

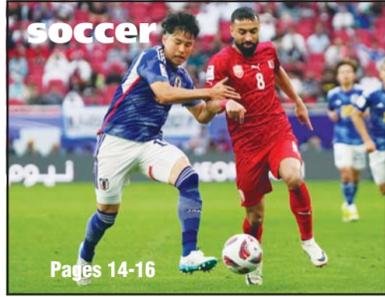


basketball

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soccer

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AMIR ELEVATES PATRIOTISM AS KUWAIT'S FLAG GRACES THE SKY AT BAYAN PALACE



A Kuwaiti flag- hoisting ceremony took place at Bayan Palace on Wednesday under the patronage, and in presence, of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Amiri Diwan photos Council, the Head of the Court of Cassation Adel Bouresli and senior state officials, attended the event.

National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, President of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial

The motorcade of His Highness the Amir arrived at the venue, given a 21-gun salute and warm welcome by the personnel of the Army, Police and National Guard. His Highness the Amir then hoisted the flag and the National Anthem was played.

Kuwait, Saudi call for Iraq Khor compliance

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have renewed their call on neighboring Iraq to adhere to the agreement signed with Kuwait in 2012 on regulating the navigation in Khor Abdullah waterway.

This came in a joint statement issued after His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to the Kingdom on Tuesday and his talks with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud.

The two sides noted that the Khor Abdullah agreement entered into force on December 5, 2013 after its ratification by both countries and was jointly deposited with the United Nations on December 18, 2013.

They also rejected Iraq's unilaterally cancelling of the security exchange protocol hammered out between Kuwait and Iraq in 2008 and its endorsed map signed between Kuwait and Iraq on December 28, 2014, which included a clear and specific mechanism for their amendment and cancellation.

The two sides reiterated support for the UN Security Council Resolution No. 2107 (2013),

Opinion

It's a blessed visit

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

"A BLESSED visit to the honorable country" - this title can summarize the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

It signifies the strong bond between the two countries, marked by the numerous significant milestones that reaffirm the historic cohesion between them, starting with the departure of the late King Abdulaziz bin Saud from Kuwait to unify the vast kingdom, passing through the historical fraternal solidarity between the two nations, all the way to the decisive stance taken by the late King Fahad bin Abdulaziz during the Iraqi invasion in 1990.

Everyone remembers his statement at the time - "Kuwait must return, otherwise Saudi Arabia will also go with Kuwait. If Kuwait's dignity is gone, Saudi Arabia's dignity is gone once and for all. There is no Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. There is only one country; either we live together or we perish together."

Indeed, the dignity of Saudi Arabia is the dignity of Kuwait. That is why for more than 130 years of a unified fate, no one has been able to disturb the peaceful relations between these two nations. All the loudest trumpets have been unable to undermine the friendship between the Saudis and Kuwaitis, or drive a wedge between them.

Therefore, the positions of the two countries always highlight the historic unity between them. From this standpoint came King Fahad's response when the Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Fahad called him to tell, "The Kuwaitis are here, what should we do?" The late King Fahad responded by saying, "Do all that is necessary to be done."

On that day, the doors were opened for the Kuwaitis. Royal orders were issued to the banks to deal with the Kuwaiti currency at its normal exchange rate, which was the rate before the invasion.

I also remember quite well that King Salman bin Abdulaziz, who was then the Prince of Riyadh, issued his instructions that day to open the homes of all the city's residents to Kuwaitis, just as we remember what King Salman said in 1986, "If there is aggression against Kuwait, I will be the first to carry a gun in defense of it."

These historical relations between Kuwait and Riyadh were, and still are, in accordance with the fraternal vision based on the respect of the two nations and countries for each other.

Continued on Page 5

Email: ahmed@aljarallah.com

Follow me on:



ahmedaljarallah@gmail.com

KNPC expat staff probed

MP seeks clarity on family visa 'quotas'

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The government has referred decree number 5/2024 on the State budget for fiscal 2024/2025 to the National Assembly.

The decree includes 41 reports on the budgets of ministries, public institutions, independent budget institutions and subsidiaries.

According to the decree, the total State budget is KD18,662,209,000 and the estimated expenditure is KD24,555,000,000; so the deficit is estimated at KD5,892,791,000.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the parliamentary Financial and Economic Affairs Committee MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri disclosed that the reports of the committee on the bills about the cost of living allowance increment and zero interest loans have been included in the agenda of the session scheduled for Feb 6, 2024. He affirmed these bills will be discussed and voted on to bring glad tidings to the people of Kuwait.

He disclosed that the bill on increasing the cost of living allowance to KD250 per month covers the public sector employees, nationals working in the private sector and receiving the national labor subsidy, retirees, and those with medium and severe disabilities.

He said the other bill is on amending Article 112 of the Public Institution for Social Security Law No. 61/1976 in order to increase the maximum amount of zero interest loan to 15 times of the beneficiary's salary.

Continued on Page 5

Ditch birthdates and names as passwords

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The Ministry of Interior has issued a warning, urging residents and expatriates to refrain from using names and birthdates as secret codes in electronic accounts due to the risk of these accounts being targeted by specialized hacking groups involved in theft, burglary, and email breaches, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Ministry outlined five key tips for creating a robust password for enhanced security. These include ensuring passwords contain a combination of letters, symbols, and numbers, with a minimum length of 10 characters.

It also advises against using easily guessable information such as birthdates, names, personal numbers, and phone numbers.

Additionally, the Ministry recommends not using the same password for all electronic accounts, periodically changing passwords, and avoiding sequential or repetitive combinations. Sharing electronic accounts and passwords is strongly discouraged, and it is advised to keep them away from public visibility.

Continued on Page 5

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received on Wednesday a phone call from Ahmad Abu al-Gheit, Secretary General of the Arab League, congratulating him on assuming his post.

During the call, Abu al-Gheit said he looks forward to working with Minister Al-Yahya to enhance joint Arab action, wishing the best for the Kuwaiti top diplomat.

Latest regional and international developments were also discussed. (KUNA)



Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, Kuwait's Minister of Health, engages with attendees during the 9th Gulf Week for Cancer Awareness, conducted under the theme 'We are with you' on Wednesday.

Photo by Mohamad Morsi

Kuwait budget forecasts 13.5% deficit decline to KD 5.89 billion

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31, (KUNA): Kuwait's budget deficit in the fiscal year 2024/2025 is expected to hit KD 5.89 billion (USD 19.15 billion), down 13.5 percent compared to the current year, according to a draft budget bill released by the Ministry of Finance Tuesday.

The budget, which starts April 1, 2024 and ends on March 31, 2025, forecasts KD 18.66 billion (USD 60.66 billion) in revenue, down 4.1 percent and KD 24.55 billion (USD 79.80 billion) in expenditure, down 6.6 percent versus the FY 2023/2024 budget ending on March 31st.

It forecasts that the non-oil revenues would reach KD 2.42 billion (USD 7.87 billion), up 5.7 percent compared to the current year's budget.

It also estimates that salaries and subsidies would make up 79.4 percent

of the total expenditure. Meanwhile, capital expenditure would take 9.3 percent share of the total expenditure and other expenses would make up 11.3 percent.

— See Also Page 2 —

The 2024/2025 revenue projections are based on the assumption that Kuwait would produce 2.7 million barrels of crude oil a day and the average price of a barrel of the Kuwait crude would be USD 70.

The budget bill will be reviewed by the National Assembly before passing it into a law and refer it to the cabinet and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for final approvals.

Fourth in apartment affordability

Kuwait 2nd globally as tax-free haven

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The Zawya website has quoted a report issued by William Russell Company, which specializes in expatriate insurance, stating that Kuwait this year ranked second globally on the list of 12 countries that exempts residents from taxes. Kuwait scored 6.49 out of 10 scores, reports Al-Rai daily.

The report stated that Kuwait is the fourth cheapest country on the list to rent an apartment in, with the average cost reaching about 775 US dollars per month, and it is also the second cheapest country in terms of monthly costs and public service bills, in conjunction with Brunei. The average net monthly salary in Kuwait is

about \$2,743. For its part, the UAE ranked fourth globally as a tax-free haven for expatriates. With an average monthly cost of about 3.59 thousand dirhams, and an average net monthly salary of 13,015, the UAE outperforms other countries that do not impose taxes.

Oman ranked first in the list of the most affordable tax-free havens for expatriates, as it has the lowest monthly costs of living and ranks third in terms of the cheapest country in terms of monthly utility bills, which amount to about 386 dirhams, followed by Kuwait and Bahrain in second and third places.

Kuwait achieves 30% cancer recovery rate

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Kuwait's Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, emphasized on Wednesday that the ministry's strategic goal includes conducting awareness campaigns for chronic diseases, with a particular focus on cancer.

Speaking at the 9th Gulf Week for Cancer Awareness under the theme "We are with you," the minister highlighted that cancer awareness has increased to 30%, contributing to early cancer detection and a 30% recovery rate. These campaigns have not only achieved sustainable development goals in human care but have also resulted in savings within the ministry's budget allocated for chronic illnesses, he added.

Continued on Page 5

Day by Day

THE swift passage of time leaves our affairs continually under scrutiny, with opportunities slipping away while our mantra remains "the best is better."

Time, often likened to a sword, demands decisive action; yet, how often have we failed to wield the sword of time, persisting in our belief that "the right thing is better than what is?"

Another adage suggests that if time refuses to yield, one should submit to it. It appears that we find ourselves obedient to time, unable to command its compliance.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:17	Asr	15:03
Sunrise ..	06:38	Maghrib ..	17:24
Zohr	12:01	Isha	18:44

Local

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

Weather

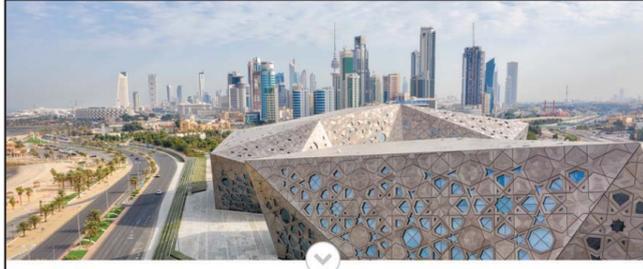
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild and partly cloudy with light to moderate northeasterly wind changing to southeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-35 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain.

By Night: Cold with light to moderate freshening gradually southeasterly wind changing to northeasterly wind, with speeds of 15-60 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear and a chance for rising dust.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	22	15
Kuwait Airport	23	10
Abdaly	26	10
Jahra	24	12
Salmiyah	20	16
Nuwaib	23	13
Wafra	24	09

Cabinet submits '24/'25 budget bill to parliament for review, discussion, approval



موازنة	موازنة	أولاً: الإيرادات
السنة المالية المنتهية في 31 مارس 2024	السنة المالية المنتهية في 31 مارس 2025	الإيرادات النفطية
17,168.8	16,234.1	5.7%
2,297.8	2,428.1	(4.1%)
19,466.6	18,662.2	
		ثانياً: المصروفات والتزامات
		المرتبات وما في حكمها
(0.8%)	(14,948.0)	(14,832.5)
(21.5%)	(5,948.0)	(4,668.3)
(7.7%)	(2,481.3)	(2,290.2)
(4.7%)	(2,901.2)	(2,764.0)
(6.6%)	(26,278.5)	(24,555.0)
(13.5%)	(6,811.9)	(5,892.8)

Budget Breakdown by Components			
KWD Million			
	Budget	Budget	% Change
	Year ending March 31 2025	Year ending March 31 2024	
Revenue			
Oil Revenue	16,234.1	17,168.8	(5.4%)
Non-Oil Revenue	2,428.1	2,297.8	5.7%
Total Revenue	18,662.2	19466.6	(4.1%)
Expenditure			
Salaries	(14,832.5)	(14,948.0)	(0.8%)
Subsidies	(4,668.3)	(5,948.0)	(21.5%)
Capex	(2,290.2)	(2,481.3)	(15.2%)
Other Expenses	(2,764.0)	(2,901.2)	(4.7%)
Total Expenditure	(24,555.0)	(26278.5)	(6.6%)
Fiscal Balance	(5,892.8)	(6811.9)	(13.5%)

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The Kuwait Ministry of Finance today released the State of Kuwait's draft budget bill for the coming fiscal year, which starts April 1, 2024 and ends on March 31, 2025. The budget forecasts 18.66 billion in revenue (-4.1% vs current year's budget), 24.55 billion in expenditure (-6.6% vs current budget), and projects a deficit of KD 5.89 billion (-13.5% vs the budgeted deficit for the current year ending on March 31st of KWD 6.81 billion).

24/25 Budget highlights

- **Revenue:**
 - Total projected revenue: KD18.66 billion, representing a decrease of 4.1% compared to the current year's budget.
 - Non-oil revenue: KD2.42 billion, representing an increase of 5.7% compared to the current year's budget.
- **Expenditure:**
 - Budgeted expenditure: KD24.55 billion representing a decrease of 6.6% compared to the current year's budget.
 - Expenditure breakdown:
 - Salaries and Subsidies: 79.4% of total expenditure

- Forecasted Deficit: KWD 5.89 billion, down 13.5% from the current year's budget
- Projected Total Revenue: KWD 18.66 billion, down 4.1% from the current year's budget
- Projected non-Oil Revenue: KWD 2.42 billion, up 5.7% from the current year's budget
- Budgeted Total Expenditure: KWD 24.55 billion, down 6.6% from the current year's budget

- Capital Expenditure: 9.3% of total expenditure
- Other Expenses comprise 11.3%
- Projected Fiscal Balance:
 - KDS.89 billion fiscal deficit, projecting a decrease of 13.5% compared to the forecasted deficit in the current year's budget.
 - Break-even point: An average price per barrel of USD 90.7 for the financial year.

Ruling on 15-year-old 'Alcazar' case

\$490m comp stays, appeal rejected

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: In a historic ruling, the Court of Cassation in Kuwait rejected an appeal submitted by the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq against a ruling issued by Kuwait's Court of Appeals in favor of Alcazar Capital, a subsidiary of Agility, stating that the appeal was inadmissible, and upheld the verdict that obligated the Kurdistan Regional Government to pay compensation worth \$490 million to Alcazar Company.

The case dates back to more than 15 years when Agility invested in an Iraqi telecommunications company. As soon as the investment was made, the Kurdistan Regional Government provided a sovereign guarantee to protect Agility's investments and had pledged to pay if the Iraqi company failed to pay the amounts owed to it.

Following Iraq's decision to confiscate Agility's investment in the Iraqi company, the latter refused to compensate any part of the investment made by Agility. Accordingly, Agility submitted its claim based on the sovereign guarantee of the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The latest ruling comes in the wake of a similar victory achieved by Maysan Company a year ago in an arbitration held at the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) against the Iraqi company and its president in that arbitration.

The court found that the Iraqi company and its representative were involved in defrauding Iraq Telecom Limited, a subsidiary of Agility, and International Holding Company Limited, an Agility subsidiary that previously owned 100 percent of the Iraqi company's shares, by bribing its regulators in Iraq.

Iron hand vowed 'No publishing of banned content'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Assistant Undersecretary of the Press, Publishing and Publications Sector at the Ministry of Information Lafi Al-Subaie has warned that the publication of prohibited content will be dealt with firmly in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations, stressing the laws are applied on everyone, reports Al-Rai daily.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) recently, Al-Subaie asserted that media outlets should not publish, broadcast, replay, send or transfer prohibited contents as stipulated in the media laws of Kuwait.

He said the ministry is closely monitoring news and media materials, and all those proven to have committed violations are referred to the competent authorities. He explained that the Electronic Media Law is applied only on social media accounts characterized by professionalism; while other concerned entities deal with personal accounts as per the relevant laws.

He called on the officials of various media outlets to ensure accuracy in conveying any news in their publications and platforms, work towards meaningful media content, depict the honorable image of the country, and cooperate in everything that contributes to developing media work and addressing the negative aspects.

'We're proud of heritage'

'School activities play role in uniting people'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31, (Agencies): School activities have a major role in fostering the sense of nationality and social involvement, said Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, Minister of Education and Higher Education on Wednesday.

In a statement following a flag-hoisting celebration, Al-Adwani said such activities serve as the foundation for cultivating a responsible and loyal generation.

On the occasion, the Minister congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and the Kuwaiti people on starting the country's national celebrations.

During the flag-raising ceremony at the Ministry's General Office lobby, Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, expressed the pride in Kuwait's history and the unity of its people. He emphasized drawing inspiration from past achievements as a source of strength for future progress and solidarity.

In extending his heartfelt congratulations and blessings, Al-Adwani acknowledged His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister, and His Highness Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, along with the entire Kuwaiti populace, as the nation embarked on celebrating its precious national holidays.

Al-Adwani underscored the crucial role played by the Ministry of Education in nurturing the national spirit among students. This involves designing educational curricula and promoting school activities that foster loyalty and a sense of belonging to the homeland. By encouraging community participation, the Ministry aims to contribute to the development of a generation that takes pride in its country and assumes responsibility for its progress.

The ceremony saw the presence of the ministry's leaders, including assistant undersecretaries, directors, and employees, alongside delegations from Arab and Gulf countries participating in the Al Salam Flower Camp. The event also featured the enthusiastic involvement of male and female scouts and guides. Notably, the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy actively participated through its committee dedicated to developing and implementing strategies for electricity and water consumption rationalization. A corner was dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of preserving water and utilizing it judiciously.

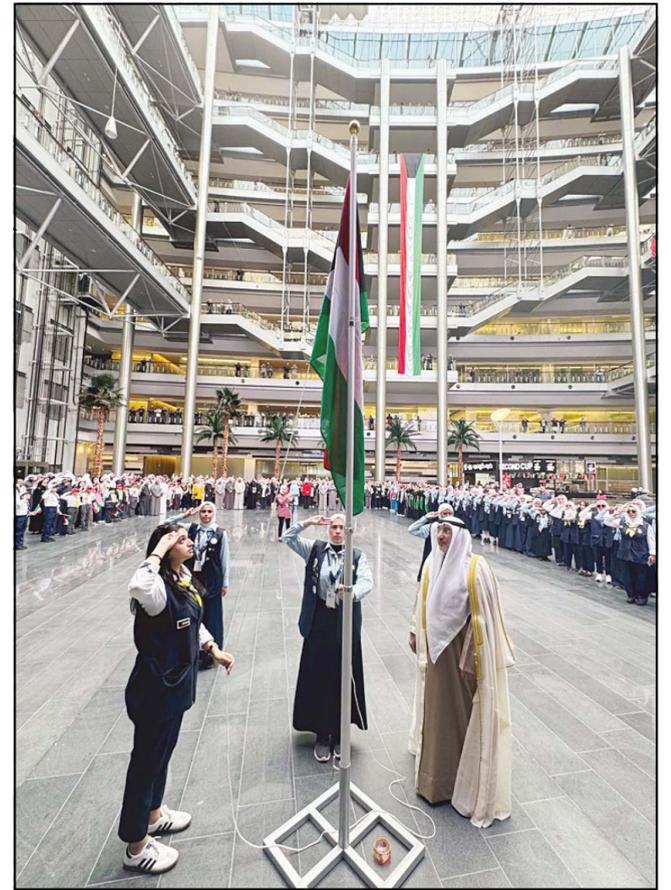


Photo by Mahmoud Jadeed
Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr. Adel Al-Adwani during the flag-hoisting ceremony.

Nod to barbecuing on beaches

Nov 1-March 31 at specified places: DG Municipality

Farmers thank philanthropist

New Abdali Clinic opened after '30 years' of waiting

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: A number of Kuwaiti farmers expressed their happiness with the completion of the new Abdali Clinic after nearly 30 years of waiting.

They thanked the philanthropist businessman Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanim, who built the clinic at his own expense, given the importance of the clinic to the farmers, workers, and residents of the region.

In this regard, farmer Fahad Al-Shraideh extended gratitude and appreciation to the philanthropist Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanim for the opening of the "integrated" Abdali clinic.

He explained that Al-Ghanim built and furnished it at his own expense in Qashaniya, the center of the Abdali Agricultural Area, in the far north of Kuwait close to the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border.

The new clinic will replace the old clinic next to it, which had rooms with prefabricated rooftops and a small area, and has been used for more than three decades.

Al-Shraideh affirmed that the new clinic was established after a long wait, as the old one was no longer suitable for the status of Kuwait especially for the requirements of the residents of the Abdali area, which necessitated the construction of the new clinic.

Meanwhile, farmer Faisal Al-Zoubi said the new clinic includes all health services for all Abdali farmers, their families, workers, and their increasing visitors.

He said, "Abdali has become a vital area. Thousands of Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti families are keen to visit it throughout the winter and spring months to enjoy its refreshing atmosphere and spacious farms, and to buy fresh products from its popular fixed and mobile markets.

"The Abdali Clinic not only serves Abdali farmers, their families, workers and visitors, but it also serves those traveling to the northern Kuwait region and those returning or coming from Iraq."

In addition, farmers Saleh Al-Dhabib, Faisal Al-Zoubi, Moataz Al-Omani, and Saleh Al-Dhabib unanimously agreed that the new Abdali Clinic building has become an important necessity for the region.

They revealed that it was completed a few months ahead of schedule because it was the subject of constant follow-up by the one who was responsible for building and equipping it - the Kuwaiti philanthropist Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanim.



Al-Ghanim

By Inaas Awad

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Director General of Kuwait Municipality Saud Al-Dabbous issued an administrative decision yesterday to regulate the places intended for barbecuing inside public places, squares, facilities, waterfronts, and public lands.

According to the first article of the decision, barbecuing will be allowed from November 1 to March 31 of each year from 12 noon to 4:00 pm on the beaches controlled by the Tourism Enterprises Company (TEC) behind Meghana Restaurant in Service Center 2, behind Burger King and Pizza Hut restaurants in Service Center 3, and behind Villa Fayrouz Restaurant in Service Center 4. Barbecuing is also allowed at Egaila Beach and Al-Khairan Park for members only during the times set by TEC.

Barbecuing is banned on all Kuwaiti islands and beaches subject to the municipality, which are Shuwaikh Beach, which extends from Seif Palace to the oil complex, Anjafa Beach No. 17 opposite Salwa Block 12, Fintas Beach No. 8 next to Egaila Park, Mahboula Beach No. 10, and Abu Al Hasaniya Beach No. 5 in Abu Al Hasaniya Block 11

The decision specified eight controls for barbecuing in the permitted places, which are -

1. The materials used for barbecuing must be environmentally friendly.
2. Barbecuing should be done only on designated tiled areas, and not on any green space and sand.
3. The stove must be at least one meter high from the ground
4. Signboards to that effect should be placed at the entrances and exits of the beaches and inside them with a warning outside those designated spaces
5. Beach-goers must be obligated to ensure that all waste and materials that aid combustion are extinguished and transferred to a designated container of high quality provided by TEC.
6. A specific vehicle should be allocated to remove barbecue and charcoal waste without merging any other waste or rubbish in order to avoid any situation that occurs inadvertently or by mistake.
7. The beach-goers should commit to not breaking or vandalizing public property.
8. A special team will be formed by the municipality and the environmental police to follow up on the level of cleanliness in beaches and for inspection.

Article 4 of the decision required all parties under whose supervision the sites authorized for barbecue are located and mentioned in the decision to set requirements, create explanatory maps and indicative signs, determine the designated area for barbecue in each site separately, and specify the times during which barbecuing is permitted.

Awareness campaigns will be conducted for citizens and residents by the authorities concerned with the sites in coordination with the municipality on various media. The authority supervising the sites designated for barbecuing should be committed to the provisions of the Environmental Protection law No. 42/2014 and its amendments.

Article 7 of the decision stressed that the municipal employees who hold judicial police status are responsible for controlling violations in accordance with the provisions of decree law No. 9/1987 regarding the prohibition of certain acts that are harmful to public cleanliness and plants.

Ministerial resolution No. 354/2023 regarding municipal waste management and public hygiene regulations requires taking legal measures to control violations and issuing the necessary reports regarding them to the competent authority.

