion requirements. He found out that these employees supported their request by doing special tasks, which include buying breakfast and coffee. He added their request was approved although most of them are tardy most of the time. He urged Al-Raqaba to follow up the investigation conducted by the committee he assigned to look into the issue.

MP Hamad Al-Matar asked Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Adel Al-Manea about the number of scholarship slots for medical studies granted to students who graduated from public schools compared to those who graduated from private schools. He claimed the students who graduated from private schools are suffering due to the wrong evaluation methods, making it very difficult for these students to complete their medical studies. He said the number of private school students accepted into the medical institutions is 30 percent higher than those who graduated from public schools, considering a secondary stage student in a private school is given 100 percent even if his actual mark is only 92 percent.

He went on to say the decision to suspend the scholarship slots for medical students in Jordan and Egypt was not studied well and there have been no alternative universities till date.

MP Jenan Bu Shehri asked Minister of Justice and State Minister for Housing Affairs Faleh Al-Raqaba about the contracting companies which have been suspended in the last three years for committing violations, as well as the relevant documents and correspondences. She confirmed receiving the minister's response to the first part of her queries, disclosing the minister informed her that he cannot provide copies of the documents and correspondences as per the ruling of the Constitutional Court. She wondered what could be the confidential information that prevented the MP from performing her monitoring task.

MP Fahd bin Jame'e asked Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah about the criteria for the appointment of the members of the National Diwan for Human Rights Affairs. He revealed one of the members of the Diwan is working in both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Diwan; hence, the conflict of interests.

MP Khalid Al-Otaibi said he forwarded the same queries to three successive ministers of Education and Higher Education and he received different answers. He revealed one of them asked for more time to respond to the queries; that is, beyond the deadline stipulated in the National Assembly Law, another resigned after stating that the queries are unconstitutional and finally he obtained the answers from the incumbent minister. He then urged his colleagues not to give up and insist on getting the answers to their queries.

MP Abdullah Al-Anbai asked the health minister about the crowds in public hospitals, the citizens' complaints in this regard and the date of opening Dhaman Hospital. He affirmed receiving a detailed response, but it is not convincing; as he was informed that the hospital has been completed, but the opening is delayed due to administrative and legal considerations. He argued the citizen has nothing to do with such complications, which should be settled by the court.

On the lack of some medicines in public pharmacies, Al-Anbai said he suggested following the system adopted by Saudi Arabia where the patient takes the prescription from the public hospital and then obtain the medicine from the private pharmacy for free. He pointed out this is done in coordination with the Ministry of Health; thereby, reducing the financial and administrative burdens of the ministry.

MP Soud Al-Asfour asked the Commerce and Industry minister about the revenues of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and the donations it receives, stating the minister responded that he has no idea due to the law on the establishment of

KFAS. He said a ministerial decision stipulates that shareholding companies and institutions are obligated to inform the Ministry of Commerce and Industry about their annual revenues, as the latter usually deducts one percent from such revenues to put in the coffers of the government. He explained the regulations of KFAS do not allow such deduction; hence, the need for a legislative solution similar to the case of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI).

MP Hassan Jawhar asked the education minister about the total cost of overseas scholarships in the last five years and he was informed that the cost is estimated at KD4 billion. He pointed out this amount is enough to establish two universities, stressing the need to save public funds for the development of the quality of education in the country.

MP Fares Al-Otaibi asked Minister of Social Affairs and State Minister for Family, Women and Children Affairs Sheikh Feras Al-Sabah about the complaints against the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs (PADA), particularly the delayed provision of the devices they need like wheelchairs and earphones. He disclosed some beneficiaries wait for more than two years to obtain these devices, not to mention the complicated administrative procedures. The minister then affirmed that he is closely following up the issue, as he is keen on improving services for the disabled.

## Kuwait urges

Continued from Page 1

The current Conference of the States Parties marks the 20th anniversary of the UNCAC, adopted by the UN General Assembly in October 2003.

In other news, Palestinian militants ambushed Israeli troops in a dense Gaza City neighborhood, killing at least nine of them, the military said Wednesday, as Hamas put up stiff resistance in areas that Israel has isolated and pounded with airstrikes for over two months.

The air and ground war has killed thousands of Palestinian civilians and pushed nearly 85% of Gaza's population from their homes, sparking international outrage. The United States has repeatedly called on Israel to take greater measures to spare civilians, even as it has blocked international calls for a cease-fire and rushed military aid to its close ally.

## KPC charts

Continued from Page 1

For his part, the Director-General of the Arab Planning Institute Abdullah Al-Shami said that there are many challenges pertinent to energy, including steady growth in the question of cities and demand for housing that consumes 29 percent of oil and gas.

He added that oil exporting countries, which are mostly in the Middle East, are locked in several problems, including high oil production costs and lack of necessary oil technology as well low foreign investment.

The 12th Arab Energy Conference, organized by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) in Doha over the past two days, recommended tapping into the carbon resources of the member states while protecting the environment.

The energy ministers of the OAPEC member states agreed on a final communique on Tuesday which outlined steps for leveraging the clean energy to reduce carbon dioxide CO2 emissions in a bid to reach carbon neutral emissions by 2050.

They highlighted the need of integrating the efforts to develop the energy sector, protect the environment and achieve sustainable development into the developmental policies of OAPEC members.

The development plans need to ensure balanced use of natural resources, diversification of the resources of the economy, and prioritizing environment protection, the communique noted.

# 'Schools one of most important institutions to promote health'

Health Promoting Schools Initiative workshop opens

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The Assistant Undersecretary for Health Care Dr. Nadia Jumu'ah highlighted the aspiration of the Ministry of Health for all Kuwaiti schools to promote health, and achieve the highest level of well-being for the students and for all members of the school community, which would require the cooperation of all government sectors and other entities to achieve the best levels of individuals' health.

Dr. Jumu'ah said this in a speech she delivered during the inauguration of the "Health Promoting Schools Initiative" exhibition and workshop, on behalf of the workshop sponsor, the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi.

She explained that schools are one of the most important institutions that can promote health. The number of adolescents around the world reaches 1.2 billion, that is, more than one-sixth of the population, and about 18 percent of the population goes to schools.

### Unique

More than 90 percent of children around the world are in primary school, and more than 80 percent are in middle school. They spend one third of their time in schools, which makes schools a unique place to promote preventive health.

The Health Promoting Schools Initiative is one of the pioneering initiatives concerned with promoting health in schools, which has received great attention from international organizations.

It is important to develop the school system and make them institutions capable of promoting the health of members of the school community. From this, the foundations of health promotion begin to include the entire community.

The World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) observed an increase in the levels of stress, anxiety, and other mental health problems for students after the closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruption of in-person education.

Therefore, recent guidelines issued by the World Health Organization and other partners at the United Nations recommend that every school must be a health-promoting school to contribute in achieving the 13th goal of the General Programme of Work of the World Health Organization in 2023, and the global agenda for education until 2023, which is coordinated by UNESCO.

### Nursing

Meanwhile, the Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities at the Ministry of Education Maryam Al-Enezi stressed the need to enhance the number of nursing personnel in school clinics in new areas such as the Wafra, Khairan, and Sabah Al-Ahmad.

In a press statement, Dr. Al-Enezi affirmed the keenness of the Ministry of Education to ensure the participation of all governmental and private state institutions with regard to students, due to which it was keen to participate in the Health Promoting Schools Initiative. "This is because the ministry cares about student health in terms of food, mental health and all aspects of life", she added.

Dr. Al-Enezi praised the joint educational and health cooperation and programs between the two sides, including the school vaccination program, the opening of school clinics, the weight and height measurement project, and the attention



Dr. Nadia Jumu'ah



KUNA photo

A Kuwait Airways airplane

## One of vital criteria over safety

# Kuwait Airways passes IOSA program

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA): Kuwait Airways has said it has successfully passed the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) Program.

Kuwait's national carrier said in a press release that the IOSA Program certificate is one of the significant criteria for evaluating the safety of aviation industry, adding that it greatly contributes to improving the performance of safety and leading to cost-savings.

It added that to be IATA members, airlines must obtain this program's certificate, which is based on the assessment of risks and promotion of audit efficiency, and aims at developing aviation safety.

The IOSA Program is an internationally recognized and accepted evaluation system designed to assess the operational management and control systems of an airline.

The IOSA audit creates a standard that is comparable on a world-wide basis, enabling and maximizing the joint use of audit reports.

This has saved the industry over 6,400 redundant audits and continues to lead to extensive cost-savings for IOSA participating airlines. All IATA members are IOSA registered and must remain registered to maintain IATA membership.

Kuwait Airways was established in 1953 and operated its maiden flight on March 16, 1954. It is wholly owned by the government of Kuwait.

## 'Govt keen on reinforcing rights' values'

# Kuwait's National Diwan for Human Rights holds training program for disabled people

By Saleh Alsaqabi

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA): Kuwait government is keen on reinforcing values of human rights and raising awareness of peoples with mental disabilities in the work force, National Diwan for Human Rights affirmed.

The National Diwan, part of this awareness, held a training program in collaboration with 360 Mall on Wednesday to raise awareness about mentally disabled people and include them in the work place.

The program was also in collaboration with Center 21 for Special Needs, which picked a few of its members to work in different stations and shops around the mall.

This initiative seeks to include mentally disabled people -- who struggle to find relevant jobs -- in the work force, said National Diwan for Human Rights council member Ali

Al-Thuwaini in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

The National Diwan for Human Rights wishes to raise public awareness for the mentally disabled and provide them a safe environment to achieve their career dreams, he added.

Center 21 is glad to work with 360 Mall and the National Diwan for Human Rights on this important initiative, to achieve its goal of integrating mentally disabled people into the work force, as well as empowering them and their capabilities, said Center 21 for Special Needs General-Director Nabil Al-Nassar.

This initiative comes as part of The National Diwan's mission to reinforce the rights and bring equality to disabled people in all aspects of life, most importantly work places, as well as enabling and empowering them to achieve their goals.

to physical health, as well as the importance of good nutrition, via lectures, workshops, health-promoting schools, the oral and dental health program, the World Health Organization art competition for school students for all school levels, and others.

In addition the Director of the School Health Department at the Ministry of Health Dr. Wafaa Al-Kandari revealed that there is a clinic in every government school in Kuwait such that the total number of clinics is about 911.

### Vaccination

In a press statement, she explained that the school vaccination schedule is in line with the vaccination schedule approved in Kuwait.

Vaccinations are the responsibility of preventive health in Kuwait, but the School Health Department gives booster doses to students in the fifth, sixth and twelfth grades. This is based on the schedule of preventive health in Kuwait.

The School Health Department usually vaccinates 98 percent of the target groups every year.

The Health Promoting Schools Initiative is a global initiative under the umbrella of the World Health Organization which has identified eight basic standards under which sub-standards fall. The school that applies these standards is considered a health-promoting school.

The initiative aims to create a generation aware of healthy behaviors and skills that lead to reducing the burden of disease among chil-

dren and adolescents. It is also aimed to train the workforce in the educational environment, including teachers, parents, and students, on behavioral skills to overcome diseases.

### Discussions

Regarding the workshop, Dr. Al-Kandari explained that it aims to enrich discussions among all stakeholders and partnerships in governmental and private agencies such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, and the Environment Public Authority.

She expressed appreciation for the participation of the School Health Department in the Sultanate of Oman, along with some civil society bodies, for contributing to developing the mechanism for implementing the initiative.

Dr. Al-Kandari clarified that the first stages of the initiative include developing a plan and mechanism, and forming and training work teams, which is what is being worked on now, in preparation for launching the initiative during the next academic year.

She highlighted the effort to introduce the initiative in two to three schools in each educational zone at the beginning of the launch of the initiative, and then expand and diversify between the primary, middle and secondary school levels, based on a scheduled plan between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, with the aim of transforming all public and private schools into health-promoting schools.

## World News Roundup

## Europe

## Sunak's gamble pays off

## UK lawmakers uphold Rwanda 'asylum' plan

LONDON, Dec 13, (AP) — British lawmakers have voted to support the government's plan to send some asylum-seekers on a one-way trip to Rwanda, keeping alive a policy that has angered human rights groups and cost the U.K. at least \$300 million, without a single flight getting off the ground.

The House of Commons voted 313-269 to approve the government's Rwanda bill in principle, sending it on for further scrutiny. The result averts a defeat that would have left Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak's** authority shredded and his government teetering. It buys Sunak some breathing space, but tees up further wrangling in the coming weeks.

The bill seeks to overcome a ruling by the U.K. Supreme Court that the plan to send migrants who reach Britain across the English Channel in boats to Rwanda — where they would stay permanently — is illegal.

The Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill faces criticism both from conservative centrists who think it skirts with breaking international law, and from lawmakers on the party's authoritarian right, who say it doesn't go far enough to ensure migrants who arrive in the U.K. without permission can be deported.

The government was so nervous about the result that it ordered Climate Minister **Graham Stuart** to fly back from the COP28 summit in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where negotiations are in their final hours, for the vote.

But after threatening to block the bill on Tuesday, many of the hard-liners abstained in hopes of toughening it up later in the legislative process.

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**Poland's new PM Tusk sworn in:** The new Polish Prime Minister **Donald Tusk** and his Cabinet were sworn in by the president on Wednesday morning, in a ceremony which marked the end of eight tumultuous years of rule by a national conservative party, Law and Justice.

The swearing-in ceremony of the pro-European Union government, the final step in a transition of power, took place in the presidential palace in Warsaw. Tusk was returning to the job after a nine-year spell in opposition.

The change of government follows a national election on Oct. 15 which was won by a group of parties that ran on separate tickets vowing to work together under Tusk's leadership to restore democratic norms eroded by Law and Justice and mend relations with foreign allies that were also strained.

Tusk and his ministers arrived at the presidential palace in a bus in the white and red colors of Poland's flag and the words: "We thank you, Poland!" They were greeted by cheering supporters. (AP)

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**Pope wants to be buried in Rome:** Pope Francis says he wants to be buried in the Rome basilica of St. Mary Major, not in the grottoes of the Vatican like other popes, so he can be near his favorite icon of the Madonna. Francis, who turns 87 on Sunday, also said he never thought about resigning this year despite a series of health scares. He said he has a trip confirmed to Belgium next year and visits under consideration to Polynesia and his native Argentina.

"It is true that all journeys are now rethought," Francis told N+ of Mexican broadcaster Televisa. "If they're close by, they can be done. If they're farther away they are rethought. There are limits."

It was Francis' first interview since his latest bout of acute bronchitis, which forced the cancellation of a trip this month to Dubai to participate in the U.N. climate conference. Francis, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, appeared in good form and said he was now recovered and feeling fine. (AP)

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**Moldova extends NATO alliance:** Moldova announced on Wednesday the extension of the partnership plan with The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for the upcoming year, amid Russian objections.

Russian News Agency (TASS) quoted the Moldovan government as saying that partnership with NATO aims to improve their military combat capabilities and enhance cooperation in security fields, and extending partnership until the end of 2024.

President of Moldova **Maia Sandu** has previously warned that Moldova's neutrality, although enshrined in its constitution, has become an increasingly talked-about topic, adding that she was ready to revisit the issue if the Moldovan people would want that.

Sources added that Moldova stressed the importance of engaging in integration with the European Union, noting that the NATO launched a public relations office and media center in the capital city of Chisinau. (KUNA)

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**Switzerland's Greens fail in bid:** Switzerland's environmentalist Greens failed in a long-shot bid to enter the national government Wednesday as lawmakers elected a new center-left minister to the Alpine country's executive Federal Council.

Parliament met in Bern to elect the seven-member governing council following a September election that saw the country's strongest political force, the nationalist Swiss People's Party, rebound from losses four years earlier and two environmentally minded parties lose ground. Switzerland has an unusual, consensus-oriented political system. (AP)

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**Far-right Wilders seeks unity:** Far-right lawmaker **Geert Wilders**, whose party swept to a shock victory in last month's Dutch general election, said Wednesday he wants to be prime minister for "all Netherlanders," and pledged that he will ensure his policies adhere to the country's constitution.

Wilders' comments during a debate in parliament were aimed at easing fears among potential coalition partners about his strident anti-Islam rhetoric and plans including banning mosques, Islamic schools and the Quran. (AP)

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**Blast rocks commercial area:** A powerful bomb explosion damaged a commercial apartment block housing stores and businesses early Wednesday near the port of Piraeus, southwest of Athens, authorities said.

Police confirmed the night-time blast was caused by a bomb. The explosion resulted in no injuries but caused extensive damage to ground-floor stores in the building and offices on other floors, and shattered the windows of nearby homes and businesses. (AP)



President Joe Biden shakes hands with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as they meet in the Oval Office of the White House, Tuesday, Dec 12, 2023, in Washington. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told America his country was fighting for "our freedom and yours" as he made an impassioned plea Tuesday for Congress to approve more assistance to fight Russia's invasion. But prospects for additional U.S. aid to Ukraine appeared seriously delayed, if not in grave doubt,

despite his whirlwind diplomacy in Washington. After hours of talks on Capitol Hill, Zelenskyy spent more hours at the White House meeting with President Joe Biden and his aides about a way forward. The U.S. has already provided Ukraine \$111 billion since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his grinding invasion more than 21 months ago, but Republicans are insisting on linking any more money to strict U.S.-Mexico border security changes that Democrats decry. (AP)

## US announces new sanctions on Russia's weapons suppliers as Zelenskyy visits Washington

The Biden administration hit hundreds of people and firms, from Russia to China to Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, with economic and diplomatic sanctions Tuesday as the U.S. targets third-country contributors that are equipping Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The latest round of sanctions landed as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is visiting Washington to make an appeal for more financial support as

his nation fights off the Russian invasion that will enter its third year in February.

The financial penalties have made Russia the most sanctioned country in the world but have yet to deliver a knockout punch to Russia's economy.

Tuesday's sanctions package targets a multinational weapons procurement network led by Chinese national **Hu Xiaoxun**, his China-based private defense company **Jarvis HK Co.**, and a network

of associates that coordinate the sale of Chinese-manufactured weapons and components to Russia.

A representative from Jarvis did not immediately respond to an Associated Press request for comment.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson **Mao Ning** condemned Washington's latest move, saying "China has firmly opposed such unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction by the U.S." (AP)

## Politics

## House vote on Biden impeachment looms

## GOP leaders navigate political tightrope

WASHINGTON, Dec 13, (AP) — The House is pushing toward a vote Wednesday to formally authorize the impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden as Republicans rally behind the charged process despite lingering concerns among some in the party that the investigation has yet to produce evidence of misconduct by the president.

The vote comes as House Speaker **Mike Johnson** and his leadership team face growing pressure to show progress in what has become a nearly yearlong probe centered around the business dealings of Biden's family members. While their investigation has raised ethical questions, no evidence has emerged that Biden acted corruptly or accepted bribes in his current role or previous office as vice president.

Ahead of the vote, Johnson called it "the next necessary step." He acknowledged there are "a lot of people who are frustrated this hasn't moved faster."

But Johnson said on Fox News he believes the resolution will pass the House and "we'll be in the best position to do our constitutional responsibility."

