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Opinion

Premiership under the eyes of a captain who wants pioneership of the country

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

WELCOME to the Prime Minister-designate Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah. You are onboard a ship that has gone through many failed experiences. Many ministers and heads of Cabinet have left behind nothing but decline and failure in all fields. The country, as the poet said, has been killed by thirst while carrying the goodness of water on his back.



Al-Jarallah

Welcome to the confidence of the leadership, which we never doubt. In fact, why should we doubt it when we are a nation in which Almighty Allah said, "O you who have believed, obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you."

Today, you are the vice captain of a ship that has been exhausted by fatigue as a result of 30 years of decline. Today it is led by a different captain who has followed public affairs and the course of the country's rulers for 60 years, and was satisfied with some of their decisions. He restrained his anger with others, and knew who was wrong and who was right.

The captain raised the banner of truth and justice in front of everyone, starting with himself and his family. He will not allow anyone to lower that banner or tamper with it.

Therefore, the Prime Minister-designate knows more than anyone else about his goals. They are well-known to the people of Kuwait as well, because His Highness announced them in his positions and speeches, and in front of his visitors. The most important of them is that there is no place for corruption and the corrupt.

Kuwait must return to its former path of pioneership and progress. There is nothing to prevent that, as long as its resources are many and its human potential is great. This is why you, the Prime Minister-designate, must know how to distance those with personal interests and avoid the absurd fight between the two authorities.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, you today hold the reins of the secretariat of the executive authority. You must choose a team of ministers that understands how to implement the ambitions of His Highness the Amir.

As we mentioned, only you know more than anyone else what the ship's captain wants and what his objectives are.

Among the biggest dangers in the current sensitive circumstances internally, regionally and internationally are the lack of response to his orders, not having an understanding of everything that is going on in the country and the region, and dealing with events with cynicism.

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MPs-elect called for April 21 to prevent 'Constitutional breach'

'Fuel price hike decision deferred for study'

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: MP-elect Saleh Ashour has clarified that he will moderate the inaugural session of the National Assembly as the second oldest newly elected MP, since the Secretariat General of the Assembly informed him that MP-elect Ahmed Al-Saadoun, who is the oldest, has declined to moderate the session because he will run for the speaker election.

Ashour added there will be no session on Wednesday in view of the Amiri decree on postponing the inauguration of the Assembly until May 14. Nevertheless, he stated

that the MPs-elect are invited to a session on April 21 — the official working day after the two-week grace period for holding the opening session as per Article 87 of the Constitution. He explained this session is aimed at preventing any Constitutional violation.

Meanwhile, some MPs-elect reacted to the Amiri decree on the appointment of Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as Prime Minister.

MP-elect Mohammad Al-Raqeeb asserted that HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has absolute right to appoint the prime minister in accordance with the Constitution. He said cooperation with the new government will be based on the selection of ministers and commitment of the executive authority to improve the citizens' standard of living, as well as the implementation of economic and political reforms.

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Passengers queue up at designated windows at Kuwait Airport Terminal 1 prior to their travel.

Photo by Samer Shiker

Kuwait airport records over 1 million passengers in March

Kuwait Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said on Tuesday that the total number of passengers during March reached 1,067,674 people.

DGCA Acting Director General for Aviation

Safety and Air Transport Affairs Abdullah Al-Rajhei said in a press release that Kuwait International Airport witnessed a decrease in passenger traffic by 8 percent, a rise in flights by 7 percent, whereas air

cargo increased by 14 percent compared to the year prior.

He added that the number of flights operated from and to Kuwait International Airport during March reached 9,950 flights

compared to 9,283 last year.

He also stated that the most popular destinations during March were to Jeddah, Dubai, Cairo, Dhaka and Doha. (KUNA)

NewsWatch

CAIRO: The Arab Parliament called Tuesday for forming an international fact-finding committee to visit Israeli occupation prisons and identify the serious and inhumane violations Palestinian prisoners and detainees are being exposed to.

In honor of Palestinian Prisoners' Day, which is commemorated every year on April 17, the Parliament demanded that institutions like the United Nations, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) put pressure on the Zionist entity to release innocent prisoners immediately.

The Parliament demanded that the occupation pays heed to and applies international law, as well as provide innocent captives with the necessary protection in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention. (KUNA)

WASHINGTON: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Al-Sudani and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin discussed ways to strengthen bilateral defense relationship and global coalition to defeat the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Iraq.

US Department of Defense said in a press release on Monday that "the Secretary and the Prime Minister affirmed the two nations' commitment to an enduring US-Iraq bilateral defense relationship and to a strong Iraq, capable of self-defense in support of a more stable and peaceful region." (KUNA)

TOKYO: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir Abdollahian have discussed the tensions between Iran and the Israeli occupation, state-run Xinhua News Agency reported Tuesday.

In their phone conversation on Monday, Amir-Abdollahian briefed Wang on Iran's position on the attack on the consular section of the Iranian embassy in Damascus, Syria, saying, "The UN Security Council did not make a necessary response to this attack, and that Iran has the right to self-defense in response to the violation of its sovereignty," according to the report. (KUNA)

TOKYO: Japan has resumed funding the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), completing the disbursement of about USD 35 million, the Foreign Ministry announced on Monday.

The contribution will be spent to provide relief supplies for women and infants in Gaza and medical services in the West Bank, as well as other services, according to the ministry. (KUNA)

Calls for visionary leadership, private sector boost

Experts advise Kuwait's new government on economic revamp

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: A consensus among economists highlighted several significant and formidable challenges facing the new government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Foremost among these challenges is the imperative to overhaul the ministerial selection process, particularly for economic portfolios. The appointed ministers must possess visionary and innovative ideas to steer Kuwait away from its reliance on oil revenues towards a diversified economic system that ensures financial and economic sustainability.

Kuwait has lagged behind neighboring countries in taking decisive steps towards economic diversification. While others have made strides in tourism, trade, and industry, Kuwait has been slow to follow suit.

Economists emphasize the importance of ministers having a clear vision for Kuwait's economic future and maximizing the role of the private sector in economic development. They advocate for the enactment of laws that incentivize attracting foreign investors.

Former Vice-Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fahd Al-Jouan, underscored the need for ministers with a background in the private sector and a strategic vision for implementation. He criticized the hasty formulation of laws without input from economic experts, leading to adverse outcomes.

The decline in the private sector's role in recent years is alarming, prompting concerns about Kuwait becoming unattractive for private investment.

Economic expert Ali Al-Rashid Al-Badr

emphasized the necessity of diversifying income sources away from oil, focusing on meaningful economic development rather than superficial projects.

Former Minister of Commerce and Industry Dr. Yousef Al-Ali emphasized the urgency of improving citizens' quality of life, alongside economic diversification. He points out the lack of concrete economic alternatives despite decades of discussion.

Mishari Al-Abduljalil, Chairman of the Kuwait Economic Society, stressed the importance of a long-term economic reform program with clear objectives and consistent implementation, regardless of changes in government. He highlights challenges such as excessive current expenditures, overreliance on oil revenue, and unemployment.

Dr. Nawaf Al-Abduljader, a professor at Kuwait University, identified challenges

such as job overcrowding in the public sector and the need for new job opportunities. He underscores the importance of a clear vision and coordination between ministries for effective implementation of economic plans.

Economists agreed on the necessity of economic diversification, budget reform, and encouraging private sector growth. They also emphasized the importance of addressing populist demands with fiscal prudence and tackling administrative inflation in the state apparatus.

The criteria for selecting ministers in economic portfolios should prioritize expertise in the private sector, innovative economic visions, effective communication skills, and a focus on long-term national interests. These criteria aim to ensure that ministers prioritize Kuwait's economic future and implement sustainable economic policies.

Oman toll hits 18

Rains ravage UAE, other Gulf nations also soaked

DUBAI, April 16, (AP): Heavy rains lashed the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday, flooding out portions of major highways and leaving vehicles abandoned on roadways across Dubai. Meanwhile, the death toll in separate heavy flooding in neighboring Oman rose to 18 with others still missing as the sultanate prepared for the storm.

The rains began overnight, leaving massive ponds on streets as whipping winds disrupted flights at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel and the home of the long-haul carrier Emirates.

Police and emergency personnel drove slowly through the flooded streets, their emergency lights flashing across the darkened morning. Lightning flashed across the sky, occasionally touching

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An SUV splashes through standing water on a road with the Burj Al Arab luxury hotel seen in the background in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Tuesday, April 16, 2024. (AP)

Kuwait presses Iraq on maritime border

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Kuwait's Foreign Minister, Abdullah Al-Yahya, has extended a formal invitation to Iraq to engage in substantive discussions aimed at finalizing the demarcation of maritime borders between the two neighboring nations, reports Al-Rai daily.

Speaking at the second Ministerial Council meeting on Monday between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Central Asian countries, held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Al-Yahya underscored the critical importance of Iraq's commitment to honoring international and bilateral agreements, including pertinent Security Council resolutions and navigation regulations pertaining to Khor Abdullah.

Al-Yahya emphasized that Kuwait views the completion of maritime border demarcation as a matter of utmost importance, highlighting the necessity for

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Prayer Timings

Fajr	03:59	Asr	15:22
Sunrise ..	05:21	Maghrib ..	18:15
Zohr	11:48	Isha	19:35

Local

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

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind to southeasterly wind, with speeds of 10-38 km/h.

By Night: Mild with light to

Weather

moderate southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec		
Kuwait City	29	21	Kuwait Airport	30
			Abdaly	29
			Jahra	31
			Salmiyah	27
			Nuwaisib	30
			Wafra	31

Red tape to delay appointments for job-seekers

Around 16,000 travel bans issued for Kuwaitis, expats in Jan, Feb

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Recent statistics from the Enforcement Department's Travel Ban Section at the Ministry of Justice for January and February of this year have shed light on travel ban trends affecting both citizens and expatriates, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Approximately 16,000 travel bans were issued during this period, alongside 8,033 orders to lift travel bans, in addition to 917 "one-time travel" requests.

In January, 6,642 travel ban orders were issued, increasing to 9,006 in February. Correspondingly, orders to lift travel bans amounted to 6,642 in January and 3,811 in February.

Al-Ahmedi Governorate recorded the highest number of travel bans during this time, with 4,321 orders, followed by Farwaniya with 3,641, and Hawalli with 2,452. Al-Jahra and the capital registered 2,381 and 1,757 travel ban orders, respectively, while Mubarak Al-Kabeer had the fewest, with 1,096.

In the Family Court, 1,211 travel ban procedures were conducted, with 620 in January and 591 in February. Additionally, 380 orders to lift travel bans were issued, including 220 in January and 160 in February.

Furthermore, 27,809 travel ban orders were registered for rentals, with 14,420 in January

and 13,389 in February. The Family Court also processed 907 vehicle seizure and seizure procedures, comprising 474 in January and 433 in February.

According to a source, common reasons for travel bans include outstanding checks, bank debts, unpaid phone bills, installment payments, overdue rents, and electricity bills, as well as expenses and family court cases.

Gap for job-seekers: The workforce registration sector at the Civil Service Bureau has revealed concerns about a future gap for job seekers due to Circular No. 4 of 2024, which outlines the mechanism for approving the job needs of government agencies under the central employment system, reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to a source within the sector, the new nomination controls, particularly those not restricted by registration periods, may delay the employment of qualified graduates and push them towards jobs unrelated to their fields.

The source noted that these controls have not been reviewed by the relevant administration responsible for organizing and aligning job seekers' qualifications and experience with the needs of government agencies.

The requirement in the circular to impose job

needs for government agencies in April and October only is seen as ineffective in expediting the recruitment process.

Instead, it may delay the acquisition of job grades until the specified months and impose recruitment cycles twice a year. This delay, coupled with existing challenges in the appointment mechanism within government agencies, has disrupted the enrollment of thousands of candidates in government positions.

The source emphasized the importance of reviewing the controls in coordination with government agencies to ensure the fair selection of qualified job seekers. Failure to do so could exacerbate the challenge of finding suitable jobs for graduates and potentially create a future employment crisis.

In response to these concerns, a group of job seekers registered in the central employment system is planning a protest in front of the Civil Service Bureau.

They object to the controls outlined in the new circular, which they believe will further delay their nomination. Some of these job seekers have not received nominations in the past two years, and they fear that the new controls will only increase the number of individuals waiting for employment opportunities.



Lloyd Austin



Sheikh Fahad

Kuwait, US discuss bilateral issues

KUWAIT CITY, April 16. (KUNA): Kuwait Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabab discussed with US Defense Minister Lloyd Austin, topics of common interest. This came during a phone call Monday, said the Ministry of Defense in a statement.

The statement also noted that Sheikh Fahad stressed Kuwait's position calling for the importance of the Security Council assuming its responsibilities towards maintaining international peace and security by ensuring the commitment of the entire international community to what is stipulated in international laws and conventions.

Other Voices

Appeal filed as uproar over fraud, multiple voting in 2024 poll grows

'Kuwaiti by origin' becomes bone of contention

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The recent National Assembly elections held on the 14th of this month have sparked controversy, leading to a direct appeal filed with the Constitutional Court, reports Al-Anba daily.

Nasser Al-Nasrallah, a candidate from the First Constituency, and Suhaila Al-Salem, a candidate from the Third Constituency, jointly filed the appeal, challenging both the integrity of the elections and the constitutionality of Law No. 44 of 1994.

Al-Nasrallah and Al-Salem allege that thousands of fraudulent and duplicate votes were cast in the elections, with names appearing multiple times on voter lists. They argue that this compromises the fairness and validity of the electoral process.

One of the focal points of their appeal is the contention that Decree Law No. 4 of 2024, which reinforced electoral restrictions without providing avenues for objection or judicial challenge, violates constitutional principles. They argue that this lack of accountability undermines the legitimacy of the electoral process.

Moreover, Al-Nasrallah emphasizes that Law No. 44 of 1994, which grants voting rights to the children of naturalized citizens and labels them as 'Kuwaitis by origin', contradicts the provisions of the Constitution.

He asserts that the designation of 'Kuwaiti by origin' is reserved for founding Kuwaitis and their descendants, as outlined in Article 82 of the Constitution.

The appeal seeks to restore order by advocating for electoral nominations to be restricted to founding Kuwaitis and their direct descendants, in accordance with the constitutional definition of inherent Kuwaiti citizenship.

This move aims to uphold the integrity of the electoral process and ensure that only those constitutionally defined as Kuwaiti citizens can participate in elections for the National Assembly.

Kuwaiti duo acquitted

Ruling in Za'atari murder case set for June 9: court

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Court of Appeal has set the session of June 9 to rule on the case of the murder of Kuwaiti citizen Abdulaziz Al-Za'atari.

Earlier, the Criminal Court had sentenced a ruling family member to death after he was convicted of killing the victim.

According to the case files, on the evening of April 10 last year, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate witnessed a horrific crime when the young citizen Abdulaziz Al-Za'atari was shot 12 times by an unknown assailant in front of his house. The assailant was wearing a protective helmet, and he fled from the scene after killing the victim.

Kuwaiti duo acquitted: The Court of Cassation acquitted two Kuwaiti citizens who were accused of bank fraud, making false statements, and seizing approximately two million dinars from a Kuwaiti citizen. The court issued such a ruling after dismissing video recordings as evidence because they were taken without permission from the Public Prosecution.

Representing the two citizens was Lawyer Dr. Fawaz Khaled Al-Khatib, who maintained the innocence of the accused and demanded the dismissal of the indictment due to its violation of article 130 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, of which the recordings were obtained illegally and without permission from the Public Prosecution, something which render them invalid.

The court ended up invalidating the evidence derived from the video recordings, despite the matching of the features and personal characteristics in the video and the matching of the voice according to the forensic evidence report, basing its invalidation on the fact that it was done without the permission of the Public Prosecution and without the knowledge or consent of the accused. It considered it the result of illegal procedures that invalidate all evidence derived from it.

The court also concluded that the elements of the crimes leveled against the defendants were absent due to lack of proof.

It hence ruled that the defendants be acquitted and the civil lawsuit be referred, which was upheld on appeal.



Mol photo
Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior with the UAE delegation.

Al-Nawaf hosts UAE security delegation

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, welcomed a security delegation from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Kuwait, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In a press statement, Lieutenant General Al-Nawaf expressed his warm welcome to the UAE delegation, considering Kuwait as their second home.

He praised the continuous strengthening of security cooperation between the Ministries of Interior of both countries, highlighting this as a testament to the strong relationship between the leaderships of Kuwait and the UAE, and their mutual commitment to enhancing partnerships across various sectors.

Lieutenant General Al-Nawaf also commended the regular joint security and traffic meetings between the Ministries of Interior of the UAE and Kuwait, which serve to bolster security cooperation and collaboration between the two brotherly nations.

In response, the UAE delegation conveyed their gratitude to Lieutenant General Al-Nawaf for the warm reception and generous hospitality extended to them. They expressed their sincere wishes for further progress and prosperity for Kuwait under its wise leadership. The visit reaffirms the enduring bond and cooperation between the Ministries of Interior of Kuwait and the UAE.

Minister forms task force

Plan to diversify charities role

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Sheikh Firas Al-Malik, the Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs, recently received an official letter from the Council of Ministers assigning him, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and the Kuwait Municipality, the task of proposing a concept that would enable registered public benefit and charity societies to utilize some of the vacant spaces within their premises for investment purposes.

The Council has requested this proposal within a two-month timeframe, reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to sources familiar with the matter, the ministry is in the process of establishing a task force comprising representatives from the civil society and charity societies' departments, Al-Mabarar, officials from the Ministry of Finance (State Property Administration), and the Kuwait Municipality.

The purpose of this task force is to thoroughly examine the matter from all angles, especially the legal aspects, and conduct a comprehensive study on the feasibility of allowing associations to engage in investments.

This initiative aims to provide them with a financial resource to support their

societal objectives. Once the study is completed, the proposal will be presented to the Minister of Social Affairs for submission to the Council of Ministers for further deliberation and decision-making.

The idea of permitting associations to invest follows the completion of tasks assigned to a field work team established by Administrative Resolution No. 2683 of 2023.

This team was tasked with inspecting the utilization of spaces within the headquarters of public benefit and charitable associations for investment activities.

The Ministry decided to explore the possibility of allowing associations to invest as a means of supporting their objectives, particularly in light of concerns raised by the Ministry of Finance regarding violations by some associations.

These violations involved conducting activities on state-owned properties without proper contractual agreements, which the Ministry of Finance considered a breach of state property regulations.

In an effort to address these violations and rectify the legal status of associations, the Ministry is considering the option of allowing investments within their premises. This initiative aligns with the increasing number of civil society organizations, which currently stands at approximately 150, alongside over 70 well-established charities.



Sheikh Firas

The animal ways in humans

By Ahmad alsarraf

As we approach the thirtieth anniversary of one of the most horrifying tribal genocides in history, the Rwandan genocide serves as a stark reminder of the depths of human brutality. In just 100 days, over 800,000 people lost their lives, with the majority of victims being Hutus and the perpetrators largely from the Hutu tribe.

Despite belonging to the same ethnic group and sharing language, traditions, and religion, they were not spared from a bloody and horrific fate.

The conflict over interests played a significant role in fueling this tragedy. As we reflect on the Rwandan genocide, it's crucial that we learn from this dark chapter in human history. We must recognize the dangers of tribalism, prejudice, and unchecked power. We must prioritize peace-building, reconciliation, and the protection of human rights. The lessons from Rwanda compel us to work towards fostering understanding, empathy, and cooperation among diverse communities to prevent such atrocities from ever happening again.

The beginning of the tragedy was in 1916 with the arrival of the Belgian colonialists to Rwanda. Their need for the people of the country pushed them to bring closer to the best, in their view, the Hutus, who made up 15% of the population, and alienated the Hutus, who made up 84%, out of a population of 32 million, 98% of whom were Christians.

Due to the near impossibility of distinguishing between members of the two tribes, the colonizer issued an order to include the name of the tribe in the identity card! The Hutus welcomed this, and they enjoyed higher jobs and better educational opportunities than the Hutus, and they accumulated greater wealth, and their distinction continued until shortly before independence.

As problems accumulated and complaints increased about the Hutus getting all the advantages, a series of riots broke out in 1959, in which more than 20 people were killed. Thousands of Hutus died, and many fled to other countries.

When Belgium relinquished power and Rwanda gained independence in 1962, authority was transferred to the Hutus, who constituted the numerical majority. However, tensions persisted between the two ethnic groups. The shooting down of President Haby-

rimana's plane in early April 1994 marked a turning point, unleashing a wave of violence.

Hutu extremists, including elements of the army and armed civilians, embarked on a campaign of revenge. This began with the targeted killing of political opposition leaders, many of whom were Hutus, followed by the slaughter of moderate politicians from both sides.

What ensued was the systematic mass killing of Hutus wherever they could be found. Neighbors turned against neighbors, and even Hutus were compelled to kill their Hutu spouses under threat of death themselves. Identity cards indicating tribal affiliation became deadly instruments, effectively serving as a "license to kill." Machetes became the weapon of choice, often wielded mercilessly at checkpoints. The genocide in Rwanda stands as a horrifying testament to the depths of human depravity and the consequences of unchecked hatred and division.

It was very possible that the total number of victims of the Rwandan massacres, and what happened in its neighboring countries, which amounted to millions, would have been much less, had it not been for the identity system, which included the name of the tribe, inherited from the colonial era, and which continued to be used even after independence. The biggest reason was the large number of victims, without which it would have been impossible to know the person's true tribal affiliation!

It is not surprising, therefore, that the majority of citizens of developed countries, such as Britain, where I lived for a long time, do not hold an identity card of any kind, other than a vehicle driving license, for example. Anyone whose identity is doubted by the police is detained until they are identified, or they are released and asked to visit any nearby police station to prove their identity. As for polling stations, banks, and other entities, they require some type of proof of identity, such as a passport, before carrying out the required procedure.

The National Guard, nearly 30 years ago, when His Highness the Amir was Deputy Chief of the Guard, banned the placement of a soldier's last name on his jacket, so that family, tribal, or sectarian affiliation would not be exploited to obtain service that may not be legitimate. The rest of the security services subsequently followed the same procedure!

This wise measure came to show that affiliation must belong to the state only, and not to any other component. So when will the rest of the state's agencies implement this simple measure in its importance?

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Parking lots sought

Vital issues on MC meet agenda

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: During its upcoming meeting scheduled for next Tuesday, the Municipal Council Technical Committee will address several important issues, reports Al-Jarida daily.

One of the main agenda items is the request from the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) to allocate a portion of the Umm Al-Hayman Post Office site for the establishment of the national data center for business continuity and disaster management. This request involves allocating an area of 5,890 square meters in Block 7 of the Ali Sabah Al-Salem area.

Additionally, the committee will discuss the request of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare to amend the boundaries of the housing project in the southern Khaitan area, specifically plots 1 and 2 (formerly

3 and 4). There will also be consideration of proposals related to abandoned properties and parking lots for government schools, submitted by committee member Fahd Al-Abduljader.

Other matters on the agenda include a proposal from the Chairman of the Municipal Council, Abdullah Al-Muharri, regarding adding activities in the Ardiya Industrial Area, as well as a request from the Environment Public Authority regarding the establishment of a sea bridge to connect Al-Mutla'a City to Kuwait City.

Furthermore, the committee will examine a proposal from Vice-President of the Municipal Council, Member Khaled Mufleh Al-Mutairi, concerning the allocation of parking lots adjacent to private housing plots throughout Kuwait for the owners of those plots.

Political vacuum raises concern as region on brink of all-out war

"IT'S no secret anymore that the Middle East is engulfed in a political and military turmoil, reaching a boiling point. The conflicts in our region have transcended mere border disputes or disagreements over resources like oil fields. We find ourselves amidst a full-blown war, particularly evident in the Gaza area controlled by the Zionist entity since last October," columnist **Asrar Johar Hayat** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"This turmoil has started to spill over into neighboring countries and is now dangerously close to us. Recent events, such as the bombing of the Iranian consulate in Syria, have sparked heated exchanges between Iranian, Zionist, and American officials.

"These exchanges are far from reassuring and serve as stark reminders that we are precariously close to the brink of multi-party conflict. Any rash actions, driven by impulsive reactions, could easily plunge us into a state of intense military confrontations. We must tread carefully to avoid the catastrophic consequences of a war breaking out.

"We cannot afford to dismiss the situation in Kuwait as irrelevant to us. On the contrary, we are perhaps the most affected, given our small size and our geographical proximity to larger, often competing nations.