Article 8 of the decision highlights the right of the municipality to amend the controls and places allowed for barbecuing in order to achieve the public interest.



KUNA photo
Foreign Affairs Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya holds talks with KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer.

KRCS humanitarian work praised

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Foreign Affairs Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya praised the remarkable contributions of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) in serving the purpose of humanitarian work during his recent meeting with KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer at the ministry's headquarters, reports Al-Rai daily.

Al-Yahya expressed appreciation for the relentless efforts of the Society in delivering humanitarian, medical and relief aid to the afflicted peoples around the world. He highlighted the prestigious position of the State of Kuwait and its rich record of distin-

guished humanitarian work.

During the meeting, they discussed the activities and projects of KRCS at the regional and global levels; as well as ways to strengthen cooperation with international organizations affiliated with the United Nations, in addition to the humanitarian, non-governmental and civil society organizations. They stressed the need for concerted efforts in dealing with humanitarian emergencies resulting from wars and crises, including Kuwait's provision of humanitarian aid for the Palestinians in Gaza.



Al-Dabbous

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Forging nationalities snowballed into malaise, crime in Kuwaiti society'

"THE prevalent issue of forgery in our nation has evolved into a perilous and increasingly widespread phenomenon. The root cause lies in society's growing emphasis on outward appearances rather than genuine capabilities, intellectual prowess, or inner integrity," columnist Dr Muhammad Abdulmoheeen Al-Maqqatei wrote for *Al-Jarida* daily.

"Reflecting on Kuwait during the 1960s and 1970s, the formative years of my generation, the society was closely-knit, fostering strong connections among its people. The widely embraced Kuwaiti proverb of the time encapsulated this sense of unity: "We are all people of a village, and each one knows his brother."

"In those decades, Kuwaiti society was characterized by simplicity, spontaneity, and authenticity in relationships.

"It was a society marked by boldness, sincerity, and a foundation of trust, honesty, and good moral values. There was a notable absence of hypocrisy, sycophancy, or flattery, even towards those in elevated positions, including the ruler. While the ruler commanded admiration and respect, it was not achieved through flattery or insincerity, in stark contrast to the contemporary ethical standards witnessed today. In the present era, some individuals resort to adopting new and dubious moral standards in pursuit of undeserved status.

"Regrettably, this has led to the emergence of examples who, despite their moral shortcomings, attain prominence. This pattern is reminiscent of the experiences of newcomers throughout various periods in history.

"The status of the man/person and his status in the "Kuwait of the past" stemmed from his humility, the elevation of his character, his good neighborliness, and his distinguished reputation, which is the secret of the strong bond of the people of Kuwait in their belonging to their homeland, their love for it, and their sacrifice for it with its various true and basic components and groups. They are Kuwaitis by right of belonging and loyalty.

"Following the influx of migrants, who later asserted their ties to the country, a wave of newcomers rushed to capitalize on the opportunities provided by our nation, Kuwait. Notwithstanding their lack of participation in enduring the challenges of residing in Kuwait, contributing to its development, or defending it, these individuals sought to leverage Kuwait's openness and leniency toward



Al-Maqqatei

expatriates for a better life, lawful livelihood, and employment prospects.

"However, their pursuit of citizenship faced formidable barriers, with the doors tightly shut. In an attempt to secure citizenship, they falsely claimed to be offspring of Kuwait, disregarding the comprehensive records in Kuwait that specify their nationalities and document their countries of origin, as validated by official statistics, notably the 1957 census.

"As nationality laws and investigating committees came into play, these matters were resolved, distinguishing Kuwaitis from other residents based on their respective nationalities. Subsequently, instances of false claims surged, accompanied by audacious manipulation of data and attempts to alter documents, highlighting the worsening phenomenon of forged citizenship -- whether acquired through purchase, illegal means, or through ingratiating oneself to influential figures or sheikhs.

"The emergence of cases involving political naturalization and manipulation for the sake of loyalties and agents added complexity to the issue. The progression of stages witnessed a proliferation of forgery cases, with the manipulation of nationality becoming a prominent breeding ground for fraudulent activities.

"The assertion of lineage and changes in names became crucial steps, with the exploitation of laws governing claims of lineage and name changes. Families underwent alarming alterations, changing not only individuals' first, second, and third names but even their family names.

"Many families engaged in a scandalous and widely-known forgery to conceal their non-Kuwaiti origins, facilitated by leniency, laxity, and, in some instances, collusion that aided in accomplishing their goals.

The scope of forgery expanded from birth certificates to academic credentials, with individuals obtaining fictitious certificates from nonexistent countries, universities, or commercial establishments.

"The snowball effect gained momentum, especially as those rightfully naturalized -- albeit a minority -- or unjustly naturalized, comprising the majority, achieved their status through political manipulation, forgery, data distortion, or tampering.

"Armed with documents or employing a disconcerting duplicity, these individuals transitioned into voters, marking the commencement of a political terror game. The unsettling trend of annually granting naturalization to 4,000 people evolved into a web of deals, trades, and falsification of citizenship.

"This unethical practice eventually led to the legitimization of changes in cit-

izenship descriptors through laws that contradicted the constitution. The market for parliamentary seats thrived on this, alienating sovereignty and prioritizing personal gain over the country's interests.

"Kuwaiti identity and nationality, once sacrosanct, transformed into commodities traded in the marketplace of electoral bids, further fueling the rise of manipulation and fraud related to citizenship. The majority of naturalized individuals, obtained through questionable means, underscored the urgent need for a thorough review to cleanse the nationality records of these irregularities.

"Consequently, society found itself victimized by forgery and counterfeiters -- be it in the form of forged citizenship or manipulated data and documents."

Also:

"I was attracted by the news that Al-Qabas published on its front page recently accusing former ministers of embezzlement of public funds," columnist Mishari Jassem Al-Anjari wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"I would like here to repeat what I mentioned previously about the seriousness of this issue for the country and its future.

"The thefts and infringements of public funds of all kinds that occurred in the past two decades, especially from some senior officials, are the main reason for the random decisions that led to the next state budget reaching approximately 26 billion dinars, of which subsidies and salaries constitute 80%, which is the opposite of the normal percentage. A properly prepared budget, with major failures in the fairness of salary grants and in providing job opportunities, housing, education, health, infrastructure, etc., and with a failure to diversify sources of income is worth taking note of.

"The danger of these infringements and thefts also lies in their direct and direct relationship with the administrative and financial laxity that citizens see and talk about and their effect on officials with hesitation in making the right decisions and the weakness of successive governments in the face of mistakes and future dangers.

"We hope, as we see, that this situation will not continue, which will not lead to in the country except into the unknown. It is worth noting that we must thank, appreciate and be grateful to everyone who has contributed and is contributing to uncovering every crime and not covering it up until it is referred to justice."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

Law to eradicate corruption

Kuwaiti jailed for insulting investigator

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Those who participated in the forum organized by the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies stated that Law No. 1/2023 regarding preventing conflicts of interest and its executive regulations is intended to eradicate the exploitation of public office for personal interests and make decisions that serve the employees or those close to them.

They stressed that the law will instill a culture of anti-corruption in society, as it does not neglect any functional level of public functions in Kuwait to achieve integrity and transparency; however, its results will take time.

Meanwhile, the official spokesman and acting Secretary-General of the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Dr. Mohammad Bou Zubar said Law No. 1/2023 on the prevention of conflicts of interest and its executive regulations represent a practical implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which Kuwait signed in December 2003 in Mexico along with 140 countries in the world.

He pointed out the close relationship between corruption and manifestations of conflicts of interest, favoritism and nepotism, as this results in mistrust due to reliance on personal and family ties instead of standards of competence and experience.

Bou Zubar called for the need to have foundations in all state institutions to enhance values and moral motives and avoid exploiting the job for private interests.

He stressed that the penal legislation protects all components of public jobs and has criminalized behaviors and manifestations of tampering with them, such as assaulting public funds, bribery, non-implementation of judicial rulings, insulting an employee, and conflicts of interest.

Bou Zubar said, "The law preventing conflicts of interest was issued in its first version in 2018, but it was issued in a very shameful manner and contained ambiguous phrases. There was a clear defect that placed the judge in a position of doubt and suspicion.

After challenging the law, the Constitutional Court ruled it as unconstitutional because it was harsh and exaggerated, and sometimes forced the employee to leave his job.

After that law, the integrity Law No. 31/2023 was issued, and 17,000 public jobs were subject to it until the conflict-of-interest law came to expand the scope of public jobs and include every person assigned to a public service. They should address those subject to them and those close to them in the second degree."

Meanwhile, a Professor of Criminal Law at Kuwait University Dr. Khaled Al-Rashidi stated that an employee who falls into a conflict of interest must submit a written disclosure to a specific party within 15 days from the date of his learning of the case, along with revealing the information and providing data about the case.

He stressed that there are two types of conflict of interest - the first is a criminal conflict of interest whereby committing it is a crime, and the second is administrative conflict of interest, which is only a disciplinary violation.

Jail for insulting official: The Misdemeanor Court sentenced a Kuwaiti citizen to three-month imprisonment for verbally insulting an investigator at the Ministry of Interior while the latter was performing his duty, and ordered the referral of the case to the relevant civil court circuit.

The Public Prosecution had charged the citizen with insulting the employee of the Ministry of Interior using inappropriate words and gestures, as specified in the report.

Because of it, the Public Prosecution requested that the accused be punished in accordance with Article 134/1 of the Penal Code.

During the court session, the counsel of the investigator lawyer Abdul Lateef Al-Sarraf explained that the allegations leveled against the accused were proven with evidence.

This was confirmed from the statements of his client, who works as an investigator, that he was in the investigation office when two individuals came, and one of them had a referral from Public Security but without police presence with them or the person who prepared this referral.

When he was informed of the referral, it was found that there was only one party, without the data of the other party present with him, without a date on the referral, and without the name of the person who wrote down this referral. It also had scratches. When asked who wrote this referral, he said it was written by a policeman in the police station.

He wrote it down and informed him that the police were to be brought, after which the accused came. He told him to rest in the adjacent office so that he could inform him of the method for writing the referral and the error found in it. However, the accused then shouted at his client saying, "I am sitting in the office and I am not waiting for you, and if you want to come to me, come on." He waved his hand and shouted in front of his client's colleague and one of the clients. Witnesses to the incident confirmed the wrongdoing of the accused, and their testimony was consistent with his client's statements.

Other Voices

'Stop this unjustified waste'

By Ahmad alsarraf

The National Assembly committed a financial crime against itself and squandered public money, when, years ago, it approved the appointment of 15 citizens to become assistants and secretaries for each member, and the majority of representatives appointed their wives, children, and relatives.

Over time, these people became a financial, moral, and social burden on the state and society, as they have no real job, not even a place to sit on the council, with an annual cost equivalent to \$50 million in salaries!



alsarraf

MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri previously stated, almost a year ago, that in 2024 there will be a new pandemic, and the United Nations will require every individual to carry a card proving that he is vaccinated, otherwise he will not be able to leave his house or buy or sell anything, not even travel. And international Freemasonry is planning this, and perhaps their goal is to kill a billion people. He personally conducted a live dialogue with representatives of the White House, convinced them of his views, and explained to them the truth of his fears (!!!).

He also finally warned the Minister of Health that "we all" know the danger of Corona vaccines, and their goal of harming people, with the aim of spreading diseases and reducing humanity's numbers, so why should the Kuwaiti government, represented by the Ministry of Health, submit to these agendas and accept to be a tool for implementing a plan that is forbidden by law constitutionally, morally and humanely. He called on Kuwait to withdraw, unilaterally, from the World Health Organization!!

Then this MP came back a few days ago with a warning about planes spraying chem-trails in the sky of Kuwait. He asked who was spraying these harmful substances, warning the concerned minister of their danger to health and the environment. Of course, all his illusions and claims were prov-

en wrong, and I do not know what the duties of the 15 secretaries are and who works for him?

On the other hand, the other MP, Hassan Johar, had previously stated that he had documents proving the deposit of tens of millions of dinars in the accounts of ministers, during the era of the Sabah Al-Khaled government, and of course during the era of Marzuq Al-Ghanim, and that he presented that proof to the former prime minister, but when "Nazaha" summoned him to provide his evidence, he refused to appear before the investigators. The same representative made other funny allegations, during the pandemic, when he accused the government, also without evidence, of spending five million dinars to buy 5 million masks (!!!)

MP Mohammad Al-Mutairi also waved more than once a folder he was carrying, which he called the "black file," claiming that it contained a number of serious violations committed during the period in which Marzuq Al-Ghanim was Speaker of the Parliament, and after more than five months have passed, we have not heard of a single scandal from that huge file.

I am not an observer of the Council's work or the statements of its representatives. Rather, I write about what comes to my attention by chance, and I leave the matter of exposing these "inactive people" to professionals like the creative "Khalifa Al-Muzain."

The picture in the world's parliaments is completely different, as most of them appoint two or three assistants for each MP, in specializations related to the nature of their jobs, such as legislators and monitors of government performance. In the US Congress, the senator is given a sum of money to spend on legal studies and consultations, preparing his parliamentary questions, and improving his legislative and oversight performance.

Consequently, Kuwait has the highest number of secretaries in the world dedicated to assisting MPs in their work, and the competence of most of them does not exceed the ability to drive a car. It is necessary for the next President of the Council to reconsider this miserable situation and stop this unjustified waste.

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

'Crackdown to continue'

36 detained in Mahboula raid

By Munaif Nayef

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

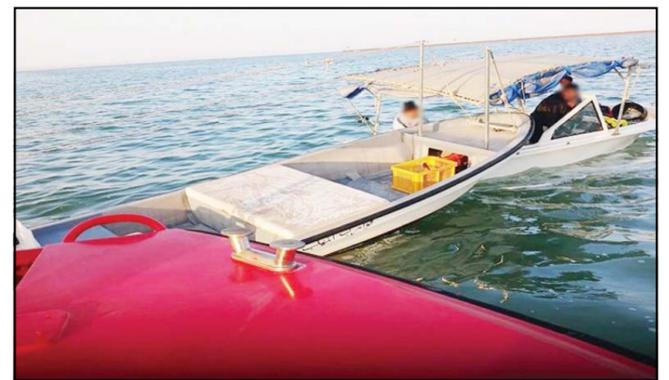
KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Based on directives of the Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf, patrol teams launched a security campaign in Mahboula, which resulted in the arrest of 36 people including violators of the residency law, those wanted by judicial rulings, and a person in possession of narcotic drugs.

According to a press statement issued by the Security Media Department of the Ministry of Interior, these campaigns were conducted under the direct follow-up of the acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf. Extensive security campaigns will continue

to be held throughout the country in order to impose security control and the authority of the law, and extend the umbrella of security and stability over the various regions of the country.

It revealed that the security personnel launched a security campaign in Mahboula, which resulted in the issuance of 258 traffic citations, arrest of 15 people with expired residency, ten without any identification document, one individual in possession of narcotic substances and 13 others wanted by law, and seizure of five vehicles wanted for judicial custody.

The department affirmed that the security establishment is continuing its security efforts to impose the state's prestige, arrest violators, wanted persons and reckless persons, and confront all forms of crime.



Four people were injured as fishing boats collided at sea.

Asian expat perishes on road

4 hurt as fishing boats collide

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The Shuwaikh Fire and Marine Rescue Center, acting on information yesterday afternoon, dealt with a collision that occurred between two fishing boats opposite Doha, reports Al-Anba daily.

The mishap resulted in the injury to four people. The injured men were handed over to the medical emergency personnel.

Expat dies in accident: An unidentified Asian expatriate, born in 1965, died in a tragic hit-and-run motorist on the Jahra Road while he was crossing the road, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a security source, the Ministry of Interior's Operations Room received a report about the hit-and-run accident. Following the report, patrol officers and forensic experts from the Operations Department were promptly dispatched to the site and arrested the motorist who caused the accident and handed him over to the authorities.

The corpse has been referred to Forensics. A case has been registered at the Al-Naeem police station.

'Don't carry liquor': Customs officers at the Nuwaiseeb port have arrested an unnamed individual for attempting to smuggle two bottles of alcohol. The suspect, arriving from an undisclosed Gulf country, had concealed the booze bottles under the passenger seat of the car, reports Al-Anba daily.

Driving drunk: An unidentified expatriate is currently in custody at the Maidan Hawalli police station on charges of driving under the influence of alcohol and colliding with another vehicle. The incident occurred on Al-Muatasem Street, reports Al-Anba daily.

Mahboula fire tackled: Firefighting teams from Al-Mangaf and Fahaaheel centers successfully contained an apartment fire on the second floor of a building in the Mahboula area. The Directorate-General of Fire Department (DGF) issued a statement indicating the evacuation of residents as a precautionary measure before extinguishing the fire. No significant injuries were reported, reports Al-Anba daily.

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Committee deliberates strategic plan and budget for 2024-2025

Regional leaders meet at 37th Exec Cmte for marine protection

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The Executive Committee of the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment held its 37th meeting with the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the organization's headquarters in the State of Kuwait, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The meeting was presided over by the Minister of Oil and Environment, Personal Envoy for Climate Change in the Kingdom of Bahrain, and Chairman of the current session of the organization's Executive Council Dr. Mohammed bin Mubarak bin Dinah.

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Dr. Osama Fakhri, Deputy Director of the Environment Department in the Islamic Republic of Iran Dr. Mojtaba Mazloumi, and the Executive Secretary of the organization Dr. Jassem Bishara participated in the meeting.

Many important topics related to financial, administrative and technical affairs were discussed along

HH Amir and PM congratulate Malaysian King on oath-taking

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Wednesday a cable of congratulations to Sultan Ibrahim, the King of Malaysia, on taking the oath of office.

His Highness the Amir wished the King of Malaysia success and good health and further develop-

ment and progress for the good relationship between Kuwait and Malaysia.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah also sent on Wednesday a cable of congratulations to Sultan Ibrahim, the king of Malaysia, on taking the oath of office.

with what the organization has accomplished since the organization's previous meeting in February 2023.

The organization's five-year strategic plan for the period 2024-2025, and the programs and activities proposed to be implemented in the next five years were also presented to take appropriate decisions to conduct the organization's work in a way that ensures the enhancement of scientific

and environmental returns for the benefit of member states, with the need to develop the organization's administrative and financial regulations.

The executive committee has developed the organization's strategic plan for the next five years and has approved the organization's budget for the year 2024 and the programs and activities for the next two years.



The Executive Committee of the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment's 37th meeting.



The Municipal Council Technical Committee during its eighth meeting of the second session.

Municipal Council Technical Committee OK's Al-Mutlaa City sea bridge proposal

Ministry of Justice's request approved

By Inaas Awad

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Head of the Technical Committee of the Municipal Council Dr. Hassan Kamal said the committee, in its eighth meeting of the second session yesterday, discussed the proposal of some members

of the Municipal Council regarding the establishment of a sea bridge to connect Al-Mutlaa City to Kuwait City.

In a press statement, he revealed that the government authorities concerned with the matter have been summoned - the most important of which are the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART), the Environment Public Authority (EPA), the Structural Plan Department of the Kuwait Municipality, and the General Traffic Department - to know the importance of this proposal, especially with the population growth witnessed by the new residential cities in the locations specified in the proposal, including Al-Mutlaa Residential City, Jaber Al-Ahmad Residential City, and Al-Sabriya.

Dr. Kamal highlighted the importance of the traffic study and the study on the environmental impact of the proposal.

He said the committee approved the proposal in principle and it will be presented to the Municipal Council during its next regular meeting.

Dr. Kamal said, "The committee also approved the Ministry of Justice's request regarding renewing the decision to allocate land for the Family Court building project in the Capital Governorate in Grenada. The land was previously allocated to the ministry but administrative procedures delayed the completion of the project. The land was then re-allocated by the council to the Ministry of Justice due to the expiry of the legally prescribed period for the project. A representative of the Ministry of Justice presented at the committee meeting a detailed explanation of the project and its importance to the ministry."

He explained that the committee discussed a proposal related to Failaka Island which was submitted by its mayor. They discussed the formation of the executive branch of a special committee on the subject and the preparation of a study on it, which included an accurate identification of the state property on the island. They decided to coordinate with the Council of Ministers regarding the proposal, and determine the expropriation rates for private lands on Failaka Island in accordance with legislative and legal controls. The transaction will be returned to the

executive branch to update the response regarding it.

The committee also discussed the request of the Public Authority for Industry to allocate a site to establish a station for treating liquid industrial waste in Sabhan Industrial Area Block 1, and the request of the Ministry of Communication for deducting an area of 15,000 square meters from its former warehouse site in Shuwaikh Industrial Area and allocating it to expand the EPA site in Shuwaikh Industrial Area.

Some of these items will be retained and others will be referred to the executive body again after reviewing the opinions of the representatives of the parties participating in the committee meeting, in order to clarify some decisions and update the responses received from some government agencies regarding them.

The Technical Committee did not accept the Ministry of Finance's request to transfer to the Ministry of Finance's State Treasury the ownership of part of housing site No. 47 located in Mirqab Block 2 in front of Al-Shaheed Park, in order to pay the actuarial deficit to the Public Institution for Social Security.

Meanwhile, the Legal and Financial Committee of the Municipal Council, at its meeting yesterday headed by Fahad Al-Abd Al-Jader, retained the proposal submitted by two members Saud Al-Kandari and Fahid Al-Muwaizri regarding reconsidering the naming of some cities and regions affiliated with the Public Authority for Housing Welfare.

It also discussed the proposal submitted by member Munira Al-Amir regarding amending the advertising regulations to ensure the public interest and preserve the aesthetic character of Kuwait in order to provide her with a technical opinion on what was stated in the proposal, as there is no legal impediment to amending the regulations after their issuance. The proposal was submitted before the regulations and its introduction was provided with a response devoid of technical opinion after studying the terms of the detailed proposal.

The committee also referred to the executive body the proposal related to Route 6.5 submitted by a citizen, the proposal submitted by a citizen regarding naming a street after her father, and the proposal submitted by a citizen regarding the names of the new areas.

Strategic adjustment

Municipality to reduce area of MoD's Air Force Command site

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The Ministry of Defense has informed Kuwait Municipality, as the executive body of the Municipal Council, that it has no objection to reducing the area of the Air Force Command site in Sabhan, which currently is approximately 1,974,544 square meters, to 1,625,892 square meters, in order to avoid any obstacles or disruption to any services, provided that the competent departments are authorized to move and change the dimensions and area of the site to no more than the designated areas, and in the event that it conflicts with any existing infrastructure services or any regulatory reasons, during installation.

It was stated in the transaction approved by the Director General of Kuwait Municipality Saud Al-Dabbous that the Municipal Council, in its decision issued on November 13, 2017, agreed to allocate the administrative and service site to Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate in Sabhan for the benefit

of the Ministry of Defense. This is on condition of coordination with the ministries of services before starting implementation, with the cancellation of the Municipal Council's decision on the same subject issued on 6/10/2013. Based on the above, the municipality's survey department was contacted to stabilize the site for the benefit of the Ministry of Defense.

The ministry stated in its letter dated November 22, 2022 that, after downloading the coordinates of the site of the Air Force Command in Sabhan on the cadastral plans, there were discrepancies, namely, interference with Route 208, the TES cables, and a power station, in addition to interference with a street on the west side of the site.

Accordingly, the municipality informed the Ministry of Defense about the matter, and it in turn responded that it had no objection to reducing the space allocated to them for the Air Force Command site in order to avoid any services or obstacles at the site located in Sabhan.



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His Highness the Amir attends a luncheon in honor of His Highness at Azayez Farm.

Amiri Diwan photo

Amir receives congratulatory cable from Mali's interim president

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Wednesday a cable from Interim President of Republic of Mali Assimi Goita, congratulating His Highness on assuming office. In the cable, the president

wished His Highness the Amir success and good health, and further progress and prosperity to Kuwait.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply cable to the president, expressing his sincere gratitude and appreciation for his heartfelt sentiments.