By holding a vote on the floor, the speaker, who has been on the job less than two months, will be putting his conference on record in support of an impeachment process that can lead to the ultimate penalty for a president: punishment for what the Constitution describes as "high crimes and misdemeanors," which can lead to removal from office if convicted in a Senate trial.

A successful vote would also ensure that the impeachment investigation extends well into 2024 when Biden will be running for reelection and seems

likely to be squaring off against former President Donald Trump — who was twice impeached during his time in the White House. Trump has pushed Republicans to move swiftly on impeaching Biden, part of his broader calls for vengeance and retribution against his political enemies.

In a recent statement, the White House called the whole process a "baseless fishing expedition" that Republicans are pushing ahead with "despite the fact that members of their own party have admitted there is no evidence to support impeaching President Biden."

## Resolution

Some House Republicans, particularly those hailing from politically divided districts, have been hesitant to take any vote on Biden's impeachment, fearing a significant political cost. But GOP leaders have made the case in recent weeks that the resolution is only a step in the process, not a decision to impeach Biden. That message seems to have won over skeptics.

"As we have said numerous times before, voting in favor of an impeachment inquiry does not equal impeachment," Rep. **Tom Emmer**, a member of the GOP leadership team, said at a news conference Tuesday.

Emmer said Republicans "will continue to follow the facts wherever they lead, and if they uncover evidence of treason, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors, then and only then will the next steps towards impeachment proceedings be considered."

Most of the Republicans hesitant to back the impeachment push have also been swayed by leadership's recent argument that authorizing the inquiry

will give them better legal standing as the White House rebuffs their requests for information.

A letter last month from a top White House attorney to Republican committee leaders portrayed the GOP investigation as overzealous and illegitimate as the chamber had not yet authorized a formal impeachment inquiry by a vote of the full House. **Richard Sauber**, special counsel to the president, also wrote that when Trump faced the prospect of impeachment by a Democratic House in 2019, Johnson had said at the time that any inquiry without a House vote would be a "sham."

Rep. **Dusty Johnson**, R-S.D., said Monday that while there was no evidence to impeach the president, "that's also not what the vote this week would be about." "We have had enough political impeachments in this country," he said. "I don't like the stonewalling the administration has done, but listen, if we don't have the receipts, that should constrain what the House does long term."

Rep. **Don Bacon**, R-Neb., who has long been opposed to moving forward with impeachment, said that the White House questioning the legitimacy of the inquiry without a formal vote helped gain his support. "I can defend an inquiry right now," he told reporters this week. "Let's see what they find out."

For the impeachment probe vote to succeed, nearly all House Republicans will have to vote in favor. It will amount to a major test of party unity, given GOP's narrow 221-213 majority. House Democrats are unified in their opposition to the impeachment process, saying it is a farce used by the GOP to take attention away from Trump and his legal woes.



Former President Donald Trump speaks during the New York Young Republican Club's annual gala at Cipriani Wall Street, Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023. Lawyers for Donald Trump told a federal appeals court on Wednesday that it should not speed up its consideration of whether the former president is immune from prosecution, accusing federal prosecutors of trying to rush his 2020 election subversion case through before next year's presidential election. (AP)



Haley



DeSantis

## America

**WH hosting US lawmakers:** The White House is hosting nearly 100 lawmakers from around the country on Wednesday to work on how their states can try to reduce gun violence.

The gun violence prevention office, the first of its kind, was launched this year by President Joe Biden. It has formulated a set of guidelines to help states take action across six areas, including creating state-run offices like the federal office, strengthening support for survivors and families of victims, and reinforcing responsible gun ownership.

"We've been meeting with the state legislators ever since the start of our office, and one thing we hear all the time is they want to do more to reduce gun violence," said **Stefanie Feldman**, director of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention. "The question is, what should they do and how?" Vice President **Kamala Harris** is overseeing the office and will speak to the lawmakers on Wednesday. (AP)

**Haley gets endorsement:** New Hampshire Gov. **Chris Sununu** endorsed Republican presidential candidate **Nikki Haley** on Tuesday, six weeks before the state's pivotal first-in-the-nation primary.

Sununu appeared with Haley during a campaign town hall at a ski area in Manchester, where he said she has shown she understands the values Republicans associate with the state's "Live Free or Die" motto, including low taxes, limited government and local control. "This is an opportunity for New Hampshire to lead this country, for New Hampshire to say we're not looking in the rearview mirror anymore," Sununu said.

His message for Donald Trump: "Thank you for your service, Mr. President, we're moving on. This is New Hampshire, and we go forward." (AP)

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**DeSantis goes after Trump:** Donald

Trump "flip-flipped" on abortion, overreached in response to COVID-19 and failed to uphold his campaign pledge to get Mexico to pay for a wall on the southern

U.S. border, Florida Gov. **Ron DeSantis** said Tuesday in Iowa.

DeSantis, who is in a distant second place behind Trump in most national polls in the



**Frank Vanore**, Philadelphia Police Department First Deputy Commissioner Field Operations, speaks to press and updates the current status of the inmate who escaped at the Philadelphia Detention Center in the Holmesburg Section in Philadelphia on Thursday, Nov 30, 2023. Police were searching on Friday, Dec. 1, 2023, for **Gino Hagenkotter**, an inmate who escaped from a Philadelphia jail by walking away from a work detail, the fourth breakout from a city lockup this year. (AP)

battle for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, stepped up his case against the former president during a CNN town hall in Des Moines five weeks before the state's first-in-the-nation caucuses.

He zeroed in on abortion in a state where evangelical voters form the backbone of the GOP, contrasting Trump's recent skepticism about strict anti-abortion laws with his earlier comments about protecting the sanctity of life. (AP)

**FBI to exhume woman's body:** FBI investigators are planning to exhume the body of a young woman whose unsolved 1969 killing has been a source of widespread speculation, especially since Netflix's documentary series "The Keepers" examined the slaying of a Baltimore nun that unfolded days earlier under eerily similar circumstances.

**Joyce Malecki** went Christmas shopping in November 1969 at a suburban mall outside Baltimore and never came home. Her body was found on a nearby military base days later and an autopsy determined she had been strangled. An advocate for the Malecki family confirmed Tuesday that the exhumation was tentatively planned for Thursday.

The case received renewed attention after "The Keepers" was released in 2017, raising questions about whether Malecki's disappearance was linked to that of **Sister Cathy Cesnik**, who was found dead from blunt force trauma after she went shopping and never returned. (AP)

## Africa

## Weapons &amp; paraphernalia found

## Ethiopian ex-peace min arrested over rebel ties

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, Dec 13, (AP): Ethiopia's peace minister has been fired and arrested for having alleged links to an outlawed rebel group after he made a series of social media posts criticizing the government.

Federal police released a statement Tuesday accusing Taye Dendea of "collaborating with anti-peace forces that are trying to destroy Ethiopia" and of belonging to the Oromo Liberation Army, which is banned as a terrorist organization.



Ahmed

The statement was published alongside several photos showing firearms, identity documents, mobile phones and OLA flags that police said were seized from Taye's home.

The OLA is waging a long-running insurgency against the government. It claims to be fighting for greater representation for the Oromo, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, but has been accused of ethnic-based attacks on other groups.

Human rights groups, meanwhile, have accused the government of targeting civilians in its military campaign against the OLA.

Taye, an ethnic Oromo, is a senior member of the ruling party, but has grown increasingly critical of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

Last week Taye blamed the government for the failure of recent peace talks with the OLA and condemned a decision to ban an opposition rally in Addis Ababa, the capital.

On Monday, Taye posted his dismissal letter from Abiy on Facebook and described the prime minister as a "barbarian" who "plays with human blood."

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**50 mln people could face hunger:** The United Nations warned on Tuesday that hunger could surge across West and Central Africa next year, primarily driven by violence in the conflict-riddled region.

Nearly 50 million people could face food insecurity and more than 2.5 million will be on the brink of starvation, said officials from the U.N., the Food and Agriculture Organization, regional and other groups as they presented the findings in Senegal's capital, Dakar.

The report is compiled by regional governments, the U.N. and aid groups. While climate change and inflation are contributing factors, the main driver of food insecurity is increasing violence, particularly across the Central Sahel - the vast expanse below the Sahara Desert - which has been hardest hit.

Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have had five coups in three years, which has led to increased jihadi attacks linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. The militants were already operating in the area and have capitalized on the political turmoil, taking swaths of land and blockading cities.

"The biggest concern this year is the threat of insecurity," said Martin Naindoubu Djerandjé, a regional expert for FAO. He added that if those affected do not get aid, "people could die and the situation (could) get worse."

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**Kenya marks 60 years of independence:** Kenya's president on Tuesday defended the high taxes the government recently imposed, calling them a "necessary sacrifice" in helping the country deal with ballooning foreign debt which now stands at \$70 billion.

Speaking at celebrations marking 60 years since Kenya's independence from Britain, President William Ruto said East Africa's largest economy was no longer at risk of defaulting on bond payments following economic reforms his government had undertaken since taking power last September.

"Though painful, the sacrifices we have made will not only make our freedom fighters proud," Ruto told tens of thousands of people in the capital, Nairobi. He added: "I can now confirm without fear of any contradiction that Kenya is safely out of the danger of debt distress, and that our economy is on a stable footing."

The economy has taken center stage in politics and daily life in Kenya as the government tackles mounting debts. A \$2 billion Eurobond is due in June.

Last month, the government reached a lending agreement with the International Monetary Fund amounting to \$938 million, a boost for the country struggling with dwindling foreign exchange reserves.

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**SA to build new nuclear plants:** The South African government announced plans on Tuesday to build new nuclear power stations to generate more electricity amid an energy crisis and regular blackouts in the continent's most advanced economy.

The move to invite bids to build the stations - which will take at least a decade to be ready, according to officials - was immediately criticized by the main political opposition party, which said that Russian state-owned nuclear agency Rosatom was the South African government's "preferred partner."

Government officials didn't name any potential bidders and only outlined the start of the process.

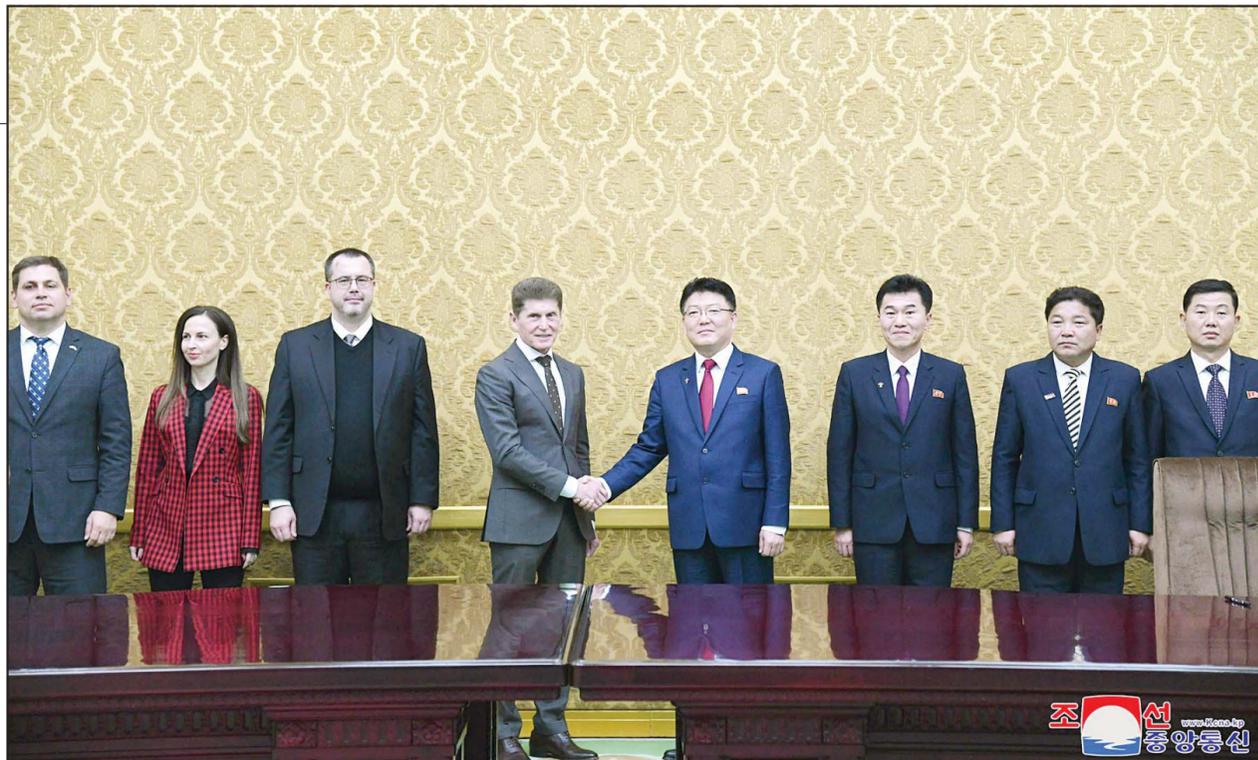
But the criticism by the opposition Democratic Alliance was linked to a major nuclear deal that South Africa signed with Russia in 2014 worth an estimated \$76 billion that was shrouded in secrecy and canceled by a South African court in 2017 for being illegal and unconstitutional. It was tarnished with allegations of large-scale corruption and was signed under the leadership of former South African President Jacob Zuma, who is now on trial on unrelated corruption charges.

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**Congo agrees to a 3-day cease-fire:** Congolese security forces and rebel groups have agreed on a 72-hour cease-fire to de-escalate tensions in the country's hard-hit east near the border with Rwanda, the White House announced just days before Congo's presidential election. But some of the region's many rebel groups quickly distanced themselves, and neither government commented.

The agreement was backed by both Congo and Rwanda, a spokeswoman for the White House National Security Council, Adrienne Watson, said in a statement Monday. The most prominent rebel group is the M23 with links to Rwanda, a major source of tension between the neighbors even as Rwanda denies supporting the rebels.

The U.S. said the agreement includes the withdrawal of forces occupying the locality of Mushaki - seized this month by the M23 - and the RP1030 road, a main supply route in eastern Congo. The wider region has struggled with conflict for decades as more than 120 armed groups fight for control of mineral resources or to defend their communities.



This photo provided by the North Korean government, Oleg Kozhemyako, center left, governor of the Primorye region in the Russian Far East, and Yun Jong Ho, center right, North Korean external economic relations minister, shake hands during their meeting at the Mansudae Assembly Hall in Pyongyang, on Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2023. Independent journalists were not given

access to cover the event depicted in this image distributed by the North Korean government. The content of this image is as provided and cannot be independently verified. Korean language watermark on image as provided by source reads: 'KCNA' which is the abbreviation for Korean Central News Agency. (AP)

## North Korean and Russian officials discuss economic ties as Seoul raises labor export concerns

Senior North Korean economic officials met with the governor of a Russian region along the Pacific coast for discussions on boosting economic cooperation between the countries, North Korean state media said Wednesday.

The meeting in Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, came as concerns have grown in South Korea that the North may be attempting to expand its labor exports to Russia in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions to generate revenue for its struggling

economy and help fund leader Kim Jong Un's nuclear weapons program.

The official Korean Central News Agency said North Korean officials led by the country's external economic relations minister, Yun Jong Ho, met with the delegation led by Oleg Kozhemyako, governor of the Primorye region in the Russian Far East, and discussed elevating economic cooperation between the countries to "higher levels." The report did not specify the types of cooperation that were discussed.

Kozhemyako told Russian media ahead of his visit that he was expecting to discuss expanding cooperation with the North Koreans in agriculture, tourism and trade.

Kozhemyako's visit extends a flurry of diplomacy between North Korea and Russia this year, highlighted by a summit between Kim and Russian President Vladimir Putin in September, which underscores their aligning interests in the face of separate, intensifying confrontations with the United States. (AP)

## Asia

## Jimmy Lai's son appeals to UK for father's release

## Vietnam concedes to 'shared future' with China

HANOI, Vietnam, Dec 13, (AP): Chinese leader Xi Jinping met with Vietnam's prime minister and the head of the country's National Assembly on Wednesday, on the second day of his visit to shore up Beijing's relationship with Hanoi after the Southeast Asian nation recently elevated its ties with Japan and the United States.

Xi met with Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong on Tuesday, and they announced that China and Vietnam would work toward a "community with a shared future," in what was seen as a diplomatic concession by Vietnam to Beijing.

Vietnam has resisted using that phrase in the past but wanted to assuage Beijing's concerns after Vietnam designated both the U.S. and Japan as "comprehensive strategic partners" in recent months, a designation it uses for China. The status is Vietnam's highest official designation for a diplomatic relationship.

Xi referenced the phrase again Wednesday in a meeting with National Assembly Chairman Vuong Dinh Hue. "In the next stage, both sides need to strengthen cooperation in various fields, including legislation, to contribute to the building of the community with a shared future," Xi said.

Nguyen Khac Giang, a visiting fellow at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore, said the rhetorical concession from Hanoi "doesn't mean Vietnam supports China-led political initiatives, but rather (is) a delicate act of hedging, particularly after its upgrade with the U.S. and Japan recently."

"I think the move is expected given the fact that Xi came to Hanoi in person," Nguyen said.

Xi also met with Vietnamese Prime

Minister Pham Minh Chinh and President Vo Van Thuong on Wednesday and will end his trip after meeting with young Vietnamese and Chinese scholars.

Vietnam and China already have robust ties, but they also have significant points of difference, primarily over territorial claims over islands in the South China Sea.

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.

## Also:

**LONDON:** The son of jailed Hong Kong media mogul and pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai met with Britain's foreign secretary on Tuesday to lobby for the U.K.'s help in securing his release from prison.

Lai, the founder of the now-defunct Apple Daily, an outspoken pro-democracy newspaper, faces a long-delayed trial next week over charges he violated sweeping national security laws that Beijing imposed on Hong Kong after anti-government protests.

The 76-year-old British citizen has been in detention since 2020 over other offenses. He faces life in prison if convicted of the national security charges.

His son Sebastien Lai, who leads an international campaign to call for his father's release, said he hoped the meeting with British Foreign Secretary David Cameron would raise the case's profile and add to international pressure on Hong Kong's government.

"The U.K. opposes the National Security Law and will continue to stand by Jimmy Lai and the people of Hong Kong," the Foreign Office said after the meeting.

Hong Kong, a former British colony, returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Jimmy Lai is accused of conspiring with others to call for international sanctions or engage in hostile activities against Hong Kong or China. He also faces a charge of collusion with foreign forces to endanger national security, and a separate sedition charge under a colonial-era law that is increasingly used against the opposition.

The enactment of the national security law in 2020 has led to the arrests of scores of opposition lawmakers and democracy activists, as well as an exodus of young professionals fearful of shrinking civil liberties.

Apple Daily was forced to close following the arrests of its top executives, editors and journalists.

Caioilfhonn Gallagher, a London-based rights lawyer leading the Lais' international legal team, argued that the trial, to be overseen by three judges, is stacked against him.

"There's no possible outcome for this trial that's fair," she said.

Sebastien Lai and his legal team hope that diplomatic pressure could be instrumental. They cite the case of Cheng Lei, the Chinese Australian journalist who was released earlier this year after being detained for three years in China on murky espionage charges.

