



Soccer
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SPEAKER INVITES GOVERNMENT, MP_s TO ORDINARY SESSIONS

March 5 session to cover expat residency

'Fingerprint' stirs debate

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: National Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun has invited the government and MPs to the ordinary sessions scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday to discuss the following:

- Incoming letter from the Human Resources Committee requesting for extension of its mandate to research and discuss the reasons for the increasing number of nomination letters issued by government agencies, provided that it submits its report before the start of the third session.
- Parliamentary questions,
- Continuation of the discussion of the Amiri speech and the government's work program.

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Kuwait braces for thunderstorms, heavy rainfall with chances of hail

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10, (KUNA): The Kuwait Meteorological Department anticipates the onset of light to moderate rainfall from Saturday afternoon onwards, with increased instability expected on the evening of the following day, Sunday.

Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, the Director of the Department, informed Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the latest projections from numerical models and weather maps indicate the country's exposure to a superficial depression coinciding with a cold and deep depression in the upper atmosphere, commencing from the afternoon of the day after tomorrow. This is expected to result in

the proliferation of low and medium clouds interspersed with cumulonimbus clouds, leading to light to moderate rainfall.

Al-Qarawi stated that the phase of instability is set to commence on Sunday evening, with the likelihood of rain steadily increasing and the possibility of thunderstorms, ranging in intensity from moderate to heavy.

There are chances of hail in certain areas, coupled with active southeasterly winds exceeding 60 kilometers per hour, stirring up dust and reducing horizontal visibility across the region.

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Bid to combat false news

Official stresses importance of content evaluation in e-media

AMMAN, Feb 10, (KUNA): On Saturday, a senior Kuwaiti official emphasized the importance of evaluating electronic media content from a professional standpoint, particularly concerning false news and unreliable sources.

Lafi Al-Subaiee, the Assistant Undersecretary of the Press and Publication at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information, stressed the need for experts to scrutinize content to prevent any violations of norms.

Following his participation in a meeting of the Arab electronic me-

dia committee, an affiliate of the Arab League, held in Jordan, Al-Subaiee highlighted the significance of upholding professional media standards, devoid of subjectivity. He called for seamless collaboration between traditional and emerging electronic media to ensure credibility.

During the meeting, Al-Subaiee and his counterparts discussed the role of content producers in addressing extremist speech and the potential risks associated with certain electronic games that may incite violence.

NewsWatch

BEIRUT: An apparent Israeli drone strike hit a car near **Lebanon's** southern port city of **Sidon** on Saturday, killing at least two people and wounding two others, security officials said.

The strike came as tensions across the **Middle East** grow with the **Israel-Hamas** war, a drone attack last month that killed three **U.S.** troops in northeastern Jordan near the Syrian border and attacks by **Yemen's Iran-backed** Houthi rebels on vessels passing through the Red Sea. (AP)

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WASHINGTON: US President **Joe Biden** issued a memorandum demanding the countries receiving US weapons to abide by international law, international humanitarian law, human rights law and the US policy.

The memorandum issued late Thursday came following increased US calls, including from inside the Congress, to impose restrictions on **Israel** as it uses US weapons in the **Gaza Strip**; however, the memorandum did not mention Israel directly. (KUNA)

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CAIRO: The Arab Parliament on Friday voiced support to the outcomes of a recent meeting of Arab foreign ministers in **Riyadh**, particularly the call for halting the Zionist aggression on the **Gaza Strip**.

In a press statement, the parliament's president **Adel Al-Asoumi** said the Arab legislature throws much weight behind every Arab step being taken against unprecedented world massacres committed by the Zionist entity against the Palestinian people. (KUNA)

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BEIRUT: **Iran's** foreign minister vowed after arriving in Beirut on Friday to keep supporting the militant Hezbollah group, saying **Lebanon's** security affects that of Iran and the region.

Hossein Amirabdollahian was welcomed by representatives of Lebanon's Hezbollah as well as the militant Palestinian group Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Iran, a main backer of the militant groups, has been calling on the **U.S.** to pressure **Israel** to stop its offensive in the **Gaza Strip**. (AP)

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ISLAMABAD: **Pakistan's** general elections has no clear victory as the former ruling political party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed independent candidates and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) both claimed the victory in the general elections.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has so far released 250 results of the National Assembly seats while results of 15 seats are yet to be received. (KUNA)

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KUALA LUMPUR: A 5.9 magnitude earthquake hits Wednesday the island of **Mindanao**, south of **Philippines**, said the country's seismology agency.

Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said in a statement that the earthquake was 27 km deep, expecting no casualties or damage but there could be aftershocks. (KUNA)

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GENEVA: The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned on Friday 500 percent increase in the number of killings and sexual violence in **Sudan** this year from last year.

"The world's largest displacement of children has been seen in Sudan. Four million children have been displaced. That's 13,000 children every single day for 300 days. Safety is gone. Worldly possessions are gone. Friends and family members are separated." UNICEF Spokesperson **James Elder** told a news conference in Geneva. (KUNA)



Photo by Ihab Qurtal

The inaugural ceremony of the People's World Forum features a captivating display of Kuwaiti traditional dance at the Cultural Center of Sabah Al-Salem University City on Saturday. – See Page 2

Kuwait commends UN efforts in resolving missing persons and stolen property issue

WASHINGTON, Feb 10, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait has commended the UN Security Council (UNSC) and all concerned bodies for their important and balanced role in researching for and identifying the bodies of prisoners and missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals and returning Kuwaiti property stolen during the Iraqi occupation in 1990.

Addressing the UN Security Council, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Tareq al-Bannai urged Iraq to accelerate the pace of cooperation to completely resolve this humanitarian issue.

The issue of missing Kuwaitis and the third-country nationals as well as the return of the Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, features high on the agenda of Kuwait's foreign policy, he said.

The Kuwaiti diplomat noted that, during his country's non-permanent membership at the UNSC in 2019, Kuwait submitted the draft of the unanimously approved UNSC resolution No. 2474, which was the first of its kind on missing persons during the armed conflicts.

Al-Bannai expressed Kuwait's permanent delegation the United Nations readiness to work with the Republic of Korea, during its presidency of the UN Council which will start next June, to implement the provisions of this resolution.

He said that the resolution is a direct result of Kuwaitis' bitter experience during the brutal Iraqi aggression in 1990, and of its firm belief in the human nature of this issue.

This a humanitarian file which Kuwait did not politicize and will not do so at any time, the ambassador affirmed, adding that the UNSC has assumed its responsibilities perfectly on handling the situation between the Republic of Iraq and the State of Kuwait.



KUNA photo

Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai.

Since 1990, the Council has gradually undertaken all available means and powers such as establishing a peacekeeping mission and setting mechanisms for compensations and for demarcating the borders between Kuwait and Iraq- in accordance with Resolution No. 833, he elaborated.

He commended the Security Council in particular and the United Nations in general for their wonderful success in handling this sensitive file.

With regard to the issue of missing Kuwaiti prisoners and persons and third-country nationals as well as the return of Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, Al-Bannai said "the Security Council issued Resolutions No. 686 and 687 of 1991, and No. 1284 of 1999 to give a high-level coordinator the responsibility of following up on this file before transferring these competencies to the UNAMI, in accordance with Security Council Resolution No. 2107 of 2013.

He thanked Iraq for its cooperation and understanding of the importance

and sensitivity of this file, urging Iraqis at the same time to complete this cooperation and accelerate its pace to solve this file in order to "heal the wounds" of Kuwaitis.

Previously called by former UN secretary general as a "Humanitarian Center", Kuwait is a small country in its size but big in terms of its giving, Ambassador al-Bannai said, adding that "we have offered all our experiences and abilities to all countries, institutions and organizations that have visited us, and we are fully prepared to serve this humanitarian cause inside and outside the Security Council".

The Ambassador pointed out that the UNAMI submits two separate reports to the Security Council: The first is concerned with its work and mandate, while the second is about missing Kuwaitis and the third-country's nationals, in addition to the missing Kuwaiti national property.

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'Model of economy'

Kuwait to host inaugural economic tourism forum

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10, (KUNA): Kuwait is set to play host to the first-ever Arab forum on economic tourism on Sunday, with representatives from 12 countries partaking.

Organized by the Council of Arab Businesswomen, the five-day event comes as the State of Kuwait has recently been handpicked by the council's investment committee as a "model of Arab economy".

The forum is co-supervised by the Federation of Kuwaiti Professionals and Business Associates for Small and Medium Enterprises (BPW), which is a member of the Council of Arab Businesswomen, and Kuwait Economic Society.

Speaking at a news conference on this occasion, the council's chairwoman Sheikh Dr. Hessa Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah said choosing Kuwait as a model of economy and investment in the Arab world reflects its regional status and economic weighty.

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Kuwait slams Israeli threat

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Saturday voiced extreme concern over the plans of Israeli occupation forces to attack Rafah City in the Gaza Strip following the forced displacement of its civilian population.

In a press statement, the ministry restated Kuwait's rejection of aggressive practices and displacement plans against the Palestinian people.

It also echoed the country's call for the international community and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to live up to their

Continued on Page 6



KUNA photo

Photo during the news conference.

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	05:11	Asr	15:10
Sunrise ..	06:32	Maghrib ..	17:33
Zohr	12:02	Isha	18:51

Local

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

Stakeholders express optimism, call to expedite diversification

Economic reforms mainstay of government’s work program: report

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The recent unveiling of the government’s work program has highlighted a dedicated focus on launching economic reform initiatives aimed at achieving a balanced national economic structure. Emphasizing the long-term sustainability of economic and social well-being, the program prioritizes projects and financial policies geared towards boosting non-oil revenues within the general budget, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Economic stakeholders have expressed optimism regarding forthcoming economic and financial reforms while stressing the urgency of expediting the implementation of diversification policies. These measures are praised for their potential to strengthen Kuwait’s financial standing and enhance its international competitiveness, offering significant opportunities for private sector involvement, particularly in projects such as the development of the northern region as a hub for local and foreign investments.

At the core of the program is recognition that economic prosperity is crucial to addressing Kuwait’s challenges, with a particular emphasis on empowering the private sector and fostering competitiveness among small and medium enterprises. By diversifying revenue sources and reducing reliance on oil revenues, the government aims to safeguard the state budget against volatile oil prices, ensuring sustained well-being over the medium to long term.

Moreover, the program underscores the importance of enhancing the business environment through initiatives like the launch of a digital platform for company licensing and amendments to key laws governing public tenders and public-private partnerships. These measures are expected to bolster the private sector’s role in driving economic growth and creating employment opportunities for citizens.

Saleh Al-Salami, Chairman of the Federation of Investment Companies, has voiced support for the program, emphasizing the

private sector’s capacity to address Kuwait’s economic challenges if given the opportunity to lead. He advocates for incentivizing the private sector, including tax exemptions similar to those enjoyed by foreign investors, to stimulate economic activity.

Dr. Yacoub Ahmad Baqir, a Finance Professor at Kuwait University, underscores the urgency of economic reform, citing unsustainable reliance on oil revenues and the imperative of controlling public expenditures amid demographic challenges. He stresses the importance of involving the private sector in this endeavor to alleviate pressure on public finances and foster sustainable economic development.

Warning against the consequences of delay, the government emphasizes the escalating costs of inaction and the potential threat to Kuwait’s ability to meet its obligations. With a projected budget deficit over the next five years, prompt action is deemed essential to avert potentially dire outcomes and secure the nation’s economic future.

Sources said that if the financial and economic conditions continue to deteriorate in this way, it is feared that dangerous results will be reached, not the least of which is:

- Failing individuals, companies, banks and institutions.
- Unemployment rates are dangerously high.
- Collapse of social services.
- Deterioration of social security.
- Significant inflation in the cost of living.
- Government funding requirements are expected to double over the next ten years.
- Financing the budget will require significantly higher oil prices, reaching more than \$100 per barrel in 2033.
- Kuwait’s economy will not develop into a knowledge-based economy that focuses on innovation and leading sectors, as Kuwait’s ranking in the Global Innovation Index will decline to less than 75 in 2033.
- Kuwaitis will continue to contribute to the inflation of the size of the public sector instead of working in the private sector.
- The population’s well-being and social welfare will deteriorate despite the increase in government spending, bringing Kuwait’s ranking in the prosperity index to more than 65 in 2033.



A woman from the West is decorated by local, Arab women in traditional head and face-ware at the forum.

Photo by Iehab Qurtal

People’s World Forum pulls over 10,000 participants

Bid to bridge communities gap, know culture

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Ta’k Cultural Center, in collaboration with the Dean of Student Affairs, Cultural and Artistic Activities Administration of Kuwait University, hosted the groundbreaking People’s World Forum today at the Cultural Center of the Sabah Al-Salem University City, an architectural gem nestled in the heart of Kuwait.

The aim was to foster dialogue and networking among influential leaders from various sectors, underscoring the commitment of the Ta’k Cultural Center to uniting global communities and driving cultural exchange and innovation.

With over 10,000 participants, the forum not only celebrated cultural diversity but also showcased Kuwait’s modern infrastructure and progressive spirit; poised to be a monumental success, adding significant value to Kuwait’s cultural landscape, prominently featuring and reflecting traditional attire, fragrances, and cuisine. The exhibits included traditional garments, culinary demonstrations, handicrafts, and a celebration of global harvests and aromas.

During the event, visitors had the opportunity to immerse themselves in folkloric music performances, and explore thrilling global adventures.

Most of the visitors said they were amazed by the diversity of cultures showcased under one roof demonstrating the taste flavors from different countries and learn about their culinary traditions calling it a delicious and educational experience.

One of the visitors said, “I appreciated the focus on cultural understanding and dialogue. It’s so important to celebrate diversity and learn from each other, and this event provided a perfect platform for that.”

“As a parent,” said another, “I found the event to be incredibly educational. It gave me valuable insights into how to teach my children about cultural diversity and global awareness.”

“The performances of folkloric music,” he added, “were breathtaking. It was amazing to see how music can transcend language barriers and bring people together from different backgrounds,” said another visitor.

Yet another visitor said, “I was inspired by the commitment of the organizers to promote cultural exchange and understanding. It’s events like these that remind us of the importance of embracing diversity in our increasingly interconnected world” saying it highlights the positive impact of the People’s World Forum in fostering cultural exchange, understanding, and appreciation among its visitors.

In essence, the People’s World Forum reaffirmed the commitment to uniting global communities and driving cultural exchange and innovation. These enlightening experiences opened minds to different cultures and languages, promoting dialogue and understanding within the community.

The People’s World Forum epitomized this commitment to cultural exchange and understanding. With the involvement of 150 trained student volunteers from Kuwait University, the event showcased a global extravaganza, featuring exhibitions, culinary delights, and immersive experiences that offered visitors a journey around the world, providing a glimpse into the rich tapestry of global cultures.

Kuwait and US customs share expertise & skills

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Director General of Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC) Abdullah Al-Sharhan recently met with American Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Sasahara, with Deputy Director General for Customs Ports Affairs Osama Khalil Al-Shami and a number of customs officials in attendance, reports Al-Anba daily.

The two sides discussed the close relations between Kuwaiti and American customs, which began in 1993, as the cooperation agreement between the two countries have had major achievements and qualitative leaps in developing customs work. The Kuwaiti Customs signed five agreements during the strategic dialogue with America. The results of these agreements continue to be beneficial for the local customs, considering the continuous cooperation in transferring customs expertise and skills including training courses and inspection equipment.

During the visit, Al-Sharhan accompanied Sasahara to the regionally accredited Customs Training Center to review the progress of some joint training courses between the two countries. He stressed the importance of these training courses for customs inspectors, because of their stock of international experience and their goal to improve customs work.

Weather			
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:			
By Day:	Unstable and partly cloudy to cloudy with moderate to fresh southeasterly wind to northeasterly wind, with speeds of 20-55 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery and a chance for rising dust.	By Night:	Rather cold and cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times northeasterly wind changing to northwesterly wind later on, with speeds of 15-45 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait City	24	14	
Kuwait Airport	24	09	
Abdaly	25	11	
Jahra	25	11	
Salmiyah	21	16	
Nuwaisib	25	10	
Wafra	24	10	

Other Voices

My experience with the e-car

By Ahmad alsarraf

Someone asked his friend about the meaning of the expression “mixed feelings” and he replied: It is the same feeling you get when your “mother-in-law” borrows your new car, and is late in returning it, and then you get a call from the police that she is injured as a result of a traffic accident! Here you have these mixed feelings.



alsarraf

I had this feeling after purchasing an electric car. On the one hand, I was filled with happiness because I would contribute, in my part, to preserving the environment by reducing toxic emissions, but on the other hand, my need for petrol would decrease, and my national economy would be harmed, perhaps to the same extent, but I remembered that electricity that charges... It has electric car batteries that are generated by consuming or burning oil, and this means that we will remain in the same “hellish loop” for a long time to come.

I did some research, a little late, on the advantages and disadvantages of electric cars (BEV), and perhaps I would have hesitated a lot to buy the car, if I had known enough about them. I found that the best thing about electric cars is that they do not need maintenance and damage.

The parts that move in them, and are subject to damage, are up to 20 pieces, compared to more than 200 pieces in a regular vehicle. There is no need for cooling water, oils, grease, petroleum, spark plugs, belts, internal fuel motor, gears, etc. Also, the power of the electric car lies in its battery, as it is what runs its electric motor, due to its weight

and the space it takes, this makes it heavier than a regular car, and its battery is made to last between 10 to 12 years, and does not require maintenance, but not paying attention to charging it may reduce as it ages, it is necessary to avoid charging it to the maximum, and avoid discharging it completely, that is, keeping it filled between 20 and 80% only.

Because there is no easy way to maintain this percentage, monitoring this causes some inconvenience to its owner, bearing in mind that charging an empty battery takes a few hours, and ultra-fast charging takes a few minutes, but it is available at limited points, and it is not recommended except when necessary. A disadvantage is that there are not enough battery charging points, as in Europe.

Thus, the owner becomes tied to specific points, and must constantly monitor the degree of battery charge. Temperatures, whether high or low, also affect its performance, and it is preferable to park the car in the summer under awnings or protective covers.

I can say that driving an electric car is a pleasure that I have not felt since the first car I owned 61 years ago. It is smooth and quiet in everything, and this may not please many people who are fond of loud cars.

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Note: Many were surprised by the position of MP Shoaib Sha’aban and his words against the Vice President and Minister of Defense and Interior, and his use of strange words!

It is said that the reason is due to the minister’s research into the backgrounds of some of the military attachés who were recently appointed. Perhaps the attack came to stop summoning those who do not deserve the position!

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

‘MPW has no plan to abolish PART’

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Ministry of Public Works (MPW) has no intention to abolish the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART), reports Al-Seyassah daily quoting sources.

Sources disclosed that on Dec 13, 2023; former acting Minister of Public Works Dr Jassim Al-Ostad asked the Council of Ministers to approve the withdrawal of the draft law repealing PART Law number 115/2014.

The daily obtained a copy of Al-Ostad’s letter to the Council of Ministers, stating that the issue should be re-examined in light of the decision of the parliamentary Public Facilities Committee, and the formation of an advisory and legal committee to study the impact of law number



Dr. Al-Ostad

115/2014 since its issuance. The new committee’s tasks include laying down a vision for the authority to address its administrative imbalances and develop the land transportation system to be internationally competitive, followed by amending the law on establishing the authority to keep pace with changes and achieve the desired benefit from its establishment.

It has been reported that during the recent meeting of the parliamentary Budgets and Financial Affairs Committee, several lawmakers urged Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan to activate the role of the authority and complete the request to withdraw the project, especially since the government’s work plan includes many projects related to the authority like the railway, repair of roads, development of the transportation system, projects in the northern region and others, especially since the abolition of the authority will require issuing a new law to determine the authorities supervising land transportation.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Jahra Committee of the Municipal Council will hold its third meeting on Wednesday headed by member Abdullah Al-Enezi to discuss a number of items on its agenda, the most important of which are two requests from the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART).

The first request from PART is related to allocating locations for open water basins and canals, an underground water connection, and an earthen berm to collect and drain rainwater in Sabriya area. The second request is related to allocating sites for open basins to collect rainwater, an open water channel, an underground water connection, and rainwater drainage paths around the former low-cost affordable housing area.

The committee will also discuss the request of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to allocate paths in Abdali for overhead lines with a voltage of 400 KV and a width of 200 m to feed Iraq with the line of the Gulf Cooperation Council Electricity Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) path.

The committee is planning to discuss the reallocation of the land of the Al-Shagaya Renewable Energy Complex from the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research to the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy.

Furthermore, it intends to discuss the proposal submitted by the Deputy Chairman of the Municipal Council Khaled Al-Mutairi for allocating the “Haraj” website to sell used cars, the proposal submitted by the Chairman of the committee Abdullah Al-Enezi for the development of a service road opposite Sulaibikhat Block 2 on Jamal Abdul Nasser Street, and his question regarding the entertainment hall

“Bowling and Billiards” affiliated with the Tourism Enterprises Company in Jahra Governorate.

The committee will also discuss the executive branch’s response to member Abdullah Al-Enezi’s questions regarding the wastewater purification station in the Mutlaa Housing Project and its complementary works of construction, operation and maintenance.

‘Use Kuwaiti produce’

Meanwhile, according to informed sources in the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Minister of Social Affairs Sheikh Firas Al-Malik has given instructions to officials to form a team to inspect cooperative societies and outlets selling vegetables and fruits in order to ensure that 75 percent of the cooperative societies’ stocks are purchased from Kuwaiti farmers.