It's a

Continued from Page 1

Therefore, any malady that befalls either of them is reflected in the other, because the relationship between the two nations is deep-rooted and well manifested by the leadership of the two countries, ensuring the deepening of brotherly relations.

From this standpoint, the reception for His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad in Riyadh and the brotherly embrace between His Highness the Amir and the Royal Highness of Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, symbolically expressed the extent of the interconnectedness between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Yes, Saudi Arabia has translated what King Salman bin Abdulaziz said in 1986. Four years later, it dedicated its blood, breath and all its capabilities for the return of Kuwait.

In this manner, the late King Fahad also believed that "the dignity of Kuwait is the dignity of Saudi Arabia", which is why the Kuwaiti right triumphed over Saddam's oppression.

Therefore, the blessed visit is a new confirmation that what brings the two countries together is the manifestation of the 130 years of fraternity, love, and historic cohesion.

Kuwait, Saudi

Continued from Page 1

which requests the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to enhance and facilitate search for and determining the fate of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals or restoring the framework of the Tripartite Committee and its technical subcommittee, under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross and returning the seized Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

They urged the UN Security Council to continue following up on these important issues and the UN Secretary General to present regular report on the achieved progress and UNAMI efforts in this regard in accordance with paragraph four of the aforementioned UN Security Council Resolution and called on Iraq and the United Nations.

The two sides reaffirmed what was stated in a previous joint statement that Durra field is located entirely in Kuwait's exclusive maritime areas and that the natural resources in the divided submerged area, including the entire Durra field, are shared between the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia only, and they have full exclusive rights to exploit them.

They expressed categorical rejection of any claims of rights for any other party in this field or the divided submerged area.

The two sides renewed call for the Islamic Republic of Iran to negotiate over the eastern border for the divided submerged area with the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as one party in accordance with the provisions of international law.

The joint statement also noted that the talks focused on boosting economic, commercial and investment cooperation.

In this regard, the two sides praised the growth of trade relations and mutual investments.

They pointed out that the bilateral trade exchange reached KD 900 million (USD 2.92 billion) in 2022 and KD 490 million (USD 1.59 billion) in the first seven months of 2023.

They stressed the importance of expanding economic cooperation and partnership, achieving economic integration through the opportunities available in the two countries as part of the Kuwait Vision 2035 and the Kingdom Vision 2030.

They agreed on facilitating Saudi investments in Kuwait in a number of targeted sectors, including industry,

communications, logistics, financial technology, infrastructure, and real estate development.

The Saudi side invited Kuwaiti investors and companies to expand their businesses in the Kingdom and take advantage of the available investment opportunities.

The two sides expressed their aspiration to sign an agreement on avoiding double taxation.

They said they are looking forward to holding the second session of the Kuwaiti-Saudi Coordination Council, scheduled to be held this year in Kuwait, and to work on implementing the agreed upon initiatives.

The two sides welcomed the signing of a memorandum of understanding in the field of cybersecurity between the two countries and stressed the importance of continuing to strengthen cooperation in this field.

They hailed the signing of an agreement on a railway project to link the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which will help enhance trade exchange and economic cooperation between the two countries.

They commended their energy cooperation and the successful efforts of the OPEC+ countries in maintain the stability of global oil markets.

They called for continuing this cooperation and urged all participating countries to adhere to the OPEC+ agreement in a way that serves the interests of producers and consumers and supports the growth of the global economy.

They agreed to enhance cooperation in oil and gas and their derivatives, hydrocarbon resources, clean technologies, and execution of projects to ensure the sustainability of global energy supplies.

With regard to climate change, the two sides agreed to increase cooperation in implementing international climate policies that focus on emissions, rather than fuel sources, by applying the circular economy approach of reducing, reusing, recycling, and removing carbon from the environment to address carbon emissions in an economically sustainable manner and reach carbon neutrality.

They called for cooperation and exchange of expertise related to the latest technologies of hydrogen transportation and storage.

The two sides expressed their desire to maximize local content in energy sector projects through incentivizing innovation and applying emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, in the energy sector.

They concurred on upgrading cooperation in a wide array of domains including: communications, technology, digital economy, innovation and space; judiciary and justice; healthcare; air, land and rail transport, ports, logistics services and civil aviation; culture and tourism, sports, higher education and scientific research and media.

They also agreed on enhancing cooperation in energy efficiency; electricity and renewable energy production and usage; marine environment protection; trade exchange; and finance, particularly with regard to implementing financial reforms, diversifying sources of income, enhancing the efficiency and transparency of public finance, and joint coordination on regional and international financial issues.

They agreed to intensify cooperation to reach industrial integration in priority sectors and to discuss ways of cooperation between financial institutions in the two countries to provide credit facilities for non-oil goods and products to enhance trade exchange.

On the defense and security side, the two sides affirmed their keenness to strengthen defense cooperation in all fields and develop strategic relations and partnerships to protect the security and stability of the two countries and the region.

They admired the existing level of cooperation and security coordination between the two countries and affirmed their desire to boost cooperation in combating crimes - especially drugs trafficking and dealing; border security; extremism, hate speeches and terrorism; spreading a culture of

HH Amir attends luncheon at Azayez farm

In presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Al-Quds Fund and

Endowment, Prince Turki Al-Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, and Al-Sabah family members, a luncheon was held by Sheikh Ali Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Azayez farm in Kuwait's northern Al-Abdali area on Wednesday. (KUNA)

Gulf Conference crucial for advancing digital construction: Supreme Council

Reducing costs and enhancing efficiency

Kuwait achieves

Continued from Page 1

Dr. Al-Awadhi emphasized the significance of early detection, emphasizing that it reduces treatment duration, related complications, and saves time and effort for prompt diagnosis and cure. The Gulf Week for Cancer Awareness, a collaborative effort between the health councils of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Gulf Federation for Cancer Control (GFFCC), has successfully worked towards regional awareness and early detection campaigns for cancer over the past nine years.

Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh, Secretary General of GFFCC and chairman of CAN, highlighted the considerable success of the Gulf Week since its inception in 2016, with approximately 2120 events taking place. This accomplishment not only saved lives but also garnered significant support from the health system, encompassing 19 local civil society organizations, government agencies, and public institutions.

Dr. Hessa Al-Shaheen, the head of the coordinative committee for the Gulf Week, detailed this year's program, featuring 60 social, scientific, sports, artistic, and entertainment events to spread cancer awareness both in real life and on social media. She praised the inter-GCC cooperation, stating that it would contribute to addressing cancerous diseases and effectively managing treatment and preventive measures.

MP seeks

Continued from Page 1

He affirmed these two bills are part of the legislative agenda approved by 48 MPs, urging his colleagues to bear their responsibility towards the citizens.

On the other hand, MP Osama Al-Shaheen forwarded queries to Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Yusuf Al-Sabah about the family visa regulations. He wants to know the new rules in this regard, if there is a quota for every expatriate community, and developments in the enforcement of Law No. 74/2020 on addressing the demographic imbalance issue since the Council of Ministers assigned the Interior Minister to implement the law.

MP Hamdan Al-Azmi asked Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Emad Al-Atiqi if the recommendations of the parliamentary fact-finding committee formed in the previous legislative year about the violations in the recruitment and promotion of employees at Kuwait National Petroleum Corporation (KNPC) have been implemented, if the percentage of nationals working in contracting companies was modified in view of the recommendations that nationals should constitute at least 40 percent of the total administrative workforce and 50 percent of the total number of technical staff, percentage of national workers in the last five years, and strategy to Kuwaitize jobs in contracting companies.

He added the committee also recommended filling up vacancies in KNPC and the executive regulations must be amended such that positions are not left vacant for more than three months. He inquired about the current number of vacancies at KNPC and its subsidiaries, if any position has been vacant for years, and reasons behind the delay in filling up vacancies.

He also requested for the list of the chairpersons and members of the boards of directors of KNPC's subsidiaries including their qualifications, age, term and date of appointment. He asked about the number of vacant board chairperson and member posts in the subsidiaries, number of expatriates working at KNPC and its subsidiaries, number of terminated expatriate workers since the implementation of the policy on replacing expatriates with nationals, number of national workers appointed at KNPC and its subsidiaries since the enforcement of the policy, current number of nationals working at KNPC and its subsidiaries compared to the expatriates.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31, (KUNA): The Supreme Council for Planning and Development stressed the importance of the Gulf Conference and Exhibition for Construction Information Modeling and Digital Construction in reviewing and discussing regional and international developments in the field of digital construction, and coming up with results and recommendations that maximize the role of digital construction in supporting the vision of New Kuwait 2035.

This announcement was made during a press conference held today, Tuesday, by Dr. Khaled Mahdi, the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, to declare the establishment of the Gulf Exhibition and Conference for Construction Information Modeling and Digital Construction in Kuwait. The event will commence next Sunday and will feature an elite group of academics, as well as local, Gulf, and international experts. It is scheduled to last for four days.

Mahdi stated that the conference aims to review the digitization of facility and facility management, with the goal of adopting digital designs for buildings and facilities. This, in turn, facilitates the provision of human resources to manage these facilities. Additionally, the conference aims to provide an integrated archive of the building from its construction,

MSA adopts 'flexible' working hours policy

By Fares Al-Abdan
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Abdulaziz Sari Al-Mutairi issued a decision to implement a flexible working hour system in the ministry.

According to the decision, the start of the official working hours of the ministry is from 7:00am to 9:00am. The employee is allowed to report to work at any time during this period, but he must complete seven working hours started from the time he clocked in.

This decision does not prejudice the grace periods stipulated at the beginning and end of official working hours, the permission system, or other rules and provisions contained in Civil Service Council resolution No. 41/2006.

tracking it through a digital record of all the stages that the building goes through.

He explained that the role of the General Secretariat of Planning in such initiatives is to provide integrated support and encouragement. He noted that the first study conducted by the Secretariat of Planning regarding the digitization of facilities and building management was in 2018. The study included the most prominent frameworks required for the management of state facilities and property and was sent to all concerned parties.

He stated that creating a digital data foundation for managing facilities and buildings would contribute to reducing financial waste.



KUNA photo

Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Dr. Khaled Mahdi, and Chairman of the Conference Organizing Committee and faculty member at the American International University, Dr. Manal Al-Adwani.

Cooperative Society sets record with 12% shareholders profit distribution

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Cooperative Society, Abdullah Abdul Redha, announced that the Board of Directors has approved the distribution of the highest return of profits in the history of cooperative societies to shareholders at a rate of 12 percent, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This percentage has been approved by the Ministry of Social Affairs, pointing out that the cooperative movement has achieved much by the end of the

fiscal year 2023, launching into a new digital world through the information technology and the use of smart applications, as well as increasing deposits to the tune of 3,265,759 dinars in banks for the first time in the history of the association an increase of 2.4% for 2022, and increasing sales by 335 thousand dinars in 2022.

Abdul Reda said, in a press statement, that the current Board of Directors has achieved much in the financial, administrative, marketing and even investment sectors.

World News Roundup

Europe

Denmark's King Frederik X visits Poland: King Frederik X of Denmark began his first trip abroad as monarch Wednesday with a three-day visit to Poland that is focused on promoting his country's businesses and climate policies.

Frederik, who was proclaimed king on Jan. 14, received a red-carpet welcome at the presidential palace in Warsaw, where he was greeted by Polish President Andrzej Duda and an honor guard.

Danish monarchs traditionally have traveled to another Scandinavian country first, but Frederik's visit to Poland was planned before his mother, Queen Margrethe II, announced her surprise abdication in a New Year's Eve address.

The king's trip therefore was not being treated as a state visit. He arrived without his Australian-born wife, Queen Mary.

Later Wednesday, Frederik is scheduled to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a memorial for soldiers who died defending Poland. His itinerary also includes visits to the two houses of parliament, the Sejm and the Senate, and a luncheon and a dinner at the Royal Palace in Warsaw alongside Duda.

Denmark's foreign minister, defense minister and minister for climate, energy and utilities are accompanying the king, and Danish business representatives were expected to attend the dinner. (AP)



King Frederik X

Russia lawmakers approve confiscating assets: The lower house of Russia's parliament on Wednesday approved a bill that would allow authorities to confiscate money, valuables and other assets from people convicted of spreading "deliberately false information" about the country's military.

After its swift passage in the State Duma, the bill is now expected to quickly sail through the upper house of parliament and receive Russian President Vladimir Putin's signature.

Duma speaker Vyacheslav Volodin said the measure would strengthen the punishment for the "traitors who sling mud at our country and our troops" and "strip those scoundrels of honorary titles, confiscate their assets, money and other valuables."

The new law would apply to people who are convicted of publicly inciting "extremist activities," calling for actions that would hurt the security of the state or "discrediting" the armed forces. Discrediting the Russian military became a criminal offense under a law adopted as part of a sweeping government crackdown on dissent after Moscow sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022. (AP)

EU Parliament probes Latvian lawmaker: The European Parliament has opened an investigation into news reports that a Latvian member of the assembly, Tatjana Zdanoka, has been working as a Russian agent for several years, officials said Tuesday.

The president of the European Union's legislative body, Roberta Metsola, "takes these allegations very seriously," her office said in a statement. Metsola is tasking a parliamentary committee that handles EU lawmakers' code of conduct with handling the case.

Nordic and Baltic news sites reported on Monday that Zdanoka has been an agent for the Russian Federal Security Service, or FSB, since at least 2004.

Following a joint investigation, the independent Russian investigative journalism site The Insider, its Latvian equivalent Re:Baltica, news portal Delfi Estonia, and Swedish newspaper Expressen published a number of emails they said were leaked showing her interactions with her handler. (AP)

Reintroducing mandatory army draft eyed: Serbia is considering reintroducing compulsory military service, its president said Tuesday, citing tensions in the Balkans and elsewhere in Europe.

President Aleksandar Vucic said top army commanders gave him "a strong argumentation" in favor of the reintroduction of a mandatory draft, which was suspended in 2011 in a push to professionalize the armed forces.

The populist Serbian president did not specify when the draft would return. He said the national parliament, which is dominated by his allies, would vote on the proposal, which comes after a long campaign by nationalists in favor of it.

"We are not threatening anyone," Vucic said as he inspected an exhibition of military hardware after meeting with the commanders. "Today, if you don't have (a strong) army, you don't have a country." (AP)

Italy ramps up protest with Hungary: Italy has ramped up its protests over the treatment of an Italian antifascist being held in a Hungarian jail, after images of her appearing chained and shackled at a Budapest court hearing this week sparked outrage here.

Iliana Salis was arrested in Budapest last year and is suspected of being involved in assaults against participants in Hungary's Day of Honor commemorations. Each Feb. 11, far-right activists commemorate the failed attempt by Nazi and allied Hungarian soldiers to break out of Budapest during the Red Army's siege of the city in 1945.

On Wednesday, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni spoke about Salis' detention in a phone call with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Orban's press chief Bertalan Havasi told local news site telex.hu. (AP)

Norway prepares for biggest storm in 30 yrs: Norway's central Atlantic coast battered down on Wednesday as authorities warned that the country could see its most powerful storm in three decades and urged people to stay indoors.

Hurricane-force winds are expected to hit the region, as air traffic companies and ferry lines predicted disruptions. Police warned that gusts of 126 to 180 kilometers per hour (78 to 112 miles per hour) were expected.

Named "Ingunn" by Norwegian meteorologists, the storm was expected to land in central Norway around midday Wednesday before moving north Thursday.

The storm is expected to hit the same area as the 1992 New Year's hurricane, one of the strongest storms in Norway's history, the newspaper VG wrote. (AP)

Norway's aging king on sick leave: Norway's aging king, Harald V, is on sick leave until Feb. 2 because of a respiratory infection, the Norwegian palace said in a brief statement Wednesday.

The 86-year-old monarch, who has repeatedly said he has no plans to abdicate unlike his second cousin Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, has been hospitalized several times in recent months. In December, he was admitted to a hospital with an infection and was treated with intravenous antibiotics. He also was hospitalized last August with a fever.

Harald, who has been seen using crutches in recent years, had an operation to replace a heart valve in October 2020 after being hospitalized with breathing difficulties. (AP)

'Think creatively about compensation': The foreign minister in Poland's new pro-European Union government said Tuesday he would like Germany's leaders to think in a "creative" way about compensating Poland for huge losses it suffered at German hands during World War II.

The request was greatly toned down from that of Poland's previous right-wing government, which had demanded \$1.3 trillion in reparations for Nazi Germany's invasion and occupation in 1939-45.

German officials have consistently said that while Berlin recognizes its historical responsibility, the issue of reparations was settled decades ago. (AP)



US Rep Chip Roy, R-Texas, and other House Republicans speak to reporters to show their support for pursuing impeachment of Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas during a news conference at the Capitol in Washington on Jan 29. Inset: Mayorkas testifies on Capitol Hill, Nov. 8, 2023, in Washington. (AP)

Politics

Border becomes 2024 campaign issue

House OKs Mayorkas impeachment charges

WASHINGTON, Jan 31, (AP) — House Republicans voted along party lines after midnight Wednesday to move toward impeaching Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas for a "willful and systematic" refusal to enforce immigration laws as border security becomes a top 2024 election issue.

The Homeland Security Committee debated all day Tuesday and well into the night before recommending two articles of impeachment against Mayorkas to the full House, a rare charge against a Cabinet official unseen in nearly 150 years, as Republicans make GOP presidential front-runner Donald Trump's hard-line deportation approach to immigration their own.

Unified

The committee Republicans voted in favor, while the Democrats unified against, 18-15.

"We cannot allow this man to remain in office any longer," said Chairman Mark Green, R-Tenn.

The impeachment articles charge that Mayorkas "refused to comply with Federal immigration laws" amid a record surge of migrants and that he has "breached the public trust" in his claims to Congress that the US-Mexico border is secure.

The full House could vote on Mayorkas' impeachment as soon as next week. If approved, the charges would go to the Senate for a trial, though senators may first convene a special committee for consideration.

With an unusual personal appeal, Mayorkas - who is deep in Senate talks on a border security package - wrote in a letter to the committee that it should be working with the Biden administration to update the nation's "broken and outdated" immigration laws for the 21st century, an era of record global migration.

"We need a legislative solution and only Congress can provide it," Mayorkas wrote in the pointed letter to the panel's chairman.

Rarely has a Cabinet member faced impeachment's bar of "high crimes and misdemeanors," and Democrats on the panel dismissed the proceedings as a stunt and a sham that could set a chilling precedent for other civil servants snared in policy disputes by

Biden criticizes Trump as he raises money on ex-prez home turf in Fla

JUPITER, Fla., Jan 31, (AP) — Donald Trump's private jet, emblazoned with his last name in bold white letters, was parked nearby when Air Force One landed in Florida, where President Joe Biden labeled his predecessor and potential opponent in this year's campaign as a "loser" while raising money Tuesday for his reelection.

It was a typical jab from Biden, but it came with extra punch on Trump's home turf. The first fundraiser of the day was held at the Pelican Club in Jupiter, a wealthy enclave less than an hour from Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort.

"You're the reason Donald Trump's the defeated president," Biden told donors. "And you're the reason we're going to make him a loser again."

Biden said Republicans were determined to undo his administration's progress, such as limiting the cost of insulin and other prescription drugs, and he accused Trump of "threatening our very democracy."

The Democratic president has been buoyed by positive economic news as fears of a recession have faded. Now he's eager to stockpile campaign cash to help him promote his record and target Trump, the Re-

publican presidential front-runner, in what is expected to be a grueling and expensive election year.

A second fundraiser was held in the Miami area in the evening, and it was hosted by Chris Korge, the national finance chairman for the Democratic National Committee. He said the event raised \$6.2 million.

Biden warned the audience to "imagine the nightmare if Trump returned to office."

Although Florida's wealthy donors make the state an important stop for Biden, it's unlikely to swing his way in November. President Barack Obama won Florida in 2008 and 2012, but Trump carried the state in 2016 and 2020.

Also:

NEW YORK: After initially staying out of the 2024 presidential race, billionaire hedge fund manager Ken Griffin has thrown his support behind Nikki Haley as she takes on Donald Trump for the Republican presidential nomination.

Griffin made two contributions in December and January to a super PAC backing Haley's campaign totaling \$5 million, according to Griffin's spokesperson Zia Ahmed.

works deliberately with the secretary on a bipartisan border security package that is now on life support.

The package being negotiated by the senators with Mayorkas could emerge as the most consequential bipartisan immigration proposal in a decade. Or it could collapse in political failure as Republicans, and some Democrats, run from the effort.

Trump, on the campaign trail and in private talks, has tried to squelch the deal. "I'd rather have no bill than a bad bill," Trump said over the weekend in Las Vegas.



A coalition of community groups and advocates for the How Many Stops Act coalition hold a rally at City Hall on Jan 30, in New York. New York City police officers will be required to record the apparent race, gender and ages of most people they stop for questioning under a law passed on Tuesday by the City Council, which overrode a veto by Mayor Eric Adams. (AP)



Carnahan



Mills

America

Pilot safely ejects from jet: A US Air Force pilot safely ejected from an F-16 fighter jet that crashed into waters off South Korea's southwestern coast on Wednesday, in the second such crash in less than two months.

The unidentified pilot was conscious and was transported to a medical facility for assessment, the US 8th Fighter Wing said in a statement. It said it closely worked with US and South Korean mission partners to recover the pilot, who experienced an unspecified in-flight emergency and ejected before the plane crashed into sea.

The cause of the crash, which reportedly occurred in waters near the port city of Seosan, was being investigated. There were no immediate reports of casualties or property damage caused by the crash.

"We are very thankful to the Republic of Korea rescue forces and all of our teammates who made the swift recovery of our pilot possible," said Col. Matthew C. Gaetke, the wing's commander, referring to South Korea's formal name. "Now we will shift our focus to search and recovery of the aircraft." (AP)

Former Sen Carnahan dies: Former US Sen Jean Carnahan, who became the first female senator to represent Missouri when she was appointed to replace her husband following his death, died Tuesday. She was 90.

Carnahan, a Democrat, was appointed to the Senate in 2001 after the posthumous election of her husband, Gov. Mel Carnahan, and she served until 2002.

"Mom passed peacefully after a long and rich life. She was a fearless trailblazer. She was brilliant, creative, compassionate and dedicated to her family and her fellow Missourians," her family said in a statement.

Her family did not specify the cause of death but said Carnahan died after a brief illness at a hospice facility in suburban St. Louis. (AP)

Florida man gets 30 months: A Florida man convicted of stealing tuition in 2019 from hundreds of families who planned to send their children to sports camps and spending the money on plastic surgery, va-

cations and gambling was sentenced Tuesday to two and a half years in prison.

Mehdi Belhassan, 53, of Tampa, was found guilty on two counts of wire fraud in October 2023. He was also sentenced Tues-

day to two years of supervised release and ordered to pay restitution of \$575,427 and forfeiture of \$443,346.

Beginning in the fall of 2018, Belhassan falsely claimed that he would operate his



Britain's Queen Camilla looks at miniature books as she hosts a reception at Windsor Castle for authors, illustrators and binders who have been involved in the new Miniature Library collection displayed alongside Queen Mary's Dolls' House for visitors to enjoy throughout 2024 in celebration of its centenary year in Windsor, England, on Jan 30. (AP)

Mills announces proposals: Maine Gov Janet Mills called Tuesday evening for strengthening the state's yellow flag law, boosting background checks for private sales of weapons and bolstering mental crisis care, telling lawmakers that there's broad support for action to prevent future tragedies following the deadliest mass shooting in state history.

The Democratic governor delivered her State of the State address to a joint session of the Maine Legislature three months after Army reservist Robert Card killed 18 people and wounded 13 others in Lewiston, the state's second-largest city. Mills read aloud the name of each victim and recognized law enforcement officers in the gallery.

