

ARAB TIMES

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY IN FREE KUWAIT Established in 1977 / www.arabtimesonline.com

Pages 15 & 16 SOCCET

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2023 / JUMADA AL THANI 14, 1445 AH

emergency number 112

NO. 18481

16 PAGES

150 FILS

Amir holds strategic talks on government formation



KUNA photo
Japanese calligraphy transforms into an artistic masterpiece, seamlessly blending the beauty of writing
and art in a captivating panel. — See Page 12

Opinion

Time wasted can never be recovered

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

WHEN studying the political scene in Kuwait, we are led to ask the following: Do we have proper, established relations between the two authorities - the legislative and the executive - in accordance with the constitutional text and based on sound democratic foundations? Or is it like a building that is made of paper and gets blown away by a breeze, leaving behind no traces?

From the 1960s, after we agreed on a democratic system, Kuwait faced several crises. They accumulated over the years, until they became



Al-Jarallah

very difficult to solve, because the understanding of democracy was governed by tribal or sectarian fear, and the game of interests.

This is why a sound relationship has not been established between the government and the parliament. The government is usually seeking to restrict the parliament in accordance with the visions of the Prime Minister or the

ministerial majority. The parliament persists in taking advantage of the constitutional loopholes and undermining the cooperation between the two authorities in order to dominate the executive administration.

The encroachment of powers, and even bypassing them, represents the tool used by the parliamentary blocs at several occasions, preventing the interests of those in control of it from approving laws that do not meet their interests, or do not serve any tribe and sect, as if the country were "cantons" and not a single state.

That is why appointments, even of the head of a police station or just an employee, were carried out based on the relationship between the minister and the parliamentarian. This quickly turned into a crisis, sometimes leading to the dismissal of the Council of Ministers or the dissolution of the National Assembly.

In recent years, this trend ended in something resembling administrative chaos and the takeover of industrial, agricultural, health, and education sectors, through laws that were tailored to suit the interests of the powerful, and not in the interest of Kuwait.

Throughout the decades that followed the liberation, all governmental attempts to pass laws that served the people had failed. The ones that the legislative authority passed under parliamentary pressure, the Kuwaitis did not accept, such as the law preventing coeducation, and the so-called "negative phenomena" to the point of inspecting people's intentions.

Unfortunately, the encroachment was not limited to the powers of ministers, but also reached the judicial authority, and we saw persistent attempts to dominate it.

No one did anything to prevent this parliamentary encroachment on the two authorities, except for an attempt that took place during the era of the late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad but that attempt was met with storms of denunciation, which led to the dissolution of the parliament in 1986 and the suspension of the constitution. It was one of the preludes, as we mentioned yesterday, to the Iraqi invasion.

At that time, there was no strong government working to convince the parliamentarians about the necessity of updating the Constitution and marketing its vision to the people. Also, the regional situation was encouraging tension and inflaming the relations between the social and political components.

All of this was not taken into consideration after the liberation. Rather, things went in the opposite direction, and the control over projects was used to serve personal agendas.

It was as if Kuwait was not a final homeland, but instead a temporary state. In order for these people to seize the highest number of benefits, they deliberately closed the country, for fear of competition.

This dismal scene in Kuwait has affected its economy, and spread corruption in it. Loyalty to the tribe and sect ended up being before the homeland.

Continued on Page 4

Email: ahmed@aljarallah.com Follow me on:





ahmedaljarallah@gmail.com

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah held meetings at Bayan Palace on Tuesday, engaging in consultations for the formation of a new government. The attendees included National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, former parliament speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, a

former prime minister.

The audience also included Their Highnesses Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, a former premier, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, also a former prime minister, and the current Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The discussions and receptions are integral to the ongoing consultations aimed at shaping the composition of the new government.

'Iran increasing production of highly enriched uranium'

VIENNA, Dec 26, (AP): Iran has increased the rate at which it is producing near weapons grade uranium in recent weeks, reversing a previous slowdown that started in the middle of this year, the International Atomic Energy Agency said in a report to member states.

Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said in the report that Iran "in recent weeks had increased its production of highly enriched uranium, reversing a previous output reduction from mid-2023," according to an IAEA spokesperson Sunday.

Iran had previously slowed down the rate at which it was enriching uranium to 60% purity. Uranium enriched at 60% purity is just a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%.

The U.N. nuclear watchdog said its

inspectors had verified the increased rate of production since the end of November at facilities in Natanz and Fordow to about 9 kilograms per month, up from 3 kilograms per month since June and representing a return to earlier levels of production.

Enriching uranium means increasing the percentage of uranium-235, the isotope of uranium that can be used in nuclear fission.

Bodies in Iraq belong to missing Kuwaiti, Saudi

Foreign minister confirms grim fate

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah announced today that the authorities in the Republic of Iraq have discovered the bodies of a Kuwait citizen and a Saudi national residing in Kuwait, who had

gone missing in Anbar Governorate, Iraq.

In a statement received by KUNA, Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah expressed deep sorrow and sadness at this tragic news, extending his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims. He prayed for God's mercy upon the deceased and for strength and solace for their grieving families.

The Foreign Minister affirmed that the Ministry had maintained continuous communication with Iraqi authorities, who exerted significant efforts to locate the individuals swiftly. He men-

cate the individuals swiftly. He mentioned ongoing coordination with the government of Iraq to uncover the circumstances surrounding

the incident and the findings of the ongoing investigations.

Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah instructed the Kuwaiti Embassy in Baghdad to closely monitor and facilitate the necessary procedures, commending the prompt and commendable efforts of the Iraqi leadership and authorities in swiftly determining the fate of

the deceased.

Earlier, a number of MPs have commented on the alleged kidnapping of a Kuwaiti citizen and a Saudi national residing in Kuwait while they were on a safari trip in the desert area between Al-Anbar and Saldin governorates in Iraq.

According to Al-Sumariya Iraqi TV, DAESH gangs kidnapped the two and burned their vehicle.

Deputy National Assembly Speaker MP Muhammad Al-Mutair called on the interim government to immediately secure the release of the two captives through diplomatic channels and in coordination with the Iraqi authorities.

MP Bader Al-Shemmari said he contacted Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti Embassy in Baghdad to intensify their efforts to release the two citizens and guarantee their safe return in collaboration with the concerned Iraqi authorities. He also praised the efforts exerted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the

Kuwaiti Embassy in Baghdad.
MP Meted Ayed Al-Raathan
urged Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah to
take the extra mile to release the
kidnapped and bring them back
to Kuwait as soon as possible.

Continued on Page 4

Newswatch

ANKARA: The Turkish parliament's foreign affairs committee was poised on Tuesday to resume deliberations on Sweden's bid to join NATO, days after President **Recep Tayyip Erdogan** linked the Nordic country's admission on **U.S.** approval of **Turkey**'s request to purchase F-16 fighter jets.

NATO-member Turkey lifted

its objection to **Sweden** joining the trans-Atlantic alliance in July but the ratification process has since stalled in parliament. Turkey accuses Sweden of not taking Turkey's security concerns seriously enough, including its fight against Kurdish militants and other groups that Ankara considers to be security threats. (AP)

QAMISHLI, Syria: Turkey intensified its airstrikes against Kurdish groups in **Syria** and northern **Iraq** in retaliation for the deaths of 12 Turkish soldiers in **Iraq** over the weekend.

The Turkish defense ministry said in a statement Monday that it had killed at least 26 militants in the strikes.

In northeast Syria, at least eight civilians were killed in Turkish airstrikes Monday, including two women, **Farhad Shami**, a spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, said in a post on X, formerly Twitter. (AP)



stc marks year of remarkable community impact

Details Page 10 -

OAPEC photo

Photo shows facilities for transporting and exporting hydrogen. Low-carbon hydrogen is shaping up to become one of the most promising energy resources that would lead to a better environment and help achieve the goal of carbon neutrality set by countries around the world. — See Page 8

Baghdad condemns US strikes on 'Iraqi military sites'

BAGHDAD, Dec 26, (Agencies): Iraq's government condemned US strikes on what they said was Iraqi military sites, referring to the action as hostile and unwarranted.

The Prime Minister's media office said in a statement that the government condemned the US strikes that targeted Iraqi military sites Tuesday, which resulted in the death of a soldier and injured 18 others including civilians.

In a statement Tuesday, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani condemned both the militia attack in Irbil and the U.S. response.

Attacks on "foreign diplomatic mission headquarters and sites hosting military advisors from friendly nations ... infringe upon Iraq's sovereignty and are deemed unacceptable under any circumstances," the statement said. However, it added that that the retaliatory strikes by the U.S. on "Iraqi military sites" - referring to the militia - "constitute a clear hostile act." Sudani said some of those injured in the

strikes were civilians.

US President Joe Biden ordered the United States military to carry out retaliatory airstrikes against Iranian-backed militia groups after three US service members were injured in a drone attack in northern Iraq.

National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said one of the U.S. troops suffered critical injuries in the attack that occurred earlier Monday. The Iranian-backed militia Kataib Hezbollah and affiliated groups, under an umbrella of Iranian-backed militants, claimed credit for the attack that utilized a one-way attack drone.

Iraqi officials said US strikes targeting militia sites early Tuesday killed one militant and injured 18. They came at a time of heightened fears of a regional spillover of the Israel-Hamas war.

Iran announced Monday that an Israeli strike on the outskirts of the Syrian capital of Damascus killed one of its top generals, Razi Mousavi, who had been a close companion of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the former head of Iran's elite Quds Force. Soleimani was slain in a U.S. drone strike in Iraq in January 2020.

Iranian officials vowed revenge for the killing of Mousavi but did not immediately launch a retaliatory strike. The militia attack Monday in northern Iraq was launched prior to the strike in Syria that killed Mousavi.

Continued on Page 4

Regional unrest mounts amid Israel-Hamas strife

RAFAH, Gaza Strip, Dec 26, (AP): Israeli forces bombarded Palestinian refugee camps in central Gaza on Tuesday, residents said, in apparent preparation to expand their ground offensive into a third section of the besieged territory.

The opening of a potential new battle zone points to the long and destructive road still ahead as Israel vows to crush Hamas after its Oct 7 attack on southern Israel. For weeks, Israeli forces have been engaged in heavy urban fighting in northern Gaza and in the southern city of Khan Younis, driving Pales-

tinians into further smaller corners of territory in search of refuge.

Despite international pressure for a cease-fire and U.S. calls for a reduction in civilian casualties, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday warned that the fight "isn't close to finished."

Israel's offensive has been one of the most devastating military campaigns in recent history. More than 20,600 Palestinians, two-thirds of them women and children, have been killed, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza, whose

Continued on Page 4



Palestinians mourn relatives killed in Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip in Khan Younis, Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2023. (AP)

Wafra

By Jaber Al-Hamoud/Munaif Nayef

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: The Criminal

Court sentenced to death a ruling family

member who was convicted of murdering

his friend, a Kuwaiti citizen Abdulaziz Al-

Lawyer Tariq Al-Khars stressed that the defendant

carried out his crime carelessly and arrogantly, leaving

cigarette butts near the crime scene and his shoe prints,

which helped the Public Prosecution in identifying him.
According to the case file, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor-

ate witnessed the crime on April 10, 2023 when the citizen

Abdulaziz Al-Za'atari was shot 12 times while standing in

front of his house. The suspect had worn a protective helmet

and he escaped as soon as he committed the crime. However,

the Criminal Security Sector managed to arrest the suspect

and find the weapon used for the crime. He was referred to

10 yrs in violent rape: The Court of Cassation upheld

the verdict issued earlier by the Court of Appeals which

sentenced a Kuwaiti citizen to ten-year imprisonment for

sexually assaulting an Asian woman who later committed

forcing himself on the victim after tying her up, and caus-

ing injuries, which were recorded in the medical report.

The Public Prosecution had charged the suspect with

the concerned authorities for necessary legal action.

suicide by jumping from the window of her flat.

12

Expected weather for the next

By Day: Mild and clouds will increase gradually with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of

Weather

By Night: Rather cold to cold and partly cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h. Station

Min Rec Max Exp

Kuwait Airport 12 Abdaly 23 10 24 Jahra 14 Salmiyah 21 18 Nuwaisib 22 14

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

'Height of green fence must not exceed two meters'

Municipality nod to temporary tents in close proximity to homes

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: The Municipal Council opened its eleventh regular session of the second term yesterday with a speech by the Vice President of the Municipal Council Khaled Al-Mutairi

He congratulated and pledged allegiance to the current Amir of the country Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad on assuming the reins

of the government, and called on Allah to help him be the best successor to the

best predecessor. Also, members Munira Al-Amir and Farah Al-Roumi paid tribute to the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, and offered congratulations, accompa-



nied by a pledge of allegiance, to the Amir of the country His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad. They wished His Highness success in leading the Kuwait ship towards a prosperous future in

During the session, the Municipal Council approved a draft ministerial decision regarding a regulation for the cultivation of state-owned squares adjacent to private and model residential homes.

One of the most prominent amendments was the approval of clause 10 in Article Four that the height of the green fence must be a maximum of two meters on all sides of the area. It also allowed the placement of temporary tents within the area licensed for planting purposes in accordance with the regulations and conditions stipulated

A new clause has been set that stipulates the exemption of Kuwaiti citizens with special needs from the regulations stated in clause 10 of article 4, and for the individual cases to be decided by the Municipal Council's Agriculture Committee.

As per the penalties specified in Article 11, anyone who violates the provisions of these regulations shall be imposed a fine ranging between KD 100 dinars and KD 1,000. The violator is obligated to return things back to what they were at his own

The violators of the provisions of article 1 will be fined between KD 500 and KD 1,000, and the return of things back to what they were, at their own expense.

In a related context, the Director General of Kuwait Municipality, Saud Al-Dabbous said the regulations for cosmetic planting are compatible with the rest of the regulations approved by the municipality, espe-

cially the building and canopy regulations. He said the aim of the decision to amend the cosmetic planting regulations was to upgrade them to match the rest of the relevant regulations, especially since they are old and were not amended for several

In response to the comment of a member of the Municipal Council Sharifa Al Shalfan who criticised the decision and claimed that the new amendments to the cosmetic planting regulations entail legitimizing infringement on state property, Al Dabbous explained that the cosmetic planting regulation is in line with the country's fourth structural plan and does not contradict it.

The Municipal Council also gave the final approval for the reorganization of part of Qibla Blocks 4 and 7 in Kuwait City, regarding which a decision was issued by

the Municipal Council on 7/4/2022.

It approved the proposal of member Munira Al-Amir regarding replacing the current street vendors system completely, and referred it to the upcoming meeting for discussion and decision on the matter. It also approved another proposal by Eng. Al-Amir regarding establishing a mechanism to resolve disputes between citizens and contracting and construction compa-

The Municipal Council approved two requests from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs - the first is to change the location for the construction of a mosque with allocated parking in Dajeej, South of Farwaniya, and the second to allocate a plot for the construction of a mosque within the site of the General Authority for the Holy Qur'an, Sunnah and its Sciences in South Surra. It also approved requests from the Ministry of Electricity and Water to allocate a site for building a transformer station in Jabriya Block 12, and to allocate a site for building the main transformer station in Doha to serve the Entertainment City project.

The Municipal Council approved the request of the Public Authority for Investment to allocate a path for the rainwater drainage network line to serve the site of the main building of the authority in

It also approved the proposal of member Fahd Al-Abduljader regarding the design and construction of a pedestrian bridge in Salhiya on Fahd Al-Salem Street.

The Municipal Council was informed about the objection of the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and the Minister of State for Communication Affairs Fahad Al-Shoula to the Municipal Council's decision for naming 11 new residential areas under the pretext that there was no committee to take part in the process assigned by the executive institutions.

Meanwhile, member Fahd Al-Abduljader said, "I am surprised by the Municipality Minister's objection to the naming decision. Logically, all of Kuwait is aware that the Municipal Council holds meetings and workshops regarding the naming of areas and cities. Why was the municipality not informed by the executive branch about the necessity of having the committee and then the designations are discussed?"

A representative of Minister Al-Shoula disclosed that the committee has already been formed and it includes representatives of a number of relevant official institutions, adding that the committee will revise the names given to the new residential areas

The Municipal Council was informed about the approval of the Council of Ministers, in its meeting held on November 27, 2023, of the objection of Al-Shoula to the Municipal Council's decision to approve the proposal submitted by member Alia Al-Farisi regarding the cleaning contracts of the Capital Governorate.

It was also informed about the Cabinet's objection to Al-Shaula's approval of the proposal submitted by Chairman of the Municipal Council Abdullah Al-Mahri regarding the establishment of a walkway for the people of Qadisiya opposite Blocks 1, 4, and 7 on the Moroccan Highway side. It stated that the distance between the walkway and the neighboring houses should not be less than 20 meters.

The Municipal Council agreed to refer to the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources the question submitted by member Sharifa Al-Shalfan regarding the names and locations of the parks affiliated with the municipality.

Death verdict in Za'atari murder

Kuwaiti gets 10 years in violent rape of Asian woman



KUNA photo

The representative of the State of Kuwait to the League of Arab States presents his credentials to the Secretary-General.

Kuwait rep. to AL presents credentials

The Permanent Kuwaiti Representative to the League of Arab States Ambassador Talal Khalid Al-Mutairi presented his credentials to the Arab League Secretary-General Ahmad Abul-Gheit.

During the event, Al-Mutairi renewed Kuwait's appreciation to the role the league played in reinforcing Arab cooperation and relayed the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's greetings and wishes to extend joint Arab cooperation.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Mutairi

expressed his appreciation and pride of the high trust bestowed upon him in honor of representing Kuwait in the League, stressing Kuwait's keenness to support joint Arab cooperation for the benefit of the Arab countries and their

Al-Mutairi praised the work that Kuwait did in bringing peace and security internationally, strengthening preventative diplomacy, and its humanitarian efforts in providing aid to Arab countries, one of which being the Kuwaiti Air Bridge that provides aid to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. (KUNA)

Cop attackers in custody: A family of four have been detained in Central Prison for a period of ten days for investigations after they attacked a policeman.

Security sources revealed that officers from the Ministry of Interior referred the family - a young man, his parents and his sister, who works as Lieutenant at the Ministry of Interior to the Central Prison.

They explained that a traffic officer stopped the motorist - the young man - because he had committed a traffic violation. However, he refused to step out of his vehicle when the officer asked him to, leading the officer to request for backup. Then his mother, father and sister arrived at the scene in separate cars. A dispute broke out between them and the traffic officers, during which the motorist and his mother attacked the traffic officer.

The entire family was referred to the police station of the area where a case was filed against them for attacking a securityman and humiliating him while he was on official duty. They were also accused of insulting a public employee, committing traffic violations, and misusing their smartphone for taking photographs. The main suspect's vehicle was seized and referred to the traffic im-

the Ministry of Interior affirmed that the ministry will take strict action against anyone who insults or attacks security

Other Voices

This is how we look at Russia'

By Sattam Ahmed Al-Jarallah CEO Arab Times/Al-Seyassah

The Russian President Vladimir Putin's tour of the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was a turning point in the course of the regional situation, because it shed light on many im-

portant points, whether in the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip, or the course of the special operation carried out by Russia in Ukraine, or with regard to oil and its supplies."

"It goes with-

out saying that



Al-Jarallah

the established Arab-Russian relations have an important role in supporting Arab issues, because Moscow's role historically has been in support of Arab rights, and it has even supported the Arabs throughout the past seven dec-

"Based on this history, the role of the Russian Federation today in the region is important, because it works according to a systematic plan to support the Arabs, whether in relation to the Palestinian issue, or the Arab-Israeli conflict, and Moscow is the pivot politically, geographically and economically with the Arab world

"There is no doubt that Kuwaiti-Russian relations are very old, and Kuwait does not forget the positive role that Moscow played in 1961, in order to gain its independence from the United Kingdom, as relations since 1963 were based on respect and cultural and commercial

"Rather, it can be said that Kuwait, since its independence, has been a channel for Russia to cross into the Gulf states.

"This mutual role between Moscow and Kuwait has been established in recent years, through many tools, but this must crystallize through several channels that still need to be developed, with a historical partner, whether in the fields of investment, transportation, nuclear, oil, or others.

"One of the areas, especially after Russia exempted Kuwaiti citizens from visas, which is a step that must be appreciated and worked towards in order to increase tourism and commercial exchange between the two

"This is especially since Kuwait signed a defense agreement between Kuwait and the Russian Federation and joint cooperation between the two friendly countries in 1993, which is part of the international system through which Kuwait strengthened its defense cooperation with the permanent members of the UN Security

"In all of this, we must acknowledge that what Russia is engaged in today, and in its confrontation with the West and the United States in Ukraine, is what can be considered an indirect protection of international peace, security, and stability, because Western arrogance and attempts to surround Russia with NATÔ armies mean, in the end, that if they succeed, the attempts to undermine the independence of countries outside the scope of Western hegemony, or what can be considered the killing of the last hope of freedom for peoples.

sattam@daralfayath.com

129 MEW workers deserve pension

MoC expenses hit KD 834 million

By Mohammad Ghanem Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: The Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) has informed the Ministry of Electricity and Water that 129 workers of those included in the lists sent by the ministry

deserve to receive pension. According to informed sources, these workers are above the age of 55 years and have spent 32 years in service, due to which they deserve pension as they meet the relevant regulations.

The lists sent included almost 500 workers who spent more than 30 years in service but not all of them reached 55 years of age, which is a main requirement to be referred to retirement with full pension.

Meanwhile, according to an official report, the total expenditure of the Ministry of Communications in the 2022/2023 fiscal year reached KD 834.245 million, which makes up 72 percent of the total budget of KD 1 billion and 80 million allocated for the ministry.

The expenditure amount is lower by almost KD 130.8 million compared to the previous fiscal year, reaching KD 965.055 million.

The expenditure included the payment of salaries and allowances worth about KD 253.297 million to the employees. The second item of expenditure is KD 532.866 million for the noncurrent assets, for which 68 percent of the budget was allocated. This amount is lower than the amount spent for the same purpose in the previous fiscal year by KD 101.9 million. The rest of the budget was spent on developmental and construction projects at the Ministry of Communications.

'Lack of interest'

KOC board resigns

By Najeh Bilal Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and **Agencies**

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: Members of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Oil Company Workers Union collectively resigned in protest after the General Assembly meeting was held

yesterday evening without a quorum.

Sources revealed to Al-Seyassah that despite the absence of a quorum, the meeting proceeded, and repre-sentatives of the Public Authority for Manpower, despite being informed, were not present to supervise the ex-

traordinary general assembly. The meeting aimed to secure approval from the general assembly members for the new proposals in the union's bylaws system.

Barias replaced: The First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, has issued a ministerial decision assigning Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf to carry out the duties of Under-

The decision came after the retirement of Lieutenant-General Anwar Al-Barjas due to the end of the legal period.

secretary of the Ministry of Interior.

A security source said that Lieutenant General Al-Barjas was promoted to first lieutenant general before his retirement, after a distinguished career that spanned more than four decades, during which he spent in several different positions.

Man runs away with showroom car

By Munaif Nayef

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: A Kuwaiti citi-

zen was arrested for stealing a new car from a showroom where the car was displayed for sale. According to security sources, the

suspect went to the showroom of a major car company, and he drove off with Investigations were conducted by securitymen after they received a com-

plaint from the concerned official in the car showroom. The investigations helped in identifying the suspect, and he was arrested in Sa'ad Al-Abdullah.

When questioned, he admitted to steal-

ing the car. He handed over the stolen car to the securitymen.

Abandoned cars: Al-Ahmadi Municipality men, with the support of the Al-Ahmadi Security Directorate, launched a campaign to remove a number of neglected vehicles from state property in the Fahaheel area.

The campaign, which came under the supervision of the Fahaheel Center for Cleanliness and Road Works, Muhammad Qanis Al-Hajri, resulted in the removal of 5 trucks and the placement of stickers on a number of vehicles, provided that these vehicles will be removed if they are not removed.

pound garage. The Public Relations and Security Media Department of

Increase in Kuwait's import bill for goods

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: Official statistics showed an increase in Kuwait's import bill for goods by about 13.3 percent or KD1 billion in the first nine months of 2023, reports

The total value of merchandise imports into Kuwait from January to September amounted to about KD8.64 billion, compared to KD7.6 billion in 2022. The increase in the bill of goods imported into Kuwait was mainly driven by waves of global price inflation, in addition to the increase in the volume of merchandise imports by more than 2.9 million

The volume of goods imported by Kuwait increased by 12.4 percent to reach 26.8 million tons from January to September 2023, compared to KD23.84 million in 2022.

Kuwait's imports from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) reached KD787 million, KD444 million from Saudi Arabia, KD70 million from Iran, KD2.89 billion from China (33 percent of Kuwait's total imports), KD523 million from Japan, KD480 million from India, KD134 million from Thailand, and KD98.5 million from Egypt.

Kuwait's export revenues witnessed a decline during the first nine months of the current year by 18.7 percent or KD4.47 billion as the amount reached KD19.3 billion by the end of September this year, compared to KD23.83 billion in 2022.

Goods

The quantity of goods exported by Kuwait increased by about 1.39 percent or 1.34 million tons as the total from January until the end of September 2023 was 97.26 million tons, compared to 95.9 million tons in 2022.

Kuwait's exports to the UAE during the first nine months of the year amounted to about KD285 million, KD160 million to Saudi Arabia, KD93 million to Iraq, KD1.6 million to Gaza, KD82 million to Pakistan, KD13.5 million to Turkey, KD144 million to China and Hong Kong, KD232 million to

India and KD27 million to Egypt.

In the first nine months of this year, Kuwait imported KD423 million worth of live animals and products, including KD43 million of live animals, KD165.3 million of meat, KD49.24 million of fish, and KD165 million of dairy products, eggs and honey.

Kuwait's purchases of chocolate and its products in the first nine months of 2023 amounted to KD45.5 million with cocoa and its preparations amounting to KD18.5 million in the first quarter of the year, KD13.14 million in the second quarter and KD13.8 million in the third quarter.

Kuwait's imports of medicines amounted to about KD441.4 million, as the pharmaceutical products item included imports amounting to KD167.4 million in the first quarter, KD134.37 million in the second quarter and KD139.6 million in the third quarter. Kuwait imported perfumes worth KD196 million with es-

sential oils, resinous material extracts, perfume and softening preparations amounting to KD66.38 million in the first quarter, KD66.6 million in the second quarter and KD62.56 million in the third quarter.

Kuwait's imports of children's toys amounted to KD41.23 million -- KD14.37 million in the first quarter, KD15.13 million in the second quarter and KD11.7 million in the third

طيوانية 🕈 diwaniya

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Inaugural speech leads to govt, Parliament debates

"THE distinguished address delivered during the inauguration ceremony sparked discussions on the relationship between legislative and executive authorities, as well as the coordination between them, which was perceived to have adversely impacted the country's interests," columnist Mubarak Fahd Al-Duwailah wrote for Al-Qabas

"This speech prompted certain MPs to issue a statement clarifying some facts they believed were overlooked by

"The eloquent speech aimed to delineate the nature of the relationship between the two authorities, highlighting precautions to prevent a recurrence of the pitfalls experienced by previous

administrations and councils. It also provided a glimpse into the anticipated transformations in how the state would be governed in the new era.



