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HH Amir and Omani Sultan boost ties in Muscat talks

PM unveils '100-day' blueprint for reform

MPs tackle govt's bill delay request

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: The government has officially presented its work program to the National Assembly on Tuesday.

In his speech about the program, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah

said: "We are receiving a new era full of determination, optimism and national responsibility. We will work hard as a council and government to enhance constructive co-operation and redouble efforts in serving the country to embody the hopes and aspirations of citizens."

In the work program, which bears the slogan, 'A Just, Safe and Sustainable Homeland', the government affirmed that "the cost of financial and economic reform will increase the longer

we delay in addressing this issue, and confronting it may become extremely difficult, along with harsh and painful consequences."

It stressed that "the pivotal goal of economic reform in Kuwait is to achieve balance in the structure of the national economy by redrawing the government's role in economic activity in a way that restores the private sector's leading role, while enhancing the diversity of its sectors to ensure the creation of productive job opportunities for graduates, as well as supporting the sustainability of economic and social well-being in the long term."

It pointed out that the work program is aimed at managing economic resources in an optimal manner and meeting the expectations of relevant parties in order to achieve sustainable well-being for citizens.

It also stated that the first step is the activation of Article 20 of the Constitution by expanding the offering of investment opportunities to enable the private sector to create national job opportunities in various economic sectors, which is the main goal of the government's work program.

It has identified achievements that must be reached within 100 days, the most prominent of which are as follows:

- Take measures to curb price hikes
- Launch the digital platform for companies and commercial licenses
- Conduct a study on the financial, economic and technical feasibility of a railway link between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia
- Handover of the Maternity Hospital
- Inauguration of Kuwait Compulsory Insurance Complex

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AI empowers Islamic cause

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6, (KUNA): The President of the Kuwait-based Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences (IOMS), Dr. Mohammad Al-Jarallah, stressed on Tuesday the importance of employing Artificial Intelligence (AI) in achieving provision of Islamic law.

This came in a workshop opening statement by Dr. Al-Jarallah under the title "Employing AI in improving capabilities of doctors, scholars and preachers to public speaking and media confrontation" with the participation of 70 scholars and preachers.

The workshop was held by the organization in cooperation with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. It aimed to employ the capabilities of AI in achieving purposes that align with Sharia, noting that AI represents the beginning of a new era and indicating that this technology has dangers that one must be cautious of.

Dr. Al-Jarallah pointed out that it also aimed at how to prepare a sermon, write an article or create content using AI and identify the challenges and concerns related to AI.

The workshop targets senior personalities working in the field of Islamic advocacy and preachers in general.

Kuwaiti creativity shines in Bahrain

MANAMA, Feb 6, (KUNA): Kuwaiti artists participating in the second "Gulf Ceramics" exhibition in Bahrain said on Tuesday that Gulf workshops and exhibitions stimulate creativity and talents by exchanging cultural knowledge and experiences.

In a statement to KUNA, Kuwaiti potters said that it was a great opportunity to introduce the Kuwaiti Ceramic House - Al Ghaith House, and its activities and history.

Dr. Jamila Al-Salem, a Kuwaiti pottery artist, said that the exhibition includes variety of artworks and expressed her gratitude to the organizers for the opportunity to get to meet other pottery artists from the GCC.

She explained that during the participation in the exhibition, she presented pieces of art with modern contemporary features

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KUNA photo
Kuwaiti artist Moayed Al-Thalith's unique artworks are showcased at the second edition of the 'Gulf Ceramics' exhibition in Bahrain.



Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tareq warmly receives His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah upon his arrival in the Omani capital of Muscat for a state visit.



Amiri Diwan photos
Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman awards His Highness the Amir the Al-Saeed Medal as a gesture of recognition and appreciation.

Visit expected to mark bilateral milestone

MUSCAT, Feb 6, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq exchanged medals at Al-Alam Palace in the Omani capital Muscat.

Sultan Haitham bin Tariq decorated His Highness the Amir with (Al-Saeed) Medal in recognition and appreciation for His Highness, while His Highness the Amir gifted Sultan Haitham (Mubarak Al-Kabir) Medal in appreciation of His Majesty and the distinguished achievements and efforts he has made for the Sultanate of Oman and its people.

Earlier, Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq held a banquet in honor of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation on the occasion of the state visit.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was treated to an official reception at Oman's royal palace on Tuesday, marking his state visit to the Gulf Arab Sultanate.

As His Highness the Amir's official convoy pulled up, he was warmly greeted by Oman's Royal Camel Corps, a customary gesture to welcome a visiting head of state, while the traditional 21-gun salute sounded to usher in the visit.

His Highness the Amir went on to shake hands with top Omani state officials before the bilateral talks got underway.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Omani Sultan Haitham bin Tariq held a session of official talks at Al-Alam Palace in Muscat.

During the talks, the deep-rooted ties between the two countries were touched on as well as boosting bilateral relations in various fields.

The discussions also dealt with ways of expanding frameworks to support and enhance the progress of the

Gulf Cooperation Council, the most prominent issues of common interest, and the discussion of some matters in light of the latest events and developments taking place in the regional and international arenas.

The talks were attended by the official delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrived, along with official accompanying delegation in Omani capital of Muscat on state visit.

A fleet of Omani military jets accompanied His Highness the Amir's plane over the Omani airspace.

Receiving His Highness the Amir at the airport was Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq.

The Omani Deputy Prime Minister for Defense Affairs Shihab bin Tareq, Minister of Diwan of Royal Court Khaled Al-Busaidi, Minister of Royal Office Lieutenant General Sultan Al-Numai, Interior Minister Humoud Al-Busaidi, Foreign Minister Bader Al-Busaidi, Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Saleh Al-Kharousi and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Oman Dr. Mohammad Al-Hajri, were also at the airport receiving His Highness the Amir.

Accompanying His Highness the Amir are Sheikh Mohammad Abdulaziz Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Sheikh Hamad Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah, Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Mansour Mubarak Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Dr. Basel Al-Humoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr. Imad Al-Atiqi, and senior officials at the Amiri Diwan.

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Commerce minister sets up committee

Kuwait moves to strengthen Consumer Law

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6, (KUNA): The Commerce and Industry Minister Abdullah Al-Jouan issued a ministerial decree, Tuesday, forming a three-member committee to review the Consumer Protection Law, its associated regulations, implementation, and challenges.

The ministry announced in a press release that the committee's mission is to identify legislative and executive shortcomings, propose amendments to standard contracts to prevent unfair treatment of consumers, suggest awareness campaigns for consumer rights, ensure the consumer complaint process, and propose any necessary amendments.

The committee is responsible for studying topics referred to it by the minister concerning consumer protection, identifying legislative and executive deficiencies, and proposing amendments, the ministry stated.

The committee may seek assistance from relevant experts and is tasked with submitting reports and recommendations to Al-Jouan for decision-making, it mentioned.

UK monarch halts public duties

King Charles III diagnosed with cancer

LONDON, Feb 6, (AP): King Charles III's cancer was caught early and the whole country is hoping for a speedy recovery, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said Tuesday, as the monarch's son Prince Harry reportedly flew from the U.S. to visit his father.

Buckingham Palace announced Monday evening that the king has begun outpatient treatment for an undisclosed form of cancer. It was found during his recent hospital treatment for an enlarged prostate but is a "separate issue" and not prostate cancer, the palace said.

"Thankfully, this has been caught early," Sunak told BBC radio, adding that as prime minister he would "continue to communicate with him as normal."

"Many families around the country listening to this will have been touched by the same thing and they know what it means to everyone," Sunak said. "So we'll just be willing

him on and hopefully we get through this as quickly as possible."

Less than 18 months into the reign that he'd famously waited decades to begin, the 75-year-old monarch has suspended public engagements but will continue with state business - including weekly meetings with the prime minister - and won't be handing over his constitutional roles as head of state.



Charles III

The palace said Charles, who has generally enjoyed good health, "remains wholly positive about his treatment and looks forward to returning to full public duty as soon as possible."

Opinion

One ruler for Kuwait, not 51

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THERE is a common expression - "Leave it to the experts" - which means assigning a task to someone who is qualified to perform it, or else "there will be trouble if the cobbler starts making pies."

Recently, the editors-in-chief of local newspapers were in front of a man who fully understands what the country needs, and knows how decisions are formulated and how to remedy issues. He is also fully aware of the defects that have severely afflicted State institutions.

In the meeting between His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem and the editors-in-chief, the picture became clear to everyone that this government has come to work.

His Highness the Prime Minister is also fully aware of the importance of correcting the economic imbalance in order to push the country towards renaissance again.

It is true that remedying three decades of bad practices and deals between successive Cabinets and parliaments will not be a walk in the park. However, as long as there is will, finding a path towards rectification of issues becomes easy.

We all know that the ministerial position has not been stable for even a single day since 1992. We know how ministers have been dismissed just hours after their appointment, and how some made the ministry their personal institution and appointed their cronies in vital positions.

Some of them sought to systematically plunder, some others committed the greatest evil, which is mismanagement, and others resorted to make deals with the parliamentarians to take the cup of parliamentary accountability away from them.

Also, everyone knows that decisions were taken to close the country. Those who had experience and had built interests in Kuwait were deported overnight because they had reached 60 years of age. We also know how people were prevented from bringing their daughters to Kuwait on a visit unless they obtained a "not pregnant" certificate, a decision the likes of which have not been seen even in the banana republics.

His Highness the Prime Minister laid out the general lines of the state renaissance project before the editors-in-chief. This is with regard to the northern economic region, the objective of which is to protect the country's national security by revitalizing it, and building and developing factories so that it becomes the nerve that connects us with neighboring countries.

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NewsWatch

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud, held a meeting Monday with the visiting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

According to Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the two reviewed aspects of bilateral relations and prospects for joint cooperation. (KUNA)

CAIRO: The second meeting of the Arab Customs Cooperation Committee took place at the Arab League on Tuesday, presided by Saudi Arabia, to continue discussing the executive mechanism of the agreement.

Director of the League's Economic Integration Department Dr. Bahjat Abu-Alnasser said in his opening speech at the meeting that the agreement has been in effect since August 3rd 2022 with eight Arab states joining it. (KUNA)

Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:14	Asr	15:08
Sunrise ..	06:35	Maghrib ..	17:30
Zohr	12:02	Isha	18:49

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-35 km/h.

By Night: Cold with light to moderate northwesterly wind to

Weather

wind, with speeds of 10-32 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.	Kuwait Airport	22	06
	Abdaly	24	09
	Jahra	23	10
	Salmiyah	19	14
	Nuwaisib	22	09
	Wafra	23	07

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

'Ideal destination to purchase second home ... invest'

Spanish city Marbella mayor visits Kuwait, promotes tourism

By Paul Francis X. Fernandes

Arab Times/Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: Marbella, a jewel of the Costa del Sol, where the Mediterranean sun kisses golden beaches and the vibrant culture beckons travelers from all corners of the globe seeking an enchanting escape, Marbella offers a harmonious blend of luxury, history and warm hospitality.

The Mayor of Marbella, Ángeles Muñoz, who is in Kuwait to promote tourism in Marbella emphasized that the city "is the ideal destination to visit, purchase a second home and invest" and that "its alliance with Kuwait strengthens its position as a world leader in excellence".

Nestled along the sun-drenched coast of Southern Spain, Marbella exudes an irresistible charm that captivates visitors upon arrival. Its rich tapestry of Moorish architecture, whitewashed buildings, and lush gardens provides a picturesque backdrop for unforgettable experiences.

The councillor of this Spanish town, was received by the Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait, HE Miguel José Moro, to participate in an event held at the embassy to present the Marbella Tourism Trade Mission in the Middle East, in which the Spanish Luxury Association and some of the most emblematic hotels in the municipality of the Costa del Sol participated.

"We hope to also continue to have the support of Kuwait and that the union between us will grow up in the future," said the Mayor, who highlighted that 90% of Kuwaiti tourists who visit Spain choose Marbella as their destination, and it is the Middle East country that acquires the most properties in the city.

"We are on the right way, we will continue to move forward together and always remember that we are waiting for you with open arms in Marbella, which is also your home," she added.

Muñoz thanked the ambassador for his invitation and for the presence of members of the Kuwaiti Royal Family, Princess Beatrix of Orléans – honorary president of the association – businessmen and representatives of luxury travel agencies.

Speaking at the event, she highlighted how Marbella "feels very close to Kuwait, because we are two destinations that have a lot in common, we have a lot to contribute, and we are going to continue working on that line of collaboration that we opened long time ago."

In Marbella, she said, every moment is an invitation to indulge in the finer things in life. From world-class resorts and boutique hotels to Michelin-starred restaurants and lively beach clubs, the city caters to discerning travelers with impec-

cable taste.

Whether you seek relaxation under swaying palm trees or excitement amidst the vibrant nightlife, Marbella promises an unforgettable journey tailored to your desires, she added.

The Mayor added, "the enthusiasm that the citizens of Kuwait show with Marbella is evident in the data of tourists from this market who come to our city and by the interest of investors who decide to buy homes in our town".

In this sense, she recalled how Marbella's link with Kuwait dates back to the early 1980s of the last century, when Kuwaitis who began to invest for the first time in the Spanish economy discovered that Marbella "was the ideal place to spend their holidays and also to buy a second home and do business. "And that alliance has been growing over all these years," she added.

Beyond its opulent facade, Marbella boasts a soulful warmth that resonates deeply with Middle Eastern visitors. The people of Marbella, known for their genuine hospitality and welcoming nature, embrace guests with open arms, creating an atmosphere of inclusion and camaraderie.

Muñoz mentioned the fact that Marbella "is a benchmark of excellence and a synonym of quality, with a privileged tourist offer that has positioned them as a unique destination, the result of the hard work between the City Council and the private sector, which we continue developing because our purpose is always to improve ourselves, to continue moving forward and to continue meeting the expectations of all those who visit us and who, in most cases, they repeat."

"Our fantastic climate, our 27 kilometers of coastline with a unique promenade, our natural environment and our rich history, which are combined with the extensive range of golf courses, the presence of the best commercial brands and the nautical offer, help you to visit us.

"As well as the opportunities for leisure and our excellent gastronomy, with more than a thousand restaurants, with traditional and international cuisine, and the privilege of having five Michelin stars, the city in Andalusia with the highest number of these awards," said the Mayor.

"In addition, large brands in the tourism sector choose us to invest, to undertake new adventures or to expand their hotel offer, within alliances that generate wealth and employment. Our hotel offer is a real luxury", said Muñoz, who thanked the hotels participating in this trade mission – Meliá Don Pepe, Hard Rock, Boho Club, Alanda and La Quinta – for their "firm commitment to Marbella and their support for "a brand that is a guarantee of the quality of life".



Ambassador Moro flanked by Mayor Ángeles Muñoz (left) and Princess Beatrix of Orléans.



Ambassador Moro flanked by Mayor Muñoz (left) and Princess Beatrix of Orléans pose for a photo with other dignitaries.

Australian meat will be available in Ramadan, no shortage: envoy

Visas for Kuwaitis via our mission in Dubai: Kelly

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: The Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Melissa Kelly says Kuwait and Australia are celebrating this year the 50th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relationship.

She affirmed that the celebrations will be different and will focus particularly on the diplomatic activities between the two countries, indicating that the historic visit of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Australia in 1992 will be a focal point for thought and contemplation.

During a press conference held the day before yesterday evening, Ambassador Kelly said, "This was the first visit of its kind by a Kuwaiti ruler to Australia. I look forward to witnessing this year visits from Kuwaiti ministers to Australia and an increase in visits by Australian ministers to Kuwait."

"Many things represent the pivotal threads in the fabric of our partnership. Behind our cooperation in the fields of food security, investment, education, and other fields, there are names and personalities that enabled that cooperation. For this reason, the Australian embassy's social media accounts will be highlighting the "50 Stories for 50 Years" campaign throughout 2024."

In response to a question regarding Australia's gradual end to the export of live sheep by sea, she explained that the Australian government had announced in 2022 its intention to gradually end the export of live sheep by sea. This will not begin in the government's current term (meaning it will not begin before mid-2025), as an independent committee will provide guidance to the government on the details of the phasing-out. No report has yet been released by the committee. There is close consultation with Kuwait regarding the details of the gradual end of the export.

The ambassador reassured that Australia is committed to remaining the ideal partner for Kuwait to ensure its food security, adding that Australian meat will be present during Ramadan and there will be no shortage of it, through coordination with the Kuwaiti government, the livestock company, and the Embassy of Kuwait in Australia.

When asked about the situation of the Australian community in Kuwait, she said, "We have about 800 people working in various fields such as oil, education, and various other professions. Some have been in Kuwait for a long time, some are married to Kuwaitis, and some live with their families in Kuwait."

Regarding whether there were any discussions about lifting visas for Kuwaitis to enter Australia, she said, "Unfortunately, there are none at the present time. Visa applications must be submitted online because we do not issue entry visas through our embassy in Kuwait, but rather through our mission in Dubai."

When asked about the military cooperation between the two countries, the ambassador said Australia is interested in the security of Kuwait and the Gulf region as a whole, adding that Australia had provided assistance in liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion.

She affirmed that this cooperation continues, with the presence of a number of Australian soldiers in Camp Arifjan, which does not exceed ten soldiers, indicating that this number changes constantly.

Ambassador Kelly denied the existence of any discussions between the two sides to conclude deals to purchase weapons, stressing that her country is ready to support Kuwait if there is a Kuwaiti desire.

She said, "We have limited participation in securing the Red Sea at the present time. We are working with the government of Kuwait and the governments of the Gulf states in order to provide military security for the region."

Regarding the volume of Kuwaiti investments in her country, the ambassador explained that, "According to official statistics, the amount of investment has reached about 30 billion Australian dollars. However, I believe that the real value is greater than that and perhaps twice this amount, given that it is difficult to monitor all Kuwaiti investments. These investments are diversified in the field of solar energy, wind energy, and food security."

Concerning the number of Kuwaiti students studying in Australia, she indicated that there are 400 Kuwaiti students studying in Australia and they are well integrated into Australian society, affirming that, although the number is small, they contribute to transferring Australian culture to Kuwait. Meanwhile, the Australian ambassador highlighted her country's position on what is happening in the Gaza Strip and the funding of UNRWA.

She said, "We are closely following what is happening there. This is what was expressed by our country's Minister of Foreign Affairs, who called for the necessity of protecting civilians and delivering humanitarian aid. Since October 7, Australia has increased aid to UNRWA to approximately 46 million Australian dollars. We work on cooperating with it, as it is the only organization in the United Nations capable of delivering aid."

However, at the present time, funding has been suspended due to what happened, as the catastrophic crisis in Gaza confirms the need for a political solution to the conflict".



The Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Joan, Minister of Public Works Dr Noura Al-Mashaan during the cabinet session.

Nod to govt action program

Cabinet weekly session delves into various topics on agenda

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6, (KUNA): The cabinet held its weekly session on Monday and highlighted various issues, namely His Highness the Amir's visit to Oman, and His Highness the Prime Minister earlier meeting with the press.

A cabinet statement said, the ministers held their weekly meeting at Seif Palace, headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

After the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Shereeda Al-Mousherji, said the ministers were briefed on His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visit to Oman, where he and Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, under their patronage and attendance will witness the opening ceremony of the Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries on Wednesday, 2/7/2024 in the province of Duqm.

The Ministers then reviewed the outcome of His Highness the premier Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah earlier with the editors-in-chief of local newspapers and representatives of the relevant media agencies, where His Highness touched on a number of topics, most notably what was stated in the contents of the sublime speech of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the government's work program and the cooperation of the executive and legislative authorities.

The cabinet also viewed through a visual presentation submitted by the Gen-

eral Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development on all the details related to the government's work program.

The Council of Ministers approved the government's work program and decided to refer it to the National Assembly in accordance with the text of Article 98 of the Constitution.

The Council of Ministers then discussed the affairs of the National Assembly and reviewed the topics on the agenda of the two sessions of the National Assembly on Tuesday, February 6, 2024, and Wednesday, February 7, 2024.

Finally, the ministers welcomed the announcement by the Anti-Corruption Public Authority (Nazaha) that the State obtained a score of 46 on the Corruption Perceptions Index for the year 2023, an increase of 4 degrees from its score in 2022, as the State was ranked 63rd on the scale of the ranking of countries in the index, which includes 180.

The state advanced 14 places compared to its previous ranking.

Meanwhile, the cabinet meeting, has approved the final form of the government action program.

The program will be tabled to the National Assembly soon after the government takes the oath of office before the parliament Tuesday, the government spokesman Amer Al-Ajmi said in a tweet on the X account of the Government Communication Center.

200,000 to benefit: official

MoH to distribute 'Afiya' cards

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, has announced the launch of the distribution of "Afiya" health insurance cards to additional beneficiary segments, from next Sunday, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This initiative is in accordance with the enactment of Law No. 71 of 2023, which amends Article 2 of Law No. 114 of 2014, thereby extending health insurance coverage to new eligible categories under the "Afiya Insurance" scheme.

Dr. Hisham Kalender, the Assistant Undersecretary for External Health Services Affairs and Supervisor of "Afiya" Insurance, disclosed that more than 200,000 individuals stand to benefit from health insurance services due to the inclusion of three new categories, as outlined in Law 71 of 2023.

He applauded the dedicated efforts

of his colleagues within the Insurance and Health Insurance Department at the Ministry of Health, expressing gratitude for their unwavering commitment to serving the esteemed insured citizens. Dr. Kalender underscored the distribution of health insurance cards to the newly eligible categories through 18 designated locations spanning all governorates of the country.

Furthermore, he recognized the collaborative endeavors of various sectors and departments within the Ministry to successfully execute the provisions of Law No. 71 of 2023. This involved undertaking necessary preparatory and administrative measures to ensure seamless access for the new beneficiary segments. Dr. Kalender concluded by extending heartfelt wishes for good health and well-being to all beneficiaries.



Suraya Al-Baqsam and Farida Al-Baqsam pose in front of a painting at the exhibition.

Ghadir Gallery opens art exhibition

The Ghadir Gallery, under the management of Mohammad Al-Qadiri, inaugurated an art exhibition titled 'Paintings from East and West' on February 4, 2024 at Mishref, Block 6, Street 5, Villa 40.

The exhibition will continue till Wednesday, Feb 7. A host of diplomats and other dignitaries attended the opening ceremony. The guests heaped praise on the standard of art depicted in the paintings on display at the exhibition.

Replacement hot on confab agenda

Dearth of jobs for Gulf citizens

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6, (KUNA): The role of the "Gulf Society towards a changing world" conference would focus the challenges Gulf societies face namely unemployment, demographic changes, and globalization in the Gulf region, said an official on Tuesday.

During the one-day event, Chairman of Board of Directors of Kuwait Social Association Abdullah Al-Radwan delivered a speech touching on the three major issues to be tackled by the conference.

Unemployment, indicated Al-Radwan, is considered one of the biggest challenges that Gulf societies face in the terms of economic and social development.

The unemployment rate of the total population was very low because the majority of the workforce were foreigners, compared to the unemployment rate of citizens to the

population, which was very high. Clearly showing the depth of the system's structural dysfunction, he added.

Al-Radwan pointed out that the demography of the region was shifting wherein "we find that citizens represent a small percent of the total population as the majority of the population are foreigners."

Gulf countries should focus on and finding solutions to, like the replacement policy, he affirmed.

He touched on globalization, which raises controversy and multiplicity of opinions.

The concept of globalization is characterized by objectivity and inconsistency between theory and reality, he said, stating, "If we take into consideration that globalization refers to a range of developments that aim to erase borders between the entire world, which is a reality we are currently living in, but the theoretical aspects are quite paradoxical."

The conference included several sessions on topics from a group of academics.



Al-Radwan

'Govt must pursue real reforms for better economic discharge'

"IN THE past decade, Kuwait has experienced an unprecedented surge in the establishment of various economic entities, both in terms of quantity and scope. The rationale behind this initiative was not officially, clearly, or comprehensively articulated by the government at the time," columnist **Dr. Saud Al-Mutairi** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"Some argue that it merely involved stripping government ministries of their inherent functions to settle political debts, detached from any technical justifications. Conversely, others view it as a worthwhile policy aimed at activating sectors by freeing them from the constraints of traditional government agencies, known for bureaucratic challenges and complex procedures.



