



## JORDAN'S KING BESTOWS PRESTIGIOUS MEDAL ON KUWAIT'S AMIR

# Amir, King Abdullah II discuss bilateral ties



His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, arrives in Jordan for a state visit and is welcomed by Jordanian King Abdullah II.

Amiri Diwan photos

### Opinion

## Governors in developed countries have great powers

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

TRADITIONALLY in Kuwait, governors and mayors are appointed for some interests, and also as a reward for serving the country for a long period.

This is why their position has become largely ceremonial, except for those who worked to fulfill their role and supervise some work in their governorates, but these were few in number and they did not have the opportunity to continue their work.

The governors often seek the assistance of advisors and employees for the sake of honor and prestige. Their luxurious offices are intended for the protocol and are nothing more than diwanias.

On the other hand, in most countries of the world, a governor is considered a provincial or rather a local ruler with several powers, and with a team that works on ensuring the availability of all necessary facilities and services, as well as the public security.

For example, in Saudi Arabia, the provincial council or region addresses service-related issues of a local nature, which helps reduce the burden on the central apparatus.

In the Sultanate of Oman, a governor's powers include ensuring the implementation of the rule of law, protecting the interests of the state, enhancing its prestige, developing and investing in the governorate's resources and promoting them in order to achieve sustainable development and create job opportunities for citizens, and working to benefit from the various components of the governorate.

The situation is the same in France where a governor is a local ruler who heads the provincial council, supervises all affairs of the province and its budget, and works in consultation with its council to impose tariffs on services. If the need arises, he also represents the state in concluding contracts for governorate projects.

In other words, he is the head of the local authority in the state's decentralized system.

In some countries, a governor is a representative of the executive authority in the governorate. He is responsible for supervising the implementation of the state's general policy and following up the development plan's projects in his governorate. He also has the authority to choose overseas study missions for those residing in his governorate in order to ensure the availability of the specializations his province needs.

Continued on Page 5

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## MP-elect Bushehri slams Internet censorship pact

Iraq road deal quizzed

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: A number of MPs-elect have commented on the Road Development Project Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by Iraq, Türkiye, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in a bid to transform Iraq into a transit hub connecting Asia and Europe through Al-Faw Port that is close to Abdullah Port.

MP-elect Bader Nashmi Al-Anzi said the neighboring countries are working hard to sign economic agreements in the interest of their citizens and national security, while the Kuwaiti government is engaged in acts that could lead to political instability. He inquired about the position of the government on the abovementioned MoU, positive impact of the project on the economy and security of Kuwait, and how it will affect Abdullah Mubarak Port. He stated that the response of the government will reveal the level of its commitment to comply with Article 123 of the Constitution. He vowed to closely follow up the issue.

Article 123 states: "The Cabinet shall exercise control and supervision over the interests of the State. It shall lay down the public policy of the Government, shall follow its execution and shall control the operations in Government departments."

MP-elect Muhannad Al-Sayer thinks the weakness of decision-makers here led to the success of the other party in accomplishing every project that Kuwait has been dreaming of. He warned that the project will negatively affect Abdullah Mubarak Port and waste the huge money spent on it. He added that in the past, he repeatedly called on the government to expedite the operation of the port; but it seems the latter

is not concerned about protecting public funds.

He disclosed that he will be part of the Public Funds Protection Committee in the 18th parliamentary term and he will investigate the issue in order to question the government about its failure to protect public funds. He wondered who could benefit from hindering the operation of the port.

MP-elect Abdullah Al-Mudhaf stated that political instability, vacant leadership positions and negligence led to more wasted opportunities. He emphasized the need for the next government to address issues and face challenges; otherwise, it will eventually leave as a failure.

Continued on Page 5

### Day by Day

WHEN those responsible for governance declare, "We seek administrators adept in their craft, not ministers merely concerned with prestige," it signals a shift away from vanity.

When officials and leaders become mere figureheads, reveling in the trappings of power while distancing themselves from the populace, it foretells a looming catastrophe.

In contrast, in other nations, prime ministers lead by example. Some commute to their offices on bicycles or public trains, mingling with the common people. They throw open their office doors to those in need, listening to grievances and shouldering their responsibilities.

Glory be to Him who changes conditions.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



King Abdullah II presents Kuwait's HH the Amir with Jordan's highest distinction.

## Economic, cultural cooperation strengthened

AMMAN, April 23, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Jordanian King Abdullah II held an official session of talks Tuesday, at Basman Palace.

During the talks, both sides touched on the deep-rooted bilateral ties between the two countries and ways of boosting cooperation to serve the aspirations of the two peoples.

His Highness the Amir congratulated King Abdullah II on the 25th anniversary of his coronation, praising Jordan's achievements under his wise leadership.

The talks were attended by His Highness the Amir's official delegation. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and an official delegation accompanying him arrived on Tuesday in Jordan on a state visit.

His Highness the Amir was received by Jordanian King Abdullah II and the Crown Prince Al-Hussein bin Abdullah.

His Highness the Amir was accompanied by an official delegation that included the Minister of Finance, the Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, and senior officials in the Amiri Diwan.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Al-Hussein Necklace from Jordanian King Abdullah II.

Al-Hussein Necklace is the highest civilian medal in the Kingdom of Jordan.

Following the ceremony, Jordan's King Abdullah II held a banquet in honor of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation on the occasion of the state visit.

Meanwhile, Speaker of the House of Nobels Parliament, Faisal Al-Fayez and speaker of the House of Representative in Jordan, Ahmad Al-Safadi both stressed the importance of the visit of His Highness the Emir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Jordan.

Continued on Page 5

## Kuwait sends aid package to alleviate Sudan's crisis

KUWAIT CITY, April 23, (KUNA): Kuwait has sent its first aircraft carrying 40 tons of food and medical supplies and ambulances to Port Sudan International Airport.

Speaking to KUNA on this occasion, Deputy General Manager of Kuwait Society for Relief Omar Al-Thuwaini said today's aid plane is part of a humanitarian campaign that was jointly launched by the society and eight other Kuwaiti charities with a view to helping Sudanese people who have been affected by their country's war ramifications.

The Kuwaiti initiative is mainly intended to help answer Sudanese people's basic needs, primarily food, medicine, and shelter, amid the tough living conditions they are undergoing, he added.

In this context, he voiced gratitude and appreciation to Kuwaiti state bodies, chiefly the ministries of defense, foreign affairs, social affairs, and information, for their efforts to facilitate and speed up the humanitarian mission.

Continued on Page 5



An aircraft transports 40 tons of food, medical supplies, and ambulances to Sudan as part of a humanitarian initiative.

KUNA photo



A young child extends a warm welcome to His Highness the Amir upon his arrival.

## Toll jumps to 34,183

## KRCS sends relief supplies to Gaza

### Newswatch

**KUWAIT CITY:** Chief of Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, Jamal Al-Loughani, stated that the 25th conference on the fundamentals of the oil and gas industry addresses the accelerating developments in the field through directly and indirectly related issues.

Al-Loughani, inaugurating the conference on Tuesday, mentioned that it aims to highlight industry fundamentals and its various dimensions, sharpen employee skillsets as well as provide opportunities for participants' to strengthen professional relations. (KUNA)

**JEDDAH:** The Saudi Cabinet reaffirmed on Tuesday the Kingdom's firm position to establish regional and international security and stability.

Saudi Arabia also reiterated its constant call on the international community to stop Israel's attacks on Gaza, and support the Palestinians' right to self-determination and an independent state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said.

KUWAIT CITY, April 23, (Agencies): Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) sent on Tuesday 26 trucks loaded with 675 tons of food and nutritional materials to the Gaza Strip through Jordanian lands.

In a statement for KUNA, KRCS Chairman Dr. Hilal Al-Sayer said that this campaign aims to aid the Palestinian people in Gaza and to lift their suffering.

He pointed out that KRCS will not stop aiding the Palestinian people in light of the rising numbers of refugees and injured people due to the Israeli aggression.

Al-Sayer noted that these campaigns come under the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah within the framework of Kuwait's continuous support for the Palestinian people.

Meanwhile, some 34,183 Palestinians have been killed and more than 77,000 injured since an Israeli offensive against the Gaza Strip began in October, the Palestinian enclave's health authorities said on Tuesday.

These casualties came after Israeli occupation forces committed more than 3,000 "massacres" since the violence began, with some 14,778 children, 30 of them starved to death, and 9,752 women among the victims, according to a Gaza's media office report.

Continued on Page 5

## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 03:50 Asr ..... 15:22  
 Sunrise .. 05:14 Maghrib .. 18:19  
 Zohr ..... 11:46 Isha ..... 19:41

# Local

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

## Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:  
**By Day:** Hot with moderate to fresh northwesterly wind, with speeds of 20-45 km/h causing rising dust.

**By Night:** Mild with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 10-38 k/h.

**Station Max Exp Min Rec**  
 Kuwait City 35 25

Kuwait Airport 36 21  
 Abdaly 36 20  
 Jahra 36 23  
 Salmiyah 30 25  
 Nuwaisib 36 24  
 Wafra 35 22



Participants of the EU-Gulf forum.

KUNA photo

## Kuwait Deputy FM partakes in high level EU-Gulf forum in Luxembourg

BRUSSELS, April 23, (KUNA): Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, participated in a high-level forum on regional security convened by the European Union in the duchy of Luxembourg on Monday.

The event witnessed participation of member states from both the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the European Union (EU), which focused on enhancing regional security and stability through cooperation and coordination efforts.

## EU keen on exempting Kuwaitis from Schengen visa: Koestinen

Preferential policy applied: EU envoy to Kuwait

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 23:** The Ambassador of the European Union to Kuwait Anne Koestinen affirmed that exempting Kuwaitis from the Schengen visa requirement is one of her priorities during her tenure as the European Union Ambassador to the State of Kuwait.

In a press statement issued yesterday, she said, "Kuwaitis have been enjoying a very preferential visa policy since September 2023 when the European Commission adopted specific rules and provisions related to the issuance of multiple-entry Schengen visas to Kuwaitis."

"This allowed the issuance of visas valid for five years to all qualified applicants, including those applying for a Schengen visa for the first time. This is the longest possible period of validity for a Schengen visa."

"If the visa's validity exceeds the validity of the passport, the visa will be issued with a validity period that ends three months before the expiry of the passport."

"Travelers who use a Schengen visa can stay for 90 days within the Schengen area, which consists of 29 countries, during any period of 180 days."

Given the approaching summer vacation season and the increase in the number of visa applicants, the ambassador said she encourages all those planning to visit the Schengen countries to apply for a visa early, as this can be done at least six months prior to the date of travel.

Ambassador Koestinen called on all those wishing to apply for a Schengen visa to follow the instructions and guidelines issued by the consular offices of the member states of the European Union that they intend to visit.

She said, "I hope that the European Parliament will look positively at the proposal to exempt Kuwaiti citizens from the Schengen visa requirement. The exemption from the Schengen visa requirement constitutes an important step in facilitating communication between people and enhancing political and economic relations, research, and educational and cultural exchange".



Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah holds talks with the Cyprus Foreign Minister Dr. Constantinos Kombos.

### Sheikh Jarrah meets Cyprus FM

## Deputy FM partakes in luncheon event hosted by Luxembourg FM

BRUSSELS, April 23, (KUNA): Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, participated in a luncheon ceremony hosted by Luxembourg Foreign Minister Xavier Bettel on Monday.

The ceremony was in honor of the participating delegations of the GCC countries and the European Union (EU), on the sideline of EU-Gulf Cooperation Council High Level Forum on Regional Security and Cooperation.

During the ceremony, participants exchanged point of views on various issues on the regional and international arena.

### Bahrain

Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, received on Monday Bahrain's Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Ambassador Sheikh Dr. Abdullah bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa

on Monday.

The meeting took place on the sideline of EU-Gulf Cooperation Council High Level Forum on Regional Security and Cooperation hosted in Luxembourg.

During the meeting, the two exchanged views on various issues on the regional and international arena.

### Cyprus

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Koestinen



Major General Christopher McPhillips is presented a memento.

MoD photo

### Kuwait, US commanders meet

Rear Admiral Hazza Mutlaq Hudaib, Commander of the Naval Forces, welcomed Major General Christopher McPhillips, Commander of the US Marine Corps Central, in a meeting where they exchanged friendly conversations and discussed various topics of common interest, particularly those related to military aspects, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Additionally, an annual ceremony to honor distinguished individuals took place this morning at the multi-purpose

building in the Mubarakiya camps. The event was held under the patronage of Lieutenant General Pilot Bandar Al-Muzain, Chief of the Army General Staff, and was attended by Brigadier General Fares Ahmed, Director of Budget Programming.

During the ceremony, officers, non-commissioned officers, and individuals affiliated with the Directorate were recognized for achieving first place in various courses, acknowledging their outstanding achievements.

### Ex-minister's funds scam case adjourned

## 5 years jail for blogger in slander

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 23:** The Minister's Court has adjourned to May 14 the trial of a former minister who was accused of squandering public funds and abuse of power. The case was adjourned to summon witnesses.

According to the case file, the minister registered two industrial plots - one while he was an MP in the National Assembly and the other after assuming the ministerial portfolio - in the name of a retired military officer so that the charge would not be proven against him.

The matter was discovered after the former soldier, who was referred with him in the same case to the Court of Ministers, sold one of the two plots and transferred an amount of KD 700 thousand to the bank account of the accused minister.

It is worth highlighting that the minister did not disclose this matter to the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), and also purchased a residential apartment in London with public funds.

**Blogger gets 5-year jail:** The Criminal Court sentenced a Kuwaiti blogger to five-year imprisonment for insulting the rulers

of Kuwait and the Emirates, insulting the judiciary, and insulting the Kuwaiti flag on Snapchat and X platforms.

The Public Prosecution charged the accused with publishing phrases and images that would jeopardize Kuwait's relationship with a friendly country, via the social networking site X, formerly known as Twitter. It also charged him with insulting the judiciary and the judicial authority.

**Terror case adjourned:** The Criminal Court adjourned to May 7 the trial of the Tunisian cell members who are accused of joining the terrorist organization ISIS and planning to carry out acts of sabotage in the country. The case was adjourned to summon and interrogate the incident officer.

According to the case file, the accused denied all charges leveled against them. Their defense team requested their release, but the court rejected the request.

During the session with the detention renewal judge, the three Tunisians insisted that they had come to the country for the purpose of working for a delivery company.

They demanded that they be released to return to their country and their families.

### Winners get KD 10,000 award

## KFAS honors young researchers

**KUWAIT CITY, April 23, (KUNA):** Kuwait Foundation for Advancements of Sciences (KFAS) announced Tuesday winners of Jaber Al-Ahmad Prize for young researchers in its 34th edition. The award, a sum of KD 10,000 (approx. USD 33,000), is granted annually to Kuwaiti PhD holders.

KFAS released a statement detailing names of winners and their respective fields, starting with Dr. Zaid Al-Marzouq, a cardiologist and clinical researcher at Mas General Brigham and Harvard University's medical school.

Dr. Al-Marzouq's research focuses on causal inference methods in treating cardiovascular diseases, with a special interest in modern cardiac devices.

The statement also mentioned that Dr. Al-Marzouq has been awarded with many prizes including the Richard Gorlin award.

The award for biological sciences was given out to Dr. Fatima Al-Rashed, a scientist specializing in immunology and microbiology at Dasman Institute for Diabetes for her renowned research and contributions to the field.

Dr. Al-Rashed, a pioneer in her field, attained her doctorate from Nottingham University, and was awarded many prestigious

awards including UNESCO's L'oreal award for women in science.

Dr. Amar Bahman, Assistant Professor of mechanical engineering at Kuwait University, was granted the award in field of engineering sciences. Dr. Bahman's expertise lies in air conditioning systems suitable for high temperature climates.

Bahman, whose research interest also includes, techno-economic analysis, exploration of substitute cooling methods and heat transfer, got his degree from American Purdue University.

As for field of social sciences and humanities, both Dr. Amal Al-Saleh of the educational planning and management department at KU and Dr. Fahad Al-Zumae, Associate Professor of Law were granted the award for their expertise and valuable research.

KFAS wished all recipients further success in future research endeavors, stating that this reflects the exceptional role of Kuwaiti researchers and their contributions to knowledge in its various fields.

The award was established back in 1988 as an initiative by His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to encourage and honor PhD holders.

## Kuwaiti teams qualify for robotics contest in Dallas

**KUWAIT CITY, April 23, (KUNA):** The Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC), a part of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), announced that Kuwaiti teams have qualified for the VEX Robotics World Championship in Dallas, Texas, US, in which the event will host 1,800 teams worldwide from the day after tomorrow until May third.

Kuwait's teams secured their place after the National Robotics Competition held last March, SACGC said in a press statement Tuesday.

These teams consist of students from Kuwait University (KU), American University in the Middle East, Ibn Al-Ameed Secondary School, Kuwait International English School, and American Baccalaureate Middle School.

The competition offers a unique opportunity for knowledge exchange and learning from diverse cultures and ideas, enhancing practical and theoretical skills, fostering innovation, critical thinking, and teamwork abilities among students, it mentioned.

According to Director General of the Center Neda Al-Daihani, this participation marks a vital step in strengthening Kuwait's position in global technological innovation and artificial intelligence.

Preparation and training for the competition have been intensive, with students undergoing rigorous training programs supervised by experts and trainers in the Computer Science Department at KU, she pointed out.

On her side, Dr. Noura Al-Jeri, a faculty member in the Computer Science Department at KU and head of the organizing committee, underscored that participation in this international competition is not only about showcasing students' skills but also a crucial step towards positioning Kuwait as a hub for innovation and excellence in science and technology.

## Shutting embassies abroad with no use...right move at right time

"FOR years, I have been talking with some of the men of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whom I trust, whether former or still in diplomatic work positions, including former ambassadors as well, about the number of Kuwaiti embassies abroad and the importance of each of them in our diplomatic, political, commercial and tourism relations with them, and Kuwait's benefit from the presence of embassies in some countries, especially in aspects of political and diplomatic work, and the importance of relations within the framework of common interests and co-ordination on international issues under the umbrella of the United Nations, and this conversation still continues from time to time whenever opportunities for meetings arise," columnist **Youssef Al-Shehab**, wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.



Al-Shehab

"Kuwait has about 70 embassies abroad distributed over the five continents of the world, in addition to consulates, and they have more diplomats than the number of offices of each embassy, and they have budgets of millions of dinars.

"Among these Kuwaiti embassies they are in countries with which we only have Development Fund loans, so they have no effect. There are no international decisions, no commercial or tourism relations, no official visits, no educational relations with these embassies, and despite all that and other things, we have embassies there, so why is that?"

"We do not know, unless there is parliamentary pressures. The United States, which is the largest country in the world, has 249 embassies, along with 149 consulates and 11 agencies in international bodies. It is the second country to possess such embassies, consulates and agencies in the world after China.

"If this is the number of American embassies abroad, it is because it has wide influence in its relations with the countries of the world. It also has a say in the international matters and various world issues, while Kuwait has embassies whose presence is of no benefit other than a financial burden. Most of their appointments came under pressure and perhaps even parliamentary duties for the sake of the financial privileges that a diplomat receives abroad and many other privileges.

"The decision to close some of our embassies abroad, even if it came late, is a right decision in place, as the point is not the presence of such embassies and the number of employees in them, but rather the importance of this country and its influence on international resolution, which is what we saw in the Security Council and the position of the countries on the issue of the invasion of Kuwait and its liberation by resolution; an international gathering around which all countries of the world realized the just Kuwaiti position towards the Iraqi aggression and occupation at that time.

"What matters to Kuwait about opening any embassy in any country is the importance of the embassy and the importance of relations with it. As for preparing it, there is no benefit other than flooding it with employees, among whom only three or four work, and for the rest -- there is no job or employer -- except for salaries and benefits.

"I do not think that we need to open any embassy today, as all our embassies in important countries are present there, and therefore we need to close more of them and implement a "diet program" for many of our embassies in countries with which there is no cooperative activity.

"Try the closure and you will see the results are much better than the presence of these embassies, whose role is no more than hiring employees with privileges that burden the ministry and the state budget. Thank you for closing and waiting for more..

"Any increase beyond the required need in all aspects of life brings negative results. For work that requires one or three employees and you put ten employees in it, know that it will not be completed until after the period specified for it due to the dependence of each one on the other, as well as the number of embassies when we place them in countries that we do not need. Except for expenses and a large number of diplomats whose existence has no meaning. Then they will be a burden on the budget."

### Also:

"In recent times, the country has witnessed fluctuations in the situation and unstable and inconsistent electoral results with the government, which results in repeated parliamentary elections and ministerial formations, for which quickest solutions must be found," columnist **Dr Ghadeer Muhammad Asiri** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Popular dissatisfaction is noticeable, and citizens are bored of casting ballots every now and then voting. The method of selecting representatives is to make society accept a new behavior, which is an unwillingness to practice democracy, and to encourage incitement to refrain from running, voting,

or political participation.

"Elections are a political and constitutional process. Although they can move us to greater democracy, they brew political and social conflicts. Voting has been practiced since ancient times in a primitive manner in ancient Greece and Italy. In the fourth century BC, it was practiced in Sparta, by involving the king and the people in expressing their opinion on decisions, which must have prior approval, through noise, or shooting arrows, and over time parliamentary electoral systems developed and multiplied, as they develop to suit the appropriate society.

"A few days ago, I attended a rich dialogue session on "Reforming Electoral Systems," and the most important thing that attracted me was the sentence, "It is possible that the non-geographic electoral system is not ideal, but rather the system most appropriate for the current time in the State of Kuwait," which was said by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Al-Muqataei", President of the Kuwait International College of Law, when he explained in detail his proposal to reform the current system and replace it with this non-geographic distribution of voters, by the date of birth of each voter, 3 months before the elections, which is accurately sorted into constituencies consistent with the number of voters in the State of Kuwait, which is consistent.

"With rational numbers, it solves part of the problem of inconsistency between the districts in the number of voters. The districts with the number of voters are very large, and their areas are few, and the districts with the number of voters are small and the number of regions is large.

"With this consistent distribution among the districts in Kuwait, the voter is changed and the family is not centralized or the tribe in the same district, as the speech from the candidate is less sectarian, because he is considered a candidate for many different groups that are not known long before the elections, and is trying to win over society as a whole instead of relying on a specific group centered in the current districts for success, which is often sectarian or ethnic which divides votes and society, and is used as a tool for quick traditional success in elections.

"The proposed system of non-geographic constituencies increases the strength of the national discourse, because the candidate is for everyone to represent many sects and groups, and the proposal reduces the phenomena of selling or buying votes individually, traditional or modern, in groups, from a person with a bureau, a head of a family, or an electoral professional."

"It happened in Sharjah ... In the Emirate of Sharjah, may Allah protect it, the torrent swept away an important road linking the outskirts of the emirate to the city center, yet we did not hear anyone complaining or 'destroying'. Instead, we heard nothing from them except the expression of satisfaction with Allah's decree and destiny, as well as cooperation to repair what could be repaired," columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"What we are referring to here is that this road, which was swept away by the torrent, was left as it was until the water dried up, and then a new road was constructed on high ground next to the old road that was swept away by the torrent within a period not exceeding one day and one night. Yes, within 24 hours, the road was ready and the citizens used it! We have been here in the State of Kuwait for years complaining about bad roads, many potholes, accidents and deaths, yet there is no hope for reform, with deep regret!

"The difference between them and us is that a decision was taken and implemented with extreme speed for the benefit of the citizen. Here, there is confusion, loss of time and absence of a decision and result!

"Unfortunately, we all believed the myth of foreign companies that would save the situation, and lo and behold, as years passed by, we are in the state of 'the late Tamam', and this minister is leaving and another is taking his place, a prime minister is leaving and another is being appointed, yet the condition of roads remains as it is. The problem is that we know the cause and the cure, but we stop at implementation!"

"The capabilities of the Emirate of Sharjah cannot be compared to the capabilities of the State of Kuwait, but the difference is in the decision. They collectively felt the damage, so they decided to perform the national duty with solid management. Hence, they achieved the impossible to connect the parts of the country to the mainland!"

"Yes, this is how camels are imported. For your information, neither the Kuwaiti people nor our guardians lack a strong will and decisiveness, but it is the deadly routine that we introduced with the expatriate brothers who destroyed their country and they were brought here to destroy our country, and we watch!

"If you cannot do without them, then park them on high shelves, freeze them, bring the descendants of the founders close to them and hand over the command to them, and then what happened in Sharjah will happen in Kuwait, God willing..."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf, Lt Gen Eng Hashim Al-Rifai, Lt Gen Pilot Staff Bandar Al-Muzain and Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mekrad at the command center.

## Preparing for emergencies in area scenario

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: The National Guard has launched the Command Centers Exercise (CPX-Shield) at the Security System and Crisis Management Operations Center with the participation of the ministries of Defense and Interior, and Kuwait Firefighting Force (KFF), reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

The event was held under the patronage and in the presence of Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf, Chief of the General Staff of Kuwait Army Lieutenant General Pilot Staff Bandar Al-Muzain, Undersecretary of the National Guard Lieutenant General Eng Hashim Al-Rifai, KFF Director Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Mekrad, and Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic and Operations Affairs at the Ministry of Interior Major General Yousef Al-Khadha.