Al-Duwailah

guity, clarifying facts that might be unclear to some, and underscoring loyalty and obedience to the ruler.

"Following the crucial session, four points became subjects of controversy, leading the Prime Minister to promptly submit his resignation to His Highness the Amir. The representatives, however, found it unnecessary to take a position other than clarifying perceived confusion.

"The critique primarily centred on the so-called parachute appointments in certain ministries and state institutions, the amnesty file and its contents, the citizenship issue and attempts to alter national identity, and the rehabilitation law and its expedited approval.

"The MPs clarified that they were innocent of these matters, asserting that parachute appointments were made through ministerial decisions and decrees, amnesty lists were formulated and approved by government agencies, and the National Assembly had no involvement.

"Regarding nationality issues, the judiciary played a decisive role, with the National Assembly having no influence. The rehabilitation law was a government project agreed upon by both authorities before approval

"In conclusion, the sublime speech and its contents are duly acknowledged and appreciated by all. His Highness's speech remains paramount, deserving respect and consideration, with the hope that God grants His Highness a prosperous reign."

"Following the failure of the Zionist state to find anyone in Gaza criticizing Hamas, despite the challenges faced by the people, a Zionist from the Liberation Organization in the West Bank emerged timidly to criticize Hamas and vow to hold it accountable for the Strip's destruction.

'This move came after the announcement of the failure of the military campaign by the Zionist leadership.

Also:

"In the historic session of the National Assembly last Wednesday, His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Mesha'al Al-Ahmad, emphasized the need to establish comprehensive guidelines, particularly regarding "serious accountability for negligence, dereliction, and tampering," Walid Ibrahim Al-Ahmad wrote for Al-Rai daily.

"Many of the setbacks experienced by our nation since "after liberation" until today, hindering our developmental progress, can be attributed to the mishandling of public funds, non-compliance with laws, lack of oversight and accountability, and the absence of a clear strategy to cleanse and eradicate the corruption that has tarnished the Kuwaiti image.

"A disturbing trend is observed when comparing the number of individuals involved in illicit activities within established projects to those engaged in legitimate endeavors. The former significantly outnumbers the latter, contributing to our decline and placing us at the bottom of the development spectrum.

"It is untrue to claim that technologically, industrially, or developmentally advanced countries are immune to malpractices, profiteering, exploitation, and unethical conduct. However, the crucial question is the proportion of such misconduct relative to actual achievements.

"The forthcoming phase necessitates putting an end to profiteering, the influence of merchants and powerful figures, as well as sheikhs leveraging their positions for personal gains in decision-making. Simultaneously, there is a need to curb negligence, enhance monitoring, eliminate hidden conflicts, and address the issue of "parachute' appointments.

"The misuse of public funds, the questionable distribution of donations, millions, and farms by successive governments to undeserving individuals seeking political favor or support must be scrutinized.

"All members of society, including National Assembly representatives, bear responsibility for the nation's developmental stagnation. Despite vociferous calls to combat corruption, some representatives contribute to the problem by endorsing corrupt practices in appointments, transfers, assignments, and circumventing the law.

"Unless there is a genuine commitment to applying the law uniformly,

wrongdoing remain unattainable. "In summary, it is imperative to halt the power struggles evident in the rush to claim a share of the metaphorical cake before others, and sincere efforts are needed to rectify these situations. With the collective commitment to change, we hope for a better future.'

irrespective of status, and rendering judgments against those exploiting

the country for personal gain, the na-

tion's well-being and the eradication of

"Will we witness a new equation that confirms the change in the political scene and move it from the unknown to a clear vision until we find the path and take the first step of a thousand miles?" columnist M. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Khorafi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Yes, it is a journey of a thousand miles, if the stagnation of political and development scenes continues. Rather, it will turn into thousands of miles, as challenges grow, difficulties increase and confrontation becomes difficult, since stagnation has affected most, if not all, of our economic and social sec-

"Education, health, infrastructure and the gross domestic product sectors are witnessing stagnation. Economic growth is nothing but growth driven by rising oil prices. The general budget is also captive to oil prices. If they rise, we achieve a surplus, and if they decrease, there is a deficit. Is this what we want and will remain with us? The answer: Absolutely not. We are in dire need of a new start, such that we are not

at the end of the ride.
"The beginning should be marked by change, revitalization of the political scene, and a shift from the dominance of one team to a genuine popular participation in the National Assembly and Council of Ministers regardless of who are part of such a team, defeating the politics of axes or the rule of one team, and then push for real political pluralism and national unity as the basis of transformations in the development and social sectors.

"This is not a form of theorizing, as the fundamental transformation of the data and components of the political scene into a new and broad start comes with many pieces of evidence, including our brothers in other Gulf countries that witnessed a start, rather developmental breakthroughs, have had achievements, broad popular satisfaction, and replaced pessimism with

"Kuwait does not lack the elements of progress, wealth, history and qualified human resources. It has all of these in abundance. Kuwaitis stand united behind their leader -- HH the Amir -- with their arms wrapped around him. All of us are hoping that a strong and trustworthy crown prince will be chosen, with experience in managing the State, skills acquired through experience, knowledge of public affairs and abilities to support HH the Amir.

"The biggest concern is the continuation of the current scene, including the dominance of one team, the policy of exclusion, and the elements of stagnation. This has been proven to be a scene of stagnation and disruption. Whoever says otherwise should look at our international and development indicators. Education, economy and government administration must be reformed through a bold decision and serious efforts.

"Kuwait's vision, whatever its extent, must be reconsidered, as what was realistic more than two decades ago may not be so today. The development plans, which we hear about but do not see their impact, must be reconsidered in terms of preparation, methodology and implementation. The economic administration and its institutions are in dire need of serious fundamental reforms based on the market economy. We must reconsider and ponder on many things.

"Fixing all of these is a daunting task that requires a clear vision, a bold decision, and a comprehensive plan that will put us on the right path and lift us out of frustration and despair. It is our homeland, let us work for it."

"Lost in poetry and literature... Praise Allah, who made us - Muslims -- believe in death as we believe in life. May Allah have mercy on the late great Abdulaziz Al-Babtain whose death made Kuwait lost its icon of poetry and literature. May Allah have mercy on him, make him dwell in His spacious gardens and put everything he gave in the balance of his good deeds. The Arab literary arena has lost its middle pillar, a great writer who loved Arabic Literature and made fun of himself. He passed away after a life full of giving in all aspects of life, not just in poetry and literature," columnist Talal Al-Saeed wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"The virtuous, kind, generous and self-made man -- who built himself up until he reached what he had reached -- passed away. He never denied the beginnings of his life. He was proud and boasted about them without shame or arrogance. This is how great men are. They work and leave. History speaks

for them!
"May Allah have mercy on him. He adopted Arabic poetry and literature through the 'Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Award Foundation,' which crossed the continents, becoming a global award that countries have the honor of being established on their soil. Writers are keen on participating in this award of great literary value.'

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

Warning: Don't feed stray dogs

PAAAFR denies dog bite killed girl

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: The Director of the Department of Animal Health at the Public **Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish** Resources (PAAAFR) Abdullah Al-Badhal denied the rumors that claim a girl died of a stray dog attack, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, Al-Badhal clarified that the victim received necessary medical treatment and left the clinic on the same day. This fact has been confirmed by

both the clinic and the police station of the area.

He revealed that the girl was not bitten by a stray dog but

Al-Badhal explained that the Department of Animal Health at PAAAFR works hard with full capacity to deal with stray dogs. About five trucks have been allocated for collecting the stray dogs. Almost 1,600 to 1,700 stray dogs have been collected in the last five months and they have been kept in a shelter located in Fahaheel. A specific plan is laid down to put an end to the phenomenon of the growing number of stray dogs.

He called upon citizens and residents to put an end to the attitude of helping stray dogs to multiply, such as by feeding them and allocating specific places to offer food to them.

Meanwhile, PAAAFR received over 5,000 complaints about stray dogs in the last five years.

Statement

It had earlier issued a statement to stress that stray dogs in Kuwait come from remote and isolated areas where there are a large number of them.

It revealed that it has a strategy to minimize the number of stray dogs by providing adequate shelters where both the male and female dogs are neutered and spayed, given vaccinations against rabies, and rehabilitated in preparation to be handed over to the concerned societies and volunteers for adoption.

PAAAFR highlighted the coordination with the concerned animal care associations

In the Letter No. 4554 sent on March 14, 2021, PAAAFR addressed the Municipal Council to allocate plots in Wafra and Abdali areas to be used as shelters for stray dogs . PAAAFR said it met with the relevant committee of the Municipal Council in September during which the request was approved. Procedures are ongoing to impose more requirements to importing dogs and encourage the adoption of rehabilitated dogs from the shelters run by PAAAFR.

PAAAFR indicated that it is preparing a plan currently to minimize the number of stray dogs, especially in residential areas but this plan is not a sustainable one.

It clarified that coordination is ongoing with the Financial Affairs Department to lay down a sustainable strategy for this purpose.

PAAAFR explained that exporting stray dogs is part of the

solution but such an action is not part of the responsibility of official institutions. Rather, it is rather the task of concerned animal care Entities.

It revealed that it receives the reports about stray dogs via the Hotline No. 122 of the Ministry of Interior and via the Telephone No. 56575070 of the concerned teams at PAAAFR in addition to the complaints received through Sahel app.

Eateries found selling ill-prepared foodstuff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: Inspection supervisor for Hawally Governorate at the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) Mohammad Al-Kandari confirmed the closure of nine food establishments proven to have committed various violations, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Kandari told the daily that the above-mentioned establishments in the governorate were found to be operating without obtaining a license from the authority, clarifying that reconciliation is not permissible for this violation and those behind the violation were referred to the Public Prosecution. He said the establishments also sold food items not fit for

human consumption; disclosing the inspectors discovered that the natural properties of the food products were altered including the color, shape and smell. He added the food items were destroyed and a violation report was submitted to the prosecution, citing non-compliance with public sanitation regulations as insects and dirt were found on the floor and walls. He disclosed a food preparation facility that belongs to a

restaurant was shut down for selling food not fit for human consumption; indicating that moldy lemons were used for preparing the food. He stressed that among the serious violations which led to the closure of the facility are those considered threats to human health like the sale of food not fir for human "We found moldy cauliflower, lemon and many vegetables

in the refrigerator; as well as adulterated food, unlabeled food products, including meat and chicken that have been cooked, re-frozen, and packed in non-designated containers. The fine for this violation could reach KD1,000," he concluded.

On the total number of violations in the first half of December, Al-Kandari revealed that more than 60 violation reports were submitted to the prosecution and 15 establishments were shut down within this period. He went on to explain that the closed establishments were allowed to open temporarily to address their violations, not to engage in business. He confirmed that the inspectors visited these establish-

ments again to ensure the violations were addressed and then they were allowed to operate again. He pointed out that it is not permissible to issue warnings for such violations, as the protocol is to issue a direct arrest report.

He enumerated other violations like the workers handling food without a health certificate from the competent authorities. "In this case, a report is issued against the employee and the employer. Reconciliation is allowed and the specified fine must be paid within a period of 60 days," he added.

Expat drug trafficker nabbed with 'heroin'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: The Farwaniya police have arrested an expatriate drug dealer with 57 bags of crystal meth and heroin during a planned operation in the Khaitan area.

As per information provided by a security source to Al-Anba, the Director of Farwaniya Investigations received confidential intel about an individual engaged in narcotics trade in

Acting on this information, he directed his team to monitor and verify the details. Following several days of surveillance and investigation, it was confirmed that the drug dealer, in his thirties, was an expatriate. A covert source was employed, an agreement was reached to purchase a quantity of narcotics, and during the exchange near a café in the Khaitan area, the location was raided. The suspect was arrested with 57 bags containing heroin and crystal meth.

In the subsequent interrogation, the suspect confessed to his involvement in narcotics trade for an extended period, sourcing the substances from an unknown supplier. Consequently, both the suspect and the seized narcotics were handed over to the Public Prosecution. Meanwhile, under the supervision of Brigadier General Mu-

hammad Al-Mutairi, the Director General of Ahmadi Security, Operations Support Patrol officers initiated a comprehensive security and traffic campaign in the Wafra and Al-Julaiah ar-

The operation resulted in the arrest of 10 individuals wanted for various offenses and violations of residency laws, belonging to different Asian and Arab nationalities. Additionally, 10 vehicles were seized for reckless driving and noise disturbances from exhaust systems, with the drivers referred to the traffic detention garage. The campaign also identified 13 remaining violations and issued 32 traffic citations.



One of the serious violations that exposes workers and neighboring buildings to

Fire, no safety rules at site

Contractors cited for 52 violations

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: Kuwait Municipality persisted in its rigorous inspection campaigns to unearth violations in construction projects across the six governorates of Kuwait. The primary objective is to safeguard the security and well-being of workers and individuals overseeing residential construction initiatives.

Over the past four months, the Capital Municipality has issued 52 reports of building regulation violations and 16 warnings, targeting 14 engineering offices and contractors for non-compliance with established building regulations.

Abdullah Al-Jaber, the construction supervisor in the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department of the Capital Municipality, informed the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the ongoing campaign in the Jaber Al-Ahmad area revealed several severe breaches of security and safety standards. In response, numerous minutes and warnings were issued to the responsible contractors.

Al-Jaber detailed some observed violations related to the enforcement of security and safety measures for workers and the areas adjacent to construction sites. Notably, a fire hazard was identified near a building under construction, prompting the immediate evacuation of all workers. The contractor was summoned to face legal consequences in accordance with municipal regulations.

Among the highlighted infractions were workers failing to wear safety helmets and neglecting other essential safety precautions, posing a significant risk to their wellbeing. Al-Jaber emphasized that these violations are reported to competent authorities within Kuwait Municipality, initiating judicial processes to determine the penalties in line with explicit regulatory provi-

He underscored the municipality's unwavering commitment to conducting these campaigns throughout the year across all six governorates.

Other Voices

Travels of Saud Al-Sanousi

By Ahmad alsarraf

read dozens of novels by Kuwaiti Lnovelists and writers, and most of them were good, and a few of them were distinguished, but the novels "Bamboo Stalk" and "Travels of the City of Mud," by the creative storyteller, the young Saud Al-Sanousi, occupied a spe-

cial place in my heart, especially the second one, perhaps because of the connecbetween tion many from its events in my childhood and my relationship with the sea and Furjan, the



markets, Seif Palace, the American Hospital, and other places and events I experienced, they sometimes made me happy, often tired me, and sometimes made me cry.

"Travels of the City of Mud," spanning two parts and nearly nine hundred pages, with an eagerly anticipated third part, stands as a universal novel. Its storytelling, events, and most notably, the imagination of the author, who despite being just over forty, takes you on a journey as if you had lived through a century of the novel's events.

As I turned the pages of the novel, I experienced peculiar sensations. The scent of the sea seemed to fill my nostrils, and I could almost hear the rustling of water grasses or the crunching of frost under my feet. It was as if the beach sand was slipping between my toes or as if I walked alongside the writer through the old markets of Kuwait. Memories flooded back as I imagined crossing the short street separating the two Madouh cemeteries, a route I took daily to school, recalling the curiosity and embarrassment I felt passing the four ruined houses known for their dubious reputation. In the words of the central char-

acter, "Sa'adoun," Saud captures the essence of the sea: "...if I die, I may not be buried among the houses of Al-Mataba in the 'Bin Haqqan' cemetery. It is the sea that inhales the scents of its phases." Saud vividly describes the various

scents associated with the sea, from the salty mud in the afternoon hours to the calciferous wind exhaled by the bones of dead squid. The sea becomes a repository of voices and memories, drowning out the sound of its breathing with the rhythmic sounds of tambourines, sea drums, and the chants of men and women. Saud's prose paints a vivid picture

of life by the sea, capturing the multifaceted essence of its scents, sounds, and the cultural tapestry woven by the people living in its proximity. His words evoke a sensory experience that transports the reader to the shores of Kuwait, creating a profound connection to the novel's rich narrative.

The novel "Travels of the City of Mud" is beautiful and worth reading and purchasing.

e-mail: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw



Directors of educational zones urged to nominate heads of panels

MoE to form committees on following up examination process

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

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: As part of the preparations for the final examinations of the first semester for high school students scheduled to begin on January 7, 2024,

the Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Adel Al-Manea issued decisions to form committees that will be tasked with following up the examination

Regular students of the public sector schools will take the exams in

their own schools, while the private sector students, students of adult schools, and home-schooled students will sit for the exams in the places to be determined by every educational zone after receiving approval from the undersecretary of the Ministry of Education

The decisions included reshuffling the heads of the examination committees for the final exams of the first semester, the final exams of the second semester, and the summer course

The decisions called on the directors of educational zones to nominate

the heads of examination committees to be approved by the undersecretary after the assistant undersecretary for Public Education Affairs makes a presentation in this regard.

Al-Manea issued directives to nominate a sufficient number of teachers for invigilating students while they take their exams, stressing that none of the teachers can invigilate students who are their relatives.

Sources revealed that around 200 heads of exam committees will be reshuffled as per the decision of Al-

'Rediscover Thailand', Ambassador Polpipat calls on Kuwaiti investors

Thai-Kuwaiti ties described as excellent and historic

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to Kuwait Ekapol Polpipat has affirmed the depth and strength of Thai-Kuwaiti relations, describing them as excellent and historic, pointing to their development at all levels and various areas of cooperation over the course of 60 years, which is the lifetime of bilateral relations between the two countries, while noting the existence of 20 agreements and memorandums of understanding that guide bilateral relations between the two countries, reports Al-Anba daily.

In his first interview with a local newspaper, Polpipat stressed that Kuwait is one of the main players in the region, and its calm and balanced diplomacy is the most prominent reason for supporting security and stability here. He said Kuwait has a distinctive democratic climate, freedom of expression is protected, and it has a strong parliament



Polpipat

political experience, revealing that political consultations between the two countries will be held in Thailand in the first

and a unique

quarter of next year. He added the number of the Thai community in Kuwait does not exceed a thousand people, and it is a qualified and trained community that works in a number of sectors. He confirmed that Thailand has discussions with the Kuwaiti side to bring in more trained workers.

He asserted: "Our bilateral relationship is developing significantly at all levels and in various fields of cooperation. Therefore, we have broad and active areas of ioint cooperation, such as political and economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and tourism of all kinds. We have been working with the Kuwaiti side on an agreement to bring trained Thai workers, including doctors and nurses, to Kuwait. The Kuwaiti side signed an agreement to protect investments to encourage investments, especially since Kuwait Investment Authority has been investingd in our country for many years and we seek to increase the volume of these investments, especially since we have a distinctive investment climate and environment."

Rediscover

He called on Kuwaiti investors to rediscover Thailand as a distinctive investment destination; especially in the areas of green economy, technology, food security, energy security, and the hospitality and hotels sector.

He pointed out that Thailand has great potential in the medical sector. "We have an agreement with Kuwait regarding cooperation in the health field that was signed on Oct 17, 2012. I am hap-

py to say that Thailand is one of the most prominent medical and therapeutic tourism destinations for Kuwaitis, due to the presence of hospitals, health centers and high-class doctors of internationally acclaimed competence and specialists in all fields, providing the best medical services at reasonable prices. We also encourage more cooperation in new aspects of this sector. We are discussing with the Kuwaiti side to prepare an agreement to support and promote medical tourism. We have a number of Thai doctors and nurses who visit Kuwait from time to time in cooperation with hospitals and health centers in Kuwait.

He explained that Thailand is one of the favorite tourist destinations among Kuwaitis, who visit it every year in large numbers. "Kuwaiti tourists are welcome in our country, and they do not need a visa to enter for a period of 30 days. For non-Kuwaitis, they obtain a visa through easy procedures, and the issuance period does not exceed three working days. In general, we receive 50 applications to obtain a visa daily. Last year, more than 40,000 Kuwaitis visited Thailand," he revealed.

Time wasted

Continued from Page 1

On the other hand, the countries of the region moved toward openness to the world, and developed at a record speed, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman, all of which preceded Kuwait by light years.

This is because in all countries of the world, the head of state can stop any tampering if he has access to a trustworthy group of competent advisors.

The Gulf countries, when they gained independence from Britain in 1970, did not abandon foreign experts. Rather, these experts stayed for years until the people of the country accumulated experience, and worked to build a correct identity based on loyalty to the homeland.

In fact, this is what all countries, which went through difficult periods, did, because they realized from the beginning that they would not be able to progress without the help of others.

In China, when a British academic of Iraqi origin, Elias Korkis, who was called the pioneer of the Chinese Renaissance, was hired, no one objected, neither from the ruling party nor from the tribes and sects of that country.

Therefore, it is necessary to work quickly, because time wasted can never be recovered, and we should not reach the point of crying over spilled milk.

Bodies in

Continued from Page 1

MP Khalid Al-Otaibi asked Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah to do everything he can to secure their release and bring them back

MP Falah Al-Hajri disclosed that he contacted one of the kidnapped, indicating the two looked worried and that the image was vague. He added their families are worried as well, pointing out that the action taken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not enough considering the gravity of the situation

In another development, the parliamentary fact-finding committee tasked to investigate violations in the distribution of agricultural, industrial and vocational plots finalized its report on Tuesday. The committee held 23 meetings and interrogated 98 individuals, including the concerned senior officials. The committee will soon coordinate with the Parliamentary Priorities Committee to include the report in the agenda of the National Assembly.

The fact-finding committee consists of MPs Abdullah Al-Mudhaf, Muhannad Al-Sayer, Marzouq Al-Hebeini, Abdullah Fehad and Abdulaziz Al-Saqaabi.

The Real Estate and Housing Affairs Committee recently discussed its assignment to investigate the delayed provision of basic services and infrastructure in modern and newly established residential areas.

The committee issued a statement affirming that the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) promised to provide 4,400 houses in Taimaa, Sulaibiya and Qairawan; adding that the details about the distribution of these houses will be revealed from April to June 2024. The committee said the houses will be completed within two years, while it will take one year for the beneficiaries to transfer to these houses. It went on to say that it will take two to three years to complete the infrastructure works in the aforementioned areas.

Furthermore, MP Mehalhal Al-Mudhaf forwarded queries to Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of State for National Assembly and Cabinet Affairs Essa Al-Kandari; Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil, Economic and Investment Affairs Saad Al-Barrak; Minister of Justice and State Minister for Housing Affairs Faleh Al-Raqaba; Minister of Commerce and Industry and State Minister for Youth Affairs Muhammad Al-Aiban; Minister of Health Ahmed Al-Awadhi; Minister of Information, Endowments and Islamic Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi; Minister of Social Affairs and State Minister for Family, Women and Children Affairs Sheikh Feras Al-Sabah; and Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Adel Al-Ma-

Al-Mudhaf wants to know the number of consultants in every ministry and their subsidiaries; including the nationalities, qualifications, experience, salaries, allowances and job descriptions. He requested for copies of the decisions to delegate and appoint the consultants in the ministers' offices, as well as the directors in the ministries and their subsidiaries. He also inquired about the number of consultants from the Legal Advice and Legislation Department who were seconded to the ministries and their subsidiaries.

Meanwhile, as part of the MPs' role to monitor and protect the funds of shareholders in consumer cooperative societies; MP Osama Al-Zaid asked Minister of Social Affairs and State Minister for Family, Women and Children Affairs Sheikh Feras Al-Sabah to provide him with copies of the reports of the fact-finding committee tasked to audit the accounting files of five cooperatives in September 2023 -- Rawda and Hawally Cooperative Society, Mishref Cooperative Society, Al-Massayel Cooperative Society and Ishbeliya Cooperative Society. He pointed out that reviewing the reports will help in the issuance of laws needed to develop the cooperative sector. He wants to know the steps taken to implement the recommendations included in the reports, in addition to the timetable for the full implementation of these recommenda-

MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf asked Minister of Justice and State Minister for Housing

Affairs Faleh Al-Raqaba if his relative was appointed as head of the National Assembly Affairs Department at Ministry of State for Housing Affairs. If yes, he wants to know if the job was advertised as per the relevant regulations to guarantee justice and equal opportunities. He also demanded for a copy of the fingerprint attendance record of the minister's relative since he was appointed till date, as well as the total salaries and allowances he received.

Al-Hajraf disclosed he obtained information that the head of the Office of the Minister of State for Housing Affairs committed administrative and financial violations, but Al-Raqaba did not investigate the issue. He asked if the official in question is exempted from the fingerprint attendance system. If yes, he requested for copies of all decisions to exempt certain officials from the fingerprint attendance. He wants to know the allowances paid to this official, if any.

MP Abdulwahab Al-Essa forwarded queries to Minister of Commerce and Industry and State Minister for Youth Affairs Muhammad Al-Aiban about the report published on social media that the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises formed a fact-finding committee to investigate the alleged manipulation of the fingerprint attendance system by some employees at the fund. He inquired if a neutral committee was tasked to investigate the issue. If yes, what are the recommendations of the neutral committee and if the case was referred to Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) and Public Prosecution?

MP Marzouq Al-Ghanim forwarded queries to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd about the suspicious contracts for the purchase of spy devices to be funded by Kuwait Army as mentioned by the minister on Dec 12, 2023 when the Assembly discussed the allegation that the Military Intelligence Unit tortured a citizen.

Al-Ghanim wants to know when the minister discovered the suspicious contracts, measures taken in this regard, if the case was referred to the concerned judicial institution, results of investigations, if the devices were discovered, manner of using these devices, penalties imposed on involved individuals, and connection between the suspicious contracts and the illegal arrest and torture of the citizen.

On the other hand, Chairperson of Kuwaiti- Japanese Parliamentarian Friendship Society MP Jenan Bu Shehri recently met with Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait Morino Yasunari. They discussed several issues of mutual concern and ways to strengthen parliamentarian cooperation between the two friendly countries. Members of the society MP Jarrah Al-Fawzan and MP Dawoud Maarefi attended the meeting.

Regional unrest

Continued from Page 1

count doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants.

Meanwhile, there were new signs of the Israel-Hamas war enflaming tensions around the region. An Israeli airstrike in Syria killed an Iranian general, bringing vows of revenge from Iran. U.S. warplanes hit Iranian-backed militias in Iraq that had carried out a drone strike that wounded American soldiers there.

Residents of central Gaza on Tuesday

shaking the Nuseirat, Maghazi and Bureij camps. The camps are built-up towns, housing Palestinians driven from their homes in what is now Israel during the 1948 war and their descendants - and now are also crowded with people who fled the north.

"The bombing was very intense," Radwan

described a night of shelling and airstrikes

"The bombing was very intense," Radwan Abu Sheitta, a Palestinian teacher said by phone from his home in Bureij. "It seems they are approaching," he said of Israeli troops.

The Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military arm, said that its fighters struck an Israeli tank east of Bureij. Its report couldn't be independently confirmed, but it suggested Israeli forces were moving toward the camp.

Baghdad condemns

Continued from Page 1

Biden, who was spending Christmas at the presidential retreat at Camp David, Maryland, was alerted about the attack by White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan shortly after it occurred Monday and ordered the Pentagon and his top national security aides to prepare response options to the attack on an air base used by American troops in Irbil

American troops in Irbil.

Sullivan consulted with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. Biden's deputy national security adviser, Jon Finer, was with the president at Camp David and convened top aides to review options, according to a U.S. official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and requested anonymitm.

ity.
Within hours, Biden convened his national security team for a call in which Austin and Gen. CQ Brown, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, briefed Biden on the response options. Biden opted to target three locations used by Kataib Hezbollah and affiliated groups, the official said.

The U.S. strikes were carried out at about 4:45 a.m. Tuesday in Iraq, less than 13 hours after the U.S. personnel were attacked. According to U.S. Central Command, the retaliatory strikes on the three sites "destroyed the targeted facilities and likely killed a number of Kataib Hezbollah militants"

"The President places no higher priority than the protection of American personnel serving in harm's way," Watson said. "The United States will act at a time and in a manner of our choosing should these attacks continue."



Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday) 2 Bedroom Chalet Queen Cabana (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night. per night. NOW NOW BHD 57.173/-net BHD 128.000/-net Weekends (Thursday & Friday) Queen Cabana 2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night. per night. NOW NOW BHD 61.000/-net BHD 136.198/-net

Promo period from 19th – 31st December 2023

Tel: +973 17701201 - Ext. 351 Email: reservation@albander.com

Terms & conditions apply*

Congratulations continue to pour in for HH Amir Sheikh Mishal

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a congratulatory cable from Thailand King Maha Vajiralongkorn, expressing his congratulations to His Highness on assuming the top office.

In the cable, the King wished His Highness the Amir good health and further success in leading the State of Kuwait to a much prosperous and promising future.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply cable to the King, expressing utmost appreciation for the heartfelt senti-

Bulgaria

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad received a congratulatory cable from the President of the Republic of Bulgaria Rumen Georgiev Radev, expressing his congratulations to His Highness on assuming the top

In the cable, the president wished His Highness the Amir good health and further success in leading the State of Kuwait to a much prosperous and

His Highness the Amir sent a reply cable to the president, expressing utmost appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments

Eritrea

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad received a congratulatory cable on Tuesday from the resident of Eritrea Isaias Afwerki on assuming top office.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply enclosed with the utmost appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments expressed by the president.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad received a congratulatory cable from the President of Kosovan Republic Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu on assuming the top office.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply enclosed with the utmost appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments expressed by the president.

Croatia

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad received a congratulatory cable from Croatia President

Zoran Milanovic, expressing his congratulations to His Highness on assuming the top office.

In the cable, the Croatian leader wished His Highness the Amir good health and further success in leading the State of Kuwait to a much prosperous and promising future.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply cable to the president, expressing utmost appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments.

Bahrain

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad received a congratulatory cable from Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, expressing his congratulations to His Highness on assuming the top office.

In the cable, the Bahraini Crown Prince wished His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal good health and further success in leading the State of Kuwait to a much prosperous and promising

His Highness the Amir sent a reply cable to the Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad, expressing utmost appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments.

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait sponsors 17th Kuwaiti-French Scientific Exhibition

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) proudly sponsored the 17th Kuwaiti-French Scientific Exhibition, organized by MILSET in cooperation with the French Embassy, and under the patronage of Dr. Adel Al-Mane, the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and the ambassador of France to Kuwait. The exhibition showcased an array of scientific and research projects in hydroponics, offering a platform for numerous students to delve into the innovative world of hydroponic agriculture.

In joint cooperation with the General Technical Direction of Science at the Ministry of Education and the Kuwaiti Hydroponics Society, the exhibition served as an invaluable opportunity for students to expand their knowledge and practical understanding of the field, which is growing in significance in modern agricultural practices.

Commenting on ABK's participation in the exhibition, Sager Albenali, Acting Chief Communications Officer at ABK, stated, "We are proud to have sponsored this exhibition as it aligns with our commitment to nurturing the educational development of

supporting



A standout feature of the exhibition was the active participation of specialists from the Kuwaiti Society of Hydroponics, who offered training sessions on the importance of hydroponics, its methods, and the materials



A photo from the honoring event.

used. This hands-on engagement was instrumental in enriching the educational experience for the participants, equipping them with valuable insights

Dawood Al Ahmad, the Kuwait Director of MILSET, honored ABK for its substantial role in contributing to the success of the event. This recognition underscores ABK's commitment to fostering a holistic approach to community development, encompassing both educational and financial support.

Albenali further emphasized ABK's dedication to supporting numerous initiatives and participating in various events, reinforcing the Bank's reputation across all segments of Kuwaiti society. He added, "ABK is unwavering in its commitment to contributing to the advancement of education, and we see our sponsorship of this exhibition as a testament to our pledge to enable the growth of scientific education and

research in Kuwait.' Sponsoring the 17thKuwaiti-French Scientific Exhibition aligns with ABK's broader mission to empower the educational landscape in Kuwait, encouraging the pursuit of knowledge and fostering a spirit of exploration and discovery among the nation's youth. Looking forward, ABK remains resolute in its dedication to supporting educational initiatives and participating in events that contribute to the holistic development of the community.

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital.

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 44

This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients.

8 Kuwaitis to showcase their projects at global tech exhibit

Digital administration of charitable societies

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: The Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, which is affiliated with Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), has confirmed its participation at the Web Summit Qatar (WSQ), which will be held from Feb 26-29, 2024 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC) in Doha, Qatar, reports Al-Qabas daily.

WSQ is considered one of the largest technology conferences in the world. Through the support of Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, eight Kuwaiti entrepreneurs or emerging companies will be given the opportunity to showcase their projects under the youth category.

In a press statement, Director General of the center Nada Al-Daihani disclosed that the participation in this prestigious global event, which is being held for the first time in the Middle East and Africa, is nothing but encouragement and support for Kuwait in a bid to put the country on the map of global innovation and entrepreneurship. It also constitutes a platform that attracts a wide and diverse group of technology industry leaders, investors and emerging entrepreneurs

from all over the world. Al-Daihani added that the confer-

MoSA advances digital transformation

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: Assistant Undersecretary for the Social Development Sector in the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr Khaled Al-Ajmi, revealed that the Family Welfare Department, which provides its services to approximately 40 cases, benefits from social assistance, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a statement to the daily on the sidelines of his visit to the Family

Welfare Department recently, Al-Ajmi confirmed that he was briefed on the process of using mechanization in the administration's work and the way employees deal with it.

During the visit, he met a number of people in the reception hall, where he stressed that the ministry is seeking to complete its digital transformation.

ence brings together thousands of entrepreneurs, investors and international leaders in Doha to connect the world of technology in a prominent event of its kind, especially since WSQ joined the list of international events organized by the World Web Summit, along with the Lisbon Web Summit and the Rio Web Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Collision in Toronto and RISE in Hong Kong.

"The importance of this summit also stems from the participation of thousands of international entrepreneurs, investors and the next generation of leaders, as it addresses new aspects of cooperation in the world of technology, and linking the growing technology system throughout the Middle East, Africa, India, Europe, North and South America, and Asia, Al-Daihani concluded.

Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary for the Social Development Sector in the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr Khaled Al-Ajmi revealed that the Charitable Societies and Foundations Department has contacted the charitable societies in order to determine those that obtained quality certification from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), reports Al-Anba In a statement to the daily, Al-Ajmi

confirmed that the Social Development Sector is keen on honoring charities that obtained the ISO certificate; given this certificate greatly contributes to the development of charitable work in accordance with the instructions of Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Al-Saud. On the electronic transformation in

order to quickly complete tasks in the administration of charitable societies and foundations at the beginning of the New Year, he announced that the administration will be completely digital at the beginning of the year. He affirmed that all procedures and transactions between the ministry and charitable societies will be automated through the electronic management platform; which allows communication between the administration, societies and foundations.



Ministry of Justice Court of First Instance Hawally Courts Complex **Bankruptcy Management**

On Sunday, 24/12/2023 at the headquarters of the Bankruptcy Management. With

In application No.2/2023 - Protective Settlement Listed under computer No. 232185260.

In the presence of Mr. Bader Al Farsi, Secretary

membership of Mr. Suliman Bin Yousef, Bankruptcy Judge.

Submitted by	Mushrif Trading & Contracting Company
Versus	1 - Kuwait Finance House.
	2 - Muscat Bank.
	3 - Burgan Bank.
	4 - Gulf Bank.
	5 - Ahli Bank of Kuwait.

7 - Bahrain & Kuwait Bank

6 - Warba Bank

Having perused the application and the enclosed documents. Whereas the facts, as evident from reading the papers, are concluded in that the applicant company, a Kuwaiti shareholding closed company, has applied an application on 977/2023 to the Bankruptcy Management to open the protective settlement procedures against all its creditors, enclosed with an explanatory memorandum of the applicant facts. In explanation of the same, it said that its position confirms that there are reasons making it expect and fear the inability to pay its debts, as confirmed from the labour lawsuits filed by personnel the 1st instance commercial lawsuits filed by all the clients, whether suppliers, sub contractors and banks financing the projects, which represent more than 2000 cases being deliberated at the courts, including those in which final judgments were passed and have not been implemented yet. Further, there is a deficit in the Company financial position as confirmed from the Company financial statements for the fiscal year ended on 31/12/2021, whereby the losses were estimated by approximately KD 75,000,000. These losses exceed 75% of the capital. The Company assigned the undertaking of a technical study on the continuality of the its businesses to Fatema Saqer Al Rashoud Office, registered with M/s Capital Markets Authority, which issued on 2/12/2022 a technical report indicating that the Company's businesses are sustainable, and that it will continue payment of its debts to be subject to protective settlement under the ordinary context of practicing its businesses. Therefore, all the conditions for submitting the protective settlement application apply on it. Accordingly, the Company convened an extraordinary general assembly and on 1/9/2022 it agreed to submit the protective settlement application. Further, it mentioned in its memorandum an explanation of the protective settlement proposal, and concluded it with the request to open the protective settlement procedures. It enclosed with the application four files (nos. 4 box files) for the supporting documents of the application.

Further, the application was enclosed with the original of the consolidated financial statements of the applicant company for the fiscal year ended on 31/12/2021 and the fiscal year ended on 31/12/2022, as well as the independent auditor s report for the same, issued by (HLB Kuwaiti Accountant Auditing Office), copies of all a statement indicating the details of the banks, dues, a statement of the names of the companies and contractors to whom outstanding amounts are due, and a statement of the names of personnel to whom outstanding amounts are due

Further, it is confirmed from perusal of the enclosed documents that in the hearing of 14/6/2023, a court judgment was issued in case No.4439/2021 commercial 1st instance/43 filed by 1- Khaled Ali Al Kharafi & Brothers Construction Contracting Company KSCC, 2- Real Estate Construction and Manufacturing Company KSC Joint interventionist) ruling for declaring the bankruptcy of the applicant company in the manner set forth in the text

The applicant company did not accept this judgment and challenged it by appeal No.4383/2023 commercial/?, and the appeal has not been decided yet.

During the hearing of the application by the bankruptcy judge, the applicant company submitted the original report of the protective settlement plan issued by (Fatema Saqer Al Rashoud Chartered Accountants and Advisors), enclosed with two files (2 box files) for the documents supporting the proposal.

Further, a number of the major creditors appeared by their attorney lawyers before the bankruptcy judge during the deliberation of the application in the hearings, namely M/s Kuwait Finance House, Gulf Bank, Ahli Bank of Kuwait,

Muscat Bank, Burgan Bank and the Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait, which Sought grace period for the application in order to prepare the reply to the submitted protective settlement proposal. Attorney of Kuwait Finance House submitted three dockets which included copies of the documents supporting the debt. Attorney of Ahli Bank of Kuwait submitted a letter for a brief on the debt and the executive procedures adopted against the applicant company enclosed with copies of their supporting documents. Attorney submitted a letter for commenting on the protective settlement proposal submitted by the applicant company and a docket which comprised copies of the documents supporting the debt.

On 19/9/2023, the bankruptcy judge issued a decision for communicating with the Bankruptcy Committee for undertaking the inspection of the applicant and documents submitted therein and declare the opinion in this respect in the manner set forth in its text. Accordingly, the Bankruptcy Committee lodged report No.40 dated 15/10/2023 in the Bankruptcy Management, and concluded with the following final opinion:

1- The settlement plan did not include information on the ability of the Company to continue

practicing its activity in light of the financial deficit and the possibility to obtain the necessary projects for practicing the activity.

2- The submitted plan did not include a statement of the future cash flows, including the applied basis and assumptions.

3-The plan did not include information to address the accumulated losses which exceeded

The decision to open preventive settlement procedures regarding the request submitted by the debtor, Mushrif Trading and Contracting Company K.S.C., against all of its creditors



4-The plan relied on the collection of funds from debtors and court judgments which may not be ascertained or estimated, as this is subject to the assessment of the

Therefore, it is not possible to declare the opinion on the possibility of settlement or submit a report to the Bankruptcy Management, taking into consideration the unavailability of the above information.

In the hearing of 19/10/2023, the applicant company appeared by an attorney lawyer and another attorney lawyer. Further, its chairman appeared personally. The lawyer appearing for the applicant submitted a memorandum of defense which included the reply and objections to the result of the Bankruptcy Committee report, and has also submitted a

On 2/11/2023, the bankruptcy judge issued a decision for communicating again with the Bankruptcy Committee for examining the application, the documents submitted therein, declare the opinion in this respect and investigate the objections of the applicant company in the manner set forth in its text.

Accordingly, the Bankruptcy Committee lodged the second report No.44 dated 6/11/2023 to the Bankruptcy Management, which concluded with the final opinion that pursuant to the Company's responses to the observations of the Bankruptcy Committee for its ability to practice its business, therefore the Bankruptcy Committee recommends accepting the otective settlement plan according to the following:

Meeting and acceptance of the creditors of the settlement plan with submission of a time chedule to this effect.

Removal of the pledge on the equipment and giving the legal grace period according to the discretion of the bankruptcy judge, in order for the Company to be able to practice its business, and take the protective procedures to prevent transacting with the equipment. i The continuation of the executive management's administration of the Company's businesses and following up its claims.

inplement a plan for addressing the accumulated losses according to the submitted pro-

After lodging the 2nd report of the Bankruptcy Committee, representatives of the creditors Messrs. Kuwait Finance House, Gulf Bank, Ahli Bank of Kuwait, Muscat Bank and Burgan Bank, referred to the headquarters of the Bankruptcy Management in the manner confirmed in details in the minutes of the hearings. Attorney of Kuwait Finance House stated in the hearing of 9/11/2023 that the 2nd report of the Bankruptcy Committee No.44 dated 6/11/2023 was perused, and declared his approval of the conclusion of the opinion, provided the remarks stated in the committee's first report are addressed. He stated that is principal agrees on the opening of the protective settlement procedures. Attorney of the Gulf Bank submitted in the hearing of 14/11/2023 a memorandum in which he commented on the content of the 2nd report of the Bankruptcy Committee, at the end of which he declared is approval of issuing a decision for opening the protective settlement procedures pursuant to the application submitted by the applicant company, and start the executive steps according to the law. Attorneys for the creditors Ahli Bank of Kuwait, Muscat Bank and Burgan Bank requested in the hearing of 14/11/2023 a grace period to obtain approval of their principals/creditors to open the procedures. The hearing of the application was adjourned for consideration and action according to the development, after each of the creditors Ahli Bank of Kuwait, Muscat Bank and Burgan Bank submit their response in connection with the 2nd report of the Bankruptcy Committee and the extent of their

approval to open the procedures. In the hearing of 14/12/2023, the applicant company appeared by an acting attorney lawyer, who submitted the original of the investigation study of the amounts of the applicant companys creditors, issued by Fatema Saqer Al Rashoud Office, enclosed with unclassified documents consisting of the statements of the details of the creditors dues, provided with their names, addresses and debt amounts of each creditor. The study and the statements enclosed therewith stated that the total debts of the affected Company amounts to 133,307,336 Kuwaiti dinar (one hundred, thirty three million, three hundred, seven thousand, three hundred and thirty six Kuwaiti dinar), and that the debt due to the creditor Gulf Bank amounts to KD 37,236,431, that the debt due to the creditor Kuwait Finance House amounts to KD 37,061,194, the total of which exceeds more than half the total debts of the affected Company. The attorney of the applicant Company requested expediting the issuing of the decision to open the protective settlement procedures.

In the hearing of 21/12/2023, it has been confirmed that the statement of the creditors Ahli Bank of Kuwait, Muscat Bank and Burgan Bank has not been received by submitting their response in connection with the bankruptcy report and the extent of their approval to open the procedures up to date. The applicant Company submitted a letter for expediting the opening of the protective procedures which stated that the grace period for pronouncing the judgment in appeal No.4383/2023 commercial/? in connection with the declaration of bankruptcy case was extended to the hearing of 10/1/2024

Whereas the bankruptcy judge has decided to present the papers to today's hearing for action in the application of opening the protective settlement procedures according to the

Whereas it is determined according to the provisions of articles 1, 29 33, 58/7 and the last paragraph thereof, and 61 of the Bankruptcy Law promulgated by law No.71 of 2020 that in the implementation of the provisions of this law, the following words and expressions shall have the meaning set forth next to each of them: suspension of claims: the suspension of any case or executive procedure filed against the debtor, whenever it is related to his funds or debts. The bankruptcy judge shall decide the claim within ten days of the expiration date of the period scheduled for replying to the same, by issuing a decision for opening the protective settlement procedures. Within ten days of the date of issuing the bankruptcy judge's decision for opening, rejecting or dismissing the opening of the procedures, the Bankruptcy Management shall publish the decision and announce it, notify those concerned with the same, and disclosure in Kuwait Stock Exchange if the debtor is listed therein, mandate the debtor to disclose the same on its website, unless the bankruptcy judge decides ot suffice with any of such methods or other methods. The bankruptcy judge may decide to announce the decision by one of the daily newspapers issued in a foreign

country if a significant part of the debtor's creditors, its funds, or businesses are in this country or for any other reason deemed by the bankruptcy judge. In all circumstances, the decision issued for opening the procedures shall be registered within the grace

period set forth in this article. The issuing of the decision for opening the protective settlement procedures shall result in suspending the claims for a period of three months following the date of issuing the decision. Taking into consideration the provisions determined under this law in connection with the application to open the procedures, the debtor may submit the application for opening the protective settlement procedures according to the following: 7-lf a final judgment was already issued for declaring the bankruptcy of the debtor, the application may not be submitted unless after the passing years after the termination of the bankruptcy. As an exempt on from the provisions of clauses (...,..., 7) of this article, the debtor may submit the application at any time if it is enclosed with a proof of the prior approval of the required majority of the protective settlement proposal for which the application is submitted.

In view of the above and the aforesaid legal rules, and whereas the applicant Company has submitted the application for opening the protective settlement procedures against all its creditors, which indicated the required procedures and its reason, and enclosed with the documents and statements required by articles 20 and 59 of the Bankruptcy Law by the required amount to issue this decision. The Bankruptcy Committee lodged its second report No.44 dated 6/11/2023 to the Bankruptcy Management, and concluded with the final opinion by recommending the acceptance of the protective settlement plan according to the aforesaid clauses. Therefore, the bankruptcy judge is issuing his decision for opening the protective settlement procedures, which is unaffected by issuing a judgment for declaring the bankruptcy of the applicant company according to the judgment issued in case No.4439/2021 commercial 1st instance/43, as this judgment has not become final yet and is challenged by appeal No.4383/2023 commercial/?, which has not been decided, as the hearing of 10/1/2024 is scheduled to rule in the appeal. Furthermore, it is confirmed after perusal of the original study of investigating the amounts of the creditors of the applicant company issued by Fatema Sager Al Rashoud Office, and the statements for the details of the creditors' dues that the total debts of the affected Company amounts to 133,307,336 Kuwaiti dinar (one hundred, thirty three million, three hundred, seven thousand, three hundred and thirty six Kuwaiti dinar), that the debt due to the creditor Gulf Bank amounts to KD 37,236,431, that the debt due to the creditor Kuwait Finance House amounts to KD 37,061,194, the total of which exceeds more than half the total debts of the affected Company.

Further, representatives of the creditors Kuwait Finance House and the Gulf Bank appeared before the bankruptcy judge during the deliberation of the application the hearings and approved the opening of the protective settlement procedures. Thus, the applicant has submitted a proof of the prior approval of the affected creditors holding more than half the affected debts, of the protective settlement proposal for which the application is submitted. In view of the above, the prohibition to submit the application set forth in clause 7 of article 58 of the Bankruptcy Law has no effect as the bankruptcy judgment is not final. Therefore, the bankruptcy judge advances in issuing the decision for opening the protective settlement procedures according to the aforesaid legal rules, in light of articles 1, 20, 24, 25, 26, 55, 59, 62, 70, 71, 73 and 74, and articles 76 to 81 of the Bankruptcy Law, in the manner set forth in the text of the decision.

Therefore: We decided the following:

To open the protective settlement procedures in connection with the application submitted by the debtor (Mushrif Trading & Contracting Company KSCC) with the suspension of all the judicial claims and executive procedures adopted it against it for a period of three months after the date of this decision. The Bankruptcy Management shall notify Central Bank, the Execution General Department, the applicant Company, the respondents and the Bankruptcy Committee with this decision article 55 of the Bankruptcy Law and publishing the decision in the official gazette, as well as register it within ten days, in addition to mandating the applicant Company to disclose this decision on its website, and announce the same in two daily newspapers, one of which is issued in English language, at its cost, submit a proof to this effect, mandate it to proper the draft protective settlement proposal, which includes the details required according to article 73 of the Bankruptcy Law, exert the due diligence to convince the creditors to approve the protective settlement proposal, to coordinate within ten days of the date of issuing this decision with the creditors to form the creditors committee of representatives for their debts categories, pursuant to the provision of article

of the Bankruptcy Law, to lodge with the Bankruptcy Management within ten days of the expiration of the period set forth under the previous article a list of the categories of the debts, to form the creditors committee pursuant to the provision of article 72 of the Bankruptcy Law, to lodge a copy of the protective settlement proposal within a period not exceeding three months after the date of issuing this decision pursuant to the provision of article 70 of the Bankruptcy Law, then endeavour to invite the creditors to approve the protective settlement proposal and complete the procedures determined according to articles 76 to 81 of the Bankruptcy Law

Bankruptcy Judge	Secretary
Suliman Bin Yousef	Bader Al Farsi
Signed	Bankruptcy Management
24/12/2023	Signed

State of Kuwait - Court of First Instance- Bankruptcy Management - executive form delivered to Mahmoud Abdulmajeed Mahmoud - signature- signed- date: 24/12/2023- Bankruptcy Management.

World News Roundup

Europe

Transfer raises concerns

Russian opposition Navalny resurfaces

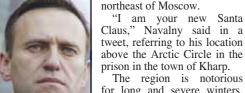
MOSCOW, Dec 26, (AP): Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny on Tuesday released a sardonic statement about his transfer to a Arctic prison colony nicknamed the "Polar Wolf," his first appearance since associates lost contact with him three weeks ago.

Navalny, the most prominent and persistent domestic foe of President Vladimir Putin, is serving a 19-year sentence on an extremism conviction. He had been incarcerated in central Russia's Vladimir region, about 230 kilometers (140 miles) east of Moscow, but supporters said he couldn't be found beginning on

They said Monday that he had been traced to a prison colony infamous for severe conditions in the Yamalo-Nenets region, about

1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow.

whose coal mines were among



for long and severe winters. The town is about 100 kilometers (60 miles) from Vorkuta,

the harshest of the Soviet Gu-

lag prison-camp system. Navalny, who is noted for sharply humorous comments, said he was in a good mood after being transported to the new prison, but suggested the northern winter darkness is discouraging: "I don't say 'Ho-ho-ho,' but I do say 'Oh-oh-oh' when I look out of the window, where I can see night, then the evening, and then the night again.

Prisoner transfers in Russia often result in contact with inmates being lost for weeks. Navalny's supporters contend the transfer was arranged to keep Navalny out of sight amid Putin's announcement that he will run for another term as president in the March elec-

Navalny has been behind bars in Russia since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin. Before his arrest, he campaigned against official corruption and organized major anti-Kremlin protests.

He has since received three prison terms and spent months in isolation in Penal Colony No. 6 for alleged minor infractions. He has rejected all charges against him as politically motivated.

Russian naval ship damaged: A Russian naval ship in Crimea was damaged in an airstrike by Ukrainian forces, Russia's Defense Ministry said Tuesday.

The landing ship Novocherkassk was hit at a base in the city of Feodosia by plane-launched guided missiles, the ministry said, adding that two Ukrainian fighter jets were destroyed by anti-aircraft fire during

Over the past several months, Ukrainian forces have conducted attacks around Crimea, mostly with sea drones. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy credits those attacks with allowing Ukraine to restore navigation in the Black Sea and allowing the export of millions of tons of grain.

In September, a Ukrainian attack hit the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in the Crimean city of Sevastopol, killing one person, and Ukraine launched more missiles against the city on the following day.

The Russia-appointed head of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, said one person was killed in the Tuesday at-

"The Russian fleet has become smaller," Ukrainian air force Cmdr. Mykola Oleschuk said in a mocking message on the Telegram app. He urged Russians to leave Crimea - which Russia annexed in 2014 - "while it's not too late.'

The gloating came amid growing concern about battlefield disappointments and about the future of Western aid for Ukraine's war effort. Despite high hopes for a summer counteroffensive, the front line has barely moved and political disputes in allied countries leave billions of dollars of aid in doubt.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu briefed Russian President Vladimir Putin about the attack, according to Russian news agencies, but details of what he said weren't reported. (AP)

Cyberattack blocks Albania's Parliament: Albania's Parliament reported Tuesday it had suffered a cyberattack with hackers trying to get into its data and

wipe them out, temporarily halting its work. A statement said Monday's cyberattack had not "touched the data of the system," adding that experts were working to discover what consequences the attack could have. It said services would resume at a

The local media reported that a cellphone provider and an air flight company were also targeted by cyberattacks Monday from Iranian-based hackers called Homeland Justice, something which could not be verified independently.

Albania suffered a cyberattack in July 2022 that the government and multinational technology companies blamed on the Iranian Foreign Ministry. Believed to be in retaliation for Albania sheltering members of the Iranian opposition group Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, or MEK, the attack led the government to cut diplomatic relations with Iran two months later.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry denied Tehran was behind an attack on Albanian government websites and noted that Iran has suffered cyberattacks from the

In June, Albanian authorities raided a camp for exiled MEK members to seize computer devices allegedly linked to prohibited political activities.