Dr. Al-Mutairi

"Setting aside the underlying intentions and objectives of creating these entities, this article focuses on examining the significance and role of these institutions since their inception in economic activities. The key question is whether they have had a positive impact on the economy and the country or the opposite.

"While acknowledging the importance of the goals these entities aim to achieve in stimulating economic growth, it becomes evident, upon reviewing reports and statistics from specialized bodies, that most, if not all, have exhibited disappointing performances.

"The Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, established in 2013, for instance, failed to attract foreign investments, ranking last among Gulf countries in 2022, significantly lagging behind the UAE, which secured the top spot.

"Similarly, the Competition Protection Authority did not enhance competitiveness, and inflation persists despite historically tight monetary policies.

"The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Fund, despite a substantial budget allocation, failed to make a tangible contribution to the local economy, lacking in job creation and neglecting important industries. The Authority for Public-Private Partnership Projects, established in 2014, has only presented one project, Shamal Al-Zour Company, which remains incomplete to date.

"The underwhelming performance of these bodies raises questions about whether the expansion of such entities is politically or technically motivated. Despite this, there are calls for establishing more bodies, like the State Property Management Authority and the Real Estate and Land Authority, rather than reevaluating the feasibility of continuing with the current entities.

"The real reform must be through the improvement and restructuring of existing institutions, addressing their challenges without political interference.

"The expansion of parallel bodies is deemed ineffective, and the focus should be on enhancing the performance of existing entities and reducing costs.

"Allocating entire bodies to achieve development goals is seen as insufficient evidence of the state's commitment, as it may serve narrow interests at the expense of the public. The government is urged to pursue genuine restructuring for better performance and cost-effectiveness, avoiding superficial changes with political motives."

Also:

"The State of Kuwait marked the ceremony of hoisting the Kuwaiti flag at Bayan Palace in the esteemed presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, may God protect and preserve him," columnist **Dr. Hind Al-Shoumer** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"The hoisting of the Kuwaiti flag signals the commencement of Kuwait's festivities for its national days, the sixty-third Independence Day, and the thirty-third Liberation Day.

"The celebrations take various forms, including flag-raising ceremonies at government buildings, residences, and vehicles, national parades, the singing of patriotic songs and anthems, donning traditional attire, illuminating lights on official structures and homes, and fireworks displays.

"Kuwait's history spans over 400 years, with the establishment of Kuwait City in the seventeenth century and the

subsequent prosperity following the settlement of the Al-Sabah family.

"Archaeological evidence suggests that the region's history predates the Common Era.

"From its inception, the majority of Kuwait's population engaged in pearl diving and maritime trade, fostering Kuwait's development into a commercial hub in the northern Arabian Gulf and a crucial port connecting the Arabian Peninsula and Mesopotamia. The pearl diving industry remained the cornerstone of Kuwait's economy until 1946, when the oil era commenced with the first oil shipment.

"Maintaining internal independence from the Ottoman Empire under the rule of the Al-Sabah family, Kuwait entered a phase of British protection during Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah's reign. The protection agreement with the British Empire, signed in 1899, provided Kuwait with external political stability and laid the foundation for modern governance. The treaty was terminated on June 19, 1961, and Kuwait declared its independence.

"As we celebrate this year, let our festivities reflect Kuwait's economic and political stature. It is imperative that all citizens ensure the dignified raising of the Kuwaiti flag and refrain from disrespecting or damaging the flags. The flag is the emblem of our nation, and those participating in the celebrations should adhere to public decorum, preserve the cleanliness of our country, and avoid causing harm to others. Celebrations should be a source of joy, not sadness for anyone.

"I extend an invitation to all to partake in the celebrations of the national days, fostering love for our homeland and instilling patriotism in our children. May the bonds of belonging, loyalty, and sacrificial love for the nation be fortified.

"Congratulations to the Kuwaiti people and all the Gulf states on our national days under the guidance of our sagacious leadership. I pray to God Almighty for our perpetual safety, security, and stability. Wishing everyone good health, and well-being."

"My heart ... the homeland, then the citizen. He expresses his opinion in the morning, then he has another opinion before the day ends, according to the interest and hypocrisy that increased and spread among the people recently," Kuwaiti citizen **Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The nation's representatives, officials and citizens are like this person. It is unfortunate, because while others are steadfast in their opinions, some people turn into followers. These are human changes that have nothing to do with the world. We often say: 'The world has changed.' Even this human change is for the worse, not for the better. The issue here is about some people's morals, behavior and honesty. Therefore, be careful, you who fear Allah, and those who do not fear Him, do not hope in Him, or do not take into account their conscience, because trust is almost non-existent among that group of people, except those who have obtained mercy from the Lord.

"Like them, some owners of media platforms speak according to their whims, not as the truth imposes on them to change their opinions, with justifications that are in line with their interests.

"If there is disagreement between members of the boards of directors in companies or banks, and their number does not exceed 10 or a little more, then how can there be cooperation without disagreement between more than 70 individuals representing the people and the government, without their mutual interests going between them, as we mentioned in the previous article?"

"Recognition is the master of evidence, as one of the nation's representatives stated with courage, that the government is responsive to the National Assembly more than necessary.

Thus, there is no comparison with the representatives of the European assemblies, whose cooperation with their governments is for the benefit of their countries. Here, some representatives' cooperation with the government is for the benefit of their relatives. We do not know when they will oblige us to change our impression of them.

"This piece of news made me laugh: Representatives advised His Highness the Prime Minister not to back down in the face of pressure. The question is: Gentlemen, where does the pressure come from?"

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



KUNA photo
Defense Ministry's Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah presents a memento to Lieutenant General Nicolas Vojour, the Commander of the French Naval Force.

Kuwait seeks to upgrade bilateral ties with France

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6, (KUNA): Kuwait Defense Ministry's Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah met on Tuesday with Lieutenant General Nicolas Vojour, the Commander of the French Naval Force, and the Ambassador of the Republic of France to Kuwait, Claire Le Flécher.

10 years imprisonment, KD33m fine in money laundering case

Court acquits activist in 'false' X upload

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: The Criminal Court acquitted activist Talal Al-Dabbous who was accused of publishing a medical report of Dr. Obaid Al-Wasmi on X social media platform, which would have caused damage to his reputation.

According to the case file, the Public Prosecution charged Talal Fahad Al-Dabbous and others, as stated in the indictment report, with publishing confidential medical reports of legislator Dr. Obaid Muhammad Al-Mutairi on X social networking application.

The prosecution explained that such publication was aimed at harming the reputation of the victim. The accused used words intended for harming his dignity, as stated in the investigations. They also intentionally committed the offenses using a smartphone.

During the court session, which was attended by the accused along with his defense counsel Lawyer Mohammad Al-Husseini, he denied all charges leveled against him.

Lawyer Al-Husseini stressed the complainant is a member of the Kuwaiti parliament and claims to fight corruption and recover stolen funds, and he has publications denouncing this.

He said, "We were surprised by the trending of pictures on social media sites that included his dental treatment abroad at the state's expense of \$47,000, which unjustly cost the state's public treasury. Out of concern and fear for the state's money, the actions in question were published as well as out of criticism of the complainant because he is a public figure, and in a bid to serve the public interest of the state."

Jail, heavy fine: The Criminal Court, headed by Judge Nayef Al-Dahoum, sentenced the owner and the director of a car sale office to 10 years in prison and fined them KD33 million in a money laundering case, reports Al-Rai daily.

The court also ordered freezing the company's accounts and referral of the case to the Civil Court.

Attorney Abdul Mohsen Al-Qattan, in his capacity as representative of a number of the victims, said: "The court does not take into account the defendants' denial, especially since there is no evidence to support their claim that they did not commit the crime. The Public Prosecution referred them for trial based on incriminating evidence."

Al-Qattan added "the actions of the defendants harmed the victims and disrupted commercial transactions; hence, the need to impose the harshest penalties on them as per the law. In this manner, the victims can reclaim their rights."

He revealed the two defendants were charged with fraud and laundering large sums after more than 500 people in and outside the country accused them of swindling.

He said the defendants laundered the amounts they collected from the victims, which are estimated at more than KD17 million and QAR 1.5 million, to hide their illegal source. They deceived the victims by deluding them about the possibility of purchasing luxury vehicles at a lower price, and these vehicles will be shipped and delivered to them.

Earlier, the prosecution referred two citizens and a general trading and contracting company to the court for claiming that they can import cars at prices lower than the actual value and to deliver them within a short period.

Deportation for 4

Forged permits used to enter 'no-go' area

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: In a recent development, Abdullah Qunais reports that port authorities have initiated investigations against three foreign nationals, all in their thirties, on charges of unlawfully entering and facilitating entry into a restricted area using a falsified permit purportedly belonging to another individual. As per a security insider, two of the apprehended individuals were caught during their attempted entry, with one found in possession of a forged permit, while the other presented a permit not registered under his name. Subsequent inquiries revealed the involvement of a third accomplice in the scheme, reports Al-Rai daily.

Upon questioning, the suspects confessed to their involvement, with the initial accused disclosing that he had obtained a permit from the third party to facilitate the entry of the second individual for work purposes. The collaboration among the trio was allegedly premeditated.

Further investigations by detectives confirmed the complicity of all three individuals, as the driver, identified as the first invitee, had procured the permit from the third individual, despite its belonging to an unrelated party. The said permit was in the possession of the third accused.

The case underscores the gravity of forgery and breaches of security protocols within Kuwait's port facilities.

Liquor, illegal entry: Al-Ahmedi law enforcement officials successfully apprehended four expatriates in the Mina Abdullah area suspected of unlawful entry. Upon thorough investigation and search, authorities discovered three bottles of locally brewed alcohol in their possession.

According to a security source, the four individuals have been referred to the Administrative Deportation Department for processing and eventual repatriation to their respective countries. Additionally, their names have been added to the list of individuals prohibited from entering the country.

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The suspect with the contraband.

Kuwaiti doing drugs in car held

Drugs Control thwarts attempt to flood market with narcotics

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: The vigilant efforts of the General Department of Narcotics Control have thwarted an attempt to introduce approximately 11 kilograms of narcotic substances and 133 thousand narcotic pills into the local market, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a statement released by the Ministry of Interior, police officers received information about three individuals possessing narcotic substances with the intention of trafficking. Consequently, a parliamentary permit was obtained, and the three suspects were apprehended following a strategic ambush. Six kilograms of shabu and hashish, along with five kilograms of lyrica powder and pills, were seized during the operation.

The three detainees confessed to possessing narcotic drugs for the purpose of trafficking. Subsequently, they, along with the confiscated items, were handed

over to the Drugs and Liquor Prosecution for further legal proceedings, with the intention of referring them to the judiciary.

Kuwaiti arrested: The security authorities from the Jahra governorate have arrested a Kuwaiti who is in his thirties for consuming drugs inside his car in the parking lot of a commercial complex in Jahra, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During a body search police found with the man narcotic pills and a sum of money. According to a source, he was arrested during a routine patrol in the Jahra Markets area, a car with its interior lights on raised police suspicions.

Upon closer inspection, a person inside the vehicle was found in a state of drug use. A search conducted as a precaution before yielded narcotic pills. The suspect was subsequently taken into custody and referred to the General Administration for Narcotics Control.

Major violations noticed

Forex brokerage firm under focus

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: The Capital Markets Authority (CMA) says it has uncovered significant violations involving a foreign exchange brokerage firm operating through external brokerage companies, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The violations primarily revolve around discrepancies between customer transaction records and their corresponding accounts.

The company failed to reconcile these records and accounts, resulting in a disparity between the amounts recorded internally and those held in customers' bank accounts and third-party accounts used for executing orders.

The violations also extend to the transfer of cash amounts from clients' wallets to the company's bank account without proper documentation, as well as the failure to reconcile records with external parties, such as financial brokerage firms.

These firms hold private accounts for executing client transactions in securities, further exacerbating the inconsistencies within the company's internal records.

The company's activities encompass providing trading services and tools across various financial markets, including Forex, precious metals, stocks, indices, commodities, and energies. Additionally, it offers market information and analyses to trading clients and investors.

The Capital Markets Authority is committed to enforcing securities laws and regulations, ensuring accountability for all market participants.

Consequently, the companies involved have been referred to the Disciplinary Board for appropriate penalties, aiming to restore investor confidence and foster a transparent and trustworthy investment environment aligned with international best practices.

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Kuwaiti-Omani ties flourish with mutual respect and brotherhood

Bonds beyond borders

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6, (KUNA): Kuwaiti-Omani ties had always been highlighted by strengthen of cooperation and a keen sense of brotherhood and mutual respect shown by the leaderships and people of both countries.

Relations between the brotherly nations went beyond mere decades, the Kuwaiti and Omani people had been intertwined in familial and commercial relations for centuries.

Perhaps the biggest indication of the strength of relations came when Kuwait experienced its darkest hours during the Iraqi invasion in 1990 for which the Sultanate of Oman expressed utter condemnation.

The Omani involvement in the liberation of Kuwait in 1991 had displayed the Sultanate keenness on turning words of solidarity to action on the ground.

Leaderships

On the political level, the leaderships of both countries were keen on visiting each other in an act to bolster and foster ties for the sake of their development and their peoples.

On September 18, 1991, then Kuwait Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited Oman and met with the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, expressing gratitude towards Oman's support of Kuwait during the invasion.

On December 23, 1991, Sultan Qaboos visited Kuwait to partake in the 12th GCC Summit, meeting during the occasion with the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad.

On May 20, 2002, Sultan Qaboos bin Said, yet again, visited Kuwait, meeting with the late Sheikh Jaber



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with his brother Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Sultan of Oman.

Al-Ahmad to inquire about his health condition. During this visit, Sultan Qaboos held official rounds of talks with Sheikh Jaber, discussing matters pertaining to ties as well as developments within the Arab and Islamic spheres.

On June 7, 2005, Sultan Qaboos visited Kuwait, meeting with then Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah with both officials focusing on the latest developments back then on the level of bilateral ties and happenings in the world.

On December 28, 2009, the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Ja-

ber Al-Sabah bestowed Sultan Qaboos with the "Order of Mubarak the Great" during his visit to Kuwait. Sultan Qaboos also bestowed Sheikh Sabah with the "Civil Order of Oman of the First Class".

On June 17, 2010, Sultan Qaboos bin Said visited Kuwait and met with the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, discussing during the occasion a number of matters relating to relations and recent happenings in the world back then.

On April 16, 2012, Sultan Qaboos was a four-day visit to Kuwait where he met with the Amir Sheikh Sabah,

discussing with them an assortment of issues.

The Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited Oman on February 20, 2017 where he met with Sultan Qaboos and discussed matters pertaining to relations.

On January 12, 2020, the late Amir Sheikh Sabah visited the Sultanate to offer condolences on the passing away of Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

The current Sultan Haitham bin Tareq visited Kuwait on October first, 2020, to offer his condolences on the passing away of the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Sultan Haitham also visited Kuwait on June 18, 2023 to offer condolences over the death of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

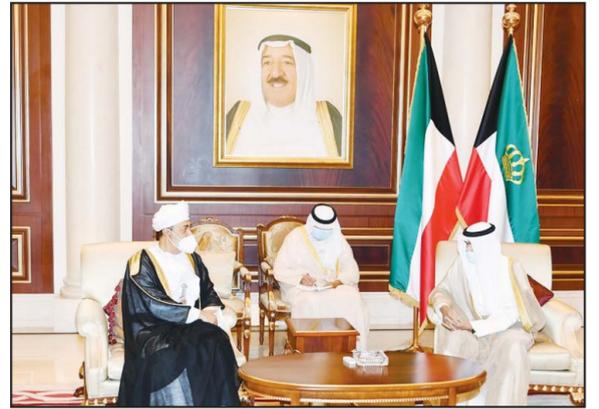
On the level of cooperation, Kuwait and Oman had closely coordinated efforts throughout their history, forming in 2001 a cooperation committee to hold regular meetings.

Officials from both countries also exchanged regular visits to seek bolstering of cooperation and ways to coordinate stances on issues of importance.

On March 11, 2023, then Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah headed Kuwait's delegation to the ninth meeting of the joint Kuwaiti-Omani committee in Oman, holding discussions with Omani counterpart Badr Al-Busaidi.

Al-Busaidi, on his part, visited Kuwait on November 16, 2023 where he held an official round of meetings with Sheikh Salem, signing on the occasion agreements in the fields of higher education, economy, environment protection, and industrial exports.

On November 21, 2023, then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visited Oman, meeting with Omani Deputy Prime Minister for Defense Affairs Shihab bin Tareq.



His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with his brother Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Sultan of Oman.



His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with his brother Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Sultan of Oman.



His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in a meeting with his brother Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Sultan of Oman.

Event to showcase 90 engineering projects

Kuwait University unveils 45th Engineering Design Exhibition

By Abdul Rahman Al-Shammari
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: The Dean of the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University Dr. Khaled Al-Hazza announced the launch of the 45th Engineering Design Exhibition for the College of Engineering and Petroleum on Sunday, February 18 with the participation of 90 projects submitted by 325 male and female engineering graduates of the college.

In the press conference held at the college theater yesterday with the participation of the exhibition's sponsors, Dr. Al-Hazza said, "After five years of study and diligence, a group of engineers graduated. Despite the pressures that come with studying, our goal was to produce a successful engineer."

He explained that the exhibition will showcase 90 engineering projects submitted by 325 engineering students who completed their studies at the college after five years of hard work and diligence.

This year, the exhibition offers "Engineerathon" awards, which are various awards presented to distinguished projects through many indicators.

Dr. Al-Hazza said, "We hope that our students' projects will obtain many new patents, pointing out that our partners aspire to see something honorable from our Kuwaiti youth."

Meanwhile, the representative of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Faisal Al-Saraei said, "The Environmental Sustainability Award is presented by KFH to enhance environmental aspects. This award comes from our interest in the envi-

ronment, and through this award we aim to see projects implemented on the ground."

Also, the President of the Kuwait Society of Engineers Eng. Faisal Al-Atol said, "The Society is keen to support students. This year we presented two prizes, the first for "Industry and Construction" and the second for "Energy and Water"."

The Deputy Director of the Public Authority for Youth Nasser Al-Sheikh said, "We presented the National Priorities Award, as we are keen to activate the role of youth in society. Through the role of youth, students have an effective role in putting forward new creative ideas, and we want to link youth ideas with the needs of the country."

Director of Business Development at the Construction Holding Company Abdul Rahman Al-Anbai said, "We launched the Infrastructure Award and we are certain that there are innovative ideas presented by the students that will contribute to supporting the sustainability of the country's infrastructure."

The representative of the Boeing office in Kuwait Musaed Al-Houli said, "I believe that the most difficult stage that a student will go through after his graduation is the stage of his involvement in the labor market."

The representative of Atiyab Al-Marshoud Company Abdul Latif Al-Ayoub said, "Our award is dedicated to the most influential project, and I am proud to be a graduate of Kuwait University."

In addition, Dr. Khaled Al-Hazza announced the main prize of the exhibition, which is the Dr. Ahmed Al-Bishara Award, amounting to KD 5,000, in memory of Dr. Ahmed Al-Bishara.



Photo during the meeting.

Kuwait Society of Engineers, Indian Embassy tackle approval of engineering qualifications

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: A collaborative meeting between the Kuwait Society of Engineers and the Indian Embassy in Kuwait was convened by a joint committee to discuss the approval of engineering qualifications for Indian engineers employed in Kuwait, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The meeting, held at the society's headquarters, was attended by Engineer Ali Mohseni, the committee's head, along with member Jalal Al-Fadhli, Ibrahim Samir from the association's professional accreditation center, and Anantha Abir, the second secretary for community and workers welfare from the embassy, alongside several accredited embassy staff.

The meeting was convened in response to directives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aimed at addressing and resolving issues faced by engineers from the Indian community working in Kuwait.

He clarified that the committee was established under the guidance and cooperation

of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stating, "The cases presented by the cultural team from the Indian Embassy were thoroughly discussed, and appropriate measures were taken for each case."

Furthermore, Mohseni affirmed the committee's commitment to streamlining procedures while ensuring compliance with the professional accreditation requirements necessary for practicing engineering in Kuwait.

The committee's chairman emphasized that the cases presented were limited in number, and each was addressed individually. He reiterated their willingness to collaborate with Indian accreditation bodies to align with professional and academic standards.

Additionally, plans are underway to arrange meetings with accredited bodies to visit India and establish mutual understandings in accordance with the regulations set by the Engineering Qualifications Accreditation Committee of the Society.



February

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KIPIC achieves objective, hits maximum production capacity

Al-Zour Refinery surpasses target

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: The Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) has announced the realization of its strategic objective to attain the maximum production capacity of the Al-Zour Refinery, reaching an impressive 615 thousand barrels per day of Kuwaiti export crude, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This accomplishment marks a historic milestone in KIPIC's operations, signifying a significant advancement in enhancing the refining capabilities of the Kuwaiti oil sector. Moreover, it underscores KIPIC's unwavering commitment to align with the 2040 strategic directions outlined by the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and the state development plan.

Abdullah Fahad Al-Ajmi, the official spokesman and Executive Vice President for Administrative and Commercial Affairs of the company, elaborated on the achievement. He



Kuwait's Al-Zour Refinery.

highlighted that KIPIC celebrated the full operation of the three Al-Zour refineries in December of the preceding year and now proudly declares the realization of the maximum refining capacity of 615 thousand barrels per day.

Al-Ajmi emphasized the challenge and significance of this achievement, requiring precise operational plans and continuous collaboration among relevant authorities.

He further stated, "This achievement represents a significant challenge and requires the implementation of precise operational plans and continuous cooperation between the concerned authorities. It also confirms our commitment to meeting the growing demand for high-quality, environmentally friendly petroleum products in global markets."

Al-Ajmi commended the tremendous efforts of the operating teams at Al-Zour Refinery, acknowledging their dedication in achieving this remarkable milestone for the State of Kuwait and the oil industry at large.

He emphasized that it is the outcome of the sincere endeavors of Integrated Petroleum to solidify Kuwait's standing as a major, reliable supplier of crude oil and refined petroleum products in the global markets. The achievement also underscores their dedication to excellence, innovation, and technological advancement in the oil and gas sector.

Highlighting the broader implications of this achievement, Al-Ajmi expressed optimism about expanding collaborations with international companies and enhancing investor confidence in Kuwait's energy sector. This, in turn, is anticipated to pave the way for a more promising future for upcoming generations. He noted that the refinery has already commenced exporting commercial shipments of various products, including kerosene, naphtha, high-quality jet fuel, fuel oil, and low-sulfur diesel products to global markets.

MoH launches green initiative for courtyard health facilities

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: As part of its commitment to provide a safe, healthy and conducive environment for maintaining good health; the Ministry of Health has announced the launching of the clean, green and plant campaign in the courtyards of health facilities, under the directives of the Minister of Health Dr Ahmed Al-Awadhi through the Public Services Sector in the Ministry, reports Al-Anba daily.

of green spaces and their positive impact on the human body, particularly one's health and psychological state.

He cited the minister's instruction regarding the importance of incorporating green spaces into the design of health buildings, and creating a balance between nature and architecture, which contributes to enhancing environmental and health harmony, as they are two sides of the same coin.

Assistant Undersecretary for Public Services Affairs Eng Abdulaziz Al-Tasha explained that the first step of the campaign includes cleaning and paving the courtyards of health facilities and the ministry's head office. He pointed out this campaign is based on the results of scientific research indicate about the importance

of green spaces and their positive impact on the human body, particularly one's health and psychological state. He added the campaign will continue until the planting stage within the perimeters of health facilities is completed; and this includes the courtyards of the ministry's head office, Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialties, hospitals, specialized centers and primary health care centers

07 FEBRUARY - 13 FEBRUARY 2024

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LOCAL



Kuwait FM meets UNRWA Commissioner-General.

KUNA photo

FM lauds UNRWA aid to Palestinian people

Kuwait affirms commitment

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6, (KUNA): Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya met on Tuesday with Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini on the occasion of his official visit to the country.