The sources explained that the decision is supposed to be issued this week to launch tours of all sales outlets and ensure that all the cooperative societies’ vegetable and fruits stocks are from local farmers. Necessary measures will be taken against any cooperative society that does not comply. This is because Sheikh Firas Al-Malik seeks to support farmers through such regulatory decisions.

The team will have judicial control. Therefore, any cooperative society that does not comply will be gradually subjected to penalties, as judicial control is initially carried out and then the approval of the cooperative society’s financial authority is suspended.

In this context, the sources revealed that Sheikh Firas Al-Malik formed a committee to study citizens’ complaints against cooperative societies, expedite the investigation and follow-up, and take the necessary measures regarding these complaints quickly, away from red tape.



Sheikh Firas

China seeks to invest in Kuwait

Plan to set up solar energy station

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The recently concluded visit of the Chinese delegation, representing a government-owned company, marks the culmination of two weeks of discussions with key figures including Dr. Salem Al-Hajraf, the Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, and the Minister of State for Housing Affairs, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This visit follows the recent trip made by His Highness the Amir of the country to the People’s Republic of China last September, during which memorandums of understanding were signed to foster cooperation on vital projects between the two nations.

According to informed sources within the Ministry of Electricity and Water, the discussions primarily revolved around the feasibility of establishing a solar energy station in Al-Shaqaya, as well as the regulatory framework governing the establishment of

companies within Kuwait in accordance with the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority law.

During meetings with ministry officials, broad terms of the agreement between Kuwait and the Chinese delegation were deliberated upon, alongside discussions on the steps taken with the Direct Investment Promotion Authority regarding the station’s establishment project.

The delegation provided Minister Salem Al-Hajraf with a comprehensive briefing on the proposed solar energy station, including its production capacity and the details outlined in the explanatory memorandum for the agreement.

Throughout their visit, the Chinese delegation held multiple meetings with officials from various Kuwaiti ministries, including the Ministry of Finance and KDIPA.

diwaniya

ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Past practices shunned, gov't working for people first time

"DO WE currently possess a government with widespread support? It's evident that our current administration stands apart from previous ones. Its formation, operational methodology in governing the state, and fostering a role for Kuwaiti citizens in administrative affairs all underscore the presence of a popularly supported government for the first time," columnist **Youssef Al-Jalahma** wrote **Al-Rai** daily.



Al-Jalahma

"This government's establishment diverged from past practices of forming coalitions based on various quotas, appeasing diverse parliamentary blocs representing tribes, religious sects, or business interests. Instead, what we observe now is a specialized government that operates with clarity of purpose.

"Its approach suggests deriving strength from the people, disregarding clamors from vested interests, exemplified by the resolute actions of Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Minister of Interior and Defense, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah.

"Despite facing increased opposition and smear campaigns, the government persists in enforcing laws and rectifying malpractices, as seen with Minister of Works and Municipality, Engineer Noura Al-Mashaan's initiative to engage citizens in identifying infrastructure issues for repair, despite social media backlash. Such steadfastness in the face of criticism solidifies the government's bond with the people.

"This popularly-supported government adopts a fresh approach to addressing grievances, discarding the outdated "Al-Samkha" system of favoritism that previously dominated Kuwaiti politics. It challenges the entrenched belief in a binary political landscape and introduces a government that serves the people exclusively. Attempts to undermine it through coercion or manipulation are futile.

"The government's popularity is further bolstered by its commitment to involve citizens in setting priorities for its agenda, despite initial skepticism. Meetings between His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Muhammad Al-Sabah and media editors reaffirm the government's allegiance to the Amir and his vision for a secure, stable, and progressive Kuwait.

"Critics argue that this government may falter under pressure from certain members of the National Assembly, especially those whose personal interests are threatened. However, such challenges, exemplified by trivial interrogations and comedic distractions, do not deter the government's resolve to serve the people.

From its inception, this government has embarked on a path towards genuine popular governance. Its formation and conduct instill a sense of ownership among the populace, making it more resilient to political upheavals than individual members of the National Assembly.

Also:

"Parents often express frustration over their children's stubbornness, feeling the need to "break their heads" to deal with this behavior firmly. However, as educators, it's crucial to approach stubbornness with logic and wisdom, considering our responsibility in shaping future generations," columnist **Nada Muhallal Al-Mudhaf** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Stubbornness, as a resistant behavior in children, stems from various factors such as the pursuit of independence, imitation of parental behaviors, a desire for attention, or a response to feeling pressured or frustrated. Understanding these underlying reasons is essential in addressing and guiding children effectively.

"Stubbornness may manifest as a refusal to follow directives, rooted convictions that resist change, or learned behaviors from parental reactions. Confronting stubbornness with forceful methods like "breaking heads" is a mistake, as it often leads to temporary compliance or negative repercussions.

"Instead, fostering open dialogue and providing logical responses can help children understand the consequences of their actions and develop constructive ways to express themselves. Encouraging positive outlets for their emotions and empowering them to channel their energy into productive endeavors can lead to more lasting solutions.

"Ultimately, addressing stubbornness requires patience, empathy, and a willingness to engage in meaningful communication. By guiding children with care and understanding, we can nurture their growth and contribute to the betterment of society as a whole.

"Some methods of dealing with stubbornness educationally:

"Be patient and calm: confront stubbornness with calmness and not getting angry. Understand why he is stubborn. Perhaps he is basically expressing an opinion and you classified him as stubborn.

"Promoting positive dialogue: Encouraging the son or daughter to express himself and listening to him carefully.

"Clarifying choices and consequences: Providing limited choices for a son or daughter allows them a sense of independence while understanding the consequences of choices.

"Promoting positive behaviors: Rewarding children for positive and cooperative behaviors.

"Raising is a responsibility in which the couple chose to have children and pledged to thank God for this great gift by raising them in a good manner that requires effort, consultation, and

a deeper understanding than breaking one's head."

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"The Omani experience... His Highness the Amir was given distinguished and unprecedented royal, official, popular and lavish reception in the Sultanate of Oman. We must learn from the magnificent Omani experience in incorporating popular heritage within the official protocol. We must learn about commitment and organization from the Omanis themselves. Every individual who participated in the reception knows and understands his role well, considering none of them deviated from the group," columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"There was harmony between the crowds of welcoming entourage whose members come various backgrounds. The calmness and prestige of the reception were not disrupted, starting with the Hajjana who stood with unprecedented regularity, then the horses and army music, bagpipes and brass, then the popular bands that represent folk art or the rich Omani heritage, even the women's bands with their costumes. The bright, authentic Omani woman was not absent from the scene and the reception, so much so that it seemed to those watching that all the Omani people came out to receive the Amir of Kuwait.

"What draws attention is the accuracy of the organization, as the popular groups worked on their own. The official procession barely passes one group without the next one moving, until the procession passes by it with extreme precision. Not a single participant left his place even after the procession passed, and not a single participant crossed the sidewalk of the street on which it passed. The procession passed by, heading to Al-Alam Palace!

"All of them, without exception, were innately trained since childhood in their folk arts, which made them creative in performing, taking into account the spirit of the times. Neither a woman nor a man emerged from them, and no one's movement differed from the other! We saw authentic Omani folk art that represented the Omani people, best represented by welcoming Oman's great guest, Mishaal Kuwait!

"The Omanis on the land of Muscat embodied the meaning of royal, popular and governmental welcome. It is worth noting that the Omanis are the most interested in popular heritage among the Gulf citizens. They are the most adherent to it, while the Omani government is a major supporter of the legacy and its people. Even when His Majesty the Sultan served as Minister of Culture, he focused on popular groups and their arts. He encouraged participation in them, until they entered the Omani protocol on official occasions. The Omanis responded to the government support and adhered to their cultural heritage, which represents the true face of Oman's civilization. They are not only practicing their heritage. They are creating a country for new generations, a heritage that stands on solid ground. I wish we could all benefit from the Omani experience ... Good."

□ □ □

"Parachute appointments destroy institutions. The sublime speech of His Highness the Amir at the swearing-in session was a corrective movement that brought before the current government important files and issues that must be addressed immediately in order to translate the contents of the speech into reality and a correct executive path towards what His Highness described as 'futility' and 'harming the country,'" columnist **M. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"On top of the issues highlighted by His Highness is the unfair appointment to some positions, and the resulting injustice that some of those who were removed from their positions for no reason or fault are still suffering from today. Among them are those who worked hard and were dedicated to their work and in the service of Kuwait.

"What made matters worse was that some of those who replaced them were appointed through a 'parachute'. This contradicts the fair rules and regulations on appointments. It is inconsistent with the basic rule of appointing the right person in the right place.

"Undoubtedly, this undermined confidence in appointments and deprived those who are diligent in occupying positions for which they were qualified. At the same time, those who were excluded were left alone in their suffering and disappointment. His Highness' speech was like a restoration of their dignity. Will this issue be addressed and find the necessary attention from the government? It may be appropriate to summon those who were excluded to learn about the legality of their removal from their positions, and to give justice to those who deserve it.

"Without a doubt, the government is aware of the dangers of 'parachute' appointments and placing the wrong man in the wrong place, in addition to the destructive consequences and effects on agencies and institutions, not to mention the lack of confidence in State procedures that it generates.

"The sublime speech put emphasis on the necessity of addressing this issue did not come out of nowhere. It was rather an expression of an in-depth awareness of the seriousness of the issue, and the damage that these appointments caused to our institutions and agencies. Thus, it necessitates a serious stance from the government and a radical remedy that restores consideration to those who have been subjected to the injustice of exclusion and unfair appointments.

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Participants at the National Security College course.

Security officers training concludes

As part of the training plan for the 2023/2024 training season at the National Security College, which aims to equip and prepare future leaders to undertake responsibility tasks, the college recently concluded the course titled "Analysis of Security Risks and Threats," reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The course was attended by Major General Walid Al-Shehab, Director General of the National Security College, along with 17 officers and civilians from various sectors of the Ministry and individuals in supervisory roles.

Covering a range of pertinent topics, the course delved into methods for obtaining information, modern approaches to analyzing risks and threats, and the prioritization of addressing them.

The participants also learned about the formulation of security and intelligence reports, among other key subjects, which were presented by Brigadier General Dr. Youssef Al-Yaqout.

Fingerprint attendance system opposed by schools & officials

'Abandon move'; MPs slam rushed approval by MoE

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Just hours before the Ministry of Education's scheduled implementation of the fingerprint attendance system in schools, reactions rejecting this move have intensified, with increasing demands to abandon it, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Officials in several schools have voiced concerns, describing the decision to implement the fingerprint system as ill-considered and disruptive to the educational process. They argue that verifying the attendance of educational staff does not necessitate such a system, as teachers are already obliged to fulfill their teaching duties according to their assigned schedules.

These officials emphasize that the fingerprint system adversely impacts the educational process, introducing unnecessary bureaucracy and undermining the flexibility and trust inherent in the educational environment. They highlight previous efforts by the Ministry of Education to seek an exemption from fingerprinting for the educational body until clear organizational structures are in place, stressing the unique nature of teachers' work compared to other employees.

In parliamentary interactions, several members of the National Assembly have expressed their opposition to the implementation of the fingerprint system in schools. They urge the Ministry of Education to reconsider this decision, emphasizing the crucial role of teachers in shaping future generations and advocating for their recognition and status.

MP Badr Sayyar Al-Shammari criticized the rushed approval of the fingerprint system, warning of its potential negative impacts on the educational process and administrative confusion. Representative Falah Dhahi Al-Hajri echoed the same sentiments, highlighting the challenges faced by teachers in Kuwait's educational environment and questioning the necessity of the fingerprint system.

The Ministry of Education's circular, issued by Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education, Hessa Al-Mutawa, calls for the implementation of fingerprint devices in schools starting February 11, 2024. The circular emphasizes the importance of facilitating information management systems and proving attendance through fin-



KUNA photo

Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah during his visit to the base.

'Maritime safety security system's integral part'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10, (Agencies): Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah stressed Saturday that maritime border safety is an integral part of the comprehensive security system.

The minister made the remarks while making a field tour of Sabah Al-Salem Maritime Base, the Interior Ministry's public relations and media department said in a press release. "It is necessary to keep cautious and vigilant to deal with various targets in territorial waters and to monitor and address any violation, as well as to develop monitoring plans to confront infiltrators and smugglers with a view to maintaining Kuwait's security and stability," the minister was quoted as saying in the release.

During the tour, Al-Yousef was briefed on the functionality of radar systems, the operations room, and the command center. He also inspected various assets including French vessels, technical workshops, recently refurbished interceptor patrols, as well as newly acquired and locally manufactured patrol boats.

Throughout the inspection, Al-Yousef provided feedback and directives aimed at addressing any identified issues promptly. Emphasizing the importance of vigilance, he underscored the necessity of monitoring Kuwait's territorial waters diligently, responding to any violations swiftly, and devising robust monitoring strategies to combat infiltrators and smugglers.

and administrative consequences as voiced by the Teachers Association.

According to school officials -- teachers' attendance does not require a fingerprint.. and its application confuses the educational process; the nature of the work of "mind builders" is different from that of employees "in offices" and every teacher is obligated to attend and teach in the classroom according to the schedule

Petrol stolen for KD 18.5

Hunt launched for eight times 'fill and run' thief

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: An individual utilizing the deceptive tactic of claiming falsely lost items managed to pilfer fuel on eight separate occasions. This scheme bears resemblance to a prior case outlined by Al-Anbaa in December of the previous year. In that instance, a similar theft of fuel by a vehicle was documented and filed at the Maidan Hawalli Police Station. Yesterday, a fresh case emerged, marked as No. 2024/7 at the Sabah Al-Salem Police Station, shedding light on fuel theft once again, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

According to sources familiar with the matter, a citizen, born in 1962 and serving as a representative for a local fuel marketing company, lodged a formal complaint at the Ali Sabah Al-Salem police station. The complaint detailed the repeated visits of a driver operating an American vehicle, a Vanette, to a fuel station in the Ali Sabah Al-Salem area.

On each visit, the driver filled the vehicle with fuel before hastily departing without settling the bill. It was disclosed that the perpetrator managed to abscond with fuel amounting to 18.5 dinars over the course of eight incidents. Substantial evidence, including video footage capturing the accused in the act, was submitted by the informant. In response, the police station initiated an investigation, directing detectives to apprehend the suspect.

Two perish in accident

By Munaif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: A Tunisian man and an Egyptian woman died in a tragic accident that occurred on the Seventh Ring Road opposite the Subhan cemetery.

According to security sources, when the Operations Room of the Ministry of Interior received information about the accident on the Seventh Ring Road, security-men and paramedics rushed to the location.

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Empowering positivity and driving community change through contributions from the stc family

stc concludes cleaning campaign in collaboration with Ministry of Municipality

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the completion of a significant cleaning campaign, in line with the Company’s sustainability program titled “Small Move, Big Impact”, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Municipality. The initiative marks an additional milestone under stc’s ongoing commitment to environmental preservation, especially through its extensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework and the recently launched sustainability program.

This initiative was organized for the stc family in the presence of stc’s Corporate Communications team represented by Abdullah Al Najdi and Mariam Al Kandari, with the focus area being in the Al Mutlaa desert, a popular area today for camping. With a spirit of environmental consciousness and community service, employees were invited to participate in the clean-up, providing them with an opportunity to actively contribute to the preservation of the local ecosystem. The event was met with great enthusiasm as employees eagerly signed up, demonstrating their commitment to environmental stewardship and community engagement.stc’s sofara’a, the dedicated ambassadors selected by the



A group photo of participants at stc's environmental cleaning campaign.

Companyknown for their commitment to stc’s values and community initiatives, were also present to help clean the area and motivate the participants.

The involvement of stc’s employees demonstrates the ingrained values and culture of social responsibility and sustainable practices within the organization, reinforcing

the importance of community engagement in environmental stewardship. Such initiatives have been consistently implemented by the Company to set a certain standard when it comes to environmental responsibility within the local community.

In a statement, stc expressed that such initiatives, as well as others, highlight the active engagement and deep commitment of its employees towards environmental and community welfare. The successful clean up campaign serves as a reflection of the organization’s culture, where such values are embodied in the actions of its workplace. The enthusiastic participation of employees in the campaign is a testament to their dedication to making a positive change in the community and the environment. In this regard, stc recognizes and appreciates the efforts of every employee who contributed to this initiative, demonstrating that collective action can lead to significant environmental benefits.

To find out more about stc’s events, promotions, and sponsorships, follow stc’s official social media platforms, visit one of stc’s branches, download mystc mobile application, visit www.stc.com.kw or contact the customer service center by dialing 102 for around the clock assistance.

Bolstering Gulf cooperation

Kuwait FM receives congratulatory call on assuming the new mission

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received Thursday a telephone call from Qatar’s Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan al-Muraikhi, congratulating him on his new post.

Al-Muraikhi wished Al-Yahya every success in his new mission.

He said that he looks forward to working with Al-Yahya to contribute to enhancing deep-rooted brotherly bonds between the two countries and their peoples in a manner that boosts bilateral cooperation and supports the joint Gulf action.

CITRA unveils ‘Aman’ service to tackle cybercrime

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Yousef Kazim, official spokesman of the unified government application for electronic services – Sahel, has announced the launching of ‘Aman’ service for the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) to monitor images of fraud and electronic phishing; such that the citizens and expatriates, who fall victims to such scams, could immediately inform the concerned authorities through the application, report Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, Kazim explained that the ‘Aman’ service will be available to users through the ‘Services’ list CITRA in the Sahel application. He added it will allow the users of the application to report any electronic phishing attempt they might be exposed to whether in the form of messages or fake calls. He said the new service also aims to monitor all forms of electronic fraud through various means like text messages, voice calls, website, electronic platform or any other means suspected of engaging in fraudulent operations.

MoE drafting new regulation aimed at revising rental fees for public schools

45 govt premises host temporary private licenses

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Ministry of Education is in the process of drafting a new regulation aimed at revising rental fees for public schools and establishing guidelines for the utilization of vacant buildings, educational spaces, classrooms, playgrounds, and cafeterias, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to an educational source the new regulations are currently under review. Once finalized, they will be presented to the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and

Scientific Research, Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, for approval.

The source further elaborated that in some cases, annual rental fees amount to 300 thousand dinars per school. Additionally, there are 45 government schools currently serving as premises for private schools under temporary administrative licenses, which are subject to renewal based on the ministry’s future requirements.

The source stated that there are 4 types of building exploitation for private schools:

- Private schools exploit buildings owned by licensees.
- Private schools that exploit buildings rented from others (individuals or companies).
- Schools exploit buildings leased from the Ministry of Finance within public state property, using a BOT lease contract system, the revenues of which are collected through the Ministry of Finance.
- Private schools exploit vacant government school buildings that have been allocated under temporary exploitation licenses for the purpose of exploiting them as educational institutions for the same purpose for which they were established. The exploitation fee is collected within the revenues of the Ministry of Education.

February

Room Promotion



Kuwait's public school classroom.

Kuwait Oil Company showcases sustainable ‘initiatives’ at Al-Muruj Complex Exhibition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Kuwait Oil Company was actively engaged in the “Kuwait Sustainability Exhibition,” hosted at the Al-Muruj Complex, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The event was being held under the patronage of Eng. Samira Al-Kandari, the Acting Director General of the Environment Public Authority.

At the exhibition’s inauguration, four team leaders from the company were present: Budur Sayed Omar, Head of the Media Team; Nasser Al-Hajri, Head of the Maintenance and Reliability Team (South and East Kuwait); Hashem Al-Hashemi, Head of the Roads and Support Team; and Muthanna Al-Moumen, Head of the Soil Rehabilitation Projects Team (2).

The company’s pavilion showcased its endeavors and initiatives in promoting sustainability, sustainable development, recycling, and environmental preservation in Kuwait. Additionally, it features various plants from the company’s natural reserves.

Several groups and work teams actively participated in the pavilion, including the public relations and media team, the soil rehabilitation team, the roads and support work team, and the maintenance and reliability support work team (south and east of Kuwait).

Notable displays included the company’s successful projects, such as the environmental rehabilitation project post-invasion, demonstrating soil washing and biological treatment technologies, along with the extraction of contaminated soil and associated devices available for experimental purposes.

Furthermore, the Health, Safety, and Environment (Gas) team presented information about its ongoing environmental campaign, scheduled until the end of February, themed “Your environment needs you... reduce the impact of your carbon footprint.” The campaign aims to raise awareness about sustainable practices and their role in minimizing carbon footprints.

Now in its third edition, the exhibition boasts participation from over 30 companies and entities supporting sustainability in Kuwait.

Committee remains dedicated to modification

Social Affairs Ministry temporarily suspends personal interviews for senior posts in co-ops

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: The Ministry of Social Affairs, through its Quartet Committee responsible for assessing job nominations and conducting interviews for supervisory roles in cooperative societies, has temporarily suspended personal interviews for citizens seeking positions such as general managers, deputy managers, and department heads, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting reliable ministry sources.

This suspension follows the political leadership’s decision issued in December 2023, which halted appointments, promotions, transfers, and secondments across all state agencies for a three-month period, with the possibility of extension.

According to sources, the committee, which includes representatives from the Public Authority for Manpower and the Federation of Cooperative Societies, along with a representative from the respective cooperative seeking employment, will resume personal interviews once the decision’s term expires.

The objective is to swiftly fill vacant positions within cooperative societies, with selected candidates being promptly announced. The Kuwaitization process receives significant attention and support from the Council of Ministers, with ongoing oversight from Minister of Social



Union of Cooperative Society building.