She wants to allow police officers to be able to go directly to a judge to start the process of removing guns from someone in a psychiatric crisis, addressing a problem that arose when a deputy was stymied by Card's refusal to answer the door for a required face-to-face meeting that's necessary under current law. The rampage happened little more than a month later. (AP)

Lat/Am

New program in Haiti

Govt made mistake in war on gangs – Ulloa

SAN SALVADOR, Jan 31, (AP): El Salvador's government "made mistakes" in its war against the country's gangs, but has never undermined the country's democracy to consolidate power, according to the man likely to be reelected vice president.

Félix Ulloa, temporarily on leave as El Salvador's vice president while he runs for reelection alongside Nayib Bukele, defended his government's controversial crackdown in an interview with The Associated Press on Tuesday, days before a presidential election they are expected to win easily. Such policies, he said, will continue until El Salvador's gangs are defeated. Ulloa acknowledged that in their administration's mass detention of citizens the government imprisoned thousands of people who had not committed any crime, something he said they are correcting, but justified the harsh actions as being widely popular and completely "legal."

Since declaring a state of emergency in March 2022 following a surge in gang violence, the government has detained 76,000 people - more than 1% of the population in the small Central American nation. The declaration, which suspended some fundamental rights like access to a lawyer and being told why you're being arrested, has been renewed by congress every month since.



Ulloa

Defended

"There is no perfect work by humans ... Look at the big picture," Ulloa said. "Understand what this country is doing when we have defended people and the human rights of millions of Salvadorans whose rights were being violated by criminal structures."

Around 7,000 people arrested under the state of emergency have since been released from prisons where authorities have been accused of torture, as well as committing systematic and mass human rights abuses. Ulloa said that in some cases officials may have asked security forces to meet quotas of detentions - arresting a predetermined number of people - but that it was "not an order from executives, nor a government policy."

Human rights groups say more than 150 people have died in custody since the beginning of the crackdown.

Reporting by the Associated Press has documented that detainees pass through mass hearings of as many as 300 defendants at a time. They rarely have access to lawyers. The vast majority of those arrested under the emergency declaration remain in prison without having been tried.



Haiti pushes forward with new program: Prime Minister Ariel Henry met for the first time Tuesday with officials from various countries who are part of an international steering committee aimed at boosting the country's beleaguered police department as it awaits the potential deployment of a foreign armed force to help it fight gangs, according to Haiti's government.

The committee responsible for overseeing the program includes officials from the United States, Canada, Japan, Germany, the United Nations and the European Union, according to the office of Haiti's prime minister.

The office did not provide further details, except to say the program is for the operational and institutional reinforcement of Haiti's National Police.

A government official who was not authorized to speak to the media told The Associated Press the program aims to generate more money for an existing basket fund created to help Haiti's National Police. The official said he didn't know how much additional money, if any, each country pledged or what the money would be used for specifically.

The meeting comes just days after a court in Kenya ruled that deploying police officers to Haiti as part of a UN-backed mission approved last year is unconstitutional.



19 dead, 18 hurt in bus-truck collision: A collision between a passenger bus and a freight truck on a highway in northern Mexico Tuesday left at least 19 people dead and 18 injured, local authorities said.

The accident occurred on a highway in the Pacific coast state of Sinaloa. Roy Navarrete, the director of the state civil defense office, said the crash occurred in the township of Elota, near the port city of Mazatlan.

The injured were being treated at local hospitals and the cause of the accident is under investigation.

There were 37 people aboard the bus. Photos of the scene showed both vehicles had been reduced to burnt-out metal frames.



Boat accident kills 4 Mexican tourists: Four Mexican tourists died after a boat carrying 19 people capsized or swamped between Cancún and Isla Mujeres, authorities said Tuesday.

The boat was carrying 17 passengers and a crew of two when the accident occurred late Monday. The captain of the boat survived and was taken into custody, according to the municipal government of Isla Mujeres.

Most of the passengers had to be rescued from the water by personnel from the Mexican Navy, local police and civil defense agencies, and some were taken to hospitals. All were Mexican citizens.

Investigators in the Caribbean coast state of Quintana Roo are looking into whether the boat had been overcrowded, or if rough weather had played a role in the accident. It was not clear whether the passengers were wearing life jackets.



Gov faces heated debate: A public servant from the United Kingdom has been sworn in as the new governor of the British Virgin Islands, where he faces debate over the archipelago's sovereignty after an investigation found widespread corruption and sparked a constitutional crisis.

Gov. Daniel Pruce said in a speech released Tuesday that he would follow the recommendations issued by a 2022 commission of inquiry, which found that corruption ran so deep in the British Caribbean territory that the local elected government should be suspended.

Local officials retained their power, but Pruce's steps will be closely watched. Caribbean leaders recently rejected a push by his predecessor, former gov John Rankin, to award the governor's office more power after finding that the inquiry's proposed reforms were "significantly stalled."

Pruce promised to work closely with local government officials to implement the commission's proposals.



Sultan of Johor, Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar, center, sits during the oath taking ceremony as the 17th King of Malaysia at the National Palace in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Jan 31. Inset: Sultan Ibrahim salutes the guard of honor at National Palace in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Wednesday. (AP)

Billionaire Sultan Ibrahim sworn in as Malaysia's new king

The billionaire sultan who rules Malaysia's Johor state was sworn in as the nation's new king Wednesday under a unique rotating monarchy system.

Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar, 65, took his oath of office at the palace and signed the instrument of the proclamation of office in a ceremony witnessed by other royal families, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and Cabinet members. A coronation ceremony will be held later.

One of the richest men in the country, Sultan Ibrahim has an extensive business empire ranging from real estate to telecoms and power plants. The candid monarch has close ties with Anwar and his rule could bolster Anwar's unity government, which faces a strong Islamic opposition.

Nine ethnic Malay state rulers have taken turns as king for five-year terms under the world's only such system since Malaysia gained independence from Brit-

ain in 1957. Malaysia has 13 states but only nine have royal families, some that trace their roots to centuries-old Malay kingdoms that were independent states until they were brought together by the British.

Sultan Ibrahim's election to the national throne by his fellow rulers in October was widely expected based on an established rotation order. Sultan Nazrin Shah, the ruler of Perak state and next in line to the throne, was reelected as deputy king. (AP)

Asia

North Korea tests long-range cruise missiles

Taiwan military conducts 2-day drills at sea

KAOHSIUNG, Taiwan, Jan 31, (AP): Almost every day, Chinese warships sail in waters around Taiwan and warplanes fly toward the island before turning back. What if they suddenly attacked?

Taiwan's military conducted a two-day exercise at sea, on land and in the air this week to practice defending against such a surprise attack. As journalists looked on from fast escort boats, a mine layer released at least a half dozen dummy mines from a chute in its stern.

Maj. Gen. Sun Li-fang, the chief defense ministry spokesperson, told reporters at Zuoying Naval Base in southern Taiwan that China's recent actions threaten to spark a conflict that could have devastating effects on the entire region, where billions of dollars in trade pass the 160 kilometer- (100 mile)-wide waterway separating Taiwan from China.

Action

"Any unilateral irrational action could very easily escalate tensions and sabotage stability in the Taiwan Strait region," Sun said. "So the Chinese Communists should immediately cease these sorts of undermining actions."

China claims the self-governing island of 23 million people as its own territory and says it must come under Beijing's control. The long-running divide is a flashpoint in US-China relations. As relations between the rivals have deteriorated in recent years, fears have grown that America could get pulled into a war if hostilities break out.

Later in the day, journalists witnessed a simulated attack by China at a military base in the eastern county of Taitung.

Troops in red helmets representing the People's Liberation Army parachuted in, while Taiwanese army drones buzzed overhead. Taiwanese troops soon rolled onto the training course, fighting back with M60 Patton tanks, a model first introduced to the US Army in 1959 but significantly upgraded by Taiwan. Taiwan is gradually replacing some of them with M1 Abrams tanks and the HIMARS rocket system that has been so effective in Ukraine.

Ethiopia's Tigray and Amhara regions in recent months, the national ombudsman said Tuesday, a rare admission of hunger-related deaths by a federal body.

Local officials have previously reported starvation deaths in their districts, but Ethiopia's federal government has insisted these reports are "completely wrong".



Members of the Taiwanese Marines stand guard on the assault craft at Zuying Navy Base in Kaohsiung, Southern Taiwan on Jan 31. Taiwan is holding spring military drills following its recent presidential election and amid threats from China, which claims the island as its own territory that it is determined to annex, possibly by force. (AP)

South Korea's opposition leader Lee accuses president of divisive politics

SEOUL, South Korea, Jan 31, (AP): A South Korean opposition leader who was stabbed in an attack and underwent surgery earlier this month accused the country's conservative president on Wednesday of promoting divisive politics and worsening an already toxic discourse in the nation.

Lee Jae-myung also urged voters to support his liberal Democratic Party in the April parliamentary elections in order to keep what he described as President Yoon Suk Yeol's "prosecutorial dictatorship" in check.

With Yoon, "our society has become even more extremely polarized," said Lee, speaking at his first news conference since the Jan. 2 attack. Instead of "leading the way in promoting national unity," Yoon is "obsessed with choosing sides and waging an outdated ideological war."

Lee underwent surgery and spent eight days in hospital before his release. The suspect, who was arrested, later told investigators that he wanted to kill Lee to prevent him from becoming president.

At the news conference, Lee, who narrowly lost to Yoon in

the 2022 presidential race, also claimed that his rival's allegedly reckless policies were letting a decaying job market and tensions with nuclear-armed North Korea get out of hand.

Also:

BANGKOK: A Thai court on Wednesday convicted a prominent political activist of defaming the country's monarchy and sentenced her to a two-year suspended jail term under a controversial law that criminalizes any perceived criticism of the royal institution.

Patsaravalee Tanakitvulporn, better known by her nickname "Mind," had pleaded not guilty to an offense under Article 112 of the criminal code, relating to a speech she gave at a rally in the capital in March 2021.

A judge at the Bangkok South Criminal Court officially sentenced her to three years in prison for the crime known as lese majeste, but reduced it to a two-year suspended term due to her cooperation.

She was acquitted of a charge of violating an emergency decree on public gatherings because she was not an organizer of the event.

Also:

SEOUL, South Korea: North Korea said Wednesday it conducted a test-firing of long-range cruise missiles with an aim to sharpen its counterattack and strategic strike capabilities, in its latest display of weapons threatening South Korea and Japan.

The report by North Korean state media came a day after South Korea's military detected the North firing multiple cruise missiles into waters off its western coast, the third launch of such weapons this month. The event extended a provocative streak in weapons testing as

North Korea continues to raise pressure on the United States and its Asian allies amid a prolonged freeze in diplomacy.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said that the weapon tested on Tuesday was the Hwasal-2 and that the launch did not affect the security of neighbors. The report didn't specify the exact numbers of missiles fired or the specifics of their flight performance.

The North has previously described the Hwasal-2 as nuclear-capable and that their range is up to 2,000 kilometers (1,242 miles), a distance that would include US military bases in Japan.

Ethiopia's ombudsman office sent experts to the regions, which are gripped by drought and still reeling from a devastating civil war that officially ended 14 months ago. They concluded that 351 people have died of hunger in Tigray in the past six months, with 44 more deaths in Amhara. (AP)

Auction suspended: The planned auction of dozens of artifacts belonging to Nelson Mandela has been suspended pending a court application to completely halt it, the body that protects South Africa's cultural heritage said Tuesday.

The online auction had been scheduled by New York-based Guernsey's auction house on Feb. 24, in conjunction with Dr Makaziwe Mandela, the eldest daughter of the anti-apartheid icon and South Africa's first democratically elected president who died in 2013.

It had received widespread criticism from the public and the South African government, which is supporting a court application by the South African Heritage Resources Agency, or SAHRA, to appeal an earlier court judgment that gave the auction the go-ahead.

Items listed for the auction include Mandela's iconic Ray-Ban sunglasses and "Madiba" shirts, personal letters he wrote from prison, as well as a blanket gifted to him by former U.S. President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle. (AP)

Africa

Militants kill 12 villagers: Militants killed at least 12 villagers in a spate of attacks in eastern Congo, a local official and a civil society leader said as the country's president ruled out dialogue with neighboring Rwanda over a related conflict.

The killings in Congo's North Kivu province took place on Tuesday and were carried out by the Allied Democratic Forces, armed militants believed to be linked to the extremist Islamic State group.

The militants attacked three villages in the Beni territory, according to Kinoo Katuhu, the president of the local Mamove civil society organization.

Eastern Congo has struggled with armed violence for decades as more than 120 groups fight for power, land and valuable mineral resources, while others try to defend their communities. The armed groups have long waged campaigns of violence in the mineral-rich region and have been accused of mass killings.

Meanwhile, Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi on Tuesday repeated his claims that the M23 rebels are supported by Rwanda, and said he would not engage in talks with Rwanda's leader, Paul Kagame, over the issue. (AP)



Coastal communities evacuated: Residents were evacuated from small coastal towns near Cape Town in South Africa as wildfires swept down from surrounding mountains and burned out of control for a second day on Tuesday.

Authorities ordered a full evacuation of Pringle Bay, a coastal village popular with holidaymakers about 80 kilometers (50 miles) from Cape Town. People evacuated parts of the nearby town of Betty's Bay on Monday.

Wildfires are relatively common in the mountain ranges around Cape Town and further down the coast in the South African summer, but it's unusual for towns to be completely evacuated. (AP)



'Nearly 400 died of starvation': Nearly 400 people have died of starvation in

oil down

The price of Kuwaiti crude oil went down by USD 1.82 to USD 83.49 per barrel on Tuesday, compared to USD 85.31 pb the day before, said the Kuwaiti Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Wednesday.

Brent crude oil went up by 47 cents to USD 82.87 pb, same as the West Texas intermediate up by USD 1.04 to reach USD 77.82. (KUNA)

Kuwait's Dec oil exports to Japan down 27%

Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan in December 2023 declined 27.0 percent from a year earlier to 5.92 million barrels, or 191,000 barrels per day (bpd), down for the third consecutive month, government data showed Wednesday.

As Japan's third-biggest oil provider, Kuwait supplied 7.2 percent of its total crude imports, compared with 8.8 percent in the same month of last year, the Japanese Natural Resources and Energy Agency said in a preliminary report.

For the whole of 2023, Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan stood at 224,000 bpd, up 1.1 percent from the previous year, and took up 8.8

percent of total Japanese crude imports.

Japan's overall imports of crude oil in December fell 10.2 percent year-on-year to 2.66 million bpd, down for the second month in a row. Shipments from the Middle East accounted for 91.0 percent of the total, down 2.2 percentage points from the year before.

By country, Saudi Arabia remained in the top spot, although imports from the kingdom slid 3.6 percent from a year earlier to 1.17 million bpd, followed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with 901,000 bpd, down 16.4 percent. (KUNA)

KIPIC hosts second contractors' forum

Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) held its second contractors' forum under the guidance of the company's CEO, focusing on strengthening communication and commending exemplary practices related to health, safety, and the environment for the successful partners engaged in projects at the Al-Zour Oil Complex, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The event took place at the auditorium of the administrative building of the Al-Zour Complex, attended by

company officials and representatives from fellow oil companies.

Walid Al-Badr, KIPIC CEO highlighted the collaborative efforts between employees and contractors in achieving excellence in health, safety, and the environment, attributing it to the company's success. He expressed a commitment to forging new horizons, fostering innovation, and working collectively to attain the highest standards in safety, sustainability and excellence.

Market Movements 31-01-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts		
UAE	- DFM	+0.65	4,169.08	SAUDI	- Tadawul	-189.34	11,796.63
JAPAN	- Nikkei	+220.85	36,286.71	EGYPT	- EGX 30	-2,065.39	28,281.91
PHILIPPINES	- PSEi	+24.43	6,646.44				
PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	+74.46	61,981.84				

Business

Kuwait faces alarming 87% surge in government debts

Statements reveal troubling 6-year debt trajectory

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: In spite of concerted government efforts to recuperate outstanding dues from various entities and individuals, Kuwait's financial statements reveal a disconcerting trend in the accumulation of government debts over the past six years.

This distressing trajectory witnessed an alarming 87% surge, escalating from 1.17 billion dinars to a staggering 2.5 billion dinars in the fiscal year 2022/2023. This unsettling data underscores the persistent and worsening nature of the problem.

A thorough analysis of consecutive Kuwaiti

budget reports unveils a steady annual increase in government dues. The trajectory commenced at 1.3 billion dinars in the fiscal year 2017/2018 and reached its zenith at 2.5 billion dinars in 2022/2023.

These debts encompass a spectrum of financial obligations, including unresolved court cases, illicit salary and bonus disbursements, outstanding tax dues from major corporations, and fees owed to the Ministry of Electricity and Water.

In stark contrast, debts owed to the government exhibited a distinct upward trajectory, growing by 34.8% over the same six-year period. The figures reached 520.8 million dinars in the fiscal year 2022/2023, marking a considerable increase from the 386.2 million dinars recorded in 2017/2018.

The state's tax dues also experienced a substantial uptick, ascending by 39.6% to reach 385.6 million dinars in 2022/2023, up from 276.2 million dinars in 2017/2018.

Despite these challenges, the data indicates an encouraging trend in the collection of revenues during the last fiscal year (2022/2023).

The total revenue collected amounted to 581.4 million dinars, reflecting an increase from the preceding year's figure of 462.4 million dinars. Notably, income, profits, and capital gains taxes surged to 164.8 million dinars, a significant rise from the 131 million dinars recorded previously.

Additionally, taxes on trade and international transactions witnessed a remarkable increase, reaching 395 million dinars compared to the previous figure of 306 million dinars.

The final account for the fiscal year 2022/2023 underscores the positive momentum in tax collection efforts, particularly in the face of challenges posed by burgeoning government debts. This data offers a nuanced perspective on the fiscal landscape, highlighting both areas of concern and signs of progress in Kuwait's financial management.

Company secures 5-year contract

NAPESCO lands 17m dinars contract with joint operations

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The National Petroleum Services Company "NAPESCO" has signed a contract for naming services and support services for drilling and repairing wells, worth 17 million Kuwaiti dinars, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

NAPESCO explained the implementation of the contract will be in joint operations between the Kuwait Gulf Oil Company and the Arab Chevron Company of Saudi Arabia. The contract period is five

years. The company expects the profit margin for this contract to be 10%, and this depends on the conditions of contract implementation and the workflow in joint operations.

It is noteworthy that NAPESCO's profits increased in the first nine months of last year, it achieved profits worth 6.41 million dinars, a growth of 19% over its level in the same period in 2022, amounting to 5.39 million dinars.

Kuwait aims for 15% eco energy by 2030

KIA subsidiary signs deal to manufacture solar energy panels with Energy America

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: An economic report revealed that a subsidiary of the Kuwait Investment Authority has entered into a deal with an American company to manufacture solar energy panels, as Kuwait seeks to align itself with the renewable energy initiatives of its Gulf counterparts, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to the Arabian Gulf Business Insight website, Anertec Holding Company, fully owned by the KIA, has signed a cooperation agreement with "Energy America" in San Francisco to produce solar panels. The collaboration aims to design, develop, and finance solar power station projects in the United States and globally.

The report highlights Kuwait's ambition to generate up to 15% of its energy from renewable sources by the end of the current decade. However, the country faces challenges in keeping pace with neighboring Gulf nations that have swiftly advanced their solar energy industries.

The Al-Shaqaya project, a key solar energy initiative in Kuwait, launched in 2019, combining solar and wind energy. Despite encountering delays and modifications, it is considered the first

official Kuwaiti project for renewable energy.

Recently, the Public-Private Partnership Projects Authority, in collaboration with the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, invited international and local companies to participate in a bidding process for the design, financing, construction, operation, maintenance, and transformation of the Al-Shaqaya Renewable Energy Project - Phase Three.

The government's decision to make the project a 4-gigawatt solar energy system with substantial storage capacity reflects Kuwait's commitment to transitioning from traditional oil and gas power plants. Solar energy currently constitutes less than 1% of Kuwait's renewable energy generation capabilities.

The global shift towards a low-carbon future to combat climate change has increased pressure on investors across sectors to contribute to the necessary trillions of dollars in investment. Sovereign wealth investors are showing a growing willingness to invest in renewable energy assets, considering the mature and profitable state of the technology without the need for extensive government support.

US resilience and fiscal support in China boost global outlook

IMF forecasts global growth at 3.1% in '24, 3.2% in '25

WASHINGTON, Jan 31, (KUNA): Global growth expected to be broadly balanced, and greater-than-expected resilience in the US, and several large emerging market and developing economies, as well as fiscal support in China, a statement by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said Tuesday.

The statement said "global growth is projected at 3.1 percent in 2024 and 3.2 percent in 2025, with the 2024 forecast 0.2 percentage point higher than that in the October 2023 World Economic Outlook (WEO) on account of greater-than-expected resilience in the United States and several large emerging market and developing economies, as well as fiscal support in China."

The forecast for 2024-25 is, however, below the historical (2000-19) average of 3.8 percent, with elevated central bank policy rates to fight inflation, a withdrawal of fiscal support amid high debt weighing on economic activity, and low underlying productivity growth, the IMF noted.

Inflation is falling faster than expected in most regions, in the midst of unwinding supply-side issues and restrictive monetary policy.

Global headline inflation is expected to fall to 5.8 percent in 2024 and to 4.4 percent in 2025, with the 2025 forecast revised down.

With disinflation and steady growth, the likelihood of a hard landing has receded, and risks to global growth are broadly balanced. On the upside, faster disinflation could lead to further easing of financial conditions.

Looser fiscal policy than necessary and then assumed in the projections could imply temporarily higher growth, but at the risk of a more costly adjustment later on.

Stronger structural reform momentum could bolster productivity with positive cross-border spillovers.

On the downside, new commodity price spikes

from geopolitical shocks, including continued attacks in the Red Sea, and supply disruptions or more persistent underlying inflation could prolong tight monetary conditions.

Deepening property sector woes in China or, elsewhere, a disruptive turn to tax hikes and spending cuts could also cause growth disappointments.

Policymakers' near-term challenge is to successfully manage the final descent of inflation to target, calibrating monetary policy in response to underlying inflation dynamics and, where wage and price pressures are clearly dissipating, adjusting to a less restrictive stance.

At the same time, in many cases, with inflation declining and economies better able to absorb effects of fiscal tightening, a renewed focus on fiscal consolidation to rebuild budgetary capacity to deal with future shocks, raise revenue for new spending priorities, and curb the rise of public debt is needed.

'Red Sea attacks pose downside risk to economy'

Optimism grows as IMF foresees soft landing in global economy

By KAMCO Invest

Optimism grows backed by balanced risks and improved outlook

In its latest World Economic Outlook report, the IMF expressed its optimism for a higher chance of a soft landing in global economy backed by improved economic outlook, especially related to resilient economic growth in US and several other large emerging market and developing economies. The fiscal support announced in China is also expected to support global growth. Nevertheless, the agency highlighted that tight monetary conditions as well as divergence in global growth path would continue to pose challenge. In addition, high levels of public debt and fiscal deficits are also key concerns. Inflation continued to surprise favorably for 2025 with the IMF lowering its forecast by 20 bps to 4.4% while inflation expectation for 2024 was kept unchanged at 5.8% as compared to 6.8% in 2023.

In terms of upside risks, the IMF highlighted a faster fall in inflation, easing financial condition and strong structural reforms could lead to faster growth. On the other hand, downside risks include higher commodity prices, especially after the recent attacks on the Red Sea, property sector issues in China and spending cuts by governments can impact growth. The IMF said that the recent attacks on the Red Sea cargoes are resulting in higher cost of transportation and causing delays. However, this has not reflected in recent commodity prices. Furthermore, the IMF said that dynamically calibrating monetary policy on the basis of moves in the underlying inflation is one of the key challenges facing policymakers globally.