The two officials discussed the latest development in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially the effort of UNRWA in delivering aid and humanitarian project to ease the pain and sufferings of the Palestinian people.

The Kuwaiti minister hailed UNRWA's efforts in the Palestinian

lands and reaffirmed Kuwait's stance in supporting the work of UNRWA for its constant support to the Palestinian people against the Israeli occupation.

Al-Yahya also asserted Kuwait's call for Palestinian rights of an independent state in its lands with the East Jerusalem as its capital.

On his part Lazzarini highlighted Kuwait's pivotal role in supporting UNRWA constant aid to the Palestinian people in their fight against the Israeli occupation.

The Commissioner-General expressed his gratitude to Kuwait outstanding and leading humanitarian role in helping countries in need, praising its prestigious stand and international recognition as leader in humanitarian aid.

The meeting also tackled means of ensuring the sustainability of all of UNRWA programs to provide urgent aid for the Palestinian people.

Opportunity for 8 winners to win a KD 30,000 car each

KFH launches 'Mastercard .. You Choose the Car' campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has announced its recent campaign launch with Mastercard titled (With KFH Mastercard ... you choose the car), granting 8 winners the opportunity to win a car of their choice with a value up to KD 30,000.

Eligible customers can enter two draws during the campaign period extending from February 1st until May 26th this year. Four winners will be selected in each draw to be held on April 25th and May 30th under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

KFH Executive Manager Credit and Charge Card Products, Talal AlArbeed expressed his pleasure in announcing the launch of the campaign in collaboration with Mastercard. "As our customers know, our campaigns are unique, distinct, add value to custom-



Talal AlArbeed

ers experience, and present valuable prizes to a large number of winners. Each winner will get their dream car within the price limit of KD 30,000," he said.

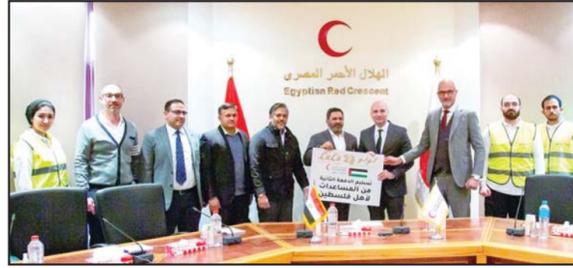
He pointed out that Mastercard credit or prepaid cardholders can have one chance to enter the draw during the campaign for every KD 1 when using their cards through Point of Sales terminals or e-commerce transactions locally.

"For every KD 1 spent using Mastercard credit and prepaid cards through Point of Sales terminals or e-commerce transactions internationally, customers

will get ten chances to enter the draw," he added, "local and global cash withdrawals are not considered."

AlArbeed went on to say that establishing a link between the prizes and the card usage inside and outside Kuwait enhances the usage of the cards in the local market, activates merchants' sales, accomplishes mutual interest of KFH and Mastercard and creates an added value to the customers' experience in shopping and banking services as primarily targeted by KFH.

AlArbeed added that, through its high-demand campaigns, KFH affirms its keenness to enhance cooperation with its partners to execute other positively impacting campaigns with a view to boosting its customers satisfaction and usage rates, expanding its market share, and strengthening its leadership in the banking cards market.



2nd batch of 50 tons of food and essential products handed over to Egyptian Red Crescent.



UAE's Lulu Group continues sending relief aid to Gaza

CAIRO, Feb 6: Abu Dhabi based Lulu Group has again lent a compassionate hand to the people of Gaza with much needed aid and relief materials. The second batch of aid, consisting of 50 tons of food products, hygiene products and other essentials were handed over to the Egyptian Red Crescent authorities in Cairo on Monday.

The relief materials were received by Dr. Rami

El-Nasser, Chief Executive Officer of the Egypt Red Crescent from Lulu Egypt Marketing Manager Hatim Said along with Juzer Rupawala, Lulu Egypt & Bahrain Director, Huzefa Qureshi, Regional Director and other officials.

Red Crescent aims to deliver the relief materials to the people of Gaza at the earliest, said Dr. Rami El-Nasser. He welcomed Lulu's helping hand and

expressed gratitude to Yusuff Ali MA and the Lulu Group for the continued support to the people of Palestine.

This is the second time Lulu is providing much needed help to the Palestine People undergoing hardship in current situation.

In December, it provided 50 tons of relief materials to Gaza through Egypt Red Crescent.

One ruler

Continued from Page 1

It also includes rendering it to be the key to land communication routes between Asia and Europe, starting with Mubarak Port, which must be reactivated. The planned routes must be completed, and sovereign funds must be invested at home instead of being exposed to the fluctuations of global financial markets.

There is no doubt that the expulsion of investments from Kuwait made it seem like an island isolated from the world, while other neighboring countries opened up to the world and worked to establish private universities, as in the Emirates, which today has about 60 private universities and colleges. As for Qatar, there are 30 private universities. On the other hand, in Kuwait, the university city in Shadadiya has been suffering from obstruction since its approval in 1986. To this day, that project has not been completed.

Also, our health sector suffers from mismanagement and lack of professionalism. A total of 112 private hospitals and 53 government hospitals have been built in the Emirates alone. All of this has helped develop its local economy, because it has become a treatment and educational hub for thousands of patients and students coming from abroad.

Kuwait could have benefited from all of this if there had been an understanding behind the meaning of opening the country based on well-thought-out plans, instead of being controlled by the mentality of "the foreigner who is coming to eat our wealth", as some shortsighted people imagine to this day.

They are the ones who advocate the culture of others, to the extent of reviving tribalism and sectarianism among the members of society, while forgetting that a person's true dignity is his experience and his understanding of how to serve his country.

All these important issues were presented by His Highness the Prime Minister, with whom the editors-in-chief, during the meeting with him, felt he had a great deal of understanding of what the country requires. He made them feel completely comfortable with the path that the government embarked on to work.

There is no doubt that His Highness the Prime Minister has all the tools to work towards achieving the government's program. He also has great public support, and the confidence of the political leadership.

This is proof that Kuwait is governed by one ruler, and not 51 MPs, as was the case in recent years. Therefore, after this meeting, we believe that the affairs of the country have been handed over to the expert.

PM unveils

Continued from Page 1

- Inauguration of research centers for cybersecurity and artificial intelligence
- Implement the amendment to law number 71/2023 regarding adding housewives to the health insurance beneficiaries
- Expansion of specialized primary healthcare clinics
- Open new hospitals and health centers
- Launch the Ministry of Health application with a new vision and new services
- Launch the medical human capital development program
- Receive Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium at Sulaibikhat Sports Club
- Receive Khatib Lounge at Arab Sports Club
- Submit a draft law on regulating the media
- Submit a draft law on amending the Tenders Law
- Re-price government services that are not linked to the law and have a limited impact on citizens
- Re-price land rents affiliated with the State Property Administration
- Prepare a draft law on corporate profits tax
- Study the categories eligible for support
- Enable the next wave of savings in government contracts

The government work program also specified the legislative requirements for its projects in the second session of the 17th legislative term as follows:

- Northern Economic Region
- Development Plan Law
- Amend the law on partnership between the public and private sectors
- Draft law on amending the Import and Export Law
- Draft law on electronic commerce
- Amend the Industry Law
- Public sector wages (strategic alternative to the salary scale)
- Amend the Public Tenders Law
- Establish an independent body for standards and metrology
- Draft law on amending the Right of Access Law
- Draft law on amending the Electronic Documentation Law
- Business Profits Tax Law
- Re-price rents on State-owned lands
- Excise tax
- Liquidity Instruments Law
- Foreigners Residency Law
- Civil Aviation Law
- Electricity and Water Corporation Law
- Law on the strategic transformation for electric energy and water
- Law on media regulation
- Reform the insurance system of the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS)

The National Assembly discussed a number of incoming letters in its ordinary session on Tuesday – the most important of which is the government's request to postpone the discussion

and voting on the reports of parliamentary committees about the bills for one month for further study, taking into consideration that the government is new.

Some MPs supported the new government's request, pointing out that the Assembly approved a similar request submitted by the previous government headed by HH the former Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; so the new government deserves to be treated in the same manner.

However, other MPs argued that even if the Assembly approved a similar request in the past, it was in response to the co-operation of the previous government that led to the ratification of four bills. They pointed out that the new government seems to be buying time since it did not promise to approve the bills in case they are discussed after the one month grace period.

The Priorities Committee chairman disclosed that during their meeting with the government, many options were presented, such as voting on urgent bills in the first reading and the second reading should be done in the session scheduled for March 5, 2024 – when the government is ready to present its opinion. He added the government rejected all the other options, an indication that it is not keen on passing the bills.

On the other hand, Minister of State for National Assembly and Youth Affairs Dawoud Maarefi affirmed that the new government is as committed as the Assembly in improving the citizens' standard of living and ensuring financial sustainability for the State.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheriada Al-Meoshherji also stressed that improving the citizens' standard of living is the main item of the government's work program. He explained that the request to postpone discussing the bills is only aimed at giving the government a chance to study them carefully, before presenting its opinion.

Nevertheless, MPs Mubarak Al-Hajraf, Abdulkareem Al-Kandari, Bader Nashmi and others stressed that this excuse of the government is unacceptable, considering the technical teams in different ministries have already studied the bills and submitted their reports. They also pointed out that the new government consists of some ministers who were members of the previous government and they affirmed support for the bills. They said the institutions should not change whenever the ministers change.

To settle the argument, the government's request was subjected to open voting with 30 approvals and 33 rejections.

Following are the approved incoming letters:

- A letter from former State Minister for National Assembly and Cabinet Affairs Essa Al-Kandari requesting to expedite the discussion and approval of the bill on the charter of the Digital Cooperation Organization.
- A letter from a group of MPs requesting to assign the Environmental Affairs, Food and Water Security Committee to investigate the alleged recruitment violations of the Environment Public Authority (EPA) and the rising air pollution rate.
- A letter from MP Hamad Al-Elyan requesting to assign the Education, Culture and Guidance Affairs Committee to conduct a study on the deteriorating conditions of special needs schools.
- A letter from MP Fahad Al-Masoud requesting to assign the Education, Culture and Guidance Affairs Committee to study the regulations on accrediting higher studies programs in private universities.
- A letter from MPs Badr Nashmi and Fahd Al-Masoud requesting to assign the Interior and Defense Affairs Committee to investigate the obstacles to the establishment of the Ministry of Interior centers in Doha and Sulaibikhat.
- A letter from Badr Nashmi and Fahd Al-Masoud requesting to assign the Public Facilities Committee to investigate the obstacles to the establishment of Kuwait Municipality centers in Doha and Sulaibikhat.
- A letter of from Chairman of the Education, Culture and Guidance Affairs Committee MP Hamad Al-Elyan requesting to extend the period given to the committee to submit its report on the suffering of students in southern areas.
- A letter of from Chairman of the Human Rights Committee MP Muhammad Hayef requesting to extend the period given to the committee to investigate the alleged torture citizen Turki Al-Anzi at the Military Intelligence Unit for several months.
- A letter from MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf requesting to assign the Public Facilities Committee to hold meetings with the concerned institutions to discuss the maintenance of the roads mentioned in the letter.
- A letter from MP Osama Al-Shaheen requesting to assign the Digitalization, Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Committee to assess the methods of combating online banking fraud.
- A letter from MP Hamad Al-Matar requesting the Health Ministry to coordinate with its Foreign Affairs counterpart in order to expedite the process of bringing Palestinians, who were injured in the Israeli attacks on Gaza, to Kuwait for treatment.
- A letter from the Budgets and Final Accounts Committee chairman requesting to assign public institutions to conduct investigations on the reports of the State Audit Bureau (SAB) about the violations in converting the unused leave days of public sector employees into cash.
- A letter from the Budgets and Final Accounts Committee chairman requesting to refer SAB's report on the non-implementation of the fingerprint attendance system in the Ministry of Education to the Education, Culture and Guidance Affairs Committee to discuss it and determine the reasons.
- A letter from MP Abdullah Al-Mudhaf requesting to assign the Education, Culture and Guidance Affairs Committee to investigate the poor monitoring the minors' bank accounts.
- A letter from the Public Facilities Committee chairman requesting to refer the proposal on hackers to the Digitalization, Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Committee.
- A letter from MP Shuaib Shaaban requesting to assign the Health Affairs Committee to review the justifications for not establishing a hospital or increasing the capacity of the health center in Jaber Al-Ahmad City and the delay in providing health services in Al-Mutlaa City.

- A letter from a group of MPs requesting to assign the Public Utilities Committee to investigate the causes of the dilapidation of the buildings allocated for the Ministry of Social Affairs in Sulaibikhat.
- A letter from a group of MPs requesting to assign the Public Funds Protection Committee to investigate the amounts that Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) spent on media advertisements.
- A letter from a group of MPs requesting to assign the Environmental Affairs, Food and Water Security Committee to investigate the environmental damage resulting from the lack of sanitation in Al-Mutlaa.
- A letter from a group of MPs requesting to assign the Environmental Affairs, Food and Water Security Committee to investigate the environmental situation of the landfills in South Abdullah Al-Mubarak.
- A letter from a group of MPs requesting to assign the Environmental Affairs, Food and Water Security Committee to investigate the lack of green spaces in various regions.
- A letter from a group of MPs requesting to assign the Environmental Affairs, Food and Water Security Committee to investigate the existing environmental violations in Asherji.
- A letter from a group of MPs requesting to assign the Environmental Affairs, Food and Water Security Committee to investigate the environmental damage caused by telecommunications towers.
- A letter from the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee requesting for an extension of its mandate to submit its report on the draft law on establishing the Northern Economic Zone for a period of four months.
- A letter from a group of MPs requesting to assign the Priorities Committee to set a two-hour period in one of the upcoming legislative sessions for the discussion of the report of the State Audit Bureau (SAB) on assessing all the work of the Al-Dhaman Hospitals Company.
- A letter from a group of MPs requesting that the joint committee between the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee and the Human Resources Committee urgently study and discuss proposals to issue laws regulating the appointment of officials.
- A letter from MP Saad Al-Asfour requesting to assign the Values Enhancement and Combating Negative Phenomena Committee to discuss the reasons behind the increasing number of websites for gambling and illegal mortgage.
- A letter from MP Hamad Al-Medlej requesting to assign the Public Funds Protection Committee to investigate the violations found in the contract for the maintenance of the headquarters of SAB.

Meanwhile, the Assembly read the letter of HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah thanking the MPs for their condolences over the passing of HH the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and another letter expressing gratitude to the MPs for congratulating him on his ascension to power.

It also looked into the report of its Secretariat General about the meetings of parliamentary committees from Oct 31, 2023 to Dec 31, 2023.

Moreover, Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun adjourned the session for 30 minutes, then it resumed to discuss the parliamentary queries. Deputy Speaker Muhammad Al-Mutairi presided over this part of the session.

MP Badr Al-Mullah revealed that the queries he forwarded to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Emad Al-Atiqi aim to find the truth about the contract signed directly with a company known for its "deep infiltration" into public institutions. He asked about the rationale behind signing the contract directly with such a company, instead of floating a public tender. He said the value of the contract increased by 50 percent, so it was not referred to the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT). He urged the minister to address the issue immediately.

On his queries for Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Yusuf Al-Sabah; MP Adel Al-Damkhi asserted that Kuwait Army is suffering from chaos. He disclosed that the report of the parliamentary fact-finding committee highlighted violations, including the manipulative acts of the Purchase Committee at the Ministry of Defense regarding the deals to buy Caracal helicopters and Eurofighter planes. He called on the minister to read the report on the armament deal carefully in order to take the appropriate action. He went on to say that some officers were punished and humiliated, because of their role in discovering the truth and some of them were even forced to retire.

MP Abdulhadi Al-Ajmi commented on his queries to Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Adel Al-Adwani about increasing the capacity of the College of Medicine and the health institutes. He added some students, who obtained a grade of 99 percent, could not enroll at Kuwait University due to the lack of seats.

He also inquired about the reasons for suspending the scholarships for medical sciences in Jordan and Egypt, while the country hires doctors who graduated from the universities in both countries.

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tries especially when one considered it going to take place a few months after His Highness the Amir assumed his post on December 16.

Since modern Oman was established in 1970 under the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the leaders of the two brotherly nations exchanged frequent visits to boost ties on all possible levels, indicated the Ambassador, noting that the current visit of His Highness Sheikh Mishal was part of such great legacy.

The ambassador affirmed that bilateral ties were witnessing a new phase with the launch of Al-Duqm refinery, which began actual production in recent months with a capacity of 230,000 barrels per day.

He added that investment in the project, which also included a petrochemical complex, amounted to USD nine billion, making it one of the most importance ventures amongst GCC countries.

Dr. Al-Kharusi noted that Al-Duqm area itself was one of the most important economic zones in the region at an area of 1,200 square kilometers with a strategic location on the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

The ambassador also said that the two countries were eager to boost ties on all possible domains, commending in this regard, the recent outcome of the ninth session of the Omani-Kuwaiti joint committee meeting, which was held in Muscat last March.

Meanwhile, a number of Omani journalists agreed that His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's impending visit to the Gulf Arab Sultanate would mark a watershed moment in bilateral relations, expecting the event to propel these ties to greater levels.

In separate remarks to KUNA, the journalists pointed out that while ties have long been marked by their solidarity and breadth, there remains more room for progress across various significant realms, which run the gamut from political and economic cooperation to tourism and social development.

On His Highness the Amir's visit, Oman daily's chief editor Essam Al-Shaidi said the arrival of His Highness the Amir in the Omani capital Muscat is tantamount to the start of a "new era" in bilateral relations, describing ties as the "paradigm" of intra-Arab relations.

As he chronicled the history of relations between the two Gulf Arab countries, he praised the "harmony and unity" among the two nations, pointing out that His Highness the Amir's visit would coincide with the opening of the Gulf Arab Sultanate's Duqm refinery, which he said would be instrumental in further bolstering economic development.

Addressing bilateral relations, the chief editor of Oman's Al-Masara newspaper Ali Al-Ajmi said the two countries are bound by common "history, vernacular and blood," saying Omanis have always shared amicable relations with their Kuwaiti neighbors.

Under the respective leadership of His Highness the Amir and Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, he prognosticated more development in bilateral ties particularly after the opening of the Duqm refinery, a joint venture between Oman Oil Company and Kuwait Petroleum International, which is estimated to lure up to USD 8.5 billion worth of investment, he underlined.

Echoing their sentiments, Omani podcaster host Bader Al-Shaibani said His Highness the Amir's visit typifies the camaraderie shared between the two countries, which continues to "grow deeper" by every passing day, he emphasized.

He went on to praise the two countries' "joint stance" on the Middle East conflict as evidenced by their unwavering support for the Palestinians and their determination to protect them from the "brutal Israeli crimes," he said.

Omani journalist Majid Al-Hatali believes that economic ties between the Gulf Arab neighbors have seen the most growth, citing robust trade relations that have seen Kuwaiti investments in Muscat exceed 922 million Omani riyals in the third quarter last year, he said.

See Also Page 4

Kuwaiti creativity

Continued from Page 1

that reflect love, peace and human feelings, expressing hope that one day her works would be known worldwide.

Abdulaziz Al-Khabaz, another Kuwaiti pottery artist, praised the displayed pieces and the creativity of the participants.

Al-Khabaz participated with three paintings, the first was 'Dalmunia' that represented the link between Kuwait and Bahrain, the second was 'Kuwaiti clay' and the third 'ancient craftsmanship'.

The Kuwaiti pottery, Taliah Al-Khars, said that she is keen on presenting art pieces inspired by Arabic calligraphy to preserve the existence of this art and that she uses safe materials out of honesty and sincerity in her work.

The Bahraini pottery artist, Mohsen Al-Titun, the general coordinator of the exhibition, told KUNA that after the success of the first ceramic exhibition, the festival has expanded this year to attract artists from all Gulf countries.

He pointed out that Bahrain, as a large and wide artistic arena, embraced a brilliant group of professional Gulf potters, noting that the exhibition is an opportunity for dialogue and exchange of ideas and experiences, and this is the main objective of its establishment.

Dima Al-Quraini, an official from the Kuwaiti Ceramic House which is under the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, participated in the exhibition and gave a lecture.

Seven Kuwaiti pottery artists participated in the exhibition with distinguishable works of art, Dr. Jamila Al-Salem, Ali Al-Awad, Fawaz Al-Duwaish, Taliah Al-Khars, Abdulaziz Al-Khabaz, Moayed Al-Thalith and Hassan Al-Najat.

World News Roundup

Asia

Snow hits Tokyo

SKoreans stay 'calm' despite North threats

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 6, (Agencies): North Korea's recent escalation of threats and more tests of weapons aimed at South Korea haven't done much to upset the calm in the nation's capital.

"We learned to be numb," said Renee Na, a 33-year-old office worker in Seoul who was one of a dozen South Koreans who sounded more indifferent than scared when talking with The Associated Press.

"Our generation grew up seeing North Korea use nuclear provocations as showmanship to maintain the stability of its regime," Na said. "When they act up, it doesn't feel like a real threat, but more like an annual event they stage when they need to shore up internal unity or want outside help."

That's a stark contrast to recent comments from Pyongyang, where leader **Kim Jong Un** said in January that his nation was abandoning its fundamental objective of peaceful reconciliation with South Korea. He also repeated a threat to annihilate the South if provoked.

At the same time, North Korea has conducted a streak of weapons testing, including what it described as simulated nuclear attacks on the South.

Worries about a direct provocation were amplified after the North fired hundreds of artillery shells into waters near its disputed western sea boundary with South Korea, prompting the South also to fire.

For now, there's concern in South Korea - but not alarm.

And it's nothing like 1994, when waves of panicked crowds emptied stores of instant ramen and rice after a North Korean negotiator threatened to turn Seoul into a "sea of fire."

North Korea has mastered a cycle of raising tensions with weapons demonstrations and threats before eventually offering negotiations aimed at extracting concessions. The result is that many South Koreans believe North Korea is using its old playbook to get attention during an election year in South Korea and the United States.

'Halt airstrikes': Nine members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) condemned "indiscriminate" airstrikes by Myanmar's military against civilians before an envoy briefed the council Monday as part of regional efforts to implement a peace plan that has so far been largely ineffective.

The plan, adopted in April 2021 shortly after the military seized power in a takeover that sparked a civil war, calls for the immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar, a dialogue among all concerned parties, mediation by a special envoy from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, provision of humanitarian aid through ASEAN channels, and a visit to Myanmar by the special envoy to meet all concerned parties.

Veteran diplomat Aloukeo Kittikhoun - the special envoy to Myanmar for this year's ASEAN chair, Laos, and a former U.N. ambassador - addressed a closed council meeting on behalf of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Kittikhoun committed to implementing ASEAN's "five-point consensus" for peace in Myanmar through continued "quiet diplomacy," according to a council diplomat familiar with the meeting who spoke on condition of anonymity because the meeting was private.

The military leadership in Myanmar has so far ignored the plan, and violence and the humanitarian crisis in the country have been growing at a rapid pace.

Cambodia ruling party files lawsuit: Lawyers for Cambodia's ruling Cambodian People's Party filed a lawsuit Monday at the order of the party's leader, former Prime Minister Hun Sen, accusing a leading rights activist of defamation and seeking damages of half a million dollars.

The complaint was filed in Phnom Penh Municipal Court against Soeng Sen Karuna, deputy chief of Cambodia's biggest rights group, ADHOC. The lawsuit asserts that remarks by Soeng Sen Karuna caused dishonor to the ruling party. The court is expected to determine which law would be applicable for the complaint.

There have been previous cases in which political opponents of the ruling party have been ordered to pay punitive damages after being found guilty of defamation.

The complaint, according to a copy seen by The Associated Press, referred to comments Soeng Sen Karuna made in a recent interview in which he allegedly said that the Cambodian People's Party used the country's courts as a tool to thwart or intimidate its political opponents.

Heavy snow hits Tokyo, injures 240: Rare heavy snow hit Tokyo and surrounding areas, injuring at least 240 people, authorities said Tuesday.

