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Amir's guidance catalyst for prosperity among special needs individuals

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PM visits Grand Mosque

KUWAIT CITY, March 31, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah paid an inspection visit to the Grand Mosque of Kuwait on Saturday night on the start of the last ten nights of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

He was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shareeda Al-Mousherji, and Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Faisal Said Al-Gharib.

During the visit, His Highness the Prime Minister was apprised by the administrators of the Mosque of the preparations for receiving and serving the large numbers of worshippers during these blissful nights.

He was also briefed on the measures of coordination among various state agencies to ensure tranquil spiritual atmospheres for the worshippers.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah during an inspection visit to the Grand Mosque on Saturday evening. PM Diwan photo

Opinion

Election outcomes in front of different leadership

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

WE are just a few days away from the parliamentary elections and its outcome. Regardless of which candidate emerges victorious, they must understand that engaging with the current leadership differs from past experiences.

This leadership, at both senior and executive levels, operates differently from the leadership of yesterday. It does not include in its dictionary overstepping of one authority over another, paid for interpellations, tribal, sectarian, or personal interests.

Based on what is known from the lofty speeches of His Highness the Amir, it laid out the broad outlines that should be in the mind of every parliamentarian, minister, and any official in any position.

From this standpoint, the new or re-elected parliamentarians must realize that times have changed. The games that prevailed over the past years led to the decline of the country at all levels, paralyzed the economy, corrupted institutions, and destroyed administration, and had a negative impact on society over the course of 30 years.

The courts are filled with lawsuits filed against corrupt people who either plundered public money, carried out parachute appointments, interfered in the administration outside the legal and constitutional text, tampered with national identity, and falsified nationalities. They must also consider the reasons for dissolving the previous National Assembly, and understand the many warnings that His Highness the Amir gave in his previous speeches.

They should not deal with matters according to the principle of "everything is up for grabs", which almost destroyed the country. These warnings were appreciated by the Kuwaiti people, and has been their stance, with the

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NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Sunday His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace.

His Highness the Amir also received Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to President of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto congratulating him on being elected as president.

His Highness the Amir wished the President of Indonesia success and everlasting health, and further bolstering of bilateral ties.

Kuwait's Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem also sent a cable to President of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto congratulating him on being elected as president. (KUNA)

ISTANBUL: One person was killed and 11 others were injured on Sunday after an armed brawl broke out during the voting process at a polling station in Sur district in Diyarbakir, Turkish media reported.

The Turkish News Agency Ikhlas reported that security sources said that one person was killed and 11 others were injured in brawl incidents on the sidelines of the municipal elections in southeastern Turkey. (KUNA)

MANDATORY HEALTH CHECKS FOR OVER 65 RENEWAL Kuwait sets new conditions for licensing medical professionals

'Standardization'

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Ministry of Health has issued Ministerial Resolution No. 71 of 2024, which outlines general conditions and regulations for licensing medical professionals in both the public and private sectors, reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to the resolution resident doctors and registered assistants are prohibited from practicing in the private sector unless they work in licensed training establishments under supervision.

Medical professionals seeking promotion to higher technical levels in the private sector must obtain one hundred educational units of continuing medical education approved by the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialties (KIMS).

Individuals over 65 years old must undergo medical examinations specified by the Ministry to ensure they meet required fitness conditions before being granted or renewing licenses. These medical examinations must be repeated every two years.

Titles and years of experience required for medical and allied health professions in the government sector are applicable to the private sector, provided the experience is in the same specialty.

General practitioners are permitted to work in private clinics, health dispensaries, and hospitals, but they must start in accident departments, outpatient clinics, or hospital wards under supervision. They are not allowed to perform specialized surgeries.

Dentists at the general practitioner level are allowed to work in private clinics, dental centers, and hospitals, beginning in dental departments in outpatient and accident clinics. They are not permitted to work in operating rooms.

These regulations aim to ensure the quality and standardization of medical care provided in both public and private healthcare sectors in Kuwait.



Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah receives Saudi Arabia Ambassador Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al-Saud.



Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah receives Bahrain Ambassador Salah Ali Al-Malki.



Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah receives UAE Ambassador Dr. Matar Hamed Al-Neyadi.

Kuwait Defense Minister and GCC envoys talk cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, March 31, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah received, Sunday, Ambassadors from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain to deepen Gulf collaborative efforts.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Defense said Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah met with Saudi Arabia Ambassador Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al-Saud, UAE Ambassador Dr. Matar Hamed Al-Neyadi, and Bahrain Ambassador Salah Ali Al-Malki at Bayan.

During the meetings, the minister and the Ambassadors discussed many topics including issues regarding ways to enrich relations between Gulf Cooperation countries, and other regional and global issues.

Ramadan Timings

Iftar Monday 18:07
Imsak Tuesday 04:13

Call for 'legislative correction'

Disqualified candidates lose appeal

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Third Administrative Circuit in the Court of Cassation on Sunday dismissed the appeals of the following disqualified 2024 National Assembly candidates: Marzouq Al-Khalifa, Ahmed Mutee, Jaber Al-Muhailbi and Marzouq Al-Habani.

The Court of Cassation upheld the decision to deny them participation in the elections after convicting them of by-election crimes.

The Cassation Prosecution demanded in its memorandum before the court that all appeals of candidates for the upcoming parliamentary election who were removed from the nomination lists should be rejected.

The Court of Appeals had earlier upheld the decision of the Ministry of Interior to remove all the disqualified candidates from the lists for the election, the most prominent of whom are those who participated in the by-elections like Marzouq

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Day by Day

THE saying, "There is no comfort in separation, nor in connection" reflects the profound impact of disconnection and lack of communication on individuals and nations alike.

When people are separated by ignorance and lack of resourcefulness, it leads to destruction and exacerbates problems rather than solving them.

Leaders who fail to bridge these gaps and rely on gossip instead of meaningful action often find themselves ineffective and unable to address the challenges facing their societies.

As problems accumulate and are deferred to the future, the urgency of addressing them becomes ever more apparent. Indeed, tomorrow is always approaching, and it is imperative to take proactive steps today to foster connection, understanding, and effective problem-solving. ... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Al-Najat hosts iftar for 1,500

KUWAIT CITY, March 31, (KUNA): The Al-Najat Charity Society held Saturday an iftar (fast-breaking) banquet for 1,500 people in Al-Mubarakiya marketplace in Kuwait City, in cooperation with the ministries of interior and social affairs, as well as the Kuwait Municipality,



Iftar banquet in Al-Mubarakiya marketplace. KUNA photo

a private company and several volunteers.

Speaking to KUNA on the sidelines of the banquet, Abdullah Al-Shehab, Al-Najat official, said the society is keen on continuing its activities inside the country aiming to strengthen bonds among Muslim communities through the Islam Presentation Committee (IPC).

It is a chance to meet the needs of communities and show the country's civilized image in terms of embracing all expats, he said.

The society has handed out 1.8 million iftar meals, including 46,000 inside Kuwait, since the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, he noted.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Al-Kandari, head of IPC public relations, said 382 people converted to Islam since the start of Ramadan, thanks to the committee's services presented in 14 languages.

The aim of iftar campaign is to reach out to Muslim communities in Kuwait and help educate them about the teachings of Islam, he stated, referring to the distribution of pamphlets and publications with different languages during the iftar banquets.

Prayer Timings

Fajr	04:20	Asr	15:23
Sunrise ..	05:40	Maghrib ..	18:05
Zohr	11:52	Isha	19:23

Local

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

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Rather hot and partly cloudy with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-30 km/h.
By Night: Mild with light to

moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-30 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	29	21

Kuwait Airport	30	22
Abdaly	31	19
Jahra	29	22
Salmiyah	26	22
Nuwaisib	34	22
Wafra	31	18

'Amir's special needs people support prosperity lift'

'Constitution does not bar disabled from running in polls'

By Maryam Al-Woqayan

KUWAIT CITY, March 31, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait is moving steadily towards prosperity, based on the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to honoring all needs of people with visual impairment towards growth, progress and active participation for development of their society.

Following the speech delivered by His Highness the Amir during his visit to the Kuwait Blind Association on March 26, state institutions now face a great responsibility to play an important role in supporting people with strong determination to challenge disabilities in various domains, especially educational, cultural, sports, social and recreational.

After His Highness the Amir's instructions to the relevant state institutions to support people with special needs, build the nation and supporting its path to progress and prosperity, their focus in the next stage will be to follow up on the issues of this group, provide their needs, support their activities, provide devices, machines and tools that would help them and provide appropriate job opportunities.

Media also play an important role in encouraging distinguished people with special needs through highlighting their success stories locally and regionally in various fields and their confrontation of challenges.

Achieved

The State of Kuwait has achieved many accomplishments on an international level in supporting the rights of persons with special needs, based on its firm approach and keenness for persons with special needs at the legislative and executive levels, and ensuring the active participation of institutions and persons with special needs to empower and integrate them into society.

At an international level, in 1992, the United Nations designated December 3 as International Day for Persons with Disabilities to better understand disability issues and protecting the rights of persons with special needs, in addition to raising awareness to include them in the political, economic and cultural fields.

The electoral process in Kuwait witnessed developments in the parliamentary process, including the candidacy of three visually impaired persons in 1999, a blind candidate in 2013 and another one in 2023 and lastly Ayedh Al-Ajmi, who is deaf-mute and ran in the Fifth Constituency in the upcoming National Assembly elections, to be held on April 4 2024, before announcing his withdrawal.

Persons with special needs must overcome the difficulties of running for the National Assembly elections by providing electoral places equipped for people with special needs and raising awareness about their political rights, as well as the procedures provided to them for running and participating in the electoral process.

Constitutional expert and legal advisor at the Amiri Diwan, Dr. Adel Al-Tabtabaei told KUNA that there is no article in the Constitution that prevents a person with disabilities from running in the National Assembly elections.

Conditions

He added that Article 82 of the Constitution indicates that "the conditions that must be met by a member of the National Assembly are that he must be Kuwaiti by origin, be qualified as an elector, not less than 30 years of age on the day of the election and be able to read and write Arabic well."

Regarding secret voting on resolutions and draft laws in the National Assembly for the deaf, Dr. Al-Tabtabaei said that this could be done by raising hands, in writing or on a computer with the help of a sign language interpreter.

For his part, Kuwaiti sign language trainer and interpreter Bader Al-Doukhi expressed to KUNA his happiness that people with special needs are attempting to run for elections, hoping for their victory in the future.

As for the role played by the sign language interpreter in front of deaf voters in election campaigns, he said "this role falls on the candidate who must reach out to us to interpret his visions and present his electoral program, especially with regard to supporting the deaf and the special needs."

He added "we have major responsibility to convey everything that is said to the deaf correctly and accurately as any error may have consequences for both sides."

He continued that among the ethics of the interpreter is not to express his opinion on any topic related to the deaf during the election campaign and his role is limited to helping express opinion and advice if he is asked to do so.

Founder of the Kuwait Society for Hearing Disability, Hamad Al-Marrri told KUNA that it is difficult for the deaf to read and write like their normal peers, saying a deaf person "cannot discuss issues during sessions, even in the presence of a sign language interpreter."

He added that each disability has its own characteristics, learning style, tasks, skills and abilities."

For his part, Vice-President of the World Federation of Deaf Football Jaber Al-Kandari, who is also a coach and expert in Kuwaiti sign language, told KUNA that attempts of deaf-mute people to run for the National Assembly elections is satisfactory and urges others to pay attention to potential and capabilities of this group.



Dr. Adel Al-Tabtabaei



Bader Al-Doukhi



Hamad Al-Marrri



Jaber Al-Kandari

Amir's call to preserve national identity supported

'Elections awakening of state to confront fraud'

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The National Identity Defense Group has issued a statement, endorsed by hundreds of citizens, which will be presented to His Highness the Amir along with the names of the signatories, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The statement underscores the group's commitment to supporting His Highness the Amir's call for the preservation of national identity. Signatories emphasize the importance of implementing the Amir's directives aimed at safeguarding national identity. They also express solidarity with the government and the Minister of Interior in their efforts to address issues of tampering with nationality.

Furthermore, the statement advocates for strict and decisive measures against forgery, duplication, and manipulation of Kuwaiti nationalities, which have affected thousands of individuals. The signatories commend the government's efforts in protecting national identity and reject any political or parliamentary interference that could impede these efforts.

In a separate statement titled "The upcoming elections are a response to the awakening of a state and to confront fraud," Al-Dhoub Group addresses the issue of national identity. They highlight the significance of the upcoming parliamentary elections following the Emir's speech on December 20, 2023.

According to the statement, the Amir's speech emphasized the need for corrective actions regarding appointments, promotions, and nationality issues that deviated from the principles of justice and fairness.

The group urges the public to support the Amir's corrective measures through participation in the elections, emphasizing the solemnity of the oath taken by elected officials to uphold the constitution, defend freedoms, and serve the interests of the people with integrity.

The group emphasized that His Highness wasted no time in implementing sovereign decisions upon assuming power, notably taking immediate steps to cleanse the citizenship records tainted by forgery, which undermined national identity and reduced it to a commodity subject to exploitation.

The response from the Kuwaiti people to the Emir's directive was significant, as it aimed to rectify the deviation from the true path of national identity. Investigations revealed audacious practices where forging nationality became easier than obtaining a visa entry, with certain parliamentary members acting as staunch defenders of such practices.

It was noted that 32 representatives refused to give nod for the formation of a committee to detect forgery in naturalization and also opposed prosecuting those who forge academic certificates. Furthermore, some representatives regularly interfered with the Naturalization Department's operations to shield forgers, despite final judicial rulings against them, disregarding religious injunctions against false speech and bearing false witness.

The National Identity Defenders Group expressed concern over attempts to downplay the severity of forgery, leading to confusion and questioning regarding the fate of families whose situations would be rectified. However, it reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to justice and humanity, assuring that those who rectify their status will continue to live with dignity in the country.

The group highlighted the need to address forgery comprehensively to prevent further exploitation, noting that correction will bring stability to families whose names were unjustly added to the nationality file. It also mentioned instances where counterfeits openly confessed in courtrooms to obtaining citizenship through fraudulent means.

The statement continued, shedding light on efforts to distort facts surrounding the forgery issue. Those responsible for the crime seek to obscure accountability by portraying the situation inaccurately, often issuing vague statements about national unity as a smokescreen. However, the active efforts of the Minister of the Interior and ministry staff have gradually dispelled these smokes, revealing the extent of tampering and forgery practices.

This increased transparency has prompted a reevaluation of past misconceptions, signaling a genuine intent to address the issue. The group expressed gratitude to the government of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Al-Sabah for its collaboration with the Amir in rectifying lax practices. This collaborative effort will extend to correcting discrepancies in academic certificates, marriage contracts, birth documents, and housing records, rectifying numerous erroneous conditions.

Biometrics & CSC linkage will not lead to bonus cut

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Linking the fingerprints of employees in government agencies to the integrated systems of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) will not lead to reduction of the excellent job performance bonus, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources explained that all government agencies have adopted the employee evaluation system included in the integrated systems, so the employee evaluation items of each government agency must be linked to the CSC systems; hence, the need to link the fingerprints to ensure there is no defect which could affect the employee's evaluation and to guarantee absolute transparency.

On the positive aspects of such linking, sources pointed out that the fingerprint system can be modified only through the CSC; thus, the employees of government agencies will not be harmed except those who are non-compliant. Sources affirmed that the CSC has completed the largest percentage of linking the fingerprints of government employees to the integrated systems; and that within this year, the remaining agencies, institutions and ministries will be linked.

In addition, sources advised employees wishing to extend the Eid Al-Fitr holiday to submit an official leave request from now on, as it is not permissible to submit such a request during or after the holiday. "If the employee is absent before or after the Eid Al-Fitr holiday, the entire period will be counted as absence from work, that is, including the official holiday; and this will lead to salary or indemnity deduction."

Other Voices

Freedom breeds creativity

By Ahmad alsarraf

What if the Spanish Picasso was Kuwaiti? What if the Italian painter Salvador Dali was Kuwaiti? What if the German Beethoven was Kuwaiti? Or the most famous American director, Steven Spielberg, Kuwaiti? Or were the Russian ballet choreographer Petipa, the Ukrainian (Russian) novelist Leo Tolstoy, the Greek philosopher Socrates, and thousands of others from that era, in philosophy, art, culture, literature, and dozens of other fields of thought, invention, and engineering, holding Kuwaiti citizenship?

Positive creativity is a difficult issue and needs a free climate. Just as the artist, intellectual, novelist, writer, and journalist need creativity, the teacher, engineer, and government employee need a free climate to produce, innovate, and advance.

The climate of abuse, repression, and prohibition is against freedom, against creativity, and against human nature, and therefore Picasso would have lost his desire to paint after painting two paintings when the ministry's inspector objected to the presence of what looked like a breast in one of them.

Leo Tolstoy would have torn up the chapters of his novel that he had handwritten if the censor refused to approve what he had written, and Steven Spielberg would quit directing if the censor banned a shot he did not like, and so it was with Beethoven, Chopin, Muhammad Abdel-Wahab, Umm Kulthum and thousands of other creative people.

When Kuwait excelled in theatre, sports, singing, novels, directing, stories, drawing, etc., there was freedom and there was a civil state. The day it became closer to the religious state, all those innovations disappeared, education retarded, corruption increased, the employee's psychology deteriorated, and the citizen became a partner in ruin.

Khaled Al-Nafisi, Abdul-Hussein, Ghanima, Suad, and hundreds of others did not come out of nowhere, but rather came as a result of a free climate. Other creative people preceded them by decades, and before the advent of oil, such as Fahd Al-Askar, Khaled Al-Faraj, and

the sons of Ezra, Saleh and Daoud Al-Kuwaiti.

All of this is due to the climate of freedom that prevailed, which we replaced with a rough and harsh culture that even those who introduced us to it abandoned, so the margin of freedom diminished.

Freedom gradually, with the support of influential parties, and in multiple stages, and it still continues to diminish, and we do not know when the turnaround will happen!

Allow me, Your Highness, to give the following two examples:

The articles of the Constitution stipulate that the state is civil, and common sense also calls for this. We lived for nearly half a century, and much before that, without hearing about "distance" education in the last ten days of Ramadan. How can this be accepted in this era in which we live, with all the backwardness that education suffers from? Isn't this the behavior of a religious state?

There is also the case of Dr. Nayef Al-Mutawa, who works as an assistant lecturer in psychology at the College of Medicine at Kuwait University, is a well-known person who has local and international creativity and is certified as a doctor, teacher and therapist from several universities, inside and outside Kuwait, and holds three doctorate degrees from recognized universities.

Dr. Nayef was surprised, when a few days ago, fatwa was issued by a "Sharia teacher," in response to a question from one of his students, stating that it is not necessary to attend his lectures, mostly because the "Sharia teacher" doubts the positions and opinions of Dr. Nayef!

The latter, after a number of his students were absent from attending his lectures, protested verbally about what happened, then followed it up with a written protest to the administration of Kuwait University, but no one has moved, as of the time of writing this article, to put an end to this disdain for the state's systems and its condemning laws, noting that whoever issued the fatwa realizing that he "might" be exposed, in the worst case, to verbal reprimand, but he achieved his goal of severely insulting the reputation and status of a "creative personality"!

Do we have to submit to the opinions of the Mufti and others like him when we are in the year 2024?

□ □ □

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KD 345m used in dev projects

Budget surplus in govt spending

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Total government spending on development projects in fiscal 2023/2024 reached KWD345 million out of the KWD1.1 billion allocated at the beginning of the fiscal year to spend on these projects with a spending percentage of about 30 percent, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to official data, there are 124 development plan projects; including seven projects in the delivery stage, 62 in the implementation stage, 42 in the preparation stage and 13 have yet to be implemented.

The 2023/2024 development plan projects include the Northern Economic Zone Development that entails the establishment of a zone governed by special laws and regulations aimed at attracting investments, with an independent institutional structure that ensures the attraction of global investments with high added value and in a way that encourages innovation, while ensuring transparency in the management of financial resources.

The list also includes Kuwait International Airport expansion project (Passenger Terminal Two) — a strategic project considered a qualitative leap in infrastructure and air transport, and an important step to transform Kuwait into a financial center

by making Kuwait International Airport a hub that attracts travelers around the world. This is in addition to the development of Mubarakiya Market and its parking lots in order to revive the market economically and culturally, and enhance its tourism role.

In addition, statistics issued by the Ministry of Finance showed that the total general budget expenditures within 10 months of fiscal 2023/2024 amounted to KD18.8 billion, while current spending on salaries, subsidies, etc., accounted for KD17.9 billion of this budget and the total capital spending amounted to KD820 million out of the KD2.4 billion allocated for disbursements in fiscal 2023/2024.

The new government's work program emphasized giving priority to launching economic reform programs with the aim of achieving balance in the structure of the national economy in a way that supports the sustainability of economic and social well-being in the long term. The projects and financial policies that would increase non-oil revenues in the general budget acquired a balanced share of the program, while the percentage of economic and financial projects reached 33 percent of the total number of projects included in the program.

E-system wipes out dual role

'Double membership in co-ops zero'

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Ministry of Social Affairs' adoption of fully electronic and automated programs in the Cooperatives Sector, especially with regard to membership and shareholder affairs, has eliminated the issue of double membership in cooperatives; such that the number of double membership is now zero, reports Al-Anba daily quoting a reliable source from the ministry.

The source also revealed that the number of shareholders reached more than half a million, distributed to 77 cooperative societies and two unions — Consumer Cooperative Societies Union and Agricultural Productive Societies Union.

The source added this is the result of linking cooperative societies with the Cooperatives Sector, which aims to address

the duplication of data received from societies that occurred before the adoption of the automated system for shareholders data in each society.

The source clarified that every Kuwaiti citizen has the right to contribute to cooperative societies in his area of residence in accordance with the Cooperatives Law.

He said the new automated system refuses to register any shareholder registered in another cooperative and at a previous address. In this case; such shareholder must submit a letter on changing his address, canceling his contribution to the previous cooperative, and removing his name from the list by the relevant administration so that he can contribute to the cooperative in his new residence, the source added.

Forging nationality is not only a crime, but mother of all crimes!

"I DO not really know what is the relationship between the government's due call to reveal the one who forged Kuwaiti citizenship as a crime, like any other crime, drugs, murder, or anything else, and the one who obtained the Kuwaiti citizenship fraudulently and criminally, and benefited from it unlawfully for many years and I emphasize 'only' of its advantages, with the state of insanity that afflicted some candidates for the National Assembly and others," columnist **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.



Iqbal Al-Ahmad

"If theft is a crime that must be reported, if drugs are a crime that must be reported, and if murder is a crime that must be reported, then forging nationality is not only considered a crime... but rather the mother of all crimes.

"They frothed, thundered, and cursed in low, immoral language, against those who supported and encouraged the Ministry of Interior in its bold and deserved step, under the leadership of its minister, and with the encouragement of the senior leadership.

"These people (unfortunately) considered it offensive and the other party described them with harsh words that sometimes amounted to immoral descriptions, in a manner and method that only they could understand... unfortunately.

"I am very surprised by the loud voice that went beyond morals and ethics from some candidates and other names, who apparently felt that the decision to expose the counterfeiters and share power with the people in this true national mission may be a threat to them and to those standing behind them.

"The Ministry of Interior's step took a long time to implement after the counterfeiters wreaked havoc on the earth, when they made this fraud and forgery easy, because of the presence of weak, cheap souls like them, regardless of their name or position, who helped them obtain Kuwaiti citizenship in exchange for money or a position, unfortunately they are the ones who must also be held severely accountable.

"Unfortunately, we have witnessed and heard a new language in our Kuwaiti society from some candidates who exceeded the ceiling of morality in their attacks, as if there was only one issue in Kuwait for which they nominated themselves, forgetting development issues and other important issues that the National Assembly and the Authority also failed in previous years to raise seriously, and to examine the reasons for. Its failure or delay in implementation within the framework of the reform and development plan.