"Regardless of our stance on regional or international disputes, we are inevitably impacted politically, economically, and socially. The repercussions of conflicts extend beyond borders, affecting even those countries that strive for neutrality.

"What troubles me deeply is the current political climate, which may be the most volatile and severe since the first and second Gulf wars, especially with the ongoing aggression against our brethren in Gaza. Yet, we find ourselves in an unprecedented state of political vacuum precisely when we need a functioning government and parliament the most. We require their presence to ensure informed decision-making and swift responses to any events unfolding in the region.

"Today, we find ourselves governed by an 'urgent disposal' government, but can we truly rely on a resigned administration to effectively handle any emergencies in the region? Events in the Middle East unfold rapidly, leaving no room for speculation or expectations.

"Compounding our concerns is the fact that the recently elected parliament remains suspended due to representatives not fulfilling their oath. We must wait until the session begins, leaving us without a functioning parliament.

"This political vacuum, coupled with vacant key positions, is deeply concerning, particularly in the midst of a tumultuous region attracting the attention of various stakeholders.

"As citizens, we're especially troubled by recent Iranian statements regarding military training and Zionist responses indicating readiness to retaliate against potential Iranian strikes. All this while we lack a government and effectively have no parliament.

"In the face of imminent threats, who will steer the ship of government if the worst-case scenario unfolds? The threats loom dangerously close."

Also:

"I challenge you ... Every word in the phrase, 'I challenge', comes with incomprehensible connotations due to its frequent repetition. It has become common in parliamentary discourse. I do not know who 'invented' it and planted its seeds in parliamentary work. It is being used so frequently that we no longer know who is challenging whom, what is meant by the challenge and what is its purpose," columnist **M. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"It is common among MPs and between MPs and ministers, but those who fear it and take account of it the most are those sitting in the front row. The wise men in ancient times said: 'Politics is the art of possibilities.' It is possible only through constructive dialogue, which builds and does not destroy. Political relations between various parties are based on public interest. Their goal is stability and collective action.

"As for the 'challenge', it transforms differences of opinion, which is a healthy phenomenon, unlike the continuation of the 'challenge' that turns the dispute into rivalry. The absence of wisdom turns rivalry into a dispute, and the conflict has undesirable consequences. When 'challenge' spreads among the people of one nation, the biggest loser is the nation and its citizens.

"The goal of democracy is to exchange and cross-fertilize ideas, which produce solutions and facilitate their implementation. The experience of advanced democracies did not develop through challenge, disagreement and conflict, but through respect for the opinion of others with rational care to compromise on solutions that unite everyone.

"If democracy loses this basic goal, which the common phrase -- 'I challenge' -- in our political and parliamentary discourse leads to, then we are doomed to falter. Will we push our democratic path to falter with our own hands and then look for a 'peg' to hang our mistakes?"

"Self-criticism is an essential first step for those who raise the slogan of reform in all aspects. This does not happen through challenge, but by ensuring consensus through constructive democratic dialogue. Differences of opinion should not lead to friendliness as an issue.

"Isn't it time for us to realize that? Doesn't everyone see our stagnant situation for years? Don't we see that every election gives birth to another until people get tired of it? Honestly, anyone loyal to his country and loves everyone can see that the current political scene is shrouded in ambiguity and confusion. It is the worst possibility for a development breakthrough that all of us are aspiring for, yet we do not do it well.

"Before challenging anyone, every official should look at our development indicators and our ranking in international indices to know that we are in dire need of a breakthrough. We have missed many opportunities and wasted even more of our resources. Shall we not learn and fear Allah in Kuwait?"

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"Early clash ... An Amiri decree was issued to postpone the inaugural session of the National Assembly for a month in the interest of the public, as the period is not sufficient for more political consultations needed in the next critical stage, which is expected to be a stage of political stability, far from dissolving the Assembly and changing the council of ministers," columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"In our opinion, the senior leadership realized the need for a longer time to form the new government, and that waiting is necessary before assigning the authority. So, why object and attempt to push for holding the inaugural session on April 17? Why look into the unconstitutionality of the decree, on which the constitutional experts have disagreed? They are divided into permissible and not permissible. As long as there is a constitutional dispute, why do we not choose what is in line with the highest interest of the country? The supreme leadership realized this when the postponement decree was issued, knowing that the opening session will not be held unless the government is formed and sworn in before His Highness the Amir. This means the reward that some members are trying to call for is invalid and trivial!

"On other hand, why do some of the new representatives or those who have been re-elected start their term with an undesirable 'Saddam', instead of extending a hand of cooperation? For the information of all these people whom we elected as our politicians, the Kuwaiti street is looking forward to more cooperation between the two authorities, in search of stability and achievement, after our problems became without solutions. For example, we called for solutions to restore the streets, yet not a single street was restored. We demanded that salaries be adjusted, but this was not done. We called for jobs to be nationalized, but this was not done, up to the point that replacement became an unworkable slogan. We demanded a comprehensive plan for education, but it only got worse. What has been achieved for the citizen?"

"At the same time, the expatriates demanded that the 'visa' be opened, and that was done. They demanded that the visit visa be opened and extended, and that was done. They demanded a period for the violators to leave without accountability or punishment, and that was done. They demanded the return of those who violated laws, and that was done. Our distinguished representatives are still searching for the clash ..."

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"Settle it ... This was confirmed by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah prolong his life and keep him as the support and asset of the honorable people of Kuwait. As soon as the Ministry of Information announced the date of His Highness' speech, the citizens began anticipating this date to hear reassurance about the future of the coming generations. They are certain that HH the Amir of firmness and determination was one of the first to preserve national identity and protect it from tampering," **Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"When he said it without opening his mouth, he relieved all his loyal people. It was an indirect order to His Excellency, the Minister of Interior, to continue what he started and rid the country of forgers wherever they may be.

"Thank you, sir, for all the advice and guidance you have given to your children for the common good.

"We congratulate our representatives, wishing them success in playing an effective role in the interest of the public, while preventing tension and crises without interfering in governmental affairs, so that the National Assembly can continue its work. There is no harm in us repeating what we said and being true to our expectation of dissolving the last Assembly before a year passed. We say to those who were unlucky: Follow the sessions of the representatives. Do not go far, and be prepared either to reserve your temporary positions or for your positions to be fixed in your homes, to remind you of the proverb, 'Beware of the evil of the forbearing one when he gets angry.'

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

Citizens' transactions, MEW power bills tied

KD 550 million outstanding

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: In a move aimed at streamlining transactions and ensuring the fulfillment of financial obligations, the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy has initiated coordination with the Ministry of Interior to establish electronic connectivity. This connectivity will require citizens to settle their outstanding dues to the Ministry of Electricity before proceeding with transactions related to the Ministry of Interior, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Reliable sources have disclosed that this collaborative effort between the ministries is geared towards enhancing efficiency and accountability in financial matters. The successful implementation of a similar electronic linkage between the Ministry of Electricity and the Ministry of Interior in the past, which mandated expatriates to clear their dues before departing the country, yielded significant results in debt

recovery. This precedent has prompted the Ministry of Electricity to undertake proactive measures to facilitate the collection of outstanding dues from citizens.

It is emphasized that citizens who commit to settling their accrued debts to the Ministry of Electricity, either in full or through installment plans, will be permitted to proceed with their transactions. The primary objective of this initiative is to ensure the settlement of longstanding debts owed to the Ministry, without unduly impeding the interests of citizens or residents.

Statistics provided by the Ministry indicate that total collections for the fiscal year 2023/2024 amounted to approximately 500 million dinars, inclusive of associated fees. Furthermore, it is noted that several government entities owe substantial sums to the Electricity Authority, with outstanding debts reaching around 550 million dinars.

This concerted effort between the Ministries of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, and the Ministry of Interior underscores a commitment to financial integrity and accountability, while also facilitating smoother administrative processes for citizens.



Al-Rai photo
Vehicle sheds put up illegally are removed by the municipality.

Car sheds uprooted

No to encroachments on government's land

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The municipality has announced the commencement of robust field campaigns aimed at eradicating encroachments on state property across all governorates. These initiatives will be undertaken in collaboration with the violations removal departments stationed within the municipality's branches across various governorates, reports Al-Rai daily.

The municipality has outlined that these field campaigns will be conducted by supervisory teams, targeting industrial and commercial investment zones, as well as encroachments on land areas. Yesterday morning, the Violations Removal Department's field team in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate executed the removal of six awnings from residential buildings. These structures were found to be encroaching on state property following the expiration of the legal warning period.

'Husband kidnaps kids & travels to home country'

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: An expatriate woman, born in 1986, has accused her husband of kidnapping her children, reports Al-Anba daily.

The woman filed a report at Maidan Hawalli Police Station, stating that her husband kidnapped her son identified only as 'F' and born in 2017, as well her daughter identified as 'M' and born in 2013, in front of their school, and then traveled with the children. A case of child kidnapping classified as felony was registered.

□ □ □

Drug addict held: Jahra securitymen arrested a citizen, in his 30s, for the consumption and possession of narcotic substances, reports Al-Anba daily.

Jahra security officers patrolling around Jahra road noticed a speeding American-made car, so they chased it and forced the driver to stop. The officers then discovered that the driver, a citizen, was under the influence of drugs. They also found bags containing Shabu, narcotic pills and drug paraphernalia in his car.

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Car pile-up near mall

One dead in accident; car pile-up near mall

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: A fatal collision occurred Tuesday morning on the Seventh Ring Road, drawing the attention of fire brigades to the scene. The accident claimed one dead as identity of the victim was not known. Emergency personnel promptly addressed the incident, ensuring the area's safety before transferring control to the relevant authorities, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Meanwhile, a collision involving six vehicles occurred in front of the "360 Mall" on the Sixth Ring Road. The Ministry of Interior advises motorists to seek alternative routes until the accident scene is cleared. Drivers are urged to maintain safe distances between vehicles, exercise caution, and cooperate with authorities on the scene.

Police hunt for thieves

Fuel theft for few dinars

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Hawalli detectives have been instructed to arrest those who stole fuel from two stations in Hawalli Governorate, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security source disclosed that Misdemeanor Case No. 155/2024 was registered after a citizen, born in 1963 -- the representative of a company selling fuel -- reported that the driver of a Japanese vehicle went to one of the company's stations several times on various days, during which he filled his car with fuel and then fled. The value of fuel he stole is estimated at KD10. The citizen provided police with the plate number of the suspect's vehicle.

Meanwhile, Misdemeanor Case No. 156/2024, filed by the same company representative, involves a man driving a South Korean vehicle that carried out the same act at the station located on the Fourth Ring Road. Investigations are ongoing to identify and arrest the thieves.

'I did not steal anything'

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: A Kuwaiti citizen has filed a report with the Maidan Hawalli police station accusing an unidentified person of stealing his two iPhones, ten branded watches, pair of Apple earphones, and two branded bracelets, reports Al-Anba daily.

Following the registration of Case No. 159/2024, categorized as a misdemeanor, a security source stated the suspect was summoned for interrogation and he vehemently denied any involvement in the theft, claiming to have visited the complainant only once and insisted that no items were stolen.

According to investigation reports, no conclusive evidence was submitted by the complainant linking the suspect to the theft. The case is being investigated further.

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MoE commits to enhancing student participation in educational contests

Kuwaiti schools excel in Arab Education Bureau Awards

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, Mansour Al-Dehani, emphasized the ministry's commitment to enhancing student and school participation in educational competitions, citing their role in fostering positive competition and developing capabilities across various educational and pedagogical domains, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Al-Dehani made these remarks while representing the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, at the Arab Education Bureau for the Gulf States Award for School Excellence in its second edition.

Al-Dehani highlighted the significance of the School Excellence Award in recognizing school

administrations distinguished by their management according to specific criteria.

He praised the efforts of the Arab Education Bureau in spotlighting these schools, which have achieved remarkable success and accomplishments. Kuwait, he noted, stands as a pioneering country in embracing such prestigious awards, as evidenced by the outstanding achievements of the recognized schools and their impact on teachers and students.

The School Excellence Award aims to promote a culture of excellence in schools by enhancing educational and administrative practices, improving school performance, and showcasing the role of distinguished schools in educational processes. Al-Dehani underscored the importance of school excellence in advancing the educational and pedagogical landscape.

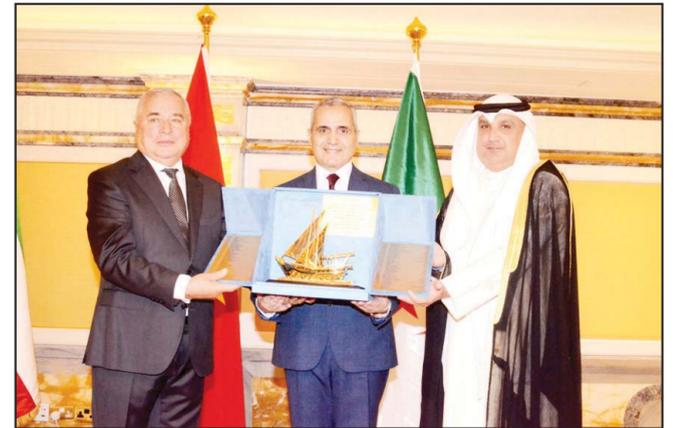


Al-Dehani

Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Asmi, Director General of the Arab Education Bureau for the Gulf States, expressed appreciation and gratitude towards distinguished schools, acknowledging their outstanding achievements in educational, administrative, and professional realms.

These schools, he emphasized, underwent rigorous screening and evaluation by specialized committees to demonstrate their eligibility for the award. Al-Asmi extended congratulations to the winning schools and encouraged them to continue striving for quality and excellence.

Three schools from Kuwait received the School Excellence Award: Abdul Mohsen Al-Rashid Al-Badr Primary School for Boys, affiliated with the Capital Educational District, secured the gold medal; Al-Yasra Middle School for Girls, affiliated with the Al-Ahmadi Educational District, received the silver medal; and Qamriya Amin Middle School for Girls, affiliated with the Capital Educational District, earned the bronze medal.



Photos by Mahmoud Jadedd

Top and above: Some photos from the ceremony.

Ambassadors hailed for boosting ties with Kuwait

Dean of Diplomatic Corps honors outgoing Vietnam, Algeria envoys

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and the Ambassador of Tajikistan to Kuwait Zubaidullah Zubaidov held a farewell ceremony Sunday evening for the Ambassador of Vietnam to Kuwait Ngo Tuan Thang, and the Ambassador of Algeria Nouredine Meriem, in the presence of the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Farsi, and a large number of heads of diplomatic missions accredited in Kuwait.

Ambassador Zubaidov praised the efforts exerted by his outgoing colleagues to develop their countries' relations with Kuwait, as well as their cooperation with their fellow heads of other missions.

He expressed his appreciation to Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its constant cooperation and support for diplomatic missions and international organizations in Kuwait, and for providing all facilities and overcoming all difficulties to complete their tasks.

Relations

Ambassador Zubaidov highlighted the good relations that bind Kuwait with all countries.

He said, "With the departure of Ambassador Ngo Tuan Thang, we will lose a dear brother, as he was one of the most active ambassadors, and his country should be proud of him. His success comes first because of the presence of his wife by his side. He was and will remain a friend to everyone."

Meanwhile, the Vietnamese ambassador expressed his appreciation to Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saying, "We have many memories here. Both the State of Kuwait and Kuwaitis were very generous to me, and I learned a lot from them."

He expressed his gratitude to the ambassadors who helped him during his stay in Kuwait for about three years.

Ambassador Ngo Tuan Thang extended his "big" thanks to the local press, "which has always done a wonderful job with me and most of the ambassadors".

Enjoyable

He invited everyone to visit him in Vietnam, where he will spend two years before being appointed to a new country.

Ambassador Ngo Tuan Thang said, "Diplomatic life in Kuwait is enjoyable, and I have a great friendship with many diplomats and ambassadors."

He highlighted the cooperation of Vietnamese and Kuwaiti Airlines, and the closeness of facilitating direct flights during the summer this year.

In addition, the Algerian Ambassador to Kuwait Nouredine Meriem expressed his pride in his work in Kuwait.

He said, despite the short time he spent in the country, he gained rich experience and long-standing friendships with Kuwaitis and the diplomatic community.

Ambassador Nouredine Meriem praised the depth of the friendly relations between Kuwait and his country, and the keenness of both sides to enhance all aspects of cooperation.

'Many questions need to be modified'

Experts call for more realism over PAHW's new 'Threads' account

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) has launched its official Threads page under the name "@pahwgovkw" in order to communicate, complete transactions, and respond to inquiries.

However, the announcement of the account launch was not welcomed by some specialists, as they called for more realism.

In the first reaction to the launch of the account, the housing welfare activist Salman Al-Mutairi said, "Unfortunately, the site is very bad and there is no update on the data in general. We hope to develop the website of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare."

I met a number of PAHW officials in this regard, including assistant undersecretaries and the director of the Information Systems Department, but there is no development of the page."

Meanwhile, Hadi Al-Ajmi, who is also interested in the housing issue, said, "The basis for expanding social media is communication. Since communication with citizens is missing in the world of the Internet, and on the occasion of the new account in Threads, I say to you - Do not beat your chest while your ribs are weak."

In addition, the housing activist Mohammad Al-Murtaji posted on his X account that, "Regarding the new website, many of the questions need to be modified, as they are based on constant updates. For example, the areas available for allocation are South Saad Al-Abdullah, but the actual date of allocation is more than a year old which has not occurred at the current location. The correct date is June 30, 2007."

As for projects under design, the publication is still pending on south Qairawan, with the knowledge and announcement of other areas that include

CMA 'suspends' license renewals, cancellations

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Kuwait Capital Markets Authority (CMA) recently announced a temporary halt in receiving requests for renewing and canceling licenses for securities activities, reports Al-Anba daily.

This pause, effective from Tuesday, April 16, until the end of the working day on Thursday, April 28, is aimed at facilitating the launch of new and updated electronic services. This initiative reflects the authority's commitment to enhancing its services for licensed entities.

During this period, the authority will not accept applications for license renewal or cancellation. However, normal operations will resume, and requests will be accepted during official working hours starting Sunday, the 28th of this month.

This temporary pause underscores the authority's dedication to continuous improvement and streamlining processes for licensed individuals and entities in the securities market.

this area.

As for future projects, only Al-Sabriya and Nawaf Al-Ahmad were listed on the new site. A total of 4,400 housing units in Sulaibiya and Taima were previously announced and were supposed to be included in this section. Promoting future projects is essential.

As for the projects under distribution, all the information on the site about the current distribution and statistics has been suspended for a long time and needs to be updated and corrected for errors. The existing housing applications are still suspended for updating on the date of January 9, 2024."



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Minister Plenipotentiary Mahdi Al-Ajmi heads Kuwaiti delegation

Arab League meet focuses on disaster risk reduction frameworks



KUNA photo

The Kuwaiti delegation participating in the Arab coordination meeting.

Dept serves all residents in Jahra

MoH to open dermatology clinics at Mutla'a Health Center: official

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Head of the Dermatology Department at Jahra Hospital Dr Mohammad Al-Otaibi said the Ministry of Health will open a number of dermatology clinics at Mutlaa Health Center to make it easier for Mutla'a residents, instead of visiting Jahra Medical City, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Otaibi told the daily that the total number of visitors to various clinics in Jahra Health District reached 81,000 last year. He affirmed that the department is one of the centers accredited by Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialties for training dermatologists.

He pointed out that the department serves all citizens and expatriates residing in Jahra regardless of gender or age, indicating it provides therapeutic services to children and adults through referral and electronic appointment system in the affiliated health centers.

He said the department handles all

cases that require consultation from a dermatologist, and serves patients through the general and specialized clinics daily (in the morning). He stressed there are a number of specialized dermatology clinics serving patients, including three that are specialized in treating moderate to severe cases of psoriasis.

He added the department provides the latest scientific findings in the field of medicine, particularly biological ones, which are given under the supervision of qualified doctors. He also affirmed the existence of two hair treatment clinics, where severe alopecia cases are treated using the latest methods, as well as the contact allergy clinic where a specialist performs an allergy test to identify the causative substances.

He confirmed that dermatology clinics perform many other therapeutic procedures like cold cauterization and skin injections for some diseases.

CAIRO, April 16, (KUNA): The League of Arab States' General Secretariat hosted a meeting on Monday to finalize the Arab Coordination Mechanism for Disaster Risk Reduction. The meeting included a delegation from Kuwait and aimed to develop frameworks for the

mechanism's basic system related to disaster risk reduction. The system is designed to monitor the implementation of Arab strategies and agendas for reducing disaster risks and achieving the goals of the Global Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Kuwait's delegation, led by Minister Plenipotentiary Mahdi Al-Ajmi from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, includes Colonel Dr. Mishari Al-Faras as the National Liaison Officer and First Lieutenant Yousef Al-Enezi as the Deputy Focal Point at the Arab Coordination Mechanism

for Disaster Risk Reduction meeting. The Sendai Framework, endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, is a 15-year international voluntary approach. It works alongside other agreements to reduce disaster risks and achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

CSC allegedly stops appointments in DGCA, rejects those nominated

PAHW invites bids for South Sabah Al-Ahmad project

By Mohammad Al-Misleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: According to an informed source, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) suspended the appointment process in the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and rejected candidates.

He explained that CSC recently addressed DGCA to confirm the cancellation of those nominated to work in the central employment system and hold administrative and technical qualifications not allocated to the entity at all levels.

CSC also requested that it be informed of the technical qualifications and specializations required to be canceled, especially since there are technical specializations designated for civil aviation, including ground pilotage, a diploma in aircraft maintenance, avionics, a diploma in engines and structures, meteorology, and others.

DGCA had previously addressed CSC regarding stopping the appointment process and returning all nominations received to the central employment system.

More than 100 citizens had their nominations returned to the pilotage, especially since some of them had undergone medical examinations and interviews.

The source indicated that some of the nominations were from former ministers, including the elected ones, who issued nomination letters in large numbers without clear criteria and controls for employment, which increased the density of the number of employees.

PAHW invites bids: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare has initiated contractors to submit bids for the development of infrastructure in the South Sabah Al Ahmad project. The contract encompasses infrastructure work for 6,568 housing units spread across neighborhoods including N1, N2, N3, and N11, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to reports from the MEED magazine, the tender was floated on March 31, with a deadline for bid submissions set for May 16. The master plan for the South Sabah Al Ahmad project was crafted by Foster & Partners, a renowned firm based in the United Kingdom. This plan encompasses the construction of a residential project comprising over 11,000 housing units.

Spanning across an area of 6,150 hectares, the South Sabah Al Ahmad project is situated 70 kilometers south of Kuwait.

In March, bids for two contracts related to the road network and infrastructure for the South Sabah Al Ahmad project were disclosed.

The China State Construction Engineering Corporation emerged as the lowest bidder for constructing roads and infrastructure networks for 7,623 housing units (N5, N7, N9, N10). Similarly, another Chinese company, Sinohydro Corporation, submitted the lowest bid for constructing roads and infrastructure networks for 6,189 housing units (N4, N6, N8).

Last July, it was reported that the local contractor, Kuwait Arab Contractors Company, had commenced construction work on infrastructure in the southern part of Sabah Al Ahmad City. The contract, awarded in March of the previous year, includes the construction of roads, utility service networks, rainwater tanks, freshwater networks, saltwater networks, and associated facilities.

Number of wards down: Director of the Juvenile Welfare Department in the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr Jassim Al-Kandari said the number of wards under the department has decreased to 40 and 23 of them were transferred to the new juvenile complex in Sulaibiya -- 14 from the correctional home, seven from the observation home and two from the guest house, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Kandari told the daily that most child delinquency cases are due to the absence of religious motivation, influence of bad friends, family problems and family disintegration; while the most common issue is related to traffic due to juveniles driving their parents' cars without a license.

He revealed three juvenile homes were transferred to the Sulaibiya complex; indicating the new complex is exclusive for boys, while the female wards remained in the Sulaibikhat complex.



Photo by Rizk Taufiq

The Mubarak Al-Kabeer Courts complex.

MPW assigns court complex project to technical staff

Kuwait University allegedly allocates graduate program seats for citizens of certain countries

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: According to informed sources, the Ministry of Public Works has agreed to the design and implementation of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Court Complex project, the Family Court and the parking building to its technical staff. This is based on a request from the Ministry of Justice, as the beneficiary of the project, which will be implemented for its benefit with the aim of providing and facilitating litigation procedures for residents of the governorate.