Šince 2013, some 2,500 Iranian exiles are sheltered in Albania, where they are not supposed to engage in any political activity and must abide by the country's

The United States, NATO and the European Union supported NATO member Albania in the dispute.

Mother and children killed: Four children between nine months and 10 years old and their mother were killed in their apartment east of Paris, in what local authorities called an exceptionally violent crime. The children's father was arrested Tuesday and is the primary suspect.

Neighbors spotted a pool of blood outside the family's door on Christmas Day and alerted police, who discovered the five bodies, Prosecutor Jean-Baptiste Bladier told reporters in the city of Meaux. (AP)



Migrants wait by the City Hall plaza in Paris, Monday, Dec 25, 2023 as migrant families meet on Christmas Day seeking somewhere to stay. (AP)

Paris City Hall plaza draws holiday visitors and migrant families seeking shelter

The forecourt of Paris City Hall buzzes with activity this holiday season: Children spinning on a sparkling carousel, shoppers browsing a Christmas market, tourists posing in front of huge signs advertising the 2024 Olympics - and dozens of migrant families searching for a roof over their heads.

About 50 families with children between three months and 10 years old gathered on City Hall plaza on Christmas evening, to meet members of aid groups who distribute food, blankets and diapers and help find temporary lodging. A similar scene plays out most nights beneath the ornate facade of the Paris monument.

Some sat on pieces of cardboard with their suitcases. A toddler who arrived in socks was given shoes, and an older child was given a gift in shiny

wrapping.
Many of the families are from French-speaking African countries, including Burkina Faso, İvory Coast

and Senegal.

Aicha, 20, is among those seeking shelter. She arrived in Paris from Mali in 2020 and gave birth to a baby boy, Ismael, last year.

"We sleep here outside or in the metro, but it's not safe because there are thugs. It's complicated, we have to negotiate, we have no solution. But it's not just me, there are lots of families who sleep outside," she told The Associated Press. She spoke on condition her full name not be published because she doesn't have residency papers

Zoe Lafargoutte, a member of migrant aid group Utopia 56, said they find space for about 20-40% of those in need every evening.

"We try to distribute tents and blankets so that they can sleep, even if it's not ideal, or we direct them to hospitals, to places where they can spend the night in a bit of warmth," she said.

Aid workers are concerned that Paris authorities will clear out migrants and others sleeping in the rough before next year's Olympics without providing longer-term housing options. Olympics organizers say they are working with aid groups to find solutions for those in the streets, including the many people who come from around the world to Paris . seeking refuge or employment. (AP)



Ivan Zelenchuk, dressed in a traditional hutsuls suit, sings the Ukrainian anthem in front of a church during Christmas celebrations in Kryvorivnia village, Ukraine, Monday, Dec. 25, 2023. (AP)





America

Republican Greene targeted: Republican U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene was the target of a swatting attempt at her Georgia residence on Christmas morning, the congresswoman and local police said, marking the latest instance of someone calling in a fake emergency to draw armed officers or SWAT teams to her home.

The Rome Police Department quickly verified that the call was a hoax and did not send officers to the house, department spokesperson Kelly Madden said.

"I was just swatted. This is like the 8th time. On Christmas with my family here. My local police are the GREATEST and shouldn't have to deal with this," Greene wrote in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

A man in New York called the Georgia suicide hotline just before 11 a.m. Monday, claiming that he had shot his girlfriend at Greene's home and was going to kill himself next, Madden said. The call was quickly transferred to police when suicide hotline responders recognized the Georgia congresswoman's address.

The department said it contacted Greene's private security detail to confirm she was safe and that there was no emergency at her residence. The call was then determined to be a swatting attempt, so the police response was canceled en route, Madden explained.

"We determined before our personnel could get to her location that there was no emergency and there was no reason to respond," she said. "Her security detail had it all under control, and there actually was nothing going on." (AP)

Suspect found dead after standoff: An armed man who faced off with officers at a California home for several hours on Christmas Eve was later found dead in the home's garage, authorities told local media.

The Los Angeles County Fire Department responded to a 911 call on 11th Street in Hermosa Beach around 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, KTLA-TV reported.

Politics

Democracy under scrutiny

Right to protest under threat in UK

LONDON, Dec 26, (AP): For holding a sign outside a courthouse reminding jurors of their right to acquit defendants, a retiree faces up to two years in a banner reading "Just Stop Oil" off a bridge, an engineer got a three-year sentence. Just for walking slowly down the street, scores of people have been arrested.

They are among hundreds of environmental activists arrested for peaceful demonstrations in the U.K., where tough new laws restrict the right to protest.

The Conservative government says the laws prevent extremist activists from hurting the economy and disrupting daily life. Critics say the arrests mark a worrying departure.

"The government has made its intent very clear, which is basically to suppress what is legitimate, lawful protest," said Jonathon Porritt, an ecologist and former director of Friends of the Earth.

Britain is one of the world's oldest democracies, home of the Magna Carta, a centuries-old Parliament and an independent judiciary. That system is underpinned by an "unwritten constitution" - a set of laws, rules, conventions and judicial decisions accumulated over the years.

The result is "we rely on self-restraint by governments," said Andrew Blick, author of "Democratic Turbulence in the United Kingdom" and a political scientist at King's College London. "You hope the people in power are going to behave themselves."

But what if they don't? During three scandal-tarnished years in office, Boris Johnson pushed prime ministerial power to the limits. More recently, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak asked Parliament to overrule the U.K. Supreme Court, which blocked a plan to send asylum-seekers to Rwanda.

Critics say cracks have appeared in Britain's democratic foundations.

As former Conservative justice minister David Lidington put it: "The 'good chap' theory of checks and balances has now been tested to destruction.'

Canaries

The canaries in the coal mine are environmental activists who have blocked roads and bridges, glued themselves to trains, splattered artworks with paint, sprayed buildings with fake blood and doused athletes in orange powder to draw attention to climate change.

Groups such as Extinction Rebellion, Just Stop Oil and Insulate Britain argue that civil disobedience is justified, but Sunak has called them "ideological zealots."

In 2022, a statutory offense of "public nuisance" was created, punishable by up to 10 years in prison. The 2023 Public Order Act broadened the definition of disruptive protest, increased police search powers and imposed penalties of up to 12 months in prison for protesters who block roads or other "key infrastructure."

In May, six anti-monarchist activists were arrested before the coronation of King Charles III before they had so much as held up a "Not My King" placard. All were released without charge In recent months, hundreds of Just

Stop Oil activists have been detained under a new rule that criminalizes slow walking protests. Some protesters have received prison sentences that have been called unduly punitive.

Structural engineer Morgan Trowland was one of two activists who scaled a bridge over the River Thames in October 2022, forcing police to shut the highway below for 40 hours. He was sentenced to three years in prison.

He was released early on Dec. 13 after 14 months in custody.

Ian Fry, the United Nations' rapporteur for climate change and human rights, has called Britain's anti-protest law a "direct attack on the right to the freedom of peaceful assembly.

The Conservative government has dismissed the criticism. "Those who break the law should feel the full force of it," Sunak said.

Even more worrying, some legal experts say, is the "justice lottery." Half the environmentalists tried by juries have been acquitted after explaining their motivations. But at other trials, judges have banned defendants from mentioning climate change or their reasons for protesting. Several defendants who defied the orders were jailed for contempt of court.

A witness said neighbors heard an argument and saw a man with a gun who went into the two-story home and refused to surrender to police who arrived at the scene, KTLA reported.

The garage at the home caught fire shortly before 5 p.m., KTLA reported.

Hermosa Beach Police Chief Paul LeBaron said the suspect's immediate family members, including children, fled before



President Joe Biden walks on the beach with daughter Ashley Biden, June 20, 2022, in Rehoboth Beach, Del. Criminal prosecutors may soon get to see over 900 documents pertaining to the alleged theft of a diary belonging to Ashley Biden, after a judge on Thursday, Dec. 21, 2023, rejected a First Amendment claim by the conservative group Project Veritas. Attorney Jeffrey Lichtman said on behalf of Project Veritas on Monday, Dec. 25, that an appeal is being considered of the ruling. (AP)

police arrived, KTLA reported.

"They came out and, at that point, the only person left inside that we were aware of was the suspect," LeBaron said, adding that neighboring homes were evacuated.

Police reported hearing explosions, which may have been gunshots, but officers did not believe they were targeted, LeBaron said. (AP)

Restriction on carrying guns: Nebraska's two largest cities are violating a new state gun law by prohibiting them from public places such as parks, according to two recent lawsuits.

The Liberty Justice Center filed lawsuits Dec. 18 challenging executive orders issued by the mayors of Omaha and Lincoln. The lawsuits allege that the orders are in violation of a new state gun law. The suits were filed on behalf of the Nebraska Firearms Owners Association.

State lawmakers in April passed a bill allowing people to carry concealed guns across the state without a permit and without the need to complete a gun safety course. It also said that it overrides stricter local laws, like those in Omaha and Lincoln.

The lawsuits state that despite the new law. Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert and Lincoln Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird issued executive orders banning all firearms from city property, including parks and sidewalks. The suits said the Omaha City Council also banned "ghost gun" parts and manufacturing, and the Lin-coln City Council has not repealed ordinances regulating weapons. (AP)

Asia

Beijing shivers

S.Korea tightens export controls against Russia

TOKYO, Dec 26, (KUNA): South Korea will tighten export controls against Russia and Belarus by significantly expanding its list of items subject to export restrictions, including excavators, batteries and larger vehicles, in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Yonhap News Agency reported, Tuesday.

Under the revision to the regulations on trading strategic items, South Korea added 682 more categories regarding heavy construction equipment, rechargeable batteries, aircraft components, machinery and other things to the list of items that are banned from shipping to Russia and



Belarus, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy under Minister Bang, Moon Kyu..

Under the new regulation, the total number of items on the list will be 1,159, the ministry said, adding that the revision is expected to take effect in early 2024 following due administrative procedures and the government's issuance of

guidelines for exporters.

The ministry also said, it will make a case-by-case review of "exceptional cases" for shipments to the two nations and the move came as chances are high for those items to be used for military purposes, though they are not classified as strategic items under South Korea's export control scheme.

Beijing records sub-freezing temp: Beijing recorded the most hours of sub-freezing temperatures in December in more than seven decades as a cold wave has enveloped northern and central swathes of China, bringing snowstorms and record-breaking tempera-

A weather observatory in the Chinese capital as of Sunday had recorded more than 300 hours of subfreezing temperatures since Dec. 11 - the most since records began, in 1951, according to the official newspaper Beijing Daily.

The city saw nine consecutive days with temperatures below minus 10 degrees Celsius (14 degrees Fahrenheit), the paper added.

Parts of northern and central China have shivered under frigid cold snaps this month, with authorities closing schools and highways several times due to

Temperatures at 78 weather stations across the country hit record lows for the month of December, while average temperatures this month in northern and some central parts of China hit record lows set in 1961, according to the National Meteorological Cen-

Furnace blast toll in Indonesia hits 18: The death toll following the explosion of a smelting furnace at a Chinese-owned nickel plant on Indonesia's Sulawesi island rose to 18 on Tuesday, as police ordered the plant to stop operations until an investigation into the incident is completed.

The accident, which occurred on Sunday, was the latest in a series of deadly incidents at nickel smelting plants in Indonesia that are part of China's ambitious transnational development program known as the Belt and Road Initiative

Nickel is a key component in global battery production for electric vehicles.

Four Chinese and nine Indonesian workers died instantly on Sunday when the furnace exploded while they were repairing it, said Central Sulawesi police chief Agus Nugroho. Three more victims died a day later while being treated at a local hospital.

Two more workers died on Tuesday at the hospital, bringing the total number of fatalities to 18, including eight workers from China, said Deddy Kurniawan, a spokesperson for PT Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park, known as PT IMIP, the parent company of PT Indonesia Tsingshan Stainless Steel, where the accident occurred.

The plant is in the Bahodopi neighborhood of Morowali regency.

"We have ordered PT Indonesia Tsingshan Stainless Steel to stop its operation until our entire investigation is completed," said Nugroho, the police chief, adding that authorities had set up a team to determine whether negligence by the company led to the deaths.

The blast was so powerful it demolished the furnace and damaged parts of the side walls of the building, Nugroho said.

PT IMIP said in a statement on Sunday that the furnace was under maintenance and not operating at the time of the accident. However, "residual slag in the furnace" came in contact "with flammable items," causing the furnace walls to collapse and the remain-

ing steel slag to flow out. Rescuers extinguished the fire and evacuated workers after a nearly four-hour operation, Kurniawan said.

About 44 workers are still being treated at a hospital and the company's clinic on Tuesday with serious to minor injuries, including 11 Chinese nationals, Kur-

Casualties

In a news briefing on Monday, Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning expressed condolences for the victims and said that China is "saddened by the casualties caused by the accident."

She said her ministry is working closely with authorities in Indonesia and has instructed the Chinese Embassy in Jakarta to assist in the aftermath, including ensuring medical treatment is provided to the injured and helping to determine the cause of the ac-

It was the third deadly incident this year at Chineseowned nickel smelting plants in Central Sulawesi province, which has the largest nickel reserves in In-

Two dump truck operators were killed when they were engulfed by a wall of black sludge-like material following the collapse of a nickel waste disposal site

In January, two workers, including a Chinese national, were killed in riots that involved workers of the two nations at an Indonesia-China joint venture in neighboring North Morowali regency.

Last year, a loader truck ran over and killed a Chinese worker while he was repairing a road in PT IMIP's mining area, and an Indonesian man burned to death when a furnace in the company's factory exploded.

Nearly 50% of PT IMIP's shares are owned by a Chinese holding company, and the rest are owned by two Indonesian companies.



Indian passengers who travelled in an unmarked Legend Airlines A340 from Vatry Airport in France, arrive at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai, India, Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2023. (AP)

276 Indians stuck in French airport for days arrive in India

A charter plane that was grounded in France for a human trafficking investigation arrived in India with 276 Indians aboard early Tuesday, authorities said. The passengers had been heading to Nicaragua but were instead blocked inside the Vatry Airport for four days in an exceptional holi-

The regional administration said that 276 of the original 303 passengers were en route to Mumbai, and that 25 others requested asylum in France.

Those who remained were transferred to a special zone in Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport for asylum-seekers, it said. The passengers grounded in France had included a 21-month-old child and several unaccompanied minors.

The remaining two passengers were initially detained as part of a human trafficking investigation but were released Monday after appearing before a judge, the Paris prosecutor's office said. The judge named them as "assisted witnesses"

to the case, a special status under French law that allows time for further investigation and could lead to eventual charges or to the case be-

ing dropped.
The Legend Airlines A340 plane stopped Thursday for refueling in Vatry en route from Fujairah airport in the United Arab Emirates for Managua, Nicaragua, and was grounded by police based on an anonymous tip that it could be carrying human trafficking victims. (AP)

Mexico

More trudging under a hot sun

No Christmas respite for migrants

HUIXTLA, Mexico, Dec 26, (AP): Christmas Day meant the same as any other day for thousands of migrants walking through southern Mexico: more trudging under a hot sun.

There were no presents, and Christmas Eve dinner was a sandwich, a bottle of water and a banana handed out by a local church to some of the migrants in the town of Álvaro Obregón, in the southern state of Chiapas, which borders Guatemala.

Migrants spent Christmas night sleeping on a scrap of cardboard or plastic stretched out under an awning or tent, or the bare ground.

In the morning, it was waking as usual at 4 a.m., to get an early start and avoid the worst of the heat, walking to the next town, Huixtla, 20 miles (30 kilometers) away.

Karla Ramírez, a migrant from Honduras who was traveling with other adults and four children, got to Álvaro Obregón too late Sunday to get any of the food being given out by the church. So they had to buy whatever little they could afford.

"It was sad: we have never, ever been in the street before," Ramírez said. "Our Christmas dinner was some mortadella, butter and tomato, with a tortilla."

Mariela Amaya's seven-year-old

son didn't understand why they had to spend Christmas this way. Amaya, also from Honduras, tugged the hand of her tired, recalcitrant son as they walked. "They don't understand why we

have to do this to get a better life," Amaya said. Nor did the governments of Mexico and the United States, she said.

"Why can't they help us? We need their help," she said.

"These peaceful demonstrators are

victims of state terrorism," Ahmed said,

of force by authorities.

What little help there was came from local families, one of whom gave out tamales - traditional seasonal fare - and water to the passing migrants.

The migrants included single adults but also entire families, all eager to reach the U.S. border, angry and frustrated at having to wait weeks or months in the nearby city of Tapachula for documents that might allow them to continue their journey.

transit visas, but migrants keep hoping to get some sort of document so they could at least take buses to the

Journey

"This journey has been really hard for us migrants. We need the (Mexican) immigration office and the government to have some pity on us, and give us a safe conduct pass," said Jessica García, a migrant from Venezuela.

Mexico says it detected 680,000 migrants moving through the country in the first 11 months of 2023.

At around 6,000 people, the migrant caravan that set out Sunday was the largest one since June 2022, when a similarly sized group departed Tapachula.

And like the 2022 caravan - which started as U.S. President Joe Biden hosted leaders in Los Angeles for the Summit of the Americas - this year's Christmas caravan came a few days before U.S. officials are to meet with their Mexican counterparts in Mexico City to explore ways of stemming the number of migrants showing up at the U.S. southwest border.

The Mexican government has already said it is willing to help try to

Baluchistan province - which borders

Afghanistan and Iran and is rich in oil.

peacefully protest in Pakistan.

block migrants from crossing Mexico; the government had little choice, afte U.S. officials briefly closed two vital Texas railway border crossings, claiming they were overwhelmed by processing migrants.

That put a chokehold on freight moving from Mexico to the United States, as well as grain needed to feed Mexican livestock moving south. The rail crossings have since been reopened, but the message was clear.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony ico City Wednesday to hammer out new agreements to control the surge of migrants seeking entry into the United States. The U.S. delegation will also include Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and White House homeland security adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall.

This month, as many as 10,000 migrants were arrested per day at the U.Š. southwest border.

In May, Mexico agreed to take in migrants from countries such as Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba who had been turned away by the U.S. for not following rules that provided new legal pathways to asylum and other forms of migration.

But that deal, aimed at curbing a post-pandemic jump in migration, appears to be insufficient as numbers rise once again, disrupting bilateral trade and stoking anti-migrant sentiment among conservative voters in

Arrests for illegal crossing topped 2 million in each of the U.S. government's last two fiscal years, reflecting technological changes that have made it easier for migrants to leave home to escape poverty, natural disasters, political repression and organized crime.

low-level insurgency by Baluch nationalists for more than two decades. Baluch nationalists initially wanted a share of provincial resources, but later initiated an insurgency for independence. According to human rights activists,

those who demand a greater share of the

province's natural resources often go

missing after being detained by security

forces. (AP)

Three Maoists gunned down: Indian police said on Sunday that three Maoists were gunned down in a gun battle with security forces in Dantewada district Chhattisgarh in central India.

The Press Trust of India said quoting Inspector General of Police of Bastar Range Sundarraj P that the gun battle in which three Maoists were killed occurred on a hill near Dabbakunna village when a ioint team of security personnel was carrying out an anti-maoists operation in the evening.

Maoist rebels are active in various Indian states including Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar and Maharash-

The banned group is waging an armed struggle for decades against the government and its developmental projects in order to establish a communist society toppling the current system which they call as semi-feudal and semi-colonial.



Babar

290 Baloch activists freed: Pakistani police Monday freed 290 Baloch activists who were arrested when they attempted to hold a protest last week in the capital, Islamabad.

Subcontinent

Ahmed

Workers arrange ballot boxes pre-

pared for 2024 elections and tempo-

rarily stored at a stadium in Jakarta,

Indonesia, Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2023. The world's third-largest democracy is gearing up to hold its legislative

and presidential elections on Feb. 14,

2024. (AP)

Their release came days after protest organizers gave authorities a deadline to release all those detained.

The activists had traveled 1,600 kilometers (about 1,000 miles) on Thursday from Turbat, a town in Baluchistan province, to protest forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in the militancy-ravaged southwest.

The protesters were mostly women and some had brought along their children, aged 7-12, when security forces used batons and water canons to disperse and ar-

They wanted to draw attention to the case of 24-year-old Balaach Mola Bakhsh, who died in November while in police custody in Baluchistan. Authorities said he was killed after militants ambushed the police vehicle transporting him.

Police said Bakhsh was carrying explosives when he was arrested. His family insists he is innocent, demanding justice for him. They also said he had been detained since October. Police said they arrested him in November.

The police use of force against the protesters sparked anger among Baluchistan residents and drew nationwide condemnation from top human rights activists. Protest organizers said that as the

dozens of vehicles carrying the activists reached the outskirts of Islamabad before dawn Thursday, police used water canons against them and started beating them up to prevent them from reaching the heart of the capital.

At the weekend, organizers and protesters held a sit-in outside the Islamabad Press Club to denounce the violence. "Four female police officers with batons hit me," Mahrang Baloch, one of the organizers, told reporters as she and dozens of others held portraits of those detained by the police, demanding their

Senator Mushtaq Ahmed and top human rights activist Farhatullah Babar attended the sit-in and condemned the use



Indian paramilitary soldiers patrol a market in Srinagar, Indian-controlled Kashmir, Saturday, Déc 23, 2023. Anger spread in some remote parts of Indian-controlled Kashmir after three civilians were killed while in army custody, officials and residents said Saturday. This comes two days after a militant ambush killed four soldiers. (AP)

11,813.09 4.028.88

+1.05

-0.27

Rate cut hopes mount

Global economy to remain under pressure

By National Bank of Kuwait

Tadawul

Going into 2024, the global economy faces headwinds as earlier monetary tightening continues to filter through with a lag. Although current indicators are still far from flashing any significant recession, the global growth outlook, led by developed markets, has softened in the last few months. Meanwhile, inflation seems to be on a downward trend, boosting hopes of a soft landing - though core inflation still has some way to fall to return to pre-Covid levels. Interest rates in the US are likely at their peak, with the Fed signaling a pivot away from tightening, and projecting several rate cuts next year. Elsewhere, China continues to grapple with a deepening property downturn, pushing the authorities to do more to support the outlook. India however remains one of the few bright spots for the global economy, with growth holding at above 7% in Q3.

US momentum fading, Fed to cut rates in 2024

The US economy, having overshot expectations in the last two quarters, now seems to be losing some momentum as consumer spending develops fatigue and the delayed effect of aggressive monetary tightening steadily shows up. GDP in Q3 grew at a sharp and better-than-expected 4.9% annualized rate versus 2.1% in Q2. (Chart 1.) Household spending was robust and residential investment rose following two consecutive years of declines. However, economic indicators in Q4 have been patchy, with retail sales (+0.3% m/m) and industrial production (+0.2% m/m) rising in November after large drops in October, and mixed PMI survey readings (manufacturing and services at 46.7 and 52.7, respectively). The upshot is that the market expects a sharp slowdown in GDP growth to 1-1.5% in Q4.

However, the labor market remains solid, giving credence to the soft-landing scenario, as job gains picked up in November (+199K, lower than the average of 2022-23 but above pre-Covid) and wage growth accelerated (+0.4% m/m), with the unemployment rate dropping (3.7%). Jobless claims have been volatile but are historically low.

Consumer price (CPI) inflation has broadly decelerated, with the core rate unchanged at 4% y/y in November. This is double the Fed's target but well off its 6.6% peak last year. With the Fed funds target interest rate now at 5.25-5.50%, real policy rates are in positive (and restrictive) territory, representing a brake on economic momentum. Tighter policy, along with headline inflation slowing to just 3.1% y/y in November, have led futures markets to predict the Fed will bring forward its first rate cut to as soon as March and cut rates rather aggressively after that (over 125 bps in total by end-2024). The FOMC's revised dot-plot projection in December showed a smaller easing of 75 bps in 2024. This is more an aggressive loosening than it previously projected, but Fed officials will be mindful of declaring victory over inflation too soon, with core PCE inflation set to exceed the 2% target until 2026.

Europe's economy heads towards recession

Economic activity in Europe trended lower in Q3 due to pullbacks in consumer spending, investment, and industrial output amid high inflation and elevated borrowing costs. Preliminary Eurozone Q3 GDP estimates showed growth turning negative at -0.1% q/q (+0.2% in Q2) and almost flat at 0.1% y/y, slowing sharply from Q2's 0.5%. (Chart 2.) Following the negative Q3 print, the bloc is on the cusp of a technical recession: the October and November PMI scores remained below the 'no change' 50 mark, potentially signaling another output drop in Q4. The European Commission downgraded its economic growth projections for 2023 and 2024 to 0.6% (from the previous estimate of 0.8%) and 1.3% (from 1.4%), respectively.

Deteriorating economic activity has fed concerns that the

■ Going into 2024, the global economy remains under pressure as the lagged effect of past policy tightening filters through, and with growth in most major economies set to under-

■ The US economy has shown surprising resilience, though growth will slow sharply in Q4 from 4.9% in Q3. Progress in lowering inflation is boosting hopes for a 'soft landing' helped by early cuts in interest rates.

■ The Eurozone economy continues to flirt with recession having contracted in Q3. However, both the ECB and the UK BofE in December pushed back on market hopes of early interest rate cuts next year.

■ The Chinese authorities have stepped up policy support measures - albeit hesitatingly not to stoke debt concerns - as tepid consumption at home and weak external demand make

for an uncertain outlook.

Despite above-target inflation, the BofJ remains cautious about ending ultra-loose monetary policy, while India should record the fastest growth in 2024 among major global economies.

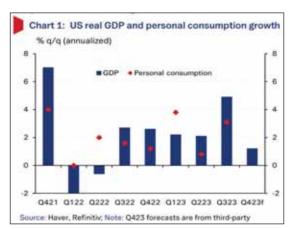
ECB may have overtightened monetary policy - especially with the most recent November inflation print of 2.4% y/y slowing from October (2.9%) and well below expectations. ECB policymakers have pushed back against market expectations of sharp rate cuts, but the markets are pricing in a first cut in March or April.