Affairs, Sheikh Firas Al-Malik. The committee remains dedicated to demographic modification and labor market development.

Before the decision to halt appointments, the committee had conducted numerous interviews with citizens interested in cooperative roles. Several candidates had successfully progressed through the interview stage following the review of requisite documents and academic certificates, in accordance with Ministerial Resolution No. 68/2023. This resolution delineates criteria, requirements, and procedures for appointing citizens to supervisory positions, including directors, deputy directors, and department heads within cooperative societies.

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Authority affirms commitment to empower people with disabilities

PADA outlines integration plans

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Representative of the Minister of Social Affairs and acting Director General of the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs (PADA) Al-Humaidi Al-Mutairi has affirmed the authority’s keenness to participate in all activities and events in the interest of people with disabilities, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Mutairi made the statement to the daily on the sidelines of the Asian Blind Union Conference organized by the Kuwait Blind Association with the theme: “Blindness ... and Challenges.” He said the authority’s participation in the conference is part of its action plan to integrate people with disabilities into society and support them in their daily lives. He disclosed that one of the priorities of the authority is integration of people with disabilities in all aspects of society like education, work and daily life, so they can have normal lives.

Regarding cooperation with government agencies, he unveiled the plan to activate the provisions of Disabled Affairs Law number 8/2010. He said the associations for people with disabilities are under the supervision of



Al-Humaidi Al-Mutairi, Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs.

the Ministry of Social Affairs, while PADA works with these associations to support eligible groups; indicating there are representatives of the associations in the Board of Directors of PADA. He added that in coordination with the Public Authority for Youth, PADA will present its opinion about Al-Amboh Club.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Blind Association Fayez Al-Azmi revealed that the conference included the meeting of the board of the union and a work-

shop for the union. He stated this is a special union for West Asia and many member-nations are expected to attend the board meeting.

Al-Azmi disclosed: “We are keen on holding the event in February to coincide with Kuwait’s national celebrations and the appointment of Kuwait Blind Association Secretary Mansour Al-Enezi was appointed Secretary General of the Asian Blind Union -- the first time for Kuwait to occupy a leadership position in the union.”

On the action plan of the Association for the current season, he confirmed the preparation of an integrated program to celebrate the national holidays throughout the month of February. He disclosed the program consists of many cultural, recreational and sporting activities; in addition to the preparation of a special program for the holy month of Ramadan.

Secretary-General of the Asian Blind Union and Secretary of Kuwait Blind Association Mansour Al-Enezi dedicates his appointment to the abovementioned position to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Kuwait. He considers this a unique achievement, since Kuwait is the first Gulf country to obtain such a high position in the union since its establishment. He also confirmed his selection as member of the Executive Committee of the World Blind Union as per the nomination of the Asian Blind Union.

Collaborative efforts in heritage conservation

Kuwait-Tunisia explore avenues for boosting cooperation across diverse cultural domains

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Ambassador Mansour Al-Omar of the State of Kuwait in Tunisia and Tunisian Minister of Culture, Hayat Al-Qarmazi, convened to explore avenues for bolstering cooperation across diverse cultural domains between their respective nations, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to Kuwait News Agency, they have reached an agreement to host a Kuwaiti cultural week in Tunisia.

A statement from the Tunisian Ministry of Culture announced that this decision transpired during Minister Al-Qarmazi’s meeting with Ambassador Al-Omar in the presence of Director-General of the Tunisian Heritage Institute, the Director-General of the Tunisian Center for Puppetry, and the Director of the Center for Arab and Mediterranean Music (Najma Ezzahra) in Sidi Bou Said.

Discussions encompassed fortifying collaborative efforts in heritage conservation, music, puppetry arts, as well as the orchestration of cultural and artistic events. Consequently, both parties pledged to enact several initiatives aimed at bolstering mutual cooperation. These include hosting a Ku-

waiti cultural week in Tunisia, knowledge exchange in manuscript restoration, and the signing of cooperation agreements between the Tunisian Heritage Institute and the House of Antiquities in Kuwait.

Additionally, they agreed to collaborate on developing joint submissions to UNESCO for the recognition and preservation of intangible heritage. Tunisian involvement in Kuwait’s celebration as the Capital of Arab Culture for 2025 was also deliberated.

The meeting further addressed support for the establishment of the International Center for Calligraphy Arts (Iqra), a project authorized for completion by Tunisian President Kais Saied. Based in Tunis, the center focuses on Arabic calligraphy and calligraphy in various languages.



Al-Omar

Land allocation in focus

Hawally Governorate Committee to hold crucial 6th meeting headed by Al-Jadaan

By Enas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 8: Municipal Council’s Hawally Governorate Committee will hold its sixth meeting of the second session headed by Nasser Al-Jadaan on Monday to discuss a number of items on its agenda, the most important of which is the Ministry of Health’s letter for the allocation of land in Hawally Governorate to establish a specialized dental center.

It will also discuss the following items on its agenda:-

1. The request of the Ministry for the reallocation of the site decided upon by the Municipal Council in favor of the Ministry of Finance.
2. The request of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy for allocating a secondary transformer station in proposed site No. 3 in Surra Block 5.
3. The request of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy for the allocation and maintenance of a construction site for a secondary transfer station with an area of 12 x 7 meters in Mishref Block No. 6, Station No. 2.
4. The request of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy for the allocation of a secondary transfer station site with dimensions of 12.5 x 16.5 meters in Mishref Block No. 6, Station No. 5.
5. The proposal submitted by member Alia Al-Farsi regarding traffic congestion in Jabriya and Surra areas.
6. The proposal submitted by member Fahad Mused Al-Abd Al-Jader regarding construct-

Ministry of Education announces Financial Sector’s plan for academic year 2024/2025

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Director of the Financial Department at the Ministry of Education Matrook Al-Mutairi has announced the Financial Sector’s plan for academic year 2024/2025, reports Al-Anba daily.

The daily obtained a copy of the plan submitted to the concerned entity stating: “As part of the preparations of the Financial Sector and its units for academic year 2024/2025, we inform you that the Covenant Follow-up Division in the Entities Accounting Department will transfer the fund allocations for schools to the bank accounts of the administrations of schools during the summer vacation, so the administrations can meet their needs before the start of the school year and carry out emergency maintenance works.”

ing industrial speed bumps on Khaled Abdulatif Al-Musallam Street in Al-Salaam Block 3

7. The proposal submitted by the Chairman of the committee Nasser Al-Jadaan for the creation of a U-turn on Nasser Al-Mubarak Street Road.

8. The proposal submitted by member Dr. Hassan Kamal for the introduction of a U-turn in Rumaithiya residential area.

Al-Mutairi disclosed that special bulletins and circulars will be issued at the beginning of each year to the accounting units in the educational districts, in addition to a book from the Educational Facilities Sector with detailed statistics (for each stage separately) on the number of schools expected to open in the new academic year. He then confirmed the opening of 25 schools in Ahmadi and Farwaniya educational districts this year.

He said the educational districts will be informed about the schools with classes for slow and low learners , as well as the names and number of distinguished schools. He revealed a letter will be sent to the Supplies and Stores Department to monitor the needs of the educational districts and their affiliated schools.

9. A letter submitted by a citizen for converting a plot No. 14618 into a commercial property in Salmiya Block 6, Street 3.

10. The item related to amending the status of plots 145 to 153 and those numbered A55-B55 in Al-Saddiq Block 4, in accordance with the provisions of law No. 40/1978 regarding the organization of regulatory plots.

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Joint Operations (Saudi Arabian Chevron Inc. / Kuwait Gulf Oil Company), announces the under-mentioned Public Tenders for procurement of materials.

Kuwaiti and Saudi Merchants, registered with either Company wishing to participate in any of the under-mentioned Tenders are invited to collect the Tender documents from Purchasing Section, Purchasing & Logistic Division, Administration Building, Ground Floor, Joint Operations, Wafra, during the official working hours from **11 FEB 2024** up to **10 MAR 2024** for a non-refundable fee mentioned against each tender. Tender Fees to be deposited in the National bank of Kuwait (NBK) Account No. 1001132057. Saudi Suppliers can collect the tender documents from Saudi Arabian Chevron office in Al-Khobar Telephone No.: (013) 8645104 - Fax No.: (013) 8985436

The closing date for the following Tenders will be on **Monday, 18 MAR 2024 @ 10:00 AM.**

S.NO.	TENDER NO.	MATERIALS	FEES (IN KD)
1	012254	S/F INGERSOLL DRESSER PUMP	25
2	012346	S/F UNION PUMPS	5
3	012347	CONTROL VALVES	35
4	012631	S/F LUFKIN PUMPS	15
5	012634	CLOSED DRAIN VESSEL	50
6	012635	DRAIN PUMP	50
7	012637	AIR COMPRESSOR PACKAGE	50
8	012700	PIPE FITTINGS COATED	25
9	012886	FLAME ARRESTOR (TANKTECH - ENARDO - PROTEGO)	5
10	012918	THERMAL MASS FLOWMETERS	15
11	013011	S/F SULZER PUMPS	35
12	013012	PIPES AND INSERT SLEEVES, COATED	35
13	013035	PRODUCTION SEPARATOR	25
14	013202	VALVES (GATE _ BALL - BUTTERFLY)	35
15	013453	CROSSOVERS	5

Notes: Gate Passes are required for Suppliers entering JO-Wafra Administrative Offices to collect the tender document and gate pass processing time is 48 hours. Please fill request for gate pass along with legible copies of Authorization letter, Civil ID, Car Registration, Supplier Registration (KGOC or SAC) to e-mail HBJH@chevron.com and CBMS@chevron.com at least 48 hours prior to arrival.

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The closing date for the following Tenders will be on **Monday, 4 MAR 2024 @ 09:00 AM.**

S.NO.	TENDER NO.	MATERIALS	FEES (KD)
1	011107 - R1	LAB EQUIPMENTS	25
2	012483	HEATER TUBES	25
3	012485	CERAMIC FIBRE BLANKET	5
4	012488	STRUCTRAL STEEL	5
5	012489	OIL, LUBRICANT & GREASE	5
6	012704	ELECTRICAL CABLES	5
7	012797	DISTRIBUTION TRANSFORMERS	15
8	012802	STUFFING BOX, SUCKER ROD & PONY ROD	5
9	012883	PRESSURE REGULATORS (BAIRD & TATLOCK - TAYLOR VALVE TECH - NEHER SYSTEM)	5

Notes: Gate Passes are required for Suppliers entering JO-Wafra Administrative Offices to collect the tender documents and gate pass processing time is 48 hours. Please fill request for gate pass along with legible copies of Authorization letter, Civil ID, Car Registration, Supplier Registration (KGOC or SAC) to e-mail HBJH@chevron.com and CBMS@chevron.com at least 48 hours prior to arrival.

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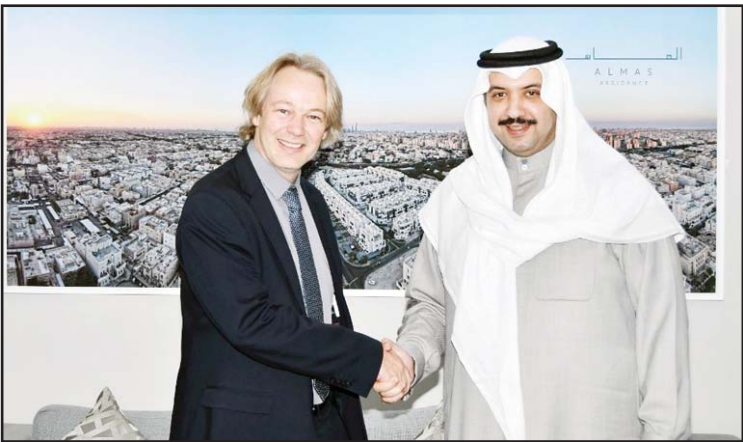
Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah enters into an agreement supporting the French cultural work in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Action Group Holdings, discussed with the Director of the French Institute of Kuwait, Mr. Benoit Cathala, their common ideas on ways to enhance “cooperation and bilateral cultural relations between Kuwait and France.”

Sheikh Mubarak stressed the importance of intensifying efforts to implement a variety of cultural activities between Kuwait and France, noting that Kuwait and France have has a close relationship since the establishment of official relations between the two

friendly countries in the 1960s, and this was reinforced by France’s pivotal role in the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. And the positive position that France enjoys in Kuwait. An example of this is that the Kuwaiti government introduced the teaching of the French language in public secondary schools, and many private schools were established that adopt French curriculum, such as the French School of Kuwait.

Sheikh Mubarak said: “There are certainly many areas in which bilateral Kuwaiti-French cultural cooperation is possible. Based on the two countries’ awareness of the need to increase bilateral exchanges



Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Action Group Holdings, with the Director of the French Institute of Kuwait, Mr. Benoit Cathala.

in various fields such as organizing exhibitions, seminars, arts, hospitality and tourism. During the meeting, the idea of expanding the scope of promoting French culture in Kuwait was raised by developing specific plans for related cultural endeavors. Among these endeavors is the agreement of Action Group to be the golden partner and sponsor of the cultural events organized by the French Institute in Kuwait.

Sheikh Mubarak said that Kuwait and France have many aspects that can be learned from each other. We should be proud of the friendly relations that the two friendly countries have maintained over many years and decades. It should

be noted that in 2017, Sheikh Mubarak was awarded by the French government with the highest French civilian award, L’ordre national de la Légion d’honneur (Knight of the National Order of the Legion of Honor) for his role in strengthening bilateral Kuwaiti-French relations.

For his part, Mr. Benoit Cathala said, “The French Institute in Kuwait was established in 2012 and is committed to promoting cultural initiatives and ideas for mutual benefit, and illustrating commitments to diverse cultural exchanges.” He appreciated Sheikh Mubarak’s initiative and support for French cultural work in Kuwait.

March 5

Continued from Page 1

On the other hand, the concerned committees’ reports on amending the electoral districts, residency of foreigners, investigation into the Caracal and Eurofighter deals, good loan, cost of living and children allowances will be tackled on March 5 as per the government’s request with the approval of the Assembly.

Meanwhile, five parliamentary committees will meet on Sunday to deliberate on various items in their agendas.

The Public Utilities Committee will discuss the proposal to issue a law on determining the mechanism for allocating and exploiting vacant State-owned lands and investing them, in the presence of representatives of the Kuwait Municipality and Ministry of Finance.

The Budgets and Final Accounts Committee will start discussing the general framework of the budget for the new fiscal year -- 2024/2025; in the presence of representatives of the ministries of Finance and Oil, State Audit Bureau (SAB), Civil Service Commission (CSC), Bureau of Financial Controllers (BFC) and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC).

The Health Affairs Committee will discuss a draft law on charitable work, in the presence of representatives of the ministries of Social Affairs and Foreign Affairs and the charitable societies.

The Education Affairs Committee will discuss the proposed law on establishing the Supreme Education Council and a draft law on the reorganization of the Supreme Education Council submitted by the Ministry of Education. Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Adel Al-Adwani will attend the meeting.

The Modern and Remote Areas Development Committee will discuss and follow the services, infrastructure works and accelerating access to modern and remote areas, in the presence of representatives of the Ministry of Public Works and KPC.

On the other hand, Director of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Abdul Aziz Al-Ibrahim confirmed that from April 1 to Sept 30, 2023; the authority monitored a number of negatives and obstacles related to preventing and combating corruption within the framework of its competencies regulated by law number 2/2016.

In a ‘top secret’ letter he sent to Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun, who included it in the agenda for Tuesday’s session; Al-Ibrahim attached a set of recommendations to activate the implementation of the law and laws related to reducing the obstacles mentioned in the report, prosecuting the corrupt, and recovering State funds.

In another development, MPs commented on the decision of Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Adel Al-Adwani to impose the fingerprint attendance system on teachers.

MP Falah Al-Hajri criticized the decision; pointing out that educational institutions continue to suffer from poor services, while the teachers’ salaries are lower than that of the employees in other ministries. He said the decision worsens the condition of teachers whose attendance is already proven by their presence in classrooms, the oversight entities and the senior officials including the department head, technical supervisor and assistant manager.

MP Badr Sayyar Al-Shemmari said three former education ministers realized that it is impossible to implement the fingerprint attendance system for teachers without an integrated organizational structure. He holds Al-Adwani accountable for any negative consequence of this decision, which will lead to more problems in the educational sector particularly in the administrative, legal and technical aspects.

In contrast, MPs Hamad Al-Elyan, Abdulwahab Al-Essa, Fahd Al-Masoud and Jenan Busheiri issued a joint statement supporting the decision of Al-Adwani. They asserted that educational development necessitates the concerted efforts of all the concerned parties. They pointed out that the implementation of the fingerprint attendance system for teachers does not mean doubting the teachers’ sincerity, as it helps in ensuring fairness in the annual performance assessment and will end disputes over the results. They urged the Ministry of Education to alleviate their worries about the work overload, exacerbated by the additional administrative tasks.

Moreover, MP Muhammad Al-Hewaila submitted a proposal to cancel the administrative decision stating that the secondary school certificate should have been issued maximum of two years ago for the student to enroll in higher education. He explained the decision is a hindrance to Kuwaiti employees who want to pursue higher studies, but their secondary certificates were issued more than two years ago.

He underscored the need for the legislative and executive authorities to bear their responsibility in ensuring a prosperous

and stable life for the citizens; hence, the importance of ratifying bills included in the agenda of the session slated for March 5, as they play an essential role in achieving social stability. The lawmaker said the citizens have the right to enjoy the financial surplus through the ratification of urgent bills like increasing the cost of living allowance and the minimum amount of zero interest loans for retirees. He added the Kuwaiti citizen is the victim of the rising prices, which eat up his salary within 10 days; so he is forced to borrow money to cover his family’s needs.

In addition, MP Fahd bin Jame’e has stressed the need to restructure the United Nations (UN) and its Security Council to end their use of double standards, such that they have not hurled any accusation at Israel in the last 75 years the latter has been committing crimes against humanity and human rights.

In a press statement after attending the recent meeting of parliamentarians from UN-member nations which was held in cooperation with the International Parliament Union (IPU), Jame’e disclosed that they tackled a number of important issues including human rights and the Israeli attacks on Palestinians, especially those residing in Gaza.

He affirmed that Kuwait -- represented by its political leadership, government and National Assembly -- has adopted a strong and permanent supportive position towards the Palestinian issue since 1948. He emphasized the need for Palestinians to obtain their rights and exercise sovereignty over their entire land. He believes that the diplomacy of Kuwait, Arab and Muslim countries will eventually emerge victorious.

Kuwait braces

Continued from Page 1

In some coastal areas, sea waves may rise to more than seven feet.

He emphasized that gradual improvement is expected to begin by noon on the following Monday, with diminishing clouds and receding chances of rain. This will be accompanied by the advancement of a high-pressure air system and the potential for fog formation at night, leading to reduced horizontal visibility in specific areas.

Kuwait slams

Continued from Page 1

responsibilities by protecting the disarmed Palestinian civilians and put international accountability mechanisms in place in order to stop continued Israeli violations of international law, international humanitarian law and international legitimacy resolutions.

Jordan on Saturday warned against an Israeli occupation military operation on Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, which is home to hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, who were displaced by the ongoing Israeli aggression on Gaza.

Jordan’s Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Sufyan Qudah said in a statement that Jordan absolutely refuses the displacement of Palestinians inside or outside their own land, emphasizing the need for the war to stop and achieve a ceasefire while assuring the Palestinians’ protection.

Qudah called on the international community to take responsibility and accountability and take action to pressure the Israeli occupation to stop its continued war on the enclave.

Israeli occupation’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered on Friday the occupation’s military to prepare for a military operation in Rafah in Gaza.

Meanwhile, the body of 6-year-old Hind Rajab and five of her family members were discovered on Saturday, after the vehicle they were traveling in was surrounded by Israeli tanks for 12 days in the Tal Al-Hawa area, southwest Gaza City.

According to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS), the bodies of paramedics Yousif Zaino and Ahmad Al-Madhoun, who went to rescue Hind were also found in the area.

PRCS said that the Israeli occupation aggression deliberately targeted the ambulance, as it was found meters away from the vehicle that the child was in.

Hind and her cousin Layan survived after her family were shot by Israeli occupation force, after which Layan called emergency services to rescue her and Hind, before the call was cut off after hearing heavy gunfire in the background.

The call’s recording was published by PRCS and the search for the child continued for 12 days.

Alice Wairimu Nderitu, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, reiterated Friday the call for a humanitarian ceasefire and protection of civilians in the Gaza Strip.

In a news statement, Nderitu expressed profound horror at the ongoing situation

in the Middle East and claims on violations of international law.

She also underscored the need to intensify diplomatic efforts to bring the crisis to an end.

“Civilians should never pay the price of a conflict for which they bear no responsibility,” she added.

“Their most basic rights must be protected and preserved, and their humanitarian needs must be met,” she noted.

She referred to the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the case brought forward by South Africa against Israel on prevention of genocide in the Gaza Strip.

Nderitu noted that neither the UN Secretary-General nor herself, as his Special Adviser, “take a position” in relation to ongoing judicial proceedings before the Court.

In the 26 January decision, the ICJ ordered Israel, inter alia, in accordance with its obligations under the Genocide Convention, “to take all measures within its power” to prevent the commission of acts within the scope of Article II of the Convention, including killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group’s destruction, and imposing measures intended to prevent births.

