



Overcrowding at fingerprint centers attributed to lack of appointments

Ministry of Interior enforces appointment-only policy for biometrics

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: The Ministry of Interior has urged people to book appointments in advance through the "Meta" platform on the unified government application for electronic services "Sahel" before visiting designated biometric fingerprinting centers, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The Public Relations and Security Media Department of the Ministry of Interior emphasized that "no references will be received without a prior appointment."

In a press statement, the Ministry highlighted that the plan devised by the General Department of Forensic Evidence for appointment periods is sufficient for all, ensuring appointments are scheduled before the specified periods ends.

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Gov't declares Thursday public holiday for Assembly elections



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah presides over the Cabinet's weekly session at Bayan Palace on Tuesday. PM Diwan photo

Eid holidays from April 9 till 13: CSC

KUWAIT CITY, April 2. (KUNA): The holiday for Eid Al-Fitr will be on April 9-13, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) announced on Tuesday.

In a statement on the social platform (X), the CSC said that work at government institutions would be suspended during the period expect for entities of specialized nature, which would continue to operate according to their own capacities.

Tehran vows response

Kuwait slams attack on Iranian consulate

KUWAIT CITY, April 2. (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has expressed Kuwait's strong condemnation of the Israeli occupation's airstrike, which targeted the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria, causing many casualties and injuries.

In a statement, the ministry said that such attack is considered a clear violation of international law, which supposedly protects diplomatic missions around the world from such a blatant attack.

The ministry calls on the international community to bear responsibility and exerts efforts to protect the stability and safety in the region.

Earlier, several casualties and injuries occurred because of an Israeli missile attack that targeted the Iranian consulate building in Mezzeh neighborhood in Damascus.

Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi condemned and denounced Monday the targeting of Iran's consulate in the Syrian capital Damascus.

In a statement, the GCC chief underlined the importance of abiding by international law and treaties, including the protection and safety of diplomatic missions.

Iran and one of its key proxies vowed Tuesday to respond to a strike widely attributed to Israel that demolished Iran's consulate in the Syrian capital of Damascus and killed eight people, including two Iranian generals.

Iran's state TV reported Tuesday that the country's Supreme National Security Council, a key decision-making body, met late Monday and decided on a "required" response to the strike.

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Newswatch

CAIRO: President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi of Egypt was sworn in for a third six-year term on Tuesday after being re-elected in a December vote in which he faced no serious challengers.



El-Sisi

El-Sisi took the oath of office before parliament, which convened in the new administrative capital in the desert outside Cairo.

El-Sisi won 89.6% of the vote in the December election, with turnout of 66.8% more than 67 million registered voters. He ran against three virtually unknown opponents. (AP)

CAIRO: Permanent representatives to the Arab League will hold an extraordinary meeting tomorrow Wednesday to discuss actions amidst Israeli occupation's genocide, policy of starvation and forced displacement against the Palestinian people.

The meeting, at the request of Palestine and to be chaired by Mauritania, would be held in light of the Israeli occupation's threats to launch an offensive on the city of Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, which housed over 1.5 Palestinian people, Arab League Assistant Secretary General Hussam Zaki said in a statement Tuesday. (KUNA)

ISTANBUL: A fire at an Istanbul nightclub during renovations on Tuesday left 25 people dead and others badly hurt, officials and reports said. Several people have been detained for questioning.

At least eight people were injured, seven of them hospitalized in serious condition, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported.

The nightclub, which was closed for the renovations, was on the ground floor of a 16-story residential building in the Besiktas district on the European side of the city bisected by the Bosphorus. The fire was put out.

Gov. Davut Gul told reporters at the scene that the cause of the fire was under investigation, and the victims were believed to be involved in the renovation work. (AP)

Ramadan Timings

Iftar Wednesday 18:08
Imsak Thursday 04:11

Dharaan season begins

Temp set to rise Wednesday

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: The Al-Ojairi Scientific Center announced that starting Wednesday, air temperatures are expected to rise as the weather becomes increasingly unstable, marking the onset of the Dharaan season, which will span 26 days, reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to a statement provided to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the center elaborated that the Dharaan season is characterized by Sarayat, a distinctive phenomenon signifying transient weather patterns.

During this time, the sun's angle reaches a height that allows direct heating of the soil without significantly affecting the air temperature, thereby accelerating air currents before the eventual replacement of cold air by hot air, leading to dusty conditions.

The statement further highlighted that the current period experiences an overlap between the concluding Hamim season, slated to end Tuesday, and the forthcoming Dharaan season. Consequently, this transitional phase brings about various climatic changes and weather instabilities.

During Al-Dharaan, notable shifts in wind speed and direction are observed, signifying the onset of a new seasonal phase. The season is divided into two segments, each lasting 13 days, during which the transition from spring to a warmer climate is marked.

Israeli airstrike kills seven aid workers, food aid halts

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip, April 2. (AP): An apparent Israeli airstrike killed seven aid workers with World Central Kitchen, leading the charity to suspend delivery Tuesday of vital food aid to Gaza, where Israel's offensive has pushed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to the brink of starvation.

The food charity, founded by celebrity chef José Andrés, said it was immediately suspending operations in the region. Cyprus, which has played a key role in trying to establish a maritime corridor, said the aid ships were returning with some 240 tons of undelivered aid.

The source of fire late Monday could not be independently confirmed. The Israeli military expressed "sincere sorrow" over the deaths while stopping short of accepting responsibility.

Footage showed the bodies, several wearing protective gear with the charity's logo, at a hospital in the central Gaza town of Deir al-Balah. Those killed include three British nationals, an Australian, a Polish national, an

American-Canadian dual citizen and a Palestinian, according to hospital records.

The charity, founded by celebrity chef José Andrés, was key to a recently opened sea route for delivering desperately needed aid to northern Gaza - where the U.N. says much of the population is on the brink of starvation, largely cut off from the rest of the territory by Israeli forces.

Andrés - whose charity operates in several countries wracked by wars or natural disasters, including Israel after the Oct. 7 attack that triggered the current conflict - said he was "heartbroken" by the deaths of his colleagues.

"The Israeli government needs to stop this indiscriminate killing. It needs to stop restricting humanitarian aid, stop killing civilians and aid workers, and stop using food as a weapon," he wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

The charity said the team was traveling in a three-car convoy that included two armored vehicles, and its movements had been coordinated with the Israeli army.

Kuwait enters electoral silence period

KUWAIT CITY, April 2, (KUNA): Thursday will be a public holiday in Kuwait due to the holding of the National Assembly elections.

The Cabinet, during its weekly session held at Bayan Palace under chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, decided to shut all ministries, government and public authorities and institutions on Thursday, April 4.

Thursday will be a day of rest according to the Decree 29/2024, calling on the voters to elect members of the National Assembly.

The cabinet has also assigned authorities of special nature's work to set their holidays with knowledge of the relevant departments for sake of public interest.

The Cabinet discussed on Monday the preparation of 124 schools hosting ballot boxes for the upcoming 2024 National Assembly elections scheduled on Thursday, April 4.

The meeting, chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, saw Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Al-Adel Al-Adwani delivering the schools' preparations to organize the elections in the five constituencies.



Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi inspects the medical preparations and equipment at the polling committee headquarters for the 2024 National Assembly elections. MoH photo

The minister affirmed that schools were ready to be handed to the Interior Ministry by the end of Tuesday, noting that studies in these particular schools would be done remotely on April 3, Wednesday.

Electoral silence will be observed from noon time Wednesday until end of balloting on Thursday, in line with Article 22 of the Election Law 4/2024.

According to this law, all nominees' campaigns must stop 24 hours ahead of the polling, thus all advertisements, interviews, promotions, reports or opinion polling must stop.

Media's role during this period is restricted to encouraging citizens to vote, providing them with information about the ballot centers, and the constituencies and making distinctions between the information and electoral bulletins.

Jassem Kamal, secretary of the Kuwait Journalists Association, said in a statement to KUNA that the electoral silence is perfectly sound and is observed in many countries of the world. It had been tested in Kuwait several times and proved useful for attaining justice for the nominees.

Kamal has indicated that the media is media is key tool for the nominees, forming public opinion, transferring the facts to the voters, and promoting the candidates' programs and the electoral silence stems the media influence and provides the electorate with the freedom of choosing their favorites.

Kuwait Journalists Association, he has added, has been holding contacts with the local press and ordinary citizens to encourage casting the ballot "and choose a new future for Kuwait through a new assembly."

Meanwhile, Dr. Mohammad Al-Tamimi, a law professor at Kuwait University, said in remarks to KUNA that according to the law 61/2007 on the audio-visual media and the law 3/2006 about publications and publishing, the relevant



A man displays blood-stained British, Polish, and Australian passports after an Israeli airstrike, in Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip, Monday, April 1, 2024.

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Prayer Timings

Fajr	04:17	Asr	15:23
Sunrise ..	05:37	Maghrib ..	18:07
Zohr	11:52	Isha	19:25

Local

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

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 08-28 km/h.
By Night: Mild with light vari-

Weather
 able wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.
Station **Max Exp** **Min Rec**
 Kuwait City 34 24

Kuwait Airport	34	17
Abdaly	35	17
Jahra	35	19
Salmiyah	30	24
Nuwaisib	34	18
Wafra	33	17

Balanced approach must to win parliament seat: Dr Al-Kanderi

Poll-runners' media campaigns could backfire with wrong messages

By Mubarak Al-Enezi

KUWAIT CITY, April 2, (KUNA): As the date approaches for the 2024 National Assembly elections on April 4, candidates running for parliament intensified their campaigns through different venues including media, essential for those eager to secure a seat in parliament.



Dr Al-Kandari



Dr Al-Tayyar



Dr Hussein Ibrahim

Media campaigns play an integral role in candidates' bids to reach parliament and KUNA explored this issue by interviewing academics.

Advertisement-heavy media campaigns tend to be the main medium in which candidates try to reach their constituents and are essential for their chances to reach the National Assembly, professor of Anthropology at Kuwait University (KU) Dr. Yaqoub Al-Kanderi told KUNA.

In addition to regular media channels, social media -- with their far-reaching influence -- were added to the advertisement arsenal of candidates due to their direct connection with the voters, he added.

With all said and done, still media

campaigns might backfire on candidates if they choose to deliver controversial messages to the masses, causing them to lose their race, he affirmed.

Dr. Al-Kanderi stressed that media campaigns whether online or other methods must be balanced and take into consideration issues of importance to eligible voters for the candidates to succeed in their parliamentary quest.

Professor of Psychology at KU Dr. Hamad Al-Tayyar touched on the psychological impact of media campaigns on the voters and candidates' chances to win a seat in parliament, noting that there were several factors, which contributed to the delivery of a successful campaign.

Body language, the tone of voice, as well as verbal and vernacular skills all are some of the skills that candidates must learn to lure voters to them, he affirmed.

He noted that mastering communication and showcasing crowd-connection skills might also attract voters who were still on the fence about whether to vote or not.

Nowadays, media have become more far-reaching in its influence on voters, especially with the advent of social media platforms, affirmed Dr. Hussein Ibrahim, a professor of public relations and media at KU.

The message must be clear to voters even with the latest technology at disposal, said Dr. Ibrahim, adding that intensifying media campaigns and utilizing important communication skills would have a strong influence on how voters cast their ballot come Thursday.

At the end of the day, the main reason for the success of a media campaign all boils down to having the right message delivered to candidates, he pointed out.

Body language skills play major role: Dr Al-Jazzaf

Charisma vital for touching voters' hearts and minds

By Amna Al-Shimmari

KUWAIT CITY, April 2, (KUNA): Experts believe that parliamentary nominees should consider dedicating concern to body language, their charisma and the rhetoric to enhance their chances of winning the electorate's minds and hearts.

Dr. Khaled Al-Qahs, a media professor at Kuwait University, said in an interview with KUNA that body language entails facial expressions such as grief and joy, anger and surprise, while the hand



Dr. Al-Qahs

movement may affirm the rhetoric in addition to various other signals such as salute.

As to the eyes, they mirror concern and concentration. Head movements such as nodding and rejection also emit messages, he said, affirming that body language in general is helpful to send the hopeful message clearly to the audience.

Charisma is a synonym to attraction, acceptance and influence and these are traits that must be enjoyed by people who deal with public affairs or those who need to invoke confidence and persuade others.

As to the media rhetoric during the elections, Dr. Al-Qahs said it has found new realms, such as online messages and podcast interviews.

However, he called on the hopefuls to ad-

dress their supporters at the electoral headquarters and the diwanis, with emphasis on wide masses ahead of the electoral silence.

Dr. Bassam Al-Jazzaf, a media figure, said among the body language skills of the candidate are visual communication, restraining sentiments of agitation, standing postures, affirming the necessity of the charisma that manifests self-confidence, leadership's personality, the capability of listening and communicating, sincerity, transparency, competition, inspiration, and calm voice.

The candidate's voice, way of talking, visual communication, and physical stature are all basic factors that contribute to forming an impression about him (or her).

Traditional modes of campaigning 'vital' for '24 elections: academics

Ramadan to have positive effect on polls: Dr Al-Mukaimi

By Muhammad Al-Me'seb

KUWAIT CITY, April 2, (KUNA): Amid anticipation and excitement, the upcoming 2024 National Assembly, held during the month of Ramadan, is seen as proving grounds for candidates to showcase their agendas and reach the much-coveted seat at parliament.



Dr Al-Mubarak



Dr Hussein Murad

While election campaigns in current times focus on spreading candidates' ideas and convictions through social media and fast-spreading video content, traditional modes of campaigning remain essential for candidates and voters alike.

Speaking on the issue to KUNA, head of the political science department at Kuwait University (KU) Dr. Haila Al-Mukaimi said that due to elections being held during the holy month of Ramadan, it would be understandable that votes might feel a bit less energetic as a result of the spiritual and social-gathering nature of the month.

However, the academic pointed out that holding meetings with voters directly, despite fasting, remains a key component of the election cycle and vital means for candidates to connect with voters, she added.

She pointed out that elections in Kuwait garnered attention from countries in the region and elsewhere, touting on this occasion the highly transparent nature of elections in the country.

Back to the direct connection between candidates and voters, Dr. Al-Mukaimi said that by being face-to-face with eligible voters; candidates could directly address their concerns and aspirations without any obstructions or obstacles.

On her part, professor of international relations Dr. Ma'asouma Al-Mubarak affirmed that voters were highly interested in engaging with election campaigns, searching for all venues to directly converse with candidates in real-life platforms whether forums, meetings, or other types of gatherings.

She argued that Ramadan would have a positive impact on the electoral process due to the presence of many eligible voters in the country during the holy month.

She noticed that voters were flocking to election headquarters to see their potential candidates, and ponder their agenda and messages.

Dr. Al-Mubarak called on candidates to avoid quarreling and focus on national unity and service to the people, indicating that the advent of Ramadan, a month of fasting, prayers, and good deeds, might help to heighten peoples spirituality of goodness.

Also providing his input, Dr. Hussein Murad, an associated mass communications professor at the Kuwait University (KU), stressed the vitality of election headquarters for candidates, saying that social media presence was not enough to lure voters.

He indicated that some headquarters have also become places for Taraweeh prayers during the occasion of Ramadan, which highlights the special nature of this election similar to the one held in 2013.

He said that voters were keen on attending rallies at candidates headquarters, adding that without it, any election would lose its oomph.

Similarly, mass communications and public relations professor at KU, Dr. Ahmad Al-Kanderi said that the presence of many eligible voters in the headquarters of parliament hopefuls reflected Kuwaitis' deep democratic convictions.

Traditional methods of campaigning still remain key in luring voters due to their straightforwardness and that is a vital component, he said, pointing out that candidates could spice up their campaigns by boosting their social media presence, which also is part of the election lore.



KUNA photo
 Kuwaiti Ambassador to Iraq Tareq Al-Faraj holds talks with Iraqi Foreign Ministry Undersecretary for bilateral relations Ambassador Mohammad Bahr Al-Uloum.

Boost eyed in bilateral ties

Kuwaiti Ambassador to Iraq Tareq Al-Faraj held discussions with Iraqi Foreign Ministry Undersecretary for bilateral relations ambassador Mohammad Bahr Al-Uloum on Monday regarding bilateral relations.

Ambassador Al-Faraj stated to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the discussions revolved around issues of shared interest, and ways to develop bilateral relations to serve the peoples of the two neighbouring countries. (KUNA)

Kuwaitis, residents wooed

Romania is Schengen member as of March 31, apply – envoy

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: The Ambassador of Romania to Kuwait HE Mugurel Stanescu said Romania has gained access to the Schengen Area, effective March 31, following a similar announcement by Bulgarian Ambassador Dimitar Dimitrov a few days earlier, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Stanescu said Kuwaitis and residents can apply for a short-term Schengen visa, granting them access to Romania and other Schengen countries for a period not exceeding 90 days within every 6 months.

Residency in Romania will now be considered as residency in the Schengen area, thereby counting towards the maximum stay of 90 days in any 180-day period.

Stanescu clarified that unified visas issued after March 31 will permit travel to the

Schengen Area for up to 90 days within any 180-day period. However, visa applicants are advised to apply for a visa from the country that is the main destination of their trip.

Existing short-stay visas issued by Romania before March 31, 2024, will remain valid for entry into Romania only.

For travel to other Schengen countries, applicants must obtain a visa from the authorities of the respective country. As the summer season approaches, Stanescu encouraged all Kuwaitis interested in visiting Romania to take advantage of the new regulations and make necessary arrangements in advance to facilitate the application process and avoid overcrowding.

The Schengen Area now encompasses 29 countries, including Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

'Hajj not acceptable on charity money'

How much 'zakat' must be paid?

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs emphasized the importance of precision in fulfilling zakat obligations, including Zakat on wealth, Zakat al-Fitr, and atonement for the penalty of food, as per legal fatwas, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Assistant Undersecretary for the Fatwa and Sharia Research Sector, Turki Al-Mutairi, stated that Zakat al-Fitr for this year amounts to "between one dinar and one and a half dinars for each individual."

Al-Mutairi clarified that it is impermissible to use zakat for Hajj expenses, even if it's obligatory. Instead, the funds should be directed to those in need. He emphasized that Zakat al-Fitr is obligatory for all

eligible Muslims at sunset on the last day of Ramadan, provided they possess wealth beyond their basic needs.

Zakat al-Fitr must be paid on behalf of oneself, one's dependents, and those legally obligated to be supported, including spouses, parents, and children. However, it is not obligatory for servants unless specifically donated on their behalf beforehand.

The designated time for paying Zakat al-Fitr is from dawn on Eid al-Fitr until the commencement of the Eid sermon. The fatwa committee determined that the amount of Zakat al-Fitr is equivalent to a saa of the country's staple food, estimated to be between one dinar and one and a half dinars per individual in Kuwait for this year.

Tour conducted of Ramadan retreat

Bid to strengthen religious faith

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: The Supervisor of the Rehabilitation and Evaluation Department of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdulaziz Saud held an inspection tour of the Ramadan retreat to observe the readiness of the retreat place, and to ensure the availability of all necessary basic needs in order to create the atmosphere of faith and provide complete comfort for those in retreat.

This came in preparation for the start of the annual Ramadan retreat for those recovering from addiction, residents of

the halfway house, and to activate the values of cooperation and institutional partnership.

Sources from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs said an integrated faith-based awareness program was prepared for the participants in the retreat, with the aim of strengthening the religious faith, supporting positive behavior and spiritual elevation, improving obedience, and taking advantage of the last ten days of Ramadan, which contribute to completing the journey of the recovered so that they are qualified to integrate into society and live a decent life.

Other Voices

American boots on Yemeni soil

By Ahmad alsarraf

Yemen, time and again, has demonstrated its resilience against conquerors, refusing to submit for long periods and often luring in armies only to later subject them to humiliation.

Its history spanning over two thousand years tells a tale of battles, bloodshed, dispersion, and union, interspersed with periods of peace and comfort that have been rare indeed.

Manipulating power dynamics and shifting weapons from one faction to another is a game Yemenis have mastered over centuries, much like their proficiency in marksmanship and the cultivation of khat leaves, which they consume while singing, playing, or even fighting, with spittoons by their side.

Yemen has worn down the Abyssinians, Ottomans, Italians, English, Egyptians, and countless Arab armies that sought to conquer, unify, or assist it in overcoming its challenges. They tolerate outsiders only to extract temporary benefits before expelling them. They are unwilling to alter the traditional facets of their lives, including attire, daggers, khat consumption, and a variety of firearms, which have remained largely unchanged for centuries.

Reviewing the history of Yemen, with the beginning of Gregorian history, we find hundreds of transformations and battles between its various regions, continuously and repeatedly, and Iran finally succeeded in winning a strong faction there, made up of a majority of the Houthis, who are Zaidi, and sympathetic to the Shiites, so they became a thorn in the side of its government. Legitimacy, which has melted and ended, leaving Yemen unified, but it is still a country whose

regions are ruled by those who carry weapons.

With the intensification of pressure on Gaza, Iran, an ally of Hamas; used the Houthis to annoy America and its Western allies, the largest supporter of Israel, and to stop maritime navigation through the Bab al-Mandab Strait.

They succeeded in pushing thousands of ships to circle around Africa to reach Europe, at a high cost, after it was forbidden. It had to cross the Suez Canal, so Egypt's resources from it fell to less than half, and all American and Western aircraft raids failed to reduce the Houthis' ability to stop navigation at Bab al-Mandab, and this prompted America to enter into secret talks with Iran to convince the Houthis to end their attacks on ships at the entrance to the Red Sea but Iran denied the New York Times' news about the Houthis, but did not deny the existence of talks.

It is evident that despite its formidable military power, the United States has been unable to decisively address the threat posed by the Houthis. Numerous airstrikes and attempts to impose sanctions have yielded little result. The resilience of the Yemeni fighters, who have little to lose and are not deterred by material losses, presents a formidable challenge.

Moreover, the reluctance to commit large numbers of ground troops to a conflict with uncertain outcomes further complicates the situation. Military operations in Yemen without a significant ground presence are unlikely to achieve significant breakthroughs.

The evolving dynamics of warfare and conflict further underscore the limitations of relying solely on aerial bombardment. The example of Russia's prolonged and costly efforts in Ukraine serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the challenges of achieving military objectives from a distance without a substantial ground presence.

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diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Kuwaitis want to see new people who can fulfill promises to nation'

"It is beautiful and wonderful that this move was made by the Ministry of Interior announcing its initiation of legal measures against anyone who harms national unity, regardless of the media used, even if it is through social media. It is important today to emphasize that everyone is equal under the law, and everyone is also concerned with building Kuwait," columnist **Fakhri Hashem Al-Sayyid Rajab** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Under the frank and clear slogan that all components of Kuwaiti society are concerned with the elections, because Kuwait is the foundation for all its people, regardless of their tribal or sectarian affiliation, and today we can affirm that we are moving towards a Kuwait of familiarity and love among all and this is the first and correct step towards nation building, and we hope that this determination will get top priority."



Fakhri Rajab

"Even after the elections, when it is no secret to anyone that weak souls must exist at all times and in any place, but when the highest authority insists on working hard and correcting all previous mistakes, then it is necessary to obtain a correct result; except what is correct, and the dissolution of the previous councils more than once is a clear indication of the imbalance that has prevailed during the past elections."

"Difference is a logical and healthy topic also when it is in points of view, but this difference must remain within a clear goal and line that is paramount to the interest of Kuwait, so it does not spoil any form of interaction between members of one parliament."

"Therefore, we all hope today that everyone who is qualified will get elected to the parliament. And everyone who has in his heart the interest of Kuwait will get elected, and everyone who tempts himself to buy votes and gain access for the purpose of personal gain should be confronted before he enters the doors of parliament, and this is definitely a situation that exists today, but remember that whoever buys your vote today for money will sell you tomorrow for free."

"Be vigilant and realize your responsibility and put your trust in His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, may God protect and preserve among us."

"We are facing a different stage today. Kuwait is required to keep pace with everything that is happening in the world, so there must be change and there must be advancement and renewal."

"Many slogans were launched by the candidates, all of which promise that the next election will be different, and will carry a different vision than the previous one, although the candidates can only rely on beautiful and encouraging phrases, such as the commitment to serving the people, and preserving all national symbols, the interests and gains of the people, and the aspirations of the citizens, which is undoubtedly a right, but the truth today, and what concerns us is that everyone who does not remain faithful to the promises he/she made must be held accountable later, and everyone who tries to make the council a window for gain, and to obstruct any process that contributes to the development of Kuwait, will be held accountable."

"People today need something new, and they want to see that those who are reached the parliament seat on their vote keeping their promises they made to the electorate and implement these promises seriously."

"All best wishes for success to whoever works from his heart for the benefit of Kuwait and the people of beloved Kuwait. God grant us success."

Also:

"Any discourse on national unity must transcend division. Nations, encompassing all their peoples, affiliations, sects, and tribes, are not built on such distinctions alone. Rather, they are forged through unity under the banner of homeland and a cohesive society that eschews discrimination in all its forms," columnist **Youssef Al-Shehab** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Any attempt to undermine this unity, regardless of its justification, is an assault on the very principles that bind society together. Those who engage in such divisive actions are agents of discord and must be recognized as such."