Addressing the participants of the exercise, Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf conveyed the greetings and appreciation of National Guard Chief His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali, and his wish for the success of the exercise. He disclosed the exercise is in compliance with the directive of the political leadership, HH the Amir and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to strengthen cooperation among military agencies. He said this is in line with the objectives of the National Guard's guiding document (2025 Protection and Support) to raise the level of coordination, ensure combat readiness and efficiency in managing crises and disasters, exchange of experience, and unify concepts and procedures between military agencies to deal with various circumstances, developments and

preparations for any emergency, especially in light of the regional developments, which require vigilance and caution to maintain the security of the nation.

On the other hand, Al-Muzain stressed that such exercises effectively contribute to unifying efforts and integrating roles among the participants to work as one team, strengthen coordination and exchange of experience to improve the performance, guarantee combat and administrative readiness, and develop capabilities in the field of crisis and disaster management and response mechanisms in emergency situations to maintain homeland security.

### Committed

Al-Rifai thanked the National Guard leadership for being committed to raise the level of training in accordance with the latest standards in military institutions, expand the implementation of joint exercises with military authorities in and outside the country, and improve performance and combat efficiency. He praised the participation of forces from the Army, Police and KFF; as it is an embodiment of the importance of concerted efforts in crisis and emergency management.

Al-Mekrad lauded the readiness and capabilities implemented during the exercise, stressing that such exercises contribute to integration between military agencies and enhance societal security by developing capabilities in the field of disaster and crisis management to maintain homeland security. He affirmed all the capabilities of KFF are at the disposal of the National Guard, Kuwait Army and the Ministry of Interior to achieve the goals of these exercises.

# Sudanese man admits killing his compatriot in quarrel over cash

## Decomposed body of girl found in Nugra flat

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: A Sudanese expatriate has been arrested for killing his friend by stabbing him in the neck with a 'screw driver' in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and then fleeing from the location.

According to security sources, when the Ministry of Interior's Operations Room received information about the presence of a corpse near a street in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area, Farwaniya securitymen, paramedics and detectives immediately rushed to the location and discovered that the body belonged to a Sudanese expatriate who died from a stab in the neck.

The detectives, after conducting investigations, discovered that the person responsible for his murder is

also a Sudanese national. Detectives immediately went to his apartment and arrested him.

When questioned, the suspect admitted that he killed his friend over a financial dispute especially since he was asking for money.

He was referred to the Public Prosecution for necessary legal action.

In a related context, the Security Media Department of the Ministry of Interior announced that officers from the Criminal Security Sector arrested the killer who committed the premeditated murder in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area, as part of the efforts of the sector to arrest violators and outlaws, and under the direct field follow-up of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah.

The Directorate General of Criminal Investigation's Farwaniya Investigation Department arrested the suspect in less than eight hours, from

the time of receiving information about the quarrel and murder in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area.

After intensifying the search and investigation operations and carefully surveying the site, the perpetrator's data and location were obtained. He was arrested and the crime tool was found. When confronted during investigations, the suspect admitted that he had attacked the victim due to a financial dispute.

**Dead body of girl found:** A decomposed corpse, supposedly of a young woman, was found in an apartment in Nugra.

According to security sources, when the Operations Room of the Ministry of Interior received information about a discovery of a corpse in an apartment in Nugra in Hawally Governorate, securitymen and detectives were immediately dispatched to the location.

They realized that the individual had been dead for a while, and it seemed to belong to a young woman.

The corpse was referred to the Forensic Medicine Department to determine her identity and the circumstances behind her death. A case has been filed.

**'50 valuable birds stolen':** A report was filed at the Kabd police station by Mubarak Al-Tanaib, a 49-year-old citizen, stating that 50 birds were stolen from his Jakhour in the Barr Abdaliyah area. He estimated the total value of the missing birds at 2,000 dinars, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

When asked if he had any suspects, Al-Tanaib responded that he had no one in mind. The case was then forwarded to the investigators. The Deputy Public Prosecutor was informed and directed that the case be classified as a felony, under case number 16/2024.

## Minister praises Kuwait environment condition

KUWAIT CITY, April 23, (KUNA): Kuwait's state of the environment report is considered a milestone for the country's environmental conditions, and a starting point for further environmental studies, affirmed Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr. Imad Al-Atiqi, Tuesday.

This came in a speech by Dr. Al-Atiqi on Tuesday, during a launch party by the Environment Public Authority (EPA) in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and other locally concerned entities.

The state of the environment is a reflection of the fruitful cooperation between the EPA and other concerned parties that highlight Kuwait's environmental issues, improving issues concerning public and food security, added Dr. Al-Atiqi.

On her part, EPA Acting General Director Samira Al-Kandari in her speech said the report is a cooperative effort between the EPA and the UNEP in accordance with the 2022 signed agreement between the two parties mutually benefit from shared skills and environmental experiences.

She explained that the state of the environment report focuses on seven main issues including climate change, waste management, land and water resources, biodiversity, and coral and marine environmental management.

Al-Kandari said that the report is a foundation to plan future strategies and legislate policies, at a time when the EPA seeks to analyze the leading cause of environmental changes and eliminate the gap in existing policies regarding environmental management.

The UNEP representative and regional director Sami Dimassi, on his part, said, the report affirms the commitment of the EPA in conducting a comprehensive evaluation based on the global integrated analysis in accordance with the IEA and UN guidelines.

Dimassi added that the report is an investment in the right direction and will play a role in managing the environment based on scientific and practical analyses in future planning and strategies.



Dr. Al-Atiqi

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs partners with ESCWA to organize event

Kuwait promotes women's role in peace with UN Resolution 1325 course

Kuwait's 'anti-corruption' efforts embrace integrated work system

British Embassy lauds Kuwait's 'Aada' program

By Inass Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: According to the Vice President of the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Nawaf Al-Mahmel, anti-corruption efforts are not limited to a specific party, but they constitute an integrated work system in which roles are distributed among all parties.

He explained that recent years have witnessed an increase in the international and local efforts to combat and prevent corruption, through a package of preventive measures, by establishing administrative and legal controls that regulate procedures, direct behavior, spread awareness to communities, and continuously seek to improve the level of awareness about the aspects of corruption, its various forms, and its risks.

This is accompanied by consolidating and strengthening the ideas, values and honest behaviors that limit it, the most prominent of which are the governance of administrative systems, improving the business environment and enhancing accountability, with the aim of achieving a business environment that embraces integrity and is characterized by professionalism, trust and excellence. It also includes supporting work values and guiding its ethics, which reflects positively on administrative and financial transactions, and consolidating the principles of respect and commitment to job duties and rights.

In a speech he delivered Sunday, during the inauguration of the first "Aada" conference, which was organized by Nazaha with the cooperation of the British Embassy in Kuwait, to activate the implementation of the codes of professional conduct launched by the Civil Service Commission

(CSC) for state institutions. The conference was held at the St. Regis Hotel in the presence of a number of representatives of the entities participating in the project.

Al-Mahmel explained that the codes come within the framework of the vision of administrative reform in the public sector in accordance with the government work program, which includes enhancing the integrity and transparency of performance of the public employee.

The United Nations Convention against Corruption, which Kuwait signed in 2003, urges the need for states' parties to strive to establish and disseminate codes or standards of conduct for the correct, honorable and proper performance of public functions.

Al-Mahmel concluded by emphasizing that the Aada project is aimed to activate the codes of job conduct circulated by CSC in coordination with the Global Partners for Governance Foundation (GPG) by creating a program that contributes to the optimal and effective application of the codes of job conduct, and in accordance with global standards and international best practices, which were implemented in coordination with a number of ambitious state institutions.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Head of Mission of the British Embassy Sunny Ahmed expressed her happiness at celebrating the launch of the "Aada" program, which seeks to enhance the culture of transparency and integrity within the public sector in Kuwait.

She affirmed that it is a positive sign of commitment to progress for a more transparent, efficient and accountable governance model, stressing that this initiative is not only limited to enhancing operational standards but it is also a call to ensure a future in which high levels of professionalism and ethical behavior are the norm.

Ahmed said, "The principles of Aada, which is based on professionalism, excellence, and integrity, are more than just guiding principles. They are fundamental to how the Kuwaiti public sector operates and is viewed both locally and internationally."

She highlighted the 125th anniversary of the official diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Kuwait, adding, "It is not only a celebration of our shared history, but also an indication of the two governments' commitment to strengthening cooperation in key areas such as standards, transparency and the overall quality of the Kuwaiti-British partnership."

Ahmed also highlighted the investment of approximately 700 thousand pounds sterling for providing technical assistance to the Aada program, which supports efforts aimed at combating corruption, in an effort to achieve the common vision of a brighter and more prosperous future.

She praised the dedication of the five Kuwaiti government agencies that took the initiative to activate the Aada program, stressing that each of them was awarded a bronze memento in appreciation of their efforts so far.

Ahmed explained that it demonstrated an incentive for other entities in the government sector to achieve excellence in terms of the standards of professionalism, quality and integrity that they set for themselves. By conforming to the standards set by the Aada system, government agencies can not only demonstrate their commitment to improving service delivery, but they can also reassure the public of their dedication to ethical behavior, and foster a more trustworthy relationship between the government and its citizens. This can be established through its public entities that embody the principles set forth in Nazaha's Code of Ethical Conduct. Kuwait is not only working to strengthen its governance, but also to raise its profile on the global stage.

She concluded by inviting more government agencies to participate in Aada, which not only meets the highest standards of professionalism and integrity, but exceeds them to become a shining example for others around the world.

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), recently organized a two-day introductory course on Security Council Resolution No. 1325, titled "Women, Peace, and Security." Under the esteemed supervision of Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights Affairs, Ambassador Sheikhah Jawaher Al-Sabah, the course convened various government agencies to delve into crucial discussions, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In a press statement issued on Monday, the ministry underscored Kuwait's unwavering commitment to the pivotal role of women in fostering peace and security. The session, attended by representatives from the National Committee for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, aligns with Kuwait's persistent efforts to amplify the role of women in cultivating safe and sustainable societies.

Highlighting Kuwait's commendable endeavors in the realm of human rights, the statement lauded the comprehensive approach undertaken by the permanent committee overseeing the implementation of the five-year plan and the government's operational agenda, particularly through the Human Rights Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The course aims to foster an exchange of



Al-Qabas photo  
Ambassador Sheikhah Jawaher (right) during the event.

experiences and perspectives regarding the optimal implementation of Resolution 1325 at the national level. By doing so, it seeks to forge pathways toward greater female involvement in peace processes, thereby nurturing a safer and more prosperous future. Furthermore, the course seeks to bolster awareness regarding the imperative of integrating women's concerns across all phases of conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and peace building. By enhancing participants' understanding of the tenets of Security Council Resolution 1325, the initiative aims to empower individuals to translate these principles into tangible action, thereby aligning with Kuwait's international commitments and obligations.



Al-Mahmel



A group photo of artists.

Al-Jarida photo

2nd arts exhibition kicks off at The Avenues

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: The second art exhibition at The Avenues Gallery has been launched, building upon the success of the first exhibition and showcasing new paintings and artworks by emerging artists, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Situated in the Soko area, Entrance 17, The Avenues Gallery provides visitors with an enriching artistic experience daily from 11 am to 7 pm, except on Fridays.

Visitors have the opportunity to explore a diverse collection of art pieces and may even acquire them, thus contributing to the support of local artists. Additionally, the exhibition features art workshops conducted by participating artists, aiming to promote the appreciation and understanding of

art within society. A variety of talented artists are participating in the second exhibition, including Abdul Redha Baqir, Lina Hegazy, Muhammad Al-Sheikh Al-Farsi, Ahmed Muqem, Abdul-Wahab Al-Awadi, Fawaz Al-Dawish, Noura Abdul-Hadi, Suhaila Al-Attiyah, and Samar Al-Rashid.

The management of The Avenues reaffirms its commitment to fostering the arts by supporting exhibitions that cultivate a culture of art appreciation within society. The Avenues Gallery aims to serve as a vibrant artistic hub, facilitating meaningful interactions between visitors and artists through their captivating works.



A scene from the play.

Al-Jarida photo

Award-winning 'Saleh' marks Int'l Theater Day

As part of the International Theater Day celebrations, the Department of Cultural and Artistic Activities at the university's Deanship of Student Affairs partnered with Saleh Shehab High School for Boys to showcase a play titled "Saleh" on April 17, at the College of Law in Shuwaikh, reports Al-Jarida daily. The production, which tackled themes of conscience, common sense, anti-bullying, Islamic val-

ues, and addiction awareness, clinched the prestigious top spot in the Hawalli Educational Zone within the Ministry of Education. Abrar Al-Kandari, supervisor of the UNESCO Club overseeing the theater, emphasized the importance of nurturing such talented student performances, hinting at future opportunities for involvement in the university's theater team. Above: One act of the play.

PAHW to allocate plots of land to applicants

MoE releases dates for Grade 10, 11 & 12 exams for '23/'24 academic year

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: Hessa Al-Mutawa, the Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education, has given nod for the schedules for the tenth and eleventh grades, encompassing both scientific and literary sections, for the academic year 2023/2024, reports Al-Qabas daily.

These exams will take place from May 15, 2024, until May 27, 2024.

Additionally, Al-Mutawa has approved the dates for the twelfth grade exams, both in the scientific and literary sections, scheduled from May 29, 2024, until June 10, 2024. Furthermore, religious education exams are set to commence from May 22, 2024 and will run until June 10, 2024.

Al-Mutawa emphasized that, in accordance with the decision of the General Directives Council, an additional 15 minutes have been allocated to the exam time for each field of study. This extension aims to provide students with ample time to review instructions and verify the number of papers. Additionally, an extra 30 minutes has been allotted for students with learning difficulties across all subjects.

The Holy Qur'an exam for home students in the tenth and eleventh grades, both in the scientific and literary sections, is scheduled for Tuesday, May 14, 2024, from 8 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.

Likewise, the Constitution and Human

Rights exam for home students in the twelfth grade, in both scientific and literary sections, is slated for Monday, May 13, 2024, from 8 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. The Holy Qur'an exam for home students in the twelfth grade, in both scientific and literary sections, is scheduled for Tuesday, May 14, 2024, from 8 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.

PAHW to allocate plots: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare has announced its intention to proceed with the allocation of plots in the Taima and Sulaibiya regions for persons with existing housing applications dating back to 2002 and earlier, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In a press statement issued, Monday, the authority revealed that it will unveil the allocation dates on May 19, 2024.

Additionally, the PAHW stated that it is currently undertaking the necessary steps to secure approvals from relevant government bodies for the approval of plans in the aforementioned regions.

This includes the completion of technical studies, as well as planning and design efforts for roads and infrastructure networks.

The authority anticipates finalizing the organizational plan for both regions by next June. Following this, details regarding the plans and public services will be announced accordingly.

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## LOCAL

### Governors in

Continued from Page 1

One of the governor's duties is also to supervise the maintenance of infrastructure. He has a budget collected from the fees charged to provide services, such as road maintenance, garbage collection, and some aesthetic aspects.

In many countries, the powers of a governor are defined as following up on the implementation of laws and administrative regulations in a way that ensures achieving the public interest, studying the grievances and complaints he receives from citizens, contacting the relevant authorities to facilitate obtaining the necessary information regarding their solution or proposing an appropriate solution for them, and notifying citizens of the response of the authorities in their respective cases.

Some of them also work to receive citizens' transactions, refer them to the concerned government agencies, and follow up on them.

All of this has not been done for decades in Kuwait. This is why the role of governors declined, and became limited to administrative work in their offices only. As a local governor, he must be following up all the affairs of his province or rather constituency both during and outside work hours. If necessary, he works day and night.

This is why the idea of developing the role of governors is very important, especially in Kuwait, which currently needs to exert every effort to get out of the impasse of decline that it has been suffering from for years.

We have been calling for activation of the role of governors and mayors for some time now. All of these authorities have great potential if they are used correctly. They can become beehives that produce sustainable development. However, if left as it is, it becomes a burden on public funds and the state, and is of no use.

Thank you for the directives of our Amir in this regard, as we are witnessing a blessed renaissance.

### MP-elect Bushehri

Continued from Page 1

MP-elect Mohammad Al-Raqeb stressed the need to form a fact-finding committee to investigate the reasons behind the suspension of Abdullah Mubarak Port operations and to punish those who will be proven to have wasted public funds. He said the failure of four successive prime ministers to operate the port only proves that the government is not capable of managing development projects.

MP-elect Abdulkareem Al-Kandari said the State lacks decision-makers, as most of the leadership positions are occupied by interim officials. He pointed out that yesterday, it was the Boursa Kuwait issue, and today, the port issue. "We do not know what is next," he asserted.

In another development, MP-elect Jenan Bushehri has unveiled her plan to grill the concerned minister about the agreement that the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) signed to censor/monitor individuals through the Internet.

She intends to file the grilling motion two weeks after the oath taking in order to consider the verdicts of the Constitutional Court regarding the political liability of the concerned minister.

She said CITRA took advantage of the absence of the legislature to sign the agreement despite the constitutional violations therein and the fact that she has been warning the government about the relevant tender since Sept 4, 2023.

She clarified that she is strongly against fake social media accounts which are being used to offend individuals and attack Kuwait, but she is also against using this issue to justify the settlement of an unconstitutional tender.

### Kuwait sends

Continued from Page 1

For his part, Chief of Relief and Projects at the Kuwait Society for Relief Mahmood Al-Mesbah said the first Kuwaiti aid aircraft carried 20 pallets of medical supplies, 20 pallets of foodstuff and three ambulances.

Kuwaiti relief aid comes under the direction of the country's political leadership for sending necessary humanitarian aid to the Sudanese people in order to ease war impacts.

Kuwait sent 16 relief aid planes carrying hundreds of tons of food and medical supplies, clothes, and ambulances to Sudan in June.

Meanwhile, a year into the brutal civil war in Sudan between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), this Arab country's economy has suffered major losses estimated at billions of dollars.

Sudan's Minister of Finance Dr. Jibril Ibrahim estimated that the losses may reach USD 200 billion, without taking into account the losses of the country's missed economic opportunities, possibly estimated at USD 700 billion.

The amount of losses increased from USD 20 billion during the first two months of the war to reach about USD 700 billion according to preliminary estimates by economists.

### KRCS sends

Continued from Page 1

In more statistics, some 5,000 Palestinians, 310 of them healthcare personnel, were detained since the violence began, added the report, showing that some 181 government buildings have been destroyed amid continued Israeli aerial bombardments.

Elsewhere, Columbia canceled in-person classes, dozens of protesters were arrested at New York University and Yale, and the gates to Harvard Yard were closed to the public Monday as some of the most prestigious U.S. universities sought to defuse campus tensions over Israel's war with Hamas.

More than 100 pro-Palestinian demonstrators who had camped out on Columbia's green were arrested last week, and similar encampments have sprouted up at universities around the country as schools struggle

with where to draw the line between allowing free expression while maintaining safe and inclusive campuses.

### Amir, King

Continued from Page 1

In a statement to KUNA, the two speakers stressed the depth of the historical relations between the two countries and Jordan's keenness to strengthen bilateral relations with Kuwait in various fields for the interest of the two nations.

Speaker Faisal Al-Fayez said in a statement to KUNA that the visit of His Highness the Amir to Jordan comes within the framework of joint Arab action between Kuwait and Jordan to enhance bilateral relations, reaffirm their solidarity, expand cooperation and discuss various regional issues and unify positions regarding those issues.

Al-Fayez said that Kuwaiti-Jordanian relations constitute a model in joint Arab action and that there was constant communication and coordination between His Highness the Amir and King Abdullah II to strengthen bilateral relations and discussing various regional issues and everything that would serve the causes of Arab nations and end the Israeli aggression against Palestine.

He stressed Jordan's keenness to strengthen bilateral relations with Kuwait in various fields, noting that the significant development witnessed in enhancing the relations were due to the directives of the leaderships.

Al-Fayez applauded the state of security and stability Kuwait enjoyed and the great development it is witnessing in various fields thanks to the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir and his keenness on the security and stability of his homeland.

He also praised Kuwait's positions towards Jordan and expressed his gratitude to His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people for the constant support and assistance to Jordan in confronting economic challenges.

Al-Fayez also commended His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his position towards Arab issues and Arab unity and the return of security and stability to the region.

On his part, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ahmad Al-Safadi said that the Kuwaiti-Jordanian relationship constitutes a model in the strong relations built on trust, respect and coordination at the highest levels.

He pointed out that Kuwait and Jordan have common destiny, close cooperation, and enjoy leaderships who prioritize their nations' issues and interests above everything, he said that Kuwait and Jordan hold common positions and visions of what the Arab stance should be towards the Palestinian issue, by adhering to the two-state solution.

Speaker Al-Safadi stressed that Kuwait and Jordan are blessed with wise leaderships whose concern is always to achieve security and peace for their people and bridge the gap between the Arab nations.

Al-Safadi stressed the importance of the positions of the leadership of both countries and stressing that Kuwait and Amman firmly believe in the strength of the Arab nations and their ability to face all challenges.

He stated that Jordan highly appreciates Kuwait for its continuous support for Jordan, stressing the unity of destiny and future of Kuwait and Jordan.

His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Sabah's visit to Jordan encapsulates the recent progress seen in bilateral relations, in addition to Kuwait's rising prominence and growing clout on a regional level.

His Highness the Amir's visit to the Hashemite Kingdom encapsulates a common desire to propel ties to greater levels, given the historic camaraderie and values shared by the two Arab nations, while more growth in ties would simultaneously serve the best interests of Kuwait and Amman.

Since bilateral relations commenced in earnest back in 1961, some 73 joint deals and agreements covering a myriad of fields had come to fruition, in a testament to the two countries' shared viewpoints on current developments around the region, chief among the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Lawmakers from Kuwait and Jordan have ramped up diplomacy in a bid to serve the best interests of the wider Arab region, while the two countries have vociferously shored up support for the Palestinians in regional and international gatherings, in a bid to demonstrate their commitment to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

A spate of joint high-profile visits by Kuwaiti and Jordanian leaders has given impetus to more headway in bilateral relations, while Amman and Kuwait have constantly cited the "Palestinian cause" as the Arab world's core concern, taking precedence over a host of other pressing matters in the region.

Kuwaiti investments in Jordan are worth some KD three billion, with bilateral trade volume skyrocketing to KD 67 million (USD 218 million), while Kuwaiti philanthropists have left their mark on the Hashemite Kingdom with a slew of charitable projects aiming to aid the country's impoverished.

On the military front, a number of joint drills have brought the two countries' respective armies closer together, with educational ties also seeing growth in the number of Kuwaiti students pursuing higher studies in the Hashemite Kingdom.

While the number of joint deals signed over the years have been innumerable, some of the most notable ones include a regulatory aviation agreement in 1975, in addition to a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement signed in 1985.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's state visit to Jordan reflects the strong, deep-rooted bonds the two nations share, Jordan's Ambassador to Kuwait Sinan Al-Majali said on Monday.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Majali added His Highness Amir's visit to Jordan on Tuesday marks his first state visit outside the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), indicating Jordan's significance to Kuwait.

The well-established Kuwaiti-Jordanian bond in economic, political, and social aspects demonstrates the strong bilateral relations the two nations share.

They also share most regional and global issues, especially the Palestinian cause, prioritizing it politically, noted Al-Majali.

Al-Majali affirmed King of Jordan Abdullah II's cooperation and coordination of the state visit, where His Highness the Amir and King Abdullah II will discuss issues concerning the two nations' security, stability, and regional prosperity.

In regards to trade and the two nations' economies, Al-Majali affirmed that these topics will be given great attention as Kuwaiti investments are considered the largest in Jordan, stressing the opportunity for further investments.

# Austrian business delegation visits Kuwait to intensify commercial ties

Stauber-led team to engage in B2B meetings

**KUWAIT CITY, April 23: An Austrian business and trade delegation, led by Mr. Andreas Stauber, the Austrian Commercial Counselor and Trade Commissioner for Kuwait and Qatar, will visit Kuwait on April 24 and 25 with the aim of enhancing commercial and business relations between Kuwait and Austria, says a press release issued by the Austrian Embassy.**

During their visit, the delegation will engage in Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings between Austrian firms and Kuwaiti companies. They will also hold discussions with Mr. Rabah A. AlRabah, the Director General of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce & Industry, along with the Austrian Ambassador Marian Wrba.

The program also includes visits to key Kuwaiti institutions such as the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), where they will meet with Mr. Sulaiman Al-Ghunaiman, the Managing Director, and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), where they will be hosted by Sheikh Abdulla Sabah Hamoud Al-Sabah, Assistant General Manager for Investment Operations.

Sheikh Mubarak Abdulla Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, the Chairman of Kuwait-Austria Business and Friendship Association (KABFA), will receive the delegation in the White Palace.

Austrian businesses view Kuwaiti companies as potential partners for regional sales strategies in the GCC region or as a gateway to Iraq. The Foreign Trade Center for Kuwait and Qatar arranges economic missions, market research trips, and trade fair participation annually. This goes under the umbrella of the RefocusAustria Initiative, launched by the Austrian government to strengthen the country's economy post-COVID-19. It involves collaboration among the Austrian Foreign Ministry, the Austrian Chamber of Commerce's global offices, and other government departments. RefocusAustria promotes Austrian companies worldwide, enabling them to enter new markets and attract investments. It seeks to showcase Austria's reputation for quality products, engineering, and innovation, particularly in areas such as renewable energy, digital transformation, and sustainability practices.

#### Background: Trade:

The KW statistics show annual imports from Austria in the range of KD 56 million.

The primary imports from Austria to Kuwait consist of motor vehicles, machinery, and technical equipment. Additionally, significant export categories include pharmaceutical products, electronic goods, furniture (including office furniture and advertising signs), photographic and measuring devices, surgical and dental instruments, orthopedic devices, and specialized plastics and goods.