Among them, 135 people in Tokyo were taken to hospital due to snow-related injuries, the Tokyo Fire Department said in a statement. 31 flights were cancelled Tuesday so far, mainly to and from Tokyo's Haneda Airport, according to the airlines.

Snowfall also caused suspensions or delay of some trains linking Tokyo with other cities, and affected Tokyo metropolitan area's transit systems, the operators said. Expressway sections in and around Tokyo were also partially closed.

Central Japanese village of Nozawa Onsen observed 82 cm of snow through Tuesday morning, while central Tokyo recorded 8 cm of snow, the Japan Meteorological Agency said, urging people to take precautions although the snowfall has passed its peak.

Thousands of vehicles stuck in China highways: Icy conditions trapped thousands of motorists on highways in central China as snow and freezing rain snarled travel by air, train and road during the annual Lunar New Year holiday rush.

A Chinese travel blogger said she and her boyfriend were waiting with others Tuesday for de-icing work to be completed after covering only 30 to 40 kilometers (20 to 25 miles) in 13 hours the previous day.

Traveling in the relative comfort of a motorhome, Chen Wei appeared unperturbed by the delay in the trip to her hometown. She quoted an old Chinese saying, telling the AP she "accepts what comes and faces it with calmness."

The heavy snow, unusual for central China, was forecast to continue into Wednesday. Millions of people are heading home for the Lunar New Year, which falls on Saturday. Families traditionally gather for dinner the night before.



Kim



US President Joe Biden speaks at a campaign event on Feb 4, 2024, in North Las Vegas, Nev. Biden is going small to try to win big in November, the Democratic incumbent is all in on minimalist events. (AP)

America

Haley requests Secret Service protection

Biden going small to try to win big in Nov

WASHINGTON, Feb 6, (Agencies): US President Joe Biden is going small to try to win big in November.

With 10 months to go until Election Day, the Democratic incumbent is all in on minimalist events - visits to a boba tea store, a family's kitchen and a barber-shop, for example - rather than big rallies.

Never much of an orator, Biden is leaning into his strength as a retail politician honed over more than 50 years in elected office. But the strategy also reflects what his team sees as a changed media landscape, where TikTok videos and Instagram stories can reach voters more effectively than television ads and speeches.

Last month in Raleigh, North Carolina, Biden picked up burgers and fries from Cook Out and brought takeout to what his campaign described as a "kitchen table conversation" at the home of Eric Fitts, who works in the local school system and benefited from the administration's student loan forgiveness programs.

Biden's campaign taped the visit, which was closed to reporters, and later released curated snippets online. But the highlight for the president's team was unplanned. One of Fitts' sons, Christian, shared a 57-second video on TikTok, offering a behind-the-scenes look at Biden's drop-by, including the president admiring photos on the family's fridge and his limo pulling out of their driveway.

The post quickly attracted millions of views, and Biden's campaign was happy to steer reporters to it even though the campaign itself doesn't use TikTok due to national security concerns.

"You have to go to the places where people are," said Biden deputy campaign manager Rob Flaherty. He added that in an era when people consume media on different platforms that cater to individual tastes, it's harder than ever for campaigns to reach the voters they need.

For Biden, those voters are often the least engaged with the political process - younger, more racially diverse than the country at large and unenthused about a likely rematch between Biden and former president Donald Trump.

"We have to widen the aperture of what the president's time is good for,

and who he's talking to and why," Flaherty said.

Biden kicked off the presidential election year with a pair of big speeches near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and in Charleston, South Carolina, meant to lay out the choice for voters in November. His campaign says he'll continue to hold set-piece events, especially closer to the summer once voters begin to tune in, but they see as much - if not more - value in smaller interactions.

Biden's less-than-electric speaking style and sometimes rambling speeches at larger events have become fodder for Trump and GOP critics to feed into the notion that the 81-year-old president is not up to another four years in the White House. Trump, by contrast, rarely holds retail events, preferring his signature rallies before large crowds of supporters - many of whom wait hours to get in - or appearances at sporting events.

The campaign hopes Biden's go-small strategy is a way to show the American people a different side of the president that will help boost his lagging poll numbers.

Also:

WASHINGTON: Former UN Ambassador **Nikki Haley** has requested Secret Service protection after receiving a growing number of threats during her 2024 presidential campaign, according to a report published Monday.

Haley told The Wall Street Journal while campaigning in **South Carolina** that she had made the request.

"We've had multiple issues," she said. "It's not going to stop me from doing what I need to do."

Neither Haley's campaign nor the Secret Service responded to requests for comment.

Both President **Joe Biden** and former President **Donald Trump** receive Secret Service protection. The Secret Service protects the president and vice president as well as their families along with some senior government officials. It is also authorized to provide protection to major party presidential candidates, an authority granted after the assassination of **Robert F. Kennedy** in 1968.

Haley is the last major challenger to Trump in the Republican primary

race. She is focusing on South Carolina's Feb. 24 primary as an opportunity to demonstrate momentum against Trump, though she is also traveling the country to attend fundraisers and is scheduled to appear at a rally in **California** on Wednesday.

WASHINGTON: The US House is ready to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas over border security, a deeply partisan and highly unusual attack on a Cabinet official that has drawn concerns from constitutional scholars and rebuke from Democrats.

Republicans in the House argue that Mayorkas has "refused to comply" with immigration laws resulting in the record surge of immigrants at the US-Mexico border and "breached the public trust" by his actions and comments. The House vote on the charges, which Democrats say are untrue and hardly grounds for impeachment, is set for Tuesday.

Not since 1876 has a Cabinet secretary faced impeachment charges and it's the first time a sitting secretary is being impeached - 148 years ago, Secretary of War William Belknap resigned just before the vote.

"Very clearly Secretary Mayorkas has picked and chosen which laws he's going to enforce," said Rep. Mark Green, R-Tenn., the chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, at a hearing ahead of the vote.

The impeachment charges against Mayorkas come as border security is fast becoming a top political issue in the 2024 election, a particularly potent line of attack being leveled at President Joe Biden by Republicans, led by the party's front-runner for the presidential nomination, Donald Trump.

Record numbers of people have been arriving at the southern border, many fleeing countries around the world, in what Mayorkas calls an era of global migration. Many migrants are claiming asylum and being conditionally released into the US, arriving in cities that are under-equipped to provide housing and other aid while they await judicial proceedings which can take years to determine if they may remain.



People visit Sensoji temple at the Asakusa district in Tokyo, Japan on Feb 5. Japan Meteorological Agency warns more metropolitan areas braced for snowfall on Monday. Rare heavy snow hit Tokyo and surrounding areas, injuring at least 240 people, authorities said on Feb 6. (AP)



Grossi



Pistorius

Europe

'Security still fragile at N-plant': Security at Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant remains fragile amid worrying recent staff cuts enacted by Russian authorities occupying the facility, which is one of the 10 biggest atomic power plants in the world, the United Nations nuclear watchdog chief said Tuesday.

International Atomic Energy Agency chief **Rafael Grossi**, who is in Kyiv, told The Associated Press that his upcoming visit to the plant as the war approaches its two-year milestone will aim to assess the impact of recent personnel reductions after Russia denied access to employees of Ukraine's Energoatom.

"This huge facility used to have around 12,000 staff. Now, this has been reduced to between 2,000 and 3,000, which is quite a steep reduction in the number of people working there," Grossi said. "To man, to operate these very sophisticated big installations you need a certain number of people performing different specific functions." (AP)

Germany doubles contribution: Germany will double its contribution of about 100 troops to the NATO-led peacekeepers in Kosovo in a demonstration of its commitment to regional security, German Defense Minister **Boris Pistorius** said Monday.

Pistorius, who was on a regional tour to Kosovo and neighboring Serbia, said Germany will add another company of soldiers to the 99 troops it already has in the nearly 4,500-strong peacekeeping force by spring. It is also prepared to add more if necessary, he said.

"I believe the signal is strong and expresses our perspective on the stability of this region," Pistorius said at a news conference with Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani.

NATO has been ramping up the level of the Kosovo Force, or KFOR, from about 3,800, following two violent incidents last year.

In May, Serb demonstrators in northern Kosovo clashed with NATO peacekeeping troops. In September there occurred a deadly gunbattle when about 30 Serb gunmen clashed with Kosovo police, leaving a Kosovo officer and three Serb gunmen dead. (AP)

France summons Russia's envoy: The French foreign ministry said that it summoned Russia's ambassador to France on Monday over the deaths of two French

nationals working for nongovernmental organizations in Ukraine.

The humanitarian workers were killed in Russian strikes on Thursday near the front

line of fighting in the war in Ukraine north of the Dnipro River. Three other French nationals were wounded in the strikes.

A day after the strikes, French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne posted on X, formerly Twitter, that "Russian barbarity has targeted civilians in Ukraine... Russia will have to answer for its crimes."

The French aid workers were killed in the town of Beryslav in the southern Kherson region, Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said. French President Emmanuel Macron, who is expected to visit Kyiv in the next few weeks, denounced the attack as "cowardly and outrageous." (AP)

Serbian parliament inaugurated: Serbia's National Assembly held a tense inaugural session on Tuesday as the ruling nationalists ignored widespread reports that parliamentary and municipal elections held in December were marred by vote rigging and numerous other irregularities.

As the session started, opposition lawmakers gathered around the speaker's stand, whistling, booing and holding signs that read "You Stole the Elections." Others held photos of populist Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic with a caption that read "The mafia boss."

Supporters of the ruling Serbian Progressive party displayed a large banner denouncing the opposition.

Vucic's party won 129 seats in the 250-seat assembly in the Dec. 17 vote. The opposition Serbia Against Violence coalition finished a distant second with 65 seats. (AP)



A view of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Station, in Enerhodar, Zaporizhzhia region, in territory under Russian military control, southeastern Ukraine, on May 1, 2022. Security at Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant remains fragile amid worrying recent staff cuts enacted by Russian authorities occupying the facility, which is one of the 10 biggest atomic power plants in the world, the United Nations nuclear watchdog chief said on Feb 6. (AP)

dollar stable

The exchange rate of the US Dollar against the Kuwaiti Dinar stabilized at KD 0.307, while the Euro fell by 0.21 percent to KD 0.330 compared to yesterday's rates, the Central Bank of Kuwait on Tuesday.

The CBK indicated in its daily bulletin that the exchange rate of the Sterling pound went down by 0.44 percent to KD 0.386, the Swiss franc stabilized at KD 0.354, and the Japanese yen at KD 0.002. (KUNA)

oil slumps

The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by USD 1.56 to USD 77.66 per barrel on Monday as opposed to USD 79.22 pb last Friday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday.

The prices of the Brent crude and the West Texas Intermediate at the global market went up respectively by 66 and 50 cents to settle each at USD 78.22 pb and USD 72.78 pb. (KUNA)

BP exceeds expectations with \$3 billion earnings

Oil and natural gas giant BP beat expectations on Tuesday with earnings of \$3 billion in the last three months of 2023, bringing last year's total to half its record 2022 profit as energy prices have fallen since spiking after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

London-based BP reported its underlying replacement cost profit, which excludes one-time items and fluctuations in the value of inventories, was down from \$3.3 billion in the previous quarter.

It brought in \$13.8 billion for all of last year, a huge drop from the \$27.7 billion

it earned in 2022, when Russia's war in Ukraine sent oil and natural gas prices surging. Those prices drove inflation and contributed to a cost-of-living crisis, drawing outrage from consumers facing higher utility bills while energy companies saw explosive growth in their bottom lines.

Energy prices have since fallen as a weak global economy holds back demand for fossil fuels to power cars, planes, factories and more.

Despite the drop in annual earnings, BP kept its dividend steady and said it would

buy back \$1.75 billion in shares as well as commit to \$3.5 billion in additional share buybacks for first half of this year. The company's stock rose 5.75% in morning trading.

"Looking back, 2023 was a year of strong operational performance with real momentum in delivery right across the business," CEO Murray Auchincloss said in a statement. "We are confident in our strategy, on delivering as a simpler, more focused and higher-value company." (AP)

Market Movements

06-02-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
SAUDI	-	Tadawul	+46.50	12,071.41	
PHILIPPINES	-	PSEI	+27.04	6,755.26	
PAKISTAN	-	KSE 100	+861.40	63,851.28	
UAE	-	DFM	-76.96	4,153.74	
JAPAN	-	Nikkei	-193.50	36,160.66	
EGYPT	-	EGX 30	-256.36	27,409.39	

Business

IEA likely to upgrade oil demand projections

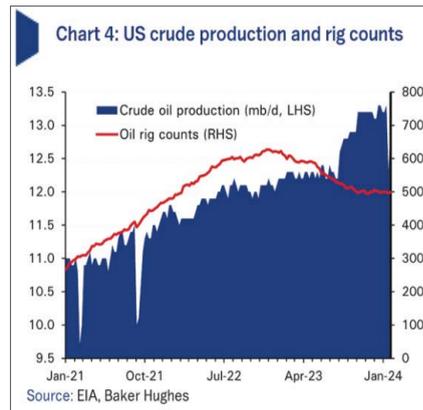
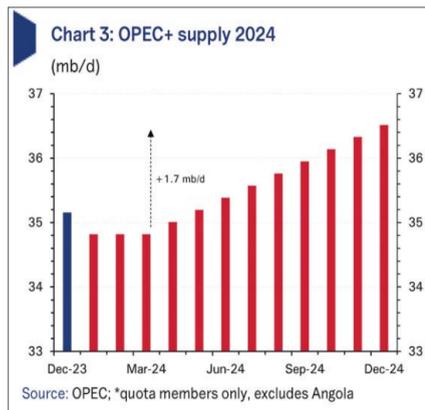
Oil prices rally in January on geopolitical risk and economic optimism

By National Bank of Kuwait

■ Brent futures rallied in January, posting their first monthly increase since September with a rise of 6% m/m to \$81.7/bbl. (Chart 1.) Price gains reflected a combination of heightened geopolitical risk in the Middle East, inventory drawdowns in the US and better-than-expected global economic activity. Houthis attacks on passing vessels in the Red Sea forced shipping companies to transit around the much lengthier—and costlier—Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. Meanwhile, US commercial crude oil inventories dropped to a multi-month low in December, further adding to the bullish impulse. Prices were also buoyed with the release of data showing that the US economy grew at a much faster rate than expected in Q4 23 and after Chinese authorities unveiled stimulus measures to support the economy. Local marker Kuwait Export Crude (KEC) closed the month at \$84.1/bbl, up 5.7% ytd.

■ In terms of oil demand expectations for the year ahead, the outlook looks slightly more positive following the upgrade to global GDP growth by the IMF in January: growth was revised up from October's forecast by 0.2% pts to 3.1%. The International Energy Agency (IEA), which takes its economic cues from the IMF, may follow suit with another upgrade to its oil demand projections for 2024, having just last month revised them up by 180 kb/d to 1.24 mb/d from 2.25 mb/d in 2023. (Chart 2.) The organization has raised its 2024 forecast by a cumulative 380 kb/d in total since June last year and was behind the curve in its 2023 oil demand growth estimates, underestimating the resilience of gasoline consumption especially. OPEC, meanwhile, has been consistent since the outset in its projection of oil demand growth of around 2.25 mb/d for 2024. The oil exporters' group has been firm in its view of above-trend demand and has extended the bullish narrative into 2025 with its projection of growth of 1.85 mb/d to 106.2 mb/d. Consumption growth in non-OECD countries will account for 94% of this rise.

■ On the supply side, OPEC+ has determined that further supply restraint will be necessary in 2024. The group will roll over and deepen last year's voluntary production cuts through Q1—and potentially longer—to balance the market and prevent a large buildup of oil inventories. The volume of cuts pledged at November's OPEC+ meeting was around 2.2 mb/d, though in practice only about 500 kb/d will be fresh cuts including



135 kb/d from Kuwait, 223 kb/d from Iraq and 82 kb/d from Kazakhstan. Russia signed up to an additional 200 kb/d of export reductions (refined products). Saudi's 1 mb/d voluntary production cut rollover remains the largest item in the 'cut' announcement.

■ OPEC+ output (quota-bound members only and

excluding Angola) is therefore scheduled to fall to 34.3 mb/d in Q1. (Chart 3.) Supply in December rose to 34.7 mb/d (+49 kb/d), according to combined OPEC secondary source and S&P Global data, with the largest gains coming from Nigeria (+99 kb/d) and Kazakhstan (+30 kb/d), offsetting slight declines in most members. Out-

side of quota-bound members, Iran's output declined modestly from November's post-2018 sanctions high of 3.2 mb/d to 3.1 mb/d. Iranian production soared in 2023: with gains of almost 600 kb/d, it was one of the largest contributors to global supplies. Meanwhile, Venezuela, which has benefited from a reprieve in US sanctions, has been gradually pumping more oil. Output in December reached 786 kb/d (+7 kb/d m/m), its highest level since February 2019.

■ Non-OPEC supply, meanwhile, increased by 2.3 mb/d in 2023, the IEA estimated. This was mainly on the back of output gains in the US, Canada, Brazil and Guyana. In the US, oil production expanded at the fastest rate since 2019, by more than 1.0 mb/d to 12.9 mb/d, according to US Energy Information Administration (EIA) data. Weekly EIA data showed that output, at 13.0 mb/d, was hovering near its record high of 13.3 mb/d. (Chart 4.) Remarkably, such gains have taken place while oil drilling has been in decline (-19.5% in 2023), though by the end of January the drop in the number of active oil rigs appeared to stabilize at the 500 level, according to Baker Hughes. Looking ahead, the IEA thinks such oil production gains are unlikely to be sustained, with growth dropping to less than 300 kb/d on average over the next two years.

■ As far as the outlook for 2024 is concerned, notwithstanding the forecasting uncertainties by research houses over the pace of global economic and demand growth amid a myriad of factors including the prospects for monetary policy easing in the US and the Europe, we think that overall activity will be fairly solid. Oil demand growth will slow from last year's 2.2 mb/d but remain slightly above trend at 1.4 mb/d given ongoing consumption gains in emerging markets. Non-OPEC supply growth should also moderate, with Iran and the US not expected to bring on supply at 2023's breakneck pace.

■ OPEC+ supply management will, therefore, once again be key to the oil price outlook, geopolitical risk apart. Provided that supply cuts remain in place beyond Q1, we think OPEC could succeed in keeping market balances tight, with bias towards a stock decline. Of course, OPEC+ compliance issues and market share considerations are bound to come into play and could result in supply cuts being unwound from Q2 onwards: OPEC+ will not want to cede market share to rivals by suppressing supply indefinitely. Nevertheless, we think that Brent will find support at the \$80/bbl level for the year.

Banking studies research unveils Kuwaiti sector competition trends

'Geopolitical influence on banking competition'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: The Effect of Competitiveness of Kuwaiti Banks on Risk Profile and Profitability study by the Institute of Banking Studies Research covers several topics, of which the main one is investigating the impact of competition on profitability and risk profile in the Kuwaiti banking sector, in addition to other related relevant subjects.

Other topics include Covid-19 and the impact of the geo-political environment on banking competition, the talent war among banks and its implications for banks' performance from a cost to income perspective, new payment technologies and their implications for fee income for banks, the implications of digital banks and new Telco market penetration for the banking and financial services landscape. The following bullet points summarize the findings of the study:

■ Competition among Kuwaiti banks is not significantly high due to the significant concentration in the Kuwait banking sector.

■ Competition generally affects the profitability and risk profile of Kuwaiti banks.

■ Concentration has a favorable significant impact on profitability and the risk profile of banks in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

■ Interest rate spread increases banks' profitability while it slightly increases credit risk, but not liquidity and capital risk.

■ Income diversification slightly increases risk exposure due to monitoring difficulties across the sectors engaged with.

■ Coping with the new post-pandemic trends reshaping the future of the banking industry landscape, namely new monetary and fiscal policies, digitalization, regulation,

Bank endorses Kuwaiti youth initiative

Gulf Bank set to launch GB Market event on Saturday

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: As part of its ongoing efforts to promote sustainability principles in society, Gulf Bank is introducing its first GB Market event, with the goal of supporting small-scale initiatives and businesses in Kuwait.

Scheduled for next Saturday, February 10th, 2024, from 10 am to 6 pm at the Dhaher Complex in the Al-Bida'a area, the event is poised to showcase approximately 11 businesses and initiatives exclusively owned by young Kuwaitis. These enterprises encompass various sectors, such as perfumes, jewelry, restaurants, and cafes. Participants are selected via competitions and voting by followers on Gulf Bank's social media platform, reflecting their preferences for specific stores and products.

Mr. Abdullah Al-Mulaifi, Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, emphasized Gulf Bank's commitment to supporting youth and small to medium-sized initiatives and businesses. He highlighted the bank's proactive involvement in events and initiatives aimed at fostering youth talent, prioritizing the promotion of sustainability, and

economic growth, new entrants, and competitive landscape is mainly the responsibility of the government and regulatory authorities.

■ In relation to the talent war, banks need to improve their training programs and culture to keep their employees energized and engaged. In addition, they also need to make their employees feel valued, grant them recognition and growth oppor-



Abdullah Al-Mulaifi, Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank

offering support to young individuals—both integral components of the bank's 2025 strategy.

He emphasized that GB Market provides an excellent opportunity to bring together entrepreneurs and small to medium-sized business owners, enabling them to showcase their products directly. This nurtures the growth of these businesses and enhances their overall contribution to the national economy. Moreover, the

market enables the public to explore products from their preferred stores, while having an enjoyable family day, filled with diverse entertainment options and prize giveaways.

■ Embracing digitalization will assist incumbent banks to stay competitive in the face of digital players. They will be enabled to provide enhanced digital financial services that improve client well-being both directly and indirectly through enabling a broader ecosystem.

market enables the public to explore products from their preferred stores, while having an enjoyable family day, filled with diverse entertainment options and prize giveaways.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

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

firms will be able to secure funds for larger investment and build a trustworthy reputation through banks.

■ Embracing digitalization will assist incumbent banks to stay competitive in the face of digital players. They will be enabled to provide enhanced digital financial services that improve client well-being both directly and indirectly through enabling a broader ecosystem.

'Three interest rate cuts in '24'

Powell acknowledges Fed's 'misjudgment' on inflation

WASHINGTON, Feb 6, (AP): Chair Jerome Powell said in an interview broadcast Sunday night that the Federal Reserve remains on track to cut interest rates three times this year, a move that's expected to begin as early as May.

Powell, in an interview recorded Thursday for the CBS news program "60 Minutes," also said the nation's job market and economy are strong, with no sign of a recession on the horizon.

"I do think the economy is in a good place," he said, "and there's every reason to think it can get better."

Powell's comments largely echoed remarks he gave at a news conference Wednesday, after the Fed decided to keep its key interest rate steady at about 5.4%, a 22-year high. To fight inflation, the Fed raised its benchmark rate 11 times beginning in March 2022, causing loans for consumers and businesses to become much more expensive.

The Fed chair also reiterated that the central bank's next meeting in March was likely too soon for a rate cut. Most economists think the first cut is likely to come in May or June.

With inflation steadily cooling, nearly all the 19 members of the Fed's policy-setting committee have agreed that cuts in the central bank's key rate will be appropriate this year, Powell said in the "60 Minutes" interview. A reduction in that rate would help lower the cost of mortgages, auto loans, credit cards and other consumer and business borrowing.

In December, Fed officials indicated that they envisioned three rate cuts in 2024, reducing their benchmark rate to about 4.6% by year's end. Powell told "60 Minutes" that that forecast likely still reflected policymakers' views.

As gauged by the Fed's preferred measure, inflation fell to just 2.6% in December compared with 12 months earlier. And in the second half of 2023, inflation was measured at an annual pace of just 2%, matching the Fed's target level, down drastically from a peak of 7.1% in the summer of 2022.

Powell attributed the inflation surge of 2021-2022 to the disruptions of the pandemic, including a shift in spending away from services, like restaurant meals, to goods,

like home office furniture and exercise bikes. At the same time, COVID closed down or slowed factories across the globe, severely disrupting supply chains and causing widespread shortages of goods and components. Both trends, Powell said, accelerated inflation.