"The Kuwaiti society, with its diverse sects, tribes, professions, and traditions, has long been united in its dedication to the nation above all else. Over the decades, this unity has been the cornerstone of Kuwaiti identity, fostering a collective sense of purpose and destiny. This inter-connectedness has been exemplified throughout the nation's history, demonstrating a remarkable solidarity in pursuit of common goals."

"However, recent efforts to uncover instances of fraudulent citizenship acquisition have revealed elements seeking to sow discord and division within society. These divisive actions, aimed at undermining the unity and cohesion that have long defined Kuwaiti society, threaten to unravel the very fabric of our nation. Yet, Kuwait has historically been a beacon of brotherhood and solidarity, transcending sectarian, tribal, or any other affiliations."

"In the face of such challenges, it is imperative that Kuwaiti society remains steadfast in its commitment to unity and cohesion. By rejecting divisive rhetoric and standing together as one, we can preserve the legacy of our forebears and ensure a future built on

strength, solidarity, and shared destiny.

"The unity of our people is a shield that guards against the seeds of discord and division sown by those who harbor ill intentions for our society. We must remain vigilant against such attempts to disrupt our harmony, for they pose a threat to the very fabric of our community."

"Kuwait, with its diverse social fabric, is not defined by any particular sect or tribe but rather by a collective spirit akin to that of a family. When one member suffers, the rest are compelled to respond with empathy and solidarity."

"Efforts by the government to uncover cases of fraudulent or dual nationality are not acts of sedition, as some misguided individuals may suggest. Rather, they are necessary measures to safeguard our national identity from those who seek to undermine it through deceit. Any deviation from this principle only serves the dark intentions of those who harbor resentment towards Kuwait and its true identity."

"We call upon those entrusted with the governance of our nation to respond firmly and decisively to any attempts to sow discord or division. Kuwait is a nation that embraces all who bear its true national identity, not those who seek to exploit it through forgery or deceit. We must prioritize the preservation of our unity and pride as a people above all else, rejecting any efforts to stoke hatred or division among us."

"To those who seek to incite sedition, we remind you to fear God and consider the consequences of your actions. Reflect on the devastation wrought by division in other societies and reconsider your motives. Teach your children to love Kuwait above all else, transcending tribal, sectarian, or personal interests."

"As the late Iraqi poet Ma'arouf Al-Rusafi cautioned, do not be deceived by outward displays of patriotism, for true intentions may lie hidden. Similarly, candidates vying for support in elections must exercise wisdom and restraint, avoiding theatrics that serve only to distract from their message. False bravado is akin to treading on a path littered with pitfalls."

"Let us heed the wisdom of our elders and strive for unity and harmony in all our endeavors. With a clear mind and steadfast resolve, may we continue to uphold the principles that have guided us through generations. May Kuwait prosper and endure for generations to come."

"Cold elections... It seems that we are living in the 'cold elections' phase. It is qualitatively different from most of the elections we have witnessed in the past, even though this election is preceded by important events, such as the resignation of the Council of Ministers, dissolution of the National Assembly, and the emergence of hot issues and theses, including the contents of the Supreme Speech in the oath-taking session. These are very important issues, but indifference and reluctance seem to rule the nation," columnist **M. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Perhaps, this is because the election will be held during the holy month, which comes with psychological calm and reverence. However, whatever the reason, the truth is that we are in a different election climate, characterized by coldness and stagnation."

"All I fear is that the current situation resulted from psychological and social shock due to the successive dissolution of national assemblies, succession of councils of ministers within short periods and political instability. If these are the reasons, then we have entered the worst stage."

"Reasonable people have always warned that this would happen as a result of parliamentary and governmental practices that were not up to the challenges. Parliaments and the councils of ministers were busy with issues and conflicts that did not fall within our national priorities. Each of them sang: 'Ala Laila, - his way'. Both authorities should have been aware of the dangers of such developments. The upcoming parliamentary election is a national opportunity that we should not waste, just as we wasted many opportunities, which were lost and we continued to cry over 'spilled milk'."

"For us to stop crying and grumbling, we must all seize the opportunities and make our forums and offices full of piety in this holy month. They should be places for exchanging opinions, discussing our issues, and correcting the course of our affairs."

"We should not leave our national arena to be monopolized by the candidate. The Kuwaiti voter should fill it with his opinion, concerns, requirements and priorities. In fact, I do not blame those who despair or are fed up with negative practices, whether governmental or parliamentary, and so on, but I am trying to draw attention to the fact that democratic practice and popular participation are our national choices, which we must adhere to and work for, regardless of all the mistakes that have marred democratic practice. No one else will fix and correct the path, which is the responsibility of all of us. We must shoulder this responsibility with honesty and sincerity for a country that we love and care for."

"Reluctance and indifference will make matters worse, and the worst thing is for democracy to be monopolized in the arena with its own agendas and practices that we do not desire, and priorities other than our own. I know that we have witnessed frustrating political situations and practices, but they should not hinder our will to build and reform. If frustration and reluctance prevail, the nation is the first loser. Therefore, let us make the election hot with our ideas, concerns and priorities. Let our vote be our first step toward correcting our national path."

— **Compiled by PFX Fernandes**



Cooked food is distributed to needy people at an unidentified location in Gaza.

KUNA photo

Kuwait charity launches aid bid for needy groups

Kuwait-based International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) has launched a fresh humanitarian initiative aiming at extending aid to several needy countries and areas, primarily the Gaza Strip.

The endeavor comes to mark the last 10 days of the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims often seek to step up their religious

and altruistic activities, IICO's Deputy General Manager for Communication Ibrahim Al-Bader said in a press statement on Monday.

It embraces an integrated health center intended to serve 2,000 beneficiaries in Niger, along with five new mosques in Bangladesh, India and Niger, Al-Bader elaborated.

It is also meant to offer humanitarian aid to orphans in Palestine, Yemen, Somalia and Sudan, he said, adding that top priority was given to the population of the Gaza Strip during the holy month in general and the last 10 days in particular, in a bid to ease the anguish of poor families, medics and orphans. (KUNA)

Panic digs in as expats gate crash for biometrics without any dates

Frustration, uncertainty, 'iqama' expiry worry Asians, Arabs

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: As the first month of the grace period draws to a close, the Ministry of Interior notes significant crowds at biometric fingerprint centers, emphasizing the importance of prior appointments for smoother processing, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The three-month grace period, stipulated by the Ministry of Interior for citizens and residents to complete their biometric fingerprinting, has reached its first milestone. Throughout this initial phase, individuals are required to undergo biometric registration, a crucial procedure for official transactions and documentation.

Reports from various fingerprinting centers highlight a substantial influx of visitors, particularly among residents. Yesterday, a notable gathering was observed outside the Investigation Department at Al Farwaniyah Security Directorate. These crowds are anticipated to persist until the deadline, slated for the end of May, with an estimated 670,000 procedures already completed.

In response to a viral video depicting congestion at one of the centers, the Ministry of Interior reassures the public of appropriate measures taken to address the situation. Emphasizing the necessity of appointments, the Ministry underscores the "Matta" platform for scheduling via "Sahl" before visiting designated centers. Unauthorized walk-ins are discouraged to streamline operations and avoid delays.

The Ministry assures that sufficient capacity and resources are allocated to accommodate all within the specified timeframe. However, challenges persist, particularly in densely populated areas such as the Farwaniya governorate, home to approximately 800,000 residents. Queues and overcrowding outside centers have necessitated the rescheduling of appointments through the "Matta" platform.

Many individuals express frustration and uncertainty over canceled appointments, especially those nearing the expiration of their residency permits. Concerns arise regarding the timely completion of essential procedures to avoid disruptions in their legal status. Requests are made for additional centers and extended operational hours to cater to the overwhelming demand.

As the Ministry continues its efforts to streamline the biometric registration process, individuals are urged to adhere to appointment protocols and remain patient amidst ongoing adjustments. With the Eid holiday approaching, anticipation grows for the reopening of appointment slots and the alleviation of overcrowding at centers.



A huge crowd at one of the biometrics centers in Farwaniya.

CSC report on 17 govt agencies

'No financial violations recorded'

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: The Employment Affairs Oversight Sector at the Civil Service Commission (CSC), supervised by CSC Undersecretary Nadba Dhiyaa Al-Qabandi, has not recorded any administrative or financial violation in 17 government agencies and their subsidiaries, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The sector's observers confirmed in their regular report that the absence of violations in the abovementioned entities could be attributed to strict compliance with the decisions of the CSC, oversight regulations and instructions of observers; in addition to completion of training courses aimed at raising awareness on steps that should be taken to avoid repeat-

ing violations, some of which are due to lack of familiarity with the regulations and decisions of the CSC.

These observers recorded a significant decrease in administrative violations related to promotions and raising the job level; while sources affirmed that the sector monitors violations and refer them to the CSC which, in turn, submits them to the Council of Ministers.

Sources pointed out that the strict implementation of regulations on promotions, transfers, assignments, disbursement of excellent job performance bonus and other decisions related to employment affairs greatly contributed to the reduction of violations.

21,858 traffic violations

1,620 accidents, 23 held driving without licenses

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: The General Traffic Department (GTD) in the Ministry of Interior has announced that its patrols dealt with 1,620 traffic accidents from March 23 to 29; including 293 serious collisions that resulted in injuries and deaths, as well as 1,409 minor accidents which did not result in injuries, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

According to the department, the traffic campaigns conducted within the above-mentioned period led to the issuance of 21,858 citations for various violations and arrest of 23 juveniles for driving without a license. These youths were referred to the Juvenile Prosecution.

Also, 48 individuals were detained by traffic police for committing serious traffic violations.

Furthermore, 130 vehicles and 25 motorcycles were impounded; while eight individuals wanted by law were arrested, in addition to eight street vendors, one person who was in abnormal condition and three persons involved in civil cases. A total of 51 vehicles were impounded, because they were utilized in committing various crimes.

Wanted cars seized: Traffic patrol officers seized two judicially wanted vehicles on the Fahaeel Expressway. The first was referred to Abu Halifa Police Station, and the other to Rumaihiya Police Station.

According to a security source, traffic police were able to seize the first vehicle after its driver committed a traffic violation. Upon inquiring about the vehicle, it was found that it was wanted. The second vehicle that was seized on the same road was discovered to be wanted, after its driver committed a traffic violation.

Bullet, knife in vehicle: A 22-year old Kuwaiti citizen was arrested in possession of the bullet of a shotgun and a knife inside his vehicle, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

According to security sources, officers patrolling the Fahaeel Expressway noticed a motorist committing a traffic violation, and ordered him to pull over. While following the usual procedures, one of the officers noticed a bullet and a knife in the front seat of the vehicle.

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Kuwaiti medical delegation arrives in Gaza to support healthcare system.

KUNA photo

2nd Kuwait's medical team enters Gaza to support healthcare system

Delegation carries seven tonnes of medical supplies: KSR chief

GAZA, April 2, (KUNA): A second Kuwaiti medical delegation entered Gaza on Monday through Rafah Crossing Point to support the healthcare in Gaza by conducting surgical operations for injured Palestinians.

The head of the delegation and deputy general manager of Kuwait Society for Relief Omar Al-Thuwaini stated to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the delegation entered Gaza on Sunday and was set to continue their operations for seven straight days.

The main reason for the visit is to "reinforce the broken healthcare system in Gaza", said Al-Thuwaini, pointing to moral and psychological support with 11 medical doctors participating with specialties ranging in surgery, ophthalmology, urology, neurosurgery.

He added that the delegation carried seven

tonnes of medical supplies to aid the medical team in Gaza.

Al-Thuwaini affirmed that this mission was possible thanks to Kuwait's relentless and ongoing support towards Palestine and its people, hoping that it would succeed in relieving the affected Palestinians.

The first Kuwaiti medical delegation entered Gaza last month and was the first of its kind, sent by Kuwait Red Crescent Society.

Earlier, Kuwait Society for Relief (KSR) announced the departure of a medical relief team consisting of 11 physicians and consultants from different medical and surgical fields to Cairo Airport heading towards Gaza's hospitals.

The medical relief team plans to assist the Kuwait Specialized Hospital and the Gaza European Hospital starting April 7.

The Deputy General Director of KSR and team leader Omar Al-Thuwaini said to KUNA that the medical team consists of highly specialized medical and surgical professionals including a nurse and humanitarian directors.

Al-Thuwaini affirmed that medical relief head-

ed to Gaza since October 10, 2023 included more than 30 Kuwaiti humanitarian and charity organizations donations.

On his part, Ophthalmology surgical consultant and volunteer Dr. Mansoor Al-Shammari, in a similar statement to KUNA, said the medical relief of over three tons of equipment would also be received in the two hospitals in Gaza for treating Palestinians.

Meanwhile, senior specialist in Nephrology, Urology, infertility and robotic surgery, Dr. Omar Al-Hunaidi said that the medical equipment and relief aims to provide assistance physicians during surgical operations in Gaza.

Anesthesiologist and pain management specialist Dr. Hasan Behbehani informed KUNA that this trip aims to lighten the burden of the Palestinian Health Authorities and the injured Palestinians in Gaza in the midst of the Israeli occupation siege.

Faculty member of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, Dr. Mohammad Al-Kandari confirmed the necessity of providing medical assistance to Gaza, to curb the humanitarian disasters occurring at this time.



Photo by Mohammad Morsi
A KRCS volunteer assisting an elderly woman in a wheelchair to attend late-night prayers in one of the mosques in Kuwait.

Expenses during the last 10 months

MoF releases detailed breakdown of Kuwait '23/'24 fiscal expenditure

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: The Ministry of Finance has released official data detailing expenditure across various sectors during the past ten months of the fiscal year 2023-2024 in Kuwait, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The following is a breakdown of the expenditures:

Education -- Total spending on education reached approximately 2.3 billion dinars. The majority of funds, around 894 million dinars, were allocated to pre-primary and primary education, followed by 825 million dinars for secondary education. Higher education received 293 million dinars, with research and development in education accounting for around 155 thousand dinars.

Health -- Expenditure on health amounted to 2.1 billion dinars. The bulk of this, approximately 1.9 billion dinars, went towards hospital services, while 62 million dinars were allocated for medical equipment and products. Research and development in health received about 229 thousand dinars.

Housing and Community Facilities -- Expenditure in this category totaled around 3.05 billion dinars. Funds were allocated for housing development, water

supply, street lighting, and other housing-related utilities.

Economic Affairs -- Total spending on economic affairs amounted to 2.08 billion dinars. This included 350 million dinars for transportation and approximately 1.1 billion dinars for fuel and energy. Other expenses covered communications, mining, agriculture, and fishing.

Public Order and Safety Affairs -- Expenditure in this sector reached about 1.3 billion dinars. The majority, around 1.04 billion dinars, went to police services, while courts received about 277 million dinars. Remaining expenses were allocated for prisons and other related services.

Religion, Culture, and Entertainment -- Approximately 367 million dinars were allocated for religious, cultural, and entertainment services. Religious services received around 197 million dinars, followed by radio and publishing services with expenses totaling 132 million dinars.

Social Protection -- Expenditure on social protection services, covering areas such as old age, family and children, housing, and social distancing, amounted to about 334 million dinars by the end of January.

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Bank employees distributing break fast meals.



Great interest in the bank's charitable initiative.

'Employees' dedication truly commendable'

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait's Ramadan initiative spreads compassion, goodwill across Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is proud to announce organizing its annual Ramadan initiative where employees volunteered to distribute iftar meals to those in need across various locations in Kuwait.

This initiative, in alignment with the spirit of the holy month of Ramadan, reflects the Bank's values of compassion, solidarity, and giving back to the community.

This is in addition to the Bank's recent collaboration with Kuwait Red Crescent Society for the second consecutive year, to distribute relief boxes to underprivileged individuals and families, spreading joy and warmth during the blessed month of Ramadan.

Sager Albenali, Chief Communications Officer at ABK, expressed his enthusiasm for the initiative, stating, "Ra-

madan is a time of reflection, gratitude, and generosity. At ABK, we believe in embodying these values by reaching out to those in need and making a positive impact in the community. Our employees' dedication to serving others is truly commendable and reflects our commitment to social responsibility."

The Ramadan initiative not only signifies ABK's dedication to supporting the less fortunate but also highlights the importance of unity and empathy during Ramadan.

By coming together to share meals and support one another, the Bank and its employees are fostering a sense of solidarity that transcends borders and backgrounds.

Albenali concluded, "Through initiatives like this, ABK continues to demonstrate its unwavering commitment to making a difference in the lives of individuals and communities, embodying the true essence of corporate social responsibility."

The Bank looks forward to further initiatives that promote kindness, inclusivity, and community welfare."



Albenali

Fatwa and Legislation Dept urged to ensure correctness of donation procedures

Municipality, Commercial Bank sign deal for tunnel development

KUWAIT CITY, April 2. (KUNA): Kuwait Municipality announced on Tuesday that it had signed a joint contract with the Commercial Bank regarding the development and restoration of Derwaza Al-Abd Al-Razzaq tunnel in Kuwait City.

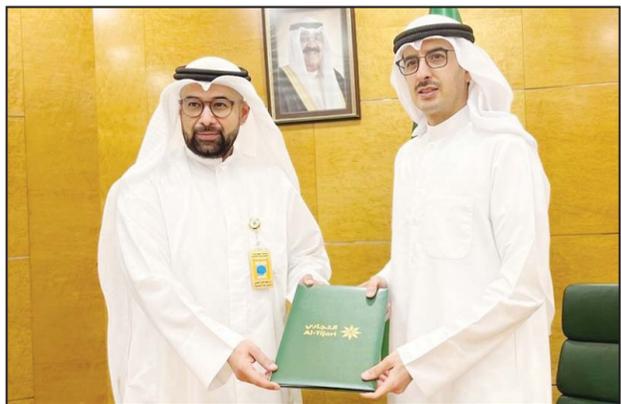
Chairman of Kuwait Municipality Saud Al-Dabbous said in a press statement that the ministry would ensure the completion of the project in accordance with the highest safety conditions.

Al-Dabbous added, after signing the contract with the Chairman of Commercial Bank of Kuwait Sheikh Ahmad Al-Duaij Al-Sabah that the Municipality addressed the Fatwa and Legislation Department to ensure the correctness of the donation procedures.

He praised the initiative of the Commercial Bank and its members and the participation of the private sector in these vital projects.

Al-Dabbous explained that the engineering defect in Al-Derwaza is not an easy matter, adding that the follow-up of the work will be under his personal supervision.

On her part, Deputy Director General of the Projects Sector in the Municipality Maysa Bushehri confirmed that the contracts have been studied and the necessary technical and engineering measures have been taken to begin the work plan for the development and restoration of the tunnel in coordination with the contractor from the donor bank.



KUNA photo
Part of the contract signing ceremony between the Kuwait Municipality and the Commercial Bank of Kuwait.

'Prominent former MP'

Kuwait mourns death of Jumaa

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: Kuwait bid farewell to Hussein Makki Jumaa, a prominent former Member of Parliament, businessman, and philanthropist, who passed away at the age of 95, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Throughout his illustrious career, Jumaa made significant contributions to the nation, particularly in the realms of politics, economics, and charitable endeavors.



Jumaa

Born in Kuwait in 1929, Jumaa's legacy includes pioneering institutional donations for the construction of a comprehensive cancer treatment hospital, now known as the Hussein Makki Jumaa Medical Center, which has been instrumental in providing care to thousands of patients over the past four decades.

Jumaa's influence extended beyond healthcare; he played pivotal roles in various investment ventures and held numerous leadership positions. His economic foresight helped lay the groundwork for Kuwait's economic resurgence. From chairing boards of directors to membership in influential companies and organizations, including the Kuwait Fish Company, Aluminum Extrusion Company, and Arab International Bank, Jumaa's impact on Kuwait's economic landscape was profound.

Known for his integrity, honesty, and humility, Jumaa garnered widespread admiration and affection from the Kuwaiti people. His genuine concern for the well-being of others, coupled with his unwavering commitment to philanthropy, earned him a special place in the hearts of his fellow citizens.

In addition to his charitable endeavors within Kuwait, Jumaa's philanthropic spirit extended to humanitarian projects abroad, leaving a lasting legacy of compassion and generosity.

Ministry of

Continued from Page 1

Addressing concerns about overcrowding at fingerprint centers, the Ministry clarified that any incidents were promptly addressed, attributing crowding to the presence of a large number of individuals without prior appointments.

The Ministry previously announced a three-month deadline, running from March 1, 2024, to June 1, 2024, for biometric fingerprints for all citizens and residents. It emphasized that failure to comply with this requirement would result in the suspension of all related transactions.

Fingerprinting services are available at all border crossings, Kuwait International Airport, and designated centers across the country.

— See Also Page 3

Gov't declares

Continued from Page 1

minister, usually the minister of information, is entitled to prohibit the media broadcasts according to the rules set in the relevant executive laws.

Faisal Al-Sewaghi, the head of the Kuwait Electronic Media Union, said that the electoral silence is observed in countries of democratic histories, indicating the need for it to create adequate atmospheres for the voters and ensure that the media abstain from affecting the public opinion.

The electoral silence is aimed at enabling the voters to practice their franchise freely and attaining justice in the nominees' competition.

He called on the media to use the silence period to educate the voters and stimulate citizens to go to the ballot stations to partake in the 2024 polls.

He alluded to the latest speech by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, urging the citizens to practice their franchise and contribute to a better future for the country.

On Tuesday, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health announced that Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, the Minister of Health, conducted an inspection of the medical facilities and equipment at the polling stations designated for the 2024 National Assembly elections.

Accompanied by Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi, the Undersecretary of the Ministry, and Dr. Nadia Al-Jumaa, the Assistant Undersecretary for Health Care Affairs, the visit aimed to uphold the highest standards of health safety for voters.

The Ministry stated that Minister Al-Awadhi received updates on the necessary arrangements for the upcoming leg-

islative elections scheduled for Thursday. These arrangements included the provision of medical clinics with adequate personnel, supplies, and ambulances across all electoral committees.

Additionally, Dr. Al-Awadhi was briefed on the comprehensive medical preparations in both primary and auxiliary committees, as well as the establishment of an operations room equipped with communication tools to monitor developments during the polling day. These measures are designed to ensure the health safety of voters and all participants in the electoral process.

Kuwait slams

Continued from Page 1

The report said the meeting was chaired by President Ebrahim Raisi, but provided no further details.

Israel has repeatedly targeted military officials from Iran, which supports militant groups fighting Israel in Gaza, and along its border with Lebanon. Monday's strike in Damascus signaled an escalation because it struck an Iranian diplomatic mission.

It was not clear if Iran would respond itself, risking a dangerous confrontation with Israel and its ally the United States, or if it would continue to rely on proxies, including Lebanon's Hezbollah militia and Yemen's Houthi rebels.

The airstrike in Syria killed Gen. Mohammad Reza Zahedi, who led the elite Quds Force in Lebanon and Syria until 2016, according to Iran's Revolutionary Guard. It also killed Zahedi's deputy, Gen. Mohammad Hadi Hajriahimi, and five other officers.

Hezbollah said Tuesday that Zahedi played a crucial role in helping "develop and advance the work" of the group in Lebanon. A Hezbollah member was also killed in Monday's strike, bringing the overall death toll to eight. Hezbollah announced the death of Hussein Youssef on Tuesday, but did not provide further details.

"This crime will certainly not pass without the enemy receiving punishment and revenge," Hezbollah said in a statement.

Since the outbreak of the war in Gaza nearly six months ago, those proxies have stepped up attacks, leading to near daily cross-border exchanges between Hezbollah and Israel, and frequent Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping. Hamas, which rules Gaza and attacked Israel on Oct. 7, is also backed by Iran.

Israel, which rarely acknowledges strikes against Iranian targets, said it had no comment on the latest attack in Syria, although a military spokesman blamed Iran for a drone attack early Monday against a naval base in southern Israel.

MoE opens e-registration for new primary stage students

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: The Ministry of Education has announced the opening of electronic registration for new primary stage students in academic year 2024/2025 – from April 1 to Sept 30, reports Al-Anba daily.

The ministry explained the registration mechanism through its official website; that is, by clicking the services list, then select 'Student/Parent' and enter to register the new students by following the instructions therein.

On the other hand, the Teachers Association praised the positive response of the ministry and understanding shown by acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education Hessa Al-Mutawa regarding the demand of the graduates of the College of Basic Education for their right to be appointed as Physical Education teachers – an issue that the association raised in a previous statement.

Undersecretary Matrouk Al-Mutairi sent a letter to the director of the Civil Service Commission, stating that "with reference to the letter of the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education No. 422752 dated March 18, 2024 on nominating graduates of the colleges of Education and Basic Education to work in the ministry based on the memorandum of understanding signed by the ministry and the colleges, please instruct your competent authority to nominate those who graduated from both colleges less than a year ago as follows:

1. Physical Education for males
2. Kindergarten, Basic Education, Social Studies and Economics for females."

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has transferred some of its services to Google Cloud, such as the electronic certificate of origin and real estate management portals, in order to achieve its strategic goals in developing services and enhancing safety and efficiency for citizens and business owners, reports Al-Anba daily.

Digital

The ministry confirmed that these steps are part of its plan to enhance the digital transformation process in a bid to provide integrated electronic services which rely on advanced technologies.