"There is a question that is always raised when talking about the issue of withdrawing citizenship, and in my view it is a legitimate question (You are holding accountable and withdrawing citizenship from the forger. What about the one who facilitated the forgery or the one who granted the false citizenship?) Indeed, this question needs clarification from the concerned party, as I personally know that some of them are currently in prison.

"This in itself requires actual clarification, but that absolutely does not prevent us from continuing to expose forgers with evidence and withdrawing their citizenship immediately.

"I conclude with information for which I thank lawyer Nawaf Al-Fuzaie (which is that there are nationality laws in all the world, based on a history that is a foundational reference for citizenship). Al-Fuzaie says: "The Saudi law, which was issued in 1954, stipulates that the Saudis are those present on Saudi territory before 1914.

"As for Qatari law, it stipulates that Qataris are those who existed before 1925, while the law in the United Arab Emirates specifies that "Emiratis are those who existed before 1931."

"The danger in our topic is that Article Seven of the Kuwaiti Nationality Law allows anyone who has been granted Kuwaiti citizenship to naturalize his children, even those born before their father obtained citizenship. The law also allows a father to grant citizenship to the children of his deceased son as well.

"Imagine that this was applied to the counterfeiters who are defended by these candidates and those like them, who frothed, thundered, insulted and cursed.

"Based on this article, citizenship was granted to children and grandchildren, using a false nationality. Through it, they succeeded in stealing the jobs of real Kuwaiti youth, and their rights, over which they unjustly disputed with them.

"The state of spasm and nervousness that afflicted some candidates and others, if it indicates anything, is that tranquility is close to the neck. Our government continues to forcefully clean up this rotten file, and pay no attention to them, no matter how much they froth and thunder, and no matter how low their language is and how cheap their words are."

Also:

"Last week, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, ac-

companied by the Prime Minister, His Highness Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Al-Sabah, paid visits to men of the Armed Forces, the National Guard, security and firefighters. This honorable annual custom of the heads of our state is an affirmation of the care and attention these institutions receive from the wise leadership, which is committed to communication with generosity and humility in character," columnist **Kawthar Al-Jouan** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"The escalating political events are not new to us today, nor are the societal events with their horrific, sad and heavy events as well. These scenes could not have occurred without warm embraces that nurtured and nourished them, until they grew and their threads extended to joints in the state concerned with security and societal aspects.

"One was given money, another was given property, a third was a position and treatment, and a fourth was the forger of certificates. In the Kuwaiti body, nationalities were granted without examination or any responsibility, so files accumulated and lineages became mixed. What matters is 'how much money I receive and how many people I need'.

"Blinded by money, inflamed by positions, their consciences died in the pit of interests and betrayal, and they abandoned their responsibilities and the country, and devoted themselves to weakening society with the poison of drugs and violence.

"This situation continued in the absence of the application of a just law, 'and the hereafter is the most righteous', until we almost forgot that we had laws that were proud of, a culture that transcended the seas and oceans, sciences for which Lebanon is attested, and legislative councils that nourish thought and secure the citizen's satisfaction.

"Shocking political events for a small community would not have magnified in this way if we had efficient executive departments that put the right person in the right place and held accountable the negligent.

"There would not have been scenes that disturbed our lives if the members of the National Assembly had employed their real work to serve the citizen and address his issues, and we would not have seen such comical and sad scenes at the same time."

□ □ □

"Rational subtraction ... A rational proposal is required and attractive to a large group of voters who are no longer attracted to fanaticism, false heroism, screaming and raising the bar of rhetoric, as was the case during the 'Arab Spring'!" columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Some candidates, along with those who call themselves 'political activists' ... we say some, not all, with deep regret, believe that raising one's voice to the point of screaming and raising the level of discourse to the point of being offensive will guarantee them success in the upcoming elections. This is a big mistake they are making. Someone applauds them intentionally or the applause of the audience may play a major role in the absence of reason. Thus, this leads to unjustified impulsiveness and the result is attacking national constants. Every rational and balanced voter who looks at matters with the rationality of the Kuwaiti people will not accept this!

"We will not talk about all the candidates who are insulting others. We will not talk about all the activists and their ridiculous arguments, as the list is almost long. We will talk about two examples, but not limited to them.

"One of the candidates even attacked the powers of His Highness the Amir, may Allah protect and preserve him. No action was taken against the candidate, as if they did not hear him, knowing that his voice disturbed everyone who cared about the country's highest interests.

"An activist insulted the symbol of Kuwait -- Mubarak the Great, and undermined everything we studied about this great symbol. No action was taken against him, while another is referred to the prosecution as soon as he opens his mouth!

"All the Kuwaiti people are looking for strong and honest candidates who confront corruption and the corrupt, and preserve public money, in order to vote for them. However, this does not mean that we rejoice or interact with discordant voices, which attack our symbols and national unity. They try to irritate people with their unbalanced presentation. Consequently, one of them presents himself as the necessary leader required by this stage to save the country and its people.

"The truth of the matter is that people are drawn into things that may have bad consequences. The scenes of people taking to the streets may be repeated in the new 'Arab Spring'.

"Therefore, the competent authorities are required to move quickly to deal with the bullying, which will intensify if we remain silent. This may affect those who are not aware of the consequences of things, so they will drag us into a new confrontation. They will certainly lose in the end, and cause their followers to be imprisoned, but the real loser will be the homeland when they create a rift in the social fabric that may be difficult to heal."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Maintenance work ongoing in Abdullah Al-Mubarak.

Warm and partly cloudy weather conditions seen

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Meteorological Department anticipates warm and partly cloudy weather for today, Sunday. Expect light to moderate northwesterly to northerly winds, ranging from 08 to 32 km/h during the daytime.

As night falls, the forecast predicts moderate conditions with partly cloudy skies. Winds are expected to be light to moderate, shifting between northwesterly and variable directions, with speeds of 06 to 28 km/h.

Temperature-wise, anticipate a high of 30°C and a low of 22°C, making for a relatively balmy day and night ahead.

Road repairs begin in various areas as citizens air 'outrage'

Maintenance on major highways still on hold

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Ministry of Works (MPW) is actively addressing citizens' complaints regarding road conditions by conducting repairs and maintenance work across various regions. Teams from the Ministry inspect the reported roads and carry out necessary repair work in response to these complaints, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

According to sources within the Ministry, repair work was recently undertaken in the Abdullah Al-Mubarak area, specifically focusing on the entrance leading to the area from the 6.5 Ring Road. This initiative is part of ongoing efforts to improve road conditions in different governorates of the country.

The Ministry highlighted that while major maintenance work on highways and internal roads is pending regulatory procedures, the current focus is on immediate repairs. This involves removing worn-out asphalt to address issues like potholes, cracks, and overall road deterioration. The repair work adheres to the standards and specifications set by the Ministry of Works.

Furthermore, the Ministry plans to initiate more extensive maintenance projects once the regulatory procedures are completed. These projects will be announced through the Official Gazette, and contracts will be signed for maintenance in various regions and roads as part of the comprehensive road repair plan.

Dr. Noura Al-Mishaan, the Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, has instructed the Ministry to promptly respond to citizens' complaints regarding road conditions. This proactive approach demonstrates the Ministry's commitment to addressing the needs and concerns of the community related to road infrastructure.



Pulling down illegal poll advertisements.

Field trips conducted in Ahmadi

448 violating adverts removed

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Public Relations Department at Kuwait Municipality has confirmed the removal of 448 advertisements in Ahmadi Governorate for violating election regulations, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

According to the department, the Municipality branches in the governorates are conducting field trips to remove violating advertisements during the 2024 National Assembly election period. It added that inspectors from the audit and follow-up of municipal services departments are monitoring violations throughout the election period.

Inspectors from the Audit and Services Follow-up Department in the Ahmadi Governorate branch of the Municipality carried out an inspection tour within the framework of implementing the provisions of the law by removing violating advertisements on the roads outside the walls of the electoral headquarters or on the streets of residential areas, as well as removing random advertisements from streets and squares, and advertisements not licensed by the Municipality.

The Municipality indicated that the tours resulted in the removal of 448 violating election advertisements and the issuance of 23 warnings, indicating the violations included installation of advertisements without a license and advertisements outside the election headquarters.

It also affirmed that inspectors will con-

2 dead in accidents

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: A tragic incident occurred in the Waфра region resulting in the loss of a citizen's life and injury to another individual. The Ministry of Interior's operations were alerted to a traffic accident in the Al-Waфра area, specifically at the Umm Qadir Reserve. Security and ambulance personnel promptly responded to the report, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Upon reaching the scene, police found a vehicle overturned, tragically claiming the life of its driver. Additionally, the driver's companion sustained injuries, including a broken back. The injured individual was swiftly transferred to the hospital for medical attention.

In a separate incident, one person lost his life in a collision on Kabb Road. The investigating authorities were promptly notified, leading to the removal of the deceased's body and the transfer of the injured party to the hospital for treatment.

continue to carry out their field tours to monitor violating advertisements and remove them immediately, stressing the need to adhere to the provisions of the law to avoid committing violations and payment of fine.



Photo shows the driver is flung out of the jeep.

'Miraculous escape'

Motorist flung from SUV while performing stunts

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: A video clip circulating on social media showed a four-wheeler driven by a reckless motorist along the beach in the Abu Al-Hassaniya escaped certain death because the impact with the water sent the driver flying into the air and falling into the water after the vehicle had flipped over several times, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The motorist reportedly sustained injuries, but he is seen running across the water and onto the shore. Fortunately, a child who was at the scene managed to escape moments before the accident occurred.

Fire kills Kuwaiti child

2,275 male, female expats to be deported soon: Mol

By Munaif Naif/Jaber Al-Humoud
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Deportation Department of the Ministry of Interior has finalized the procedures for the deportation of about 2,275 male and female expatriates in the month of March.

These expatriates were referred from various sectors of the Ministry of Interior for different violations of the country's laws and regulations.

The monthly statistics revealed the deportation of 1,469 men and 806 women as part of the department's efforts to complete the procedures for the deportees as quickly as possible.

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Fire kills Kuwaiti child: A 7-year old Kuwaiti girl died, and a 46-year old Sri Lankan domestic worker sustained burns and injuries because of a fire that broke out in a house in Qasr.

In a press statement, the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate explained that firefighters rushed to the location after receiving information about the house on fire in Qasr. Both victims - the 7-year old Kuwaiti girl and the 46-year old Sri Lankan woman - were rescued. However, the young girl succumbed to her injuries and her body was referred to the Forensics Medicine Department. The Sri-Lankan woman has been admitted to the Intensive Care Unit in Jahra Hospital for treatment.

Investigations are ongoing to determine the cause of the fire.

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'Juwaihil' ruling set: The Criminal Court has set the session of April 14 to issue its ruling on the case filed by the Ministry of Interior against the political activist Muhammad Al-Juwaihil for allegedly insulting tribes and harming national unity.

During the court session yesterday, Al-Juwaihil denied the allegations leveled against him, insisting that he did not insult the Ajman tribe, but he was referring to the Yemenis and Houthis outside the country.

The Ministry of Interior arrested him for the violation of the national unity law and for insulting tribes in an audio clip that was leaked on social media.



Ambassador of Azerbaijan Emil Karimov in a group photo during the Ramadan Iftar banquet he organized for the media. Photo by Mohamad Morsi

Envoy calls for increase in Kuwaiti investments, tourists in Azerbaijan

Karimov organizes Ramadan Iftar banquet for media

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Kuwait Emil Karimov highlighted the close relations between Kuwait and Azerbaijan.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of an Iftar banquet he organized in honor of the media, recently, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, the ambassador revealed that the number of Kuwaiti tourists visiting his country reached 30,000 last year, and he hopes this number will increase to 100,000 in the near future.

He said, "We are working with Kuwait to strengthen cooperation between us in all fields. The volume of trade exchange between the two countries has not reached the required level, as it reached USD 650 thousand dollars last year."

Ambassador Karimov called for an increase in Kuwaiti investments in his country, especially in the liberated areas, stressing that his country has vast lands, and foreigners can own real estate without paying taxes.

Tourism

He indicated that the embassy has an ambition to increase the number of Kuwaiti tourists to 100,000 annually by promoting tourism in Azerbaijan.

Ambassador Karimov revealed that the third session of the second joint committee between the two countries will be held in Kuwait before

the end of this year, adding that it prepares the general framework for discussing ways of cooperation between the two sides in all fields.

He highlighted his country's desire to benefit from the Kuwaiti experience and expertise in clearing mines and to use them to clear the mines present in the liberated Nagorno-Karabakh area.

Ambassador Karimov indicated that the information they obtained from the Armenian side is not accurate.

He stressed his country's keenness to call for a ceasefire in Gaza Strip and stop the bloodbath and killing of innocent children, the elderly and women.

The ambassador said his country opened a representative office in Ramallah, which demonstrates its close relationship with the Palestinian Authority and its support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Karimov revealed his keenness to communicate with Kuwaiti society by visiting diwanis during Ramadan and attending Ramadan ghabga.

He said he believes this good tradition enhances communication between members of society, as poetry collections are a societal culture that distinguishes Kuwait from other countries.

The ambassador praised the support of the local media to strengthen relations between the two countries and highlight the embassy's activities.

He extended his congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and the people of Kuwait on the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr, wishing Kuwait further development, prosperity and growth under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir.

KFH partners with Kuwait Food Bank

KFH's contribution of KD 1 mln to support needy families in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has partnered with the Kuwait Food Bank in a collaborative agreement, pledging KD 1 million to support underprivileged families in Kuwait. This contribution reinforces KFH's commitment to social and humanitarian responsibility within the Kuwaiti community. The agreement marks the extension of a successful three-year partnership between the two organizations.

At the signing ceremony, Fahad Khaled Al-Mukhaizeem, KFH Group Chief Strategy Officer, emphasized that KFH Group's humanitarian strategy in Kuwait aligns with the state's overall development plan and government objectives to enhance citizen care, covering various aspects of society's well-being. He also expressed gratitude for the impactful social initiative of Kuwait Food Bank and its role in providing food assistance to families in need during Ramadan.

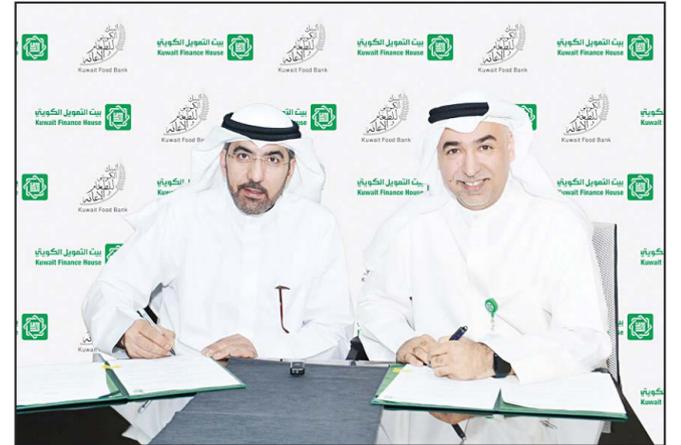
"By signing this agreement, we formalize the successful partnership and cooperation between both parties in recent

years. We look forward to building on this success and continuing our fruitful collaboration in the future. KFH remains committed to contributing to societal development and empowering communities to overcome challenges. We achieve this by meeting citizens' needs and collaborating with official organizations in the sector to help them achieve their goals," he added.

Kuwait Food Bank Vice Chairman Meshal Al-Ansari praised KFH for its significant contributions to charitable efforts. He highlighted the strong and successful strategic partnership between KFH and the Kuwait Food Bank.

He highlighted a long-standing partnership between the Kuwait Food Bank and KFH. He expressed hope for continued success in their joint efforts to support families in need through the Food Basket initiative.

Al-Ansari expressed his appreciation to the Board of Directors and all employees of KFH for their support of all the activities across the various sectors of the country.



Al-Mukhaizeem and Al-Ansari sign the agreement.



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan, Al-Marri, delivers the annual Kuwait's contribution to UNRWA.

Kuwait delivers contribution to UNRWA

Support from Kuwait, other nations plays vital role in lives of Palestinian refugees

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan, Hamad Al-Marri, has delivered Kuwait's annual contribution of two million dollars to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), reports Al-Jarida daily.

Following his meeting with Tamara Al-Rifai, the Director of the External Relations Department at UNRWA, Ambassador Al-Marri reaffirmed Kuwait's steadfast commitment to supporting the Palestinian cause and improving the conditions of Palestinian refugees.

He emphasized Kuwait's responsibility for fulfilling its international obligations and expressed full confidence in UNRWA's efforts to serve Palestinian refugees. Ambassador Al-Marri underscored Kuwait's unwavering support for UNRWA, especially given the current challenges facing the agency, which affect its ability to provide essential services to Palestinian refugees.

In response, Al-Rifai praised Kuwait's partnership and annual contribution to UNRWA, highlighting the significant impact of Kuwait's support on the agency's humanitarian efforts in assisting Palestinian refugees.

She explained that Kuwait's contribution directly aids Palestinian refugees across various fields, including education and health-care. Al-Rifai noted that UNRWA operates 700 schools attended by approximately half a million children and provides medical services to over two million Palestinian refugees in neighboring countries.

She also mentioned that the Palestinian refugee population is estimated at about 5.9 million, residing both within Palestine and in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The ongoing support from Kuwait and other countries plays a crucial role in addressing the humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees in the region.

Fund to evaluate buildings in Ardhiya

MoSA addresses dual membership issue in 77 co-ops and two unions

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Responsible sources in the Ministry of Social Affairs have confirmed the successful elimination of the phenomenon of "dual membership" among shareholders of cooperative societies, a long-standing issue that has troubled the ministry in previous years, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The ministry has revised its records and removed tens of thousands of duplicate entries, resulting in a total of approximately 490,000 registered shareholders across 77 cooperatives and two unions (consumer and production).

Through automated linkage with the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), the ministry has established a reliable database of shareholders.

This process revealed errors in the registration of shareholders, including individuals living outside their designated area of operation and those holding dual memberships in multiple associations, both of which are violations of established laws and ministerial decisions governing membership criteria.

Furthermore, the automated system uncovered deceased shareholders, incorrect civil identification numbers, shareholders lacking valid addresses, and non-Kuwaiti individuals still listed as shareholders de-

spite potential loss of nationality or registration through unlawful means.

The ministry is expanding the use of automated systems, particularly during elections for cooperative boards of directors, to ensure transparency and prevent fraud. Additionally, efforts are underway to implement electronic voting, with plans to introduce fingerprint authentication to further safeguard against identity theft and ensure the integrity of the voting process.

Buildings to be evaluated: The National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development is set to evaluate the buildings of the Ardhiya craft complex located in the Ardhiya area, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This evaluation process aims to assess the general condition of the buildings in preparation for their tendering. The evaluation will focus on examining the foundations, concrete structures, and ensuring the safety of the buildings.

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine whether the buildings require restoration, completion, or demolition, especially considering previous reports highlighting the need for concrete examination.

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'Event helps introduce Kuwait's Ramadan customs to ambassadors'

Ambassador Hayat holds Ghabqa for Asian diplomatic mission heads

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Samih Johar Hayat held a Ramadan Ghabqa, which was attended by heads of diplomatic missions of Asian countries accredited to the country.

Also present were the Assistant Foreign Minister for Legal Affairs Tahani Al-Nasser, the Assistant Foreign Minister for international organizations Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah, the Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Nawaf Al-Ahmad, and Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Khaled Al-Yassin.

The Dean of the diplomatic corps of the Asian Group and the Ambassador of Af-

ghanistan Sayyed Javid Hashemi, the Ambassador of Turkey Topa Sönmez, and the Head of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme's Mission to the Arabian Gulf Region and Kuwait Dr. Amira Al-Hassan also participated in the Ghabqa that Ambassador Hayat had held in his diwaniya in Shaab.

In a press statement issued on the occasion, Ambassador Hayat confirmed that the purpose of holding the Ghabqa was to introduce Kuwait's Ramadan customs to the ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps of Asian countries to those accredited in the country, adding that it was also an opportunity for exchanging conversations and getting to know the heads of missions away from formalities and daily work.



Al-Jarida photo

Ambassador Hayat with heads of diplomatic missions of Asian countries accredited to the country.

Five surrender, three detained

Probe into electoral fraud continues

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The investigation into the first crime observed in the 2024 National Assembly elections, involving the organization of by-elections for one of the tribes in the fourth constituency, continues as the Ministry of Interior and the Public Prosecution pursue the case.

According to a report from Al-Qabas, five defendants have surrendered themselves to the Ministry of Interior.

The Public Prosecution has conducted intensive investigations and presented the accused with substantial evidence. As of Thursday, three of the defendants were in detention pending further proceedings.

Mobile phones confiscated from the suspects are being examined, and scrutiny is being directed towards an Instagram account allegedly used in the voting process. All individuals involved in this activity will be summoned for interrogation in accordance with legal procedures.

The Ministry of Interior has deployed specialized security teams to monitor and address electoral crimes, ensuring adherence to the law. Those found engaged in illegal activities such as "branching" or "vote buying" will be referred to the Public Prosecution after thorough documentation of the crime and collection of evidence.

Arab Parliament president lauds Kuwait's deep-rooted democracy

'Kuwait is a democratic example that should be followed'

Interview by Fahad Al-Saeed

KUWAIT CITY, March 31, (KUNA): President of the Arab Parliament Adel Al-Asoumi has affirmed that Kuwait's democratic experience is both deep-rooted and inspiring.

The State of Kuwait is a democratic example that should be followed in the Arab world, Al-Asoumi said in an interview with Kuwait News Agency, alluding to the effective role of the Kuwaiti MPs during meetings of the Arab Parliament.

It plays a pivotal and major role at the level of Arab parliamentary activities, Al-Asoumi indicated.

Asked on supervising the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Kuwait, he said the Arab Parliament has been keen on following up on parliamentary events in the Arab and friendly states. This is among the priorities and in line with the keenness on activating the Arab parliamentary diplomacy at various levels, in addition to bolstering partnership with the Arab parliaments.

He indicated that personnel of the Arab parliament, who would partake in observing the polls in Kuwait, would prepare a report about the balloting and refer it to the concerned authorities in the country.

He affirmed special significance of the Arab Parliament's participation in supervising the elections in Kuwait, noting that the State of Kuwait is a pivotal and significant state in the joint Arab order. In this respect, it plays a major role to beef up the Arab order under leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Kuwait has succeeded in bolstering its status at the Arab, regional and international levels and has mapped out a rational and balance external policy that has largely contributed to supporting its foreign ties, he added.

He lauded Kuwait's parliamentary diplomacy and its effective role in strengthening the regional security and stability, particularly through the parliament's effective participation in regional and international events.

Kuwait's elections are set for April 4. Voters will cast their ballots in the five constituencies from noon time to midnight, under watchful eyes of civil societies, local and foreign associations and the media.



Al-Qabas photo

A photo from the training session.

Collaboration aims to bring team of experts from UK

British Embassy & KRCS partner to support Nott Foundation's medical training initiative

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The British Embassy in Kuwait, alongside the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, has announced a joint initiative to support the David Nott Foundation, a British medical charity specializing in training doctors for work in conflict zones and natural disasters, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Their collaboration aims to bring a team of expert surgeons and anesthetists from the United Kingdom to provide specialized surgical training in hostile environments to Kuwaiti medical teams. These teams will subsequently travel to Gaza to offer urgently needed assistance.

British Ambassador Belinda Lewis expressed her appreciation for the partnership between the

UK government and the David Nott Foundation in Kuwait, highlighting the strength and productivity of the relationship between the two countries. She credited Dr. Ghassan Abu Sitta, a veteran war surgeon and humanitarian pioneer, for proposing this valuable partnership.