The Court also ordered Israel to “ensure with immediate effect that its military forces do not commit any of the above-described acts”.

Kuwait to

Continued from Page 1

She said Kuwait has always been an example to follow in view of its economic measures that serve societal interests.

“Kuwait was and is still pioneering in everything and in various domains and is considered by everyone to be a land of amity and giving, and that’s why it was selected by the Council of Arab Businesswomen (as an Arab economic model),” she added.

For her part, the federation’s Deputy Chairwoman Khairiah Dashti said the forum will draw representatives from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco.

The event features tours by the participating delegations of the Kuwait National Museum, Science Center, Al-Salam Palace and Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center and ancient popular markets, she elaborated.

The federation’s Secretary-General Jameela Al-Dawas, also speaking at the news conference, said the federation mainly aims at women’s economic empowerment and contribution to developing the economic capabilities of the private sector.

She noted that the federation seeks to encourage and stimulate the development of professional skills and open channels of effective dialogue with state agencies in order to wipe out obstacles hindering development goals.

For his part, Chairman of the Kuwaiti Economic Society Mishar Alabduljaleel said the State, in coordination with civil society organizations, is properly doing its due role to create a distinguished business environment with a view to roping in world companies and foreign capital.

Kuwait commends

Continued from Page 1

He emphasized that Kuwait’s permanent delegation is fully prepared to work with all members of the Security Council, including the five newly joined countries, on this dossier.

Ambassador al-Bannai thanked and appreciated Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the UNAMI Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and all members of her team for hard work and tangible efforts in moving this file forward and carrying out her tasks in this regard.

He called for continuing submission of periodic reports about the progress in this file to the Security Council.

He warned “and that any retreat from implementing these mechanisms which proved successful and effective will undermine and negatively affect all the strenuous efforts that have been made in this regard since 1991”.

He said that Kuwaiti permanent delegation’s participation for the first time as a speaker at the Security Council meetings concerned with the UNAMI mission showed that “we believe that this file is of a humanitarian not political nature”.KUNA photo

Kuwait’s Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai.

Egyptian Ambassador praises Kuwait diplomatic excellence

Academic ties strengthen with new agreements

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Osama Shaltout has expressed Egypt’s appreciation for the Kuwaiti foreign policy, which is characterized by calm and moderation, as it seeks to resolve differences and conflicts through peaceful means, reports Al-Qabas daily.



Osama Shaltout, Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait.

During his interview with the daily, Shaltout pointed out that the positions of Kuwait are clear; affirming the latter is explicitly supportive of Arab rights. He lauded the important role that the country plays in supporting humanitarian issues, stressing this was evident in the clear and strong position of Kuwait regarding the Israeli attacks on Gaza, especially in international forums like that of the United Nations (UN).

He praised the unified Arab and Islamic positions in support of all steps and procedures that lead to preserving and defending Palestinian rights, including the case filed by South Africa against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for committing genocide against the Palestinians. He said the Palestinian issue is a priority for Egypt and Kuwait and “will continue to support the rights of the Palestinian people.”

He then highlighted the academic and educational cooperation between the two countries, which resulted in the signing of a number of agreements between scientific institutions such as Egyptian universities and academies and their Kuwaiti counterparts.

Regarding the latest developments on Kuwait’s decision to temporarily stop medical scholarships for Kuwaiti students in Egypt, Shaltout explained that Egypt has the largest and most prestigious universities in medical specialties; and it receives a large number of foreign students of various nationalities annually -- Arab or non-Arab -- to study medical courses there.

He affirmed that “Egyptian universities also enjoy a good classification and rank. We have four Egyptian universities in the top 10 Arab universities in the following order: Cairo, Ain Shams, Mansoura and Alexandria.”

He believes the decision of the brothers in Kuwait to temporarily suspend the scholarship is a right guaranteed for every country, as each government determines the priorities of scholarship areas according to its vision. He said consultation between the Egyptian and Kuwaiti sides in this regard is still ongoing to achieve the maximum benefit for the two brotherly countries in the field of scholarship and scientific research through the

Joint Committee on Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research.

He went on to say that since the outbreak of events in Gaza, Egypt has been providing all means of support for the brothers in the Gaza Strip. He confirmed that Egypt tops the list of countries in terms of the amount of aid sent to Gaza. “Since the first day, Egypt also expressed its readiness to receive all humanitarian aid at Al-Arish Airport, where Egypt received a lot of aid directed to Gaza, and most of this aid entered the Strip despite the Israeli obstinacy,” he added.

He then expressed his great appreciation for the aid sent from the Kuwaiti side; thanking the leadership, government and people of Kuwait and Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) for their role in helping their Palestinian brothers.

He explained that President of the Republic Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has stressed more than once that the Palestinian issue is the “issue of all issues” for Egypt. He asserted that Egypt will remain supportive of the brothers in Palestine until they obtain their full rights by establishing an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital on the borders of June 4, 1967. He confirmed coordination with the Gulf states, including Kuwait in particular, regarding the delivery of aid to Gaza through each country’s Red Crescent in cooperation with the Egyptian authorities in Al-Arish and Rafah.

Regarding the Israeli allegations and accusations that Egypt is obstructing the entry of aid into Gaza, Shaltout stated: “The ICJ has rejected those allegations and obliged Israel to take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of basic services and humanitarian aid in order to address the difficult living conditions faced by the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The ICJ held Israel solely responsible for obstructing the entry of aid to our Palestinian brothers in Gaza, and causing the difficult living

conditions they are currently suffering from. Perhaps, the court’s decision is the most eloquent response to the Israeli allegations that are not based on any foundation.”

On reports that Arab aid are stuck at the Rafah crossing, he pointed out that with regard to Kuwaiti aid, KRCS has affirmed that all the aid sent already entered the Gaza Strip. The obstruction of some non-food aid is the result of Israeli obstinacy, so this aid will remain in Egypt with the hope that it will be brought in at a later time.

Speaking about the recent developments in the Red Sea, he said Egypt confirmed that what is happening in the Red Sea is a direct result of Israeli practices, and warned more than once of the danger of the continued Israeli aggression against the Palestinians, warning against expanding the scope of the conflict as a result, which could have been avoided by taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the ceasefire.

He added: “Egypt’s priority remains the ceasefire in Gaza. The lives of our brothers are priceless and we are working with all forces to stop the bloodshed. We believe that stopping Israeli military operations and stopping the expansion of the conflict will contribute directly to the return of maritime navigation in the Red Sea to normal, and thus, stop the negative impact on the interests of many countries, including Egypt. We stress that the countries bordering the Red Sea bear the responsibility for securing it.”

Asked if there is coordination with the Gulf states to secure navigation and trade movement in the Red Sea, Shaltout affirmed: “There is coordination with these countries, most notably the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.”

He also talked about investment cooperation, announcing that 25 percent of Kuwaiti investments in Egypt are under the umbrella of Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA).

Zero tolerance

Deputy PM stands firm against liquor smuggling

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef has affirmed the ability of the Criminal Security Sector and Kuwait General Administration for Customs (KGAC) to efficiently handle smuggling and trading of alcohol cases, reiterating the zero tolerance policy in dealing with smugglers and traders of alcoholic drinks, reports Al-Anba daily.

Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf were present during the inventory of the largest seizure of imported liquor in the year 2024 -- 13,422 bottles with a market value exceeding KD1 million -- at Shuwaikh Port. They thanked the concerned officers for exerting tremendous efforts in combating the smuggling of narcotic and intoxicating substances. They



Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef -- Deputy Prime Minister

also stressed the need for everyone to be vigilant and be strict in dealing with smugglers and traders of such prohibited items.

This came after the officers received confidential information about an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of liquor in a container loaded with furniture coming from an Asian country. Accordingly, coordination was made with the Ports Sector to seize the container, such that a joint team was formed between the Drugs Control General Department and KGAC to gather information in order to verify the tip-off.

After searching the container, the officers found a large quantity of imported liquor and initial investigations revealed the involvement of three people who were referred to the concerned authorities, along with the confiscated liquor bottles.

World News Roundup

Asia

Indonesia goes to polls

No desire for diplomacy with South Korea – Kim

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 10, (AP): North Korean leader **Kim Jong Un** restated he has no desire for diplomacy with South Korea and that the North would annihilate its rival if provoked, state media said Friday, in the latest of his belligerent statements that are raising tensions in the region.

During a visit to North Korea’s Defense Ministry on Thursday, Kim said his recent moves to cut ties with South Korea allow his military to take on a more aggressive posture “by securing lawfulness to strike and destroy (the South) whenever triggered.”

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have increased in recent months, with Kim elevating his weapons demonstrations and threats and the United States, South Korea and Japan strengthening their combined military exercises in response.

While most South Korean officials and experts have downplayed the possibility that Kim has real intent to engage in a war, concerns about a direct military provocation have grown as the North may try to ramp up pressure in an election year in South Korea and the United States.

The North’s official Korean Central News Agency reported Kim said he took the initiative to “shake off the unrealistic pretense of dialogue and cooperation with the (South) Korean puppets who sought the collapse of our republic.” The agency said Kim on his visit to the ministry was accompanied by his daughter, thought to be named Kim Ju Ae, who some experts believe is being groomed as a future leader.

Remarks

Kim Jong Un’s remarks came weeks after he declared to his rubber-stamp parliament that North Korea was abandoning its long-standing objective of a peaceful unification with South Korea and ordered the rewriting of its constitution to cement the South as its most hostile foreign adversary.

The North has since shut down government departments that handled affairs with the South, tore down a major unification monument and abolished laws that had governed past economic projects with the South.

Experts say Kim’s attempts to recalibrate relations with the South, which come amid a testing spree of potentially nuclear-capable weapons targeting neighboring rivals and the United States, are aimed at reducing Seoul’s voice and eventually forcing direct negotiations with Washington over the nuclear standoff.

NKorea welcomes Russian tourists: A group of Russian tourists arrived in North Korea on Friday, likely the first from any country to enter the isolated state since the pandemic.

The tour underscores deepening cooperation between the two countries following a meeting last September between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin at a cosmodrome in Russia’s Far East.

Many Russians now struggle to travel to Europe and the United States because of sanctions applied to Russia after its invasion of Ukraine. In October, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said he would recommend North Korea as a vacation destination.

South Korea’s government said it has no record of North Korean state media reporting on tourists entering the country since the COVID-19 pandemic.

The tour group will visit the capital, Pyongyang, and then go skiing, said Inna Mukhina, the general director of the Vostok Intur agency, which is running the tour. Vladivostok airport’s online timetable shows an Air Koryo plane took off for Pyongyang at 1:39 p.m. local time Friday.

The group left from Vladivostok airport in Russia’s Far East. Mukhina said there were “lots” of people who wanted to come on the tour, adding that the group contains travelers from places across Russia including Moscow and St. Petersburg as well as the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad, sandwiched in between Poland and Lithuania. The group also includes children who study skiing at a Russian school that aims to create Olympic champions, she said.

The Russians’ reasons for visiting North Korea vary, Mukhina said, suggesting some people are interested in the opportunity to visit a closed country, while others are more interested in skiing and snowboarding.

Indonesia goes to polls: With a broad smile on his face, Jakarta city council candidate Rian Ernest answers almost every question about his faith with the same line.

“I’m Christian, but my wife and children are Muslims, so pray for me to get the guidance,” Ernest said. Ernest is one of thousands of candidates facing the contradictions of seeking office as a member of a minority in the world’s third-largest democracy, which is holding national elections on Wednesday.

Elections in the country often reveal a tension between pluralism and the power of conservatives from its Muslim majority.

Nearly 90% of Indonesia’s 277 million people are Muslims. There are just under a million Christians in Jakarta, out of around 10 million people.

Christians like Ernest hold around 14% of seats in the national legislature, while making up just under 9% of the general population, but they face constant questions about their faith. A national quota system has helped more women win office, but fallen short of its own targets. And in this election, a new party is seeking to win representation for marginalized groups like domestic workers and people with disabilities.

Ernest, a lawyer turned politician, is running for a seat in the city legislature in East Jakarta for Golkar, Indonesia’s second largest party.

US, Australia, Japan ships conduct drills: Warships from the United States, Australia and Japan have held joint drills in the South China Sea in defiance of Beijing, which claims sovereignty over virtually the entire strategic waterway.

The US 7th Fleet that oversees most US Navy operations in the region said the guided-missile destroyer USS John Finn and combat ship USS Gabrielle Giffords carried out operations with navy ships from Japan and Australia on Wednesday and Thursday.

There was no word on whether the exercises were conducted close to islands and shoals claimed by Beijing, which has built military bases on at least seven islands by piling concrete and sand on top of coral atolls. Beijing objects strongly to foreign naval operations in the area, saying historical records prove it belongs to China.



In this photo released by Sputnik news agency on Friday, Feb. 9, 2024, Russian President Vladimir Putin (right), listens to a question during an interview with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia, Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024. (AP)

Russia

‘Interview of the century’

Putin foresees multipolar world

MOSCOW, Feb 10, (Agencies): The interview of the century ... This is how the American journalist Tucker Carlson described the interview of the Russian President Vladimir Putin. It is Putin’s first interview with a foreign media outlet since the start of the special Russian operation in Ukraine in February 2022.

In the interview, which lasted 127 minutes, Putin confirmed that the West has begun to realize the impossibility of defeating his country strategically, and that it must think about what to do next.

He revealed his readiness for dialogue, indicating that sooner or later Moscow and Kiev will reach an agreement on the end of the war.

The interview received more than 250 million views on various social media outlets around the world, and was widely followed by many, especially in the Western countries, led by the United States to which Putin sent special messages through one of its most famous journalists affiliated with former US President Donald Trump.

In the interview, Putin indicated what the world’s conditions will look like after the war.

He said, “The emergence of a multipolar world is inevitable for greater cooperation and shared responsibility.”

Regarding Poland and Latvia, Putin said, “An invasion of the two NATO members is absolutely out of the question, except for one case, i.e., if Poland attacks Russia. We don’t have the slightest desire to go to Poland, Latvia or anywhere else. Why would we do that? We simply have no desire”.

He stressed that it would be contrary to common sense to get involved in “some kind of a world war.”

Russia’s strategic defeat will never happen

The Russian President insisted that the strategic defeat that the West is trying to inflict on Russia will never happen, adding that his country does not attack anyone, but rather defends itself.

Putin said, “The Western countries are making blatant noise about inflicting a strategic defeat on Russia on the battlefield, but they are beginning to realize with their ruling class that this is not an easy matter and will never happen”.

He highlighted Russia’s readiness for dialogue with the West, adding, “When it comes to defending yourself, your family, and your homeland, we do not attack anyone, but rather we defend our people, ourselves, our homeland, and our future. Russia

could not stand by and watch when Kiev launched a war on Donbass in 2014 because that amounts to criminal negligence, and we could not leave our brothers. In fact, part of the Russian people is under that war machine.”

End the war

Regarding the American policy in Ukraine, Putin said, “In 2022, the American policy in Ukraine reached dangerous limits for Russia to the extent that we can no longer cross because it would have destroyed Russia itself.

If the American leadership really wants to stop hostilities in Ukraine, it must stop supplying arms to Kiev. Everything then will end within weeks, after which some conditions can be agreed upon.”

Putin explained that his country, after the 2014 coup in Ukraine, repeatedly proposed for a solution to the problems that arose through peaceful means, but no one listened to it. Rather, the Ukrainian leadership announced that it would not implement the Minsk agreements and continued the military activity in the region.

He said, “If the people of Donbass had been persuaded to return to the framework of the Ukrainian state, taking into account the Minsk agreements, it would have been possible, but Kiev wanted to resolve the issue only by military force. Russia appealed to the United States and European countries to stop this immediately so that it becomes possible to implement the agreements.”

NATO expansion

Putin revealed Moscow’s discomfort with NATO’s expansion policies since the 1990s, stressing that NATO does not need to expand.

He said, “The expansion of the alliance means that the situation will be as it was during the Cold War, but closer to Russia’s borders.”

He indicated that the United States did not fulfill its promise that NATO would not expand eastward.

Regarding the negotiations between Russia and NATO on the current security situation, the Russian President said, “They want the negotiations, but they do not know how to do it. They brought the situation to where we are.”

Supporting terrorism

Regarding the United States’ support for terrorists in the North Caucasus, Putin said, “On my part, I have raised the issue of the inadmissibility of the United States’ support for separatist movements or terrorism in the North Caucasus many times. But the Americans continued to provide political, media, financial and military sup-

port.”

He stressed that the election of a new US president, which is scheduled for November 5, is likely to pit the former Republican President Donald Trump against the current Democratic President Joe Biden, but it will not change relations between the United States and Russia.

Putin said, “You just asked me if anything would change if another leader came. It is not a question of who is the leader, or of the personality of a specific person”

He revealed, “I had a personal relationship with Donald Trump.”

Using the dollar is “stupid”

In another context, Putin indicated that using the dollar as a tool of conflict in foreign policy is “stupidity” and one of the biggest strategic mistakes of the United States.

He explained, “The dollar is the main weapon for maintaining Washington’s influence in the world. Once it is used as a tool in the political conflict, you will have undermined this American influence.

Dollar reserves are declining even among the allies of the United States. Everyone is looking at what is happening and starting to look for an opportunity to protect themselves.”

The Russian President Vladimir Putin believes that the United States is adapting to the trends of world development and the global economy through force, sanctions, pressure, bombing, and the use of armed forces, all of which is linked to arrogance.

Russian economy

On the other hand, Putin revealed that the BRICS countries are developing at a very rapid pace and their share in the global economy now exceeds that of G7, adding that this has nothing to do with the events in Ukraine.

At the same time, he stressed Russia has become the No. 1 economy in Europe in 2023, despite the American sanctions and tools that are of no use.

North Torrent

Regarding a question about the Nord Stream 1 pipeline sabotage, Putin said, “Whoever blew up the Nord Stream pipeline sabotage is the one with the capabilities to commit it, and the one who benefits from it. When investigating the sabotage, one should not only search for the party with an interest in that, but also the one capable of doing so. It has become clear to the whole world what happened to the Nord Stream pipelines.”

He expressed his country’s readiness to supply Europe with gas through the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, but Germany is not in agreement.

10 children between 2004 and 2016. (AP)

Van Agt dies with wife: Dries van Agt, the Christian Democrat prime minister of the Netherlands from 1977 until 1982, has died by euthanasia, “hand in hand” together with his wife, according to the human rights organization he founded. They both were 93.

The news was made public on Friday by The Rights Forum, which said the couple died Monday and would be buried in a private ceremony in the eastern city of Nijmegen. “He died hand in hand with his beloved wife Eugénie van Agt-Krekelberg, the support and anchor with whom he was together for more than 70 years and whom he always continued to refer to as ‘my girl,’” the non-profit organization said in a statement.

The two both had been in fragile health for some time. In 2019, Van Agt suffered a brain hemorrhage while giving a speech at a commemoration event for Palestinians and never fully recovered.

A Christian Democrat from traditional Dutch stock, Van Agt became increasingly progressive after he departed politics, ultimately leaving his party in 2017 over ideological differences with the center-right Christian Democratic Appeal’s approach to Israel and the Palestinians. (AP)



Indonesia’s presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto gestures as he speaks during his campaign rally at Gelora Bung Karno Main Stadium in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Feb 10. (AP)



Zelenskyy



Syrskiy

Europe

Russian drone strike kills 7: A Russian drone strike on Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second largest city, killed at least seven people overnight, including three children, Kharkiv region governor Oleh Syniehubov reported Saturday.

He said the Iranian-made Shahed drone hit civilian infrastructure in the Nemyshlyan district on the city, causing a massive fire that burned down 15 private houses.

Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said more than 50 people had been evacuated and that emergency workers had contained the blaze by Saturday morning.

The Ukrainian air force said air defense systems destroyed 23 out of 31 Iranian Shahed drones launched by Russia overnight. The drones primarily targeted the northeastern Kharkiv region and the southern province of Odesa, the statement said.

Odesa regional governor Oleh Kiper said four people were injured there by the overnight drone attacks.

The attacks came in three waves, he said. The first targeted the regional capital - the port city of Odesa. All nine drones were shot down, but the debris damaged port infrastructure and injured one person. (AP)

Syrskiy signals new momentum:

Ukraine’s new military chief signaled Friday that he wants to build new momentum, saying his immediate goals are to improve troop rotation at the front lines and harness the power of new technology, at a time when Kyiv’s forces are largely on the defensive in the war with Russia.

Col **Gen Oleksandr Syrskiy**, who previously was the commander of Ukraine’s ground forces, spoke a day after President **Volodymyr Zelenskyy** put him in charge of the battlefield campaign with the war poised to enter its third year. He replaced the broadly popular Gen Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

“New tasks are on the agenda,” Syrskiy said on his Telegram channel. Syrskiy emphasized the need for “maintaining a balance between the fulfillment of combat tasks and the restoration of units with the intensification of training,” in an apparent reference to the need to rotate troops exhausted by nearly two years of fighting. (AP)

Protesters demand prez to quit:

Calls for Hungary’s conservative president to resign grew Friday amid outrage over her pardoning of a person convicted of covering up a child abuse case, which has unleashed an unprecedented political scandal for the long-serving nationalist government.

Katalin Novák, the first female president in Hungary’s history, sparked indignation after it was revealed that she issued a

presidential pardon in April 2023 to a man convicted of hiding a string of child sexual abuses in a state-run children’s home.