It stated that it is keen on improving the level of security and protection for citizens' and companies' data through the use of advanced cloud computing services provided by Google Cloud, stressing that cloud computing provides additional layers of protection and encryption for data.

It also emphasized the importance of transferring its range of services to Google Cloud in accelerating development and innovation processes, through the provision of a flexible development environment and computer resources that can be easily expanded.

This also allows the development teams to develop and test software and applications faster and at a lower cost, which enhances digital transformation and contributes to achieving goals and visions in a more efficient manner, the ministry added.

In the meantime, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Dr. Salem Al-Hajraf issued a ministerial decision entrusting Maha Al-Asousi to carry out the undersecretary's duties; in addition to her work as Assistant Undersecretary for Electrical Distribution Networks Sector, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Hajraf also assigned Director of the Water Networks and Facilities Projects Design Department Abdullah Ghuloum Hussein as Assistant Undersecretary for the Water Projects Sector, in addition to his current work.

He assigned Director of the Water Networks Operation and Maintenance Department Fahd Al-Dhafiri as Assistant Undersecretary for the Water Operations and Maintenance Sector, in addition to his current work.

On the other hand, the Administrative Affairs Sector in the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy is currently completing the annual job performance evaluation of more than 30,000 employees in the ministry. Sources affirmed that the sector is close to completing the evaluation process in accordance with the regulations of the Civil Service Commission (CSC), as well as laws on the disbursement of bonuses – the most important of which is the number of absences throughout the year determined by CSC.

'Commerce' transfers some of its services to Google Cloud



Al-Qattan speaking during the participation announcement.

Dr Al-Qattan unveils Kuwait's participation in Osaka Expo

A faculty member at the College of Architecture at Kuwait University, Dr. Imad Al-Qattan, has revealed Kuwait's participation in the "Expo 2025" exhibition in Osaka, Japan, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The exhibition, set to launch in April 2025 under the slogan "Innovating the future to improve the lives of communities," is described by Al-Qattan as a national project and an international exhibition that marks a turning point towards a

new world post-2025.

With the participation of 150 countries and 25 international organizations, the exhibition serves as a cultural forum showcasing various global traditions and cultures while fostering new creative endeavors and opportunities for societal transformation in social, economic, and cultural aspects.

Al-Qattan further explained that the exhibition comprises three sub-themes: "Ensuring the sustainability of life, empowering life, and

enhancing life through communication." The State of Kuwait's pavilion will focus on the theme of "Empowering Life," showcasing the history, culture, and heritage of the Kuwaiti people, as well as Kuwait's role in skill and energy development.

The architectural design of Kuwait's pavilion, dubbed "The Light-house of the Future," draws inspiration from Kuwait's distinctive architecture and is influenced by marine and desert environments.

First clinic tied to lymphocytic hyperplasia opens

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: Senior Plastic Surgery Specialist Dr. Hussein Al-Moussawi has confirmed the opening of the first specialized clinic for the management of lymphocytic hyperplasia in the country; indicating this clinic provides the best care for patients suffering from the disease, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a statement to the daily, Al-Moussawi expressed his pride in establishing the clinic; while stressing the importance of the services it offers to the community, and that these services are an essential part of the commitment to provide the best possible healthcare.

On the other hand, Dr. Khaled Al-Tarrah, plastic surgery specialist at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital, affirmed that

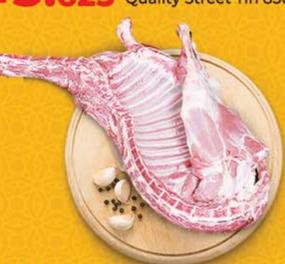
the establishment of this clinic is an important step in providing healthcare services to patients with lymphocytic hyperplasia. He added these services include lymphatic drainage, improving the patients' quality of life, and specialized and comprehensive care to alleviate their suffering and improve their daily lives.

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World News Roundup

Europe

Irish politician Simon Coveney steps down: Enterprise Minister **Simon Coveney**, one of Ireland's highest-profile government members, announced Tuesday he is stepping down from the government ahead of the election of a new national leader.

Coveney, 51, developed a high international profile when he served as Ireland's foreign minister between 2017 and 2022 during the turmoil over the U.K.'s departure from the European Union. Brexit had huge implications for Ireland, an EU member that shares a border with the U.K.'s Northern Ireland.



Coveney

Coveney has been minister for enterprise, trade and employment since December 2022.

Prime Minister Leo Varadkar stepped down last month as head of the center-right Fine Gael party, part of Ireland's coalition government, for "personal and political" reasons.

His replacement, 37-year-old Simon Harris, is due to be confirmed as Ireland's youngest prime minister, or taoiseach, next week by Ireland's parliament, the Dail.

Coveney, a member of Fine Gael, said on social network X that he'd told Harris "that I would not be making myself available to serve in cabinet when the Dail resumes next week."

Coveney told Irish broadcaster RTE that stepping aside would make it easier for Harris "to promote new talent in the party." He said he plans to remain in parliament as the lawmaker for Cork South Central. (AP)

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Student opens fire at Finland school, 1 dead: A 12-year-old student opened fire at a secondary school in southern Finland on Tuesday morning, killing one and seriously wounded two other students, police said. The suspect was later arrested.

Heavily armed police cordoned off the lower secondary school, with some 800 students, in the city of Vantaa, just outside the capital, Helsinki, after receiving a call about a shooting incident at 09:08 a.m.

Police said both the suspect and the victims were 12 years old. The suspect was arrested in the Helsinki area later Tuesday with a handgun in his possession, police said.

Police told a news conference that one of the wounded students had died. The other two were seriously wounded, said Chief of Police Ilka Koskimaki from the Eastern Uusima Police Department.

Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo posted on X that he was "deeply shocked" over the shooting.

In the past decades, Finland has witnessed two major deadly school shootings. (AP)

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Ukraine drones attack Russian facilities: Ukrainian drones attacked industrial facilities in the province of Tatarstan, Russian authorities said Tuesday, in what would be Kyiv's deepest strike inside Russian territory since the war began more than two years ago.

Seven people were injured in the attack on facilities near the cities of Yelabuga and Nizhnekamsk, located some 1,200 kilometers (745 miles) east of Ukraine, Russian regional authorities said.

The strike damaged a hostel for students and workers in a free economic zone where a factory manufacturing Iranian-designed drones is reportedly located, other media reports said. Tatarstan is known for its high level of industrialization.

Tatarstan officials said the attack didn't disrupt industrial production, while Nizhnekamsk's mayor said the attempt to strike a refinery was thwarted by air defenses.

Kyiv officials normally neither claim nor deny responsibility for attacks on Russian soil, though they sometimes refer obliquely to them. The Associated Press could not independently verify the reports.

Ukrainian drone developers have for months been extending the weapons' range, part of Kyiv's effort to compensate for its battlefield disadvantage in weapons and troops. The unmanned aerial vehicles are also an affordable option while Ukraine awaits more US military aid. (AP)

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'Suspects linked to Moscow attack': Russia's top security agency said Monday it has broken up what it called a "terrorist cell" in southern Russia whose members had provided weapons and cash to suspected attackers of the Moscow concert hall.

The Federal Security Service, or FSB, said that on Sunday it detained four suspected members of the cell in the Russian province of Dagestan in the North Caucasus.

The agency alleged that the suspects detained in Dagestan were involved in channeling funds and providing weapons to the gunmen who attacked the concert hall in Moscow's western edge on March 22, killing 144 people in the deadliest attack on Russian soil in two decades.

"The detained militants directly participated in financing the perpetrators of the March 22 terror attack on the Crocus City Hall in Moscow and providing them with terror means," the FSB said in a statement.

It said one of the suspects detained in Dagestan had confessed to personally bringing weapons to the Moscow attackers. (AP)

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Austria needs to deter Russian infiltration: The arrest in recent days of a former Austrian intelligence officer on serious allegations of spying for Russia suggests that Austria needs to boost its security to thwart Russian infiltration, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer said Monday.

The allegations against Egidio Ott, who worked for a now-defunct intelligence agency and whose arrest was announced Friday, are "grave" and have prompted the chancellor to call a meeting next week of Austria's National Security Council, he said. Ott has denied wrongdoing.

"On the one hand, these allegations have to be addressed by the judiciary. On the other hand, an evaluation and clarification of the security situation of the republic is needed," Nehammer said in a statement. "We have to avoid having Russian spy networks threaten our country by infiltrating or instrumentalizing political parties and networks." (AP)

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Norway plans increase in conscripted soldiers: Norway is to increase the number of conscripted soldiers from the present 9,000 to 13,500, the Norwegian government said Tuesday.

"We must have enough people with the right skills at the right time," Defense Minister Bjorn Arild Gram said. "We will need more people with professional military expertise going forward."

The country's armed forces will see a gradual increase in the number of conscripts for initial service each year, Arild Gram said, adding that several billion kroner (several hundred million dollars) will be invested in the Norwegian Armed Forces' facility at Terningmoen, north of Oslo, where the NATO member will gather all new recruits. He did not specify precisely how much oil-rich Norway will spend.

Norwegian news agency NTB said the aim was to reach 13,500 conscripts by 2036. (AP)

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New law will tackle hate crime - Scotland: A new law against hate speech came into force in Scotland on Monday, praised by some but criticized by others who say its sweeping provisions could criminalize religious views or tasteless jokes.

The Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act makes it an offense to stir up hatred with threatening or abusive behavior on the basis of characteristics including age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and transgender identity. Racial hatred was already banned under a law dating from 1986.

The maximum sentence is seven years in prison. The legislation does not specifically ban hatred against women. The Scottish government says that will be tackled by a separate forthcoming law against misogyny. (AP)

Scottish Minister for Victims and Community Safety Siobhan Brown said the new law would help build "safer communities that live free from hatred and prejudice." (AP)



Republican presidential candidate former US President Donald Trump attends a campaign rally in Waterford Township, Mich., Feb. 17, 2024. Trump is holding events on April 2, in Grand Rapids, Mich. and Green Bay, Wis., as he pressures President Joe Biden on immigration. (AP)

Politics

Ex-prez posted \$175m bond to avert asset seizure

Trump to go after Biden on border policy

LANSING, Mich., April 2, (AP) — Donald Trump was expected on Tuesday to attack President Joe Biden over his handling of the US-Mexico border when he visits Wisconsin and Michigan, both critical battleground states in the 2024 election.

Trump will first appear in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to deliver a speech about what his campaign calls "Biden's Border Bloodbath." He will then hold a rally in Green Bay, Wisconsin, on the day the state holds its presidential primaries.

Polls suggest Trump has an advantage over Biden on immigration issues as many prospective voters say they're concerned about illegal border crossings hitting record highs. In recent weeks, Trump and others in his party have seized on several high-profile cases of immigrants in the US illegally being charged with crimes, including the killing of Laken Riley, a nursing student in Georgia, for which a Venezuelan man is charged.

Trump on Tuesday was expected to discuss the killing of Ruby Garcia, a Michigan woman who was found dead on the side of a Grand Rapids highway on March 22. Police say she was in a romantic relationship with the suspect, Brandon Ortiz Vite. He told police he shot her multiple times during an argument before dropping her body on the side of the road and driving off in her red Mazda.

Records

Authorities say Ortiz Vite is a citizen of Mexico and had previously been deported following a drunk driving arrest. He does not have an attorney listed in court records.

"Under Crooked Joe Biden, EVERY state is now a border state. EVERY town is now a Border Town - because Joe Biden has brought the carnage, chaos, and killing from all over world, and dumped it straight into our own backyards," Trump spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt said in a statement previewing the former president's speech.

FBI statistics show overall violent crime dropped again in the US last year, continuing a downward trend after a pandemic-era spike. In Michigan, violent crime hit a three-year

low in 2022, the most recent available data. Crime in Michigan's largest city, Detroit, is also down, with the fewest homicides last year since 1966.

While Riley's family attended Trump's rally in Georgia last month and met with him backstage, it was unclear whether Garcia's family would attend. Trump told conservative Michigan radio host Justin Barclay on Monday that he'd "love to have her family there, if they'd like to be there - it'd be in my honor" and asked him to try to coordinate.

Her sister pleaded on Facebook last week for reporters to stop politicizing her sister's story.

Biden's campaign, which has been hammering Trump for his role in killing a bipartisan border deal that would have added more than 1,500 new Customs and Border Protection personnel, in addition to other restrictions, preempted the speech by accusing Trump of doing the same.

Tragedy

"Tomorrow, Donald Trump is coming to Grand Rapids where he is expected to once again try to politicize a tragedy and sow hate and division to hide from his own record of failing Michiganders," said Alyssa Bradley, the Biden campaign's Michigan communications director.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat, said Monday that there is "a real problem on our southern border" and that it's "really critical that Congress and the president solve the problem."

"There was a solution on the table. It was actually the former president that encouraged Republicans to walk away from getting it done," Whitmer said. "I don't have a lot of tolerance for political points when it continues to endanger our economy and, to some extent, our people as we saw play out in Grand Rapids recently."

Donald Trump posted a \$175 million bond on Monday in his New York civil fraud case, halting collection of the more than \$454 million he owes and preventing the state from seizing his assets to satisfy the debt while he appeals, according to a court filing.

A New York appellate court had given the former president 10 days to put up the money after a panel of judges agreed last month to slash the amount needed to stop the clock on enforcement.

The bond Trump is posting with the court now is essentially a placeholder, meant to guarantee payment if the judgment is upheld. If that happens, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee will have to pay the state the whole sum, which grows with daily interest.

If Trump wins, he won't have to pay the state anything and will get back the money he has put up now.

Appeals

Until the appeals court intervened to lower the required bond, New York Attorney General Letitia James had been poised to initiate efforts to collect the judgment, possibly by seizing some of Trump's marquee properties. James, a Democrat, brought the lawsuit on the state's behalf. Her office declined to comment Monday.

The court ruled after Trump's lawyers complained it was "a practical impossibility" to get an underwriter to sign off on a bond for the \$454 million, plus interest, that he owes.

The company that underwrote the bond is Knight Specialty Insurance, which is part of the Knight Insurance Group. The chairman of that company, billionaire Don Hankey, told The Associated Press that both cash and bonds were used as collateral for Trump's appellate bond.

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The judge in Donald Trump's April 15 hush-money criminal trial declared his family off-limits to the former president's rancor on Monday, expanding a gag order days after Trump assailed his daughter and made false claims about her on social media.

Manhattan Judge Juan M. Merchan amended a week-old ban on Trump making public statements about witnesses, jurors and others connected with the case after the presumptive Republican nominee lashed out at Loren Merchan, a Democratic political consultant in several posts on his Truth Social platform.



A woman places a photograph of a fallen Ukrainian serviceman on the Memory Wall, commemorating fallen Ukrainian military members, in Kyiv Ukraine, on April 1. (AP)



Biden

Scarsi

America

Judge won't dismiss Biden case:

A judge refused Monday to toss out a tax case against **Hunter Biden**, moving the case closer to the possible spectacle of a trial as his father campaigns for another term as president.

US District Judge **Mark Scarsi** denied eight motions to dismiss the indictment accusing President Joe Biden's son of scheming to avoid paying \$1.4 million in taxes while living an extravagant lifestyle.

Hunter Biden has pleaded not guilty to the nine felony and misdemeanor tax offenses filed in Los Angeles. His attorney, Abbe Lowell, contended the prosecution is politically motivated, among other arguments, but Scarsi found he had little support for the claims.

"Defendant fails to present a reasonable inference, let alone clear evidence, of discriminatory effect and discriminatory purpose," he wrote. (AP)

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'Limit legal liability': The owner and manager of a cargo ship that rammed into Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge before the span collapsed last week filed a court petition Monday seeking to limit their legal liability for the deadly disaster.

The companies' "limitation of liability" petition is a routine but important procedure for cases litigated under US maritime law. A federal court in Maryland ultimately decides who is responsible - and how much they owe - for what could become one of the costliest catastrophes of its kind.

Singapore-based Grace Ocean Private Ltd. owns the Dali, the vessel that lost power before it slammed into the bridge early last Tuesday. Synergy Marine Pte Ltd., also based in Singapore, is the ship's manager.

Their joint filing seeks to cap the companies' liability at roughly \$43.6 million. It estimates that the vessel itself is valued at up to \$90 million and was owed over \$1.1 million in income from freight. (AP)

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Crash injures multiple people: Multiple people were hurt Monday in a pileup involving as many as 30 vehicles at an intersection south of Midland, Texas, as high winds blew dust that made visibility difficult, the Texas Department of Public Safety said.

Texas Highway Patrol Troopers and

Upton County Emergency personnel responded to the crash along State Highway 349 around 4:50 pm.

The National Weather Service had is-

sued warnings about blowing dust and damaging winds for Monday afternoon in the area. Motorists were urged to use caution when traveling in West Texas.



Police officers at the scene of Viertola comprehensive school, in Vantaa, Finland, on April 2. One of three students who were wounded in a school shooting has died and the two others are seriously injured. The suspect, also a 12-year-old, was arrested later on Tuesday, police said. (AP)

Northeast of Midland in Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri and Illinois, severe storms with possible tornadoes, hail and flooding rain were moving through on Monday evening. (AP)

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Inmates sue state corrections: Inmates in New York are suing the state corrections department over the decision to lock down prisons during next Monday's total solar eclipse.

The suit filed Friday in federal court in upstate New York argues that the April 8 lockdown violates inmates' constitutional rights to practice their faiths by preventing them from taking part in a significant event.

The plaintiffs are six men with varying religious backgrounds who are incarcerated at the Woodbourne Correctional Facility in Woodbourne.

Thomas Mailey, a corrections department spokesperson, said the agency doesn't comment on pending litigation, but takes all requests for religious accommodations under consideration.

He said those related to viewing the eclipse are currently under review.

Daniel Martuscello III, the department's acting commissioner, issued a memo March 11 announcing that all state correctional facilities will operate on a holiday schedule next Monday. (AP)

Lat/Am

Gunbattle in Haiti

Peru's embattled prez replaces six ministers

LIMA, Peru, April 2, (AP): Peruvian President **Dina Boluarte** replaced six ministers after they resigned as her government is rocked by a political crisis fueled by an alleged illicit enrichment scandal involving luxury watches.

The Cabinet shakeup Monday came as lawmakers submitted to Parliament a request to remove her from office for "permanent moral incapacity" three days after police broke down the front door of her residence to search for the watches as part of an investigation.

The request was submitted by lawmakers from various parties including Peru Libre to which Boluarte once belonged. To remove Boluarte, the move requires 87 votes from the 130-seat unicameral Parliament, and so far, five parties that together have 54 votes expressed support for the president following the raid.

Boluarte is being preliminarily investigated for allegedly acquiring an undisclosed collection of luxury watches since becoming vice president and social inclusion minister in July 2021 and then president in December 2022.

Lawmakers in their request to remove her from office cite the investigation against Boluarte as well as countrywide problems, such as rising crime.

She has denied the illicit enrichment accusations.

Entered

Late Friday, armed police officers broke down the front door of Boluarte's house with a battering ram in search of Rolex watches. The raid marked the first time in Peru's history that police forcibly entered the home of a sitting president.

The probe began in mid-March after a TV show spotlighted Boluarte wearing a Rolex watch that is worth up to \$14,000 in Peru. Other TV shows later mentioned at least two more Rolexes.

Boluarte, a 61-year-old lawyer, was a modest district official before entering then-President Pedro Castillo's government on a monthly salary of \$8,136 in July 2021. Boluarte later assumed the presidency with a lower salary of \$4,200 per month. Shortly thereafter, she began to display the luxury watches.

she did not list the three watches in an obligatory asset declaration form. On Monday, Boluarte initially lost three Cabinet members when the ministers of interior, education and women abruptly resigned.

Interior Minister Víctor Torres told reporters his resignation was due to a family matter while the heads of the Ministry of Women, Nancy Tolentino, and of Education, Miriam Ponce, did not offer reasons in the announcements they shared on social media.

Argentina, Colombia avert diplomatic crisis:

Argentina and Colombia have agreed to end a diplomatic spat that escalated over right-wing Argentine President **Javier Milei's** visceral attack on his leftist counterpart in Colombia last week, prompting the country to order the expulsion of Argentine diplomats.

In a joint statement late Sunday, the foreign ministries of the two Latin American nations said they "have taken concrete steps to overcome any differences and strengthen this relationship."

Colombia said its ambassador that it had summoned from Buenos Aires would return there, and the Argentine government said its foreign minister would visit Bogota. Colombia also stepped back from its threat to expel Argentine diplomats, saying it would approve Argentina's newly appointed ambassador.

Tensions between Argentina's Milei and Colombian President **Gustavo Petro** have repeatedly erupted into bitter quarrels since Milei, a brash right-wing economist and former TV personality, burst onto the world stage last year. Past sharp exchanges include Milei calling Petro "a murderous communist," and describing socialists as "human excrement." Petro retorted that "this is what Hitler said."

This time, the contentious war of words between the populist presidents began with Milei branding Petro a "terrorist murderer" in an interview last week with CNN, a reference to Petro's past as a member of a left-wing guerrilla group. In response, Petro accused Milei on social media of isolating Argentina diplomatically and increasing its poverty rate with his libertarian policies.

Gunbattle paralyzes area in Haiti: Heavy gunfire erupted Monday in the downtown area of Haiti's capital as police battled gang members near the National Palace for several hours.

Local media reported that at least one policeman was shot after he and other officers were forced to flee an armored car that was later set on fire.

Scores of people were trapped by the gunfire in downtown Port-au-Prince while dozens of others managed to flee. One man who declined to provide his name out of fear for his life told The Associated Press that he was stuck for five hours until police rescued him.

"It's the armored car that covered us (so we could) leave the area," he said.

A spokesman for Haiti's National Police did not return messages for comment.

The latest gunbattle comes more than a month after powerful gangs began attacking key government infrastructure. They have torched police stations, opened fire on the main international airport that remains closed and stormed the country's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates.

The violence has somewhat subsided in certain areas since the attacks began on Feb. 29, but gunfire still echoes daily.

Candidate for mayor killed in Mexico: A candidate for mayor of a violence-ravaged city in Mexico has been killed just as she began campaigning.

Two authorities in the north-central state of Guanajuato said candidate **Bertha Gaytán** was shot to death on a street in a town just outside the city of Celaya. Mayorships in Mexico often included smaller surrounding communities. The authorities were not authorized to be quoted by name.

Video of the scene posted on social media showed a small procession of people shouting "Morena!" - the name of Gaytán's party. At that moment, several shots can be heard and people are seen running and falling down.

It was the latest killing in the increasingly bloody runoff to Mexico's June 2 elections. At least 14 candidates have been killed since the start of 2024.

Morena is the party of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who leaves office in September. The June 2 elections will decide his successor, as well as many state and municipal posts.



A news program airs a file image of a missile launch by North Korea at the Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea, on April 2. Inset: In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, (left), supervises artillery firing drills in North Korea on March 7. (AP)

Asia

Indonesia's President-elect Subianto visits China

'NKorea fires missile into its eastern waters'

SEOUL, South Korea, April 2, (AP): North Korea test-fired a suspected intermediate-range ballistic missile toward waters off its eastern coast Tuesday, South Korea's military said, as it pushes to advance its weapons aimed at remote US targets in the Pacific.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missile was launched from an area near the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, and flew about 600 kilometers (372 miles) before landing in the sea between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

Lee Sung Joon, spokesperson of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the launch likely followed up on a North Korean test in March of a solid-fuel engine built for a new intermediate-range hypersonic missile it has been developing. If perfected, such weapons could reach the US Pacific military hub of Guam and beyond, experts say.

Lee didn't specify why the South Koreans were assessing the missile as less than its capacity, but said the North Koreans were likely experimenting with new warhead technologies.

Assessment

Japan's Defense Ministry gave more details in its assessment, saying the missile flew about 650 kilometers (403 miles) while reaching a maximum altitude of 100 kilometers (62 miles) before landing in waters outside of Japan's exclusive economic zone. The Japanese military didn't immediately say whether it assessed the missile as intermediate range or something else.

Hours after the launch, Seoul's Defense Ministry announced that South Korea, the United States and Japan conducted a combined aerial exercise above waters near Jeju island that involved at least one nuclear-capable US B-52 bomber.

The United States in recent months has been increasing its deployment of strategic assets to the region, also including aircraft carriers and missile-firing submarines, in a show of force against North Korea. The South Korean ministry said Tuesday's training, which also involved the three countries' fighter jets, was aimed at enhancing their response capabilities against North Korean nuclear and missile threats.

It was the North's first known launch event since March 18, when North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised a live-fire drill of artillery systems designed to target South Korea's capital.

Japan's coast guard shared an as-

essment of the country's Defense Ministry that the missile has already landed but still urged caution for vessels passing the area.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters that no damage related to the missile has been reported. He said North Korea's frequent missile launches "threaten the peace and safety of not only Japan but also the region and the international security."

Tensions in the region have risen since 2022 as Kim used Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a distraction to accelerate his testing of missiles and other weapons. The United States and South Korea have responded by expanding their combined training and trilateral drills involving Japan and sharpening their deterrence strategies built around strategic US assets.