The sources indicated that three plots of land were allocated for the project in West Abu Fatira, after the Ministry of Justice received the site boundaries from the Kuwait Municipality.

They said a plot of land of 5,000 square meters was allocated for the family court building, another of 10,000 square meters for the court complex building, and another of 5,000 square meters for a multi-storey parking building.

The sources explained that the Ministry of Public Works is coordinating with the Ministry of Justice's Engineering Projects Department, to complete the project. The project completion period was estimated at 90 months, which includes the preliminary study, advertising, contracting, design, and the implementation phase for a period of 36 months. The

total cost of the project was also determined at KD 72 million.

The Ministry of Public Works is awaiting the Ministry of Finance's approval of the Ministry of Justice's request to approve the project within the budget of the Ministry of Justice for the 2024/2025 fiscal year.

KU to allocate seats: Kuwait University has approved the proposal of the College of Graduate Studies to allocate seats in graduate programs for the citizens of countries with diplomatic representation in Kuwait, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources confirmed that the university has adopted the suggestion of the dean of the college to allot one seat in programs that accept less than 10 students and two in programs that accept more than 10 students.

Sources clarified the total number of seats granted to each diplomatic body should not exceed the seats specified above for each program within the applicable academic year.

Sources said there must be competition and comparison between applicants to fill these seats if the number of applicants is higher than the allocated seats. They also stressed the need to apply the general admission and program conditions for these applicants to complete the admission process. They added the embassies will be addressed in this regard through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

MoCI reports 29% jump in transactions in January

Major increase seen in people's companies licenses

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The latest statistics from the People's Companies Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry revealed a remarkable increase in the number of licenses for major people's companies -- 28 percent rise in January (1,895 licenses compared to 1,481 in December 2023), reports Al-Anba daily.

The statistics also showed 45 percent increase in the number of licenses for company branches within the same period -- 286 in December 2023 compared to 414 in January 2024.

The number of transactions completed by the department in January is 29 percent higher than that of December -- 3,298 transactions in December compared to 4,071 in January. These transactions included issuing new licenses for private companies, license renewal, changing the address, changing the trade name, dissolving and liquidating the company and canceling the license, and opening a Gulf branch.

The number of license renewal transactions for main companies reached 849 in January, compared to 655 in December -- an increase of 30 percent; while the number of such transactions for branches of private companies reached 269 in January, compared to 228 in December (18 percent increase).

The address change transactions for major companies reached 1,059 in January compared to 908 in December (17 percent increase); while the same transac-

tion for branches of companies totaled 236 in January compared to 187 in December (26 percent increase).

The number of trade name change transactions for major private companies reached 204 in January compared to 183 in December (11 percent increase); and 72 for branches of private companies in January compared to 53 in December (36 percent increase).

For company dissolution and liquidation and commercial license cancellation, the number of transactions for major companies reached 64 in January, compared to 71 in December (10 percent decrease). The number of such transactions for branches of companies totaled 114 in January, compared to 103 in December -- an increase of 11 percent.

Four new licenses for Gulf branches were issued in January, compared to one in December (300 percent increase).

Regarding the licenses for various types of companies; 1,358 licenses were issued for one-person companies in January, compared to 1,046 in December (30 percent increase). For limited liability companies, 932 licenses were issued in January, compared to 701 in December (33 percent increase); in addition to 12 licenses for joint-venture companies in January, compared to 14 in December (14 percent decrease). For limited partnership companies, 10 licenses were issued in January, compared to 11 in December -- a decrease of nine percent.

Premiership under

Continued from Page 1

There is no time for reconciliation at the expense of Kuwait's higher interests. There is no room for fighting over nonsensical matters.

In fact, reform must be the ultimate goal, because the ship's captain seeks to achieve that, irrespective of the cost.

The prices that were paid previously were so high that the Kuwaitis and the senior leadership can no longer accept any failure, as the country does not take any adventure with uncalculated consequences.

Today we have a ship captain who has knowledge of every matter in the various ministries. He has tried many officials who he discovered were neither up to the level of responsibility nor the level of the challenges they faced in administration. Kuwait today needs construction, and everyone must watch over this task, just like the Amir (May Almighty Allah grant him well being and success).

O Prime Minister-designate, we will not hide from you the fact that we will monitor your actions and the actions of your ministerial staff. Just as you dream of prolonging the life of the Council of Ministers that you lead, Kuwaitis dream that political stability will be long-term, that development will begin under your executive leadership, and that you will not allow the establishment of a deep state or mini-states of this kind.

You realize what it means about the fact that Kuwait today is led by a ruler who dedicated his whole life for his country. He will not allow any mistake, no matter how small. He is a ruler who is tired of dreaming of the best. He is a ruler who wants Kuwait to return to its pioneership.

As we said, there is a lot of goodness, and we only lack administrators who are up to the task.

MPs-elect

Continued from Page 1

MP-elect Mohammad Al-Dahoum urged HH the Prime Minister to choose ministers wisely, increase the citizens' salaries, respond to public demands, address the employment issue and control prices.

On the other hand, in response to the denial of the official spokesperson of the government, Dr. Amer Al-Ajmi, regarding the revelation of MP-elect Shuaib Al-Muwaijiri that the Council of Ministers decided to increase fuel prices by 25 percent starting June 1, Al-Muwaijiri posted a copy of the executive decision about the aforementioned increase.

Dr. Al-Ajmi explained on Tuesday that the letter regarding a supposed hike in fuel prices has been returned by the Ministry of Finance to the Ministerial Committee for Economic Affairs for further study.

In a brief statement, Dr. Al-Ajmi told KUNA that the cabinet postponed discussions on the issue of raising the price of fuel for further deliberation.

Al-Ajmi added that the letter addressed to the Ministry of Finance was recalled on the same day, which was directed to the ministry, on April 8, and it was returned to the Ministerial Committee for Economic Affairs for further study.

Rains ravage

Continued from Page 1

the tip of the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building.

Schools across the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms, largely shut ahead of the storm and government employees were largely working remotely if able. Many workers stayed home as well, though some ventured out, with the unfortunate stalling out their vehicles in deeper-than-expected water covering some roads.

Authorities sent tanker trucks out into the streets and highways to pump away the water.

Rain is unusual in the UAE, an arid, Arabian Peninsula nation, but occurs periodically during the cooler winter months. Many roads and other areas lack drainage given the lack of regular rainfall, causing flooding.

Initial estimates suggested over 30 millimeters (1 inch) of rain fell over the morning in Dubai, with as much as 128 mm (5 inches) of rain expected throughout the day. Rain also fell in Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

In neighboring Oman, a sultanate that rests on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, at least 18 people had been killed in heavy rains in recent days, according to a statement Tuesday from the country's National Committee for Emergency Management. That includes some 10 schoolchildren swept away in a vehicle with an adult, which saw condolences come into the country from rulers across the region.

Kuwait presses

Continued from Page 1

Iraq's cooperation in this endeavor. He stressed that adherence to established agreements and international norms is essential for fostering stability and security within the region.

Moreover, Al-Yahya commended the Central Asian countries for their steadfast commitment to addressing global security concerns and their ongoing cooperation with GCC member states. He praised their dedication to upholding international principles and underscored the mutual interest shared by both regions in bolstering security and stability.

In his address, Al-Yahya reiterated Kuwait's unwavering stance on Iraq's adherence to international resolutions, emphasizing the significance of Iraq's commitment to Security Council Resolution 833 of 1993, which pertains to the demarcation of the Kuwait-Iraqi border. He also highlighted the importance of completing the demarcation of the maritime border between Kuwait and Iraq, extending beyond Mark 162, and urged Iraq to adhere to the agreement regulating navigation in Khor Abdullah, signed between the two nations in 2012.

Furthermore, Al-Yahya emphasized Kuwait's aspiration to deepen cooperation and dialogue with Central Asian countries. He expressed Kuwait's readiness to host the next meeting between the GCC and Central Asian nations in 2025, underscoring Kuwait's commitment to advancing regional cooperation and addressing common challenges.

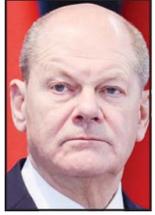
Overall, Al-Yahya's remarks reflect Kuwait's proactive approach to regional diplomacy and its commitment to fostering constructive dialogue and cooperation with its neighbors for the collective benefit of the region.

World News Roundup

Europe

'Russia invasion of Ukraine threatens global security':

German Chancellor **Olaf Scholz** told Chinese leader Xi Jinping who hosted him in Beijing on Tuesday that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine threatens global security, in an apparent call for China to apply greater pressure on its neighbor and close strategic partner to resolve the conflict.



Scholz

Scholz also told Xi at their meeting that the use of nuclear weapons in the 2-year-old war should not even be threatened, German media reported. Russian President Vladimir Putin warned last month that Russia is ready to use nuclear weapons if its sovereignty or independence is threatened, his latest such threat since invading Ukraine.

Scholz told Xi that Germany's "core interests" were impacted by the war against Ukraine, which has threatened to spread into a regional conflict and has disrupted energy and global food supplies and other trade.

Russia's actions "violate a principle of the United Nations Charter and the principle of the inviolability of national borders," Scholz was quoted as saying by German media.

China has refused to criticize the invasion and has maintained ties with Russia. While China says it is not sending military aid to Moscow, it has provided it with an economic lifeline to help it cope with sanctions from the West. (AP)

'Attacks on N-plant put world at risk': Russia and Ukraine on Monday traded blame before the United Nations Security Council for the attacks on Europe's largest nuclear power plant, which the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency said have put the world "dangerously close to a nuclear accident."

Without attributing blame, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said his agency has been able to confirm three attacks against the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant since April 7.

"These reckless attacks must cease immediately," he told the Security Council. "Though, fortunately, they have not led to a radiological incident this time, they significantly increase the risk ... where nuclear safety is already compromised."

The remote-controlled nature of the drones that have attacked the plant means that it is impossible to definitively determine who launched them, Grossi told reporters after the meeting.

"In order to say something like that, we must have proof," he said. "These attacks have been performed with a multitude of drones."

Zaporizhzhia sits in Russian-controlled territory in south-eastern Ukraine and has six nuclear reactors. (AP)

Blinken assures US support of allies in Black Sea: The US secretary of state assured allies bordering the Black Sea on Monday that they could depend on his country's support to make the region more secure, prosperous and integrated.

Addressing the attendees of the Second Black Sea Security Conference in the Bulgarian capital, Sofia, via a video feed, Anthony Blinken underscored the importance of investing in the region's security to ensure peace and freedom across Europe.

Russia illegally annexed the Crimean Peninsula - on the northern coast of the Black Sea - in 2014. It has served as a key hub supporting the Russian invasion of Ukraine which President Vladimir Putin ordered in Feb. 2022.

"Putin believed that Ukraine's neighbors in the region would be divided, but he was wrong," Blinken said, adding that "the United States will continue to support Ukraine both so it can defend itself today and stand on its feet." (AP)

US citizen appears in Moscow court: A US citizen arrested on drug charges in Moscow amid soaring Russia-US tensions over Ukraine appeared in court on Monday.

Robert Woodland Romanov is facing charges of trafficking large amounts of illegal drugs as part of an organized group - a criminal offense punishable by up to 20 years in prison. He was remanded into custody in January, and the trial began in the Ostankino District Court in late March. A new court hearing is scheduled for next week.

In January, the US State Department said it was aware of reports of the recent detention of a US citizen and noted that it "has no greater priority than the safety and security of U.S. citizens overseas," but refrained from further comment, citing privacy considerations. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow issued a similar statement at the time.

Russian media noted that the name of the accused matches that of a U.S. citizen interviewed by the popular daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in 2020. In the interview, the man said that he was born in the Perm region in the Ural Mountains in 1991 and was adopted by an American couple when he was 2. He said that he traveled to Russia to find his Russian mother and eventually met her on a TV show in Moscow. (AP)

Georgia lawmakers scuffle over divisive bill: Lawmakers in Georgia's legislature scuffled on Monday as the parliament debated a divisive new law dubbed the foreign agent bill. Hours later, hundreds of people protested against the legislation outside the parliament in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi.

The draft - proposed by the ruling Georgian Dream party - calls for media and non-commercial organizations to register as being under foreign influence if they receive more than 20% of their funding from abroad.

Opponents of the measure denounce it as "the Russian law" because of similar legislation used by Moscow to stigmatize independent news media and organizations seen as being at odds with the Kremlin.

Video shared online shows the leader of the Georgian Dream lawmakers, Mamuka Mdivaradze, being punched in the face while speaking by an opposition lawmaker who rushed up to the podium. Several other lawmakers from opposing sides then join in the brawl, scuffling and wrestling with each other. (AP)

Bill set to become law: A key plank in the British government's plan to send some asylum-seekers on a one-way trip to Rwanda is expected to become law this week, but opponents plan new legal challenges that could keep deportation flights grounded.

A bill aimed at overcoming a UK Supreme Court block on sending migrants to Rwanda is due to pass Parliament after the government overcomes efforts to water it down in the House of Lords.

The Rwanda plan is key to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's pledge to "stop the boats" bringing unauthorized migrants to the UK, and Sunak has repeatedly said the long-delayed first flights will take off by June.

"This week Parliament has the opportunity to pass a bill that will save lives of those being exploited by people-smuggling gangs," Sunak's spokesman, Dave Pares, said Monday. "It is clear we cannot continue with the status quo ... now is the time to change the equation." (AP)

'Toss out Armenian case': Lawyers for Azerbaijan on Monday urged the top United Nations court to throw out a case filed by Armenia linked to the long-running dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, arguing that judges do not have jurisdiction.

Armenia filed the case at the International Court of Justice in 2021, accusing Azerbaijan of a "state-sponsored policy of Armenian hatred" that has led to "systemic discrimination, mass killings, torture and other abuse."

The legal dispute stems from long-standing tensions that erupted into a 2020 war over Nagorno-Karabakh that left more than 6,600 people dead. The region is within Azerbaijan, but had been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since the end of a separatist war in 1994. (AP)



US President Joe Biden, (right), shakes hands with Prime Minister Petr Fiala of the Czech Republic during a meeting in the Oval Office at the White House on April 15. (AP)

US president hosts Czech leader at White House

US President Joe Biden urged the US House to immediately take up Senate-passed supplemental funding for Ukraine and Israel on Monday as he hosted Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala in the Oval Office.

The visit came as Biden aimed to highlight the efforts other nations are making to support Ukraine. It followed the Czech government's announcement

that it is sending 1 million rounds of artillery ammunition to Ukraine, which Kyiv says is badly needed on the battlefield against Russia's invasion.

"As the Czech Republic remembers, Russia won't stop at Ukraine," Biden said. He appealed to Congress to pass the supplemental funding so the US could do its part to help Ukraine. "They have to do it

now," Biden said.

Fiala praised the US president for his leadership in support of Ukraine, adding, "We are also doing our best."

He said, "In 1968 I saw Russian tanks in the streets of my town, and I don't want to see this again." (AP)

Politics

Dems seek to seize control of Michigan House

Biden back to Scranton roots to pitch tax plan

WASHINGTON, April 16, (AP) - US President Joe Biden returns to his childhood hometown of Scranton on Tuesday to open three straight days of campaigning in Pennsylvania, capitalizing on the opportunity to work the battleground state while Donald Trump spends the week in a New York City courtroom for his first criminal trial.

The Democratic president plans to use Scranton, a working class city of roughly 75,000 people, as the backdrop for his pitch for higher taxes on the rich. At the same, he will portray Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee and a billionaire himself, as a tool of wealthy interests.

It's all aimed at reframing the conversation around the economy, which has left many Americans feeling sour about their financial situations at a time of stubborn inflation and elevated interest rates despite low unemployment.

Biden plans to spend Tuesday night in Scranton before continuing to Pittsburgh on Wednesday morning. He then goes back to the White House, only to return to Pennsylvania on Thursday, this time visiting Philadelphia.

Importance

By the time the week is over, Biden or Vice President Kamala Harris will have visited the state eight times this year, reflecting its importance to Biden's hopes for a second term.

"It's hard to draw paths to Biden winning the White House that don't involve Pennsylvania," said Daniel Hopkins, a political science professor at the University of Pennsylvania. No Democrat has become president without winning the state since Harry Truman in 1948.

Scranton, the president's first destination, will blend the personal and the political for Biden. He grew up in a three-story colonial home in the Green Ridge neighborhood until his father struggled to find work and moved the family to Delaware when the future president was 10.

Although Delaware eventually became the launching pad for Biden's political career, he often returned to Scranton and grounded his autobiography in the city. He visited so often, he was sometimes called "Pennsylvania's third senator."

In 2020, Biden described the presidential campaign as "Scranton versus Park Avenue," and his reelection team is framing this year's race in a similar way.

"You've got Joe Biden, who sees the world from the kitchen table where he grew up in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and Donald Trump, who sees the world from his country club down in Mar-a-Lago," said Michael Tyler, the campaign's communications director.

Political

Christopher Borick, director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion, described Scranton as a "mythical place in political culture," and it will provide a test for Biden's political appeal.

"It's an area that, on paper, aligns perfectly with the populist gains of the Republican Party during the Trump era," Borick said.

However, Biden won the city and the surrounding county in 2020. If he's able to carry Scranton and similar places again this year, as well as limit Trump's winning margins in rural areas, Biden may be able to secure another victory in Pennsylvania.

"Everything is on the margin. Even-

rything that we talk about are small shifts," Borick said.

Biden's pitch on taxes is a key part of his effort to blunt Trump's populist allure.

When Trump was president, he signed into law a series of tax breaks in 2017 that disproportionately benefit the rich. Many of the cuts expire at the end of 2025, and Biden wants to keep a majority of them to fulfill his promise that no one earning less than \$400,000 will pay more taxes.

Also:

LANSING, Mich: Democratic lawmakers are hoping to win back a majority in the deadlocked Michigan House and regain control of the state government in two special elections on Tuesday.

Democrat **Mai Xiong** is taking on Republican **Ronald Singer** in District 13, while **Peter Herzberg**, a Democrat, faces Republican **Josh Powell** in District 25. Both districts are located just outside Detroit and are heavily Democratic, with the previous Democratic incumbents each having won by over 25 percentage points in 2022.

The lower chamber has been tied 54-54 between Democratic and Republican lawmakers since November, when two Democratic representatives vacated their seats after winning mayoral races in their hometowns. Democrats previously held a majority in both chambers along with control of the governor's office.

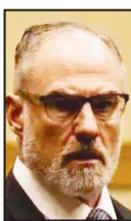
"These special elections will determine who controls the House here in Michigan and set the tone for November, when we will decide whether Democrats hold on to the state House," said Michigan Democratic Party Chair **Lavora Barnes**.



Ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh and European Union observers drive their cars past a check point on the road from Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia's Goris in Syunik region, Armenia on Sept 29, 2023. Lawyers for Azerbaijan on April 15 urged the top United Nations court to throw out a case filed by Armenia linked to the long-running dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, arguing that judges do not have jurisdiction. (AP)



Carney



LaRue

America

'Psych evaluation for man': A judge on Monday ordered a psychiatric evaluation for a northern Illinois man charged with killing four people and injuring seven others by stabbing, beating and driving over them.

Winnebago County Judge Debra Schafer ordered the evaluation for Christian Soto when the 22-year-old man appeared in court by video link for a scheduled arraignment on charges of first-degree murder.

Soto's arraignment now is scheduled for May 17.

Assistant State's Attorney **Ken LaRue** said the case would go before a grand jury on Friday. (AP)

Former marine gets 9 yrs: A former US Marine was sentenced Monday to nine years in prison for firebombing a Southern California Planned Parenthood clinic in 2022, federal prosecutors said.

Chance Brannon, 24, pleaded guilty in November to four felony counts, including malicious destruction of property by fire and explosives and intentional damage to a reproductive health services facility.

Brannon, of San Juan Capistrano, California, also admitted that he made plans for additional attacks on a second Planned Parenthood clinic.

During the sentencing hearing, US District Judge **Cormac J. Carney** said Brannon "engaged in cruel and indefensible domestic terrorism." (AP)

'Ship had electrical issues': Hours before leaving port, the massive container ship that caused the deadly collapse of a Baltimore bridge experienced apparent

electrical problems, a person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press on Monday, the same day FBI agents boarded the vessel amid a criminal



Denmark's King Frederik X, from left, Queen Mary, Queen Margrethe and Princess Benedikte wave from Fredensborg Castle during the celebration of Queen Margrethe's 84th birthday in Fredensborg, Denmark on April 16. It is the first time since the change of throne that Queen Margrethe's birthday is celebrated. (AP)

investigation into the circumstances leading up to the catastrophe.

The Dali departed Baltimore's port early on March 26 laden with cargo destined for Sri Lanka. It lost power before reaching open water and struck one of the supports for Francis Scott Key Bridge, causing the span to collapse into the Patapsco River and sending six members of a road repair crew plummeting to their deaths. Two of the victims are still unaccounted for. (AP)

Las Vegas lawyer, wife killed: A Las Vegas lawyer and his wife had been in the middle of a contentious battle for custody of her children from a previous marriage when the woman's former father-in-law, also an attorney, fatally shot them last week during a deposition hearing in the case, according to authorities and relatives.

The coroner's office in Las Vegas identified the victims as lawyer Dennis Prince and his wife, Ashley. Both were shot multiple times, the coroner's office said, before 77-year-old Joseph Houston shot and killed himself.

Gunfire erupted just minutes after the deposition hearing began on the morning of April 8 at Dennis Prince's law firm, Prince Law Group, in the affluent Summerlin neighborhood.

Seven people were in the room at the time of the shooting, police said. (AP)

Africa

Rebels kill 11 in Congo

World donors pledge mlns in aid for Sudan

PARIS, April 16. (Agencies): French President Emmanuel Macron announced Monday that world donors are pledging more than 2 billion euros in aid for Sudan after a yearlong war that has pushed its population to the brink of famine.

Macron spoke at the end of an international conference in Paris aimed at drumming up support for Sudan's people. He did not give a detailed timeline or breakdown of the funding.

In a final statement, top diplomatic envoys, UN officials and aid agencies gathered at the conference also urged Sudan's warring parties to stop rights violations and allow access for humanitarian aid. Members of Sudan's civil society took part in the Paris meeting, but neither the Sudanese army nor its rival paramilitary were represented.

Sudan descended into conflict in April last year when simmering tensions between the military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces exploded into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum, and elsewhere across the country.

Macron called it "one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world," that has created a "real risk of famine."

Needs

The United Nations' humanitarian campaign needs some \$2.7 billion this year to get food, health care and other supplies to 24 million people in Sudan - nearly half its population of 51 million. So far, funders have given only \$145 million, about 5%, according to the UN's humanitarian office, known as OCHA.

After Monday's conference, Macron said, "We are today at 2 billion euros for Sudan."

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres urged the international community to donate generously and support the UN life-saving efforts to help Sudanese people, trapped in the "nightmare of bloodshed."

More than 14,000 people have been killed and at least 33,000 have been wounded in a yearlong war. Nearly 9 million people have been forced to flee their homes either to safer areas inside Sudan or to neighboring countries, according to the UN. Hunger, sexual violence against women and girls and continued displacement are rampant and much of the country's infrastructure - homes, hospitals and schools - has been reduced to rubble.

"We cannot let this nightmare slide from view," Guterres said in a video message to the Paris conference.

"It's time to support the Sudanese people. It's time to silence the guns," he added.

Mobilize

French Foreign Minister Stéphane Sejourne said the aim of the conference was to mobilize humanitarian funding to help Sudanese people, who have been victims of both a "terrible war" and "international indifference."

"It's a colossal task," Sejourne said. "It's a war the Sudanese people did not want, a war that only produces chaos and suffering."

The European Union's crisis management commissioner, Janez Lenarcic, said the 27-member bloc wants to ensure that Sudan is not forgotten as wars in Gaza and Ukraine dominate the international news.

"People of Sudan, caught up in this emergency, are almost completely invisible," Lenarcic said. Sudan has turned into one of the worst humanitarian disasters ever on the African continent, he said, and added: "It is our duty not to look away."

President of the International Committee of the Red Cross Mirjana Spoljaric warned that humanitarian action is increasingly politicized in Sudan and humanitarian workers are risking their lives to get vital aid to people. She urged all sides in the war to facilitate a "safe, rapid, and unimpeded passage of humanitarian personnel and goods, into and within Sudan, through all available routes."