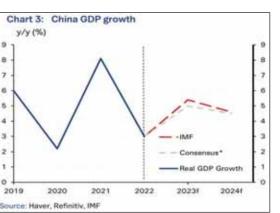
It has been a similar story in the UK. The economy stagnated in Q3 (0.0% q/q; +0.6% y/y), then unexpectedly shrank 0.3% m/m in October. Meanwhile, inflation fell more than expected to 3.9% in November (from 4.6% in October) and wage growth cooled in the three months to October. The Bank of England is also seen cutting rates next year but at a more moderate pace than the ECB or the Fed, given the UK's higher inflation levels currently. On the fiscal side, Chancellor Jermy Hunt in November unveiled a package of demand and supply-side measures aimed at easing the costof-living burden for households and stimulating economic growth, worth on average 0.6% of GDP per year over com-

Japan's output shrinks in Q3 on weak external sector Japan's economy faltered in Q3, underpinning its struggle for a post-pandemic rebound amid a softer yen and dampened global outlook. GDP fell 2.9% (annualized) in Q3 after +3.6% in Q2 (both were revised downwards recently), marking its first decline since Q3 2022. The drop was mainly due to falling private investment and a weaker trade balance. Meanwhile, private consumption (the largest component in GDP) fell 0.6%, suggesting softer domestic demand. The economy could post a mild contraction in Q4 on soft demand

from China and the US, while the weaker yen - despite helping exports - will keep import prices up, continuing to weigh on consumer spending. The uncertain outlook has prompted the government to offer further stimulus measures such as tax breaks to help cushion the impact of higher prices. Consumer price inflation has been above the Bank of Ja-

pan's (BoJ) 2% target for 19 months now (October's core inflation reading at 2.9% y/y), adding pressure on the bank to alter its ultra-loose monetary stance including negative interest rates. However, BoJ officials have maintained that the current inflationary wave is more driven by supply side (food, energy etc.) factors and the weak yen than demand side pressures, and want to make sure inflation remains sustainably at or above the 2% target before shifting policy.





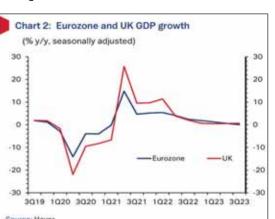
Despite the faltering economic outlook, it remains to be seen whether the bank can resist for long. The BoJ left policy unchanged in December and governor Ueda avoided any clear signals on the timing of a policy change, but a shift is

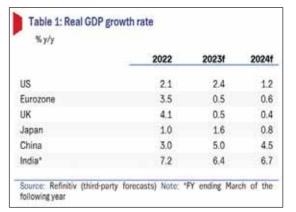
broadly expected in the first half of 2024. Chinese economy rebounds but outlook cautious

Signs of an economic rebound in China have emerged, even though the property sector slump continues to weigh on prospects. GDP growth accelerated to 1.3% q/q in Q3 2023, up from 0.5% in Q2 but slowed year-on-year to 4.9% from 6.3% Q2, due to unfavorable base effects. Growth is on track to meet the government's target of 'around 5%', after averaging 5.2% YTD. Recent data has been patchy. Retail sales growth missed expectations despite accelerating to 10.1% y/y in November (October 7.6%) helped by a supportive base effect, but growth in industrial output reached a more than two-year high of 6.6% y/y.

Meanwhile, real estate activity remains on a downward trajectory, with an accelerated fall in YTD property investment (-9.4% y/y) and existing house prices (-3.3% y/y) in November. Amid the deterioration, property developers have been facing liquidity issues and defaulting on obligations. The ripple effects are also felt in the shadow banking sector with last month Zhongzhi, a large wealth manager, revealing a \$36 billion funding shortfall as such institutions typically took outsized property-related exposures during stronger days. Additionally, consumer price inflation in November fell deeper into deflation (-0.5% y/y) as consumption failed to pick up. Exports and imports have been volatile in October-November on weak domestic demand and a soft global economy.

Amid these challenges, the government has stepped up policy support measures, including using unconventional monetary policy such as providing cheap liquidity to proper-





ty developers, mortgage rate cuts to boost housing demand, and increased infrastructure spending. However, investors are still looking for the government to act more decisively to support growth, including potentially outright policy interest rate cuts. Improved long-term prospects remain tied to successfully shifting the economic model away from being overly dependent on infrastructure investments and exports to spurring sustained domestic consumption.

India's Q2 growth marginally slows but still solid

India's economy has maintained its robust momentum, with growth expected at the fastest pace among major global countries next year. GDP expanded by an above-consensus 7.6% y/y in Q2 (July-Sep), slightly slowing from 7.8% in Q1, supported by strong manufacturing activity and government spending. Still, this year's erratic monsoon season has dampened rural demand, while challenges remain on the external front as exports have been weak. Confirming the strength in the domestic sector, fiscal revenues have been solid, remaining on track to achieve the government's fiscal deficit target of 5.9% of GDP this year (from 6.4% last year). The government may have space to accelerate spending on infrastructure as well as populist measures before next year's general election. On the back of outperformance in Q2, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) upgraded its growth projections for this year (FY23/24) to 7% from 6.5% earlier and around 6.5% for Q1-Q3 FY24/25.

Meanwhile, consumer price inflation increased to a three-month high of 5.6% y/y in November on surging agriproducts prices after irregular rains impacted crop yields. Nonetheless, the peak inflationary phase seems behind us. The RBI has maintained its stance on policy rates (repo rate at 6.5%), but the bank recently increased the risk weight on some unsecured consumer loans to curb excessive demand.

Kuwait Central Bank affirms rigorous 'Low-carbon hydrogen' rises controls on consumer, housing loans

Bank gives detailed response to parliamentary inquiries

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: The Central Bank of Kuwait has issued a comprehensive response to dispel any misconceptions regarding banks' alleged leniency in granting financial facilities to citizens and residents without a thorough assessment of their credit capacity. The Central Bank emphasized that such assumptions are unfounded, and its commitment to prudent supervisory controls reflects in the measures it actively imple-

In its detailed response to parliamentary inquiries, the Central Bank provided specific data to underline the accuracy and effectiveness of its supervisory approach. It confirmed that legal actions against citizens and residents, pertaining to consumer and housing loans, represent a mere 3.9% of the total borrowers. This percentage, as of the end of November 2023, demonstrates a significant decrease and underscores the robust regularity observed in the consumer and housing loan portfolio, exceeding an impressive 96%.

The success of maintaining such a high level of regularity is attributed to the presence of meticulous supervisory controls within the framework of the Central Bank of Kuwait's overarching supervisory system. The system is designed not only to fortify the banking sector but also to enhance overall financial stability. The Central Bank has a keen interest in the foundations and rules governing the granting of consumer and housing loans, ensuring a secure and stable financial environment for both banks and cus-

By Mohammad Al-Mutairi

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26, (KUNA): The Arab Planning Institute (API) signed a Memorandum of Understanding Tuesday with the Association of Banks in Jordan for the purpose of developing training work in the field of entrepreneurship, consultations and financial awareness.

Dr. Abdullah Al-Shami, told KUNA that the memorandum aims to extend its expertise to the Banks' Associa-

One notable aspect of the Central

Bank's supervisory measures is the

emphasis on independent external

audits. These audits play a crucial

role in enhancing the regularity of the loan portfolio, providing an additional

layer of scrutiny to verify the integ-

rity of banks' adherence to the Cen-

tral Bank's instructions. Furthermore,

the Central Bank has implemented

procedures for imposing penalties on

banks found in violation of prescribed

regulations, contributing significantly

to the overall regularity of the loan

The Central Bank's commitment

to financial stability extends beyond

the confines of supervisory controls.

It places a special emphasis on the is-

sue of financial inclusion, considering

it a cornerstone of overall financial

stability. Within this framework, the

Central Bank of Kuwait has issued a

set of instructions and directives to the

banking sector, aimed at promoting

transparency and disclosure in finan-

cial and banking transactions. These

instructions are designed to create an

environment that preserves the rights

of customers while ensuring the pro-

tection of the banking sector from

reputational risks arising from non-

compliance with professional banking

Al-Shami hailed Jordanian banks as an additional value to the Institute, pointing out that API is exposed to the work of private sector institutions in the Arab world, to offer qualitative value to consultations, training and youth empow-

cial step in Arab integration is the exchange of experience and knowledge between Arab countries and

ciation of Banks in Jordan Dr. Maher

Al-Mahrouq told KUNA that this cooperation aims to develop small and medium enterprises, promote financial culture and awareness as well as entrepreneurship.

He further said that the partnership with the institute is beneficial for scientific, cultural and educational sectors in Jordan, indicating that he will be a partner in the financial awareness and culture platform that the association will launch soon.

The Kuwait-based Arab Planning Institute, established in 1980, aims to support economic and social development in the Arab region.

ers with copies of contracts and state-

ments. These measures underscore

the Central Bank's commitment to

transparency and customer rights pro-

Bank's stance is its acknowledg-

ment that the decision to grant cus-

tomers a loan is ultimately up to

the banks. The Central Bank does

not interfere in credit decisions, in-

cluding those related to obtaining

guarantees. Instead, its role involves

verifying that banks comply with

issued instructions and make deci-

sions based on sound foundations

when considering borrowing and

The Central Bank's approach en-

sures a balanced relationship frame-

A crucial aspect of the Central



Abdulmotai

Al Mutairi

On this issue, several experts spoke to KUNA on the validity of the new promising energy resource.

is a new venture and Kuwait is keen on capitalizing on such an opportunity, Manager of the Energy Efficiency Technologies Program at Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) Dr. Dr. Fotouh Al-Ragom told KUNA.

Dr. Al-Ragom affirmed that Kuwait had an abundance of renewable natural resources, noting that it could use solar and wind energies to produce green hydrogen not only for national

as sustainable energy option

By Khaled Al-Mutairi

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26, (KUNA): Low-carbon hydrogen is shaping up to become one of the most promising energy resources that would lead to a better environment and help achieve the goal of carbon neutrality set by countries around the world.

Hydrogen, as an element, is a safe and clean source of energy that does

produce pollutants while burned and has several applications including a source of heat for housing or a raw material in the industrial sector, and recently attracted attention as a future

Al Ragom

resource. There around methods to prolow-carduce bon hydrogen, which less than 2.4 kilograms carbon dioxide for every one kilogram of hy-

The most imortant kinds of low-carbon hydrogen are the ones produced by wind and solar-powered devices known as "green hydrogen" and the other, known as "blue hydrogen", extracted from natural gas as a

The usage of low-carbon hydrogen

consumption, but also as a material to export to other countries.

She indicated that there were many countries beginning to show increasing interest in such viable energy resource, adding that Kuwait had taken some serious steps to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 in the oil and gas sectors, a step necessary for an ambitious plan for total carbon neutrality for all sectors of the state by 2060.

It is very important to focus on decreasing direct and indirect carbon emissions to achieve the aforementioned goal, she affirmed, saying that it could be achieved by decreasing the burning of gas in extraction and production operations as well as bolstering circular economy, a model of production that focuses on sharing, leasing, and reusing energy to lessen carbon emission.

Dr. Al-Ragom also indicated that utilizing solar energy to produce electricity would also contribute to lessening carbon emissions.

She asserted that Kuwait's efforts in this regard were in line with the global pledge for renewable energy sources and efficiency, which increases such energy resources by threefold, a measure that would decrease temperature by 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2030.

She also mentioned Kuwait's vision to save 15 percent of its need for renewable energy resources by 2030 in line with the global pledge.

Dr. Al-Ragom also revealed that there were various state entities cooperating on this matter.

Also speaking on the matter of low-carbon hydrogen usage, natural gas industries expert at the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) Wael Abdulmotai said that hydrogen use was not a novelty; the resource was used in the past as a raw material in various industries to create products.

The increasing interest in hydrogen nowadays was due to its practical usage in future clean energy production, indicated Abdulmotai, affirming that there were obstacles that needed to be addressed before embarking on a wide-scale usage of hydrogen.

He said that the main concern with the production of low-carbon hydrogen as a resource was the high cost of the material, which was fivefold the cost of producing natural gas.

To better utilize low-carbon hydrogen, the infrastructure must be built to allow for international commerce like in the case of oil and natural gas, he affirmed, saying that policies must also be devised to ensure the organization of the process for the benefit of consumers and producers.

API signs MoU with Jordan's Bank Association tween the two sides.

The institute's Director General, tion and enhancing cooperation be-

tomers.

portfolio.

erment. He also added that the most cru-

their institutions.

The Director General of the Asso-

As part of a comprehensive package of supervisory controls, the Central Bank actively directs credit policy to support economic and social progress, contributing to increased national income. The system is crafted to stimulate credit growth within well-defined controls, maintaining the quality and regularity of credit facilities. This approach provides a conducive environment for economic growth, aligning with the Central Bank's broader goal of enhancing monetary and financial

The Central Bank of Kuwait's commitment to supervisory controls is evident in the instructions issued on 12/28/1993, which reflect international banking standards for effective supervision. These instructions cover various principles and controls related to the process of granting credit, emphasizing the importance of an integrated credit study that considers the feasibility of granted facilities. Additionally, the instructions stress the need for recent evaluations of guarantees when required and the board of directors' responsibility in ensuring the preservation of funds and reduction of risks associated with credit

Over the years, the Central Bank

work that protects the interests of customers while safeguarding the banking sector from potential risks. The Central Bank of Kuwait, through its vigilant supervisory controls and commitment to regulatory measures, continues to foster a stable, transparent, and customer-centric banking en-

vironment in the country.

financing applications.

Commit to combating climate change, cutting emissions by 2030, outlining net-zero roadmaps

Agility and 13 top MENA firms commit to net-zero future

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: Agility, a supply chain services, infrastructure and innovation company, affirmed its commitment to combating climate change as a signatory to the World Economic Forum's joint communique on achieving a net-zero future

Agility is one of 14 leading companies from the Middle East and North Africa that signed the communique. The companies, members of the World Economic Forum's Leaders for a Sustainable Middle East and North Africa initiative, pledged to: 1) Drive their organizations to net zero; 2) Deliver near-term emission reductions, 3) Enable greener growth; 4) Build awareness and capability, especially among consumers and supply chain participants; 5) Collaborate with the public sector to create an enabling ecosystem. "Representing 7% of MENA's current emissions, this coalition of top business leaders are going beyond pledges and are stepping up with concrete actions to reduce emissions and mobilize the ecosystem towards a net-zero future. This is not only about combating climate change, but about seizing the opportunity to drive a sustainable, inclusive and resilient future for the region," said Borge Brende, President of the World Economic Forum.

Agility has taken a group-wide approach in its sustainability efforts. All Agility group companies pursue ESG strategies tailored to their industry contexts. Menzies Aviation and Tristar, Agility's two largest subsidiaries, are responsible for the majority of Agility's overall emissions and have each established net-zero goals. Menzies aims for net zero by 2045; Tristar's target is 2050. In the short term, Menzies plans to reduce Scope 1 & 2 emissions by 50% and Scope 3 emissions by 20% by 2030, aligned to the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) corporate Net Zero standard. Meanwhile, Tristar has set annual operational energy consumption intensity and CO2 emissions reduction goals of 30,000 tons/ year which is approximately around 35% of its total emissions under Scope 1 & 2. Tristar aims to contribute to climate actions through using zero emission fuels in 5% of its deep-sea shipping by 2030. This will be in line with achieving the IMO Initial GHG strategy objection.



Agility Vice Chair Tarek Sultan



Borge Brende – WEF President

tive of 40% reduction of CO2 emissions per transport work compared to 2008, by 2030. Tristar is also one of the first signatories to 'Forward Faster', a UN Global Compact initiative guiding companies on where they can make their biggest and fastest impact for 2030.

Agility Logistics Parks (ALP), another Agility subsidiary, is pioneering the use of sustainable materials and designs across the MENA region. ALP's warehousing complex in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and the company's warehousing complex in Cote d'Ivoire earned the first EDGE Advanced Certifications ever awarded in MENA and West Africa, respectively. This certification, an IFC-backed standard, recognizes buildings that are at least 40% more energy-efficient than the market. Agility was recently named the No. 3 sustainability leader in MENA's Transport & Logistics sector by Forbes as part of its Middle East Sustainability 100 list.

Tarek Sultan, Agility Vice Chairman, said: "Sustainability is a central focus for Agility, and we seek collaboration with partners who share our vision. Joining WEF's initia-

tives for climate change in the MENA region is a reflection of that commitment, and our on-ground sustainability efforts are a testament to our resolve. We believe collaboration like this is critical if the region is to cut emissions and reach net zero.

1. Tarek Sultan, Chief Executive Officer and Vice-Chairman, Agility (Kuwait) 2. Marco Arcelli, Chief Executive Officer, ACWA Power (Saudi Arabia)

3. Majid Jafar, Chief Executive Officer, Crescent Petroleum (United Arab Emir-

4. Hatem Dowidar, Group Chief Executive Officer, e& (United Arab Emirates) 5. Shayne Nelson, Group Chief Executive Officer, Emirates NDB (United Arab

6. Hana Al Rostamani, Group Chief Executive Officer, First Abu Dhabi Bank

(United Arab Emirates) 7. Abdulaziz Al-Helaissi, Group Chief Executive Officer, Gulf International Bank

(Bahrain)

8. Mohammed Alardhi, Executive Chairman, Investcorp (Bahrain) 9. Ahmed Galal Ismail, Chief Executive Officer, Majid Al Futtaim Holding (Unit-

10. Helmut von Struve, Chief Executive Officer, Siemens UAE & Middle East

(United Arab Emirates) 11. Jasim Husain Ahmed Thabet, Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, Abu Dhabi National Energy Company (TAQA) (United Arab Emirates) 12. Lina Noureddin, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Lamar

Holding (Bahrain) 13. Abdulrahman Al Hatmi, Group Chief Executive, Oman Global Logistics

Group (ASYAD) (Oman)

14. Khalil Yassine, Head, Unilever Arabia (United Arab Emirates)

rev-

Stoppage to affect local economies

Daihatsu halts Japan factories amid bogus safety test probe

TOKYO, Dec 26, (AP): Daihatsu, a unit of Japanese automaker Toyota Motor Corp., has shut down production lines at all its four factories in Japan while transport ministry officials investigate improper tests for safety certifications.

The shutdown as of Tuesday comes a week after Daihatsu Motor Co. announced it was suspending all vehi-

cle shipments in and outside Japan finding improper testing involving 64 models. That led transport ministry officials to launch a deeper probe into problems that apparently persisted for decades. The stoppage



Okudaira

is expected to affect thousands of auto parts makers and their employees in a potential blow to local economies.

The safety test irregularities earlier this year triggered an independent panel investigation, which found widespread and systematic problems at Daihatsu. It is the latest of safety or other violations found at at least five of Japan's major automakers in recent

So far, there have been no reports of accidents or deaths due to the falsified

Daihatsu, maker of Hijet trucks and vans and Mira hatchbacks, said it started shutting down some lines Monday and production stopped at all four plants in Shiga, Kyoto and Oita prefectures as well as at its headquarters in Osaka on Tuesday.

The company declined to say when production will resume, while media reports said lines will be suspended at least through January.

Daihatsu is Toyota's unit specializing in small cars and trucks that are popular in Japan. The company assembled some 870,000 vehicles at the four plants in fiscal 2022.

According to market research company Teikoku Databank, Daihatsu factories have supply chains including 8,136 companies across Japan, with sales totaling 2.2 trillion sales (\$15.53

"The longer the shipment suspension, the greater the concern about its impact on company earnings, employment and the local economy," it said in

The problems were found in 64 models and three vehicle engines, including 22 models and an engine sold by Toyota. The problems also affected some models of Mazda Motor Corp. and Subaru Corp. sold in Japan, and Toyota and Daihatsu models sold

Daihatsu's probe found 174 new cases of irregularities in safety tests and other procedures in 25 test categories, on top of problems reported ear-

The issue emerged in April when Daihatsu reported improper testing on door linings. Problems in side collision testing surfaced in May, officials said. The also found data falsifications and use of unauthorized testing proce-

Speaking to reporters last week, Daiĥatsu President Soichiro Okudaira acknowledged the cheating on safety testing and procedures, saying it was tantamount to neglect of safety certificates. He attributed the problems to pressure on workers to meet ambitious demands for tight development dead-



Mini vehicles of Daihatsu Motor Co. are displayed in Tokyo, on Sept. 9, 2015. Daihatsu, a unit of Japanese automaker Toyota Motor Corp., has shut down production lines at all its four factories in Japan while transport ministry officials investigate improper tests for safety certifications. (AP)

Asian markets 'advance' but Chinese shares dip in holiday-thinned trading

European markets closed

BANGKOK, Dec 26, (AP): Shares advanced in Asia on Tuesday in holiday-thinned trading, while European markets remained closed for holidays.

The future for the S&P 500 was 0.2% higher and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average added 0.1%. Oil prices edged higher.

Shanghai's benchmark led losses in Asia on heavy selling of technology and computer chip-related shares as worries revived over trade tensions with the U.S. and other western coun-

A number of video gaming stocks announced share buybacks meant to stem losses after Chinese regulators issued draft guidelines on Friday that caused shares in game makers like Tencent and Netease to plunge. Hong Kong markets were closed Tuesday, so the impact of an effort by Beijing on Monday to cushion the impact of the new rules by voicing support for the industry and announcing the approval of more than 100 games was unclear.

The Shanghai Composite index sank 0.7% to 2,898.88. In Shenzhen, where relatively more high-tech companies are listed, the A-share index lost 1.2%.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 gained 0.1% to 33,276,50. In South Korea, the Kospi added 0.1%, to 2,602.59. Bangkok's SET rose 0.4%. Taiwan's Taiex gained 0.8% and the Sensex in Mumbai was

U.S. and European markets were closed Monday for Christmas.

On Friday, Wall Street closed its eighth straight winning week with a quiet finish following reports showing inflation is on the decline even as the economy appears stronger than expected.

On Friday, the S&P 500 rose 0.2%. It's less than 1% below its record set nearly two years ago and is in the midst of its longest winning streak

The Dow slipped less than 0.1% and the Nasdaq gained 0.2%.

In other trading Tuesday, a barrel of U.S. crude shed 18 cents to \$73.38 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude, the international standard, gave up 11 cents to \$78.69 per barrel.

The U.S. dollar rose to 142.49 Japanese yen from 142.33 yen. The euro was unchanged at \$1.1017.

Aggregate revenue in MESAC region grows by 22.4%

KPMG's global revenue touches US\$36b

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: Amid economic and geopolitical slow-downs, KPMG MESAC announced a 22.4-percent growth in the aggregate revenue of KPMG member firms (in local currency terms) in the region for the fiscal year ending 30 September 2023 (FY23). The announcement came in after KPMG International declared the annual globally aggregated revenues for KPMG firms of US\$36b for FY23, marking an increase of 8 percent from FY22 (5 percent in US\$).

The financial figures highlight robust year-on-year growth, reinforced by a multi-disciplinary approach that binds together world-leading expertise and integrated capabilities.

Commenting on the results, Dr. Rasheed Al-Qenae, Chairman of the KPMG MESAC region and Man-aging Partner, KPMG in Kuwait, said,"The financial results for FY23 are an outcome of our continued investments in strengthening the quality and trust agenda as well as in expanding our capabilities. We are committed to making the most of our multi-disciplinary model, ensuring sustainable growth in every domain we operate in. Despite increasing complexities in the economic and geopolitical landscapes, we are seeing new, more tangible opportunities emerge in the region. We are, both, well-equipped and well-positioned to cater to the needs of our clients, people, and the wider society, while maintaining a keen focus on driving progress in terms of our ESG initiatives.

KPMG member firms in the ME-

SAC region also saw double-digit growth across all 3core functions of Audit, Tax and Advisory, with the most notable upshot in Advisory revenue which climbed by more than 30%over the previous

Globally, Audit enues grew 9 percent on FY22, Advisory grew 7 Tax & Legal services grew

Dr. Al-Qenae

10 percent. The primary focus for KPMG in the ME-SAC region in FY23 remained strengthening capabilities with senior hires, particularly in areas such as digital and artificial intelligence (AI), project finance, deal advisory, managed services, forensic, dispute advisory and transfer pricing, as well as in sectors such as cities, defense, energy, and natural resources, among others. As a result, more than 4,200 people were hired across the KPMG MESAC region including 78 partners and directors, pushingthe region's combined talent pool upwards of 11,400 as of 30September 2023.

Additionally, bolstering resource mobilization and delivery capabilities through strategic alliances, particularly in the technology space, delivery networks and regional corridors, were among the key areas of focus for KPMG in the MESAC region.

In line with this, the KPMG member firm in Kuwait appointed

new Heads of Management Consulting, Audit, and ESG to propel its capabilities in the Advisory space further. Moreover, partners and employees of the firm are leveraging the KPMG Kuwait Impact Plan to ensure that businesses think beyond financial profits and move towards operational responsibilities for the collective good of the society.

Looking at the next phase, Bill Thomas, Global Chairman & CEO, KPMG International, said, "As the world faces economic and geopolitical uncertainty and increasing complexity, KPMG has remained focused on harnessing the full breadth of our multidisciplinary model, which has enabled us to deliver sustainable growth across all areas of the business.

Guided by shared values, purpose and a strong KPMG culture, we remain driven to make a positive difference for clients, our people and society more widely. Through the next phase of our global Collective Strategy, KPMG firms are investing significantly in areas important to clients, including technology and ESG services, and in attracting and retaining the best talent in the market."

In the next phase of its global Collective Strategy, KPMG has outlined a collective investment of US\$4.2b, placing a wider focus on high-impact opportunities, especially in technology, talent and ESG. It is anticipated that the extension in the term of present Global Chairman and CEO, Bill Thomas, to 30 September 2026, will ensure continuity of leadership and direction for KPMG for the next 3

Southwest Airlines faces holiday travel hiccups

WASHINGTON, Dec 26, (AP): Conditions were mostly nice this year for travelers flying ahead of and on Christmas, but some naughty disruptions again plagued those flying

with Southwest Airlines. For millions of people traveling over the holiday, this year was much better than last. Christmas morning put a

bow on a relatively smooth weekend. By midday Monday, only 138 flights within, into or out of the U.S. had been canceled and 1,366 were delayed, according to the tracking website FlightAware.

On Saturday and Sunday, Southwest canceled 426 flights and delayed 2,689 flights, FlightAware data showed.

A Southwest spokesperson blamed the issues on dense fog in Chicago on Saturday and Sunday that prevented planes from landing and said some additional cancellations may be necessary Monday ahead of what was expected to be a full recovery on Tuesday. Auto club AAA predicted that between Saturday and New Year's Day, 115 million people in the U.S. would travel at least 50 miles (80 kilometers) from home by air or car. That's up 2% from last year.

2024 cybersecurity predictions

What does 2024 look through a cybersecurity lens? F5 Labs delves in ...

As we peer into the future of cybersecurity, our predictions underscore the need for continuous adaptation and innovation in defending against evolving cyber threats. Whether it's addressing the socioeconomic disparities in cybersecurity resilience, fortifying edge computing environments, or preparing for seemingly endless AI-driven assaults on our lives, the future cybersecurity landscape demands a proactive and collaborative approach to safeguard our digital

Prediction #1: Generative AI will converse with phishing victims

Large language models (LLMs) are set to take over the back-and-forth between phisher and vic-

Organized crime gangs will benefit from no longer needing to employ individuals to translate messages from victim and act as a "support center". Instead, generative AI will be used to translate messages from the non-native language the attackers use, and respond with authentic sounding responses, coaching the victim along

their path of being socially engineered. By incorporating publicly available personal information to create incredibly lifelike scams, organized cybercrime groups will take the phishing-as-a-service we already know and magnify it both in scale and efficiency.

Prediction #2: Organized crime will use generative AI with fake accounts

There ishuge potential for AI-based fake accounts containing posts and images that are indiscernible from real human content. All attack strategies that fake accounts engender, including fraud, credential stuffing, disinformation, and marketplace manipulation, could see an enormous boost in productivity when it costs zero effort to match human realism.