At the same time, Powell acknowledged in the interview, the Fed misjudged the duration of the resulting inflation, which it repeatedly suggested would prove short-lived. As he has before, Powell said the central bank moved too slowly to raise its key rate, which can help slow borrowing and spending. Inflation began spiking in mid-2021 yet the Fed didn't start raising rates until March 2022.

"So in hindsight, it would've been better to have tightened policy earlier," Powell said, referring to rate hikes. "I'm happy to say that. ... We thought that the economy was so dynamic that it would fix itself fairly quickly. And we thought that inflation would go away fairly quickly without an intervention by us."

At his news conference Wednesday, Powell signaled that the Fed was likely to cut rates this year but underscored that central bank officials wanted to see further evidence that inflation is in check.

"It's not that we're looking for better data - it's just that we're looking for a continuation of the good data that we've been getting," he said. "We just need to see more."

Also Wednesday, Powell repeatedly acknowledged the strength of the U.S. economy and noted that inflation had slowed without the sharp rise in unemployment and weak growth that many economists had said would be necessary to cool consumer demand and slow price increases.

"We've got six months of good inflation data and an expectation that there's more to come," Powell said Wednesday. "So this is a good situation. Let's be honest. This is a good economy."

Other Fed officials have expressed caution about the prospect of rate cuts, particularly after a government report Friday showed that job growth soared unexpectedly in December, a sign that businesses remain confident enough in the economy to add many workers.

BUSINESS

China pledges measures to boost domestic consumption

China will introduce a raft of measures to boost domestic consumption this year, state-run Xinhua News Agency reported Tuesday, such as stimulating purchases of vehicles and household appliances.

"Automobiles, household appliances and home furnishing are the focus of traditional consumption and are closely related to people's lives," Vice Minister of Commerce Sheng Qiuping

said at a press conference in Beijing.

Sheng also mentioned how China aims to work on promoting vehicle trade-ins this year due to the great demand among people and the potential for replacement.

Last year, the world's second economy's new car sales exceeded 30 million units for the first time, up 12 percent year on year, while its second-hand car

trading volume reached 18.41 million units in 2023, an increase of nearly 15 percent.

Car ownership has reached 340 million in China, ranking first in the world, according to the vice minister.

China will also encourage the renovation of old houses and the replacement of home appliances, as part of a package of measures to bolster domestic demand, Sheng added. (KUNA)

Swiss bank UBS reports a pretax loss in 4th quarter

UBS on Tuesday reported a fourth-quarter pretax loss of more than \$750 million as the Swiss banking giant continued to integrate its longtime rival Credit Suisse after a government-orchestrated merger.

The Zurich-based lender reported losses before tax of \$751 million in the quarter, which included losses of more than a half-billion dollars linked to an investment in SIX Group,

which operates Switzerland's main stock market. The net loss in the quarter came in at \$278 million.

UBS said it expects to complete the merger of Credit Suisse by the end of the second quarter this year, and the merger of the two banks' Swiss operations by the end of the third quarter. The company plans to increase its dividend for the 2023 financial year by 27 per-

cent, and said it would resume share buybacks in the second half of the year.

"As we move to the next phase of our journey, we will focus on restructuring and optimizing the combined businesses," CEO Sergio Ermotti said in a statement.

"While our progress over the next three years will not be measured in a straight line, our strategy is clear." (AP)

stc's revenues for financial yr ended 31 Dec '23 totaled KD 351.4m

KD 32.7mn net profit recorded

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc), a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its financial results for financial year ended 31 December 2023, highlighting the most significant achievements, financial and operational performance in addition to the social initiatives made by the company during 2023.

In this regard, Eng. Maziad Alharbi, stc's Chief Executive Officer, has stated that: "In 2023, Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc) achieved numerous financial and operational milestones represented in expanding its business model and efficiently managing its internal operations. stc's implementation to its corporate strategy, which was designed to keep pace with the rapid developments in the telecommunications sector has played a vital role in its success, and thus, has contributed in meeting the shareholders' aspirations.



Eng. Maziad Alharbi, stc's Chief Executive Officer.

Driven by the importance of digital transformation and innovation in shaping the global economy, the company has successfully embraced the latest technologies, including 5G services, Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (IA), and data analytics to ensure its comprehensive and integrated technical services and solutions are at the forefront of all the available offerings in the telecommunications market through implementing its corporate strategy based on expanding its operations. stc's constant focus on developing solutions specifically designed to meet the evolving needs of both individual and corporate customers reflects its unwavering commitment to better serve its customers. This represents one of the key pillars of its corporate strategy "LEAD" for the years 2023 to 2025, which enabled the company - during the first year of implementation - to achieve remarkable strong results, which, in turn, contributed to strengthening stc's position as a leader in the ICT market. The Company's expansions along the past few years demonstrate stc's efforts to provide the best integrated solutions in the communications and networks field, along with the advanced technical solutions, fixed services, broadband, integration systems, and cloud services for both individual and corporate customers, leveraging its highly advanced network and the expertise of its subsidiaries specializing in fixed communication services as well as ICT, in addition to providing the enterprise sector with innovative, comprehensive, and high-quality solutions. Therefore, stc has managed to maintain its competitive position in the telecommunications and ICT markets in Kuwait, whereby our primary focus is the implementation of a productive and digital operating model for stc, with our unwavering commitment to enhance profitability, increase the potential of our employees, enhance their future professional skills and work on the sustainability of the Company, in addition to the hard work that our subsidiaries are eager to do with their ability to deliver solutions in the telecommunications and



stc headquarters

ICT markets.

stc is committed to innovation and excellence through its investments in the latest technologies to enhance its services and maintain its leading position in the rapidly evolving telecommunications sector, where by stc's workforce has the ability to adapt and proactively face challenges. We also emphasize the significance of the Company's strategic partnerships and acquisitions that were executed throughout the previous years, which played a notable and effective role in capturing growth opportunities in the telecommunications and ICT sectors, especially in the enterprise sector. These initiatives have propelled stc towards new horizons of sustainable growth by delivering high-quality products, services, and innovative solutions in the enterprise sector in Kuwait.

Commenting on the announcement of stc's financial results for the year ended December 31, 2023, Eng. Maziad Alharbi noted: "stc has achieved strong financial results by leveraging its technical and human capabilities in accordance with the

aspirations and expectations of both its customers and shareholders, whereby, stc recorded the highest total revenue since inception to reach KD 351.4mn in the financial year ended December 31, 2023 with a growth rate of 4.5% compared to KD 336.4mn in the previous year. The expansion of the Company's operations and its focus on providing digital services to the enterprise sector through the development of its digital services and offering integrated technical solutions to companies across various sectors had the greatest impact on stc's success. Not to mention stc's focus on driving its operations towards new areas of sustainable growth through a series of innovative initiatives aimed at optimizing Company's operations as well as delivering high-quality services and products that cater to the market's requirements and demand, in addition to enhancing the Company's infrastructure."

Alharbi added: "These outcomes resulted in a growth of EBITDA by 3.7% to reach KD 85.1mn in 2023 compared to KD 82.0mn in 2022 supported by the

The financial results for the financial year ended 31 December 2023	
Revenues	KD 351.4 mn
EBITDA	KD 85.1 mn
Net Profit	KD 32.7 mn
Earnings per share	33 Kuwaiti fils
Assets	KD 447.7 mn
Shareholders' equity	KD 243.9 mn
Book value per share	244 fils per share
Customer base	2.3 mn customers

increase in the Company's revenue. As a result, the Company's net profit reached KD 32.7mn (EPS 33 Fils) in 2023. Whereby, stc's customer base reached approx. 2.3mn customers at the end of December 2023."

Commenting on stc's financial position as of December 31, 2023, Alharbi said: "stc's total assets reached KD 447.7mn by the end of December 2023, while the total shareholders' equity increased by 1% reaching KD 243.9mn by the end of December 2023 compared to KD 241.4mn in 2022. Whereby, stc has a strong solvency position amongst the telecom companies in the Middle East.

The Board of Directors has recommended distributing cash dividends of 35 fils per share representing 35% of the share nominal value for the year ended 2023, subject to the approval of the Ordinary General Assembly of the company. This decision was based on stc's confidence in the continuous advancements of its operations, the robustness of its financial position, and the strength of its cash flows."

Alharbi noted: "stc is committed to periodically review and update its financial strategy, with the aim of allocating resources towards the development of its services in order to remain at the forefront of the telecommunications companies, meet customers' needs and provide an added value to shareholders. As part of this commitment, stc has successfully implemented numerous strategic projects, supported by the digital solutions that align with the Company's strategic and financial objectives. These initiatives are designed to enhance operational efficiency, process control practice, and achieve excellence in treasury management operations."

Regarding stc's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Alharbi stated: "Supporting the community in various ways has been a longstanding commitment under stc's extensive and sustainable corporate social responsibility (CSR) program. Considering its role as a pioneer in Kuwait's telecommunications market, stc has implemented programs that aim to foster long-term growth focusing on key areas such as education, environmental sustainability, sports, health, youth empowerment and entrepreneurship. stc's programs and initiatives in 2023 were diverse and sustainable, each targeting specific community needs and causes that coincided the Company's values and beliefs. These efforts were reflected through various programs in partnership with a range of key players, including government institutions and the private sector under the umbrella of "Wyak", which focuses on supporting young entrepreneurs and startups. The second primary initiative was the educational 'upgrade' umbrella, which aims to contribute towards empowering the youth and supporting the local education initiatives. The last primary initiative is the 'Because we care', which aims to spread awareness on health and wellness, and environment.

Looking ahead, stc is set to build on the solid foundation established through its comprehensive and sustainable CSR program over the years. stc envisions a sustainable future where its partnerships with government bodies, private sector entities, and community organizations will continue to address a broader spectrum of societal needs and challenges, combining diverse perspectives and expertise to create more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Q3 profit totaled 1.36 trillion yen

Toyota raises its profit outlook after solid earnings helped by a weak yen

TOKYO, Feb 6, (AP): Toyota raised its full fiscal year profit forecast Tuesday after reporting its profit in the October to December quarter nearly doubled from the year before.

Toyota Motor Corp.'s third quarter profit totaled 1.36 trillion yen (\$9 billion), up from 727.9 billion yen in the same period in 2022, as Japan's top automaker recovered from losses suffered when the coronavirus pandemic slammed computer chip production.

In the first nine months of the fiscal year, Toyota reported a 3.9 trillion yen (\$26 billion) profit, more than double what it racked up the previous fiscal year.

A favorable exchange rate also helped the maker of the Camry sedan, Prius hybrid and luxury models. A weak yen raises the value of overseas earnings when they are converted into yen. The dollar has been trading at about 148 yen lately, up from 140 yen a year ago.

Quarterly sales rose 23% to 12.04 trillion yen (\$81 billion) from 9.75 trillion yen.

Toyota, based in central Japan's Toyota city, raised its full fiscal year profit forecast to 4.5 trillion yen (\$30 billion), from an earlier forecast of 3.95 trillion yen (\$27 billion). It earned 2.45 trillion yen in profit in the year that ended in March 2023.

Toyota also raised its full year sales projection to 43.5 trillion yen (\$294 billion), from an earlier estimate of 43 trillion yen (\$290 billion). It was 37 trillion yen in the previous fiscal year.

Cost cuts, marketing efforts and the currency exchange effects are behind its revision of its forecast, Toyota said.

The company did not raise its vehicle sales forecast for the full fiscal year, instead cutting it to 9.45 million vehicles. Toyota had earlier expected to sell 9.6 million vehicles. Even the lower forecast is better than the previous fiscal year's sales of 8.8 million vehicles.

The shortage of computer chips has hurt automakers, including Toyota. Production has been suspended recently at Toyota group's Daihatsu Motor Co., which makes small models, under Japanese government orders after the automaker admitted it had faked safety tests for decades.

No major accidents have been reported in connection with the cheating, but the tests will have to be carried out properly. The scandal began after a whistleblower came forward in April 2023. Daihatsu has apologized and promised sweeping reforms of its corporate culture.

The impact on Toyota sales and profits will be relatively limited because the subsidiary makes up a small fraction of Toyota's massive global sales

The owners of Yandex are selling - at a big, Kremlin-required discount

FRANKFURT, Germany, Feb 6, (AP): The Dutch parent of pioneering Russian tech company Yandex is selling its operations in the country at a steeply discounted price of just over \$5 billion to its Russia-based managers and oil company Lukoil, one of the biggest deals for Western-held companies to exit Russia since the invasion of Ukraine.

The price reflects a 50% discount that Moscow imposes on companies from "unfriendly" countries like the Netherlands as a condition of exiting business in Russia, according to a statement Monday from Nasdaq-exchange listed Yandex NV.

It follows drawn-out negotiations that show the complexities international companies must navigate if they want to unload their Russian businesses, which many have been struggling to do since President Vladimir Putin's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine and the sweeping financial and economic sanctions that followed.

Yandex, founded in 1997 as Russia's answer to Google and Yahoo, serves Russian-speaking customers through its search engine and with widely used apps for food delivery, car-sharing and shopping.

Co-founder Arkady Volozh, who had earlier moved to Israel, resigned as CEO in 2022 after he was hit with European Union sanctions. He subsequently condemned Russia's invasion as "barbaric." The Nasdaq exchange suspended trading in Yandex shares days after the invasion.

"We can welcome the agreement reached by the shareholders on the sale," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in a conference call with reporters. "The company's Russian management will remain as the main owner. Of course, it's important for us that the company continues its operations in this sphere."

"We know that the negotiations were long, and we welcome their completion," he added.

The sale in cash and shares worth 475 billion rubles would transfer Yandex's core business - representing more than 95% of its revenue, assets and employees - to the group of up to 50 managers, Lukoil and business en-

ties owned by investors Alexander Chachava, Pavel Prass and Alexander Ryazanov.

The 50% discounted sale price was based on the average value of Yandex shares on the Moscow exchange for the three months ending Jan. 31 - \$10.2 billion. That's after shares had already fallen by more than half in ruble terms since their peak before the invasion.

After the sale, Yandex NV would be left with its international businesses - employing 1,300 people - including self-driving technology and generative artificial intelligence as well as a data center in Finland.

Yandex NV Chairman John Boynton said the company had faced "exceptional challenges" since the start of the war.

"We believe we have found the best possible solution for our shareholders, our teams and our users in these extraordinary circumstances," he said in a statement.

Boynton said the sale would "allow shareholders to recover some value for the businesses that we are divesting, while unlocking new growth potential for the international businesses we will retain."

Hurdles for businesses to exit Russia include finding partners who are not under U.S. or European sanctions as well as avoiding banned financial transactions. None of the purchasers have been sanctioned, Yandex NV said, and the cash part of the transaction would be conducted in Chinese yuan outside of Russia.

Companies fleeing Russia not long after the war began ended joint ventures and wrote off stakes worth billions. For instance, McDonald's sold its 850 restaurants to a local franchisee, while France's Renault took a symbolic single ruble for its majority stake in AvtoVAZ, Russia's largest carmaker.

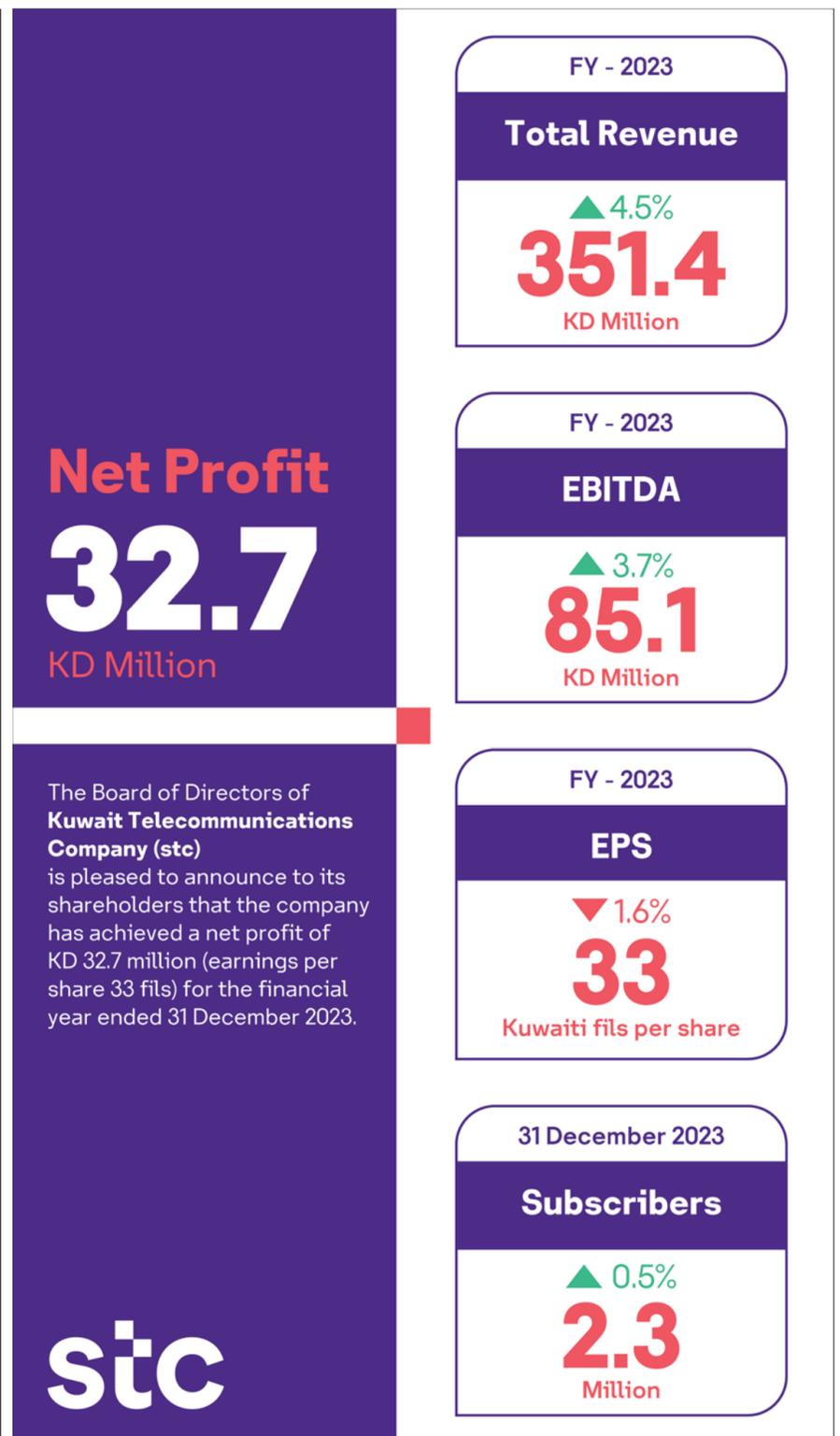
Others are still struggling to leave because of the hurdles put in place by Putin's government, and some are simply staying put.

The government also has seized assets or businesses belonging to Western corporations in Russia, including Danish beer maker Carlsberg's Baltika Breweries, French yogurt maker Danone, Finnish energy company Fortum and Germany's Uniper utility.

and production. But Toyota acknowledged sales for the year will decline in Japan because of Daihatsu's problems.

The scandal has been a blow to

Toyota's brand image, as similar irregularities have emerged lately at other group companies like Hino and Toyota Industries.



New council outlines upcoming events for the next two years

IDAK conducts art & craft exhibition along with meet & greet 2024



Photos from the event.

Positive relations strengthened

Kuwait Airways organizes open day for its employees and their families

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: Kuwait Airways organized an open day for its employees which was held at the sports villages, in cooperation with the Kuwaiti Sports for All Federation in the Sulaibikhat area. The open day included the participation of employees and their families in various recreational and sporting activities and events, bearing witness to the spirit of happiness, friendship, and unity of being one family. The event was also attended by Kuwait Airways Board Member, Mr. Salem Al-Shatti.

Speaking on the occasion, the Director of Corporate Communication, Public Relations, and Marketing at Kuwait Airways, Mr. Munawer Al-Munawer stated, "Organizing the open day for employees and their families comes within the framework of Kuwait Airways' commitment towards developing social activities, which strengthen friendly relations among the employees, thereby increasing and fostering a positive and productive spirit among everyone. This also contributes towards consolidating relations, coordination, and cohesion among the employees."

Al-Munawer added that events such as these were unique opportunities for employees to engage in recreational activities outside their work environment. He emphasized that one of the priorities of the company is to encourage, support and appreciate employees for their commitment and tireless efforts that they have extended throughout the year, thereby contributing to their productivity, which in turn benefits the company. Moreover, such events and activities also reflect the company's commitment towards improving the work environment and enhancing team spirit.

Al-Munawer concluded his statement by extending his sincere thanks to those who organized the event, mak-



Salem Al Shatti, accompanied by the Corporate Communications Department team.



Salem Al Shatti in a group photo with some of the participants.

ing it an exemplary success and for fostering harmony and unity in a comprehensive and interactive manner, while highlighting the company's endeavour to conduct similar events and activities in the near future. The open

day was a success with participants and attendees expressing their appreciation to officials for organizing the event which contributed to strengthening and developing positive relations between the employees.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: The Indian Dentists' Alliance in Kuwait (IDAK) conducted first ever IDAK Arts and Crafts Exhibition, aptly named iACE'24 along with IDAK Meet and Greet 2024 on 2nd February 2024 at the scenic setting of Royal Tent in Hotel Safir, Fintas.

iACE'24 was inaugurated by noted theatre personality and award winning director Mr. Shemej Kumar K K, with an instant art work. The exhibition was a collection of the scintillating art and craft works by IDAK members. The audience was mesmerised by the quality of artistry in display by dental surgeons. The exhibition organised by the Cultural Committee headed by Dr. Aysha John was widely appreciated. More than 45 art works done by 10 doctors were exhibited and they were done in different mediums on a wide range of themes.

IDAK Meet and Greet is conducted once in two years to introduce the newly chosen committee members and to act as a platform to introduce the new members to the organisation. During this event the new Council also enumerates the events

planned for the two years ahead.

IDAK President Dr. George P Alex, during his Presidential address said he was happy that gender parity was achieved in the IDAK organisational framework and called upon the members to come forward and take active participation in the activities. He said the loyal foot soldiers of the organisation help the association to grow by leaps and bounds and enumerated the activities planned for the term.

General Secretary Dr. Jijan Sam Thomas welcomed the new members and members, while Vice President Dr. Roshila Mathew proposed the constitutional amendments. Dr. Srikanth Reddy, the Treasurer and Dr. Tiny Elsa Thomas, the Membership Committee Chair welcomed the new members to the association. President Elect, Dr. Shalin Anna Simon led the felicitation of past council while Joint Secretary Dr. Amrita Geevarghese introduced the new Executive Committees. Immediate Past President Dr. Thomas Thomas felicitated the members leaving Kuwait, while Joint

Secretary Dr. Asheel Mohammed proposed the vote of thanks.

Event Management Committee headed by Dr. Aju Wilson, News and Media Committee headed by Dr. Bankima Malhotra and Membership team led by Dr. Tiny Elsa Thomas helped the Council to organize the event in an exemplary manner.

The meeting was attended by more than 175 Indian dentists and was sponsored by Nexus Financial Services Ltd. and Philo Pharma. Mr. Sunit Arora, General Manager of Nexus Financial Services Ltd., spoke about the importance of investment, while Mr. Michael Eskandar, General Manager of Philo Pharma introduced the new drug Abracp.

The meeting ended with a sumptuous dinner after the interactive session organised by News and Media Committee, which helped the members to break the ice and interact with each other more freely with innovative games and contests. The MCs for the evening were Dr. Serene, Dr. Jane, Dr. Tiny and Dr. Pramod.

Indian School of Excellence claims top honors

FAIPS – DPS culminates 7th CTY-2023

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: FAIPS – DPS hosted the successful final round of the Inter-School Quiz Competition CTY-2023 in memory of Mr. Rino Alex on January 11, 2024. Following a competitive Preliminary round on December 7, 2023, where 40 teams from 20 schools participated, the stage was set for the Finals. The top six teams – Indian School of Excellence, Gulf Indian School, FAIPS, Indian Central School, ICSK Junior, and Indian Learners Own Academy – emerged from the Preliminary round, showcasing their knowledge and enthusiasm.