The man was sentenced to more than

three years in prison in 2018 for pressuring victims to retract their claims of sexual abuse by the institution’s director, who was sentenced to eight years for abusing at least



Experts examine a body of a resident killed in a fire as a Russian drone hit his home in a residential neighbourhood, in Kharkiv, Ukraine on Feb 10. Seven people including three children were killed in the Russian drone attack, said the city administration. (AP)

UAE EUROPE	- DFM - EURO Stoxx 50	Change +24.76 +5.09	Closing pts 4,183.86 4,715.87	PAKISTAN UK	- KSE 100 - FTSE 100	Change -1,154.41 -22.90	Closing pts 63,042.45 7,572.58

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait upgraded to Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market

ABK's trading volume and value lead to market upgrade

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) Group said it is pleased to announce the upgrade of its shares from the Main Market to the Premier Market of Boursa Kuwait, effective today.

This achievement is a testament to the Group's success in meeting the criteria required for the upgrade, including the daily trading volume of the Bank's stock and its nominal share and capital value.

Mr. Talal Behbehani, Chairman of ABK, expressed his satisfaction with the Bank's qualification to Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market, emphasizing "This milestone underscores the strength of the Group's financial position and our unwavering adherence to technical standards and regulations."

He clarified that the upgrade signifies shareholders' confidence in ABK's stock, as evidenced by the trading rates aligning with stipulated requirements. Mr. Behbehani also highlighted the potential for increased trading in ABK's stock by international institutions and funds following Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market index as a result of this development.

Mr. Behbehani conveyed his pride in this achievement, citing the Bank's fruitful culmination of years of dedicated work, successful strategies, and the ability to overcome diverse challenges. He attributed this success to the sophisticated plans devised by the Bank's Board of Directors, Executive Management, and staff members, all of whom have been instrumental in establishing efficient operational processes across the organization.

At the end of his statement, Mr. Behbehani expressed gratitude to the shareholders for their invaluable trust and emphasized his eagerness for the continued success of the ABK Group in the forthcoming period.

On his part, Mr. Abdulaziz Jawad, Chief Strategy Officer at ABK, stated, "This upgrade reaffirms the Bank's consistent alignment with the expectations of local and foreign financial and investment communities, ensuring a secure environment for shareholders." He underscored the successful investments which have positively impacted the Bank's share and the traded liquidity rates.

Jawad clarified that the ABK Group planted a seed two years ago as part of its strategy. Today, that seed has blossomed into a remarkable achievement of being upgraded to Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market. He said, "This is a reflection of our growth, stability, and success and is testament to the Group's vision and dedication, paving the way for continued excellence in the financial market."



Talal Behbehani



Abdulaziz Jawad

- **Talal Behbehani:** This milestone underscores the strength of our financial position and our unwavering adherence to technical standards and regulations
- **Abdulaziz Jawad:** The upgrade reaffirms the Bank's consistent alignment with the expectations of local and foreign financial and investment communities



Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait headquarters

Attracting Investors

Mr. Jawad highlighted, "ABK Group is dedicated to strengthening its competitive position in the Kuwaiti banking sector and bolstering its impact on the country's economic landscape through the development of diverse banking and financing solutions and products. This effort aims to attract a greater number of local and foreign investors to engage in trading its shares."

About ABK

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital.

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 45 branches.

This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients.

ABK is a strong supporter of Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign. Through its various initiatives, the Bank aims to promote financial inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customer rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services. Additionally, ABK consistently provides strategic information on how to avoid banking and financial fraud, loan application requirements, digital services, and more.

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

Other Voices

Refinery boasts 200,000 BPD

OQ8, newest oil co in region

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

OQ8, which opened its first refinery last week in Doqum, Oman, is a joint company between Kuwait and Oman, making it the first ever Gulf state cooperation within the Gulf Cooperation Council. This first-of-its-kind collaboration between the Gulf countries will be written in history. The refinery costs about \$9 billion, and it is 65 percent financed by international banks, while the rest is owned jointly by the two companies OQ8 Group and Kuwait Petroleum International or the two states Oman and Kuwait.

The new refinery's capacity is currently 200,000 barrels per day. It is located in the open Arab sea, which is open to both the west and the east. However, for the time being, the Asian markets are better in terms of prices and margin. Besides, it could lead to longer-term contracts with potential buyers of petroleum from the joint company. Now each partner can sell its share separately.

Kuwait will never have any problem in disposing of its entitlement in no time, as it has long-term arrangements with many companies in the east starting from Pakistan and India and all the way to Japan and Korea.

OQ8, which is a relatively young company, has the potential to grow and expand fast in developing its capacity by maybe double to reach 400,000 barrels per day in no time. What is more important is to incorporate petro-

chemical units at the earliest to bring in more profits and value to the refinery. Nowadays refineries are without petrochemicals, and of no higher value, which is not the optimum case to make more money and be more attractive.

What adds more value are creating, hiring, making room for fresh graduates to join the new refinery, giving them the opportunity in the newly developed business, and expanding on it for long term generations.

It is very important to find a well known foreign petrochemical partner like Dow, Basf or even some of the major oil companies that can operate and jointly share such a venture. We should not repeat the experience of AL Zour refinery in Kuwait, in terms of not having any petrochemical units to enhance and increase the profit margin.

It will be beneficial to listen to all refineries to include petrochemical units in any new refinery. Lessons should be learned. This applies to KPC and its refineries that are producing naphtha in our three refineries and selling as raw material, for instance as raw crude oil, instead of using this same product as raw material in producing ethylene and other top production as well as medical products.

We have a long way to go but Kuwait's oil industry is a leader in refining and joint ventures within the OPEC countries. Today, there are three joint refining operations in the world. It is an added value to our oil and refining business.

OQ8 is a new name in the refining business and will be well known in no time, provided that we upgrade and install petrochemical units.

Well done Oman and Kuwait on the new OQ8 joint venture. It is a unique example and experience for the Gulf Cooperation Council.



Email: nafikuwaiti@yahoo.com

By Mahmoud Shendi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Central Bank of Kuwait has recently unveiled crucial data shedding light on the intricate dynamics of the country's banking sector throughout the year 2023. The report provides a comprehensive overview, offering key insights into various aspects of financial activities. Here are the significant highlights:

1. Check Issuance Trends:

In the year 2023, a staggering 104.5 thousand bank customers collectively generated 4.35 million checks, amounting to a substantial 25.5 billion dinars.

Despite a marginal increase in the number of checks circulating (4.352 million), there was a noteworthy decline of 10.5% in their cumulative value compared to the preceding year.

2. Checks without Adequate Balance and Sub-

sequent Account Closures:

The data exposes a concerning trend as 2,778 individuals issued approximately 4,295 checks without sufficient balance, leading to the closure of 684 bank accounts.

Notably, there was a 5.6% reduction in the overall number of customers involved in check issuance, with around 104.4 thousand customers by the close of 2023.

3. Checks Returned due to Insufficient Balance: An alarming uptick was observed in the number of checks returned due to insufficient balance, totaling 4,295 in 2023, signifying an 8.5% surge.

Despite the rise in the number of returned checks, their cumulative value experienced a marginal dip of 0.1%, settling at 59.6 million dinars.

4. Account Closures and Customer Impact:

The report unveiled a 12.5% surge in closed accounts stemming from bounced checks, with 684

accounts shut down in 2023.

Approximately 646 customers experienced account closures during the year, depicting a significant 15.7% increase in comparison to the previous year.

Checks leading to account closures numbered 2,085 in 2023, reflecting a 10.4% increase from the preceding year.

5. Financial Implications:

The financial fallout was apparent, with the value of checks contributing to account closures due to insufficient balance experiencing a substantial decline of 33.6%. The total value amounted to about 19.9 million dinars in 2023.

This detailed exploration offers a nuanced understanding of the challenges and trends within Kuwait's banking sector, providing valuable insights for financial analysts, regulators, and stakeholders in the industry.

Account closures surge

Kuwait's Central Bank unveils banking sector data for 2023

Weekly unemployment claims fall to 218,000

US unemployment claims decline despite layoff announcements

Index hits 5,000 level

S&P 500 accomplishes first major milestone in 41 years

WASHINGTON, Feb 10, (KUNA): The S&P 500 US stock market index closed above the 5,000 level on Friday for the first time ever.

The landmark moment comes during a period of strong economic growth, the artificial intelligence revolution, a better-than-expected earnings season, and anticipation of a pivot from the Federal Reserve to start cutting rates.

It took almost 41 years for the S&P 500 to reach its first major milestone of 1,000, which it hit on February 2, 1998, according to Howard Silverblatt, senior index analyst at S&P Dow Jones Indices.

The index reached its previous major milestone of 4,000 on April 1, 2021, after the Fed slashed rates to almost zero, the government

pumped stimulus funds into the economy and the Covid-19 vaccine fueled optimism of post-pandemic economic growth.

On January 19, the benchmark index hit a new record for the first time in two years, closing at and besting its previous high of 4,796.56, reached on January 3, 2022. The index went on to set six new highs in January alone.

The S&P 500, an index that includes 500 leading publicly traded companies, is regarded as one of the best gauges of Wall Street's health.

The Standard and Poor's 500, or simply the S&P 500, is a stock market index tracking the stock performance of 500 of the largest companies listed on stock exchanges in the United States.

Tokyo stocks hit new highs

Tokyo stocks extended their winning streak for a third consecutive session, with the benchmark Nikkei 225 Stock Average reaching its highest finish since February 19, 1990, reaching 36,897.42. The index briefly breached the 37,000-mark to reach 37,287.26. However, the broader Tokyo Stock Price Index, which includes all shares of the market's First Section on the TSE, fell by 4.75 points to 2,557.88.

According to public broadcaster NHK, New York equity prices surged, attracting investors due to the yen's decline against the US dollar, which boosts exports and increases profits when converted into local currency. (KUNA)

German inflation eases in Jan

The Federal Statistical Office of Germany announced Friday a decline in the inflation rate in January, after an increase that reached nearly seven percent in the past two years due to the Russian-Ukrainian war and its repercussions on the prices of energy supplies.

The price rate rose by only 2.9 percent compared to the same month last year, which is the lowest since July of 2021, which witnessed a significant increase due to the Corona virus epidemic, it added.

The office detailed that energy prices rose last January by 2.8 percent, while food prices rose by 3.8 percent, expecting prices to continue to decline in Germany throughout the current year. (KUNA)

Farmers in Italy, Spain, Poland protest

Farmers in Italy, Spain and Poland demonstrated Friday as part of ongoing protests against European Union farming policies and to demand measures to combat production cost hikes, reduced profits and unfair competition from non-EU countries.

Similar protests have taken place across the bloc in recent weeks. Farmers complain that the 27-nation EU's policies on the environment and other matters are a financial burden and make their products more expensive than non-EU imports.

The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, has made some concessions over the last few weeks, including shelving plans to halve the use of pesticides and other dangerous substances. Nonetheless, the protests have spread.

In Poland, where imports of cheap grain, milk and other produce from Ukraine have caused particular anger, farmers drove tractors across the country to slow down traffic and block major roads, some displaying signs that read "EU Policy is Ruining Polish Farmers." (AP)

Powered by strong economic growth, steady oil prices, and stable inflation levels across region

Markaz predicts robust real estate growth in key GCC mkts for H1 2024

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: In line with its commitment to empowering investors with the latest and most reliable information on market trends and opportunities, Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" published a series of reports on the real estate markets in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE recently.

Prepared by Marmore MENA Intelligence, of the research arm of Markaz, the reports review the real estate sector's performance for H2 2023 and provide a detailed outlook report of H1 2024 based on critical macroeconomic indicators like oil and non-oil GDP growth, fiscal position, investments, money supply, inflation, interest rate, population growth, and job creation.

According to the projections for H1 2024, the real estate sector in the GCC region is expected to witness steady to accelerated growth trends, powered by anticipated stability in oil prices, rise in real estate demand, strong economic growth, and supportive government policies. The Markaz Real Estate Macro Index Scores for Kuwait, UAE, and Saudi Arabia for H1 2024 are 2.9, 3.8, and 3.55, compared to the H2 2023 scores of 2.8, 3.8, and 3.55, respectively.

Kuwait Real Estate Report

The Markaz Real Estate Report for Kuwait forecasts a stable real estate market in the country in H1 2024, buoyed by several favorable factors. The country's economic growth is expected to be positive at 3.6% year-on-year, compared to -0.6% in 2023, supported mainly by the projected non-oil sector growth rate of 3.5% supported by an expected stabilization of interest rates and the recent boost in project activity. Also of significant impact are the IMF forecasts of oil prices, set to average at USD 79.92 per barrel in 2024 compared to USD 80.49 per barrel last year, ensuring stability in prices, as well as Kuwait's decision to continue its voluntary oil output reduction.

Kuwait witnessed relatively stable inflation (CPI) trends during H2 2023 enabled by the country's easing of food prices as well as the decline in global food prices. During the same period, housing rents increased by 3.4% year-on-year while the credit to the private sector underwent a significant slowdown from 9.1% to 2.5% year-on-year in October 2023. The report states that the likelihood of the peaking of interest rates, the continued momentum in project activity, and the ongoing job gains for citizens could support credit growth through H1 2024, although elevated interest rates and extension of oil production cuts to end-2024 could cap credit growth.

The report notes that the real estate sector remained largely stable in 2023, with prices and rent holding steady and the normalization of the pent-up post-pandemic demand beginning to normalize. It also highlights the decline in residential sales, transaction volumes, Istithmarisegment, and commercial

sector sales in 9M 2023. However, based on its assessment of various macroeconomic indicators, the report reflects confidence in the stability of the Kuwaiti real estate sector in 2024. The outlook suggests promising prospects for increased activity in the latter part of the year, as evidenced by the country's Markaz Real Estate Macro Index score of 2.9 out of 5.0.

KSA Real Estate Report

Markaz's KSA Real Estate Report estimates improved economic growth for the Kingdom in 2024 as opposed to the slow growth experienced in 2023. This is primarily expected to be driven by Saudi Arabia's robust performances across the oil and non-oil sectors, with real GDP growth expected to improve by 4% year-on-year. The Kingdom's economic performance is expected to improve due to the stronger demand for oil, moderate inflation levels, and low unemployment levels. The contribution of non-oil activities, along with active government spending, is expected to further accelerate the performance.

Saudi Arabia's oil prices are expected to average at USD 93 per barrel in 2024, according to IEA's estimates, as opposed to the IMF forecasted breakeven price of USD 79.7 per barrel. The Kingdom's fiscal position is anticipated to be secured by ongoing government investments and the stability of oil prices.

According to the report, the value of Saudi Arabia's real estate transactions decreased by 11.3% year-on-year until September 2023, with a corresponding volume drop of 7%. Driven by a 1.2% increase in residential land prices, the KSA real estate price index rose by 0.7% year-on-year in Q3 2023, although residential transactions continued to decline due to higher interest rates on mortgages and rigid property prices. However, the strong performance of the office sector witnessed during 2023 is expected to continue into 2024, especially due to the demand driven by multinational companies looking to set up their regional headquarters.

The report predicts an accelerated phase for the real estate sector in Saudi Arabia in H1 2024 based on its assessment of the various macroeconomic factors in the Kingdom. The sector's favorable position is expected to be supported by a stable growth in non-oil activities, a robust hospitality sector, and increased government spending on infrastructure projects.

UAE Real Estate Report

Markaz's Real Estate Report for the United Arab Emirates predicts sustained growth for the country's economy in 2024, with real GDP growth of 4% year-on-year as compared to 3.4% in 2023, which is backed by IMP projections. This growth is expected to be primarily driven by the country's higher oil GDP, non-oil sector growth, investor-friendly government policies, stable fiscal position, and current account surplus.

BANGKOK, Feb 10, (AP): A Nasdaq-listed Chinese technology company that makes parts for self-driving vehicles is threatening to sue the U.S. government after it was included in a list of companies the Pentagon says have links to the Chinese military.

Hesai Technology's core product is LiDAR road sensing equipment, used in passenger and commercial vehicles, autonomous driving vehicles, delivery robots and other applications. It was among 17 companies the U.S. Department of Defense recently added to its list of companies it considers "Chinese military companies."

The revised list also includes Megvii, a Beijing-based artificial intelligence company and IDG Capital, a major private equity investment company with holdings in many Chinese technology companies, and major Chinese energy, telecoms and aviation companies. Its investors include U.S. pension funds and foundations.

Explanation

Hesai's inclusion on the list came without any explanation and the company plans to file a lawsuit, Hesai CEO Yifan "David" Li said in a statement that described the move as "unjust, capricious and meritless."

"Hesai is not a military company. Hesai products are for civilian use only and have never been designed or validated for military use," he said.

Li did not give any details on the company's plans for legal action. The statement accused Hesai's critics of conducting a smear campaign against it for unfair commercial advantage.

In a statement issued last week, the company said its LiDARs were not designed to conform to military specifications. The U.S. Department of Commerce has designated them as not being suitable for any military application, it said.

Hesai's stock price has fallen to about \$4 from about \$22 a year ago.

President Joe Biden's administration has kept in place tariffs imposed by his predecessor Donald Trump after he launched a trade war against Beijing in 2018. Under Biden, the U.S. has further limited China's access to advanced U.S. technology, limited U.S. investments in strategically sensitive Chinese industries and expanded sanctions on leading Chinese companies like Huawei Technologies.

The Defense Department periodically updates its list of now nearly four dozen Chinese military companies to counter links between Chinese military and companies and other entities that it says appear to be civilian. China's foreign and commerce ministries protested the move after the list was expanded last week.

In 2021, Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi Corp., which overtook Apple Inc. as the world's No. 3 smartphone maker by sales for a time, was removed from the blacklist after it sued the U.S. government, demanding to be removed and denying it has any links with China's People's Liberation Army.



A group photo of the innovators with the jury members, with Mai Al-Awaish in the middle.

Bid to promote innovation among its employees

Gulf Bank concludes the 2nd edition of 'Fekrety' Innovation Competition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: In its ongoing commitment to foster innovative and creative thinking, Gulf Bank successfully concluded the second edition of the Fekrety Innovation competition in 2024. The competition aimed to stimulate innovation among employees, providing them with a platform to voice and implement their ideas.

The organizing committee received numerous innovative proposals that combined digital transformation and creativity to improve the interior design of Gulf Bank branches, all aimed at enhancing the customer experience. These ideas underwent thorough filtering and organization, and participants were trained to present their ideas to the judging panel. The panel consisted of several bank officials, including Mr. Ali Abulhasan, Co-founder and CEO of Tap Payments.

Ms. Mai Al-Owaish, Chief Data and Innovation Officer at Gulf Bank, stressed, "We are committed to empowering our employees and cultivating a culture of participation, acknowledging each employee's contribution to achieving excellence in performance. This aligns with the bank's 2025 strategy and Kuwait's Vision 2035, which prioritize the adoption of smart and digital technologies, as well as innovative services, to propel economic growth and improve quality of life."

She emphasized that the competition provided employees from

various departments throughout the bank the chance to enhance the customer experience. Delivering exceptional services and products to customers is a shared objective for all departments, employees, and officials. Hence, the bank aims to stimulate innovation among its employees, encouraging them to think outside the box, even if their ideas are ahead of their time.

Reservoir

Furthermore, Al-Owaish emphasized Gulf Bank's human resources and its reservoir of talent and expertise across diverse fields, known for their efficiency and professionalism. Harnessing these capabilities is crucial to support employees in unleashing their ideas and innovations.

She further noted that all bank managers are eager to motivate their teams to propose innovative ideas that improve customer service, aligning with the 2025 strategy's emphasis on prioritizing the customer experience.

Al-Owaish reaffirmed Gulf Bank's commitment to leading a successful digital transformation journey, offering technological solutions to customers, and enhancing employee performance through engagement and involvement, all while adhering to the highest global standards in risk management practices.

Furthermore, Gulf Bank undertakes the responsibility of

contributing to Kuwait's digital transformation and Vision 2035 by fostering talent within the community and among its employees. This dedication is evident through various competitions aimed at providing the community with new skills and challenges. Future generations will utilize data to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), strengthen the economy, and contribute to collective benefits through enhanced data and digital services.

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.

ABK Capital wins the 'Fastest Growing Asset Manager' award

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: ABK Capital, the investment arm of Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), has been recognized as the "Fastest Growing Asset Manager in Kuwait 2023", by Global Business Outlook magazine, which relies on high standards by a specialized committee of experts.

On this occasion, Dr. Husayn Shahrur, CEO of ABK Capital, said: "We are extremely pleased with this achievement, which reflects the success of the company transformation, including investment in human capital and expertise, enriching of customer experience through a distinctive investment solutions platform, and development of the systems infrastructure, in addition to the rebranding journey."

He added: "This award comes as part of ABK Capital efforts to foster its position as a leading Kuwaiti investment company, meeting the needs and requirements of its clients, to be their local partner for global reach."

It is worth mentioning that ABK Capital is committed to informing the investor community about market developments, locally, regionally, and globally, along with their major trends, with full transparency. This is aimed at enabling them to make better investment decisions.

ABK Capital is a leading regional investment firm, providing asset management solutions and investment advisory services in the region. Since its establishment in 2006, ABK Capital, the Investment Arm of Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), has built a business model that places clients' interests at the top of its priorities. ABK Capital remains committed to fostering close long-term relationships with its clients and strives to meet their investment needs.

With a team of highly experienced investment professionals, ABK Capital pursues to strengthen its position as one of the leading investment companies in Kuwait. It delivers a



Dr. Husayn Shahrur – CEO of ABK Capital



ABK Capital Kuwait GBO trophy

wide range of products, services, and investment solutions, tailored to meet its clients' specific goals. The Company's offerings cover traditional and alternative asset classes, and provide an easy and convenient access to local, regional, and global markets.