"Securing a military advantage cannot be pursued regardless of the human cost," Spoljaric said.

The United States and Saudi Arabia initially led efforts to find a negotiated way out of the conflict. But the efforts did not succeed, and since October the fighting has been overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, which is threatening to expand into a broader regional conflict.

Also:

GENEVA: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk warned on Monday of a further escalation in violence in Sudan as parties to the conflict arm civilians and more armed groups join the fighting.

On the first anniversary of the outbreak of the armed conflict, Turk issued a statement from Geneva calling for an end to the conflict and the suffering of civilians.

Turk expressed concern about the recruitment of children in the conflict, arming civilians, as the increase of indiscriminate attacks in densely populated areas, as well as ethnically motivated attacks.

He denounced the recent arrest warrants issued against leading civilian figures including former Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok on charges that he said "do not appear to be substantiated" and some of which carry the death penalty.

"The Sudanese authorities must immediately revoke the arrest warrants against Hamdok and other civilian leaders and prioritize confidence-building measures towards a ceasefire as a first step followed by a comprehensive resolution of the conflict and the restoration of a civilian government" he added.

KINSHASA, Congo: Extremist-linked rebels attacked villages in eastern Congo over the weekend, killing at least 11 people, torching vehicles and taking possessions, a local official said.

The attacks occurred Saturday and were reported by the local mayor on Sunday. Allied Democratic Forces rebels with ties to the Islamic State group have long operated in the border area near Uganda. The United Nations said earlier this month that almost 200 people have been killed there this year.

In one area, 11 bodies were recovered from four different places in the commune of Mulekera, according to the mayor, Ngongo Mayanga. Mulekera is near a town in North Kivu province.

Eastern Congo has been ravaged by conflict for decades as more than 120 armed groups fight for control of valuable mineral resources and some try to protect their communities. Mass killings by rebels are frequent. The violence has led over 7 million people to flee their homes, the UN has said.



Workers conduct annual cleaning operation on the bronze statue of King Sejong in Seoul, South Korea on April 16. (Xinhua)

Asia

Marcos says 'not one person died'

Manila seizes largest haul of meth in drug bust

MANILA, Philippines, April 16, (AP): Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said Tuesday police seized the largest haul of methamphetamine in the country in years without anybody being killed, in a subtle criticism of his predecessor's notoriously deadly crackdown on illegal drugs.

Police seized nearly 1,630 kilograms (1.8 tons) of methamphetamine Monday from a van and arrested its driver at a checkpoint in Alitagtag town in Batangas province south of Manila. Intelligence operations were underway to arrest other suspects, officials said without elaborating.

Powerful

Locally known as shabu, the powerful stimulant had a street value of more than 13 billion pesos (\$228 million), officials said.

"This is the biggest shipment of shabu that we've seized, but not one person died. No shots were fired and nobody was injured because we operated slowly," Marcos told reporters in Alitagtag, where he presented the boxloads of seized drugs to the press.

"This should be the approach in the drug war for me and the most important objective is to stop the smuggling of illegal drugs into the Philippines," Marcos said, adding that the newly seized drugs came from outside the country.

Marcos, who took office in mid-2022, has vowed to continue the crackdown on illegal drugs launched by his predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, but said it would be done differently and focus more on rehabilitating drug addicts.

Under Duterte, more than 6,000 mostly poor suspected drug dealers were killed in reported clashes with law enforcers. The widespread killings alarmed Western governments, including the United States, and sparked an ongoing International Criminal Court investigation as a possible crime against humanity.

Police say there have been considerably fewer killings of drug suspects under Marcos, but human rights groups have expressed alarm over the continued killings and asked Marcos to cooperate with the ICC in investigating the killings that took place when Duterte was president and a longtime mayor of southern Davao city.

As president, Duterte withdrew the

Tensions rise in Australia after bishop and priest wounded in a 'knife attack'

SYDNEY, April 16, (AP): A teenager has been accused of wounding a Christian bishop and priest during a church service in a second high-profile knife attack to rock Sydney in recent days, leaving communities on edge, leaders calling for calm and a besieged church urging against retaliation.

The 16-year-old was overpowered by the shocked congregation at Christ the Good Shepherd Church after he allegedly stabbed Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel and Fr. Isaac Royel during a service on Monday night that was being streamed online.

Police have not commented on reports that the boy's fingers were severed by parishioners in the Orthodox Assyrian church in suburban Wakeley, but confirmed his hand injuries were "severe."

Video of the attack spread quickly on social media and an angry mob converged on the church demanding vengeance. They hurled bricks, bottles and fence boards at police, who temporarily barricaded the boy inside the church for his own safety. Many in the crowd chanted "an eye for an eye" and "bring him out."

Several people including police officers required hospital treatment following the hours-long riot.

Police and community leaders said public anxiety had been heightened by a lone assailant's knife attack in a Sydney shopping

mall on Saturday that killed five women and a male security guard who attempted to intervene. The 40-year-old assailant, Joel Cauchi, had a history of mental illness and trouble with women and a fascination with knives. He was shot dead by police.

Also:

TANA TORAJA, Indonesia: Rescuers recovered the bodies of a 3-year-old girl and her mother, the last victims still missing after landslides killed 20 on Indonesia's Sulawesi Island, authorities said Tuesday.

The steep, muddy terrain blocked heavy equipment from coming in, forcing rescuers to dig through the mud with handheld tools.

At least 20 search and rescue officers took part in the search, as well as dozens of residents.

Mud loosened by torrential rain poured from surrounding hills onto four houses Saturday at South Makale village in the Tana Toraja district of South Sulawesi province, said local police chief Gunardi Mundu. He said a family gathering was being held in one of the houses when the landslide hit.

The last two victims were found late Tuesday afternoon as heavy rains continued. Rescuers carried them away, wrapped in orange body bags, across a dark and rainy field with the help of torches.



In this handout photo provided by the Batangas Public Information Office, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr talks to reporters as he visits Alitagtag town in Batangas province, Philippines on April 16. Marcos said Tuesday police seized the largest haul of methamphetamine in the country in years without anybody killed, in a subtle criticism of his predecessor's notoriously deadly crackdown on illegal drugs. (AP)



Pope Francis



Galán

Lat/Am

Bogota announces measures: The mayor of Colombia's capital on Monday announced new measures to reduce water consumption in the city of eight million people, where a drought associated with the El Niño weather pattern has already prompted officials to ration water in most neighborhoods and ask residents to change their showering and habits.

In a statement aired by local media, Bogotá's Mayor Carlos Fernando Galán said homes that use more than 22 cubic meters of water per month will have to pay additional fees. He also threatened to impose fines of up to \$300 on people who wash their cars on the streets or conduct other activities that are deemed to be a waste of water.

The mayor said that city buses, which are usually washed every day, will now only be washed once per week. For public health reasons, the insides of the buses will still need to be cleaned on a daily basis.

"We have started to reduce water consumption, but there is still a long way to go to reach our goals," Galán said. (AP)

'Corpses likely migrants': Brazilian police investigating the grim discovery of a boat full of corpses say the dead were likely African migrants from Mali and Mauritania.

Fishermen off Brazil's northern coastal state of Pará found the boat adrift Saturday in the Atlantic ocean. Brazil's Federal police said in a statement late Monday it had recovered nine dead in total.

"Documents and objects found near the bodies indicate that the victims were migrants from the African continent, from the region of Mauritania and Mali," the statement read. Police added that other nationalities could be among the deceased.

The roughly 12-meter (39-foot) -long white and blue canoe-shaped boat found in Brazil shares the same characteristics of Mauritanian fishing pirogues frequently used by West African migrants and refugees fleeing to Spain's Canary Islands, suggesting Brazil was probably not their destination.

The Atlantic route from West Africa to the European Union territory is one of the most dangerous in the world. Boats that miss their destination can be swept away

by Atlantic trade winds and currents from east to west, drifting for months. Migrants aboard often die of dehydration and malnutrition. Others have also been known

jump into the ocean out desperation. (AP)



An aerial drone photo taken on April 13, 2024 shows blooming magnolia flowers in Cangwangzhai Village of Yongsheng Town in Jiangyou, southwest China's Sichuan Province. (Xinhua)

Pope sides with Peruvian villagers: Pope Francis sided with a group of Peruvian villagers who have complained that companies linked to a powerful South American church group have tried to evict them from their land using lawsuits and obscure land titling schemes.

In a video recorded at his residence in the Vatican, the Pope sent a message of support to members of the San Juan Bautista de Catacos farmers community in northern Peru, who have been fending off lawsuits from companies associated with the Sodalitium Christianae Vitae since 2014.

"I know what happened to you," the Pope said in Spanish. "Defend your land and don't let them steal it."

The Sodalitium is a lay group that runs schools and spiritual retirement centers in several South American countries, but is also involved in real estate, agriculture and construction companies.

The conservative group was founded in Peru in 1971 and gained thousands of members in South America, where it also ran homes housing consecrated members.

But the Sodalitium has come under increased scrutiny in recent years after its founder and some of its main leaders were accused of committing abuses against children. (AP)

oil prices dip amid easing regional conflict fears

Oil prices fell by about a percentage point on Monday morning, following a decline in the market fears of the outbreak of a broader regional conflict, following the attack launched by Iran over the weekend on Israel, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Brent crude futures for June delivery fell 99 cents, or approximately 1.0 percent, to \$89.46 per barrel, and West Texas Intermediate crude futures for May delivery fell \$1.05, or 1.2 percent, to \$84.61 per barrel.

Oil prices rose on Friday, with anticipation of the Iranian response to the targeting of its consulate, and touched their highest levels since October. So far, the conflict between Israel and Hamas has had little tangible impact on oil supplies.

In this context, the International Energy Agency said on Monday that the further escalation of tension in the Middle East region due to the air attacks launched by Iran on Israeli military facilities raises the risk of increased

volatility in oil markets, and represents a new reminder of the importance of energy security.

The agency added, in its news bulletin, that global oil markets were already witnessing a state of scarcity even before the attacks, noting that the escalation of geopolitical tension in the Middle East is focusing attention on the security of supplies, according to the latest version of the agency's monthly report on oil markets, quoted by the news agency.

The agency said that, as always, it will follow developments closely. She noted that Brent crude oil exceeded \$90 per barrel earlier this month, reaching its highest levels since October 2023, amid escalating tensions between Israel and Iran.

In another context, the Venezuelan government arrested two high-ranking energy officials, after the arrest of a former oil minister, in light of an investigation into billions in losses in revenues from Petroleos de Venezuela

SA. Bloomberg quoted an unnamed informed source as saying that Deputy Oil Minister Eric Perez and Deputy Minister for Gas Affairs Juan Santana were arrested on Saturday.

Bloomberg said that the arrests came in the wake of the arrest of former Venezuelan Oil Minister Tarek El Aissami last Tuesday, a year after his resignation. El Aissami faces charges of treason and money laundering in connection with an alleged scheme in which billions of dollars in oil revenues were hidden.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Dr. Imad Al-Ateqi, on Monday, held a meeting with the leaders of the corporation and its subsidiaries, in the presence of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil, during which he was briefed on the corporation's preparations to confront all possibilities at the security level.

Market Movements

16-04-2024

Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
↑		SAUDI	- Tadawul	-207.91 12,500.43
↓		DUBAI	- DFMGI	-59.47 4,184.31
		JAPAN	- Nikkei 225	-761.60 38,471.20
		PHILIPPINES	- PSEi	-157.46 6,404.97
		EGYPT	- EGX 30	-215.63 29,400.84
		PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	-155.75 70,453.13

Business



Warba Team



General assembly approved distribution of 6% grant for 2023

Warba's precision strategy yields successful implementation

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Chairman of Warba Bank, Hamad Musaed Al-Sayer, said that the Bank was able to implement a solid strategic vision that began years ago and completed it with remarkable success through management that was supervised and implemented with sincerity and mastery, and its goal was not only achievement; Rather, praised achievement by everyone.

Al-Sayer added in his speech during the General Assembly, which was held yesterday, with an attendance rate of 54.874%, that the combined integrated efforts were behind the achievements of Warba Bank during the year 2023. Warba succeeded in translating its vision and mission into reality and reaping the fruits of implementing a long-term strategy adopted by the Board of Directors, to diversify sources of profits, avoid risks, rationalize spending, increase operating revenues from major banking activities, and achieve harmony in performance, to ensure sustainability in growth and profitability. This was confirmed by the positive indicators, the strength and efficiency of the financial position, and the sustainable, balanced growth over the past years, which was characterized by increasing positive performance in financial indicators and market shares, which reflects the strength of the financial position and the sustainability of profits.

Growth of all financial indicators

Al-Sayer continued, saying: "We conclude the year 2023 with remarkable distinction for Warba Bank, which was built on solid steps and a deep foundation, continuing the progress you have witnessed, with growth in earnings per share to achieve an increase at the end of 2023 of 12.4% as a result of a vision that was carefully formulated, studied and implemented. He added that the Bank's net profits amounted to KD 19.7 million, compared to net profits in 2022, which amounted to KD 19.3 million, and an earnings per share of 8.05 Fils in 2023 compared to 7.16 Fils in 2022."

Al-Sayer explained that these results achieved by Warba Bank, despite the intense competition in the banking sector, are due to the trust placed in Warba Bank by the distinguished shareholders and esteemed customers, and the subsequent diligence and sincerity provided by all employees of the Bank, with diligent care to provide the highest and most distinguished levels of service to clients, with exceptional creativity and remarkable innovation, which the Bank has been keen to implement, motivate and develop since the launch of its five-year strategy in 2022.

Rationalizing expenses and maximizing profitability

He stated that the integrated efforts provided by the Bank resulted in achieving tangible growth in most of its basic financial indicators, while maintaining the distinguished rate of return on assets and return on shareholders' equity, rationalizing expenses, and maximizing profitability. Through our preventive plans, we will be able to improve asset quality indicators and bad debt coverage rates from provisions.

He stressed that, as a result, total assets increased to KD 4.8 billion, a growth rate of 15%. We also witnessed an increase in total operating revenues, reaching KD 245 million, a growth rate of 53%. Customer deposits increased during the year 2023 to KD 2.9 billion, an increase of KD 233 million or 9% over the year 2022.

Al-Sayer noted that financial indicators are continuing to record improved figures, as the value of the Bank's equity has increased, reaching KD 391 million, compared to the year 2022, which recorded an increase then of KD 17 million. He pointed out that the efforts did not stop there, but rather the Bank continued to work to support ambitious projects that achieve customers' visions, which directly contributed to increasing the value of the financing portfolio to KD 3.5 billion, with a growth rate of 10% in line with the continuous increase in the Bank's client base.

Al-Sayer further said that the market share of local financing in general has witnessed an increase of 0.7% currently, resulting from an increase in Warba Bank's share of corporate financing by 1.02%.

Warba Bank's achievements did not stop there. Rather, it also succeeded in maintaining the capital base above the minimum requirements as per Central Bank of Kuwait, with the capital adequacy ratio increasing from 16.94% at the end of 2022, to 16.98% at the end of 2023.

Our human wealth

Al-Sayer praised the Bank's employees, saying: "They are not just employees; they are real wealth, raising Warba Bank on solid foundations of knowledge, experience, and competence. They keep pace with every cognitive and creative development, confident that Warba Bank has given them the highest attention, as their devel-

Al-Sayer:

- Our excellence in 2023 is built on solid steps and a deep foundation... and we promise to continue improving profit growth.
- We achieved significant growth in most of the financial indicators and maintained the rate of return on assets and shareholders' equity
- The Bank's preventive plans enabled it to improve asset quality indicators and coverage ratio.
- The Bank's continued implementation of its visions by supporting ambitious projects contributed to an increase in the financing portfolio to reach KD 3.5 billion, with a growth of 10%.
- Warba's market share is constantly increasing and the capital base has been maintained with a capital adequacy ratio of 16.98% by the end of 2023.
- Warba Gives its young employees a leadership role, with full confidence because of their potential that keeps pace with every cognitive and creative development.
- We implemented the Kuwaitization plan with a balanced rate between recruitment and development of national talent, reaching more than 83.5%.
- The Bank provides services and products that form part of its identity, proving year after year that it is one of the most distinguished banking institutions in customer service.
- Warba became the most attractive environment for young people eagerly searching for a competitive place to work in the private sector in general, and the banking sector in particular.
- We were the first to launch "Warba World" as a unique initiative in marketing activation as part of our plan towards digital transformation and innovation.

opment means its development, and their excellence means its excellence. Explaining that this vision requires leadership that combines the courage of ambitious youth with experience that keeps the balance, without being an obstacle to progress. Rather, to be open to everything new, and keeps pace with every progress. Therefore, Warba Bank gave the youth a leadership role, with full confidence, due to the potential of its employees that qualify them for this leadership, with endless support from practical and academic training, so that the Bank would be an attractive environment for every young person with thought and creativity. Opening its doors to Kuwaiti youth who aspire to creativity more broadly than their peers."

Al-Sayer noted that Warba Bank has endeavored to implement the Kuwaitization plan set by the Board of Directors within its strategic plan, with a balanced rate between employment and development of national talents, reaching more than 83.5%, so that we can take our role and duty in truly effective contribution to the national economy.

Al-Sayer stated that Warba Bank is still one of the institutions that most often opens its career doors to Kuwaiti citizens, and attracts and develops national talents, as the rate of attracting Kuwaitis ranged from new appointments in recent years, which reached 83.5%, most of whom were recent graduates.

At Warba, we did not neglect implementing the succession plan, pushing for Kuwaitis to receive middle management and executive management positions, thus supporting the achievement of the nationalization goals for workers in the Bank. Highlighting that this contributed to making "Warba" the most attractive environment for young people eagerly searching for a competitive place to work in the private sector in general, and the banking sector in particular, providing a wide and fertile space for creativity and innovation.

Strategic partnerships

On the other hand, Al-Sayer said that Warba Bank is keen, as usual, to pay attention to sports and youth activities and develop them for school and university stu-

dents, as the Bank signed a strategic partnership with the Kuwait School Sports Federation and Higher Education, to sponsor the school league for the year 2023/2024, to encourage the practice of sports as a healthy lifestyle, instilling the value of noble competition, and nurturing the sporting talent that is formed in this age group rich in talent. This partnership aims to promote school sports and higher education and build a strong and capable sports generation that can proudly represent our country at the local, regional, Arab and international levels. This is part of our efforts to contribute to building a sustainable future for the youth of Kuwait.

Technology investment

Al-Sayer stressed that "Warba" has been keen since its inception in technological and digital investment due to its firm conviction that it is the future of business in general, so Warba Bank launched an event on the world of augmented reality "Warba World" as part of its bold plan towards digital transformation and innovation. Warba Bank was the first to launch this unique initiative in marketing activation, to be the first of its kind in Kuwait, presented with a local touch, to educate the community financially, for the Bank's clients and others, in the form of educational materials and a review of general facts in the form of simple questions and answers, believing in society's right over us, offering it everything we can in recognition of our social responsibility.

Distinctive retail services

Warba Bank is unique in providing many banking services and products, which form part of its identity that it has built among its clients and investors, proving year after year that it is one of the most distinguished Kuwaiti banking institutions in customer service. It does not stop at any limit; Rather, it always seeks to provide innovative services and unique products in the banking market, after studying new segments of clients and dividing them into categories that share common interests and hobbies. Warba Bank launched the first prepaid card for e-sports in Kuwait, which was designed for a new segment of clients, united by one hobby and a special interest, emphasizing that the rapid progress and development that our current era is witnessing requires us to always be progressive, unique pioneers, and put our own identity and mark in everything we offer.

Quality initiatives

Warba is a life partner for its clients, and a community partner for the entire community. Its responsibility is not limited to its clients; Rather, it goes beyond that to include all members of society, so it always adopts qualitative community initiatives, those that make society better and facilitate people's lives.

Among the qualitative initiatives adopted by Warba Bank, through strategic partnerships:

- "Sad" application for e-learning, where Warba Bank worked in cooperation with the "Sad" application to launch the first electronic competition of its kind in Kuwait for the Holy Qur'an; "Warba Readers", through which the specialized Warba Bank team sought to develop the latest methods and technologies in the field of e-learning, to present a Ramadan Qur'anic competition, which provided a high-tech competitive environment, with a modern touch, and under the supervision of an elite group of certified memorizers and specialized educational supervisors.

- An initiative at Gulf University for Science and Technology to collect plastic bottle caps, to raise community awareness about sustainability and the cumulative danger of these materials to the environment and the importance of recycling. Warba Bank sponsored this initiative, which was carried out by the public relations club for university students, collecting more than 90,000 plastic caps. They created the name "Kuwait" to enter the Guinness World Records.

- The "Let's Be Aware" campaign, in which Warba Bank participates in cooperation with the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association, with monthly activities, to increase the level of awareness in society about electronic fraud methods, and to educate and protect everyone and alert them about the latest developments in electronic fraud, to protect them and preserve their money.

The General Assembly approved all items on the agenda, including the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute bonus shares at the rate of 6% of the nominal value of the share, i.e. (6 shares for every 100 shares) to shareholders for the fiscal year ending on December 31, 2023.

Markaz CEO among top asset managers

Kuwaiti firms' CEOs acknowledged in Forbes asset managers ranking

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Forbes Middle East recently unveiled its list of 'The Most Powerful Asset Managers in the Middle East 2024,' featuring 30 leaders from asset management companies across the region, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Among them, five leaders from Kuwaiti firms were recognized for their contributions to the industry, managing assets worth over \$340 billion in 2023. These leaders play a vital role in providing investors with opportunities to diversify their portfolios and capitalize on economic growth stories in the region.

Included in the list are prominent figures such as Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, CEO of KAMCO Invest; Abdulaziz Nasser Al-Marzouq, CEO of KFH Capital Investment; Fahd Abdulrahman Al-Mukhaizeem, CEO of the National Investments Company; Ali Khalil, CEO of Kuwait Financial Center (Markaz); and Hussein Shahrou, CEO of Ahli Capital Investment.

The selection criteria for the list considered factors such as previous experience, achievements in the past year, and total assets managed by the company. It encompassed leaders from independent asset management firms as well as investment arms of banks and financial institutions. Notably, as-

set managers from sovereign wealth funds, private, and family offices were not included in the ranking.

While Saudi Arabia dominates the list with 14 companies, Kuwait follows with five entries, and the UAE with four entries, underscoring the significant presence of asset management expertise in the Gulf region.

In other news, Standard & Poor's anticipates a slowdown in the growth of total spending by Gulf oil companies in 2024 compared to previous years, albeit remaining relatively high.

Factors contributing to this include modest growth in capital expenditures and a temporary halt in adding production capabilities in Saudi Arabia. The agency projects a decline in demand for oil drilling rig work, usage rates, average daily prices, and profitability of drilling companies in the region.

Despite this slowdown, plans for expanding drilling work, especially in new fields announced by Qatar, may lead to increased spending by Gulf oil companies. However, the overall growth of drilling work is expected to decline, impacting demand and profitability.

Standard & Poor's anticipates Gulf national oil companies to adopt a cautious approach to spending, with modest increases in total capital expenditures.

IMF upgrades global economic outlook, predicts 'soft landing'

US leads strong global growth, IMF forecasts 3.2% expansion

WASHINGTON, April 16, (AP): The International Monetary Fund has upgraded its outlook for the global economy this year, saying the world appears headed for a "soft landing" - reining in inflation without much economic pain and producing steady if modest growth.

The IMF now envisions 3.2% worldwide expansion this year, up a tick from the 3.1% it had predicted in January and matching 2023's pace. And it foresees a third straight year of 3.2% growth in 2025.

In its latest outlook, the IMF, a 190-country lending organization, notes that the global expansion is being powered by unexpectedly strong growth in the United States, the world's largest economy. The IMF expects the U.S. economy to grow 2.7% this year, an upgrade from the 2.1% it had predicted in January and faster than a solid 2.5% expansion in 2023.

Though sharp price increases remain an obstacle across the world, the IMF foresees global inflation tumbling from 6.8% last year to 5.9% in 2024 and 4.5% next year. In the world's advanced economies

alone, the organization envisions inflation falling from 4.6% in 2023 to 2.6% this year and 2% in 2025, brought down by the effects of higher interest rates.