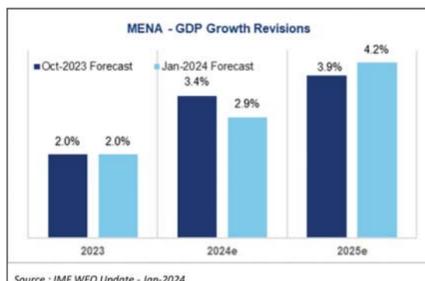
The IMF marginally raised World GDP growth expectations for 2024 by 20 bps to 3.1% and kept 2025 forecast unchanged at a slightly higher growth rate of 3.2%. Forecasts for 2024 for both Advanced Economies as well as Emerging Market and Developing Economies were upgraded by 10 bps to 1.5% and 4.1%, respectively. For the next year, the IMF kept forecasted growth in Advanced Economies unchanged at 1.8% with marginal downgrades to growth rates for the US and Euro Area offset by upward revision to forecasted growth rates for Japan and Other Advanced Economies. Growth in Emerging Market and Developing Economies was upgraded marginally for 2025.

Growth in the United Kingdom is forecasted to gradually rise from 0.5% in 2023 to 0.6% in 2024, then to 1.6% in 2025, a downward revision of 40 bps for 2025 due to limited opportunities for growth in light of recent upward statistical revisions to output levels during the pandemic period. For the Asia region, IMF upgraded China's forecast by 40 bps to 4.6% in 2024 after 5.2% growth in 2023. However, growth in 2025 is retained at 4.1%. The upgrade in 2024 is due to higher-than-expected growth in 2023 and government spending on disaster resilience. Growth forecast for India was forecasted at 6.5% for both 2024 and 2025, an upward revision of 20 bps compared to the October-2023 estimates for both the years buoyed by the continued strong domestic demand.

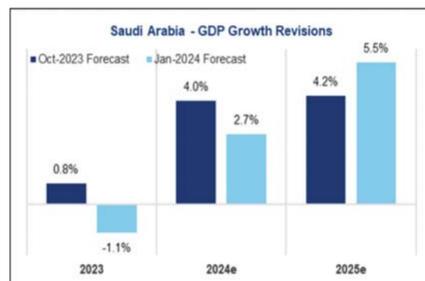
Growth in Emerging and Developing Europe is expected to accelerate from 2.7% in 2023 to 2.8% in 2024, before slowing to 2.5% in 2025. Russian economy is attributed for the 0.6% increase in forecasted growth for 2024 compared

Country/Regions	Jan-2024 Updated Forecasts				Rev. from Oct-2023	
Real GDP Growth	2022	2023	2024e	2025e	2024e	2025e
World Output	3.5%	3.1%	3.1%	3.2%	0.2%	0.0%
Advanced Economies	2.6%	1.6%	1.5%	1.8%	0.1%	0.0%
United States	1.9%	2.5%	2.1%	1.7%	0.6%	-0.1%
Euro Area	3.4%	0.5%	0.9%	1.7%	-0.3%	-0.1%
EM and Developing Economies	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	4.2%	0.1%	0.1%
China	3.0%	5.2%	4.6%	4.1%	0.4%	0.0%
India	7.2%	6.7%	6.5%	6.5%	0.2%	0.2%
MENA	5.6%	2.0%	2.9%	4.2%	-0.5%	0.3%
Saudi Arabia	8.7%	-1.1%	2.7%	5.5%	-1.3%	1.3%
Sub-Saharan Africa	4.0%	3.3%	3.8%	4.1%	-0.2%	0.0%
Trade Volume Growth	2022	2023	2024e	2025e	2024e	2025e
World Trade Volume	5.2%	0.4%	3.3%	3.6%	-0.2%	-0.1%
Advanced Economies	6.1%	0.3%	2.6%	3.2%	-0.4%	-0.1%
EM and Developing Economies	3.7%	0.6%	4.5%	4.4%	0.2%	0.0%
Consumer Prices Change	2022	2023	2024e	2025e	2024e	2025e
Advanced Economies	7.3%	4.6%	2.6%	2.0%	-0.4%	-0.2%
EM and Developing Economies	9.8%	8.4%	8.1%	6.0%	0.3%	-0.2%

Sources : IMF WEO Update - Jan-2024



Sources : IMF WEO Update - Jan-2024



MENA Region

Growth in the MENA region was lowered by 50 bps to 2.9% for 2024 and revised upward by 30 bps to 4.2% for 2025. The downward revision for 2024 is mainly due to Saudi Arabia which reflects temporarily lower oil production in 2024, including unilateral cuts in accordance with an agree-

ment reached through OPEC+ (the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, which includes Russia and other non-OPEC oil exporters), while non-oil growth is expected to remain resilient. This was also reflected in the forecast for Saudi Arabia which is now expected to grow by 2.7% in 2024, a downward revision of 130 bps, followed by 5.5% in 2025 with an upward revision of 130 bps.

Global trade volume growth is expected to come in at 3.3% for 2024, a downward revision of 20 bps due to trade imbalances and geoeconomic fragmentation which are predicted to negatively impact global trade. Trade growth in Emerging Market and Developing economies was upgraded by 20 bps to 4.5% in 2024, whereas, the growth for the Advanced Economies was also lowered by 40 bps to 2.6% for 2024. Next year, Advanced Economies saw a downward revision of 10 bps to 3.2% while growth for the Emerging market and Developing Economies was kept unchanged. The IMF forecasts the fuel and nonfuel commodity prices to decline in 2024 and 2025 in line with interest rates which are expected to decline in major economies. According to IMF, in 2024, the average annual price of oil is predicted to decrease by around 2.3%, while the prices of nonfuel commodities are anticipated to decrease by 0.9%.

Inflation is falling faster than expected from its 2022 peak

According to the IMF, Global inflation is expected to decline from 6.8% in 2023 to 5.8% in 2024 and 4.4% in 2025. The global estimate was unchanged for 2024, compared with October 2023 projections, and revised downward by 0.2% for 2025. In 2024, Advanced Economies are likely to have faster disinflation, with inflation falling by 200 bps to 2.6%, while Emerging market and Developing Economies would only see a 30 bps decline to 8.1%. The forecast is revised down for both 2024 and 2025 for Advanced Economies, while it is revised up for 2024 for Emerging market and Developing nations.

Inflation has been declining owing to tighter monetary policies, softer labor markets, and pass-through effects from reduced energy prices, though the factors vary by country. According to the IMF, 80% of the world's economies are predicted to see decreased annual average headline and core inflation in 2024. By Q4-2024, headline inflation is expected to be 0.6% above target for the median economy, a decrease from 1.7% at the end of 2023. In several major economies, the downward revision to the projected inflation, combined with a modest rise in economic activity, indicates a softer-than-expected landing.

The faster-than-expected drop in inflation has enabled an increasing number of central banks to shift from hiking policy rates to a less restrictive stance. When the underlying inflation and expectations are moving toward target-consistent levels, adjusting rates to more neutral levels and a continued commitment to price stability will be required to avoid prolonged economic weakness. In the emerging economies the monetary tightening cycle led to earlier rate reductions, after adapting to monetary policy based on wage and price pressures. With borrowing prices still high, continuous monitoring of financing circumstances and the ability to deploy financial stability instruments will be critical for averting financial sector stress, according to the IMF.

AUB congratulates the winners of Al-Hassad Weekly Draw

Ahli United Bank (AUB) congratulated the winners of Al-Hassad Weekly Draw of Al-Hassad Islamic account, which was held on 31 January, 2024 at the bank's head office in the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as well as a representative from Deloitte as the external auditor to oversee the draws as per the instructions of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in this regard.

The Bank announced 10 winners of KD 1,000 as follows: Khaled Majed Al-Hakawati, Basemah Abduljaleel Abbas Al-Saffar, Yousef Yaqoub Ahmad Abdullah, Hajer Ghanim Matni Al-Shammari, Rajab

Saleh Rajab Al-Yazidi, Ahlam Ibrahim Hussain Al-Jassim, Muhammad A M Al-Meshari, Halima Ghrareeb Gholoum Shehab, Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and Jaber Mohammad Ali Al-Ali.

In its new package, Al-Hassad Islamic Saving Account presents a broader variety of rewards. Customers could now participate in the draw to win a monthly KD 100,000 prize, in addition to 10 weekly prizes of KD 1,000 each. The grand quarterly prize of KD 250,000 in cash for the winner remains the most important aspiration of customers. It is a real chance for them to realize their life dreams. In addition to this attractive package, there will be the annual expected

profits on the basis of a Wakala contract that increases the attractiveness of the Al-Hassad Islamic Saving Account to customers.

Al-Hassad Account provides a suite of unique features, including the simplest and easiest savings program and a unique account-opening feature online with all ease with an instant deposit option.

To be eligible to participate in the draw, the customer should have a minimum balance of KD 100, whereby the customer has two chances to participate, with up to 30,000 chances per draw, in addition to rewarding annual profits. Every KD 50 invested entitles the customer to one chance in the

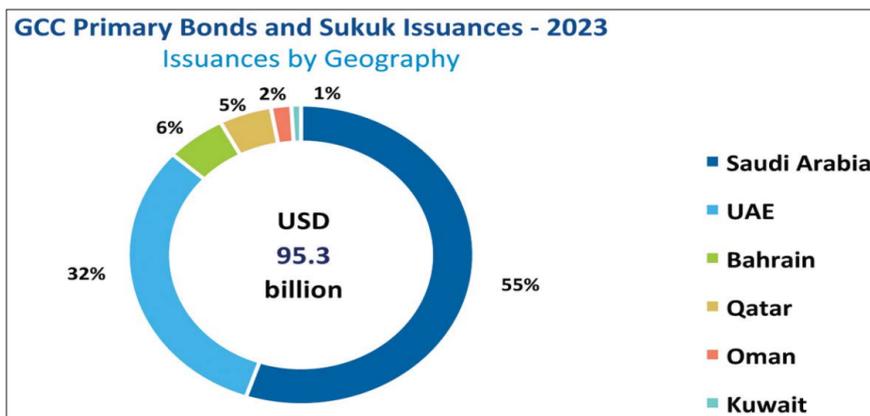
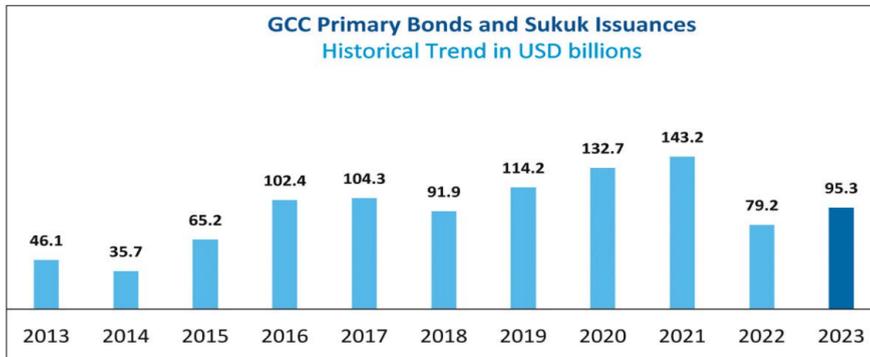
draws, provided that to maintain his balance for at least fifteen days before the draw date. The longer the customer keeps his balance the bigger the chances of participation in the draw with every KD 50 in the account. Draws are held every Wednesday based on the draw scheme. On religious and national holidays, the draw is postponed to the next business day.

For more information on Ahli United Bank's products and services, customers are invited to visit any of the Bank's branches, dial the customer services "Hayakom" on 181 2000, or log on to the Bank's website at www.aahliunited.com.kw

Total issuance equals USD 95.3 billion

GCC Fixed Income mkts see 20.3% y-on-y growth in primary issuances

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: In its Fixed Income Report, Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" states that Primary debt issuances of Bonds and Sukuk in the Gulf Cooperation Council ("GCC") Countries amounted to USD 95.3 billion during the year 2023 compared to USD 79.2 billion raised in 2022, marking a year-on-year growth of 20.3%. During the year 2023, there were 224 primary debt issuances including fixed and floating rate tranches compared to 201 issuances in 2022.



Issuances by Geography: Saudi-based issuers led the GCC Bonds and Sukuk market during the year, raising a total of USD 52.5 billion through 69 issuances, representing 55.1% of the total value raised in the GCC, followed by UAE issuers which raised USD 30.0 billion with 94 issuances, representing 31.5%. Bahrain entities raised a total of USD 5.3 billion representing 5.6% while Qatar entities raised a total of USD 4.7 billion representing 4.9% of the total new amount issued during the year. Oman entities raised a total of USD 1.9 billion representing 1.9% followed by Kuwaiti issuers that raised a total of USD 0.8 billion through 5 issuances.

Sovereign vs. Corporate: Issuances by Sovereign entities in the GCC made up 42.5% of the total value of GCC primary issuances during 2023, amounting to USD 40.5 billion and down 5.8% year-on-year from its value in 2022. Primary issuances by Corporates, on the other hand, amounted to USD 54.8 billion during 2023 constituting 51.4% of the total value of GCC primary issuances and marking a year-on-year growth of 51.4% compared to the preceding year.

Conventional vs. Sukuk: Conventional issuances increased by 29.6% year-on-year during 2023, raising a total of USD 44.0 billion representing 46.1% of the total value of primary issuances in the GCC. On the other hand, Sukuk issuances amounting to USD 51.3 billion made up 53.9% of the total value of primary issuances during 2023 and recording a 13.4% year-on-year growth.

Sector Segmentation: The Government sector accounted for the largest amount of primary debt issuances by value, raising a total of USD 40.5 billion, or 42.5% of the total value of issuances in the GCC in

2023, closely followed by the Financial sector (including quasi-government entities) that raised a total value of USD 36.7 billion, representing 38.5% of the total

amount issued.

Maturity Profile: Issuances with tenors of 5-10 years dominated the GCC debt capital markets by to-

tal value, with a total of USD 45.4 billion, or 47.6% of the total value of issuances. Issuances with tenors of less than 5 years came in second with a total value raised of USD 29.7 billion, or 31.2% of the total value of issuances.

Issue Size Profile: The size of GCC Bonds and Sukuk primary issuances during the year ranged from USD 1 million to USD 4.0 billion. Issuances with principal amounts greater than or equal to USD 1 billion raised the largest amount totaling USD 58.8 billion, representing 61.7% of the total primary issuances.

Currency Profile: US Dollar-denominated issuances led the GCC Bonds and Sukuk primary market in 2023, raising a total of USD 67.2 billion or 70.5% of the total value of GCC primary issuances. This was followed by Saudi Riyal denominated issuances that raised a total of USD 17.0 billion or 17.8% of the total value of issuances in the GCC.

Rating: In 2023, a total of 69.1% of GCC primary Bonds and Sukuk issuances (in terms of value) were rated by either one of the following rating agencies: Standard & Poor's, Moody's, Fitch and/or Capital Intelligence, of which 59.1% were rated within the Investment Grade.

About Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" Established in 1974, Kuwait Financial Centre K.P.S.C "Markaz" is one of the leading asset management and investment banking institutions in the MENA region with total assets under management of over KD 1.16 billion as of 30 September 2023 (USD 3.75 billion). Markaz was listed on the Bourse Kuwait in 1997. Over the years, Markaz has pioneered innovation through the creation of new investment channels. These channels enjoy unique characteristics and helped Markaz widen investors' horizons. Examples include Mumtaz (the first domestic mutual fund), MREF (the first real estate investment fund in Kuwait), Forsa Financial Fund (the first and only options market maker in the GCC since 2005), and the GCC Momentum Fund (the first passive fund of its kind in Kuwait and across GCC that follows the momentum methodology), all conceptualized, established, and managed by Markaz.

IIT plays a major role in India's dev

GCC media delegation visits famous institute

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

NEW DELHI, Jan 31: The GCC media delegation visited the Indian Institute for Technology (IIT) Delhi, during which Dean of Research and Development at the institute Professor Nareesh Bhatnagar conducted a brief presentation about IIT, which was established in 1961.



The GCC media delegation during the visit to the Indian Institute of Technology in New Delhi.

Bhatnagar revealed that since its inception, IIT has been playing a vital role in developing distinguished engineering and technological personnel through the provision of the best engineering and technological education. He pointed out that IIT is one of the most important educational establishments not only in India, but all over the world as well.

He said IIT offers academic programs for different stages, starting from pre-graduate to PhD with multiple programs for students; including Computer, Electrical, Mechanical, Aerospace engineering courses and many others.

Professor Bhatnagar said the total number of students at IIT is 12,748 including 5,174 undergraduates, 3,799 master degree students, 3,774 PhD and 158 foreign students.

Bhatnagar attributed the low number of foreign students to the tough admis-

sion exams, which only a few students manage to pass. He was quick to add though that the number of foreign students increased in 2021/2022 compared to the previous years when their number did not exceed 10.

He revealed that IIT opened the Institute of Technology campus in Dubai as per the trade agreement signed between India and the United Arab Emirates

(UAE) in November 2022.

IIT has a number of subsidiaries, such as the Innovation and Research Park, which the GCC media delegation visited as well; accompanied by Commander KV Narsemham from Quantum Powertrain PVT LTD.

He showed the different departments; such as the one focusing on the development of drones, especially the control

panels, receivers and electronic chips.

He also guided the delegation to the department for research on developing electric vehicle engines; including the two-wheel, three-wheel and four-wheel vehicles. He explained that the research work is aimed at improving the efficiency of electric motors, which contributes to ongoing efforts to protect the environment.

GCC media delegation visit FICCI

India offers 'diverse' investment opportunities in all fields: Pathak

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

NEW DELHI, Jan 31: India offers a plethora of investment opportunities in all fields, considering it has the biggest population in the globe; thereby, adding a significant advantage for the local market, says Secretary General of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Shailesh K. Pathak during his meeting with the GCC media delegation.

He affirmed that his country welcomes foreign investors, particularly those from GCC countries. He urged the GCC investors: "Come to India to make money in India, with India."

Pathak stressed that the Indian legislation provide security and guarantees for foreign investments, which are available in all states in India. He cited a number of examples of investment opportunities; such as agriculture, food security, information technology and aerospace, which made a huge leap in recent years. He added the Indian experience in different investment sectors is available to willing GCC investors.

He asserted that GCC countries are the closest neighbors of India, while its

deep-rooted historical relations with Gulf countries started centuries ago.

He revealed that his country is mostly concerned about food security in Gulf countries. He affirmed that the top priority of Indian companies is their relationship with countries in the region. He pointed that his country does not only provide an environment conducive for investment, as it also helps foreign investors in finding the most suitable and trustful local partners; leaving it to the investors to decide what sector meets their investing demands.

He went on to say that FICCI has 70 committees dealing with 70 different investment sectors, indicating these committees provide the investors with all the necessary data and information to guarantee their success.

He also reassured the GCC countries stating, "Our friends in the Gulf countries should not worry about the possibility of cutting food and medicine supplies from India due to economic crises." He pointed out that COVID-19 proved that crises will not lead to cutting India's supply of food and medicines to Gulf countries. He added India discussed the challenges that investors are facing at the 2023 G20 Summit held in Delhi.



The GCC media delegation during their meeting with the secretary-general of FICCI.

Employers posted 9 mln job openings

US job openings rose in December, pointing to still-durable labor market

WASHINGTON, Jan 31, (AP): America's employers posted 9 million job openings in December, an increase from November and another sign that the U.S. job market remains resilient despite the headwind of higher interest rates.

The number of openings was up from November's 8.9 million, which itself was revised up in Tuesday's report from the government. Job openings have gradually but steadily declined since peaking at a record 12 million in March 2022. But they remain at historically high levels: Before 2021, monthly openings had never topped 8 million.

Still, in a cautionary sign, layoffs rose in December. And the number of Americans quitting their jobs - a sign of relative confidence in their ability

to find a better position - dipped to the lowest level since January 2021.

The U.S. economy and job market have remained surprisingly durable despite sharply higher interest rates, which have led to higher borrowing rates for consumers and businesses. The Federal Reserve's policymakers raised their benchmark interest rate 11 times between March 2022 and July 2023, bringing it to a 23-year high of around 5.4%.

The Fed wants to see the job market cool from the red-hot levels of 2021 and 2022, thereby reducing pressure on businesses to raise pay to attract and keep staff - and to pass on those costs to customers through higher prices.

Higher rates have contributed to a slowdown in hiring, though the pace of job growth remains relatively healthy:

U.S. employers added 2.7 million jobs last year, down from 4.8 million in 2022 and a record 7.3 million in 2021.

When the government issues the January employment report on Friday, it is expected to show that employers added a solid 177,000 jobs, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet.

The job market is cooling in a mostly painless way - through fewer openings. Despite a wave of high-profile layoffs, the number of job cuts across the economy remains relatively low.

The unemployment rate has come in below 4% for 23 straight months, the longest such streak since the 1960s. And the number of people applying for unemployment benefits - a proxy for layoffs - has remained unusually low.

At the same time, while inflation

has sharply slowed after peaking in mid-2022, it remains above the central bank's 2% target.

The Fed has signaled that it expects to reverse course and cut rates three times this year, though it's set to leave rates unchanged after its latest policy meeting ends Wednesday. Financial markets have been anticipating the first rate cut as early as March, though continued strength in the job market might make the Fed's policymakers wary of acting before mid-year.

"These data - which show demand for workers remains robust - do not support imminent rate cuts," said Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics. "They support a cautious approach going forward, so that policymakers can be sure that inflation" will reach their 2% target.

Microsoft profit up 33% on AI, cloud-computing investments

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 31, (AP): Microsoft Corp. said Tuesday that its profit for the October-December quarter soared 33%, powered by its significant investments in artificial intelligence technology. The company said that increase largely reflected growth in its cloud-computing unit, where Microsoft focuses most of its AI investments.

The company reported net income for the quarter of \$21.87 billion, or \$2.93 per diluted share, beating Wall Street expectations of \$2.79 per share. The Redmond, Washington-based software maker posted revenue of

\$62.02 billion in the quarter, up 18% from \$52.75 billion the previous year, also beating expectations.

"Microsoft is firmly establishing itself as a frontrunner in the AI race," said Jeremy Goldman, director of briefings at Insider Intelligence. In addition to other benefits, Goldman suggested that AI technology could help expand Microsoft's share of digital advertising. His firm anticipates that Microsoft's worldwide ad revenues will grow 12% this year to \$14.93 billion, but also notes that Google is expected to expand its much larger ad business by 10% in the same period.



Group photo from the event.

Abdalmohsen Abdulaziz Albabtain Co wins 'Nissan Global Award' in Dealers category

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: In another achievement reflecting its leadership and success in enhancing its position, market share, and customer satisfaction, Abdalmohsen Abdulaziz Albabtain Co, the exclusive authorized dealer of Nissan in Kuwait, won the "Nissan Global Award" in the Dealers category. This recognition is in appreciation of the sales volume it achieved in the local market and the significant improvement in the level of services that greatly impacted customer satisfaction and increased demand for Nissan cars in the Kuwaiti market.

The "Nissan Global Awards Program" aims to honor distributors, dealers, and suppliers who have achieved outstanding performance contributing to Nissan's success during the fiscal year 2022. The winners are selected and announced by Nissan Motors in Japan.

This award is characterized by strict and precise high-level standards, as candidates for the Nissan International Award in the "Dealer" category are evaluated based on the size of the market in three different categories, including the volume of new car sales, growth in market share, and their excellence in developing and implementing a clear business plan that contributes to raising the level of customer satisfaction. In the field of sales and after-sales services.

Abdalmohsen Abdulaziz Albabtain Co, was able to win this prestigious international award from Nissan in recognition of its innovative services and its ability to establish a distinguished position and prominent leadership, thanks to the pioneering human cadres it embraces and world-class trained sales employees who are keen to provide the best services to customers throughout the period of their ownership of a Nissan car, in a way that enhances Customer satisfaction along with their experience with the company, and it reinforces the great presence of this international brand, and

“Our commitment with Nissan is to provide the best in terms of services to Nissan’s growing customer base in Kuwait. One of our main focus areas is to provide the best after-sales services with the highest quality and the best value to ensure peace of mind for our customers.”