ABK Capital seeks partnerships with leading regional and global asset managers to leverage their resources in delivering the performance investors seek and to provide the most appropriate investment solutions.

Japan's government OKs new foreign trainee program

TOKYO, Feb 10, (AP): The Japanese government adopted plans on Friday to scrap its current foreign trainee program, which has been criticized as a cover for importing cheap labor, and replace it with a system it says will actually teach skills and safeguard trainees' rights as Japan desperately seeks more foreign workers to supplement its aging and shrinking workforce.

Under the new program approved on Friday at a meeting of related Cabinet ministers, people who arrive on a three-year trainee visa will be able to upgrade to a skilled worker category that would allow them to stay up to five years and possibly obtain permanent residency.

Japan's population of 126 mil-

lion is rapidly aging and shrinking, and many short-staffed industries, including services, manufacturing and construction, rely heavily on foreign trainees and language students. Japan also grants visas to some white-collar professionals, often from the West.

The current Technical Intern Training Program, introduced in 1993 as a way of transferring skills to developing countries through youth training, has been criticized as a scheme for importing cheap labor under abusive conditions and unequal benefits. As of last June, nearly 360,000 trainees were participating in the program, with most from Vietnam, followed by Indonesia and the Philippines, according to

government data.

The new plan, which still requires parliamentary approval, follows the recommendation of a government panel last year that the current system be abolished after reports of rampant abuses, labor rights violations and other maltreatment.

The new program will continue to restrict which types of jobs are available to foreign trainees, as the conservative governing party remains reluctant to allow a more open immigration policy.

Japan's lack of diversity and inclusivity as well as its comparatively low pay has been making it less attractive to foreign workers, who are increasingly choosing other Asian countries such as South Korea.

"The government seeks to create an inclusive society, and we want to make Japan a country that foreign workers will choose," Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said at the Cabinet meeting where the new policy was endorsed.

The current program prohibits trainees from changing workplaces, a rule that caused thousands to run away from their employers due to unpaid wages, harassment and other maltreatment. The new system would allow them to change jobs after working for one to two years, but only in the same job category.

Applicants for the new trainee system will also be required to pass a Japanese language proficiency test.

What's On



Clock



Kemal Sirtikirmizi, General Manager



AVA Restaurant

Ratings showcased on ForbesTravelGuide.com

Waldorf Astoria Kuwait and Waldorf Astoria SPA named Five-Star Hotel and Five-Star SPA in Forbes Travel Guide 2024 Star Awards

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Forbes Travel Guide ("FTG"), the only global rating system for luxury hotels, restaurants, spas and ocean cruises, today announced its 2024 Star Awards. Waldorf Astoria Kuwait and Waldorf Astoria SPA earned a new Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star award and is showcased with other honourees on ForbesTravelGuide.com.

Waldorf Astoria Kuwait proudly unveils its latest achievement: we have been honoured with the prestigious Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star award for the hotel. Additionally, the Waldorf Astoria Spa has received Five-Star Rating, elevating our status to join the elite ranks of the world's top-rated spas.

Receiving this double Five-Star recognition from Forbes Travel Guide is a testament to the unparalleled luxury and exceptional service offered by Waldorf Astoria Kuwait. The Hotel proudly stands as the first and only double Five-Star hotel in Kuwait to achieve this distinction in its first year of operations.

Connected to The Avenues, the country's largest retail, entertainment, and lifestyle destination, Waldorf Astoria Kuwait stands as an unrivaled hub for prestige and luxury. Inspired by the original Waldorf Astoria in New York, the world-renowned Dubai-based architecture firm LW Design Group meticulously crafted this property in the heart of Kuwait, embodying timeless luxury and elegance. It serves as the perfect venue for both business and pleasure.

The hotel features 200 contemporary deluxe rooms and suites, offering the largest entry-level rooms, along with an array of first-class, award-winning restaurants, a stunning outdoor pool, the signature Waldorf Astoria Spa, exclusive The Ikaros Club, and the family-friendly



Hotel exterior

Waldorf Astoria Kids' Club.

With beautifully designed meeting and event spaces, including a spectacular Grand Ballroom, Waldorf Astoria Kuwait offers an incredible, tailored experience for guests of all ages and interests.

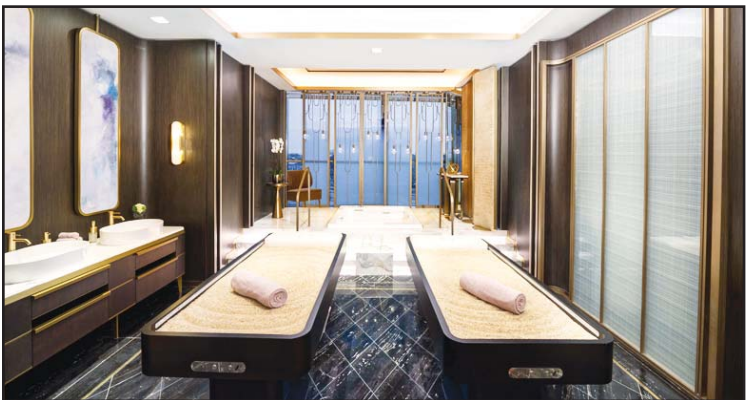
"Today, we celebrate the tremendous success of receiving the Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star award. We are extremely proud and honored that Waldorf Astoria Kuwait stands as the first and only double Five-Star hotel in Kuwait to achieve this recognition in our first year of operations.

Waldorf Astoria Spa also achieve the highest level of service and standards, positioning its status as the best spa in Kuwait and among the world's best spas," says Kemal Sirtikirmizi, General Manager of Waldorf Astoria Kuwait.

Kemal Sirtikirmizi acknowledges, "The Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star award has been acclaimed because of the passion, hard work, and dedication of every team member in our hotel. The team, with this award, once again proved that they are the best in class

in delivering exceptional, personalized, and unforgettable experiences in Kuwait and the world. Our team's relentless and unwavering dedication and commitment to quality have played a pivotal role in reaching these noteworthy milestones.

Forbes Travel Guide is the world-renowned authority on excellence in hospitality, and Waldorf Astoria Kuwait and Waldorf Astoria SPA are the latest additions to its illustrious annual Star Rating list.



SPA VIP Treatment Room



Presidential Suite

"This year's Star Awards reflects the forecasted surge in demand for more thrilling travel experiences," says Amanda Frasier, President of Ratings for Forbes Travel Guide. "They are delivering at the very top of their game and reimagining the future of luxury across

design, dining and well-being. Our 2024 winners include more special places to visit across the Middle East and Africa, with a record number of list additions for the region. We commend all the 2024 winners for continuing to deliver a fresh new guest experience."



Photos during the Royal Britannia Kindergarten for Special Needs' First Step Exhibition.



Empowering special needs education

Royal Britannia Kindergarten proudly embraces community engagement at First Step Exhibition



Royal Britannia Kindergarten for Special Needs proudly marks Flag Raising Day with a joyous ceremony.

Royal Britannia Kindergarten for Special Needs marks Flag Raising Day

Royal Britannia Kindergarten for Special Needs proudly marked Flag Raising Day with a joyous ceremony that imparted a profound sense of national identity and respect among its students.

The highlight of the day was the flag-raising ceremony, a symbolic gesture that carried deep significance for the young learners. As the national flag ascended, all children chanted the Kuwait National Anthem with enthusiasm and pride. This experience served as a powerful connection amongst the students and their family members who attended with their country's heritage, fostering a sense of identity, and instilling a deep respect for national symbols from an early age.



Symbolic gesture carries deep significance for the young learners.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Royal Britannia Kindergarten for Special Needs proudly participated in the First Step Exhibition held at the Mishref Exhibition Fairgrounds.

Royal Britannia Kindergarten is at the forefront of advocating for quality education and support for students with diverse learning needs. RB is an accredited special needs kindergarten with Kuwait Public Authority for Disabilities and is an accredited member of the British National Association of Special Education Needs.

Royal Britannia stands out by seamlessly integrating Montessori principles into the UK Early Years Foundation Stage framework curriculum. This distinctive approach reflects the institution's commitment to providing a well-rounded and individualised educational experience for our students who have differentiated challenging learning styles.

Our participation in the First Step Exhibition is a testament to our dedication to reaching out, educating, and making a positive impact in the lives of children with special needs," said Dr Hanan Al Mutawa, Founder and Chair of Royal Britannia Kindergarten.

"We are proud of the service we provide to the community and are committed to creating a better future for SEN children in Kuwait. The exhibition served as an excellent opportunity for parents, educators, and the community to learn more about Royal Britannia Kindergarten's unique approach and commitment to excellence in Special Education Needs."

NBTC staff benefit initiative

IDAK & INFOK hold medical and dental screening camp

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Indian Dentists' Alliance in Kuwait (IDAK) along with Indian Nurses Federation of Kuwait (INFOK) and Haya Clinic, Kuwait, successfully conducted a combined medical and dental screening camp on Thursday, 8th February, 2024 for NBTC employees in Ahmadi.

It aimed to benefit large number of employees/labourers working at NBTC. Medical and dental health awareness sessions made it informative for the employees along with the medical and dental screenings.

The well organised camp was conducted at the NBTC office Ahmadi and saw employees attending in large numbers.

IDAK's Community Welfare Committee led by Dr. Prashanth R. and Dr. Ajay Vazhiyadan along with members Dr. Gireesh Krishnan, Dr. Jacob Lonappan and Dr. Valentina Fernandes were present to actively participate and contribute towards the social cause.

During the felicitation ceremony Dr. Gireesh Krishnan addressed the audience on oral cancer awareness. Mr. Manoj, GM of NBTC was



IDAK receives a memento.

present during the ceremony, and expressed his gratitude to IDAK for their contribution and presented a memento to the association.

IDAK extends its appreciation to the doctors of HAYA clinic and the organizers of INFOK particularly Mrs. Binamol for the excellent coordination and follow up. IDAK thanks Mr. Bibin, Ms. Hima, Mr. Shyju and all INFOK members for a successful medical and dental screening camp.



IDAK receives a memento.



Photos during the combined medical and dental screening camp.

Obituary

TOKYO, Feb 10, (AP): **Seiji Ozawa**, the Japanese conductor who amazed audiences with the lithe physicality of his performances during three decades at the helm of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, has died, his management office said Friday. He was 88.

The internationally acclaimed maestro, with his trademark mop of salt-and-pepper hair, led the BSO from 1973 to 2002, longer than any other conductor in the orchestra's history. From 2002 to 2010, he was the music director of the Vienna State Opera.

He died of heart failure Tuesday at his home in Tokyo, according to his office, Veroza Japan.

He remained active in his later years, particularly in his native land. He was the artistic director and founder of the Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival, a music and opera festival in Japan. He and the Saito Kinen Orchestra, which he co-founded in 1984, won the Grammy for best opera recording in 2016 for Ravel's "L'Enfant et Les Sortilèges (The Child and the Spells)."

In 2022, he conducted his Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival for the first time in three years to mark its 30th anniversary. That turned out to be his last public performance.

That year, Ozawa also conducted the Saito Kinen Orchestra to deliver Beethoven's "Egmont" Overture live to Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata at the International Space Station. The event was co-organized with the Japan Aerospace and Exploration Agency, just as the world was divided by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Music can link the hearts of people - transcending words, borders, religion, and politics. It is my hope that through music, we can be reminded that we are all of the same human race living on the same planet. And that we are united," Ozawa said in a statement.

Ozawa exerted enormous influence over the BSO during his tenure. He appointed 74 of its 104 musicians and his celebrity attracted famous performers including Yo-Yo Ma and Itzhak Perlman. He also helped the symphony become the biggest-budget orchestra in the world, with an endowment that grew from less than \$10 million in the early 1970s to more than \$200 million in 2002.

The icon of Boston Symphony Orchestra

Acclaimed Japanese conductor Seiji Ozawa dies at 88

When Ozawa conducted the Boston orchestra in 2006 - four years after he had left - he received a hero's welcome with a nearly six-minute ovation.

Ozawa was born Sept. 1, 1935, to Japanese parents in Manchuria, China, while it was under Japanese occupation.

Revered

After his family returned to Japan in 1944, he studied music under Hideo Saito, a cellist and conductor credited with popularizing Western music in Japan. Ozawa revered him and formed the Saito Kinen (Saito Memorial) Orchestra in 1984 and eight years later founded the Saito Kinen Festival - renamed the Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival in 2015.



Ozawa

Ozawa first arrived in the United States in 1960 and was quickly hailed by critics as a brilliant young talent. He attended the Tanglewood Music Center and was noticed by Leonard Bernstein, who appointed him assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic for the 1961-62 season. After his New York debut with the Philharmonic at age 25, The New York Times said "the music came brilliantly alive under his direction."

He directed various ensembles including the San Francisco Orchestra and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra before beginning his tenure in Boston in 1970.

At the time there were few nonwhite musicians on the international scene. Ozawa embraced the challenge and it became his lifelong passion to help Japanese performers demonstrate they could be first-class musicians. In his 1967 book "The Great Conductors," critic Harold C. Schonberg noted the changing ranks of younger conductors, writing that Ozawa and Indian-born Zubin Mehta were the first Asian conductors "to impress one as altogether major talents."

Ozawa had considerable star quality and crossover appeal in Boston, where he was a well-known fan of the Red Sox and Patriots sports teams. In 2002, Catherine Peterson, executive director of Arts Boston, a nonprofit group that markets Boston's arts, told The Associated Press that "for most people in this community, Seiji personifies the Boston Symphony."

Ozawa is largely credited with elevating the Tanglewood Music Center, a music academy in Lenox, Massachusetts, to international prominence. In 1994, a 1,200-seat, \$12 million music hall at the center was named for him.

His work at Tanglewood was not without controversy. In 1996, as music director of the orchestra and its ultimate authority, he decided to move the respected academy in new directions. Ozawa ousted Leon Fleisher, the longtime director of Tanglewood, and several prominent teachers quit in protest.

Despite glowing reviews for his performances in Europe and Japan, American critics were increasingly disappointed in the later years of his tenure with the BSO. In 2002, Anthony Tommasini of The New York Times wrote that Ozawa had become, after a bold start, "an embodiment of the entrenched music director who has lost touch."

Many of the orchestra's musicians agreed and even circulated an anti-Ozawa newsletter claiming he had worn out his welcome in Boston. But the city, marking his 85th birthday in 2020, announced it designated Sept. 1 as Seiji Ozawa Day.

Ozawa won two Emmy awards for TV work with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the first in 1976 for the BSO's PBS series "Evening at Symphony" and the second in 1994, for Individual Achievement in Cultural Programming, for "Dvorak in Prague: A Celebration."

Ozawa held honorary doctorates of music from the University of Massachusetts, the New England Conservatory of Music, and Wheaton College in Norton, Mass. He was one of five honorees at the annual Kennedy Center Honors in 2015 for contributing to American culture through the arts.

Variety



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Kingsley Ben-Adir in 'Bob Marley: One Love.' (AP)

Film

A reflective journey through the life of cultural icon

'Bob Marley: One Love' doesn't stir

By Jake Coyle

Bob Marley was born in 1945, the son of an 18-year-old mother and a much older white man who had nothing to do with his son. As a boy raised in poverty, he often slept on the cold ground. Five years after moving to Kingston's Trench Town, he made his first record, at 17. And 20 years later, he was dead.

By then, Marley had become the face of not just reggae, Rastafarianism and Jamaica, but of revolution, resistance and peace. He left behind a body of work that has only grown more monumental with time. "Redemption Song." "No Woman No Cry." "War." "Trench Town Rock." "Get Up Stand Up." "Lively Up Yourself." "One Love People Get Ready."

So, yeah, it's a lot for a movie -- any movie. "Bob Marley: One Love," directed by Reinaldo Marcus Green, is a noble but uninspired attempt to capture some of the essence of Marley. Its lived-in textures and attention to Marley's political consciousness, just by themselves, are enough to make "One Love" something more substantial than many recent, glossier music biopics.

But the power and complexity of Marley is still out of reach for "One Love," which takes a typical biopic framework in plotting itself around the run-up to an important concert with flashbacks mixed in. When footage of the real Marley inevitably plays over the credits, it's a painful comparison to the ruminative but inert movie that played before it.

The first thing you notice about the performance by Kingsley Ben-Adir, the talented British actor of "One Night in Miami..." and "Barbie," is that he's got the voice. His Marley has the growl and lilt of the singer's resonant Jamaican accent. But what the performance

is missing - an absence so clear when the real Marley turns up - is the physical dynamism and charismatic velocity of Marley.

The sheer vibrancy of Marley, who spent afternoons playing soccer and had at least 11 children in his short life, would undoubtedly be a tall order for most films. "One Love," set in the aftermath of a 1976 shooting that wounded Marley, follows a more contemplative Marley in self-imposed exile in London - on tour in Europe, recording the 1977 album "Exodus" and ultimately receiving a diagnosis of cancer.

Private

Marley was by many accounts a more private person than often remembered, so the rendering here is surely a genuine aspect of a man rife with contradictions. "One Love," which lists four screenwriters and was made with Marley's estate (Ziggy and Cedella Marley are producers), appears to have wrestled with finding a single portrait, and the movie's patchwork pacing occasionally shows signs of that struggle.

But just as he showed in "King Richard," Green is skilled at finding intimacy in the lives of larger-than-life figures. Early in "One Love," Marley and his band assemble in a smoke-filled living room to play "I Shot the Sheriff," and it's moments like these that work far better than those in the public eye.

The performance that bookends the film is the One Love Peace Concert, which was put on in Jamaica in 1978 as a way to heal the divided, violent country. Marley, during "Jammin'," brought the rival party leaders Edward Seaga and Michael Manley on stage.

The turmoil in Jamaica weighs heavily on Marley throughout film; images of fields aflame run repeatedly as a reflection of his memories. Though largely

set in Europe, the real through line of the film is Marley as consumed with the plight of his countrymen, and others in similar situations around the world. When white executives push back against touring in Africa due to its lack of infrastructure, he replies, "So we build it." How all of this percolates in Marley and gets filtered into the music is, ultimately, what "One Love" is about.

"The music and the message are the same thing," Marley explains.

"One Love" is attuned to the communal aspect of Marley's life - he rarely appears alone in the film - yet few other individuals come through vividly. The events of the film are years after the breakup of the Wailing Wailers so Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer are little seen. The most notable supporting roles go to Lashana Lynch as Rita Marley, his wife, and James Norton, as Island Records founder Chris Blackwell.

Though "One Love" drifts into increasingly conventional biopic scenes, its spirit remains fairly true to Marley - enough, at least, that you overlook some of its faults. But what's harder to forgive is the lackluster music performances peppered throughout. Ben-Adir doesn't himself sing the songs but relies on Marley recordings - which is fine. Yet when Marley and company take the stage, Green sticks to largely drab coverage. Precisely when "One Love" should be, as Marley was, striving for transcendence, it feels like it's going through the motions. Come on, you want to plead, and stir it up.

"Bob Marley: One Love," a Paramount Pictures release is rated PG13 by the Motion Picture Association for marijuana use and smoking throughout, some violence and brief strong language. Running time: 107 minutes. Two stars out of four. (AP)

TOKYO: Will she make it?

Taylor Swift's last song will still be ringing in the ears of thousands of fans at the Tokyo Dome on Saturday night when the singer is expected to rush to a private jet at Haneda airport that will take her on a time-zone-spanning journey to see her boyfriend, NFL star **Travis Kelce**, play in the Super Bowl in Las Vegas.

The prospect of this race against time, crossing nine time zones and the international date line, has fired imaginations, and speculation, for weeks.

At Saturday night's concert, there was plenty of evidence of the unique cultural phenomenon that is the Swift-Kelce relationship, a nexus of professional football and the huge star power of Swift. In addition to sequined dresses celebrating Swift in the packed Tokyo Dome, there were Travis Kelce jerseys and hats and other gear celebrating his team, the Kansas City Chiefs. Some in Tokyo spent thousands of dollars to attend the pop superstar's concerts this week.

To call the worldwide scrutiny of Swift's travels intense is an understatement.

Fans have tracked her jet. The planet-warming carbon emissions of her globe-trotting travels have been criticized. Officials have weighed in on her ability to park her jet in **Las Vegas** airports. (AP)

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LAS VEGAS: Actor **Scarlett Johansson** and NFL legend **Dan Marino** come from different professions, but they have two things in common: Both have a sweet tooth and an infatuation with M&Ms.

Johansson and Marino will star in the Super Bowl commercial that will focus on the candy being the comfort fun food while watching the big game. Both will be placed in a humorous scenario around the theme, poking fun at their respective "almost champion" status from her Oscars and his Super Bowl losses.

The commercial will also have guest appearances from former NFL players **Terrell Owens** and **Bruce Smith**.

Johansson is so much of a Marino fan that she agreed to do the commercial before even knowing M&Ms was the brand behind it. Thankfully, she's a lover of the candy too - particularly the peanut



Swift



Johansson

butter version.

"Some creative brain stuck us together," said Johansson, who has starred in the films "Black Widow," "Lucy" and "Asteroid City." "I was pretty excited about it, mostly because I was excited to work with Dan. I didn't want to geek out, but I couldn't wait to meet him. As soon as my agent

said Dan Marino's name, I was like 'Yes, this is awesome. What is this for?' " (AP)

□ □ □

NEW YORK: A man accused of stalking **Taylor Swift** after being spotted multiple times outside the singer's **Manhattan** townhouse was found unfit to stand trial and

will be committed to state custody for psychiatric treatment, attorneys said Friday.