The Federal Reserve, the Bank of Japan, the European Central Bank and the Bank of England have all sharply raised rates with the aim of slowing inflation to around 2%. In the United States, year-over-year inflation has plummeted from a peak of 9.1% in the summer of 2022 to 3.5%. Still, U.S. inflation remains persistently above the Fed's target level, which will likely delay any rate cuts by the U.S. central bank.

Globally, higher borrowing rates had been widely expected to cause severe economic pain - even a recession - including in the United States. But it hasn't happened. Growth and hiring have endured even as inflation has decelerated.

"Despite many gloomy predictions, the global economy has held steady, and inflation has been returning to target," Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, the IMF's chief economist, told reporters ahead the release of the fund's latest World Economic Outlook.

Though the world economy is showing unexpected resilience, it isn't exactly strong. From 2000 through 2019, global economic growth had averaged 3.8% - much higher than the 3.2% IMF forecasts for this year and next. Keeping a lid on the world's growth prospects are the continued high interest rates, along with

sluggish gains in productivity in much of the world and the withdrawal of government economic aid that was rolled out during the pandemic.

The IMF warns that the economic expansion could be thrown off by the continuing adverse effects of higher rates and by geopolitical tensions, including the war in Gaza, that risk disrupting trade and raising energy and other prices.

China, the world's No. 2 economy, has been struggling with the collapse of its real estate market, depressed consumer and business confidence and rising trade tensions with other major nations. The IMF expects the Chinese economy, which once regularly generated double-digit annual growth, to slow from 5.2% in 2023 to 4.6% in 2024 to 4.1% next year.

But on Tuesday, Beijing reported that China's economy expanded at a faster-than-expected pace in the first three months of the year, fueled by policies that are intended to stimulate growth and stronger demand. The Chinese economy expanded at a 5.3% annual pace in January-March, surpassing analysts' forecasts of about 4.8%, official data show. Compared with the previous quarter, the economy grew 1.6%.

Japan's economy, the world's fourth-largest, having lost the No. 3 spot to Germany last year, is expected to slow from 1.9% last year to 0.9% in 2024.

China's industrial output up 6.1 pct in Q1

China's value-added industrial output, an important economic indicator, went up 6.1 percent year on year in the first quarter of this year, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed Tuesday.

By category, output of the manufacturing sector grew by 6.7 percent. The high-tech manufacturing sector registered a growth of 7.5 percent, accelerating by 2.6 percentage points

from the fourth quarter of 2023. In March, the value-added industrial output increased by 4.5 percent year on year.

From January to February, major industrial enterprises nationwide realized total profits of 914.1 billion yuan (about 128.7 billion U.S. dollars), up 10.2 percent year on year.

The industrial output is used to measure the activity of enterprises each with an annual main

business turnover of at least 20 million yuan.

Tuesday's data also showed that China's gross domestic product grew 5.3 percent year on year in the first quarter of the year.

GDP growth of 5.3 percent in the first quarter was mainly driven by a rebound in the industrial sector and an improvement in the service sector, said NBS deputy head Sheng Laiyun. (Xinhua)

Japan to take necessary steps on excessive yen swings

Japan is prepared to take all necessary steps to counter excessive currency moves, Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki said Tuesday, as the yen tumbled past 154 against the U.S. dollar to a 34-year low.

The U.S. dollar remained strong in the lower 154 yen range early Tuesday in Tokyo after hitting a fresh new high overnight in New York for the first time in nearly 34 years.

Suzuki told a press confer-

ence that the authorities are closely watching developments in the currency market and are prepared to take all necessary steps if needed, but he still declined to comment directly on the possibility of market intervention.

Japanese officials have repeatedly warned that the government would act if needed, leaving traders wondering when the authorities will step into markets to prop up the yen.

"With respect to whether the recent moves are excessive or rapid, I don't think it's appropriate to state our view because this is linked to our position to take all necessary steps," Suzuki said.

The yen has already tumbled past levels where Japan previously intervened to halt the decline. Japanese authorities sold U.S. dollars and bought yen after the dollar rose close to 152 yen in October 2022. (Xinhua)

Amt part of Warsaw's post-COVID recovery package

EU releases blocked funds of \$6.7 billion to Poland

WARSAW, Poland, April 16, (AP): The European Union disbursed 6.3 billion euros (about \$6.7 billion) to Poland as a part of the 27-nation bloc's post-pandemic recovery fund, the biggest single transfer ever to the country, a government minister said Monday.

Poland's former national conservative government, voted out of power in October, made changes to the judiciary which the EU said violated democratic checks and balances, and so decided to block the money.

The European Commission had said at the time Poland must meet certain "milestones" to guarantee the independence of the judiciary to get the funds. Brussels emphasized that an independent judiciary is vital to respecting the EU's democratic norms, while some also argue that independent courts boost investors' confidence in the country's ability to adjudicate commercial disputes.

Katarzyna Pełczynska-Nalecz, Poland's minister of funds and regional policy, hailed the move while stressing that the value of EU membership goes beyond money.

"Being in the EU pays off, but the EU is not only about money, which our predecessors forgot," she tweeted. "We are united by values: democracy, equal opportunities, rule of law, civil liberties!"

Poland's pro-European coalition of three center-left parties led by current Prime Minister Donald Tusk won parliamentary elections and took over in December. It succeeded the nationalist Law and Justice party that had ruled for eight years and introduced changes to the justice system, reproductive rights and the media that put Poland on a collision course with the EU.

The Commission announced in February that it would start releasing funds, confident in promises by the pro-EU Tusk to restore democratic norms.

The fund, known as the Recovery and Resilience Facility, was set up in 2020 and approved a 672.5 billion euro (\$815 billion) recovery package a year later to help member nations recover more quickly from the coronavirus pandemic.

Poland is set to receive 25.3 billion euros (about \$26.9 billion) in grants and 34.5 billion euros (nearly \$36.7 billion) in loans as part of a post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery plan.

A commission's spokesperson said Monday Poland is expected to request a total of 23 billion euros (\$24.5 billion) this year.

Businesses that fund Sudan war sanctioned

LONDON, April 16, (KUNA): Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCO) announced on Monday, freezing assets of entities and sanctions on businesses, which support Sudanese military and Rapid Support Forces involved in Sudan's war.

"This senseless and brutal war has devastated lives, a year on since the outbreak of fighting, we continue to see appalling atrocities against civilians, unacceptable restrictions on humanitarian access and an utter disregard for civilian life" said Minister Lord David Cameron in a statement.

He continued that the businesses that support the warring parties "must be held to account" alongside those responsible for human rights abuses.

He added that the world must not forget about Sudan, as he called for an urgent need to end the violence.

The conflict in Sudan has caused more than 8.6 million people to flee their homes, as well as 25 million people on the verge of a catastrophic hunger crisis.

Pakistan's PM calls for closer coop with Saudi

ISLAMABAD, April 16, (AP): Pakistan's prime minister called for closer cooperation between Saudi Arabia and his cash-strapped Islamic nation to enhance Saudi investment in his country, a government statement said Tuesday.

Shehbaz Sharif made his remarks during a meeting with Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan who arrived Monday in the capital, Islamabad, to discuss a range of issues, including how to help Pakistan overcome its economic crisis.

The previous week, Sharif met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia, one of Pakistan's closest allies and a leading supplier of oil to Islamabad. According to Pakistani officials, Prince Mohammed had assured Pakistan that Saudi Arabia would invest \$5 billion in Pakistan.

On Monday, Sharif said the visit by Prince Faisal and the high level delegation showed the "strong commitment of both countries to the strengthening of bilateral relations focused on mutually beneficial economic cooperation."

Scholz calls for fair competition, warns against 'dumping' during visit to China

BEIJING, April 16, (AP): German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called for fair competition in trade relations with China while warning about dumping and overproduction as he spoke to students in Shanghai on Monday.

Scholz is visiting China against the background of looming EU tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles and other trade-related tensions. The two countries are also split over how to handle Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"The one thing that must always be clear is that competition must be fair," Scholz told students at Tongji University in Shanghai, according to German news agency dpa.

"Of course we would like our companies to have no restrictions, but conversely we behave exactly how we are demanding here," he said, adding there must be no dumping or overproduction.

The European Union is mulling tariffs to protect its producers against cheaper Chinese electrical vehicle imports, which some fear will flood the European market.

The head of Germany's auto industry association, the VDA, expressed opposition to such tariffs ahead of Scholz's visit. Hildegard Müller told the Welt am Sonntag newspaper in comments published Saturday the tariffs would not help the European and German auto industries and instead "could quickly have a negative effect in a trade conflict."

"Current business with China secures a large number of jobs here in Germany," Müller said.

Scholz made comparisons to reservations years ago when Japanese and Korean automakers entered the German market.

"There was great agitation in the newspapers: 'Now the Japanese cars will come and clean up' - nonsense," he told the Tongji University students. He said there are German cars in China that were made with Chinese manufacturers, and at some point there would also be Chinese cars in Germany and Europe.

Scholz began his three-day China trip on Sunday in the industrial hub of Chongqing, where he and his delegation of ministers and business executives visited a partially German-funded company and other sites in the vast city, which is a production base for China's auto and other industries.

He is set to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang on Tuesday in Beijing before returning to Berlin later in the day.

Scholz is expected to question Xi about China's support for Russia's economy two years into Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Prior to his arrival, the German leader posted on social platform X that he had discussed the "massive" Russian air attacks on civilian energy infrastructure with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Saturday, and declared that Berlin would "stand unbreakably by Ukraine's side."

China has refused to criticize Russia's aggression. Beijing maintains trade relations with Moscow, and the two nations carry out joint military drills. A U.S. intelligence report last week found China has increased equipment sales to Russia to help in its war effort against Ukraine.

Retail sales up 4.7 pct in first quarter

China's GDP expands 5.3 pct year on year in Q1

BEIJING, April 16, (Xinhua): China's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 5.3 percent year on year in the first quarter of 2024, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed Tuesday.

The country's GDP reached 29.63 trillion yuan (about 4.17 trillion U.S. dollars) during this period, the NBS data showed.

On a quarterly basis, the economy increased 1.6 percent in the first three months.

"China's high-quality development has made new achievements in the first quarter. The national economy has sustained recovery momentum and got off to a good start," Sheng Laiyun, deputy director of the NBS, told a press confer-

ence. Sheng mentioned positive factors during the period such as rising production demand, stable employment and prices, and growing market confidence.

"These positive factors driving economic recovery are accumulating and strengthening, laying a good foundation for full-year growth," said Sheng.

Sheng attributed the upbeat momentum in the first quarter to the implementation of supportive government policies and intensified macro-control efforts.

Also: BEIJING: China's retail sales of consumer goods, a major indicator of

the country's consumption strength, climbed 4.7 percent year on year in the first quarter of 2024, official data showed Tuesday.

The growth was compared to an increase of 5.5 percent registered during the January-February period, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

Retail sales in the country's urban regions rose 4.6 percent year on year during the period, while that in rural areas expanded 5.2 percent.

Online retail sales jumped 12.4 percent year on year, with online retail sales of physical goods expanding 11.6 percent and accounting for 23.3 percent of the total retail sales of consumer goods.

China vowed to expand domes-

tic demand and promote sound economic flows, while promoting steady growth in consumer spending this year.

Service consumption maintained solid expansion in the first quarter, contributing 55.7 percent to the economic growth, Sheng Laiyun, deputy director of the NBS, told a press conference.

The number of trips made during the Spring Festival holiday jumped 34.3 percent year on year, exceeding that of the same period in 2019. Tourism consumption during the holiday also surpassed the level seen in the same period in 2019, official data showed. geted its full-year economic growth at around 5 percent for 2024.



People watch as fire and smoke rise out of the Old Stock Exchange, Boersen, in Copenhagen, Denmark, Tuesday, April 16, 2024. (AP)

Fire rages through the 17th-century old Stock Exchange in Copenhagen

One of Copenhagen's oldest buildings is on fire and its iconic spire has collapsed.

The roof of the 17th-century old Stock Exchange, or Boersen, that was once Denmark's financial center, was engulfed in flames Tuesday.

The building, which is situated next to the Christiansborg Palace where the parliament sits, is a popular tourist attraction. Its distinctive spire, in the shape of the tails of four dragons twined together, reached a

height of 56 meters (184 feet). Huge billows of smoke rose over downtown Copenhagen and people were seen rushing inside the building to save paintings. Danish media reported that an annex of the parliament was being evacuated.

Danish Culture Minister Jakob Engel-Schmidt said it was "touching" to see how passers-by helped emergency services "to save art treasures and iconic images from the burning building."

Police and firefighters were at work outside the building, which was encased in scaffolding. Ambulances were at the scene but there were no reports of casualties.

The Danish Chamber of Commerce has its headquarters in the building, which was built in 1615. The chamber's head, Brian Mikkelsen, was among those helping to carry paintings out of the building.

Police said they were evacuating buildings in the street where

Boersen is located, including the Finance Ministry. An annex of the Danish parliament which is located in the block behind the old Stock Exchange, was also ordered evacuated, Danish media reported.

Police said on the social media site X that a main road in Copenhagen was closed and people should expect the area to be cordoned off for some time.

The cause of the fire was not immediately known. (AP)

Berlin is also worried about a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan, a self-ruled island 130 kilometers (80 miles) off of China's coast that Beijing claims as its own.

Scholz told students in Shanghai that borders "must not be moved by force."

"We should not be afraid of our

neighbors," he said, emphasizing the importance of international institutions such as the World Trade Organization.

Despite the political and trade frictions, China was Germany's top trading partner for the eighth straight year in 2023, with 254.1 billion euros (\$271 billion) in goods and

services exchanged between the sides, slightly more than what Germany traded with the U.S. but a 15.5% contraction from the year before.

This is Scholz's second trip to China since he became chancellor in late 2021. His previous visit was in November 2022 and essentially was

a one-day trip because of the strict COVID restrictions still in place at the time.

It is his first visit since the German government last year presented its China strategy, which met with criticism from Beijing. Premier Li and a delegation of senior officials visited Berlin in June.

Euphoria at the time of launch fades

Trump Media stock slides again to bring it more than 66% below its peak

NEW YORK, April 16, (AP): The stock price for Donald Trump's social media company slid again Monday, pushing it more than 66% below its peak set late last month.

Trump Media & Technology Group closed down 18.4% at \$26.61 as more of the euphoria that surrounded the stock fades. It's a sharp comedown since nearing \$80 after the owner of

Truth Social merged with a shell company to get its stock trading on the Nasdaq under the symbol "DJT," for Trump's initials.

Part of the decline may be due to criticism that the stock price had zoomed way past what skeptics said the money-losing company is worth, particularly one with tough odds for success. But another part is also likely because of

action Trump Media took Monday.

The company filed documents with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission that open the door for the future potential sale of millions of shares. The document, called an S-1, relates to warrants held by investors that can be transformed into shares of stock, as well as shares held by company insiders.

The filing also includes all the shares held by the former president. Trump, though, remains under a "lock-up" deal that largely restricts him from selling his shares for another roughly five months. His son, Donald Trump Jr., who is a director on the board, and CEO Devin Nunes, are also bound by the lock-up.

Typically, all shares of stock held by

insiders subject to lock-up deals are included in such filings, according to Jay Ritter, an expert on initial public offerings of stock at the University of Florida's Warrington College of Business.

The filing does not necessarily mean any investors are planning to sell their shares, Sarasota, Florida-based Trump Media & Technology Group said in a statement.

Visa partnership with NBK enhances cardholders' experiences

NBK offers customers chance to win exclusive Olympic packages

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always seeks to enhance customer banking experience by providing premium exclusive offers and rewards for a comprehensive and exceptional banking experience. In this context, the bank has announced the launch of "2024 Summer Olympics in Paris" Campaign, giving customers the opportunity to win exclusive packages to attend the 33rd Summer Olympics in Paris scheduled from 26 July to 11 August 2024.

The campaign will run from 1 April to 31 May 2024, and a draw will be conducted on 6 June to announce 9 winners who will attend the Summer Olympics in Paris.



Al Ballam

Packages will include business class tickets along with a companion, as well as luxurious hotel accommodation, city experience, and tickets to attend the activities including the opening and closing ceremonies.

To qualify for the campaign, customers need to register using the registration page on nbk.com and spend a minimum of KD 250 per month using the eligible NBK Visa Credit/Prepaid Cards. Each KD 1 spent locally gives customers 1 chance, each KD 1 spent internationally gives customers 2 chances, and if the card



Summer Olympics Paris 2024

is issued during the campaign period, this gives customers 10 chances in the draw.

Eligible cards:

- NBK Visa Platinum Credit Card
- NBK Visa Signature Credit Card
- NBK Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK Visa Infinite Privilege Credit Card
- NBK-KPC Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Signature Credit Card
- NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Platinum Prepaid Card
- NBK Avios Visa Signature Pre-

paid Card

Commenting on this offer, **Anwar Al Ballam** Senior Products Manager, at Consumer Banking Group, at National Bank of Kuwait said: "We seek to be always closer to our customers by participating with them in all events and occasions and providing premium offers and exceptional campaigns to meet their expectations and needs, giving them a comprehensive and exceptional banking experience that suits all segments and ages."

"The exclusive outstanding offers provided to our customers around the year reflect our endeavors to offer them an integrated banking experience integrated with our cutting-edge, innovative banking products, services and payment solutions," he added.

"NBK Credit Cardholders get the chance to participate in the bank's campaigns all year round, in addition to enjoying a unique lifestyle through the various benefits offered by these cards," he emphasized.

"Our Olympics sponsorship enables Visa to co-create with our bank partners worldwide exclusive experiences for our cardholders. That's exactly what this partnership with NBK is about - helping make Visa cardholders' journey to 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris a memorable one. This promotion is also a great way to support the Kuwait government's ambitions to extend the benefits of digital payments to more local consumers and businesses. We are delighted to partner with NBK on this exciting promotion and look forward to bringing more of these exciting promotions to Visa cardholders in Kuwait," said Mohamed Reyad, Visa's Head of Financial Institutions for Kuwait.

NBK Visa Credit Cards offer the best payment method for the convenience and benefits they provide to customers, especially when using them in shopping including NBK Rewards Program, NBK Miles Program, as well as Purchase Protection and Extended Warranty.

Additionally, NBK Visa Credit Cards provide a unique lifestyle, and eligibility for exceptional campaigns throughout the year, which are always well-received and popular among customers.

Critical questions before adopting AI in education

By **George Veletsianos**
University of Minnesota

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

Every few years, an emerging technology shows up at the doorstep of schools and universities promising to transform education. The most recent? Technologies and apps that include or are powered by generative artificial intelligence, also known as GenAI.

These technologies are sold on the potential they hold for education. For example, Khan Academy's founder opened his 2023 Ted Talk by arguing that "we're at the cusp of using AI for probably the biggest positive transformation that education has ever seen."

As optimistic as these visions of the future may be, the realities of educational technology over the past few decades have not lived up to their promises. Rigorous investigations of technology after technology - from mechanical machines to computers, from mobile devices to massive open online courses, or MOOCs - have identified the ongoing failures of technology to transform education.

Yet, educational technology evangelists forget, remain unaware or simply do not care. Or they may be overly optimistic that the next new technology will be different than before.

When vendors and startups pitch their AI-powered products to schools and universities, educators, administrators, parents, taxpayers and others ought to be asking questions guided by past lessons before making purchasing decisions.

As a longtime researcher who examines new technology in education, here are five questions I believe should be answered before school officials purchase any technology, app or platform that relies on AI.

One of the most important questions that educators ought to be asking is whether the technology makes a real difference in the lives of learners and teachers. Is the technology a solution to a specific problem or is it a solution in search of a problem?

To make this concrete, consider the following: Imagine procuring a product that uses GenAI to answer course-related questions. Is this product solving an identified need, or is it being introduced to the environment simply because it can now provide this function? To answer such questions, schools and universities ought to conduct needs analyses, which can help them identify their most pressing concerns.

Compelling evidence of the effect of GenAI products on educational outcomes does not yet exist. This leads some researchers to encourage education policymakers to put off buying products until such evidence arises. Others suggest relying on whether the product's design is grounded in foundational research.

Unfortunately, a central source

for product information and evaluation does not exist, which means that the onus of assessing products falls on the consumer. My recommendation is to consider a pre-GenAI recommendation: Ask vendors to provide independent and third-party studies of their products, but use multiple means for assessing the effectiveness of a product. This includes reports from peers and primary evidence.

Do not settle for reports that describe the potential benefits of GenAI - what you're really after is what actually happens when the specific app or tool is used by teachers and students on the ground. Be on the lookout for unsubstantiated claims.

Oftentimes, there is a "divide between what entrepreneurs build and educators need." This leads to products divorced from the realities of teaching and learning.

For example, one shortcoming of the One Laptop Per Child program - an ambitious program that sought to put small, cheap but sturdy laptops in the hands of children from families of lesser means - is that the laptops were designed for idealized younger versions of the developers themselves, not so much the children who were actually using them.

Some researchers have recognized this divide and have developed initiatives in which entrepreneurs and educators work together to improve educational technology products.

Questions to ask vendors might be: In what ways were educators and learners included? How did their input influence the final product? What were their major concerns and how were those concerns addressed? Were they representative of the various groups of students who might use these tools, including in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic background?

Educational technology is rarely neutral. It is designed by people, and people have beliefs, experiences, ideologies and biases that shape the technologies they develop.

It is important for educational technology products to support the kinds of learning environments that educators aspire for their students. Questions to ask include: What pedagogical principles guide this product? What particular kinds of learning does it support or discourage? You do not need to settle for generalities, such as a theory of learning or cognition.

Finally, people ought to ask how a product addresses educational inequities. Is this technology going to help reduce the learning gaps between different groups of learners? Or is it one that aids some learners - often those who are already successful or privileged - but not others? Is it adopting an asset-based or a deficit-based approach to addressing inequities?

Educational technology vendors and startups may not have answers to all of these questions. But they should still be asked and considered. Answers could lead to improved products. (AP)

Johair Marafi unveils all-inclusive customer package

ABK announces GMC Yukon quarterly draw winner

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently announced Ahmad Ibrahim Mohamad Eissa as the winner of the GMC Yukon vehicle in the Bank's quarterly "Transfer Your Salary!" campaign draw, held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

On this occasion, **Johair Marafi**, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, said, "I would like to begin by congratulating our winner. I am very pleased to witness the great success of our campaign, reaffirmed by the noteworthy customer turnout seeking to benefit from the numerous features offered."

Upon salary transfer, ABK awards new customers an array of benefits including a cash gift of up to KD 1,000, a free-of-charge Visa Signature credit card for life, as well as a chance to enter the next quarterly draw to win yet another GMC Yukon.



Johair Marafi

Marafi continued, "Our salary transfer offering represents one of the Bank's most significant campaigns designed to reward customers with worthwhile benefits. It encompasses an all-inclusive package catered to suit customer needs and desires."

In addition to attracting new customers to open accounts, she also expressed ABK's commitment and

ABK announces Amal Abdullah Al Hamli as KD 10,000 Alfouz weekly draw winner

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced Amal Abdullah Al Hamli, as the KD10,000 Alfouz weekly draw winner on Monday, 15 April, 2024, whereby the draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Since its launch, the Alfouz account continues to offer an impressive weekly draw of KD10,000. The Bank has recently expanded its offering by adding a new alluring monthly draw of KD20,000, and an exceptional quarterly draw of KD100,000.

The account also retains its hallmark mega annual draw of a KD5,000 monthly salary for ten years. Furthermore, the Bank now offers customers an increased opportunity to win for every KD10 as opposed to KD100 previously.

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account and/or increase their balances to have more chances in winning in the upcoming

eagerness to ensure the satisfaction of its existing customers. She said, "All our initiatives are in line with the Bank's goal to sustain our position as one of the most prominent players in the market."

Marafi affirmed, "We constant-



Alfouz poster

weekly draw winner announcement, which will take place on Monday, 22 April 2024. The higher the deposits, the higher the chances to win.

For more information about ABK,

please follow the Bank's Instagram account @abk_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

future."

Marafi concluded with an invitation to follow the Bank's social media accounts to remain up to date with the latest marketing initiatives and to benefit from the promotions offered throughout the year.

'Scammers exploit desire for quick profit'

KFH warns against investment fraud

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: As part of its continuous support to Diraya campaign, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) advises customers to keep caution when receiving investment offers messages from unknown parties. While the messages may entail investment opportunities with high returns in a short period of time, they are considered one of the latest fraud approaches that mainly aim to steal customers' bank information.