Cheng's return to Australia was seen as the result of lobbying from the Australian government and improved relations between China and Australia.

into the chamber.

One of the arrested said she was a student protesting rising unemployment. "People's voice is not being heard by the government. There can't be a dictatorship in the country," she told reporters as she was taken away by the police. (AP)

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## Attacker used 264lb of explosive:

The suicide bomber who rammed his car

into a police station's main gate in Pakistan's northwest used 120 kilograms (about 264 pounds) of explosives, authorities said Wednesday. The attack - one of the deadliest in months - killed 23 officers and wounded 32 others the day before.

Inayat Ullah, head of the bomb disposal unit, told The Associated Press the explosives were fitted in the suicide attacker's vehicle.

The assault - which also included five

other militants opening fire before officers gunned them down - targeted Daraban police station in the city of Dera Ismail Khan, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which borders Afghanistan and is a former stronghold of the Pakistani Taliban, or TTP.

The militant Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan group - believed to be an offshoot of the TTP - claimed responsibility for the attack.

A large number of security forces from across Pakistan were recently deployed at the station for intelligence operations against militants in the area in coordination with the local police, authorities said. (AP)

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**Air quality declines in India:** Air quality deteriorated in New Delhi as Air Quality Index registered Severe and Very Poor on Wednesday. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) several cities crossed 400 mark in a 500 basis scale.

According to CPCB, several areas fell into the severe category like Anand Vihar (415), Ashok Vihar (412) and Narela (408). Other cities like Moti Bagh (368), Punjabi Bagh (397) Indira Gandhi International Airport (355) fell into the "very poor" category. The Air Quality Index in New Delhi registered 375 declining from 355.

For last several weeks, the Indian capital city has witnessed air quality index between poor, very poor and severe. Emissions from vehicles, firecrackers, paddy straw burning and other local pollution sources have made New Delhi the worst city in the world in terms of air quality.

According to the air quality classification, a reading above 400 is considered dangerous for people's health, especially people suffering from diseases. (AP)



Parliament member Rukchanok Srinork of Thailand's opposition Move Forward party arrives at criminal court for the verdict for allegedly violating the lese-majeste law in Bangkok, Thailand, Wednesday, Dec. 13, 2023. A court in Thailand convicted and sentenced Wednesday the recently elected lawmaker to six years in prison for defaming the monarchy under a controversial law that guards the royal institution. (AP)



Sharif



Imran Khan

## Subcontinent

**Ex-PM conviction reversed:** A Pakistani court overturned Tuesday the 2018 conviction of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a graft case, clearing his path to run in the parliamentary election set to be held in February.

The Islamabad High Court announced its verdict after Sharif filed his appeal in October. Courts in Pakistan usually take much longer to issue such rulings. The same court acquitted Sharif in another graft case on Nov. 29.

Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League party welcomed the verdict, saying the country's three-time former premier was exonerated and could run in the coming election.

Mariyum Aurangzeb, Sharif's spokeswoman, hailed the court ruling, saying: "Today, the reality of these fake and false cases has come to light in front of the public."

In 2018, an anti-graft tribunal sentenced Sharif to seven years and 10 years in prison in two cases filed against him, after he stepped down as prime minister. He returned to Pakistan in October, after four years of self-exile abroad.

Currently, Sharif's political future seems more secure than that of his rival and opponent Imran Khan, who is serving a three-year sentence for corruption in a jail on the outskirts of Rawalpindi. Khan has multiple charges filed against him. (AP)

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## Indian police arrest 4 intruders:

Police arrested two people who jumped from the visitors' gallery into the lower house of India's Parliament on Wednesday, the speaker said, in a major security breach on the anniversary of a deadly 2001 attack on the complex.

Two accomplices also were arrested outside the chamber, Parliament Speaker Om Birla said.

Security guards overpowered the intruders as one of them climbed over the tables of the lawmakers' seating area, TV images showed. They carried small canisters that emitted yellow smoke, said Senthil Kumar, a lawmaker who was present



Indian security personnel check motorists at a checkpoint set up outside the Indian parliament in New Delhi, India, Wednesday, Dec. 13, 2023. Police arrested two people who jumped from the visitors' gallery into the lower house of parliament, the speaker said, in a major security breach on the anniversary of a deadly 2001 terrorist attack on the complex. (AP)

## oil down

The price of the Kuwaiti oil barrel fell 47 cents to USD 79.02 per barrel (pb) on Tuesday in contrast to Monday's USD 79.49, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Wednesday.

In international markets, the Brent crude went down USD 2.79 reaching USD 73.24 pb, the same with the West Texas Intermediate dropped USD 2.71 reaching USD 68.61 pb. (KUNA)

## Aramco to acquire 40% stake in Gas & Oil Pakistan

Aramco, a prominent integrated energy and chemicals company, has officially entered into agreements to acquire a 40% equity stake in Gas & Oil Pakistan Ltd. (GO). GO, a diversified downstream enterprise engaged in fuels, lubricants, and convenience stores, stands as one of Pakistan's leading retail and storage companies. The completion of this transaction is contingent upon fulfilling customary conditions, including obtaining regulatory approvals.

This strategic move marks Aramco's inaugural foray into the fuels retail market in Pakistan, in line with its overarching objective to fortify its interna-

tional downstream value chain. The acquisition is poised to provide Aramco with increased outlets for its refined products while creating fresh market opportunities for Valvoline-branded lubricants. This follows Aramco's acquisition of the Valvoline Inc. global products business in February 2023. Mohammed Y. Al Qahtani, Aramco Downstream President, expressed, "This planned retail acquisition complements Aramco's downstream expansion strategy, paving the way for the growth of an integrated refining, marketing, lubricants, trading, and chemicals portfolio on a global scale. (PR Newswire)



Officials from GO and Aramco during the agreement signing ceremony.

## Market Movements

13-12-2023

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
EGYPT	-	EGX 30	PAKISTAN	-	KSE 100
JAPAN	-	Nikkei		-1,081.39	65,309.24
SAUDI	-	Tawadul			
UAE	-	DFM			
	+702.26	24,773.92			
	+82.65	32,926.35			
	+6.47	11,401.47			
	+2.03	3,939.31			

# Business

## Kuwait ranks 66th in Global Trade Resilience Index 2023

### Logistics performance scrutinized

By Mahmoud Shendi  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: In the inaugural edition of the Global Trade Resilience Index 2023 by Whitechild International Specialized Consulting, Kuwait found itself at the crossroads of global economic evaluation, securing the 66th position worldwide and the seventh position among Arab nations.**

This comprehensive index, unveiled on the sidelines of the prestigious Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP28) in Dubai, served as an illuminating lens into the resilience and adaptability of nations in the face of global trade challenges. Concurrently, the United Arab Emirates, with its strategic economic prowess, claimed the top spot in the Arab world and an impressive 31st rank on the global stage.

The unveiling of the index brought to the forefront Kuwait's performance across a triad of pivotal indicators, offering nuanced insights into the nation's strengths and areas for improvement. Notably, one significant revelation emerged in the "Operations Network Resilience Index," a sub-index gauging the quality of logistics services, customs capabilities, and the robustness of infrastructure, encompassing roads, ports, and airports. In this realm, Kuwait scored 43.1 out of 100, placing it at the 80th position globally—a facet deserving of scrutiny for policymakers and stakeholders alike.

Despite this particular setback, Kuwait showcased commendable performance in the other two sub-indices. The "Trade Network Flexibility" sub-index, evaluating the adaptability and diversity of trading partners, positioned Kuwait at a respectable 64th globally with a score of 50.3 points.

Similarly, in the "Institutional Network Flexibility" sub-index, measuring the efficacy of laws, systems, governance, and economic performance, Kuwait stood at the 42nd position globally, with a score of 59.3 points. These results paint a nuanced picture of Kuwait's economic landscape, indicating strengths in certain dimensions while pointing toward targeted areas for enhancement.

Expanding the canvas to the broader business environment, Kuwait distinguished itself positively in the "Institutional Network Flexibility" sub-index. This sub-index, delving into the nation's legal framework, systems, governance, and economic performance, underscored Kuwait's robust institutional foundations. Moreover, the "Trade Network Flexibility Index," assessing the importance of location and the diversity of trading partners and the strength of commercial entities, portrayed Kuwait as a player with strategic foresight

and adaptability in the global trade arena.

Zooming out to a global perspective, the index highlighted other notable regional performers. Qatar secured the second position in the Arab world, positioned at 46th globally, with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia following closely in third place at the 47th position globally. Morocco, securing the 48th position globally, claimed the fourth spot in the Arab world. These rankings underscore the varied economic landscapes and trade resilience capabilities across the Arab region.

At the global zenith of the index were economic powerhouses, with Germany leading the pack, followed by the Netherlands, the United States of America, and France. The report emphasized the dominance of countries evolving into global commercial hubs, with the UAE serving as a prime example, thanks to its significant role as a major global commercial center and a conducive environment for business activities.

Beyond the quantitative evaluations, the report underscored the broader significance of the Global Trade Resilience Index as a pivotal tool for assessing countries' capacities to recover swiftly after exposure to trade-related shocks. In particular, it drew attention to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the critical role of international cooperation in bridging the gap between supply and demand during times of crises. The report posited the index as an initiative geared towards contributing to global trade policy discussions and fortifying the sustainability of economies worldwide.

During the launch of the report in Dubai, Whitechild International Specialized Consulting framed it as an unprecedented methodology aimed at supporting countries in identifying pathways to enhance their capacity to withstand and recover from business fluctuations. The overarching goal, as articulated by Whitechild, was for the report to play a pivotal role in achieving the conference's objectives, especially in areas that leverage trade and supportive policies to stimulate climate protection measures and promote sustainable development.

Notably, the UAE's inclusion of global trade on the agenda of COP28 marked a significant milestone, aligning with the conference's broader goals and reflecting a growing acknowledgment of the interconnectedness between global trade dynamics, climate protection, and sustainable development.

This convergence of global economic discourse and environmental imperatives underscores the evolving nature of international cooperation and the multi-faceted role that trade policies play in shaping the trajectory of nations in an increasingly interconnected world.

As nations grapple with the challenges of a post-pandemic era, the Global Trade Resilience Index stands poised to become an invaluable compass, guiding policymakers and stakeholders towards informed decisions that foster economic resilience, sustainability, and inclusive development.

## Premier market index hits 7,425 points

### Boursa Kuwait hits 40 bln dinars market value

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13:** The Boursa Kuwait has once again soared in its market value to exceed 40 billion dinars, after achieving market gains of about 755 million dinars in just the last 10 sessions, since the beginning of December trading until yesterday's session, which saw continuous increases in the circulating liquidity, reports Al-Anba daily.

The daily added, the stock market indices witnessed continued positivity, as the Premier Market Index broke the level of 7,300 points upwards during the current December trading, and reached the level of 7,425 points, a jump that gives an indication of the possibility of continued rises led by the Premier Market.

The surge in the stock market's gains can be attributed to seven key factors that have significantly influenced trading activities:

■ **Changing Foreign Investment Trends:** Foreign investors have shifted their focus from international markets to the Boursa Kuwait, particularly targeting high-liquidity banking stocks. This shift is evident in the increased foreign ownership in the primary market, reaching approximately 4.8 billion dinars, marking a notable increase of 100 million dinars.

■ **Funds' Positive Performance:** The performance of funds experienced a remarkable upturn at the end of last November. This was propelled by institutional purchases in selected portfolios and stocks, contributing positively to the overall market performance. Traditional funds saw gains ranging from 1.76% to 3.5%, while Islamic investment funds registered gains between 0.47% and 3.1%.

■ **Year-End Dynamics:** December typically witnesses shifts in investment positions based on technical performance analysis indicators and the strategic rebuilding of new positions in stocks expected to yield positive results.

■ **Active Trading:** The market is currently witnessing active trading in specific investment groups and selected stocks that are driving market movements, creating a positive momentum in transactions.

## Combined assets of \$343 bln

### Eight Kuwaiti banks rank in top 100 Arab Banks in 2022

**BEIRUT, Dec 13, (KUNA):** An analytical study by Union of Arab Banks (UAB) showed that eight Kuwaiti banks have been ranked among the top 100 Arab banks in 2022.

With combined assets of USD 343 billion, the eight banks' capital came to about USD 35.8 billion, said the Beirut-based UAB.

The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Burgan Bank, Gulf Bank (GBK), Ahli United Bank of Kuwait (AUB), Kuwait Commercial Bank, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait, and Kuwait International Bank are the eight banks that UAB mentioned in the list.

As stated in the report, the highest capital in the area was NBK, followed by KFH and Burgan Bank in third position. When it came to total assets, KFH was the biggest bank.

According to data released by "The Banker" magazine in November 2023, the UAE has the highest record of all Arab countries with 18 banks among the top 100.

Egypt came in second with 11 banks, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain with 10 banks each, Qatar and Jordan with nine banks, Kuwait and Oman with eight banks each, Tunisia with six banks, Lebanon with two banks, and Palestine with one bank.

A number of 22 Islamic banks were also identified by the survey, and they were spread as follows: five banks from Qatar, four from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, three from Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, two from Egypt, and one from each of Jordan and Oman. The rankings were based on the major capital of 2022.

Encouraging Price Levels: Many stocks have recently recorded price levels that inspire the initiation of new investment centers, signaling an optimistic outlook.

■ **Positive results:** The results announced for listed companies in the first nine months of 2023, led by banks, showed positive indicators of financial performance, which encourages intensification of purchasing operations in anticipation of cash distributions and grants, and 142 companies achieved net profits of about 2.074 billion dinars, an increase of 30.4 percent, compared to the level of profits for the first nine months of 2022, which then recorded about 1.59 billion dinars.

■ **Interest changes:** Most expectations indicate that the US Federal Reserve will begin easing its monetary tightening policy at its upcoming meeting today, Wednesday, not

to mention its intention to reduce interest rates during 2024, which consequently means increasing the attractiveness of stocks once again to increase their glow.

In addition, the liquidity flowing to the stock market continued its remarkable record highs, reaching 79.4 million dinars, an increase of 17% during yesterday's trading session, of which about 66.5 million dinars were directed to the shares of the Premier Market, while the Main Market received about 12.89 million dinars.

Yesterday's session ended with a continuation of the collective rise of the indices by 1.07% for the Premier Market Index, with a gain of 78.5 points, to reach 7,425 points. The Main Market Index also rose by 0.25%, with a gain of 13.7 points, to reach 5,531 points. The General Market Index rose by 0.9%, with a gain of 60.1 points, to reach 5,531 points.

## GCC's non-energy sectors to drive GDP expansion in 2024

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13:** The latest Economic Insight report for the Middle East, commissioned by ICAEW and compiled by Oxford Economics, reveals the region is expected to defy the global slowdown in 2024 as non-energy sectors continue to drive growth. The pace of the Middle East's GDP growth is predicted to rise to 3.2% next year, above the global GDP growth forecast of 2.1%.

According to the report, the Middle East economy will expand less than initially expected this year, with GDP growth expected at 1.3%. However, growth will improve in 2024 and outpace most advanced economies. Projections for GCC growth this year have been scaled back to 0.7% due to a large negative contribution from the energy sector amid ongoing curbs in oil production. However, there are promising signs within the non-energy sectors, notably in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The GCC's growth is expected to rise to 3.9% next year, primarily propelled by these industries.

The region's non-energy sector continued to deliver growth this year, especially in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The resurgence of travel and tourism across the region has been notably robust, surpassing pre-pandemic levels in nearly every GCC country. Saudi Arabia's tourism industry continues to thrive, welcoming 27.6 million overnight tourists

this year. This is expected to increase further, with a projected 30 million tourists by 2024 and more than 50 million by 2032. The government recently revised its 2030 visitor target to 150 million (both domestic and international), up from the previous 100 million, aiming for the tourism sector to contribute 6% of GDP in the current year and 10% by 2030. The introduction of a unified GCC tourist visa, expected to take effect in 2024 or 2025, will likely further amplify visitor arrivals to the region. Energy prices have cooled over the past month, despite the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict. Measures to bolster prices, including additional voluntary cuts during the OPEC+ November meeting and Saudi Arabia's pledge to extend its 1m b/d reduction through Q1 2024, have had limited impact. While the Brent crude price is currently trading below \$80pb, down from over \$90pb in early October and below the report's average forecast of \$83pb for this year, the tight global supply outlook is expected to support prices next year, with Brent forecast to average \$84.4pb in 2024.

Hanadi Khalife, Head of Middle East, ICAEW, said: "The economic outlook this quarter has been significantly hampered by oil output cuts. We now expect GCC oil output to shrink by nearly 5% this year, which makes it the weakest performance since 2009, excluding 2020. However, despite oil production and prices, there remains positive momentum in the non-energy sectors and an overall investment drive across the region to support this growth."

Scott Livermore, ICAEW Economic Advisor, and Chief Economist and Managing Director, Oxford Economics Middle East, said: "The global economic backdrop is weakening as we enter 2024, with most major economies poised for a significant slowdown. However, there are indicators of optimism for the region. We have seen better than expected recovery in the travel and tourism sector which will continue to drive GDP expansion next year, outpacing global growth forecasts."



Livermore



Khalife

## Consumer price index shows 3.1% year-over-year increase

### US inflation dips with cheaper gas, up 0.1% in Nov

**WASHINGTON, Dec 13, (AP):** U.S. inflation ticked down again last month, with cheaper gas helping further lighten the weight of price increases in the United States.

At the same time, the latest data on consumer inflation showed that prices in some areas - services such as rents, restaurants and auto insurance - continued to rise uncomfortably fast.

Tuesday's report from the Labor Department said the consumer price index rose just 0.1% from October to November. Compared with a year earlier, prices were up 3.1% in November, down from a 3.2% year-over-year rise in October.

But core prices, which exclude volatile food and energy costs, rose 0.3% from October to November, slightly faster than the 0.2% increase the previous month. Measured from a year ago, core prices rose 4%, the same as in October. The Federal Reserve considers core prices to be a better guide to the future path of inflation.

The stickiness of inflation in the economy's service sector will likely keep the Federal Reserve on guard against inflation as it meets this week. Fed Chair Jerome Powell has been scrutinizing such costs as a guide to whether underlying inflationary trends are cooling.

Inflation remains above the Fed's 2% target. And while Powell has expressed optimism about slowing inflation, he said earlier this month that it was "premature" to assume that the Fed was done raising its benchmark interest rate or to speculate about rate cuts, which many on Wall Street expect as early as spring.

Michael Gapen, chief economist at Bank of America, said that persistent inflation in the service sector "fits the 'wait and see and be careful' narrative that the Fed is constructing."

"In terms of building confidence that you're in a disinflationary environment and opening the door to cuts," Gapen added, "I think you have to say, well, we need more time to assess where services inflation is going."

Prices for such services as hotels, health care and entertainment are heavily determined by wages because they are labor-intensive. And wages



A motorist fills up the tank of a vehicle at a Costco gasoline station on Thursday, Nov. 30, 2023, in Thornton, Colo. U.S. inflation ticked down again last month, with cheaper gas helping further lighten the weight of consumer price increases in the United States. (AP)

are still rising rapidly, though they've eased from pandemic-era peaks.