Prediction #3: Nation-states will use generative AI for disinformation

Generative AI tools have the potential to significantly change the way malicious information operations are conducted with fake content creation, automated text generation for disinformation, targeted misinformation campaigns, and circumvention of content moderation.

We have already observed genAI created content being used on a small scale in current conflicts around the world. At a larger scale, we expect to see this used by different actors ahead of major world events which in 2024 including the U.S. Presidential election and the Olympics in Paris. Concerns, such as these, led to Adobe, Mi-

crosoft, the BBC, and others, creating the C2PA standard; a technique to cryptographically watermark the origin of digital media. Time will tell whether this will have any measurable impact. Prediction #4: Hacktivism will grow thanks

to generative AI and technological advance-

Hacktivist activity related to major world events is expected to grow as computing power continues to become more affordable and, crucially, easier to use. Using AI tools and the power of their smartphones and laptops, it is likely that more unsophisticated actors will join the fight in

cyber space as hacktivists.

Over the past couple of years, the world observed a resurgence in the volume of hacktivist activity, starting with threat actors expressing support for both sides with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. More recent conflicts, only a small amount of hacktivist activity was initially seen but as violence increases on the physical battlefield, so too have hacktivists moved to progressively more destructive attacks. Intelligence reports have observed availability attacks which include distributed denial-of-service attacks, data leaks, website defacements, and a clear focus on attempting to disrupt critical infrastructure.

With world events like the Olympics, elec-

tions, and ongoing wars taking place in 2024, hacktivists are likely to use these opportunities to gain notoriety for their group and sympathy for the causes they support. Attendees, sponsors, and other loosely affiliated organizations are likely to become targets, if not victims of these geopolitically motivated hacktivists. This is likely to extend beyond just targeting individuals but also to targeting companies and organizations that support different causes.

Prediction #5: Web attacks will use realtime input from generative AI With their impressive ability to create code

LLMs can, and will, be used to direct the sequences of procedures during live attacks, allowing attackers to react to defenses as they encounter them.

By leveraging APIs from open genAI systems such as ChatGPT, or by building their own LLMs, attackers will be able to incorporate the knowledge and ideas of an AI system during a live attack on a website or network. Should an attacker's website attack find itself blocked due to security controls, an AI system can be used to evaluate the response and suggest alternative ways to attack.

Look for LLMs to diversify attack chains to

our detriment soon. Prediction #6: LLLMs (Leaky Large Language Models)

Fresh research has shown disturbingly simple ways in which LLMs can be tricked into revealing their training data, which often includes proprietary and personal data. The rush to create proprietary LLMs could result in many more examples of training data being exposed, if not through novel attacks, then by rushed and misconfigured security controls.

We expect to see some spectacular failures of GenAI-driven tools-such as massive leaks of PII, novel techniques to gain unauthorized access, and denial of service attacks.

As with cloud breaches, the impact of LLMs

leaks has the potential to be enormous, because of the sheer quantity of data involved. Prediction #7: Generative Vulnerabilities

Many developers, seasoned and newbie alike, increasingly look to generative AI to write code or check for bugs. But without the correct safeguards in place, many foresee LLMs creating a deluge of vulnerable code which is difficult to secure. Whilst OSS poses a risk, its benefit has an inherent fix-once approach. Should a vulnerability be discovered in an OSS library, it can be fixed once and then used by everyone who uses that library. With GenAI code generation, every developer will end up with a unique and bespoke piece of code.

Code assistants write code so quickly that developers may not have time to review. Depending on when the LLM was built, it may not even be aware of the latest vulnerabilities, making it impossible for the model to construct code that avoids these vulnerabilities or avoids importing libraries with vulnerabilities.

In the age of generative AI, organizations that prioritize speed over security will inevitably introduce new vulnerabilities. Prediction #8: Attacks on the Edge

Physical tampering, software and API vulnerabilities, and management challenges are all risks

that are exacerbated in an edge context. Seventy five percent of enterprise data will be generated and processed outside the traditional confines of data centers or the cloud. This paradigm redefines organizational boundaries, since workloads at the edge may harbor sensitive infor-

mation and privileges. Just as with MFA, attackers will focus on where their time has the biggest impact. If the shift to edge computing is handled as carelessly as cloud computing can be, expect to see a similar number of high-profile incidents over the coming

Prediction #9: Attackers will improve their ability to live off the Land

Growing complexity of IT environments, particularly in cloud and hybrid architectures, will make it more challenging to monitor and detect living-off-the-land (LOTL) attacks.

Attackers are increasingly turning to LOTL techniques that use legitimate management software already present on victim systems to achieve their malicious objectives. To make things worse, LOTL attacks can be incorporated into supply chain attacks to compromise critical infrastructure and disrupt operations.

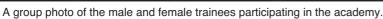
Unless we improve our visibility in our own networks, expect to see attackers use our own tools against us with increasing frequency. Prediction #10: Cybersecurity Poverty Ma-

There are growing concerns about the effect that trends in security architecture will have on the security poverty line, a concept advanced more than a decade ago by the esteemed Wendy Nather. The security poverty line is defined as the level of knowledge, authority, and most of all budget necessary to accomplish the bare mini-

mum of security controls. Today it seems that organizations need security orchestration, automation, and incident response (SOAR), security information and event management (SIEM), vulnerability management tools, and threat intelligence services, as well as programs like configuration management, incident response, penetration testing, and governance, compliance, and risk. Vinberg explains:

The key issue here is that many enterprise organizations choose to consume these controls as managed services, such that the expertise is guaranteed but so is the cost. The heightened cost of entry into each of these niches means that they will increasingly become all-or-nothing, and more organizations will eventually need to choose between them.







A group photo of the participants and honorees in the Future Leaders Program.



During a visit to the Shamiya Nature Reserve.



Ahmed Al-Nuwaibit and Anfal Al-Kandari with a group of entrepreneurs and Dr. Heba Al-Musallam.



stc team cleaning the beach.

Driving engagement, collaborations, and building partnerships to make a long-lasting impact

stc ... marking a year filled with exceptional community contributions

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: Supporting the community in various ways has been a longstanding commitment under stc's extensive and sustainable corporate social responsibility (CSR) program. Considering its role as a pioneer in Kuwait's telecom market, stc leveraged its resources and expertise to launch or participate in community driven initiatives that have a far-reaching and positive impact on the community. With a focus on key areas such as education, environmental sustainability, sports, youth empowerment, and entrepreneurship, stc has implemented programs that aim to foster longterm growth and development in the community. These programs are designed to empower individuals and businesses, especially the younger generation, SMEs, and entrepreneurs, by providing them with the knowledge, support, and opportunities to succeed. Through these efforts, stc has established itself as more than just a telecom provider, but a strong contributor to the social and economic fabric of Kuwait.

stc's programs and initiatives in 2023 were diverse and sustainable, each targeting specific community needs and causes that coincided the Company's values and beliefs. These efforts were reflected through various programs, including the three primary initiatives launched under the CSR agenda. Under the 'Weyak' umbrella, the first of stc's three primary initiatives for the year, the emphasis was on supporting young entrepreneurs, business start-ups and SMEs, capitalizing on the strong momentum gained from previous campaigns. The second primary initiative was the educational 'upgrade' umbrella, which aims to contribute towards empowering the youth and supporting the local education initiatives. The last primary initiative is the 'Because we care', which aims to spread awareness on health and wellness, environment and other humanitarian causes. Numerous activities were organized under each initiative in line with stc's approach to creating lasting positive changes and building a better future for the younger generation in Kuwait.

Driven by a commitment to create a meaningful difference in the community, stc effectively orchestrated, led, and engaged in a range of initiatives designed to uplift and empower Kuwaiti society. These initiatives, reflecting stc's dedication to social responsibility, were executed in partnership with an array of key players, including the Kuwaiti Government, well-established businesses, small and medium-sized enter-

prises (SMEs), specialized service providers, and community members. This collaborative approach ensured the successful implementation of various projects and programs that aligned with stc's CSR framework, demonstrating the company's holistic and inclusive strategy in addressing societal needs and fostering positive change

Empowering Youth and Entrepreneurs with "Weyak"

The 'Weyak' umbrella played a pivotal role in stc's CSR framework by empowering Kuwait's younger generation and the entrepreneurial landscape. This innovative program was specifically designed to cater to the needs and aspirations



of Kuwait's youth, as well as SMEs and startups. By providing essential support, 'Weyak' helped young entrepreneurs and innovators transform their visionary ideas into tangible realities. This initiative fostered an environment where creativity and business acumen could flourish, significantly contributing to the nation's economic vitality

A crucial element of the 'Weyak' initiative was stc's collaboration with Dawrat & COFE App. The partnership with 'dawrat' brought forth a variety of educational programs, workshops, and courses, all tailored to equip young entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in a competitive market. By integrating digital technology into these learning modules, stc ensured that participants were well-versed in the latest digital trends and practices, which are indispensable in today's digitally evolving business world. While stc continued to enable and activate the strategic agreement with COFE App, the region's premiere online coffee marketplace, through a series of interactive activities including online activations and special events.

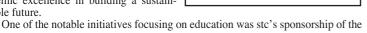
Further amplifying the impact of 'Weyak' was the launch of inspireU Program in the Kuwait Market, an entrepreneurial state-of-the-art incubator and accelerator designed to support startups and SMEs in Kuwait. Three start-ups were selected from the Kuwaiti market to take part in the 10th intake of inspireU program hosted by stc group, based on the criteria defined under the program to be among the 20 companies participating in the tenth edition of the inspireU program. Winning projects will have access to several networking opportunities through participation and visits to international conferences. In addition, inspireU provides financial support to enable start-ups to realize their ideas and dreams.

In essence, the 'Weyak' initiative included multifaceted programs that exemplified stc's commitment to nurturing a thriving ecosystem for young entrepreneurs and innovators. This commitment was reflective of stc's understanding that the progress and prosperity of Kuwait are deeply rooted in the empowerment of its youth and the growth of its entrepreneurial sector. Supporting this segment of the community has been a focus of stc's CSR program for several years, aligning with the Company's strategic objective of serving as an enable of digital transformation in Kuwait by introducing innovative concepts and technology that can be utilized by individuals and corporates.

Focusing on education through 'upgrade'

The 'upgrade' initiative, another key component of stc's 2023 CSR program,

demonstrated the Company's deep commitment to education stewardship. Several initiatives were launched throughout the year under the umbrella of the educational 'upgrade' initiative, each serving a different purpose. This focus mirrors stc's understanding of the nature of academic excellence in building a sustain-



upgrade



A group photo of the work teams from COFE and stc.



Group photos of the participants with the judging panel.



stc CEO Mazyad bin Nasser Al-Harbi with CEO of Tourism Projects Fadel

2nd Watheefti Career Fair during 2023. This event presented a pivotal opportunity for young Kuwaitis to explore a wide array of career paths and professions. By bringing together over 120 entities from both the private and public sectors, the fair served as a vibrant setting of opportunity and guidance. For stc, the Watheefti Career Fair also served as a strategic investment in the nation's future, ensuring that young people had access to the information and networks necessary to make informed career choices.

stc continued its support for academic excellence by sponsoring the graduation ceremony for disabled students for the second year in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. 100 students with physical disabilities were honored amongst their proud families, friends and teachers in a celebratory initiative that aligned with stc's core values of promoting leadership and self-growth. It is worth mentioning that stc adopted this graduation ceremony for the 1st time in Kuwait last year as part of the MOE initiative to bring all students together under one roof to celebrate their success

As part of stc's strategic partnership with the Kuwait University to support and empower students, the Company held several 'stc Diwaniya' sessions in the presence of social media influencers and personalities along with young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs at Kuwait University. The strategic partnership with Kuwait University aims to provide students with a unique learning curve and the motivational drive that will assist them in reaching their goals and aspirations in their future careers.

With various other programs and activities organized throughout the year, the educational 'upgrade' initiative showcased stc's dedication to nurturing an educated conscious society. By supporting educational growth, stc aspires to play a crucial role in shaping a more informed, responsible, and sustainable Kuwait. These efforts reflect the Company's broader vision of social responsibility, one that encompasses not just immediate community needs but also the long-term wellbeing and prosperity of the nation.

Prioritizing health and environmental causes under 'Because we care' The 'Because we care' initiative, the third primary campaign under stc's 2023 CSR framework, illustrated the Company's deep commitment to fostering health and environmental sustainability within the Kuwaiti community. This initiative, launched prior to 2023, encompassed various campaigns, each designed to make a tangible impact on the well-being of individuals and the environment. stc launched and participated in numerous campaigns that aimed to spread awareness on various health issues and environmental causes

that impact members of the community A highlight of the 'Because we care' initiative for 2023 was the "Our Environment, Our Life" campaign, a collaborative effort with Kuwaiti personality Youssef Al-Omran, also known as "Bu Jarrah", and a large group of volunteers. This campaign focused on the environmental preservation and safety of Abu Al-Hasaniyah Beach. The shoreline cleanup and proper maintenance of this beach area primarily focused on



protecting the delicate coastal ecosystem and having a safe environment for beachgoers.

Another significant aspect of the 'Because we care' initiative was the organization of the annual health initiatives related to Blood Donation, Breast Cancer and Prostate Cancer where stc collaborated with various entities to promote and raise awareness on these health issues and the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

The comprehensive nature of the "Because We Care" iniative, with its focus on both environmental sustainability and personal health, reinforced stc's role as a responsible corporate citizen. These efforts showcased the Company's dedication to the welfare of the Kuwaiti community, extending its impact beyond the realms of technology and telecommunications. These initiatives launched by stc aimed to contribute to the development and well-being of Kuwait, which can be witnessed on several fronts. By prioritizing health, wellness, and environmental sustainability, stc aspires to enhance the quality of life for individuals while playing a crucial role in the broader societal and environmental progress in Kuwait.

Creating memories at second season of 'Winter Wonderland Kuwait' In an effort to empower and enable the youth, stc sponsored

'Winter Wonderland Kuwait', in strategic partnership with TEC as it aligns with the Company's

commitment to participate in various initiatives that engage with the community, especially with the areas of education, youth empowerment, health, sports, entrepreneurship, and others that serve the community.

stc's sponsorship falls in line with the Company's extensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) program, which aims to create a positive social impact, especially through strategic collaborations with government entities and companies within the private sector.



Strengthening community ties through strategic partnerships

Collaborating with a diverse range of partners, including the Kuwaiti Government, private enterprises, non-profit organizations, and community members, stc has exemplified the power of collective effort in driving social change. These part-

nerships have broadened the scope and impact of stc's CSR program and enriched the Company's understanding and approach to addressing complex societal challenges. The synergy between stc and its partners underlines the notion that social responsibility transcends individual or corporate boundaries. It is a collaborative journey that unites different sectors of society towards a common goal. Through these alliances, stc has been able to amplify its impact, bringing innovative programs and sustainable practices to the forefront of its



Through our strategic partnership with Flare Fitness, stc sponsored the 8th 'Flare Festival', one of the largest of its kind in Kuwait, for the fourth year in a row. Our participation and support towards such initiatives within the community builds on stc's strive to promote healthy living, amongst the youth.

stc continued to extend its collaboration with Tarahom Volunteer Team in an effort to support the Kuwaiti society through various humanitarian and good will initiatives. This year's campaign consisted of several initiatives that focused on spreading joy and happiness to the hearts of many in the local community throughout the holy month of Ramadan.

Envisioning a sustainable path forward

Looking ahead, stc is set to build on the solid foundation established through its com-

prehensive and sustainable CSR program over the years. This past year has been a testament to stc's unwavering commitment to creating a positive and lasting impact in the community through various sustainable initiatives, a dedication that is expected to grow stronger in the future. The focus for the upcoming year is to nurture and expand the relationships formed, emphasizing collaborative efforts as a central driver of societal progress. stc envisions a sustainable future where its partnerships with government bodies, private sector entities, and community organizations will continue to address a broader spectrum of societal needs and challenges, combining diverse perspectives and expertise to create more effective and sustainable outcomes.



In 2024, stc aims to further introduce or participate in initiatives that resonate with its core sustainable values and the evolving needs of the Kuwaiti community. Whether through empowering youth and entrepreneurs, advancing education and environmental awareness, or promoting health and wellness, stc's CSR framework will continue to explore new opportunities to give back to society in various ways. This forward-looking approach solidifies stc's role as a dynamic agent of change, committed to not just meeting but exceeding its social responsibility goals. As stc moves forward, it remains dedicated to playing a pivotal role in the development and well-being of Kuwait, making a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals and the community at large.

Peacock Theater readies for TV's glittering night of excellence

LOS ANGELES, Dec 26, (AP): The 2023 Emmy Awards will be held in 2024. Hollywood's two strikes meant a four-month delay for television's annual celebration of itself. But both have now been resolved and the show will go on. Here's a look at the telecast, the ceremony, and the series and stars up for awards.

The 75th Primetime Emmy Awards will be held on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, Monday night, Jan. 15, at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles. Anthony Anderson will host. It will be telecast live on the Fox network starting at 8 p.m. Eastern, and available to stream the following day on Hulu.

Fox is taking its turn this year in an annual rotation between the four networks. Anderson, who was nominated for lead actor in a comedy seven times for his work on ABC's "black-ish," is a first-time Emmys host, although he's hosted the NAACP Image Awards eight times.

He'll also have a fresh connection to Fox by the time he takes the Emmys stage - his new show "We Are Family" is set to debut

No presenters have yet been announced.

Now with a TV-themed name, downtown LA's Peacock Theater, formerly the Microsoft Theater and the Nokia Theatre, has been the go-to home for the Emmys since 2008

As is typical at the Emmys, HBO shows dominated the nomina-

tions when they were announced way back in July. The top three nominees were all from the gilded cable channel.

"Succession" is the leading nominee, getting 27 for its fourth and final season, including best drama, an award it has won at two of the past three Emmys. Brian Cox, Jeremy Strong and Kieran Culkin are all up for best actor in a drama. Four more men from the show are up for best supporting actor. And Sarah Snook got a best actress nomination.

HBO's "The Last of Us" got 24 nominations, including best drama, best actor for Pedro Pascal and best actress for Bella Ramsey.

Nominations

"The White Lotus," yes, also from HBO, got 23 noms for its second season. Jennifer Coolidge and Aubrey Plaza are among the whopping five nominees from the show in the single category of best supporting actress.

"Ted Lasso" was tops among comedies with 21 nominations, including best comedy series, and best actor for Jason Sudeikis. The Apple TV+ series won both awards for each of its first two seasons. Hollywood's historic work stoppage among writers and actors,

both essential to the Emmys, meant the show had a rare delay for an unprecedented four months.

Leaders of the Television Academy were among those breathing a sigh of relief when actors voted to approve their new strikeending contract on Dec. 5 and put a period on the entire stoppage.

With an autumn show date based around the traditional broadcast TV season, the Emmys have for years had some quirks based on the far more scattered schedule of cable and streaming. The delay makes those oddities even odder.

To give one example, the 13 nominations for Hulu's "The Bear" are for its first season, even though the awards will be handed out six months after its second season dropped.

In another anomaly, by the time of the ceremony, all the winners will have been established, the metaphorical envelopes sitting unopened for more than four months. That's because the Television Academy wanted at least the voting to be the same as always, so its approximately 20,000 members had to cast their ballots by Aug. 28.

The January date will put the Emmys within the rest of Hollywood's awards season, a week after the Golden Globes and about six weeks before the Screen Actors Guild Awards - both ceremonies that honor television along with movies.

The delay is the first time the Emmys have been postponed since 2001, when the 9/11 attacks came just five days before the planned ceremony. That ceremony would end up being held in November.

Variety



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Timothee Chalamet in a scene from 'Wonka.' (AP)

Film

Roald Dahl's daring is missing

Chalamet charms in whimsical 'Wonka'

By Jake Coyle

The original 1971 "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" may have been a delicious dream, lined with trees of gumballs and fields of lollipops. But never has there been a more cautionary tale about the danger of too much of a good thing.

Magical as that Roald Dahl-scripted film was, it remains lodged in our imaginations less for its sugary goodness than the way darkness, satire and even mania ebb around its edges - flowing down that nightmarish watery tunnel and pooling somewhere in the back of Gene Wilder's eyes. Charlie Bucket and Grandpa Joe may bubble with laughter all the way up the ceiling, but there's a spinning metal blade up there.

"Wonka," the latest attempt to revisit Dahl's masterwork, bears no such danger. It's going more for the taste of an Everlasting Gobstopper - an ingenious confection that piles flavor on top of flavor. Tasty though that can be, you miss the daring of Dahl in the more wanly whimsical "Wonka."

Still, the movie has two big things going for it: the charisma of its winning star, Timothée Chalamet, and the dazzling designs of its director, Paul King, the don of "Paddington." To a large degree, King has applied much of the formula that defined "Paddington" - and that "Godfather Part II" of sequels, "Paddington 2" - to a Wonka origin story that populates a delightfully detailed world with a delightful array of supporting characters (many of whom are "Paddington" veterans). Did I say it's delightful?

Yet it's that strain to delight that keeps "Wonka" from achieving liftoff. King's film is lively but too neutered to do Dahl justice; congenial but not clever enough to match the giddy joy of "Paddington 2." If Tim Burton's 2005 film, with Johnny Depp giving Wonka a Michael Jackson spin, leaned into creepiness, "Wonka" goes the opposite direction.

And you might fairly wonder: What's so wrong that? Who doesn't want a cynicism-free, candycolored charm overload? "Wonka" may be too much of a good thing, but for many (particularly kids) it will surely, well, delight. Even for a movie predicated on retooling IP, "Wonka" comes across as re-

markably sincere in its feel-good aspirations. In the film's opening scenes, Willy (Chalamet) breezes into a frigid, unnamed European-styled city, singing "I've got nothing to offer but my chocolate and a hatful of dreams." He arrives like a too-confident traveling salesman, eager to sell his chocolate to the world.

Immediately fleeced of his few coins, Willy sets down on a bench for the night and pulls a candle out of his hat that he lights with a gentle blow. He's offered a bed for the night at inn. There, the innkeeper Mrs. Scrubit (Olivia Colman) and her henchman Bleacher (Tom Davis) trap needy drifters into years of indentured labor with elaborate contracts.

Imagination

This Wonka can't read, a twist that I doubt Dahl would have endorsed, given how much, for him, reading and imagination were intertwined. Before Willy has even gotten started, he finds himself imprisoned with a handful of other similarly misfortunate souls, including the young Noodle (a very natural Calah Lane).

But inspired by his late mother (Sally Hawkins, seen in tender childhood flashbacks), Willy isn't much daunted in his dream to open a shop alongside other candy makers in the Galeries Gourmet. He manages to escape repeatedly to dazzle customers with chocolates of exotic ingredients before slipping through manhole covers to make a getaway, like Harry Lime in "The Third Man."

Sensing the potential power of Wonka's enchanting chocolates (some cause levitation), the monopolizing local chocolatiers - Slugworth (Paterson Joseph), Prodnose (Matt Lucas) and Fickelgruber (Mathew Baynton) - band together to squash Willy with the aid of a chocolate-addicted police chief (Keegan-Michael Key), whose waistline expands throughout the film.

That bit, like most others in the film, doesn't quite land despite the good cheer it's delivered with. "Wonka" assembles a wide array of top-notch comic actors - not only Key and Colman but Hugh Grant as an Oompa Loompa; Simon Farnaby (who co-wrote the script with King) as a security guard, mirroring his "Paddington 2" cameo; and Rowan Atkinson as

a corrupt priest. But most of the jokes in "Wonka" are as memorable as its songs. The gag of Grant, the "Paddington 2" MVP, smothered in orange makeup and green hair as a proudly debonair Oompa Loompa, is never quite as clever as the movie thinks it is. (On the press

trail for the film, Grant has been 10 times funnier.) Neil Hannon's songs are generic, but Chalamet sings them well. When a few notes from Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley's "Pure Imagination" float by, they only serve as a reminder to how much

better the tunes were in the original. I may be being too hard on "Wonka." This is an eminently pleasant movie, propped up by its indefatigable good cheer and King's immaculately tidy craftsmanship. The costumes (Lindy Hemming), cinematography (Chung-hoon Chung) and, in particular, the ingenious production design (Nathan Crowley) craft a wonder-filled backdrop. A film doesn't need scenery this good for Chalamet to carry it. His Wonka is simpler and brighter than Wilder's, more a

figure of pure optimism, like Paddington. But we've also had some exemplary Dahl adaptations lately that didn't forget that worlds of imagination come alive when the cruelties of life and of childhood aren't just paid lip service. (Veruca Salt or Mike Teavee, for instance, wouldn't fit anywhere in "Wonka.") I'm thinking of Wes Anderson's inventive Dahl-adapted shorts, released this fall on Netflix, and Matthew Warchus' terrific "Matilda the Musical," from last year. "Wonka" is a more mixed addition: More tailored for kids yet less about childhood.

"Wonka," a Warner Bros. release, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for "some violence, mild language and thematic elements." Running time: 116 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

in Los Angeles at 56, the family announced. De los Reyes died Sunday following a brief battle with cancer, according to a statement from Lisa Goldberg, a publicist for de los Reyes' wife, Sherri Saum. În "One Life to Live," de los Reyes starred as Antonio Vega, a

HOUSTON, Texas: Beyoncé's childhood home caught fire early

on Christmas morning, though the family living there escaped safely. The fire was reported at about 2 a.m. Monday and the Houston Fire Department arrived on the

scene of the two-story brick house

'We had it contained in about

10 minutes," Houston Fire Depart-

ment District Chief Justin Barnes

within three to five minutes, the

Houston Chronicle reported.

told the newspaper.

Beyoncé Knowles' family

bought the home on the 2400

block of Rosedale in 1982 and

Beyoncé lived there until she was

5 years old. She was seen taking

photos of the property when she

The home in the historic Riv-

A messages sent to Beyoncé's

voice actor best known for playing

erside Terrace neighborhood was

publicist was not immediately

The cause of the blaze was

LOS ANGELES: Kamar de los

Reyes, a television, movie and

a gang member-turned-cop in

the soap "One Life to Live" and

a villain in the video game "Call of Duty: Black Ops II," has died

returned late Monday.

under investigation. (AP)

was in her hometown for her

Renaissance World Tour

former gang member who became a lawyer and then a cop, alongside Saum. In the popular video game "Call of Duty: Black Ops II," he played the villain Raul Menendez. He also had roles in Fox's "Sleepy Hollow," ABC's "The Rookie" and CW's "All American."

The family statement said that at the time of his death, de los Reyes was filming "All American" - and had recently shot roles in Marvel's upcoming "Daredevil" series and Hulu's yet to be released "Washington Black," starring Sterling K. Brown.