In a press release, KFH explained that fraudsters continue developing new means to lure customers and steal their account data and their money. The latest of which is fake investment opportunities, which entails marketing a deceptive investment



Diraya logo

offer targeting people who want to profit quickly and pushes them to rush into handing over information that are considered confidential which ultimately results in the theft of their data and funds.

KFH pointed out that some scammers take advantage of people's desire for quick profit by impersonating an investment fund, government agency or a famous business influencer. They reach out to customers via phone, e-mail or social media accounts to speculate in currencies, precious metals, foreign stocks, cryptocurrencies, bonds or fake investment and real estate funds, while the main goal of fraudsters is to obtain bank data when customers log in before they start trading.

KFH invites those wishing to invest to contact licensed banks and companies and deal with trusted parties to provide investment advice. The bank also urges customers to

avoid suspicious communications, invitations, fake websites, and online platforms. It stressed the necessity to verify the authenticity of the investment entity before disclosing any information or taking any step.

Diraya awareness campaign, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with local banks, aims to spread banking literacy among the society and raise awareness on financial issues and how to protect assets from any fraud attempts. It also aims to highlight the role of the banking sector and the products the bank provides by presenting and posting instructions and guidance through media and social media platforms.

Empowering early-career professionals in use-inspired research

By **Zoey England**, University of Connecticut

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

Often, when scientists do research around a specific societal challenge, they hope their work will help solve that larger problem. Yet translating findings into long-lasting, community-driven solutions is much harder than most expect.

It seems intuitive that scientists studying living organisms, microbes and ecosystems could apply their findings to tackle food shortages, help keep environments healthy and improve human and animal health. But it's not always that easy. Issues like climate change, renewable energy, public health and migration are complex, making direct solutions challenging to develop and implement.

As a group of researchers invested in helping scientists create meaningful

impact with their work, we understand problems like these will need experts from different fields and industries to work together.

This means we might need to reevaluate certain aspects of the inquiry process and embrace fresh perspectives if we, as members of the scientific community, want to improve our capacity for producing solutions-oriented research.

Science does not occur in a vacuum. Factors including funding availability, access to advanced technologies and political or social contexts can influence the kinds of studies that get done. A framework called use-inspired research and engagement, or UIRE, acknowledges this fact.

In use-inspired research, the potential applications of findings for society shape the directions of exploration.

In UIRE, researchers work with members of a community to figure out what questions they should look into. They form partnerships with other stakeholders, including governments, businesses of all scales and nonprofits, to form a

collaborative foundation. This way, researchers can tailor investigations from the outset to be useful to and usable by decision-makers.

Translational research, or intentionally grounding scientific exploration in practical applications, isn't new. Use-inspired research expands on translational research, prioritizing building connections between practitioners and communities.

In the U.S., the passage of the CHIPS and Science Act in 2022 further codified use-inspired research. The act directed US\$280 billion over the next 10 years toward funding scientific inquiry to boost domestic competitiveness, innovation and national security.

This legislation also authorized the establishment of the National Science Foundation's Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships, called NSF TIP. TIP marks the agency's first new directorate in over three decades, created with the aim of sparking the growth of diverse innovation and technology landscapes. (AP)



Students from Thomas Leadership Academy play on the school's playground in Eatonville, Fla., Aug. 23, 2023. (AP)

'Rust' gun supervisor jailed for fatal shooting by Baldwin

SANTA FE, N.M., April 16, (AP) — A movie weapons supervisor was sentenced to 18 months in prison in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer by Alec Baldwin on the set of the Western film "Rust," during a hearing Monday in which tearful family members and friends gave testimonials that included calls for justice and a punishment that would instill greater accountability for safety on film sets.

Movie armorer Hannah Gutierrez-Reed was convicted in March by a jury on a charge of involuntary manslaughter in the death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins and has been held for more than a month at a county jail on the outskirts of Santa Fe. Prosecutors blamed Gutierrez-Reed for unwittingly bringing live ammunition onto the set of "Rust," where it was expressly prohibited, and for failing to follow basic gun safety protocols.

Gutierrez-Reed was unsuccessful in her plea for a lesser sentencing, telling the judge she was not the monster that people have made her out to be and had tried to do her best on the set despite not having "proper time, resources and staffing." Gutierrez-Reed plans to appeal the judgment and sentence, defense attorney Jason Bowles said in an email.

Baldwin, the lead actor and co-producer for "Rust," was pointing a gun at Hutchins during a rehearsal on a movie set outside Santa Fe in October 2021 when the revolver went off, killing Hutchins and wounding director Joel Souza.

Baldwin has pleaded not guilty to a charge of involuntary manslaughter. He is scheduled for trial in July at a courthouse in Santa Fe.

The sentence against Gutierrez-Reed was delivered by New Mexico Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer, who is overseeing proceedings against Baldwin. The judge said anything less than the maximum sentence

would not be appropriate given that Gutierrez-Reed's recklessness amounted to a serious violent offense.

"You were the armorer, the one that stood between a safe weapon and a weapon that could kill someone," the judge told Gutierrez-Reed. "You alone turned a safe weapon into a lethal weapon. But for you, Ms. Hutchins would be alive, a husband would have his partner and a little boy would have his mother."

Creativity

Gutierrez-Reed teared up as Hutchins' agent, Craig Mizrahi, spoke about the cinematographer's creativity and described her as a rising star in Hollywood. He said it was a chain of events that led to Hutchins' death and that if the armorer had been doing her job, that chain would have been broken.

Friends and family recalled Hutchins as courageous, tenacious and compassionate - a "bright beam of light" who could have gone on to accomplish great things within the film industry.

"I really feel that this was due to negligence," Steven Metz, a close friend, testified. "This case needs to set a precedent for all the other actors, and cinematographers and every one on set whose lives are at risk when we have negligence in the hands of an armorer, a supposed armorer."

Los Angeles-based attorney Gloria Allred read a statement by Hutchins' mother, Olga Solovey, who said her life had been split in two and that time didn't heal, rather it only prolonged her pain and suffering. A video of a tearful Solovey, who lives in Ukraine, also was played for the court.

"It's the hardest thing to lose a child. There's no words to describe,"

Solovey said in her native language.

The Ukrainian relatives of Hutchins are seeking damages in her death from Baldwin in connection with the shooting. Allred said after Monday's hearing that the family supports his criminal prosecution.

Defense attorneys for Gutierrez-Reed requested leniency in sentencing - including a possible conditional discharge that would avoid further jail time and leave an adjudication of guilt off her record if certain conditions are met.

Gutierrez-Reed was acquitted at trial of allegations she tampered with evidence in the "Rust" investigation. She also has pleaded not guilty to a separate felony charge that she allegedly carried a gun into a bar in Santa Fe where firearms are prohibited.

Defense attorneys have highlighted Gutierrez-Reed's relatively young age of 26 "and the devastating effect a felony will have on her life going forward," arguing that she will forever be affected negatively by intense publicity associated with her prosecution in parallel with an A-list actor.

Special prosecutor Kari Morrissey urged the judge to impose the maximum prison sentence and designate Gutierrez-Reed as a "serious violent offender" to limit her eligibility for a sentence reduction later, describing the defendant's behavior on the set of "Rust" as exceptionally reckless.

Morrissey told the judge Monday that she reviewed nearly 200 phone calls that Gutierrez-Reed had made from jail over the last month. She said she was hoping there would be a moment when the defendant would take responsibility for what happened or express genuine remorse.

Film

Variety



This image released by Warner Bros. Discovery shows Sandra Oh in a scene from the HBO television mini series 'The Sympathizer.' (AP)

Television

War saga blends drama, comedy and espionage

Vietnamese voices shine in 'Sympathizer'

LOS ANGELES, April 16, (AP) — Vietnamese journalist-turned-filmmaker Phanxinh remembers exactly when he decided to make movies in his native country rather than Hollywood.

It was in 2008 but it could have been a satirical scene out of the Vietnam Era-novel "The Sympathizer." Someone from a movie studio visiting his University of Southern California film class told him his story pitch about a Vietnamese American woman traveling the US would only work if the heroine was white.

Having a white star would give the film "a broader audience," Phanxinh recounts being told.

"It is the moment I realized that if I want to stay in America, I have to do a movie about Caucasian people," said Phanxinh, who goes by a one-name moniker professionally. The reason I want to be a filmmaker is because I want to tell the story that I know the story about my people, my country, my culture."

Now, over 15 years later, Phanxinh is doing his first US-side professional acting job in HBO's adaptation of "The Sympathizer" with an ensemble of fellow Vietnamese actors.

For decades, Vietnamese people often have been relegated to the background in popular cinematic depictions of the Vietnam War. Films like "Full Metal Jacket" and "Apocalypse Now" typically only examined the price the US and its soldiers paid.

In the adaptation of Viet Thanh Nguyen's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel that premiered Sunday, it is South Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers' struggles with loss, loyalty and identity that take center stage. For some cast members, there were initial concerns about stirring up what was a traumatic time even for their own families. But, they are not shying away from feeling a sense of responsibility in shaping the narrative.

Sprinkled with drama, comedy and espionage, the series follows a half French, half Vietnamese spy for the Viet Cong known as The Captain. Played by Hoa Xuande, Captain embeds himself with South Vietnamese people, even becoming part of a post-war refugee community that settles in Los Angeles. Robert Downey Jr., who is also a producer, plays four

different white antagonists. Sandra Oh also co-stars.

Phanxinh, who plays Major, an assistant to a South Vietnamese general who also relocates to the US, actually wanted to keep his involvement with the series private for as long as possible to put off any political backlash. Even now in Vietnam, any media touching on the war is scrutinized heavily. The book faced difficulties getting published in Vietnam because of its portrayal of what Vietnamese see more as "The American War." Even some friends advised him not to take part in the project.

Character

"During the shoot, I met several people really upset about how the Vietnamese American (are) portrayed in this series. And I totally understand that," Phanxinh said. "I think what comes will come."

Fred Nguyen Khan plays Bon, a South Vietnamese soldier whose character suffers a great loss. He was among several who filmed a harrowing re-enactment of the fall of Saigon. Khan, 41, acknowledged the show could be triggering for some of his relatives. But, that doesn't have to be a bad thing.

"I think it's going to be a real cathartic moment for a lot of them. And if we can just talk about it afterwards and start healing that, I think that that's a win," Khan said.

The production actually helped him connect more with his heritage. The Canadian-born actor refreshed his knowledge of the Vietnamese language. When Khan returned from the eight-month shoot in Thailand, he threw his parents with his heightened fluency.

"It was like I got so much better. It's like I went through this training montage from the 'Rocky' movies," Khan said. "I felt a really new appreciation to the Vietnamese culture by being exposed around all these amazing Vietnamese actors. And that's something that I never felt before - coming from Montreal, Quebec."

Vietnamese people are almost erased in a lot of movies, documentaries and history books on the war, said Long T. Bui, a professor of global and international studies at the University of California, Irvine.

They also fail to show how perspectives can vary within the community between those who identify as South Vietnamese versus the North.

"People are hoping that 'The Sympathizer' is a success, but also that it will open the doors for more movies and TV shows about the Vietnamese American experience," said Bui, who is acquainted with Nguyen, the author. "So people are hoping that this is this is the gateway."

Phanxinh, who is a well-known filmmaker in Vietnam, has watched several Hollywood pictures like "Apocalypse Now," "Born on the Fourth of July" and, more recently, "Da 5 Bloods." Some of them seemed "ridiculous" to him.

"I can see still American filmmakers, when they do a movie about Vietnam War, they still don't really look at the world like how Vietnamese people look at it," he said.

For Khan, the only Vietnamese actors he can recall seeing growing up were Thuy Trang, who was the yellow Power Ranger, and Dustin Nguyen ("21 Jump Street"). He knows some Vietnamese viewers and actors may be looking to this show to push progress forward with fleshed-out, flawed characters.

"They should have expectations. If you have no expectations, then you're not excited about it," Khan said. "I have expectations, too."

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Fresh off her Oscar nomination, Lily Gladstone stars in a new limited series for Hulu called "Under the Bridge" with Riley Keough. Based on a true-crime novel by Rebecca Godfrey, "Under the Bridge" tells the story of the murder of Canadian teen Reena Virk in the late 1990s. Gladstone plays a police officer investigating the case and Keough plays Godfrey, who immersed herself in Virk's world to detail not only what happened, but the social and cultural implications surrounding her death. "Under the Bridge" premieres Wednesday on Hulu and is already garnering Emmy buzz for both Gladstone and Keough.

Features

ARABIC TIMES

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2024

LOS ANGELES: ABBA, Biggie, Blondie and Rudolph are entering America's audio canon.

New inductees into the National Recording Registry at the Library of Congress include ABBA's 1976 album "Visitors," The Notorious B.I.G.'s 1994 album "Ready to Die," Blondie's 1978 breakthrough "Parallel Lines" and Gene Autry's 1949 version of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer."

Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden announced the 25 new titles in the class of 2024 on Tuesday, saying in a statement that they are "worthy of preservation for all time based on their cultural, historical or aesthetic importance in the nation's recorded sound heritage."

Puerto Rican singer Héctor Lavoe's signature song, 1978's "El Cantante," written by Ruben Blades, will enter the registry, along with Mexican singer Juan Gabriel's 1990 tribute to his mother, "Amor Eterno."

Other titles deemed to be among "the defining sounds of the nation's history and culture" are Jefferson Airplane's 1967 album "Surrealistic Pillow," Green Day's 1994 album "Dookie" and the Chicks' 1998 "Wide Open Spaces," the most recording among the new inductees.

Lily Tomlin's 1971 album of sketches "This Is a Recording" is the only comedy and the only non-musical recording on this year's list. (AP)

LONDON: Prince Harry's fight for police protection in the UK received another setback on Monday, when a judge rejected his request to appeal an earlier ruling upholding a government panel's decision to limit his access to publicly funded security after giving up his status as a working member of the royal family.

The long-running legal battle began more than four years ago when Harry challenged the panel's decision, arguing that he and his family still needed an armed security detail because of hostility directed toward him and his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, on social media and relentless hounding by the news media.

But High Court Judge Peter Lane ruled in February that the panel's decision, which provides for "bespoke" security on an as-needed basis, wasn't unlawful,

irrational or unjustified.

"Insofar as the case-by-case approach may otherwise have caused difficulties, they have not been shown to be such as to overcome the high hurdle so as to render the decision-making irrational," Lane wrote in his 51-page ruling.

In most cases, UK plaintiffs don't have an automatic right to appeal



Latifah



Harry

and they must seek permission from the original court before doing so.

The High Court said Monday it had rejected Harry's initial bid for permission to appeal. However, he can now seek permission directly from the Court of Appeal. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Cardi B, Queen

Latifah and The Roots will headline concerts to celebrate the return of the BET Experience in Los Angeles just days before the 2024 BET Awards.

BET announced Monday the star-studded lineup of the concert series, which makes a return after a five-year hiatus. It was canceled ahead of its 2020 event due to the

coronavirus.

The BET Awards will take place June 30.

Cardi B, Gunna, Davido and Sexy Red will perform June 28 at Crypto.com Arena. The Roots, Common, Latifah and Jungle Brothers are expected to hit the stage June 29 at the Hollywood Bowl. (AP)

People & Places

Characters

New storytelling era

Killer Pooh: Where is remix culture going?

LOS ANGELES, April 16, (AP): The giant stuffed bear, its face a twisted smile, lumbers across the screen. Menacing music swells. Shadows mask unknown threats. Christopher Robin begs for his life. And is that a sledgehammer about to pulverize a minor character's head?

Thus unfolds the trailer for the 2023 movie "Winnie the Pooh: Blood and Honey," a slasher-film riff on A.A. Milne's beloved characters, brought to you by ... the expiration of copyright and the arrival of the classic children's novel into the American public domain.

We were already living in an era teeming with remixes and repurposing, fan fictions and mashups. Then began a parade of characters and stories, led by

Winnie the Pooh and Mickey Mouse with many more to follow, marching into the public domain, where anyone can shape something into new stories and ideas.

After a two-decade drought brought on by congressional extensions of the copyright period in 1998, works again began entering the public domain - becoming available for use without licensing or payment - in 2019. The public began

to notice in 2022, when Winnie the Pooh was freed for use as the 95-year copyright period elapsed on the novel that introduced him. That made possible "Blood and Honey" a sequel, which dropped last month, a forthcoming third, and plans for a "Poohiverse" of twisted public domain characters including Bambi and Pinocchio.

Pooh going public was followed this year by a moment many thought would never come: the expiration of copyright on the original version of Mickey Mouse, as he appeared in the 1928 Walt Disney short, "Steamboat Willie."

Classic characters, new stories, fresh mashups. Will it be all be a bonanza for makers? Are we entering a heyday of cross-generational collaboration or a plummet in intellectual property values as audiences get sick of seeing variations of the same old stories?

Hollywood

Films from Hollywood's early talkie era have started to become public. King Kong, who has one of his enormous feet in the public domain already because of complications between companies that own a piece of him, will shed his remaining chains in 2029. Then, in the 2030s, Superman will soar into the public domain, followed in quick succession by Batman, the Joker and Wonder Woman.

The possibility of new stories is vast. So is the possibility of repetition. Classic stories and characters could get, well a bit tiresome.

"I don't feel like it's going to make that big a difference," says Phil Johnston, an Oscar nominee who co-wrote Disney's 2011 "Wreck It-Ralph" and co-wrote and co-directed its sequel, 2018's "Ralph Breaks the Internet."

"Like, 'Winnie the Pooh Blood and Honey' was a novelty, made a bit of a splash, I guess. But if someone makes 'Steamboat Willie' (into) a jet ski movie or something, who cares?" he says.

Many creators were clearly anxious to do something with "The Great Gatsby," which has been subject to several reinterpretations in very different flavors since it became public in 2021, says Jennifer Jenkins, a professor of law and director of Duke's Center for the Study of Public Domain.

"We have our feminist retellings of 'The Great Gatsby,' where Jordan gets to tell the story from her perspective, Daisy gets to tell the story from her perspective," Jenkins says. "We got prequels, we got sequels, we've got musicals, TV shows, we've got the zombie version because we always do. These are things that you can do with public domain work. These are things that you can do with Mickey Mouse."

But the newly available works and characters are arriving after years of parent corporations demanding that every creation be tied to their intellectual property. And with some big, "Barbie"-sized exceptions, the returns are growing thinner, and artists themselves are a little sick of it.

While Shakespeare, Dickens and Austen have been public-domain gold mines at various times, other properties have proven more problematic. The forthcoming "Wicked," starring Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo, will be yet another attempt at using the public-domain work of author Frank Baum's "Oz" - filtered through a hit novel and Broadway show - to glom onto the classic status of the 1939 "Wizard of Oz" film. Previous tries led to little success, and most were outright flops, most recently 2013's "Oz the Great and Powerful," from Disney.

Domain

Some of the most effective use ever of public domain properties came from Disney itself in its early decades, turning time-tested folktales and novels into modern classics with "Snow White," "Pinocchio" and "Cinderella." It would later become the primary protector of the most valuable rights in entertainment, from the Marvel universe to the Star Wars galaxy to its homegrown content.

That has meant a major flowering through the years of fan art and fan fiction, with which the company has a mixed relationship.

"When you look at how the Disney organization actually engages with fan art, there's a lot of looking the other way," says Cory Doctorow, an author and activist who advocates for broader public ownership of works. "I always thought that there was so much opportunity for collaboration that was being missed there."

When the law extending copyright by 20 years passed in 1998, musicians including Bob Dylan were among the key figures who had implored Congress to act. Younger generations of musicians, who came up awash in sampling and remixing, made no discernible outcry for another extension. In part this could be because in the streaming era, many of them make little off recorded music.

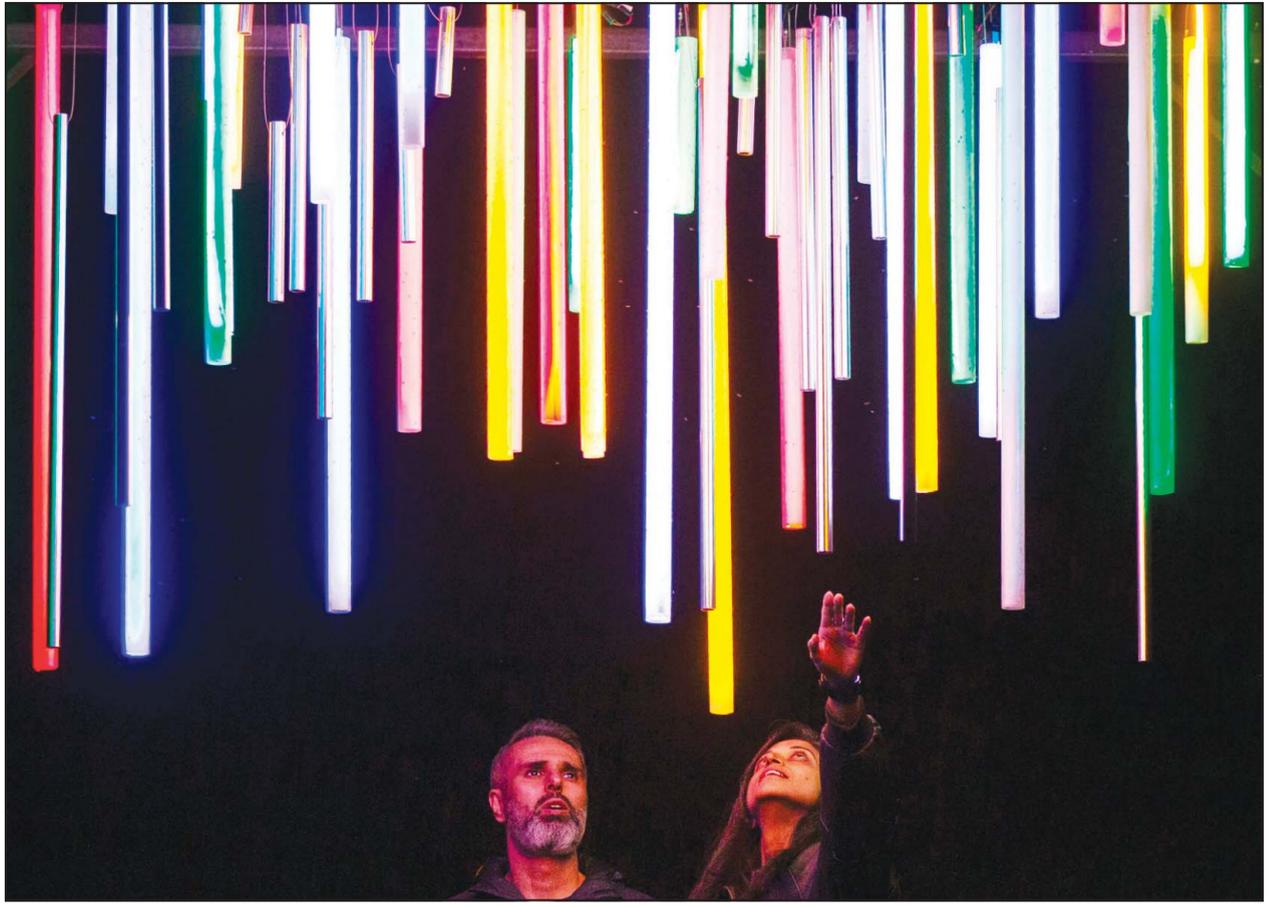
Jimmy Tamborello, who records and performs electronic music under the name Dntel and as part of The Postal Service - a group whose very name caused trademark headaches with the official version at its inception - says artists are generally happy to allow others to turn their work into new things. The problem is companies that come between them.

"I think no one would care if it was just artists to artists," Tamborello says.

Johnston says age and experience have made him feel less possessive about his own work. But his attitude changes if the re-maker is not an artist but artificial intelligence.



Erivo



People look at a light art installation during the 'Lumiere: The Art of Light' exhibition in Toronto, Canada, on April 15. Featuring 17 light installations created by local artists, the outdoor light-based art exhibition is held here from March 12 to April 20. (Xinhua)

Fashion

Fashion isn't just for the eyes

Met Gala exhibit: A feast for the senses

NEW YORK, April 16, (AP): Fashion, most would surely agree, is meant to be seen. Not heard, and certainly not smelled.

But Andrew Bolton, the curatorial mastermind behind the blockbuster fashion exhibits at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute, begs to differ. His newest show, to be launched by the starry Met Gala next month, seeks to provide a multi-sensory experience, engaging not just the eyes but the nose, the ears - and even the fingertips, a traditional no-no in a museum.