Mrs & Mr. K. G. Alexander, along with the extended family of the late Mr. Rino Alex, attended the event, joined by esteemed Guests of Honor Rev. Pramod Mathew and Dr. Sushil Mathew from the USA. Rev. Pramod Mathew, our esteemed Guest of Honour, delivered an inspiring address on the pursuit of excellence to the audience.

The quiz was structured into seven rounds – General, Name It & Claim It, Audio-Visual, living on the Edge, Match Time, Rapid Fire, and a Buzzer Round – the quiz aimed to challenge participants' knowledge and decision-making skills. Following a closely contested competition, the winners of Catch Them Young 2023 were announced as follows:

The Indian School of Excellence secured the Rolling Trophy, claiming the first position with an impressive total of 175 points. Gulf Indian School secured the second position with 165 points, while ICSK Junior achieved third place with a total of 160 points.

The 7th Season concluded with the victorious teams receiving captivating prizes generously sponsored by Mr. K. G. Alexander (NBTC), Fantasy World, and Pottery Barn Kids. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to our exceptional sponsors – Caesars Travel Group, Pottery Barn Kids, Fantasy World, and Safex Fire – for contributing to the memorable experience of our participants throughout the year.



FAIPS-DPS CTY-2023 Quiz winners

Ultimate symbol for true love and lasting commitment

Dazzling Diamond-inspired Valentine's at Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: Dazzlingly beautiful and one of the most resilient materials on earth, diamonds are the ultimate symbol for true love and lasting commitment. This Valentine's Day, Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait honours both the outward shine and the inner resilience of meaningful partnership with a multi-faceted array of diamond-inspired experiences: glittering city-view dining at the Hotel's renowned restaurants; mesmerising ambiance; lavish room offers; dazzling spa treats; Ali Bin Ali Watches & Jewelry collaboration, and more.

"As tough as they are beautiful, diamonds truly represent the unbreakable nature of true love," comments the Hotel's General Manager, Martin Kipping. "Our Valentine's theme of diamonds also reminds us of the enduring facets of the human spirit – from strength to prosperity – and the idea that light truly radiates from within."

Dazzling Dining

With the city lights twinkling gem-like below, the hotel's rooftop hot spot, Sintohe will serve up a feast of Asian culinary creativity this Valentine's night whereby Chef Wattana will let you discover mouth-watering dishes from scallop tempura to lamb gochujang with divine sweet bites to finish your experience.

Chef Luigi Frassanito and team are ready to wow with a five-course Italian menu at 21st floor Dai Forni with a deliziosa Italian feast including signature dishes like Risotto Aragosa with lobster, Agnello, lamb cooked in a rich sauce with porcini mushrooms and truffles.

Starlit dining comes courtesy of Al Bandar's private air-conditioned cabanas – an atmospheric poolside experience under the stars that includes four-course menu, private butler service, a bottle of sparkling juice and unlimited soft drinks.

Heartfelt Room Offers

What better way to mark the day of love while savouring the most precious resource of all – time – than a romantic getaway? Make the most of precious moments together with a nearly check-in and late check-out; enjoy in-room cake, flowers and non-alcoholic sparkling juice with the Hotel's Romance Package.

'Shine Bright' Together Spa Experiences

Luxuriate in shining bright together with a unique couples' Gold or Silver membership this Valentine's Day. Enjoy access to our Forbes five star wellness centre featuring the latest equipment, fitness classes, as well as personal sessions with certified trainers, and access to the Hotel's indoor and outdoor pools. A sensorial journey inspired by ancient Moroccan secrets awaits at the Spa: "The Art of Sensory" sees warmed oil infused with scents of amber, vanilla and musk massaged into the skin, leaving it radiant and glowing starting at KD 75 for 60 min.

Sparkling and Sweet Surprises

Overlooking the verdant, mist-cooled expanse of Al Shaheed Park – the largest green space in Kuwait City – the Hotel's elegant Al Soor Lounge delights with Valentine's treats from its French chocolaterie counter. Choose from bite-sized lip-shaped indulgences in red and pink.

Looking for something a little more permanent to mark the occasion? World-renowned for exquisite gems meeting exacting requirements, Ali Bin Ali Watches & Jewelry is where expertise meets creative vision. Our unique collaboration with this dazzling jewellery brands includes displays of Leo Pizzo, PF Jewels and Marco Valente, an Italian unique diamond pieces, designed to satisfy your every desire. A dazzling way for couples to honour their own connection with an enduring symbol of resilience, beauty and strength.

For details or to book a dazzling Valentine's experience at Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya, please contact: 2200 6065.



Unforgettable moments.



Hotel's Romance Package.

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في مكان واحد!
We gathered the peoples of the world in one place!
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From five continents

Saturday, 10th February
11:30 AM to 10:00 PM
Get to Know The Peoples in
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Register now for free to attend the Peoples' Forum, the first of its kind in Kuwait, to watch the display of more than 30 classic and modern cars from five countries around the world as part of our exceptional festival to learn about the cultures and heritage of peoples in 40 countries from five continents around the world!
Saturday, February 10, 2024; 11:30 AM-10 PM
<https://events.talkclub.com>

Taylor Swift stuns fans with new album announcement

LOS ANGELES, Feb 6, (AP) — Forget her “Reputation.” Taylor Swift has a whole new album coming out.

Accepting the Grammy for best pop vocal album on Sunday night, Taylor said she’d been keeping a secret for two years.

“My brand-new album comes out April 19. It’s called ‘The Tortured Poets Department.’ I’m going to go and post the cover right now backstage,” she announced.

And so she did.

On her Instagram, Swift posted a black-and-white image of her reclining across pillows. The top half of her face and lower half of her legs are cut off in the low-contrast image.

“All’s fair in love and poetry...” her caption read. In a little over an hour, the Instagram post alone had amassed nearly 7 million likes - a figure that swelled to an apt 13 million in under a day.

“And so I enter into evidence / My tarnished coat of arms / My muses, acquired like bruises / My talismans and charms / The tick, tick, tick of love bombs / My veins of pitch black ink,” read what appeared to be handwritten lyrics posted after the album cover.

Inside Los Angeles’ Crypto.com Arena, Swift’s album announcement elicited screams from the upper levels.

Swift had provoked mass speculation earlier in the night when her site seemed to go down. Some theorized she was gearing up to release “Reputation (Taylor’s Version),” but cryptic clues on the “crashed”

site indicated that might be a misdirect. And so it was.

The site’s back up now, focused around the upcoming album, with preordering and merchandise options. The album will feature 16 tracks, with some editions offering a bonus track, “The Manuscript,” according to product descriptions. On Monday night, Swift released a track listing on social media.

Collaborations include “Fortnight,” featuring Post Malone, and “Florida!!!” featuring Florence + the Machine. A selection of other song titles: “Down Bad,” “I Can Fix Him (No Really I Can),” “loml” and “Clara Bow.”

Launched

This will be Swift’s 11th studio album, not counting her re-recordings. Her last original album was “Midnights,” released in October 2022. Since then, she’s launched the billion-dollar Eras Tour and released “Speak Now (Taylor’s Version)” and “1989 (Taylor’s Version).”

Swift was accepting the Grammy for “Midnights” when she made the surprise announcement. She later picked up album of the year, the show’s final award, for the album.

“I would love to tell you this is the best moment of my life, but I feel this happy when I finish a song, or when I crack the code to a bridge that I love, or when I’m shortlisting a music video, or when I’m working with my dancers,” she said after accepting her album of the year

award from Celine Dion. With it, she broke the record for the most wins in that category (her other albums of the year: “Fearless,” “1989” and “Folklore”).

While a nod to the album - and reminiscent of the “tick, tick, tick” in “The Tortured Poets Department” post - the watch seemed particularly apt, given the superstar’s seemingly packed schedule over the next week. Swift is set to head back out on her Eras Tour this week, performing for four nights in Tokyo. She still will be able to make it back to the US later in the week to catch her boyfriend Travis Kelce playing in the Super Bowl.

Also:

NEW YORK: An average of 16.9 million viewers tuned in to see performances by Miley Cyrus and Billie Eilish and watch Taylor Swift make history at the Grammy Awards on Sunday, the largest audience for the telecast in four years and another consecutive annual increase for a show that is recovering from its pandemic declines.

Ratings were up 34% on Sunday across CBS, Paramount+ and other digital platforms from last year, and with delayed watching included was expected to amass over 17 million viewers. The telecast peaked with 18.25 million viewers during the in memoriam segment, with performances by Stevie Wonder, Annie Lennox, Jon Batiste and Fantasia Barrino.

Variety



This image released by Neon shows Kôji Yakusho, (left), and Arisa Nakano in a scene from ‘Perfect Days.’ (AP)

Film

A tale of serenity amidst Tokyo’s hustle

Wim Wenders’ ‘Perfect Days’ is sublime

By Jake Coyle

Wim Wenders’ “Perfect Days” is set among the crowded skyscrapers of Tokyo and the quiet urban parks that Hirayama (Kôji Yakusho) traverses daily in his job cleaning public toilets. But where the movie resides, really, is Yakusho’s face.

In this gently sublime film, Hirayama steps outside his humble apartment each morning and gazes up at the sky with a smile radiating gratitude. Hirayama says little throughout the course of Wenders’ quiet, quotidian film. Little happens. Yet Yakusho’s warm presence speaks volumes in a film where less can mean profoundly more.

Wenders, the 78-year-old German filmmaker, has long had a preference for troubled loners. Think of Harry Dean Stanton’s dusty drifter in “Paris, Texas,” or Bruno Ganz’s terminally ill man in “The American Friend.” But the Wenders’ movie that “Perfect Days” most recalls is “Wings of Desire,” where melancholy angels watched over Cold War-era Berlin and spoke of testifying “day by day for eternity.” “Perfect Days” has no such supernatural element, but its gaze is likewise attuned to what’s beautiful and meaningful in everyday living.

Each morning, Hirayama wakes, puts on his blue sanitation jump suit and neatly drapes a white towel around his neck. He drives his van from public toilet to public toilet, where he takes remarkable care in his work. He uses a small mirror to see the underside of a toilet bowl.

“How can you put so much into a job like this?” says Takashi (Tokio Emoto), Hirayama’s younger, less scrupulous coworker.

Hirayama’s days are rigorously routine but lively with variation. While driving through the elevated highways of Tokyo, he selects a cassette tape from a rack above the sun visor. Patti Smith, Lou Reed, the Kinks, the Animals or Nina Simone play as he rides. Usually, Hirayama, analog through and through, is driving against the traffic.

He’s a lover of trees, and each day on his lunch break takes a photograph of the branches above him,

with light pouring through. With the care of a surgeon, he plucks a tiny seedling, places it in a small paper sack, and adds it to his nursery at home. At night, he reads Faulkner.

Eventually, a niece (Arisa Nakano) turns up, followed by Hirayama’s estranged sister (Yumi Aso). But Wenders’ film, which is nominated for best international film at the Oscars and opens in theaters Wednesday, is largely uncluttered by plot or exposition. Instead, we’re invited to ponder Hirayama’s serene, monastic existence - to admire the joy he finds in the mundane and the attentiveness he gives to the things he values.

Is he running from the world or in its thrall? Wenders, who co-wrote the film with Takuma Takasaki, is a longtime admirer of Japan; in his 1985 documentary “Tokyo-Ga,” Wenders traveled to Japan to pay homage to the great filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu. Much in “Perfect Days,” filmed in boxy academy ratio, radiates with a similar spirit of minimalist wisdom.

That’s a great credit to Yakusho, the great Japanese actor, whose soulfulness fills the empty spaces of “Perfect Days.” It may sound like an art house enterprise but anyone could connect with Wenders’ film. My 8-year-old daughter accompanied me on my second watch; that she hung with the movie from start to finish, I think, is because Yakusho’s Hirayama is a character to love.

Wenders was initially drawn to the project by Tokyo’s exquisite public toilets, which are light years more artfully designed than the few you can even find in most American cities. In that way, they’re a symbol of civic good. And so is Hirayama, who in his life and work, in plant life and cassette tapes, fully encapsulates the definition of custodian.

“Perfect Days,” a Neon release, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for some language, partial nudity and smoking. Running time: 123 minutes. Four stars out of four.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: The Los Angeles Opera opens its 2024-25 season Sept. 21 with Puccini’s “Madama Butterfly” reimagined in a film studio and said Saturday it

will present the company premiere of Osvaldo Golijov’s “Ainadamar” while reducing its offerings from six main-stage productions to five.

Mario Gras’s “Butterfly” staging, first seen at Madrid’s Teatro Real in 2017, stars Karah Son as Cio-Cio-San and Jonathan Tetelma as Pinkerton in their company debuts. James Conlon conducts in the start of his 19th season as music director.

“Because it’s set on this vintage Hollywood sound-stage, the director, Martin Gas, he contextualizes the ersatz vision of Japan because he puts a frame around it,” LA Opera CEO Christopher Koelsch said. “Because of the Hollywood connection, even though it was not conceived for us, it feels particularly apt for this city.”

Revenue has recovered from the coronavirus pandemic shutdown, with three main-stage productions thus far this season generating \$5.2 million. The six main-stage productions in 2022-23 brought in \$9.4 million; the COVID-shortened 2019-20 season resulted in just under \$7 million from four stagings.

“What I’m trying to do is build resiliency and strength for the organization in the long term,” Koelsch said.

“Ainadamar (Fountain of Tears)” opens on April 26, 2025, starring Ana María Martínez and Daniela Mack in a Deborah Colker staging that first appeared at the Scottish Opera in 2022, was at the Detroit Opera and Welsh National Opera last year and is scheduled for the Metropolitan Opera this fall.

“That’ll be our ninth main-stage opera in Spanish in the company’s 38-year history,” Koelsch said.

Ian Judge’s 2005 staging of Gounod’s “Roméo et Juliette” will be revived starting Nov. 2 with Duke Kim and Amina Edris in their debuts.

Michael Cavanagh’s production of Mozart’s “Così fan tutte,” first seen at the San Francisco Opera in 2021, opens March 8, 2025, with Conlon leading a cast that includes Erica Petrocelli and Rihab Chaieb.

Tomer Zvulun’s staging of Verdi’s “Rigoletto,” which premiered at the 2019 Houston Grand Opera, opens May 31, 2025, with Quinn Kelsey, Rosa Feola in her company debut and René Barbera. (AP)

TOKYO: The Ukrainian-born winner of this year’s Miss Japan beauty pageant and the contest’s organizers say she has renounced her title after a magazine published an article about her affair with a married man.

Karolina Shiino was crowned Miss Japan on Jan. 22, setting off public discussion on an old question about what it means to be Japanese in a country where homogeneity and conformity are still valued.

In a message posted on her Instagram site on Monday, Shiino said that after the article came out, she offered to renounce her crown and resign from her modeling agency over it. She says her offer was accepted.

The Associated Press could not immediately reach Shiino for comment.

The Weekly Bunshun magazine reported last week that Shiino had been in a relationship with a doctor who is married. Initially, she appeared to confirm the relationship but said she did not know he was married.

Later, she said her earlier explanation “was not true” and that she was aware of his marriage status and that he had a family. She was in a state of shock and fear over the report, and panicked, which is why she was not able to tell the truth, Shiino said, and apologized.

“I’m very sorry for causing the tremendous trouble and for acting as if betraying everyone who has supported me,” she said on Instagram.

Shiino also apologized to the man’s partner and his family, as well as other parties involved. (AP)

NEW YORK: A convicted drug dealer reluctantly testified Monday that Jam Master Jay - known for his anti-drug advocacy as part of the groundbreaking rap group Run-DMC - got involved in cocaine deals to pay his bills.

Taking the stand at the federal murder trial over the DJ’s October 2002 death, Ralph Mullgrav gave the first testimony about the alleged drug dealing that prosecutors claim, got the rap star killed. He was shot dead in his studio in front of stunned aides, one of whom wept in court Monday as she recounted the attack.

Mullgrav said Jam Master Jay,

born Jason Mizell, approached him periodically to sell cocaine that the rap star had acquired - “maybe 1 or 2 kilos, here or there.”

“Jason wasn’t a drug dealer. He just used it to make ends meet,” Mullgrav told jurors.

The defendants - Mizell’s godson, Karl Jordan Jr., and the DJ’s childhood friend Ronald Washing-



Shiino



Jay

ton - have pleaded not guilty to murder in a case that has offered answers to the long-unsolved loss of a hip-hop legend while airing questions about how his life went once the limelight dimmed.

While Run-DMC helped rap gain mainstream popularity in the 1980s as the first rap group to notch gold and platinum albums and have

a video in rotation on MTV, it also distanced itself from drugs.

The trio delivered the message in rap with the 1987 hit “It’s Tricky,” with lyrics including: People “offer coke, and lots of dope, but we just leave it alone.” They even recorded an anti-drug public service announcement.

But at the trial, prosecutors and

some witnesses have depicted a rap star who became a cocaine middleman as his career slowed and money ran short. Speculation that he was killed over a drug dispute circulated in chatter and media reports for decades, but so did other theories. Mizell’s family insisted he didn’t deal narcotics. (AP)

People & Places

Music

Women triumph

'24 Grammy Awards signal changing tide

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 6, (AP): When the 2024 Grammy nominees were first announced, women dominated the major categories. And at Sunday's show, those nominations translated into awards: Every televised competitive Grammy went to at least one woman.

Several women earned their very first Grammys, including **Miley Cyrus**, best new artist Victoria Monét, country artist Lainey Wilson and Karol G - also the first woman to win in best música urbana, a moment that may reflect changing perceptions of reggaeton and Latin hip-hop as exclusively "men's music."

"You know, I feel a lot of responsibility about that. As a woman, I have to say, like in my experience, it was tough, like so many things, to be a girl in this industry, in the music that I do, in urban music," the "Mañana Será Bonito" artist told The Associated Press backstage, saying she also reflected "women in the world fighting to represent" themselves.

Paramore became the first rock band fronted by a woman to win best rock album. And Taylor Swift, of course, not only made history by becoming the first artist to win album of the year four times - but she also is still the only woman to ever win more than twice.

"First of all, I think it is just wonderful to see so many women at the top," Dua Lipa told the AP on the red carpet, moments before she opened the show with a fiery pop medley.

"What we want is just an equal space in the industry and to be seen equally on equal levels - not just on the creative side but on the business side - so hopefully the equality in the industry will kind of level things out a little," she added. "I think we're still kind of figuring that part out. But we're getting there, slowly."

Evidence

The evidence points to what Lipa is referencing: Only 19.5% of all songwriters across the Billboard Hot 100 songs in 2023 were women, according to analysis from the USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. Women still make up a fraction of producers and engineers.

But at the Grammys, where much of the focus is on performers, it appeared like women were ruling the industry.

Phoebe Bridgers of boygenius won her first Grammys last night, taking home more than any other performer last night, with four.

In the week leading up to the Grammys, Bridgers told the AP there was some significance to the band's recognition because "it was only a couple of years ago now that that (expletive) who is now being accused of sexual violence said women need to step it up if they want to be nominated."

She was referring to former Recording Academy President Neil Portnow, who, in 2018, said women need "to step up" if they wanted to receive Grammys and then issued an apology. He stepped down in 2019. In November 2023, Portnow was sued by a woman who said he had drugged and raped her in 2018, an allegation his representative has called "completely false."

Bridgers renewed her critique backstage at the Grammys, telling the media room, as she held one of her four trophies, that she hopes he'll "rot."

The Recording Academy has made considerable changes to their programming in the post-Portnow years, attempting to better reflect the current musical climate. Recently, more than 2,400 music creators joined the voting bloc - of those new additions, 50% are people of color, 46% are under the age of 40, and 37% are women.

In January, Recording Academy CEO and President Harvey Mason Jr. theorized the number of women nominated was "a direct result of a lot of the changes that we've been making at the academy," something echoed by Swift while accepting her first award of the night.

"I know that the way the Recording Academy voted is a direct reflection of the passion of the fans," she said.

The question then becomes: Was this year a fluke? The result of an all-star year of women who couldn't be ignored? A correction? Symbolic of some systemic shift? Or something else entirely?

The only real televised criticism came from Jay-Z, the lone man awarded solo on the telecast (Finneas also won a televised Grammy, alongside his sister, Billie Eilish). His acceptance speech for the Dr. Dre Global Impact Award began by shouting out the rap legends that came before him - the ones who worked to bring hip-hop to the preeminent music award show, only to have rap categories not make the official broadcast Sunday.

"We want you all to get it right," Jay Z said in his speech. "At least get it close to right."

History

The he switched focus to Beyoncé, who last year became the most decorated artist in Grammy history, with 32 trophies.

"Most Grammys, never won album of the year. How does that work?" he said of his wife. "Even by your own metrics it doesn't work."

Emily Lordi, a Vanderbilt University professor whose focus is African American literature and Black popular music, says there is value in examining the intersections of race and feminism at the Grammys.

This year, two women - SZA, for her critically acclaimed and groundbreaking "SOS," and Janelle Monáe, for her innovative treatise on sensuality and freedom "The Age of Pleasure," were up for album of the year. If one of them had taken it home, the winner would have become the first Black woman to do so since Lauryn Hill with "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" in 1999.

Lordi says that record "suggests a residual and highly flawed view of Black women's music as 'niche,'" despite the fact that "Black women have foundationally influenced every genre of American music, so that Billie Eilish's vocal style is a direct descendant of Billie Holiday's aesthetic, just as Miley is made possible by Tina Turner, and Taylor by Tracy Chapman."

Janelle Monáe, who has 10 career nominations, did not win a Grammy - and never has. SZA, who led nominations with nine, took home three awards - but was completely shut out of the general field categories.

There's much to celebrate about the 2024 Grammys, including its focus on female performers - something that wouldn't have seemed possible as recently as 2011, when the Grammys still had gender-specific awards.



Cyrus



Honoree Toby Keith performs at the 46th annual Songwriters Hall of Fame Induction and Awards Gala at the Marriott Marquis on June 18, 2015, in New York. Singer-songwriter Toby Keith has died. He was 62. (AP)

Obituary

Legendary singer-songwriter suffered from cancer

Country icon Toby Keith dies at 62

NORMAN, Okla., Feb. 6, (AP): "Beer For My Horses" singer-songwriter Toby Keith has died. He was 62.

Keith, who was battling stomach cancer, passed peacefully on Monday surrounded by his family, according to a statement posted on the country singer's website. "He fought his fight with grace and courage," the statement said. He was diagnosed in 2022.

Sometimes a polarizing figure in country music, the 6-foot-4 singer broke out in the country boom years of the 1990s, crafting an identity around his macho, pro-American swagger and writing songs that fans loved to hear. Over his career he publicly clashed with other celebrities and journalists and often pushed back against record executives who wanted to smooth his rough edges.

He was known for his overt patriotism on top 9/11 songs like "Courtesies of the Red, White and Blue," and boisterous barroom tunes like "I Love This Bar" and "Red Solo Cup." He had a powerful booming voice, a tongue-in-cheek sense of humor and range that carried love songs as well as drinking songs.

Among his 20 No. 1 Billboard hits were "How Do You Like Me Now?!", "Should've Been a Cowboy," "As Good As I Once Was," "My List" and "Beer for My Horses," a duet with Willie Nelson.

Keith worked as a roughneck in the oil fields of Oklahoma as a young man, then played semi-pro football before launching his career as a singer.

"I write about life, and I sing about life, and I don't overanalyze things," Keith told The Associated Press in 2001, following the success of his song "I'm Just Talking About Tonight."

Lessons

Keith learned good lessons in the booming oil fields, which toughened him up, but also showed him the value of money.

"The money to be made was unbelievable," Keith told The Associated Press in 1996. "I came out of high school in 1980 and they gave me this job December of 1979, \$50,000 a year. I was 18-years-old."

But the domestic oil field industry collapsed and Keith had not saved. "It about broke us," he said. "So I just learned. I've taken care of my money this time."

He spent a couple seasons as a defensive end for the Oklahoma City Drillers, a farm team for the now-defunct United States Football League. But he found consistent money playing music with his band throughout the red dirt roadhouse circuit in Oklahoma and Texas.