There are concerns that North Korea could further dial up pressure in an election year in the United States and South Korea. Following the March 19 test of the solid-fuel IRBM engine, Kim said the strategic value of such weapons would be just as important as his intercontinental ballistic missiles targeting the US mainland.

In recent years, North Korea has been focusing on developing more weapons with built-in solid propellants. Those weapons are easier to move and hide and can be made to launch quicker than liquid-propellant missiles, which need to be fueled before launch and cannot stay fueled for long periods of time.

Kim has also vowed to acquire hypersonic missiles that can overwhelm its adversaries' missile defense systems. Other weapons North Korea have tested this year include cruise missiles and "super-large" multiple rocket launchers aimed at the Seoul capital area.

Also:

BEIJING: Indonesian President-elect **Prabowo Subianto** pledged to continue his country's friendly policy toward China as he met Monday with Chinese leader **Xi Jinping** in Beijing.

Subianto, who will succeed **Joko Widodo** in October, chose Beijing for his first official visit after his February election victory in a bid to emphasize the countries' robust ties amid rising tensions in the **South China Sea**.

He will follow up his Beijing trip with a visit to **Japan**, suggesting that Indonesia will continue to pursue a middle road between Beijing and the **United States**' allies in the region,

such as Japan and the **Philippines**.

Subianto described China as **Indonesia's** "strong cooperative partner," according to a readout of his meeting with Xi, released by the official Xinhua news agency. The president-elect expressed his willingness to continue Widodo's "friendly policy" toward Beijing and promote cooperation in fields such as the economy, trade and poverty alleviation. He is set to also meet with Chinese Premier **Li Qiang** and Defense Minister **Dong Jun** before departing on Tuesday.

China became Indonesia's largest trading partner during Widodo's decade in office, with Beijing investing billions in major infrastructure projects such as the **Jakarta-Bandung** high-speed railway, which opened last October, and **Cirata**, Southeast Asia's largest floating solar power project, on a reservoir in **West Java**, 130 kilometers (80 miles) from the capital Jakarta.

Xi said China wanted to continue to build strong ties with Indonesia and referred to the Jakarta-Bandung railway as a "golden" example of the countries' cooperation, according to **Xinhua**.

Xi added China was willing to deepen maritime cooperation with Indonesia and provide it with support in poverty reduction and alleviation.

TAIPEI, Taiwan: Former Taiwanese president **Ma Ying-jeou** is visiting China to help build social and cultural links on a trip that will include a meeting with Chinese leader **Xi Jinping** despite heightened tensions.

Ma left Taipei on Monday with a student group on an 11-day trip that underlines continued interactions in education, business and culture despite Beijing's threat to use military force against the self-governing island democracy to achieve unification.

Toward the end of his second term in 2015, Ma held a historic meeting with Xi in Singapore, which has close contacts with both sides. The meeting - the first between the leaders of China and Taiwan in more than half a century - produced few tangible outcomes and Ma's Nationalist Party lost the next presidential election to **Tsai Ing-wen** of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party.

Current Vice President **Lai Ching-te**, despised by Beijing for his opposition to unification, was elected as Tsai's successor in January, although the Nationalists recovered a narrow majority in the legislature.



Mexico City mayor hopeful candidate Santiago Taboada addresses supporters during a rally in Mexico City on April 1. A candidate for mayor of a violence-ravaged city in Mexico has been killed just as she began campaigning. Two authorities in the north-central state of Guanajuato said candidate Bertha Gaytán was shot to death on a street in a town just outside the city of Celaya. (AP)



Africa

Congo appoints 1st female PM: Congolese President **Felix Tshisekedi** on Monday appointed the country's first female prime minister, fulfilling a campaign promise and taking an important step toward the formation of a new government after his reelection late last year.

Former planning minister **Judith Suminwa Tuluka** will step into the role at a time of worsening violence in the country's mineral-rich east, which borders Rwanda. The long-running conflict has displaced more than 7 million people according to the United Nations, making it one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Tuluka promised to work toward peace and development in her first speech on state television following her appointment. Still, it could be months before a new government is formed as the process requires intensive negotiations with the many political parties.

"My thoughts go out to the east and to all corners of the country, which today are facing conflicts with enemies who are sometimes hidden," she said, referring to the conflict that involves many armed groups, including some believed to be backed by Rwanda's military. "I'm thinking of all these people, and my heart goes out to them."

Far from the nation's capital, Kinshasa, eastern Congo has long been overrun by more than 120 armed groups seeking a share of the region's gold and other resources as they carry out mass killings.

Both regional and UN peacekeepers have been asked to leave Congo after the government accused them of failing to resolve the conflict. Violence has only continued to worsen as the withdrawal of personnel begins and Congolese authorities move into their positions. Bintou Keita, the top UN envoy to Congo, told the UN Security Council last week that the prominent rebel group known as M23 had made significant territorial gains in the east, which was contributing to the spike in violence and surging numbers of displaced people.

Reelected to a second five-year term in December, Tshisekedi has blamed neighboring Rwanda for providing military support to the rebels. Rwanda denies the claim but UN experts have said there is substantial evidence of their forces in Congo.

The United States last month urged Congo and Rwanda to walk back from the brink of war.

The US State Department also said Rwanda should withdraw troops and surface-to-air missile systems from eastern Congo and criticized M23, calling it a "Rwanda-backed" armed group.



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, Chinese President Xi Jinping (right) shakes hands with Indonesian President-elect Prabowo Subianto at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on April 1. Subianto pledged to continue his country's friendly policy toward China as he met Monday with Xi in Beijing. (AP)

The Rwandan Foreign Ministry said last month that the country's troops are defending Rwandan territory as Congo carries out a "dramatic military build-up" near the border.

Congo, Africa's second-largest country, has seen a recent upsurge in insecurity in its mineral-rich east, an area that has been

wracked by conflict for decades. More than 120 armed groups are fighting for land and power and, in some cases, protecting their communities. However, M23, the largest and best-known group, allegedly linked to neighboring Rwanda, has not engaged with Geneva Call.

Tshisekedi, who started his second five-year term in January, had made quelling violence in the eastern parts of the Central African country a priority in his first term - but has struggled to deliver results.

Sfrica speaker faces arrest: South Africa's parliamentary speaker faces imminent arrest over corruption charges after a court on Tuesday dismissed her bid to block police and prosecutors from arresting her.

Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, who is a senior member of the ruling African National Congress party, is accused of receiving bribes from a defense contractor while she was defense minister.

According to prosecutors, she received 11 payments totaling \$135,000 between December 2016 and July 2019. She sought another bribe of \$105,000 but that wasn't paid, prosecutors said.

Opposition lawmakers have called for her to step down from her position as speaker over the allegations.

Mapisa-Nqakula last week launched an urgent court bid to block her arrest, but a judge at the North Gauteng High Court in Pretoria dismissed her application on Tuesday.

oil soars

Kuwait oil price rose by USD 1.90 to USD 88.22 pb Monday via a vis USD 86.32 pb last Thursday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said Tuesday.

In international markets, the Brent crude futures climbed by 42 cents to USD 87.42 pb and those of the West Texas intermediate crude oil climbed by 54 cents to USD 83.71 a barrel. (KUNA)

KIPIC extends \$16B project bidding deadline

Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) has extended the bidding deadline for a contract worth \$16 billion to deliver alternative feeding systems for the hydrogen production unit at Al-Zour Refinery. The new deadline, set for May 19, replaces the previous deadline of April 14, reports Al-Qabas daily quoting MEED magazine.

The decision to extend the deadline comes shortly after MEED revealed KIPIC's considerations to adjust the project delivery schedule. A study is underway to determine the refinery's handling of heavy

oil and the specific requirements of various units. The contractors are expected to await the results of this study before finalizing their bids.

Since the project's inception last year, the bidding deadline has been extended multiple times. Initially set for June 20, 2023, it has been subject to revisions to accommodate ongoing developments.

The scope of the contract includes engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) works, encompassing pre-commissioning, and quality testing.

Qatar hosts Gulf Housing Week in May

Qatar will host the second edition of the Gulf Housing Week (GHW) in May 13-15 at the Qatar National Convention Center (QNCC). Qatar News Agency (QNA) mentioned, Monday, that the Qatari Ministry of Social Development and Family underscored the Housing Week event, labeling it as "an important platform for government entities and agencies across the GCC region."

Hosting this event provides a platform "to meet and exchange visions and ideas, and chart an advanced path to

achieve sustainable social development and family well-being," added QNA.

QNA highlighted the significance of the GHW, stating, "[it] is a significant pivotal forum for dialogue and cooperation between the main parties, decision and policymakers, housing sector experts, and innovators from the GCC countries."

Additionally, during the event, relevant issues will be explored and innovative solutions will be introduced to promote the growth and prosperity in the region. (KUNA)

Market Movements

02-04-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts		
SAUDI	- Tadawul	+53.58	12,476.59	PHILIPPINES	- PSEi	-19.38	6,960.43
UAE	- DFM	+6.11	4,269.40				
JAPAN	- Nikkei	+35.82	39,838.91				
PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	+130.00	66,919.13				

Business

Top advances in compliance training: 2023 learning & development program

National Bank of Kuwait receives Brandon Hall Group Bronze Excellence Award

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) received the coveted Brandon Hall Group Bronze Medal for its excellence in the "Best Advance in Compliance Training" in the Learning and Development program, acknowledging its outstanding training and development programs.

The award was presented to Mr. Emad Al-Ablani, GM -head of Group Human Resources by the representative of IQAD, the leading digital learning solutions provider at NBK HQ.

Brandon Hall Group employed an extensive set of criteria to select the winners of the 2023 Excellence Awards. These criteria were developed based on an assessment of the success of the compliance training in satisfying learning objectives and aligning with the business environment. They also examined whether the program's design was rooted in a well-defined business

goal and effectively supported compliance objectives. Furthermore, they ensured that compliance training positively influenced both organizational goals and learning outcomes and that the program produced quantifiable benefits and outcomes. Finally, these criteria sought to establish if the overall compliance training program positively impacted both learners and the organization.

Brandon Hall Group is a prominent global research organization headquartered in the United States. For over 21 years, the company has been dedicated to recognizing exceptional initiatives and best practices in various areas, including education, leadership development, the promotion of diversity and inclusion, and numerous other aspects related to human resources.

The Brandon Hall Awards for Excellence in Human Resources Management were initiated over two



NBK wins Brandon Hall Group Bronze Medal for compliance training excellence.

decades ago and remain a pioneering recognition program in education and development. These awards

consistently draw participation from companies spanning various industries and regions worldwide, includ-

ing government entities, private businesses, joint ventures, and non-profit organizations. Their enduring prestige and widespread recognition underscore their profound importance and esteemed reputation on the global stage.

The compliance training program stands as a crucial initiative in collaboration with IQAD, NBK's digital learning partner, tailored to meet the training requirements of employees and facilitate their comprehension and adherence to the bank's policies and procedures, as well as relevant laws and regulations. The program's training content is engaging, interactive, and extensive, incorporating various teaching approaches such as videos, simulations, and assessments. These methods ensure a more comprehensive understanding and practical application of compliance requirements.

NBK Training and Development

Department continually adapts its initiatives by recognizing the evolving requirements of the group's workforce. This includes introducing new educational opportunities to foster an open work culture and cultivating an environment that inspires employees to innovate and unleash their creativity.

NBK is consistently seeking inventive methods to streamline learning and improve its accessibility to benefit employees, all while placing a significant emphasis on the practical implementation of the acquired knowledge. Furthermore, NBK has cultivated exclusive training programs through collaborations with prestigious universities and institutions worldwide over the years. This strategic partnership ensures the delivery of exceptional, top-quality training tailored to meet the diverse needs of employees across various functional levels within the NBK Group.

Al-Shall report urges strategic re-evaluation of Kuwait's public spending amidst concerns

'Kuwait leads in per capita public spending'

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: According to a weekly report by Al-Shall, public spending should ideally be directed towards financing public services and investments in infrastructure, education, health, and other essential sectors, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The report noted that Saudi Arabia and the UAE exceed Kuwait in absolute public spending figures, with Saudi Arabia spending about \$315 billion and the UAE about \$136 billion in 2023, compared to Kuwait's \$86 billion. However, when considering per capita spending, Kuwait leads with approximately \$17.3 thousand per capita, followed by the UAE with \$13.6 thousand and Saudi Arabia with \$9.6 thousand.

Efficiency in public spending is typically measured by its impact on the overall economy or GDP. Despite Kuwait's substantial public spending, its economy ranks fourth among Gulf countries, lagging behind Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar. This indicates a decline in the contribution of public spending to economic growth, from 10.6% in 2013 to 8.0% in 2023.

Al-Shall's report highlights Kuwait's infrastructure as one area where spending has not translated into ideal standards, citing issues with roads and modernity. Similarly, indicators for education, public services, and efficiency in official transactions demonstrate Kuwait's lag compared to other countries in the region.

The report emphasizes that a significant portion of Kuwait's spending is allocated to current expenditures, with insufficient investment in capital spending to create sustainable job opportunities and achieve macroeconomic goals.

However, the report also acknowledges Kuwait's unique characteristics and does not advocate for blind imitation of other Gulf countries' experiences. Instead, it calls for a

Bank advises wealthy clients to embrace risk

HSBC reports Q2 2024 investment outlook, exploring opportunities in stocks and bonds

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: HSBC Global Private Banking is advising high net worth and ultra high net worth clients to consider taking on more risk and put their cash to work as the investment environment has become more attractive.

HSBC Global Private Banking's Q2 2024 investment outlook, A Fertile Ground for Investment Returns, shows that with the debate in the US shifting away from recession risks towards a soft landing, and potentially no landing, we have zero cash in our tactical asset allocation and have been taking an overweight position in both global equities and bonds.

The outlook also shows that there are many opportunities to put cash to work, although we remain selective and continue to focus on quality stocks and bonds over cheap valuations. Our four investment priorities are:

- Extending bond duration: As we approach the first Fed rate cut, which we expect to happen in June, we recommend locking in attractive bond yields and extend duration.
- Broadening US equity exposure: The US economy has been beating ex-



Georgios Leontaris, Chief Investment Officer.

pectations for 15 months and continues to surprise on the upside, and we expect the US equity rally to broaden beyond technology stocks to companies in additional sectors.

- Hedging tail risks: Volatility is bound to remain in our complex world, so we recommend alternatives and multi-asset strategies to broaden the opportunity set while achieving appropriate diversification.
- Diversifying Asian equity expo-

sure: In Asia, we continue to actively diversify as we await stimulus measures in China to translate into stronger growth, so we look towards India, Indonesia, South Korea and Japan for better returns.

Willem Sels, Global Chief Investment Officer at HSBC Global Private Banking and Wealth, said: "We think our investment priorities find the right balance between exploiting the opportunities while focusing on quality and limiting exposure to areas where risks are mispriced. Of course, risks remain in our complex world, but as we have seen, markets are happy to take some uncertainty in their stride as long as the earnings and rate fundamentals remain constructive."

Georgios Leontaris, Chief Investment Officer, Switzerland and EMEA, HSBC Global Private Banking and Wealth, said: "GCC economies continue to offer compelling investment opportunities, driven by long-term growth drivers including structural reforms, favourable demographics, and ambitious infrastructure programs supporting non-oil sectors."

new era focused on curbing corruption and improving the efficiency of public expenditures. It warns against the risks of runaway spending, emphasizing the need for a more strategic and efficient approach to budget allocation to ensure long-term stability and prosperity.

According to Al-Shall's report, total revenues collected by the end of the tenth month of the fiscal year 2023-2024 amounted to approximately 17.80 billion dinars, representing around 91.5% of the total estimated revenues for the entire fiscal year, which is about 19.46 billion dinars.

The report highlights that actual oil revenues as of January 31, 2024, reached about 16.35 billion dinars, or

95.2% of the estimated oil revenues for the entire fiscal year, which amounts to about 17.16 billion dinars. The average price of a barrel of Kuwaiti oil during the first ten months of the fiscal year stood at approximately \$84.1.

Non-oil revenues collected during the same period amounted to about 1.45 billion dinars, falling short of the estimated 2.29 billion dinars for the entire fiscal year. This suggests a potential shortfall of about 555.4 million dinars if revenue collection continues at the same monthly rate.

Regarding expenses, appropriations for new expenses for the current fiscal year were estimated at about 26.32 billion dinars, with actu-

al spending reaching approximately 17.18 billion dinars by the end of January 2024. Additionally, about 1.7 billion dinars were committed and treated as equivalent to expenses. This brings the total expenses, including actual spending and commitments, to about 18.89 billion dinars, with a monthly average expenditure of approximately 1.89 billion dinars.

Despite the Ministry of Finance reporting a deficit of about 1.09 billion dinars by the end of the tenth month, the report suggests caution in accepting this figure as final. It notes that the rate of monthly spending is expected to increase by the end of the fiscal year.

87% decrease in net losses

ACICO group reports stunning financial improvement in 2023

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: ACICO Group has witnessed a remarkable improvement in its financial performance for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2023. Net losses decreased substantially by 87%, totaling 6.1 million dinars compared to a net loss of 46.4 million dinars in 2022. Consequently, the loss per share decreased from 123.19 fils per share to 11.55 fils per share, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The company's operating profits surged to about 14.8 million dinars in 2023, marking a notable turnaround from losses of 29.5 million dinars in 2022. This achievement is attributed to the positive transformation undertaken by the company throughout the year.

Imad Al-Issa, Chairman of the Board of Directors, attributed this improvement to the successful implementation of the company's five-year strategy aimed at returning to profitability. The strategy focused on enhancing financial and operational performance, maximizing shareholder rights, restructuring financial obligations, and streamlining investments and assets.

Despite challenges such as fluctuating interest rates impacting profitability, ACICO Group continued to deliver products and services of the highest quality standards. Opera-

tional initiatives aimed at cost management, rationalizing expenses, and enhancing efficiency contributed to increased market share and operating profits.

While industrial sector revenues decreased by 8% due to external economic factors, total profits tripled to reach 11.6 million dinars, indicating the success of the company's restructuring plan. The real estate sector in Dubai also witnessed a 16% growth in revenues, supported by increased occupancy rates and rental prices.

Total assets at the end of the year amounted to 358 million dinars, with a slight increase over the previous year. However, total equity decreased to 37 million dinars in 2023, compared to 43 million dinars in 2022. The company is actively working on restructuring its debts to strengthen its financial position.

ACICO Group has revamped its organizational structure to enhance effectiveness and internal control. New executive cadres, including a new CEO, were employed to drive efficiency and cost reduction efforts.

Looking ahead, ACICO Group remains focused on quality, efficiency, and operational excellence as it progresses towards sustainable profitability.

OSN buys stake in Anghami at \$3.69/share

Anghami and OSN+ successfully complete milestone transaction

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: KIPCO - Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - announced that OSN's leading video streaming platform for premium content, OSN+, and Anghami Inc., a leading music and entertainment streaming platform for premium content, have successfully completed their landmark transaction after receiving all regulatory approvals.

OSN Group has acquired 55.45% in Anghami, giving it a majority stake at a valuation of \$3.69 per share, 1.9x the closing price of the stock on Thursday, March 28. This deal will result in a company with over 120 million registered users, circa 2.5 million paid subscribers

and close to US\$100 million in revenue at closing.

The combined entity brings together OSN+'s premium and exclusive library of 18,000 hours of video content with Anghami's rich catalog of more than 100 million songs and podcasts. Moreover, it will benefit from Anghami's strong tech stack, delivering an enhanced streaming experience with AI-driven hyper-personalization and soon to be announced best-in-class products.

Elie Habib, Anghami Co-founder and CTO, will lead the combined entity as incoming Anghami CEO, while Joe Kawkabani will remain as OSN Group CEO.



Anghami & OSN+ successfully complete milestone transaction, creating an entertainment powerhouse.

Bahrain's Salam Bank inks final deal to acquire KFH-Bahrain

MANAMA, April 2, (KUNA): Bahrain's Al Salam Bank said on Monday it has inked a final deal with Kuwait Finance House (KFH) to acquire the latter's entire share of KFH-Bahrain.

The final agreement has yet to be approved by concerned regulators, the bank said in a press release, adding that once the acquisition is completed, an integrated and smooth plan will be developed to unify relevant operations.

It added that it would reveal further information on the acquisition and potential changes after obtaining the required approvals.

The bank, further, reassured that it would keep the bank's operations and customers' services going on as normal.

Egypt to receive \$820 mln following reform deal

IMF confirms increasing Egypt's bailout loan to \$8 bln

CAIRO, April 2, (AP): The executive board of the International Monetary Fund confirmed a deal with Egypt to increase its bailout loan from \$3 billion to \$8 billion, in a move that is meant to shore up the Arab country's economy which is hit by a staggering shortage of foreign currency and soaring inflation.

In a statement late Friday, the board said its decision would enable Egypt to immediately receive about \$820 million as part of the deal which was announced earlier this month.

The deal was achieved after Egypt agreed with the IMF on a reform plan that is centered on floating the local currency, reducing public investment and allowing the private sector to become the engine of growth, the statement said.

Egypt has already floated the pound and sharply increased the main interest rate. Commercial banks are now trading the U.S. currency at more than 47 pounds, up from about 31 pounds. The measures are meant to combat ballooning inflation and attract foreign invest-

ment.

The Egyptian economy has been hit hard by years of government austerity, the coronavirus pandemic, the fallout from Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and most recently, the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. The Houthi attacks on shipping routes in the Red Sea have slashed Suez Canal revenues, which is a major source for foreign currency. The attacks forced traffic away from the canal and around the tip of Africa.

China's Q1 economy robust, higher rate than expected

China's economy welcomed a robust start in the first quarter of this year, the Bank of China reported on Monday forecasting a year-on-year gross domestic product (GDP) growth of about 4.8 percent, according to state-run Xinhua News Agency.

The global demand is warming up and international trade sentiment is on the

rise, which contributes to the rebound in China's export growth, the report said.

The intrinsic growth momentum of the economy has been strengthened, as consumption increased, manufacturing investment has accelerated, production has been steadily recovering, and the trend of industrial upgrading and transformation is evi-

dent. The report also mentioned that China's GDP growth for the second quarter will be around 5.1 percent.

Fiscal policy is set to significantly increase its support, utilizing a comprehensive range of policy tools to help maintain a high growth rate in infrastructure investment, the report added. (KUNA)

Microsoft splits Teams from Office

Microsoft will stop packaging its Teams videoconferencing app with its Office software after the practice attracted antitrust scrutiny.

The tech giant said Monday that customers buying Office subscriptions starting this week won't get Teams bundled with the service. Microsoft will start selling the two products separately around the world, follow-

ing a move last year to separate the products in Europe.

That was after the European Union's executive commission, the 27-nation bloc's top competition enforcer, opened a formal investigation over concerns that bundling Teams with Office gives the company an unfair edge over competitors.

The investigation was triggered by a complaint filed in

2020 by Slack Technologies, a maker of popular workplace messaging software.

Slack, owned by business software maker Salesforce, alleged that Microsoft was abusing its market dominance to eliminate competition - in violation of EU laws - by illegally combining Teams with its Office suite, which includes Word, Excel and Outlook. (AP)

Action in settlement of Chrome privacy case

Google to purge billions of files containing personal data

SAN FRANCISCO, April 2, (AP): Google has agreed to purge billions of records containing personal information collected from more than 136 million people in the U.S. surfing the internet through its Chrome web browser.

The massive housecleaning comes as part of a settlement in a lawsuit accusing the search giant of illegal surveillance.

The details of the deal emerged in a court filing Monday, more than three months after Google and the attorneys handling the class-action case disclosed they had resolved a June 2020 lawsuit targeting Chrome's privacy controls.

Among other allegations, the lawsuit accused Google of tracking Chrome users' internet activity even when they had switched the browser to the "Incognito" setting that is supposed to shield them from being shadowed by the Mountain View, California, company.

Google vigorously fought the lawsuit until U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers rejected a request to dismiss the case last August, setting up a potential trial. The settlement was negotiated during the next four months, culminating in Monday's disclosure of the terms, which Rogers still must approve during a hearing scheduled for July 30 in Oakland, California, federal court.

The settlement requires Google to expunge billions of personal records stored in its data centers and make more prominent privacy disclosures about Chrome's Incognito option when it is activated. It also imposes other controls designed to limit Google's collection of personal information.

Consumers represented in the class-action lawsuit won't receive any damages or any other payments in the settlement, a point that Google emphasized in a Monday statement about the deal.

"We are pleased to settle this lawsuit, which we always believed was meritless," Google said. The company asserted it is only being required to "delete old personal technical data that was never associated with an individual and was never used for any form of personalization."

In court papers, the attorneys representing Chrome users painted a much different picture, depicting the settlement as a major victory for personal privacy in an age of ever-increasing

digital surveillance.

The lawyers valued the settlement at \$4.75 billion to \$7.8 billion, relying on calculations based primarily on the potential ad sales that the personal information collected through Chrome could have generated in the past and future without the new restrictions.

The settlement also doesn't shield Google from more lawsuits revolving around the same issues covered in the class-action case. That means individual consumers can still pursue damages against the company by filing their own civil complaints in state courts around the U.S.