Restaurant prices are an example. They rose 0.4% from October to November for a third straight month, leaving them 5.3% more expensive than they were a year earlier. Rents are also fueling inflation: They accelerated slightly from October to November. Real-time data from companies like Zillow and ApartmentList, though, suggest that apartment rent growth is slowing. That slowdown has started to bring down the government's official measure of rents and should continue to do so in coming months.

### Dropped

Gas prices tumbled 6% just from October to November. From a peak of \$5 about a year and a half ago, the national average has dropped to \$3.14 a gallon, according to AAA.

And grocery prices are showing signs of further cooling, which should provide consumers with some relief for one of their most frequent purchases: Food prices ticked up just 0.1% in November and are only 1.7% higher than they were a year ago. Bread, beef, chicken and pork prices all dropped.

Many goods prices, including furniture, clothing and appliances, also fell last month. Used cars were an ex-

ception. Their average prices jumped 1.6% in November, though they're still down nearly 4% from 12 months earlier.

The sharp decline in goods prices reflects substantial improvement in global supply chains, which were severely disrupted by the pandemic. At the same time, Americans ramped up spending on cars, stationary bikes and furniture in 2021 and 2022, worsening the bottlenecks for many factory-made items.

In the past year or so, a slower economy and smoother production have helped reduce inflation pressures by making it easier and cheaper for companies to obtain supplies and find workers.

At Christmas Decor, a company that installs holiday decorations for homes and businesses, sales are still growing this year but at a less frantic pace than in the previous two years. In 2021, for example, Brandon Stephens, the company president, was so busy and customers were so willing to spend money on decorations that some people were willing to wait until after Christmas for his company to put up lights and ornaments.

"This year wasn't as feverish as it felt in the last two years," Stephens said.

### Benchmark

The mixed picture in Tuesday's inflation report will likely keep the Fed on track to leave its benchmark interest rate unchanged when its latest meeting ends Wednesday. Inflation still exceeds the Fed's 2% annual target, which is why its officials are set to leave rates high. But inflation is also cooling faster than officials expected, a key reason they likely see no cause to further raise rates, at least for now.

If the Fed leaves rates where they are Wednesday, it will be the third straight time it has done so. The central bank last raised its key rate in July, which suggests that it's probably finished raising borrowing costs.

The central bank has pushed its key rate to about 5.4%, the highest level in 22 years, in a determined drive to conquer inflation. Its rate hikes have made mortgages, auto loans, business borrowing and other forms of credit much costlier, reflecting the Fed's goal of slowing borrowing and spending enough to tame inflation.

Even if the central bank is done raising rates, it's expected to keep its benchmark rate at a peak for at least several more months. The Fed raised its key short-term rate 11 times starting in March 2022.

According to a lesser-known 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.

### Sri Lanka will get the 2nd tranche of bailout package

The International Monetary Fund executive board approved the release of the second tranche of a \$2.9 billion dollar bailout package to help Sri Lanka recover from the worst economic crisis in its history.

In a statement, the fund said the decision Tuesday to release \$337 million came after Sri Lanka had made "commendable progress" toward debt sustainability, raising revenue, rebuild-

ing its reserves, reducing inflation and safeguarding financial stability.

It said a strong commitment to improving governance and protecting the poor and vulnerable remains critical.

In September, the IMF delayed the release of the second tranche of the four-year package, saying Sri Lanka's economy was recovering but the country needed to improve

its tax administration, eliminate exemptions and crack down on tax evasion.

Sri Lanka plunged into its worst economic crisis last year, suffering severe shortages and drawing strident protests that led to the ouster of then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. It declared bankruptcy in April 2022 with more than \$83 billion in debt - more than half of it to foreign creditors. (AP)

### Myanmar's economy is deteriorating

Myanmar's economy is forecast to grow only 1% in the fiscal year that ends in March, the World Bank says, as conditions deteriorate with an escalation in fighting between the military and its opponents that has newly displaced more than 500,000 people.

Intensified fighting near Myanmar's border with China has blocked trade routes, causing shortages of food and other ne-

cessities and worsening inflation that was already near 30%, the World Bank said in a report Tuesday.

Myanmar is embroiled in widespread conflicts that deepened and expanded after the military's seizure of power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in early 2021 prompted a wave of popular resistance.

The total number of people displaced by fighting has risen

to some 2.5 million, the report said.

Political instability coupled with the pandemic and mismanagement by the military leadership have undone years of economic progress, the report said. It said the military administration's efforts to attract foreign exchange and stabilize Myanmar's currency, the kyat, have "generally been ineffective," causing uncertainty and distorting markets. (AP)

### Debt and deflation cloud outlook for coming year

# Chinese leaders consider next steps for economy

BANGKOK, Dec 13, (AP) - Chinese leaders have wrapped up a two-day annual meeting to set economic priorities for the coming year, the official Xinhua News Agency said in a report Tuesday that cited a litany of problems but also said the world's second-largest economy had "achieved a recovery."

The report gave no details of specific policy changes, but laid out broad goals that are in line with what the ruling Communist Party has been doing as it endeavors to steer the world's second-largest economy toward more sustainable, stable growth as China recovers from the setbacks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The property industry is in crisis. Prices have been falling for months, suggesting weak overall demand both inside China and in global markets. Youth unemployment is precariously high and local government debts are adding to pressures on the financial system.

The Xinhua report said that China was contending with slack demand, excess industrial capacity, weak consumer confidence and "certain risks and hidden problems" - and a world that has grown increasingly "complex, severe and uncertain."

"China still has to overcome some difficulties and challenges to further revive the economy," it said. "It is important to be more mindful of potential dangers and to effectively respond to and solve these problems."

But it also called for greater confidence, saying that "favorable conditions outweigh unfavorable factors."

The annual economic work conference is usually held in mid-December. It followed a meeting of top party leaders last week where Xinhua reported that Xi had described 2024 as a "crucial year" for attaining goals laid out in the party's five-year plan through 2025.

Reports on both meetings suggest officials are seeking greater consistency in carrying out policies. That hints at concerns over moves in recent years that have at times caused major disruptions, such as strict and disruptive anti-COVID 19 policies that Beijing abruptly abandoned late last year.

Tuesday's report said the meeting had called for maintaining stability and for establishing "the new before abolishing the old," a phrase analysts said suggested greater caution and a more gradual approach.

Policy swings such as the decision late last year to abruptly drop the anti-virus controls, and uncertainty over regulatory changes have also unnerved foreign companies operating in China and appear to be deterring foreign investment, which has fallen sharply in recent months.

The economy has been slowing from its past double-digit growth for years and is forecast to have expanded at about a 5% annual pace this year, in line with the government's target. Most estimates suggest it will slow further next year.

Last week, Moody's Investor Service downgraded China's sovereign debt rating as the country's real estate crisis seeps into local governments and private financing. It also downgraded ratings for some major Chinese banks and insur-

ance companies.

China has tipped into deflation in recent months, another sign of weakness. Wholesale, or producer prices, have fallen year-on-year for all of 2023, dipping to a low of minus 5.4% in June. Consumer price inflation has hovered near 0% or below in annual terms since April.

The property sector, a major source of demand for any major economy, has stalled with dozens of developers defaulting on their debts and struggling to finish apartments they promised to deliver.

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

The weak housing market is among trends that have sapped enthusiasm for spending, hindering progress toward increasing domestic demand to help drive growth. Another is the high rate of unemployment among young Chinese, which was at about 20% as of June. That is the latest figure available after the government suspended its monthly reporting on that measure.

The Xinhua report said that leaders had resolved to do everything possible to "secure people's livelihoods and improve their well-being" and to emphasize stable employment.

### Inflation abates

## BoJ survey shows manufacturers are optimistic about the economy

BANGKOK, Dec 13, (AP) - The Bank of Japan's quarterly survey on business sentiment shows large Japanese manufacturers have grown more optimistic in the past several months, the third straight quarter of improvement even while other data showed the economy in a contraction.

The central bank's "tankan" survey, released Wednesday, measured business sentiment among major manufacturers at plus 12, up from plus 9 in October and plus 5 in June.

The tankan survey, conducted every three months, measures corporate sentiment by subtracting the number of companies saying business conditions are negative from those replying they are positive. It's considered a leading indicator of future trends in the world's third-largest economy.

The survey showed sentiment among major non-manufacturers rose 3 points to plus 30 from plus 27 in the previous survey. It was the seventh consecutive quarter of improvement and the most positive result in about three decades.

A recovery of foreign tourism and a resurgence of business activity and domestic travel after the bleak days of the pandemic have contributed to a rebound in retail and leisure activities.

However, high borrowing costs in the U.S. and other major markets have crimped demand for Japanese exports, dragging on growth.

Updated data released on Friday showed Japan's economy shrank by 2.9% year-on-year in the July-September quarter, worse than estimated earlier.

"The continued improvement in the 'tankan' suggests that the drop in Q3 GDP was just a blip, but we still expect GDP growth to slow sharply next year," Marcel Thieliand of Capital Economics said in a note to clients.

The tankan's projection of business sentiment three months from

## ExxonMobil says it will stay in Guyana for the long term

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, Dec 13, (AP) - Oil giant ExxonMobil says it will keep ramping up production in offshore Guyana despite the escalation of a territorial dispute with neighboring Venezuela, which claims that oil-rich region as its own.

In a brief statement posted Monday on Facebook, ExxonMobil Guyana said it was reaffirming its "long-term commitment to Guyana" as tensions grow between the two South American countries that share a border.

"We are not going anywhere - our focus remains on developing the resources efficiently and responsibly, per our agreement with the Guyanese government," the company wrote.

Earlier this month, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro proposed that companies operating in the vast Essequibo region in Guyana, that is rich with minerals and located near massive oil deposits, should withdraw their operations within three months.

His government also is seeking to ban companies operating in Guyana from doing so in his country.

Venezuelan lawmakers are currently debating a bill that contains the proposed ban.

now among large manufacturers showed they expect conditions to deteriorate, falling 4 points to plus 8. Non-manufacturers also were pessimistic, with the forecast falling 6 points to plus 24.

The Bank of Japan's stance on its monetary policy is keenly watched, with many market observers increasingly expecting it will shift away

Maduro has argued he has the authority to issue such orders following a Dec. 3 referendum aimed at annexing the Essequibo area.

ExxonMobil is producing about 600,000 barrels of oil a day after successfully drilling more than 40 wells off Guyana's Essequibo region. The Exxon-Mobil consortium also submitted a bid and received approval to develop three more areas in the region believed to contain additional oil deposits.

Many of Guyana's largest gold, diamond, manganese and other mines also are located in Essequibo. Most are Canadian-owned, but no companies have reacted yet to Maduro's statement. Several Chinese companies also have timber operations in the area.

ExxonMobil issued the statement a day after Guyana's president, Irfaan Ali, told reporters Sunday that investors have nothing to fear.

"We want to encourage our investors to invest as much as they want," he said.

Ali and Maduro will meet Thursday in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to discuss the territorial dispute, with regional leaders urging talks to avoid further conflict.

from its longstanding negative interest rate policy in coming months.

No major moves are expected at a policy meeting that will wrap up on Dec. 19. Recent price data suggest an easing of inflationary pressures and that could leave the central bank less likely to change gears and raise interest rates out of concern that the economy may slow further.

## Argentina sharply devalues its currency, cuts subsidies

### Shock economic measures outlined



Argentina's Economy Minister Luis Caputo, center, accompanied by Foreign Affairs Minister Diana Mondino, arrive at the Metropolitan Cathedral for an interfaith ceremony, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Dec. 10, 2023. Caputo said in a televised message on Tuesday, Dec. 12, the Argentine peso will be devalued by 50% from 400 to the U.S. dollar to 800 pesos to the dollar. (AP)

**BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, Dec 13, (AP):** Argentina on Tuesday announced a sharp devaluation of its currency and cuts to energy and transportation subsidies as part of shock measures new President Javier Milei says are needed to deal with an economic emergency.

Economy Minister Luis Caputo

said in a televised message the Argentine peso will be devalued by 50% to 800 to the U.S. dollar from 400 pesos to the dollar.

"For a few months, we're going to be worse than before," Caputo said, two days after the libertarian Milei was sworn in as president of the second largest economy in South America and immediately warned of tough measures.

Milei has said the country didn't have time to consider other alternatives.

Argentina is suffering 143% annual inflation, its currency has plunged and four in 10 Argentines are impoverished. The nation has also a yawning fiscal deficit, a trade deficit of \$43 billion, plus a daunting \$45 billion debt to the International Monetary Fund, with \$10.6 billion due to the multilateral and private creditors by April.

As part of the new measures, Caputo said the government is canceling tenders of any public works projects and cutting some state jobs to reduce the size of the government.

He also announced cuts to energy and transportation subsidies without providing details or saying by how much, and added that Milei's administration is reducing the number of ministries from 18 to 9.

He said the measures are necessary to cut the fiscal deficit he believes is the cause of the country's economic problems, including surging inflation.

"If we continue as we are, we are inevitably heading toward hyperinflation," Caputo said. "Our mission is to avoid a catastrophe."

The IMF welcomed the measures, saying they provide "a good foundation" for further discussions with Argentina about its debt with the institution.

"These bold initial actions aim to significantly improve public finances in a manner that protects the most vulnerable in society and strengthen the foreign exchange regime," said IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack in a statement. "Their decisive implementation will help stabilize the economy and set the basis for more sustainable and private-sector led growth."

The major figures in the former Peronist government of Alberto Fernández didn't comment on the measures announced Tuesday.

But social leader Juan Grabois, who is close to former center-left president Cristina Fernández (2007-2015), said that Caputo had announced "a social murder without flinching like a psychopath about to massacre his defenseless victims."

"Your salary in the private sector, in the public sector, in the popular, social and solidarity economy, in the cooperative or informal sector, for retirees and pensioners, will get you half in the supermarket," he said. "Do you really think that people are not going to protest?"

"There's no money," has been a common refrain in Milei's speeches, using it to explain why a gradualist approach to the situation is a non-starter. But he has promised the adjustment will almost entirely affect the state rather than the private sector, and that it represented the first step toward regaining prosperity.

## Asian Development Bank upgrades growth forecast for developing Asia to 4.9 percent

TOKYO, Dec 13, (KUNA) - The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Wednesday raised its economic forecast for developing Asia this year after robust domestic demand drove higher-than-expected growth in China and India.

In an update of its Asian Development Outlook, the Manila-based lender expects gross domestic product (GDP) in the region to expand 4.9 percent this year, up from its September forecast of 4.7 percent growth, while maintained the outlook for next year at 4.8 percent.

Developing Asia covers 46 economies in Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, but excludes industrialized countries of Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

"Developing Asia continues to grow at a robust pace, despite a challenging global environment," ADB Chief Economist Albert Park said in a statement.

"Inflation in the region is also gradually coming under control. Still, risks remain, from elevated global interest rates to climate events such as El Nino. Governments in Asia and the Pacific need to remain vigilant to ensure that their economies are resil-

## UK's ONS: Zero GDP growth between August, October

LONDON, Dec 13, (KUNA) - Official data showed, Wednesday, that British Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was unable to achieve any significant growth between August and October, raising fears that the local economy could enter a recession.

Data released from the British Office for National Statistics (ONS) said monthly GDP is estimated to

at 4.5 percent and 6.7 percent respectively.

The ADB lowered the GDP growth forecast for Southeast Asia to 4.3 percent in 2023 and 4.7 percent in 2024, compared with earlier estimate of 4.6 percent and 4.8 percent respectively.

"The upgrades for China and India more than offset a lowering of the forecast for Southeast Asia, caused by lackluster performance in the manufacturing sector," the ADB said in the report.

"Risks to the outlook include persistently elevated interest rates in the US and other advanced economies,

have fallen by 0.3 percent in October 2023, following growth of 0.2 percent in September 2023, adding that the 0.8 percent decrease in the production output in October 2023 was driven by widespread declines in manufacturing.

Data also showed that the construction sector fell by 0.5 percent in October 2023 after growth of 0.4 per-

cent in September 2023.

Earlier reports by the Bank of England predicted that the British economy this year would enter a recession affected by the high inflation rate, which caused an increase in the cost of living and a decline in the pace of consumption that directly affects the performance of the main services sector.

which could contribute to financial instability in vulnerable economies in the region, especially those with high debt," the report said.

The ADB also warned that potential supply disruptions caused by the El Nino weather pattern or the Russian invasion of Ukraine could also rekindle inflation, particularly regarding food and energy.

The ADB is a multilateral development finance institution dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific. Established in 1966, it has now owned by 68 members, mostly from the region, as well as the US, the UK and Germany.

## German govt reaches solution on the budget crisis triggered by court ruling

BERLIN, Dec 13, (AP) - The German government on Wednesday reached a solution to a budget crisis triggered by a court ruling last month, German news agency dpa reported.

The leaders of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's three-party coalition had been wrangling over money since Germany's highest court annulled a decision to repurpose 60 billion euros (\$64.7

billion) originally meant to cushion the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic for measures to help combat climate change and modernize the country.

The immediate challenge was to plug a 17 billion-euro hole in next year's budget. Scholz, Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck and Finance Minister Christian Lindner had met repeatedly seeking to resolve the impasse before the end of the year.

## Zain Smart Home welcomes visitors at Hall 6 of Kuwait Int'l Fair

## Zain showcases latest smart home innovations at Mirzam Expo

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: For the fourth year running, Zain returns as a Platinum Sponsor of the latest season of Mirzam Expo, Kuwait's top interior design and home decoration event. Through its dedicated booth at the expo, dubbed the Zain Smart Home, the company showcases a wide range of the latest smart home innovations, automation technologies, and sustainable solutions. The Home welcomes visitors daily at Hall 6 of the Kuwait International Fair in Mishref until Saturday December 16.

Mirzam Expo is the most anticipated gathering of its kind for all things related to home decoration, furnishing, and design. The fourth season is the biggest yet in its history, with over 300 booths covering over 30 categories for interior and exterior design, home furnishing, decoration, and more.

As it does every year at Mirzam, Zain participates through its dedicated booth, which the company has designed to resemble a miniature house with several rooms and halls that mimic those of real houses, giving visitors a unique experience to try out the latest smart home solutions. Customers can choose the products that best serve their home-planning needs, whether they're building a new home or want to upgrade their existing one.

Zain's booth covers all smart home needs, like automation solutions and sustainable applications that turn traditional homes into smart, enviro-friendly ones. This enhances convenience, comfort, energy efficiency, and security by allowing homeowners to automate and control different aspects of their home in a smart, automated way.

The offerings at the Zain Smart Home cover a wide range of products and services, including security solutions, surveillance cameras, sensors, smart lighting, home appliances, smartphone accessories, as well as a

dedicated gaming section with the latest consoles, gaming PCs, and accessories.

This year, Zain has also collaborated with the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy to promote the ministry's latest campaign, Waffer, for raising awareness of energy conservation. The company has dedicated a section of its booth for the ministry's team, who provides informative advice and valuable consultation to visitors on how to implement sustainability tools and practices in their existing or future homes.