Jihan Bu Hamdan, CTO of Albabtain Group

its agent in Kuwait.

The CEO of Albabtain Group, Mr. Saleh Abdulmohsen Albabtain, explained during the awards ceremony: “Our commitment with Nissan is to provide the best in terms of services to Nissan’s growing customer base in Kuwait. One of our main focus areas is to provide the best after-sales services with the highest quality and the best value to ensure peace of mind for our customers. From the beginning, Al Babtain Group has worked to represent “Nissan” in Kuwait and develop it into an exceptional brand as a tribute to loyalty, dedication and trust. Despite our progress in the market, we continue to drive the business forward, and today we feel prouder than ever to gather with our loyal partners to celebrate our long-term partner-

ships and the amazing achievements we achieve together. We always strive to reach the top and achieve more.”

The CTO of Albabtain Group, Mrs. Jihan Bu Hamdan, explained, “These awards are not just symbols of achievement; they are a testament to the collective dedication and hard work of everyone at Nissan Al-Babtain. Each award represents a milestone in our journey towards achieving The highest score for customer satisfaction and maintaining excellence in the services we provide. This recognition is not just about receiving awards; it is about the constant pursuit of excellence that defines our organizational culture. It reflects our commitment to innovation, superior quality, and above all, keeping the customer at the forefront of our priorities. This is only the



Saleh Abdulmohsen Albabtain, CEO of Albabtain Group

“These awards are not just symbols of achievement; they are a testament to the collective dedication and hard work of everyone at Nissan Al-Babtain.”

beginning, as we seek to make the experience of every Nissan car owner an exceptional and comfortable one to the greatest extent.

In addition to the prestigious international award won by Abdalmohsen Abdulaziz Albabtain Company, Nissan Albabtain also received the “Nissan EXCELLENCE Award”, further solidifying its global automotive industry standing and the quality of its services in the region. These awards go beyond mere appreciation, as Nissan Albabtain’s team achieved a total of five different awards in NDSP Program (Nissan Dealership Standards & Process). The awards include a gold award and four silver awards, and this highlights Nissan Albabtain’s tangible achievements and dedication to achieving excellence in every aspect.

with the highest standards but also embodies the values of the brand and its exclusive dealer in Kuwait. The Silver awards highlights the company’s exceptional performance, demonstrating continuous dedication and collaborative efforts to reach this position.

In essence, these awards are not just honors but reflections of a culture deeply rooted in the continuous pursuit of excellence in every aspect of Nissan Albabtain’s services. They serve as incentives to proceed with setting new standards in the automotive industry, ensuring customers receive the best in terms of service, satisfaction, and overall experience.



The Nissan Global Award

21st millionaire to win the largest prize in AIDanah draw history

Gulf Bank announces winner of the world's largest cash prize today

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: With representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young in attendance, Gulf Bank will announce the grand prize winner in the annual draw for the AIDanah Millionaire account on February 1, 2024, at 10:30 am. The announcement will be made during a live broadcast ceremony from Al-Shaheed Park, accessible through the bank's social media channels. This momentous occasion signifies the 21st millionaire in the history of AIDanah draws and holds particular significance as it announces the first winner following the increase in the prize's value to KD 2 million in 2023.

In celebration of this occasion, Mr. Mohammad Al-Qattan, General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, conveyed, "We are thrilled to broadcast this exceptional

annual event to our customers, and we extend our best wishes to all eligible participants."

Highlighting the bank's commitment to rewarding customers, he noted that the annual grand prize for the AIDanah Millionaire account draw has been increased from KD 1.5 million to KD 2 million, solidifying its position as the world's largest cash prize linked to a bank account.

Al-Qattan explained that the annual draws for the AIDanah Millionaire account consistently result in the recognition of two millionaires in notable draws – one receiving KD 2 million and the other KD 1 million. Furthermore, two additional winners from separate draws each receive KD 100,000, and there are also 10 monthly draw winners, each receiving KD 1,000.

Emphasizing Gulf Bank's dedication to providing an exceptional



Mohammad Al-Qattan

banking experience and fostering a savings culture, Al-Qattan concluded by stating that the bank aims to solidify its leading position in Kuwait through the modification of the

AIDanah account draw structure and the introduction of innovative products and services, in line with customer aspirations and needs.

Participation Conditions

Conditions for participation are inclusive, open to both Kuwaitis and expatriates. To open an AIDanah account, customers must maintain a minimum balance of KD 200. By keeping this balance, they automatically qualify for upcoming AIDanah Millionaire draws. If the balance falls below KD 200, a monthly deduction of KD 2 will be applied until the minimum balance is restored. Opening a new account or depositing additional funds automatically makes customers eligible for the AIDanah draws.

Gulf Bank encourages AIDanah customers to enhance their chances of winning by increasing deposited amounts through the convenient online payment

service available on the bank's website and mobile application.

AIDanah Millionaire stands as one of Kuwait's oldest savings accounts, crafted to instill a culture of saving within the community and reward regular savers for their commitment. We urge everyone to open an AIDanah account, save consistently, and enjoy the array of benefits it offers to customers.

Key Features

Among the many advantages provided to AIDanah Millionaire account holders, it distinguishes itself as Kuwait's exclusive account that carries over the winning chances from the previous year to the next, highlighting Gulf Bank's unwavering commitment to acknowledging and rewarding customer loyalty.

Additionally, the AIDanah Millionaire Account provides unique services, including the AIDanah Exclusive Deposit Card service,

enabling customers to deposit cash at their convenience. The Calculator service, available on the Bank's website (e-gulfbank.com/AIDanah) and mobile app, allows customers to assess their winning probabilities in the AIDanah Millionaire monthly, quarterly, and annual draws.

To enter in the upcoming AIDanah Millionaire draws, customers are required to uphold the specified balance. They have the option to visit Gulf Bank branches in person, conduct direct transfers through the online banking service, utilize the WhatsApp service at 1805805 for immediate inquiries, communicate with Gulf Bank representatives, or contact the customer service center at the same number for assistance. Further information about the account and the winners can be found on the website.

Promotion runs from 1 February to 16 March

LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Hala Shop & Win' Promotion

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: LuLu Hypermarket, the regional retail leader, celebrated Kuwait's festival month of 'Hala February', with the launch of an exciting 'Hala Shop & Win' promotion that runs from 1 February to 16 March at all LuLu Hypermarket outlets in the country.

The six-week long promotion that extends throughout the month of February and well into mid-March provides shoppers with a one-off opportunity to shop unhurriedly at their own pace for a range of products that are being offered at special discounts, while enjoying the many celebratory events featured during the promotion period.

A special promotional offer during the 'Hala Shop & Win' festival is the chance to win several enticing prizes, with every purchase of KD5. Among the exciting prizes are a Nissan Patrol SUV for one lucky winner, two Nissan XTrails for two winners, and 30 iPhones of the latest iPhone 15 Pro version for 30 lucky winners.

Hala Shop & Win promotion not only provides shoppers with the chance to shop for products at amazing discounts, but also gives lucky winners the incredible opportunity to drive away in a legendary Nissan vehicle or



LuLu Hypermarket promo flyer.

own the latest iPhone.

LuLu Hypermarket went all out with their Hala Shop & Win festival to make the month of Hala February memorable for shoppers with a host of celebratory events, promotional offers, discounts and much more, which ensured that customers not only enjoyed

their shopping experience but also had the opportunity to win big. With the Hala Shop & Win promotion, LuLu Hypermarket once again proved its commitment to customer satisfaction, and to provide them with an unforgettable shopping experience during each visit to the hypermarket.

6301 winners in 100 days

Gold Festival campaign by BEC

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Bahrain Exchange Company (BEC), specialists in worldwide money transfers and currency exchange, have launched their latest promotional campaign 'Gold Festival' a chance to win gold coin daily and grand prize of 50 grams gold.

Running from the January 22nd to April 30th, 2024, the campaign will be open to all customers that make any currency exchange or money transfer transaction from one of its 62 branches, plus customers who send money online through BEC's secure online money transfer service.

BEC Online through website or App will also be eligible to take part. The Customers will be entered into the daily draws for the transactions made between each draw dates throughout the campaign period. The draws will be held every day throughout the campaign and the grand prize 50-gram draw will be on 2nd May, 2024.

Mr. Mathews Varughese, BEC CEO commented on the campaign, "This campaign is different from our earlier ones. Gold festival will have 1 winner from each branch every day for 100 days. I wish all our customers a good fortune."

BEC currently has 62 branches across Kuwait including 3 branches at Kuwait International Airport in T1, T4 and T5 terminals respectively.

BEC specialises in sending money around the globe safely and quickly to over 46,000 locations in 30 countries.

Its global reach has extended to over 200 countries and territories through its partnership with international remittance companies such as MoneyGram, EzRemit and TransFast.



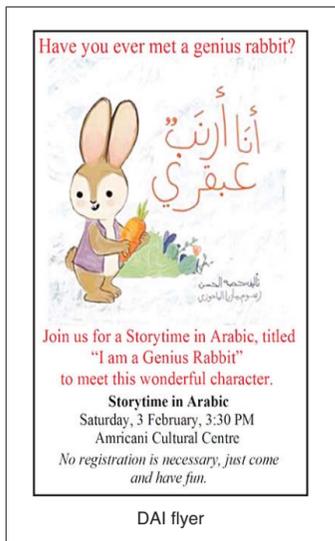
BEC Gold Festival poster.



DAI flyer

Group marks Republic Day with diverse literary expressions

Patriotic fervor at Writers' Forum Kuwait's monthly meeting



DAI flyer

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: New Year 2024 started with much zeal and enthusiasm as the members of the Writers' Forum Kuwait gathered for the first meeting of the Year marking the celebration of the Republic Day of India. The event was originally planned to be on a much bigger scale, however due to the mourning period after the death of H.H. the late Amir of Kuwait and the ongoing war against Palestine, the Forum curtailed its celebration to a limited scale by holding a meeting at the residence of Hindi poetess Ms. Kavita Sarvesh.

Similar to Women taking the lead in India's Republic Day parade, women were leading the Republic Day celebration at the Writers' Forum also. While the host of the day was Ms. Kavita Sarvesh, the meeting was anchored by the General Secretary of the forum Ms. Nazneen Ali. President of the forum Mrs. Maimuna Choughle presided over the meeting and English poetess Ms. Sabiha Bilgrami was the chief guest.

The meeting started with Ms. Nazneen Ali welcoming everyone specially the new member Yajuvendra Chandrakar. She then congratulated all the members for a successful past year in which many new poets and writers joined the Forum. The President of the Forum Mrs. Maimuna Choughle also congratulated



Writers' Forum Kuwait group photo.

the members and inspired them to continue their contributions in the field of literature.

The poetic session incepted with the members exchanging greetings with each other on the occasion of the Republic Day of India. The feeling of patriotism intensified with a patriotic

poem by Ameeruddin Ameer. The session then reached its peak with the spreading of different shades of poetry by the members in different Indian languages, each as beautiful and significant as the colors of a rainbow.

Ms. Nazneen Ali, Saeed Nazar Kadpawi,

Yaseen Dawre, Sabir Omer, Ibrahim Sange Qasid and Dr. Rajesh Gupta ruled the hearts with Urdu Ghazals and poetry. The Hindi flag bearers were Ms. Kavita Sarvesh, Ms. Anupama Chaturvedi, Dr. Radhika Guleri Bhardwaj, Ms. Sangeeta Choube Pankhudi, Aamir Diwan, Shabeeh Ahmed, Yajuvendra Chandrakar and Pankaj Tiwari, all of whom were equally mesmerizing. Pankaj Pawan and Mohan Singh added to the multilingual flavor with their beautiful Punjabi and English recitations respectively.

Varied thoughts, themes, subjects and emotions in different languages were distinct and unique yet unifying and binding all the poets together with a common chord of love, life, humanity and patriotism.

As the meeting moved towards conclusion Ms. Sabiha Bilgrami summarized each poet's creation by beautifully weaving lines chosen from each of the recitations of the day. In her Presidential remarks Mrs. Maimuna Choughle expressed her contentment with the Forum's progress and contribution to literature and urged her members to continue making their efforts for the same.

The meeting concluded with Ms. Nazneen Ali thanking the members for their presence in full strength and the members thanking the host for the perfect arrangements and heartwarming hospitality.

Association holds 18th Annual General Body meeting

FOKE elects new Central Committee office bearers

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Friends of Kannur (FOKE), a community group of people hailing from Kannur district residing in Kuwait, held its 18th Annual General Body meeting on Friday, January 26 at Abbasia Oxford Pakistani English School Auditorium. President Xaviour Antony presided over the general body meeting, which was attended by more than 250 members from three zones namely Abbasia, Central and Fahaeel. General Secretary Vijayakumar NK presented the eighteenth annual report of the organization and Treasurer Sabu-Nambiar presented the Financial Report. Membership Secretary Rajesh Kumar presented the condolecence resolution and Vice President Balakrishnan EV presented Charity Report in the absence of Charity Secretary.

Lijeesh P (President), Hariprasad UK (General Secretary), SabuNambiar (Treasurer), Dilip Kumar, Nikhil Ravindran, EldoBabu (Vice Presidents), Suraj KV (Joint Treasurer).

Vinoy Wilson (Admin Secretary), Vinoy Kumar (Arts Secretary), Sunil Kumar (Charity Secretary), Rajesh Kumar (Membership Secretary), Unnikrishnan (Sports Secretary) and Rajith KC (Media Secretary) were elected as

office bearers for the 19th year of operation from 29 member Central Committee executive members. Praesidium consisting of Omanakuttan K, Xaviour Antony and Jithesh MP moderated the meeting proceedings.

FOKE requested The Central Government through a resolution (1) to take necessary action to instruct Go First Airline Company to take quick action to refund the ticket money paid by the expatriates in Kuwait as soon as possible, (2) to increase travel facilities by allowing foreign flights to land at Kannur Airport, (3) to include expatriates who die normally in the central scheme that provides financial support for accidental deaths, and (4) to restore the abolished central ministry of expatriates.

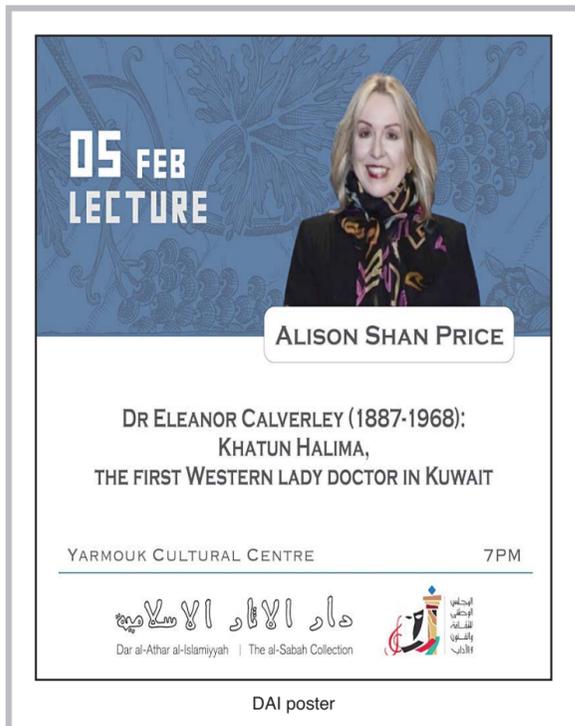
Through a resolution, the state government was also requested (1) To ease the conditions of financial assistance for students related to Kerala Pravasi NORKA by removing the requirement for non-residents to upload the ECR page of the passport to become a member of the welfare fund, (2) to start the process of establishing residential schools in all the districts of Kerala with hostel facilities for parents for the children suffering from diseases like autism and polio, which are the most disadvantaged in Kerala.



FOKE's new Central Committee office bearers.

Ex-President, Ex-General Secretary, Advisory Board Members, Vanitavedi and Unit Officers congratulated the newly elected committee. Joint Treasur-

er Sooraj KV expressed vote of thanks for the meeting while Admin Secretary Vinoy Wilson welcomed the audience for the meeting.



DAI poster

People & Places

Music

Deportation feared

Anti-Putin rock band detained in Thailand

BANGKOK, Jan. 31, (AP) — Members of a rock band that has been critical of Moscow's war in Ukraine remained locked up Tuesday in a Thai immigration jail, fearful that they could be deported to Russia as a reported plan to let them fly to safety in Israel was apparently suspended.

The progressive rock band Bi-2 said on Facebook that it had information that intervention from Russian diplomats caused the plan to be scuttled, even though tickets had already been purchased for their flight.

"The group participants remain detained at the immigration center in a shared cell with 80 people," the post said. It said they declined to meet with the Russian consul. The Russian press agency RIA Novosti said the refusal was confirmed by Ilya Ilyin, head of the Russian Embassy's consular section.



Putin

The group later said on the Telegram messaging app that its singer, Yegor Bortnik, whose stage name is Lyova, boarded a flight for Israel late Tuesday, but the other members remained in the jail.

The seven band members were arrested last Thursday after playing a concert on the southern resort island of Phuket, reportedly for not having proper working papers. On Facebook, they said all their concerns "are held in accordance with local laws and practices." Phuket is a popular destination for Russian expats and tourists. After paying a fine, the band members were sent to the Immigration Detention Center in Bangkok.

The detained musicians "include Russian citizens as well as dual nationals of Russia and other countries, including Israel and Australia," the group Human Rights Watch said in a statement Tuesday. Those holding only Russian citizenship are thought to be most at risk.

Release

"The Thai authorities should immediately release the detained members of Bi-2 and allow them to go on their way," said Elaine Pearson, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "Under no circumstances should they be deported to Russia, where they could face arrest or worse for their outspoken criticisms of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russia's war in Ukraine."

"It is not known if the Russian authorities have sought the band members' forcible return to Russia," Human Rights Watch said. "However, amid repression in Russia reaching new heights, Russian authorities have used transnational repression - abuses committed against nationals beyond a government's jurisdiction - to target activists and government critics abroad with violence and other unlawful actions."

Self-exiled Russian opposition politician and a friend of Bi-2, Dmitry Gudkov, told the AP that he had been in touch with lawyers and diplomats in an attempt to secure the band's release and suggested that pressure to detain and deport them came directly from the Kremlin and the Russian Foreign Ministry.

Russia, Gudkov said, needs an "evocative story to show that they will catch any critic abroad. This is all happening in the run-up to (Russia's presidential election), and it's clear that they want to shut everyone up, and that's why there's intense pressure going on."

Russia's ambassador to Thailand Yevgeny Tomikhin said Russian diplomats were not responsible for the group's detention.

"It's not our practice to dictate to anyone. Americans can do this. We don't behave like that and don't make such requests," Tomikhin was quoted as telling the newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda.

There have been no public statements from Thai officials on the situation.

Bi-2 has 1.01 million subscribers to its YouTube channel and 376,000 monthly listeners on Spotify.

Andrei Lugovoi, a member of the lower house of Russia's parliament, called the band members "scum" for their criticism of Russia's military operations in Ukraine.

"Let the guys get ready: soon they will be playing and singing on spoons and on metal plates, tap dancing in front of their cellmates," Lugovoi said on Telegram. "Personally, I would be very happy to see this."

Britain has accused Lugovoi of involvement in the death of former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko, who died in London in 2006 after being poisoned with tea laced with radioactive polonium-210.

Also:

NEW YORK: The man accused of killing Run-DMC's **Jam Master Jay** can't have his rap lyrics used against him at trial, a Brooklyn judge decided Tuesday in a ruling that doubled as a history-filled paean to hip-hop as "a platform for expression to many who had largely been voiceless."

The ruling came in response to an attempt by federal prosecutors to introduce lyrics penned by **Karl Jordan Jr.** as evidence of his role in gunning down Jay, a pioneering artist whose birth name was **Jason Mizell**. His 2002 death remains one of rap's most infamous slayings.

In her 14-page order, Brooklyn Federal Judge **LaShann DeArcy Hall** traced the evolution of hip-hop over five decades, referencing tracks from over a dozen artists before ultimately finding the lyrics inadmissible.

"From the genre's nascence as an oral tradition, rap artists have played the part of storytellers, providing a lens into their lives and those in their communities," Hall wrote.

Prosecutors had sought to introduce several lines written by Jordan that described first-person accounts of violence and drug dealing, including: "We aim for the head, no body shots, and we stick around just to see the body drop."

Those lyrics didn't detail the specific crime, Hall wrote, but "merely contain generic references to violence that can be found in many rap songs."

She pointed to similar lines written by rappers **Nas**, **Ice Cube** and **Vince Staples**, along with interviews with artists like **Fat Joe** and **Future** who have publicly discussed the distance between their art and real lives.

Diving further into the genre's past, Hall cited the political activism of artists like A Tribe Called Quest and **Queen Latifah**, along with the role "gangsta rap" played "as a portal for others to see into America's urban centers."

"The Court cannot help but note that odious themes - including racism, misogyny, and homophobia - can be found in a wide swath of genres other than rap music," she added in a footnote, even referencing lyrics from the Rolling Stones and **Jason Aldean**, a controversial country music star.



Chita Rivera arrives at the 72nd annual Tony Awards at Radio City Music Hall on June 10, 2018, in New York. Rivera, the dynamic dancer, singer and actress who garnered 10 Tony nominations, winning twice, in a long Broadway career that forged a path for Latina artists, died Tuesday. She was 91. (AP)



Ziggy Marley poses for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the film 'Bob Marley: One Love' in London, Tuesday, Jan. 30, in London. (AP)

Variety

STAVANGER, Norway: The doors close Wednesday on nominations for the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize, with peace activists connected to the wars in **Gaza** and **Ukraine** among the known entries.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee keeps the nominations secret, but those with nomination rights sometimes make their picks public.

Attempts to find an end to the war in Gaza have been a theme for some of the announced nominations.

Academics at the Free University Amsterdam said they have nominated the **Middle East**-based organizations **EcoPeace**, **Women Wage Peace** and **Women of the Sun** for peace efforts between Israelis and Palestinians.

"They are bringing communities together to build peace in the Middle East with a special focus on the role of women and climate justice," the university's Peace and Conflict Studies department wrote.

Norwegian lawmaker **Ingvild Wætrhus Thorsvik** told newspaper VG that she had nominated Palestinian video journalist **Motaz Azaiza** for documenting conditions in Gaza.

The prestigious prize typically attracts more than 300 entries from academics connected with peace studies, lawmakers of national parliaments, former winners and others with nomination rights. (AP)

SUNNYVALE, Calif.: Hal Buell, who led The Associated Press' photo operations from the darkroom era into the age of digital photography over a four-decade career with the news organization that included 12 Pulitzer Prizes and some of the defining images of the **Vietnam War**, has died. He was 92.

Buell died Monday in Sunnyvale, **California**, after battling pneumonia, his daughter **Barbara Buell** said in an email. His final two months were spent with her and her husband, and he died in their home with his daughter at his side.

"He was a great father, friend, mentor, and driver of important transitions in visual media during his long AP career," Barbara Buell said. "When asked by the numerous doctors, PT, and medical personnel he met over the last six months what he had done during his working life, he always said the same thing: 'I had the greatest job in the whole world.'"

Colleagues described Buell as a visionary who encouraged photographers to try new ways of covering hard news. As the editor in charge of AP's photo operations from the late 1960s to the 1990s, he supervised a staff that won a dozen Pulitzers on his watch and he worked in 33 countries, with legendary AP photographers including **Eddie Adams**, **Horst Faas** and **Nick Ut**.

"Hal pushed us an extra step," Adams said in an internal AP newsletter at the time of Buell's retirement in 1997. "The AP had always been cautious, or seemed to be, about covering hard news. But that was the very thing Buell encouraged." (AP)

ROMANIA: A Romanian court on Tuesday

Obituary

Tony-winner leaves a legacy of dance and drama

Broadway icon Rivera dies at 91

NEW YORK, Jan. 31, (AP) — Chita Rivera, the dynamic dancer, singer and actor who garnered 10 Tony nominations, winning twice, in a long Broadway career that forged a path for Latina artists and shrugged off a near-fatal car accident, died Tuesday. She was 91.