Open to the public beginning May 10, "Sleeping Beauties: Reawakening Fashion" features 250 items that are being revived from years of slumber in the institute's vast archive, with some in such a delicate state of demise that they can't be draped on a mannequin or shown upright. These garments will lie in glass coffins - yes, like Sleeping Beauty herself.

As ever, celebrity guests at the May 6 gala, which this year is being hosted by Zendaya, Jennifer Lopez, Bad Bunny and Chris Hemsworth, will get the first look at the exhibit. With a dress code defined as "The Garden of Time," one can expect lots of creative, garden-themed riffs. But will anyone go so far as to actually wear a living garden? As he began mounting the exhibit late last week, Bolton shared that there's just such a garment in the show, a coat that has been planted with oat, rye and wheatgrass.

The garment, designed by Jonathan Anderson of the label LOEWE (a sponsor of the show), is currently "growing" right now in a tent at the museum, with its own irrigation system. It will be displayed in all its green glory for the first week, after which it will be replaced with a version, also grown for the show, that has dried out. As the museum puts it, the coat "will

grow and die over the course of the exhibition."

"Sleeping Beauties" will be organized around themes of earth, air and water - but also, Bolton says, around the various senses. The garden gallery where the coat will be displayed is one of four areas devoted to the sense of smell.

This means viewers will be able to sample scents connected to various garments. But it doesn't mean that a floral gown, for example, will be accompanied by a floral scent. The reality is much more complex.

Garments

"What we're really presenting is the olfactory history of the garment," Bolton says. "And that's the scent of the person who wore it, the natural body odors that they emitted, what they smoked, what they ate, where they lived." For these galleries, the museum worked with Norwegian "smell artist" Sissel Tolaas, who took 57 "molecular readings" of garments, all to create scents that will waft through the rooms and enhance the visitor's connection to the items on display.

But garments also create sound. Especially if the garment is embroidered, as is one famous gown by the late Alexander McQueen, with dried and bleached razor clams.

Because the original dress would be too fragile to now record the sounds it makes in movement, curators made a duplicate - with the same kind of razor clams that McQueen collected from a beach in Norfolk, England - and then isolated and recorded the sound in an echo-free chamber at Binghamton University. The effect, Bolton says, is "to capture the minutiae of movements."

The same effect is achieved with a silk taffeta garment, featuring a sound called "scroop," a combination of the

words "scrape" and "whoop."

"I know it sounds like a garage band," quips Bolton, "but it's a specific sound that silk makes." It can be loud or soft, depending on the finishing of the silk. Taffeta has the loudest, so that's what visitors will hear in one particular gallery.

And then there is touch. "It's one of the difficulties of museums, that you can't touch things," the curator says. The exhibit aims to change that, too. An example: an embroidered 17th-century Jacobean bodice. No, you can't handle such a fragile thing. But with the help of 3D scanning, curators have recreated the embroidery on wallpaper. "The whole room will be covered with this wallpaper," Bolton says. "You can use your hands to feel the shapes and the complexity of the embroidery." The same technique will be used to experience the feel of a Dior dress.

Even with the plain old sense of sight, the exhibit aims to enhance the viewing experience with accompanying animations featuring details of the garment one cannot see with the naked eye - rather like looking through a microscope.

For what Bolton says is one of the most ambitious shows the Costume Institute has attempted, he went through the museum's entire archive of 33,000 garments and accessories to choose the ultimate 250.

He hopes the various new technologies will become a norm, and that the institute will be able to build a database of the sounds and smells of some garments before they enter the collection - capturing them in living form, in their "last gasp" of life before they become museum pieces. Perhaps one day to lie in a glass coffin, like Sleeping Beauty.

"Sleeping Beauties: Reawakening Fashion" will run May 10-Sept. 2, 2024.



This image released by The Metropolitan Museum of Art shows a Jonathan Anderson for LOEWE coat. Anderson is one of many designers whose work will be included in The Costume Institute's 2024 exhibition, "Sleeping Beauties: Reawakening Fashion," on view from May 10 through Sept. 2, 2024. (AP)



Hilton



Scott

Variety

NEW YORK: In Salman Rushdie's first book since the 2022 stabbing that hospitalized him and left him blind in one eye, the author wastes no time reliving the day he thought might be his last.

"At a quarter to eleven on August 12, 2022, on a sunny Friday morning in upstate New York, I was attacked and almost killed by a young man with a knife just after I came out on stage at the amphitheater in Chautauqua to talk about the importance of keeping writers safe from harm," Rushdie writes in the opening paragraph of the memoir "Knife," published Tuesday.

At just over 200 pages, "Knife" is a brief work in the canon of Rushdie, among the most exuberant and expansive of contemporary novelists. "Knife" is also his first memoir since "Joseph Anton," the 2012 publication in which he looked back on the fatwa, the death decree, issued more than 20 years earlier by Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini because of the alleged blasphemy in Rushdie's novel "The Satanic Verses."

Rushdie was initially driven into hiding, and for years lived under constant protection. But the threat had seemingly receded and he had for some time been enjoying his preferred life of travel, social engagement and a free imagination, out at play in such recent novels as "Quichotte" and "Victory City."

As Rushdie observes in "Knife," subtitled "Meditations After an Attempted Murder," he had sometimes pictured his "public assassin" turning up. But the timing of the 2022 attack seemed not just startling, but "anachronistic," the rising of a "murderous ghost from the past," returning to settle a score Rushdie thought long resolved. He refers to August 11, 2022, as his "last innocent evening." (AP)

SACRAMENTO, Calif.: Paris Hilton joined California state lawmakers Monday to push for legislation aimed at cracking down on the industry that cares for troubled teens by requiring more transparency from youth treatment facilities.

The bill supported by the Hilton Hotel heiress and media personality aims to pry open information on how short-term residential facilities for youth dealing with substance abuse and behavioral issues use disciplinary methods such as restraints or seclusion against minors. It would require such

centers to notify parents and the state any time they use restraints or seclusion rooms for minors. It's authored by Republican state Sen. Shannon Grove and Democratic state Sens. Aisha Wahab and Angelique Ashby.

On Monday, Hilton testified in a legislative hearing in support of the bill, detailing her harrowing abuse as a teenager at a facility in Utah that she said still haunts her and

urging lawmakers to take actions before more children have to suffer similar treatment.

"Our current system designed to reform, in some horrific instances, does the exact opposite," Hilton told lawmakers Monday.

"It breaks spirits and instills fear, and it perpetuates a cycle of abuse. But today, we have the power to change that."

The California bill passed committee with

bipartisan support on Monday. Under the bill, facilities would have to report details such as what disciplinary actions were taken, why and who had approved the plan. (AP)

HOUSTON: Attorneys for rap star Travis Scott argued in court Monday that he should be dismissed from hundreds of lawsuits filed over the deadly 2021 Astroworld festival, saying he was not responsible for safety planning and watching for possible dangers at the Houston event.

But attorneys for relatives of one of the 10 people killed during a massive crowd surge at the festival said Scott ignored safety concerns and threatened to release online the personal information of anyone who would cancel the event over safety concerns.

Stephen Brody, an attorney for Scott, said the rap star remains "devastated" and "heartbroken" by the tragic events of Nov. 5, 2021, when authorities and festival organizers tried to shut down the show and stop the surge.

The families of the 10 people who died, as well as hundreds who were injured, sued Scott and Live Nation - the festival's promoter - as well as dozens of other individuals and entities.

During a court hearing before state District Judge Kristen Hawkins, Brody argued that Scott and his touring and production company, XX Global, should be dismissed from the case. They said his duties and responsibilities related to the festival were outlined as performing, marketing, curating talent for the event, providing for his own personal security and approving all creative matters involving the festival. (AP)



Hannah Gutierrez-Reed wipes her tears at her sentencing hearing in state district court in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on Monday, April 15. Gutierrez-Reed, the prisoner on the set of the Western film 'Rust,' was sentenced to 18 months in prison for involuntary manslaughter in the death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, who was fatally shot by Alec Baldwin in 2021. (AP) — Details Page 11

Enhanced precision, reduced side effects

Next level cancer care: China's heavy-ion accelerator saving lives

LANZHOU, April 16, (Xinhua): In a hospital in Wuwei, northwest China's Gansu Province, a medical facility consisting of large pieces of steel and complex coils occupies a building of 30 meters high. The high-speed carbon ions produced by it are channeled into the treatment room to kill the tumor cells of cancer patients.

The advanced medical facility, called heavy-ion accelerator, is assisting human's fight against cancers. However, due to its large size, high production and maintenance costs, it has not been widely used in ordinary hospitals.

"We are developing a new generation heavy-ion accelerators for medical use, so that the treatment is more accessible to ordinary patients," said Hu Zhengguo, deputy director of the Institute of Modern Physics (IMP) under the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Killer

As a physical therapy method, radiation therapy has a history of over 100 years. The conventional radiotherapy, usually using X-rays or gamma rays, is prone to complications due to its inability to distinguish normal cells and cancer cells.

Scientists have found that heavy-ion beams can pass through normal tissue cells without causing any harm, and only release energy when they reach tumors.

Research shows that the relative biological effect of heavy-ions is about three times higher than that of conventional photon rays. That means heavy-ion beams could have a greater "killing power" on cancer cells, leading to a higher probability of DNA double-strand breakage in cancer cells and better preventing cancer cell residue and recurrence. By adjusting the energy and direction of the ions, precise delivery of the radiation dose to the tumor can be achieved with an accuracy of millimeters, while effectively sparing normal organs, experts say.

Heavy-ion radiotherapy is internationally recognized as one of the advanced radiotherapy methods. It's suitable for the treatment of some solid tumors that are unsuitable for surgery, insensitive to conventional radiation, and prone to recurrence after conventional radiation therapy, said Zhang Yanshan, vice president of the Wuwei Tumor Hospital.

China launched the research and development of the heavy-ion accelerator for cancer treatment in early 1990s. It took the research team from IMP, which



Workers produce components of the heavy-ion therapy facility in Lanzhou Ion Therapy Co. Ltd., in Lanzhou, northwest China's Gansu Province, April 11, 2024. (Xinhua)

has a long history of developing heavy-ion accelerators, about three decades to achieve the transformation from a huge scientific device to a large-scale high-end medical equipment, said Hu.

They shortened the circumference of the synchronous accelerator from 161 meters used in scientific experiments to 56.2 meters, making it the smallest synchrotron system among medical heavy-ion accelerators in the world.

This project made China the fourth country in the world after the United States, Germany and Japan to have the ability to independently develop heavy-ion therapy system and clinical applications.

Compared with imported equipment, China's self-developed heavy-ion therapy facility has low operation and maintenance costs, and can provide continuous technical upgrade services, said Yang Wenjie, deputy general manager of the Lanzhou Ion Therapy Co. Ltd., a company affiliated to IMP and responsible for the development and production of the heavy-ion therapy facility.

In clinical trials, the five-year survival rate of 46 cancer participants reached 64.04 percent, Yang said.

Since the facility was put into use in the Wuwei Tumor Hospital in March 2020, more than 1,100 Chinese patients, as well as patients from Belgium and Australia, have received treatment, in-

volving over 50 kinds of cancers including lung cancer, liver cancer, pancreatic cancer and glioma, said Zhang.

So far, 204 patients of lung cancer, which has the highest incident rate among all the cancers in China, have received treatment by using the facility, and the 24-month survival rate after treatment reached 68.65 percent.

In addition to the facility in Wuwei, seven similar facilities have been constructed or being constructed in hospitals in other cities such as Putian, Hangzhou, Wuhan, Nanjing and Changchun. And the number of the facilities is expected to reach 20 in the coming five years.

The existing equipment, however, cannot meet the needs of China's vast cancer patient population.

Making the equipment smaller will be the future development direction of the medical heavy-ion accelerators. And only by lowering the price of the treatment can more cancer patients enjoy the benefits brought by this new technology.

"Although the circumference of our first generation medical heavy-ion accelerator is the shortest among similar products in the world, the space utilization rate of our first generation product is not high. We hope to use new technologies to develop the next generation miniaturized devices to improve space utilization," said Hu.

Non-opioid medication shows promise

Hope for non-addictive painkillers: study

WASHINGTON, April 16, (AP): For decades, patients seeking medication for pain have had two choices: over-the-counter drugs like aspirin or powerful prescription opioids like oxycodone.

Opioid prescriptions have plummeted over the last decade as doctors have become more attuned to the risks of addiction and misuse during the country's ongoing drug epidemic.

Vertex Pharmaceuticals recently reported positive results for a non-opioid painkiller, one of several medications the Boston-based drugmaker has been developing for various forms of pain. Patients taking the drug after surgery experienced more pain relief than those getting a placebo, although the drug didn't meet a secondary goal of outperforming treatment with an opioid.

The Associated Press spoke with Vertex's chief scientist Dr. David Altshuler about the company's research and development plans. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Question: Why is Vertex interested in new drugs for treating pain?

Answer: There is a great need for additional medicines to help people manage pain. There are medicines like Tylenol that are modestly effective but they're very well tolerated. And there's medi-

cines such as opioids that are very effective but unfortunately have side effects, as well as addictive potential.

Identifying additional medicines that could be used for people who need more pain relief but don't want to take the risks of opioids would be helpful for society.

Q: How did you develop these drugs?

A: Vertex has been working on this for 20 years, and the insight that led to the medicines actually came from studies of people who had a rare condition where they are insensitive to pain. They can feel things, sense temperature, but do not feel pain. This was actually identified in a family of fire walkers who could walk on hot coals.

So scientists figured out that that condition was due to inherited differences in a particular protein that has a role in pain signaling, so if you lack this function you don't feel pain. So we and many others have worked for decades to make a medicine that could recapitulate that naturally-occurring phenomenon.

Q: Why wouldn't these drugs carry the same addictive properties as opioids?

A: Addictive medicines typically work in the brain and they have side effects that aren't really separable

from the reduction in pain, because they're the same thing. That's their mechanism of action. In our case, our goal is to make medicines that act in the periphery, not in the brain, so they wouldn't have the same potential risk.

Q: Tell me about the recent data you've reported?

A: We've reported three studies in people with acute pain - things like surgery or an injury - all three studies were positive, all three studies showed substantial reduction of pain of about 50%.

One of the secondary endpoints was superiority to the opioid and the drugs were not superior to the opioid that was used for comparison, they were similar in magnitude. But because opioids have so many safety and tolerability issues, a medicine that could have similar efficacy but does not have those challenges might be of interest to people in pain.

Q: Are you testing this approach in patients with long-term pain?

A: We also did a study of diabetic peripheral neuropathy, which is long-term pain caused when people with diabetes have damaged nerves. That was also a positive study that showed clinically meaningful reduction in pain. So based on that study, a phase 2 study, we're now planning for a phase 3 study.

Australia unveils innovative cancer treatment

3D printed films kill over 80% of liver cancer cells

CANBERRA, April 16, (Xinhua): Films that are 3D printed and loaded with drugs could revolutionize cancer treatments, world-first Australian research has found.

According to a new study, the post-surgery films -- which were designed by a team from the University of South Australia (UniSA) -- are capable of killing more than 80 percent of liver cancer cells and significantly reducing recurrence rates.

Created from gels, the films are loaded with tailored doses of anti-cancer drugs 5-fluorouracil (5FU) and cisplatin (Cis) and placed at the exact surgical site where cancer has been removed to deliver localized drugs, treating residual cancer cells and minimizing the toxic side effects of chemotherapy.

In addition to liver cancer, the study said the films also have the potential to treat other cancers where 5FU and Cis have previously proven successful, including ovarian cancer and head and neck cancer.

Souha Youssef, a co-author of the study from the Center for Pharmaceutical Innovation at UniSA, said that the films could revolutionize liver cancer treatments by bridging the gap for patients who discontinue post-surgery chemotherapy due to the debilitating side effects.

"There are striking statistics that show how many patients choose to discontinue treatment due to its aggressiveness and how it is affecting their quality of life," she said in a media release on Monday.

"This targeted approach releases the drugs into the exact cavity and lower amounts into the bloodstream which otherwise cause serious side effects at high doses."

The films are loaded with exact doses of the drugs that are delivered over 23 days and are biodegradable, eliminating the need for surgical removal.

By using state-of-the-art 3D printers, researchers were able to tailor protocols for each patient to deliver superior treatment.

Separate research published by the International Agency for Research on Cancer in 2022 found that in 2020 an estimated 905,700 people were diagnosed with, and 830,200 people died from, liver cancer globally.

NASA links mystery object to space station debris

NASA is seeking a faster and cheaper way to bring Mars samples to Earth

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., April 16, (AP): NASA's plan to bring samples from Mars back to Earth is on hold until there's a faster, cheaper way, space agency officials said Monday.

Retrieving Mars soil and rocks has been on NASA's to-do list for decades, but the date kept moving forward, as costs ballooned. A recent independent review put the total cost at \$8 billion to \$11 billion, with an arrival date of 2040, about a decade later than advertised.

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said that's too much and too late. He's asking private industry and the space agency's centers to come up with other options to revamp the project. With NASA facing across-the-board budget cuts, he wants to avoid gutting other science projects to finance the Mars sample project.

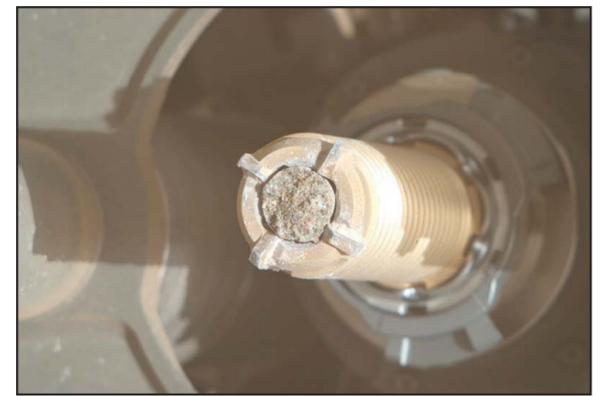
"We want to get every new and fresh idea that we can," he said at a news conference.

NASA's rover Perseverance already has gathered 24 core samples in tubes since landing in 2021 at Mars' Jezero Crater, an ancient river delta. The goal is more than 30 samples to scour for possible signs of ancient Martian life.

The space agency wants to get at least some of the collected samples to Earth sometime in the 2030s for no more than the \$7 billion. That would require a spacecraft that goes to Mars to get the tubes and launches off the planet. Then it must rendezvous with yet another spacecraft that would bring the samples to Earth.

NASA's science mission chief, Nicky Fox, refused to speculate at the news conference when the samples might arrive at Earth, given a new program and timeline, or even how many samples might be returned. That information will be included in any proposals, she said.

"We've never launched from another planet, and that's actually what makes Mars sample return such a challenging and interesting mission," Fox said.



This photo provided by NASA shows a coring bit used by the Mars Perseverance rover to collect a sample on Oct. 14, 2023. NASA has put the effort to bring the samples to Earth on hold until there is a faster, cheaper way. (AP)

Scientists are eager to analyze pristine samples from Mars in their own labs, far superior to the kind of rudimentary testing done by spacecraft at the red planet. It will take such in-depth testing to confirm any evidence of microscopic life dating back billions of years when water flowed on the planet, according to NASA.

The samples will help NASA decide where astronauts go on Mars in the 2040s, Nelson said.

NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, had been in charge of the sample project. It was hit by hundreds of layoffs earlier this year due to all the budget cutbacks. Nelson is seeking ideas from across the space agency, with the revamped program more spread out.

NASA hopes to receive any ideas by late fall.

Also:

NAPLES, Fla.: NASA confirmed Monday that a mystery object that crashed through the roof of a Florida home last month was a chunk of space junk from equipment discarded at the International Space Station. The cylindrical object that tore

through the home in Naples on March 8 was subsequently taken to the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral for analysis.

The space agency said it was a metal support used to mount old batteries on a cargo pallet for disposal. The pallet was jettisoned from the space station in 2021, and the load was expected to eventually fully burn up on entry into Earth's atmosphere, but one piece survived.

The chunk of metal weighed 1.6 pounds (0.7 kilograms) and was 4 inches (10 centimeters) tall and roughly 1 1/2 inches (4 centimeters) wide.

Homeowner Alejandro Otero told television station WINK at the time that he was on vacation when his son told him what had happened. Otero came home early to check on the house, finding the object had ripped through his ceiling and torn up the flooring.

"I was shaking. I was completely in disbelief. What are the chances of something landing on my house with such force to cause so much damage," Otero said. "I'm super grateful that nobody got hurt."

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Ceremony kicks off despite weather glitch

Paris Olympics flame is lit at the Greek cradle of ancient games

ANCIENT OLYMPIA, Greece, April 16, (AP): Even without the help of Apollo, the flame that is to burn at the Paris Olympics was kindled Tuesday at the site of the ancient games in southern Greece.

Cloudy skies prevented the traditional lighting, when an actress dressed as an ancient Greek priestess uses the sun to ignite a silver torch - after offering up a symbolic prayer to Apollo, the ancient Greek sun god.

Instead, she used a backup flame that had been lit on the same spot Monday, during the final rehearsals.

Normally, the foremost of a group of priestesses in long, pleated dresses dips the fuel-filled torch into a parabolic mirror which focuses the sun's rays on it, and fire spurts forth.

OLYMPICS

But this time she didn't even try, going straight for the backup flame, kept in a copy of an ancient Greek pot. Ironically, a few minutes later the sun shone forth.

From the ancient stadium in Olympia, a relay of torchbearers will carry the flame more than 5,000 kilometers (3,100 miles) through Greece until the handover to Paris Games organizers in Athens on April 26.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said the flame lighting combined "a pilgrimage to our past in ancient Olympia, and an act of faith in our future."

"In these difficult times ... with wars and conflicts on the rise, people are fed up with all the hate, the aggression and negative news," he said. "We are longing for something which brings us together; something that is unifying; something that gives us hope."

Thousands of spectators from all over the world packed Olympia for Tuesday's event amid the ruined temples and sports grounds where the ancient games were held from 776 B.C.-393 A.D.

The sprawling site, in a lush valley



The first torchbearer, Greek Olympic gold medalist Stefanos Douskos, (right), passes the flame to first French torchbearer, three-time Olympic medalist Laure Manaudou, after the official ceremony of the flame lighting for the Paris Olympics, at the Ancient Olympia site, Greece, Tuesday, April 16, 2024. The flame will be carried through Greece for 11 days before being handed over to Paris organizers on April 26. (AP)

by the confluence of two rivers, is at its prettiest in the spring, teeming with pink-flowering Judas trees, small blue irises and the occasional red anemone.

Greek authorities maintained high security around Olympia on Tuesday, after protests by rights activists disrupted the lighting ceremonies for the Beijing summer and winter games. Armed police stopped incoming vehicles and checked for explosives, while sniffer dogs combed the grounds.

The first torchbearer was Greek rower Stefanos Douskos, a gold medalist in 2021 in Tokyo. He ran to a nearby monument that contains the heart of French Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the driving force behind the modern revival of the games.

The next runner was Laure Manaudou, a French swimmer who won three medals at Athens in 2004. She handed over to senior European Union official Margaritis Schinas, a Greek.

The IOC's Bach praised Paris organizers for doing "an outstanding

job" with preparations for the July 26-August 11 games.

He also highlighted their environmental impact, saying that cleanup efforts will make it possible to swim in the River Seine, which traverses Paris, "for the first time in a hundred years."

The flame will travel from Athens' port of Piraeus on the Belem, a French three-masted sailing ship built in 1896 - the year of the first modern games in Athens.

According to Captain Aymeric Gibbet, it's due on May 8 in the southern French port of Marseille, a city founded by Greek colonists some 2,600 years ago.

The Belem arrived in Katakolo, near Olympia, on Monday. Lookers-on included a small, enthusiastic group of tourists from the northwestern French region of Brittany, where the ship's homeport of Nantes is, waving French and Breton flags.

"We thought it would be a unique opportunity to see the flame lighting

Kuwait Club & Al-Qadisiya in driver's seats as Al-Arabi and Kazma 'aim' to even series

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Kuwait Club and Al-Qadisiya aim to secure their spots in the Basketball League final as they face off against Al-Arabi and Kazma in the playoffs' second round today. The matches will take place at Al-Ittihad Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Hall Complex.

Al-Qadisiya will play against Kazma at 5:30 PM, followed by Kuwait's match against Al-Arabi at 7:30 PM. The semi-finals employ a playoff system of three matches, with the winners of two advancing to the final, which will follow the same format but with five matches.