#### Tourism:

Kuwaiti visitors contribute significantly to Austria's economy as tourists. They favor Austria as a family-friendly holiday spot, especially during the summer months, with Zell am See, Salzburg and Vienna being the most sought-after destinations. Kuwait Airways operates direct flights between Kuwait and Vienna during peak summer travel periods. The recent introduction of the Five-Year Schengen Visa for Kuwaiti Citizens will greatly ease year-round travel to Austria.

Austria's appeal to Kuwaiti tourists lies in its blend of natural beauty, cultural wealth, summer and winter sports, culinary experiences, and historical importance. This unique combination makes Austria an attractive destination for Kuwaiti travelers seeking diverse European experiences.

#### Investments:

Austria offers a generally welcoming environment for Kuwaiti investors, thanks to a bilateral agreement between the two countries for the encouragement and reciprocal protection of investments. This agreement outlines the legal framework for Kuwaiti investments in Austria and ensures fair treatment.

Austria offers various investment facilities to Kuwaiti investors, including:

1. Real Estate Investment: Kuwaiti investors can invest in Austrian real estate, including residential and commercial properties. Austria has relatively stable property markets, especially in major cities like Vienna and Salzburg.
2. Business Investment: Aus-



Top and above: Some photos from the event.

### 'Justice is the Basis of Governance and Ruling'

## Talal Abu-Ghazaleh discusses digitalization of judiciary at the Kuwait Bar Association seminar

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: The Kuwait Bar Association seminar, entitled 'Justice is the Basis of Governance and Ruling - The Role of Judiciary in the Era of Digital Transformation', has hosted HE Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, founder and chairman of Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Global (TAG.Global), as a keynote speaker.

In his statement, Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh reviewed his business journey, expressing his deep pride in his accomplishments that started in the State of Kuwait; the country that welcomed and supported him in 1960 for 30 years, particularly from top Kuwaiti leaders. During his stay in Kuwait, he learned many things about life and business. He then moved to Jordan which granted him citizenship and the support needed to complete his career journey and to continue with his mission.

During the seminar, moderated by President of the Association, Mr. Sharyan Al-Sharyan, Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh discussed three main topics including; Information and Knowledge Revolution, Digitalization in Judiciary, Justice and Practice of Law, and Advanced Models in Digital Transformation.

Moreover, Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh stated that his belief in the importance of information and knowledge revolution dates back to 1965, after joining a "Data Processor" course, where he realized that this science, which the majority of people are unaware of, is the beginning of something great to come. He pointed out that the global shift toward digitalization is paving the way for something that is more serious than what we experience today. "The world will eventually embrace digital transformation", he

affirmed.

Furthermore, Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh added that when TAG.Global was established in Kuwait in 1972, the main priority on its agenda was 'Capacity Building', mainly in the field of digital transformation, noting that digitalization impacted many areas including economy and education, where new concepts like digital economy and digital learning are now developing.

He went on to talk about a project TAG.Global will launch next year which will change education in the whole world, saying that "The education we knew that was based on memorization is no longer appropriate for the next generation, especially in the age of knowledge. Education must become learning, and the role of the teacher must change to become a facilitator."

Concerning judiciary and digital transformation, Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh stated that the judiciary is the only profession that has not globally undergone digitalization. He pointed out, that while some countries have implemented "remote trials," this cannot be considered digitalization.

He also reiterated that all countries worldwide are still lagging behind in embracing digital transformation in the judiciary, stressing that justice is the basis of rule, and that complete integrity cannot be achieved without digital transformation.

Speaking about the experience of the Scandinavian and Baltic nations, Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh noted that TAG.Global is currently exploring the experience of those developed countries in the area of digitalizing the judiciary in order to reap maximum benefits.

He further pointed out that digital transformation in the judiciary requires the rehabilitation of technological infrastructure of the judiciary as well as training and qualifying all judicial personnel, including judges, lawyers and administrators, to better deal with judicial digitalization, pointing to the capabilities of TAG.Global to provide consulting services in this regard worldwide.

It is worth mentioning that the attendees have interacted effectively with Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh's speech, showing their support for the need to digitalize the judiciary and to qualify staff in this field through specialized training courses and workshops. They also praised TAG.Global's role in the fields of intellectual property protection and e-learning.

During the visit, HE Sheikh Faisal Hmoud Al-Sabah has received Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh at "Al Diwan Al Amiri" and presented him with the Gold-Inlaid Sword of Kuwait.

For this gesture, Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh expressed his sincere appreciation to Sheikh Al-Sabah for the warm hospitality during his visit to Kuwait, noting that during the activities of the seminar organized by the Kuwait Bar Association held on April 1, 2024, Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh expressed his pride saying 'Talal Abu-Ghazaleh was made in Kuwait'.

He said in a telegram sent to HE Sheikh Faisal Al-Sabah: "Your Excellency's reception of me in your esteemed Diwan and your gift of the inlaid sword of Kuwait indicates the most sincere feelings, which increased my appreciation for your generosity and for the first country that supported me."

in public-private partnerships (PPPs) or infrastructure development projects.

The Austrian Energy Supply Company EVN, in partnership with Kuwait, is currently constructing one of the world's most technologically advanced wastewater treatment facilities in Umm Al Hayman. This facility treats and manages wastewater from southern Kuwait, providing process water to agriculture and industry. This project, featuring a complex financing structure, ranks among the largest public-private partnership (PPP) projects in the Middle East.

5. Tourism and Hospitality: Austria's tourism sector is

vibrant, with opportunities in hotels, resorts, and leisure businesses. Kuwaiti investors can consider hospitality investments in popular Austrian tourist destinations.

6. Startups and Innovation: Austria has a growing startup ecosystem, particularly in areas like technology, biotech, and green energy. Kuwaiti investors can explore investment opportunities in Austrian startups and innovative ventures.

7. Tax Incentives and Treaties: Austria has double taxation agreements with Kuwait, which can be beneficial for Kuwaiti investors looking to minimize tax liabilities on cross-border investments.

## World News Roundup

## Europe

## '\$620m military aid for Kyiv'

## Groups condemn UK Rwanda asylum plan

LONDON, April 23, (AP): Britain's plans to send some asylum-seekers to Rwanda were swiftly condemned by international humanitarian organizations after Parliament approved legislation allowing the deportation flights to begin later this year.

Both the UN refugee agency and the Council of Europe on Tuesday called for the UK to rethink its plans because of concerns that the legislation undermines human rights protections and fears that it will damage international cooperation on tackling the global migrant crisis.

"The new legislation marks a further step away from the UK's long tradition of providing refuge to those in need, in breach of the Refugee Convention," UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said in a statement. "Protecting refugees requires all countries - not just those neighboring crisis zones - to uphold their obligations."

The statement came just hours after Britain's House of Lords dropped its attempts to amend the legislation, paving the way for it to become law. On Monday, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said deportation flights to Rwanda would begin in 10-12 weeks.



Sunak

Michael O'Flaherty, the Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights, criticized the legislation for preventing asylum-seekers from asking the courts to intervene when they are threatened with being sent back to the countries they are fleeing.

The reaction came as French media reported that at least five people died Tuesday when a boat carrying about 100 or more migrants got into trouble while trying to cross the English Channel.

**'\$620m military aid for Ukraine':** The UK on Tuesday pledged an additional \$620 million in new military supplies for Ukraine, including long-range missiles and four million rounds of ammunition, at a time when Ukraine is struggling to hold off advancing Russian forces on the eastern front line of the war, now in its third year.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Tuesday morning to confirm the assistance and "assure him of the U.K.'s steadfast support for Ukraine's defense against Russia's brutal and expansionist ambitions," Sunak's office said.

Sunak was traveling to Warsaw later Tuesday to meet with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg for talks about further aid for Ukraine.

**'Tower strike part of intimidation campaign':** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said a Russian missile strike that smashed a television tower in Kharkiv was part of the Kremlin's ongoing effort to intimidate Ukraine's second-largest city, which in recent weeks has come under increasingly frequent attack.

The strike sought to "make the terror visible to the whole city and to try to limit Kharkiv's connection and access to information," Zelenskyy said in a Monday evening address.

The northeastern Kharkiv region straddles the approximately 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line where Ukrainian and Russian forces have been locked in battle for more than two years since Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The front line has changed little during a war of attrition, focused mostly on artillery, drones and trenches.

**Russia withdraws forces from Karabakh:** Russian forces are being withdrawn from Azerbaijan's Karabakh region, where they have been stationed as peacekeepers since the end of a war in 2020, officials of both countries said Wednesday.

In a conference call with journalists, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed reports of the withdrawal but did not give further details. Hikmet Hajiyev, the head of foreign policy in Azerbaijan's presidential administration, also confirmed the withdrawal, saying it was agreed to by both countries.

Hajiyev did not say why the forces were being withdrawn, but their presence appeared superfluous after Azerbaijan regained full control of the region last year.

**German EU lawmaker's aide arrested:** A man who works for a German far-right lawmaker in the European Parliament has been arrested on suspicion of spying for China, authorities said Tuesday. The detention came less than 24 hours after three people were arrested for spying for China in a separate German case.

The suspect was arrested Monday in the eastern German city of Dresden, federal prosecutors said in a statement. They said that he has worked for a German lawmaker in the European Union's legislature since 2019.

The German national is accused of working for a Chinese intelligence service and of repeatedly passing on information on negotiations and decisions in the European Parliament in January. Prosecutors allege that he also spied on Chinese dissidents in Germany.

Prosecutors didn't identify the lawmaker for whom he works, but Maximilian Krah of the far-right Alternative for Germany, who is his party's top candidate in the European Parliament election in early June, said in a statement that he found out about the arrest of employee Jian Guo from the press on Tuesday.

**Police clear out a migrant camp in Paris:** French police evicted migrants from a makeshift camp in Paris a few steps away from the Seine River on Tuesday, the latest operation in what aid groups call a campaign of "social cleansing" ahead of the Summer Olympics.

Before dawn on an unusually cold April morning, around 30 teenage boys and young men from West Africa were awakened by police and urged to pack their tents and belongings. Most of them were underage and in the process of seeking residency papers.

"I was already scared but I am even more scared because I don't know where to go," said Boubacar Traore, 16, who said he fled conflict in Burkina Faso and arrived in France two months ago.

The operation came days after police carried out a large-scale eviction at France's biggest squatter camp in a suburb south of Paris.



People walk under blooming cherry blossoms at High Park in Toronto, Canada, on April 22. (Xinhua)

## Politics

## US prez announces \$7b in federal solar power grants

## Biden marks Earth Day by going after GOP

TRIANGLE, Virginia, April 23, (AP): US President Joe Biden marked Earth Day by announcing \$7 billion in federal grants for residential solar projects serving 900,000-plus households in low- and middle-income communities - while criticizing Republicans who want to gut his policies to address climate change.

Seeking reelection in November, Biden said, "Despite the overwhelming devastation in red and blue states, there are still those who deny the climate is in crisis."

He took specific aim at supporters of former President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement.

## Provides

"My MAGA Republican friends don't seem to think it's a crisis," Biden said Monday during a visit to Virginia's Prince William Forest Park, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) southwest of Washington. "They actually want to repeal the Inflation Reduction Act, which provides the funding for the vast majority of these projects, and roll back protections for clean air and clean water."

The president also used the trip to announce that nearly 2,000 corps positions are being offered across 36 states as part of his New Deal-style American Climate Corps green jobs training program, including jobs offered in partnership with the North American Building Trades Unions.

Biden used executive action last year to create the American Climate Corps modeled on Roosevelt's New Deal.

"You'll get paid to fight climate change," he said Monday.

Biden made the announcements in a shady spot in Prince William Forest Park, which was established in 1936 as a summer camp for underprivileged youth from Washington. That was part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps to help create jobs during the Great Depression.

The solar grants are being awarded by the Environmental Protection Agency, which unveiled the 60 re-

## Donald Trump tried to corrupt 2016 presidential poll, prosecutor alleges

NEW YORK, April 23, (AP): Donald Trump tried to illegally influence the 2016 presidential election by preventing damaging stories about his personal life from becoming public, a prosecutor told jurors Monday at the start of the former president's historic hush money trial.

"This was a planned, coordinated, long-running conspiracy to influence the 2016 election - to help Donald Trump get elected through illegal expenditures to silence people who had something bad to say about his behavior, using doctored corporate records and bank forms to conceal those payments along the way," prosecutor Matthew Colangelo said. "It was election fraud, pure and simple."

A defense lawyer countered by assailing the case as baseless and attacking the integrity of the one-time Trump confidant who's now the government's star witness.

"President Trump is innocent. President Trump did not commit any crimes. The Manhattan district attorney's office should never have brought this case," attorney Todd

Blanche said.

The opening statements offered the 12-person jury - and the voting public - radically divergent roadmaps for a case that will unfold against the backdrop of a closely contested White House race in which Trump is not only the presumptive Republican nominee but also a criminal defendant facing the prospect of a felony conviction and prison.

It is the first criminal trial of a former American president and the first of four prosecutions of Trump to reach a jury. Befitting that history, prosecutors sought from the outset to elevate the gravity of the case, which they said was chiefly about election interference as reflected by the hush money payments to a porn actor who said she had a sexual encounter with Trump.

"The defendant, Donald Trump, orchestrated a criminal scheme to corrupt the 2016 presidential election. Then he covered up that criminal conspiracy by lying in his New York business records over and over and over again," Colangelo said.

recipients. The projects are expected to eventually reduce emissions by the equivalent of 30 million metric tons of carbon dioxide and save households \$350 million annually.

Biden's announcements come as he is working to energize young voters for his reelection campaign. Young people were a key part of a broad but potentially fragile coalition that helped him defeat then-President Trump in 2020.

Biden's campaign is hoping that his climate efforts can energize young voters ahead of November. Senior administration officials said young Americans are keenly invested in the Biden climate agenda and want to help enact it and that the Climate Corps is a way

to do so.

Solar energy is gaining traction as a key renewable energy source that could reduce the nation's reliance on fossil fuels. Not only is it clean, but solar energy can also boost the reliability of the electric grid.

But solar energy can have high costs for initial installation, making it inaccessible for many Americans - and potentially meaning a mingling of environmental policy with election-year politics.

Forty-nine of the new grants are state-level awards, six serve Native American tribes and five are multi-state awards. They can be used for investments such as rooftop solar and community solar gardens.

the Rock airport director who died after a shootout with agents serving a search warrant.

Rep. **Jim Jordan** made the request as

state police said it's sending the findings of its investigation of the shooting to the local prosecutor to determine whether it was justified.



A group of people thought to be migrants are brought in to Dover, Kent, by the Border Force following a small boat incident in the Channel, on April 23. UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said 'nothing will stand in our way' of getting flights to Rwanda off the ground, as the Government braced itself for legal challenges to the scheme to send asylum seekers to the east African country. (AP)



US President Joe Biden speaks at Prince William Forest Park on Earth Day on April 22 in Triangle, Va. Biden announced \$7 billion in federal grants to provide residential solar projects serving low- and middle-income communities and expanding his American Climate Corps green jobs training program. (AP)



Jordan



Knight

## America

**5 found dead in Okla home:** Oklahoma City police called to a home on the city's southwest side Monday discovered the bodies of five people, including at least two children, authorities said.

All five victims had injuries consistent with homicide, said police Sgt Gary Knight.

"This wasn't a carbon monoxide situation or anything like that," Knight said. "These are five people who were killed."

Knight said a man and woman were among those who were found dead, but he didn't know the gender or ages of all the victims.

He said officers who arrived on the scene backed out of the home after determining all the victims were deceased and that investigators were obtaining a search warrant before they started combing through the scene for evidence. (AP)

**Ariz judge declares mistrial:** An Arizona judge declared a mistrial Monday in the case of a rancher accused of fatally shooting a Mexican man on his property near the U.S.-Mexico border.

The decision came after jurors failed to reach a unanimous decision after more than two full days of deliberation in trial of George Alan Kelly, 75, who was charged with second-degree murder in the Jan. 30, 2023, shooting of Gabriel Cuen-Buitimea.

"Based upon the jury's inability to reach a verdict on any count," Superior Court Judge Thomas Fink said, "This case is in mistrial."

The Santa Cruz County Attorney's Office can still decide whether to retry Kelly for any charge, or drop the case all together. (AP)

**Jordan seeks details from ATF:** The chair of the US House Judiciary Committee on Monday asked the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to provide documents and information about its raid at the home last month of the Lit-

Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport Executive Director Bryan Malinowski died days after he was shot when ATF agents were executing a warrant March 19 at his home in Little Rock. The ATF said agents returned fire after Malinowski shot at the agents, striking and injuring one of them. (AP)

**Suspect arrested in break-in:** Police in Los Angeles arrested a suspect following a break-in at the home of Mayor Karen Bass early Sunday, officials said.

The suspect was arrested shortly after smashing a window to get inside of Getty House while it was occupied, the Los Angeles Police Department said in a statement on social media. The home is the mayor's official residence, on Irving Boulevard west of downtown.

"Mayor Bass and her family were not injured and are safe," her office said in a statement. "The Mayor is grateful to LAPD for responding and arresting the suspect."

Bass told reporters Monday, "I am fine. My family is fine."

The LAPD identified the suspect in the burglary investigation as 29-year-old Ephraim Matthew Hunter, a city resident. He was being held on \$100,000 bail, a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department website said. (AP)

## Lat/Am

## Maduro meets accuser

## 'Health system' in Haiti near collapse

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, April 23, (AP): On a recent morning at a hospital in the heart of gang territory in Haiti's capital, a woman began convulsing before her body went limp as a doctor and two nurses raced to save her.

They stuck electrodes to her chest and flipped on an oxygen machine while keeping their eyes on a computer screen that reflected a dangerously low oxygen level of 84%.

No one knew what was wrong with her. Even more worrisome, the Doctors Without Borders hospital in the Cite Soleil slum was running low on key medicine to treat convulsions.

"The medication she really needs, we barely have," said Dr Rachel Lavigne, a physician with the medical aid group.

It's a familiar scene repeated daily at hospitals and clinics across Port-au-Prince, where life-saving medication and equipment is dwindling or altogether absent as brutal gangs tighten their grip on the capital and beyond. They have blocked roads, forced the closure of the main international airport in early March and paralyzed operations at the country's largest seaport, where containers filled with key supplies remain stuck.



Burns

"Everything is crashing," Lavigne said.

## Fragile

Haiti's health system has long been fragile, but it's now nearing total collapse after gangs launched coordinated attacks on Feb. 29, targeting critical infrastructure in the capital and beyond.

The violence has forced several medical institutions and dialysis centers to close, including Haiti's largest public hospital. Located in downtown Port-au-Prince, the Hospital of the State University of Haiti was supposed to reopen on April 1 after closing when the attack began, but gangs have infiltrated it.

One of the few institutions still operating is Peace University Hospital, located south of the shuttered airport. From Feb. 29 to April 15, the hospital treated some 200 patients with gunshot wounds, and its beds remain full.

"We urgently need fuel because we operate using generators. Otherwise we run the risk of closing our doors," hospital director Dr Paul Junior Fontilus said in a statement.

More than 2,500 people were killed or wounded across Haiti from January to March, a more than 50% increase compared with the same period last year, according to a recent UN report.

Even if a hospital is open, sometimes there is little or no medical staff because gang violence erupts daily in Port-au-Prince, forcing doctors and nurses to stay at home or turn around if they encounter blocked roads manned by heavily armed men.

The spiraling chaos has left a growing number of patients with cancer, AIDS and other serious illnesses with little to no recourse, with gangs also looting and setting fire to pharmacies in the capital's downtown area.

## Prevent

Doctors Without Borders itself has run out of many medications used to treat diabetes and high blood pressure, and asthma inhalers that help prevent deadly attacks are nowhere to be found in the capital, Lavigne said.

At the Doctors Without Borders hospital, medical staff recently tried to save a boy with a severe asthma attack by giving him oxygen, she said. That didn't work, and neither did another type of medication. Finally, they ended up injecting him with adrenaline, which is used in emergencies to treat anaphylactic shock.

"We improvise and we do our best for the people here," Lavigne said.

People's health is worsening because the daily medication they need for their chronic conditions is not available, warned Doctors Without Borders project coordinator Jacob Burns.

"It becomes acute and then they run out of options," he said. "For certain people, there are very, very few options right now."

Despite the pressing need for medical care, the Doctors Without Borders hospital in Cite Soleil has been forced to cut the number of outpatients it treats daily from 150 to 50, Burns said, though all emergencies are attended to.

Scores of people line up outside the hospital each day and risk being shot by gang members who control the area as they await medical care.

Everyone is allowed to enter the hospital compound, but medical staff set up a triage to determine which 50 people will be seen. Those with less urgent needs are asked to return another day, Burns said.

## Also:

**CARACAS, Venezuela:** Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro met with the head of the International Criminal Court as he faces an ongoing investigation by the tribunal into crimes against humanity for his crackdown on anti-government protests.

ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan's fourth visit to Venezuela comes almost two months after an appeals panel ruled that the court's investigation could proceed over the objections of Maduro's government.

Khan said he was hopeful that, even as its independent investigation continues, the ICC could supply technical assistance to Venezuelan authorities so that there could be "meaningful justice" in the country.

"I think there is unity on a central truth: that the dark cloud of suspicion or allegations will not lift without the gentle breeze or winds of credible investigations," Khan said after his meeting with Venezuela's chief prosecutor.

The US is not a party to the Netherlands-based ICC but has backed the probe, originally proposed by several Latin American nations, into Maduro's responsibility for alleged abuses including arbitrary detention, torture and sexual violence committed by security forces deployed to quell protests in 2017.

The appeals judges, in announcing their ruling in March, said that Venezuelan investigations appeared to be focused on low-level perpetrators. The ICC seeks to prosecute senior commanders deemed responsible for crimes.

The judges also noted that "Venezuela appears to have taken limited investigative steps and that, in many cases, there appear to be periods of unexplained investigative inactivity," the court said in its statement.



This photo taken on April 23, 2024 shows debris of a crashed helicopter in Perak state, Malaysia. Ten individuals were killed following a mid-air collision involving two Malaysian military helicopters on Tuesday morning in Perak state. The helicopters collided and crashed at 9:32 am local time over the Lumut Royal Malaysian Navy base while undergoing a flypast rehearsal, the Royal Malaysian Navy said in a brief statement. (Xinhua)

## 2 Malaysian copters collide &amp; crash while training, killing all 10 on board

Two Malaysian military helicopters collided midair and crashed during a training session on Tuesday, killing all 10 people on board, the navy said.

The helicopters were rehearsing at a naval base in northern Perak state for the navy's 90th anniversary celebration next month when the accident oc-

curred, the navy said in a brief statement.

"All victims were confirmed dead on site," it said, adding that the remains have been sent to the hospital to be identified.

A video circulating on social media showed several helicopters flying low in a formation. One of

the aircraft veered sideways and clipped the rotor of another helicopter, causing both to plunge and crash. A local police officer who declined to be named because he isn't authorized to speak to the media confirmed that the video footage is genuine. (AP)

## Asia

## Myanmar's VP steps down

## Musk accuses Australia of censorship

MELBOURNE, Australia, April 23, (AP): Tech billionaire Elon Musk accused Australia of censorship after an Australian judge ruled that his social media platform X must block users worldwide from accessing video of a bishop being stabbed in a Sydney church.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese responded Tuesday by describing Musk as an "arrogant billionaire" who considered himself above the law and was out of touch with the public.

X Corp., the tech company rebranded in 2023 by Musk after he bought Twitter, announced last week it would fight in court Australian orders to take down posts relating to a knife attack on Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel in an Assyrian Orthodox church as a service was being streamed online on April 15.

The material was geoblocked from Australia but available elsewhere.

But the regulator that made the orders, Australia's eSafety Commission, which describes itself as the world's first government agency dedicated to keeping people safer online, successfully applied to the Federal Court in Sydney for a temporary global ban on sharing the video of the bishop being stabbed.

In an after-hours hearing Monday, Justice Geoffrey Kennett suppressed the footage from all X users until Wednesday, when an application for a permanent ban will be heard.

**Leaders trek Kokoda:** Australia and Papua New Guinea's prime ministers on Tuesday began trekking into the South Pacific island nation's mountainous interior to commemorate a pivotal World War II campaign and to underscore their current security alliance, which faces challenges from China's growing regional influence.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese received an elaborate traditional welcome when he arrived by helicopter at Kokoda Village with

## \$8b US military aid to Taiwan will 'boost confidence' in region - Lai

TAIPEI, Taiwan, April 23, (AP): A \$8 billion defense package approved by the U.S. House of Representatives over the weekend will "strengthen the deterrence against authoritarianism in the West Pacific ally chain," Taiwan's President-elect Lai Ching-te said Tuesday, in a reference to key rival China.

The funding will also "help ensure peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and also boost confidence in the region" Lai, currently Taiwan's vice president, told visiting Michigan Representatives Lisa McClain, a Republican, and Democrat Dan Kildee at a meeting at the Presidential Office Building in the

capital Taipei.

Cluster of quakes hit Taiwan: A cluster of earthquakes struck the island republic of Taiwan early Tuesday, the strongest having a magnitude of 6.1, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

There were no reports of casualties in the quakes, although there were further damages to two multi-story buildings that had been evacuated following a magnitude 7.4 quake that hit the island earlier this month, killing 13 people and injuring over 1,000. That earthquake was centered along the coast of the rural and mountainous Hualien County.

who served in the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi and then continued in the position after the military ousted her to seize power in 2021, is stepping down for unspecified health reasons, state media said Monday.