"All through this whole thing the only constant thing we had was music," he said. "But it's hard to sit back and say, 'I'm going to go make my fortune singing music, or writing music. I

had no contacts."

Eventually his path took him to Nashville, where he attracted the interest of Mercury Records head Harold Shedd, who was best known as a producer for the hit group Alabama. Shedd brought him to Mercury, where he released his platinum debut record "Toby Keith," in 1993.

"Should've Been a Cowboy," his breakout hit, was played 3 million times on radio stations, making it the most played country song of the 1990s.

But label's focus on global star Shania Twain overshadowed the rest of the roster and Keith felt that the executives were trying to push him in a pop direction.

"They were trying to get me to compromise, and I was living a miserable existence," Keith told the AP. "Everybody was trying to mold me into something I was not."

After a series of albums that produced hits like "Who's That Man," and cover of Sting's "I'm So Happy I Can't Stop Crying," Keith moved to DreamWorks Records in 1999.

Independent

That's when his multi-week "How Do You Like Me Now?!" took off and became his first song to crossover to Top 40 charts. In 2001, he won the male vocalist of the year and album of the year at the Academy of Country Music Awards, exclaiming from the stage: "I've waited a long time for this. Nine years!"

Songs like "I Wanna Talk About Me," a spoken-word song written by Bobby Braddock about a man frustrated by its similarity to the cadence of rap, which Keith dismissed. "They're going to call it a rap song, (although) there ain't nobody doing rap who would call it rap," he told "Billboard" magazine in 2001.

Keith often wore his politics on his sleeve, especially after the terrorist attacks on US soil in 2001, and early on he said was a conservative Democrat, but later claimed he was an independent. He's played at events for Presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump, the latter giving him a National Medal of the Arts in 2021. His songs and his blunt opinions sometimes caused him controversy, which he seemed to court.

His 2002 song, "Courtesies of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)" included a threat: "We'll put a boot in your ass - It's the American way" - to anyone who dared to mess with America.

That song got pulled from a patriotic ABC Fourth of July special after producers deemed it too angry for the show. Singer-songwriter Steve Earle called Keith's song "pandering to people's worst instincts at a time they are hurt and scared."

Then there was the feud between

Keith and The Chicks (formerly called the Dixie Chicks), who became a target of Keith's ire when singer Natalie Maines told a crowd that they were ashamed of then President George W. Bush. Maines had also previously called Keith's song "ignorant."

Keith, who had previously claimed that he supported any artist's freedom to voice their opinion about politics, used a doctored photo of Maines with an image of Saddam Hussein at his concerts, further ramping up angry fans.

Maines responded by wearing a shirt with the letters "FUTK" onstage at the 2003 ACM Awards, which many people believed was a vulgar message to Keith.

He also publicly called out actor Ethan Hawke, who had written a story in "Rolling Stone" that described an argument between Kris Kristofferson and an unnamed country star that sounded a lot like Keith. During a backstage press conference during an awards show, Keith was furious at Hawke (and reporters for repeating the story) for what he called a "fictitious (expletive) lie."

Keith, who has acknowledged that he holds onto grudges, walked out of the ACM Awards in 2003 early because he had gotten snubbed in earlier categories, causing him to miss out when he was announced as entertainer of the year. Vince Gill accepted on his behalf. He came back the next year and won the top prize for a second year in a row, along with top male vocalist and album of the year for "Shock 'n Y'all."

Career

His pro-military stance wasn't just fodder for songs, however. He went on 11 USO tours to visit and play for troops serving overseas. He also helped to raised millions for charity over his career, including building a home in Oklahoma City for kids and their families who are battling cancer.

After Universal Music Group acquired DreamWorks, Keith started anew again, starting his own record label, Show Dog, in 2005 with record executive Scott Borchetta, who launched his own label Big Machine at the same time.

"Probably 75 percent of the people in this town think I'll fail, and the other 25 percent hope I fail," he said that year.

Later the label became Show Dog-Universal Music and had Keith, Trace Adkins, Joe Nichols, Josh Thompson, Clay Walker and Phil Vassar on its roster.

His later hits included "Love Me If You Can," "She Never Cried In Front of Me," and "Red Solo Cup." He was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2015.

He was honored by the performance rights organization BMI in November 2022 with the BMI Icon award, a few months after announcing his stomach cancer diagnosis.



Carla Gugino, a cast member in 'Lisa Frankenstein,' poses at the premiere of the film, Monday, Feb. 5, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Variety

NEW YORK: A day after Taylor Swift made music history at the Grammy Awards, a band formed long before she was born made their own history: The Grateful Dead have broken the record for the most Top 40 albums to chart on the Billboard 200.

The Grateful Dead pulled out ahead of Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra with 59 total Top 40 entries on the chart Monday following the No. 25 debut of their archival release "Dave's Picks, Volume 49: Frost Amphitheatre, Stanford U., Palo Alto, CA (4/27/85 & 4/28/85)." Elvis and Sinatra are stuck at 58 albums apiece.

It's a remarkable run, made even more special since the group disbanded following the death of Jerry Garcia in 1995. Forty-one of the band's 59 entries in the Top 40 have happened since 2012, thanks to the popularity of the series of archival albums compiled by David Lemieux.

Lemieux in a statement credited the Dead for recording so many live shows and "the loyalty and passion of the many Dead Heads who have made this record possible." He said it "could be the most unlikely and unexpected record in music history."

The record could be further solidified: Another volume in the Dave's Picks series will be released in April, capturing the band's May 1977 shows at the Palladium in New York City. (AP)

NEW YORK: Gap Inc. has tapped American fashion designer Zac Posen as the chain's creative director.

The hire announced on Monday is among the first big personnel moves under the San Francisco-based chain's new CEO Richard Dickson, who took the helm in August and is aiming to turn around years of languishing sales. Dickson had previously been president of toy giant Mattel and was responsible for re-energizing its Barbie and Hot Wheels lines.

Gap also operates stores under Athleta and Banana Republic, Old Navy and its namesake brand.

In a statement, Dickson said Posen's "technical expertise and cultural clarity have consistently evolved American fashion, making him a great fit for the company as we ignite a new culture of creativity across the portfolio and reinvigorate our storied brands."

Posen, who launched his eponymous collection in 2001 and was known for his glamorous body-hugging gowns, was a red carpet favorite for such stars as Katie Holmes and Rihanna. But the business later struggled and was forced to shut down in 2019.

He'll be executive vice president at Gap Inc. and also chief creative officer for the lower-priced Old Navy chain.

Posen will work closely with Haio Barbeito, Old Navy's president and CEO, reporting directly to him, the company said. Gap's shares rose nearly 1%, or 16 cents, on Monday to close at \$19.97. They are up 31% in the last 12 months. (AP)

LONDON: Actor Ian Lavender, who played a hapless Home Guard soldier in the

classic British sitcom "Dad's Army," has died, his agent said Monday. He was 77.

Agent Hilary Gagan said Lavender had been ill for some time and died with his wife and sons at his side.

Lavender was the last surviving main cast member of "Dad's Army," about a ragtag volunteer unit assembled to defend their seaside English town from potential Nazi invasion during World War II.

Originally broadcast between 1968 and 1977, it attracted as many as 18 million



Garcia



Lavender

viewers an episode — a third of the British population — and remains perennially popular in reruns.

Lavender played Private Frank Pike, the youngest member of the unit and frequent butt of the epithet "stupid boy!" from commanding officer Captain Mainwaring.

Another scene, in which a captured German officer demands the young private's name and Mainwaring thunders: "Don't tell him, Pike" is routinely voted one of Britain's funniest TV moments. (AP)

Researchers publish findings on artificial intelligence and immunity

New study highlights AI's role in enhancing immunotherapy

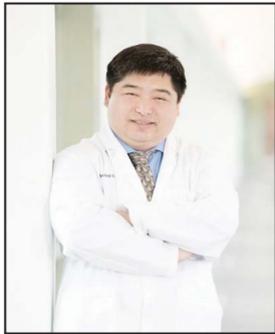
CLEVELAND, Feb 6: Researchers from global health system Cleveland Clinic and IBM have published a strategy for identifying new targets for immunotherapy through artificial intelligence (AI). This is the first peer-reviewed publication from the two organizations' Discovery Accelerator partnership, designed to advance research in healthcare and life sciences.

The team worked together to develop supervised and unsupervised AI to reveal the molecular characteristics of peptide antigens, small pieces of protein molecules that immune cells use to recognize threats. Project members came from diverse groups led by Cleveland Clinic's Timothy Chan, M.D., Ph.D., as well as IBM's Jeff Weber, Ph.D., Senior Research Scientist, and Wendy Cornell, Ph.D., Manager and Strategy Lead for Healthcare and Life Sciences Accelerated Discovery.

"In the past, all our data on cancer antigen targets came from trial and error," says Dr. Chan, chair of Cleveland Clinic's Center for Immunotherapy and Precision Immuno-Oncology and Sheikhha Fatima Bint Mubarak Endowed Chair in Immunotherapy and Precision Immuno-Oncology. "Partnering with IBM allows us to push the boundaries of artificial intelligence and health sciences research to change the way we develop and evaluate targets for cancer therapy."

For decades, scientists have been researching how to better identify antigens and use them to attack cancer cells or cells infected with viruses. This task has proved challenging because antigen peptides interact with immune cells based on specific features on the surface of the cells, a process which is still not well understood. Research has been limited by the sheer number of variables that affect how immune systems recognize these targets. Identifying these variables is difficult and time intensive with regular computing, so current models are limited and at times inaccurate.

Published in Briefings in Bioinformatics, the study found that AI models that account for changes in molecular shape over time can accurately depict how immune systems recognize a tar-



Timothy Chan M.D., Ph.D., who led the study, holds the Sheikhha Fatima Bint Mubarak Endowed chair in immunotherapy and precision immuno-oncology.

get antigen. Through these models, researchers could home in on what processes are critical to target with immunotherapy treatments such as vaccines and engineered immune cells.

Researchers can incorporate these insights into other AI models moving forward to identify more effective immunotherapy targets.

"These discoveries are an example of what makes this partnership successful - combining IBM's cutting-edge computational resources with Cleveland Clinic's medical expertise," Dr. Weber says. "These findings resulted from a key collaboration between everyone on a world-class expert in cancer immunotherapy to our physics-based simulation and AI experts. Collaboration when combined with innovation has terrific potential."

Cleveland Clinic and IBM launched their Discovery Accelerator partnership in 2021, which is focused on advancing the pace of biomedical research through the use of high-performance computing, artificial intelligence and quantum computing. The landmark partnership brings together Cleveland Clinic's world-renowned expertise in healthcare and life sciences, with IBM's next generation technologies to make scientific discovery faster.

Dengue fever cases surge

Rio de Janeiro 'declares' a dengue health emergency

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 6, (AP): Rio de Janeiro on Monday has declared a public health emergency because of an outbreak of mosquito-borne dengue fever, the city announced Monday, just days before Carnival celebrations kick off across Brazil.

The outbreak wasn't expected to derail Carnival, which officially starts Friday evening and runs until Feb. 14, but it has prompted a slew of special measures by the city in hopes of containing the illness.

Rio city hall announced the opening of 10 care centers, the creation of an emergency operations center and the allocation of hospital beds for dengue patients. Authorities also will use "smoke cars" in regions with the highest incidence of cases, diffusing an insecticide in the air.

Since the beginning of 2024, the municipality has registered more than 10,000 dengue cases. That is just under half of the total cases - 23,000 - recorded throughout all of 2023.

The announcement comes as tourists and revelers are pouring into Rio to take part in street parties and attend the samba schools' flamboyant parades.

Among Rio state's operational plans for Carnival, presented by Gov. Cláudio Castro on Monday, is the "Against Dengue Every Day" cam-

aign. That will entail the distribution of repellents, stickers, bandanas and hats with warnings about the disease to audiences at the Sambadrome, where a 15-second notice about the fight against the infection also will be shown.

Dengue is a viral infection transmitted to humans through the bite of infected mosquitoes and is more common in tropical climates. Frequent rains and high temperatures, which accelerate the hatching of mosquito eggs and the development of larvae, make the famously hot city of Rio susceptible to dengue outbreaks.

But the problem is national. The explosion of dengue cases across Brazil has caused at least four states - Acre, Minas Gerais and Goias, in addition to the Federal District - to declare public health emergencies.

On Monday, the Brazilian air force set up a 60-bed field hospital in the Federal District in Ceilandia that was due to begin treating patients.

"Our objective is to relieve emergency care units in the region, given that today the Federal District accounts for around 20% of dengue cases in the country," air force commander Lt. Brig. Marcelo Kanitz Damascene said in a statement.

From convenience to necessity

Telemedicine poised to play a growing role in your regular healthcare with AI

'Smoking leading cause of death'

Debate over vaping might derail the war on tobacco

NEW YORK, Feb 6, (AP): Cliff Douglas fought the tobacco industry for decades. As a lawyer, activist, and executive at nonprofit organizations, he sued cigarette makers, cultivated whistleblowers, and led the campaign to ban smoking on airlines.

Which is why allies in the anti-smoking movement were surprised when in October he became CEO of the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World, a nonprofit created and entirely funded by Philip Morris International, one of the world's largest tobacco companies.

Douglas, who previously worked for the American Cancer Society and the American Lung Association, sees his new job as the continuation of his anti-smoking work. He joined the foundation only after its board agreed to make a clean break from Philip Morris. He wants to bring together foundations, nonprofits, public health experts, elected officials, regulators, and academics in a renewed effort to curb death and disease caused by smoking.

It won't be easy. Because anti-smoking groups aren't just fighting the tobacco companies these days. They're fighting, sometimes bitterly, among themselves.

"I'm under no illusions about the challenges," Douglas says.

The stakes are high. Smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing about 480,000 people a year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. To succeed, Douglas will have to work through what he calls the "very fraught, polarized environment" that hampers the nonprofits, foundations, governments, and academics who work on tobacco control. They have fractured over tobacco harm reduction - the idea that people who cannot or will not quit smoking should be provided with alternatives, notably e-cigarettes, which deliver nicotine without burning tobacco.

Cancer

Bloomberg Philanthropies and the nonprofits it supports - the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and long-established groups like the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, and the American Heart Association - have campaigned relentlessly to limit access to e-cigarettes. The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids has focused on what it continues to describe as a "youth e-cigarette epidemic," even though vaping by teens has fallen by more than 60% since its peak in 2019. They argue that e-cigarettes will lead to a new generation addicted to nicotine, even if they are not smoking.

Backed by \$300 million in Bloomberg philanthropic money, along with political donations from Michael Bloomberg, the anti-vaping groups have helped convince five states - California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island - to ban



Varieties of disposable flavored electronic cigarette devices manufactured by EB Design, formerly known as Elf Bar, are displayed at a store in Pinecrest, Fla., June 26, 2023. (AP)

the sale of flavored e-cigarettes. The nonprofit Truth Initiative goes further, saying it is "committed to making tobacco use and nicotine addiction a thing of the past," which would require removing all e-cigarettes from the market. Some cities, including San Francisco, have already done so.

Douglas and his allies in the harm reduction camp say that's been nothing short of disastrous. Bans on flavored e-cigarettes, which now cover nearly 40% of the United States, have been associated with increased sales of conventional cigarettes, according to several academic studies and financial analysts.

"These bans disincentivize the far safer product and move people back to a product that's going to kill one in two of them," Douglas says.

The argument threatens to derail progress on one of the most successful public health campaigns in history. The percentage of Americans who smoke has dropped from 42% in 1964 - when the first Surgeon General's report warned of the dangers of smoking - to less than 12%. But the arrival of e-cigarettes fractured opponents of smoking, especially after startup company JUUL marketed its vapes with high nicotine levels to young people, infuriating activists and regulators.

"I can't think of any other field of public health that has been so divided," says Charles Gardner, a former program officer at the Foundation for a Smoke Free World and a global-health expert who previously worked at the Rockefeller and UBS Optimus foundations.

The mission of the Foundation for a Smoke Free World, which Philip Morris started in 2017, is to reduce deaths and diseases caused by smoking. It focuses largely, but not entirely, on reduced-risk nicotine products, a category that includes e-cigarettes, oral tobacco, and "heat not burn" products that warm up tobacco without burning it.

This aligns with the goals of the

company, which says that its future depends on replacing cigarettes with the smoke-free products that it sells. Philip Morris International promised that the foundation would be independent and said it would fund it with \$80 million a year for 12 years.

Disease

Anti-smoking groups called the foundation a public relations stunt, noting that the tobacco industry has a long history of creating front groups to push its agenda. Joanna Cohen, a professor of disease prevention at the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University, and Ellen MacKenzie, the school's dean, urged universities and nonprofits around the world to shun the foundation.

Douglas says the company has no influence over the foundation. All ties with Philip Morris were severed after accepting \$122.5 million, which he characterized as a severance payment.

But some anti-tobacco advocates remain skeptical. Yolonda Richardson, president of the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, and Deborah Arnott, chief executive of a British health charity called Action on Smoking and Health, told Reuters that the foundation was tainted by accepting tobacco money and could not be seen as independent.

Douglas would like his critics to reserve judgment. "I'm asking those who feel doubt at this early stage to not merely rely on what I say but to watch what we do," he says.

What, then, will the foundation do? Douglas intends to correct widespread and dangerous misunderstandings about the relative risks of conventional cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and nicotine. There are no safe tobacco products; all fall along what's called a continuum of risk. Nicotine pouches and gums are widely accepted because, unlike e-cigarettes, they have been approved as smoking-cessation medicines by the FDA.

NEW YORK, Feb 6, (AP): Telemedicine's early days of handling mostly mild illnesses like sinus infections or pink eye are fading fast.

The frontier involves connecting patients more routinely with their regular doctors and using artificial intelligence to keep tabs on their health, according to Dr. Roy Schoenberg.

He's seeing this develop as co-CEO of Amwell, a Boston-based company that provides telemedicine software and technology for health systems and insurers. The company works with more than 55 health plans and health systems representing over 2,000 hospitals.

Schoenberg spoke recently with The Associated Press. The conversation has been edited for clarity and length.

Question: The COVID-19 pandemic pushed people into telemedicine. Did that lead to any permanent care delivery changes?

Answer: In a very profound way. We're just beginning to unravel how deep the impact is. When people started buying books on Amazon, they didn't notice that they were beginning to embrace online retail. We're going through the same thing with telehealth. People have opened the door for getting care through technology.

Q: What is some care patients seek in-person now that you expect will become largely virtual in the future?

A: Early generations of telehealth have really been about convenience ... how a patient can quickly get a simple prescription or solve a problem with a sick child. The revolution that's going on right now is where people are beginning to utilize these technologies to interact with their regular caretakers. These are regularly scheduled appointments. Patients with very difficult conditions like cancer and deep chronic conditions are becoming the frequent flyers of telehealth. That's going to continue to evolve.

Q: What's the biggest way your technology uses artificial intelligence?

A: AI is not in any position to replace clinicians. However, these technologies can help check on a patient regularly. If you have a patient who was discharged from a hospital or has a chronic condition at home ... we can check every day to see how they're doing. If the patient is not doing well, (the technology) will have the smarts to escalate that patient right back in front of (a nurse or doctor). You get a text message that begins the interaction. It switches over to a secure platform, essentially an application on your phone.

Q: You're co-CEO with your brother Ido. How do you handle disagreements?

A: Ido is focused on business making. My heart is about developing technologies that solve big problems in care. We respect the fact that each of us has his own special skills. When disagreements arise ... the right decision-maker is whoever really is proficient in that domain. We've been doing this for 30 years now.

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Mitchell, Cavs keep rolling, beat Kings



Philadelphia 76ers' Tyrese Maxey (0) goes up to shoot against Dallas Mavericks' Dwight Powell, bottom, during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Feb. 5, 2024, in Philadelphia. (AP)

Lakers best Hornets

CLEVELAND, Feb 6, (AP): Donovan Mitchell scored 29 points, Max Strus added 22 and the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Sacramento Kings 136-110 on Monday night for their sixth straight win and 14th in 15 games.

The Cavs are a league-best 19-4 since Dec. 16. Cleveland matched a season high with 23 3-pointers in winning its ninth straight home game and eighth in nine against teams from the West.

Sacramento's Domantas Sabonis had 12 points, 19 rebounds and 15 assists for his 15th triple-double this season, tying him with Denver's Nikola Jokic for the league lead.

BASKETBALL

Harrison Barnes added 22 points and De'Aaron Fox had 19 as the Kings finished 5-2 on a season-long trip.

Lakers 124, Hornets 118

In Charlotte, N.C. Anthony Davis had 26 points, 15 rebounds and 11 assists for his third career triple-double, and Los Angeles beat short-handed Charlotte.

D'Angelo Russell scored 28 points and LeBron James had 26 for the Lakers, who won their third straight and concluded a 4-2 trip.

Miles Bridges scored a career-high 41 points and rookie Brandon Miller added 33 points for the Hornets, who lost their eighth straight since trading Terry Rozier to Miami.

Mavericks 118, 76ers 102

In Philadelphia, Kyrie Irving had 23 points and eight assists and Luka Doncic scored 19 points as Dallas beat Philadelphia.

Irving and Doncic played together for just the 23rd time in the Mavericks' 50 games. Josh Green scored 20 points for the Mavericks.

Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 19 points, Tobias Harris had 17 and Tyrese Maxey 15 for the Sixers, who fell to 4-11 without injured MVP Joel Embiid, who's set for knee surgery this week.

Warriors 109, Nets 98

In New York, Stephen Curry scored 29 points, Jonathan Kuminga added 28 points and 10 rebounds, and Golden State shook off a poor start to beat Brooklyn.

The Warriors outscored the Nets 66-49 in the second half, even while going



LA Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard (2) takes a shot as Atlanta Hawks guard Dejounte Murray (5) defends during the first half of an NBA basketball game Monday, Feb. 5, 2024, in Atlanta. (AP)

just 4 for 22 from behind the arc in the game - with all the makes by Curry.

Cam Thomas scored 18 points but shot 4 for 21 for the Nets, who had won three of four. Nic Claxton added 15 points and a career-high seven blocked shots before being ejected in the fourth quarter for a flagrant foul against Brandin Podziemski, who had 15 points and 11 rebounds.

Pelicans 138, Raptors 100

In New Orleans, Brandon Ingram made a career-high eight 3-pointers and scored 41 points, and New Orleans routed Toronto.

Ingram hit 16 of 21 shots and also dished out nine assists in 30 minutes. He capped his performance by hitting five straight 3s at the end of the third.

CJ McCollum scored 20 points for the Pelicans, who won their third straight and sent the Raptors to their eighth loss in nine games.

Rookie Grady Dick had a season-high 22 points for the Raptors.

Clippers 149, Hawks 144

In Atlanta, Kawhi Leonard scored 36 points, including 11 in the fourth quarter, and Los Angeles beat Atlanta to conclude a 6-1 road swing.

James Harden had 30 points and 10 assists, and Paul George scored 18 for Los Angeles.

De'Andre Hunter matched a season high with 27 points for the Hawks. Trae Young added 25 points.

Hosts make clean sweep of ODI series

Australia rout West Indies for 86

CANBERRA, Australia, Feb 6, (AP): Fast bowler Xavier Bartlett ran through the West Indies lineup with another impressive total of 4-21 as Australia swept the one-day international series with another resounding eight-wicket win on Tuesday.

Australia won the first match by eight wickets in Melbourne and the second by 83 runs in Sydney.

Bartlett, who grabbed four wickets in his debut ODI at MCG in the series opener before the pace bowler was rested at Sydney, ripped through West Indies batting as the visitors were bowled out for 86 - its fifth-

lowest total in ODIs.

Jake Fraser-McGurk made a rapid 41 off just 18 balls as Australia sped to 87-2 in just 6.5 overs with the opening batter smacking three sixes and five fours.

CRICKET

Josh Inglis was also in a hurry and made a brisk unbeaten 35 off 16 balls as fast bowler Matthew Forde gave away 40 runs off his two overs with Fraser-McGurk and Inglis both showing plenty of aggression.