Investors apparently aren't too worried about the settlement terms affecting the digital ad sales that account for the bulk of the more than \$300 billion in annual revenue pouring into Google's corporate parent, Alphabet Inc. Shares in Alphabet rose 3% to close Monday at \$155.49, giving the company a market value of \$1.9 trillion.

Austin Chambers, a lawyer specializing in data privacy issues at the firm Dorsey & Whitney, described the settlement terms in the Chrome case as a "welcome development" that could affect the way personal information is collected online in the future.

"This prevents companies from profiting off of that data, and also requires them to undertake complex and costly data deletion efforts," Chambers said. "In some cases, this could have a dramatic impact on products built around those datasets."

Google is still facing legal threats on the regulatory frontier that could have a far bigger impact on its business, depending on the outcomes.

After the U.S. Justice Department outlined its allegations that the company is abusing the dominance of its search engine to thwart competition and innovation during a trial last fall, a federal judge is scheduled to hear closing arguments in the case May 1 before issuing a ruling anticipated in the autumn.

Google is also facing potential changes to its app store for smartphones powered by its Android software that could undercut its revenue from commissions after a federal jury last year concluded the company was running an illegal monopoly. A hearing examining possible revisions that Google may have to make to its Play Store is scheduled for late May.

France presses China on trade and Ukraine ahead of Xi's visit

French and Chinese officials in talks

BEIJING, April 2, (AP): The French foreign minister pressed China on trade issues and the war in Ukraine on Monday ahead of a planned visit to France by Chinese leader Xi Jinping later this spring.

Stéphane Séjourné, in talks with his counterpart Wang Yi in the Chinese capital, largely echoed positions that have been laid out by European leaders, including Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte on a visit to Beijing last week.

"The rebalancing of our economic partnership is a priority, as it is for our European partners," Séjourné said at a joint news conference with Wang. "The European Union is a very open market, the most open in the world. But the current deficits with a certain number of countries, including China, are not sustainable for us."

European officials have expressed concern that a flood of low-priced Chinese-made electric vehicles could disrupt production and displace jobs in Europe. The EU is investigating whether Chinese government subsidies for EVs give an unfair advantage to Chinese auto exporters. European companies operating in China are complaining that recent changes to national security laws have made it riskier to invest and do business in the country.

Raised

On the Chinese side, officials have raised concern about a "de-risking" strategy being pursued by the EU to ensure that it is not overly dependent on any one country for vital supplies and minerals. Wang expressed understanding for the European position but said he hopes it doesn't negatively affect business sentiment.

"I believe the facts have proved and will continue to prove that China constitutes opportunities for Europe, rather than risks," he said. "The two sides are partners not opponents."

He also said that China is willing to import more "high-quality French products and services" and is working to resolve the concerns raised by European companies, including restrictions on the transfer of data overseas.

Séjourné insisted that Europe is not becoming protectionist and remains open to investment, a possible reference to attempts to woo Chinese automakers and other companies to create jobs by building factories in Europe rather than exporting their products from China.

Neither foreign minister mentioned a Chinese anti-dumping investigation into imports of French brandy that, together with the EU electric vehicle probe, could be a



Yannick Lintz, president of the Guimet Museum, (foreground, 2nd right) and the Palace Museum director Wang Xudong pose for photos after signing documents during the opening ceremony of "The Forbidden City and the Palace of Versailles" exhibition, which celebrates the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between France and China, in the forbidden city, in Beijing, Monday, April 1, 2024. (AP)

Trump Media stock falls more than 21 pct after company discloses \$58m loss for '23

NEW YORK, April 2, (AP): Less than a week after a flashy stock market debut, Donald Trump's social media company on Monday disclosed that it lost nearly \$58.2 million last year, sending its stock tumbling more than 21%.

Losses in 2023 for Trump Media & Technology Group - whose flagship product is Truth Social - mark a stark decline compared with the profit of \$50.5 million that the former president's company reported for 2022, according to a company filing with securities regulators.

Revenue for Trump Media came in at \$4.1 million in 2023, the SEC filing shows, although that's up from \$1.5 million in 2022. After merging with a blank-check company called Digital World Acquisition Corp., Trump Media began trading March 26 on the Nasdaq stock market under ticker symbol DJT. And it's been a volatile ride.

Trump Media's shares soared in their first couple days of trading - surpassing \$79 at one point - but have since fallen closer to their initial offering price of \$49.95. The company's stock closed at \$48.66 after Monday's sell-off, meaning a lot of early investors are taking a hit.

Industry analysts have compared the fervor around Florida-based Trump Media to the meme stock

craze, which notably boosted shares of struggling companies such as GameStop and the movie chain AMC Entertainment to exorbitant heights in 2021.

On Monday, shares for these so-called meme stocks slid as well, with GameStop and AMC down more than 4% and 15%, respectively, at market close. And Reddit, another company that recently went public and has since been looped into meme stock frenzy comparisons, slumped nearly 7%.

Trump's social media site had been seen as a potential financial lifeline for the presumptive Republican presidential nominee as he faces an unprecedented onslaught of legal and financial challenges.

In addition to four criminal cases - which each come with their own expensive lawyers - Trump faces a \$454 million-plus civil fraud penalty after a New York state judge ruled that he and others at his company had schemed for years to dupe banks, insurers and others by inflating his wealth on financial statements.

Last week, Trump won a break when an appeals court cut the amount he needs to put up to pause collection while he appeals to \$175 million, which Trump has said he will be able to cover. But he must come up with the money by Thursday.

Trump previously put up a \$92 million bond after he was found liable for sexually assaulting and defaming writer E. Jean Carroll. The money is meant to ensure that she will receive a jury award for his verbal attacks against her if it survives appeals.

How much cash Trump will have left at the end of the week is unclear. Trump reported having about \$294 million in cash or cash equivalents on his most recent annual financial statement for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021.

After that, according to New York state lawyers, he added about \$186.8 million from selling the lease on his Washington hotel in May 2022 and the rights to manage a New York City golf course in June 2023.

Trump Media's move into the public market could also net the former president billions on paper - although there hasn't been an immediate payout yet. In Monday's filing, the company did not announce any changes to the provision that prevents insiders such as Trump from selling their shares for six months following its stock market debut. Still, some experts have speculated that the board might waive the provision for Trump and allow him to sell shares to help cover his legal bills.

Séjourné said France is determined to maintain a close dialogue with China to contribute toward finding a path to a lasting peace in Ukraine.

Prosecutors asked for less

Murdaugh gets 40 years for stealing from clients

CHARLESTON, S.C., April 2, (AP): For maybe the last time, Alex Murdaugh, in a prison jumpsuit instead of the suit he used to wear, shuffled into a courtroom Monday in South Carolina and was sentenced to 40 years in federal prison.

Murdaugh was punished - this time in federal court - for stealing from clients and his law firm. The 55-year-old disbarred attorney is already serving a life sentence without parole in a state prison for killing his wife and son.

Federal agents had recommended a sentence from 17 1/2 to just under 22 years.

Murdaugh also pleaded guilty in state court to financial crimes and was ordered to spend 27 years in prison. The federal sentence will run at the same time as his state prison term and he likely will have to serve all 40 years if his murder convictions are overturned on appeal.

U.S. District Judge Richard Gergel said he sentenced Murdaugh to a harsher punishment than suggested because he stole from "the most needy, vulnerable people," including a client who became a quadriplegic after a crash, a state trooper who was injured on the job, and a trust fund intended for children whose parents were killed in a wreck.

Murdaugh stole from people who "placed all their problems and all their hopes" on him, Gergel said.

The 22 federal counts are the final charges outstanding for Murdaugh, who three years ago was an established lawyer negotiating multimillion-dollar settlements in tiny Hampton County, where members of his family served as elected prosecutors and ran the area's premier law firm for nearly a century.

Murdaugh will also have to pay nearly \$9 million in restitution.

"There is a staggering human toll to every cent," said attorney Justin Bamberg, who represented several of Murdaugh's victims.

Prosecutors asked the judge to give Murdaugh a harsher sentence because FBI agents think he is not telling the whole truth about what happened to \$6 million he stole and whether a so-far unnamed attorney helped his criminal schemes.

Murdaugh's largest scheme involved the sons of his longtime

housekeeper Gloria Satterfield. She died in a fall at the family home. Murdaugh promised to take care of Satterfield's family, then worked with a lawyer friend who pleaded guilty on a scheme to steal \$4 million in a wrongful death settlement with the family's insurer.

In all, Murdaugh took settlement money from or inflated fees or expenses for more than two dozen clients. Prosecutors said the FBI found 11 more victims than the state investigation found and that Murdaugh stole nearly \$1.3 million from them.

Murdaugh again apologized to his victims at his sentencing Monday, saying he felt "guilt, sorrow, shame, embarrassment, humiliation." He offered to meet with victims so they can say what they want to say and "more closely inspect my sincerity."

"There's not enough time and I don't possess a sufficient vocabulary to adequately portray to you in words the magnitude of how I feel about the things I did," Murdaugh said.

Murdaugh blamed nearly two decades of addiction to opioids and said he was proud he has been clean for 937 days.

Gergel scoffed at this explanation. "No truly impaired person could pull off these complex transactions," the judge said of the maze of fake accounts, juggled checks and money movements that hid the thefts for nearly 20 years.

Prosecutor Emily Limehouse said Murdaugh's claims don't make sense because he told the FBI he was taking the same amount of pills as he did when his addiction started in 2008, but the amount of money he stole increased rapidly in the years before his arrest.

"He was adamant all of the money was spent on drugs. It doesn't add up," Limehouse said.

Murdaugh was convicted a year ago of killing his younger son Paul with a shotgun and his wife, Maggie, with a rifle. While he has pleaded guilty to dozens of financial crimes, he adamantly denies he killed them and testified in his own defense. There will be years of appeals in the murder cases.

The case has captivated true crime fans, spawning dozens of podcast episodes and thousands of social media posts.

United Airlines is asking pilots to take time off in May

WASHINGTON, April 2, (AP): United Airlines is asking its pilots to take time off in May because of delays in receiving new planes that the airline ordered from Boeing, which is struggling with production due to manufacturing problems.

A United spokesperson said Monday that the offer is voluntary. "Due to the recent delays in Boeing deliveries, our forecasted (flight hours) have been reduced and we are offering our pilots voluntary programs for the month of May to reduce excess staffing," spokesperson Leslie Scott said.

In a note to pilots obtained by The Associated Press, United said it expects to make similar requests

during the summer and possibly into the fall.

The Air Line Pilots Association said United is offering short-term leaves and unpaid time off, but they are not mandatory.

Boeing declined to comment.

United doesn't expect to get all the Boeing jetliners it ordered and was due to receive this year or next year. A month ago, United said it was contractually due 191 planes this year and 127 next year but expects to receive only 88 this year and 64 in 2025.

Almost all of the shortfall consists of Boeing 737 Max planes, including a new, larger model. United had planned to begin flying 80 Max 10 jets this year. The Federal

Aviation Administration has not yet certified the Max 10, however, and FAA approval is likely to be further delayed by increased scrutiny of Boeing since a panel blew out of an Alaska Airlines Max 9 in January.

United is considering options to replace orders for the Max 10.

Since the Alaska Airlines accident, federal regulators have been investigating production quality issues at Boeing, and the FAA has barred Boeing from increasing production of 737 Max jets.

United previously said that it expects to lose money in the first quarter because its Max 9s were grounded for inspections for three weeks after the blowout on the

Alaska plane. The Chicago-based airline is scheduled to release financial results April 16.

United CEO Scott Kirby is one of several airline executives who have called out problems at Boeing and sought a meeting with Boeing directors. Boeing announced last week that CEO David Calhoun will step down at the end of the year as part of a leadership shakeup at the company. The head of Boeing's commercial-airplanes unit has already been replaced, and the chairman of the board will not stand for reelection in May.

Shares of Boeing Co. fell 1.5%, while United Airlines Holdings was up less than 1% in afternoon trading Monday.

Unity in diversity

Ramadan ... tapestry of faith, community

By Chaitali B. Roy

Special to the Arab Times

Ramadan is my favourite and perhaps my busiest month of the year. There are many sides to Ramadan. For nearly 2 billion people worldwide, this month is rooted in faith, traditions, culture and spiritual introspection. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. The Holy Qur'an was believed to have been sent down from heaven and revealed to Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) during this month. Apart from fasting from dawn to dusk and engaging in prayers and charity, the month is also marked by social gatherings, cultural events and unique traditions. In the GCC, it is also a time for the family to gather and watch special television dramas made especially for this season. Interestingly, although, Ramadan is a time for fasting, prayers and community gatherings, it is also a time when people go berserk shopping. According to the Statista website, in 2023, the value of retail sales during Ramadan in the Middle East and North Africa was around 66 billion US dollars.

For first-time expats in Kuwait, Ramadan is quite an experience. Some find it difficult to adjust to the strict rules and regulations about abstaining from food or drink in public. They see it as a trial of endurance, but others accept that living in Islamic countries, they are bound by the laws of the host country. In Ramadan, the pace of daily life is slow during the day, but it picks up and reaches a feverish pitch as soon as the sun sets. The hustle and bustle returns, roads get very busy, and malls get busier than ever. For long-time expatriates, such as me, I embrace the experience. I wait for Graish, Gergian and Ghabga – all traditions unique to Kuwait, and I enjoy the community gatherings that encourage social cohesion and better understanding. To understand how other expatriates perceive Ramadan, the Arab Times spoke to people of different countries and different faiths to find out more.

Melody Mitchell

Retired Officer US Army, Businesswomen, Founder of Lean In (Kuwait)



Mitchell

Ramadan envelops Kuwait in a unique atmosphere, where tranquility and activity harmonizes seamlessly. Over ten years, I've grown to cherish this blend of reflection and community. It's a time marked by quiet contemplation amidst the energy of evening

events. Being invited to Iftars and Ghabgas is a privilege I sincerely appreciate. It offers moments of connection with friends amidst the backdrop of elegant traditions. Among these cherished customs, my annual Iftar with my Lean In Circle stands out. We have upheld this tradition for seven meaningful years. These gatherings during Ramadan serve as pillars of camaraderie and warmth, etching fond memories in our hearts. Moreover, the adjusted work hours during this period provide a welcome structure. They foster heightened focus and productivity. Within this framework, I seize the opportunity for personal growth. Each Ramadan brings with it a renewed commitment to self-improvement, connection and reflection.

Alison Shan Price, MBE

Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, Cultural Historian

During my forty years of living in Kuwait, I have been shown the utmost kindness and moral support in times of great happiness and sadness by people of the Islamic Religion. Ramadan, one of the five Pillars of Islam revealed by Prophet Mohammad

(PBUH), has taught me the importance of reaffirming Faith. It is a time of self-reflection (introspection) and the setting of personal goals aligned with the requirements of achieving a "higher self", one capable of selflessness, non-materialism and humanitarianism. Through abstinence and purification of body and mind, the human entity attempts to be in harmony with the Spirit it is part of, not in secular existence, isolated and alone. Ramadan unites people worldwide in prayer for a better world, and it deserves reverence and respect from all citizens of the world.

Ismael Pasha

French-Turkish Student

Ramadan in Kuwait is very different from the way I experienced it elsewhere. In France, the country not being Muslim, it is, above all, a personal matter, and most non-Muslims adapt their social and professional lives to accommodate the fact that they are often the only ones in their entourage to do it. In Kuwait, it is almost the opposite;



Pasha

life around us adapts to Muslims who fast: shops and restaurants are closed, class and work hours are adjusted, and since the majority of the population is Muslim, we feel more surrounded, which makes fasting easier.

However, it is not just a story of Muslim or non-Muslim countries! Having lived in Turkey, I was able to experience it there, and although the country is predominantly Muslim, there is no legal provision on this subject: shops and restaurants remain open, it is still possible to drink and eat in public, and this is explained by the fact that a large part of the Muslim population is not practising.

Melanie Halham

British School Teacher

As a British teacher working within a sizeable Muslim community in Birmingham, UK, the Holy month of Ramadan was not new to me. However, Muslims in Britain are fasting under incredibly difficult circumstances as food outlets are still open and they are surrounded by people at work, on the streets and in

restaurants all eating during daylight hours. I was always very respectful of the Muslim students and colleagues that I was working alongside - so not eating or drinking in front of people who were fasting was already something I was used to. However, when I moved to Kuwait in 2020, I saw Ramadan as a time not only of fasting but a time of great reflection, prayer and self-improvement. Family time is so important in Kuwait, more so during Ramadan and Eid. At school, students seem calmer, more focused and kinder towards each other during this time, and I'm impressed with how well my students cope with fasting. As a Brit living in Kuwait, I also take advantage of Ramadan to improve my diet. I don't tend to eat as much during school hours and I'm certainly drinking less coffee! I love seeing the Ramadan displays in the shopping malls and the sense that the whole of Kuwait is marking the Holy Month of Ramadan, together, as a community. I find this a great lesson for us all.

Antonio Campos

Portuguese Business Council

Living in the Middle East for the last 17 years and in Kuwait since 2015, I've experienced many Ramadans, and I believe I understand their meaning and what they represent to all Muslims. It's interesting to establish a cultural comparison between Ramadan and the Christian Easter, celebrated by all Christians in my country, Portugal. I realised there's a deep con-

nection between these celebrations in Portugal and Kuwait. This year, Easter and Ramadan are celebrated during the same period. Christian and Islamic practices emphasise finding closeness to God through prayer, fasting, and acts of charity, always within a community and family setting. Both encourage us to look inward, serve others, and

seek a deeper relationship with God. These practices help us grow personally and strengthen our family ties, key cultural values. In Ramadan, Iftar brings families together, as families in Portugal gather during Easter time. Such traditions highlight our shared values of generosity, compassion, and the importance of family. Experiencing Ramadan in Kuwait has deepened my respect for the universal values across cultures. The Easter and Ramadan traditions blend to show how faiths and cultures can enrich our lives and guide us toward a more compassionate and connected world.

Amani Abdelnurr

Egyptian Voice Artist

In Kuwait, we are introduced to many different cultures and religions. We, as Christians living in Kuwait, find it very easy to worship and pray inside our church compounds; we know and respect all the Religious rules of Kuwait. And since my dad was the first Arabic senior pastor at the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait we grew up knowing a lot about Islam and got involved in so many activities at church and religious gatherings. As a Christian living in Kuwait I was interested to learn more about other faiths when I observe the holy month of Ramadan I realise the significance of generosity towards many people. Like children, when they celebrate the Gergeaan, adults; when they enjoy feasting meals like Ghabga, Iftar and Sohur! It was a great surprise that in 2024, Christians also started fasting at the same time as Ramadan, but for the occasion of the Resurrection and Easter celebration, which came at the same time during Ramadan!

Huffrish Davar
Indian Homemaker
A Zoroastrian (Parsi) by birth, I moved from India to Kuwait, which



Abdelnurr

I would term a 'Paradise on Earth', 19 years ago. I thank the Almighty and my husband for this beautiful existence for the last 19 years. It was indeed a gateway to a better life with improved children's education, health, and social life. Most of all, it has been an immersion in a sea of nationalities and exploring their different cultures. The most significant of these has been Ramadan. Despite its importance, Ramadan is celebrated in Kuwait beautifully, subtly and classily, without the need for hype or fanfare. The luxury that represents Kuwait is transformed into a simple existence during Ramadan. Respect, humility, charity, and devotion are the guidelines the entire community follows, including locals and expats. We look forward to the Iftars and Ghabgas during this religious period. It is unquestionably a time when all faiths get together in a spirit of camaraderie that honours our essential human relatedness. My husband and I host Iftars with 50-75 friends during Ramadan. We have welcomed and honestly enjoyed this ritual every year since we moved to Kuwait. It is one of our ways of saying thank you to the beautiful communities that welcomed us into their home and practised love and harmony during this holy period. Our aim has always been to respect all religions and their traditions, and I am proud to say that our children aspire to have the same ideal.



Davar

Maria Zoghbi
Greek Restaurateur
Being a resident of Kuwait for the past 23 years, I see Ramadan as a celebration of vibrant lights, food, sweets, and many other gatherings. And it's also a month in which we learn to slow down and take things at ease. Although tasking, I can see it being anticipated by children and adults alike. Of course, I realise that, as in Christian lent at Easter time, Ramadan is a religious staple, a lesson in humility and self-control reflecting deep and meaningful teaching behind it. I am accustomed to the ambience and lifestyle during this holy month in Kuwait, and I keep discovering spiritual similarities with my culture. Indeed I realize that Ramadan is a month in which one is reminded to

Maria Zoghbi

Helen Newton
British Music Teacher
I have lived in Kuwait for almost 27 years now. Even though I am Christian, now that I am married to a Muslim, I view Ramadan slightly differently from how I used to view it. Before, I used to see Ramadan as an inconvenience, especially not being allowed to eat and drink in public and the restaurants being closed all day. Now, however, I am more tolerant of the Holy Month of Ramadan. My husband fasts from sunrise to sunset, which I view as a fantastic testament to his faith. I do not fast, but I am very mindful of not openly eating and drinking in front of him. At American United School, where I work, I find the fasting students to be more tolerant of each other. I particularly enjoy the special days of Gergean and hearing the Gergean songs. We have several Muslim friends, and we enjoy having Iftar with them. My husband and I look forward to celebrating Eid together in the coming days.



Zoghbi

show kindness, and to crave family togetherness and serenity with all beings, irrespective of creed or religion.

Gaurav Jai Kumar

Indian Professional

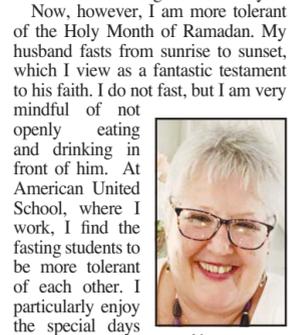
As a non-native resident of Kuwait, experiencing Ramadan in Kuwait offers a blend of cultural richness and religious observance. Throughout the day, the pace of life in Kuwait changes, with businesses adjusting their hours and many people spending more time praying, providing a deeper understanding of the spiritual significance of Ramadan in Kuwait. As the sunset approaches, you witness the communal spirit during Iftar, where families and friends gather to pray, followed by breaking their fast together and sharing their favourite traditional dishes. Last but most importantly, Acts of charity, such as giving food and money to those in need, are widely visible during the holy month of Ramadan, emphasizing the importance of giving back to society.

So, as a visitor/non-native resident of Kuwait, you get to witness Cultural richness, Communal spirit, acts of giving back to society and Spiritual significance.

Helen Newton

British Music Teacher

I have lived in Kuwait for almost 27 years now. Even though I am Christian, now that I am married to a Muslim, I view Ramadan slightly differently from how I used to view it. Before, I used to see Ramadan as an inconvenience, especially not being allowed to eat and drink in public and the restaurants being closed all day. Now, however, I am more tolerant of the Holy Month of Ramadan. My husband fasts from sunrise to sunset, which I view as a fantastic testament to his faith. I do not fast, but I am very mindful of not openly eating and drinking in front of him. At American United School, where I work, I find the fasting students to be more tolerant of each other. I particularly enjoy the special days of Gergean and hearing the Gergean songs. We have several Muslim friends, and we enjoy having Iftar with them. My husband and I look forward to celebrating Eid together in the coming days.



Newton

Over 800 participants of all ages joined the competition's third season

Zain awards winners of Alshaheed Park Ramadan Challenge

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: After 9 thrilling days, Zain awarded the winners of its third Alshaheed Park Ramadan Challenge that came in strategic partnership with Suffix Events. This year, over 800 participants joined the exciting competition to compete, collect kilometers, and top the leaderboard.

The winners were celebrated at Alshaheed Park - Phase 1, joined by Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al MUSAIBEEH, Suffix Chief Operations Officer Ahmad Al Majed, Zain and Suffix teams, and the first place winners in each category.

The competition's third season was a great success, with over 800 participants joining in four different age groups each for males and females: 20 years and below, 20-34 years, 35-49 years, and 50+ years. In addition, the Zain Kids Race was joined by over 280 children, and over 50 participants with special needs joined the Down's Syndrome Day race.

The challenge ran for 9 consecutive



Ahmad Al Majed honors Waleed Al Khashti in recognition of Zain's support.

days at Alshaheed Park and offered people of all ages a great opportunity to join by speed-walking or running at their own time and pace. Participants collected distance points based on how many kilometers they covered and competed to top the leaderboard. Those who wanted extra points joined the special workouts held at the park.

Zain's support to this unique sports initiative for the third year running sprung from the company's strategy to support health and sports programs in the community, especially during the Holy Month. In its past seasons, the Zain Alshaheed Park Ramadan Challenge was highly successful with thousands of adults and children joining in to promote a healthier, more active lifestyle during the month of fasting.

This year, six of Zain's strategic community partners, including Suffix, joined its annual Ramadan social campaign, Zain Alshuhor. The campaign featured a wide range of humanitarian, charitable, social, religious, health, and sports programs that continued throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Zain Alshuhor 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.



Hamad Al MUSAIBEEH joins in awarding the winners.

Smart Cities, AI, cybersecurity & more

AIU introduces new degree specializations for Fall 2024 semester

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: American International University (AIU), well-known for its dedication to excellence in American education in Kuwait, proudly presents a range of highly demanded specializations designed to equip students with essential skills for the future. With a commitment to meeting industry demands and stimulating innovation. Some of the specialized tracks AIU is offering are Artificial Intelligence (AI), Smart Cities, Cybersecurity, Data Science, Blockchain, Automation and Robotics, and more for the Fall 2024 semester.