Dr. Hilal Al-Sayer, President of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, underscored the organization's pride in cooperating with the David Nott Foundation to enhance the emergency medical response capabilities of their volunteers. He emphasized the crucial role of skilled medical professionals in addressing the suffering caused by conflicts, especially in Gaza, and thanked donors such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Brit-

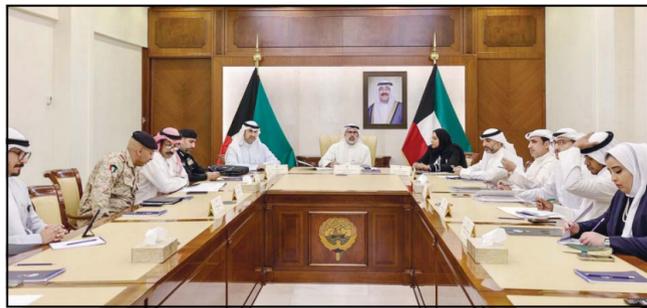
ish Embassy for their support. Tim Law, Chief Operating Officer of the David Nott Foundation, highlighted their response to the escalating violence in the Middle East and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. He mentioned the foundation's partnership with PalMed to conduct training courses in environmental surgery, training numerous surgeons and anesthetists who have volunteered in Palestine.

Law affirmed the foundation's commitment to supporting and developing the skills of medical teams providing urgent assistance in Gaza, including offering training courses to Kuwaiti doctors intending to volunteer in Palestine. This commitment reflects their dedication to addressing the ongoing crisis in Gaza.



KUNA photo

President of the Arab Parliament Adel Al-Asoumi.



KUNA photo

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, chairing the Border Committee meeting.

Dy FM chairs border demarcation meet

Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired on Sunday a border demarcation committee meeting

held at the ministry's headquarters. In the meeting, they discussed prominent topics related to the work of the committee. (KUNA)

Election outcomes

Continued from Page 1

exception of some profiteers who spread corruption on earth. There is no doubt that these people will go out of their way, and will work to incite every strife that serves their interests. The rest of the people must be on the lookout for them.

Therefore, the leadership wants a different approach to the legislative wing of the state. They want the cooperation between the two authorities to be based on achieving the country's interests through a clear path, and not based on the private interests of either the parliamentarians or their electoral keys, or the ministers who fear for their positions.

In this regard, he will be "a sharp razor on all heads", which means he will not allow any attempt to continue the sabotage that has prevailed over the past three decades, for which the Kuwaiti people paid a very heavy price and still continues to suffer from its consequences. It had reached such an extent that the most popular question was - Where is the strong hand that can stop this devastation?

Nonetheless, the senior leadership believes that cooperation between the two authorities - the legislative and the executive - must be characterized by what benefits public affairs and meets national ambitions, instead of the madhouse and tribal and sectarian slogans that ruled the past period to the extent that police stations almost turned into sundries and farms for a tribe or a sect or an influential person, and public administrations were merely a track recorder for the transactions of parliamentarians and other corrupt individuals.

Therefore, everyone must realize that the new path of the current leadership is firm enough for a bitter treatment, even if it ends with cauterization.

This is because getting out of the impasse that the country inherited from the era of chaos over the past decades now requires the exercise of firmness. The nation representatives must work in accordance with the country's national interests; otherwise the "divorce" this time will be irrevocable. We do not believe that any rational person wants that.

Disqualified

Continued from Page 1

Al-Khalifa, Marzouq Al-Habini, Ahmed Mutee and Jaber Al-Muhailbi.

It is worth noting that the ministry decided to disqualify some candidates for not fulfilling one of the electoral conditions due to their conviction for the crime of participating in by-elections.

The ministry informed Ahmed Mutee, Jaber Al-Muhailbi, Marzouq Al-Habini, Marzouq Al-Khalifa, Sheikh Mishal Al-Malik, Mohammad Al-Juwailih, Walid Al-Nasser, Mohammad Al-Azmi, Hani Hussein, Adel Al-Saeedi, Mubarak Trad, and three others of their disqualification for not completing the registration procedures.

Meanwhile, Marzouq Al-Khalifa said he will continue performing his duties whether he is inside or outside the Assembly. He added the Ministry of Interior will not intimidate him, and that any of the pro-reform members of the next Assembly could submit a grilling motion against the acting interior minister.

Commenting on the court verdict, former MP and Fourth Constituency candidate Hamdan Al-Azmi asserted that he respects the decision even if it is shocking. He emphasized the need for the next Assembly to issue a legislation aimed at correcting the current situation; which prevents a former MP, who represented the citizens for years and has a good reputation, from standing for the election.

In his meeting with his constituents, former MP and Fifth Constituency candidate Bader Al-Dahoum revealed that if he wins in the election, he will invite the pro-reform MPs to gather in his diwaniya at 1:00 pm on April 6 to coordinate their positions on some important issues.

Fourth Constituency candidate Musaed Al-Qeraifa stressed the need to expand the authority of the courts to include ruling on citizenship cases. He warned that some citizens could lose their nationality due to erroneous procedures or inaccurate information.

Moreover, the Ministry of Interior issued a decision prohibiting military personnel from entering the election centers.

Both countries share values that call for peace and stability in world

Kuwait marks 20th 'versary of designation as non-NATO strategic ally

By Amnah Al-Shammari

KUWAIT CITY, March 31, (KUNA): Kuwait celebrates Monday the 20th anniversary of its designation by the United States as a strategic ally from outside NATO, as both countries share values that call for peace and stability in the world.

This status -- bestowed on Kuwait on April 1, 2004, by the US -- has strengthened the close bilateral relations dating back to 1951 when the US opened its first consulate in the capital, Kuwait City.

Kuwait being a strategic ally of the US means it can acquire modern military technology in addition to encompassing other economic and scientific aspects, such as obtaining a distinctive status and significant preference.

Kuwaiti-American relations began in the 19th century and witnessed great development over the years, especially in defense, security, education, economic, consular, customs and border security cooperation, as well as cooperation on global issues.

Kuwait has become a strategic ally and a key partner of the US thanks to its efforts in promoting security and stability and de-escalating tensions in the Middle East,

especially through its mediation role and bridging viewpoints in a number of regional and global crises.

Regarding the strategic alliance between the two countries, the Acting Head of the Department of Political Science at Kuwait University, Dr. Haila Al-Mukaimi, stated to KUNA that Kuwaiti-American relations have gone through long and extensive historical stages that can be classified into five main stages.

The first of these stages is the early presence and early relations, where these relations date back to an early period, exemplified by the American hospital, which was considered an important landmark for the pre-independence stage of Kuwait, and the establishment of the American consulate in Kuwait in 1951.

The second stage is the beginning of diplomatic relations in 1961, after Kuwait's independence, the consulate turned into an embassy, recog-

nizing Kuwait by the US as an independent sovereign state, therefore, the US promptly initiated this recognition and supported Kuwait in facing Iraqi claims at the time, which is considered an important stage in the history of bilateral relations.

The third stage is the stage of the strategic relationship, which emerged following the Iran-Iraq War, where Kuwait requested the US in 1986 to put American flags on Kuwaiti tankers to ensure safe transport of its oil to the world and have the tankers under the protection of a major power.

The fourth stage is enhancing the strategic relationship, represented by the 1991 Gulf War liberation, adding that Kuwaitis recognize the importance of the US' role in 1991.

The fifth stage is the Kuwaiti-American relationship in 2004, represented by Kuwait's declaration as a strategic ally of the US from outside NATO, adding that this came after the visit of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to the US.

Al-Mukaimi added that the US remains one of the most important tourist destinations for Kuwaitis and for study, indicating that Kuwaiti-American relations are characterized by both official and public dimensions.

She explained that this reflected several aspects, including Kuwait's pivotal role in maintaining regional and global peace and security, joint efforts, and informational coordination between the two parties.

She added that in Kuwait's dealing with matters related to global security, as Kuwait is closely linked to international law and has experienced invasion and liberation by the United Nations (UN) and the demarcation of borders and depositing them with the UN, it all contributed to shaping Kuwait's foreign policy.

Al-Mukaimi stated that Kuwait's status enhances its international role in maintaining peace and security, as well as its humanitarian and relief dimension, especially since it has been considered a global relief center since 2004, which has reinforced its role as a peace-promoting state worldwide.

She mentioned that Kuwait has hosted many initiatives related to peace and reconstruction, such as the conferences on Syria and hosting the Iraq Reconstruction Conference.

On his part, Dr. Abdullah Al-Shayji, Professor of Political Science at Kuwait University, stated that Kuwait's designation as a strategic ally outside NATO is an important matter.



Al-Mukaimi

World News Roundup

Europe

Russia missile strike kills 2 in Lviv: A Russian cruise missile strike on infrastructure in Ukraine's western Lviv region killed two, officials said Sunday.

The attack destroyed a building and sparked a fire, Gov Maksym Kozzytskyi wrote on social media app Telegram. He said that rescue operations were ongoing.

Meanwhile, thousands in Ukraine's Odesa region were temporarily left without power Sunday after debris from a downed Russian drone caused a blaze at an energy facility, Gov Oleh Kiper said. Some 170,000 homes were left with temporary power outages as a result of the attack, said Ukraine's largest private electricity operator, DTEK.



Kozzytskyi

The Ukrainian air force said that it shot down nine of the 11 Shahed-type drones launched by Russia overnight, as well as nine out of 14 cruise missiles.

Russia has escalated its attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure in recent days, causing significant damage in several regions.

Ukrainian energy company Centner-ergo announced Saturday that the Zmiiv Thermal Power Plant, one of the largest thermal power plants in the eastern Kharkiv region, was completely destroyed following Russian shelling last week. Power outage schedules were still in place for around 120,000 people in the region, where 700,000 had lost electricity after the plant was hit on March 22.

Ten Czech-made Vampire rockets also landed in the Russian border region of Belgorod on Sunday, Russia's Ministry of Defense said. One woman was injured when a fire broke out following the attack, said regional Gov Vyacheslav Gladkov.

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed orders heralding the start of the country's annual spring recruitment season, officially drafting 150,000 conscripts. (AP)



Ambassadors lay flowers at site of hall massacre: Foreign diplomats in Russia laid flowers on Saturday at the site of last week's attack on a suburban Moscow concert hall that killed 144 people.

Those in attendance included ambassadors from the United States, EU countries, Africa and Latin America. Russian state news agency RIA Novosti noted that the attendees included representatives of "unfriendly states".

Since the attack, thousands of people have brought bunches of flowers, wreaths and other tokens such as teddy bears, creating a makeshift memorial at the Crocus City Hall.

Russian state news agency Tass reported Saturday that the number of people wounded in the attack was 551, quoting figures from the Moscow regional department of the Russian Emergency Situations Ministry. Previous figures have been much lower and it did not explain the discrepancy.

The death toll rose to 144 on Friday when a severely injured victim died in a hospital, according to Russian Health Minister Mikhail Murashko.

An affiliate of the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack, the deadliest on Russian soil in years. The Kremlin, however, has insisted that Ukraine and the West had a role, something Kyiv has vehemently denied. (AP)



Journo who covered Navalny's trials jailed: A Moscow court on Friday ordered a Russian journalist who covered the trials of late Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny and other dissidents to remain in custody pending an investigation and trial on charges of extremism.

Antonina Favorskaya, also identified by court officials as Antonina Kravtsova, was arrested earlier in March. On Friday, Moscow's Basmanov District Court ordered that she remain in pre-trial detention at least until May 28.

The hearing was conducted behind closed doors at the request of the investigators, which was supported by the presiding judge. Favorskaya and her lawyer protested the decision, the independent news site Mediazona reported.

"I am completely against a closed process. The press needs to know what's going on here, what I'm being accused of," the outlet quoted Favorskaya as saying.

She is accused of collecting material, producing and editing videos and publications for Navalny's Foundation for Fighting Corruption, which had been outlawed as extremist by Russian authorities, according to court officials. She has been charged with involvement with an extremist group, a criminal offense punishable by up to six years in prison. (AP)



Charles attends Easter service: King Charles III joined the queen and other members of the royal family for an Easter service at Windsor Castle on Sunday in what will be his most significant public appearance since he was diagnosed with cancer last month.

The monarch offered a cheery wave as he walked into St. George's Chapel for a service expected to last about an hour.

The appearance of the 75-year-old king is seen as an effort to reassure the public after Charles stepped back from public duties following an announcement by Buckingham Palace in early February that he was undergoing treatment for an unspecified type of cancer. Though he has been working behind the palace walls, his emergence in public for a royal fixture like the Easter service is seen as a positive sign.

The service itself will be smaller than usual as Kate, the Princess of Wales, is also being treated for cancer and has paused public duties. The princess, her husband Prince William and their children won't attend the service.

Kate shock's announcement that she, too, had cancer was made on March 22, after weeks of speculation about her health and whereabouts following major abdominal surgery in February. (AP)



Pope overcomes health concerns: Pope Francis overcame concerns about his health to preside over Easter Sunday Mass, leading some 30,000 people in a flower-decked St. Peter's Square in one of the most important liturgies of the year.

Just hours after celebrating the 2½-hour nighttime Easter Vigil, the 87-year-old Francis appeared in good form at the start of the liturgy in the blustery piazza. Francis, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, has been battling respiratory problems all winter that the Vatican and he have said were bronchitis, the flu or a cold.

The Vatican said some 30,000 people attended the Mass, with more packing the Via della Conciliazione boulevard leading to the piazza. (AP)



Cruise ship accident injures 17 in Austria: Seventeen passengers were hurt when a Bulgarian river cruise ship lost steering and hit the sides of a lock on the Danube in Austria, the apa news agency reported Saturday. Eleven of the injured were taken to hospitals.

The ship with 142 passengers aboard, most of them from Germany, temporarily lost power to its electronics system and became unsteerable as it passed through narrow locks at 9:45 p.m. Friday, apa reported.

The ship's power was restored but not before the bow and stern struck the concrete sides of the lock passage near the town of Aschach, a few miles upriver from Linz.

The ship sustained minor damage and continued to its next port. The cause of the loss of electrical power was under investigation. (AP)



Dutch police arrests hostage-taker: Dutch police detained a man Saturday after he left a nightclub where four people had been held hostage for hours, bringing a peaceful end to a tense standoff.

"We are exceptionally happy that it ended this way. That the victims came out safely and that we were able to arrest this suspect without using violence," said Marthyne Kunst, head of the regional public prosecutor's office.

There was no immediate word on a motive, but police and prosecutors said they did not believe it was a terrorist incident. Police said the hostage-taker was armed with knives, and a backpack he carried was being examined to establish if it contained explosives.

The suspect's identity was not released. Ede Mayor René Verhulst said he was a Dutch citizen. (AP)



Republican presidential candidate former US president Donald Trump talks with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott during a visit to the US-Mexico border, Feb 29, in Eagle Pass, Texas. As Trump campaigns on the promises of mass deportations and pardons for those convicted in the Jan. 6 Capitol attack, his ideas are being met with little pushback by a new era of Republicans in Congress. It's a shift from the first time around when Trump encountered early skepticism and, once in a while, the uproar of condemnation. (AP)

Politics

Biden wins N. Dakota Democratic primary

Trump allies already support his '25 ideas

WASHINGTON, March 31, (AP) — As Donald Trump campaigns on promises of mass deportations and pardons for those convicted in the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol, his ideas are being met with little pushback and some enthusiasm by a new era of Republicans in Congress.

It's a shift from the first time around when the presumptive Republican presidential nominee encountered early skepticism and, once in a while, the uproar of condemnation.

Rather than being dismissed as campaign bluster or Trump speaking his mind to rouse his most devoted voters, his words are being adopted as party platforms, potentially able to move quickly from rhetoric to reality with a West Wing in waiting and crucial backing from key corners on Capitol Hill.

"We're going to have to deport some people," said Republican Sen. JD Vance of Ohio, one of Trump's biggest supporters, days after campaigning alongside Trump in his home state.

While Democratic President Joe Biden and his allies are sounding alarms about Trump's proposed agenda for a second term - and his promise that he would be a "dictator" but only on Day one - the Republican Party in Congress is undergoing a massive political realignment toward Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement.

Judicial

Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who clashed with Trump at times particularly over the Capitol riot while also pushing through dozens of his judicial picks, is preparing to step down from his leadership role at the end of the year. House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., faces constant threats of his ouster.

Rising in the churn are MAGA-aligned newcomers such as Vance, who wasn't yet elected during Trump's presidency, and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, who was elected as Trump lost to Biden in 2020. Both Vance and Greene are considered potential vice presidential picks by Trump.

Greene, who recently filed a mo-

tion to potentially force Johnson from the speakership, said it's too soon to be discussing a second-term policy agenda or who will fill West Wing positions.

As she campaigns for Trump, she said her priority is just winning the election.

Other Republicans in the House and Senate often simply shrug when asked about Trump's agenda, pointing to policies they like and others they might support.

Meanwhile, a cast of former Trump White House officials in Washington is pushing out policy papers, drafting executive actions and preparing legislation that would be needed to turn Trump's ideas into reality. These efforts are separate from Trump's campaign, whose senior leaders have repeatedly insisted that outside groups do not speak for them, though many group leaders would be in line to serve in a new Trump administration.

Plan

If Trump wins, "we are going to have a plan - and the personnel - ready to roll," said Paul Dans, a former Trump administration official who heads the conservative Heritage Foundation's Project 2025, which is collecting thousands of resumes and training staff for a potential second Trump administration.

Trump himself has suggested having a "very tiny little desk" on the Capitol steps so he can sign documents on Inauguration Day, Jan. 20, 2025.

"On Day 1 of President Trump's new administration, Americans will have a strong leader," said Karoline Leavitt, the campaign's national press secretary.

Congress pushed back at times during the first Trump administration, a stable of Republicans joining with Democrats to halt some of his proposals.

Republicans and Democrats resisted a White House effort to commandeer funds for a U.S.-Mexico border wall, leading to the longest government shutdown in history. Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona, who died in 2018, famously gave a thumbs-down to Trump's effort to repeal the health law known as the Affordable Care Act.

And after Trump supporters stormed the Capitol to try to reverse his 2020 loss to Biden, 10 Republicans in the House voted to impeach Trump for inciting the insurrection and seven Republican senators voted to convict him. Many of those lawmakers have since left Congress. One, Sen. Mitt Romney of Utah, is retiring at the end of his term. Had the Senate convicted Trump, it could have then moved to bar him from holding federal office again.

As a result, there are fewer lawmakers now in Congress willing or able to stand up to Trump or publicly oppose his agenda as he has effectively commandeered the party apparatus, including the Republican National Committee, as his own.

"Those people are all kind of flushed out," said Jason Chaffetz, a former GOP representative who is close to Trump allies on and off Capitol Hill.

Trump still falsely argues the 2020 election was stolen and is claiming he should be immune from a four-count federal indictment alleging he defrauded Americans with his effort to overturn the results. He has made Jan. 6 a cornerstone of his 2024 campaign and often refers to those imprisoned for the attack as "hostages."

Also:

BISMARCK, ND: US President Joe Biden has won North Dakota's Democratic presidential primary.

The state party on Saturday announced the results of the mostly mail-in primary. The party began circulating ballots in February to voters who asked for them.

Biden's victory was virtually assured, though seven other candidates were on the primary ballot.

Former President **Donald Trump** won the North Dakota Republican Party's March 4 presidential caucuses, taking all 29 delegates.

Biden and Trump have already secured enough delegates for their parties' nominations, lining up the first presidential rematch election since 1956.

Sen. **Bernie Sanders** won the North Dakota Democratic caucuses in 2016 and 2020.



US Ambassador to Russia Lynne Tracy, (foreground), with other ambassadors of foreign diplomatic missions, attends a laying ceremony at a makeshift memorial in front of the Crocus City Hall on the western outskirts of Moscow, Russia, on March 30. (AP)



Delahunt



Markey

America

Former Rep Delahunt dies: Longtime US Rep. William D. Delahunt of Massachusetts, a Democratic stalwart who postponed his own retirement from Washington to help pass former President Barack Obama's legislative agenda, has died following a long-term illness, his family announced.

Delahunt died Saturday at his home in Quincy, Massachusetts, at the age of 82, news reports said.

Delahunt served 14 years in the US House of Representatives, from 1997 to 2011, for Massachusetts's 10th congressional district. He also was the Norfolk County district attorney from 1975 to 1996 after serving in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1973 to 1975.

The Delahunt family issued a statement Saturday saying he passed away "peacefully," but did not disclose his specific cause of death, news reports said.

"While we mourn the loss of such a tremendous person, we also celebrate his remarkable life and his legacy of dedication, service, and inspiration," the statement said. "We could always turn to him for wisdom, solace and a laugh, and his absence leaves a gaping hole in our family and our hearts."

Democratic US Sen Ed Markey of Massachusetts lauded Delahunt's long public service as a legislator in the nation's capital and a prosecutor in the county south of Boston. (AP)



Plane crash kills 2 in Calif: Two people died when a small airplane crashed in a California town near the Nevada state line on Saturday evening, police said.

A single-engine plane crashed while attempting to land at Truckee Tahoe Airport shortly after 6:30 p.m. Saturday, the Truckee Police Department said in a social media post.

Two deaths were confirmed but it was not immediately known how many people were onboard the plane, police said.

The National Transportation Safety Board and Federal Aviation Administration will begin investigating the accident on Sunday, police said. (AP)



Shoplifter chased by police: Police in New Mexico had all the horsepower in this

chase: A shoplifter was detained outside a Walgreens this month after trying to outrun a horse-mounted police officer.

Albuquerque police bodycam video

shows a dark-brown horse trotting through a parking lot behind a man in black clothing. The horse catches up to him within seconds.



Police gather in Edon, Netherlands on March 30. Dutch police detained a man on Saturday after he left a nightclub where four people had been held hostage for hours, bringing a peaceful end to a tense standoff. (AP)

"It wasn't me," the man yells as he leads the horse and police officer into the street, stopping traffic.

The man then finds himself surrounded when two more police officers on horses arrive at the scene, the video shows. (AP)



Crews start removing steel: Teams of engineers worked Saturday on the intricate process of cutting and lifting the first section of twisted steel from the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge, which crumpled into the Patapsco River this week after a massive cargo ship crashed into one of its supports.

Sparks could be seen flying from a section of bent and crumpled steel in the afternoon, and video released by officials in the evening showed demolition crews using a cutting torch to slice through the thick beams. The joint incident command said in a statement that the work was being done on the top of the north side of the collapsed structure.

Crews were carefully measuring and cutting the steel from the broken bridge before attaching straps so it can be lifted onto a barge and floated away, Coast Guard Rear Adm Shannon Gilreath said.

Seven floating cranes - including a massive one capable of lifting 1,000 tons - 10 tugboats, nine barges, eight salvage vessels and five Coast Guard boats were on site in the water southeast of Baltimore. (AP)

Africa

'Women farmers invisible'

South Africa's drought leaves millions hungry

MANGWE, Zimbabwe, March 31, (AP): Delicately and with intense concentration, Zanyiwe Neube poured her small share of precious golden cooking oil into a plastic bottle at a food aid distribution site deep in rural Zimbabwe.

"I don't want to lose a single drop," she said. Her relief at the handout - paid for by the United States government as her southern African country deals with a severe drought - was tempered when aid workers gently broke the news that this would be their last visit.

Neube and her 7-month-old son she carried on her back were among 2,000 people who received rations of cooking oil, sorghum, peas and other supplies in the Mangwe district in southwestern Zimbabwe. The food distribution is part of a program funded by American aid agency USAID and rolled out by the United Nations' World Food Programme.

They're aiming to help some of the 2.7 million people in rural Zimbabwe threatened with hunger because of the drought that has enveloped large parts of southern Africa since late 2023. It has scorched the crops that tens of millions of people grow themselves and rely on to survive, helped by what should be the rainy season.

They can rely on their crops and the weather less and less.

The drought in Zimbabwe, neighboring Zambia and Malawi has reached crisis levels. Zambia and Malawi have declared national disasters. Zimbabwe could be on the brink of doing the same. The drought has reached Botswana and Angola to the west, and Mozambique and Madagascar to the east.

A year ago, much of this region was drenched by deadly tropical storms and floods. It is in the midst of a vicious weather cycle: too much rain, then not enough. It's a story of the climate extremes that scientists say are becoming more frequent and more damaging, especially for the world's most vulnerable people.

Waiting

In Mangwe, the young and the old lined up for food, some with donkey carts to carry home whatever they might get, others with wheelbarrows. Those waiting their turn sat on the dusty ground. Nearby, a goat tried its luck with a nibble on a thorny, scraggly bush.