David Crowe, 33, was arrested three times late last month in front of the pop star's home in Manhattan's exclusive **Tribeca** neighborhood. The Seattle resident faced charges of stalking, harassment and contempt. (AP)

People & Places



Tommy Hilfiger



Christian Siriano

NEW YORK: Tommy Hilfiger threw himself a welcome home party Friday night at Grand Central's Oyster Bar with Questlove as his DJ and Jon Batiste serenading Anna Wintour on his melodica while a bevy of global celebrities looked on.

Turning the iconic restaurant into "The Tommy" club for a night, Hilfiger called his New York Fashion Week show "A New York Moment," rolling out roomy, '90s prep classics for the bash. The last time he hit town for fashion week was in September 2022, when his crowd braved rain for his "Tommy Factory" show at a Brooklyn drive-in theater.

This time, happy and dry underground beneath the transportation hub's vaulted ceilings, fans lined ramps for a glimpse of K-pop's Nayeon, her countryman Junho Lee, Indian actor Sonam Kapoor and various other friends of the brand: Sofia Richie Grainge and Danson Idris among them. Sylvester Stallone popped in at the end.

As the crowd sipped cocktails in booths, Hilfiger stuck to what he knows on models walking through: rugby shirts, blazers, chinos and varsity jackets in corduroy and herringbone. There were tailored women's coats in wool, checks and earth-toned tweeds, and chunky cable knits and mini-dress polos in cashmere.

Hilfiger put some of his famous guests in pieces that were shoppable as he continued to embrace a "see now, buy now" approach to fashion shows.

Who's wearing his take on so-called affordable luxury?

During a preview Thursday at his Madison Avenue offices, Hilfiger ticked off his primary markets of today: Germany, France, Italy, England, Turkey, various parts of Scandinavia and Greece among them.

"That business is now bigger than the U.S. business," he told The Associated Press.

"We're going to bring it back in the states now because we have really focused a lot on international growth. And this is a statement we're making, that we're coming home, and we're taking it very seriously."

And who had the most fun during his New York return? Hilfiger himself. He sipped a martini as he posed with Stallone and others for photos after his finale, when Batiste played along to his hit "Freedom" as he walked through the crowd. The designer even briefly joined Questlove in his booth.

On the runway, Hilfiger kept his logo messaging to a minimum as he attempts to "grasp," as he called it, US consumers once again.

"We have to do it in a different way. We have to give them more elevated product, more modern fabrics and fits, and avoid redundancy," he said. "We've got a very big polo shirt business, chino pant business, Oxford

Above and below: Models present creation from the Tommy Hilfiger and Christian Siriano collections during Fashion Week in New York on Feb 8 and 9. (AP)

Style

Tommy Hilfiger



Tommy Hilfiger

shirt business. But the consumer wants more than just that. Those are his or her staples. We're now going to bring some more excitement. And some more sophistication."

Christian Siriano

There was nary a sandworm in sight Thursday night on the runway of

Christian Siriano, but he definitely had "Dune" on his mind as he kicked off New York Fashion Week.

The glam squad of the sand had

places to go and people to see in their earth tones and orange shimmer worthy of a Sahara sunset. The movie, and now a second coming up, was his

jumping off point.

"I was like, what if we lived in this world that was kind of apocalyptic, but in the sand in the desert. But where's the glamour? Where's the evening-wear? What would they wear if people had to live in this culture on a planet?"

Well, velvet with lace in body-hugging gowns, for one, and lots of metallic copper tones, orange-hued tulle and ochre sparkle, apparently. Perhaps they'd leave Siriano's over-size peplums and his spare enlarged shoulders at home.

Under the sparkling chandeliers



Christian Siriano



Tommy Hilfiger

Fashion

at The Plaza, Siriano rolled out 60 looks for dinner and cocktail dressing, galas and other social-circuit affairs, mixing bare-chested men in jackets with dazzling displays of earth colors, including gentler creams in slinky gowns and tuxedo silhouettes for women in black.

The designer thinks often of other worlds, with a caveat: "Don't forget the beauty." He's a particular fan of the sandy franchise starring Zendaya, who he's dressed lots of times, and Timothée Chalamet, who he'd love to dress but hasn't so far. (AP)

WASH-
INGTON:
Colin Jost,
the co-
anchor of
Weekend
Update
on "Sat-
urday
Night
Live," will
get a chance in
April to roast leading political
and media figures as the fea-
tured entertainer at the annual
dinner of the White House
Correspondents' Association.

"His smart brand of comedy and keen observation will turn up the heat on the national news media and across the political spectrum," said Kelly O'Donnell, president of the White House Correspondents' Association and NBC News Senior White House Correspondent, in a statement.

A writer and comedic performer, Jost has written for the long-running NBC late night comedy franchise since 2005. He began co-anchoring the show's news parody in 2014 with Michael Che. His film credits include "Coming 2 America" and "Tom & Jerry."

He is the author of the memoir "A Very Punchable Face." Jost, 41, grew up in the New York City borough of Staten Island and graduated from Harvard University, where he was dormmates with now Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. (AP)

The Conversation

Health risks driving EPA's stricter air pollution standard

Air pollution tied to heart attacks, cancer and early death

By Jennifer Weeks
The Conversation

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

The US Environmental Protection Agency has announced a new standard for protecting the public from fine particulate air pollution, known as PM2.5 because the particles are smaller than 2.5 millionths of a meter. These minute particles can penetrate deeply into the body and have been linked to many serious illnesses.

The new rule sets an annual limit of 9 micrograms per cubic meter of air, down from the previous level of 12 micrograms. States will be required to meet this standard and to take it into consideration when they evaluate applications for permits for new stationary air pollution sources, such as electric power plants, factories and oil refineries.

Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA is required to set air pollution standards at levels that protect public health. In the four articles that follow, scholars wrote about the many ways in which exposure to PM2.5 contributes to cardiovascular disease, lung cancer, other illnesses such as dementia, and premature deaths.

Scientists have known since the 1993 Six Cities Study, which showed that people were dying faster in dirty cities than in clean cities, that exposure to PM2.5 increased the risk of lung cancer and heart disease. Subsequent research has linked fine particulates to a much broader range of health effects.

Once a person inhales PM2.5, "it causes an inflammatory response that sends signals throughout the body, much as a bacterial infection would," wrote public and environmental health scholars Doug Brugge of the University of Connecticut and Kevin James Lane of Boston University. "Additionally, the smallest particles and fragments of larger particles can leave the lungs and travel through the blood."

In Brugge and Lane's view, evidence that PM2.5 could affect brain development, cognitive skills and children's central nervous systems is particularly notable. They termed fine particle pollution an urgent global health threat.

Particulate

"Developed countries have made progress in reducing particulate air pollution in recent decades, but much remains to be done to further reduce this hazard," they observed. "And the situation has gotten dramatically worse in many developing countries - most notably China and India, which have industrialized faster and on vaster scales than ever seen before."

Medical researchers are looking closely at air pollution as a possible accelerator of brain aging. University of Southern California preventive medicine specialist Jiu-Chuan Chen and his colleagues have found that older women who lived in locations with high levels of PM2.5 suffered memory loss and Alzheimer's-like brain shrinkage not seen in women living with cleaner air.

Chen and his colleagues compared brains scans taken at five-year intervals of older women who lived in areas with varying levels of air pollution.

"When we compared the brain scans of older women from locations with high levels of PM2.5 to those with low levels, we found dementia risk increased by 24% over the five years," Chen wrote.

More alarmingly, "(T)hese Al-

zheimer's-like brain changes were present in older women with no memory problems," Chen noted. "The shrinkage in their brains was greater if they lived in locations with higher levels of outdoor PM2.5, even when those levels were within the current (2021) EPA standard."

As researchers in environmental justice have shown, facilities such as factories and refineries often are concentrated in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. This means that these areas are exposed to higher pollution levels and face heavier related health burdens.

Regulations put in place under the Clean Air Act have greatly reduced levels of harmful air pollutants across the US over the past 50 years. But when University of Virginia economist Jonathan Colmer and public policy scholar Jay Shimshack analyzed data tracing PM2.5 concentrations at more than 8.6 million distinct U.S. locations from 1981 through 2016, they found that the areas that were most polluted in 1981 remained the dirtiest nearly 40 years later.

"In 1981 PM2.5 concentrations in the most polluted 10% of census tracts averaged 34 micrograms per cubic meter," the authors reported. "In 2016 PM2.5 concentrations in the most polluted 10% of census tracts averaged 10 micrograms per cubic meter. PM2.5 concentrations in the least polluted 10% of census tracts averaged 4 micrograms per cubic meter." In other words, while all areas had cleaner air, people in the most polluted areas still were exposed to PM2.5 levels more than twice as high as people in the cleanest zones.

Guidelines

"For decades, federal and state environmental guidelines have aimed to provide all Americans with the same degree of protection from environmental hazards," Colmer and Shimshack note. "The EPA's definition of environmental justice states that 'no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences.' On this front, our research suggests that the United States is falling short."

Like the proverbial canaries in coal mines, wild animals can show effects of exposure to pollution that offer broader warnings. One example is wildfires, which produce high levels of gases and particulate matter.

Cornell University conservation biologist Wendy M. Erb was studying wild orangutans in Indonesian Borneo when that island suffered large-scale wildfires. Orangutans are semi-solitary animals that communicate with each other through long, booming calls in the tropical forests where they live.

During the fires and for several weeks after the smoke cleared, Erb and her colleagues found that four male orangutans they were following called less frequently than usual - about three times daily instead of their usual six times. "Their voices dropped in pitch, showing more vocal harshness and irregularities," Erb reported. "Collectively, these features of vocal quality have been linked to inflammation, stress and disease - including COVID-19 - in human and nonhuman animals."

Erb hoped to see further study of how toxic smoke affects wildlife. "Using passive acoustic monitoring to study vocally active indicator species, like orangutans, could unlock critical insights into wildfire smoke's effects on wildlife populations worldwide," she observed. (AP)



(Pic B) This image provided by Hikma Pharmaceuticals shows the company's nasal spray drug Kloxxado, containing 8 milligrams of naloxone. (AP)

Concerns raised over side effects

Higher-dose naloxone spray didn't save more lives: study

NEW YORK, Feb 10, (AP) - A new, higher-dose nasal spray for reversing opioid overdoses did not save more lives than the previous standard dose, but it did cause more vomiting and other side effects, researchers wrote in a study published Thursday.

The 8-milligram naloxone spray - twice as potent as the highest dose previously available - was approved two years ago after pressure from experts and patient advocates who noted lower-dose antidotes often were being given multiple times to people suffering overdoses.

The new study, which was limited to more rural parts of New York state, is being called the first to provide real-world data on the differences between the two sprays. The paper was published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but the federal health agency was not involved in the research.

Benefits

The higher-dose "did not provide added benefit," the authors wrote.

"What was really remarkable was the survival was the same, but the amount of withdrawal symptoms was significantly larger in the people that got the 8-milligram dose," said one of the authors, Dr. Michael Dailey of Albany Medical College.

Dailey said the study did not lead him to endorse one product over another. But, he said, "its important for us to recognize that the potential for increased side effects is real."

The researchers worked with the New York State Police, who respond to emergencies along highways and in rural areas.

Three troops in eastern New York were given 8-milligram sprays. Eight troops based further away from Albany were stocked with 4-milligram doses. The study results were based on 354 instances in which troopers administered naloxone sprays from late

March 2022 to mid-August 2023.

In cases where overdose patients were still alive when troopers arrived, 99% survived after getting naloxone, no matter which dose was given.

People who got 4-milligram sprays usually got more than one dose - 1.67 doses on average, equivalent to 6.7 milligrams. But so too did those treated with the 8-milligram sprays, who got 1.58 doses, or 12.6 milligrams, on average.

In both groups, disorientation and lethargy were common when people came to.

But other problems were significantly more common in the patients who got the higher-dose sprays. About 38% experienced signs and symptoms of withdrawal, including vomiting, abdominal pain, sweating, shaking and diarrhea. Only 19% of those getting the lower dose had those problems, the study found.

Overdose

That's a concern because it could actually contribute to future overdose deaths, said Dr. Alexander Walley, a Boston Medical Center addiction specialist who also works with the Massachusetts health department.

If someone has extra withdrawal symptoms when they are rescued from an overdose, they may remember the pain and discomfort of that experience and - experts fear - might actually avoid having someone with naloxone around when they take drugs in the future, Walley said.

The study is limited and imperfect in how it randomized who got which doses, Walley said, but it's nevertheless "good quality evidence."

"The solution to a more potent (illicit) drug supply is not necessarily a more potent naloxone," he said. "It's having people be witnessed when they use the drugs, and have that witness be someone who can administer naloxone and call for help."

NEW YORK, Feb 10, (AP): The flu virus is hanging on in the US, intensifying in some areas of the country after weeks of an apparent national decline.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data released Friday showed a continued national drop in flu hospitalizations, but other indicators were up - including the number of states with high or very high levels for respiratory illnesses.

"Nationally, we can say we've peaked, but on a regional level it varies," said the CDC's Alicia Budd. "A couple of regions haven't peaked yet."

Patient traffic has eased a bit in the Southeast and parts of the West Coast, but flu-like illnesses seem to be proliferating in the Midwest and have even rebounded a bit in some places.

Last week, reports were at high levels in 23 states - up from 18 the week before, CDC officials said.

Flu generally peaks in the US between December and February. National data suggests this season's peak came around late December, but a second surge is always possible. That's happened in other flu seasons, with the second peak often - but not always - lower than the first, Budd said.

So far, the season has been relatively typical, Budd said. According to CDC estimates, since the beginning of October, there have been at least 22 million illnesses, 250,000 hospitalizations, and 15,000 deaths from flu. The agency said 74 children have died of flu.

Coronavirus

COVID-19 illnesses seem to have peaked at around the same time as flu. CDC data indicates coronavirus-caused hospitalizations haven't hit the same levels they did at the same point during the last three winters. COVID-19 is putting more people in the hospital than flu, CDC data shows.

The national trends have played out in Chapel Hill, said Dr. David Weber, an infectious diseases expert at the University of North Carolina.

Weber is also medical director of infection prevention at UNC Medical Center, where about a month ago more than 100 of the hospital's 1,000 beds were filled with people with COVID-19, flu or the respiratory virus RSV.

That's not as bad as some previous winters - at one point during the pandemic, 250 beds were filled with COVID-19 patients. But it was bad enough that the hospital had to declare a capacity emergency so that it could temporarily bring some additional beds into use, Weber said.

Now, about 35 beds are filled with patients suffering from one of those viruses, most of them COVID-19, he added.

"I think in general it's been a

pretty typical year," he said, adding that what's normal has changed to include COVID-19, making everything a little busier than it was before the pandemic.

Also:

NEW YORK: More foods are being recalled in the wake of a deadly outbreak of listeria food poisoning, including snack foods that may be part of Super Bowl Sunday party menus.

Seven-layer bean dip, chicken enchiladas, cilantro salad dressing and taco kits sold at stores like Costco, Trader Joe's and Albertson's are part of the growing recalls of products made by Rizo Lopez Foods, Inc., of Modesto, California, federal health officials said.

Dairy products made by Rizo Lopez Foods are the source of the listeria outbreak that has killed two people and sickened more than two dozen since 2014, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Health officials investigated illnesses in 2017 and 2021, but were only able to confirm the source based on new laboratory and inspection information when more people fell ill in December, officials said.

Rizo Lopez Foods recalled more than 60 soft cheeses, yogurt and sour cream on Monday that are sold under the brands Tio Francisco, Don Francisco, Rizo Bros, Rio Grande, Food City, El Huache, La Ordena, San Carlos, Campesino, Santa Maria, Dos Ranchitos, Casa Cardenas, and 365 Whole Foods Market.

The recalled foods were sold to food service providers, retailers and at deli counters nationwide.

The federal government said consumers should consult the Food and Drug Administration's table of recalled products for updated information about descriptions, sizes and best-by dates.

The US Department of Agriculture also issued a public health alert for certain Amazon kitchen burritos that contain ingredients made by Rizo Lopez Foods.

About 1,600 people are sickened by listeria food poisoning every year, according to the CDC. Listeria infections can cause serious illness and, in rare cases, death. People who are pregnant, older than 65 or have weakened immune systems are particularly vulnerable.

Symptoms - like muscle aches, fever and tiredness - usually start within two weeks after eating contaminated foods, but can start earlier or later.

The CDC said consumers who have the recalled products should throw them away and thoroughly clean the refrigerator, counters and other contact sites. Listeria can survive in the refrigerator and easily contaminate other foods and surfaces.

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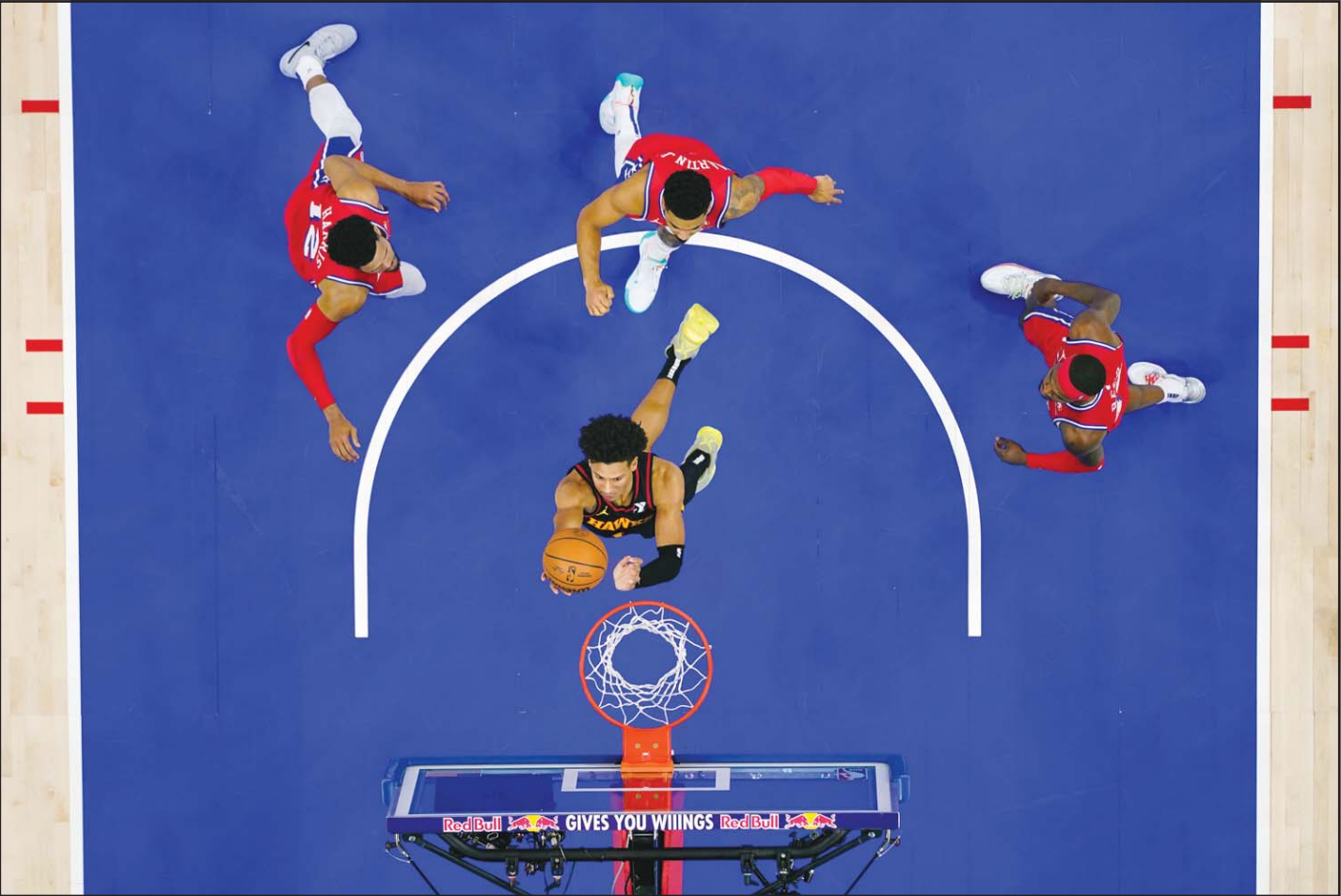
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NBA-leading Celtics rally past Wizards



Atlanta Hawks' Jalen Johnson, bottom, goes up for a shot past Philadelphia 76ers' Tobias Harris, from left, KJ Martin and Paul Reed during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Friday, Feb. 9, 2024, in Philadelphia. (AP)

US skier Hurt 3rd

Gut-Behrami wins GS to overtake Shiffrin at top

SOLDEU, Andorra, Feb 10, (AP): Swiss skier Lara Gut-Behrami came from a long way behind to win a women's World Cup giant slalom by one-hundredth of a second on Saturday, and overtake the absent Mikaela Shiffrin on top of the overall standings.

Gut-Behrami improved from ninth position after the opening run to edge out New Zealand's Alice Robertson. Shiffrin's teammate AJ Hurt finished 0.15 behind in third for the American's first career podium in GS.

Enjoying a three-race winning streak, Gut-Behrami raised her season's tally to 1,214 points, five more than Shiffrin, who sits out this weekend's races to nurse a left knee injury.