Mirzam's huge success in the past drove Zain to continue supporting it, as the company prides itself for being a top supporter of homegrown projects that foster creativity and innovation in the community. In addition, being Kuwait's top digital service provider that serves the biggest family of subscribers, Zain was keen on adding value to the expo by offering the best world-class smart home solutions.

The fourth season of Mirzam Expo is the biggest in its history, with over 25,000 sqm of space across three halls in the Kuwait International Fair, Mishref. Over 300 booths covering over 30 categories serve all visitor needs for interior and exterior design, home furnishing, decoration, and more. The expo also offers exciting draws, valuable prizes, and other entertainment programs to the crowds throughout its period.

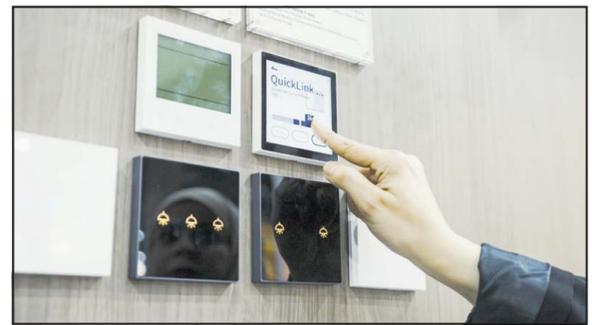
Mirzam gathers decoration experts, designers, suppliers, professional contractors, and specialists that offer all services and needs related to designing and decorating homes, offices, commercial projects, and more. The event also features many panel discussions, seminars, and other programs that reveal the secrets of the art of interior design and discuss the latest decoration trends.



Hamad Al Musabeh and Farah Al Humaidhi with Zain's team.



MEW's team showcasing sustainable solutions at the Zain Smart Home.



Zain offers the latest smart home solutions.

Procures 100% traceable 'RandPure' Gold from Rand Refinery, South Africa

## Malabar Gold &amp; Diamonds reaffirms commitment to ethical sourcing

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: One of the most significant challenges confronting the gold and diamond industry is the assurance of complete adherence to ethical and sustainable sourcing. Accredited by the London Bullion Market Association (LBMA), Rand Refinery is one of the world's leading gold and silver refiners and the only referee status Refiner in the southern hemisphere, making significant contributions towards setting industry standards with their 100% traceable and certified 'RandPure' Gold. Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 335 showrooms across 13 countries, has partnered with Rand Refinery, to procure 'RandPure' Gold, positioning itself once again as a major proponent of responsible business practices in the jewellery trade.

Mr. Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, received the first shipment of RandPure gold from Rand Refinery CEO Mr. Praveen Bajinath, in the presence of Rand Refinery CFO, Mr. Dean Subramanian and other senior officials from Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

RandPure gold is 100% ethically sourced, with completely traceable origins. Procured exclusively from Rand Refinery's Securities Exchange listed mines, the raw materials are processed in a segregated production line. Each RandPure gold batch carries a distinctive 'RandPure' mark & a 'Certificate of Assurance', providing customers with essential details about the raw material such as the country of origin, mining period, conflict-free nature, etc.

"Sustainability and responsible business practices have formed the core of our operations at Malabar Gold & Diamonds. Through our association with Rand Refinery and procurement of RandPure gold, we are reaffirming our commitment towards responsible and ethical sourcing by opting for gold that meets the strictest industry norms," commented Malabar Group Chairman, M.P Ahamed.



Mr. Shamlal Ahamed, MD - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, received the first shipment of 100% Traceable and ethically sourced, 'RandPure' gold from Rand Refinery CEO Mr. Praveen Bajinath, in the presence of Rand Refinery CFO, Mr. Dean Subramanian and other senior officials from Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

"We take our responsibilities very seriously. We have a century-long tradition of putting people, products, and the planet first and are known to exercise the highest level of rigour, well beyond the LBMA requirements. Throughout our history, we have contributed to building a robust mine-to-market value chain in Africa," says Mr Bajinath CEO Of Rand Refinery. "Our volume of due diligence puts pressure on suppliers to improve practices and is a deterrent to anyone that wants to contaminate our supply chain," he continued.

The traceability of RandPure Gold is subjected to an annual audit that is in adherence to conflict zone regulations and guidance from reputable organizations like the World Gold Council, LBMA, and OECD. These guidelines including the Global Precious Metal Code encourage refineries to tackle

human-rights violations, avoid contribution to conflicts in volatile regions as well as adhere to high standards of internationally accepted environmental practices, Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) policies.

Mr. Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds said: "The significance of sustainability gains additional prominence in the aftermath of COP 28, hosted by the UAE, where pivotal sustainability goals were established. The acquisition of RandPure gold serves as further evidence of our commitment as a conscientious jeweller, and the heightened levels of accountability associated with this pledge ensure our steadfast dedication to ethical sourcing."

"Through our partnership with Rand Refinery, we aspire to establish a com-

mendable precedent within the industry, encouraging other organizations to play their role in reshaping the gold supply chain with increased transparency, accountability, and ethical standards," commented Malabar Group Vice-Chairman, Mr. Abdul Salam K.P.

ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) initiative has been the primary commitment of Malabar Group since its inception in 1993, with 5% of net profits set aside towards such initiatives in each country of operations. The principles of sustainability and responsibility are incorporated into its core business through practices such as responsible sourcing, zero tolerance on compliance, Anti-money Laundering (AML) & Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT), usage of FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) wood for packaging, LEED Gold certified offices and outlets.

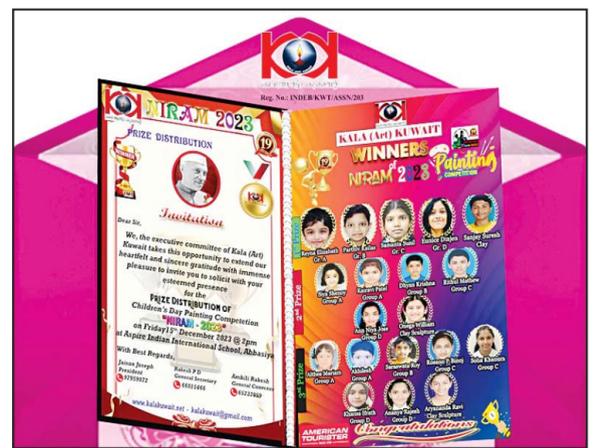
## Kala (Art) Kuwait to honor young artists at 'NIRAM 2023' prize distribution ceremony

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Kala (Art) Kuwait delighted to honor the winners of 'NIRAM 2023' Painting Competition with a grand Prize Distribution Ceremony which is scheduled to be held on Friday, 15th December 2023 at 2:00pm onwards at Aspire Indian International School Abbasiya, Kuwait

Kala (Art) Kuwait held the program "NIRAM 2023" Children's Day painting competition on 10th November 2023. Since the Year 2005, we have been celebrating Children's Day, as a tribute to our late Prime Minister Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the founder of modern India, titled as "Niram" which means color. As previous years, this year too it is worthwhile to note that students of different nationalities from all 28 Indian Schools in Kuwait with the active participation of more than 3,300 children.

Kala (Art) Kuwait, highlights the exclusive prizes for the winners of each group as First place with Gold Coin & gold medal, Second place with silver medal and Third place with bronze medal along with memento & certificate. 81 Merit Prizes and 235 Consolation prizes also will be with memento & certificate. Prizes for Clay Modeling Competition also will be distributed in the event.

Kala (Art) Kuwait takes this opportunity to extend our heartfelt and sincere gratitude with immense pleasure to invite all to the prize distribution ceremony to boost the morale of our children, according to Kala (Art) Kuwait President Jaison Joseph, General Secretary Rakesh P. D., Treasurer Ashraf Vithura, General Convener Ambili and Media Convener Mukesh V. P.



Niram 2023 invitation

## Birthday Greetings



Happy birthday to my lovely daughter Harshitha Yadav Nuthayti. Many more happy returns of the day! Enjoy all the beauty this day brings and surround yourself with all your favorite things. God bless you with health and bright future!

Greetings from parents Sasi Sankar, brothers Sasidhar Yadav, Pranadeep Yadav, Siddhartha Yadav and family members and relatives in Kuwait & India.

## Warm up your winter

## LuLu Hypermarket unveils tea and coffee fiesta

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: LuLu Hypermarket, renowned for its commitment to providing diverse and high-quality shopping experiences, recently started an enticing promotion crafted for tea and coffee enthusiasts. From December 13th to 19th, 2023, customers can enjoy exclu-

sive discounts and reduced prices across an extensive array of teas and coffees.

To enhance the shopping journey, special counters adorned each LuLu Hypermarket outlet, dedicated to showcasing the finest teas and coffees through captivating displays. This thoughtful arrangement aimed to immerse customers in a delightful environment, urging them to explore the diverse range of products available.

A standout feature of this promotion was the noteworthy discounts and price reductions applicable to all varieties of teas and coffees. This provided customers with an attractive opportunity to indulge in their preferred beverages at appealing prices throughout the winter season.

In a bid to enrich the overall experience, LuLu Hypermarket introduced complimentary samplings. This thoughtful addition allowed patrons to savor the diverse and rich flavors of featured teas and coffees, empowering them to make informed and enjoyable selections.

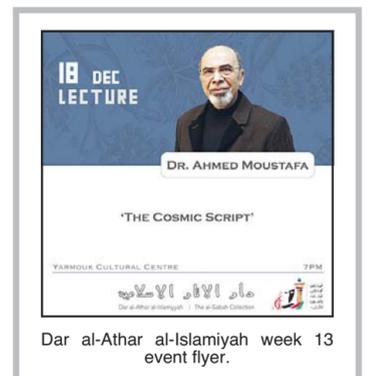
As part of the winter festivities, LuLu Hypermarket presented an expanded collection of imported teas and coffees, with an attractive price-off on these premium selections. This initiative aimed to acquaint customers with a broader

spectrum of flavors and options.

Customers are invited to explore these ongoing promotions by visiting any LuLu outlet in Kuwait, where they can discover the perfect blend of teas and coffees at prices that infuse warmth into every sip. LuLu Hypermarket continues its tradition of delivering exceptional value and variety to valued patrons.



LuLu Hypermarket's tea and coffee hub.



**'Homicide' actor died after a brief illness**

# Andre Braugher, Emmy-winning actor, passes away at 61

LOS ANGELES, Dec 13, (AP) — **Andre Braugher**, the Emmy-winning actor who would master gritty drama for seven seasons on "Homicide: Life on the Street" and modern comedy for eight on "Brooklyn 99," died Monday at 61.

Braugher died after a brief illness, his publicist Jennifer Allen told The Associated Press. No further details were given.

The Chicago-born actor would establish himself in the role of Det. Frank Pembleton, the lead role on "Homicide: Life on the Street," a dark police drama based on a book by David Simon, who would go on to create "The Wire." The show, which focused on the homicide unit of the Baltimore Police Department, ran for seven seasons on NBC, and would win critical acclaim with Braugher as its dramatic center and breakout star.

He would win his first career Emmy for the role, taking the trophy for lead actor in a drama series in 1998.

He feared he would be typecast after spending most of the 1990s as the brooding detective.

"If I do it too long then I'll stop really searching and probing inside my own work," he told the AP in 1998. "That's just a great danger. I think I'm going to escape that trap, and get an opportunity to do some work that will be more challenging for me."

That would not prove to be a problem. He would go on to play a very different kind of cop on a very different kind of show, shifting to comedy as Capt. Ray Holt on the Andy Samberg-starring "Brooklyn Nine-Nine." It would run for eight seasons from 2013 to 2021 on Fox and NBC.

Though he'd dipped his toe into comedy in the TNT dramedy "Men of a Certain Age," "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" still represented a major shift for Braugher, who was known for acting in dark and heavy dramas.

"I just felt as though it was an opportunity to do something strikingly different from the rest of my career," Braugher told the AP in 2019. "I like it because it just simply opens up my mind and forces me to think in a different way. So I think I've become much more sort of supple as an actor, and more open to the incredible number of possibilities of how to play a scene."



Braugher

him Monday night.

"Can't believe you're gone so soon," Crews said on Instagram. "I'm honored to have known you, laughed with you, worked with you and shared 8 glorious years watching your irreplaceable talent. This hurts." He added, "You showed me what a life well-lived looked like."

Braugher most recently starred in "She Said," the 2022 film about the New York Times journalists who broke the story of Harvey Weinstein's years of sexually abusing women. Braugher played Times editor Dean Baquet.

**Talent**

He would be nominated for four Emmys during the run.

Braugher's "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" co-star Terry Crews was among those paying tribute to

Born and raised in Chicago, Braugher graduated from Stanford and got a master of fine arts degree from Juilliard.

He had his breakthrough role in 1989's "Glory," starring alongside Morgan Freeman and Denzel Washington, who won an Oscar for the film about an all-Black Army regiment during the the Civil War.

Braugher played the bookish, frightened union corporal Thomas Searles in the film.

"I conceived that character as heroic, but I got a lot of scripts after that where I'm constantly crying," he told the AP in 1993.

Despite the part, he told the AP in 2019 that before "Homicide" he struggled to find work in a Hollywood where roles for African American actors were "few and far between, Period."

Braugher won his second Emmy for lead actor in a miniseries or movie for the 2006 limited series "Thief" on FX. Braugher would be nominated for 11 Emmys overall.

His other film credits included "Primal Fear" and "Get on the Bus," and his other TV credits included "Hack," "Gideon's Crossing" and "The Good Fight."

He also acted frequently on the stage, often doing Shakespeare. He won an Obie Award for playing the title role in "Henry V" at the New York Shakespeare Festival, where he also appeared in "Measure for Measure," "Twelfth Night" and "As You Like It."

Braugher was married for more than 30 years to his "Homicide" co-star Ami Brabson. He is also survived by sons Michael, Isaiah and John Wesley, his brother Charles Jennings and his mother Sally Braugher.

Obituary

**Variety**

Features



This image released by Apple TV+ shows Harrison Ford in a scene from 'Shrinking.' (AP)

**Television**

'Succession,' 'Jury Duty,' 'Shrinking,' 'Swarm' and more

## Dive into the best shows of 2023

LOS ANGELES, Dec 13, (AP) — With so many shows on TV and streaming services, it's impossible not to miss a gem or two. This year's top television offerings as selected by The Associated Press include a mix of dramas and comedies that will draw you in.

Some are new, some have already ended their runs and some have new episodes on the horizon. There's no time like December to add a title to your growing TBW (to be watched) list or settle in for a marathon during that time warp between Christmas and New Year's when no one knows what day it is.

Here are 10 shows from 2023 that shouldn't be missed.

Let's start off with a public service announcement to watch "The Bear" if you haven't already. The FX show about an award-winning, fine dining chef named Carmy (played by Jeremy Allen White), who returns home to Chicago to run his late brother's dive quietly debuted on Hulu in 2022 and was a word of mouth and critical hit. Season two did not experience a sophomore slump. In fact, it excelled. Any given episode can make you laugh, cry, feel anxious and excited by its genius casting of guest stars.

Episode six, called "Fishes," is a masterpiece. "Schitt's Creek" ended its run in 2020 and left a void for a show about acceptance and unlikely friendships. It was humanity at its best and yet still funny, quotable and meme-worthy. Fans missing that vibe should watch "The Big Door Prize," which follows the residents of a small town whose lives are turned upside down when a new game called Morpho appears in the general store that promises to tell each user what their life's potential is. Some of Morpho's answers prompt people to make major changes, while others feel dejected, insecure or second guess the results. Each episode follows a different character's reaction to their Morpho reveal. The show's charming cast is led by Chris O'Dowd with the story based on a novel by M.O. Walsh. And yes, it has a "Schitt's Creek" connection - its showrunner is David West Read, a "Schitt's Creek executive producer and writer."

Good news for fans: season two is coming. After 27 seasons of "The Bachelor," the franchise

managed to lure in viewers with a senior-centric version of the show called "The Golden Bachelor." Instead of hate-watching, people tuned in as a 70-something widower named Gerry Turner set out to find a new partner. The streaming numbers set a record on Hulu. Turner told The Associated Press he believed people could feel the authenticity of the cast. "I never once questioned anyone's motives about being on the show. At the age of 70, you're only there for the right reason."

Even better: Turner's wedding will air live on ABC Jan. 4.

**Satirical**

Dominique Fishback was already a rising Hollywood star when she landed the lead in "Swarm," but now she's an Emmy nominee for this seven-episode satirical slasher. Co-created by Donald Glover, Fishback plays Dre, an obsessed fan of a Beyoncé-like R&B singer named Ni'Jah whose fan base is dubbed the swarm. Dre's devotion to Ni'Jah is unshined and deadly. A commentary on celebrity worship, "Swarm" features Chloe Bailey in a recurring role and Damson Idris, Paris Jackson, Halsey and Billy Eilish are among guest stars. For a lighter offering that takes on celebrity, particularly the internet famous, there's the "The Other Two." Created by two former "Saturday Night Live" writers, the show followed Cary and Brooke, the older brother and sister of a teen pop idol. Chase - who goes by Chase Dreams. Canceled by Max after three seasons, the show is still worth a watch for how it pokes fun at internet culture, millennials, celebrities and sibling rivalry.

Drew Tarver and Heléne Yorke play the older siblings, Molly Shannon is their mother and momager to a clueless Chase, played by Case Walker.

For a dark comedy about an unhealthy fixation, look no further than the limited series "Beef."

Ali Wong and Steven Yeun play two people almost get into a car accident in a parking lot and the incident escalates to road rage on "roids. Instead of eventually calming down and moving on, the two become obsessed with ruining the other by infiltrating each other's lives and wreaking havoc. At some point you may start to wonder, do these two actually like each other?

Wong told AP earlier this year: "At first you think it's about these two people who are enemies, but they keep involving each other in each other's lives and they keep coming back to each other. And there's a reason for that. It's because they are letting those walls down. They're seeing each other at their ugliest and the worst but somehow it's very connecting and they still want to be around each other."

In "Jury Duty," everyman Ronald Gladden is led to believe he was picked for and then sequestered on a jury trial being filmed for a documentary. Everyone surrounding Gladden is an actor, including James Marsden, who plays a hilarious, heightened version of himself. The situations that occur from "witness" testimony to interactions among the other jury members is so absurd, it's amazing Gladden never caught on. The best part is his reaction to the truth in the final episode.

The series was created by Lee Eisenberg and Gene Stupnitsky, the duo who wrote the "Dinner Party" episode of "The Office," which was uncomfortable humor at its finest.

Something happened between season one and season two of HBO's "Perry Mason" starring Mathew Rhys. It got good.

The first season had an impressive cast but it was an origin story of Mason the attorney, and the guy was dark: broke, divorced, angry and a drunk. The story was also hard to follow. Season two, however, did a 180. The central mystery was gripping, its supporting characters served the story, there were some light moments, and Mason showed his investigative skills that helped him to be a successful lawyer. And then... it was also canceled, but you can still watch on Max.

Therapy and grief don't sound like a recipe for a feel-good comedy, but "Shrinking" pulls it off. Jason Segel stars as Jimmy, barely coping with the recent death of his wife and making bad choices all around, as his teenage daughter resentfully watches from the sidelines and is essentially being raised by a neighbor (Christa Miller.) The irony? Jimmy is a therapist whose colleagues are played by Harrison Ford and Jessica Williams - each with their own set of issues playing out in their lives.