Rivera's death was announced by her daughter, Lisa Mordente, who said she died in New York after a brief illness.

Rivera first gained wide notice in 1957 as Anita in the original production of "West Side Story" and was still dancing on Broadway with her trademark energy a half-century later in 2015's "The Visit."

"I wouldn't know what to do if I wasn't moving or telling a story to you or singing a song," she told The Associated Press then. "That's the spirit of my life, and I'm really so lucky to be able to do what I love, even at this time in my life."

In August 2009, Rivera was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor the US can give a civilian. Rivera put her hand over her heart and said she shook her head in wonderment as President Barack Obama presented the medal. In 2013, she was the marshal at the Puerto Rican Day Parade in New York City.

"She was a true Broadway legend," playwright Paul Rudnick said on X, formerly Twitter. "She always delivered and audiences adored her. The moment she stepped onstage, the world became more exciting and glorious."

Rivera rose from chorus girl to star, collaborating along the way with many of Broadway's greatest talents, including Jerome Robbins, Leonard Bernstein, Bob Fosse, Gower Champion, Michael Kidd, Harold Prince, Jack Cole, Peter Gennaro and John Kander and Fred Ebb.

Rebounded

She rebounded from a car accident in 1988 that crushed her right leg and became an indefatigable star on the road. She was on Broadway in a raucous production of "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" in 2012 and the chilly "The Visit" in 2014, earning another best actress Tony nomination.

"She can't rehearse except for full-out," said playwright Terrence McNally in 2005. "She can't perform except for full-out, no matter what the size of the house. She's going to be there 101% for that audience."

She won Tonys for "The Rink" in 1984 and "Kiss of the Spider Woman" in 1993. When accepting a Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2018, she said "I wouldn't trade my life in the theater for anything, because theater is life."

She was nominated for the award seven other times, for "Bye Bye Birdie," which opened in 1960; "Chicago," 1975; "Bring Back Birdie," 1981; "Merlin," 1983; "Jerry's Girls," 1985; "Nine," 2003; and "Chita Rivera: The Dancer's Life," 2005.

"I don't think we have enough origi-

nal musicals," she told The Associated Press in 2012. "I know I'm being old fashioned, but the theater is the place where music, lyrics, words, scenery and stories come together. And I've been blessed enough to have done several shows when they really did. They take you places and they're daring. That's what we need."

Her albums include 16 tracks pulled from her original cast recordings and put out as part of Sony's Legends of Broadway series and two solo CDs - "And Now I Sing" for a tiny record label in the 1960s and "And Now I Swing" in 2009 for Yellow Sound Label.

"I looked up to you and always will admire you as a talent and mostly as a person!" wrote Kristin Chenoweth on X. "A kick butt woman you were. All the rest of us just wanna be you."

In the 1993 musical "Kiss of the Spider Woman," Rivera played the title role, a glamorous movie star at the center of the fantasy life of an inmate in a South American prison. The story, from a novel by Manuel Puig, had already been made into an Oscar-winning 1985 movie.

Relationship

In his review, then-Associated Press drama critic Michael Kuchwara wrote that Rivera "is more than a musical theater star. She's a force of nature - which is exactly what is needed for the role of the Spider Woman. With her Louise Brooks haircut, brassy voice and lithe dancer's body, Rivera dominates the stage whenever she appears."

In 1975, she originated the role of Velma Kelly (to Gwen Verdon's Roxie Hart) in the original Broadway production of "Chicago." Rivera had a small role in the 2002 film version, while Catherine Zeta-Jones won the best supporting actress Oscar as Velma - just as Rita Moreno had picked up an Oscar for her portrayal of Anita in "West Side Story."

The songwriters for "Chicago," Kander and Ebb, also wrote Rivera's first Tony-winning performance, for "The Rink." In winning the Tony for best actress in a musical, Rivera topped the show's top star, Liza Minnelli, who also had been nominated. The two played a mother and daughter who struggle to rebuild their relationship after a long estrangement; the setting is an old-fashioned roller rink that has seen better days.

"Spider Woman" had been her first Broadway show since 1986, when she suffered a broken leg in the traffic accident while she was appearing in "Jerry's Girls," a Broadway tribute to the songs of Jerry Herman.

At the Tony awards a few weeks later, she flashed her cast and belted out "Put on a Happy Face" from the musical "Bye, Bye, Birdie."

It took months of physical therapy to bring back her dancing skills. She told The Associated Press: "It never entered my mind that I wouldn't dance again. Never. I can't explain to you why. It's hard work getting back but

that's what I'm doing."

"My spirit is still there."

Lin-Manuel Miranda, the Broadway songwriter and performer, featured Rivera in a scene in his 2021 film adaptation of "Tick, Tick... Boom," and in a statement said having her included "remains one of the all-time joys of my life."

Dolores Conchita Figueroa del Rivero was born Jan. 23, 1933, in Washington, D.C. Her Puerto Rican father, Pedro del Rivero, was a musician who played in the United States Navy Band, who died when she was 7. Her mother was of Scottish and Italian descent.

Memoir

She took dance classes and then entered the prestigious School of American Ballet in New York. Her first theater gig, at age 17, was in the touring company of "Call Me Madam." That led to chorus stints in such shows as "Guys and Dolls" and "Can-Can."

In her 2023 memoir, "Chita: A Memoir," another woman steals scene after scene: her self-proclaimed alter ego, Dolores. Unapologetic and fiery, Dolores was the unfiltered version of Chita and served as motivation in times of self-doubt. In one chapter, Rivera writes that she doesn't read reviews "or Dolores just might invest in a dozen voodoo dolls."

"I consist of - and I think we all do - I consist of two people: Dolores and Conchita," Rivera said in an interview with the AP that year. "Conchita, she's the one that has been taking all the glory, you know. She's been doing all the shows, but Dolores is the one that's pushed her into it. And she's been keeping me on track, so I listen to Dolores. I listen to her. She's growing in my head now as we speak."

Among other early appearances on the New York stage were roles in "The Shoestring Revue," 1955; a 1955 musical version of "Seventh Heaven" starring Ricardo Montalban; and "Mr. Wonderful," a 1956 show starring Sammy Davis Jr.

"I can't believe that I've been given the gift to look back and relive my life," she told The Associated Press shortly before "The Dancer's Life" opened on Broadway in late 2005. "It's about how anybody can do it - if you really believe it, you have the good fortune, you do all the right things and you really work hard."

Rivera, who had a relationship with the now-deceased Davis, married fellow "West Side Story" performer Tony Mordente in 1957. The marriage ended in divorce. Their daughter, Lisa Mordente, also became a performer who occasionally appeared on Broadway, garnering a Tony nomination in 1982 for "Marlowe."

Among those honoring Rivera on social media were actor Jason Alexander, who said "she set the bar in every way," and actor and dancer Debbie Allen, who wrote: "I will miss touching you, but I will forever hear your laughter and hold that baton of power you tossed my way."

rejected an appeal by influencer **Andrew Tate** to ease judicial control measures imposed while the legal case continues in which he is charged with human trafficking, rape and forming a criminal gang to sexually exploit women.

The Bucharest Court of Appeal's decision upheld a ruling by another court on Jan. 18 which extended by 60 days the geographical restrictions against Tate, 37, stipulating that he cannot leave the country.



Buell



Azaiza

Tate lost his appeal more than a year after he was first arrested near **Bucharest** along with his brother, **Tristan**, and two Romanian women. Romanian prosecutors formally indicted all four in June last year and they have denied the allegations.

The case is still being discussed in the preliminary chamber stages, a process in which the defendants can challenge prosecutors' evidence and case file. No trial dates have been set. (AP)

HEALTH



Sumanta Choudhary, Marketing Officer at the Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council of India (pharmexcil), addresses media delegation from GCC countries.

Indian pharma exports to Kuwait surge by 42.7% in the last 2 years

India's pharmexcil chief dispels COVID vaccine rumors

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

NEW DELHI, India, Jan 31: In his meeting with the GCC media delegation to India, Sumanta Choudhary, Marketing Officer at the Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council of India (pharmexcil), has confirmed the significant increase in the volume of pharmaceutical exports from India to Kuwait over the past two years -- 35 and 42.7

percent respectively.

Choudhary revealed there have been negotiations with the Gulf countries in this regard, affirming these negotiations are on the right path even if they take a long time. He said the Indian pharmaceutical companies have contributed to improving health in the world, as they participate in about 60 percent of global vaccine production.

He pointed out that the Council is responsible for exporting medi-

cines and vaccines, indicating it was established under another ministry and then it was transferred to the Indian Ministry of Commerce.

He added any company wishing to export medicines from India needs to register with the Council; disclosing that about 4,000 companies have so far registered.

Asked about the rumored side effects of the Covid-19 vaccines, Choudhary stressed these rumors have not been proven true and the

vaccines are subject to numerous tests before being put into circulation.

He stated that the pharmaceutical industry in India enjoys a number of advantages, including a strong base of active pharmaceutical ingredients, high degree of conformity to standards, support from a strong base of pharmaceutical factories; and the availability of researchers, technicians and trained workers.

China to collaborate

Fentanyl trafficking targeted as 'drug deaths' surge in US

BEIJING, Jan 31, (AP): American and Chinese officials committed Tuesday to working together to stem the flow of fentanyl into the United States, the head of a visiting US delegation said. Their meeting was a hopeful sign of cooperation as the two global powers try to better manage their contentious ties.

The US is seeking more information sharing and law enforcement cooperation and the designation and control of made-in-China chemicals that are ingredients for fentanyl made elsewhere, said Jen Daskal, a deputy homeland security advisor in the White House.

"Obviously we need to see the results and we need to see action," she said in a phone interview after the meeting. "But there was a real spirit of cooperation and a commitment to working together."

The first meeting of a new US-China counternarcotics working group will be followed by more in-depth meetings in smaller groups on Wednesday. Fentanyl, the synthetic opioid that is ravaging America, is a major focus, and in particular the ingredients and pill presses for the drug that come from China.

Agreements

Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to restart cooperation in drug trafficking and a handful of other areas when he and US President Joe Biden met outside San Francisco in November. The agreements were a small step forward in a relationship strained by major differences on issues ranging from trade and technology to Taiwan and human rights.

The US wants China to do more to curb the export of chemicals that it says are processed into fentanyl, largely in Mexico, before the final product is smuggled into the United States.

Chinese Public Security Minister Wang Xiaohong said the two sides had in-depth and pragmatic talks.

"We reached common understanding on the work plan for the working group," he said at a ceremony marking the inauguration of the group.

Daskal said that Biden had sent a high-level delegation "to underscore the importance of this issue to the

American people."

She said there have been some drops in shipments of fentanyl "precursors" from China since the Biden-Xi meeting and stressed the importance of information sharing to identify trends and keep up with fentanyl producers who come up with substitutes when supplies of a particular ingredient dry up.

"There's a real sense of urgency," she said, noting the high number of fentanyl-related fatalities in the United States and the violence, corruption and instability fueled by drug cartels around the world.

China used to be a major supplier of fentanyl, and the US has credited Beijing for a 2019 crackdown that led to "a drastic reduction in seizures of fentanyl shipments... from China."

Synthetic opioids are the biggest killers in the deadliest drug crisis the US has ever seen. More than 100,000 deaths were linked to drug overdoses in 2022, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than two-thirds involved fentanyl or similar synthetic drugs.

China had previously rebuffed US appeals for help as relations between the two global powers deteriorated, often responding that the US should look inward to solve its domestic problems and not blame them on China.

Talks were formally put on ice in 2022, when China suspended cooperation in several areas including narcotics to protest a visit to Taiwan by then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The ice began to thaw in the lead-up to the Biden-Xi meeting in November 2023. A US Senate delegation pressed the fentanyl issue on a visit to Beijing in October and said that Chinese officials expressed sympathy for the victims of America's opioid crisis.

But China refused to discuss cooperation unless the US lifted sanctions on the Public Security Ministry's Institute of Forensic Science. The Commerce Department had imposed the sanctions in 2020, accusing the institute complicity in human rights violations against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups in China's Xinjiang region.



A man prepares to smoke fentanyl on a park bench in downtown Portland, Ore., on Thursday, May 18, 2023. (AP)



A group photo from the DDI's diabetes awareness drive at the WHO Kuwait at the United Nations House.

Dasman Diabetes Institute conducts awareness outreach at WHO Kuwait

Dasman Diabetes Institute, founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, recently organized an awareness outreach at WHO Kuwait at the United Nations House.

On this occasion, Tarek Aleryan, Director of Public Relations and Media Services at Dasman Diabetes Institute, stated that the Institute participated with its mobile clinic, to conduct various

preventative medical testing such as blood glucose, pressure, and vital signs, as the Institute believes in the importance of conducting early checks and spreading awareness on diabetes to contribute to the prevention of this disease and its complications.

In addition, booklets, leaflets, flyers, and other material on educational topics such as

the healthy plate, intermittent fasting, how to prevent diabetes, insulin doses and several other subjects were distributed to the staff. Aleryan added, "The Institute spares no effort in spreading awareness among all segments of society, noting the importance of the role played by the Institute through these awareness outreach".

Gonorrhea cases show unexpected decline

CDC reports alarming 9% rise in syphilis cases

NEW YORK, Jan 31, (AP): The US syphilis epidemic isn't abating, with the rate of infectious cases rising 9% in 2022, according to a new federal government report on sexually transmitted diseases in adults.

But there's some unexpected good news: The rate of new gonorrhea cases fell for the first time in a decade.

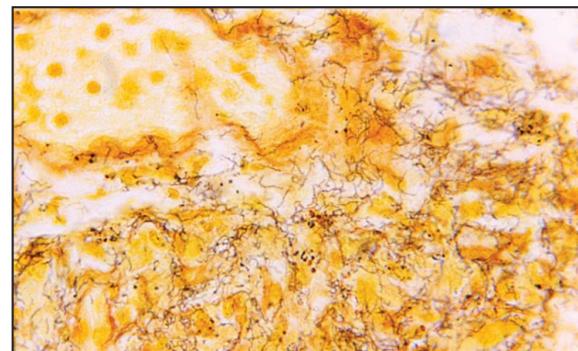
It's not clear why syphilis rose 9% while gonorrhea dropped 9%, officials at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said, adding that it's too soon to know whether a new downward trend is emerging for the latter.

They are most focused on syphilis, which is less common than gonorrhea or chlamydia but considered more dangerous. Total cases surpassed 207,000 in 2022, the highest count in the United States since 1950, according to data released Tuesday.

And while it continues to have a disproportionate impact on gay and bisexual men, it is expanding in heterosexual men and women, and increasingly affecting newborns, too, CDC officials said.

Syphilis is a bacterial disease that can surface as painless genital sores but can ultimately lead to paralysis, hearing loss, dementia and even death if left untreated.

New syphilis infections plummeted in the US starting in the 1940s when



This 1966 microscope photo made available by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows a tissue sample with the presence of numerous, corkscrew-shaped, darkly-stained, Treponema pallidum spirochetes, the bacterium responsible for causing syphilis. (AP)

antibiotics became widely available and fell to their lowest by 1998.

About 59,000 of the 2022 cases involved the most infectious forms of syphilis. Of those, about a quarter were women and nearly a quarter were heterosexual men.

"I think its unknowingly being spread in the cisgender heterosexual population because we really aren't testing for it. We really aren't looking

for it" in that population, said Dr. Philip Chan, who teaches at Brown University and is chief medical officer of Open Door Health, a health center for gay, lesbian and transgender patients in Providence, Rhode Island.

The report also shows rates of the most infectious types of syphilis rose not just across the country but also across different racial and ethnic groups, with American Indian and Alaska Native people

having the highest rate. South Dakota outpaced any other state for the highest rate of infectious syphilis at 84 cases per 100,000 people - more than twice as high as the state with the second-highest rate, New Mexico.

South Dakota's increase was driven by an outbreak in the Native American community, said Dr. Meghan O'Connell, chief public health officer at the Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board based in Rapid City, South Dakota. Nearly all of the cases were in heterosexual people, and O'Connell said that STD testing and treatment was already limited in isolated tribal communities and only got worse during the pandemic.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services last year convened a syphilis task force focused on stopping the spread of the STD, with an emphasis on places with the highest syphilis rates - South Dakota, 12 other states and the District of Columbia.

The report also looked at the more common STDs of chlamydia and gonorrhea.

Chlamydia cases were relatively flat from 2021 to 2022, staying at a rate of about 495 per 100,000, though there were declines noted in men and especially women in their early 20s. For gonorrhea, the most pronounced decline was seen in women in their early 20s as well.

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Tatum scores 30 as Celtics beat Pacers



New York Knicks forward Precious Achiuwa (5) and guard Josh Hart (3) guard Utah Jazz guard Jordan Clarkson during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2024, at Madison Square Garden in New York. The Knicks won 118-103. (AP)

Warriors defeat 76ers 119-107

BOSTON, Jan 31, (AP): Jayson Tatum scored 30 points and had two blocks in the final 30 seconds to help the Boston Celtics hold off the Indiana Pacers 129-124 on Tuesday night.

Jaylen Brown added 25 points and Derrick White finished with 24 to help Boston win its season series with Indiana, 3-2. The Pacers eliminated the Celtics in the quarterfinal round of the In-Season Tournament in December.

Aaron Nesmith led the Pacers with 26 points and 12 rebounds. Pascal Siakam finished with 23 points and Myles Turner added 17. All-Star Tyrese Haliburton had 13 points on 5-of-16 shooting and 10 rebounds.

The Celtics led 127-124 when Tatum denied Turner at the rim with 29.3 seconds left, leading to a shot-clock violation. He came up with another block with 11.2 seconds remaining to preserve Boston's five-point lead.

Warriors 119, 76ers 107

In San Francisco, Stephen Curry had 37 points with eight 3-pointers, Jonathan Kuminga had 26 points and Golden State beat Philadelphia on a night when guard Klay Thompson sat out with an illness.

Curry, who also had eight rebounds and seven assists, shot 12 for 17 in his third straight 30-point game.

Andrew Wiggins added 23 points, five rebounds and four assists.

Tobias Harris had 26 points and 10 rebounds and Joel Embiid scored 14 points for the Sixers before limping to the locker room with 4:04 left after Kuminga fell on his left knee.

Knicks 118, Jazz 103

In New York, Donte DiVincenzo made a career-high nine 3-pointers and scored 33 points, Jalen Brunson had 29 points and nine assists, and New York wrapped up one of the best months in franchise history with its eighth straight victory.

The Knicks finished 14-2 in January. That was their most wins in a month since going 14-0 in March 1994 and just one shy of their most ever, when they were 15-3 in December 1968.

Collin Sexton scored 22 points for Utah, which lost in New York for the second straight night to finish its road trip at 2-4. The Jazz were beaten 147-114 by Brooklyn on Monday.

With starting Knicks forwards Julius Randle and OG Anunoby sidelined for the second straight night, Precious Achiuwa matched a season high with 18 points. Josh Hart finished with 10 points, 10 re-



Golden State Warriors guard Brandin Podziemski, top, defends Philadelphia 76ers forward Tobias Harris during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2024, in San Francisco. (AP)

bounds and 10 assists, and Isaiah Hartenstein had 14 points and 12 boards.

Hawks 138, Lakers 122

In Atlanta, Trae Young scored 26 points, knocking down his first six attempts from 3-point range, and the Atlanta handed Los Angeles its second double-digit loss in as many nights.

The Lakers, playing without Anthony Davis after a 135-119 loss at Houston on Monday, slipped back below .500 at 24-25. Austin Reaves scored 28 points and James added 20 in a lackluster performance before a standing-room-only crowd.

Dejounte Murray, who had 24 points for the Hawks, knocked down mid-range jumpers on three straight possessions midway through the fourth quarter to turn back any thoughts of a Lakers comeback.

Raptors 118, Bulls 107

In Chicago, Gary Trent Jr. scored 24 points, Bruce Brown added 19 points and seven rebounds, and short-handed Toronto rallied past Chicago to snap a season-high five-game skid.

Jordan Nwora scored 17 points in 19 minutes and Dennis Schroder added 16 points and 10 assists for the Raptors, who trailed by 16 in the second quarter but regained the lead late in the third and held on from there.

DeMar DeRozan led the Bulls with 25 points and Ayo Dosunmu had 21. Chicago has lost three of four.

Most pre-tournament favorites miss out

Underdogs shaking up Africa Cup

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast, Jan 31, (AP): The underdogs are enjoying their moment at the Africa Cup of Nations.

The tournament has been a festival of upsets with most of the big favorites eliminated before the quarterfinal stage.

World Cup semifinalist Morocco, defending champion Senegal, seven-time champion Egypt, five-time winner Cameroon, four-time champion Ghana, and former winners Algeria and Tunisia have all been knocked out.

None of the eight quarterfinalists from the last edition of the Africa Cup in Cameroon - Burkina Faso, Tunisia,

Senegal, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Cameroon, Egypt and Morocco - have made it to the last eight this time. Nor have any of the five African teams that played at the 2022 World Cup - Cameroon, Ghana, Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia.

"This cup is really difficult. Lots of surprises," Morocco coach Walid Regragui said after his team was upset by South Africa.

Four of the remaining teams - Cape Verde, Angola, Guinea and Mali - have never won the Africa Cup before, while three-time champion Nigeria and host nation Ivory Coast will feel they have a great opportuni-

ty to claim the trophy. They could meet in the final. South Africa and Congo are the other remaining teams.

Here is a closer look at the quarterfinals, which start Friday:

Nigeria Vs. Angola

Nigeria is the favorite for many after an impressive win over Cameroon in the last 16. José Peseiro's team has grown as the tournament progressed, seemingly benefiting from a relaxed approach to interactions with media and fans. With his witty outlook and comments, Peseiro himself has overcome criticism after poor pre-tournament results

to become a favorite among Nigerian journalists, who have been asking for selfies with the Portuguese coach. Previously a worry, Nigeria's defense has become a strength with only one goal conceded so far and none in the Super Eagles' last three games. Napoli star Victor Osimhen has only scored once, but his tireless performances have inspired the rest of the team and earned accolades from fans who call his name. Angola is back in the quarterfinals for the first time since reaching the semifinals in 2008. The Sable Antelopes recorded impressive wins over Namibia, Burkina Faso and

Mauritania, while they drew with Algeria 2-2 in their opening game. Forwards Gelson Dala (four goals) and Mabululu (three) have together scored more goals than the Nigerian team (five). They will pose problems for its defense Friday in the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Stadium in Abidjan.

Congo Vs. Guinea

Congo, which won the last of its two titles in 1974, is yet to win a game in normal time in this tournament. After three draws in the group stage, the Leopards overcame Egypt in a penalty shootout with goalkeeper Lionel Mpsi scoring the winning spot kick to progress. Guinea also had a dramatic end to its last 16 match, with Mohamed Bayo scoring in the eighth minute of stoppage time to beat Equatorial Guinea. It was the first time the National Elephants had ever won an Africa Cup knockout game. Guinea was runner-up to Morocco in 1976 but that tournament had a different format. Guinea plays Congo in the 60,000-capacity Alassane Ouattara Stadium in Abidjan on Friday.

Ivory Coast Vs. Mali

Ivory Coast's tension-filled win on penalties over defending champion Senegal has restored belief for a team that looked down and out after an embarrassing 4-0 loss to Equatorial Guinea. Ecstatic Ivorians now believe the Elephants can go on to win what would be just their third title after 1992 and 2015. Forward Sébastien Haller is back after recovering from an ankle injury. But Mali will provide a strong challenge after topping a group with South Africa, Namibia and Tunisia, and dominating in a 2-1 win over Burkina Faso. Mali coach Eric Chelle was born in Abidjan and has friends among the home team. He won't want to do them any favors when they meet in Bouaké on Saturday.