Neube, 39, would normally be harvesting her crops now - food for her, her two children and a niece she also looks after. Maybe there would even be a little extra to sell.

The driest February in Zimbabwe in her lifetime, according to the World Food Programme's seasonal monitor, put an end to that.

"We have nothing in the fields, not a single grain," she said. "Everything has been burnt (by the drought)."

The United Nations Children's Fund says there are "overlapping crises" of extreme weather in eastern and southern Africa, with both regions lurching between storms and floods and heat and drought in the past year.

In southern Africa, an estimated 9 million people, half of them children, need help in Malawi. More than 6 million in Zambia, 3 million of them children, are impacted by the drought, UNICEF said. That's nearly half of Malawi's population and 30% of Zambia's.

"Distressingly, extreme weather is expected to be the norm in eastern and southern Africa in the years to come," said Eva Kadilli, UNICEF's regional director.

Erratic

While human-made climate change has spurred more erratic weather globally, there is something else parching southern Africa this year.

El Niño, the naturally occurring climatic phenomenon that warms parts of the Pacific Ocean every two to seven years, has varied effects on the world's weather. In southern Africa, it means below-average rainfall, sometimes drought, and is being blamed for the current situation.

The impact is more severe for those in Mangwe, where it's notoriously arid. People grow the cereal grain sorghum and pearl millet, crops that are drought resistant and offer a chance at harvest, but even they failed to withstand the conditions this year.

Francesca Erdelmann, the World Food Programme's country director for Zimbabwe, said last year's harvest was bad, but this season is even worse. "This is not a normal circumstance," she said.

The first few months of the year are traditionally the "lean months" when households run short as they wait for the new harvest. However, there is little hope for replenishment this year.

Joseph Nleya, a 77-year-old traditional leader in Mangwe, said he doesn't remember it being this hot, this dry, this desperate. "Dams have no water, riverbeds are dry and boreholes are few. We were relying on wild fruits, but they have also dried up," he said.

People are illegally crossing into Botswana to search for food and "hunger is turning otherwise hard-working people into criminals," he added.

Also:

ZIGUINCHOR, Senegal: Mariama Sonko's voice resounded through the circle of 40 women farmers sitting in the shade of a cashew tree. They scribbled notes, brows furrowed in concentration as her lecture was punctuated by the thud of falling fruit.

This quiet village in Senegal is the headquarters of a 115,000-strong rural women's rights movement in West Africa, We Are the Solution. Sonko, its president, is training female farmers from cultures where women are often excluded from ownership of the land they work so closely.

Across Senegal, women farmers make up 70% of the agricultural workforce and produce 80% of the crops but have little access to land, education and finance compared to men, the United Nations says.

"Women farmers are invisible," said Laure Tall, research director at Agricultural and Rural Prospect Initiative, a Senegalese rural think tank. That's even though women work on farms two to four hours longer than men on an average day.

"We work from dawn until dusk, but with all that we do, what do we get out of it?" Sonko asked.

She believes that when rural women are given land, responsibilities and resources, it has a ripple effect through communities. Her movement is training women farmers who traditionally have no access to education, explaining their rights and financing women-led agricultural projects.

Across West Africa, women usually don't own land because it is expected that when they marry, they leave the community. But when they move to their husbands' homes, they are not given land because they are not related by blood.



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (center), greets US congressional delegation led by Senator Kirsten Elizabeth Gillibrand during their courtesy call at the Malacanang Presidential Palace in Manila, Philippines on March 26. Also in photo, (from left), Senator Michael Farrand Bennet, US Ambassador MaryKay L. Carlson, Senator Cynthia Jeanne Shaheen, Representative Adriano Espallat and Senator Mark Edward Kelly. (AP)

Asia

Russia veto ends monitoring of UN's NKorea sanctions

Philippines creates Nat'l Maritime Council

KUALA LUMPUR, March 31, (Agencies): President of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, signed an order creating a council to boost national maritime security and raise awareness on mounting tensions and regional conflicts over South China Sea, or what Manila dubs West Philippine Sea.

Local newspaper, Philippines Star, indicated that Marcos issued the executive order to comprehensively address issues affecting national security and territorial integrity of expansive maritime zones.

The order came after Marcos announced that the Philippines will be implementing countermeasures to tackle the illegal, coercive aggressive and dangerous attacks.

The executive order renames earlier version of the council into the National Maritime Security Council making it the central agency responsible for policies and strategies guaranteeing efficiency of maritime security and awareness.

Manilla and Beijing have exchanged accusations on violations taking place in conflict areas in South China Sea.

China demands almost total control over the Sea dismissing all claims from other countries, including the Philippines.

Relations between Manilla and Beijing have deteriorated during Marcos' administration as he sought to deepen defense relations with United States to counter Chinese attacks against Philippines forces.

Also:

UNITED NATIONS: A veto by Russia ended monitoring of UN sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear program, prompting Western accusations that Moscow is seeking to avoid scrutiny as it allegedly violates the sanctions to buy weapons from Pyongyang for its war in Ukraine.

Russia's turnaround on the UN monitoring reflects how Moscow's growing animosity with the US and its Western allies since the start of the Ukraine war has made it difficult to reach consensus on even issues where there has been longstanding agreement.

The veto came during a vote on a UN Security Council resolution that would have extended the mandate of a panel of experts monitoring sanctions on North Korea for a year, but which

will now halt its operation when its current mandate expires at the end of April.

The vote in the 15-member council, with 13 in favor, Russia against, and China abstaining, has no impact on the actual sanctions against North Korea, which remain in force.

Russia had never before tried to block the work of the panel of experts, which had been renewed annually by the UN Security Council for 14 years and reflected global opposition to North Korea's expanding nuclear weapon program.

Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told the council before the vote that Western nations are trying to "strangle" North Korea and that sanctions are losing their "relevance" and "detached from reality" in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the country.

He accused the panel of experts of "increasingly being reduced to playing into the hands of Western approaches, reprinting biased information and analyzing newspaper headlines and poor quality photos." Therefore, he said, it is "essentially conceding its inability to come up with sober assessments of the status of the sanctions regime."

But US Deputy Ambassador Robert Wood called the panel's work essential and accused Russia of attempting to silence its "independent objective investigations" because it "began reporting in the last year on Russia's blatant violations of the UN Security Council resolutions."

He warned that Russia's veto will embolden North Korea to continue jeopardizing global security through development "of long-range ballistic missiles and sanctions evasion efforts."

White House national security spokesman John Kirby condemned Russia's veto as a "reckless action" that undermines sanctions imposed on North Korea, while warning against the deepening cooperation between North Korea and Russia, particularly as North Korea continues to supply Russia with weapons as it wages its war in Ukraine.

"The international community should resolutely uphold the global nonproliferation regime and support the people of Ukraine as they defend their freedom and independence against Russia's brutal aggression,"

Kirby told reporters.

Britain's UN Ambassador Barbara Woodward said Russia's veto follows arms deals between Russia and North Korea in violation of UN sanctions, including "the transfer of ballistic missiles, which Russia has then used in its illegal invasion of Ukraine since the early part of this year."

"This veto does not demonstrate concern for the North Korean people or the efficacy of sanctions," she said. "It is about Russia gaining the freedom to evade and breach sanctions in pursuit of weapons to be used against Ukraine."

"This panel, through its work to expose sanctions non-compliance, was an inconvenience for Russia," Woodward said.

France's UN Ambassador Nicolas de Riviere added that "North Korea has been providing Russia with military material in support of its aggression against Ukraine, in violation of many resolutions which Russia voted in favor of."

Russia's deputy UN ambassador Dmitry Polyansky responded, calling these "unfounded insinuations" that "only strengthened our conviction that we took the right decision to not support the extension of the panel of experts."

The Security Council imposed sanctions after North Korea's first nuclear test explosion in 2006 and tightened them over the years in a total of 10 resolutions seeking - so far unsuccessfully - to cut funds and curb its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

The last sanctions resolution was adopted by the council in December 2017. China and Russia vetoed a US-sponsored resolution in May 2022 that would have imposed new sanctions over a spate of intercontinental ballistic missile launches.

The Security Council established a committee to monitor sanctions and the mandate for its panel of experts to investigate violations had been renewed for 14 years until Thursday.

In its most recent report circulated last month, the panel of experts said it is investigating 58 suspected North Korean cyberattacks between 2017 and 2023 valued at approximately \$3 billion, with the money reportedly being used to help fund its development of weapons of mass destruction.



People look for salvageable pieces from burned cars at a mechanic shop that was set on fire during violence by armed gangs in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on March 25. (AP)



O'Neill



Pintard

Lat/Am

2 hacked to death in Haiti: Two men in Haiti were hacked to death by a mob who thought they were buying ammunition or guns for gangs that have terrorized the country, police said Saturday.

Police confirmed the crowd snatched the men from police custody after they were found with about \$20,000 and the equivalent of about \$43,000 in Haitian cash in their car, along with two pistols and a box of ammunition.

Carrying that amount of cash was considered suspicious, and residents assumed it was a weapons purchase for the gangs.

The killings happened Friday in a town near the provincial city of Mirebalais. Police appeared to fire warning shots into the air to try to prevent the killings, but the mob killed them anyway. One of the victims was a police officer, and the other was a former guard, according to their identification documents.

The killings underscored how outnumbered police are in Haiti, and the anger of Haitians after months of killings, kidnappings and armed attacks by the country's gangs.

In the last month, gangs have been targeting key infrastructure across the capital, Port-au-Prince, including police stations, the main international airport that remains closed and Haiti's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates.

William O'Neill, the UN rights expert for Haiti, said the conflict-racked Caribbean nation now needs between 4,000 and 5,000 international police to help tackle "catastrophic" gang violence, which is targeting key individuals and hospitals, schools, banks and other critical institutions.

In 2023, the number of people killed and injured as a result of gang violence increased significantly, with 4,451 killed and 1,668 injured, O'Neill's report said. This year, as of March 22, the numbers continue to climb, with 1,554 killed and 826 injured. As a result of the escalating gang violence, so-called "self-defense brigades" have taken justice into their own hands, the report said, and "at least 528 cases of lynching were reported in 2023 and a further 59 in 2024."

Haiti asked for an international force to combat gangs in October 2022, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appealed for a force last July, he said. (AP)

8 migrants die in boat accident: The bodies of eight migrants, apparently from Asia, were found after a boat accident off Mexico's southern Pacific coast, authorities said Friday.

Prosecutors in the southern state of Oaxaca said one survivor, an Asian man, was located. Based on preliminary investigations, the dead appeared to have been from Asia,

immigration checkpoints inside Mexico. (AP)

The bodies were found near a beach in the town of Playa Vicente, which is about 250 miles (400 kilometers) east of Mexico's border with Guatemala. The causes of the boat accident were under investigation.

The area is a key route for migrants seeking to cross Mexico to reach the US border. Most migrants travel by land, but some pay to make the journey by sea seeking to avoid

□ □ □

Bahamian politician killed: A well-known politician in the Bahamas was killed when two gunmen opened fire on a group of people while trying to rob them, police said Thursday.

Don Saunders, a former parliamentarian



Women share peas during a food distribution in Mangwe district in southwestern Zimbabwe on March 22. A new drought has left millions facing hunger in southern Africa as they experience the effects of extreme weather that scientists say is becoming more frequent and more damaging. (AP)

and the deputy chairman of the Free National Movement Party, died at the scene late Wednesday, according to officials. He was 49.

"We are still gathering all of the facts as we come to grips with this tragedy," parliamentarian and FNM party leader Michael C. Pintard wrote on X, formerly called Twitter. The Royal Bahamas Police Force said in a statement that the shooting occurred in Gambier Village, just west of the capital, Nassau.

Police said the unidentified gunmen apparently demanded cash and began shooting after the group "reportedly panicked and fled for refuge."

There were no immediate arrests. (AP)

□ □ □

Mob in Mexico beats kidnapper: A mob in the Mexican tourist city of Taxco brutally beat a woman to death because she was suspected of kidnapping and killing a young girl.

The mob formed after an 8-year-old girl disappeared Wednesday. Her body was found on a road on the outskirts of the city early Thursday. Security camera footage appeared to show a woman and a man loading a bundle, which may have been the girl's body, into a taxi.

The mob surrounded the woman's house, threatening to drag her out. Police took the woman into the bed of a police pickup truck, but then stood by - apparently intimidated by the crowd - as members of the mob dragged her out of the truck and down onto the street where they stomped, kicked and pummeled her until she lay motionless. (AP)

Syed Intekhab Abbas



NBK provides access to RMs on the go with contact your RM feature on MoB

NBK always strives to elevate Privilege Banking services for a standout customer experience, the new service provides customers with seamless interaction with their Relationship Managers. This innovative service puts customers directly in touch with their Dedicated Relationship Manager, offering seamless and personalized banking experience on the go.

On this occasion, Intekhab Abbas Head - of Premium segment, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "This new service will allow Privilege Package customers easily access their Relationship Manager's

contact information, including Relationship Manager name, phone number, and email address directly within NBK Mobile Banking App, along with ability to call, e-mail and WhatsApp them through the app as well. The NBK Mobile App will also facilitate easy appointment booking with their Relationship Manager. The feature will also allow the customer to conveniently display their Relationship Manager's branch location, and working hours, keeping them informed and empowered. This service can be accessed under Premium Banking section specially created in the application".

NBK offers Privilege Banking Customers an exclusive array of services that has been strengthened to ensure a quality customer experience. These services include: a Dedicated Global Relationship Manager taking care of all their local and global banking needs, as well as a wide range of preferential services and financial products, Premium Services Lounges and Premium Concierge Service. Furthermore, Privilege Customers can avail the advantages of Family Banking Services, Global Banking, NBK Home Banking and Multicurrency cash delivery in Kuwait.

Market Movements

31-03-2024

Change Closing pts

Change Closing pts

SAUDI	- Tadawul	-164.33	12,401.56
EGYPT	- EGX 30	-675.96	26,883.39

Business

Company recommends 10 fils per share as dividends

Agility achieves net profit of 83.6 million dinars in fiscal year 2023

Kuwait gov't development spending at 30% utilization

Economic reform priorities in Kuwait's new work program

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: During the fiscal year 2023-2024, the government's total spending on development projects reached approximately 345 million dinars, representing a utilization of about 30% of the allocated budget of 1.1 billion dinars. Official figures indicate that the development plan comprised 124 projects, with 7 in the delivery stage, 62 in implementation, 42 in preparation, and 13 yet to commence, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Key projects under the 2023/2024 development plan included the Northern Economic Zone Development Project, aimed at establishing a region with favorable investment laws and regulations to attract high-value global investments while ensuring transparent financial management.

Additionally, the Kuwait Airport expansion project, specifically Passenger Terminal 2, was highlighted as a strategic initiative to elevate Kuwait's status as a financial hub by enhancing airport infrastructure and attracting international travelers. Another notable project is the development of Mubarakiya Markets and its parking lots, intending to revitalize the market economically, culturally, and enhance its tourism appeal.

In terms of overall government expenditure, data from the Ministry of Finance revealed that total general budget spending over ten months of the fiscal year amounted to approximately 18.8 billion dinars. Current spending, encompassing salaries, subsidies, etc., accounted for about 17.9 billion dinars, while capital spending reached 820 million dinars out of a total allocation of 2.4 billion dinars for the year.

The government's new work program prioritizes economic reform initiatives to rebalance the national economy, aiming for sustainable economic and social well-being in the long term. Approximately 33% of the program's projects and financial policies focus on increasing non-oil revenues in the general budget.

To address challenges and accelerate project implementation, government reports emphasize the need to eliminate delays caused by budgetary or disbursement approval delays. Efforts will be intensified to advance projects stimulating private sector involvement, especially public-private partnership initiatives.

Moreover, radical solutions are sought to overcome challenges hindering project progress, including addressing significant delays in project timelines despite the absence of identified obstacles. Executive agencies involved in the plan are urged to swiftly complete their planning structures to facilitate seamless communication and coordination, enhancing project preparation and monitoring systems.

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Agility, a global leader in supply chain services, infrastructure, and innovation, today reported Q4 2023 earnings of KD 26 million, or 10.2 fils per share almost in line with the same period a year earlier. Q4 EBITDA grew 21.6% to KD 77.5 million and revenue increased 2.2% to KD 343.9 million.

For full year 2023, Agility net profit was KD 83.6 million, or 32.7 fils per share, an increase of 22%. Full-year EBITDA was up 42.4% to KD 257.2 million and revenue increased 56.7% to KD 1,353 million. It is worth noting that due to the accounting treatment of our investment in DSV, only our share of DSV cash dividends gets reflected in our income statement, however, if we take into account our prorata share of DSV's EBITDA for the year 2023 that would increase Agility's EBITDA by approximately KD 90 million.

FY 2023 Performance

Agility Vice Chairman Tarek Sultan said: "Agility delivered on a track record of positive momentum in 2023, despite ongoing volatile markets and the challenging macro environment. Agility ended the year with a 42.4% growth in EBITDA, driven by strong performance across our operating entities.

Agility's Investments segment benefited from a general uplift in global equity markets in the third quarter of the year. Given the materiality of this segment to our balance sheet, and in particular our DSV investment, Agility closed two funded equity collar agreements to safeguard the value of DSV stake and get access to relatively cheaper funding.

We enter 2024 optimistic about the future and the opportunities to grow both globally and in Kuwait, driving value for our shareholders, employees, customers, and communities."

End of Year Dividends Recommendation

Agility's board is recommending a cash dividend of 10%, equivalent to 10 fils per share for the year 2023. This recommendation is subject to the approval of the General Assembly.

Sultan said: "The dividends reflect our determination to deliver value to shareholders, especially after a period of volatility and uncertainty in global capital markets."

The Full year cash dividend is an additional dividend pursuant to the interim dividends announced on March 28, following the board of directors' approval to issue two interim dividends:

- An interim cash dividend distribution of KD 25.5 million (US \$83 million), equivalent to 10 fils per share.
- A stock or in-kind dividend distribution estimated at KD 800 million (US \$2.6 billion), representing 49% of the shares owned by Agility in its subsidiary, Agility Global PLC, which is pursuing a listing on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange. Agility Global PLC is expected to discuss, on or before

	Q4 2023 (Million KD)	Q4 2022 (Million KD)	Variance (%)	FY 2023 (Million KD)	FY 2022 (Million KD)	Variance (%)
Revenue	343.9	336.5	2.2%	1,353.0	863.4	56.7%
Net Revenue	218.3	188.6	15.7%	818.0	473.3	72.8%
EBITDA	77.5	63.8	21.6%	257.2	180.5	42.4%
Net Profit	26.0	26.6	-2.3%	83.6	68.0	22.8%
EPS (fils)	10.2	10.5	-3.0%	32.7	26.8	22.0%

Numbers above are rounded.

fore listing, its own dividend distribution to be paid throughout 2024.

FY 2023 Performance

Agility Controlled Businesses

Agility's controlled businesses are those the company operates and owns majority stakes in, and whose performance is consolidated and reported through Agility's profit and loss statement. For FY2023, the consolidated EBITDA of Agility's controlled businesses was KD 264.2 million on revenue of KD 1.4 billion, increases of 35.4% and 56.7%, respectively, over 2022.

For the FY 2023, performance of the company's controlled businesses is reported under three groups:

Aviation Services

Menzies Aviation reported revenue of KD 665.8 million and EBITDA of KD 97.8 million for the FY 2023, increases of 126.5% and 135.5% over the same period a year earlier. The figures include the consolidated performance of Menzies Aviation and Agility's legacy National Aviation Services (NAS).

Globally, air travel reached 95% of 2019 levels in December 2023. Menzies expects that all major markets will recover to pre-Covid levels during 2024. Total air traffic, according to the International Air Transport Association, grew 37% in 2023.

All geographic regions served by Menzies posted year-on-year revenue growth due to increases in passenger flights. The Americas (which includes North and South America) performance benefited from contract wins in different markets. In Europe, Menzies experienced significant growth and launched successful new operations. Menzies recently announced major contract wins in Spain (launching in H1 2024) and expects progression other new operations in 2024. The company's cargo business performed well in 2023. While recovery across Africa generally was slower, the Middle East and South Asia posted significant growth.

Fuel Logistics

Tristar's FY consolidated revenue grew 33.3% vs. FY2022, and EBITDA increased 26.2%. This performance was driven by Tristar's diversified portfolio of services.

Tristar ended 2023 with revenue exceeding \$1 billion. This was driven by the acquisition of HG storage in 2022 in addition to the growth in the Fuel and Road Transport & Warehousing segments, underpinned by new contract wins. The Maritime segment showed continued resilience as markets remained strong throughout the year. Tristar expects to maintain its momentum in 2024.

Other Controlled Businesses

As a group, Agility's other controlled businesses reported EBITDA

of KD 99.4 million on revenue of KD 350.2 million.

The main contributors were:

Agility Logistics Parks (ALP). ALP reported 7.7% full-year revenue growth. ALPs continuing to pursue its growth strategy by increasing and optimizing its existing land bank and developing new projects.

United Projects for Aviation Services Company (UPAC). Full-year 2023 revenue for United Projects for Aviation Services Company (UPAC) increased 2.6%. The increase was driven mainly by a rebound in airport-related services and an increase in the frequency of daily flights and travelers at Kuwait International Airport. UPAC anticipates steady growth in 2024.

UPAC is a co-investor in Abu Dhabi's \$1.3 billion Reem Mall on Reem Island. The mall officially opened to the public in February 2023. To date, 153 units are trading and almost 72% of Gross Leasable Area (GLA) is committed. UPAC expects additional openings by more tenants in coming months. The mall is the region's first, fully integrated omnichannel retail ecosystem with digital, e-commerce, and logistics capabilities. It brings together all consumer and retail services to ensure a seamless customer experience.

Global Clearinghouse Systems (GCS). At GCS, Agility's customs modernization and port operations company, Full year revenue grew 5.3% vs. the same period in 2022.

Agility's Investments

Agility holds non-controlling minority stakes in a number of businesses, both listed and non-listed. As of December 31, 2023, the carrying value of those stakes was roughly KD 1.5 billion. The main investment in this segment is Copenhagen-based logistics company DSV. Agility's stake in DSV remains a strategic investment, and the company has moved to safeguard the value of its DSV holding by entering into multi-year, funded equity collar agreements with several banks. This transaction protects the value of the holding from market volatility, while also allowing Agility to have access to cheaper funding.

Recap of Agility FY 2023 Financial Performance

- Agility's net profit was KD 83.6 million, an increase of 22.8%, and EPS was 32.7 fils.
- Agility's EBITDA increased 42.4% to KD 257.2 million.
- Agility's revenue increased 56.7% to KD 1,353 million and net revenue increased 72.8%.
- Agility enjoys a healthy balance sheet with KD 3.7 billion in assets. Net debt was KD 888.4 million as of December 31, 2023 (this excludes lease obligations). Reported operating cash flow was KD 221.3 million for the full year 2023, an increase of 121.2%.

US crude oil production declines in Jan

Kuwaiti banks witness decline in oil and gas sector financing

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: In January, local banks exhibited a reduction in their financing activities within the oil and gas sector, marking a decline of 5.4 million dinars compared to the previous month, a decrease of 6.3%. This brought the total financing for the sector to 79.1 million dinars, down from December's figure of 84.5 million dinars. However, in a year-on-year comparison, there was a marginal increase of 0.3 million dinars from January 2023, when financing stood at 78.8 million dinars.

Simultaneously, the overall balance of local banks' financing for the oil and gas sector experienced a modest uptick in January. It rose by approximately 31 million dinars, reaching a total of 2.544 billion dinars compared to 2.513 billion dinars in December. Yet, in a broader temporal perspective, this figure represented a decline of 88 million dinars from January 2023 when the balance stood at 2.632 billion dinars.