**CAPE TOWN, South Africa:**

South African singer **Zahara**, who rose from an impoverished rural background to find rapid fame with multi-platinum selling albums and delivered her unique version of wistful Afro-soul in her country's isiXhosa language and in English, has died, her family said Tuesday. She was 36.

Zahara, whose real name was **Bulelwa Mkutukana**, died Monday, her family said in a statement posted on her official page on X, formerly Twitter. It gave no cause of death. The family said last month that Zahara had been admitted to a hospital with an undisclosed issue and had asked for privacy.

"She was a pure light, and an even purer heart, in this world," her family said in Tuesday's statement.

Zahara's debut 2011 album "Loliwe" - meaning "The Train" -- was certified double platinum and became South Africa's second-fastest selling album after the 1997 record "Memeza" by **Brenda Fassie**, an icon of South African music.

Just 23 when "Loliwe" was released, Zahara was a sensation and immediately compared with Fassie, who also died young at 39.

Zahara won 17 South African music awards, was also recognized in **Nigeria** and was included on a list of the 100 most influential women in the world in 2020 by the BBC. She released four more albums -- one of them triple platinum and one platinum.

Zahara's death prompted reaction from across South Africa, including all major political parties and South Africa's Parliament, which said in a statement "it was difficult to accept the news of Zahara's passing" at such a young age.

Zahara became known as South Africa's "Country Girl," a testament to her upbringing in the rural **Eastern Cape** province, but also how her award-winning music came with a highly-effective simplicity; through her voice and an acoustic guitar. Her songs were marked with references to her Christian religion but also to South Africa's painful history of apartheid, even if she was only a young child when it ended. (AP)

**BERLIN:** Tricia Tuttle, a former

director of the London Film Festival, will become the new director of the Berlin International Film Festival next year, the German culture minister announced Tuesday.

Tuttle, who is American, will take over in April from the outgoing leadership duo of executive director **Mariette Rissenbeek** and artistic director **Carlo Chatrian**.



Zahara Tuttle

They will lead the upcoming 74th edition of the annual event, which runs from Feb. 15-25.

Rissenbeek and Chatrian took the helm in 2019, replacing long-serving festival director **Dieter Kosslick**.

After Rissenbeek decided last year not to renew her contract, Culture Minister **Claudia Roth**

said the festival should revert to being led by one person, and Chatrian announced that he would step down too.

"Tricia Tuttle brings 25 years of film and film festival experience with her," Roth said in a statement, adding that the London festival gained in audience numbers and significance under

her leadership and become more colorful and diverse.

"Above all, she has convinced us with her clear ideas on the artistic perspectives of the Berlinale, a modern, team-orientated festival management, sustainable support for young talent and contemporary sponsorship models," Roth added. (AP)

## People &amp; Places

## Gaming

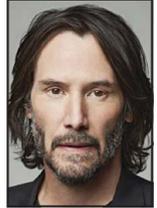
## 2023 gaming gems

## Cocoon, Zelda shine bright in stellar year

NEW YORK, Dec 13, (AP): It's been a terrific year for video games. Developers hit their stride on the PlayStation 5 and Xbox X/S consoles, unleashing massive adventures big enough to satisfy gamers for weeks. The Switch is at the end of its lifespan, but Nintendo debuted two spectacular games on its way out. And indie studios held up their end, delivering distinctive takes on classic genres.

Here are the top 10 games of 2023, as chosen by Associated Press writer Lou Kesten.

Role-playing games were particularly ambitious this year, and none was more rewarding than this epic from Belgium's Larian Studios. The main plot - you have a deadly parasite in your brain, and you need to get it out - is compelling enough, but your trek through the Forgotten Realms introduces a lively cast of characters and a cornucopia of fascinating side missions. It's as close to the Dungeons & Dragons tabletop game as you can get digitally, and it's a blast.



Reeves

Nearly 40 years in, Nintendo keeps finding new ways to present the heroic Link and his eternal battle against evil. His most powerful new skill this time is Ultrahand, which allows him to build a seemingly endless variety of outlandish vehicles to traverse the sprawling land of Hyrule. Add in the usual assortment of devilish dungeons and brain-busting puzzles, and you can spend 100-some hours just goofing around before tackling its emotionally moving climax.

Feel like you're carrying the weight of the world? That's literally the burden of the beetle at the center of this masterpiece from Annapurna Interactive. Thing is, each of those spheres gives you a special power (which I won't spoil), and you can jump inside each world and explore. By the time you're moving worlds within worlds, your mind's fully blown. Designer Jeppe Carlsen is known for the bleak cult classics Inside and Limbo, and while he's in a more forgiving mood here, Cocoon is just as thought-provoking.

## Cyberpunk

The 2020 release of Cyberpunk was, frankly, a mess, but Poland's CD Projekt Red has devoted an extraordinary amount of effort to turning it into the game fans had hoped for. This year's expansion makes it all worthwhile. It begins as an "Escape from New York" riff - the president's plane crashes in an urban hellhole - and evolves into a brutal take on technology, global politics and corporate voracity. Yes, **Keanu Reeves** is back - and you get to hang out with Idris Elba too!

Nintendo's most iconic character returns to the 2D, side-scrolling, running-and-jumping antics that made him famous. Mario has some new powers: He can drill through the ground, trap enemies in bubbles and even turn into an elephant. But the real highlight of each level is the Wonder Flower, which can transform the whole environment in an entirely different challenge. SMBW feels like the designers took every wacky idea they've had over the decades and stuffed them all into one game, and it's hilarious.

This puzzler from French indie Rundisc is built around a distinctive mechanic: translating foreign languages. Your mission is to explore an edifice inspired by the Tower of Babel, but you're not going anywhere until you can make sense of the enigmatic signs and cryptic speech of each level's inhabitants. It's almost relaxing, but I felt thrilled every time I managed to crack a new code. And the overarching goal - trying to find common ground with people you don't understand - is inspiring.

The 1990s are regarded as the golden age of role-playing games, and the folks at Canada's Saboteur Studio are obviously fans. Their latest throwback is the tale of two young warriors who can harness the powers of the moon and sun as they fight monsters summoned by a wicked alchemist. The graphics and gameplay evoke 16-bit classics like Chrono Trigger and Xenogears, the characters are thoroughly charming, and the story takes some surprising twists. While it works as homage, SoS has enough original ideas to make an old formula fresh.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe may be limping, but Sony and Insomniac Games apparently didn't get the memo. Their latest comic-book romp soars, with two Spideys - Peter Parker and Miles Morales - web-slinging their way between the skyscrapers of Manhattan and beyond. It's beautifully paced, alternating low-key personal episodes with high-octane brawls against flamboyant supervillains. It's the ideal antidote to superhero fatigue.

Afia, the swashbuckler at the center of this pirate caper from Germany's Mimimi Games, has a problem: She's dead, with a big old sword sticking right through her torso. But she's not about to let that stop her from reassembling the crew of the ghost ship Red Marley and wreaking havoc on the high seas. Each of the sailors has a mystical power - Afia can teleport, for example, while the ship's carpenter can drag people to hell. The result is an addictive series of tactical challenges with a bracing dose of black comedy.

Bethesda Softworks tries to cram decades of science fiction - from "2001: A Space Odyssey" to "Blade Runner" to "Everything Everywhere All at Once" - into its newest RPG. It doesn't always work: You can't build an entire galaxy without some stops being a little dull. But Starfield's sheer ambition is arresting, and there's enough of Bethesda's well-honed storytelling finesse to make the journey worthwhile. Given the studio's history with The Elder Scrolls and Fallout, here's hoping it becomes the foundation (another classic SF reference!) of another successful franchise.

## Also:

**LOS ANGELES:** The "Avatar" films have plenty of video-game DNA, from their immersive 3D graphics to the idea of humans virtually exploring an alien world. It's been a while, though, since we've gotten a chance to play in **James Cameron's** universe. Ubisoft is about to bridge the gap with Avatar: Frontiers of Pandora. The protagonist is a Na'vi warrior who's out for revenge after being held captive for years by the militaristic Resources Development Administration. The developer promises to show wild-life and regions of Pandora that haven't yet been seen on IMAX screens, and you'll be able to wield both Na'vi and human weapons as you try to destroy the RDA's smoke-belching factories.



Members of the Mexican rock band Maná, drummer Alex González, (from left), vocalist Fher Olvera, bassist Juan Calleros and guitarist Sergio Vallín pose during an interview in New York on Oct. 25, 2016. The band will play OVO Arena Wembley in London next year. (AP)

## Music

## Maná set for London show after 4 decades

## González shares big plans for 2024

NEW YORK, Dec 13, (AP): During a career that spans over four decades, Grammy-winning Mexican rockers Maná have toured the world, yet for some reason never played London. That all changes next July when the foursome plays the OVO Arena Wembley, and drummer Alex González says the band is "freaking out."

"We grew up influenced by so many English bands that it was always a dream for us to play in London," González said. He hopes that bringing Mexican rock to England leads to a long relationship with fans.

Started in 1982, the Mexican rock quartet from Sombbrero Verde has been compared to The Police, and González says they're big fans of Sting and Co.

And while audiences can expect to hear classic tunes such as "Rayando el Sol" and "Oye Mi Amor," there won't be any new music just yet. The band hasn't added much in that department since their last studio album, "Cama Incendiada" in 2015. But that will change when they get back into the studio late next year.

In a recent interview with The Associated Press, González shared a timetable on the band's next album, spoke on the state of regional Mexican music and called Beatles drummer Ringo Starr an inspiration.

**AP:** Why did it take so long to play London?

**González:** It could be that we never got into the right hands of a promoter or a company or somebody that wanted to take us to London. But I think the important thing is that we're going and what an honor. I hope it's the beginning of a long relationship with doing many shows and concerts in London and maybe in other parts of England.

**AP:** We're seeing a lot of great pop and rock artists coming out Mexico these days. Do you feel like you guys helped lead the way?

**González:** No, I don't think we've led the way. Music in Spanish has been around forever. For example, Los Panchos - they were a huge trio. And they even ended up playing in Japan. Then you look at Carlos Santana - I mean, there's been a lot of important people in Latin music. I think the interesting thing is around the '70s, in the 80s, that's when a whole rock boom started taking off with rock bands coming from Spain... I don't doubt that maybe influenced a lot of people, too. But the cool thing is that we've been we've continued to do it in Spanish.

**AP:** You've consistently recorded in Spanish. What's it like to play live in other countries?

**González:** We think it's cool that when you go to another country that doesn't speak Spanish and there's people listening to your music and then they start translating the lyrics and they start finding out what the songs are about. I think that's pretty cool. It's a cool way of sharing your culture. And for us here in the United States, wrapping up of 38 concerts, we did 16 sold-out shows at the Kia Forum - that just goes to show you how huge the Latin community has grown in the United States, and let alone, California.

**AP:** What's your thoughts on the increased global popularity of regional music, especially coming out of Mexico?

**González:** In the past 10 or 15 years we've been bombarded by urban reggaeton music, which is fine. But when everything is 24-hours-a-day reggaeton, you got to say to yourself, 'Hey, wait a minute, there's other styles of music, there's other artists. And I think those people deserve the same exposure as being bombarded 24-7.' I'm glad that there's other exponents, of regional and Mexican music. And it's great. It's part of the culture.

**AP:** Who inspired you to be a musi-

cian?  
**González:** Everything started with me with The Beatles. I became a drummer thanks to Ringo Starr. He was the first drummer that I saw, and the Beatles were the first band that I saw (on television) in a black and white concert. They were all dressed in their suits. And then Ringo was beating the (expletive) out of the drums. He was like the first punk alternative rock drummer. He was hitting those drums so hard. And thank God there's footage of that that you can see.

**AP:** Who else was an inspiration?  
**González:** I actually was able to start singing, or try to sing, because of Phil Collins. Phil Collins was one of my earlier influences. He was one of the first drummers that I saw that he could play the drums and sing lead vocals.

**AP:** What about more traditional artists like Los Tigres Del Norte?

**González:** They are good friends of ours. Great guys. When we were kids, they would come and play in Mexico and they would sell out bullrings and they would sell out stadiums. They would fill up these huge spaces for 30,000 or 40,000 people. So, we always saw them as a band, even though they were playing Norteño music. We always saw that there was an audience that was interested in it.

**AP:** What can fans expect in 2024 in terms of new music?

**González:** It's taken a long time trying to get everybody's schedule together to write and record it. This album has taken longer than it should have. But the good news is, around the end of 2024, we're going to start working on a brand new studio album. The idea is to release this album in 2025. Our last studio album was in 2015, so it's been a long time and we're super-excited about starting to work together again once we get into the studio. I mean, that's where the magic happens.



Ryan Tedder of the band OneRepublic performs in concert during Q102's iHeartRadio Jingle Ball at the Wells Fargo Center on Tuesday, Dec. 12, in Philadelphia. (AP)



Rubasingham



Bridgewater

## Variety

**LONDON:** Britain's National Theatre announced Wednesday that **Indhu Rubasingham** will be the next artistic director of the **United Kingdom's** pre-eminent public stage company.

Rubasingham, who currently runs the small but influential Kiln Theatre in north London, will be the first woman and first person of color to lead the National, whose six previous artistic directors include **Laurence Olivier**, **Peter Hall** and **Nicholas Hytner**.

She will join as director-designate in the spring of 2024 and take over in early 2025 from **Rufus Norris**, who is stepping down after a decade at the helm.

Rubasingham will also become the company's joint chief executive alongside **Kate Varah**, who is currently executive director of the theater.

Rubasingham said it was "a huge honor" to lead a venue that "has played an important part in my life."

"Theater has a transformative power - the ability to bring people together through shared experience and storytelling, and nowhere more so than the National," she said.

At the Kiln, Rubasingham has been praised for innovative shows that reflect the diverse communities of the surrounding area. Her directing work there includes a stage adaptation of **Zadie Smith's** novel "White Teeth," Smith's Chaucer-inspired play "The Wife of Willeloden" and "Red Velvet," a drama about 19th-century Black actor Ira Aldridge that later ran London's West End and in **New York**.

She has directed several shows at the National, including the critically acclaimed Indian play "The Father and the Assassin," about the man who killed **Mahatma Gandhi**. (AP)

**LOS ANGELES:** There are country award shows and hip-hop award ones, Latin Grammys and beyond - so why hasn't there been a televised jazz music award show to look forward to every year?

That changes on Jan. 1 when the inaugural Jazz Music Awards hits PBS member station Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) at 7 p.m. Eastern for television viewers across the state and streamers everywhere. The show was previously recorded at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre in Atlanta in 2022.

In **Georgia**, the first-ever televised Jazz Music Awards will be viewable on WGTW-TV (Atlanta/Athens), WNGH-TV (Chatsworth), WMUM-TV (Macon), WJSP-TV (Columbus), WACS-TV (Dawson), WABW-TV (Albany), WVAN-TV

(Savannah), WXGA-TV (Waycross) and WCES-TV (Augusta).

Additionally, the Jazz Music Awards will be available to stream on PBS's on-demand service, PBS Passport.

The two-hour ceremony is hosted by Grammy- and Tony Award winner **Dee Dee Bridgewater** and celebrated stage and screen actor **Delroy Lindo**. Bridgewater is one of the show's eight performers, which also includes **Dianne Reeves**, **Kenny Garrett**, **Orrin Evans**, **Ledisi**, **Somi**,

**Lizz Wright**, **Braxton Cook**, **Brandee Younger**, **Jazzmeia Horn**, The Baylor Project, and **Lindsey Webster**.

"Jazz music, although this is the original music form that comes from the **United States**, has always been a kind of stepchild when it comes to award shows," says Bridgewater.

She believes televising the Jazz Music Awards is an opportunity to highlight the genre, as well as become something people who may not know a lot about jazz - as

well as those who keep the music alive - to join. "I hope it puts the music and art in the forefront in a way that will entice people to want to experience some live jazz."

Many awards were given out during the ceremony, including a Lifetime Achievement Award to the late great **Wayne Shorter**.

The show also boasts of tributes to the recently deceased **Ramsey Lewis**, **Pharoah Sanders**, **Joey DeFrancesco**, and **Jaimie Branch**. (AP)



Patrick Dempsey, (from left), Shailene Woodley, Michael Mann, Adam Driver, Penelope Cruz and Gabriel Byrne arrive at the premiere of "Ferrari" on Tuesday, Dec. 12, at the Director's Guild of America in Los Angeles. (AP)

**NEWRY, Maine:** Ho ho ho, away they go - Santa's helpers took the day off on Sunday with a few hundred of the jolly ol' elves hitting the slopes.

With beards and stocking caps flapping, some 300 red-suited Santas were lively and quick at the foggy Sunday River ski resort in western Maine as they took a break from the holiday hustle and bustle.

The annual event has been held for more than 20 years, except for once during the pandemic. The skiing Santas participate in full Kringle garb, including, of course, a white beard and red hat.

The event's rules specifically state the hat must bear a white pom-pom.

The annual event serves as a festive kickoff to both the holiday season and the skiing season. It raises money for The River Fund Maine, an education charity.

This year's event raised \$8,000, Sunday River representatives said.

"Each year, the kindness of Santa Sunday participants contributes to creating impactful educational opportunities for our local students," said Sunday River Resort President **Dana Bullen**. (AP)

Experts warn climate change, urbanization accelerating infections pace

# Millions hit by dengue as rising temperatures fuel spread

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, Dec 13, (AP): Dengue is sweeping across the Western Hemisphere in numbers not seen since record-keeping began more than four decades ago, with experts warning that rising temperatures and rapid urbanization are accelerating the pace of infections.

A record more than 4 million cases have been reported throughout the Americas and Caribbean so far this year, surpassing a previous record set in 2019, with officials from the Bahamas to Brazil warning of crowded clinics and new infections daily. More than 2,000 deaths in that region also have been reported.

"This year is the year we've been seeing the most dengue in recorded history," said Thais dos Santos, adviser on surveillance and control of arboviral diseases with the Pan American Health Organization, the regional office of the World Health Organization in the Americas. She noted that record keeping began in 1980. "Vector borne diseases, especially these diseases that are transmitted by mosquitoes ... provide us a really good sentinel of what is happening with climate change."

## Sanitation

Poor sanitation and a lack of robust health systems have contributed to a rise in cases, but experts say droughts and floods linked to climate change are causing greater transmission of the virus, with stored water and heavy rains attracting mosquitoes.

Dr. Gabriela Paz-Bailey, chief of the dengue branch for the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Puerto Rico, noted that higher temperatures also are extending the mosquito's habitat and helping the virus develop faster inside the mosquito, leading to higher viral loads and higher probability of transmission.

"These infections are a symptom of some big underlying trends happening in the world," Dr. Jeremy Farrar, chief scientist of the World Health Organization, said in an interview. "Climate change is seemingly so difficult to address, and so many countries are now becoming urbanized, I can see dengue and the other diseases...becoming increasingly frequent and increasingly complex to deal with."

Dos Santos said officials are seeing "lots of new things" as dengue spikes, including record temperatures, extended seasons and the spread of dengue farther north and south than usual. California, for example, reported its first two locally-acquired dengue cases this year, and Florida 138 such cases - a record for the state. Last year, Florida reported 65 cases, Paz-Bailey said.