In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, these specializations are at the forefront of industry growth and innovation. AIU's Artificial intelligence specialization empowers students to leverage machine learning, natural language processing, and computer vision by enabling intelligent automation, predictive analysis, and personalized user experiences in various sectors, from healthcare to finance. Similarly, the Smart Cities specialization addresses urbanization challenges by equipping students with skills in urban planning, transportation, and environmental sustainability, enabling students to create smarter, more efficient urban environments that enhance quality of life.

Furthermore, in an era of increasing cyber threats and digital vulnerabilities, AIU's Cybersecurity specialization prepares students to mitigate cyber threats with expertise in threat detection and security infrastructure management making AIU students invaluable assets to local and international organizations in different industries.

AIU's Blockchain specialization explores distributed ledger technology and smart contracts, empowering students to innovate in finance, supply chain management, and healthcare. Additionally, AIU's specialization in Automation and Robotics equips students with expertise in robotics engineering, control systems, and automation technologies, students can pursue careers in manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, and beyond.



American International University campus.

AIU's introduction of specialized programs in Kuwait marks a significant stride towards aligning education with industry demands and graduating generations of skilled professionals ready to excel in dynamic fields within Kuwait and the region. By offering specialized tracks in high-demand areas, AIU ensures that Kuwaiti students are equipped with the knowledge and practical skills necessary to thrive in today's competitive job market. This commitment to delivering industry-aligned education within their engineering undergraduate programs not only addresses skill gaps within Kuwait's workforce but also contributes to economic growth and societal advancement. AIU's programs empower students to drive positive change in their communities and beyond. With a focus on preparing students to tackle real-world challenges, AIU plays a pivotal role in shaping Kuwait's future as a hub for innovation, technological advancement, and sustainable development.

Obituary

Veteran actress of Hollywood's Golden Age

Barbara Rush, actress from Sinatra and Newman era, dies at 97

LOS ANGELES, April 2. (AP) Barbara Rush, a popular leading actor in the 1950 and 1960s who co-starred with Frank Sinatra, Paul Newman and other top film performers and later had a thriving TV career, has died. She was 97.

Rush's death was announced by her daughter, Fox News reporter Claudia Cowan, who posted on Instagram that her mother died on Easter Sunday. Additional details were not immediately available.

Cowan praised her mother as "among the last of 'Old Hollywood Royalty'" and called herself her mother's "biggest fan."

Spotted in a play at the Pasadena Playhouse, Rush was given a contract at Paramount Studios in 1950 and made her film debut that same year with a small role in "The Goldbergs," based on the radio and TV series of the same name.

She would leave Paramount soon after, however, going to work for Universal International and later 20th Century Fox.

"Paramount wasn't geared for developing new talent," she recalled in 1954. "Every time a good role came along, they tried to borrow Elizabeth Taylor."

Rush went on to appear in a wide range of films. She starred opposite Rock Hudson in "Captain Lightfoot" and in Douglas Sirk's acclaimed remake of "Magnificent Obsession," Audie Murphy in

"World in My Corner" and Richard Carlson in the 3-D science-fiction classic "It Came From Outer Space," for which she received a Golden Globe for most promising newcomer.

Other film credits included the Nicholas Ray classic "Bigger Than Life"; "The Young Lions," with Marlon Brando, Dean Martin and Montgomery Clift and "The Young Philadelphians" with Newman. She made two films with Sinatra, "Come Blow Your Horn" and the Rat Pack spoof "Robin and the Seven Hoods," which also featured Martin and Sammy Davis Jr.



Rush

Rush, who had made TV guest appearances for years, recalled fully making the transition as she approached middle age.

"There used to be this terrible Sahara Desert between 40 and 60 when you went from ingenue to old lady," she remarked in 1962. "You either didn't work or you pretended you were 20."

Instead, Rush took on roles in such series as "Peyton Place," "All My Children," "The New Dick Van Dyke Show" and "7th Heaven."

"I'm one of those kinds of people who will perform the minute

you open the refrigerator door and the light goes on," she cracked in a 1997 interview.

Her first play was the road company version of "Forty Carats," a comedy that had been a hit in New York. The director, Abe Burrows, helped her with comedic acting.

"It was very, very difficult for me to learn timing at first, especially the business of waiting for a laugh," she remarked in 1970. But she learned, and the show lasted a year in Chicago and months more on the road.

She went on to appear in such tours as "Same Time, Next Year," "Father's Day," "Steel Magnolias" and her solo show, "A Woman of Independent Means."

Born in Denver, Rush spent her first 10 years on the move while her father, a mining company lawyer, was assigned from town to town. The family finally settled in Santa Barbara, California, where young Barbara played a mythical dryad in a school play and fell in love with acting.

She pursued drama at the University of California, Berkeley, then won a scholarship to the Pasadena Playhouse Theater Arts College.

Rush was married and divorced three times - to screen star Jeffrey Hunter, Hollywood publicity executive Warren Cowan and sculptor James Gruzalski.

Variety



Icon Award recipient Cher performs during the iHeartRadio Music Awards, Monday, April 1, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)

Television

Gillian Anderson, Rufus Sewell star in Prince Andrew drama

'Scoop' recreates royal media disaster

LONDON, April 2. (AP) As the past few weeks have shown, British royalty and the media can be an explosive mix.

The absence of the Princess of Wales after abdominal surgery in January sparked uncontrolled online speculation that was first heightened by the release of a manipulated photo, then eased by a video statement from Kate disclosing that she is being treated for cancer.

It's a reminder that when palace privacy meets public curiosity and the public interest, things can get messy.

For more evidence, watch "Scoop," a behind-the-scenes Netflix drama about a disastrous interview Prince Andrew gave in 2019 in response to allegations of sexual misconduct. Released on Friday (April 5), it stars Rufus Sewell as Andrew and Gillian Anderson as journalist Emily Maitlis, who grilled the prince for the BBC's "Newsnight" program.

The feature-length drama is a return to royal themes for "The X-Files" and "Sex Education" star Anderson, who played a leading role in series four of "The Crown," albeit as Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, not as a member of the House of Windsor. Anderson says the "complex" relationship between royalty and media needs reassessment.

"Whether that's (Prince) Harry and his cases against the tabloids and all of the truths around that that have come to the fore, or other aspects that are becoming more public knowledge, it probably needs a proper rethink," Anderson told The Associated Press.

Prince Andrew agreed to be interviewed to address reports about his friendship with financier Jeffrey Epstein - found dead in a New York prison in August 2019 while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges - and allegations by a woman that she'd had sex with Andrew when she was 17 and being trafficked by Epstein.

"Scoop" is based on a book by Sam McAlister, the tenacious producer who secured the interview. As played by Billie Piper, she promises the palace: "An hour of television can change everything."

That proved grimly true for Andrew. Under Maitlis' gentle but determined probing, the prince denied all allegations, failed to show empathy for the exploited young women and said Epstein had

"conducted himself in a manner unbecoming," which struck many viewers as an understatement.

He claimed he couldn't have been at a nightclub with his accuser on an alleged date because he was at a suburban Pizza Express restaurant with his daughter Princess Beatrice. He couldn't have been sweating on the dancefloor because an "overdose of adrenaline" during his time as a helicopter pilot in the 1982 Falklands War had left him unable to perspire.

McAlister recalled the "extraordinary" experience of being in the room as the interview was recorded inside Buckingham Palace.

"As a journalist, and an ex-lawyer, I knew profoundly that he was doing something that would change the course of his life and the course of life of everyone in the royal family," she said at the show's London premiere.

Settlement

Andrew initially thought the interview had been a great success, even giving Maitlis a tour of Buckingham Palace after it was recorded.

But he "stepped back" from public duties days after it was broadcast, and has not returned. In 2022 he reached an out-of-court settlement with his accuser, Virginia Giuffre, paying her an unspecified sum without admitting guilt.

Sewell, who spent up to four hours a day being transformed into the prince with makeup and prosthetics, said he tried to find "all of the contradictions" in Andrew. He saw a man whose self-image was forged through a lifetime of deference from those around him, and who played up to his tabloid image as a "naughty scamp" - "Randy Andy" in his bachelor youth, "Air Miles Andy" in his role as a British trade emissary.

Sewell said he felt Andrew's self-image was "dependent on the other party acquiescing to the idea that he is the prince."

"In order to maintain the idea of himself, he needs someone to play along," said the British actor, recently seen as a mischief-making ambassadorial spouse in "The Diplomat" on Netflix.

"And the interview is the process by which this fish

finds himself out of his bowl, gulping for air - because Emily Maitlis does not even need to be rude or aggressive, she just needs to not agree to her side of that contract. And suddenly he is a creature that cannot get the oxygen."

The show's recreation of the infamous interview is remarkably tense, even for viewers who have seen the real thing.

"We prepared completely separately and, and there was no rehearsal," Anderson said. "So when we came together to shoot the interview, it was on our first day of work together and we started the day sitting across from each other in those chairs and the cameras rolled. And so there was tension in and of itself."

"Scoop" is the first of two TV dramas based on the interview. Amazon's rival miniseries "A Very Royal Scandal" is due later this year, with Michael Sheen as Andrew and Ruth Wilson as Maitlis.

Anderson is proud that "Scoop" is a story with "four strong female leads in the ensemble." The cast also includes Keeley Hawes as Andrew's private secretary Amanda Thirsk and Romola Garai as "Newsnight" boss Esme Wren.

As for what the palace can learn from it, she said: "If this tells us anything, it would be that the royal family should never do an interview at all."

"But actually," she added, "I think what is amazing and what stands out is the importance of independent journalism, to hold authority to account and to at least attempt to get some semblance of the truth."

Also:

LOS ANGELES: "Lopez vs. Lopez," a comedy starring George Lopez and his daughter , returns for season two on Tuesday on NBC. The show is based on the ups-and-downs in George and Mayan's real-life relationship. Guest stars include Gabriel "Fluffy" Iglesias and Jaime Camil. Episodes also stream on Peacock.

Meanwhile, as the CW looks to establish a new identity as a major network, one of the four originals renewed for this TV season premieres the first week of April. Jared Padalecki's "Walker," debuts season four on Wednesday. "Walker" streams on Max.

NEW YORK: James Patterson is launching a true crime series on the streaming service Fox Nation. "Unsolved With James Patterson," hosted by the million-selling author, premieres Monday and will air in three segments.

According to Fox Nation, Patterson's series will include a trio of unsolved homicide cases: the death of a Louisiana school-teacher who became increasingly unstable and locked down in her home with guns and cameras before being found with a shotgun wound to the head; a Utah student who joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and soon after disappeared; and an altruistic San Francisco resident who disappeared and was later found dismembered.

"I was totally gripped by these cases," Patterson said in a statement. "The fact that they are real-life stories - and that we may help bring justice to the victims and their families - is very special."

The series will include interviews with friends, relatives and law enforcement officials.

Patterson, whose books have sold more than 400 million copies, has written numerous thrillers, along with nonfiction books about the Kennedys and John Lennon, among others. Last week, Fox Nation announced it had reached a deal with Martin Scorsese to host, narrate and produce an eight-part religious docudrama called "Martin Scorsese Presents: The Saints." (AP)

TOKYO: Japan's imperial family made an Instagram debut with a barrage of posts on Monday, hoping to shake off their reclusive image and reach out to younger people on social media.

The Imperial Household Agency, a government agency in charge of the family's affairs, posted 60 photos and five videos showing Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako's public appearances over the past three months.

The agency said they wanted the public to have a better understanding of the family's official duties and that Instagram was chosen because of its popularity among youth.

By Monday evening, their verified account Kunaicho_jp had more than 270,000 followers.

The first photo published was

of the imperial couple sitting on a sofa with their 22-year-old daughter Princess Aiko, all smiling as they marked New Year's Day. Other postings also included the Imperial couple's meetings with foreign dignitaries, including Brunei Crown Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah his wife.

A video of Naruhito addressing



Patterson



Masako

well-wishers during his Feb. 23 birthday celebrations garnered over 21,000 views in less than a day.

So far, the images are limited to the family's official duties and do not include private or candid moments. The agency said it was considering adding activities of other royal members.

"It's nice we get to see a bit of

their activities because we hardly know what they are doing," said Koki Yoneura, a 21-year-old student. "It's good that they seem to be a bit closer to us."

Yukino Yoshiura, also a student, said she was excited to see more posts about Princess Aiko. "Aiko-sama is close to our age and just graduated from university, so

I'm very happy to be able to see her images," she said, using a respectful honorific to refer to the princess.

However, both students said they didn't plan on following the royal family's Instagram account.

The Japanese imperial family's social media debut comes 15 years after Britain's royal family joined X, formerly Twitter, in 2009. (AP)

People & Places

Media

A journalist's journey

'DC roots equipped me for wartime diplomacy'

WASHINGTON, April 2, (AP): **Jacquelyn Martin** is a staff photojournalist with The Associated Press based in Washington. She covers politics at the White House and Congress and has traveled the world as a pool photographer covering every secretary of state since Hillary Clinton. She is also known for her self-driven enterprise feature packages for which she photographs, writes and records video. She was the last press photographer to photograph Nelson Mandela before he died.

Based in Washington for the AP, I cover a lot of high-stakes politics. I'm used to working in scrums, walking the fine line between being assertive while also using finesse to ensure access. Too aggressive and no one wants to work with you. Too soft and you'll get run over. When I started in 2006, female photojournalists in Washington were greatly outnumbered by men. While trailblazing colleagues like AP's Susan Walsh pushed boundaries long before I arrived, and more women have joined us in the years since, there were many years where I was the only female face in the photo scrums. It taught me a lot about walking that line, which was useful this past October.



Martin

On Oct. 11, 2023, I boarded a US Air Force plane to fly with Secretary of State Antony Blinken on his last-minute trip to Israel and the Middle East in an attempt to stop all-out war from spreading across the region in the wake of the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas against Israel. I was assigned as the photo pooler and tasked with providing pictures to US news outlets and the global wires with pictures of these frantic diplomatic efforts.

With one day's notice and no idea of how long we might be away, I packed lightly and prepped what captions I could, knowing everything could change at a moment's notice. Although I've covered the State Department, traveling as the photo pooler many times, under several administrations, I knew this story was urgent and that gave me a renewed sense of purpose.

Photograph

The Middle East can be a tough place to photograph under the best of circumstances. Access can be difficult, the press and officials can be intense, and you must be quite assertive. It's also less common to see female photojournalists there. Sometimes people not knowing what to make of you works in your favor. Add in volatile international politics, a brewing war and sky-high tensions, and that made it even more challenging. The assignment took on a greater sense of urgency, knowing that people's lives would be affected by the meetings I was covering. The adrenaline made it hard to sleep, but that was a good thing because it turned out we wouldn't be sleeping much. I knew my colleagues in the region were out in the field and in danger. Still, I had to do my best to document this one part of the larger story.

Right away I could sense the chaos, and thus an opportunity, to make more behind-the-scenes imagery than is usually possible. Being prepared and working the chaos to your advantage can lead to more story-telling moments. These photo sprays are often highly orchestrated. This time there was so much up in the air that I was able to quickly calculate where to position myself, slip in, do my job, and come away with more of a variety of scenes than normal. It helped that I've worked with the State Department team before; in fact, I was with them as the pooler for a trip to the Middle East just months before. You must show that you can do the work, that you won't get in the way. It helps to show them that if they work with you and trust your instincts, that images of their guy will go around the world.

I need to travel lightly on State Department trips. I wear all the gear on my body, even on the planes. There's no time to pack and unpack a camera bag. Traveling compactly comes in handy when you must push through a wall of Qatari official photographers or slip into photo opportunities quickly last minute because you had to sprint up from the back of a very long motorcade.

I'm not a photographer who covers war and conflict. I cover mainly politics. There was one overnight moment when we were being held outside in the middle of Israel's Ministry of Defense in Tel Aviv where alarms went off. Rockets were incoming and the press pool had to seek shelter underground. I felt the booms from the Iron Dome detonation. I hadn't experienced that previously, and it shook me. As a mother, I will admit to sending messages to my son to say I loved him, just in case. It seems sort of silly looking back, as we were in a safe place and so many people in the region were suffering much worse at that same moment. But it was scary and really brought home the seriousness of what had happened and how the situation could spiral.

Also:

NEW YORK: The Gannett and McClatchy news chains, publishers of more than 230 outlets including USA Today and the Miami Herald, have said they will stop using journalism from The Associated Press amid continued financial pressures for the news industry.

The decision by Gannett, the nation's largest newspaper chain, severs a century-old partnership. It "enables us to invest further in our newsrooms," Gannett spokeswoman **Lark-Marie Anton** said on Tuesday.

A memo from Gannett's chief content officer **Kristin Roberts** directed the chain's editors to stop using stories, videos and images provided by AP on March 25. The memo, obtained by The Associated Press, was first reported by The New York Times.

Shortly after, AP said it had been informed by McClatchy that it would also drop the service. A McClatchy spokesperson did not immediately return messages seeking comment.

Like most newspaper companies, Gannett and McClatchy have been struggling financially for several years. Gannett's workforce shrank 47% between 2020 and 2023 because of layoffs and attrition, according to the NewsGuild. The company also hasn't earned a full-year profit since 2018, according to data provided by FactSet. Since then, it has lost \$1.03 billion. The hedge fund Chatham Asset Management took control of the formerly family-owned McClatchy, with outlets in 30 U.S. markets, in a bankruptcy auction in 2020.

The AP was disappointed, considering there had been productive discussions with both news organizations, spokeswoman **Lauren Easton** said. The news cooperative remains hopeful that both chains would continue to support AP beyond their current contracts, she said.



Beyoncé, (left), accepts the Innovator Award as presenter Stevie Wonder looks on during the iHeartRadio Music Awards, Monday, April 1, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



SZA poses in the press room at the iHeartRadio Music Awards on Monday, April 1, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Variety

MEXICO CITY: Bands who play the thumping tuba-and-drums songs of northern Mexico on beaches in the resort city of **Mazatlan** appear to have emerged victorious this week after noise complaints had threatened to silence them.

But anybody who planned to witness the April 8 eclipse in a moment of awed silence will likely be disappointed. Mazatlan, on the Pacific coast, will be first place in **North America** where the path of totality will be visible.

Because of complaints from foreign tourists who like to observe the resort's sunsets in peace - or with a bit of soft music - a local hotel owner had suggested limiting the time or places where the bands could play. The bands usually wander the beaches, asking for a few dollars per song to play.

Their music is hardly conducive to reflection or relaxation - think of a frantic, speed-fueled polka with lots and lots of brass and snare drums, earning the bands the nickname of *tamboras*, or drums.

But after a protest march by the musicians turned into a violent scuffle with police last week, efforts to limit them appear to have been abandoned.

"The people are very conscious now, and they are defending their rights," President **Andrés Manuel López Obrador** said Monday. "This is how they make a living, and besides, this is a long-standing tradition ... and for that reason they protested and managed to get it reversed."

"What isn't good is the violence," López Obrador said. "But the Sinaloa bands, or the musicians of the Sinaloa bands, are completely within their rights to protest, just no violence."

While there never appears to have been any city-wide ban, at least one hotel had put up signs prohibiting the bands from offering their services to beachgoers.

Videos of the scuffles between musicians and police went viral last week, with some band members hitting police with drum sticks. Drums were turned into weapons.

Rubén Rocha, the governor of the northern state of Sinaloa, where Mazatlan is located, wrote in his social media accounts Thursday that "I do not share the idea of prohibiting the musicians of Mazatlan from carrying out their honest dignified work, that allows them to feed their families."

The issue came to a head when local hotel operator **Ernesto Coppel** posted a video urging that the bands be limited as to when or where they could offer to play. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: This year's **WrestleMania** is just days away, but the WWE's marketing campaign for its biggest premium live event of the year was kicked into overdrive months ago.

In February, three days before the Super Bowl, with all eyes on **Las Vegas**, WWE tried to snatch some of the NFL's spotlight for itself.

The sports entertainment company held a press conference in Las Vegas at the T-Mobile Arena, just down the road from the stadium where the Super Bowl was being played, to promote **WrestleMania XL**, a two-day event in **Philadelphia** that begins Sat-

The Conversation

TV series reflect changing views on Japan

'Shogun' resurfaces with new insights

By **Constantine Nomikos Vaporis**
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

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

In 1980, when James Clavell's blockbuster historical novel "Shogun" was turned into a TV miniseries, some 33% of American households with a television tuned in. It quickly became one of the most viewed miniseries to date, second only to "Roots."

I'm a historian of Japan who specializes in the history of the Tokugawa, or early modern era - a period from 1603 to 1868, during which the bulk of the action in "Shogun" takes place. As a first-year graduate student, I sat glued to the television for five nights in September 1980, enthralled that someone cared enough to create a series about the period in Japan's past that had captured my imagination.

I wasn't alone. In 1982, historian Henry D. Smith estimated that one-fifth to one-half of students enrolled in university courses about Japan at that time had read the novel and became interested in Japan because of it.

"Shogun," he added, "probably conveyed more information about the daily life of Japan to more people than all the combined writings of scholars, journalists, and novelists since the Pacific War."

Some even credit the series for making sushi trendy in the US.

That 1980 miniseries has now been remade as FX's "Shogun," a 10-episode production that is garnering rave reviews - including a near-100% rating from review-aggregation website Rotten Tomatoes.

Both miniseries closely hew to Clavell's 1975 novel, which is a fictionalized retelling of the story of the first Englishman, Will Adams - the character John Blackthorne in the novel - to set foot in Japan.

And yet there are subtle differences in each series that reveal the zeitgeist of each era, along with America's shifting attitudes toward Japan.

The original 1980 series reflects both the confidence of postwar America and its fascination with its resurgent former enemy.

World War II had left Japan devastated economically and psychologically. But by the 1970s and 1980s, the country had come to dominate global markets for consumer electronic, semiconductors and the auto industry. Its gross national product per capita rose spectacularly: from less than US\$200 in 1952 to \$8,900 in 1980 - the year "Shogun" appeared on television - to almost \$20,000 in 1988, surpassing the United States, West Germany and France.

Many Americans wanted to know the secret to Japan's head-spinning economic success - the so-called "Japanese miracle." Could Japan's history and culture offer clues?

During the 1970s and 1980s, scholars sought to understand the miracle by analyzing not just the Japanese economy but also the country's various institutions: schools, social policy, corporate culture and policing.

In his 1979 book, "Japan as Number One: Lessons for America," sociologist Ezra Vogel argued that the US could learn a lot from Japan, whether it was through the country's long-term economic planning, collaboration between government and industry, investments in education, and quality control of goods and services.

Clavell's expansive 1,100-page novel was released in the middle of the Japanese miracle. It sold more than 7 million copies in five years; then the series aired, which prompted the sale of another 2.5 million copies.

In it, Clavell tells the story of Blackthorne, who, shipwrecked off the coast of Japan in 1600, finds the country in a peaceful interlude after an era of civil war. But that peace is about to be shattered by competition among the five regents who have been appointed to ensure the succession of a young heir to their former lord's position as top military leader.

Imprisoned

In the meantime, local leaders don't know whether to treat Blackthorne and his crew as dangerous pirates or harmless traders. His men end up being imprisoned, but Blackthorne's knowledge of the world outside of Japan - not to mention his boatload of cannons, muskets and ammunition - save him.

He ends up offering advice and munitions to one of the regents, Lord Yoshi Toranaga, the fictional version of the real-life Tokugawa Ieyasu. With this edge, Toranaga rises to become shogun, the country's top military leader.

Viewers of the 1980 television series witness Blackthorne slowly learning Japanese and coming to appreciate the value of Japanese culture. For example, at first, he's resistant to bathing. Since cleanliness is deeply rooted in Japanese culture, his Japanese hosts find his refusal irrational.

Blackthorne's, and the viewers', gradual acclimatization to Japanese culture is complete when, late in the series, he is reunited with the crew of his Dutch ship who have been held in captivity. Blackthorne is thoroughly repulsed by their filth and demands a bath to cleanse himself from their contagion.

Blackthorne comes to see Japan as far more civilized than the West. Just like his real-life counterpart, Will Adams, he decides to remain in Japan even after being granted his freedom. He marries a Japanese woman, with whom he has two children, and ends his days on foreign soil.

However, the positive views of Japan that its economic miracle generated, and that "Shogun" reinforced, eroded as the U.S. trade deficit with Japan ballooned: from \$10 billion in

1981 to \$50 billion in 1985.

"Japan bashing" spread in the U.S., and visceral anger exploded when American autoworkers smashed Toyota cars in March 1983 and congressmen shattered a Toshiba boombox with sledgehammers on the Capitol lawn in 1987. That same year, the magazine Foreign Affairs warned of "The Coming US-Japan Crisis."

This backlash against Japan in the US was also fueled by almost a decade of acquisitions of iconic American companies, such as Firestone, Columbia Pictures and Universal Studios, along with high-profile real estate, such as the iconic Rockefeller Center.

But the notion of Japan as a threat reached a peak in 1989, after which its economy stalled. The 1990s and early 2000s were dubbed Japan's "lost decade."