Throughout the course of 2023, financing within the oil and gas sector demonstrated significant fluctuations. Beginning at 78.8 million dinars in January, it peaked at 298.7 million dinars in May, only to decline to 169.1 million dinars in June before rising again to 274.3

Kuwait seeks qualified investors for Al-Zour north project phases

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Bidding Committee for the Al-Zour North Electric Power Generation and Water Desalination Plant Project (Phases Two and Three), in collaboration with the Public-Private Partnership Projects Authority and the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, has issued an invitation to qualified investors to obtain bidding application documents and participate in the bidding process for the implementation of the project, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The committee outlined that a Kuwaiti public shareholding company will be established to oversee the construction and execution of the station.

million dinars in July.

Meanwhile, data from the US Energy Information Administration unveiled a notable 6% decrease in US crude oil production in January, down to 12.533 million barrels per day from December

The project encompasses financing, design, construction, operation, maintenance, and transfer of the Al-Zour North station project, Mahalla II and III, with a minimum capacity of 2,700 megawatts for electricity generation and 120 million gallons per day for desalinated water production.

The project's operation includes a combination of high-pressure natural gas and pressure oil as a reserve fuel. Situated at the western border of the Al-Zour North Station (first phase) and the northern borders of the South Al-Zour Station, it aims to foster private sector participation in state construction and development projects.

levels. This decline was particularly pronounced in Texas and North Dakota, with reductions of 5% and 13%, respectively. This downturn came after the states had achieved record production levels in November and December.

Board recommends the distribution of 5% bonus shares

NREC announces net loss of KD 35.2 million for the year ended Dec 31, 2023

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: National Real Estate Company (NREC) reported its financial and operational results for the year ended December 31, 2023. The Company announced a net (loss) attributable to the owners of the Parent Company of KD (35.2) million, and a (loss) per share of (19.8) fils in 2023, compared to a net profit of KD 17.9 million and an EPS of 10.2 fils in 2022.

The Company's operating revenue came in at KD 12.4 million for the year ended December 31, 2023, as compared to KD 26 million in 2022. Total assets were KD 533 million by December 31, 2023, as compared to KD 539 million in 2022.

For Q4 2023, the Company reported a net (loss) of KD (33.7) million, or a (loss) per share of (18.9) fils, and operating revenue of KD 2.6 million.

Commenting on the Company's results, NREC Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Faisal Jamil Sultan Al-Essa, said: "Despite the initial success of Reem Mall (RM) after its launch in the first quarter of 2023, and the opening of the eagerly anticipated Snow Abu Dhabi in H1 2023, RM encountered some challenges in the latter part of the year. These setbacks were influenced by global economic uncertainty and geopolitical tensions which impacted leasing interest and premature terminations."

"Consequently, RM underwent a devaluation, resulting in an impairment on the investment which was recognized at the end of the financial year 2023."

"While this presents a hurdle, NREC stands committed to being transparent and deems it essential to address the factors that contributed to the RM project's performance during its inaugural year. NREC acknowledges that these external factors have played a role in the project's initial operations, however we still maintain a positive outlook for the mall's future performance."

Dividend Recommendation

The Company's Board of Directors has recommended the distribution of 5% bonus shares (5 shares for every 100 shares) for the year 2023.

This recommendation is subject to the approval of the General Assembly of Shareholders.

Financial Highlights for the Periods Ended December 31, 2023 (Million KD)						
Item	Q4 2023	Q4 2022	Variance (%)	FY 2023	FY 2022	Variance (%)
Operating Revenue	2.6	7.3	-64.4%	12.4	26.0	-52.4%
Net Revenue	1.4	4.2	-67.2%	7.2	14.5	-50.6%
EBITDA/ (Negative EBITDA)	(30.9)	8.6	-460.0%	(24.5)	26.7	-191.6%
Net Profit/ (Loss)	(33.7)	6.3	-834.7%	(35.2)	17.9	-296.1%
EPS/ (Loss per Share) (fils)	(18.9)	3.6	-630.0%	(19.8)	10.2	-294.6%

NREC's strategic investment in Agility Public Warehousing Company K.S.C.P. In addition to its core real estate business, NREC is the largest shareholder with a 22.3% share in Agility Public Warehousing Company K.S.C.P.

Agility is renowned for transforming supply chains to be smarter, faster, greener, fairer, and more efficient. It takes pride in its outstanding growth and value creation for shareholders, establishing itself as a top provider of supply chain services, infrastructure, and innovations.

Sultan said: "Agility's Board of Directors has recently approved an interim cash dividend distribution."

"Agility's Board has also approved an in-kind dividend distribution estimated at KD 800 million (USD 2.6 billion), representing shares forming 49% of the issued share capital of a subsidiary, Agility Global PLC. This subsidiary, which manages key company operations and assets such as Menzies Aviation, Tristar Transport L.L.C., Agility Logistics Parks, and the DSV investment, is poised for listing on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX)."

"Following the distribution, Agility will retain a controlling stake of 51% in Agility Global PLC."

"We believe that these developments underscore Agility's commitment to delivering value to its shareholders and reflect positively on our investment in the company", stated Sultan.

Short-term focus

"We remain focused on our goal of divesting certain assets, proceeds of which will be used towards the reduction of a major part of the Company's debt obligations", said Sultan.

Landmark Projects

"We are committed to improving the performance of our operational properties focusing on our two flagship projects, Reem Mall in Abu Dhabi and Grand Heights in Egypt", said Sultan.

Reem Mall

Reem Mall is a new mall, situated on Reem Island, right in the heart of new Abu Dhabi, and covering nearly 2.8 million square feet of useable area.

It is destined to house around 450 of the finest international and local brands, as well as featuring around 85 restaurants and cafes and a range of family-focused entertainment offerings including Vox Cinemas, Carrefour Hypermarket, and the iconic Snow Abu Dhabi.

"The company holds a positive outlook for the mall's future", said Sultan.

Grand Heights

The Company's residential project in Egypt, Grand Heights, has made significant progress in developing and delivering residential units. Grand Heights forms part of a more extensive parcel of land owned by NREC's subsidiary KUWADI-CO, and is presently being developed in different sections by three sub-developers. Covering an area of 3.8 million square meters, the project addresses the surging housing needs of the growing population in Cairo and its suburbs. Sultan said: "The percentage of units sold across the whole project as of the end of 2023 was 81%."

"Total sold units across the entire project in Egypt stood at 7,300 and the remaining unsold units stood at 1,676 by year-end", added Sultan.

Established in 1973 and listed in Boursa Kuwait, National Real Estate Company (NREC) is a real estate investment, development and property manager based in the Middle East and North Africa. The Company's portfolio comprises a mix of retail, commercial and residential properties in the region.



Al-Essa

German retail sales decline in February

Inflation levels continue to stabilize but remain resilient

By National Bank of Kuwait

United States

Conference Board Consumer Confidence Drops

US consumer confidence drops slightly in March, with the figure coming in below expectations and marking a 0.1 decline from the February figure at 104.7. The figure highlights that while fears of a recession are fading, consumers are concerned about the inflation outlook for the US economy in the upcoming days. Meanwhile, consumer's inflation expectations ticked up to 5.3%, higher than the 5.2% figure seen in February.

FOMC Member Waller Speaks

Federal Reserve governor Christopher Waller signaled on Wednesday night that the Fed is in "no rush to cut the policy rate." Regarding the latest economic data, particularly when it comes to inflation and employment, Waller said that "it is prudent to hold this rate at its current restrictive stance perhaps for longer than previously thought to help keep inflation on a sustainable trajectory toward 2%." Furthermore, Waller said that he was looking at the three-and six-month measures of core inflation, and that the readings show that progress on getting inflation to their 2% target is slowing down. "The risk of waiting a little longer to cut rates is significantly lower than acting too soon" added Waller. "Cutting the policy rate too soon and risking a sustained rebound in inflation is something I want to avoid." Waller's remarks were significantly more hawkish than Fed Chair Jerome Powell's comments recently, and on par with Atlanta Fed president Raphael Bostic. Despite the latest dot plot showing a majority of FOMC members favoring three rate cuts this year, Bostic said that he expects only one rate cut to occur later in the year. Meanwhile, markets are pricing in three rate cuts by year-end, in line with the Fed dot plot.

Core PCE Index m/m in Line with Expectations

The core personal consumption expenditure, which is considered the Federal Reserve's preferred measure of inflation rose by 0.3% in February, down from a 0.4% increase in January. The data comes as the US economy continues to show resilience, with hotter than expected inflation remaining sticky, and a robust labor market continues to pressure Fed officials into revising the interest rate forecasts for the year.

The greenback ended the week closing at 104.487.

Canada

Canada's m/m GDP Exceeds Expectations

Canada's January GDP was up by 0.6%, beating forecasts of 0.4%. The growth was described by Statistics Canada as a broad-based expansion in the economy, led by a bounce back in education services.

The Canadian Dollar was last seen trading at 1.3540.

Europe

German Retail Sales Decline in February

The latest publication by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany shows a sharp decline in retail sales in February. Where sales volume declined by 1.9% m/m. The drop was well below expectations of a 0.4% rise in the figure, as well as the previous month's figure of a 0.3% decline. Declines were seen in products like food which fell by 1.7%, as well as online sales which dropped by 2.8% for the month. As lower industrial production weighed on GDP, the retail sales news release further lowered hopes for the economy to register growth in the first quarter.

The Euro ended the week last trading at 1.0767.

Asia-Pacific

Japan's Tokyo Core CPI in Line with Expectations in March

Core inflation in Japan Softened slightly in March while remaining in line with markets expectations. The Tokyo core CPI figure eased slightly to 2.4%, from the previous February figure of 2.5%. Meanwhile, overall inflation was seen rising slightly to 2.6% from 2.5% in the previous month. The figure supports the narrative that the BoJ will not tighten monetary policy further to control inflation. Where earlier in the month the BoJ raised its interest rates for the first time since 2007 to around 0% to 0.1%.

The USD/JPY pair closed the week trading at 151.34.

Australia CPI unchanged in March

Inflation has held steady in the latest CPI figure published by the Australian bureau of Statistics, where the year-over-year figure showed no change from the previous figure at 3.4%. Meanwhile, core CPI which excludes food and energy prices fell from 4.1% in January to 3.9% in March. The fall in the figure was attributed to a fall in holiday and accommodation prices, dropping by 1.3%, offsetting price rises in other categories. Reserve Bank of

Australia's governor, Michele Bullock, said the central bank needed "greater confidence that inflation will return to the target band in a reasonable timeframe and will stay there" before it would cut its cash rate.

Retail Sales in Australia rises slightly in February

Retail sales in Australia rose 0.3% month-over-month in February, slightly below expectations of a 0.4% increase. The increase was supported by increased consumer spending for the month. Meanwhile, inflation remained above the RBA's target of 2% despite easing in 2023, with the latest CPI report showing the figure at 3.4% in February.

The AUD/USD pair was down for the week closing at 0.6522.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30740.

Rates - March 31st, 2024

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0788	1.0768	1.0793	1.0767	1.0650	1.0870	1.0835
GBP	1.2621	1.2617	1.2633	1.2616	1.2520	1.2730	1.2631
JPY	151.37	151.21	151.50	151.34	150.20	152.00	149.26
CHF	0.9011	0.9008	0.9029	0.9015	0.8960	0.9100	0.8953

'Careful what you wish for'

Who would not like to see prices start falling?

WASHINGTON, March 31, (AP): Many Americans are in a sour mood about the economy for one main reason: Prices feel too high.

Maybe they're not rising as fast as they had been, but average prices are still painfully above where they were three years ago. And they're mostly heading higher still.

Consider a 2-liter bottle of soda: In February 2021, before inflation began heating up, it cost an average of \$1.67 in supermarkets across America. Three years later? That bottle is going for \$2.25 - a 35% increase.

Or egg prices. They soared in 2022, then fell back down. Yet they're still 43% higher than they were three years ago.

Likewise, the average used-car price: It rocketed from roughly \$23,000 in February 2021 to \$31,000 in April 2022. By last month, the average was down to \$26,752. But that's still up 16% from February 2021.

Wouldn't it be great if prices actually fell - what economists call deflation? Who wouldn't want to fire up a time machine and return to the days before the economy rocketed out of the pandemic recession and sent prices soaring?

At least prices are now rising more slowly - what's called disinflation. On Friday, for example, the government said a key price gauge rose 0.3% in February, down from a 0.4% gain in January. And compared with a year earlier, prices were up 2.5%, way down from a peak of 7.1% in mid-2022.

But those incremental improvements are hardly enough to please the public, whose discontent over prices poses a risk to President Joe Biden's re-election bid.

"Most Americans are not just looking for disinflation," Lisa Cook, a member of the Federal Reserve's Board of Governors, said last year. "They're looking for deflation. They want these prices to be back where they were before the pandemic."

Many economists caution, though, that consumers should be careful what they wish for. Falling prices across the economy would actually be an unhealthy sign.

"There are," the Bank of England warns, "more consequences from falling prices than meets the eye."

What could be so bad about lower prices?

Deflation is a widespread and sustained drop in prices across the economy. Occasional month-to-month drops in consumer prices don't count. The United States hasn't seen genuine deflation since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Japan has experienced a much more recent bout of deflation. It is only now emerging from decades of falling prices that began with the collapse of its property and financial markets in the early 1990s.

"Although lower prices may seem like a good thing," Banco de España, the Spanish central bank, says on its website, "deflation can in fact be highly damaging to the economy."

How so? Mainly because falling prices tend to discourage consumers from spending. Why buy now, after all, if you can purchase what you want - cars, furniture, appliances, vacations - at a lower price later?

The reality is that the economy's health depends on steady consumer purchases. In the United States, household spending accounts for around 70% of the entire economy. If consumers were to pull back, en masse, to await lower prices, businesses would face intense pressure to cut prices even more to try to jump-start sales.

In the meantime, employers might have to lay off waves of employees or cut pay - or both. Unemployed people, of course, are even less likely to spend, so prices would likely keep falling. All of which risks triggering a "deflationary spiral" of price cuts, layoffs, more price cuts, more layoffs. And on and on. Another recession could follow.

It was to prevent that very kind of economic nastiness that explains why the Bank of Japan resorted to negative interest rates in 2016 and why the Fed kept U.S. rates near zero for seven straight years during and after the Great Recession of 2007-2009.

Deflation exerts another painful effect, too: It hurts borrowers by making their inflation-adjusted loans more expensive.

It's certainly true that Americans can make their paychecks go further when prices are falling. If food or gasoline prices were to tumble, households would surely find it less painful to afford groceries or their commutes to work - as long as they remained employed.

Investors pocket the rewards

Fees for funds keep dropping

NEW YORK, March 31, (AP): In a virtuous cycle that's only helped investors, fees keep dropping for mutual funds and exchange-traded funds.

Last year, investors in stock mutual funds paid an average of 42 cents in fees for every \$100 they had invested. That's down from 44 cents the year before and from \$1.04 in 1996. Fees were even lower for investors in stock ETFs, where they paid an average of just 15 cents last year for every \$100 invested, according to the Investment Company Institute.

Investors never see a bill when funds extract their fees to pay fund managers and provide other services. The cash comes directly from the fund's total assets. Funds will show what percentage is going to cover such fees each year in what's called an expense ratio.

Fees have been dropping sharply for all kinds of funds in recent decades, whether they invest in stocks, bonds or a mix of them. The drop is partly explained by investors flocking to lower-cost funds. In such cases, funds can spread their expenses over an even wider base of dollars, which means their expense ratios can drop. That in turn can attract even more investment in the future, continuing the cycle.

Lower expense ratios give a fund's manager a lower hurdle to surpass in order to beat other funds' after-fee results,

which is what matters for investors. Some types of funds typically carry higher expense ratios than others, depending on their specialty. Funds that invest in stocks often have higher expenses than those that invest in bonds, where low yields could cap possible returns. Small niche areas requiring more research by its fund managers can also carry higher price tags, such as high-growth stocks of smaller companies.

Fund fees have also been dropping as investors opt more for index funds. These funds don't hire teams of analysts and managers hoping to beat the market. They instead try to track the S&P 500 or another index, and they typically charge fees closer to zero.

One area where the trend reversed last year was among money-market funds. There, the average expense ratio rose by 0.09 percentage points to 0.22%. That was mostly because of a decline in funds offering waivers on their expenses to shareholders.

For years, short-term interest rates near zero forced money-market funds to waive their fees to prevent investors from losing money. Over the last two years, though, the Federal Reserve has hiked its main overnight interest rate to a range of 5.25% to 5.50%. That allowed money-market funds to collect more fees while still giving their investors positive returns.

ABK holds Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly Meetings for FY '23

BoD recommends 9% cash dividends, 5% bonus shares

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held its Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly Meetings for the financial year ended 31 December 2023, attended by 90.58% of the shareholders.

Mr. Talal Behbehani, Chairman of the Board of Directors (BOD), presided over the meeting with the participation of Mr. Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, and members of the BOD and Executive Management. This is in addition to representatives of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Kuwait Clearing Company, and external auditors.

The General Assembly approved all items on the agenda, including the directors' and financial auditors' reports. Furthermore, the BOD's recommendation to distribute 9% cash dividends (9 fils per share), and 5% bonus shares (5 shares for every 100 shares) to ABK's shareholders for the 2023 financial year was approved.

Significant Growth

Commenting on this occasion, Mr. Behbehani announced, "The ABK Group has achieved significant growth in most financial indicators in 2023. Profits increased by 40% to KD 45.2 million, earnings per share (EPS) rose by 46% to 19 fils, and Operating Profit grew by 7% to reach KD 97.1 million."

He added that the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) stood at 16.74%, and Non-Performing Loans (NPL) ratio at 1.33% with NPL coverage at 445%.

In addition, Total Assets stood at KD 6.3 billion, indicating ABK's healthy financial position and robust balance sheet. ABK also maintained steady growth in Loans and Advances, which amounted to KD 4.3 billion, a growth of 5%.

In his speech, Mr. Behbehani highlighted that, thanks to its strategic plans, the ABK Group has succeeded in overcoming economic challenges locally and regionally. This has contributed to successfully enhancing its competitive position in the banking sector within Kuwait and in the regional markets in which it operates in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Added Value

Mr. Behbehani added that the Group is keen on enhancing and protecting shareholder value through its prudent balance sheet management and providing healthy returns to the shareholders. Furthermore, the Group continues to explore opportunities to enhance operations with several initiatives taken during 2023.

ABK Group's current international operations in Egypt and the UAE experienced significant growth in 2023. The Group opened four modern branches in Egypt with cutting-edge digital technologies while the DIFC branch played a key role in facilitating several syndicated loans covering the GCC, Europe, and Asia.

The Chairman emphasized that in 2023, the Group also focused on meeting the standards set by Boursa Kuwait and the Capital Market Authority (CMA), leading to its upgrade to Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market, effective since 11 February 2024. This is expected to boost trading of ABK's shares among international institutions, global funds, and market index followers.

Mr. Behbehani affirmed that the ABK Group remains committed to enhancing its transformation strategy by innovating digital banking solutions, products, and services. He said, "The goal is to increase market share across all sectors and cater to the evolving needs of customers."

Confidence

Mr. Behbehani stated that the Group is prepared to contribute to financing



Photos during the ABK Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly Meetings.

development and infrastructure projects in alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035. He expressed confidence in the enhancement of economic activity in the future due to various reforms and economic decisions by authorities. This is in line with the International Monetary Fund's projection of a 3.6% GDP growth this year, which surpasses the expected growth both in the GCC and globally.

On the topic of global strength, Mr. Behbehani highlighted that the ABK Group maintains solid credit ratings with A from Fitch and A2 from Moody's. These signify the high level of trust the Group has garnered from both local and international institutions.

Finally, the Chairman expressed gratitude to the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Capital Market Authority, Boursa Kuwait, Kuwait Clearing Company, the Central Bank of Egypt, and the Central Bank of the UAE for their dedicated efforts and support to the banking sector. He said, "Their contributions have played a significant role in ensuring the sector's stability. I would like to emphasize the Group's ongoing commitment to collaborate with and adhere to all regulatory requirements set by these institutions."

He also shared his appreciation to the BOD, Executive Management, and all employees for their efforts that led to ABK's exceptional performance in 2023. He encouraged everyone to strive for further excellence to elevate ABK Group's competitive standing in the banking industry.

Keeping Abreast of Developments
On his part, Mr. Al Sumait said, "During 2023, we continued to implement our plans to keep pace with the developments in the banking industry, and meet the ever-changing needs of customers. As such, we launched several diverse banking products, solutions, and services that suit the lifestyle of each segment of customers."

He mentioned that the ABK Group has progressed with its digital transformation initiative by introducing the first digital branch at Al Khirran Mall featuring hologram technology, a pioneering concept in the local market. He clarified that future endeavors will include the launch of additional digital branches to offer seamless and ad-

vanced services for customers, ensuring round-the-clock access without the necessity of regular visits to physical bank branches for transactions.

Diverse Awards

Mr. Al Sumait disclosed that in 2023, the ABK Group received numerous awards for its outstanding performance across retail, corporate, governance, asset management, and human resources sectors. This is in addition to the recognition of "Fastest Growing Bank" in Egypt. He said, "These achievements underscore the team's dedication to enhancing performance and elevating productivity to peak levels in the banking sector. Furthermore, it demonstrates the success in earning the trust of international institutions specialized in evaluating and studying banking and finance indicators."

Let's Be Aware

Mr. Al Sumait took the opportunity to reaffirm ABK's ongoing support for the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's "Let's Be Aware" campaign. The banking awareness campaign aims to enhance financial literacy in Kuwaiti society by introducing banking services, products, various types of bank loans, and educating customers about bank fraud prevention and related topics.

Advancements in Products and Services

Mr. Al Sumait also noted a series of significant developments in 2023, such as joining AFAQ, the Gulf payment system; the introduction of Swift Go for transfers; digital payment solutions, such as Apple Pay and Samsung Pay; and Turkish Lira transfers through the Multi-currency Freedom prepaid card. These initiatives cater to the diverse needs of retail banking customers and companies, showcasing the Bank's commitment to staying abreast of advancements in the banking industry.

Mr. Al Sumait disclosed that 2023 also saw the introduction of a wide array of new offers, campaigns, and products designed to address customers' needs and enhance their satisfaction during banking transactions with ABK cards and its diverse solutions. Emphasizing the importance of ongoing research to consistently meet and

attract customers.

Attracting New Talent

In addition to attracting new customers, the ABK Group actively engaged in multiple career fairs at universities and prominent institutions in the local market throughout 2023, aiming to recruit skilled individuals to join various divisions with a focus on achieving an 80% national employment rate.

Furthermore, Mr. Al Sumait elaborated on ABK Group's commitment to organizing training programs for employees in collaboration with specialized partners to enhance their performance and drive innovation.

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)

Mr. Al Sumait also unveiled ABK's focus on developing an ESG strategy through a 5-year plan comprising six core pillars: climate, responsible banking, community investment, governance, employee empowerment, and financial inclusion. He highlighted the Group's dedication to this through the publication of its third annual sustainability report for 2022.

Mr. Al Sumait also discussed ABK's participation in the COP28 UAE - United Nations Climate Change Conference in the United Arab Emirates. He said, "This underscores the Group's commitment to combating climate change and acknowledging it as a dynamic and intricate challenge, positioning it as a top priority."

Corporate Social Responsibility

ABK is dedicated to enhancing its social responsibility initiatives to solidify its position as a responsible financial and banking institution in Kuwait.

In 2023, the Bank sponsored various events, such as High Higness the Amir Cup final football match, High Higness the Crown Prince Cup final football match, the Porsche Kuwait Club Festival, the National Union of Kuwait Students (NUKS) in the United Kingdom, and the Amiri Hospital Health Day. Additionally, ABK provided support to Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice, distributed iftar meals and food aid during Ramadan, and actively participated in other events that garnered significant community engagement.



NEO Children's Account is present at the ceremony.



Salma Al-Hajjaj and Muhammad Al-Qattan during the ceremony.



Part of the heritage activities showcased at the event.

Significant turnout of bank employees, including executive management

Gulf Bank fosters unity, cultural connection at annual Ramadan Ghabga

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Celebrating the spirit of connection and unity during the holy month of Ramadan, Gulf Bank held its annual Ramadan Ghabga at Grand Hyatt Hotel, 360 Mall – in the presence of a large number of the bank's employees from various departments and branches, including the Bank's executive management.

