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## KUWAIT AND BAHRAIN STRENGTHEN TIES, EMPHASIZE UNITY



Bahrain King awards Kuwait's Amir the Order of Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa.



Amiri Diwan photos

### Opinion

## Blessed be the tour

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

THE visit of His Highness the Amir to Bahrain was the third of his Gulf tour. It was certainly as blessed as the previous two visits, and reveals the depth of relations between Kuwait and other member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which is built on mutual respect, love, and a single destiny.

This visit represented an opportunity to put the Head of State in front of the changes that Bahrain has witnessed, among other similar ones, from economic openness to enhancing the movement of investments in the region, and working to diversify sources of income, so that oil is not the strategic commodity that these countries rely on.

Over the past three decades, Manama has worked on increasing opportunities in all fields, and has encouraged social openness, which is the backbone of any successful economy.

It has become the focus of international rating agencies, whose indicators reveal that its rating has risen to levels that confirm it has emerged from the bottleneck in terms of the absolute dependence on oil.

There is no doubt that Bahrain is one of the countries that has worked for 20 years to diversify its sources of income based on its 2030 vision, and has taken important steps in doing so.

Its dependence on hydrocarbons has decreased, especially in terms of gross domestic product, exports, and financial revenues, so that it will not face any economic problems in the future that will hinder it and affect the social aspect.

It has promoted the tourism sector by opening itself to the world, facilitating entry into and exit from the country, granting instant visitation facilities, and encouraging investment in all sectors.

What it achieved 15 years ago in the context of its economic vision has begun to be translated today through well-thought-out laws that anticipate the future. Now it is bearing fruit.

From this standpoint, His Highness's visit to Manama was also suitable to find out what can be achieved in Kuwait. This is due to the fact that the similarity of the characteristics of the societies of Bahrain and Kuwait gives the decision-maker the ability to compare in realistic circumstances.

How can we plan for a collaborative future between the two nations in line with the Gulf vision upon which the Gulf Cooperation Council was founded? This vision aims to establish a crucial strategic partnership that is economically, politically, and socially more adaptable.

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### Day by Day

DOCTORS say that drinking tea at night is harmful for the stomach, while an ordinary person asked: How does the stomach know that it is daytime or nighttime? Sometimes there are questions that simple people ask, but they are difficult to answer.

The phrase "Take wisdom from the mouths of madmen" suggests that wisdom can come from unexpected sources, even from those who may seem unconventional or eccentric. It emphasizes the importance of being open-minded and receptive to insights from diverse perspectives, regardless of the source.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

## Bahrain bestows Amir prestigious honors

# 'No entry' except approved airlines

Kuwait Airways, Jazeera for family visits

By **Muhammad Al-Musleh**  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Due to expatriates submitting incomplete papers, the Residence Affairs Department has released a brochure outlining necessary documents for family visit visa approvals.**

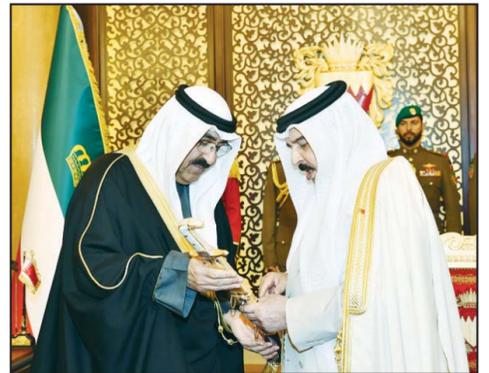
These include a signed request from the sponsor, contact information, travel ticket, valid passport

copies, sponsor's civil ID, address verification, and a sponsor's workplace confirmation.

Additionally, authenticated certificates of kinship are required attested by the Kuwaiti embassies and foreign ministries. Despite rumors, visa issuance for all visit types continues and added, it is not true that the ministry will stop issuing visit visas within two months.

Moreover, citing sources from the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation it has been reported that "No entry for family visit" passengers into the country except through Kuwait Airways or Jazeera Airways.

Sources told Al-Seyassah that "the violating passengers will be returned to where they came from."