Cape Verde Vs. South Africa

The last quarterfinal will be a clash between two teams that have thrived as underdogs. Cape Verde topped a group including heavyweights Egypt and Ghana and is back in the quarterfinals for the second time in the small Atlantic island nation's fourth Africa Cup appearance. Veteran goalkeeper Vozinha and forward Ryan Mendes have played in all four for the Blue Sharks. South Africa, the 1996 winner, ousted Morocco on Tuesday.



The Olympic rings are set up at Trocadero plaza that overlooks the Eiffel Tower, a day after the official announcement that the 2024 Summer Olympic Games will be in the French capital, in Paris. (AP)

Around 300,000 spectators eyed

France downsizes Paris '24 'opening ceremony' crowd

PARIS, Jan 31, (AP): French Interior minister Gerald Darmanin said Wednesday that some 300,000 spectators will be able to attend the opening ceremony for the Paris Olympics, about half the size of what was originally planned.

The giant show on the River Seine on July 26 will mark the first time that an opening ceremony is held outside of a usual stadium setting.

It will also involve a massive security operation, with tens of thousands of police officers and soldiers deployed.

The athletes will be paraded through the heart of the French capital on boats on the Seine along a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) route. Both banks of the river will be lined by spectators, behind multiple security cordons.

Speaking on French TV channel France 2, Darmanin said current plans would allow for 100,000 paying spectators with a waterside view, and more than 220,000

people with free tickets on the river's upper embankments.

Organizers had originally estimated that around 600,000 spectators could watch the ceremony, but Darmanin did not give a reason for why they have revised those figures.

Asked whether he had insomnia thinking about the ceremony, Darmanin replied that it is sleeping well.

"I know that we have the best security forces in the world and we'll be able to show that France is capable of winning medals and, above all, of hosting the world without any problems," he said.

In December, French president Emmanuel Macron said the ceremony could be moved for security reasons if France is hit again in the run-up by extremist attacks. He cited deadly extremist attacks that hit Paris in 2015 as an example of the type of severe crisis that could force a rethink.

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GFA apologizes for campaign

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast, Jan 31, (AP): The Ghana Football Association has apologized for the national team's disappointing Africa Cup of Nations campaign and says it will take "the requisite steps" to address the reasons for its failure.

Ghana was eliminated in the group stage with just two points from three games after three injury-time goals in two of those matches.

The Black Stars were two goals ahead against Mozambique in their final group game and on course to qualify for the knockout stage until the Mambas scored twice in injury time to draw 2-2. Ghana also conceded in injury time to lose its opening game to Cape Verde.

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SPORTS

Al-Arabi seek redemption against Al-Nasr

Al-Qadisiya resume Amir Cup journey

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The 62nd edition of the Amir Cup competition is set to resume today, featuring two exciting quarter-final matches. The first match will witness Al-Qadisiya facing off against Al-Fahaheel at 4:35 pm at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium. Meanwhile, the second clash between Al-Arabi and Al-Nasr is scheduled for 7:00 pm at Thamer Stadium.

In the first encounter, Al-Qadisiya faces a challenging task against Al-Fahaheel to secure a spot in the semi-finals. Despite Al-Qadisiya's previous victories over Al-Fahaheel in the league this season (3-0 and 2-1), the latter forced the former into penalty kicks in the Crown Prince Cup this season. Notably, Al-Qadisiya prevailed in a penalty shootout against Al-Fahaheel in the last edition of the Prince Cup. Al-Fahaheel's convincing performance against Al-Shabab in the preliminary round, where they triumphed 4-1, adds to the anticipation of a competitive match.

Under the guidance of coach Dr. Muhammad Al-Mashaan, Al-Qadisiya enters its second match, with the team eager to satisfy their hungry fans and clinch a title that has eluded them for many years.

The second match at Thamer Stadium promises a "special" confrontation, as Al-Arabi aims to reclaim its reputation against "Al-Anabi," who previously defeated them 2-1 in the Zain Premier League – the only loss Al-Arabi has suffered this season.

SOCCER

Al-Arabi is undergoing changes at the professional level, having signed Tunisian Ayman and Algerian Imad Eddine Boubacar in place of Senegalese Mamadou Thiam and Algerian Sofiane Bouchard. However, they will miss the contributions of Moroccan Walid Essabar and Nigerian Anabo Aywala in today's match. Moroccan Hamza Khaba is ready to play, but Al-Arabi will be without Sultan Al-Anazi, Hassan Hamdan, and Salman Al-Awadi due to injuries.

Al-Nasr, under the supervision of coach Zaher Al-Adwani, aims to assert its superiority over Al-Arabi and confirm its dominance over "Al-Akhdar" this season. In today's match, Al-Nasr will be without Syrian Amr Midani, who is on duty with his country's national team in the Asian Cup finals in Qatar. Despite this absence, Al-Nasr possesses distinguished players in various positions capable of advancing in the competition.



Al Salmiyah new player Al-Senussi Al-Hadi.

Several moves before the deadline

Al-Qadisiya strengthen squad with Fawaz signing

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Al-Qadisiya has finalized the addition of Omani midfielder Abdullah Fawaz as the fifth foreign player in the team, following the dismissal of Ghanaian Sarfo Kingsley for violating competition regulations due to an ethical case.

The team underwent a last-minute change in negotiations, extending an official offer to Jordanian national team player Nizar Al-Rashdan and engaging in talks with Moroccan professional Zakaria Al-Wardi. Ultimately, they settled on Omani international Abdullah Fawaz, a key addition to the team's lineup.

The Premier League's winter transfer market saw several moves before the deadline, with Kuwait Club securing the services of Congolese duo Guy Mbienda and Arsene Zola in place of injured Tunisian Yassine Al-Khanisi and Bilal Al-Aifa.

SOCCER

Al-Salmiya made noteworthy signings, including Libyan Senussi Al-Hadi, a former Al-Arabi club player, and Austrian Srđan Spiridonovich from Hajer Al-Saudi. This move involved releasing Senegalese Cesar and Ghanaian Abudou Issaka from the team.

Al-Arabi underwent changes, bringing in Tunisian Ayman and Algerian Imad Eddine Boubacar to replace Senegalese Mamadou Thiam and Algerian Sofiane Bouchard.

Al-Shabab secured three deals, including Estonian Bogdan Vastsuk, Tunisian Youssef Bensouda, and compatriot Bilal Al-Aifa.

Al-Fahaheel and Kazma each signed a single professional contract, with Orange adding Nigerian Benjamin

Warba Bank League resumes

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The Supreme Organizing Committee for the Third Higher Education Sports Games, under the auspices of the Kuwait School Sports and Higher Education Federation, has officially announced the resumption of the Warba Bank Soccer League competitions. The action is set to recommence on Sunday, February 11, featuring the knockout rounds, starting with the eagerly anticipated quarter-finals.

The teams that successfully advanced to the knockout stage include the Public Authority for Applied Education and Kuwait University from the first group, College of Kuwait for Science and Technology and the American University of Kuwait from the second group, Gulf University for Science and Technology

and Ali Sabah Al-Salem College from the third group, and Saad Al-Abdullah Academy and Kuwait Technical College from the fourth group.

SOCCER

Walid Nassar, Chairman of the Technical Committee of the Warba Bank Turf Football League, has assured that the qualifying rounds will take place at the Sports City Stadium in the Public Authority for Applied Education. Additionally, he revealed that the highly anticipated final match, to be scheduled in the coming days, will be hosted at the Friendship and Peace Stadium in Kazma Club.



Teams challenge for the ball during the Warba League soccer match.

Teddy, while Al-Fahaheel contracted with Syrian Nasouh Nakdali. Khaithan signed a deal with Senegalese Othman Fallon and also brought in Fahd Al-Rashidi from Yarmouk in a local deal.

In contrast, Al-Nasr and Al-Jahra re-

frained from significant signings, with Al-Annabi showing confidence in their existing professionals and the people of the "Red Palace" facing administrative complications that hindered their involvement in the contracting race.



A file photo of Al-Qadisiyah and Yarmouk players in action.

KUNA photo

Al-Arabi play Yarmouk in league

Kuwait Club, Al-Qadisiya head to Oman for Championship

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Today, the volleyball delegation from Kuwait Club and Al-Qadisiya clubs embarks on their journey to the city of Sohar in Oman for the second edition of the West Asian

Championship, taking place from February 2 to 11.

Yesterday marked the conclusion of the external camp for Kuwait Club in Turkey, spanning 15 days and featuring four trial matches. Unfortunately, the team

will be without the services of their star player Amer Al-Salim, who sustained an injury during the Turkish camp.

Simultaneously, Al-Qadisiya wrapped up its external camp in Dubai yesterday, engaging in

four trial matches against Dubai, Al Wasl, Al Jazira, and Baniyas clubs.

In the tournament draw, Al-Qadisiya finds itself in the first group alongside Al-Rayyan of Qatar, Al-Ibtisam of Saudi Arabia, Al-Seeb of Oman, and Baniyas of the Emirates. On the other hand, the runner-up of the first edition, Al-Kuwait, is placed in the second group with Khaibel Al-Mahra of Yemen, Al-Arabi of Qatar, Sohar of Oman, Shabab Al-Hussein of Jordan, and Al-Ahly of Bahrain.

VOLLEYBALL



Players vie for the ball.

The Al-Qadisiya is set to kick off its tournament journey next Saturday against Al-Ibtisam of Saudi Arabia, while Kuwait Club will face Al-Arabi of Qatar on the same day. All matches for the second West Asian Championship will take place in the Sohar Sports Complex hall.

In a related development, a General Volleyball League match is scheduled for today at Al-Itihad Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, featuring Al-Arabi and Yarmouk at 5:15 pm.

Kuwaiti judge Al-Attar 'selected' for Asian Weightlifting Championship judging panel

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The Asian Weightlifting Federation has selected Kuwaiti judge Ashwaq Al-Attar to join the judging panel for the upcoming Asian Weightlifting Championship in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, scheduled from February 3 to 10.

Al-Attar's nomination by the Continental Federation is a recognition of her extensive experience and expertise in the field of weightlifting refereeing. Today, Al-Hikma Al-Attar embarks on her journey to Tashkent to actively participate in the Asian Forum.

With a history of officiating in various international and continental championships, including the Asian Weightlifting Championship for



Kuwaiti judge Ashwaq Al-Attar.

junior and youth categories held in India last summer, Al-Attar brings a wealth of knowledge to the judging panel. Notably, she has previously participated in the Arab Weightlifting Championship for youth and juniors held in Egypt last October.

WEIGHTLIFTING

The tournament in Tashkent will see the participation of 17 Arab countries, with the absence of Sudan, Morocco, and Palestine. This marks another significant opportunity for Al-Attar to contribute her expertise to the sport on the international stage.

Arsenal hold off Nottingham Forest

Premier League makes explosive return as 2 teams score inside 22 seconds

LONDON, Jan 31, (AP): With one team scoring after just 18 seconds and another after 21 seconds, the Premier League made an explosive return following the competition's short winter break.

Arsenal left it much later for its goals in a win that kept the pressure on Liverpool at the top.

Just when it looked like being another frustrating match for Arsenal's often-profligate attack, Gabriel Jesus and Bukayo Saka scored in the second half to help the team beat Nottingham Forest 2-1.

Arsenal might be able to maintain a title push heading into the final months of the campaign, but can Aston Villa?

Unai Emery's team has been

the big surprise this season but a 3-1 loss at home to Newcastle slowed its bid for a finish in the Champions League places, with Villa staying in fourth place.

SOCCER

There were five games in total and 16 goals scored, three of them coming for Luton striker Elijah Adebayo in a 4-0 thrashing of Brighton that lifted his team out of the relegation zone.

Adebayo's first came after just 18 seconds and it was barely the quickest of the night, with Ben Brereton Diaz scoring after 21 seconds for Sheffield United in its 3-2 loss at Crystal Palace.

Fulham and Everton drew 0-0 in the other match on the opening night of the league's midweek



Arsenal's Emile Smith Rowe, (left), jumps for the ball with Nottingham Forest's Taiwo Awoniyi during the English Premier League soccer match between Nottingham Forest and Arsenal at the City Ground stadium in Nottingham, England. (AP)

round. Gabriel Jesus has been criticized by some for not being the

clinical finisher Arsenal might need to end its 20-year wait for a Premier League title.

The Brazil striker was enduring another frustrating match, heading over in the first half and smashing a shot against the post just after the restart, before being the inspiration behind the win.

In the 65th, he received a throw-in from Oleksandr Zinchenko, drove toward goal at an acute angle and sent in a shot that deflected into the net off the heel of Forest goalkeeper Matt Turner - a former Arsenal player.

Jesus then turned provider as he led a counterattack and passed the ball across to Saka, who took a touch and shot right-footed into the bottom

corner from just inside the area in the 72nd.

Substitute Taiwo Awoniyi scored in the 89th for Forest.

Villa hadn't lost at home since February last year before getting beaten for the second time this season by Newcastle.

Two goals in four first-half minutes from Fabian Schar put Newcastle in control before Alex Moreno's own-goal just after the break. Ollie Watkins grabbed a consolation for Villa, which will drop to fifth place if Tottenham beats Brentford on Wednesday.

Newcastle had lost six of its previous seven league games to slip away from the top four but victory lifted the team to seventh place, although still 11 points behind Villa.



A Bahrain supporter prior to the Asian Cup Round of 16 soccer match between Japan and Bahrain at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

Sports

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Japan's pursuit of 5th Asian Cup title intact

Bahrain out, Mancini apologizes

DOHA, Qatar, Jan 31, (AP): Japan maintained its pursuit of a record-extending fifth Asian Cup title on Wednesday by advancing to the quarterfinals with a 3-1 win against Bahrain.

The pre-tournament favorite has bounced back from a surprise 2-1 loss against Iraq in the group stage and will play either Iran or Syria in the next round.

Goals from Ritsu Doan, Takefusa Kubo and Ayase Ueda secured Japan's place in the last eight, while Zion Suzuki's own goal was the only consolation for Bahrain.

Bahrain had advanced as the winner of Group E ahead of another of the pre-tournament favorites, South Korea. It may have considered itself unfortunate, then, to face four-time champion Japan in the round of 16, which finished runner-up in Group D.

Japan went ahead in the 31st minute when Seiya Maikuma's long-range shot came back off the post and Doan converted on the rebound.

Kubo doubled the lead four min-

utes into the second half when he spun and finished from close range.

Bahrain was given hope of a comeback in the 64th as Sayed Baqer's powerful header was parried into the air by Suzuki. The Japan goalkeeper then tried to catch the ball, but collided with Ayase, who was attempting to head clear off the goal-line and the ball was fumbled into the net.

Ayase restored Japan's two-goal advantage eight minutes later when firing low at the near post to beat Bahrain keeper Ebrahim Lutfalla.

SOCCER

Saudi Arabia coach Roberto Mancini apologized for walking off before the end of his team's losing penalty shootout against South Korea. Mancini turned and headed to the locker room without watching Hwang Hee-chan convert the decisive kick that saw South Korea advance to the quarterfinals 4-2 on penalties and set up a clash with Australia on Friday.

"I apologize for this because I thought it was finished," Mancini said. "I didn't want to (disrespect) anyone."

"I want to say thank you to all my players for what they did. They are improved a lot."

Mancini, who won the European Championship as Italy coach in 2021, watched his team relinquish a 1-0 lead in the ninth minute of stoppage time when Cho Gue-sung headed in an equalizer.

With the score still level after extra time at Education City Stadium, South Korea goalkeeper Jo Hyeon-woo went on to save penalties from Sami Al Naji and Abdulrahman Ghareeb.

"I am very sad because when you lose a penalty shootout, when you concede a goal in the last minute ... because I don't understand 10 minutes extra (stoppage) time," Mancini said. "But I am happy because as a team we improved a lot, some players improved a lot, we worked one month together and this was really important. Now we are a team."



The Kuwaiti Sporty Academy team celebrates after winning the championship title at the conclusion of the Sixth International Friendship Football Championship held recently in the Emirates. During the tournament, the organizers arranged a closed training camp and orchestrated a series of matches involving teams from both Emirati and Kuwaiti academies. Notable participants included the Sporty Club Academy, featuring two teams, and the Hatrick Academy, represented by two teams from the Emirates. Additionally, the Kuwaiti Sporty Club fielded two teams in the competition.

Hakimi misses late penalty

South Africa knock Morocco out of Africa Cup

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast, Jan 31, (AP): Another day, another upset at the Africa Cup of Nations.

Achraf Hakimi missed a late penalty as Morocco became the latest big name to be knocked out with a 2-0 loss to South Africa in the round of 16 on Tuesday.

Evidence Makgopa's 57th-minute strike and a free kick from Teboho Mokoena in the fifth minute of stoppage time sent the Bafana Bafana through to the quarterfinals at Morocco's expense.

"We're very disappointed because we came with the ambition of winning it. Going out so early in the tournament wasn't expected, but this cup is really difficult. Lots of surprises," said Morocco coach Walid Regragui, who returned after having his suspension lifted but now faces an uncertain future.

"I said that Morocco was due in the semifinal whatever happened, so we will have a good discussion. In any case, I never hide from taking respon-



Morocco's Sofyan Amrabat, (right), challenges South Africa's Thapelo Morena during the African Cup of Nations Round of 16 soccer match between Morocco and South Africa, at the Laurent Pokou Stadium in San Pédro, Ivory Coast. (AP)

sibilities, mine at least. I failed. So there you have it," Regragui said. World Cup semifinalist Morocco was without wingers Hakim Ziyech

and Sofiane Boufal, both injured in the win over Zambia, but defender Noursair Mazraoui made his first start after recovering from a thigh injury.

The Atlas Lions, who created more chances, were stunned when Themba Zwane sent Makgopa through to score.

They responded with increased pressure but had to wait till the 82nd for a lifeline when Mothobi Mvula was penalized for blocking Ayoub El Kaabi's shot with his arm.

Instead of tying the score at 1-1, however, Hakimi grazed the top of the crossbar with the spot kick in the 85th.

The Atlas Lions' task was further complicated when midfielder Sofyan Amrabat was sent off in injury time, and Mokoena sealed their fate a minute later when he fired inside the top left corner.

SOCCER

Morocco follows defending champion Senegal, seven-time champion Egypt, five-time winner Cameroon, four-time champion Ghana, along with former winners Algeria and Tunisia to be knocked out ahead of the quarterfinal stage.

"We were warned, we made uncharacteristic mistakes that were unlike us. But I take responsibility today for the choices, for everything that happened today," Regragui said. "The penalty happens, it's football. Ashraf could perhaps have let us back into the match. But then when you look at the situations, how we let go. It doesn't reflect our team. So there you go. Congratulations to South Africa."

The Bafana Bafana will next play Cape Verde in Yamoussoukro on Saturday.

"Beating a team like Morocco is something special," South Africa coach Hugo Broos said. "We are very, very happy."

None of the eight quarterfinalists in the last edition of the Africa Cup in Cameroon have made it to the last eight this time, nor have any of the five African teams that played at the 2022 World Cup.

Mali held on to beat Burkina Faso 2-1 to set up a quarterfinal match against tournament host Ivory Coast.

An own-goal from Edmond Tapsoba and second-half strike from Lassine Sinayoko were enough for the Eagles to win the round-of-16 game, the last match of the tournament to be played in Korhogo.

Mali will next play Ivory Coast in Bouaké on Saturday, when the home team can count on supporters whose belief has been restored after beating defending champion Senegal on Monday.

Burkina Faso, which has repeatedly gone close to winning its first Africa Cup title in recent years, will have to prolong its spark after a campaign that never really sparked into life. The Stallions edged Mauritania 1-0, then drew 2-2 with Algeria, before losing their final group game 2-0 to Angola.



Japan's Ayase Ueda is challenged by Bahrain's Waleed Alhayam, rear, during the Asian Cup Round of 16 soccer match between Bahrain and Japan, at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

Kuwait's Al-Saad advances to the final of ISSF World Cup



Kuwaiti shooter Abdulaziz Al-Saad.

CAIRO, Jan 31, (KUNA): Abdulaziz Al-Saad from Kuwait has secured a spot in the final of the ISSF World Cup 2024, clinching fifth place in the "Skeet" contest held in Cairo. The event is ongoing and is scheduled to conclude on February 1.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Saad expressed his satisfaction with the achievement and sees it as the beginning of a series of positive outcomes in upcoming competitions. Topping the qualifying round with a score of 124, Al-Saad acknowledged the support provided by the national team's technical staff during the champion-

ship, which comprises five contests.

Meanwhile, Egypt's Azmi Mehelba claimed the gold medal in the same competition, with Britain's Ben Llewelly securing silver and Germany's Glen Korte earning the bronze.

SHOOTING

The ISSF World Cup 2024 encompasses Rifle, Pistol, and Shotgun contests, drawing participation from over 600 shooters representing 66 countries.

Sancho injury doubt for Dortmund

DORTMUND, Germany, Jan 31, (AP): Jadon Sancho is an injury doubt for Borussia Dortmund's game at Heidenheim in the Bundesliga on Friday because of an adductor muscle problem, something coach Edin Terzic links to his months-long spell without playing at Manchester United.

Sancho has played in all three of Dortmund's games - all of them wins - since signing on loan from United. Before that, his last game was in August amid a rift with United manager Erik ten Hag.

"Jadon Sancho hasn't been able to train with the team for the last couple

of days because he felt some muscle problems in the area of the adductor, which is not surprising after the long break that he had," Terzic said Wednesday. "We'll see about that now and we won't take any big risks. We'll see how it develops over the next two days to take a decision on whether he joins us in Heidenheim."

Terzic added that Dortmund is still without three key players, goalkeeper Gregor Kobel and forwards Marco Reus and Julian Brandt. They all missed Sunday's 3-1 win over Bochum with illness but Terzic said they are now "all on the way to recovery."

ZURICH, Jan 31, (AP): Soccer clubs worldwide spent a record \$9.63 billion last year buying players in international transfer deals processed by FIFA, soccer's governing body said in research published.

Ahead of a slow January trading window closing in Europe on Thursday, FIFA's research showed transfer spending in 2023 on player deals between clubs from different countries - fueled by spending by English and Saudi Arabian clubs - was \$2 billion more than the previous biggest spend in the pre-pandemic year of 2019.

English clubs were again the biggest spenders with \$2.96 billion worth of international deals including Enzo Fernandez to Chelsea from Benfica, Mykhailo Mudryk to Chelsea from Shakhtar Donetsk and Joško Gvardiol to Manchester City from Leipzig.

FIFA's study is not a complete picture because it does not count transfers deals between two clubs in the same country. Hundreds of millions spent on deals for Declan Rice, Alexis Mac Allister, Moises Caicedo and Kai Havertz were not logged by FIFA because the transfers were between Premier League clubs. Those deals do not require FIFA to process a change of player registration between two member federations.

English clubs recouped more than \$1 billion in international sales, including Tottenham selling Harry Kane to Bayern Munich.

SOCCER

In men's soccer, 3,279 international transfers of professional players involving a fee were processed by FIFA last year.

FIFA said its top-10 transfers accounted for more than 10% of the

entire amount spent, about \$1 billion, on international deals last year.

The top-10 list included Paris Saint-Germain buying Randal Kolo Muani from Eintracht Frankfurt and selling Neymar to Saudi Arabian club Al Hilal.

FIFA's report said Saudi clubs spent \$970 million - compared to \$50.4 million in 2022 - and recouped \$16.9 million in selling players to clubs in other countries.

In women's soccer, 1,888 international transfers of professional players were processed by FIFA last year - a year-on-year rise of more than 20%.



Newcastle United's Jacob Murphy, second left, battles for the ball with Aston Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez, second right, and Alex Moreno, right, during their English Premier League soccer match at Villa Park, Birmingham, England. Newcastle won 3-1. (AP) — See Page 15