The gathering showcased various activities and events aimed at enriching the Ramadan spirit, and cultivating stronger bonds among the employees, while also allowing them to engage with Kuwait's diverse cultural heritage.

Gulf Bank's annual Ramadan Ghabga provides a perfect occasion for

employees from different divisions and branches to connect, stepping away from their daily work routines, and mingle with executive management in a cheerful, familial setting.

Gulf Bank recognizes that its employees are fundamental to its success and the key to its excellence. Therefore, the bank is committed to empowering them to achieve professional excellence and fostering a collaborative work environment.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employ-

ee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.



A group photo with Salma Al-Hajjaj, Director of Human Resources, in the middle.



A group photo of some of the bank's leaders.



Part of the audience.

Delivering food supplies and Iftar meals in partnership with Kuwait Food Bank

Zain continues to serve underprivileged communities in last 10 days of Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Zain continues to serve underprivileged communities in the last 10 days of the Holy Month of Ramadan by delivering food supplies (Machla boxes) and Iftar meals to fasting individuals. The ongoing initiatives came in strategic partnership with the Kuwait Food Bank under Zain's annual social campaign, Zain Alshuhoor.

Zain recently held a special visit to the Fish Market in Sharq to share the blessings of the Holy Month with fasting individuals by delivering Iftar

meals. The visit was joined by Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, Kuwait Food Bank Vice-Chairman Meshal Al Ansari, Zain and Food Bank officials, and members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team.

Zain's team also paid a visit to the Kuwait Food Bank's Distribution Center in Sulaibiya to deliver Machla boxes (food supplies) to underprivileged families registered with the bank. The step was an extension to the

initiative Zain launched before the arrival of the Holy Month of secure essential food needs for underprivileged communities.

The Iftar meals initiative, which comes back in its 17th year, is a main pillar of Zain's annual social program during the Holy Month. The company serves Iftar meals every day in collaboration with its strategic partner, the Kuwait Food Bank, through trucks that visit densely populated areas across Kuwait to secure Iftar meals for underprivileged families and individuals.

Zain also serves daily meals at the Grand Mosque, another strategic partner during Ramadan, to reach a total of 42,000 meals throughout the entire month. The initiative is directly supervised and organized by Zain's team and joined by members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team that consists of employees from across the company's divisions and departments.

This year, six of Zain's strategic community partners, including the Kuwait Food Bank, join its annual Ramadan social campaign, Zain Alshuhoor. The campaign features a wide range of humanitarian, charitable, social, religious, health, and sports programs that continue throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Zain Alshuhoor is one of Kuwait's biggest and most successful community programs during the Holy Month. Every year, the company introduces a bigger, renewed version of the campaign that expands upon the previous year's initiatives and programs. The campaign strives to share the blessings of this much-cherished month with the entire Kuwaiti people.

IMA Children Circle hosts successful Kids Iftar Party

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: In a heartwarming display of community spirit and youthful engagement, IMA Children Circle's organized Kids Iftar Party held at the Indian School of Excellence on Friday, 22nd March 2024 proved to be a resounding success. Event witnessed enthusiastic participation from young attendees, marking a memorable evening of spiritual enrichment and fellowship.

Proceedings commenced with a soulful Tilawat-e-Quran by Umaima Hashmi, setting a reverent tone for the gathering. Brother Rafi introduced the Children's Circle, fostering interaction and knowledge-sharing among the youth. Brother Jawwad eloquently emphasized the significance of Ramadan, while Brother Osaib's quiz session added an enjoyable and educational dimension. Brother Waasif Hashmi enlightened us on the virtues of seeking forgiveness through Astaghfar, deepening our spiritual understanding.

The event culminated in a joyous Iftar and communal prayers, followed by a delightful dinner, further strengthening bonds of community and camaraderie.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed, with special thanks to Janab Samoil Falahi for his inspiring closing remarks. Immense appreciation is also extended to Janab Amer, Janab Shoeb Khan, Janab Ahmed Ali and the ladies' wing for their invaluable support.

As we conclude, we pray for the acceptance of our efforts by Allah Almighty and seek His abundant blessings upon us all. Ameen.

IMA Kuwait extends its gratitude to the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Kuwait, for its patronage and constant support in organizing such impactful events and programs.

IMA Kuwait, an Indian socio-religious organization, operates under the patronage of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Kuwait. It focuses on providing a platform for the spiritual and social enhancement of expatriates living in Kuwait through various programs and social gatherings. It looks forward to organizing more beneficial programs in the future, catering to the needs of the expatriate community, especially the Indian diaspora.



Al Khashti and Al Ansari with Zain and Food Bank teams.



Zain's team delivered food supplies to underprivileged families.



Zain volunteers delivering Iftar meals.



Photo from the event.

Obituary

'Gen V' star Chance Perdomo dies in motorcycle crash at 27

LOS ANGELES, March 31. (AP) Actor Chance Perdomo, who rose to fame as a star of "Chilling Adventures of Sabrina" and "Gen V," has died at age 27 following a motorcycle crash.

"On behalf of the family and his representatives, it is with heavy hearts that we share the news of Chance Perdomo's untimely passing as a result of a motorcycle accident," a publicist said in a statement issued Saturday evening.

The statement said no one else was involved in the crash. No details about the crash, including when and where it took place, were immediately released.

Perdomo most recently played Andre Anderson on the first season of "Gen V," the college-centric spin-off of Amazon Prime's hit series "The Boys," set in a universe where superheroes are celebrities - and behave as badly as the most notorious. Perdomo's character was a student at Godolkin University, founded by the sinisterly omnipresent Vought International corporation, where "supes" train; his power involved the manipulation of metal.

Amazon MGM Studios and Sony Pictures Television, the makers of "Gen V," said the show's family was "devastated by the sudden passing."

"We can't quite wrap our heads around this. For those of us who knew him and worked with him, Chance was always charming and smiling, an enthusiastic force of nature, an incredibly talented

performer, and more than anything else, just a very kind, lovely person," the producers of "Gen V" said in a statement. "Even writing about him in the past tense doesn't make sense."



Perdomo

It wasn't immediately clear from the statements how Perdomo's death would affect production on the show, which also featured Jaz Sinclair, Patrick Schwarzenegger and Shelley Conn among its sprawling ensemble cast.

One of Perdomo's most famous roles was as Ambrose Spellman, a lead character on "Chilling Adventures of Sabrina." The four-season show was a far cry from the Melissa Joan Hart-fronted "Sabrina the Teenage Witch."

Voice

Created by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, the Netflix show set its Archie Comics characters a town over from the titular location of Aguirre-Sacasa's "Riverdale," and employed a more spooky and salacious tone than its forerunner - although some of the original "Sabrina" actors came calling.

Perdomo's character was a cousin to Sabrina Spellman and a powerful, pansexual warlock who specialized in necromancy and

is initially under house arrest. He often served as a sort of voice of reason on the show, which wrapped in 2020. He starred alongside Kiernan Shipka, Miranda Otto, Tati Gabrielle, Ross Lynch and, again, Sinclair.

Perdomo, who was Black and Latino, was born in Los Angeles and raised in England.

"I was always getting into fights until I put my energy into acting. Then my grades picked up, and I became president of the student union. Before that, I was similar to Ambrose being so pent up. He doesn't know what to do with his energy because he's trapped," Perdomo told them.us in 2018.

"At the same time, he's very open and loving. I identify with that now more than ever, because being away from family for so long really puts things into perspective. No matter the occasion, if I get that FaceTime or phone call from mom or my brothers, I'm picking it up right away. It's family first for Ambrose, and I'm the same way," he continued.

Perdomo also acted in several of the "After" movies and is credited in the upcoming "Bad Man" alongside Seann William Scott and Rob Riggle.

"His passion for the arts and insatiable appetite for life was felt by all who knew him, and his warmth will carry on in those who he loved dearest," the statement from Perdomo's publicist said.

Variety



This image released by Netflix shows, from left, Sheyi Cole, Micheal Ward, Bill Nighy, Kit Young and Tom Vaughan-Lawlor in a scene from 'The Beautiful Game.' (AP)

Film

Bill Nighy, Michael Ward shine

'Beautiful Game' captures spirit of soccer

By Lindsey Bahr

"The Beautiful Game," a new movie starring Bill Nighy and Michael Ward, is about a real international soccer tournament called the Homeless World Cup.

Don't go in expecting documentary realism or grit, however. This is a movie-movie (debuting on Netflix on Friday, tidily constructed to leave audiences feeling inspired and uplifted. Mind you, this isn't a bad thing - verité authenticity has its place but so do well constructed, glossy fantasies that still evoke authentic emotion and get at some essential truths. "The Beautiful Game," directed by Thea Sharrock, is firmly the latter. Just managing expectations.

The first Homeless World Cup was held in 2003, and in the past two decades, nearly 70 countries and 1.2 million people have participated. And yet, I suspect, its existence might come as a surprise to many (even soccer fans ...excuse me, football). The foundation's goals are noble, raising awareness for homelessness in major world cities and giving players a sense of pride and community.

Colin Farrell, who narrated the 2008 documentary about the games ("Kicking It," currently streaming on Freevee) and has since become an ambassador for the foundation, is one of the main producers on the film. Screenwriter Frank Cottrell-Boyce also worked with the foundation and past participants to inspire the characters he'd end up writing. It may be a movie, but it has legitimacy in its bones.

If you have a "Ted Lasso" shaped hole in your heart (or, less dramatically, viewing schedule), or are still feeling burned from Taika Waititi's misfire "Next Goal Wins," this might just do the trick. Ward is Vinny, a down-on-his-luck dad to a young girl who also happens to be an immensely talented player. But he's not remotely ready to join any team, even one going to a real tournament in Rome, that has the word "homeless" in it.

Nighy plays Mal, a kind and soft-spoken (except when a ref makes a bad call) football legend who

coaches the homeless England team: Nathan (Callum Scott Howells), Aldar (Robin Nazari), Kevin (Tom Vaughan-Lawlor), Cal (Kit Young) and Jason (Sheyi Cole). They all have stories of how they got where they were, but all are kind and eager and excited to play. Vinny is the stick in the mud, making things tense and awkward at every turn. Essentially, he thinks he's better than his teammates on the field and off, which of course says more about him than the other guys.

While Vinny and the England team are the primary focus, there are b-plots given to Japan, a first-time team full of slightly older players and an ambitious young coach (Aoi Okuyama), America, a woman's team with a star player (Cristina Rodlo), and to South Africa, the best of the bunch under the leadership of a shrewd nun Protasia (Susan Wokoma). For an ensemble as big as this, the story does an admirable job of giving most something meaningful to do. It's not a bad travelogue for Rome either, and it's also always nice to have a dash of Valeria Golino, who is leading the tournament.

Is it a little glossy and sanitized with a jaunty score? Sure. But it also thoughtfully explores themes of redemption, invisibility, pride and sportsmanship without being preachy or condescending. It's PG-13 rating is a little puzzling - this does seem on the tamer end of the scale and appropriate for most ages. And, not for nothing, Sharrock and her team do a good job of showing just how exciting soccer can be (which is not a feat many movies have accomplished).

"The Beautiful Game," a Netflix release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for "some language, a suggestive reference, brief partial nudity and drug references." Running time: 125 minutes. Three stars out of four.

Also:

LONDON: The Oscar-winning director of "Oppenheimer," **Christopher Nolan**, and his wife and producer **Emma Thomas**, will receive a knighthood and damehood for their services to film, according to a

statement recently from the UK government.

Their recognition comes after their biopic about **J. Robert Oppenheimer**, the "father of the atomic bomb," swept the awards season, notably at the Academy Awards earlier this month, where the movie won seven Oscars, including best film and best director.

Nolan, 53, had previously been nominated for "Memento," "Inception" and "Dunkirk."

News of their honors was a bit of a surprise, because they are usually handed out twice in the year, once to mark the new year and then on the birthday of **King Charles III**, who confers the honors. They are sometimes awarded after special achievements, often related to sports and the arts.

The honors are formally awarded at a ceremony at **Buckingham Palace**, often by the UK monarch in person. However, the king is currently not undertaking any royal duties, because he is undergoing treatment for cancer.

Born in **London** to a British father and **American** mother, Nolan met his future wife, Thomas, 53, while they both attended University College London. They have four children and run a production company, Syncopy, which has been behind many of their blockbusters.

When Nolan was presented with the British Film Institute Fellowship earlier this year for being "one of the world's most innovative and influential film directors," he credited his wife.

He said he never felt alone making films as Thomas "always saw things the same way I did in terms of the importance of the medium."

Addressing the audience at this year's Academy Awards, Nolan noted cinema is just over a century old.

"Imagine being there 100 years into painting or theater," said Nolan, who shared the best-picture award with his wife and producer. "We don't know where this incredible journey is going from here. But to know that you think that I'm a meaningful part of it means the world to me." (AP)

NEW YORK: Doris Kearns Goodwin, Laurie Anderson and the president of the Harlem School of the Arts, **James C. Horton**, are being honored by the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

The academy announced Friday that Goodwin, the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, is receiving a Gold Medal for biography. Anderson, the celebrated avant-garde performer, will be given a Gold Medal for music. Horton, who has run the renowned Harlem school since 2022 and has worked in education for decades, is being cited for his "significant contribution to the arts."

All three will be presented their awards in May, when the academy formally inducts its new members, among them the Oscar-winning composer **John Williams** and the novelist **Alice McDermott**.

The arts academy is an honor society founded in 1898 that has 300 core members and each year awards numerous prizes and grants. (AP)

CAMBRIDGE, Mass.: Harvard University said it has removed human skin from the binding of a 19th century book about the afterlife that has been in its collections since the 1930s. The decision came after a review found ethical concerns with the book's origin and history.

The book, "Des Destinées de L'âme," meaning "Destinies of the Soul," was written by **Arsène Houssaye**, a French novelist and poet, in the early 1880s. The printed text was given to a physician, **Ludovic Bouldand**, who "bound the book with skin he took without consent from the body of a deceased female patient in a hospital where he worked," Harvard said in a recent statement. The book has been at the university's Houghton Library.

Bouldand included a handwritten note inside the book. It said "a book about the human soul deserved to have a human covering," associate university librarian **Thomas Hyry** said in a published question-and-answer segment online Wednesday. The note also detailed the process behind preparing the skin for binding.

Scientific analysis done in 2014 confirmed the binding was made of human skin, the university said.

In its statement, Harvard said the library noted several ways in which its stewardship practices failed to meet its ethical standards. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Owning a soccer club is hitting **Ryan Reynolds** in the wallet.

Wrexham, the Welsh team bought by Reynolds and fellow



Anderson



Goodwin

Hollywood actor **Rob McElhenney** in 2021, released its accounts for the latest financial year on Thursday and reported that the amount owed to celebrities has risen to nearly 9 million pounds (\$11.4 million).

That was up from 3.7 million pounds (\$4.67 million) from the previous year, ending June 2022.

While the club said turnover rose from nearly 6 million pounds (\$7.5 million) to 10.5 million pounds (\$13.3 million) and that future prospects are positive, its losses increased to 5.1 million pounds (\$6.4 million) from 2.9 million pounds (\$3.66 million).

Reynolds and McElhenney

purchased **Wrexham**, one of the world's oldest soccer teams, for \$2.5 million while the club was in the fifth tier of the English game.

It has since been promoted to the English Football League and is bidding for back-to-back promotions, which would take the team to third-tier League One. (AP)

People & Places

Film

Unique friendship

Colman, Buckley share their 'Wicked' secrets

NEW YORK, March 31, (AP): **Olivia Colman** and **Jessie Buckley** play women brought together by letters in the new film "Wicked Little Letters" but their preferred means of communication is WhatsApp. With their husbands, they have a group chat with an unprintable name, inspired by the some of the ... language of their film. What do they write to each other?

"There's lots of 'I ... love you. I'm going to snog your face when I see you,'" says Colman.

"With a long 'uuuuuu,'" adds Buckley.

"We're wordsmiths," says Colman.

Colman and Buckley have been good friends since they first met in a night spent, fittingly, with letters. "Is that how we met?" Colman says, jogging her memory. "Brilliant." With an American accent Buckley chimes,

"What a good angle." Each were attending a "Letters Live" performance in Britain where actors dramatically read historical and literary correspondence. Buckley read a Maud Gonne love letter to WB Yeats. The night wore on with karaoke until 6 a.m. Songs included Adele's "Someone Like You" and Amy Winehouse's "Back to Black."

"Which maybe kind of summed up the night," Buckley says. "'Someone Like You,' that's a love song, isn't it? Oh, no, it's a break-up song. We were just falling in love. 'Back to Black' is about addiction."

Buckley pauses for effect, and then adds, "I was addicted to you," Colman cheers.

In **Thea Sharrock's** "Wicked Little Letters," which Sony Pictures Classics will release in theaters Friday, Colman and Buckley play very different neighbors in 1919 England. Edith (Colman) is a conservative, church-going woman with a domineering father (Timothy Spall) who lives next to Rose (Buckley) a free-wheeling single mother who unabashedly spews salty language. When people around the village start receiving filthy anonymous letters hurling insults at them, suspicion turns toward Rose.

Scandal

It's based on the real story of the Littlehampton Letters, which at the time became a national scandal. "Wicked Little Letters" is a rare thing: a period movie.

"We kind of have this idea of Britain and the women who lived in the 1930s were just making wholesome bread and going to church," says Buckley. "But the truth of it is they were filthy (expletive). They're just like all of us."

The film, which Colman produced with her husband, **Ed Sinclair**, takes place while suffragettes are marching. And while Edith and Rose become sworn enemies, they're bonded in their mutual experience of male oppression.

"It's certainly acknowledging the journey that women have had," Colman says. "It was at that point better than it had been in previous points, and shows how far have we come since. We still haven't come quite far enough."

Part of the delight of "Wicked Little Letters" is that it puts a spirited pair of friends opposite one another for the first time, with Buckley playing a free and frank woman not so unlike herself and Colman playing something like her timid opposite. Colman called up Buckley to offer her the role.

"I said, 'There's this script and it would be you and me as neighbors swearing at each other and having fun,'" recalls Colman. "And I think you went, 'OK!'"

In between interviews at a Soho hotel, Colman and Buckley's conversation focused mainly on how long they might have to hang out that evening. Or more specifically, how many drinks they could manage to squeeze in. "New York is the land of dirty martinis," Buckley declares.

Colman, though, was just flying in and out, and Buckley had an early call time the next day. It was a similar situation on **Maggie Gyllenhaal's** "The Lost Daughter," for which Colman also suggested casting Buckley. ("You owe me!" chimes Colman in a cockney accent.) But on that film, they were playing the same character in different time periods. Colman and Buckley didn't have any scenes together, but overlapped on set for a week while Colman was quarantining.

Influence

When it's pointed out that Colman seems like she could be a bad influence under such circumstances, Buckley immediately brightens.

"There's a joke amongst our friends where Olivia's like, 'No you can't go home.' At your birthday there was a whole song about not letting anybody leave the party."

"I have done awful things," acknowledges Colman, lowering her head. "I have locked my front door and hidden the key. (Changing to a drunk voice) 'I don't know where it's gone.' I have images of friends running. They see an open door and they go running."

It perhaps goes without saying that Colman and Buckley bear little of the repression that lurks around the edges of "Wicked Little Letters." They're separated by some years - Colman is 50, Buckley 34 - but sympatico in infusing parts dramatic and comic with naturalness and spunk.

"The biggest gift that this job gives you is that you get to learn something that you need to unlearn in yourself. Growing up into a woman from a girl is hard. There's so much in our world that we think we need to be because it's around us," Buckley says. "What I've come to learn is you just have to keep educating and feeding and nurturing yourself. And there's something so much more interesting for you to say than adopting what's deemed acceptable in society."

Working with people like Colman, Buckley says, has helped wake her up to those possibilities - possibilities she never imagined when she was 15 years old. "And I know that will never stop in my life," she adds. "There's too much to unpack!"

Colman takes up Buckley's thread. "I do love the fact that I didn't get into any drama school apart from Bristol which I got into because somebody else dropped out," Colman says. "I love all the auditions I didn't get so I can go, 'Ha! In yo' face.' I think it gives you a little bit of a fire in the belly."

Soon thereafter, it's time for Buckley and Colman to move along. As the sun gets lower on the downtown skyline out the window, the pair return to pondering their plans for the evening.

"We'll do a little one," says Colman, settling it. "We're getting much more grown up, aren't we?" Buckley vigorously shakes her head. "No?" responds Colman. "Then I can force you to stay out tonight."



Colman



Models wear creations from Suncun by Yan Zhang during the China Fashion Week in Beijing, Sunday, March 31. (AP)

Music

A rising force in African music goes global

Tyla manifests stardom in debut album

NEW YORK, March 31, (AP): **Tyla** grew up in Johannesburg, South Africa, practicing acceptance speeches in the mirror, envisioning herself on the grandest award stages. But as she found out, a dream is one thing - reality is another.

"I was not prepared at all," laughed Tyla, who won the inaugural African Music Performance Grammy last month, beating out established superstar nominees. "On the way to the Grammys, I was like, 'Hey, I did not write nothing. Let me think of things in case I win.' But I don't know, I was just moving. I was going with the flow that day. And I feel like God was just giving me peace and letting me know that, 'Girl, you got it! Like, relax.' So, that was kind of the energy of the day."

Throughout the past year, tons of good energy have been coming toward Tyla, who released her self-titled debut album last week. It's a culmination of lifelong aspirations for the 22-year-old whose ambitions were always bigger than her continent, as massive as it is.

Powered by the Cape Town-recorded "Water," a lighting-in-a bottle smash that took the world by storm and earned her the Grammy before her album was released, she's quickly become one of the leading faces popularizing music originating from Africa. As Afrobeats has gained massive attention the past few years, Tyla is introducing much of the world to amapiano, which translates to "the pianos" in the Zulu language, a fusion of Kwaito house music and jazz, often driven by log drums.

"I'm finally getting to do what I love and I have more opportunities," the "ART" artist said of her whirlwind year. "I've always wanted to be in this position. I've always wanted to just push the culture, push what we've been literally making for years and years and years in Africa... now it's time to expand and to share it with the rest of the world."

Spring may have just started in

America, but Tyla's 14-track album, filled with sultry beats and vibey rhythms is primed for the summer. Featuring production from **Sammy Soso**, **Mocha**, **Ari PenSmith** and **Believe**, the team's main objective was to blend amapiano with R&B and pop, presenting a new sound.

"Creating the music wasn't really work... She understands what she wants," said Soso, who produced 10 of the tracks and has worked with Afrobeat all-stars **Wiz Kid**, **Oxlade** and **KSI**. "As a young woman growing up and being the 'it' girl and being her, she was just going through so many different things and realizing her worth and how she wanted to be treated... as we kept on making different records, it was like, 'Let's touch on this feeling. Let's touch on that feeling'... creating songs out of real-life situations."

Collaboration

While new artists' debuts are often cushioned between the safety of a heavy dose of established features, Tyla always holds her own, despite appearances from **Becky G** on "On My Body" and **Gunna** and **Skullibeng** on the party-starter "Jump," a bop she describes as "flexing on people" and not "really deep." She turns up the amapiano heat with songs like "Safer" and "Truth or Dare," as well as "No. 1," a stunning collaboration with acclaimed Nigerian singer-songwriter **Tems** who Tyla credits with opening the door for this latest generation of African singers to crossover to America. But it's songs like "Breathe Me" which prove the depth of Tyla's talent.

"The song that mostly feels like Tyla, I would say probably 'Breathe Me' because it obviously incorporates all the African sounds," she said. "I'm really singing on that song, like I'm literally giving people vocals and emotion and all of that."

On "Priorities" which skews more pop-heavy and shares a similar theme to "No. 1," Tyla laments, "My first

mistake/Thinkin' that I could be everything/Look how spreadin' myself thn/Became my priority again."