Amiri Diwan photo

The Bahraini King presents His Highness with the distinguished Bahraini Sword during the momentous occasion.

### Bond 'historic'

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13, (KUNA):** A joint statement released on Tuesday after talks between His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Bahrain's King Hamad bin Issa Al-Khalifa put much emphasis on the "historic bond" shared between the two Gulf Arab neighbors.

The talks, ahead of a pan-Arab summit hosted by the Gulf Arab kingdom in May, are part of efforts to ensure a "united Arab stand" in the face of "conflict and challenges" gripping the region, a measure they both agreed is necessary to protect peace and security.

On bilateral cooperation, His Highness the Amir and the Bahraini king collectively underscored that there remains room for progress in bilateral trade and investment, which entails exploring investment opportunities.

They discussed a joint security committee linking the two Gulf

Continued on Page 5

### Saudi Cabinet calls for ceasefire

## Kuwait FM and British envoy discuss situation in Palestine

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13, (Agencies):** Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received Tuesday the British Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and the UN, Lord Tariq Ahmed.

Both sides touched on the historical bilateral ties between the UK and Kuwait as well as the latest regional and global developments especially the situation in Palestine.

Minister Al-Yahya reaffirmed Kuwait's stance on the Palestinian cause and its support to the Palestinian people to obtain their full rights and es-

tablish their independent state.

Elsewhere, Saudi Arabia's Cabinet stressed Tuesday the need to end the ongoing Israeli war in the Gaza Strip and remove obstacles impeding the entry of humanitarian aid into the Strip.

The Saudi Press Agency quoted a cabinet statement as saying that the cabinet underscored the need to take steps toward implementing the two-state solution and recognizing the State of Palestine within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

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KUNA photo

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya receives British Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and the UN, Lord Tariq Ahmed.

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On Tuesday, National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun initiated the routine parliamentary session, delving into discussions on various significant topics.

### Parliament probes ministerial responses

## Assembly objects to exclusion of MP's speech

By **Saeed Mahmoud Saleh**  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13:** The National Assembly on Tuesday rejected the decision of Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun to remove the response of MP Abdulkareem Al-Kandari to the Amiri speech delivered on Oct 31, 2023 from the minutes of the previous session.

Al-Saadoun had earlier cut the statement of Al-Kandari from the television broadcast, pointing out this decision is in line with Article 69 of National Assembly Law. Al-Kandari then said it seems the seat of the Speaker is like magic; indicating that cutting his speech from the television broadcast indicates it included offensive phrases, but this is not true. He clarified that his speech was the polite response of a son to his father, referring to himself and HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Then, the Assembly proceeded with the discussion and approval of the following incoming letters:

■ Request of the Human Resources Development Committee to extend the deadline to complete its investigation into the factors that led to the rising number of nominees to leadership positions in public institutions. The committee promised to submit its report to the Assembly before the current parliamentary year ends.

■ Request of MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf to assign the Public Facilities Committee to discuss the establishment of the Camel Market along the Eighth Ring Road in Artal. Some MPs objected; stating this should be referred to the Environment, Food and Water Security Committee but their number was not enough to lead to the rejection of the letter.

■ Request of MP Muhammad Al-Hewaila to assign the Education, Culture and Guidance Affairs Committee to discuss the decision of the Ministry of Higher Education to prevent the holders of secondary stage certificates obtained more than two years ago from applying for admission into the universities.

■ Request of a number of MPs to assign the Health, Social and Labor Affairs Committee to investigate the delayed registration of new medicines and medical equipment, and procedures adopted by the Ministry of Health in this regard. Minister of Health Ahmed Al-Awadhi commented on the letter; affirming that he and the ministry are concerned about the citizens' health and safety. He said no medicine is approved unless it passes the specified tests, which may take long time in some cases. He explained that "sometimes the delay is due to the procedures taken away from the ministry."