State television MRTV announced on Monday night that 65-year-old Van Thio had been allowed to retire from his post for health reasons in accordance with the constitution but did not provide any details of his health or say who, if anyone, will replace him.

Van Thio, a member of Myanmar's Chin ethnic minority and a former army officer, was named second vice president in 2016 when Suu Kyi's party started its first term after winning the 2015 general election in a landslide. Her National League for Democracy party governed Myanmar with overwhelming majorities in Parliament from 2015 to 2021, before being overthrown by the military.

Crime.

Cocaine is the most seized drug in the Sahel after cannabis resin, the report

to an average of 13 kilograms (28.7 pounds) between 2013 and 2020, said the report from the UN Office on Drugs and



Villagers hold torches during a torch light festival outside a shrine at village Aishmuqam in Anantnag district, about 70 km south of Srinagar, the summer capital of Indian-controlled Kashmir, April 22. (Xinhua)



Supporters of former South Africa's president Jacob Zuma sing and dance outside the south Gauteng High court in Johannesburg, South Africa on April 11. (AP)



De Andrés



Zuma

## Africa

**ANC loses court case:** South Africa's ruling African National Congress lost a second court case against a new rival party fronted by former president Jacob Zuma on Monday.

A judge in the KwaZulu-Natal High Court in the eastern city of Durban dismissed the ANC's case alleging copyright infringement against the MK Party for using a name and a logo the ANC claims ownership of.

The MK Party was formed late last year and was given added importance ahead of a national election in May when former ANC leader Zuma joined.

MK takes its full name - uMkhonto weSizwe - from the now-disbanded military wing set up by the ANC and Nelson Mandela in the 1960s. The MK Party's logo showing a man holding a spear and a shield is similar to the old military wing's logo.

The ANC's request for payment in the form of royalties or damages from MK was rejected.

The ANC has governed South Africa for 30 years since the first democratic elections following the end of the apartheid system of racial segregation in 1994. But it is under increasing pressure from voters over the country's deep problems, which include record levels of unemployment, worsening poverty, high rates of violent crime, government corruption and an electricity crisis.

Analysts say the ANC will likely lose its majority for the first time in the May 29 election. Zuma's MK Party is among a group of challengers expected to erode its vote. (AP)

**Drug seizures up in Sahel:** Drug seizures soared in the West African Sahel region according to figures released Friday in a new UN report, indicating the conflict-ridden region is becoming an influential route for drug trafficking.

In 2022, 1,466 kilograms, (3,232 pounds), of cocaine were seized in Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso and Niger compared

said. The analysis comes as Senegal, which borders on the Sahel, announced Sunday a record-breaking cocaine seizure of 1,137 kilograms - the most ever intercepted on land and valued at \$146 million - near an artisanal mine in the east of the country. Incidents like these are becoming more common in the region: In one incident last year in December, the Senegalese navy seized a total of 3 tons of cocaine at sea.

The location of the Sahel, lying south of the Sahara desert and running from the Atlantic to the Arabian Ocean, makes it a natural transit point for the increasing amount of cocaine produced in South America and destined for Europe. The trafficking has detrimental impacts for both peace and health, locally and globally, said Amado Philip de Andrés, UN-ODC Regional Representative in West and Central Africa.

"The involvement of various armed groups in drug trafficking continues to undermine peace and stability in the region," said Philip de Andrés. The report said the drug trade provides financial resources to armed groups in the Sahel, where Islamic extremist networks have flourished as the region struggles with a recent spate of coups. (AP)

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
JAPAN	-	Nikkei 225	+113.55	37,552.16	
PHILIPPINES	-	PSEI	+62.72	6,506.80	
SAUDI	-	Tadawul	-24.52	12,484.41	
DUBAI	-	DFMGI	-1.34	4,166.32	
EGYPT	-	EGX 30	-1,367.17	26,777.05	
PAKISTAN	-	KSE 100	-67.17	71,386.44	

# Business

## NBK reports KD 146.6 mln in net profits for 1Q 2024

National Bank of Kuwait has one of highest scores of CDP disclosures among all financial institutions in GCC

**KUWAIT CITY, April 23: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has announced its financial results for the three-month period ended 31 March 2024. The Bank reported a net profit of KD 146.6 million (USD 476.8 million), compared to KD 134.2 million (USD 436.6 million) for the corresponding period in 2023, improving by 9.2% year-on-year.**

Total assets as of the end of March 2024 grew by 5.1% year-on-year to reach KD 38.3 billion (USD 124.7 billion), whereas total loans and advances increased by 5.7% year-on-year to KD 22.4 billion (USD 72.8 billion), while shareholders' equity reached KD 3.8 billion (USD 12.3 billion), growing by 7.9% year-on-year.

Commenting on the Bank's 1Q2024 financial results, Hamad Al-Bahar, NBK Group Chairman, said: "In the first quarter of 2024, we recorded robust profits, showcasing our commitment to delivering long-term sustainable value to our customers, community, and shareholders."

"As we continue to capitalize on our strategic investments in technology and talent, we remain confident in our ability to achieve further successes in meeting the needs of our customers," Al-Bahar confirmed.

Al-Bahar emphasized that NBK's ongoing success is built upon solid foundations underpinned by diversification, a key pillar of its strategy. He underscored that strategically diversifying the Bank's portfolio and services across different geographic regions not only mitigates risks but also capitalizes on favorable prospects. This underscores NBK's commitment to adaptability, resilience, and ensuring enduring stability over the long term.

"Kuwait's economy displays resilience and stability, firmly rooted in robust foundations. We expect an uptick in activity within Kuwait's operational scene throughout 2024, resulting

in increased project awards and reinforcing trust in the country's business landscape," Al-Bahar added.

"In spite of the recent escalation in geopolitical tensions in the region, we continue to focus on advancing our operations in the markets we serve while closely monitoring the repercussions on the operating environment in the region," Al-Bahar explained.

He emphasized that in 2024, NBK maintained its dedication to executing a multitude of impactful initiatives, further solidifying its position as a frontrunner in community development within Kuwait. Simultaneously, these endeavors upheld responsible business practices and played a role in fostering the sustainable advancement of the local economy.

Meanwhile, Mr. Isam J. Al-Sager, NBK Group Vice Chairman and CEO, said: "We have had a strong beginning to 2024, with our business segments maintaining momentum throughout the quarter. This underscores the benefits of our strategic investments and diversified business portfolio."

Al-Sager highlighted the Bank's robust performance, citing strong revenue and profit growth. He noted that the operational momentum from 2023 carried forward into the current period, resulting in another quarter of strong profits fueled by growth across all business sectors.

"The Group's net operating income increased by 11.2% year-on-year, reaching KD 309.0 million (USD 1.0 billion). This increase was fueled by improved revenues across various business sectors, reflecting the diverse and multiple sources of income within the Group," Al-Sager added.

Al-Sager stressed that the domestic political environment witnessed some recent instability in the form of changes in parliament and government. This is likely to result in the postponement of the long-awaited investment opportunities in Kuwait. He expressed his hopes of an improved and more stable political landscape going forward; which should positively reflect on the business environment domestically.

**Sustainable Growth**  
Al-Sager highlighted that NBK's results underscore the success of its strategy in achieving sustainable growth while also delivering long-term value to its



Hamad Al-Bahar – NBK Group Chairman



Isam J. Al-Sager – NBK Group Vice Chairman and CEO



NBK headquarters

**Al-Bahar:**

- Our strong financial results underscore our commitment to providing long-term sustainable value to our customers and shareholders.

- We are confident in our ability to continue excelling in meeting the changing requirements of our customers.

- NBK's continuous success rests upon strong fundamentals supported by an innovative diversification strategy.

- We are hopeful of a favorable operating environment in Kuwait for 2024, which will foster greater confidence in the country's business landscape.

**shareholders.**

He emphasized that the Bank, buoyed by the robustness of its balance sheet and its diversified business model, achieved business volume growth by prioritizing customer-centric approaches and delivering innovative banking experiences.

"We are seeing considerable momentum in both attracting and developing relationships with our clients. This is further supported by our strong position in terms of credit quality and capitalization, providing us with a solid foundation. This positions us well to continue advancing throughout 2024. Our growth strategy and diversified business mix highlight our resilience and stability amid a challenging macroeconomic landscape," Al-Sager noted.

**Al-Sager:**

- We started 2024 with robust performance, witnessing ongoing momentum across our key business segments throughout the first quarter.

- Our prudent risk management practices, coupled with ample liquidity and strong capitalization, have enabled us to maintain strong performance this year.

- Our commitment to supporting our customers is further reinforced by our financial discipline and ongoing investments in innovation and technology.

- Our growth strategy and diversified business mix showcase our resilience and stability in a challenging macroeconomic environment.

- In 2024, we leverage our strong position to further strengthen our leading franchise across all business sectors.

- We remain committed to investing in technology to drive revenue growth, enhance operational efficiency, and optimize returns for our shareholders.

- Our dedication has been recognized with the Best Bank in the Middle East for ESG-Related Loans Award 2024.

Al-Sager emphasized the importance of prudent risk management, alongside adequate liquidity, and robust capitalization,

which enabled the Bank to maintain its support for customers and achieve a strong performance in the quarter. He emphasized that financial prudence, combined with ongoing investment in innovation and development, reflects the Bank's commitment to supporting customers and the community, especially in challenging times.

He underscored that in 2024, NBK will capitalize on its robust position to advance its goal of extending its brand presence across diverse sectors, notably in wealth management. This encompasses the launch of "NBK Wealth", aimed at pioneering innovative and advanced solutions in private banking, wealth management, financial planning, investment management, and advisory services through a global network of operations.

Al-Sager also emphasized the significant strides the Bank has made in its digital transformation journey, focusing on enhancing the banking experience to meet the actual needs and aspirations of its customers. This has been achieved through the design and implementation of a range of digital services and products.

**Regional Leadership**

"In the first quarter of the year, NBK's regional leadership in sustainability was acknowledged, culminating in receiving the Best Bank in the Middle East for ESG-Related Loans Award 2024 by Global Finance. This accolade underscores our dedication to sustainable business practices and strengthens our aspiration to serve as the key partner for our clients in sustainable financing endeavors," Al-Sager noted.

Al-Sager also stated that

NBK has received a score of "C" in the categories of Climate Change and Forests 2023, as announced by CDP, a globally recognized non-profit organization overseeing the leading environmental disclosure, noting that NBK stands out as the sole bank in Kuwait to be rated by CDP, establishing its position among the leading financial institutions in the GCC engaged in the initiative.

Al-Sager underscored that in 2024, NBK will continue strengthening its position through investing in its people. The Bank will also prioritize offering the best products and services tailored to its customers' needs, expanding its presence in existing markets, and further developing its innovative businesses to better serve its customers and community.

Key financial indicators for 1Q2024

- Net operating income of KD 309.0 million (USD 1.0 billion), up 11.2% year-on-year
- Total assets increased by 5.1% year-on-year, at KD 38.3 billion (USD 124.7 billion)
- Total loans and advances grew by 5.7% year-on-year to KD 22.4 billion (USD 72.8 billion)
- Customer deposits increased by 9.0% by the end of March 2024 to KD 22.3 billion (USD 72.4 billion)
- Shareholders' equity amounted to KD 3.8 billion (USD 12.3 billion), registering an annual growth of 7.9%.
- Strong asset quality metrics, with NPL/gross loans ratio at 1.51% and an NPL coverage ratio of 248%.
- Robust Capital Adequacy Ratio of 17.2%, comfortably in excess of regulatory requirements.

### Merger of OSN+ with Anghami forms media tech powerhouse

## KIPCO affirms commitment to long-term value creation

**KUWAIT CITY, April 23:** KIPCO – Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) – said that it would continue to take steps to deliver on its mission to preserve and grow the holding company by creating long-term value and sustainable growth.

This came in a presentation following the company's Annual General Meeting. The AGM, chaired by KIPCO's Vice Chairman, Sheikh Abdullah Naser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, saw the approval of all items on the agenda. This was followed by an Extraordinary General Meeting in which the articles of the company's Memorandum of Association were amended to allow for the distribution of dividends on a quarterly and semi-annual basis.

KIPCO's Group Chief Executive Officer, Sheikh Dana Naser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, gave a presentation following the AGM in which she highlighted the achievements of 2023 and an outlook for 2024.

**Mission & Vision**

Sheikha Dana Naser Al Sabah underscored KIPCO's mission, to preserve and grow stakeholders' value, together with the company's vision, to be an agile investment holding in our core markets, delivering sustainable returns in sectors that matter to our society in the present and future.

Sheikha Dana Naser Al Sabah said: "With KIPCO's mission and vision in mind, our areas of thrust are to unlock value by enhancing synergies across Group companies, and to achieve a balance in the sector allocation of the investment portfolio to enhance shareholder's return and reduce concentration."

**Strategic Priorities**

Highlighting KIPCO's strategic priorities, Sheikha Dana Naser Al Sabah said: "Since 2022, our efforts have been aligned with our strategic priorities, which are to strengthen the performance of key portfolio investments and identify growth and investment opportunities in focused sectors; strengthen governance and synergies



Photo during the AGM

across the Group companies; strengthen the company's capital structure; and foster innovation and sustainability. Our results and those of our Group companies reflect this."

**The Journey to Preserve & Grow**

KIPCO's Group CEO spoke about the holding company's journey to preserve and grow stakeholders' value through high impact transactions. These include the merger with Qurain Petrochemical Industries in late 2022, which resulted in an increase in net assets of KD 603 million and an increase in shareholders' equity increasing to KD 566 million. Other transactions include NAFESCO's acquisition of United Oil Projects, as part of efforts to create efficiencies in the oil services portfolio; the acquisition of a 52% stake in Burgan Bank Turkey from Burgan Bank, releasing 200 bps of regulatory CAR at Burgan Bank; in addition to the sale of Gulf Insurance Group and the recent merger of OSN+ with Anghami.

Sheikha Dana Naser Al Sabah noted that KIPCO's journey also involved efforts to proactively manage liabilities to strengthen the company's capital

structure. The aim is to raise long-term financing, extend the tenor of existing liabilities, reduce interest expenses, and tap into new capital pools, as was the case with the issuance of KIPCO's debut Sukuk. KIPCO's Sukuk, valued at KD 103.1 million, was the first Sukuk to be issued by a Kuwaiti corporate, and the first Sukuk to be issued in Kuwaiti Dinars.

**High Impact Transactions**

Sheikha Dana Naser Al Sabah highlighted the sale of KIPCO Group's 46.32% stake in Gulf Insurance Group to Fairfax Financial Holdings. The sale successfully closed in December 2023 at 2.4 times book value. The transaction resulted in proceeds of KD 256.5 million, with a realized net profit of KD 73 million.

The Group CEO spoke of developments at OSN, emphasizing the merger of OSN's streaming business, OSN+, with Anghami. The transaction was successfully completed in April 2024 and resulted in 120 million registered users, 2.5 million paying subscribers and a combined revenue of US\$ 100 million.

Sheikha Dana Naser Al Sabah said: "By merging of OSN+ with Anghami, we have created not only one of the largest streaming platforms in the region, but a media tech company with the potential to unlock synergies for the creation of better products and more innovative offerings."

In 2024, the combined entity will see the launch of 4K Full HD, OSN+ with ads, combined subscription offering, advanced recommendations using AI and a unified entertainment experience.

**KIPCO's 2023 Results**

KIPCO is on a growth trajectory, driven by high impact transactions and successful efforts to enhance the performance of portfolio companies. In 2023, total revenue increased 23% to KD 1.3 billion, net profit was up 19% to KD 30 million, total assets went up 8% to KD 12.3 billion, shareholders' equity rose 4% to KD 611.2 million and book value increased 4% to 134 fils per share. Portfolio companies reflected growth across different indices, reflecting the efforts to enhance their performance throughout 2023.

**Asset Allocation and Sector Focus**

Sheikha Dana Naser Al Sabah noted that the company has focused its efforts on six key sectors: financial services where there are opportunities for optimization; petrochemicals in alignment with Kuwait's focus to grow the downstream industry; the high potential sectors of foodstuff, healthcare and education, and industrial services; as well as real estate where there is a potential to unlock value. KIPCO is actively seeking investment opportunities across all of these sectors, in addition to the digitization of services and enhanced technical infrastructure.

In terms of geographic presence, Sheikha Dana Naser Al Sabah said: "Kuwait is our home market, and we also see strategic alignment of interest with the development plans in the region."

### Main market index records modest rise

## Bursa Kuwait's general index 'inches up' in trading session

**KUWAIT CITY, April 23:** The Boursa Kuwait concluded its trading session on Tuesday with the general index climbing by 2.79 points, reaching 7074.70 points, marking a 0.04 percent increase. A total of 17,906 cash transactions were executed, trading a volume of million shares valued at 53.7 million dinars (approximately 163.7 million dollars), reports KUNA.

The main market index also saw an uptick, rising by 13.51 points to 5930.31 points, a 0.23 percent increase. This movement was fueled by the trading of 67.4 million shares across 5602 cash transactions valued at 9.5 million dinars (about 28.9 million dollars).

Similarly, the Premier Market Index experienced a modest rise of 0.09 points, reaching 7719.77 points. The trading session saw 110.3 million shares exchanged through 12,304 deals, valued at 44.11 million dinars (approximately 134.5 million dollars).

Concurrently, the Main 50 index recorded a slight increase of 0.66 points, reaching 5779.40 points, marking a 0.01 percent rise. Trading activity involved 47.9 million shares through 3143 cash transactions, with a total value of 5.8 million dinars (about 17.6 million dollars).

On Monday, Boursa Kuwait indices showed positive growth for the third consecutive session as the general market index increased by 0.21 percent, closing at 7071.91 points, with liquidity totaling 55.7 million dinars, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The trading activity saw 204.5 million shares exchanged through 15,613 transactions. Of the 123 shares traded, 53 gained, 55 lost, and 15 remained unchanged. Similarly, the Premier Market Index rose by 0.11 percent to close at 7,719.68 points, with liquidity at 47 million dinars. Trading involved 127.4 million shares across 11,167 transactions, with 33 shares traded. Among these, 19 gained, 11 lost, and 3 remained unchanged.

The main market index also saw an increase of 0.71 percent, closing at 5,916.80 points, with liquidity amounting to 8.7 million dinars. Trading activity encompassed 77 million shares traded through 4,446 transactions. Of the 90 shares traded, 34 gained, 44 lost, and 12 remained unchanged.

Overall, the trading session began with an increase in liquidity, although slightly lower than the previous two sessions. Trading stabilized at around one million dinars during the initial minutes, indicating continued positive sentiment among investors.

It focused, as usual, on Agility, then KFH, National Real Estate, and National Bank, but Agility and National shares suffered. Real estate, while KFH, NBK, and some other leading stocks witnessed purchases, the most notable of which was Boubyan Petrochemicals, which is awaiting its annual earnings announcements after the end of its fiscal year, which ends on March 31 every year. Most stocks also witnessed good growth, such as buildings, Aad National Real Estate, Kuwait Real Estate, and Rasiyat, while pressure and decline were on Agility stocks, as it lost 14 fils.

KFH stock witnessed clear profit-taking operations and some other medium-sized stocks, so that the session ended in the green for the third time in a row, and also awaiting the mid-week session today. To update the strength of the market momentum during this period and change the trend from a neutral trend, decline, and the end of a correction process to a new phase, purchases, and building new positions.

The red color prevailed in the performance of the GCC market indices during the second sessions of the week, and the limited rise in the Kuwait and Dubai indices was only in limited percentages, while the rest declined in varying percentages, and oil prices were trading in the red, as the Brent benchmark fell to the level of \$86.8 per barrel.

China's job market stable

China's job market remained generally stable in the first quarter of 2024, with a total of 3.03 million new urban jobs created during the period, official data showed Tuesday.

According to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, the country's surveyed urban unemployment rate stood at 5.2 percent in March, and the employment situation remained generally stable.

Calling it "a good start" for the year, Chen Yongjia, an official with

the ministry, said the employment situation has remained generally stable, with main employment indicators staying steady in the first quarter.

Chen attributed the stable performance to the country's economic recovery and the government's policies to stabilize growth and promote high-quality development.

As the country's economy continues to improve, there are favorable conditions for the country to boost employment further, he told

a press conference.

The country set an annual target of creating more than 12 million new urban jobs by 2024 and aimed to keep the surveyed urban jobless rate at around 5.5 percent this year.

Chen said the country will continue efforts to expand employment channels and foster new employment growth areas such as advanced manufacturing, digital economy, and silver economy. (Xinhua)

As earnings season rolls off hopes rise for gains

As the heart of earnings reporting season arrives on Wall Street, investors hope that many more voices will be joining the chorus of companies reporting stronger profits.

Last year, Big Tech stocks were behind much of corporate America's profit growth, and thus behind the majority of the gain for the S&P 500. Just seven companies accounted for all of the U.S. market's profit expansion over the last four quarters, according to UBS.

But as defense contractors and other big industrial companies line up to report their latest results, the hope is that profit growth will broaden out to a wider range of companies.

Consider General Dynamics, which reports results Wednesday. Analysts forecast its earnings per share jumped nearly 12% from a year earlier, according to FactSet. That would be a big acceleration from last year's first-quarter growth of roughly 1%. The company is ex-

pected to benefit from solid demand for its Gulfstream business jets and from European defense agencies.

Or Waste Management, which reports on Thursday. Analysts expect it to show an acceleration in profit growth to 15.3% from 1.6%. They say it's benefiting from higher prices for its collection and disposal services.

Give credit to the remarkably resilient U.S. economy, which continues to hum despite high interest rates meant to bring inflation down.

Average price of fuel commodities to decrease by 9.7% in 2024

# Global real GDP growth to see steady recovery

By Kamco Invest

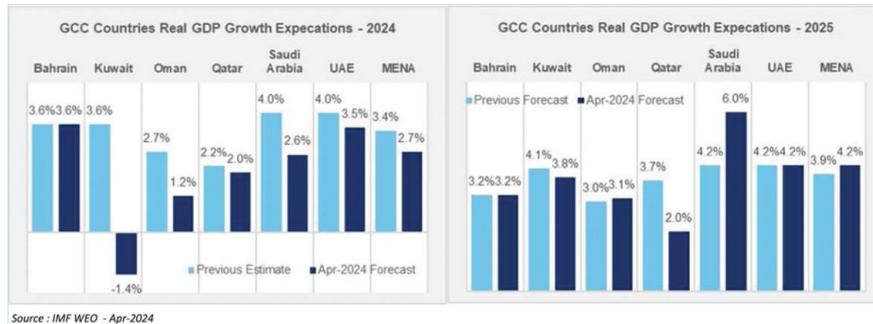
In its latest World Economic Outlook report, the IMF forecasted the Global real GDP at 3.2% in 2023, and the same levels are expected to continue in 2024 and 2025. The forecast for 2024 is revised upward by 10 bps from the January-2024 forecast and by 30 bps from the October-2023 forecast. The IMF also stated that the global growth in 2024 and 2025 is projected to be lower than the historical (2000-19) annual average of 3.8% due to high borrowing costs, withdrawal of fiscal support, COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's-Ukraine conflict, low productivity growth, and increasing geoeconomic fragmentation.

The upward revisions were made to forecast for both Advanced Economies, EM & Developing Economies as compared to the previous forecast. Growth estimates for Advanced Economies witnessed an upward revision of 20 bps to 1.7% for 2024 and remained unchanged for 2025 at 1.8%. Advanced economies are predicted to grow modestly, primarily reflecting the eurozone's comeback from slow growth in 2023, on the other hand, growth expectation for EM and Developing Economies witnessed an upward revision of 10 bps for 2024, and remain unchanged for 2025 at 4.2%. EM & Developing Economies are expected to grow steadily through 2024 and 2025, with disparities by region.

According to the IMF, despite fears of stagflation and recession, worldwide inflation fell, and economic activity continued to grow steadily. It is predicted that the average price of fuel commodities will decrease by 9.7% in 2024, with an approximate 2.5% decline in oil prices. The declines are a result of robust non-OPEC+ supply growth and an abundance of spare capacity. Post-pandemic supply-side expansion led to stable global economic activity and lower inflation. Increased labor force participation and strong employment growth boosted activity and disinflation in advanced, emerging, and middle-income economies. In several economies, the labor force has grown faster among foreign-born individuals than domestic-born individuals since 2021, with greater participation rates.

Advanced economies to see modest growth this year...

The modest upward revision to growth forecast for 2024 mainly reflected a positive growth in Advanced Economies and Emerging Market and Developing Economies. Growth in Advanced economies was raised by 20 bps for 2024 and remained unchanged for 2025. On the other hand, growth for Emerging Market and Developing Economies was revised up by 10 bps for 2024 and kept unchanged for 2025 at 4.2%. According to IMF projections, growth in the US is expected to reach 2.7% in 2024 and then drop to 1.9% in 2025 due to an expected slowdown in labor markets and gradual fis-



cal tightening. The upward revision of 60 bps for 2024 from the January 2024 WEO Update is mostly due to statistical spillover effects from a growth outcome that was greater than anticipated in the Q4-2023. Furthermore, this stronger momentum is anticipated to continue into 2024.

Meanwhile, growth in the Euro Area is expected to increase from 0.4% in 2023 to 0.8% in 2024 and 1.5% in 2025, notwithstanding the considerable vulnerability to the Ukrainian conflict. As energy prices fall and inflation decreases, consumer consumption is likely to increase, driving the recovery. Within the region, growth expectations for Germany was revised down by 30 bps to 0.2% in 2024, compared to the January-2024 forecast and lowered by 30 bps to 1.3% for 2025. The growth rate of UK is expected to increase from 0.1% in 2023 to 0.5% in 2024 as high energy prices subside. It is further expected to increase to 1.5% in 2025 as disinflation eases within the region, financial conditions and real incomes recover.