De los Reyes was born in Puerto Rico and raised in Las Vegas. According to a biography provided by the family, he caught the bug for acting when he arrived in Los Angeles in the late '80s. Early roles include playing Pedro **Quinn** in the 1994 off-Broadway play, "Blade to the Heat," and Ferdinand in director George C. Wolfe's production of "The Tempest" for Shakespeare in the Park On the big screen, de los Reyes appeared in Oliver Stone's

"Nixon," playing Watergate

Beyoncé



burglar Eugenio Martinez, as a secret service agent in "Salt," with Angelina Jolie, and in "The Cell" with **Jennifer Lopez**. (AP)

KANSAS CITY, Mo.: Pop superstar Taylor Swift walked into Arrowhead Stadium alongside Santa Claus on Monday to watch

her boyfriend and Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce as they played the Las Vegas Raiders in a Christmas Day showdown.

Swift and Kelce have become one of the hottest celebrity couples in the world since they began dating early in the season, and the 12time Grammy Award-winner has watched her boyfriend numerous

This time she showed up in a festive red shirt under a black jacket with St. Nick by her side. in Arrowhead Stadium on Mon-

times at Arrowhead Stadium.

Swift wasn't the only celebrity day. Iowa basketball star Caitlin Clark, the reigning AP women's player of the year, was on the sideline for pregame warmups. (AP)

People & Places

Quotes

'From the heart'

Quotes summing up human story in 2023

NEW YORK, Dec 26, (AP): To feel 2023 is to listen closely and think on the words of awe, dread, anger, disconnect, loss - and yes, love - that flowed from people directly involved in the world's most recent turns

To help tell the story, The Associated Press presents quotes from people around the world who shared their experiences, thoughts and insights. Some are universal and insightful, others intimate and specific and a few cases - looking at you, Elon Musk - may require a double take. In many instances, the sharing itself was an act of courage at a time when people are increas-

Perhaps, they'll make you feel less alone as this year of war, chaos and beauty comes to a close.



"It's like hunger or thirst. It's a feeling the body sends us when something we need for survival is missing.

■ US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy in an interview with The Associated Press in May after his office reported that loneliness is an epidemic in the US that was dramatically worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The World Health Organization says anxiety and

depression increased by 25% globally since the outbreak the COVID-19 global cri-

"Ten years of war and struggle. And it seems like the blood has only just begun to flow, truly. I regret nothing. But, God, it's just so tiresome."

■ Dmytro Riznychenko, a 41-year-old psychologist, walking through Kyiv's Independence Square in November as he considered an uprising that unleashed a decade of momentous change for Ukraine, eventually leading to the current war with Russia.

"I'm feeling the goosebumps, and it's a very happy moment ... You can see the energy. It's beyond words."

Celebrations

■ Shrini Singh as she watched the live broadcast of Indian spacecraft Chandrayaan-3 landing on the lunar surface, making India only the fourth country to achieve this milestone. The successful landing showcasing India's rising standing as a technology and space powerhouse sparked celebrations across India. Singh was speaking in New Delhi on Aug 23.

"We are the best actors in the world. We act like

people. When really, we are other beings frozen in our acutely agonizing desolation."

■ Ibrahim Lubbad, a 30-year-old computer engineer arrested in Beit Lahiya in the Gaza Strip on Dec. 7 with a dozen other family members and held overnight. Israeli wartime roundups, in which people have been taken to a camp at an undisclosed location, nearly naked and with little water. The roundups revealed an emerging tactic in Israel's ground offensive in Gaza, experts say, as the military sought to solidify control in evacuated areas in the north and collect intelligence about Hamas operations

"We are here all together, all the world together, to combat climate change and really, we're negotiating for what? We're negotiating for what in the middle of a genocide?'

■ Hadeel Ikhmais, a climate change expert with the Palestinian Authority, on Dec. 1 during the COP28 talks in Dubai. The Israeli offensive has killed more than 18,700 Palestinians as of the weekend of Dec. 16-17, the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory says.

"There will come a point where no job is needed. You can have a job if you wanted to have a job for personal satisfaction. But the AI would be able to do everything ... One of the challenges in the future will be how do we find meaning in life.'

■ Tesla CEO Elon Musk on AI, in conversation Nov. 20 with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

"They told me that this country was different. But

for me, it's been hell."

Karina Obando, 38, a mother from Ecuador who has been given until Jan. 5 to leave the former hotel in New York City where she has been staying with her two young children. She is one of thousands of migrant families in an emergency shelter system who has been ordered by the city to clear out, with winter setting in. Mayor Eric Adams says the order is necessary to relieve a shelter system overwhelmed by asylumseekers crossing the southern US border.

"What is most painful is that years after the brutalities and the stealing of our land, British companies are still in possession of our ancestral homes, earning millions from their comfortable headquarters in the UK,

while our people remain squatters. ■ Joel Kimutai Kimetto, 74, speaking to the AP in a phone interview during King Charles III's visit to Kenya in October. Kimetto said his grandfather and father were kicked out of their ancestral home by the British.

"God gave me a new lease on life." Devastated

■ Osama Abdel Hamid, weeping at a hospital in Idlib, Syria, after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake, the deadliest in decades, devastated his war-ravaged country and parts of Turkey Feb. 6. He said most of his neighbors died when their shared four-story building collapsed. As he fled with his wife and three children, a wooden door fell on them, shielding them from falling debris.

"We did not die from hunger or the earthquake, but we will die freezing from the cold. It shouldn't be this way. No one is sending help." Commander of the 11th National Guard Brigade's

anti-drone unit who is known on the battlefield as Boxer, voicing discontent among Ukrainian soldiers - once extremely rare and expressed only in private. He was speaking about Ukraine's attacks against wellarmed Russian troops on the other side of the Dnieper River in the southern city of Kherson. Soldiers are asking why these difficult amphibious operations were not launched months ago in warmer weather.

"This is probably the most uniquely horrible choice I've had in my life.'

■ Andrew Collins, 35, an independent from Windham, Maine, on the likely showdown in next year's election between political foes men who each have served one term as president, Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden. Collins participated a poll this month from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. in which American voters made clear how less than jazzed they are about such a rematch in 2024.

"It is amazing to see this huge berg in person - it stretches as far as the eye can see.'

■ Taylor Swift, Time's Person of the Year, describing the summer of 2023 being dominated culturally by her Eras tour, the Barbie movie and Beyoncé's blockbuster Renaissance Tour.



Japanese calligraphy in an artistic panel that combines writing and art.



Participation with the Sanabil script panel in the exhibition in Jeddah, Saudi



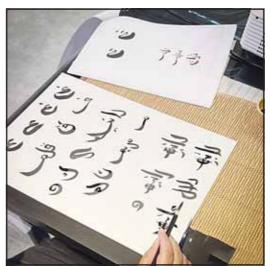
A written panel in Diwani script on gold paper.



The Arabized Japanese script is a fusion developed by calligraphers between Kanji script and Arabic letters



Writing on pottery in Arabized Shodo script.

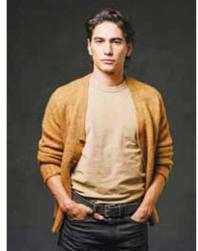


Arabic and Japanese calligraphy share traditional bamboo pens and specific types of paper and ink.



KUNA photos The calligrapher developed the drawing of Arabic letters and blended them with Japanese writing.

Art



Actor Enzo Vogrincic poses for a portrait to promote the film 'Society of the Snow' on Friday, Oct. 27, 2023, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Variety

LOS ANGELES: The return of "Night Court" and new music from the K-pop act TVXQ are some of the new television, movies and music headed to a device near

Also among the streaming offerings worth your time as selected by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists are a true crime story on Max, a new version of "America's Got Talent" and a streaming guide to the year's best films.

As the year winds down, most of the movie action is in cinemas. But if you're not heading out to see "The Color Purple," "Poor Things" or "Ferrari," there's no better time to catch up on some of the year's best movies. Many of the films that made the top 10 lists of myself and AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr are available in various places to stream.

If you haven't caught up to "Barbie" or "Oppenheimer" yet, you can digitally rent **Christopher Nolan**'s blockbuster biopic, while Greta Gerwig's pink-hued phenomenon is streaming on Max. Alexander Payne's masterfully melancholic "The Holdovers," starring Paul Giamatti, can be digitally rented also, as can Sofia Cop-

Arabic elegance meets Japanese artistry

Kuwaiti calligrapher celebrates harmony in writing

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26, (KUNA): Kuwaiti calligrapher and Islamic arts researcher, Shaima Al-Azmi, affirmed the intrinsic artistry of calligraphy, highlighting the unique charm of Japanese calligraphy in particular. She described Japanese calligraphy as akin to an artistic painting, emphasizing the pleasure derived from the fusion of writing and art. Al-Azmi, in an interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), shared her journey of studying Japanese calligraphy, exploring its origins, and drawing parallels with Arabic calligraphy.

Al-Azmi, proficient in four Diwani scripts, including the Arabized Japanese script she developed, discussed her innovative approach of combining Arabic and Japanese calligraphy. Using traditional reed pens, specific papers, and inks, she showcased calligraphy models that seamlessly integrated both styles. Highlighting the distinct characteristics of Japanese calligraphy, which relies on brushes, and Arabic calligraphy, which uses pens, she envisioned a novel form of writing that harmoniously blended these two

cultural traditions. The calligrapher delved into the intricacies of Japanese calligraphy, tracing its roots back to the fifth century AD and its exclusive association with high social classes in Japan. Al-Azmi explained the various schools and traditions within Japanese calligraphy, noting its unique tools, arts, and spiritual significance. She emphasized the meticulous rules and traditions governing Japanese calligraphy, such as writing on white paper fixed to velvet made of rice and using a reed stick and brush.

Creation

Discussing her creation of Arabized Japanese calligraphy, which she termed "Arabized Shodo," Al-Azmi outlined the fixed rules and foundations she established to facilitate its teaching and learning. She highlighted the challenges of connecting letters in Arabic calligraphy compared to Japanese, where characters are often written separately. Al-Azmi's innovation involved developing a script that harmoniously connected letters while retaining the artistic essence of both Arabic and Japanese

writing. Exploring the Japanese script further, Al-Azmi discussed its division into three types: Kaishu with separate letters for official media, Gyushu with semi-connected letters for informal writings, and Sosho representing freehand and cursive letters. She noted the aesthetic appeal of Japanese letters as independent abstract paintings, while Arabic calligraphy, with its circular and oval shapes, allows for flexible design possibilities.

In conclusion, Al-Azmi celebrated the fusion of plastic art and the Japanese language from an artistic perspective. She highlighted the capacity of Arabic writing to acquire diverse geometric shapes through elongation, return, rotation, angle, interlocking, overlapping, and composition. Through her innovative exploration of the intersection between Arabic and Japanese calligraphy, Shaima Al-Azmi continues to contribute to the rich tapestry of artistic expression.

pola's Priscilla Presley drama "Priscilla." On Netflix, there's Todd Haynes' ap-

pealingly arch "May December" and the dazzling animated sequel "Spider-Man: Across the Spiderverse." On Prime Video, you can catch up to a pair of standouts from earlier in the year: A.V. Rockwell's sprawling New York tale "A Thousand and One" and Wes Anderson's elaborately layered "Asteroid City." And if you're looking for something further afield, seek out





"The Eight Mountains," a majestic epic of friendship, streaming on the Criterion Channel.

■ Twenty years ago, SM Entertainment boy band TVXQ helped usher in K-pop's second generation. By the end of first generation, lead by bubble gum pop like H.O.T.'s "Candy," TVXQ emerged with a new kind of charisma, producing soulful harmonies with global resonance and performances alongside Britney Spears. (AP)

The Conversation

Do you eat with your eyes, your gut or your brain?

Expert urges to listen to your hunger during holidays

By Alex Johnson

Michigan State University

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

T he holiday season is here, and with it, opportunities to indulge in festive treats. The proverbial saying "you eat with your eyes first" seems particularly relevant at this time of

The science behind eating behavior, however, reveals that the process of deciding what, when and how much to eat is far more complex than just consuming calories when your body needs fuel. Hunger cues are only part of why people choose to eat. As a scientist interested in the psychology and biology that drives eating behavior, I'm fascinated with how the brain's experiences with food shape eating decisions.

So how do people decide when to

Food-related visual cues can shape feeding behaviors in both people and animals. For example, wrapping food in McDonald's packaging is sufficient to enhance taste preferences across a range of foods - from chicken nuggets to carrots - in young children. Visual food-related cues, such as presenting a light when food is delivered, can also promote overeating behaviors in animals by overriding energy needs.

In fact, a whole host of sensory stimuli - noises, smells and textures - can be associated with the pleasurable consequences of eating and influence food-related decisions. This is why hearing a catchy radio jingle for a food brand, seeing a television ad for a restaurant or walking by your favorite eatery can shape your decision to consume and sometimes overindulge.

However, your capacity to learn about food-related cues extends beyond just stimuli from the outside world and includes the internal milieu of your body. In other words, you also tend to eat with your stomach in mind, and you do so by using the same learning and brain mechanisms involved in processing food-related stimuli from the outside world.

Feelings

These internal signals, also called interoceptive cues, include feelings of hunger and fullness emanating from your gastrointestinal tract. It's no surprise that the signals from

your gut help set the stage for when to eat, but the role these signals play is more profound than you might expect.

Feelings of hunger or fullness act as important interoceptive cues influencing your decision-making around

To examine how interoceptive states shape eating behaviors, researchers trained laboratory rats to associate feelings of hunger or satiety with whether they receive food or not. They did this by giving rats food only when they were hungry or full, such that the rats were forced to recognize those internal cues to calculate whether food would be available or not. If a rat is trained to expect food only when hungry, it would generally avoid the area where food is available when it feels full because it does not expect to be fed.

However, when rats were injected with a hormone that triggers hunger called ghrelin, they approached the food delivery location more frequently. This suggests that the rats used this artificial state of hunger as an interoceptive cue to predict food delivery and subsequently behaved like they expected food.

Înteroceptive states are sufficient to shape feeding behaviors even in the absence of external sensory cues. One particularly striking example comes from mice that have been genetically engineered to be unable to taste food but nevertheless show preferences for specific foods solely by caloric content. In other words, rodents can use internal cues to shape their food-related decision-making, including when and where to eat and which foods they

These findings also suggest that feelings of hunger and the detection of nutrients is not restricted to the stomach. They also involve areas of the brain important for regulation and homeostasis, such as the lateral hypothalamus, as well as centers of the brain involved in learning and memory, such as the hippocampus.

The gut-brain axis, or the biochemical connection between your gut and your brain, shapes feeding behaviors in many ways. One of them involves the vagus nerve, a cranial nerve that helps control the digestive tract, among other things.

The vagus nerve rapidly communicates nutrient information to the brain. Activating the vagus nerve can induce a pleasurable state, such that mice will voluntarily perform a behavior, such as poking their nose through an open port, to stimulate their vagus nerve. Împortantly, mice also learn to prefer foods and places where vagal nerve stimulation occurred.

Stimulation

The vagus nerve plays an essential role in not only communicating digestive signals but also an array of other interoceptive signals that can affect how you feel and behave. In people, vagal nerve stimulation can improve learning and memory and can be used to treat major depression.

Your body's capacity to use both external and internal cues to regulate how you learn and make decisions about food highlights the impressive processes involved in how you regulate your energy needs.

Poor interoceptive awareness is associated with a range of dysfunctional feeding behaviors, such as eating disorders. For instance, anorexia may result when interoceptive signals, such as feelings of hunger, are unable to trigger the motivation to eat. Alternatively, the inability to use the feeling of fullness to dampen the rewarding and pleasurable consequences of eating palatable food could result in binge eating.

Your interoceptive signals play an important role in regulating your daily eating patterns. During the holidays, many stressors from the outside world surround eating, such as packed social calendars, pressures to conform and feelings of guilt when overindulging. At this time, it is particularly important to cultivate a strong connection to your interoceptive signals. This can help promote intuitive eating and a more holistic approach to your dietary habits. Rather than fixating on external factors and placing conditions on your eating behavior, enjoy the moment, deliberately savor each bite and provide time for your interoceptive signals to function in the role they are designed to play.

Your brain evolved to sense your current energy needs. By integrating these signals with your experience of your food environment, you can both optimize your energetic needs and enjoy the season. (AP)

Giving thanks is not just a holiday tradition ... it's part of human DNA

How gratitude shapes human connections



Juanita Mengel holds her cat Lola-Pearl in her home in Amanda, Ohio on Monday, Dec. 11. They visit hospitals, nursing homes and even amputee support groups to aid in therapy and other activities to improve well-being in communities. (AP)

Duo shares amputee journey

Woman and her prosthetic cat touch lives as therapy partners

TROY, Ohio, Dec 26, (AP): Each morning when she wakes up, Juanita Mengel removes the silicone liner of her prosthetic leg out from under a heated blanket so that the metal parts of the artificial limb don't feel as cold on her skin when she straps the pieces together.

The 67-year-old Amanda, Ohio, resident then does the same for her 5-year-old dilute tortoiseshell cat, Lola-Pearl, who is missing her left hind

The duo is one of an estimated 200 therapy cat teams registered in the US through Pet Partners. The nonprofit sets up owners and their pets as volunteer teams providing animal-assisted interventions, where they might visit hospitals, nursing homes or schools to aid in therapy and other activities to improve well-being in communities.

Therapy

"A therapy animal is an animal who's been assessed based on their ability to meet new people and not just tolerate the interaction, but actively tional director of animal-assisted interventions advancement at the organization.

Pet Partners registers nine different species as therapy animals: dogs, cats, horses, rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, birds, mini pigs, and llamas and

As part of her research, Chastain Griffin studies the impact of therapy cats and argues more research needs to be done. There's abundant research on other therapy animals like dogs, she said, but there's often a "shock factor" involved with therapy cats because many don't know they

"They go into a setting and people are like, 'Whoa, there's a cat on a leash. What's happen-Chastain Griffin said. "It kind of inspires people to connect in a way we haven't traditionally heard talked about in other therapy animal interventions.

Mengel said she knew Lola-Pearl would be a good therapy cat after she brought her on a whim to an amputee coalition conference about a month after she adopted the domestic shorthair.

"She was so good with people I just knew she would be a good therapy cat," Mengel said. "People really were attracted to her, too." During a recent visit to a limb loss sup-

port group meeting, Mengel pushed Lola-Pearl around in a stroller - labeled "Therapy Cat" - so attendees could pet the kitty as she woke up from

Whether she was sitting in the stroller, walking in between participants' legs or cuddling on their laps. Lola-Pearl brought a smile to whoever she decided was worthy of her attention in that

"She's very intuitive of people," Mengel said. Lola-Pearl isn't the only cat in Mengel's life; the former traveling nurse who lost her left leg in 2006 after years of surgeries following a nearfatal car accident is a mother to seven felines, most of which have disabilities.

Heal

"They find you, you don't find them," she said. Lola-Pearl was found at only a few weeks old with her back legs completely twisted together. She was unable to walk and brought to a friend of Mengel's at an animal shelter in Missouri, where veterinarians could not help her. The shelter found specialists in Iowa who were able to splint Lola-Pearl's legs as an attempt to save them, but they decided her left hind leg needed to be am-

Meanwhile, Mengel had been in talks with her friend in Missouri about adopting the cat, and after Lola-Pearl healed from surgery, Mengel of-

ficially adopted her. Despite the obstacles Mengel has been through, she exudes a spirit of gratitude for Lola-Pearl and for the work they do together.

"It's a really rewarding experience," she said, "I get just as much out of it as the people that I gratitude shapes who we are as a species and how we connect with the people around us.

ing our ancestors band together and survive.

"This is something that is part of our human DNA," said Sarah Schnitker, a psychologist at Baylor University. "It is

NEW YORK, Dec 26, (AP): It's the season of giving

thanks - and it turns out humans have been doing it for a

they've found the feeling likely played a key role in help-

As more researchers dig into the science of gratitude,

That legacy continues today, as being in the mood for

long, long time.

a glue, in a sense, that holds us together." Humans are social animals. That's how we've lasted so long; not by being the biggest or the strongest, but by figur-

ing out how to work together. A key part of building relationships is the idea of reciprocity: "If you like me and do nice things for me, then

I like you and do nice things for you," said Michael Tomasello, a developmental psychologist at Duke University. The animal kingdom has some parallel give-and-take behaviors, said Malini Suchak, an animal behavior researcher at Canisius University. In experiments with capuchin mon-

keys and chimpanzees, Suchak found the primates became more willing to help out a partner if that individual had helped them in the past. Some scientists think the feeling of gratitude evolved to

keep the helping exchanges going. In other words, if you were helped, you'd feel like you should repay the debt with a good deed in return, said Jenae Nelson, who researches gratitude at Baylor and Harvard universities.

"This give and take – this is very, very primal and very important to a cooperative society," Nelson said. "Otherwise, you just get a culture of takers.'

In animals and in humans, these aren't always one-toone transactions. Sometimes, an ape that gets groomed by another will later back that partner up in a fight, Suchak said, showing that reciprocity might not be about keeping exact scores, but forming broader emotional ties.

Though we can't "speak chimp" well enough to know if they're actually saying thanks, Suchak added, it makes sense that some form of this social debt showed up early

"It didn't just pop out of nowhere when humans evolved," Suchak said. Thousands of years later, gratitude has taken

Studies have found gratitude may show up in a few spots in our genes and brains – including ones linked to social bonding, feeling reward and seeing other people's point of view. And the feeling emerges early on: Children as young as 2

and 3 demonstrate they want to return favors, said Amrisha Vaish, who studies moral development at the University of Virginia. At age 4, children also show a tendency to "pay it forward." she added. In a study, Vaish found that when kids got help com-

pleting a task – in this case, finding a key to unlock a box of stickers - they were more likely to share their sticker reward with a new person.

It's that kind of behavior that shows gratitude is more than simple exchange, Schnitker said. It can make us more generous with other people in general – even if they didn't help us first.

Giving thanks might be good for you, too: A 2016 study found that people who wrote letters of gratitude reported better mental health and saw changes in their brain activity even months down the line.

But Nelson pointed out that recognizing the giver, not just the gift, is key.

So, if Thanksgiving has you in a mood for gratitude, she suggested focusing on thanking the people in your life, rather than just making "gratitude lists" of the stuff you have. This is more in line with why the feeling evolved in the first place, she said.

"It's not just about stuff and materialism," Nelson said. "It's about relationships, and the things that people do for you, and then the things that you can in turn do back for







Knicks snap Bucks 7-game winning streak

Celtics defeat Lakers for first time in Christmas Day meeting



Philadelphia 76ers guard Tyrese Maxey (0) shoots as Miami Heat forward Kevin Love, guard Tyler Herro (14) and forward Caleb Martin (16) defend during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Dec. 25, 2023, in Miami. (AP)

Cody leads Tigers to the Cotton Bowl

Schrader goes from D-II star to folk hero

ARAB (*) TIMES

COLUMBIA, Mo., Dec 26, (AP): There were very few people willing to wager that Missouri would be playing in a New Year's Six bowl game this season.

Still favor probably bet that Cody Schroder would comeday be an All American

Still fewer probably bet that Cody Schrader would someday be an All-American running back.

He received precisely zero Division I scholarship offers coming out of Lutheran South High School in St. Louis, and wound up at Truman State. The Division II school about a three-hour drive from home is known just as much for its accounting school and renowned women's swimming and diving program as it is for the Bulldogs football team.

Schrader never stopped believing in his ability, though. After leading Division II with 2,074 yards rushing two years ago, he bet on himself by entering the trans-

fer portal, and ultimately agreeing to an invitation to walk on at Missouri.

Tigers coach Eli Drinkwitz never met Schrader until he stepped on campus.

Two years later, Schrader not only has taken over the starting job but etched his name in Missouri lore. He ran for 1,625 yards and 13 touchdowns, highlighted by a record-setting day against Tennessee. He led the Tigers to a 10-2 record and a spot opposite perennial heavyweight Ohio State in the Cotton Bowl on Friday. "It's a dream come true for me and this team," Schrader admitted.

The 5-foot-8 bowling ball of a running back is exactly the kind of dream - the kind of lightning-in-a-bottle success story - that programs such as Missouri rely upon to compete against college football's powerhouses.

upon to compete against college football's powerhouses.

Sure, the Tigers have recruited better under Drinkwitz than they have in years, land-

ing five-star prospects such as Luther Burden III, who was among the nation's leading receivers this season. They still lag far behind programs such as Alabama, Georgia and, yes, Ohio State, when it comes to reeling in top prospects from high school and the portal.

Yet players such as Schrader, who are willing to work harder and longer and suffer more than most other players, can bridge that gap between good and great. While the Buckeyes have pro prospects galore - wide receivers Marvin Harrison Jr. and Emeka Egbuka, defensive ends J.T. Tuimoloau and Jack Sawyer and defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr. could all be first-round picks in the April draft - the Tigers counter with players every bit as capable who have overachieved to reach that point.

"I'm sure we're going to be a big underdog in the game. I'm sure people are going to write us off," Drinkwitz acknowledged. "I don't love it but I embrace it if it is what it is."

Sort of like how Schrader, who won the Burlsworth Trophy awarded to the nation's top former walk-on, embraced the underdog mentality to rise from Division II afterthought to national sensation.

Drinkwitz certainly learned his name by the time Schrader methodi-

FOOTBALL

cally passed Stanford transfer Nathaniel Peat on the depth chart last year, helping the Tigers to a 6-6 record and a spot in the Gasparilla Bowl. And the rest of the nation likely learned his name when the Tigers faced Tennessee in a revenge game for a whipping they took last season.

Schrader piled up 207 yards rushing and 116 yards receiving to become one of 10 players at college football's highest level to reach 200 and 100 in the same game. He was just the second to do it against a ranked opponent, helping the Tigers to a 36-7 rout of the Vols, and his total yards from scrimmage were just shy of Devin West's school record.

That was part of a stretch of five straight games to finish the regular season in which Schrader topped 100 yards rushing. He had 217 in their finale against border rival Arkansas to help the Tigers clinch a New Year's Six bowl game, and he will take a ninegame streak of reaching the end zone into the showdown with the Buckeyes.

In the Cotton Bowl. At Cowboys Stadium. Before a national TV audience.

That's a long way from the America's Crossroads Bowl, the annual Division II game that Truman State played in a couple of years ago, when Schrader ran for 219 yards in a win over Hillsdale College at a high school stadium in Hobart, Indiana.

"It's extremely special," Schrader said, "and nobody wanted to be (with the Tigers) on the outside before the season, right? I think this brotherhood, the culture we've built with the guys in this room - it's cool that people might want to transfer here, that other people might want to be a part of it. But my question to a lot of people is: Where were you guys at the start of the year?

NEW YORK, Dec 26, (AP): The Bucks hadn't just been beating them, they were beating them easily.

So in front of a sold-out home crowd and a national TV audience, the New York Knicks used the Christmas stage to make their stand against Milwaukee.