Yet a curiosity and love for Japanese culture persists, thanks, in part, to manga and anime. More Japanese feature films and television series are also making their way to popular streaming services, including the series "Tokyo Girl," "Midnight Diner" and "Sanctuary." In December 2023, The Hollywood Reporter announced that Japan was "on the precipice of a content boom."

As FX's remake of "Shogun" demonstrates, American viewers today apparently don't need to be slowly introduced to Japanese culture by a European guide.

In the new series, Blackthorne is not even the sole protagonist.

Instead, he shares the spotlight with several Japanese characters, such as Lord Yoshi Toranaga, who no longer serves as a one-dimensional sidekick to Blackthorne, as he did in the original miniseries.

This change is facilitated by the fact that Japanese characters now communicate directly with the audience in Japanese, with English subtitles. In the 1980 miniseries, the Japanese dialogue went untranslated. There were English-speaking Japanese characters in the original, such as Blackthorne's female translator, Mariko. But they spoke in a highly formalized, unrealistic English.

Along with depicting authentic costumes, combat and gestures, the show's Japanese characters speak using the native language of the early modern era instead of using the contemporary Japanese that made the 1980 series so unpopular among Japanese viewers. (Imagine a film on the American Revolution featuring George Washington speaking like Jimmy Kimmel.)

Of course, authenticity has its limits. The producers of both television series decided to adhere closely to the original novel. In doing so, they're perhaps unwittingly reproducing certain stereotypes about Japan.

Most strikingly, there's the fetishization of death, as several characters have a penchant for violence and sadism, while many others commit ritual suicide, or seppuku. (AP)

urday. It plugged appearances by top stars including **Cody Rhodes** and **Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson**, who recently became a board member for WWE's parent company, TKO Group. The free event, which was live streamed on Peacock, was a bid to grab the attention of the thousands of football fans in towns, and potential viewers nationwide.

Thousands showed up for the event which didn't include any wrestling, but The Rock did slap Rhodes across the face, garnering 15.7 million views across all of



Obrador



Johnson

WWE's social media platforms in less than 12 hours. More than 4.7 million people watched the event live, making it the most-viewed outside the ring event in WWE history, according to the company. The press conference had more than 100 million views in less than 12 hours.

WWE released its **WrestleMania XL** video on the day of the Super Bowl. That video has amassed more than 5 million views and counting on WWE's account on X, formerly known as Twitter. (AP)

No evidence of person-to-person spread in Texas bird flu case

First case of human bird flu transmission from cow in US

ATLANTA, April 2, (AP) - A person in Texas has been diagnosed with bird flu, an infection tied to the recent discovery of the virus in dairy cows, health officials said Monday.

The patient was being treated with an antiviral drug and their only reported symptom was eye redness, Texas health officials said. Health officials say the person had been in contact with cows presumed to be infected, and the risk to the public remains low.

It marks the first known instance globally of a person catching this version of bird flu from a mammal, federal health officials said.

However, there's no evidence of person-to-person spread or that anyone has become infected from milk or meat from livestock, said Dr. Nirav Shah, principal deputy director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Genetic tests don't suggest that the virus suddenly is spreading more easily or that it is causing more severe illness, Shah said. And current antiviral medications still seem to work, he added.

Last week, dairy cows in Texas and Kansas were reported to be infected with bird flu - and federal agriculture officials later confirmed infections in a Michigan dairy herd that had recently received cows from Texas. None of the hundreds of affected cows have died,

US hospitals must obtain consent for sensitive medical exams

NEW YORK, April 2, (AP) - Hospitals must obtain written informed consent from patients before subjecting them to pelvic exams and exams of other sensitive areas - especially if an exam will be done while the patient is unconscious, the federal government said Monday.

New guidance from the US Department of Health and Human Services now requires consent for breast, pelvic, prostate and rectal exams for "educational and training purposes" performed by medical students, nurse practitioners or physician assistants.

The department's release said the

guidance was issued to "reiterate and provide clarity" regarding hospital consent requirements. Federal regulations previously mentioned obtaining consent for "important tasks" related to surgeries, and did not provide the level of detail about medical students.

If hospitals don't obtain explicit consent, they may be ineligible for participation in Medicare and Medicaid programs, and also may be subject to fines and investigations if they violate patient privacy laws, Office of Civil Rights director Melanie Fontes Rainer said.

Doctors and medical students sometimes perform exams of sensitive areas for training purposes when a patient is under anesthesia. At least 20 states have passed laws requiring a patient's consent.

HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra and other top health officials criticized these exams happening without explicit consent in a letter sent to teaching hospitals and medical schools Monday. The letter said hospitals need to set "clear guidelines to ensure providers and trainees performing these examinations first obtain and document

informed consent."

It's difficult to say how often these exams take place, experts said, or how often patients understand what they're consenting to when they sign forms before surgery giving broad consent for a range of procedures.

The letter is a "critical leap forward in protecting patients and medical residents," Scott Berkowitz, founder and president of the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, said in a statement.

"It's a shocking problem with a very simple solution - hospitals need to ask for consent clearly and explicitly," he

said.

Alexandra Fountaine, a medical student at Ohio University who testified in front of a state House committee against the practice, was skeptical that the letter would result in "actual policy or real change." But, she added, it made her feel more protected and respected.

"Something like that happening is my biggest fear," she said. "As women we're all afraid of being violated on a daily basis ... but when we're put in very vulnerable positions, like being anesthetized, I think that's especially terrifying."

Shah said. Since 2020, a bird flu virus has been spreading among more animal species - including dogs, cats, skunks, bears and even seals and porpoises - in scores of countries. However, the detection in US livestock is an "unexpected and problematic twist," said Dr. Ali Khan,

a former CDC outbreak investigator who is now dean of the University of Nebraska's public health college.

This bird flu was first identified as a threat to people during a 1997 outbreak in Hong Kong. More than 460 people have died in the past two decades from bird flu infections, accord-

ing to the World Health Organization.

The vast majority of infected people got it directly from birds, but scientists have been on guard for any sign of spread among people.

Texas officials didn't identify the newly infected person, nor release any details about what brought them in

contact with the cows.

The CDC does not recommend testing for people who have no symptoms. Roughly a dozen people in Texas who did have symptoms were tested in connection with the dairy cow infections, but only the one person came back positive, Shah said.

It's only the second time a person in the United States has been diagnosed with what's known as Type A H5N1 virus. In 2022, a prison inmate in a work program picked it up while killing infected birds at a poultry farm in Montrose County, Colorado. His only symptom was fatigue, and he recovered.

'Forever chemicals' settlement

US confirms 'Havana Syndrome' symptoms at '23 NATO summit

WASHINGTON, April 2, (AP) - A senior Defense Department official who attended last year's NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, had symptoms similar to those reported by U.S. officials who have experienced "Havana syndrome," the Pentagon confirmed Monday.

Havana syndrome is still under investigation but includes a string of health problems dating back to 2016, when officials working at the US Embassy in Havana reported sudden unexplained head pressure, head or ear pain, or dizziness.

The injuries to US government personnel or their families were part of a "60 Minutes" report Sunday that suggested Russia is behind the incidents, one of which took place during the 2023 NATO summit in Vilnius.

"I can confirm that a senior DOD official experienced symptoms similar to those reported in anomalous health incidents," deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh told reporters Monday. Singh referred questions on whether Russia had a role to the intelligence community, which is still investigating.

The official, who was not identified, was not part of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's official traveling delegation to Vilnius, Singh said, but was there "separately, attending meetings that were part of the NATO summit."

Singh did not say whether the affected defense official had to seek further medical care, retire or cease performing duties, citing medical privacy.

In February the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in its 2024 threat assessment found that it was "unlikely" that a foreign adversary was responsible for causing the mysterious ailments but noted that U.S. intelligence agencies had varying levels of confidence in that assessment.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller told reporters on Monday the department has confidence in that assessment.

"It has been the broad conclusion of the intelligence community since March 2023 that is unlikely a foreign adversary is responsible for these anomalous health incidents," Miller said. "It's something that the intelligence community has investigated extensively and continues to look at. We will look at new information as it comes in and make assessments in-

side the State Department and with our intelligence community."

The foremost Cuba-based researcher of the incidents, Mitchell Valdés-Sosa, told The Associated Press that the "60 Minutes" report had failed to provide any scientific basis to substantiate the existence of the Havana syndrome. Valdés-Sosa, director of Cuba's Center for Neuroscience, is the de facto spokesperson on the issue for the Cuban health ministry, which arranged the interview.

"I think that this journalistic investigation does not provide serious elements, especially that there is a new illness caused by a mysterious energy," he said. "The symptoms are very varied: balance problems, sleep problems, dizziness, difficulties concentrating, and many diseases can cause them."

In the past, Valdés-Sosa hasn't disputed that diplomats become ill, but suggested that many of the cases consisted of ordinary illnesses that were erroneously blamed on the supposed phenomenon due to the high degree of public attention.

Forever chemicals: Chemical manufacturer 3M will begin payments starting in the third quarter to many US public drinking water systems as part of a multi-billion-dollar settlement over contamination with potentially harmful compounds used in firefighting foam and several consumer products, the company said.

St. Paul, Minnesota-based 3M announced Monday that last year's lawsuit settlement received final approval from the US District Court in Charleston, South Carolina.

The agreement called for payouts through 2036. Depending on what additional contamination is found, the amount paid out will range from \$10.5 billion to \$12.5 billion.

"This is yet another important step forward for 3M as we continue to deliver on our priorities. The final approval of this settlement and continued progress toward exiting all PFAS manufacturing by the end of 2025 will further our efforts to reduce risk and uncertainty as we move forward," 3M's chairman and CEO, Mike Roman, said in a news release.

The Conversation

Getting your heart pumping vital for fitness

Heart rate zones aren't foolproof for exercise intensity assessment

By Jason Sawyer
Bryant University

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

Aerobic exercise like jogging, biking, swimming or hiking is a fundamental way to maintain cardiovascular and overall health. The intensity of aerobic exercise is important to determine how much time you should spend training in order to reap its benefits.

As an exercise science researcher, I support the American College of Sports Medicine's recommendation of a minimum of 150 minutes per week of moderate aerobic exercise, or 75 minutes per week of high-intensity exercise. But what does exercise intensity mean?

There is a linear relationship between heart rate and exercise intensity, meaning as the exercise intensity increases, so does heart rate. Heart rate zone training, which uses heart rate as a measure of exercise intensity, has increased in popularity in recent years, partially due to the ubiquity of wearable heart rate technology.

The way exercise intensity is usually described is problematic because one person's "vigorous" may be another's "moderate." Heart rate zone training tries to provide an objective measure of intensity by breaking it down into various zones. But heart rate can also be influenced by temperature, medications and stress levels, which may affect readings during exercise.

The gold standard for determining aerobic exercise intensity is to

measure the amount of oxygen consumed and carbon dioxide exhaled. However, this method is cumbersome because it requires people to wear a breathing mask to capture respiratory gases.

An easier way is to predict the person's maximum heart rate. This can be done with an equation that subtracts the person's age from 220. Although there is controversy surrounding the best way to calculate maximum heart rate, researchers suggest this method is still valid.

Predict

The American College of Sports Medicine outlines five heart rate zones based on a person's predicted heart rate maximum. Zone 1, or very light intensity, equals less than 57% of maximum heart rate; zone 2, or light intensity, is 57% to 63%; zone 3, or moderate intensity, is 64% to 76%; zone 4, or vigorous intensity, is 77% to 95%; and zone 5, or near-maximal intensity, is 96% to 100%.

However, other organizations have their own measures of exercise intensity, with varying ranges and descriptions. For example, Orange Theory describes their zone 2 training as 61% to 70% of maximum heart rate. Complicating matters even further, companies that produce heart rate monitors also have higher thresholds for each zone. For example, Polar's zone 2 is up to 70% of maximum heart rate, while the American College of Sports Medicine recommends a zone 2 of up to 63%.

Zone training is based on the idea that how the body responds to exercise is at least in part determined by exercise intensity. These adaptations include increased oxygen consump-

tion, important cellular adaptations and improved exercise performance.

Zone 2 has received a lot of attention from the fitness community because of its possible benefits. Performance coaches describe zone 2 as "light cardio," where the intensity is low and the body relies mainly on fat to meet energy demands. Fats provide more energy compared to carbohydrates, but deliver it to cells more slowly.

Because fat is more abundant than carbohydrates in the body, the body responds to the cellular stress that exercise causes in muscle cells by increasing the number of mitochondria, or the energy-producing component of cells. By increasing the number of mitochondria, the body may become better at burning fat.

On the other end of the spectrum of exercise intensity is high-intensity interval training, or HIIT. These workouts involve exercising at a high intensity for short durations, like an all-out sprint or cycle for 30 seconds to a minute, followed by a period of low intensity activity. This is repeated six to 10 times.

Energy

During this sort of high-intensity activity, the body primarily uses carbohydrates as a fuel source. During high-intensity exercise, the body preferentially uses carbohydrates because the energy demand is high and carbohydrates provide energy twice as fast as fats.

Some people who turn to exercise to lose fat may eschew high-intensity training for zone 2, as it's considered the "fat burning zone." This may be a misnomer.

Researchers have found that high-

intensity interval training produces a similar increase in markers for mitochondria production when compared to longer, moderate aerobic training. Studies have also shown that high-intensity exercisers build muscle and improve insulin resistance and cardiovascular health similar to moderate-intensity exercisers, and they made these gains faster. The main trade-off was discomfort during bouts of high-intensity exercise.

With varying guidelines around heart rate zones and conflicting evidence on the potential benefits of training in each zone, exercisers may be left wondering what to do.

In order to yield the health benefits of exercise, the most important variable to consider is adhering to an exercise routine, regardless of intensity. Because the body adapts in similar ways to moderate- and high-intensity exercise, people can choose which intensity they like best or dislike the least.

Notice that the American College of Sports Medicine's recommendation for exercise falls under moderate intensity. This is equivalent to zone 3, or 64% to 76% of maximum heart rate, a range you can only meet in the upper levels of most zone 2 workouts. If you're not seeing desired results with your zone 2 workouts, try increasing your intensity to reach the moderate level.

A commonly reported reason for not exercising is a lack of time. For people short on time, high-intensity training is a good alternative to steady-state cardiovascular exercise. For people who find exercising at such a high intensity uncomfortable, they can get the same benefit by doing moderate-intensity exercise for a longer period. (AP)

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Sri Lanka poised to win second test and series in Bangladesh

Boult and Chahal set up victory cruise for unbeaten Rajasthan

Iowa tops LSU behind Caitlin Clark 41 points



UConn guard Paige Bueckers, right, hugs guard Nika Muhl after their win over Southern California in an Elite Eight college basketball game in the women's NCAA Tournament, Monday, April 1, 2024, in Portland, Ore. (AP)

Bueckers lifts UConn back to Final Four

ALBANY, N.Y., April 2, (AP) Caitlin Clark made nine 3-pointers and finished with 41 points and 12 assists as Iowa knocked defending national champion LSU out of the women's NCAA Tournament with a 94-87 victory on Monday night, advancing the Hawkeyes to their second straight Final Four.

Top-seeded Iowa (33-4) will play either UConn or Southern California in the national semifinals Friday night in Cleveland.

Monday's highly anticipated matchup was a rematch of last year's national championship game won by LSU, which drew a record 9.9 million viewers. Both teams wished that this meeting had come later in the tournament instead of with a Final Four berth at stake, but that was out of their control.

Clark, who also scored 41 points in the regional finals last year, and Angel Reese of LSU put on a memorable show for the sold-out crowd and the millions watching.

Flau'jae Johnson scored 23 points for No. 3 seed LSU (31-6), which fell short of becoming the first repeat champion since UConn in 2016. Reese finished with 17 points and 20 rebounds before fouling out with 1:45 left.

UConn 80, USC 73

In Portland, Ore., after being a spectator a year ago, Paige Bueckers is headed back to the Final Four after scoring 28 points and lifting UConn to a 80-73 win over Southern California in the women's NCAA Tournament on Monday night.

BASKETBALL

Bueckers outdueled fabulous USC freshman All-American JuJu Watkins, sparking a decisive run over the final five minutes that sent third-seeded UConn (33-5) to its 23rd national semifinal, the most of any school. Leading 65-64, the Huskies scored 11 straight points, including seven from Bueckers and a three-point play from Aaliyah Edwards to finally put away the top-seeded Trojans (29-6).

UConn will face Caitlin Clark and Iowa on Friday in Cleveland.

Edwards finished with 24 points, and this Final Four trip will rank as one of the most unlikely in coach Geno Auriemma's 39-year tenure. Bset by injuries that left them with only eight healthy players - including the loss of two starters - the Huskies managed minutes, fouls and exhaustion to win their regional final a year after seeing a string of 14 straight Final Four appearances snapped.

Bueckers was sidelined by a major knee injury last year when that streak ended. She was determined to get the Huskies back to that stage, and did it by hitting 11 of 23 shots and finishing with 10 rebounds and six assists.

A day after the NCAA belatedly realized the 3-point line at one end of the court at Moda Center was 9 inches shorter than the other, the Trojans and Huskies played on a corrected floor - albeit with the incorrect line still visible - with the final spot in Cleveland at stake.

And it was the Huskies celebrating at the end, although it was a shaky finish. UConn missed six free throws in the final minute and let a 12-point lead dwindle down to five.

Watkins concluded her freshman year by scoring 29 points, but UConn made it difficult for her to get clean

looks at the rim with regular double-teams and constant switching of defenders. Watkins took about 15 minutes to score the eight points needed to move past former San Diego State star Tina Hutchinson for the most by a freshman in NCAA history. Watkins' 3-pointer at the top of the key midway through the second quarter gave her the record.

Watkins missed eight of her next nine shots and UConn built a 12-point lead midway through the third quarter. USC rallied to pull even at 59-59 with 7:21 left after five quick points from Watkins and McKenzie Forbes' fourth 3-pointer of the game, but the Huskies pulled away late.

Forbes finished with 24 points and Rayah Marshall had 11 for the Trojans, who were seeking their first Final Four appearance since 1986.



Indiana Pacers' Jalen Smith (25) shoots over Brooklyn Nets' Mikal Bridges (1) during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, April 1, 2024, in Indianapolis. (AP)

Teen Uzun is starring in Germany's 2nd division

BERLIN, April 2, (AP) One of Germany's most exciting players isn't even playing in the Bundesliga.

Nuremberg teenager Can Uzun has 15 goals in the second division after scoring twice against Hertha Berlin this weekend.

Only three players have more this season than the 18-year-old, whose performances have captured the attention of a host of clubs. Uzun now looks certain to move this summer.

Uzun's second goal Saturday was the highlight in a game that ended 3-3 in Berlin's Olympiastadion. He got the ball on the edge of the penalty area and skipped past four Hertha defenders before tucking the ball inside the near post.

"I just dribbled off and when players try to stop me, I shoot, and it worked out very well," Uzun said.

His first goal was a shot from outside the penalty area inside the far post after taking a slight deflection from a defender.

It came just over a week after Uzun made his debut for Turkey in a 1-0 friendly loss to Hungary in Budapest.

"He's 18 years old and was able to celebrate his debut for his country's national team. It's something extraordinary," Nuremberg coach Cristian Fiel said. "Everyone dreams of it. I still dream of it. It won't come through anymore," the 44-year-old joked.

Uzun is comfortable with the ball at his feet facing defenders, and off-the-ball, running into dangerous positions from midfield. He can operate on the right and the left, and his composure and accuracy have helped drive up his goal tally.

The Regensburg-born Uzun could have played for Germany, which made efforts to lure him before he opted to keep playing for the country of his roots. He had already played for Turkey's youth teams.

"I listened to the sound of my heart," the player said on Instagram when he announced the decision last month.

"Such a decision is not a career decision like changing clubs, but a choice of the heart," Uzun told broadcaster Sky. "You have to feel the national team and my heart and gut told me Turkey was the right choice for me."

German soccer federation managing director Andreas Rettig wished him all the best.

"We've great respect for Can Uzun's decision to continue playing for the Turkish national teams, especially because of the good, open and honest exchange that (sporting director) Rudi Voller, (Germany under-21 coach) Antonio Di Salvo and I recently had with Can and his father," Rettig said. "We wish Can a lot of success on his future journey."

MUMBAI, India, April 2. (AP) Seamer Trent Boult and leg-spinner Yzvendra Chahal sank Mumbai Indians and Rajasthan Royals cruised to victory in the Indian Premier League on Monday.

Boult took 3-22 and Chahal 3-11 to restrict Mumbai to 125-9.

Rajasthan knocked that off with 27 balls to spare, Riyan Parag scoring 54 not out as they won by six wickets at 127-4.

Unbeaten Rajasthan moved atop the league table while winless Mumbai lost a third straight match.

Put in to bat at Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai was 20-4 in 3.3 overs. Boult struck twice in the first over, dismissing Rohit Sharma and Naman Dhir for first-ball ducks.

In a strange turn of events, Mumbai opted for an immediate impact substitution, subbing Dhir out of the game for Dewald Brevis, who was out for a first-ball duck, too. Boult had three wickets in 10 deliveries.

Ishan Kishan could also have gone but Rajasthan didn't review an lbw before Brevis' dismissal. Kishan was caught behind off Nandre Burger seven balls later though, on 16.

Mumbai skipper Hardik Pandya - booed again by the home fans at the toss - and Tilak Varma added 56 runs off 36 balls to revive Mumbai.

The revival was wrecked by Chahal. He got Pandya to hole out for 34 off 21, followed by Varma for 32 off 29. Piyush Charma was dismissed and Chahal had three wickets as Mumbai crashed to 95-7.

When Rajasthan batted, young Mumbai pacer Akash Madhwal picked up 3-20 but the hosts were never in with a chance.

Yashasvi Jaiswal was caught off Kwena Maphaka, and Jos Buttler and Sanju Samson were removed by Madhwal. Rajasthan was 48-3 in the seventh over and a comeback was envisioned, but that was quickly thwarted by Parag, who unleashed five fours and three sixes.

Parag raced to 50 off 38 balls for his second straight half-century.

Also:

LONDON: Ben Stokes ruled himself out of England's defense of the Twenty20 World Cup title in June.

Stokes made himself unavailable on Tuesday, hoping it will "be a sacrifice that allows me to be the allrounder I want to be for the foreseeable future."

He batted England across the line in the 2022 final against Pakistan in Melbourne with an unbeaten 52. But the growing pain in his left knee reduced his bowling, and he has played only two T20s since, in the Indian Premier League last year.

CRICKET

He delayed knee surgery to come out of one-day international retirement and help England in the Cricket World Cup last October in India. When England fell in the group stage, he had the operation in November.

Stokes recovered to captain England in the five-test series in India this year but didn't bowl until the last test in March, and only five overs (for one wicket).

He wants to continue to focus on being fully fit to bowl in the coming home test series against the West Indies and Sri Lanka.

"I'm working hard and focusing on building my bowling fitness back up to fulfil a full role as an allrounder in all formats of cricket," Stokes said in a statement released by the England and Wales Cricket Board.

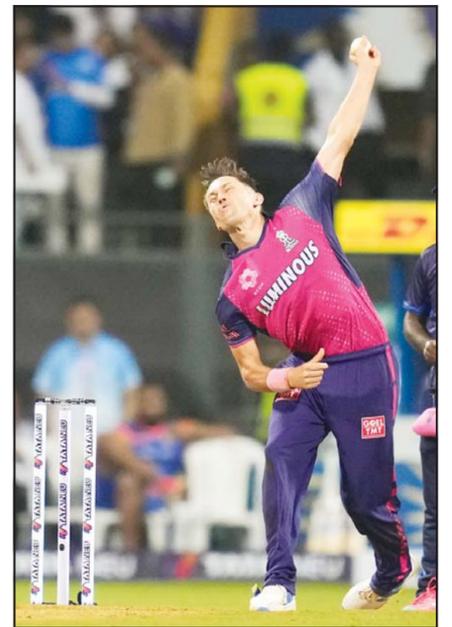
"Opting out of the IPL and the World Cup will hopefully be a sacrifice that allows me to be the allrounder I want to be for the foreseeable future."

"The recent test tour of India highlighted how far behind I was from a bowling point of view after my knee surgery and nine months without bowling. I'm looking forward to playing for Durham in the County Championship before the start of our test summer."

The T20 World Cup in the West Indies and United States starts on June 1.

Sri Lanka was closing in on victory and another test series sweep in Bangladesh after reducing the host to 268-7 in an improbable chase of a 511-run target on Tuesday.

Pacer Lahiru Kumara, left-arm spinner Prabath Jayas-



Rajasthan Royals' Trent Boult bowls a delivery during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Rajasthan Royals in Mumbai, India. (AP)

uriya and occasional bowler Kamindu Mendis took two wickets each to put Bangladesh in survival mode on day four of the second and last test.

Bangladesh barely forced a fifth day. At stumps, Mehidy Hasan was on 44 from 49 balls after hitting seven fours and Tajul Islam on 10.

They were 243 runs from an unlikely victory, but 511 was never on. Nobody could resist Sri Lanka's bowling.