Growth in Japan is kept unchanged at 0.9% for 2024 and was revised up by 20 bps to 1.0% for 2025. Low income developing countries witnessed a downward revision of 20 bps to a growth of 4.7% for 2024 and 5.2% to 2025, as certain constraints on near-term growth are expected to ease. Meanwhile, China's GDP growth is expected to be lower than the historical levels at 4.6% for 2024 and to 4.1% for 2025, primarily due to the property sector which remains weak despite the positive effects of one-time parameters such as the post-pandemic boost to spending and fiscal stimulus. Meanwhile, India's growth was revised up by 30 bps for 2024 to 6.8% and left unchanged at 6.5% for 2025 supported by the continued support in domestic demand and an increasing working-age population. Growth in Middle East

and Central Asia is expected to increase from 2.0% in 2023 to 2.8% in 2024 and 4.2% in 2025, with 10 bps decrease in 2024 compared to WEO January 2024 predictions. The 2024 growth prediction for Iran and other smaller economies has been revised downward due to decreasing non-oil activity and oil income. Emerging and developing Europe growth rate is expected to reach 3.2% in 2023 and 3.1% in 2024, before slowing to 2.8% in 2025. Since January, the projections have been revised upward by 50 bps for 2023 and 30 bps for 2024 and 2025. Russia's growth is expected to slow from 3.2% in 2024 to 1.8% in 2025 due to fading impacts from high investment, robust private consumption, and wage growth in a tight labor market.

MENA & GCC GDP Growth

Growth for the Middle East and North Africa region was slashed by 20 bps for 2024 to an expected growth of 2.7% and left unchanged at 4.2% for 2025. Saudi Arabia's growth was slashed by 10 bps for 2024 to 2.6%. However, for 2025, the expected growth was revised up by 50 bps to 6.0%. Real GDP growth for Kuwait and Oman in 2024 were revised downward by 500 bps to -1.4% and 150 bps to 1.2%, respectively. UAE growth is expected to fall by 50 bps to 3.5%. There was no change in forecast for Bahrain at 3.6%, while Qatar is expected to decline by 20 bps to 2.0%. For the year 2025, Oman is expected to grow by 10 bps to 3.1%. Kuwait and Qatar are forecasted to decline by 30 bps and 170 bps to 3.8% and 2.0%, whereas UAE and Bahrain remains the same.

Inflation is expected to fall

Global headline inflation has declined since 2022 due to reduced relative price shocks, particularly for energy, and lower core inflation. Energy prices have declined due to increased global supply and tight monetary policy's. Monetary

tightening by central banks in key industrialized economies in 2022-2023 resulted in a fall in energy demand and consequently energy prices.

Global headline inflation is projected to decrease from 6.8% in 2023 to 5.9% in 2024 and 4.5% in 2025. Advanced Economies are expected to achieve their inflation targets sooner than Emerging market and developing economies. Global growth is expected to slow to 3.1% in the next five years, the lowest in decades. Global economic gaps continue as middle and lower-income countries convergence toward improved living standards slows. According to the IMF, as the global economy approaches a soft landing, central banks are expected to prioritize stable inflation by avoiding premature easing or program delays that could result in target undershoots.

In late 2023, a number of economies saw headline inflation return to pre-pandemic levels, marking the first time since the global inflation started increase post the pandemic. In Q4-2023, Advanced Economies' headline inflation was 2.3% on an annualized basis, down from 9.5% in Q2-2022. In the Q4-2023, inflation in Emerging market and developing economies was 9.9%, down from 13.7% in the Q1-2022. However, this average was influenced by high inflation in a few countries. The median inflation rate in these economies was 3.9%. Despite progress, most economies have yet to achieve their inflation targets.

Global Trade Volumes

The IMF expects the Global trade growth to reach 3.0% in 2024 and 3.3% in 2025, with a downward revision of 30 bps from January 2024 predictions, mainly reflecting the trends in global output growth. Over the medium run, trade growth is projected to be 3.2% in 2029, lower than the historical annual average of 4.9% from (2000-2019). Considering the low economic growth outlook, the projected ratio of total world trade to GDP (in USD) is expected to average 57% during the next five years. This is expected to be consistent with trade trends since the global financial crisis. According to the IMF, global trade-to-GDP ratios remain constant, but there are substantial variations in trade patterns due to geopolitical splits, particularly with the commencement of the conflict in Ukraine in February 2022.

Imports were revised downward by 70 bps for Advanced Economies to 2.0% for 2024 and to 2.8% for 2025, down by 40 bps. For the Emerging Market and Developing Economies, imports are expected to be stable at 4.9% for 2024 and revised downward by 30 bps for 2025 to 4.1%. On the other hand, exports from Advanced Economies are expected to decline by 10 bps and 30 bps for 2024 and 2025 to 2.5% and 2.9%, respectively. Similarly, exports are expected to decline for Emerging Market and Developing Economies by 40 bps for 2024 and 2025 to a growth rate of 3.7% and 3.9%, respectively.

# Tensions between China and US are the biggest worry for American cos in China

Deal will inhibit competition

## FTC sues to block Tapestry's \$8.5 bln acquisition of Capri

NEW YORK, April 23, (AP) - The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) sued to block Tapestry, Inc.'s \$8.5 billion acquisition of Capri Holdings Ltd., saying that the deal would eliminate direct head-to-head competition between the fashion companies' brands like Coach and Michael Kors in the so-called affordable luxury handbag arena.

The agency also said Monday that the deal, announced in August 2023, threatens to eliminate the incentive for the two companies to invest for employees and could depress employees' wages and workplace benefits. The combined Tapestry and Capri would employ roughly 33,000 people worldwide, the agency said.

"With the goal to become a serial acquirer, Tapestry seeks to acquire Capri to further entrench its stronghold in the fashion industry," said Henry Liu, director of the FTC's bureau of competition in a statement.

The move is the latest by the FTC to take a more aggressive position on antitrust issues.

In February, the FTC sued to block the \$24.6 billion merger between grocery giants Kroger and Albertson's, saying the lack of competition would lead to higher grocery prices and lower wages for workers. The supermarket chains said Monday they will sell more of their stores in an effort to quell the federal government's concerns.

Kroger and Albertson's announced their planned merger in October 2022. The companies said it's necessary so they can better compete with Walmart, Amazon and other big rivals.

Tapestry's and Capri's portfolio of brands cover a wide array of items from clothing to eyewear to shoes. Tapestry has been on an acquisition binge for the past several years, and already owns Kate Spade New York, Stuart Weitzman and Coach. Capri owns the Versace, Michael Kors and Jimmy Choo brands. Specifically, Tapestry's Coach

and Kate Spade brands and Capri's Michael Kors brand are close rivals in the handbag market. The FTC said that they continuously monitor each other's handbag brands to determine pricing and performance, and they each use that information to make strategic decisions, including whether to raise or reduce handbag prices.

Once completed, the new entity would be the fourth largest luxury company in the world, with a combined market share of around 5.1% of the luxury goods market, according to research firm GlobalData PLC. In the Americas, the company will become the second largest luxury player behind LVMH, with a combined share of 6% of the luxury goods market, GlobalData said.

Both Capri and Tapestry said they strongly disagreed with the FTC's decision.

"The market realities, which the government's challenge ignores, overwhelmingly demonstrate that this transaction will not limit, reduce, or constrain competition," Capri said in a statement on its website. "Tapestry and Capri operate in the fiercely competitive and highly fragmented global luxury industry. Consumers have hundreds of handbag choices at every price point across all channels, and barriers to entry are low."

Capri said it intends to "vigorously defend this case in court alongside Tapestry and complete the pending acquisition." It said the U.S. FTC is the only regulator that hasn't approved the transaction.

Tapestry said that "there is no question that this is a pro-competitive, pro-consumer deal and that the FTC fundamentally misunderstands both the marketplace and the way in which consumers shop."

"Tapestry and Capri operate in an intensely competitive and highly fragmented industry alongside hundreds of rival brands, including both established players and new entrants," Tapestry said in a statement.

American Chamber of Commerce in China releases report

BEIJING, April 23, (AP) - Simmering tensions between Beijing and Washington remain the top worry for American companies operating in China, according to a report by the American Chamber of Commerce in China released Tuesday.

The survey of U.S. companies said inconsistent and unclear policies and enforcement, rising labor costs and data security issues were other top concerns. It also said that, despite the insistence of Chinese leaders that Beijing welcomes foreign businesses, many still are hindered from free competition.

"The Chinese government has stated that it encourages foreign direct investment, but many of our members continue to encounter barriers to investment and operations including policies that discriminate against them and public relations campaigns that create suspicion of foreigners," the report said.

The report welcomed an improvement in relations in 2023 that was capped by summit meetings of Chinese leader Xi Jinping and President Joe Biden, but said the U.S. presidential election in November was "looming large" over the future business environment.

It's unclear what ramifications a victory for either Biden or former President Donald Trump might have for relations. But Trump could deepen a trade war he started during his first term. His tough rhetoric on China and isolationist approach to foreign policy could ramp up uncertainties.

More recently, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen visited Beijing, where she raised concerns that potential overcapacity in Chinese industries - such as electric vehicles, steel making and solar panels - might crowd out U.S. and other foreign manufacturers.

The fact that such visits are taking place shows "that on difficult issues,

Store closures, possible sale

## Express files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection

NEW YORK, April 23, (AP) - Express Inc. - once a trendsetter of casual office attire that has struggled to compete with the likes of Zara and H&M - has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

The retailer based in Columbus, Ohio, and founded in 1980 also said Monday it is seeking to sell the majority of its stores.

Express, which is the parent of the Bonobos and UpWest brands, is shuttering a handful of its outlets in the process. In an announcement addressing its bankruptcy filing, the company said it plans to close 95 of its Express retail stores and all 10 of its UpWest stores.

Closing sales at locations being shut down, which span across more than 30 states and Washington, D.C., are set to begin Tuesday. Beyond these closures, Express said that it expects to conduct business as usual.

Also on Monday, Express announced that it received a non-binding

letter of intent from a group led by consumer brand acquisition and management firm WHP Global to potentially purchase the majority of its stores and operations. Express said that it had filed for Chapter 11 protection "to facilitate the sale process."

The consortium exploring the deal also includes mall operators Simon Property Group and Brookfield Properties, Express said. WHP, Simon Property and Brookfield did not immediately respond to requests for comment Monday.

Express CEO Stewart Glendinning said WHP "has been a strong partner" of the company's since 2023 - adding that the proposed transaction would give Express additional financial resources and put it in a better position to grow profitably while maximizing value for stakeholders.

Beyond its UpWest storefronts, the company operates about 530 Express retail and Express Factory Outlet stores in the United States and Puerto Rico,

in addition to roughly 60 Bonobos Guideshop locations as well as online operations for these brands, according to Express' website.

Express reported nearly \$1.2 billion in total debts and \$1.3 billion in total assets as of March 2 in its Chapter 11 petition, which was filed in U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware.

The company first started as a women's fashion purveyor and then branched out to men's wear. It offered must-have items, like denim dresses for those looking for trendy outfits in the workplace, at affordable prices.

But increasing competition from fast fashion players like H&M, as well as the rise of Old Navy and athleisure brands like Lululemon, all hurt the brand's sales, said Neil Saunders, a managing director with research firm GlobalData. Saunders also noted that the brand was beset by quality issues, and the pandemic sped up the trend of people working from home, lessening

the two governments are talking and they're able to do so in a way that's not acrimonious. So that was very positive," said the chamber's chair, Sean Stein.

The Chamber sees high-level exchanges and communication between the two sides as a top priority, the report said.

American businesses are frustrated by slow progress on promises by China to level the playing field between foreign and Chinese companies, the report said. Meanwhile, heightened U.S. export controls and other restric-

tions have raised the costs of doing business.

"So the end result is companies are getting squeezed between the two governments, and on the regulatory front, what we're seeing is it's not getting easier to do business in China; it's getting harder," Stein said.

American companies operating in China saw improved profits last year, though slightly less than half expect to be profitable in 2024.

Still, many members of the American Chamber said they were more optimistic about growth of China's own

## World Bank suspends funding for Tanzania tourism project

KAMPALA, Uganda, (AP) - The World Bank has suspended funding for a tourism project in Tanzania that caused the suffering of tens of thousands of villagers, according to a U.S.-based rights group that has long urged the global lender to take such action.

The World Bank's decision to suspend the \$150 million project, which

aims to improve the management of natural resources and tourism assets in a remote part of southern Tanzania, was "long overdue," the Oakland Institute said in a statement Tuesday, charging that the bank's "failure to take immediate action resulted in serious harms for the local communities."

At least \$100 million has already

been disbursed for the project, which started in 2017. The suspension of World Bank financing took effect April 18.

The Oakland Institute, a California-based rights watchdog whose work focuses on marginalized communities, for years led calls for the World Bank to stop funding the project known by

the acronym REGROW, documenting serious rights abuses suffered by Indigenous communities in the area.

The group in a report released in November accused the World Bank of failing to hold Tanzanian authorities accountable for extrajudicial killings and sexual assaults relating to the expansion of Ruaha National Park.

## Company sponsored The Business Year's Kuwait Innovation Forum

## Zain spearheads digital innovation to foster sustainable growth

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: Zain has sponsored the Kuwait Innovation Forum, organized by The Business Year media group in collaboration with the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA). The event featured insightful discussions and expert panels to celebrate the spirit of innovation in Kuwait's vibrant business sector.

The forum was attended by H.E. Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Dr. Anwar Al Mudhaf, KDIPA Director General Dr. Meshal Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, H.E. British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis, Kuwait Banking Association Chairman Sheikh Ahmad Duajj Al Sabah, Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, as well as executives, leaders, and experts from the public and private sectors, along with entrepreneurs and startup owners.

During the event, Zain expressed its delight to continue partnering with The Business Year to bring insightful gatherings like this one to life. The company strongly believes in the powerful role such platforms play in promoting dialogue, exchanging ideas, and fostering innovation across industries in the market.

Zain also recognized the efforts of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), which continues its mission to enhance Kuwait's economic diversification and position it as a global investment hub. Zain, as a national institution representing the vibrant private sector, will remain a key partner to this mission towards a 'New Kuwait'.

The forum celebrated the spirit of innovation in Kuwait's business sector, a topic that resonates with every company and institution. Zain believes that without truly embracing innovation, there can be no growth. And this is especially true in highly competitive industries like the ICT sector, where digital transformation plays a decisive role.

Innovation is the engine that powers growth and prosperity. By



Waleed Al Khashti highlighted Zain's role to foster digital innovation in the local market.

harnessing creativity, exploring untapped opportunities, and even taking risks, companies can create real-world value and bring about positive change that not only affects them as organizations, but the community as a whole.

Today more than ever, technology plays a significant role in the innovation ecosystem. It serves as a catalyst for innovation by providing the means to create value in ways that were previously unimaginable. This is evident in innovations like AI that are reshaping the way we communicate, work, and interact with everything around us.

Zain no longer considers itself a traditional telecom operator, but a digital enabler, taking the lead to empower companies and government institutions to enhance their operations, improve their efficiency and workflows, and find new opportunities to grow. The company achieves this by harnessing the power of innovations like 5G, AI, drones, cloud computing, and more to help organizations achieve true digital transformation.

Zain takes pride in its own digital transformation journey and how it contributed to Kuwait's business landscape throughout the years. Despite challenges, the company em-

braced digital innovation, putting it at the heart of everything it does. And together with its partners from the world's biggest technology players, Zain became the number one choice for the public and private sectors to achieve digitization aspirations and plans.

The company affirmed that, to truly embrace innovation, the public and private sectors must work together to empower a vibrant ecosystem for entrepreneurship and startups in the market. Zain is proud of the fact that Kuwait is home for so many success stories, some of whom joined the forum to share their journeys and experiences with the attendees.

For over 14 years, Zain worked hard to create a comprehensive ecosystem for entrepreneurs and aspiring business owners through its award-winning accelerator program, Zain Great Idea. Throughout the years, ZGI helped accelerate hundreds of startups, embrace thousands of ambitious minds, and create countless job opportunities in Kuwait and beyond. In the past 24 months alone, startups that joined ZGI raised over \$17.6 million of investments, and many of them have already expanded beyond the local market.



Minister of Finance Dr. Anwar Al Mudhaf, Sheikh Ahmad Al Duajj, and Waleed Al Khashti at the event.

## ABK elevates digital innovation and customer centricity

## Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait launches new website

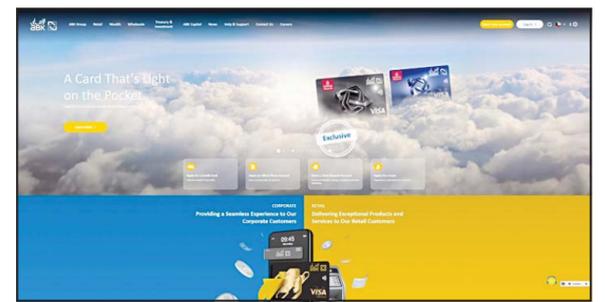
KUWAIT CITY, April 23: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is delighted to announce the launch of their new website. This milestone marks a significant step forward in the company's commitment to putting customers at the heart of their business.

Digital innovation lies at the core of ABK's ethos, as the Bank constantly seeks new and improved ways to meet evolving needs. The revamped website therefore reflects ABK's ongoing strive to enhance customer satisfaction. With its sleek, user-friendly design and intuitive navigation, it aims to provide an immersive and seamless online experience incorporating the highest standards of security.

The new website aligns with ABK's strive to provide simpler banking services.

On this occasion, Sager Albenali, Chief Communications Officer at ABK, commented, "At ABK, we are driven by a relentless pursuit of excellence and a commitment to providing our customers with unparalleled experiences. Our new website is a testament to this determination. We believe that digital innovation should be the cornerstone of any successful organization, and through our revamped website, we are taking a significant leap forward."

ABK has consistently adopted a customer centric mindset in all its endeavors. By placing the wants and needs of their customers at the forefront, ABK aims to build stronger relationships and foster greater trust. The website offers customers easy access to a wealth of information, from product and service details to educational resources and support



New Website Photo



Sager Albenali



QR Code

channels. "Our customers are at the center of everything we do and our new website reflects this," added Albenali. "By investing in digital tools and technologies, we are empowering our customers with the necessary resources to manage their financial needs conveniently and efficiently."

The new website serves as a comprehensive hub for ABK's diverse

range of products and services. It offers customers the opportunity to explore and engage with various financial solutions across ABK-Kuwait, ABK-UAE, ABK-Egypt, and ABK Capital. This includes offerings related to retail and corporate banking, wealth management, loans, and more.

To explore the new website and experience ABK's dedication to excellence firsthand, please visit eahli.com.

## 'Best account offering highest monthly expected returns'

## KIB announces winners of Al Dirwaza account's draw

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the winners of the Fourth weekly draw held under the Al Dirwaza account's 2024 campaign, which is distinguished by the highest number of winners throughout the year. The weekly draw, based on customers' March deposits, recently took place in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from the Bank. The KD 1,000 prize was awarded to Seham Mahdi Sulaiman Alshammery, Abdulrahman Mohammad Hasan Borhamah, Mona Merweh Farhan Alenezi, Mubarak Mohammad Moaitesh Almutairi, and Ahmed Assem Mohamed Mahmoud whilst the KD 500 prize was awarded to Akle Nakhle Elkallas, Saud Saeed Awadh Alajmi, Ahmed Mohamed Ali Al Sayed, Ali Hussain Jawad Alnasr, Ehab Mahmoud Abdelrahman Farag, Manar Abbas Ali Alzaidi, and Taysir Ali.

It serves to note that AlDirwaza account is a savings account for individual customers, based on the Wakala investment principle, launched by KIB as one of its banking products for individuals. The account is currently the best of its kind in the sector, with annual expected profits of up to 2% disbursed on a monthly basis, where the customer gets an expected profit of 2% for the first 3 months from the account opening date and up to 1% expected rate onward. The expected profits are automatically deposited into the customer's account within the first day of the beginning of each month.

Al Dirwaza account holders are eligible to enter the weekly, monthly and annual draws on the condition of maintaining at least KD 100 in their account. For the weekly and monthly draws, each KD 1 that has completed a full month's cycle in the account will count for one chance, and chances are calculated based on the lowest monthly balance preceding the draw. As for the mega draw, chances are calculated for each KD 1



Dirwaza

that completes a two-month cycle in the account – based on the lowest two monthly balances prior to the draw.

Al Dirwaza account is also in compliance with the provisions of Islamic Sharia and approved by the KIB's Sharia Supervisory Board. Furthermore, the account comes with a wide range of benefits, including the ease of opening the account, which does not require a salary transfer, and the customer's ability to open it remotely without visiting a branch through KIB Online on the Bank's website or KIB Mobile application on smartphones.



Photos from the event

## IDAK inaugurates scientific activities with study club

The Indian Dentists Alliance in Kuwait (IDAK) commenced its scientific endeavors for the term with the first study club titled 'Aesthetic Kaleidoscope'. Hosted at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Kuwait, the event marked a significant milestone for IDAK, with Dr. George P Alex, IDAK President, leading the inauguration ceremony.

In his inaugural address, Dr. George expressed gratitude to the Kuwait Dental Association (KDA) for their unwavering support and guidance towards IDAK's scientific pursuits over the years. He highlighted the decade-long success of IDAK Study Clubs, emphasizing that the event marked the 20th Study Club organized by the various scientific committees of IDAK.

Scientific Committee Chair and Assistant Professor at College of Dentistry, Kuwait University, Dr. Jagan Kumar Baskaradoss introduced the speakers and the outline for the day.

The event drew participation from over 200 dentists practicing in Kuwait, with seven distinguished doctors from Kuwait and India delivering insightful lectures. These lectures, accredited with 5 CME Points by the Kuwait Institute of Medical Specialization, covered a wide range of topics crucial to dental practice.

Keynote speakers Dr. Ahmad Bushehri and Dr. Jenan Altamimi from the 'Head and Neck unit' of Kuwait Cancer Control Centre (KCCC) shed light on the multifaceted aspects of head and neck cancers, under-

scoring the pivotal role dentists play in their early detection and management.

Other notable presenters included Dr. Ahmad AlSahli, Assistant Professor at the College of Dentistry, Kuwait University, and Dr. Khaled Abdelatif, representing the Egyptian Dental Association of Kuwait. Dr. George Jacob, Director of 'All for Roots', along with IDAK members Dr. Sushma Shenoy and Dr. Smida P Devdassan, delivered thought-provoking lectures, enriching the scientific discourse.

The event's seamless execution was attributed to the diligent efforts of the IDAK Scientific Committee, led by Dr. Jagan Kumar Baskaradoss, and received generous support from sponsors including Philo Pharma, Curaprox, Elgydium, Ultramed, President, and Al Mulla Exchange Company.

Guiding the proceedings as anchors were Dr. Vidya Thomas and Dr. Nikhil Malviya, while Dr. Jijan Sam Thomas, IDAK General Secretary, extended gratitude to all Executive Committee members for their contributions, expressing optimism that attendees would derive immense value from the scientific deliberations.

The inauguration of the IDAK Scientific activities for the term 2024-25, sets a promising trajectory for IDAK's scientific pursuits, reaffirming its commitment to advancing dental excellence and fostering collaboration within the professional community.

## Support acknowledged from fashion houses &amp; local partners

## Italian embassy showcases exquisite array of Italian shoes

By Paul Francis X. Fernandes  
Arab Times/Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: The Italian Embassy in Kuwait in conjunction with the 'Made in Italy Day' illustrated the excellence of the Italian industry and craftsmanship to the international public at the 360 Mall Monday evening.

The embassy put on display an array of Italy made shoes, where craftsmanship met innovation and elegance intertwined with comfort, stepping into a world where centuries-old tradition merges seamlessly with contemporary design, showcasing the finest footwear Italy has to offer.

The Italian shoes have long been synonymous with style and sophistication and visitors had the opportunity to explore an exquisite array of footwear, each pair crafted with meticulous attention to detail and a passion for excellence.

In the form of exhibition, the Italian Embassy celebrated the artistry of Italian shoemaking, where heritage



Photo from the event

met modernity, and every pair of shoes seemed to tell unparalleled quality and timeless beauty in every stride.

In his address to the gathering, the Italian envoy to Kuwait HE Lorenzo

Morini thanked "esteemed colleagues and friends for gracing us with your presence tonight at this exceptional gathering."

"First and foremost," he said, "I



HE Ambassador Lorenzo Morini speaking at the event.

wish to extend my deepest appreciation to those whose dedication has brought this exhibition to fruition. A special acknowledgment goes to Elisabetta Pisu, our esteemed curator, whose unwavering vision, passion, and tireless dedication have been the driving force behind this event. Without her invaluable contributions, this evening would not have been possible.



Some of the shoes on display.

I also extend profound thanks to the fashion houses, often through their foundations, whose generous contributions have adorned our exhibition with an exquisite array of pieces. These magnificent creations, which I dare say resemble awe-inspiring artworks, have truly enhanced the splendor of our display.

"Last but certainly not least, I express my heartfelt appreciation to the

360 Mall and the Tamdeen Group, whose pivotal support has been instrumental in ensuring the success of this endeavor." Design, as the cornerstone of the in Italy ethos, he said, permeates every facet of Italian culture, art, thought, and social life. The success of Made in Italy owes much to the craftsmanship, the spirit of experimentation, and, above all, the fervor and elegance bestowed upon everyday objects.