"Priorities" is something that I needed to tell myself... I feel like a lot of people could relate to that song, just always putting people above yourself and feeling like you need to please and (overcompensate)," said the singer who counts **Michael Jackson**, **Rihanna** and **Britney Spears** as influences. "The fear of disappointing people... I struggle with a lot. I'm a bit better now."

Tyla hopes fans gravitate to other songs like they did to "Water" - the album includes a remixed version with **Travis Scott** - but admits she felt a bit of pressure. The song reached No. 7 on the **Billboard Hot 100** and trended on **TikTok** with her viral #WaterChallenge dance. While she doesn't know the specifics about a potential ban on the app in the U.S., she says it's slightly concerning.

"TikTok really does help artists and helps us reach places that we can't really reach. Like, me being in South Africa, I was using TikTok and social media - I was using it heavy just to be seen," said Tyla, who was discovered singing covers on the social media app and released her first single, "Getting Late," in 2019. "TikTok has built a lot of careers, and it would be scary, I'm sure, for a lot of people to lose it."

Presently, Tyla is living in the moment, saying she's happy with the response to the album and hopes to begin an international tour that was postponed due to an injury. She wants to act and would like to play a Disney princess.

In the meantime, she's laying the groundwork for music royalty, **Soso** says.

"There's something about her that she has that everyone takes to... she came in and kind of took the world by storm with her energy, her kindness," he said, also pointing to "her love for music and how she's just authentic with her sound from back home."

A bemused **Gamble** replaced the wiener with a cucumber, and the poster was approved.

Gamble, who is diabetic and co-hosts the "Off Menu" food podcast, said he could see the point of the ad rules, which are intended to help curb obesity in children.

"But the new posters promote something way more harmful - the idea that cucum-

bers pair well with ketchup and mustard," he said.

Gamble isn't complaining about the extra publicity the case has generated.

"The posters are making way beyond their value now," he told the BBC on Thursday.

Since 2019, Transport for London has banned ads for foods that are high in fat,

sugar and salt from the city's subway trains and stations, buses and bus shelters. It also bars advertisements that promote unhealthy or unrealistic body shapes. (AP)

NEW YORK: Oscar winner **Michelle Yeoh**, **Batswana** President **Mogweetsi Masisi**, and **Verizon** CEO **Hans Vestberg** are among the diverse group of political, business and philanthropic leaders **Global Citizen** will convene in New York on May 1 and 2, the nonprofit announced on Thursday. The **Global Citizen NOW** summit will seek support for workable solutions to address issues of food insecurity, climate change and public health associated with extreme poverty, said **Global Citizen** CEO **Hugh Evans**.

"We are focused on advancing the ideas that will drive urgent action to end extreme poverty," Evans told **The Associated Press**, adding that the world is at a crossroads on numerous issues.

Actors **Hugh Jackman**, **Danai Gurira** and **Dakota Johnson** and representatives from **Cisco**, **Citi**, **Delta** and **PayPal** will join **Rockefeller** Foundation President **Rajiv Shah**, **Bezos** Earth Fund CEO **Andrew Steer**, and **Volker Türk**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for the event.

"I have made it my mission to work to amplify underrepresented voices," Gurira, star of "The Walking Dead" and "Black Panther" franchises, said in a statement, adding that she is eager to "address the severe inequities facing the African continent." (AP)



Tyla poses for a portrait in New York on March 22, to promote her self-titled album. (AP)



Yeoh



Cullinan

Variety

LONDON: The British Museum on Thursday appointed National Portrait Gallery chief **Nicholas Cullinan** as its new director, as the 265-year-old institution grapples with the apparent theft of hundreds of artifacts and growing international scrutiny of its collection.

Previous director **Hartwig Fischer** resigned in August after the museum disclosed that more than 1,800 items were missing in an apparent case of insider theft. Many of the items had been offered for sale online.

Mark Jones, former head of the **Victoria and Albert Museum**, has served as interim director since then. Cullinan will replace him in the summer.

Cullinan has been director of the National Portrait Gallery since 2015, overseeing a major refurbishment of the building beside London's **Trafalgar Square**. He has previously worked at **Tate Modern** in London and the **Metropolitan Museum of Art** in **New York**.

His appointment was approved by the British Museum's trustees and Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak**.

Cullinan said it was an honor to become director of "one of the greatest museums in the world."

He said he looked forward to leading the institution through "the most significant transformations, both architectural and intellectual, happening in any museum globally, to continue making the British Museum the most engaged and collaborative it can be."

The museum fired a long-standing curator, **Paul Higgs**, over the missing items, and is suing him at the High Court. Lawyers for the museum say Higgs "abused his position of trust" to steal ancient gems, gold jewelry and other pieces from store-rooms over the course of a decade.

Higgs, who worked in the museum's **Greece** and **Rome** department for more than two decades, denies the allegations and intends to dispute the museum's legal claim.

Police are also investigating, but no one has been charged. (AP)

LONDON: On the London Underground, hot dogs are no joking matter.

Comedian **Ed Gamble** has been ordered to change a subway station poster campaign for his new standup show because the image of a hot dog violated the transit network's ban on junk food advertising.

The poster for the show, "Hot Diggity Dog," showed a mustard- and ketchup-smeared Gamble beside a half-eaten hot dog on a plate.



Olivia Colman, (left), and Jessie Buckley pose for a portrait to promote 'Wicked Little Letters' on Wednesday, March 20, in New York. (AP)

The Conversation

Experts exploring mutations that delay cognitive decline

Genetic clues point to potential Alzheimer's treatments

By Steven DeKosky
University of Florida

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

Diseases that run in families usually have genetic causes. Some are genetic mutations that directly cause the disease if inherited. Others are risk genes that affect the body in a way that increases the chance someone will develop the disease. In Alzheimer's disease, genetic mutations in any of three specific genes can cause the disease, and other risk genes either increase or decrease the risk of developing Alzheimer's.

Some genetic mutations or variants interact with other genetic alterations that lead to Alzheimer's disease. In some cases, gene alterations can interact with Alzheimer's-causing genetic variants in a way that proves beneficial; they actually suppress the pathological brain changes the other mutations would normally lead to. These protective gene variants can drastically slow or prevent cognitive decline. In two recent case reports on familial Alzheimer's disease, mutations delayed Alzheimer's symptoms for decades.

I am a neurologist and neuroscientist who has spent my career studying Alzheimer's disease and dementia both in the laboratory and in the clinic. Determining how genes affect brain chemistry is vital to understanding how Alzheimer's disease progresses and devising interventions to prevent or delay cognitive decline.

In the early 1990s, scientists proposed the amyloid hypothesis to explain how Alzheimer's disease develops. The first neuropathological changes detected in the brain of Alzheimer's disease patients were the formation of amyloid plaques - clumps of protein pieces called beta-amyloid. Other changes in the Alzheimer's brain, such as the accumulation of another type of abnormal protein called neurofibrillary tangles, were thought to develop later in the course of the disease.

Symptoms

Beta-amyloid begins to accumulate in the brain up to 15 years before symptoms emerge. Symptoms correlate with the number of neurofibrillary tangles in the brain - the more tangles, the worse the cognition. Researchers have tried to determine whether preventing or removing amyloid plaques from the brain would be an effective treatment.

Imagine the excitement of the scientific community in the 1990s when researchers identified three different genes causing familial Alzheimer's disease - and all three were involved with beta-amyloid.

The first was the amyloid precursor protein gene. This gene directs cells to produce the amyloid precursor protein, which breaks down into smaller fragments, including the beta-amyloid that forms amyloid plaques in the brain.

The second gene was termed presenilin 1, or PSEN-1, a protein needed to cut the precursor protein into beta-amyloid.

The third gene, presenilin 2, or PSEN-2, is closely related to PSEN-1 but found in a smaller number of families with familial Alzheimer's disease.

These findings added strength to the amyloid hypothesis explanation of the disease. However, uncertainty and opposition to the amyloid hypothesis have developed over the past several decades. This was in part tied to a recognition that several other processes - neurofibrillary tangles, inflammation and immune system activation - are also involved in the neurodegeneration seen in Alzheimer's.

The hypothesis also got significant pushback after many clinical trials attempting to block the effects of amyloid or remove it from the brain were unsuccessful. In some cases, treatments had significant side effects. Some researchers have come up with strong defenses of the hypothesis. But until a clinical trial based on the amyloid hypothesis could show definitive re-

sults, uncertainty would remain.

The vast majority - more than 90% - of Alzheimer's cases occur in late life, with disease prevalence increasing progressively from age 65 and up. Such cases are mostly sporadic, with no clear family history of Alzheimer's.

However, a relatively small number of families have one of the three known genetic mutations that cause the disease to be passed down. In familial Alzheimer's, 50% of each generation will inherit the mutated gene and develop the disease much earlier, usually from their 30s to early 50s.

In 2019 and 2023, researchers identified changes in at least two other genes that markedly delayed the onset of disease symptoms in people with familial Alzheimer's disease mutations. These mutated genes were found in a very large family in Colombia whose members tended to develop Alzheimer's symptoms by their 40s.

A woman in the family carrying a mutated PSEN-1 gene did not have any cognitive symptoms until she was in her 70s. A genetic analysis showed that she had an additional mutation in a variant of the gene that codes for a protein called apolipoprotein E, or ApoE. Researchers believe the mutation, called the Christchurch variant - named after the city in New Zealand where the mutation was first discovered - is responsible for interfering with and slowing down her disease.

Memory

Importantly, her brain had a great deal of amyloid plaque but very few neurofibrillary tangles. This suggests that the link between the two was broken and that the suppressed number of neurofibrillary tangles also slowed down cognitive loss.

In May 2023, researchers reported that two siblings in the same large family also did not develop memory problems until their 60s or late 70s and were found to carry a mutation in a gene that codes for a protein called reelin. Studies in mice suggest that reelin has protective effects against amyloid plaque deposition in the brain. In these patients' brains, as with the patient who had the Christchurch variant, there were extensive amyloid plaques but very few neurofibrillary tangles. This observation confirmed that the tangles are responsible for the cognitive loss and that there are several ways to "disconnect" amyloid and neurofibrillary tangle accumulation.

Finding medicines that might mimic the protective effects of the Christchurch variant or the reelin mutation could help delay Alzheimer's disease symptoms for all patients. Since the vast majority of nonfamilial Alzheimer's manifests after age 70 or 75, a 10-year delay in the emergence of first symptoms of Alzheimer's could have a massive effect in decreasing the prevalence of the disease.

These findings demonstrate that Alzheimer's can be slowed and will hopefully lead to additional new therapies that can someday not only treat the disease but prevent it as well.

Despite over 20 years of doubts and therapy failures, the past several years have seen positive results from three different treatments - aducanumab, lecanemab and donanemab - that remove amyloid plaques and slow loss of cognitive function to some extent. Although there is still discussion of how much slowing of decline is clinically significant, these successes provide support for the amyloid hypothesis. They also suggest that other strategies will be needed for optimal treatment.

The US Food and Drug Administration's 2021 approval of the first antibody treatment for Alzheimer's, aducanumab, sold under the brand name Aduhelm, was controversial. Only one of the two clinical trials testing its safety and effectiveness in people yielded positive results. The FDA approved the drug on the basis of that single study through an accelerated approval process in which treatments meeting an unmet clinical need can receive expedited approval.

The second antibody, lecanemab, sold as Leqembi, was approved in January 2023 via the same accelerated approval pathway. It was then fully approved in July 2023.

The third antibody, donanemab, completed a successful phase three clinical trial and is awaiting more safety data. When that is submitted to the FDA, the agency will consider the drug for approval. (AP)



DeKosky

Ballroom dancing boosts brain health in seniors, help reduce dementia risk

By Helena Blumen

Albert Einstein College of Medicine

The Research Brief is a short take about interesting academic work.

Social ballroom dancing can improve cognitive functions and reduce brain atrophy in older adults who are at increased risk for Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. That's the key finding of my team's recently published study in the Journal of Aging and Health.

In our study, we enrolled 25 adults over 65 years of age in either six months of twice-weekly ballroom dancing classes or six months of twice-weekly treadmill walking classes. None of them were engaged in formal dancing or other exercise programs. The overall goal was to see how each experience affected cognitive function and brain health.

While none of the study volunteers had a dementia diagnosis, all performed a bit lower than expected on at least one of our dementia screening tests. We found that older adults that completed six months of social dancing and those that completed six months of treadmill walking improved their executive functioning - an umbrella term for planning, reasoning and processing tasks that require attention.

Dancing, however, generated significantly greater improvements than treadmill walking on one measure of executive function and on processing speed, which is the time it takes to respond to or process information. Compared with walking, dancing was also associated with reduced brain atrophy in the hippocampus - a brain region that is key to memory functioning and is particularly affected by Alzheimer's disease. Researchers also know that this part of our brain can undergo neurogenesis - or grow new neurons - in response to aerobic exercise.

While several previous studies suggest that dancing has beneficial effects on cognitive function in older adults, only a few studies have compared it directly with traditional exercises. Our study is the first to observe both better cognitive function and improved brain health following dancing than walking in older adults at risk for dementia. We think that social dancing may be more beneficial than walking because it is physically, socially and cognitively demanding - and therefore strengthens a wide network of brain regions.

While dancing, you're not only using brain regions that are important for physical movement. You're also relying on brain regions that are important for interacting and adapting to the movements of your dancing partner, as well as those necessary for learning new dance steps or remembering those you've learned already.

Lifestyle

Nearly 6 million older adults in the US and 55 million worldwide have Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia, yet there is no cure. Sadly, the efficacy and ethics surrounding recently developed drug treatments are still under debate.

The good news is that older adults can potentially lower their risk for dementia through lifestyle interventions, even later in life. These include reducing social isolation and physical inactivity.

Social ballroom dancing targets both isolation and inactivity. In these later stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, a better understanding of the indirect effects of COVID-19 - particularly those that increase dementia risk, such as social isolation - is urgently needed. In my view, early intervention is critical to prevent dementia from becoming the next pandemic.

Social dancing could be a particularly timely way to overcome the adverse cognitive and brain effects associated with isolation and fewer social interactions during the pandemic.

Traditional aerobic exercise interventions such as treadmill-walking or running have been shown to lead to modest but reliable improvements in cognition - particularly in executive function.

My team's study builds on that research and provides preliminary evidence that not all exercise is equal when it comes to brain health. Yet our sample size was quite small, and larger studies are needed to confirm these initial findings. Additional studies are also needed to determine the optimal length, frequency and intensity of dancing classes that may result in positive changes.

Lifestyle interventions like social ballroom dancing are a promising, noninvasive and cost-effective path toward staving off dementia as we - eventually - leave the COVID-19 pandemic behind. (AP)



Japan's health ministry officials walk towards the Osaka plant of Kobayashi Pharmaceutical Co. to conduct an on-site inspection in Osaka, western Japan, Saturday, March 30. (AP)

Thailand acts on anthrax outbreak

Death toll rises: Japan probes 'health supplement' factories

TOKYO, March 31. (AP) - Japanese government health officials on Sunday inspected a factory producing health supplements linked to at least five deaths and the hospitalization of more than 100 others, one day after the authorities investigated another plant that manufactured the product.

A team of 17 health officials from the central and prefectural governments raided a plant operated by the Kobayashi Pharmaceutical Co.'s subsidiary in Kinokawa, in the western Japanese prefecture of Wakayama, under the food sanitation act. NHK public television showed the officials walk into the factory.

The Wakayama plant took over the production of the supplements after Kobayashi Pharmaceutical closed another plant in nearby Osaka, which authorities searched on Saturday, NHK said.

Kobayashi Pharmaceutical spokesperson Yuko Tomiyama told reporters that the company is fully cooperating in the investigation.

The company says little is known about the exact cause of the sicknesses, which include kidney failure.

The supplements being investigated all used "benikoji," a kind of red mold, including Kobayashi Pharmaceuticals' pink pills called Benikoji Cholestole Help, which were billed as helping lower cholesterol levels.

The Osaka-based Kobayashi Pharmaceutical said about a million packages were sold over the

past three fiscal years. It also sold benikoji to other manufacturers, and some products have been exported. The supplements could be bought at drug stores without a prescription from a doctor.

Anthrax: Thailand's government has ordered officials to closely monitor livestock along the border with Laos after more than 50 people were reported to have contracted anthrax in the neighboring country.

Thai authorities have been working closely with those in Laos after receiving reports of the outbreak and have prepared vaccines in case of infections being detected in Thailand, said Narong Leangcharuen, director of the Bureau of Disease Control and Veterinary Services of the Department of Livestock Development.

In an interview with Thai state broadcaster NBT on Friday, Narong said the transport of livestock across the border is being strictly controlled. He warned livestock farmers to quarantine animals from Laos and immediately report any suspicious illnesses or deaths.

Thailand has received reports that 54 people in Laos have been infected with the disease, Thai government spokesperson Chai Watcharong said in a statement Thursday. He said Thailand's Department of Disease Control is coordinating with local authorities, especially along the border, to keep a close watch on the situation.



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Pelicans dispose of Bucks

Murray scores the go-ahead jumper in OT to push Hawks past Celtics

Atlanta, March 31, (AP): Dejounte Murray scored a career-high 44 points, including a go-ahead jumper in the final second of overtime to power the Atlanta Hawks to a 123-122 victory over the Boston Celtics on Thursday night.

Murray scored all of Atlanta's 11 points in the extra period to give the Hawks their second win over Boston in four days. Jaylen Brown sank a go-ahead jumper with 6 seconds remaining in overtime to give Boston a 122-121 lead. Murray answered with the jumper over Jrue Holiday. Bogdan Bogdanovic scored 24 points and De'Andre Hunter had 21 points and 13 rebounds as Atlanta won its fourth straight game to match its longest streak of the season.

Jayson Tatum led Boston with 31 points and 13 rebounds. Kristaps Porzingis scored 20 points and Brown had 18.

Pelicans 107, Bucks 100

In New Orleans, Zion Williamson scored 28 points, CJ McCollum added 25 and New Orleans held off Milwaukee.

Jonas Valanciunas had 17 points and 10 rebounds for New Orleans, giving

him his 32nd double-double of the season, but just his first in 11 games. Trey Murphy III had 15 points and 11 rebounds for the Pelicans, who won despite going just 8 of 32 on 3-pointers and shooting just 39.6% (36 of 91) overall.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 35 points and 14 rebounds for Milwaukee. Damian Lillard scored 20 points for the

BASKETBALL

Bucks, as did Malik Beasley, who hit six 3s.

Magic 118, Grizzlies 88

In Orlando, Wendell Carter Jr. had 15 points and 13 rebounds, Jalen Suggs and Cole Anthony added 15 points each and the Orlando Magic broke a three-game losing streak with a rout of the Memphis Grizzlies.

A day after committing two late turnovers and blaming himself for a loss to the Los Angeles Clippers, Paolo Banchero sat out the fourth quarter and finished with 13 points, nine rebounds and

seven assists.

Jordan Goodwin led the Grizzlies with 16 points and 11 rebounds. Brandon Clarke added 13 points in 20 minutes in his second game back from an Achilles injury.

The win moved the Magic a game and a half behind New York in the race for the fourth Eastern Conference playoff spot. With eight games left in the regular season, the Magic are in fifth place, 1 1/2 up on Indiana and 2 1/2 up on Miami. Their 43 wins are the most for the franchise since 2010-11.

Joe Ingles hit three 3-pointers during a 15-0 Magic run in the first quarter, and Anthony and Markelle Fultz hit 3s on a second-quarter burst that gave Orlando a 43-15 lead.

The Grizzlies, who came into the game last in the NBA in scoring (101.6 points per game), field-goal percentage (43.6) and 3-point percentage (34.7), shot 26.2% in the first half and 36% for the game. Desmond Bane (sore back) and Santi Aldama (illness) were added to the long list of players sidelined by injuries for the Grizzlies, who have lost seven of eight.



Milwaukee Bucks forward Khris Middleton (22) works against Atlanta Hawks' Bogdan Bogdanovic (13) and Dejounte Murray (5) during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Saturday, March 30, 2024, in Atlanta. (AP)

Collins wins Miami Open on final try, topping Rybakina



Danielle Collins holds the Butch Buchholz trophy after defeating Elena Rybakina, of Kazakhstan, in the women's singles final of the Miami Open tennis tournament, Saturday, March 30, 2024, in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

'Now I get to celebrate'

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla., March 31, (AP): Danielle Collins had the perfect send-off at her final Miami Open, beating Elena Rybakina 7-5, 6-3 on Saturday to capture the title in her home state before an adoring crowd that included Andre Agassi and Martina Navratilova.

The 30-year-old Collins announced at the Australian Open that this season would be her last because she's suffering from endometriosis, a painful ailment that affects the uterus.

On her fourth match point, Collins hit a backhand crosscourt winner, then bent over for 10 seconds without moving.

TENNIS

"That game took a lot out of me and Elena was pushing me all around the court," Collins said. "At the end I was just like, 'Thank God.' It all caught up to me."

Collins was teary-eyed during the on-court trophy ceremony.

"To the fans, I've played a lot of tennis, a few finals, and nothing close to this," Collins said. "In my home state, to come out here in front of thousands of my best friends pushing me to get over this hurdle, I was getting very emotional. It was an incredible environment. I've never experienced anything like it."

Ranked No. 53 and unseeded, Collins was animated throughout the two-

hour match against the fourth-ranked Rybakina, pumping her fist and staring up at the crowd that featured a big American flag in the third row. It was too much for the ragged Rybakina, who hit several backhands long.

It was the third career title and first since San Jose in 2021 for Collins, who became the lowest-ranked women's champion at Miami. She leaves with \$1.1 million in prize money and will move up to 22nd in the rankings.

Collins said her impending retirement has motivated her to win more titles. This was the biggest of her career and her first in a Masters 1000-level event.

"I feel this tournament is the most centered I've been," she said. "It sounds a little yoga, hippy-dippy but I think about that stuff all day."

Collins, who won NCAA singles titles at Virginia in 2014 and 2016, had never had Agassi attend one of her matches.



Elena Rybakina, of Kazakhstan, hits a return to Danielle Collins during the women's singles final of the Miami Open tennis tournament, Saturday, March 30, 2024, in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

"Andre was my (service) return idol," Collins said. "I can't tell you how much footage I've watched of Andre. When I saw him out here, I almost teared up. It was surreal."

Collins saved 10 of the 11 break points she faced. Rybakina, meanwhile, had played four prior three-set matches in the tournament and said it took a toll.

"She's playing very aggressive," Rybakina said. "I think just these first few shots of the point, you need to be very reactive. Physically I was not at my best so I couldn't push myself. Maybe I should have maybe just risked a little bit more when I had these break points."

Rybakina saved two break points while trying to serve her way into a first-set tiebreaker. Collins finally seized the set as the Kazakh player nervously poked a backhand deep on the third set point.

In the second set, Collins broke at

4-4 as Rybakina hit a swinging volley into the net, then pounded another backhand long on break point.

Serving for the match, Collins jumped to a 30-0 lead, fell behind 30-40, then finally sealed it on the fourth match point.

"They wanted me to win so bad, I didn't want to let the crowd down," Collins said. "Elena does not give up. I just had to hang in there."

Her immediate plans were to enjoy Miami. "Now I get to celebrate," Collins said. "I had so many family members fly in. We're going to have a great weekend. And I have a night out on the town. I haven't done that in a while if I can stay up for it and wear a non-tennis outfit."

Sunday's men's final pits Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner against tournament surprise Grigor Dimitrov. Following his wins over Carlos Alcaraz and Alexander Zverev, Dimitrov will vault into the top 10 for the first time since 2018.

The Bulgarian also has a prominent fan in the stands in retired legend Serena Williams, who watched Friday's semifinals. They became pals a while ago when Williams was on the tour. A tournament official said Williams and her sister, Venus, used to call Dimitrov their "little brother."

"She's amazing," Dimitrov said late Saturday after his three-set win over Zverev. "We stay in touch. We nearly speak on a daily basis. She said, 'I'm gonna come watch.' I was like, 'OK.' It's always very humbling to have such a supporter in your corner, and I think just before the match she came, and I think a little chat. It's friendship, man."