Mominul Haque's second fifty in the series helped Bangladesh go past 200 for the first time in five test innings dating to December. But he was dismissed on 50 off 56 after hitting eight fours and one six.

Sri Lanka started the day batting and allowed Angelo Mathews to score his first half-century of the series and 41st in his career. Sri Lanka resumed its second innings on 102-6 and declared at 157-7 shortly after Mathews was bowled by Shakib Al Hasan for 56 after hitting five boundaries.

Prabath Jayasuriya was unbeaten on 28.

Sri Lanka posted 531 in its first innings, the highest total without any batsman scoring a century, and took a 353-run lead without enforcing the follow-on. Sri Lanka has never lost a test in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh batted eight overs without loss to lunch, then lost its first wicket in the second over after the interval.

Jayasuriya broke up the openers when he dismissed Mahmudul Hasan on 24.

Then pacer Vishwa Fernando got Zakir Hasan caught on 19 by Dhananjaya de Silva at first slip.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto reached double digits for the first time in the series but appeared uncomfortable throughout his stay before he was bowled on 20 by Kumara.

Mominul counterattacked and raised his 18th test fifty off 55 balls, pulling pacer Asitha Fernando down to fine leg for a single. He was out off the next delivery, top-edging a sweep of Jayasuriya straight to square leg.

Shakib and Liton Das came together at 132-4 and became Bangladesh's last great hopes. They fought for more than 16 overs, bridging tea, and combined for 61 runs, but were out in the space of four runs.

Shakib, playing his first test in a year, had 36 off 53 balls when he was baffled by Kamindu's huge turn and gave the bowler his first wicket in test cricket.

Kamindu also took out Shahadat Hossain for 15 before Liton was undone by a short delivery from Kumara and edged behind on 38.

Restart within acceptable guidelines: NASCAR

Gibbs has good problem after Hamlin's pit crew steals a win from dominant and agitated Truex

RICHMOND, April 2, (AP) Joe Gibbs probably expects the organizational meeting of his four NASCAR Cup Series teams to be somewhat challenging this week, even after a weekend sweep at Richmond Raceway.

After Chandler Smith led a 1-2-3 finish for Joe Gibbs Racing in the Xfinity Series race on Saturday, the owner had a humbled, very fortunate and grateful winner on Sunday night, and a disappointed, well-respected and normally very affable driver who dominated the race but fell victim to late circumstances that left him, at least temporarily, bitter.

Joe Gibbs Racing's Denny Hamlin went from third to first on pit road when a late caution sent everyone to their pits for an overtime two-lap sprint. Teammate Martin Truex Jr. went from almost certain victory to a fourth-place finish after challenger Kyle Larson spun to bring out a caution with two laps to go, sending all the contenders to pit road, where Hamlin's team won.

On the restart on Lap 406, Hamlin took off once he crossed into the restart area, which is the leader's prerogative, beat Truex into the first turn, held him off and won, leaving Truex angry after dominating the second half of the race and Hamlin gushing about his once-troublesome pit crew.

"I went right at it, for sure," Hamlin said of the restart. "I did that because I saw those guys rolling to me. The 22 was laying back. The 19 was rolling a couple miles an hour quicker than I was. I wasn't going to let them have an advantage that my team earned on pit road."

Truex was uncharacteristically miffed, side-swiping Larson on the cool-down lap, then bumping his teammate three times to express his displeasure.

"We got beat out of the pits and then - I don't know. He jumped the start and then used me up into Turn 1," Truex said, though NASCAR said the restart was within acceptable guidelines.

Gibbs was asked to assess the outcome.

"These things are so hard to win. So when you have an experience the way Martin did tonight, to race that hard. At one point when (Larson) was in front of us on the pit stop, he came right back and got it. He drove his heart out. Then to have a caution, we go that far, with three laps to go, it was devastating. We came out of there, came out second on the pit stop.

"Honestly, that's what I was trying to relate to everybody. You're happy for Denny, certainly, and everything that happened tonight for him, but then you see Martin, how hard he fought for this, how much he wanted it. That's part of our sport. It's really hard."

The victory was Hamlin's second through seven races, tying the Gibbs Toyota garage with the Chevrolets of Hendrick Motorsports with three victories this season. But even Larson seemed sympathetic to Truex, who he'd chased all night, unable to catch and pass him.

"Martin is probably the most respected guy in the garage area, so I was surprised when he turned left on me down the backstretch after the checkered," Larson said. "It's all good. I hope he doesn't have any hard feelings to

me because I definitely don't towards him.

"Like I said, I got a lot of respect for him."

Hamlin, meanwhile, praised his pit crew for the final stop. In the past few years, he's been more inclined to blame the over-the-wall guys for costing him wins. This time, he credited them.

Ironically, his crew used to be Truex's.

"I feel like I just went through a two-year period in 2020 maybe, 2021, where every time I came down pit road I

CAR RACING

was terrified. 'Please, only lose one spot.' It was bad for a really long time," he said. "It's just finally turned the page and we're going the other way now."

"These guys have been together I think for three consecutive years now. They were on Martin's team a few years ago, but they were young and making a lot of mistakes that first year."



Denny Hamlin celebrates after winning a NASCAR Cup Series auto race at Richmond Raceway in Richmond, Va. (AP)

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SPORTS

More Ajax 'turmoil' as CEO suspended

AMSTERDAM, April 2, (AP): Ajax's calamitous season worsened when the Amsterdam club suspended new CEO Alex Kroes on Tuesday and said it intends to fire him on suspicion of insider trading in the club's shares.

Kroes, who started at Ajax only last month as a permanent replacement for Edwin van der Sar, could not immediately be reached for comment. He posted a statement on LinkedIn saying he "cannot simply accept this decision of the Supervisory Board."

A successful sports administrator, Kroes was seen as a key to bringing

SOCCER

the struggling four-time European champion back to the top of Dutch and European soccer after a dismal start to the season when Ajax fell into the Eredivisie relegation zone and fired coach Maurice Steijn.

The club has risen to fifth in the Eredivisie but 28 points behind runaway leader PSV Eindhoven, and is looking to hire a new coach for next season.

"We are deeply dismayed that this has occurred at Ajax, as it is highly detrimental to the club and everyone who holds it dear to them," Michael van Praag, chairman of the supervisory board, said in a statement. Ajax said it suspended Kroes after discovering he bought more than 17,000 Ajax shares a week before his intended appointment was announced last August.



Sparty preparing for their debut match in the Georgian league.

A strong start for Sparty in the Georgian League

Sparty Club made an impressive debut in the Georgian League by securing their first victory against GAREJIL2 with a 2-1. This match marked

Sparty's inaugural appearance in the Georgia League, adding to their participation in the UAE League. Ahmed Mudath, the club's CEO,

expressed his immense joy at this triumph, particularly as the team's preparations for league participation were rushed due to delays in approv-

al from the Georgian Federation. Mudath emphasized the club's growing ambition to replicate such successes in the future, aiming to make a last-

ing impression in the tournament. He hopes that Sparty will maintain remarkable performance levels throughout the season.

Kuwait Club volleyball team inches closer to league title

Triple hopes alive



Kuwait Club player spikes the ball as opponents defend.

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: The Kuwait Club volleyball team moved closer to clinching the League title and securing the coveted "triple" triumph with a decisive victory over Al-Qadisiya, 25-20, 25-22, 25-21 in the first playoff match of the league final showcased their dominance.

This final series is set for three matches, and the team winning two of these matches will seize the league title in its 58th edition. The intense showdown unfolded at the Volleyball Association hall in the

VOLLEYBALL

Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, witnessing stellar performance from the Chinese professional player, Liu, who played a pivotal role in securing victory for his team.

The second confrontation between the two teams is scheduled for April 8. If Al-Kuwait secures another win, it will claim the championship. However, if Al-Qadisiya emerges victorious in the second match, the teams will proceed to a playoff match on the 15th of this month.

Historically, Al-Qadisiya has clinched the championship title 23 times, followed by Kazma with 15 titles and Al-Kuwait with 14. Al-Arabi and Al-Jahra have secured the title four and once, respectively.

Musleh Al-Rashidi, Director of Volleyball at the Kuwait Club, commended the outstanding performance of the Al-Kuwait players in the first playoff final match. He emphasized the team's determination to reclaim the title they earned last year and keep it in Kaifan. Al-Rashidi highlighted the significant support provided by the club's management to the volleyball team, attributing it to their success in securing the Super Championship and Al-Itihad earlier in the season, with the current aim set on achieving the prestigious "Triple" triumph.

A significant decision Al-Arabi shakeup: Darko out, Nasser Al-Shatti in as coach

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: Al-Arabi Club's Board of Directors made a significant decision, dismissing Bosnian first team Coach Darko Nestorovic and appointing Nasser Al-Shatti as his replacement. Assisting Al-Shatti is his brother Maytham Al-Shatti and technical analyst Ali Boland.

Darko's dismissal comes just days before a crucial match against Al-Qadisiya in the Kuwaiti football "derby" on Sunday, marking the third round of championship group competitions in the Premier Six League. This decision follows Al-Akhdar's recent 1-1 draw with Al-Salmiya, which caused them to slip from the top spot in the standings to second place with 46 points, trailing leaders Kuwait by just one point.

Although Al-Arabi acknowledged Darko's efforts in steering the team through adversity,

SOCCER

including injuries and numerical shortages, recent issues arose, such as the exclusion of midfielder Abdul Rahman Al-Dhafiri and reliance on Ali Aziz. Sources also hinted at Darko's desire to explore external coaching opportunities.

Since Darko assumed coaching responsibilities last November, he managed 13 matches, winning 10, drawing 2, and suffering one defeat to Kuwait. However, the team's elimination from the Prince's Cup semi-finals against Al-Qadisiya likely contributed to his dismissal.

Darko's departure marks the

eighth coaching change in the Zain Premier League this season, with only Syrian Firas Al-Khatib of Al-Fahaheel and Zahr Al-Adwani of Al-Nasr retaining their positions.

Following Darko's dismissal, Al-Arabi initiated negotiations with several potential coaches, including Croatian Ante Misha of Salmiya and Syrian Firas Al-Khatib of Al-Fahaheel. However, unable to secure their preferred choices, they turned to the Shatti brothers for interim leadership while searching for a permanent coach for next season. Al-Shatti brings considerable local experience, having previously coached Al-Qadisiya and Al-Arabi, as well as various youth levels in different clubs.



Nasser and Maytham Al-Shatti wave to the crowd in this file photo.

Al-Fatah Club secures final spot in the West Asian Table Tennis Championship

JEDDAH, April 2: Al-Fatah Club secured a spot in the final of the West Asian Table Tennis Club Championship, held in Jeddah. Meanwhile, Al-Tadamon finished sixth, and Al-Fahaheel Club seventh in the men's category, with Salwa Al-Sabah Club taking seventh in the women's category among the competing teams.

In the women's category, Al-Fatah Club triumphed over their Qatari counterparts, winning three games to two. Conversely, Salwa Al-Sabah Club suffered a defeat at the hands of Iraqi Military Industries, losing all three games.

In the men's category, Al-Tadamon emerged victorious over Al-Fahaheel with a score of three runs to two in the initial matches to determine positions from fifth to eighth. However, they faced a setback against Al-Sadd of Qatar, los-

TABLE TENNIS

ing three runs to one in the battle for fifth and sixth places. Al-Fahaheel, on the other hand, clinched victory over Al-Ahli Saudi Arabia with a clean sweep to secure seventh and eighth positions.

Sheikha Al-Hamad, from Al-Fatah Club, expressed confidence in the club's readiness for the West Asian Club Championship and the significance it holds. She hopes to bring home the first title for both the club and Kuwait in this tournament.

Al-Hamad emphasized the importance of achieving notable positions in the ongoing tournament to secure better standings for future participations. She noted that the club's recent participation in the 34th Arab Club Table Tennis Championship, which concluded last Thursday, served as motivation to excel in the current event.



Al-Fatah Club players pose for a group photo.

Hijikata defeats Eubanks in first round

HOUSTON, April 2, (AP): Rinky Hijikata won his first clay-court match at an ATP Tour event on Monday by beating fifth-seeded Christopher Eubanks in the first round of the U.S. Men's Clay Court Championship.

Hijikata, an Australian who is 80th in the ATP rankings, won 7-6 (4), 7-6 (2).

"Just managed to get through there. It wasn't looking good for a while," Hijikata said. "I think Chris didn't miss a first serve for a long, long time and I wasn't touching too many serves or making any. I'm just glad that I kind of just hung around long enough and managed to come up with a few good points

when I had to." Hijikata won 79% of his first-serve points.

"(I am) pretty resilient," said Hijikata, who played college tennis at North Carolina. "There are a lot

TENNIS

of things that can go wrong in clay-court tennis, especially when I feel like both of us haven't played too much on it. So I'm just trying to learn as much as I can, try and adapt, and then you learn how to try playing on this as well as I can. I'm just looking forward to the next one."

Gymnast Al-Razihan to compete in Sofia International Championship

KUWAIT CITY, April 2: Rhythmic gymnast Nour Al-Razihan is set to compete in the upcoming Sofia International Championship, scheduled to take place in the Bulgarian capital from April 4 to 7.

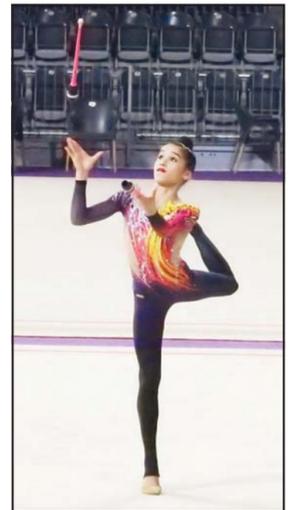
According to the Gymnastics Federation, Al-Razihan's participation in this championship is part of the strategic plan to gear up for the twentieth Asian Championship for Junior Women, slated to be held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The federation highlighted that the national team delegation traveling to Sofia will be led by Sheikha Al-Dabbous,

the mother of the athlete, Nour, and will include Ukrainian coach Hana Sputina.

Underlining the significance of Al-Razihan's involvement in the Sofia Championship as crucial

GYMNASTICS

preparation for the continental competition, the Federation expressed confidence in her ability to secure yet another milestone for Kuwaiti rhythmic gymnastics.



Rhythmic gymnast Nour Al-Razihan practicing for the championship.

Best of the Rest

Schooling retires: Joseph Schooling, who beat Michael Phelps in the 100-meter butterfly to win Singapore's first and only Olympic gold medal at Rio de Janeiro in 2016, announced his retirement on Tuesday.

It was the American swimming legend Phelps' last individual race of his career and came after Phelps won a record eight gold medals at the London Olympics in 2012.

"It comes a time when everyone has to flip the page, turn a new chapter. This is my time to do that, this is my official retirement," the 28-year-old Schooling said. "There are no regrets."

Schooling said he keeps in touch with Phelps on social media, and called the American a source of "inspiration" for him during his career.

"There is never any trash talk," Schooling said, smiling. "I would love to see him in Singapore. He's just an overall good guy."

Schooling holds eight Singapore records, six in individual events and two in the relays. (AP)

Germany withdraws jerseys: The German soccer federation and Adidas have stopped the sale of Germany jerseys with the number 44 because of a resemblance to the logo of the Nazi Party's notorious SS paramilitary units.

Adidas on Monday stopped offering the personalization of jerseys with names and numbers, and the federation halted the delivery of jerseys with the number 44 from its own online shop. (AP)



In this file photo, Singapore's Joseph Schooling shows off his gold medal in the men's 100-meter butterfly medals ceremony during the swimming competitions at the 2016 Summer Olympics, Friday, Aug. 12, 2016, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. (AP)

Sports

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Suns inch closer to Pelicans for No. 6 spot in West

Celtics cruise past Hornets

NEW ORLEANS, April 2, (AP): Devin Booker scored 52 points, the fifth-highest scoring game of his career, to power the Phoenix Suns to a 124-111 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans on Monday night, bringing them within a game of the Pelicans for the No. 6 playoff spot in the Western Conference.

Rebounding from a 128-103 loss to Oklahoma City on Friday night, the Suns (44-31) inched closer to New Orleans (45-30). The teams play again in Phoenix on Sunday.

Booker became the first NBA player since Wilt Chamberlain to score at least 50 points in three consecutive games against the same opponent.

In addition to his 52-point outburst in Phoenix's 123-109 victory over New Orleans in the Smoothie King Center on Jan. 19,

Booker scored 58 points against New Orleans in a 118-114 home win over the Pelicans on Dec. 12, 2022.

Suns coach Frank Vogel said he was in awe watching Booker's second 52-point game against the Pelicans this year.

Kevin Durant scored 20 points and Jusuf Nurkic added 19 points and 19 rebounds for the Suns, who led by as many as 25 points in the third quarter.

Durant said it was obvious Booker had it going in the first quarter, and the Suns made a concerted effort to get him the ball and screen harder to create more open space.

Pelicans coach Willie Green said there was no excuse for allowing Booker to go off, especially since they knew his history of burying the Pels.

Booker's first 24 points came on just nine shots from the field in the first quarter - he was 8-of-9 from behind the arc.

In Phoenix's 123-109 road victory over New Orleans on Jan. 19, Booker scored 25 points in the first quarter. His 24-point outburst in the first quarter Monday night gave him 76 points in his previous five quarters against the Pelicans.

The Suns built a wall around Zion Williamson on defense, and the Pelicans' leading scorer didn't take his first shot until late in the first quarter. Williamson finished with 30 points and five assists. Trey Murphy III added 21 points for New Orleans.

Booker has eight 50-plus scoring games in his career.



Booker

Celtics 118, Hornets 104

In Charlotte, Jayson Tatum had 25 points and 10 rebounds, Sam Hauser poured in 25 points on seven 3s and the Boston Celtics avenged an early season loss to the Charlotte Hornets.

Kristaps Porzingis added 20 points and Derrick White had 19 points and nine rebounds for the Celtics, who've won 11 of their last 13 games.

Hauser finished 7 of 11 from beyond the arc and the Celtics made 19 3s against the Hornets to avenge a 121-118 overtime loss on Nov. 20 when Miles Bridges hit a game-winning 3 with 6.6 seconds left.

BASKETBALL

Bridges paced the Hornets with 26 points and 11 rebounds, while Grant Williams added 23 points and Brandon Miller 19 points.

Grizzlies 110, Pistons 108

In Detroit, Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 40 points and Memphis held on for a victory over Detroit.

Cade Cunningham, who finished with 36 points, missed a tying 12-footer as time expired.

Jackson went 13 of 23 from the floor and 12 of 14 from the free-throw line. Former Piston Luke Kennard added 19 points for Memphis, which had lost three straight and seven of eight.

Detroit has lost nine of 10.

Magic 104, Trail Blazers 106

In Orlando, Franz Wagner scored 20 points and Orlando escaped with a win over struggling Portland.

Deandre Ayton missed an open baseline jumper at the final horn for the Blazers, who have lost 10 in a row.

Wendell Carter Jr. had 17 points and 13 rebounds and Jalen Suggs and Paolo Banchero each scored 15 points for the Magic.

Ayton had 20 points and 12 rebounds. Dalano Banton came off the bench with 26 points for Portland. Scoot Henderson, who set up Ayton with the final shot, had 13 points, nine assists and eight rebounds.

Pacers 133, Nets 111

In Indianapolis, Tyrese Haliburton scored 27 points and had 13 assists to lead Indiana to a rout of Brooklyn.

Despite being ejected for a flagrant foul midway through the third quarter, Pacers forward Jalen Smith had 17 points and 10 rebounds.

The Nets' Dennis Schroder was called for a technical foul for flailing on the follow-through and hitting Smith's face. Then Smith was called for a flagrant foul and ejected when he retaliated by pushing Schroder. The two had to be separated.

Pascal Siakam added 15 points and Obi Toppin had 14 for the Indiana.

Cam Thomas scored 22 points, Tandon Watford 21 and Mikal Bridges 19 for the Nets.



New Orleans Pelicans forward Zion Williamson is fouled by Phoenix Suns center Jusuf Nurkic (20) as he drives to the basket in the second half of an NBA basketball game in New Orleans. (AP)



Detroit Pistons guard Jaden Ivey (23) looks to pass as Memphis Grizzlies forward Brandon Clarke (15) defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Detroit. (AP)

Hawks 113, Bulls 101

In Chicago, Vit Krejci set career highs with 18 points and six 3-pointers, Bogdan Bogdanovic scored 20 and Atlanta beat Chicago in a matchup between potential play-in tournament opponents.

Krejci made all six field-goal attempts and surpassed his previous highs of 16 points and four 3s, helping Atlanta win for the fifth time in six games.

Dejounte Murray scored 17 points and Clint Capela added 15 points and 11 rebounds as the 10th-place Hawks moved within a half-game of the ninth-place Bulls in the Eastern Conference. Chicago owns the head-to-head tiebreaker after taking two of three from Atlanta and would host a play-in game if the teams finish tied.

DeMar DeRozan led the Bulls with 31 points. Coby White scored 22. Ayo Dosunmu added 15 points, and Andre Drummond had 13 points and 18 rebounds.

Fifth-placed Roma held to 0-0 at Lecce

Inter extend lead with win over Empoli as Bologna close in on Champs League

ROME, April 2, (AP) Inter Milan became the second team in Serie A history to score in the season's first 30 games when it beat Empoli 2-0 and edged closer to the title.

Only Juventus in the 2013-14 campaign scored in its first 30 games. In the big five European leagues this season, no other team has matched Inter's feat.

Inter extended its lead to 14 points on second-placed AC Milan. There are eight rounds left.

Empoli lost its last three games by 1-0 and it was a goal behind after just five minutes when Federico Dimarco turned in an Alessandro Bastoni cross.

Inter was on top throughout but it couldn't double its lead until the 82nd minute.

SOCCER

Alexis Saelemaekers made it 2-0 a minute from halftime.

Left back Charalampos Lykogiannis completed the scoring in stoppage time after working a neat one-two with Saelemaekers.

The result marked an unhappy debut for Salernitana coach Stefano Colantuono, the club's fourth coach this season.

Salernitana looks doomed to spend next season in the second tier. It is 11 points from safety.

Salernitana plays Sassuolo next Friday in a relegation six-point game made all the more urgent after Sassuolo surrendered a lead at home to Udinese.

Grégoire Defrel opened the scoring for the home four minutes before halftime following a defense-splitting pass from Mathieu Henrique.

However, Florian Thauvin equalized

from close range three minutes later.

The result will satisfy neither side as the search for points becomes more desperate.

Sassuolo remained second from bottom on the table, and although Udinese was five places above it, only four points separate them in a congested battle to avoid the drop.

Verona was in 15th place, above Cagliari on goal difference.

Fifth-placed Roma was held to 0-0 at Lecce. Good goalkeeping and profligate finishing ensured a stalemate.

Roma failed to score in the league for the first time since Daniele De Rossi took over as coach in mid-January but the point still means he has taken 23 points in his first 10 matches in charge, a feat bettered previously by only two other Roma coaches in the last 30 years.

'Gulf Cup 26 start date changed to Dec 21'

KUWAIT CITY, April 2, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Football Association disclosed on Tuesday, that the Gulf Football Association had revised the commencement date of the Gulf Cup 26, now set to begin on December 21, 2024, and conclude on January 3, 2025, in Kuwait. This adjustment was communicated via a statement on a social media platform (X), highlighting the alteration of the Gulf Cup 26 dates from December 13-26.

It's noteworthy that Kuwait has

been selected by the Gulf Football Association to host the Gulf Cup games for the fifth time, following previous occurrences in 1974, 1990, 2003, and 2017.

Kuwait holds the current record for the highest number of Gulf Cup titles, having emerged victorious 10 times. Following Kuwait, Iraq has secured four wins, while Saudi Arabia and Qatar have three each. Oman and the UAE have clinched two wins apiece, and Bahrain has secured one victory.

Atletico edge Villarreal to snap 2-game losing streak

MADRID, April 2, (AP): Atletico Madrid scored early and late to beat Villarreal 2-1 in an entertaining Spanish league game and snap a two-game losing streak.

Villarreal won its last four matches and was nine games unbeaten, but a last-gasp goal from substitute Saul Niguez gave Atletico all three points and took it into fourth place in La Liga, two points above Athletic Bilbao.

SOCCER

Niguez got the winner with three minutes remaining when he coolly side-footed a low shot past the goalkeeper from 17 yards out.

It was the first league goal of the season for the central midfielder, who went on to replace Pablo

Barrios just three minutes earlier.

Axel Witsel put the capital club 1-0 up when he headed home a corner from Rodrigo Riquelme after eight minutes.

Villarreal's Norwegian striker Alexander Sorloth equalized four minutes into the second half with his 14th goal of the season.

The late defeat was a crushing blow for Villarreal, which started poorly but came into the match in the second half.

It remained in 10th place, ahead of Getafe on goal difference and a point behind Osasuna in ninth.

Of the late goal, Villarreal defender Raul Albiol said, "Atletico have a punch and that can happen.

They are one of the teams who most score goals in the final minutes of a game. We just weren't able to hold on for the draw."



Inter Milan's Nicolò Barella (left), and Empoli's Simone Bastoni vie for the ball during the Serie A soccer match between Inter Milan and Empoli at the San Siro Stadium, in Milan, Italy. (AP)