Italy, a land endowed with scarce natural resources, finds its wealth in culture and creativity. Today, the Italian creative industry stands as a formidable economic force, generating an annual economic value exceeding 50 billion euros, a figure continually on the rise, buoyed by the passion and loyalty of international clientele, including our esteemed Kuwaiti patrons.

"Since my arrival in Kuwait, I have been struck by the special reverence accorded to Italian design in this country. Italian fashion, automobiles, jewelry, furniture -- the list is endless -- hold a cherished place in the hearts of the Kuwaiti people.

# PEN America cancels awards ceremony amid criticism

NEW YORK, April 23, (AP) — Facing widespread unhappiness over its response to the Israel-Hamas war, the writers' group PEN America has called off its annual awards ceremony. Dozens of nominees had dropped out of the event, which was to have taken place next week.

PEN, a literary and free expression organization, hands out hundreds of thousands of dollars in prizes each year, including \$75,000 for the PEN/Jean Stein Award for best book. But with nine of the 10 Jean Stein finalists withdrawing, along with nominees in categories ranging from translation to poetry, continuing with the ceremony at The Town Hall in Manhattan proved unworkable.

Among those dropping out was debut novel finalist Rachel Eliza Griffiths, wife of former PEN president Salman Rushdie.

"This is a beloved event and an enormous amount of work goes into it, so we all regret this outcome but ultimately concluded it was not possible to carry out a celebration in the way we had hoped and planned," PEN America CEO Suzanne Nossel said in a statement Monday.

The cancellation comes as tensions over the war have spread throughout the country, from college campuses to political events to roadways, which at times have been blocked by protesters everywhere from Illinois to California.

Since the war began last October, authors affiliated with PEN have repeatedly denounced the organization for allegedly favoring Israel and downplaying atrocities against Palestinian writers and journalists. In an open letter published last month, and endorsed by Naomi Klein and Lorrie Moore among others, the signers criticized PEN for not mobilizing "any substantial coordinated support" for Palestinians and for not upholding its mission to "dispel all hatreds and to champion the

ideal of one humanity living in peace and equality in one world."

PEN has responded by citing that it has condemned the loss of life in Gaza, called for a ceasefire and helped set up a \$100,000 emergency fund for Palestinian writers. Last week, PEN America President Jennifer Finney Boylan announced that a committee was being formed to review the organization's work, "not just over the last six months, but indeed, going back a decade, to ensure we are aligned with our mission and make recommendations about how we respond to future conflicts."

Critics have said that the relief fund is too small and noted that PEN waited until March to endorse a ceasefire, five months after the war began.

## Donated

Stein finalists had included Justin Torres' "Blackouts," winner last fall of the National Book Award for fiction, and Catherine Lacey's "Biography of X." At the request of the estate for Jean Stein, an author and oral historian who died in 2017, the prize money will be donated to the Palestine Children's Relief Fund.

"Jean Stein was a passionate advocate for Palestinian rights who published, supported, and celebrated Palestinian writers and visual artists," reads a statement from Katrina Vanden Heuvel, Wendy Vanden Heuvel and Bill Clegg, on behalf of the Stein estate. "While she established the PEN America award in her name to bring attention to and provide meaningful support to writers of the highest literary achievement, we know she would have respected the stance and sacrifice of the writers who have withdrawn from contention this year."

Camille T. Dungy's "Soil" had been the only remaining Stein award

contender.

PEN announced Monday that judges had selected a handful of winners, among them Javier Fuentes' "Countries of Origin" for debut novel, the PEN/Hemingway award. Playwright/screenwriter Tony Kushner will still receive the PEN/Mike Nichols Writing for Performance Award. Other honorary awards include the PEN/Nabokov Award for Achievement in International Literature, given to the late Maryse Condé.

Some authors have called for the resignation of Nossel and other top officials. Lacey, in an Instagram post last week, wrote that PEN needed to "make big changes in the leadership and move into a new era." More than a dozen awards finalists endorsed a recent letter that demanded Nossel, Boylan and others step down and alleged that PEN had "shown blatant disregard of our collective values."

A PEN spokesperson said it had no plans to respond to calls for Nossel and others to resign.

PEN's other high-profile spring events - the "World Voices" festivals in New York and Los Angeles, and the gala at the American Museum of Natural History - will go ahead as scheduled. Klein and Moore are among the writers who have said they will not attend the World Voices festival, which Rushdie helped establish 20 years ago. Rushdie and other former PEN presidents, including Jennifer Egan and Andrew Solomon, had recently published a letter urging the literary community to participate in the festival.

"The festival was conceived amid conflict to draw together diverse authors and thinkers at a time of deepening and deadly geopolitical tension after 9/11," the letter reads in part.

Books

## Variety



This image released by Participant/Sony Pictures Classics shows S. Epatha Merkerson in a scene from the film 'We Grown Now.' (AP)

## Film

Minhal Baig's film offers unique perspective on Cabrini-Green

# 'We Grown Now' a tribute to childhood

By Lindsey Bahr

Two 11-year-old boys navigate school, friendship, family and change in Minhal Baig's lyrical drama "We Grown Now." It's an evocative memory piece, wistful and honest, and a different kind of portrait of a very infamous place: Chicago's Cabrini-Green public housing development.

And, pointedly, it's a film that might not have existed without Participant, the activist film and television studio that just this month announced it was shutting down operations.

Baig sets her film in the fall of 1992, a moment in which the promise of the 1940s urban renewal project had curdled beyond repair. It was there, on Oct. 13 of that year, that 7-year-old Dantrell Davis was killed by a sniper while walking to elementary school with his mother. A few days later, the horror film "Candyman" opened across the country with its Black boogeyman and white heroine, inspiring pointed critiques for its regressive racial stereotypes.

No longer the place of "Good Times," Cabrini-Green had become a metonym for the failures of the system. A few years later, authorities would begin demolishing buildings there, the last of which came down in 2011. It's now home to luxury apartments.

But childhood is childhood for Malik (Blake Cameron Jones) and Eric (Gian Knight Ramirez). And the biggest thing on their mind at the beginning is transporting a found mattress down the stairs of the high rise, through the streets and sidewalks to their playground area where it will provide the perfect landing cushion for their favorite activity: Jumping.

Malik lives with his sister, mother Dolores (Jurnee Smollett, in a lovely performance) and grandmother (S. Epatha Merkerson). The adults are stable, calm and positive influences on the lives of the kids, keeping them safe in their little enclave. Still, realities of their small world inside Cabrini-Green do occasionally creep in (or, rather, sometimes burst in at 2 a.m., when authorities decide to raid and trash their apartment looking for drugs that aren't there). Do-

lores tries to protest and stick up for their rights but is painfully aware of her powerlessness over the ever-escalating hostilities towards them.

The death of a classmate sends everyone into a spiral. Voices from the outside suddenly emerge, from Chicago's mayor Richard M. Daley and others vowing to clean up Cabrini-Green. There is a pointed disconnect with what Malik and Eric's day-to-day is actually like, playing, jumping, teasing little sisters and sometimes escaping the dull nature documentary at their school to have a real adventure.

Some of these moments land, especially the banter between the boys, but some are a little clunkier. These are the ones that lean more into whimsical ideas of play and inspiration (like when they decide to visit the Art Institute on their own and have a Ferris Bueller moment with the Seurat painting) than an authentic portrait of childhood. But also, why not show the kids being self-motivated to talk about art?

And it's one of their last adventures before reality comes back to fracture their bond, when Malik's mother makes the decision to leave Cabrini-Green for a job opportunity in Peoria. Their goodbyes may just have you reaching for a tissue - a testament to the two young actors.

Baig is a product of Chicago, though not Cabrini-Green. There are perhaps questions about who should tell whose story, but she has come to it with a palpable empathy and interest, which is all you can ask for, really. Why would we want to make rules about filmmakers stepping outside the narrow confines of their personal experience to tell different stories?

That care shines through in every frame (evocatively shot by Pat Scola), for the kids growing up in these circumstances, for the adults trying to shelter them, and for the magic they're able to find despite everything. It is a delicate look at what life might have felt like beyond the fear-mongering headlines, with an elegant score from Jay Wadley. "We Grown Now" is slightly dreamy and stylized, too, but instead of a liability, it makes this very small story feel grand, poetic and cinematic - just like it would for an

11-year-old.

"We Grown Now," a Sony Pictures Classics release in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago on Friday and expanding April 26, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for "thematic material and language." Running time 93 minutes. Three stars out of four.

## Also:

**LOS ANGELES:** The Sydney Sweeney and Glen Powell romantic comedy "Anyone But You" is finally on Netflix starting Tuesday. The movie is about two young singles whose magical one-night stand ends in miscommunication and hurt feelings, and then find themselves both in a small family wedding party and staying in the same house. It's loosely based on Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing." Reviews were mixed and the box office started out tame, but it became a slow burn sleeper hit in theaters, earning more than \$218 million worldwide. If you've been holding out to see what the fuss was about, now is your low stakes chance (it's also not a bad plane option, which is where this film critic finally watched it). And afterwards, if you need a rom-com palate cleanser, "You've Got Mail" is also currently on Netflix.

**LOS ANGELES:** The cautious father (Kumail Nanjiani) of a family of ducks is coaxed into flying south for the winter in "Migration" (steaming Friday on Peacock), the latest animation from Illumination, the maker of "Despicable Me" and "The Super Mario Bros. Movie." Penned by "White Lotus" creator Mike White, "Migration" is another, albeit more kid-friendly examination of the pros and cons of an exotic vacation. In my review, I wrote that "Migration" "is vividly animated with warm cartoon tones that would do Daffy proud. But it never quite spreads its wings." With Elizabeth Banks, Danny DeVito, Carol Kane, Awkwafina and Keegan-Michael Key. (AP)

**LOS ANGELES:** Lana Vierra misses the swing set at her Lahaina home, which was reduced to ashes in the wildfires that swept through her community last summer.

"Multiple generations went through there playing in my front yard," she said. "Just with the animals and the turtles and the deer and goats that we once had in that little tiny yard."

A grandmother of four and a mother of five, Vierra had lived in the home on a corner lot since 1991. She and ten family members, including a baby less than one year old, were displaced in the deadliest US wildfire in more than a century. In the weeks that followed, she and her adult children applied for and received many different kinds of assistance, including from the People's Fund of Maui, an initiative set up by Oprah Winfrey and Dwayne Johnson.

All of them, except one adult son, have since received six monthly payments of \$1,200 directly in their bank accounts from the People's Fund. Vierra credits the payments with helping them stay current on their mortgage, which they had to pay even though the house was destroyed. When she learned she would receive direct payments, she said, "That was in the back of my head that if I had to use it, I had it. And it would probably save my house."

When Winfrey and Johnson launched the People's Fund for Maui, which benefitted people who lost their homes in the wildfires, they committed \$10 million and asked others to join them. At the time, the request was met with some criticism, given especially Winfrey's wealth and extensive estate in Maui.

In the end, the Entertainment Industry Foundation, a longtime nonprofit that helps celebrities administer charitable work and that managed the distribution of the funds, said it raised almost \$60 million. That money was dispersed between September and February to some 8,100 adults - a significant portion of the 12,000 people the state of Hawaii estimates were displaced.

The foundation wouldn't say exactly how much Winfrey and Johnson gave in total, but a list of other contributors indicates the bulk

came from them. EIF said more than 20,000 individuals and companies donated to the fund. (AP)

**TOPEKA, Kan.:** A beloved ostrich at the Topeka Zoo & Conservation Center in Kansas has died after swallowing a staff member's keys.



Winfrey



Johnson

The zoo announced in a social media post on Friday that the 5-year-old ostrich named Karen had reached beyond her exhibit's fence and grabbed and swallowed the employee's keys. Staff consulted with experts around the U.S. "to undergo surgical and non-surgical efforts to minimize the impact of the keys. Unfortunately,

these efforts were unsuccessful," the zoo said.

Karen was euthanized Thursday and "passed away in staff's hands," Topeka Zoo Interim Director Fawn Moser said in an email.

"We are devastated by the loss of Karen," Moser said in a statement. "She was not just an animal; she was a beloved member of our

community. Our thoughts are with our dedicated animal care team, who formed deep bonds with Karen during her time with us."

The adored ostrich had been at the zoo since March 2023. She was known for her love of playing in water "and, best of all, being our 'dancing queen!'" the zoo said. (AP)

## People &amp; Places

## Music

## Sweden in spotlight

## Eurovision '24: Guide to pop extravaganza

LONDON, April 23, (AP): It's springtime in Europe - time for the annual blossoming of spectacle and sound known as the Eurovision Song Contest.

Taking place in May in Malmö, Sweden, the 68th annual competition will see acts from 37 countries vie for the continent's pop crown in a feel-good extravaganza that strives - not always successfully - to banish international strife and division. And you don't have to be in Europe to watch, or to help pick the winner. Here's a guide to all things Eurovision.

On one level, it's simple: Eurovision is an international pop music competition in which acts from countries across Europe, and a few beyond it, compete in a live televised contest to be crowned Eurovision champion.

But it's also much more - a celebration of diversity, national pride and the joyous power of pop. And glitter. So much glitter.

Launched in 1956 to foster unity after World War II, Eurovision has become a campy, feel-good celebration of pop music with an audience of hundreds of millions around the world. It has grown from seven countries to almost 40, including non-European nations such as Israel and Australia.

It's now known for songs that range from anthemic to extremely silly, often with elaborate costumes and spectacular staging.

Paul Jordan, an expert on the contest who is known as "Dr. Eurovision," said the contest "is almost indescribable in terms of its scale, in terms of its craziness - but I would liken it to probably the musical version of the Olympic Games."

This year's contest will be held in Malmö in southern Sweden, with two semifinals on May 7 and 9 followed by a grand final on May 11. Traditionally the competition is hosted by the previous year's winner, and Sweden triumphed in 2023 with "Tattoo," a power ballad by pop diva Loreen.

The Nordic nation is a Eurovision powerhouse that has won the contest seven times, a number equaled only by Ireland.

## Iconic

This year marks the 50th anniversary of a Eurovision's most iconic moment, ABBA's victory in the 1974 contest with "Waterloo." The win propelled the band toward superstardom and helped jump-start Sweden's music industry.

Fans are hoping for an appearance by the Swedish supergroup in Malmö, though the band members have played down those suggestions.

Eurovision's motto is "united by music" and organizer the European Broadcasting Union strives to keep political divisions out of the competition, though it doesn't always succeed.

Russia has been banned since its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Last year's contest was held in the English city of Liverpool because the 2022 winner, Ukraine, was at war.

This year, pro-Palestinian activists and some musicians have urged organizers to drop Israel from the event over its conduct in its war against Hamas, which has killed more than 33,000 people in Gaza, according to its Health Ministry.

With feelings running high, organizers issued a statement saying they "firmly oppose any form of on-line abuse, hate speech, or harassment directed at our artists or any individuals associated with the contest."

Jordan said Eurovision organizers have sometimes been accused of inconsistency in setting the contest's boundaries.

"You're not allowed political entries ... and yet Finland 2013 has a song about equal marriage," he said. "You had other songs about world peace - technically they're political too. So what is the division between politics and non-politics is quite a blurred line."

Pro-Palestinian groups plan demonstrations in downtown Malmö during Eurovision week that they hope will draw thousands of protesters from Sweden and neighboring countries.

Malmö district police chief Petra Stenkula said security would be "rigorous," with Swedish police reinforced by officers from Denmark and Norway.

## Predict

Eurovision's complex voting system, which awards points from juries of music industry professionals as well as viewers across Europe, makes winners notoriously hard to predict.

Jordan said there used to be a "typical" Eurovision sound - a three-minute pop song in English with a key change - but the contest is now much more diverse. Many acts perform in their national languages and some draw on folk traditions and instruments, though slick production and electro beats still predominate.

Winners have ranged from Canadian chanteuse **Celine Dion**, who competed for Switzerland in 1988, to fright mask-wearing Finnish metalheads Lordi in 2006, bearded Austrian drag performer Conchita Wurst in 2014, Italian rock band Måneskin in 2021 and Ukrainian folk-rap group Kalush Orchestra in 2022.

Bookmakers' favorites this year include nonbinary Swiss singer Nemo's powerhouse song "The Code" and Croatian singer-songwriter Baby Lasagna's earwormy electro number "Rim Tim Tagi Dim."

Other entries to watch include the Netherlands' Joost Klein with pop-rap song "Europapa," "La Noia" by Italian TikTok star Angelina Mango and "Teresa & Maria" by the Ukrainian duo of rapper alyona alyona and vlogger Jerry Heil.

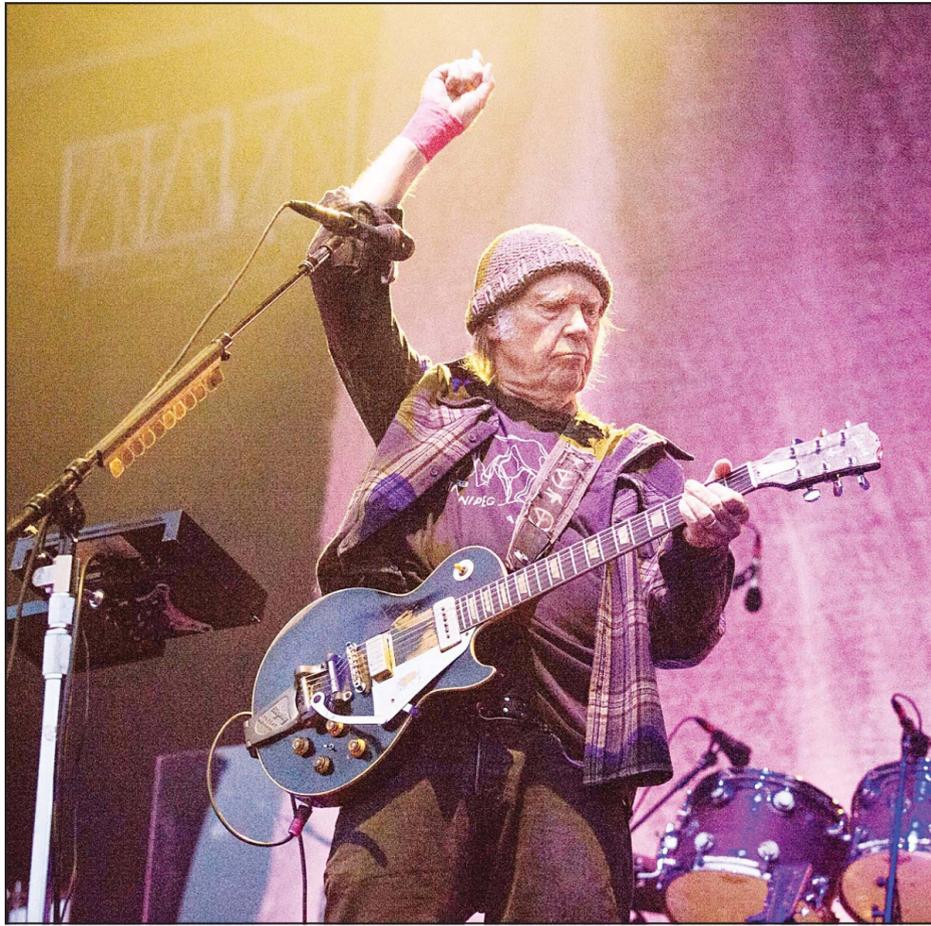
Spain's entry, "Zorra" by the duo Nebulosa, has drawn controversy because its title can be translated as an anti-female slur.

The UK, which has not won since 1997, is pinning its hopes on Olly Alexander's vertiginous pop song "Dizzy." Host country Sweden is represented by identical twins Marcus & Martinus - who, confusingly enough, hail from Norway - with the confidently titled "Unforgettable." Eurovision voters will be the judge of that.

The competition will be aired by national broadcasters in participating nations, on streaming service Peacock in the United States and on the Eurovision YouTube channel. Viewers in the US and other non-participating countries can vote online or using the Eurovision app; viewers in participating countries can also vote by phone or text message.



Dion



Neil Young performs at the BottleRock Napa Valley Music Festival at Napa Valley Expo in Napa, Calif., on May 25, 2019. Young offers a ragged and raw live take of his 1990 album 'Ragged Glory' with a new album. (AP)



Ryan Gosling, (left), and Emily Blunt pose upon arrival at the special screening for the film 'The Fall Guy' on Monday, April 22, in London. (AP)

## Variety

**MIAMI:** A leading fashion designer whose accessories were used by celebrities from **Britney Spears** to the cast of the "Sex and the City" TV series was sentenced Monday to 18 months in prison after pleading guilty in Miami federal court on charges of smuggling crocodile handbags from her native Colombia.

**Nancy Gonzalez** was arrested in 2022 in Cali, Colombia, and later extradited to the US for running a sprawling multiyear conspiracy that involved recruiting couriers to transport her handbags on commercial flights to high-end showrooms and **New York** fashion events - all in violation of US wildlife laws.

"It's all driven by the money," said Assistant U.S. Attorney **Thomas Watts-Fitzgerald**, who compared Gonzalez's behavior to that of drug traffickers. "If you want to deter the conduct, you want the cocaine kingpin, not the person in the field."

Lawyers for Gonzalez sought leniency for the celebrity designer, describing her journey as a divorced single mother of two children who designed belts on a home sewing machine in Cali for friends into a fashion icon who outcompeted the likes of Dior, Prada and Gucci.

"She was determined to show her children and the world that women, including minority women like herself, can pursue their dreams successfully, and become financially independent," they wrote in a memo prior to Monday's hearing. "Against all odds, this tiny but mighty woman was able to create the very first luxury, high-end fashion company from a third world country."

The attorneys said the 71-year-old designer has already paid dearly for her crimes. The Colombian company she built, which once employed 300 mostly female employees, declared bankruptcy and stopped operating after her arrest.

They also argued that only 1% of the merchandise she imported into the US lacked proper authorization and were samples for New York Fashion week and other events.

Gonzalez, addressing the court before sentencing, said she deeply regretted not meticulously complying with US laws and that her only wish is to hug once more her 103-year-old mother. (AP)

**NEW YORK:** True love's kiss or an invite to the Met Gala? Those in the rarified ranks of international celebrity - and **Anna Wintour**'s good graces - need not choose.

Stars of film, fashion, music, sports, politics and social media will ascend the steps of the Metropolitan Museum of Art on the first Monday in May - May 6, that is - to sip cocktails, have dinner and sample the new exhibit, "Sleeping Beauties: Reawakening Fashion." As fashion's biggest night approaches, it's time for The Associated Press to issue the 2024 version of our annual guide.

## Music

## Hersch's 'Silent, Listening'

## Neil Young brings back Ragged Glory in live set

LOS ANGELES, April 23, (AP): The venerable Neil Young offers a ragged and raw live take of his beloved 1990 album "Ragged Glory" with a new album, titled "... Up."

Of course, the 2024 version doesn't have the same semi-youthful energy that the 44-year-old Young put into the original. Maybe his voice is a little shakier, the guitar solos not quite as refined, but the songs still crackle with a power that's frankly stunning coming from the not-so-young Young.

It's clear that the 78-year-old and his band Crazy Horse fed off the small crowd at the Toronto club where this was recorded in November 2023. Young is obviously having a blast on stage, so much so that he decided to release the songs just months after the performance. This is from a guy who has held on to some of his most beloved live shows for half a century.

Young and Crazy Horse perform nine of the 10 "Ragged Glory" songs in nearly identical arrangements to how they were recorded back in 1990.

## Original

Only one song from the original release, "Mother Earth (Natural Anthem)," is absent on "... Up." The songs have all been retitled with lyrics from the original, except for the cover of "Farmer John."

For example, "Over and Over" becomes "Broken Circle" and "Love to Burn" becomes "Valley of Hearts."

The somewhat profane album title is more or less the same as a song from "Ragged Glory," just with a couple of different characters in between the "r" and the "in."

For all of its virtues, some fans of the original may quibble with Young tackling the material 34 years later, especially since he doesn't differ much from the originals.

"Not everyone will want to hear it because it's not for everyone," Young writes in the liner notes. "In the spirit it's offered, we made this for the Horse lovers. I can't stop it. The Horse is runnin' - what a ride we have. I don't want to mess with the vibe, and I am so happy to have this to share."

It may be for a niche Neil audience, but that niche is sure to love

it. And Young probably doesn't care what the rest think.

Jazz pianist **Fred Hersch** fully embraces the freedom that comes with improvisation on his solo album "Silent, Listening," spontaneously composing and performing tunes that are often without melody, meter or form. Listening to them can be challenging and rewarding. The many-time Grammy nominee's impressionistic approach creates colors that are subdued and lovely. It's chamber jazz - closer to classical music than the blues - that will be familiar to fans of ECM Records founder **Manfred Eicher**, who produced. The album will be released Friday.

Hersch returns to the Swiss studio where he recorded his first ECM album, "The Song Is You," a 2022 set with trumpeter **Enrico Rava**. The sound is pristine and airy, in classic fashion for the label, and Hersch makes full use of his instrument.

He explores the highest and lowest octaves, and strums inside the piano. With a light touch and disdain for anything showy, he plays single notes in meticulous extended sequences. There are also clusters that splash, splay and sashay, and an occasional forte chord for startling contrast. Sometimes a tune emerges, such as near the end of the contemplative "The Wind," and amid the unsteady but seductive pulse of "Starlight."