Jalen Brunson scored 38 points and the Knicks snapped Milwaukee's seven-game winning streak, ending their lengthy skid against the Bucks with a 129-122 victory Mon-

The Knicks had dropped nine straight meetings, including a 130-111 loss on Saturday in the opener of this two-game series. The Bucks had routed New York twice while rolling through their December schedule, but they haven't solved Brunson all season, and the point guard got plenty of help from his teammates this time.

Julius Randle added 24 points and nine rebounds, RJ Barrett bounced back from a poor game Saturday with 21 points and Quickley came off the bench for 20.

Giannis Antetokounmpo and Damian Lillard each scored 32 points for the Bucks, who fell to 9-2 this month. Khris Middleton added 24.

The Bucks rang up 146 points against the Knicks in the quarterfinals of the In-Season Tournament on Dec. 5 and didn't cool off much Saturday. But they seemed short on energy Monday in the middle of an extended Christmas stay in New York, with still another game remaining in the city when they visit Brooklyn on Wednesday.

Milwaukee came in averaging 132.4 points in December but couldn't even break 40 until there were less than four minutes remaining in the first half. The Bucks trailed by 16 with 4 1/2 minutes remaining in the game before a late flurry that made the score closer than the game felt.

Brunson went 15 for 28 from the field, following up games of 45 and 36 points against the Bucks this season. Isaiah Hartenstein had 11 points and eight rebounds, and Josh Hart came off the bench for 10 points and nine rebounds.

Antetokounmpo had 13 rebounds and six assists, but the Bucks fell to 3-3 in their sixth straight Christmas appearance.

The overhead video board incorrectly listed his brother Thanasis as the starter when lineups were announced, but Giannis quickly reminded everyone who he is, slamming down a lob pass on the opening possession and then making a jumper on the next trip. But Brunson was the best player on the floor the remainder of the period, scoring 15 points to spark the Knicks to a 36-27 lead after one - the same lead the Bucks had Saturday.

Lillard tried to help the Bucks chip away at a 13-point deficit in the second but didn't get much help, with Middleton going 1 for 7 and Antetokounmpo 1 for 6. Randle's 3-pointer made it 62-51 at the break.

Milwaukee cut it to 77-73 midway through the third quarter, but Hart had a good burst of three straight Knicks baskets later in the period as New York pushed it back to 98-87 after three.

Celtics 126, Lakers 115

In Los Angeles, Kristaps Porzingis had 28 points and 11 rebounds, Jayson Tatum added 25 points and Boston defeated Los Angeles for the first time in a Christmas Day meet-

Jaylen Brown had 19 points and Derrick White chipped in with 18 points and 11 rebounds. All five starters had at least 18 points for the Celtics, who have won three straight and 12 of their past 14.

Anthony Davis scored a gamehigh 40 points with 13 rebounds, LeBron James had 16 points, nine rebounds and eight assists, but the Lakers have dropped six of eight since winning the inaugural In-Season Tournament.

Boston successfully kept Los Angeles at arm's length in the final quarter, despite Davis hitting the 40-point mark for the 40th time in a regular season game.

Mavericks 128, Suns 114

In Phoenix, Luka Doncic scored 50 points to eclipse 10,000 for his career and had 14 assists, lifting Dallas to the win over Phoenix.

Doncic capped a Christmas Day full of NBA games with a stellar performance, hitting 8 of 16 from 3 and all 12 of his free throws. He eclipsed 10,000 career points in the first quarter to reach the milestone in 358 career games, seventh fastest in NBA history.

NBA history.

Dereck Lively II had 20 points and 10 rebounds after missing the previous four games with an ankle sprain and Tim Hardaway Jr. added 18 points.

BASKETBALL

Phoenix's Grayson Allen scored 19 of his 32 points in the third quarter to help the Suns rally from a 15-point deficit. Chimezie Metu added 23 points and a career-high 19 rebounds.

Heat 119, 76ers 113

In Miami, rookie Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored 31 points and got his first double-double, Bam Adebayo finished with 26 points and 15 rebounds and Miami held on to beat Philadelphia.

Heat coach Erik Spoelstra improved to 9-0 on Christmas, the best record in NBA history for head coaches on the holiday.

Tyler Herro scored 22 points, Duncan Robinson added 16 and Kyle Lowry had 12 for the Heat in what became his first Christmas win. Jaquez also grabbed 10 rebounds for Miami, which held a 56-36 edge on the boards.

Reigning MVP and two-time defending scoring champion Joel Embiid missed the game for Philadelphia because of an ankle sprain. Tobias Harris scored 27 points for the 76ers, and Kelly Oubre Jr. added 25. Mo Bamba scored 18, De'Anthony Melton had 15 and Tyrese Maxey - who shot 4 for 20 from the floor - finished with 12.

Nuggets 120, Warriors 114

In Denver, Jamal Murray scored 28 points, Nikola Jokic overcame an off day from the field by going 18 of 18 from the free throw line and Denver extended its winning streak to five games by holding off Golden State.

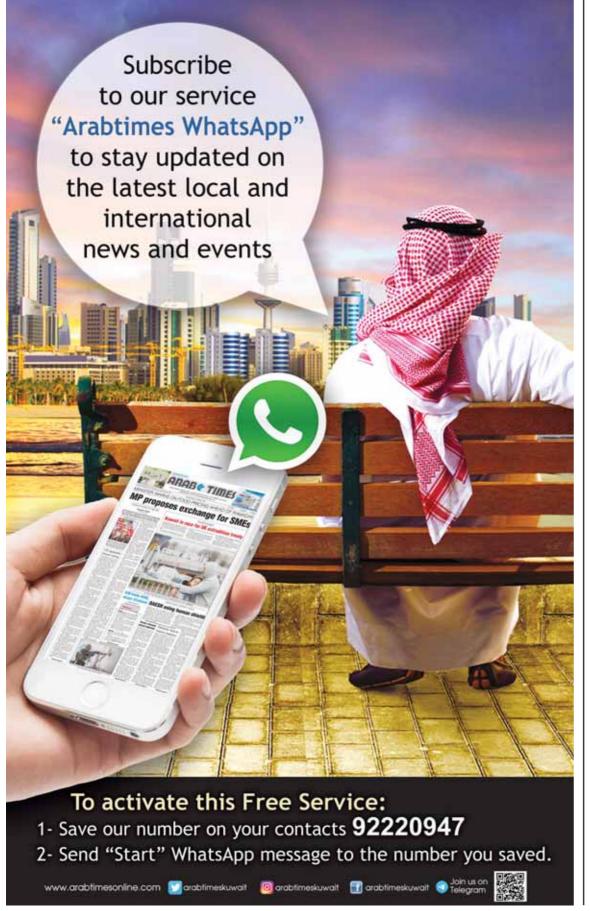
Jokic finished with 26 points despite going 4 of 12 from the floor. He also had 14 rebounds and eight assists.

It was a back-and-forth game that featured nine lead changes in the second half.

Andrew Wiggins gave the Warriors a boost by scoring 22 points as he returned to the floor after missing two games with an illness. Stephen Curry took a bit to warm up, not scoring until midway through the second quarter, but heated up late to finish with 18 points.



Dallas Mavericks guard Luka Doncic (77) shoots over Phoenix Suns guard Eric Gordon (23) during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Dec. 25, 2023, in Phoenix. (AP)



Dagaz secures a spot in the semi-finals

Syria's Hazem stuns top seed Hassan in Arab Tennis Championship

DOHA, Dec 26: In a surprising turn of events at the Third Arab Elite Tennis Championship hosted by Qatar, Syrian player Mohamed Hazem emerged victorious over the top-seeded Benjamin Hassan from Lebanon in a thrilling quarter-final match. Hazem secured the win in two sets, 7-6, 6-2, at the Khalifa International Tennis Complex in

Now advancing to the semi-finals, Hazem is set to face Egyptian contender Mohamed Safwat in a highly anticipated match scheduled for today.

Tunisian player Mohamed Aziz Dagaz secured a spot in the semi-finals by defeating Egyptian Karim Mamoun with a decisive 6-2, 6-3 victory. He will face Lebanese player Hadi Habib, who, in turn, overcame Moroccan Yassin Al-Dulaimi in straight sets 7-5, 6-2.

TENNIS

Speaking on the tournament, Mohamed Safwat emphasized the pivotal role played by the Arab Federation in elevating Arab tennis to new heights. He acknowledged the championship's contribution to enhancing the game's level and fostering enthusiasm among emerging Arab

players.
Walid Sami, Assistant Secretary-General of the Arab Tennis Federation and Secretary-General of the Egyptian Tennis Federation, expressed satisfaction with the tournament's success. He stated that Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber, heading the Arab Tennis Federation, aims to continue organizing the championship in the coming years, ensuring its regular occurrence. Sami commended the collabora-



A player returns a shot to an opponent during the singles match at Arab Elite Tennis Championship.

tive efforts of the Qatari Federation in successfully organizing the event and extended gratitude to sponsors,

including the main sponsor Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait and KGL Company, for their support.

Florida State turns to No. 3 QB, **Tate 'opts' out for Orange Bowl**

LAUDERDALE, Fla., Dec 26, (AP): Florida State quarterback Tate Rodemaker will not play in the Orange Bowl and Brock Glenn will start against Georgia on Saturday, the Seminoles said Monday.

Earlier in the day, 247Sports and The Athletic reported Rodemaker intends to enter the transfer

Rodemaker participated in open practices leading up to the Christmas break. The Seminoles (13-0) arrived in Fort Lauderdale on Christmas night to begin final preparations for the matchup with Georgia (12-1) and Florida State coach Mike Norvell spoke of Glenn's looming start after getting off the plane.

Glenn also started the ACC championship game for Florida State.

"Definitely excited to see him take the step from his first start to his second start," Norvell said. "A lot of confidence in what he'll be able to do, what he'll be able to accomplish. It's part of the new age of college athletics. I know Brock is going to be fired up and excited for the opportunity that he has."

FOOTBALL

A redshirt junior quarterback, Rodemaker stepped in for injured Jordan Travis on Nov. 18 to guide Florida State to a win over North Alabama. A week later, he led Florida State to a victory at Florida. In 2023, Rodemaker completed 32 of 56 passes for 510 yards with five touchdowns and no interceptions.

Excitement and drama in Zain Premier League

Seven red cards issued in the 11th round

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: Al-Kuwait surged ahead in the Zain Premier League, securing a commanding lead with 26 points after the eleventh round, courtesy of a spectacular sixgoal performance against Kazma. This propelled Al-Abyad ahead of Al-Arabi, who held the lead three rounds ago, with a goal difference. Al-Qadsia closely pursued in third place, trailing by just one point.

SOCCER

The latest round unfolded as the most thrilling, featuring unprecedented events and a flurry of cards. Referees brandished the red card seven times, with notable expulsions including Daniel Gebula and Aziz Nassari of Nigerian Al-Qadsia during the match against Al-Jahra. The clash between Al-Arabi and Al-Shabab witnessed the dismissals of Hamad Al-Qallaf and Moroccan player Walid Sabbar from Al-Arabi, along with Al-Shabab's Mohammed Al-Qabandi. Al-Nasr's Hansel Zapata and Salman Bormia faced ejections against Al-Salmiya, while Al-Fahaheel's Majed Al-Anzi also saw the red card.

The Al-Arabi match not only featured expulsions but also unusual incidents, including player contact and an attack on the refereeing team in the Al-Nasr and Al-Salmiya match.

KUNA 'routs' PIFSS in the futsal league

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26, (KUNA): In the Ministries and public entities futsal league match at Kazma Sports Club, Kuwait News Agency's (KUNA) futsal team secured a 4-0 victory against the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS). The league commenced on Tuesday, featuring group B with participating teams including KUNA, Kuwait National Guard (KNG), PIFSS, Kuwait University (KU), and the Ministry of Education.

In a remarkable turnaround, Al-Kuwait under the guidance of Tunisian coach Nabil Maaloul, achieved the highest result of the season, surpassing their previous triumph over Kazma. Al-Abyad's 5-2 victory sent a clear message to rivals that relinquishing the

title would not be an easy task. Al-Arabi faced a tough challenge against Al-Shabab, securing a late goal in stoppage time to clinch three crucial points, irrespective of the performance level. Al-Qadsia also struggled but secured victory in the dy-

of timing. While Al-Nasr maintained its fourth position with 17 points, refusing to concede to Al-Salmiya, who remained in fifth place with 15 points, other teams faced setbacks. Kazma continued its decline with 13 points, while Al-Fahaheel's 1-0 win against Khaitan elevated them to seventh place with 12 points, distancing them from the danger zone. Al-Shabab dropped to eighth place with 11 points, consistently losing ground. Al-Jahra, with only two points, faced imminent relegation after suffering its ninth



Ahmed Dashti celebrates with his titles

Dashti, Mabrouk win doubles title in Egypt

Ahmed Dashti, the Kuwaiti player, secured the top spot in the men's doubles category at the Egyptian Open for Pioneer Tennis Championship in Cairo. Paired with Egyptian champion Moataz Mabrouk, Dashti tri-

umphed at the Al-Jazira Club courts.

Remarkably, Dashti, who funded his own participation in the tournament, showcased his skills in a stellar match. The duo claimed victory over the title

holders of the recent third Arab Tennis Championship in Jordan, Mustafa Bahnasi and Ahmed Al-

This accomplishment solidifies Dashti's standing in Egypt as he clinched the first position in the

doubles category, adding to his success in winning two different categories. Additionally, he secured a commendable third place in the singles category, further showcasing his prowess on the tennis court.

Labuschagne notches a gritty score of 44

Australia reach 187-3 after rain-interrupted 1st day

MELBOURNE, Australia, Dec 26, (AP): Marnus Labuschagne notched a gritty score of 44 not out to guide Australia through a rain-interrupted first day of play in the second test against Pakistan at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Tuesday.

Invited to bat first by Pakistan captain Shan Masood, who won the toss in overcast conditions, Australia reached 187-3 at

Pakistan squandered a golden opportunity to put Australia on the back foot early, allowing openers David Warner (38 off 83 balls) and Usman Khawaja (42 off 101) to share a 90-run partnership on a pitch offering sideways movement for the seamers.

Warner, in his penultimate test, played a loose shot outside off stump on 38 in the final over before lunch and was caught at slip off the bowling of spinner Agha Salman.

The 37-year-old Warner, who scored 164 in the first test in Perth, was lucky to reach double figures Tuesday. Warner offered a regulation chance on 2 to first slip off the bowling of Shaheen Shah Afridi in the third over, but it was put down by Abdullah Shafique.

CRICKET

Pakistan fast bowler Hasan Ali said the tourists had a "good day as a bowling unit." "The best thing is we did not give them enough runs, so I think we are a bit ahead of

Unbeaten on 36 at lunch, Khawaja added six runs to his total before he guided a delivery from Hasan Ali to second slip at 108-2. Khawaja is the leading test run-scorer in

them," Hasan said.

2023 with 1,210 runs at an average of 55.00. Warner described Khawaja's run-scoring feats in 2023 as "phenomenal."

"Now he's just playing like every game is his last. He's going to play as long as he can," Warner said of his opening partner's roller-coaster career in and out of the test

"His last 12 months have been absolutely

phenomenal. He can play as long as he wants to and feels comfortable."

Rain interrupted play 37 minutes before the scheduled tea break, with Australia on 114-2 off 42.4 overs.

Play resumed almost three hours later, rewarding those fans among the first-day crowd of 62,167 at the MCG who had waited patiently for the rain to clear. Steve Smith was given out LBW on 19 to

the bowling of Afridi, but the former skipper successfully reviewed the decision as replays showed the ball was going over the stumps.

On 26, Smith was given not out following a caught-behind appeal from Aamir Jamal, but Pakistan successfully reviewed the decision as replays showed a faint edge.

Smith struck only two boundaries in his 75-ball knock, sharing a patient 46-run partnership with Labuschagne.

Travis Head was unbeaten on nine at stumps to join Labuschagne in the crease when play resumes Wednesday.

Australia named an unchanged side Tuesday and Pakistan made three changes. Wicketkeeper Sarfaraz Ahmed was replaced by Mohammad Rizwan and fast bowler Khurram Shahzad was ruled out due to a rib in-

Medium-pacer Faheem Ashraf was dropped as Hasan Ali and Mir Hamza returned to the side.

The third test in the three-match series is scheduled to begin Jan. 3 at the Sydney Cricket Ground, where Pakistan won its last test in Australia nearly 30 years ago.

Australia won the first test in Perth last week by 360 runs.



Australia's David Warner bats against Pakistan during their cricket test match in Melbourne .



South Africa's bowler Kagiso Rabada celebrates after dismissing India's captain Rohit Sharma for 5 runs during the first day of the Test cricket match between South Africa and India, at Centurion Park, South Africa. (AP)



Kuwait Olympic Committee

500rts

Latest sports scores at — http://sports.arabtimesonline.com

KOC defends rights of athletes

Kuwait Olympic Committee challenges Minister's controversial move

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: The Kuwait Olympic Committee has strongly criticized the decision of Muhammad Al-Aiban, the Minister of Commerce and Industry and the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, to adopt the recommendation of the Ministerial Investigation Committee and the Board of Directors of the Public Sports Authority. The decision led to the cancellation of the declaration of several sports bodies affiliated with the General Assembly of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, citing

a violation of Law No. 87 of 2017. In a statement released yesterday, the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee expressed deep regret and sadness over the consequences of the ministerial decision. It deemed the decision a clear abuse against sports bodies and an injustice to a significant number of male and female players. The committee raised concerns that such actions might result in a paralysis of the Olympic and sports movement, depriving young athletes of their fundamental rights to

engage in sports and represent Kuwait. The statement outlined the following key points:

The decision by the Minister of Commerce and Industry and the Minister of State for Youth Affairs was considered vague and based on the recommendation of a committee, most of whose members were deemed nonneutral. The committee, formed by the Minister and including individuals from the General Sports Authority, was accused of attempting to control the Olympic sports movement through illegal and non-sporting interference. The Kuwait Olympic Committee highlighted that issuing such a decision violated the principles of the Olympic Charter and norms governing the matter, as it involved canceling the declaration of numerous sports bodies without seeking the opinion of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, some of which are members of its General Assembly.

The Kuwait Olympic Committee emphasized its commitment to its responsibilities, adherence to the Olympic Charter, international federations' regulations, and the law. It asserted that it would continue to recognize the members of its General Assembly from existing sports federations, specialized clubs, and their respective boards of directors.

The committee criticized ongoing actions and interventions by the Minister and the Director General of the General Sports Authority, considering them contrary to sports teamwork and the principle of cooperation necessary between the Kuwaiti Olympic Sports Movement and government agencies. The Kuwait Olympic Committee urged the Minister and the General Sports Authority to cooperate based on Olympic sporting principles, promoting the benefit of Kuwaiti sports and athletes, and avoiding actions that create sporting instability, especially in the lead-up to the 2024 Paris Olympic

USC's Watkins is poised to step in

LOS ANGELES, Dec 26, (AP): Caitlin Clark - the current Associated Press national player of the year - is in what may be her final season at Iowa. She could stay one more year as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as could Angel Reese of national champion LSU.

Regardless of their futures, JuJu Watkins is poised to step in as the next big star of the women's game.

The Southern California freshman guard is the nation's second-leading scorer at 26.8 points per game, right behind Clark, who leads with 30.5.

Watkins earned Pac-12 Freshman of the Week honors in each of her first five weeks. She broke Lisa Leslie's school record for most 30-point games by a freshman, with five in her first seven games.

She's led the Trojans to a No. 6 ranking in the AP Top 25 poll and a 10-0 record.

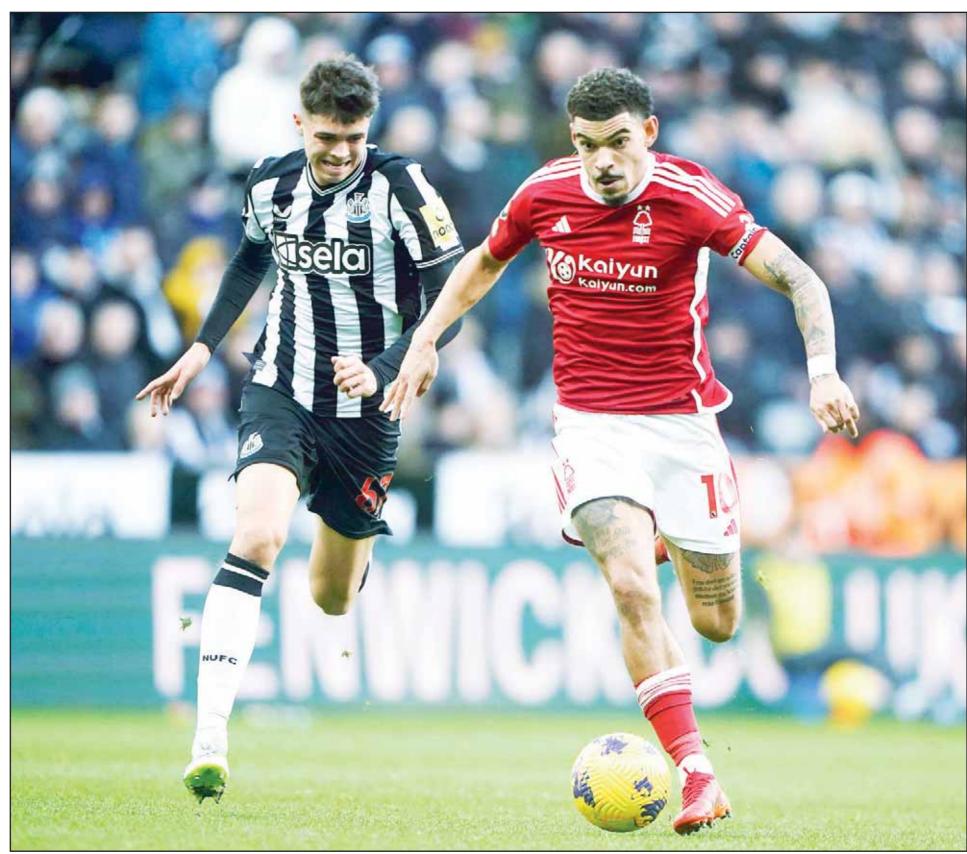
Watkins sat out a win at Long Beach State on Dec. 21, with USC only saying she was day-to-day and not explaining further.

She wasn't feeling well in a win over Cal State Fullerton three days earlier, leaving the court twice during the game but still finishing with 23 points, six rebounds and six assists.

The Trojans next play on Saturday at No. 2 UCLA in the teams' Pac-12 opener. The Bruins also are undefeated at 11-0 and the game is expected to be a rare sellout for women's basketball in Los Angeles.

Among the celebrities who've come out to watch Watkins are LeBron James, Kevin Hart, Candace Parker, 2 Chainz, Vanessa Bryant and actor Storm Reid, a fellow USC student

Forest end 7-game winless streak



Nottingham Forest's Morgan Gibbs-White, right, and Newcastle United and Notting-the English Premier League soccer match between Newcastle United and Nottingham Forest at St. James' Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, England. (AP)

Wood haunts former team Newcastle with hat trick

NEWCASTLE, England, Dec 26, (AP): Chris Wood scored a hat trick against his former club as Nottingham Forest beat Newcastle 3-1 in the Premier League on Tuesday.

Wood, who signed with Newcastle for £25 million (\$32 million) in January before joining Forest in the summer, took advantage of woeful defending at St. James' Park to help Forest end a sevenmatch winless league run and give new manager Nuno Espirito Santo his first victory.

SOCCER

Newcastle took a 23rd-minute lead through Alexander Isak's penalty but missed several opportunities to build on its advantage.

Forest then pulled even in first-

half stoppage time when Morgan Gibbs-White sprinted upfield and played a ball to Anthony Elanga, who slid a pass which Wood easily tapped in.

After Gibbs-White sent a header wide in the opening moments of the second half, Wood ran onto a pass from Elanga, turned defender Dan Burn inside out and lifted a shot over Martin Dubavka to put Forest in front in the 53rd minute

Forest then made it 3-1 seven minutes later when Murillo's through-ball split a ragged defence and Wood deftly stepped around the Dubravka to complete his hat trick.

Isak saw a 67th-minute shot deflected wide and Lewis Miley only just missed the target two minutes later as Newcastle tried to scrap back into the game, but meeting both fierce resistance and devastating counter-punching, the damage was already done andthere was no way back.

The win lifts Forest up to 16th place while Newcastle's fourth defeat in five league games keep them



Australia's Steve Smith bats against Pakistan during their cricket Test match in Melbourne. Marnus Labuschagne notched a gritty score of 44 not out to guide Australia through a rain-interrupted first day of play in the second test against Pakistan at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Tuesday. Invited to bat first by Pakistan captain Shan Masood, who won the toss in overcast conditions, Australia reached 187-3 at stumps. Pakistan squandered a golden opportunity to put Australia on the back foot early, allowing openers David Warner (38 off 83 balls) and Usman Khawaja (42 off 101) to share a 90-run partnership on a pitch offering sideways movement for the seamers. (AP)

Deterrent action vowed

KFA takes strong stand against 'assault' on referees in league

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 26: The Kuwait Football Association strongly condemned the incidents that unfolded during the matches between Al-Arabi and Al-Shabab, as well as Al-Nasr and Al-Salmiya, in the recent eleventh round of the Zain Premier League.

SOCCER

In an official statement, the Football Association expressed its disapproval of the assault on referee Hashem Al-Ibrahim and his officiating crew during the Al-Nasr and Al-Salmiya match. Video footage from the game depicted individuals attacking Al-Ibrahim and his colleagues after the conclusion of the encounter.

The Federation emphasized that such actions severely undermine the integrity of the refereeing system, pledging to address this issue robustly and mete out deterrent penalties for those who verbally or physically assault referees.

In a show of solidarity, the Federation voiced its support for referees and their efforts to counter and prevent such offensive behavior.

This, it stated, is essential for maintaining the reputation and prestige of the Kuwaiti government and the arbitration system within the Kuwaiti Federation.

Furthermore, the Football Association denounced the incidents sur-



Kuwait Football Association logo.

rounding the Al-Arabi and Al-Shabab match, including irresponsible behavior among some attendees in the stands.

Expressing deep regret and complete rejection of such deviations from sportsmanship, the Federation highlighted the potential harm to the Kuwaiti football and sports commu-

The statement concluded by confirming that all incidents and associated actions will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee. The Committee will then implement necessary penalties in accordance with regulations, actively working to eradicate offensive and unacceptable actions. The Football Association called on everyone involved to uphold a positive spirit and reject such incidents.

ARAB® TIMES

Editor-in-Chief AHMED AL JARALLAH

Editorial Office: Airport Road, Shuwaikh P.O. Box 2270, 13023 Safat, Kuwait E-mail: arabtimes@arabtimesonline.com E-mail: advt@arabtimesonline.com

Telephone: 24813566 & 24849144 Fax: 24818267

Advertising: Tel: 24813815 Fax: 24845708

Annual Subscriptions: Individuals KD 45/- Companies and Official Departments KD 75 Airmail charges extra for Fax: 24839487

Tel: 24849144