"Yes, but this is probably one month too early," Gut-Behrami said with a smile on regaining the lead in the overall standings with 14 races left until the season ends on March 23.

"For the overall World Cup, this season has shown us that you have to be fast and you have to be healthy. That will always be my top priority," said Gut-Behrami,

who also led the standings after winning the season-opening race in Austria in October.

Many top skiers have been involved in serious crashes lately and

suffered season-ending injuries, including Petra Vlhova, Valerie Grenier and Corinne Suter, and Aleksander Aamodt Kilde, Alexis Pinturault and Marco Schwarz on the men's circuit.

Shiffrin injured her

SKIING

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session.

Marta Bassino led Federica Brignone for an Italian one-two finish in the opening run, but they dropped to sixth and fourth, respectively.

Bassino was the junior world GS champion 10 years ago. She won the World Cup title in the discipline in 2021 but has won just one World Cup race over the last three years. Most racers struggled and lost time on a bump in a right turn near the end of the course, Gut-Behrami did as well, but the rest of her run was near-flawless.

"Second run was good, I just attacked. I had a big mistake on the finish so I'm really happy that in the end it worked out," she said. "Everything I was missing in the first run, I wanted to show in the second run. The course was nice, I enjoyed that."

Hurt continued her breakthrough World Cup season with her second career podium, and first in GS.

"I think I just went as hard as I could. I was like, I'm going to go all out, either I fall out or I'm going to make it to the finish hopefully really fast," the California native said.

Hurt earned her first podium when placing third at a slalom in Slovenia five weeks ago, and had two top-10 results in GS before Saturday's race.

American teammate Paula Moltzan finished 11th.

Fraser-Pryce to make Paris her final Oly

KINGSTON, Feb 10, (AP): Jamaican great Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce said the Paris Games will be her fifth and final Olympics.

The 37-year-old sprinter, who won two gold medals at 100 meters and another in the 4x100 relay, told Essence.com she still loves the sport but will retire after Paris so she can

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Bucks thrash Hornets 120-84

BOSTON, Feb 10, (AP): Jayson Tatum scored 35 points and sparked a third-quarter rally to help the NBA-leading Boston Celtics get their 40th win of the season, 133-129 over the Washington Wizards on Friday night.

Kristaps Porzingis added 34 points and 11 rebounds, and Jrue Holiday finished with 20 points for the Celtics (40-12), who reached 40 victories the fastest in a season since the 2008-09 squad did it in 49 games. It was Tatum's 20th game this season in which he scored 30 or more points.

Deni Avdija had 24 points and 11 rebounds, and Corey Kispert also scored 24 for the Wizards, who have lost five straight. Bilal Coulibaly finished with 21 points.

The Wizards led by as many as eight in the third quarter and closed within 131-127 in the final minute. But Boston was able to close it out at the foul line.

Bucks 120, Hornets 84

In Milwaukee, Doc Rivers won his

BASKETBALL

1,099th regular-season game to move into eighth place on the NBA's list, Damian Lillard scored 26 points in his return from a two-game injury absence and Milwaukee sent Charlotte to its 10th straight loss.

Malik Beasley made seven 3-pointers on nine attempts and finished with 21 points for Milwaukee, which improved to 2-5 under Rivers, who moved past Larry Brown.

Brandon Miller and Nick Richards each scored 16 points for the Hornets (10-41), who had just 10 available players and used all of them after making several moves at the trade deadline Thursday.

Kings 135, Nuggets 106

In Sacramento, Calif., Domantas Sabonis had 17 points, 17 rebounds and 10 assists to break a tie with Nikola Jokic for the NBA triple-double lead with 16 in Sacramento's win over Denver.

Jokic, the NBA triple-double leader the last two seasons, had 23 points, eight rebounds and seven assists to fall just short of keeping pace with Sabonis.

Malik Monk added 23 points for the Kings. Keegan Murray had 17 points, and De'Aaron Fox finished with 15 points, 10 assists and five steals.

The defending champion Nuggets lost for the first time in four games and missed a chance to slip past the Minnesota Timberwolves for the top spot in the



Washington Wizards' Kyle Kuzma (33) drives against Boston Celtics' Jrue Holiday, center, during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Friday, Feb. 9, 2024, in Boston. (AP)

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Inter Miami's Lionel Messi (left), battles for the ball against Vissel Kobe's Yosuke Ideguchi during the friendly soccer match between Vissel Kobe and Inter Miami CF at the National Stadiumin Tokyo, Japan. (AP)

Argentina friendly canceled

Anger over Messi's absence in Hong Kong game spreads

HONG KONG, Feb 10, (AP): An Argentina soccer friendly in China next month was canceled in more fallout from Lionel Messi failing to play in a club exhibition match in Hong Kong.

World Cup champion Argentina, captained by Messi, last month scheduled a tour of China during the international break from March 18-26. Games were lined up against Nigeria in Hangzhou and Ivory Coast in Beijing. Both opponents are coincidentally meeting in the Africa Cup of Nations final this weekend.

But Messi, on tour with his Inter Miami club, outraged fans in Hong Kong when he didn't play against a local selection last Sunday and remained on the bench. Messi said he had a groin injury. But his excuse didn't wash in Hong Kong after he played for 30 minutes on Wednesday in Tokyo against Vissel Kobe.

SOCCER

On Friday, the sports bureau in Hangzhou canceled the Argentina-Nigeria friendly.

"Because of the reasons known to all, we've learned from supervising authorities that the conditions are immature for the match to go forward. Now it's been decided that the match will be canceled," the Hangzhou Sports Bureau announced on its official social media account.

An Argentina Football Association official told the Associated Press it was aware the match was suspended and was looking for another venue to play Nigeria. The official spoke on condition of anonymity saying, "It's a sensitive matter."

Ivory Coast's friendly with Argentina in Beijing was going ahead as planned, Ivory Coast team spokesperson Anne-Marie N'Guessan told the AP on Friday.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong organizers of the club friendly with Inter Miami said they will offer a 50% refund following days of backlash against Messi from angry fans and the city government.

Many social media users in main-

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: The Zain Premier League championship is set to resume today following a 33-day break attributed to the preliminary rounds, quarter-finals, and semi-finals of the Amir Cup, along with the Asian Cup and the African Cup of Nations.

Commencing this evening, the fifteenth round of the league will feature a solitary match between Al-Nasr and Al-Fahaheel at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium at 6:00 pm.

The tour continues tomorrow with two matches; the first sees Al-Salmiya face off against Al-Shabab at Thamer Stadium at 4:45 pm, followed by a clash between Al-Arabi



A file photo of players in action during the Zain Premier League game. and Al-Jahra at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium at 7:25 pm. Concluding the round the day after tomorrow, Kazma takes on Khai-

Dortmund keep unbeaten run going in victory over Freiburg



Dortmund's Niclas Füllkrug is challenged by Freiburg's Kilian Sildillia during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Borussia Dortmund and SC Freiburg in Dortmund, Germany. (AP)

Malen scores twice

DORTMUND, Germany, Feb 10, (AP): Donyell Malen scored twice as Borussia Dortmund defeated Freiburg 3-0 in the Bundesliga and extended its unbeaten start to 2024 to five games.

Dutch forward Malen gave Dortmund the lead in the eighth minute with a shot into the top right corner off a pass from Niclas Füllkrug, and scored again in first-half stoppage time on the counter.

Füllkrug set up Malen both times and finally marked his 31st birthday with his own goal, heading in at the far post in the 87th. It was his 10th Bundesliga goal and fifth in the last four games.

Dortmund stayed fourth but moved level on points with third-placed Stuttgart, which faces Mainz on Sunday. Dortmund has won four games and drawn one this year, conceding just one goal in the process. Freiburg was seventh and has lost three in a row as its push for European qualification fades.

SOCCER

Jadon Sancho, on loan from Manchester United, came off the Dortmund bench in the 88th for a brief cameo after a muscle problem kept him out of last week's 0-0 draw at Heidenheim. Coach Edin Terzic has linked Sancho's fitness issue to his months-long absence from games at United before he returned to Dortmund on loan last month.

The game was repeatedly interrupted as fans of both teams threw tennis balls and other objects onto the field in protest at the German league's plans to sell a stake in marketing and broadcast revenue to an outside investor.

The protests caused a 10-minute stoppage in the first half and shorter interruptions in the second. Earlier Friday, a second-division game between Hamburger SV and Hannover resumed after severe disruptions including fans attaching bicycle locks to a goal.

tan at the Friendship and Peace Stadium at 4:45 pm, with the pinnacle being a match between Kuwait Club and Al-Qadisiya at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium at 7:25 pm.

Kuwait Club leads the standings with 33 points, closely followed by Al-Arabi II, and Al-Qadisiya holds third place with 32 points. The remaining positions are occupied by Al-Nasr (21 points), Al-Salmiya (20 points), Kazma (17 points), Al-Fahaheel (15 points), Al-Shabab (14 points), Khaitan (7 points), and Al-Jahra at the bottom with only 2 points.

Al-Kuwait, Al-Arabi, and Al-Qadisiya have secured spots in the

championship league, known as the "League of Six," leaving Al-Fahaheel in seventh place (15 points) unable to catch up. Intense competition ensues for the remaining three seats among Al-Nasr (21 points), Al-Salmiya (20 points), Kazma (17 points), Al-Fahaheel (15 points), and Al-Shabab (14 points). Khaitan faces a challenging situation and is nearing Al-Jahra, leading them to compete in the "Avoid Relegation" League.

In today's match, Al-Nasr aims to redeem itself after an early exit from the Amir Cup at the hands of Al-Arabi in the quarter-finals, seeking victory to regain its standing. Conversely, Al-Fahaheel strives for the same goal, aiming to compensate for its Amir Cup exit against Al-Qadisiya and assert its superiority over "Al-Annabi."

CAF doesn't know when 2025 Africa Cup will be played

Super Eagles out to stop Elephants' charge in final

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast, Feb 10, (AP): A host nation holds its breath.

Ivory Coast is on the verge of a scarcely believable third Africa Cup of Nations title, but the Elephants must first continue their remarkable run by beating old rival Nigeria in Sunday's final.

The Super Eagles are confident of capturing what would be their fourth continental crown. Portuguese coach José Peseiro has reshaped the team into a hard-working defensively stable unit, and he can count on African player of the year Victor Osimhen to lead the attack and torment the Ivorian defenders.

Locals were in a state of nervous excitement while claiming to be confident of victory. Young and old were wearing variations of the team's distinctive orange shirt. Streets in Abidjan were adorned with Ivory Coast flags, which also flew from cars, motorbikes and trucks navigating the city's usual gridlock.

Nigeria already defeated the host nation 1-0 in the group stage thanks to a second-half penalty from team captain William Troost-Ekong.

That was first game of four in which the Super Eagles didn't concede a goal - a run ended only when South Africa's Teboho Mokoena scored a last-minute penalty to send their semifinal into extra time. Goalkeeper Stanley Nwabali made two penalty saves in the shootout to ensure Nigeria progressed.

The tension and drama in that semifinal were too much for some Nigerian fans. The team held a minute's silence on Thursday for up to five supporters who died during the match.

Osimhen has only scored one goal in the tournament, but it's not for a lack of trying. The Napoli forward had three goals ruled out for various reasons and has been inspiring the rest of the team with his tireless performances.

Ivory Coast's loss to Nigeria in the group stage was just the start of the Elephants' troubles. The team was

shocked by Equatorial Guinea 4-0 in the next game - a result that left the host nation on the brink of a humiliating group-stage exit.

The Ivorian soccer federation reacted by firing coach Jean-Louis Gasset some days later, hours before the team improbably squeezed into the knockout round thanks to results in other groups.

The Ivorian federation, which had promoted Gasset's assistant, Emerse Faé, to head coach on an interim basis, then tried to replace him by asking the French federation if it could borrow its women's team coach, Hervé Renard, for the remainder of the tournament. The French refused, though Renard was keen to return.

SOCCER

Ivory Coast's emotional rollercoaster ride between triumph and despair continued in the last-16 match against Senegal, arguably the best team in the competition. Senegal took a fourth-minute lead, but Franck Kessié scored a penalty to equalize in the 86th, then followed



Ivory Coast's interim Soccer coach Emerse Fae speaks during a media conference, in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. (AP)

West Asia Volleyball Championship

Al-Qadisiya secure win over Bani Yas

MUSCAT, Feb 10, (KUNA): Kuwait's Qadisiya secured a 3-1 victory against the UAE's Bani Yas in the ongoing 2nd West Asia Men's Volleyball Championship at the Sohar Sports Stadium. This match was part of the competitions determining the 8-5 rankings in the championship, which features ten teams and is set to conclude on Monday.

The participating teams, in addition to Qadisiya and Bani Yas, include Omani

representatives Sohar and Al-Seeb.

VOLLEYBALL

The rankings for the 9th and 10th positions were decided as Saudi Al-Ibtisam defeated the Jordanian team Shabab Al-Hussein with a score of 3-1 in a match held the previous night.



Al-Qadisiya player spikes the ball as an opponent defends. KUNA photo

Kohli out for remaining Tests vs England

RAJKOT, India, Feb 10, (AP): India will play its three remaining cricket tests against England without star batter Virat Kohli.

Kohli missed the first two tests, which the teams split, due to personal reasons, and the Board of Control for Cricket in India said Saturday that he would also miss the final three matches.

"The board fully respects and supports Mr. Kohli's decision," the BCCI said in a statement.

It also said Ravindra Jadeja and KL Rahul would be subject to fitness clearances from its medical team ahead of the third test beginning next Thursday in Rajkot.

Jadeja missed the second test due to a hamstring injury suffered in the first and Rahul has a right quadriceps

injury.

England won the first test by 28 runs and India the second by 106 runs.

After the Rajkot test, the teams will play the fourth in Ranchi from Feb. 23 and the fifth and final test in Dharamsala from March 7.

CRICKET

India squad for the final three tests against England: Rohit Sharma (captain), Jasprit Bumrah, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, KL Rahul, Rajat Patidar, Sarfaraz Khan, Dhruv Jurel, KS Bharat, Ravindra Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohd. Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Akash Deep



Manchester City's John Stones challenges for the ball with Everton's James Garner during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Everton, at the Etihad stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

Sports

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City edge Everton for 6th straight victory

Haaland scores a brace



Abdullah Al-Sharbatly on the podium with other winners and officials after the awarding ceremony.

MANCHESTER, England, Feb 10, (AP): Erling Haaland scored his first goals since returning to Manchester City's team after injury to lead the champions to a 2-0 win over Everton in the Premier League on Saturday.

The Norway striker finally broke Everton's obdurate resistance when he latched onto a loose ball in the area and smashed home a fierce right-foot shot in the 71st minute.

Haaland added a second in an 85th-minute counterattack by running onto substitute Kevin De Bruyne's pass, shrugging off Jarrad Branthwaite and slotting home a low finish.

It was Haaland's second start - and third appearance - since coming back after nearly two months out with a foot injury, with the double making him the outright top scorer in the league with 16 goals. That's two more than Liverpool's Mohamed Salah.

City's sixth straight league win, and 10th in a row in all competitions, was hard to come by, with Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford well protected by his defence and not having a shot to save in the first half.

The introduction of De Bruyne off the bench in the 57th minute added



Burnley's goalkeeper James Trafford (front), makes a save in front of Liverpool's Darwin Nunez during the English Premier League soccer match between Liverpool and Burnley, at Anfield stadium in Liverpool, England. (AP)

Marco extends winning streak



The winner Switzerland's Marco Odermatt celebrates after an alpine ski, men's World Cup giant slalom race, in Bansko, Bulgaria. (AP)

BANSKO, Bulgaria, Feb 10, (AP): Swiss star Marco Odermatt dominated a men's World Cup giant slalom on Saturday to claim his ninth straight win in the discipline.

Odermatt wasn't clean on the icy steep middle part of the Banderitza course in either run. But he gained time on his competitors in all other sections as he extended his lead from the first leg to finish 0.91 seconds ahead of runner-up Alexander Steen Olsen of Norway.

Austrian skier Manuel Feller was 1.08 behind in third as the top three kept their positions from the first run.

"For sure, the confidence is on the highest level and everything is working well. The skiing is perfect and I just have fun skiing," said Odermatt, who has 20

SKIING

wins from 60 career starts in the discipline.

Odermatt, who is the Olympic and world GS champion, has won 10 World Cup races in total this season, including all six giant slaloms.

The two-time overall champion becomes the first male skier since Hermann Maier more than two decades ago to win 10 World Cup races in consecutive seasons.

Odermatt is rapidly closing in on his third big crystal globe, after raising his season's total to 1,506 points and extending his lead in the overall standings to 822 points over second-placed Cyprien Sarrazin. The French skier does not compete in the technical events.

Saturday's victory left Odermatt five wins short of the record for the most GS wins in a row, set by Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark, who won 14 straight in the late 1970s.

Odermatt had not triumphed in Bansko before. In 2021, the last time the men's World Cup visited Bulgaria, he finished fifth and second, respectively, in two giant slaloms.

"I really like to be here. It's a good crowd, it's different to all the other races. Great hill, great conditions, fun slope to ski," he said.

"The first run was very turny and difficult for tactics, and the second one was really about to push," said Odermatt, who led Steen Olsen by 0.35 after the opening run.

Best of the Rest

Empoli extend good run: Empoli continued its excellent form under new coach Davide Nicola by beating his old team Salernitana 3-1 in Serie A.

The away win by the club that started the day second to last against the only team below it extended Empoli's unbeaten run to four games since Nicola took over on Jan. 15.

Empoli rose four places to 15th. It was eight points clear of Salernitana.

The visitor was fortunate to take the lead midway through the first half. Nicolò Cambiaghi's cross from the left took a deflection off the head of defender Alessandro Zanolini and looped over his stranded goalkeeper.

Shon Weissman equalized after 69 minutes for Salernitana with a glancing header from Antonio Candreva's right cross.

M'Baye Niang secured the win from the penalty spot three minutes from the final whistle and Matteo Cancellieri completed the scoring with a fine breakaway finish in injury time. (AP)

ISU defends decision: The governing body that oversees figure skating defended its decision to award the bronze medal from the 2022 Beijing Olympics to the Russian squad, despite the disqualification of team member Kamila Valieva for a highly publicized doping violation that caused a reshuffling of the medals.

The International Skating Union published an amended standings late last month, after the Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled that Valieva was at fault for the violation and banned her for four years. But while the ISU stripped the Russians of the 10 points she had earned in each of her two events, it declined to bump up the placement of athletes that finished below her.

That didn't matter when it came to gold and silver - the United States had enough points to move into first place and Japan had enough to move into second. But it did mean that Canada, which had finished fourth at the Winter Games, was still a single point behind the Russian team in the new ordering, keeping that nation out of the medals in the team event.

"In any complex and extraordinary situation like this, the reallocation of points could negatively affect the relative team ranking, adversely impacting teams that had nothing to do with the incident in question," the ISU said in a statement. (AP)

Double delight for Saudi Arabia's Al-Sharbatly at International Show Jumping Championship

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 10: Abdullah Al-Sharbatly, the Saudi rider, showcased remarkable prowess by clinching two significant victories in "The Stadium" International Show Jumping Championship. He asserted his dominance in the three-star championship held on Marina Beach, engaging in fierce competition with riders from Kuwait, Italy, and Bahrain. The event, sponsored by Kuwait International Bank, witnessed a display of equestrian skill and determination.

In the tournament's fifth round, set at a height of 145 cm on the second

EQUESTRIAN

day, Al-Sharbatly secured the top spot with a flawless performance. Clocking in at 72.78 seconds, he was the sole rider to navigate the obstacles without incurring penalty points and adhered to the designated time. Following closely were distinguished riders Abdullah Al-Awadi (Kuwait), Khaled Al-Mabti (Saudi Arabia), and Abdullah Al-Roudhan, along with Ghazi Al-Jarwi, Fawaz Rashed, and Ali Al-Kharafi.

Al-Sharbatly continued his winning streak by claiming first place

in the second half of the competition at a height of 140 cm, registering an impressive time of 23.88 seconds. His skilled performance outshone competitors, including knights Ali Al-Kharafi, Abdullah Al-Roudhan, Anaz Al-Anaz, and Ghazi Al-Jarwi. Kuwaiti jockey Ali Al-Kharafi also secured a victory, claiming first

place at a height of 130 cm.

The triumphant riders were honored in a ceremony attended by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah bin Fahd, President of the Saudi Equestrian Federation, Masoud Johar Hayat, President of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation, and Ahmed Suleiman Al-Hazami, CEO of SAFX.

Five swimmers represent Kuwait at World Aquatics Championship

DOHA, Feb 10, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti swimming team entered the World Aquatics Championship 2024 in Doha, featuring five talented swimmers. The championship, which kicked off on February 2, is scheduled to run until February 18.

Faisal Abu Al-Hasan, the head of the participating delegation and a member of the Kuwaiti Federation, shared with KUNA before their departure on Saturday that the team comprises Rashed Al-Tarmoum, Mohammad Zubaid, Khaled Al-Otaibi, Mohammad Al-

Otaibi, and Lara Dashti, all under the guidance of Italian coach Simone Testasca.

SWIMMING

Abu Al-Hasan revealed that the team is set to compete under the impressive Aspire Dome in the Qatari capital on Sunday. He emphasized that such international events provide valuable opportunities for participants to gain expertise and interact with other highly skilled athletes



The five swimmers representing Kuwait at the World Aquatics Championship in Doha

KUNA photo