Hersch's hands converse with each other, the parts they play by turns contrasting or complementary. Rumbling bass is answered by treble toggles and trills. The animated "Little Song" swings with bouncy good cheer, but the mood on Hersch's other original compositions tends toward the wistful, ethereal or - as he describes it - nocturnal.

The amorphous, atonal music contrasts with his lyrical style on covers. The Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn tune "Star-Crossed Lovers" becomes a gentle wee-hours examination of melancholy melody. Hersch interprets "Softly, as In a Morning Sunrise" as a hummable, jaunty toe-tapper, and he saves for last his bluest performance, "Winter of My Discontent," which achieves a glow that lingers.

It started in 1948 as a society midnight supper, and wasn't even at the Met. Fast forward 70-plus years, and it's one of the most photographed events in the world, renowned for its head-spinning red carpet - though the carpet isn't always red.

It's important to note, though, that the party has a purpose, raising money for the



Gonzalez



Zendaya

## Books

## Detective tales

## Padura unravels Cuban mysteries

HAVANA, April 23, (AP): His novels recount gruesome murders, thefts, scams, bribes and humiliating secrets. But those are not even the most important themes in the stories told by award-winning Cuban writer **Leonardo Padura**.

For the last four decades, Padura, 68, has managed to turn his series of detective thrillers into a social and political chronicle of Cuba, especially Havana, where he has lived all his life.

The island he depicts in his books - which have been translated to dozens of languages - is a mix of economic deprivation, Afro-descendant syncretism, corruption, mischief, uplifting music and growing inequality - all seasoned by a revolution that marked the 20th century.

"I write about the problems of individuals in Cuban society. And often, in my books, more than dramatic conflicts between the characters, you will find a social conflict between the characters and their historical time," Padura told The Associated Press in a recent interview at his home in Mantilla, the populous Havana neighborhood where he was born, raised and married.

The scent of freshly brewed coffee is in the air, as well as the chirping sound of the birds that inhabit the patio where his dogs are buried. In a nearby studio, his wife, screenwriter **Lucía López Coll**, works on a computer.

## Character

It's also in this house where Mario Conde, the principal character of Padura's work, was born. The down-trodden, nostalgic, chain-smoking detective has accompanied Padura since 1991, when "Past Perfect" - the first of the "Havana Quartet" series featuring Conde as the main protagonist - was published.

Keeping track of Detective Conde is almost like taking the pulse of Cuba in the last few years.

His last appearance was in the 2020 novel "Personas Decentes" ("Decent People") in which, now over 60 years old, Conde gets involved in the investigation of a homicide - and corruption case - against the backdrop of the 2016 historic visit of former U.S. President Barack Obama and the Rolling Stones to the island.

"This character comes from a neighborhood similar to mine," Padura says of Conde. "He is a man of my generation. ... His view of reality has evolved because I have evolved, and his feeling of disenchantment has a lot to do with the way we have been living all these years."

Reflecting on Cuba's situation after the tightening of U.S. sanctions during the administration of President Donald Trump and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, Padura says the island has barely crawled out of the crisis and has not yet been able to get back on its feet.

He points at the lack of food and medications, rising prices and deteriorating health and education systems, while Cubans grapple with fuel shortages and constant blackouts.

"There is a historical fatigue," he says. "People are tired, they have no alternatives and they look for one by emigrating."

The soft-spoken chronicler highlights yet another impact of Cuba's ongoing economic crisis: A wave of popular protests and demonstrations that had not been seen in decades.

"The main cry was for food and electricity," Padura recalls about the protests in 2021 and, more recently, in March. "But people also screamed 'Freedom!' The lack of food and electricity might have been solved by fixing some thermoelectric plants and with a little rice and sugar ... but the other thing has not been talked about - and I think it's something that should be discussed in depth."

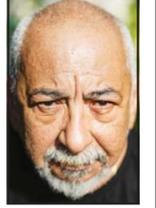
## Literature

Born in 1955, Leonardo de la Caridad Padura Fuentes studied literature at the University of Havana and worked as a journalist for state-owned media in the 1980s.

He has won a number of important prizes, including the Hammett Prize, awarded by the International Association of Crime Writers, on two occasions (1998 and 2006); Cuba's National Prize for Literature in 2012, and the Princess of Asturias Award for literature in Spain in 2015.

In 2016, Netflix released "Four Seasons in Havana," a miniseries featuring detective Conde.

Despite the international recognition, only a few of Padura's books have been published in Cuba, and when they do, only a few copies are printed. Also, because of his critical, sometimes dark view of the island, his work is barely promoted or mentioned in the official media.



Padura

## The Conversation

## Chronic skin disease affects about 1 in 5 children

## Chemical pollutants can alter skin bacteria, raise eczema risk

By Ian Myles

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

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

'We haven't had a full night's sleep since our son was born eight years ago,' said Mrs. B, pointing to her son's dry, red and itchy skin.

Her son has had eczema his entire life. Also known as atopic dermatitis, this chronic skin disease affects about 1 in 5 children in the industrialized world. Some studies have found rates of eczema in developing nations to be over thirtyfold lower compared with industrialized nations.

However, rates of eczema didn't spike with the Industrial Revolution, which began around 1760. Instead, eczema in countries such as the US, Finland and other countries started rapidly rising around 1970.

## What caused eczema rates to spike?

I am an allergist and immunologist working with a team of researchers to study trends in US eczema rates. Scientists know that factors such as diets rich in processed foods as well as exposure to specific detergents and chemicals increase the risk of developing eczema. Living near factories, major roadways or wildfires increase the risk of developing eczema. Environmental exposures may also come from inside the house through paint, plastics, cigarette smoke or synthetic fabrics such as spandex, nylon and polyester.

While researchers have paid a lot of attention to genetics, the best predictor of whether a child will develop eczema isn't in their genes but the environment they lived in for their first few years of life.

To figure out what environmental changes may have caused a spike in eczema in the US, we began by looking for potential eczema hot spots - places with eczema rates that were much higher than the national average. Then we looked at databases from the US Environmental Protection Agency to see which chemicals were most common in those areas.

## Allergy

For eczema, along with the allergic diseases that routinely develop with it - peanut allergy and asthma - two chemical classes leaped off the page: diisocyanates and xylene.

Diisocyanates were first manufactured in the US around 1970 for the production of spandex, nonlatex foam, paint and polyurethane. The manufacture of xylene also increased around that time, alongside an increase in the production of polyester and other ma-

terials.

The chemically active portion of the diisocyanates and xylene molecules are also found in cigarette smoke and wildfires. After 1975, when all new cars became outfitted with a new technology that converted exhaust gas to less toxic chemicals, isocyanate and xylene both became components of automobile exhaust.

Research has found that exposing mice to isocyanates and xylene can directly cause eczema, itch and inflammation by increasing the activity of receptors involved in itch, pain and temperature sensation. These receptors are also more active in mice placed on unhealthy diets. How directly exposing mice to these toxins compares to the typical levels of exposure in people is still unclear.

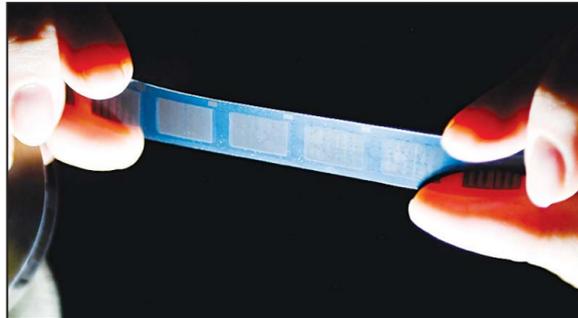
## How and why might these chemicals be linked to rising rates of eczema?

Every person is coated with millions of microorganisms that live on the skin, collectively referred to as the skin microbiome. While researchers don't know everything about how friendly bacteria help the skin, we do know that people need these organisms to produce certain types of lipids, or oils, that keep the skin sealed from the environment and stave off infection.

You've probably seen moisturizers and other skin products containing ceramides, a group of lipids that play an important role in protecting the skin. The amount of ceramides and related compounds on a child's skin during their first few weeks of life is a consistent and significant predictor of whether they will go on to develop eczema. The less ceramides they have on their skin, the more likely they'll develop eczema.

To see which toxins could prevent production of the beneficial lipids that prevent eczema, my team and I used skin bacteria as canaries in the coal mine. In the lab, we exposed bacteria that directly make ceramides (such as *Roseomonas mucosa*), bacteria that help the body make its own ceramides (such as *Staphylococcus epidermidis*) and bacteria that make other beneficial lipids (such as *Staphylococcus cohnii*) to isocyanates and xylene. We made sure to expose the bacteria to levels of these chemicals that are similar to what people might be exposed to in the real world, such as the standard levels released from a factory or the fumes of polyurethane glue from a hardware store.

We found that exposing these bacteria to isocyanates or xylene led them to stop making ceramides and instead make amino acids such as lysine. Lysine helps protect the bacteria from the harms of the toxins but doesn't provide the health benefits of ceramides. (AP)



Zheng Shanji checks microfilm at Jilin Provincial Library in Changchun, northeast China's Jilin Province, April 22, 2024. Microfilm is an effective way to preserve ancient texts and documents. China has started using micrographics technology to preserve invaluable documents on a large scale in 1985, since the establishment of the National Library's center for microfilm reproduction. Since then, over 40 public libraries have been engaging in using microfilm for document preservation. Jilin Provincial Library is one of the first batch of microfilm reproduction libraries in China. (Xinhua)

## Understanding multiple sclerosis, condition that impacts the 'central nervous system'

Dr Al-Jarki offers insights on autoimmune disorders

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: Neurologist Dr. Namariq Al-Jarki explained that multiple sclerosis (MS) -- a condition that impacts the central nervous system, comprising the brain and spinal cord is classified as an autoimmune disorder, involving the body's immune system mistakenly attacking itself, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Specifically, it targets myelin, a protective covering around nerve fibers responsible for facilitating the transmission of signals from the brain to the body's organs. This assault results in the manifestation of diverse neurological symptoms, rendering MS patients susceptible to recurrent relapses throughout the course of the disease.

Despite ongoing research, science continues to explore increasingly advanced treatments aimed at managing both the disease and its associated symptoms.

Discussing this condition, neurologist Dr. Al-Jarki emphasized that heightened awareness surrounding MS has played a pivotal role in its early detection and prompt referral to specialist care.

Al-Jarki elucidated that when myelin sustains damage, it disrupts brain function and consequently affects various organs throughout the body, manifesting in a range of symptoms. To accurately diagnose MS, these symptoms must persist for more than 24 hours.



Dr Al-Jarki (inset) offers expert tips for preventing neurological and degenerative diseases.

## Key indicators include but are not limited to:

- Weakness in one side of the body (hand or leg).
- Weakness in the legs.
- Numbness of half the body, or it begins in the feet and then escalates to the top until the abdomen or back (due to autoimmune inflammation of the marrow).
- Urinary bladder symptoms such as bladder incontinence.
- Blurred vision or double vision with eye pain.
- Balance problems.
- Stiffness in the hand or leg and muscle spasm.
- A feeling of lethargy.

According to Dr Al-Jarki, the precise cause of multiple sclerosis remains elusive despite extensive research in the field. She suggested that multiple factors may contribute to the onset of the disease, with environmental influences accounting for approximately 75% of cases, while genetic factors represent the remaining 25%.

Dr Al-Jarki highlighted common environmental factors in Gulf countries, such as vitamin D deficiency, obesity, and smoking, alongside genetic predisposition, which collectively elevate the risk of developing multiple sclerosis.

Additionally, ongoing scientific

inquiry focuses on early exposure to viral infections as a potential trigger for this immune-mediated disorder.

Researchers have observed a significant proportion of MS patients carrying antibodies to specific viral infections, prompting efforts to develop vaccines targeting these viruses and their infected cells.

Dr Al-Jarki emphasized the annual evolution of treatments for multiple sclerosis, reflecting advancements in medical standards. She noted a spectrum of over 15 available treatments designed to manage the disease's symptoms. Among these are immunosuppressants aimed at slowing disease progression and preventing relapses.

Cortisone, for instance, is prescribed during relapses and severe symptom episodes, typically administered for a five-day period to swiftly alleviate symptoms. Following this intervention, patients revert to their ongoing treatment regimen for long-term management.

Dr. submitted. Al-Jarki gave tips for preventing neurological and degenerative diseases saying make sure to follow a healthy lifestyle, regulating vitamin D levels in the body constantly, avoiding obesity and reducing excess weight, stopping smoking, exercising regularly and staying away from stress.

## Last practice completed before liftoff

## Shenzhou-18 crewed spaceship ready for launch

Intensive training preps crew for space exploration

JIUQUAN, April 23, (Xinhua): The Shenzhou-18 crewed space mission completed its last joint practice before launch and the system-wide air-tightness check on Tuesday.

The rocket and spacecraft have completed the electrical performance test, and the astronauts and all systems at the launch site have carried out the launch drill, with everything reported to be in good condition.

April is typically the windiest and sandiest month at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China. The meteorological staff at the launch site have analyzed April's wind speed data over the past 10 years and mapped out multiple contingency response plans.

The combination of the Shenzhou-18 crewed spaceship and a Long March-2F carrier rocket has been transferred to the launching area, the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) said on April 17.

The spaceship will be launched in the coming days, the CMSA said.

## European Space Agency adds 5 new astronauts

COLOGNE, Germany, April 23, (AP): For the past year, five fit, academically superior men and women have been spun in centrifuges, submerged for hours, deprived temporarily of oxygen, taught to camp in the snow, and schooled in physiology, anatomy, astronomy, meteorology, robotics, and Russian.

On Monday, the five Europeans and an Australian graduated from basic training with a new title: astronaut.

At a ceremony in Cologne, Germany, ESA added the five newcomers to its astronaut corps eligible for missions to the International Space Station, bringing the total to 11.

ESA has negotiated with NASA for three places on future Artemis moon missions, although those places will likely go to the more senior astronauts, according to ESA Director General Josef Aschbacher. The agency is also supplying the service module for the Orion crew cap-

sule. ESA relies on NASA and others to get its astronauts to space.

It is only the fourth astronaut class since 1978 for the 22-country agency, chosen from among 22,500 applicants. Another twelve were selected as reservists, but were not sent to basic training. Not surprisingly, the five have resumes studded with advanced scientific and medical degrees, military training, experience flying planes, helicopters, gliders and balloons, and "leisure" activities like rowing, scuba diving, hiking, skydiving, cycling, sailing, and kayaking.

The group formed "a very good team" devoid of personal rivalry, said Aschbacher. "I told them, one of you will fly first and one will fly last, and they accepted that of course, but from the heart, not just lip service ... the team spirit is very pronounced."

Sophie Adenot, a French air force helicopter test pilot, said the group was

"a fantastic crew and a fantastic team."

The moment that struck her the most was leaving the airlock for underwater space walk simulation when the instructor said, "Welcome to space."

"And for me it was mind-blowing. I had goosebumps. ... In a few years it is going to be me in space, not in the water with safety divers."

When she was a girl dreaming of space travel, "I couldn't count the number of people who told me, this dream will never come true. You have unrealistic dreams, and it will never happen. ... Listen to yourself and don't listen to people who don't believe in you."

In addition to Adenot, the ESA class consists of:

- Pablo Alvarez Fernandez, a Spanish aeronautical engineer who has worked on the Rosalind Franklin Mars rover intended for a joint mission with Russia that was suspended after the invasion of Ukraine.

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## Djokovic is world sportsman of the year

## Spanish women among top Laureus winners

MADRID, April 23, (AP) — Spain's first Women's World Cup triumph last year earned two more major plaudits at the Laureus World Sports Awards on Monday.

Spain was chosen world team of the year for 2023 and midfielder Aitana Bonmati was picked as the best sportswoman.

Novak Djokovic received the sportsman of the year at the ceremony in Madrid, and American gymnast Simone Biles was given the comeback of the year award.

Real Madrid forward Jude Bellingham earned the breakthrough prize, and Rafael Nadal won the sport for good award thanks to his foundation.

The Spanish women's World Cup breakthrough last August in New Zealand and Australia was tarnished in the following weeks because of an unwanted kiss of forward Jenni Hermoso by then-federation president Luis Rubiales after the final.

Laureus rewarded Spain as the first all-female team to win the team award.

Before the World Cup, Bonmati



Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic poses for the media after winning "Sportsman of the year 2024" at the Laureus Sports Awards ceremony in Madrid. (AP)

also helped Barcelona win a second Women's Champions League. She's the first female soccer player to win the Laureus, after also receiving the Ballon d'Or and FIFA best player award.

"I want to thank all my teammates and the staff of my club and

national team who have helped me a lot, and because of them I am here today," Bonmati said.

Djokovic won his record-equaling fifth Laureus sportsman award - tying Roger Federer - after titles at the Australian Open, French Open



Spanish tennis player Rafael Nadal and Maria Francisca Perello pose for the media after winning "Sport for good 2024" at the Laureus Sports Awards ceremony in Madrid. (AP)

and U.S. Open to reach a record 24 Grand Slam singles triumphs. NFL great Tom Brady presented Djokovic the award.

Biles made a record-breaking return to competition last year when she won four gold medals at the world championships, including a

record sixth all-around title.

Nadal's foundation was rewarded for helping more than "1,000 vulnerable young people in Spain and India," according to Laureus.

Teenager Arisa Trew won the action sports award after becoming the first female skateboard-



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham poses for the media after winning "Breakthrough of the year 2024" at the Laureus Sports Awards ceremony in Madrid. (AP)

er to land a 720 in competition.

Dutch wheelchair player Diede de Groot was selected as the sportsperson of the year with a disability after winning her third straight calendar tennis Grand Slam.

## Jaiswal strikes form as Royals 'thrash' Indians



Rajasthan Royals' captain Sanju Samson bowls a delivery during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Rajasthan Royals in Jaipur, India. (AP)

## Rajasthan stays on top in IPL

JAIPUR, India, April 23, (AP) — Yashasvi Jaiswal ended a string of poor scores by posting his second century in the Indian Premier League as Rajasthan Royals thrashed Mumbai Indians by nine wickets.

Jaiswal scored an unbeaten 104 off 60 balls, including nine fours and seven sixes, to lead Rajasthan to 183-1 after Mumbai struggled to 179-9.

Medium-pacer Sandeep Sharma collected 5-18 in four overs for Rajasthan while leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal took one but became the first bowler to reach 200 IPL wickets.

Jaiswal's previous highest score this season was 39.

## CRICKET

He and opening partner Jos Buttler combined for 61 in the power play when rain interrupted the chase for 45 minutes without losing any overs. Jaiswal didn't lose focus but Buttler was bowled in the eighth over for 50 off 31 balls.

Jaiswal accelerated, scoring the next 54 runs off 29 balls, which included five more sixes. In doing so, Jaiswal added 109 runs off 65 balls for the second wicket with skipper Sanju Samson, who fin-

ished 38 not out.

Jaiswal became the youngest batter at 22 to score multiple hundreds in IPL history. His first was also against Mumbai last year.

Earlier, put into bat, Mumbai suffered another top-order collapse against the Rajasthan pacers.

Trent Boult got rid of Rohit Sharma for 6, and Sandeep Sharma had Ishan Kishan caught behind for a three-ball duck. Sandeep Sharma then sent back Suryakumar Yadav for 10 and Mumbai was 20-3 after 19 balls.



Rajasthan Royals' Jos Buttler plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Rajasthan Royals in Jaipur, India. (AP)

Chahal's milestone wicket was Mohammad Nabi. Chahal claimed 200 wickets in his 153rd IPL game.

Tilak Varma countered with a half-century off 38 balls, and finished with a team-high 65. Nehal Wadhwa added 49 off 24, including four sixes, and their partnership made the five-time champions competitive.

But Rajasthan won with eight balls to spare and stayed atop the table after its seventh win in eight games. Mumbai was second to last.

## China's generosity in lead-up to cleared doping tests reflects its 'growing' influence on WADA

WASHINGTON, April 23, (AP) — In the two years before the World Anti-Doping Agency signed off on clearing 23 Chinese swimmers of intentionally taking performance enhancers, that country's government contributed nearly \$2 million above its yearly requirements to WADA programs, including one designed to strengthen the agency's investigations and intelligence unit.

The Associated Press obtained confidential minutes from meetings of the WADA executive committee that lists China as having given \$993,000 in 2018 and \$992,000 in 2019, two years that led to one of its Olympians being elected as one of the agency's vice presidents.

The Chinese contributions were part of a pattern that illustrates the country's growing influence on the drug-fighting agency at about the same time WADA's relationship with its biggest contributor, the United States, was fraying.

There is no indication from the documents AP reviewed that China donated the money in expectation of a quid pro quo to gloss over positive drug tests. In fact, WADA didn't hide the extra funding; it put out a little-noticed news release in December 2020 announcing China's \$992,000 donation.

The main part of WADA's budget each year comes from a 50-50 split between governments of the world and the Olympic movement. China's additional contributions came on top of \$430,000 its government supplied WADA as part of the routine payments in 2019.

The U.S. gave the largest regular contribution that year - \$2.51 million, but that came as its relationship with

## OLYMPICS

WADA was growing tense.

By 2021, the U.S. was sparring with WADA over passage of a new law written to combat doping in response to the long-running drug scandal in Russia. It also was withholding part of its payment, with the country's top government representative in the world anti-doping structure referencing "sorry state of affairs" that existed in WADA's governance.

While the U.S. tangled with WADA, China was chipping in on what was essentially a fundraising effort by WADA to ramp up its fledgling intelligence and investigations (I&I) program, which played a role in the current case. One of the documents obtained by the AP references committee member Ugur Erdener briefing the panel in September 2020 about the program and telling members that "only China, as far as he knew, had made a donation of 500,000 US dollars."

That amount would grow to \$992,000 by the end of 2020 - nearly three-quarters of the money received for the program to that point, and an amount surpassed only by India when it contributed \$1 million a year later, according to WADA's 2021 annual report.

That China was about to host the 2022 Winter Olympics and India was on board to host a key IOC meeting could have played into the donations.

The giving also came in the leadup to the November 2019 election of IOC member Yang Yang of China to WADA vice president. Yang was elected to her second three-year term in 2022.

Last year, according to another WADA document seen by the AP, the Chinese sports products company

## Contributed \$2 mln above quota

record sixth all-around title.

## Mobil 1 fuels Oracle Red Bull Racing to 1-2 finish at Japanese Grand Prix

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: Kuwait Automotive Import Company (Alshaya & Alsagar), the authorized distributor of Mobil 1 Lubricants in Kuwait, is celebrating Oracle Red Bull Racing's remarkable 1-2 finish at the Japanese Grand Prix. This victory highlights the outstanding performance of Mobil 1 lubricants, as demonstrated by Max Verstappen and Sergio Perez's exceptional performance on the challenging Suzuka circuit.

Unparalleled Performance on the Demanding Suzuka Circuit:

The Oracle Red Bull Racing duo exhibited extraordinary focus and determination throughout the race. Mobil 1's advanced technology played a pivotal role in ensuring optimal engine performance and durability, particularly noteworthy given the challenges of tire degradation on the Suzuka circuit. Mobil 1's innovative lubricants enabled Verstappen and Perez to push their vehicles to the limit while maintaining peak performance.

A Successful Partnership Driven by Innovation:

Mobil 1's enduring partnership with Oracle Red Bull Racing extends beyond the racetrack. Their dedication to developing state-of-the-art lubricant materials is crucial in meeting the rigorous demands of Formula 1 racing, resulting in a consistent series of victories for the team.

Maintaining Winning Momentum: Red Bull Racing Aims for Continued Success Looking ahead to upcoming races, Oracle Red Bull Racing is confident in extending their winning streak. Mobil 1's high-perfor-

mance lubricants will remain a driving force behind their success on the global stage.

This victory at the Japanese Grand Prix underscores Mobil's commitment to innovation," said Ashish Tandon, General Manager of Kuwait Automotive Import Company (Alshaya and Al-sagar). "By pushing the boundaries of lubricant technology, Mobil ensures that race cars, as well as everyday vehicles, perform at their best."

Jayan, the Divisional Manager of Lubricants, added, "For over 140 years, Mobil has been a global leader in energy exploration, production, and distribution. This legacy of excellence was evident in its superior perfor-

## MOTOR RACING

mance at the Japanese Grand Prix, showcasing Mobil's ongoing commitment to innovation and excellence in motorsports."

Mobil 1: Racing Embedded in Their DNA:

For decades, Mobil 1 has been a prominent figure in motorsports. From triumphs in rallying to collaborations with esteemed champions like Oracle Red Bull Racing and Porsche, Mobil 1 has driven victories and innovation in lubricant technology. Their insights from the track translate into high-performance products for everyday drivers, showcasing Mobil 1's dedication to pushing technological boundaries and securing future successes in motor racing.



Engineers working on one of the cars during a pit stop.

ANTA Sports signed a three-year deal to provide WADA-branded sports apparel. Among the other groups ANTA sponsors are China's national swimming federation and the Chinese Olympic committee.

Last week, reporting by The New York Times and German broadcaster ARD revealed that WADA had cleared the Chinese swimmers of doping violations by accepting the Chinese anti-doping agency's reasoning that the athletes had been exposed to a banned heart medication through contamination.

There was no public notice of the case, nor any provisional suspension, both of which are called for in the world anti-doping code. The quiet handling of the cases occurred about seven months before the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. Even a provisional suspension at that

time could have put those swimmers' eligibility for the games in jeopardy.

WADA used its news conference to defend and explain its process, saying in essence there was no effective way to win a case based on countering China's claims that the swimmers had been subject to contamination.