"It's pretty insane. It's just great to get a taste of international cricket," Bartlett said. "To cap it off with a series win was great. There was still some pressure there (today) but I relaxed a little bit more and tried to enjoy it a little bit more and they came out alright again."

Australia's 12th successive win came in its landmark 1,000th ODI as it became only the second country after India to play so many ODIs.

Bartlett was on target from the onset once Steven Smith won the toss and elected to bowl first. He had opener Kjorn Otley leg before

wicket in his second over but television replays suggested the batter had inside edged the ball.

Lance Morris, one of the two changes Australia made with Bartlett, had an injury scare when he walked off the ground with a side strain in his fifth over.

But Bartlett, who replaced rested Josh Hazlewood, bowled at an impeccable line and length as he conceded just 11 runs in his first five-over spell.

Morris dented West Indies enough before walking off the field as he had Keacy Carty as his first international wicket when Marnus Labuschagne grabbed a stunning catch at backward point and then had Teddy Bishop clean bowled with a superb full delivery.

Alick Athanaze top-scored with 32 but when he fell to a rash sweep against Adam Zampa and was caught at deep backward square leg, West Indies lost the last six wickets for just 16 runs and the innings got folded in just 24.1 overs.

Smith recalled Bartlett who had the wicket of Romario Shepherd with his first ball of the second spell and then cleaned up West Indies innings by having the wicket of Alzarri Joseph.

"Our batting let us down, it did for the entire series," West Indies captain Shai Hope said.

"We need to do some real soul-searching to understand what's needed in certain conditions ... The mind-set has a lot to do with it, playing the situation. We just didn't bat as well as we could have. We must take the positives with us and try to negate the negatives. Hopefully we can come back stronger for the next series."

Paris Oly '24 organizers 'surprised' by reports of probe into president's pay

PARIS, Feb 6, (AP): The Paris Olympics organizing committee has expressed surprise that the salary of its president is reportedly being investigated by the French National Financial Prosecutor's Office.

According to French media, quoting the French agency AFP on Tuesday, the investigation into Tony Estanguet's pay was handed to Paris

OLYMPICS

police last week, less than six months before the Olympic Games open on July 26.

The financial prosecutor's office, contacted by The Associated Press, declined to comment. Paris organizers said they have not been contacted by investigators and could not confirm a probe is ongoing.

The Games organizing committee set Estanguet's pay in 2018 at the end of its first board meeting. It was

then agreed that the former three-time Olympic canoe champion would receive an annual pay of 270,000 euros (\$290,000) gross, with possible extra incentives based on performance criteria that would not exceed 20% of annual salary.

Organizers told reporters on Tuesday that Estanguet's pay - which has not risen since 2018 - is not capped by French law.

"We wish to remind people that the organizing committee president's remuneration is subject to a strict framework," Games organizers said on Tuesday in a statement.

As president, Estanguet does not have an employee statute within the organizing committee and invoices his services on a monthly basis.

The organizers added Estanguet's income was decided independently, in line with the advice of a committee "made up of independent experts whose role is to ensure the appropriateness of our remuneration policy."

Halep's appeal begins on Wed

GENEVA, Feb 6, (AP): Former top-ranked tennis player Simona Halep will go to sport's highest court on Wednesday to challenge her four-year ban in a doping case.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport said on Tuesday that Halep plans to attend in person when the appeal opens for a closed-doors hearing scheduled over three days.

The court said in a statement, "No indication can be given as to when the final arbitral award will be notified to the parties."

Two-time Grand Slam champion Halep aims to overturn the ban imposed by the International Tennis Integrity Agency last September. It runs into October 2026 when the Romanian star will be 35.

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SPORTS

Marina Beach gears up for three-star International Showjumping spectacle

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: Equestrian enthusiasts, especially those passionate about showjumping, are in for a thrilling experience at Marina Beach as it hosts the prestigious three-star international showjumping championship, "The Stadium." This event, sponsored by Kuwait International Bank, holds World Cup qualification significance and kicks off tomorrow at 2:00 pm extending into the evening. On Saturday, the pinnacle of the championship, the Grand Prix Race, will challenge riders with a height of 150 cm, offering a total prize pool exceeding \$155,000 for all race winners.

EQUESTRIAN

The ninth and final leg of the competition, set at a height of 150 cm, marks the culmination of the international tournament season in Kuwait for 2023-2024. The coveted Kuwait International Bank Cup awaits the champion of this segment, with financial rewards totaling \$63,000.

Ahmed Al-Majed, the Executive Director of SAFEX Company, expressed excitement about the event, noting the participation of a select group of Kuwaiti riders alongside representatives from Arab and European countries. Al-Majed empha-



Ahmed Al-Majed, the Executive Director of SAFEX Company.

sized the meticulous preparations made to host this prestigious championship at Marina Beach.

Highlighting the economic significance of sports as an industry,

Al-Majed revealed plans to organize another two-star international tournament in the upcoming week, marking the completion of three tournaments in the current season.

Burgan Club volleyball, handball teams set to 'shine' in Arab and Gulf Championships

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 6: The Burgan Club volleyball team has officially confirmed its participation in the upcoming 42nd Arab Volleyball Club Championship, scheduled to take place in Jordan from February 17-29. This announcement makes Burgan the second Kuwaiti team to join the prestigious tournament, following in the footsteps of Kazma, which is currently undergoing external training in Turkey in preparation for the event.

VOLLEYBALL/HANDBALL

Due to the withdrawal of Baniyas from the UAE, the tournament draw will undergo a revision next week. Burgan, without an external camp, plans to travel to Amman, Jordan, on the 15th of this month. The team, led by Serbian professionals Irfan Hamza and Argentine Lucas Ocampo, will compete with its existing roster.

In addition to their volleyball endeavors, the Burgan Club handball team is set to participate in the Gulf Handball Club Championship hosted by the Al-Arabi Qatari Club from February 25 to March 5. The handball team will undergo an external camp in the Kingdom of Bahrain from February 13 to 23, followed by



A file photo of a players kissing a trophy.

their departure to Doha. The team will feature current professionals Orange Samedo and Egyptian Mustafa Bashir, with a potential addition of a third local or Gulf professional in the goalkeeping position, as per tournament regulations.

Anwar Al-Otaibi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Burgan Club, emphasized the significance of the club's participation in both Arab and

Gulf championships for competition, experience, and preparation in the ongoing season. He expressed the club's support for the volleyball and handball teams in their pursuit of success during these competitions.

Additionally, in a related development, the Burgan Club handball team has secured the services of Kazma player Abdul Rahman Al-Anazi on loan for the upcoming season.

City edge Brentford to close in on Liverpool

Foden grabs the spotlight

LONDON, Feb 6, (AP): Phil Foden grabbed the spotlight from fit-again Manchester City superstars Erling Haaland and Kevin De Bruyne by scoring a hat trick in a come-from-behind 3-1 win at Brentford that moved the champions two points behind Liverpool in a congested English Premier League summit.

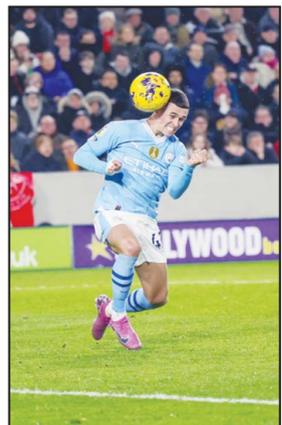
City's opponents might be able to stop Haaland from scoring or close down the space for assist king De Bruyne, but there will always be a top-class player somewhere in the team to inflict the damage.

Foden was that player against Brentford as he led City's recovery after Neal Maupay's 21st-minute goal against the run of play for the hosts.

The England midfielder equalized in first-half stoppage time by pouncing on a poor defensive clearance, headed home the go-ahead goal in the 53rd, and completed his second career hat trick in the 70th with a piercing run and composed finish.

"It's probably the best form I've had in a City shirt for a long time, consistently. Long may that continue," Foden said. His goal tally improved to 14 in all competitions.

Foden has won it all with his boy-



Manchester City's Phil Foden scores his side's second goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Brentford and Manchester City at the Gtech Community Stadium in London. (AP)

hood club after coming through the academy but hasn't always been a regular. He is now and is particularly enjoying playing in a central attacking-midfield role - where he is closer to the striker and more of a goal threat - rather than out on the wing.

"It'd help if I played in one position and learnt that position every game," Foden said of his preference for a central role. "I'm a person that adapts and plays in a lot of positions when needed. I know in this Man City side I'm going to do that - play in a lot of positions - and I need to be ready."

"I'm just enjoying playing in the middle. That's where I see myself playing my best football so hopefully I can keep getting more game time there."

City is putting together a familiar winning streak in the second half of the season - that's five in a row in the league since Dec. 27 and nine straight in all competitions - and has all of its key players back healthy, with top scorer Haaland making his first start after a nearly two-month injury absence.

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It makes City the favorite for the title once again, with Pep Guardiola's team having a game in hand over Liverpool and third-placed Arsenal. Only two points separates the top three.

Arsenal is tied for points with City in third, but has an inferior goal difference.

Haaland came off in the 86th minute. He didn't add to his 14 goals for the campaign - tied for the most with Liverpool's Mohamed Salah - but did lay on the third for Foden, who was thrown a City scarf from the crowd as he celebrated in front of the away fans. Foden wrapped it round his neck before chucking it back into the supporters.

"He is playing his best season since we have been together," Guardiola said.

City had been stunned by Maupay's goal that came from an unlikely source. Goalkeeper Mark Flekken's goal kick went straight down the middle of the field, between two defenders disturbed by the presence of Ivan Toney, and into the path of Maupay.

The French striker slotted it home and City was losing to the team that did the home-and-away double over the champions last season.

Foden made sure that won't happen this time round, grabbing the equalizer after Ethan Pinnock made a poor clearing header that looped up straight to the midfielder. Foden controlled the ball and produced a calm finish.

Sevilla player physically abused by spectator mars Liga win over Rayo

MADRID, Feb 6, (AP): A Rayo Vallecano fan appeared to interfere with a Sevilla player taking a throw in during their Spanish league match on Monday.

Lucas Ocampos was on the touchline 33 minutes into the first half when a fan reached out and poked his backside. The Argentine winger turned to remonstrate with the young fan and then called the referee over. The match was halted briefly.

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Some fans laughed at the incident as Rayo players appealed to the crowd to behave.

"You can see what happened in the (video) images," Ocampos told broadcaster DAZN. "I hope La Liga takes it as seriously as it takes racism and these things. I don't think all the Rayo people are like that because they have always

treated us with respect, but there is always one fool.

"I hope it doesn't happen in other areas, because if this happens in a women's football match we know what can happen. I kept my calm because I have two daughters. I hope this doesn't happen to them in the future. I hope that the action that has to be taken is taken, and I hope that a fool like this does not stain a set of fans who otherwise behaved very well."

The incident was the only blot on an otherwise happy night for Sevilla, which won 2-1 and ended a six-game winless streak. Sevilla moved to 15th place in La Liga, three points clear of the relegation zone.

Rayo was two places higher but the defeat was its fifth in a row and coach Francisco will be worried about his team's lack of finesse in front of goal. Only Cadiz and Mallorca have fewer goals in La Liga.



KUNA photo During the second day of the 12th Sharjah International Athletics meeting, the Kuwaiti disabled athletics team secured nine additional medals, comprising two gold, five silver, and two bronze. This achievement brought Kuwait's total medal count to an impressive 15 across various categories. Nasser Faraj clinched a gold medal in the shot put competition, while Faisal Sorour secured another gold in the discus throw competition. Yasser

Al-Musallam, Abdullah Al-Saleh (shot put in a different category), Faisal Al-Rajhi (1500-meter wheelchair), Abdullah Al-Saleh (discus throw), and Dhari Butti (shot put) contributed to the team's success with five silver medals. Additionally, Ali Al-Hajri and Hamad Hajji earned bronze medals in their respective shot put categories and disability types. Pictured are the athletes with officials.

Argentine under pressure from sponsors in Tokyo

Messi says he 'feels much better' and hopeful of playing

TOKYO, Feb 6, (AP): Look for Lionel Messi to play on Wednesday in Tokyo where Inter Miami meets Japanese club Vissel Kobe in a friendly.

And don't look for another public relations disaster as happened on Sunday when Argentina's World Cup-winning captain sat on the bench for an entire match against a selection of players from the Hong Kong league, angering thousands of fans who demanded refunds.

Teammate Luis Suarez - another big name at Miami - also remained on the bench.

Messi showed up at a five-star Tokyo hotel on Tuesday for his second news conference since joining Miami last June 7, and his first since Aug. 17. He sat alone on a stool on stage, wore a pink warm-up jacket, and showed a bit of humility.

He was surely under pressure from local Japanese sponsors, including Vissel Kobe where his former Barcelona teammate Andres Iniesta became a Japanese crowd favorite before leaving last year.

"The truth is that I feel very good compared to a few days ago," Messi said in Spanish. "And depending on how that (training) goes. And if I'm honest, I still don't know if I will be able to or not. But I feel much better and I really want to be able to do it."

Messi trained later Tuesday in suburban Tokyo and looked fit, running drills and moving with ease at a practice facility run by the Japan Football Association. He did not speak afterward with reporters.

Messi tried to explain to Hong Kong fans that it was impossible for him to play with a groin injury. Some suggested he could have simply trotted around for a few minutes, which might have satisfied fans in a game that was largely meaningless except for its promotional value.

"The truth is that it was bad luck

that I couldn't (play) on the day of the Hong Kong match," Messi said, adding the "discomfort continued and it was very difficult for me to play."

"Unfortunately, in football, things can happen in any game, that we may have an injury. It's a shame because I always want to participate, I want to be there, and even more so when it comes to these games when we travel so far and people are so excited to see our matches."

Inter Miami's global tour has been disappointing as the club tries to build a brand using its veteran stars

Messi and Suarez. In five games from El Salvador, to Dallas, to Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong, Inter Miami has won only once and been outscored 12-7.

The Asian tour wraps up on Wednesday in Tokyo's National Stadium.

Mark Conrad, who teaches law,

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ethics and sports business at Fordham University's Gabelli School of Business, reminded fans that a ticket is for a game and does not guarantee a player's

participation.

"While it may be true that many fans purchased tickets with the hope of seeing Messi, the ticket is to watch the match, not a specific player - unless there is a condition that says otherwise," Conrad told The Associated Press.

"While it is likely true that the pricing and the interest was in large part due to Messi's participation, his failure to play does not generally constitute a breach of contract."

Messi said he hoped to visit Hong Kong again and play next time.



Manchester City's Nathan Ake, (front), kicks the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Brentford and Manchester City at the Gtech Community Stadium in London. (AP)



Argentina's Claudio Echeverri, (left), and Venezuela's Bryant Ortega fight for the ball during South America's under-23 pre-Olympic tournament soccer match at Brígido Iriarte stadium in Caracas, Venezuela. The match ended 2-2. (AP)

Sports

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Kuwaiti shooters shine with gold in Sharjah

Al-Fataah Club earns first win basketball as Salwa Al-Sabah tops volleyball group

By Suzan Nasser

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

SHARJAH, Feb 6: Kuwaiti female shooters secured the team gold in the 10-meter pistol competition at the 2024 Arab Club Games for Women held in Sharjah.

The winning Kuwaiti shooting team comprised Ghazlan Hassan, Israa Bahman, and Adhari Al-Balushi. Ghazlan Hassan also clinched the individual silver in the 10-meter pistol event, while shooter Maryam Al-Razuqi earned the individual rifle bronze.

The trio of Rataj Al-Zayadi, Shaima Al-Ibrahim, and Maryam Erzouqi contributed to the team's success, winning the team rifle bronze. Additionally, the Nadi team claimed the rifle bronze for the teams. The combined efforts in shooting earned the team the silver shield for the competition.

On the basketball court, the Kuwait's Al-Fataah Club's girls' basketball team secured their first victory in the Arab Women's Club Games by defeating the Sharjah Sports Club team with a score of (74-67). This win revived the team's hopes of qualifying for the final match after experiencing two previous losses.

In volleyball, the Salwa Al-Sabah team triumphed over the Sharjah team, securing the top spot in the second group with a three-set victory.

The Al-Fataah club's table tennis team achieved a significant victory as they were awarded three points in their match against the Iraqi South Gas team, who withdrew. The Kuwaiti table tennis team included Kifaya Al-Mohsen Al-Awairidhi, Maryam Sulaiman Abdul-Rahim, and Sheikha Adnan Al-Hamad.



Women's shooting team celebrates on the podium at the Arab Games.



Nigeria's head coach Jose Peseiro talks to Nigeria's Victor Osimhen. (AP)

CFF rejects Eto'o's resignation

Osimhen is an injury concern for Nigeria before Afcon semis

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast, Feb 6, (AP): Nigeria star Victor Osimhen did not travel with the rest of the squad on Monday for its Africa Cup of Nations semifinal with South Africa.

Osimhen missed the team's flight from Abidjan to Bouaké for Wednesday's game because of abdominal discomfort, the Super Eagles said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"Team medics confirmed that he has been placed under close watch with a member of the medical team staying behind in Abidjan with him. If cleared by tomorrow morning, he will join the rest of the squad before 5 p.m." the team said.

Osimhen has only scored one goal in the tournament, but the Napoli star's tireless performances have played a large role in Nigeria getting to the semifinals for a record-equaling 16th time in its 20 appearance.

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Only seven-time champion Egypt has played as many semifinals, though the Pharaohs have played in 26 tournaments.

Wednesday's game against the Bafana Bafana is a repeat of the semifinal in 2000, when Nigeria won 2-0 in Lagos.

Nigeria won the last of its three titles in 2013, while South Africa's only win came in 1996.

Host country Ivory Coast is playing Congo in the other semifinal.

Meanwhile, Samuel Eto'o tendered his resignation as president of the Cameroon Football Federation on Monday only to have it rejected by its executive committee.

Eto'o, who won the African player of the year a record four times, has been dogged by allegations of improper conduct, match-fixing and corruption.

The federation said its executive committee met in Cameroon's capital, Yaoundé, on Monday to evaluate the national team's performance at the Africa Cup of Nations, and that the meeting started with Eto'o offering to step down while inviting the other members "to do likewise in good faith."

"At the end of discussions and subsequent deliberations, the members of the executive committee decided to

maintain their current mandates and thus unanimously rejected the president's resignation thereby renewing their confidence in him to continue with the same spirit of reconstruction and development of Cameroon football at all levels as envisaged in his plan adopted by the elective general assembly of Dec. 11, 2021," the federation said in a statement, referring to the date Eto'o took over as president.

The federation made no mention in the statement of any other decisions taken or conclusions drawn. Cameroon coach Rigobert Song's future was uncertain after a disappointing Africa Cup campaign.

Cameroon, the five-time champion, needed a win in its final group game to be sure of progressing to the group stage, scored late to achieve it, and was then eliminated by Nigeria after a lackluster performance in the round of 16.

Eto'o, who celebrated with the team after its dramatic win over Gambia in their final group game, has been dogged by corruption allegations in the last year.

Last week, sports website The Athletic reported that it had seen WhatsApp messages, emails, letters and audio recordings that allegedly support a wide-range of accusations, including "match-fixing, abuse of power, physical threats, inciting violence and spreading false information in Cameroon." It said a file had been sent to FIFA's ethics committee and that it is also being investigated by the Confederation of African Football.

CAF was already investigating what it said were "serious" allegations from "several Cameroonian football stakeholders" against Eto'o. It noted that the former Barcelona and Inter Milan star was "presumed to be innocent until an appropriate judicial body concludes otherwise."

Questions were raised in Cameroon about Eto'o's ambassadorial role with a sports betting company. At least one club complained to the Cameroonian federation about the deal, which could violate the institution's codes.

Cameroonian soccer had plenty of problems in the past. Before Eto'o was elected president, the national league had been tainted by interference from the government, allegations of corruption and broken promises from soccer leaders.

EPL title race rich with narratives

Little separating Liverpool, Man City and Arsenal

LONDON, Feb 6, (AP): One team is looking to make history. Another wants to give its long-time manager the perfect send-off. The other is eager for revenge.

An English Premier League title race rich with narratives is shaping up to have a thrilling finish with the top three - Liverpool, Manchester City and Arsenal - separated by just two points with 15 matches remaining.

Arsenal's 3-1 win over Liverpool on Sunday, followed by City's victory at Brentford by the same score on Monday, has left what appears to be a three-way fight for English soccer's biggest prize. It has the potential to be the closest finish between three teams for a decade, when there was only four points between eventual champion City, Liverpool and Chelsea after the final round of the 2013-14 season.

SOCCER

Fourth-placed Aston Villa and fifth-placed Tottenham, five and seven points off the pace respectively, could possibly be involved in the title race but few can expect them to stay the course given the pedigree of the teams above them.

Here's a closer look at the top three, what's pushing them for title glory, and what could make them fall short:

Liverpool (1st, 51 points after 23 games)

Sure, Jurgen Klopp has won the Premier League with Liverpool, ending the storied team's 30-year wait for the title in the process. But that 2020 triumph was tinged with the slightest regret in that it came during the pandemic and there were no fans inside Anfield when then-Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson and his teammates hoisted the trophy on The Kop. Doing it before a full house and in the final days of Klopp's nearly nine-year tenure would be a fitting way for the German to depart. Liverpool, which has the joint-best defensive record in the league and is second for most



Brentford's Ivan Toney (second left), heads the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Brentford and Manchester City at the Gtech Community Stadium in London. (AP)

Kuwait's Emad takes home taekwondo bronze

ABU DHABI, Feb 6, (KUNA): Abdulaziz Emad from Kuwait secured the bronze medal at the Fujairah International Taekwondo Championship. Expressing his gratitude to the Kuwait Taekwondo Federation and acknowledging the pivotal role of coaches and affiliated organizations, Emad stated that this accom-

plishment fuels his determination to persist in training, gearing up for future competitions, and aiming for further triumphs. Dedication of his medal was extended to Kuwait, coaches, and supporters, with an encouraging message for young athletes to pursue their dreams.



Kuwait's Abdulaziz Emad displays the national flag as he celebrates with his coach. KUNA photo

goals scored, still has to play City at home in mid-March and has potentially testing away games at Manchester United and Aston Villa. The biggest thing going against Liverpool could be the fact that the team is still going for silverware on four fronts, having reached the English League Cup final, the FA Cup fifth round and the

Europa League last 16. There'll be a few Thursday-Sunday turnarounds if the Reds go far in Europe, which they should.

Manchester City (2nd, 49 points after 22 games)

No team in the history of English soccer, dating back all the way to 1888, has won the top-flight for four straight years. That's what City is attempting to do as manager Pep Guardiola strives to break more new ground for an Abu Dhabi-owned club that won the Champions League for the first time last year and the Premier League in seven of the last 12 seasons. For some, any trophy won by City now comes with an asterisk, given the club is under heavy scrutiny while it faces about 80 alleged breaches of the league's financial rules and 30 more relating to its alleged failure to co-operate with an investigation. That case will likely be heard during next season. For the moment, City is focused on on-field matters and has won nine straight games in all competitions, five of them in the league. City has a fully fit squad now that Erling Haaland and Kevin De Bruyne are over their long-term injuries and also a game in hand, leading many to believe a successful title defense is likely, maybe even inevitable.

Arsenal (3rd, 49 points after 23 games)

Arsenal's push for a first league title since 2004 is being fueled by a desire to make amends for last season, when the team imploded in the closing weeks after taking an eight-point lead with nine games left. Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta seems to be pacing this season better, setting up his team to control games more and not go full throttle like in the first half of the last campaign. He has a deeper squad at his disposal this time round, too. His players will likely have learned lessons from last season, especially mentally in playing under pressure in every match and going toe-to-toe with an always fast-finishing City team. The dominant display against Liverpool on Sunday can only strengthen confidence, with Arsenal seemingly having gotten over a wobble either side of Christmas and winning its last three games while scoring 10 goals. Injuries to key players would likely affect Arsenal more than City or Liverpool, however, so Arteta will hope the likes of William Saliba, Declan Rice and Bukayo Saka can stay healthy for the run-in. Arsenal might have the toughest schedule, with away games at City, Tottenham and United.