This year's Northern Hemisphere summer was the hottest ever, with August some 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial averages. And so far, 2023 is the second hottest year on record, according to Copernicus, the European climate service.

Worldwide, more than 4.5 million cases of dengue had been reported as of early November, with more than 4,000 deaths reported in 80 countries. Farrar believes that a global record set in 2019 of 5.2 million cases could be surpassed this year.

"Dengue is something that the Americas need to be increasingly concerned about, but it's almost a global phenomenon now," he said.

Countries like Bangladesh are seeing a record number of cases and deaths. The government in the South Asian country has reported more than 313,700 cases and more than 1,600 deaths, the majority of them occurring within three days of hospitalization, according to published data.

The mosquito that carries dengue also has been identified in 22 European countries, with local spread of the disease seen in France, Italy and Spain. In August, the central African country of Chad reported its first-ever dengue outbreak.

Dengue affects some 129 countries, with roughly half the world's popula-

tion at risk, according to the World Health Organization. The virus is transmitted mainly by infected female Aedes aegypti mosquitoes, which bites hosts to obtain protein for its eggs. The virus can cause crushing headaches, fever, vomiting, a rash and other symptoms. While most infected people don't get symptoms, severe cases can lead to plasma leakage and death.

What's worse, experts say, repeated infections means a higher risk of developing severe dengue.

While the mosquito that carries dengue also spreads chikungunya and the Zika virus, there is less circulation of the other two viruses because of past immunity, Paz-Bailey said, adding that it's very rare for a mosquito to carry two viruses at once.

In January, the World Health Organization warned that dengue poses a pandemic threat and is the world's fastest spreading mosquito-borne disease. While there are vaccines and specially bred mosquitoes containing a bacteria called Wolbachia to fight dengue, there are no specific treatments for the virus once someone becomes infected.

It's unclear how many countries, if any, have requested vaccines from manufacturers, but the Pan American Health Organization said its immunization technical advisory group recently met to talk about dengue vaccines and would publish recommendations once they're finalized.

The Americas broke the previous regional record for dengue earlier this year, with Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Peru reporting the most cases worldwide. Peru declared a state of emergency in some areas after reporting a historic number of cases.

The Caribbean also is battling a surge in cases, with the region reporting a 15% increase in confirmed cases by early October compared with the same period last year, according to the Caribbean Public Health Agency.

Officials on the French Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique declared an epidemic in August that is still ongoing. Martinique, for example, is reporting an average of 800 cases a week on the island of some 394,000 inhabitants.

## Diseases

Meanwhile, Jamaica and the Bahamas declared an outbreak in September followed by Barbados in October.

"The associated risks and ripple effects must not be underestimated as outbreaks of dengue and other mosquito-borne diseases ... pose a significant threat to health, tourism, as well as social and economic development," the Caribbean Public Health Agency said in a statement.

Impoverished countries struggle the most with dengue, with poor sanitation creating fertile breeding grounds for infected mosquitoes, a lack of air conditioning and screened windows allowing the insects to roam freely and rickety health systems groaning under a growing caseload.

Farrar, chief scientist for the World Health Organization, said dengue is very difficult to treat in part because patients often delay in seeking medical care and because the virus can progress so quickly. Caring for patients is tricky because staff must ensure they receive the correct amount of fluid, which requires a lot of time and monitoring, he said.

Claude Burton, a 70-year-old retiree who lives in Jamaica, knows first-hand about the strain on medical facilities. Last month, he began to feel increasingly worse until he finally visited a doctor.

After testing positive, he took a taxi for an hourlong ride from Ocho Rios to Kingston after the doctor advised he be hospitalized. The first hospital he visited turned him away, with staff telling him no beds were available. Then at the second hospital he went to, Burton spent two nights in a wheelchair until a bed freed up.

"I was really bad," he recalled, adding that he had blood in his urine and ended up spending four nights at the hospital.



The Kuwaiti team with Professor Hong.

Hospital hosts exclusive workshop by Prof. J.B. Hong

## Jaber Hospital 'performs' first-of-its-kind complex lymphedema surgeries in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA): Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital in Kuwait achieves a milestone by successfully conducting complex surgical operations for lymphedema patients, a first for the country. The procedures were performed during a four-day workshop led by Professor J.B. Hong from South Korea, with the participation of national competencies.

Dr. Sarah Al-Yawha, head of the hospital's plastic surgery unit, explained that the operations, involving the surgical removal of edemas and precise lymphatic-venous connections under a microscope, are rare and typically performed in specialized centers around the world. Lymphedema, a complex and challenging disease, can result from hereditary defects, cancer treatment, or surgical complications, leading to deformity and dysfunction.

The Kuwaiti team actively participated in the surgeries alongside Professor Hong, who also conducted scientific lectures and workshops, fostering an exchange of experiences. The workshop, a collaborative effort between Jaber and Adan hospitals, aimed at enhancing the skills of local medical professionals.

## Collaboration

Dr. Munira Bin Nakhhi, head of the plastic surgery unit at Al-Adan Hospital, emphasized the significance of hosting international expertise. Professor Hong, renowned as one of the world's top super-microsurgery surgeons, played a pivotal role in preparing for this visit over three years. The collaboration between the two hospitals resulted in the successful performance of Kuwait's first lymphatic-venous connection operation under a microscope.

Lymphedema arises when lymphatic vessels are unable to efficiently drain fluid, often stemming from cancer-related blockages. Dr. Bin Nakhhi stressed the importance of the lymphatic sys-



A photo taken during surgical procedures in progress.

tem in the immune system and noted that cancer is a common cause of lymphedema.

Professor JB Hong expressed his delight at visiting Kuwait, expressing a desire for periodic exchanges and

cooperation between the Korean and Kuwaiti Plastic Surgery Associations. He aims to contribute to the training of young national medical professionals, solidifying the partnership in the field of plastic surgery.

## 20 deaths

Anthrax outbreaks hit 5 Africa nations

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, Dec 13, (AP): Five countries in East and southern Africa are in the middle of outbreaks of the anthrax disease, with more than 1,100 suspected cases and 20 deaths this year, the World Health Organization said Monday.

A total of 1,166 suspected cases had been reported in Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Thirty-seven cases had been confirmed by laboratory tests, WHO said. It said the five countries have seasonal outbreaks every year, but Zambia was experiencing its worst since 2011 and Malawi reported its first human case this year. Uganda had reported 13 deaths.

Anthrax usually affects livestock like cattle, sheep and goats, as well as wild herbivores. Humans can be infected if they are exposed to the animals or contaminated animal products. Anthrax isn't generally considered to be contagious between humans, although there have been rare cases of person-to-person transmission, WHO says.

Anthrax is caused by spore-forming bacteria and is sometimes associated with the weaponized version used in the 2001 attacks in the United States, when five people died and 17 others fell sick after being exposed to anthrax spores in letters sent through the mail.

Anthrax bacteria also occurs naturally in soil. In a separate assessment of the Zambia outbreak, which was the most concerning, WHO said that 684 suspected cases had been reported in the southern African nation as of Nov. 20, with four deaths.

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## SPORTS

# Clippers rout Kings for 5th straight win

Suns holds off Warriors 119-116

LOS ANGELES, Dec 13, (AP): Kawhi Leonard scored 31 points in three quarters, giving him 106 in his last three games, and the Los Angeles Clippers routed the Sacramento Kings 119-98 on Tuesday night for their season-high fifth straight victory.

James Harden added 15 points, seven assists and six rebounds to help the Clippers sweep a back-to-back for the first time this season. They have won 10 of their last 13 games.

Keegan Murray led Sacramento with 17 points and Domantas Sabonis added 15 points and 10 rebounds. De'Aaron Fox had 14 points as Sacramento's two-game winning streak was snapped.

The Kings had won five of seven, including a win against Brooklyn on Monday night, but were overwhelmed by the Clippers from the second quarter on.

The Clippers led 70-48 at halftime, shooting 59% from the floor, hitting

eight 3-pointers and making all 10 of their free throws. Ahead by nine, they outscored the Kings 31-11, including 11 in a row - six by Leonard - for a 29-point lead just before the break.

Leonard scored 14 points in the third, reeling off the Clippers' final seven to send them into the fourth leading 99-70. He worked to find his usual spots on the floor and the few times he couldn't, he passed off to his teammates. Leonard made all seven of his free throw attempts and the Clippers hit 20 of 21.

Leonard, Paul George (9 points and 6 rebounds), Ivica Zubac and Harden took the fourth off, with Terance Mann the only LA starter on the floor. Norman Powell led the bench with 15 points.

## Suns 119, Warriors 116

In Phoenix, Devin Booker scored 32 points, Bradley Beal added 16 in his return from a back injury and the Phoenix Suns held on late to beat the

## BASKETBALL

Golden State Warriors 119-116 on Tuesday night.

Golden State's Draymond Green was ejected in the third quarter after receiving a Flagrant 2 foul for hitting Jusuf Nurkic in the face. Stephen Curry led the Warriors with 24 points.

The Suns took an 88-87 lead into the fourth after Beal hit a baseline jumper with 1.9 seconds left. Phoenix used a 12-0 run - highlighted by Jordan Goodwin's steal, pass and then reverse dunk by Booker - to push ahead 109-96 with about four minutes left.

The Warriors trailed 113-104 with 1:30 left but rallied to cut the margin to 115-114 with 15 seconds left. Booker responded with two free throws to give the Suns a three-point lead and Curry missed a 3-pointer on the ensuing possession.

Beal followed with two free throws to finally put away the game. The Suns are 3-0 this season against the Warriors.

Booker shot 12 of 23 from the field and added seven assists. Nurkic finished with 17 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists.

## Nuggets 114, Bulls 106

In Chicago, Reggie Jackson scored 25 points and short-handed Denver held off the Chicago Bulls for a 114-106 victory after Nuggets star Nikola Jokic was ejected in the second quar-



Golden State Warriors forward Andrew Wiggins, right, shoots over Phoenix Suns forward Yuta Watanabe (18) during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2023, in Phoenix. (AP)

ter.

Michael Porter Jr. had 17 points and Aaron Gordon finished with 14 points, seven rebounds and six assists, helping Denver to a gritty second straight win after a 129-122 victory at Atlanta on Monday night. Julian Strawther added 16 points.

Jackson made five 3-pointers as the reigning NBA champions went 14 for 30 from behind the arc. The Nuggets also beat the Bulls 123-101 in Denver on Nov. 4.

Coby White led Chicago with 27 points, continuing his hot streak. Nikola Vucevic finished with 26 points and 16 rebounds.

## Mavericks 127, Lakers 125

In Dallas, Luka Doncic had 33 points and 17 assists, Tim Hardaway Jr. scored a season-high 32 points and the Dallas Mavericks beat Los Angeles 127-125 in the Lakers' first game since winning the inaugural In-Season Tournament.

Anthony Davis finished with 37 points and 11 rebounds, while LeBron James had 33 points, nine assists and eight boards as the Lakers' season-best four-game winning streak ended. LA erased a 15-point deficit early in the third quarter to set up an entertaining finish.

Dante Exum scored a season-high 26 points with a career-best seven 3-pointers on nine attempts, going 5 of 7 in the fourth quarter to help the Mavs stay in front. Austin Reaves had 22 for the Lakers.

Grant Williams scored 19 points for Dallas in his return from a three-game absence with a right knee injury, but the Mavericks were still without two starters in Irving and Derrick Jones Jr., who has a quadriceps injury.

## Celtics 120, Cavaliers 113

In Boston, Jayson Tatum had 25 points and 10 rebounds, Jaylen Brown also scored 25 and the Boston Celtics remained unbeaten at home with a 120-113 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Kristaps Porzingis had 21 points and 10 rebounds, Derrick White added 17 points and Boston held Cleveland scoreless for a stretch of 4 minutes, 40 seconds in the fourth quarter while finally putting away the Cavaliers, who had played on the road the night before.

Donovan Mitchell had 29 points and Darius Garland scored 26 for the Cavaliers, who couldn't overcome the cold stretch in the fourth quarter. Cleveland was also outscored 45-35 in the opener of a two-game series.

The teams play again Thursday in Boston. Max Strus added 17 points and nine rebounds for the Cavs. Cleveland was coming off a 104-94 loss at Orlando on Monday night, when the Cavs scored just 15 points in the third quarter. Cleveland started strong, opening the game with an 18-4 run, but could not maintain the pace.

## Best of the Rest

French players receive wild cards

## Rahm 'suspended' by PGA Tour for signing with Saudi-funded LIV Golf

MIAMI, Dec 13, (AP): The PGA Tour has notified Jon Rahm he has been suspended for signing with Saudi-funded LIV Golf, a formality that is more about the benefits to the players Rahm leaves behind.

Mackenzie Hughes and Carl Yuan are the immediate beneficiaries of Rahm's decision last week to sign with the rival league.

PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan in a memo to players Monday afternoon said Rahm's suspension "due to his association with a series of unauthorized tournaments" removes his name from the FedEx Cup eligibility points list.

That means Hughes goes from No. 51 to No. 50, and now is eligible for all seven of the \$20 million signature events in 2024. It also means Yuan, who was signed up for Q-school this week, moves up one spot to No. 125 and has a full PGA Tour card for next year.

The tour last year distinguished between the FedEx Cup standings and a separate list related to eligibility for the post-season and for status. The distinction was so players defecting

to LIV would not have a negative impact on those who stayed behind.

Among those who benefited last year were Rickie Fowler, who got into the postseason because of all the players who left for LIV; and Jimmy Walker and Rory Sabbatini, who moved up on the career money list and were able to use one-time exemptions to keep full status.

This year, Hughes narrowly missed out on the top 50. He kept his 51st position through the fall, which only would have guaranteed him spots in the first two \$20 million events. Now the Canadian can count on the likes of the Wells Fargo Championship in his home residence of Charlotte, North Carolina.

French tennis players Alizé Cornet and Arthur Cazaux have been given wild-card entries for next month's Australian Open, the French tennis federation said Monday.

The 33-year-old Cornet, who is ranked 116th, will participate in the tournament for the 19th time in her career and make a record-extending 68th consecutive appearance at a major. She reached the quarterfinals for the first time in Melbourne last year - her best achievement at any major.

The 21-year-old Cazaux is ranked 130th after climbing from 381st at the start of the year, and he goes into main draw first time at the Jan. 15-28 tournament.



Rahm

Duke pulls away after halftime to beat Hofstra

## Tennessee dominates Georgia Southern

KNOXVILLE, Tenn., Dec 13. (AP): Jonas Aidoo had 29 points and 11 rebounds, and No. 12 Tennessee beat Georgia Southern 74-56 on Tuesday night.

The winless Eagles (0-10) had no answer for the 6-foot-11 Aidoo, who also had two steals and two blocks. Aidoo scored the first 10 points of the game and had 21 by halftime as Tennessee led 49-21. He finished as the only double-digit scorer for the Volunteers (7-3).

Derrick Harris came off the bench to score all but two of his 13 points in the second half for Georgia Southern.

## Duke 89, Hofstra 68

In Durham, N.C., Kyle Filipowski had 28 points, 12 rebounds and a career-best eight assists as Duke beat Hofstra.

The 7-foot preseason Associated Press All-American made four 3-pointers and blocked three shots for the

Blue Devils (7-3). Duke shot 55%, made 11 of 22 3-pointers and had four players in double figures. Jeremy Roach scored 19 points.

## BASKETBALL

Darlinstone Dubar scored 24 points and hit seven 3s to lead the Pride (6-4). Hofstra shot 50% but committed 14

turnovers.

## Boise State 95, Northwestern State 54

In Boise, Idaho, Tyson Degenhart had 20 points in Boise State's 95-54 win against Northwestern State.

Degenhart added seven rebounds for the Broncos (7-3). Chibuzo Agbo added 17 points while shooting 6 for 13, including 5 for 12

from beyond the arc, and he also had five rebounds. Cam Martin had 12 points and shot 5 of 6 from the field and 2 for 5 from the line.

The Demons (1-9) were led in scoring by Cliff Davis, who finished with 21 points. Chase Forte added eight points and four assists for Northwestern State. Jamison Epps also had seven points.

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## Basketball Federation President Dhari Burgess to lead delegation

## Kuwait prepare for Arab Championship with intensive training in Cairo



Qadsia player is impeded by opponents as he goes for a shot.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The basketball team delegation is set to depart today for Cairo, embarking on a training camp scheduled to run until December 24. This preparatory session is in anticipation of their upcoming participation in the Arab Championship, slated to take place in the Egyptian capital from December 26 to January 3.

Leading the delegation is Federation President Dhari Burgess, accompanied by administrators Fahd Al-Bous and Muhammad Al-Hassawi. The coaching staff comprises German Peter Schumers as the head coach and Bashir Freih as the assistant coach. Additionally, the delegation includes 11 players: Muhammad Adnan, Abdul Rahman Al-Sahu, Turki Al-Shammari, Alexander Al-Ghais, Mustafa Al-Rifai, Youssef Al-Hamdan, Abdul Latif Al-Faraj, Nawaf Al-Enezi, Abdullah Tawfiq, Hassan Bormia, and Imran Johar.

Yousef Bourahma, Abdulaziz Al-Hamidi, and Ahmed Al-Balushi, players from Kazma, are expected to join the delegation immediately following the

team's match against Al-Shamal of Qatar on December 18, marking the third round of the second group of the West Asian Championship for the Gulf region.

President Burgess revealed that the team is gearing up for four friendly

matches as part of their tournament preparation. The Arab Championship will feature participation from 10 teams, including Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, the Emirates, Mauritania, Somalia, Tunisia, Jordan, and the

"Blue Basket."

Despite the limited time for preparation due to club commitments in Asian foreign tournaments, Burgess expressed confidence in the team's readiness, citing numerous standout talents within Al-Azraq. He emphasized the team's ambition to secure a positive



A file photo of Kuwaiti players celebrating.

## BASKETBALL

outcome in the face of formidable opponents like Jordan, the silver medalist in the last Asian Games, and powerhouses Tunisia and Egypt, reigning champions of the African continent.

Burgess extended gratitude to the General Sports Authority for their support of national teams and commended the Kuwait Club management for lending the services of German coach Peter Schumers to Al-Itihad, enabling him to lead the team in the upcoming tournament.

## Al-Qadsia target league top spot

Khaitan loom

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Al-Qadsia seeks to rise to the top of the Zain Premier League standings, albeit temporarily when it faces Khaitan at the Friendship and Peace Stadium at 5:25 pm in the tenth round. Meanwhile, Al-Shabab hosts Al-Fahaheel at 8 pm in the same round.**

Tomorrow's fixtures feature Al-Jahra meeting Al-Kuwait, followed by Kazma hosting Al-Nasr. The tour concludes on Saturday with a single showdown between Al-Salmiya and Al-Arabi at Thamer Stadium.

Currently, Al-Arabi leads the standings with 20 points, tied with second-place Kuwait, while Al-Qadsia is in third with 19 points. The league table also includes Al-Salmiya (14 points), Kazma and Al-Nasr (13 points each), Al-Shabab (11 points), Khaitan and Al-Fahaheel (6 points each), and Al-Jahra with two

points.