In the men's doubles final Saturday, top-seeded Rohan Bopanna and Matt Ebden beat Ivan Dodig and Austin Krajicek, 6-7, 6-3 (6), with the title decided on a 10-point tiebreaker.

fast car," Gray said. "I can't thank all of my guys enough back at the shop."

Corey Heim was fourth, giving Toyota just its second sweep of the top four finishing positions, Jesse Love was fifth and Bubba Pollard was sixth, also in his first start in the series.

The victory was the second for Smith this season and the third of his career. It also moved him into the series points lead by 10 over Austin Hill. Smith also won at Phoenix on March 9th.

"Never give up," he said. "This car was not good stage one, wasn't good stage two. But, we were able to do some strategy there. ... and this thing was fast when it counted."

Almirola dominated much of the day, leading 95 laps and sweeping both stages, but finished more than four seconds behind his teammate.

"I let Chandler go, and then when I started to try and just creep back to him, I didn't have anything to go in and I was too loose in

and I couldn't get the throttle down on exit," Almirola said.

Both drivers pitted with 71 laps to go, with Smith the first off pit road running 16th, and quickly worked their way around the 15 cars that declined to pit, gambling that there would be another caution late in the race.

"If a caution came out - it is what it is - it probably wouldn't have been my time, but it was our time today and I'm going to cherish the moment," Smith said.

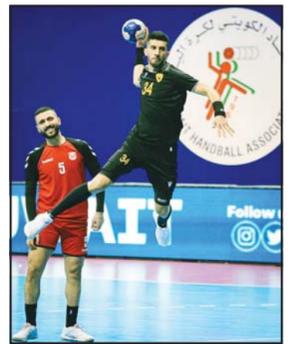
Kuwait Club top Al-Tadamon

Al-Qadisiya 'continue' to shine in the league

Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The handball team of Al-Qadisiya showcased its ongoing excellence, securing yet another victory and advancing in the league standings. They triumphed over Al-Fahaheel with a score of 31-28 in a recent match held at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex. This victory propelled the "Yellow" team to sixth place in the overall standings, accumulating seven points. Meanwhile, Al-Fahaheel remained in seventh place with six points.



A player makes a goal attempt as an opponent looks on.

HANDBALL

In a separate match, Kuwait Club effortlessly defeated Al-Tadamon with a commanding score of 47-12, reclaiming their winning streak after a previous loss to Al-Qadisiya. With this win, "Al-Abyad" temporarily secured second place with ten points, while Al-Tadamon lingered at the bottom of the standings without any points. Elsewhere in the seventh round of matches, Yarmouk emerged victorious over Al-Qurain with a score of 34-28, earning both

teams five points. Al-Salmiya secured a win against Al-Nasr with a score of 34-30, maintaining their league lead with 14 points, while Al-Nasr garnered five points. Al-Arabi defeated Al-Sahel with a score of 30-20, elevating "Al-Akhdar" to ten points, while "Sons of Abu Halifa" remained scoreless. Finally, Burgan triumphed over Khaitan with a score of 39-26, resulting in seven points for Burgan and two points for Khaitan.

Mendis makes a team-high 93

Sri Lanka hold 476-run lead over Bangladesh at stumps on Day 2

CHATTOGRAM, Bangladesh, March 31, (AP): Sri Lanka kept its nose ahead in the second and final cricket test against Bangladesh by posting a massive 531 on Day 2 Sunday, thanks to six batters getting past half-century marks.

In response, Bangladesh reached 55-1 at stumps, still trailing by 476 runs.

None of the batters were able to reach the three-figure mark but Sri Lanka ensured it didn't lose wickets in succession.

Kamindu Mendis, who scored twin centuries in the first test that Sri Lanka won by a crushing 328 runs, was stranded on 92 as the 10th wicket fell to a run-out dismissal.

Kusal Mendis made a team-high 93 while Dimuth Karunaratne scored 86. Captain Dhananjaya de Silva, who also scored centuries in both innings of the first test, added 70.

Dinesh Chandimal contributed 59 and opener Nishan Madushka made 57.

Shakib Al Hasan, playing his first test in more than a year, took 3-110 to gain a measure of control and stem some of the run flow.

Resuming at 314-4, Sri Lanka played in aggressive fashion with de Silva taking the anchor role.

Dinesh Chandimal, who reached scores of just 9 and 0 in the first test, also found some form and frustrated Bangladesh further.

Chandimal raised his 26th test fifty off 85 balls, hitting pacer Hasan Mahmud for a boundary through mid-off.

But he was he was undone by Shakib a short time later and was dismissed for 59 off 104 balls, ending an 86-run partnership with de Silva.

De Silva also struck a boundary off left-arm spinner Taijul Islam to bring up his 14th fifty off 70 balls and

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Chandler Smith wins at Richmond Raceway for the second year in a row

RICHMOND, Va., March 31, (AP): Chandler Smith took the lead with 59 laps to go Saturday and won the spring NASCAR Xfinity Series race at Richmond Raceway for the second year in a row.

Smith led a 1-2-3 finish for Joe Gibbs Racing - the seventh time the organization has done it - with Aric Almirola second and Taylor Gray third in his first start in the series.

"I made too many mistakes there throughout the race to be able to capitalize on such a



Federation Cup champions Kuwait Club celebrate on the podium.

Kuwait Club vs. Al-Qadisiya play-off begins

Kuwait Club clinch the U-16 Federation Cup

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Today marks the commencement of the 58th edition of the Volleyball League, featuring the kickoff of the first matches. The tournament adopts a "play-off" format comprising three matches between Kuwait Club, the reigning title holder and current season's Federation and Super Cup champion, and Al-Qadisiya, the Federation Cup

champion for the ongoing season. The team emerging victorious in two out of the three matches will be crowned the league champion. The inaugural match will take place at nine in the evening at the Federation Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, with the second match scheduled for April 8th. In case of a tie after the initial two matches, a playoff match will be conducted on the 15th of this month to determine the season's champion.

In other news, the Kuwait Club

team clinched the U-16 Federation Cup championship title by defeating Kazma in the final match of the tournament.

VOLLEYBALL

Kazma secured second place after a closely contested match, with the score standing at three games to two. Al-Qadisiya team secured third place following their victory over Yarmouk,

with a score of three games to one.

Following the matches, Nayef Al-Failakawi, a member of the Federation's Board of Directors, and Youssef Othman, Vice Chairman of the Federation's Competitions Committee and Director of Volleyball at the Kuwait Club, along with Musleh Al-Rashidi, distributed commemorative medals to the players of the top three teams. Additionally, the championship cup was awarded to the Kuwait Club in recognition of their achievement.

Kuwait Club surge to 'top' of league

Al-Arabi stumble

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Kuwait Club reclaimed the top spot in the Zain Premier League with a commanding 3-0 victory over Al-Salmiya in the second round of the tournament group (League of Six). This surge was facilitated by the slip-up of former leader Al-Arabi, who settled for a 1-1 draw with Al-Salmiya.

SOCCER

"Al-Abyad" ascended to 47 points, edging ahead of Al-Arabi by one point. Meanwhile, Al-Qadisiya slipped to third place with 45 points, and Al-Salmiya climbed to fourth with 25 points. The joint position of Al-Fahaheel and Al-Nasr, both remaining at 25 points, was dissolved as they fell to 24 points.

Accepting the favor granted by Al-Samawi, Kuwait seized the opportunity to force Al-Arabi into a draw, thus reclaiming the lead lost in the previous round. Kuwait Club secured a vital victory over Al-Nasr with minimal effort, capitalizing on the challenges faced by "Al-Annabi," notably their financial hardships, which had frustrated the players due to unpaid sala-

ries for five months.

On the other hand, Al-Arabi paid the price for squandering opportunities, particularly in the first half, and playing with ten players after team captain Issa Walid was sent off in the middle of the second half. Despite this setback, Al-Arabi managed to hold on to a draw through defensive play and counterattacks.

Meanwhile, Al-Salmiya encountered difficulties due to the absence of key players, including Brazilian Alex Lima, sidelined for approximately 30 days due to a muscle injury sustained in training. Other absentees included Moaz Al-Dhafri, Mahdi Dashti, and Fawaz Ayed, sidelined due to various injuries.

Looking ahead, Al-Qadisiya anticipates an early-week "Derby" match that holds significant implications for their league title aspirations. With victory becoming a pressing desire for the "Yellow Castle," optimism among supporters has surged, fueled by the team's recent impressive performances against formidable rivals.



Players in action during the Zain Premier League match.



Winners display their prizes on the podium.

Messila Equestrian Club prepares riders for season ahead with training tourney

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Messila Equestrian Club recently organized a training tournament at its headquarters in the Subhan area, drawing the participation of over 54 male and female riders across three rounds.

EQUESTRIAN

This friendly competition serves as a

preparatory event to gear up riders for the remainder of the current sports season.

Bahraini coach Adnan Al-Alawi, the club's technical director, commended the winners during the event. Subsequently, a festive Ramadan ghabga was arranged, fostering a familial and harmonious atmosphere for all club members to enjoy. Al-Alawi emphasized the club management's commitment to hosting diverse activities catering to all age groups.



Andrej Plenković (right) with Captain Hussein Al-Musallam.

PM of Croatia receives Al-Musallam

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Prime Minister of Croatia, His Excellency Mr. Andrej Plenković, welcomed Captain Hussein Al-Musallam, President of World Aquatics, in a recent meeting.

During the encounter, Capt. Al-Musallam extended congratulations to Plenković on Croatia's water polo team securing gold in the 2024 World Championship, held in Doha, Qatar.

An agreement was reached during the discussions, stipulating Croatia's hosting of the World Masters Water

Sports Championship in 2026.

Prime Minister Andrej Plenković reaffirmed his government's unwavering support for sports, particularly water sports, highlighting Croatia's achievements in the Olympics and World Water Polo Championships.

Additionally, both parties endorsed a program advocating for swimming instruction from the age of 5 in schools, aimed at promoting children's health and fostering a foundation for sports participation.

'We will keep fighting until the end'

Raphinha leads Barcelona win over Las Palmas to stay in touch with Madrid

BARCELONA, Spain, March 31, (AP): Raphinha helped to reduce Las Palmas to 10 men before scoring to lead Barcelona to a 1-0 victory in the Spanish league.

The Brazil winger was racing clear behind the defensive line when Las Palmas goalkeeper Alvaro Vallés raced out of his area and crashed into him, earning a direct red card in the 24th minute.

Las Palmas bunkered down in its area until Raphinha broke through in the 59th when he headed in a perfectly floated pass by substitute João Félix.

"These are three important points. We will keep fighting until the end and won't give up until the league is over," Raphinha said about the defending champion's chances of overtaking Real Madrid.

The Spanish powerhouses will meet in the capital in three weeks after the Champions League quarterfinals, where Barcelona faces Paris Saint-Germain and Madrid faces Manchester City.

Félix had a great chance to add to the lead when Jules Koundé found him all alone at the far post, only for the Portugal forward to send his shot off the crossbar.

Despite being down a man, Alberto Moleiro almost equalized for the Canary Islands club in the final minutes when he hit the side netting.

Barcelona's Ferran Torres returned

as a second-half substitute for his first minutes since he injured his right thigh in late January.

Since Xavi Hernández said he would not continue next season after a series of painful losses, Barcelona has improved - above all in defense - and gone unbeaten in 11 straight across all competitions.

Xavi said he hoped the decision would spark a reaction in his team. Raphinha said after Saturday's game that the turnaround was due to the players "talking about things internally and about what we needed to do to get wins."

Xavi and his players have 11 days to prepare for PSG.

SOCCER

With the league taking a break next weekend for the Copa del Rey final, Barcelona won't play again until the opening leg of its matchup against PSG on April 10.

Osasuna striker Ante Budimir scored his 16th league goal of the season to pull level with Madrid's Jude Bellingham as the competition leading scorers. Budimir helped to secure a 3-0 win at last-placed Almería.

The Croatia international made it 2-0 for Osasuna after an error by Almería goalkeeper Luis Maximiano. The goalie tried to impede the conces-

sion of a corner kick when he slid to stop the ball from crossing the endline, only to inadvertently pass it to an Osasuna player who easily set up Budimir to score into an open net.

Budimir is having the best season of his career and has netted six times in his last seven games. He next best season was for Mallorca in 2019-20 when he scored 13 times.



Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski (right), is challenged by Las Palmas' Alex Suarez during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Barcelona and Las Palmas at the Olympic Lluís Companys stadium in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)

Last-gasp goal gives new Lazio coach Tudor winning debut

ROME, March 31, (AP): A stoppage-time goal by Lazio defender Adam Marusic downed Juventus 1-0 and gave coach Igor Tudor a winning debut in Serie A on Saturday, while AC

Milan beat Fiorentina 2-1.

Marusic headed home a last-gasp cross by substitute Matteo Guendouzi to secure the victory in Rome.

"This is the best movie I could have hoped for," Tudor said. "We couldn't have started better, I'm happy for my players, for how they interpreted the game, and I'm happy that we started on the right foot."

Tudor replaced Maurizio Sarri two weeks ago before the international break. As a player, Tudor helped Juventus win Italian titles in 2002 and 2003 while making 112 career appearances in the league for the team from Turin.

Lazio rose past defending champion Napoli into seventh place, while Juventus was left in third place with just one win in nine rounds.

"My players never lacked commitment and professionalism, I can only blame them for the goal five seconds from the end. We managed the end of the game poorly," Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri said.

Fiorentina's Alfred Duncan quickly canceled out Ruben Loftus-Cheek's 47th-minute opener, but Rafael Leão put Milan ahead for good in the 53rd.

It was Fiorentina's first game since

general manager Joe Barone died following a cardiac arrest. The club's previous game at Atalanta two weeks ago was postponed when Barone fell ill shortly before the game at the team hotel.

Before the game, Fiorentina held a moment of silence for Barone with the message "Ciao Joe" on a large message board atop the stadium. It also posted on social media a statement the club attributed to Barone's family thanking Fiorentina fans for the "outpouring of love (that) has been a source of immense comfort to us all and remind us that we are not alone in our grief."

Milan stayed in a distant second place at 11 points behind leader Inter Milan.

SOCCER

Napoli players took a knee before their 3-0 loss to Atalanta in a public show of support for teammate Juan Jesus. The gesture came after a sports judge ruled Inter Milan defender Francesco Acerbi will not face sanctions for allegedly racially abusing Jesus, who is Black, in a Serie A match because there wasn't enough proof.



Aston Villa's Moussa Diaby, (right), celebrates after scoring the opening goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Aston Villa and Wolverhampton Wanderers in Birmingham, England. (AP)

Sports

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Villa stay ahead of Tottenham; Chelsea held

Uninspired Man United lucky to draw at Brentford in dramatic finish

LONDON, March 31, (AP) — Under Alex Ferguson, Manchester United was famous for scoring decisive winning goals late in matches.

There is nothing comparable under the helm of current coach Erik ten Hag, who witnessed his players relinquish an undesired lead deep in stoppage time and draw at Brentford 1-1 in the English Premier League.

Following yet another uninspired display that further dented the club's Champions League hopes, Manchester United was in sixth place, eight points behind fifth-placed Tottenham.

Brentford players kept United goalkeeper Andre Onana busy — he made four saves — and hit the woodwork four times.

Totally against the run of the play, United took the lead in stoppage time through substitute Mason Mount's effort past Mark Flekken.

With victory in sight, United conceded three minutes later when Ivan Toney cut the ball back inside the area for the unmarked Kristoffer Ajer, who bagged his second goal in two matches

to level.

"When you go 1-0 up right at the end you want to try and hang onto that," Mount said. "If you look at the game overall it wasn't to our standard. We know that. When you score at the death you think you can maybe hang on. But maybe we didn't deserve it."

Brentford battered United all night long but a cruel lack of efficiency prevented the Bees from a repeat of their 4-0 home win against the United in August 2022 in Ten Hag's second match in charge.

Brentford, which moved five points clear of the relegation zone, had 31 attempts at goal before finding the net.

Aston Villa and Tottenham didn't give up an inch in their fight for fourth place in the English Premier League on Saturday.

Battling for Champions League soccer next season, both clubs won their respective games as the league resumed following the international break. Villa in fourth and Spurs in fifth remain separated by just three points.

Tottenham, which has a match in

hand, kept the pressure on Villa early in the afternoon when a late goal from Son Heung-min sealed a 2-1 win over struggling Luton.

Villa restored its lead barely two hours later by defeating Wolverhampton Wanderers 2-0.

Villa did not play particularly well in a scrappy match that lacked intensity. A great first half strike by Frenchman Moussa Diaby for his first league goal this year put the hosts in the lead. Ezri Konsa, assisted by Diaby, capped an excellent buildup to make it 2-0 with 25 minutes remaining.

SOCCER

Spurs came close to conceding their first home draw against a Luton side locked in the relegation battle, but captain Son decided otherwise in the 86th after a quick break, concluding the move with a shot that took a deflection.

Tottenham was lethargic in the first half and was made to pay for it when Tahith Chong finished a fine collective

move from the visitors. Spurs equalized in the 49th after defender Issa Kabore, under pressure from Timo Werner, put the ball into his own net.

Kabore made up for his mistake with decisive blocks in the second half as Tottenham pressed for a winner that finally came five minutes from time.

Chelsea winger Cole Palmer became the fifth player to reach 20 goal involvements in his first Premier League. Palmer's brace at Stamford Bridge could help Chelsea only draw 2-2 with 10-man Burnley.

Chelsea was wasteful in the first half and had a goal ruled out after 20 minutes. The Blues took the lead from the spot when Palmer scored with a Panenka kick, chipping the ball down the middle.

The decision after a VAR check to award the penalty to Chelsea for a foul on Mykhailo Mudryk in the box left Burnley coach Vincent Kompany fuming. Kompany was issued a red card for his vehement protest. Lorenz Assignon, who received a second yellow card for dragging down Mudryk, was



Manchester United's Mason Mount shoots and scores his side's first goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Brentford and Manchester United at the Gtech Community Stadium in London. (AP)

also sent off.

Burnley pushed back and leveled when Josh Cullen volleyed home from 25 meters.

Palmer restored Chelsea's lead in the 78th from Raheem Sterling's backheel pass.

Dara O'Shea snatched the equalizer with a header badly handled by Djordje Petrovic.

Newcastle edged a seven-goal thriller against West Ham, coming back from 3-1 down with just 13 minutes remaining to win 4-3 at St. James' Park.

Substitute Harvey Barnes scored twice for the home side, including a beautiful winner in added time from outside the box into the bottom right corner that left goalkeeper Lukasz Fa-

bianski no chance.

"Today's a day we'll never forget," Barnes said. "It's been a tough season for me. I've missed that feeling so much, it's what you want as a player, it's amazing."

Newcastle also got two goals from Alexander Isak from the penalty spot.

Mohammed Kudus, Michail Antonio and Jarrod Bowen scored for West Ham. The London side remained one point above Newcastle, which moved up to eighth in the standings.

In a spectacular game that was goalless at the break, Sheffield United and Fulham drew 3-3 after the host blew a 3-1 lead. Nottingham Forest left the bottom three after drawing with Crystal Palace 1-1.

Leverkusen on the 'brink' of title as Dortmund edge Bayern in Klassiker

Freiburg rout Mönchengladbach

BERLIN, March 31, (AP) — Borussia Dortmund defeated Bayern Munich 2-0 away in "der Klassiker" to leave Bayer Leverkusen just three wins away from winning the Bundesliga for the first time.

"Congratulations to Leverkusen," Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel said.

Karim Adeyemi and Julian Ryerson scored in each half for Dortmund's first league win in Munich for 10 years.

Bayern, the 11-time defending champion, dropped to 13 points behind Leverkusen with seven rounds remaining. The Bavarian powerhouse was also left with the realization it will most likely have to win the Champions League to avoid its first trophy-less season since 2012.

Bayern faces Arsenal away in the first leg of their Champions League quarterfinal on April 9.

Bayern bossed the opening 10 minutes against Dortmund but fell behind when the Munich-born Adeyemi scored with the visitors' first chance. Thomas Müller lost the ball in midfield and the visitors worked it quickly to Adeyemi, whose shot should have been stopped by Sven Ulreich in the Bayern goal. The injured Manuel Neuer looked unimpressed in the stand.

SOCCER

Mats Hummels made a spectacular high-footed clearance off the line as Bayern came close to equalizing.

"I'm not fast but I was always flexible," said the 35-year-old Hummels, who had an outstanding game.

Sébastien Haller set up Ryerson to seal the win in the 83rd with a low shot inside the far post. It was Haller's first appearance since leading Ivory Coast to the Africa Cup of Nations title.

Harry Kane thought he'd pulled one back in the 89th but Bayern's evening was summed up when the goal was ruled out through VAR for offside.

"I thought we wouldn't go back to this point. Clearly I was wrong and we did indeed go back to simply giving away a game and not knowing exactly how it happened," said Tuchel, who is leaving Bayern at the end of the season.

Dortmund had to do without the support of its ultras, who reportedly had difficulties bringing their flags and banners into the stadium. Those who made it in decided to leave in solidarity with those who did not.

Police had an increased presence around the stadium in response to an apparent online threat linked to the terror group Islamic State, though a police spokesman said there was "no concrete threat" and played down its significance.

Leverkusen only just avoided its first defeat of the season when Robert Andrich and Patrik Schick scored late to beat Hoffenheim 2-1.

Laurel River wins \$12 million Dubai World Cup by record 8 1/2 lengths



Laurel River, with jockey Tadhg O'Shea, leads horses into the first turn before winning Group 1 Dubai World Cup over 2000m (10 furlongs) at Meydan Racecourse in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Inset Laurel River's trainer Bhupat Seemar and jockey Tadhg O'Shea hold the trophy after winning Group 1 Dubai World Cup over 2000m (10 furlongs). (AP)

Leverkusen was looking at the end of its German record unbeaten run in its first game since coach Xabi Alonso confirmed he's staying at the club, when Andrich equalized in the 88th minute and Schick scored the winner in the first minute of stoppage time.

"After they hit the post and the crossbar I thought, perhaps today is really our day. Perhaps they'll stop believing in themselves. But they don't do that," Hoffenheim coach Pellegrino Matarazzo said.

It stretched Leverkusen's unbeaten run to 39 games across all competitions and ensured Champions League qualification for next season. Alonso's team can no longer finish below fourth place.

Also, Freiburg routed Borussia Mönchengladbach 3-0 away in its first game since Christian Streich announced he will be leaving the club at the end of the season.

Wolfsburg enjoyed a 2-0 win at 10-man Werder Bremen in Ralph Hasenhüttl's debut as coach. Both

teams finished a man down after goal-scorer Maxence Lacroix was sent off late.

Eintracht Frankfurt drew with Union Berlin 0-0 and Mainz held Leipzig to 0-0.

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, March 31, (AP) — Laurel River rallied to win the \$12 million Dubai World Cup by a record-setting 8 1/2 lengths at Meydan

Racecourse.

Breaking from the far outside post in the field of 12, Laurel River and jockey Tadhg O'Shea surged into the lead at the midway point of the 1 1/4-mile race. Laurel River broke the old winning margin of six lengths set by Dubai Millennium in 2000 at Nad al Sheba. He covered the distance in 2:21.31 and paid \$20.70.

"I'm still coming to terms with what's happened. I think it'll probably sink in in another day or two," trainer Bhupat Seemar said. "It's absolutely amazing."

Laurel River was previously trained by Bob Baffert until owner Juddmonte Farms transferred the 6-year-old from the U.S. to Dubai-based trainer Seemar last summer.

Defending champion Ushba Tesoro finished second and earned \$2.4 million. Saudi Cup winner Senor Buscador from the U.S. was third and earned \$1.2 million.

Breeders' Cup Classic runner-up Derma Sotogake finished sixth. Defunded was seventh. Newgate, trained by Baffert, was ninth. "My horse ran flat," jockey Frankie Dettoni said.



Bayern's Harry Kane, (left), makes an attempt to score past Dortmund's Ian Maatsen during the German Bundesliga soccer match between FC Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund at the Allianz Arena stadium, in Munich, Germany. (AP)