In the previous round, Kuwait Club narrowly defeated Al-Arabi 104-100, while Al-Qadisiya secured a hard-fought victory over Kazma with a score of 85-81 on the same day.

Despite Kuwait Club being considered the frontrunner for the title and the closest to qualification, Al-Arabi's strong performance in the last match suggests today's game could go either way if it maintains its spirit and determination. While Kuwait Club boasts a history of success, Al-Arabi has shown resilience in recent matches, and today

at the historic site of Olympia," said Jean-Michel Pasquet from Loriet, near Nantes. "And when we also learnt the Belem would carry the flame ... we said we must do this."

But Pasquet said he'd have to watch the Paris Games from home.

"For us, it would be really very expensive, unaffordable," to go to the venues, he said. "So we'll watch them on television ... from our armchairs."



Kuwaiti player out jumps an Iraqi player to score during the friendly game in Kuwait.

it targets a positive result to extend the series to a third confrontation.

Meanwhile, Al-Qadisiya, led by American coach Stebbing, aims to assert its dominance over Kazma and secure a final berth without the need for a third match. Having defeated Kazma in all encounters this season, Al-Qadisiya enters the match as favorite.

However, Kazma, under the guidance of Serbian coach Bojan Lazic, has had mixed performances this season despite reaching the league semi-finals and the West Asian League Championship semi-finals.

The focus on both fronts seems to have distracted Kazma's team, who

BASKETBALL

will strive today to salvage its chances and keep title hopes alive.

In other news, Kuwait under-18 basketball team secured a 72-66 victory over Iraq in the second friendly match held at Al-Ittihad Hall. This victory follows a similar win in the first friendly match with a score of 82-77, as part of the team's preparations for the Gulf Cup qualifying tournament for the Asian Cup finals hosted by Kuwait from July 29 to August 4.

Additionally, the under-15 junior team bounced back from its previous defeat to Iraq with a narrow 76-75 victory in the second friendly match at Al-Ittihad Hall. The team is gearing up for the Gulf Championship in Doha from August 15 to 19, aiming to improve upon their previous performance after losing the first friendly match 43-89.

Al-Qadisiya and Burgan secure victories in the handball league

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Al-Qadisiya and Burgan secured victories, concluding the tenth week of the Handball League. Al-Qadisiya triumphed over Khaitan 32-27, while Burgan defeated Yarmouk 26-21. These matches took place at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex.

As the tenth round wraps up, Al-Salmiya leads the standings with 17 points from 10 matches, followed by Kuwait Club with 16 points from nine matches. Kazma and Al-Arabi share the third spot with 14 points



Khaitan's Nasser Al-Enezi tries to score against Al-Qadisiya.

HANDBALL

each, while Al-Qadisiya ranks fifth with 13 points. Al-Sulaibkhat holds the sixth position with 11 points, followed by Burgan with 10 points and Al-Nasr with nine. Al-Fahaheel has eight points, Al-Qurain seven, and Al-Yarmouk five, while Khaitan trails at four points. Al-Sahel and Al-Tadamon occupy the bottom spots in the league standings.

Tuesday marks the start of the eleventh round competitions with three matches. At 4:30 p.m., Kazma will face Al-Tadamon in what is expected

to be a straightforward match for the "Orange" team. Following that, at 6:30 p.m., Al-Fahaheel will go head-to-head with Al-Nasr in what promises to be an evenly matched encounter. The day's matches will conclude at 8:30 p.m. with a showdown between Al-Arabi and Sulaibkhat, anticipated to be a closely contested affair.

The 11th round matches will continue until next Friday, with the league expected to run until May 2nd. "Postponed" matches are scheduled for Tuesday, the 23rd, and Saturday, the 27th of this month.

Best of the Rest

Fiorentina fight back to draw:

Fiorentina mounted a second half comeback to draw with Genoa 1-1 at home in a Serie A game marked by VAR decisions against both teams.

The draw extended Fiorentina's winless run to five league matches and left it in 10th place, trailing in the race for European competitions next season.

The first VAR decision went Genoa's way when Fiorentina's Andrea Belotti had a 26th-minute goal chalked off for offside.

That roused Genoa to take the lead three minutes before halftime through a penalty from Albert Gudmundsson. Fabiano Parisi was adjudged to have felled Caleb Ekuban. It was the Icelandic's third goal in three games.

However, Jonathan Ikoné equalized nine minutes into the second half for Fiorentina with a nice header.

With 70 minutes gone, the referee awarded the home side a penalty only to change his mind after a video review.

Genoa remained in 12th place, well clear of the relegation zone but with little chance of securing a European place.

Verona also came from behind to draw at Atalanta 2-2 and secure a vital point in its relegation fight.

Verona rose to 16th, tied on points with Udinese and Empoli. But only two points separates all three from second-to-last Sassuolo.

Atalanta looked to be cruising after a Gianluca Scamacca-inspired opening few minutes. (AP)

Osasuna lose to Valencia: Ante Budimir missed what may be the worst penalty kick of his career and his embarrassing stumble cost Osasuna after it lost at home to Valencia 1-0 in the Spanish league.

Budimir was awarded the disputed spot kick in the fourth minute of stoppage time, and the penalty was upheld after a long video consultation. But the Croatian striker barely made contact with the ball and it tumbled into the arms of the disbelieving goalkeeper.

Osasuna's top goalscorer this season with 16, Budimir adopted a stop-start approach to the kick but it failed miserably in a dramatic end to the match.

"He has apologized three times to

me and he doesn't have to ask for forgiveness," Osasuna coach Jagoba Arrasate said. "It's inevitable that we'll remember this play. That's part of the game."

Andre Almeida's angled drive in the 18th minute put Valencia ahead and proved to be the difference between the sides. (AP)

CL semifinal postponed in UAE: The first leg of the Asian Champions League semifinal between Al-Ain of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal has been postponed from Tuesday to Wednesday after torrential rain brought floods to the host country.

The Asian Football Confederation made the decision after thunderstorms pounded the UAE, flooding out portions of major highways and closing roads and bridges. The UAE's national federation had earlier called off all local soccer games.

The game is now set to be played at 8 p.m. local time (1600 GMT) on Wednesday at the Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium in Al Ain.

The AFC said it was "keeping in view the safety of all fans, players and stakeholders" in pushing the game back 24 hours.

The second leg remains unchanged with Al-Hilal hosting Al-Ain in Riyadh next Tuesday.

Al-Hilal is on course for a record fifth continental title, while Al-Ain is looking to add to its 2003 continental championship.

Also on Wednesday, Ulsan HD of South Korea hosts Yokohama F. Marinos of Japan in the other semifinal. (AP)

Hölzenbein, WC winner dies: Bernd Hölzenbein, who won a crucial penalty in West Germany's victory over the Netherlands in the 1974 World Cup final, has died. He was 78.

Hölzenbein's former club Eintracht Frankfurt said in a statement Tuesday that he died Monday while with his family, without giving further details.

"One of the greatest we have ever had," the club wrote on social media. Hölzenbein played 40 games for West Germany but is best known for his role in the 2-1 comeback victory over the Netherlands to win the World Cup on home soil in 1974. (AP)

Sunrisers rack IPL record total of 287-3 and down Challengers by only 25 runs



Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Virat Kohli reacts after being bowled out during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Sunrisers Hyderabad in Bengaluru, India, Monday, April 15, 2024. (AP)

Victory lifts batting-heavy Hyderabad into the top four

BENGALURU, India, April 16, (AP): Sunrisers Hyderabad racked a record Indian Premier League total of 287-3 and beat Royal Challengers Bengaluru by only 25 runs.

Travis Head's 102, the fourth fastest century in IPL history off 39 balls, propelled Hyderabad to better its own IPL record of 277-3 set this season against Mumbai Indians.

Bengaluru looked like it was crashing to a heavy defeat at 181-6 in the 15th over until Dinesh Karthik plundered 83 off 35 balls to finish on 262-7 and narrow their defeat.

The aggregate of 549 runs was easily the highest in IPL history.

Head's blistering century included eight sixes and nine fours. The Australian left-hander pounded the fast bowlers, notably Lockie Ferguson (2-52), who had a forgetful first game of the season as Bengaluru's play not to go with a specialist spinner backfired.

Head raised his half-century off 20 balls and completed his century off the next 19 balls. Head attempted another big shot off Ferguson and holed out to Faf du Plessis at mid-off.

Hyderabad didn't change gears as Heinrich Klassen added 67, including a 23-ball half-century, Abdul Salam an unbeaten 37, and Aiden Markram an unbeaten 32. They smashed 46 runs off the last two overs bowled by Reece Topley (1-68) and Vijaykumar Vyshak (0-64).

In the chase, Du Plessis (62) and

Virat Kohli (42) helped the home team to a rollicking start of 79 in the batting power play.

Hyderabad struck through skipper Pat Cummins (3-43) and leg-spinner Mayank Markande (2-46).

CRICKET

Kohli survived early when spinner Abhishek Sharma couldn't hold onto a return catch in the first over. But Kohli was clean-bowled by Markande's slow googly.

Du Plessis, who hit four sixes and seven fours, was caught down the leg side when he attempted a pull shot against Cummins.

Karthik took charge and bludgeoned seven sixes and five boundaries before he got a thin edge in the penultimate over. Anuj Rawat (25 not out) hit four boundaries in the last over against Bhuvneshwar Kumar (0-60) in a night-marish game for bowlers.

The victory lifted batting-heavy Hyderabad into the top four, while Bengaluru suffered a sixth defeat in seven games.



Rajasthan Royals' Avesh Khan, center, celebrates the wicket of Kolkata Knight Riders' Phil Salt during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals in Kolkata, India, Tuesday, April 16, 2024. (AP)

Also:

AUSTRALIA: Former Australian test cricketer Michael Slater was remanded in custody while awaiting trial on 19 charges relating to domestic violence, stalking and breaches of bail.

The 54-year-old Slater was refused bail Tuesday when he appeared in Maroochydore Magistrates Court, about an hour north of Brisbane in Queensland state, charged with unlawful stalking or intimidation, breaking into a dwelling with intent at night, common assault, assault occasioning bodily harm and choking or suffocation.

He was arrested Friday for the alleged offenses between Dec. 5 and April 12, and on 10 counts of contravening a domestic violence order.

Slater made his debut for Australia in 1993 and played 73 test matches, scoring 5,312 runs at an average of almost 43. He also played 42 limited-overs internationals before retiring from professional cricket in 2004 and launching a lengthy career in television commentary.

He was remanded in custody until his next appearance in the same court on May 31.

The Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported that Slater collapsed to the floor and had to be helped up by security staff when Magistrate Raelene Ellis denied his bail application.

In 2022, Slater had charges of domestic violence dismissed on mental health grounds in a Sydney local court, but was ordered to undergo a 12-month treatment plan under the care of a doctor.

Porsche Centre Shuwaikh unveils the 2024 Panamera

A pivotal moment in the realm of automotive excellence



A group photo of the Porsche Centre Shuwaikh team: Callum Bottomley – Group General Manager, Mr. Hussein Behbehani – Vice President, Mr. Abdulmohsen Behbehani – Director, Hany Marie – General Manager, Reem Nageh – Marketing Executive.

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Porsche Panamera, the brand's four-seater sports car for every day which redefined the automotive executive class upon its inception, is expanding further with the introduction of its third generation at Porsche Centre Kuwait,

Behbehani Motors Company, the leading automotive brand.

The grand event unfolded at the state-of-the-art Porsche Centre Shuwaikh facility, where the spotlight shone brightly on two examples of the new Panamera.

This unveiling marked a pivotal moment in the realm of automotive excellence, showcasing Porsche's commitment to innovation and

performance. Under the theme "Choose Boldly," Porsche Centre Shuwaikh elegantly hosted the exclusive launch of the new Panamera at its state-of-the-art facility, marking the debut of this iconic car's latest generation.

Crafted with opulent settings and high-end touches, the venue exuded an ambiance of luxury and sophistication, complemented by state-of-the-art display technology showcasing the latest innovations in automotive design and engineering.

The two Porsche icons took center stage, illuminated by cutting-edge lighting technologies and display systems, captivating the attention of a select group of prominent figures, VIPs, Porsche enthusiasts, media representatives, and esteemed customers. The G3 Volcano Grey Metallic and Carrera White Metallic Panamera stood as symbols of automotive perfection, reflecting a collective pursuit of excellence.

The evening unfolded as an extraordinary celebration, embody-

ing the sophistication and prestige of the new Porsche Panamera models. Guests were treated to a dazzling array of entertainment, highlighted by a bold and masterful live saxophone performance, among other captivating shows.

The main highlight of the evening was an extraordinary visual display, accompanied by a live violinist, creating an immersive experience through graceful body expressions.

Prior to the performance, a renowned Silhouette artist sculpted faces from paper with precision, crafting silhouettes of the attendees, adding to the allure of the event.

Commenting on the success of the event, Hany Marie, General Manager of Porsche Centre Kuwait, expressed his excitement for the grand reveal, stating: "Tonight, we present to you the new Panamera, epitomizing innovation and luxury in its most exquisite form. This luxury sports car seamlessly blends the best of two worlds: sports performance and luxury comfort. The anticipation surrounding the launch of the new Panamera has been immense. The redesigned model boasts precision, sharpness, and edginess like never before, embodying a successful fusion of traditional values with forward-looking design."

"For the first time, it has an innovative chassis with active damper control – as an option for all hybrid models. We call it "Porsche Active Ride". It enables a totally new level and a whole new range between performance and comfort. Dynamic and nimble on winding country roads. While practically floating over cobbled city streets. Its dynamic spectrum is simply enormous."

Highlighting the enhancements of the new Panamera, the comprehensive improvements to the powertrain, chassis, and design, among other features, elevates this model's on-road and off-road performance, while enhancing luxury and comfort for everyday driving. The new Panamera is designed for customers who share a love for outstanding design and a preference for individualisation.

During the event, guests had the exclusive opportunity to explore two base models of the new Panamera with captivating exterior colours. The stage was adorned by a Volcano Grey and Carrera White new Panamera, featuring a technical yet elegant, and dynamic exterior.

Characterised by personalised interior colour combinations and smooth finish leather, the Volcano Grey variant displayed during the event came with a two-tone leather interior in Black and Bordeaux Red, smooth-finish leather, with 21-inch Panamera SportDesign wheels.

The Carrera White variant, on the other hand, stood out with a Two-tone leather interior in Darknight blue and Chalk Beige, smooth-finish leather, featuring 21-inch 911 Turbo Design wheels. Other optional features include



The visual artist making on spot giveaways for the customers.



The violinist composed a music piece specifically for the launch event.



The saxophone player entertains the audience.



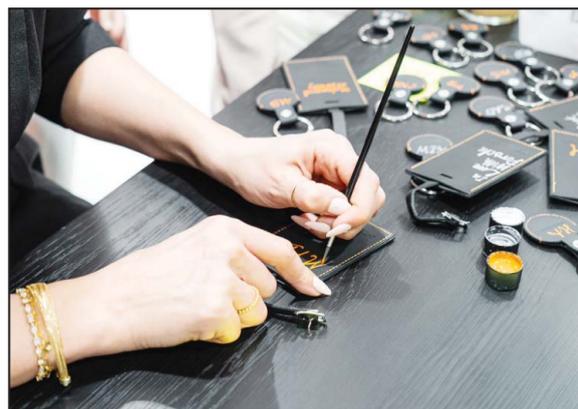
The all-new Panamera in Volcano Grey Color.



The attendees are exploring the new all-new Panamera.



The new Panamera models take centre stage at state-of-the-art facility, showcasing updated powertrain, features, and design.



The customers giveaways were customized during the event.



The attendees are exploring the new all-new Panamera.

4+1 Seats, with ventilation (front), a Panoramic roof system, a Sport Chrono Package, and a sports exhaust system, among others.

The New Panamera... Digital, Connected, and More Efficient

With its various and advanced sporty drive and equipment options, latest chassis technologies, comprehensive assistance systems and complete digital networking, drivers of the new Panamera are poised to enjoy a 360 automotive experience.

For those who wish to witness this masterpiece in person, experience its engineering brilliance up close, and even test drive it, they are invited to visit either the showroom of Porsche Centre Kuwait or Porsche Centre Shuwaikh.



Chelsea's Cole Palmer celebrates after scoring his side's fifth goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Chelsea and Everton at Stamford Bridge stadium in London. (AP)

Sports

Latest sports scores at — <http://sports.arabtimesonline.com>

Impressive progress made by teams

IIHF commends Kuwait's readiness for Division IV World Ice Hockey Championship

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): Franz Reindl, a council member of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF), commended the Kuwait Winter Games Club for its exceptional readiness to host the upcoming World Ice Hockey Championship Division IV tournament, which kicked off today. The tournament has received acclaim for its outstanding organization and technical standards.

ICE HOCKEY

In an interview with KUNA, Reindl praised the club's provision of top-tier facilities for teams, referees, and IIHF officials, along with its adherence to internationally recognized standards at the ice rink. As the chairperson of the championships committee for the 2024 World Ice Hockey Championship Division IV, Reindl emphasized the shared objective of elevating the sport's quality and expanding its global presence.

Acknowledging the impressive progress made by teams in Divisions III and IV in recent years, Reindl specifically commended Kuwait for its significant advancements. He expressed his delight at being in Kuwait and extended gratitude on behalf of the International Ice Hockey Federation to Kuwait and the organizing committee for their collaboration and outstanding contributions.

The tournament, hosted at the



Executive meeting in progress.

KUNA photo

Kuwait Winter Games Club's ice skating rink in the Bayan area, will kick off with two matches. The opening fixture will see Mongolia facing off against Indonesia, followed by Kuwait taking on Malaysia. The opening ceremony preceding the second match marks a pivotal moment, as the victorious team will secure advancement to Division III in the subsequent tournament.

Palmer scores four in Chelsea 'demolition' of dismal Everton

Everton lodge appeal against 2-point penalty

Kuwait Oly team begins AFC U-23 journey



Kuwaiti players are in a buoyant mood on the eve of the opening game.

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/ Arab Times Staff

DOHA, April 16: Kuwait kicked off its journey in the AFC U-23 Cup when it faces Vietnam at 6:30 pm in the opening match of the Group D, while Uzbekistan will take on Malaysia at 4 pm on the same day.

Unfortunately, Kuwait will be without several key players, including Badr Al-Mutairi and Abdullah Al-Enezi, who have joined the injured list alongside Bandar Al-Salama, Dhari Al-Otaibi, Abdulaziz Naji, Salman Al-Bous, and Youssef Majed, who were excluded by Portuguese coach Emilio Peixe for tactical reasons.

Despite attending a training camp in Abu Dhabi prior to the tournament, Al-Azraq did not engage in any friendly matches. The team roster boasts notable players such as Salman Al-Awadi, Ibrahim Kamil, Abdul Rahman Kamil, Mohsen Falah, and Mahdi Dashti.

In their second appearance in the tournament, Kuwait aims to progress to the second round. Meanwhile, Vietnam, competing in their fourth tournament, seeks redemption after reaching the final in 2008, only to lose to Uzbekistan, who is also eyeing a strong start against Malaysia.

SOCCER

Meanwhile, Qatar secured a 2-0 victory over Indonesia in the first group encounter at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Doha. Khaled Ali (45+1) and Ahmed Al-Rawi (54) scored for Al-Annabi, while Indonesia ended the match with nine players following the dismissals of Ivar Jenner (46) and Ramadan Sananta (90+6).

In the second match, the Jordan drew 0-0 with Australia at Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium. Qatar leads the group with 3 points, followed by Jordan and Australia with 1 point each, while Indonesia is yet to secure any points.

LONDON, April 16, (AP): Cole Palmer put on an unstoppable display with a perfect first-half hat trick and a fourth in the second half as Chelsea demolished Everton 6-0 in the English Premier League.

Palmer scored with his left foot, head and right foot in the 13th, 19th and 29th minutes to become the first Chelsea player to score in seven successive home games.

SOCCER

"It all happens so fast," Palmer told Sky Sports. "We started well and I scored another hat trick - buzzing. First one was my favorite, my right foot was a bit of a swinger."

The Manchester City reject stroked home a superb first from just outside the box and nodded in the second from close range after Jordan Pickford could only parry Nicolas Jackson's shot.

His third was a wonderful 35-yard lob after Pickford needlessly gifted him possession.

Nicolas Jackson added a fourth a minute before halftime, and Palmer made it 5-0 from the penalty spot in the 64th.

Substitute Alfie Gilchrist's first goal for the club made it six in injury time.

Palmer's goals took his season tally to 20 in the league, tied with Manchester City's Erling Haaland.

The result extended a depressing few days for Everton. Just hours before kickoff, the club lodged an appeal against a two-point deduction for a second breach of the Premier League financial rules.

Everton was docked two points last week for overspending in a three-year spell up to the end of the 2022-23 season. It was a second deduction this season for Everton, which had six points removed - reduced from 10 following an appeal - for breaching spending limits from 2019-20 to the 2021-22 season.

"We've already agreed that's gone, we have to get on with it," Everton manager Sean Dyche said. "(The points deduction) is out of our control."

Dyche described as a "collective down day" and said his team was miles off the pace.

"We can't perform like that at a place like this. The key moments when they get chances, finding the back of the net, we haven't done that all season."

The Liverpool club sits in 16th place, only two points and two places above the relegation zone.

After running its unbeaten streak to eight, Chelsea was in ninth place, only one point behind West Ham. Chelsea has two games in hand over the Hammers.

Everton has lodged an appeal against its two-point deduction for breaking financial rules, and the English Premier League wants a verdict to be reached before the last round.



Chelsea's Mykhailo Mudryk, (left), challenges for the ball with Everton's Seamus Coleman during the English Premier League soccer match between Chelsea and Everton at Stamford Bridge stadium in London. (AP)

Physical fitness of Walker most interest to Ancelotti

Pep keeps Real guessing ahead of second leg

MANCHESTER, England, April 16, (AP): Pep Guardiola kept Real Madrid guessing ahead of Wednesday's Champions League quarterfinals second leg.

Despite Manchester City's fabulously rich array of attacking talent, it is perhaps the physical fitness of Kyle Walker that will be of most interest to Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti - and to Vinicius Junior.

Walker's expert handling of Madrid's winger in last year's semifinals was a key factor in City's 4-0 rout in the second leg on its way to a treble of trophies. And his absence was felt last week in a 3-3 draw at the Bernabeu when the Spanish giants mounted repeated attacks down the right of City's defense.

Walker is back in contention after a hamstring injury, and while Guardiola would not say whether he was ready to start against Madrid, Bernardo Silva outlined his importance to the defending European champion.

"We know Kyle Walker is a player that has controlled some of the best players in the world. He always does phenomenal work," the City playmaker said Tuesday. "In the last few years he played against Vinicius Junior, (Kylian) Mbappe, Neymar and knows how to defend against them."

Even at the age of 33, Walker's speed, strength and endurance still make him one of the world's most effective defenders.

He showcased that against Vinicius last year after the Brazil winger had

been a consistent threat in the first leg in Spain.

It was a different story at Etihad Stadium, with Walker largely nullifying him as City produced a dominant win to advance to the final.

Vinicius was at his most dangerous

again last week and Madrid made the most of it with three goals in a game filled with chances for both teams.

He is likely to be affected more than most by Walker's potential return to City's starting line up.

"I don't know from the beginning or from the bench, but he will be with us tomorrow," Guardiola said of Walker, describing his return as "incredibly good news."

"You know the physicality is massively important and in football it is how you challenge your opponent," Guardiola said.

SOCCER

Madrid is aiming for a record-extending 15th Champions League title, while City would become the first English club to win the trophy back-to-back in the modern era.

City is also competing to become the first team to win the Premier League four years in a row and the first in Europe to complete successive trebles.

Bernardo said the chance to be considered the greatest team of all time was a motivation for City.

"We know how well this team has done and we want to create that legacy and to do another Premier League (title), to do six in seven years and four in a row and we want to win the Champions League to do two in a row that only Madrid did three in a row," he said. "If we win two trebles in a row that would be a legacy."



Atalanta's Jose' Dos Santos Ederson (left), fights for the ball with Verona's Nuslin during the Serie A soccer match between Atalanta and Hellas Verona at Gewiss stadium, Bergamo, Italy. Fiorentina fought back to draw 1-1 with Genoa and Atalanta concedes draw at Verona. (AP)