"In the absence of any evidence of any sort of misconduct ... I'm very confident we would have had close to a 0% chance in establishing" a case that the swimmers intentionally cheated, WADA general counsel Ross Wenzel explained.

Of the 23 Chinese swimmers who tested positive, 13 competed in Tokyo and four of those 13 won medals. Many of the athletes still compete for China and are expected to swim at this year's Paris Olympics.

## Change Name

BHARIGALA PRASAD BABU (OLD NAME), PASSPORT No: P 6325724, R/O D.NO: 8/211-2, RAM NAGAR, RLY KODUR TOWN & ML, ANNAMAYYA DIST, A.P-516101. HAS CHANGED MY NAME IN MY PASSPORT AS GOPIDESI PRASAD BABU (NEW NAME) S/O G. CHINNAIAH.

## Legendary rugby league star Lewis appeals for concussion and CTE awareness support

CANBERRA, Australia, April 23, (AP) — A legendary rugby player has cited the fear and anxiety that has come into his life among the reasons for urging the Australian government to fund support services and education about chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE).

Wally Lewis, dubbed "The King" when he played rugby league for Queensland state and Australia in the 1980s, made an appeal on behalf of the

Concussion and CTE Coalition for millions of dollars in funding during a National Press Club address Tuesday.

The 64-year-old Lewis said he's living with probable CTE, which he described as a type of dementia associated with repeated concussive and sub-concussive blows to the head.

Lewis, who worked for decades as a television sports anchor after retiring as a player in the early 1990s, relayed his own experience to get his message

across.

"The fear is real. I don't want anyone to have to live with the fear and anxiety that I live with every day, worried about what I've forgotten ... the fear of what my future will look like," Lewis said. "And living with the constant fear and anxiety that I'll let people down - the people who all my life have been able to rely on me and looked to me for my strength and leadership."

Lewis led Australia's Kangaroos in

24 international matches, was among the original players to popularize the annual State-of-Origin series, and was included in Australia's Rugby League Team of the Century in 2008.

The National Rugby League has honored him as a so-called "Immortal" of the game.

Yet his memories of it aren't clear. He started playing rugby league as a young boy and also played rugby union at an elite level before embarking on a profes-

sional career in rugby league.

"It's a journey marked by the twin shadows of fear and embarrassment, a journey through the fog of dementia and the erosion of my memory," he said. "I once had the confidence in myself to succeed, lead a team to victory, captain my country, remember the strengths and weaknesses of opposition teams, organize myself each and every day and feel well and truly in control of my life."

## Celebrating ICC Asia Cricket Week

## Excitement builds for Kuwait vs Bahrain T20 cricket series

KUWAIT CITY, April 23: The upcoming T20 Cricket Series, "Celebrating ICC Asia Cricket Week: Kuwait Nationals Vs Bahraini Nationals - Yalla Shabab" is scheduled from April 25th to 27th, 2024, at the esteemed Sulaibiya Cricket Ground, marks a significant milestone in Kuwait's sporting annals. This event heralds Kuwait's inaugural hosting of such a prestigious cricket affair, showcasing the talents of both Kuwaiti and Bahraini nationals in a thrilling face-off. Viewers worldwide can catch the excitement live on Facebook and the Kuwait Cricket Official Facebook page.

Beyond being a cricket showdown, this series, part of the ICC

Asia Cricket Week festivities, symbolizes a deeper connection to the sport, aiming to kindle camaraderie and enthusiasm among local cricket aficionados. With floodlit matches at the SCG, audiences can anticipate riveting displays of skill and fervor from both teams.

Following the IPL format, the playing eleven of both Kuwaiti Nationals & Bahraini Nationals squad, at their discretion, will have the option of having four U19 players for grass roots development & much required exposure to their budding young talents, along with the promotion of the game amongst local nationals like never before.

Leading the Kuwaiti nationals cricket team is the dynamic Fahad Mahmoud Bastaki, with Abdur Rehman Al Kendari serving as vice-captain. Comprising solely of Kuwaiti nationals, this team

## CRICKET

boasts a rich history in professional cricket leagues organized by the Kuwait Cricket Club and has proudly represented the nation in events like the Asian Games, with sights set on future Olympic endeavors.

On the Bahraini front, under the guidance of Mohammad Ismail (Captain), and Junaid Niazi serving

as Vice Captain respectively of the Bahrain national team brings forth a wealth of experience garnered from active participation in regional domestic tournaments.

Haider Farman, President of Kuwait Cricket Club, lauds the Kuwaiti Nationals team as ambassadors of cricket within the Kuwaiti community, blending seasoned players with budding talent. He reminisces about their stellar performances in previous Asian Games and eagerly anticipates their future endeavors, including the 2030 and 2034 editions.

Mohammad Mansoor, Chairman and Advisory Board Member of Bahrain Cricket Federation, underscores

## Iraq edge Saudi Arabia, advance to quarter-finals as Group 3 winners

DOHA, April 23: In the AFC U-23 Championship held in Qatar, the Iraqi national team secured their spot in the quarter-finals by defeating Saudi Arabia 2-1 in the third round of Group Three at Khalifa International Stadium. Concurrently, Tajikistan claimed

victory over Thailand with a 1-0 score at Al Janoub Stadium in the same group.

With this triumph, Iraq not only secured the final qualification spot but also clinched the top position in Group Three with six points. Saudi Arabia also advanced with six points,

## SOCCER

the series' dual purpose: entertaining cricket enthusiasts while deepening the sport's roots within Kuwaiti and Bahraini societies.

Envisioning the series as a catalyst for broader GCC engagement, Sajid Ashraf, Director General of Kuwait Cricket Club, aims to inspire GCC nationals to form teams and partake in all future development programs & friendship series such as this. By fostering cross-cultural exchanges through cricket, Kuwait seeks to fortify bonds of friendship and sportsmanship across the region.

Join us in celebrating cricket, camaraderie, and culture at the ICC Asia Cricket Week T20 Series - Yalla Shabab!

finishing as the group's runner-up. Tajikistan secured third place with three points, while Thailand trailed in fourth, also with three points.

As leader of Group Three, Iraq now awaits the runner-up of Group Four in the quarter-finals, while Saudi Arabia, finishing second in their group, will face the winner of Group Four.

In the third round of Group Two, South Korea edged out Japan 1-0, and China defeated the UAE 2-1. South Korea emerged as group toppers with nine points, followed by Japan in second with six points. China secured third place with three points, leaving the UAE at the bottom with no points.

## Murray sinks shot at the buzzer as Nuggets take 2-0 lead over Lakers

Cavaliers outlast Magic

DENVER, April 23, (AP): Jamal Murray didn't even see the biggest basket of his career. At least not live, he didn't.

Murray swished a step-back 15-footer over Anthony Davis at the buzzer Monday night, giving the Denver Nuggets a stunning 101-99 win over the Los Angeles Lakers and capping a comeback from a 20-point second-half deficit.

Murray tumbled into the Nuggets' bench along with Davis just as his shot fluttered the net and the roar from the crowd shook Ball Arena.

"I just lost my balance and fell. I think A.D. was in my way or somebody was in my way and I just heard everybody scream and that's how I knew it went in," said Murray, who was mobbed by his

teammates after his bucket gave the reigning NBA champions their 10th consecutive win over the Lakers.

More importantly, it gave Denver a 2-0 lead in their Western Conference series that shifts to Los Angeles for Game 3 Thursday night.

Murray missed 13 of his first 16 shots and was easily the most flustered, frazzled and frustrated of all his teammates when it appeared the Nuggets would lose to the Lakers for the first time in 494 days.

Nuggets coach Michael Malone chose not to call a timeout after Michael Porter Jr. grabbed the rebound off LeBron James' missed 3-pointer with 13 seconds left and the game knotted up at 99.

Murray faked like he was going to take a 3-pointer, got A.D. to close and then beat him to his spot along



Jokic



Olympiakos' Athanasios Koutsogoulas, center right, holds the trophy after winning the Youth League Final against AC Milan at the Colovray Sports Centre in Nyon, Switzerland. (AP)

## Olympiakos win first European title for Greek clubs in UEFA Youth League final

A three-goal spree in six second-half minutes lifted Olympiakos to a first European title for Greek clubs after beating AC Milan 3-0 in the UEFA Youth League final.

The senior Olympiakos team can quickly make it two UEFA titles in the Europa Conference League

next month. Olympiakos plays Aston Villa in the semifinals.

Victory for Olympiakos was a triumph for owner Evangelos Marinakis one day after his relegation-threatened club in England, Nottingham Forest, challenged the integrity of the video review match

official in a Premier League game it lost at Everton.

On Monday, VAR helped Olympiakos take the lead. A penalty was awarded only after a video review spotted a handball by Milan's Polish midfielder Dariusz Stalmach.

Christos Mouzakis scored in the 60th minute with a perfect left-footed spot kick sent low beyond Milan goalkeeper Noah Ravryere diving to his left.

Less than two minutes later, Antonios Papkanellos beat Ravryere with a shot from a tight angle.

An overhead kick by Theofanis Bakoulas sealed the win in the 66th.

No Italian club has won the UEFA youth title in 10 editions and Milan was the first to reach the final, played at the stadium next to UEFA headquarters. (AP)

## BASKETBALL

the right baseline for the clear look.

Nikola Jokic said Murray "made the tough shots today and he missed the easy ones. It was that kind of game."

Asked to go though that final sequence, Davis demurred, saying simply, "Jamal Murray made a shot," then standing up, dropping the mic - and not figuratively - and walking off from the postgame podium.

Jokic posted a triple-double with 27 points, 20 boards and 10 assists. Porter added 22 points and Aaron Gordon 14 for Denver.

Davis led the Lakers with 32 points, James had 26 and D'Angelo Russell added 23 with a career play-off-high seven 3s, including six in the first half to help the Lakers build a 59-44 lead at the break.

The Lakers stretched their advantage to 68-48 two minutes into the second half and they still led by 10 entering the fourth quarter.

That, they did, finally tying it at 95-all on Porter's 3-pointer with 1:15 left before the frenzied final minute.

## Cavaliers 96, Magic 86

In Cleveland, Donovan Mitchell scored 23 points, Jarrett Allen had 20 rebounds and the Cleveland Cavaliers outlasted the Orlando Magic 96-86 to take a 2-0 lead in their first-round Eastern Conference series.

Mitchell set the tone as the Cavs led from start to finish, just as they did in Game 1.

It's been an impressive opening to the playoffs for Cleveland, which spent the regular season waiting for a chance to redeem itself following last year's first-round exit against the New York Knicks, who punished the Cavs in five games.

Cleveland has been much tougher this time around.

Evan Mobley added 17 points and Allen scored 16 - with nine offensive rebounds - for the Cavs.

Paolo Banchero scored 21 points and Franz Wagner 18 for the Magic, who have only come back to win one playoff series in 13 tries when losing the series opener. They're now in an even deeper hole.

Game 3 of the best-of-seven series is Thursday in Orlando.

Magic guard Jalen Suggs went down with a sprained left knee in the first quarter. He collapsed to the floor after making contact with Mitchell and immediately grabbed his leg in pain. After being helped up, an emotional Suggs couldn't put any weight on his leg as he was carried to the locker room.

However, the former high school football star returned after halftime with a sleeve on his leg.

## Knicks 104, 76ers 101

In New York, Donte DiVincenzo made a go-ahead 3-pointer with 13 seconds remaining after a desperate scramble, and New York beat Philadelphia to take a 2-0 lead in their first-round playoff series.

The Knicks trailed by five points within the final 30 seconds, on the verge of losing home-court advantage before a stunning rally, starting when Jalen Brunson finally got a shot to fall during an otherwise miserable night.

Brunson's 3-pointer from the corner bounced on the rim and fell in, cutting it to 101-99 with 27 seconds remaining. Josh Hart stole the ball from Tyrese Maxey to get the ball back for the Knicks, but DiVincenzo missed a 3-pointer. Isaiah Hartenstein grabbed the rebound and passed it to OG Anunoby, who got it back to DiVincenzo, who hit that one to make it 102-101.

Hartenstein then blocked Max-

ey's drive, Anunoby made two free throws, and the Knicks held on when Joel Embiid missed a 3-pointer at the buzzer.

Brunson finished with 24 points despite going 8 for 29 from the field. Josh Hart had 21 points and 15 rebounds, and DiVincenzo scored 19 points.

Maxey had 35 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds in a brilliant performance after he was ill earlier in the day. Embiid had 34 points and 10 rebounds.

## Judge freezes bank account of Piqué company

BARCELONA, Spain, April 23, (AP): A Spanish judge has ordered a bank account of a company run by former Barcelona player Gerard Piqué to be frozen while she investigates suspicions of corruption in the hosting of the Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia.

A Spanish court confirmed local news reports saying that the investigating judge, Delia Rodrigo, acted Tuesday on a request by state prosecutors to place a

freeze on a bank account belonging to Kosmos sports entertainment company, which was started and run by Piqué.

Kosmos did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Spanish police arrested ex-federation president Luis Rubiales earlier this month as part of a corruption and money laundering probe into activities under his mandate. Another seven people had previously been arrested in

March when police raided the federation offices in Madrid and a residence belonging to Rubiales in Granada.

Rubiales took the Spanish Super Cup to Saudi Arabia in 2020 for a deal that was reportedly worth 40 million euros (then \$42 million) per tournament. Piqué, who was playing for Barcelona at that time and played in the Spanish Super Cup, helped get that deal done via his Kosmos company.

State prosecutors opened a probe of that deal in 2022 following leaked audio files of conversations between Rubiales and Piqué regarding millions of dollars in commissions.

Piqué has since retired from soccer. Kosmos was involved in revamping tennis' Davis Cup and also starting the alternative King's League soccer competition in Spain.

Rubiales stepped down in September after causing an international scandal during the awards ceremony for the Women's World Cup final.

The match official accused of bias by English Premier League club Nottingham Forest got UEFA support on Tuesday by being selected for the European Championship as a video review expert.

Forest's inflammatory social media post on Sunday targeting Stuart Attwell has been widely criticized across English soccer and was even mocked by another club.

Forest said Attwell is a fan of relegation rival Luton and claimed that this was a factor in not being awarded up to three penalty kicks on video review in a 2-0 loss at Everton on Sunday.

Attwell is among 20 video assistant referee (VAR) specialists chosen by UEFA to work at the 51-game Euro 2024 in Germany that starts June 14.



Denver Nuggets guard Jamal Murray (27) goes up for a shot against Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis (3) during the second half in Game 2 of an NBA basketball first-round playoff series in Denver. (AP)



Cleveland Cavaliers guard Donovan Mitchell, center, pushes the ball up court against Orlando Magic forward Paolo Banchero (5) during the first half of Game 2 of an NBA basketball first-round playoff series in Cleveland. Cavaliers won 96-86 to take 2-0 lead. (AP) — See Page 15

# Sports

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## Inter Milan secure 20th Serie A title

Bologna consolidate fourth spot

**MILAN, April 23, (AP):** Winning the derby ended up being the cherry on top of a special night for Inter Milan.

Holding off AC Milan 2-1 clinched for Inter the Serie A title that had been sign-posted for weeks, and earned a coveted second star on its jersey for winning a 20th Italian league title, breaking a tie with its fierce city rival.

Not even the pouring rain could dampen the spirits of the Nerazzurri and their fans.

Francesco Acerbi and Marcus Thuram scored and, although Fikayo Tomori's late goal for AC Milan threatened to delay the celebrations, Inter held on for the win that stretched its lead to an insurmountable 17 points over second-placed Milan, with five rounds remaining.

At the final whistle, a beaming Lautaro and teammate Federico Dimarco climbed onto the top of the goal frame at San Siro.

Flares and fireworks were set off in the stands, and the Inter

### SOCCER

players danced raucously in front of their fans. A banner was unfurled saying in Italian: "Repeat it to the Madonna, who are the champions and who the crybabies."

The Madonna is the statue on top of Milan cathedral that overlooks the city, and which the derby is named after.

After winning eight other trophies, Simone Inzaghi claimed his first league title as a coach.

A star is awarded for every 10 Serie A titles. Only Juventus has won more, with a record 36 and thus three stars on its jersey.

Despite the rain, the stars aligned for Inter to wrap up Serie A, another star and the Derby della Madonnina on one night at San Siro, the stadium both teams share. Inter was technically the away team and only one end of the stadium was reserved for its black-and-blue-clad support.

Inter had won the past five derbies, including both legs of the Champions League semifinal last year and a 5-1 humiliation of Milan earlier this season in Serie A.

And the Nerazzurri went in front in the 18th minute when Benjamin Pavard nodded on Federico Dimarco's corner for an unmarked Acerbi to head in from close range.

Lautaro should have doubled Inter's lead seven minutes later when he was also left woefully unmarked but the league's top goalscorer inexplicably fired over the bar from point-blank range.

Milan seemed to draw confidence from that miss and Rafael Leão had a great chance to level following a rapid run on the counterattack from Tomori, but he fired straight at Inter goalkeeper Yann Sommer.

It was end-to-end action and Milan captain Davide Calabria also forced a great save from Sommer at the end of the first half.

But clinching the crown seemed inevitable less than four minutes after the restart when Thuram ran onto a long Alessandro Bastoni ball over the top and feinted around his marker to cut in from the left along the edge of the area and drill into the near bottom corner.

The finale became tense when Milan pulled one back 10 minutes from time. Sommer did brilliantly to parry Mattia Gabbia's header onto his post but Tomori nodded in the rebound. Tomori grabbed the ball and gestured frantically to teammates as he raced back to the center circle, desperate to get the equalizer that would prevent Inter from securing the title.

As tempers flared, a scuffle broke out in stoppage time and Milan's Théo Hernandez and Inter defender Denzel Dumfries were sent off. Calabria was also shown a red card five minutes later follow-

## Kuwaitis dominate Qatar Squash Championship



The Kuwaiti squash players preparing for action.

DOHA, April 23: The Kuwaiti national squash team showcased commendable performances at the onset of the Qatar International Open Squash Championship, hosted at the Khalifa International Squash Complex in Doha, Qatar, with the event set to conclude tomorrow.

In the U-11 category, Salman

Al-Saleh secured his berth in the 16th round of the tournament by triumphing over his Pakistani counterpart, Ayoub Zaman, with a resounding 3-0 victory. Likewise, Saleh Al-Kandari advanced to the same round in the U-13 category after defeating Qatari Yousef Al-Nuaimi with another decisive 3-0 win.

Abdul Rahman Al-Kandari demon-

strated his prowess in the U-15 category by overpowering Qatari Muhammad Al-Fayad with a dominant 3-0 victory, securing his place in the round of 16.

Meanwhile, in the U-17 category, Abdullah Hani exhibited exceptional skill as he defeated Iranian Irfan Tajjan convincingly with a scoreline of 3-0, advancing to the 16th round. Khaled Al-Fawzan showcased a

stellar performance in the U-17 category by defeating Singaporean Chandra Mouly Befs with a flawless 3-0 victory, securing his spot in the round of 16.

However, Fahd Al-Ghais faced a setback in the under-19 category, succumbing to Jordanian Muhammad Al-Batayneh with a score of 1-3.



Inter Milan players celebrate at the end of the Serie A soccer match between AC Milan and Inter Milan at the San Siro stadium in Milan, Italy. (AP)

ing another scuffle.

Bologna consolidated fourth place with a 3-1 win at Roma to inflict Daniele De Rossi's second league defeat as coach of the capi-

tal club.

Bologna moved seven points above fifth-placed Roma and eight above Atalanta - both of which have a game in hand.



Inter Milan's Federico Dimarco (center), is challenged by AC Milan's Fikayo Tomori (left), and AC Milan's Matteo Gabbia during a Serie A soccer match between AC Milan and Inter Milan at the San Siro stadium in Milan, Italy. (AP)

## Kuwaiti youth ice hockey team primed for the Asian Cup battle

TASHKENT, April 23: Fahid Al-Ajmi, President of the Kuwaiti Winter Games Club, affirmed the thorough preparation of the Kuwaiti youth ice hockey team for the Asian Cup (U-18), inaugurated in Uzbekistan yesterday with the participation of 10 teams, slated to run until April 30. Al-Ajmi outlined that the Kuwaiti team will compete in the robust tournament's first group alongside Uzbekistan (the host country), Thailand, Iran, and Malaysia. Conversely, the second group

### ICE HOCKEY

will feature teams from the Emirates, Mongolia, Indonesia, Macau, and India.

He elaborated that Kuwait will kick off its tournament journey against Thailand, followed by matches against Malaysia and the Iranian teams, culminating with a fixture against host nation Uzbekistan.

Al-Ajmi emphasized the significance of young Kuwaiti players' participation in this premier continental event, underscoring its role in furnishing vital international experience. He regarded these players as pivotal to Kuwait's future in the sport, particularly highlighting the inclusion of 15- and 16-year-old players who stand to benefit from exposure to international competition, aiding in



Fahid Al-Ajmi - President of the Kuwaiti Winter Games Club

their refinement and development.

Highlighting the steady progression of Kuwaiti ice hockey in recent years, Al-Ajmi cited numerous achievements by both the men's and women's teams, including the recent triumph of the Kuwaiti senior team in the fourth-level World Cup held in Kuwait. He expressed optimism for favorable outcomes from the youth team in the ongoing tournament.

## Sevilla compound Mallorca fears

SEVILLE, Spain, April 23, (AP): Mallorca remained dangerously close to the Spanish league relegation zone after losing at Sevilla 2-1.

Three teams go down and Mallorca is tied at fourth to last with Celta Vigo. Both teams are six points ahead of third-to-last Cadiz with four games to play.

Cadiz hosts Mallorca next Sunday. "We're the same distance from relegation we were before the game started," Mallorca defender Sergi Darder said. "This Sunday we have a real final against Cadiz. These are the games that decide seasons."

Sevilla moved up to 12th and virtually guaranteed its top tier status for another year. Mallorca had the best of the first 45

minutes with Sergio Ramos doing well to save a goal-bound shot from Nemanja Radonjic after 28 minutes.

But its inability to make its pressure count came back to haunt it in the second half.

Sevilla's Youssef En-Nesyri opened

### SOCCER

the scoring with a thumping header on the hour mark and 15 minutes later Isaac Romero was fortunate to see his chip take a deflection and sail over the stranded keeper.

Substitute Abdón Prats scored in stoppage time but it was too little, too late for the visitor.

### Emery extends deal

Man U's Ten Hag hits out his critics

MANCHESTER, England, April 23, (AP): After limping into the FA Cup final, Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag came out fighting on Tuesday.

His team was roundly criticized for blowing a 3-0 lead against second-tier Coventry on Sunday and needing a penalty shootout to advance to the final.

Ten Hag, himself, admitted United had been fortunate when Coventry saw an extra-time winner ruled out by VAR for a marginal offside. But with uncertainty surrounding his future following a disappointing season, he hit out at his critics after leading United to back-to-back FA Cup finals.

"The reaction from you (the media) was embarrassing," he told a news conference ahead of Wednesday's Premier League game against Sheffield United. "Top football is about results and we made it to the final and deserved it."

"Twice (two FA Cup finals) in two years - it is magnificent. For me as manager, four cup finals in four years. The comments are a disgrace."

United will play Manchester City in a repeat of last year's final on May 25.

Ten Hag won the Dutch Cup with Ajax in 2019 and 2021, and was runner up in 2022. He also won three Dutch league titles as Ajax coach. Under Ten Hag, Ajax reached the semifinals of the Champions League in 2019.

It was that record that convinced United he was the right candidate to turn the club's fortunes around after years of decline since former manager Alex Ferguson retired in 2013.

Ten Hag won the English League Cup in his first season with United last year and qualified for the Champions League. But he has struggled to build on that early success this term.

### SOCCER

His team is currently in seventh place in the standings and looks set to miss out on the Champions League, trailing fourth-place Aston Villa by 16 points with two games in hand.

New co-owner Jim Ratcliffe is overseeing sweeping changes at the club and speculation is rife about Ten Hag's position.

A new technical director, Jason Wilcox, was hired last week as Ratcliffe aims to transform United's soccer operations. Former Manchester City executive Omar Berrada has been hired as CEO and United is also targeting Newcastle sporting director Dan Ashworth.

The FA Cup final between Manchester City and Manchester United will kick off at the traditional time of 3 p.m. (1400 GMT) on May 25, the Football Association said Tuesday.

In a repeat of last year's final, holder City will play rival United at Wembley Stadium.

The FA said the kickoff time had been agreed with both clubs, the local authority, safety advisory group and broadcasters.

It is the second straight year that the final will start at 3 p.m. In recent years it has had an early evening time slot.

City beat Chelsea 1-0 on Saturday to secure its place in the final, while United needed penalties to overcome second-tier Coventry on Sunday after blowing a 3-0 lead to draw 3-3 through extra time.

As well as the Cup, the winner will receive around \$2.5 million.

Aston Villa manager Unai Emery has extended his contract until 2027, the club said Tuesday.

Emery has overseen an impressive turnaround at the Premier League club, which was in danger of being relegated when he took charge last season.

Under the Spanish coach, Villa is now fourth in England's top flight and in contention for Champions League qualification. Emery has also led his team into the semifinals of the Europa Conference League.

In a summer when Liverpool, Barcelona and Bayern Munich are all looking to appoint a new coach, Emery has signed an extension to the deal he agreed in October 2022.

"We are enjoying our way together with Villa fans, the club owners, management and this great group of players that we are proud of," Emery said. "Me and the football management... we share the vision of the owners."