Al-Qadsia enters today's match with the goal of securing victory, aiming to surpass Khaitan after their earlier draw (1-1). The team also eyes a temporary lead with 22 points, hoping Al-Salmiya and Al-Jahra can impede the progress of their competitors within the same round.

Buoyed by a recent clean-sheet victory against Al-Shabab and a quarter-final berth in the Crown Prince Cup, Al-Qadsia looks to maintain positive results.

## SOCCER

On the other side, Khaitan seeks its second victory in the competition to distance itself from the relegation zone. Coach Florin Matrock acknowledges the challenge ahead.

In the second match, Al-Shabab aims for redemption following a tough defeat to Al-Qadsia in the last round. Victory could propel them away from the shadow of relegation. Al-Fahaheel seeks its second win to break the tie with Al-Shabab and revive hopes of securing a position among the league's top six teams.

## Lyon seeks his 500th Test wicket

## Australia 'open' cricket series against Pakistan

PERTH, Australia, Dec 13, (AP): Nathan Lyon's quest for his 500th test wicket will be one of the individual features of the series opener between Australia and Pakistan beginning Thursday at Perth Stadium.

The 36-year-old off-spinner goes into the match with 496 wickets, poised to join Shane Warne (708) and Glenn McGrath (563) as one of the only Australians to take 500 wickets in test cricket.

Perth Stadium has been a happy hunting ground for Lyon in the past: he has taken 22 wickets in three tests at an average of 18.45, leading Pakistan to identify him as one of their key figures in the first test and three-match series.

"As a team from the subcontinent we normally play offspinners really well," Pakistan team director Mohammad Hafeez said. "In the last couple of series we had a high strike-rate against Nathan Lyon."

"That will remain the same. We know Lyon is a great bowler but as a team we are confident we will take him on."

Australia vice-captain Steve Smith backed Lyon to make a strong return after missing the latter part of the Ashes series in England with a calf muscle injury, describing the veteran spinner as one of - if not the - most valuable players in the team.



In this file photo, Australia's Nathan Lyon bowls during the fourth day of the Ashes cricket Test match against England in Adelaide, Australia. (AP)

that we don't see too often.

"I think he's improved a lot since he last came out here four years ago."

Pakistan has many challenges to overcome in the test series, notably its own history of poor performances in Australia. In tests between the teams in Australia, Australia has won 26, Pakistan has won four and there's been seven draws.

The teams last met in Pakistan in 2022 when Australia won a three-test series 1-0. Australia also has an unbeaten record in the three tests it has played at Perth Stadium, which has replaced the WACA as Western Australia's premier cricket arena.

Australia heads into the match as the World Test Champion and with a full-strength squad, with Mitch Marsh holding off fellow West Australian Cameron Green for the allrounder spot and Lyon returning from injury.

Travis Head, voted player of the match in Australia's World Cup final win over India last month and in the World Test Championship final, has been elevated to be a co-vice captain of the test squad with Smith. Both are deputies for skipper Pat Cummins.

"The personality that he brings to the team is something that we all love," Cummins said Wednesday. "And I think you see it in the way he plays his cricket, there's a certain amount of freedom to it."

"He takes the game on and he enjoys it. He's always got a smile on his face. He's great at bringing the team together for team morale... so he's got all the makings of a really strong leader."

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Dec 13, (AP): England's white ball woes continued as it lost by four wickets to the West Indies in the first Twenty20 cricket international after a spectacular mid-innings reversal.

The tourists made an explosive start after being sent in, reaching 77-0 at the end of the first power play and 112-2 after 10 overs. But England collapsed to be all out for 171 in the 20th over as Andre Russell, in his first T20 international in two years, took 3-19 to lead a West Indies resurgence.

West Indies also had to negotiate difficult moments in the run chase: a short rain break and setbacks as it slipped from 101-4 in the 12th over to 123-6 in the 15th.

Some big hitting from captain Rovman Powell turned the match back in the home team's favor and the West Indies reached its target with 11 balls to spare.

Powell was unbeaten on 31 from 15 balls and Russell was not out 29 from 14 balls. Both batters hit sixes out of the stadium to pace the highest successful T20 run chase at Kensington Oval.

## CRICKET

The 35-year-old Russell was Player of the Match.

"Life is so funny," he said. "Since when I got selected for the West Indies team I've been dreaming ... of being Man of the Match."

Earlier, Phil Salt and captain Jos Buttler, returning to the opening role after batting in the middle order in the one-day international series defeat, gave England what seemed to be a winning start.

Salt struck 13 runs including three boundaries from the first over and England rushed to 50 in 4.5 overs. The scoring rate stepped up further when 26 runs came from the 6th over, the first bowled by Alzarri Joseph, which included 10 extras.

Russell broke the 77-run opening partnership in the 7th over when Salt was spectacularly caught by Shimron Hetmeyer at deep mid-wicket: the fielder stepping over the boundary and back into play to complete the catch.

In making the breakthrough, Russell also made the discovery that the slower ball was the most effective delivery on the Kensington Oval pitch. That realization helped turn the West Indies' fortunes.

"The last delivery of my first over I bowled a slower ball and I realized it gripped," Russell said. "From then on I told most of the seamers to bowl cutters, make it difficult for them. Pace on delivery, that's where they get most of their runs."

Joseph also profited from the discovery and after giving up 17 runs, including seven wides, from his second over, he settled and finished with 3-54.

## England's white ball woes continue

## Windies win 1st T20 by 4 wickets in record run chase



West Indies' Nicholas Pooran hits a six from a delivery of England's Adil Rashid during the first T20 cricket match at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados. (AP)

## Ali Al Sabah Military College pips Australian University

## Kuwait University, Applied University battle for supremacy

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The Sports City Stadium at the Public Authority for Applied Education will be the venue for the highly anticipated match between Kuwait University and Applied University at 4:30 pm in the third round of the first group of the Warba Bank Turf Football League, part of the third sports tournament for higher education.

This matchup is essentially an



Players in action.

## SOCCER/FUTSAL

early final, crucial for breaking the current tie. Kuwait University currently leads the group with 3 points and a goal difference over Applied University, while Kuwait International Law School sits in third place with no points.

In the second group competitions, the Ali Al Sabah Military College team secured victory over the Australian University with a single goal, elevating their score to 4 points and securing the top spot in the group

standings. The Gulf University team follows in second place with one point, and the Australian University is in third place with no points. The outcome of their upcoming match will determine the second team qualifying for the quarter-finals.

Meanwhile, in the Warba Bank Girls' Futsal League, the American University team earned a spot in the final after defeating the Australian University 4-1. They will face the Public Authority for Applied Education, who clinched a victory over

Kuwait University on penalties (3-1) after a goalless draw.

Dr. Salman Haji emphasized the intense competition witnessed in the Warba Bank Girls' Futsal League from the preliminary rounds to the semi-finals. He highlighted the participation of 6 private and governmental educational institutions, divided into two groups, with the champions of each group advancing to the semi-finals, and the second and third-placed teams competing in the quarter-finals.

## Youth volleyball excellence

## Kuwait prepares for Gulf Youth Games under new plan

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Nayef Al-Failakawi, a Member of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Volleyball Federation and Chairman of the Training and National Teams Committee,

has unveiled the strategy for the preparation of the 2005-born youth team. This preparation is in anticipation of their participation in the upcoming first Gulf Youth Games scheduled to take

place in the Emirati city of Dubai from April 16 to May 2.

Al-Failakawi stated, "The committee has greenlit the assembly of the technical and administrative team for the youth squad, led by the national coach, Jassem Al-Tarawah, alongside his Egyptian counterpart, Osama Madkour. The team's medical needs will be overseen by Dr. Moataz Ezz El-Din, with Talal Jassim as the team supervisor. Additionally, the preliminary ros-

## VOLLEYBALL

ter for the youth team has been established, featuring 25 players in readiness for the Gulf tournament."

He further mentioned that the technical staff is set to meet with the players today to outline the comprehensive preparation plan. This plan includes an external training camp scheduled during the spring break, the details of which will be disclosed later. Al-Failakawi emphasized the federation's dedication to nurturing a new generation of standout players, aiming to elevate the stature of Kuwaiti volleyball on both a regional and international scale.



Nayef Al-Failakawi, member of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Volleyball Federation and Chairman of the Training and National Teams Committee.



Turkish soccer referee Halil Umur Meler leaves Acibadem hospital in Ankara. (AP)

# Sports

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Turkish soccer matches to resume on Dec. 19 after suspension

## Attacks on referees could kill soccer, says top FIFA official Collina

ANKARA, Turkey, Dec 13, (AP) — The attack on a top Turkish referee this week was an example of the "cancer" that threatens to kill soccer, leading FIFA official Pierluigi Collina said on Wednesday.

"It's a responsibility for all those who love the 'beautiful game' to take action and do something. Before it's too late, before this cancer will kill football," said Collina, chairman of FIFA's Referees Committee.

"The image of Halil Umur lying on the ground, with his hands protecting his head while he was kicked by his assaulters, as well as the image of the bruise under his eye, are horrific," Collina said in a statement. "But even more horrific is to know that there are thousands of referees around the world who are verbally and physically abused at lower levels of the game

across the world, without being reported by media."

Collina, a former top referee, said even more serious incidents of violence towards officials were happening around the world.

"A referee cannot be beaten because of a decision they took, even if it's wrong," he said. "His or her car cannot be bombed or set on fire because of a penalty kick. Unfortunately this is not an exaggeration, as cars bombs and cars being set on fire is something that has happened in some countries, and not so rarely."

Meanwhile, a Turkish referee was discharged Wednesday from a hospital where he was treated for a facial fracture after being punched by the president of a top-flight soccer club.

The attack led to the Turkish Football Federation suspending all league

games.

MKE Ankaragucu president Faruk Koca attacked Halil Umur Meler on the pitch after the final whistle of a 1-1 draw in a Super Lig home game against Caykur Rizespor on Monday. The referee, who fell to the ground, was also kicked in a melee that occurred when

### SOCCER

fans invaded the pitch after Rizespor scored a last-minute equalizer.

Koca and two other people have been placed under pretrial detention, facing charges of causing injury to a public official.

The soccer federation was scheduled to hold a meeting later Wednesday to decide on the possible resumption of league games in Turkey, which

has been selected to co-host the 2032 European championship with Italy.

Meler, who was treated for a fracture near his eye, walked out of Ankara's Acibadem Hospital and raised his hand to salute the assembled media before entering a vehicle. The state-run Anadolu Agency said Meler would travel to his home in Izmir, western Turkey, escorted by police for protection.

The hospital's chief physician Mehmet Yorubulut told reporters that the referee's morale was high.

"He has no problems other than the swelling in his eye," Yorubulut said, adding that the fracture would heal in time.

Koca is reported to have told prosecutors during questioning that he merely slapped Meler, accusing the referee of "wrongful decisions" and

provocative actions.

He later announced his resignation.

"I apologize to the Turkish referee and sports community, to the Turkish people and especially to Mr. Meler and his family for the attitude I displayed toward Halil Umur Meler," he said in a statement read by his lawyer late Tuesday.

Media reports cited Meler as telling prosecutors that the club president shouted "I will kill you" during the attack and also threatened to "finish off" all of the match officials on the pitch.

Violence in soccer is commonplace in Turkey despite efforts to clamp down on it, although direct attacks on top-level referees are rare.

## Kuwaiti athletes from Al-Tomoooh Club ready for sixth Oman Athletics Forum

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The Kuwait's Al-Tomoooh Sports Club's delegation for Intellectual Disabilities has departed for the Sultanate of Oman to take part in the sixth Oman Athletics Forum, hosted by the Omani Paralympic Committee from December 13 to 17 at the Sultan Qaboos City Track and Field in Muscat.

Heading the Kuwaiti delegation is Qasim Al-Moussawi, a board member of Al-Tomoooh Club, accompanied by the club's administrative director, Hoda Al-Khalidi, coach Habab Al-Hami, and athletes Hassan Samir, Haneen Al-Mesbah, Abdullah Salmeen, and Ali Al-Shaya. The team is set to compete in various track events, including distances of 100-200, 400-1500, and long jump competitions.

Al-Moussawi expressed confi-

dence in the team's preparedness for the competition, anticipating that the players will continue their successful journey from the fifth edition, where they secured 7 medals (two gold, three silver, and two bronze).

She emphasized that this participation serves as a valuable opportunity

### ATHLETICS

for the club's athletes to engage, set new records, and vie against a distinguished international field of accomplished players. Al-Moussawi conveyed gratitude to the Omani Paralympic Committee for the invitation and extended appreciation to the General Sports Authority for their ongoing support and facilitation of the club's participation.

## Man United, Sevilla tumble out as Copenhagen qualify for CL last 16

Benfica secure place in Europa League playoffs

PARIS, Dec 13, (AP) — The Champions League proved too tough for Manchester United and Sevilla. Now, even the consolation Europa League spot is out of reach.

Both teams were eliminated from European competition to finish bottom of their groups.

Three-time Champions League winners United needed to beat Bayern Munich at home and hope for a favorable result in the other Group A game but lost 1-0 to the six-time winners.

Instead, unheralded Danish side Copenhagen qualified in second place after beating Turkish team Galatasaray 1-0 at home. Galatasaray finished third to qualify for the Europa League knockout round playoff above last-place United - which sustained 4-3 losses at Bayern and Copenhagen and conceded 15 goals in six games. It is only the fourth time a Premier League team has finished bottom of its Champions League group.

Earlier on, defending Europa League champions Sevilla - which have won the Europa League seven times - lost 2-1 at Lens to finish bottom of Group B as the French team finished third.

Fans started leaving 10 minutes before the end at Old Trafford and others booed United's players at the final whistle to heap the pressure on manager Erik Ten Hag.

After winger Kingsley Coman neatly scored Bayern's goal in the 71st minute, the away fans goaded United's supporters with a rendition of "Football's Coming Home" - a popular English soccer chant coined at the 1996 European Championship, where England lost to Germany in the semifinals - followed by "Auf Wiedersehen!" (So Long!).

Ten Hag saw burly central defender Harry Maguire limping off near the end of the first half after appearing to injure his groin. United were punished when striker Harry Kane set up Coman as Bayern cut through a static defense with ease.

### SOCCER

Over in Denmark, midfielder Lukas Lerager scored for Copenhagen in the 58th. Coach Jacob Neestrup sprinted onto the field to celebrate with his jubilant players at the end.

Italian champions Napoli advanced to the last 16 after beating Portuguese side Braga 2-0 at home to finish second in Group C, which had already been won by Real Madrid.

African player of the year Victor Osimhen, who last season helped Napoli to their first Italian league title in 33 years, got Napoli's second goal to continue his return to form.

There was a rare soccer sight when veteran Croatian midfielder Luka Modric - the 2018 men's Ballon d'Or winner - missed a penalty as Madrid fell behind but won 3-2 at Union Berlin. Forward Joselu scored twice as record 14-time champions Madrid finished with a perfect record. Braga finished third to reach the Europa League playoff.

Last year's Champions League runners-up Inter Milan and Spanish club Real Sociedad had already qualified from Group D and drew 0-0 in Italy, meaning Sociedad topped the group on goal difference.

Arthur Cabral's backheel goal in stoppage time gave Benfica a 3-1 win



Al-Tomoooh Club delegation prepare to depart to Oman.



Auckland's Regont Murati (left), vies for the ball with Al Ettihad's Zakaria Haswsawi during the Soccer Club World Cup first round soccer match between Al Ettihad and Auckland City FC at King Abdullah Sports City stadium in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

at Austrian side Salzburg in the other game to secure a place in the Europa League playoffs.

In the other early match, striker Eddie Nketiah scored his first Champions League goal as Group B winner Arsenal drew 1-1 at second-place PSV Eindhoven in a match between qualified teams.

Group winners are seeded in the last-16 draw on Dec. 18 and avoid each other. Teams also cannot be drawn against opponents from their own country. The Europa League draw is held the same day.

## Al-Ettihad rout Auckland in Club WC opener

JEDDAH, Dec 13, (KUNA) — Al-Ettihad of Saudi Arabia secured a decisive 3-0 victory against New Zealand's Auckland City as the 2023 FIFA Club World Cup commenced. The match, held at "The Jewel" in King Abdullah's Sports City in Jeddah, saw three goals in the first half, propelling Al-Ettihad to the Second Round on their journey to the final.

Romarinho Ricardo opened the scoring in the 29th minute with a deflected shot that bounced over the goalkeeper and found the net. Shortly

after, a spectacular flying side-kick from the French player N'Golo Kante in the 34th minute signaled the team's intent for further dominance.

Minutes later, Karim Benzema, assisted by Kante and Al-Shanqeeti in a one-two play, skillfully found the net, ensuring a comfortable lead heading into the second half.

Al-Ettihad is now set to face Egypt's Al-Ahly in the second leg on December 15, as anticipation builds for the 20th edition of the tournament, scheduled to run until December 22.



Inter Milan's Alessandro Bastoni fights for the ball with Real Sociedad's Mikel Oyarzabal during a Champions League group D soccer match between Inter Milan and Real Sociedad at the San Siro stadium in Milan, Italy. (AP)

## Paes & Amritraj first Asian men elected to Tennis HoF

NEWPORT, Dec 13, (AP) — Leander Paes, who won 18 Grand Slam titles in men's doubles or mixed doubles, and ex-player, broadcaster and promoter Vijay Amritraj are the first Asian men elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

The Hall, which is based in Newport, Rhode Island, and has been around since 1955, announced its Class of 2024 on Wednesday. Also being inducted next year: Richard Evans, a British journalist and historian, who was selected in the Contributor Category.

Amritraj, also chosen in the Contrib-

### TENNIS

utor Category, and Paes, who enters in the Player Category, are both from India and that country's first members of the shrine. It is the 28th nation to be represented.

Li Na, a Chinese woman who won two Grand Slam singles titles, became the first Asian member of the International Tennis Hall of Fame when she was inducted in 2019.

Next year's induction ceremony will be held in Newport on July 20.

The selection of Paes ends a two-year drought in which no one nominated in the Player Category was picked. The Class of 2022 marked the first

time in the history no one on the ballot was selected, and it happened again for the Class of 2023.

Candidates need to be chosen on 75% of ballots; voters include media, historians, Hall of Fame members, industry experts and fans.

"It has been my life's honor to play for my country for over three decades in a sport that has given and taught me everything. ... Induction into the International Tennis Hall of Fame belongs not just to me, but to our billion-plus Indians," Paes said. "Receiving this honor culminates a professional journey of a lifetime, standing on the shoulders of greats and sets the tone for other youngsters in Asia and around the world."

He won eight major championships in doubles and 10 in mixed and is one of three men in tennis history with a career Grand Slam in both. He and one of his former doubles partners, Martina Navratilova, share the record for most mixed doubles trophies in Grand Slam competition.

Paes collected a total of 55 doubles titles on the men's tour and was No. 1 in the ATP doubles rankings for 37 weeks.

His 45 Davis Cup doubles match victories for India are a record, and he participated in seven Summer Olympics - the most for a tennis player - winning a bronze medal in singles at the 1996 Atlanta Games.