Prayer Timings	
Fajr .....	05:09
Sunrise ..	06:29
Zohr .....	12:02
Asr .....	15:12
Maghrib ..	17:36
Isha .....	18:53

# Local

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

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:		Weather	
<b>By Day:</b> Warm and partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-45 km/h causing rising dust over open areas.	partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speeds of 15-45 km/h with a chance for scattered rain.	Kuwait Airport	24
<b>By Night:</b> Rather cold and		Abdaly	24
		Jahra	25
		Salmiyah	22
		Nuwaisib	23
		Wafra	24
		Max Exp	25
		Min Rec	15

## 'Major resource of drinking water, desalination plants'

# Citizens, residents urged to protect Kuwait Bay from pollution

By **Abdel Nasser Al-Aslami**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Kuwait Society for Environmental Protection (KSEP) commented on the Municipal Council's announcement of "the new committee's initial approval to establish a sea bridge linking the Mutla'a City to Kuwait City via the Kuwait Bay."

In a press statement issued yesterday in response to the Municipal Council's proposal, the society called for mobilizing the efforts of concerned parties to address the pollution of Kuwait Bay and the challenges facing its cleanliness and protection.

It called on citizens, residents and all parties to interact positively with its "Kuwait Bay Life" initiative, which it launched in 2016, to preserve and protect the Kuwait Bay, and its components and natural and environmental habitats, as it is a major economic resource for drinking water and desalination plants, in addition to its coastal, beach, recreational and commercial importance.

The Kuwait Society for Environmental Protection said, "The importance of Kuwait Bay lies in it being an economic, environmental, natural, ecological and geographical area for the State of Kuwait."

Most importantly of all, it is classified in the Environmental Protection Law as a region and environment of a special nature. It is considered a meeting point for the ecosystem in the sea and the ecosystem on land, and is the second largest fish pond in the world.

### Economic

It is also considered a suitable and safe area for shrimp breeding and nursery, and a home for migratory birds due to its warm climate, in addition to the availability of food and water.

It seems that we are in dire need today of a reminder of the goals of this initiative and campaign to always keep the environmental issue in mind.

The slowness of the currents inside the Bay makes it impossible for there to be any structural obstacles in this limited area. This will affect the

movement of water circulation and renewal in the Kuwait Bay, which in turn affects the accumulation of heavy metals and the nutrient levels in the water column, and thus affecting the fish stock."

The society explained that the most prominent and important reason for preserving and protecting Kuwait Bay is the large fish stocks, which represent a major resource for food security in the country.

### Permissible

National efforts must be exerted to solve the problem, the most prominent of which is the allocation of a national committee concerned with this matter. It should include representatives of the relevant and concerned parties, in addition to the allocation of chapter five (Biological Diversity) and Chapter Three, Articles 108, 109, and 110 of the Environmental Protection Law.

The Kuwait Society for Environmental Protection stated, "Perhaps the most important thing is that Articles 108 and 110 of the Environmental Protection Law No. 42/2014 amended by Law No. 99/2015 stipulate that it is not permissible to initiate any projects inside the city without obtaining the approval of the Supreme Council for the Environment. This is not currently available because the council has not been formed and its work has been suspended for quite some time.

The Supreme Council for the Environment cannot decide whether to approve or not until it obtains studies about the environmental impact and the opinion of the Environment Public Authority, as the decision is linked to its recommendation regarding the project's impact on Kuwait Bay."

In its statement, the Kuwait Society for Environmental Protection highlighted the importance of preserving Kuwait City.

It emphasized the importance of sustainable interaction with individual, collective and institutional responsibility towards it, and taking into account the interest of future generations, due to its economic, environmental, natural, ecological and geographical importance to Kuwait.

# 'Ties of kinship and lineage'

New turn in Kuwait-Bahrain ties: Bahrain FM

## Amir receives call from UN chief

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Monday a phone call from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

During the call, Guterres touched on the distinguished ties between the UN and the State of Kuwait as well as the pivotal role played by His Highness towards all regional and global issues.

He also thanked His Highness for the Kuwaiti positions and its support for humanitarian organizations towards various humanitarian issues, especially Kuwait's assistance to the Palestinian people in the various difficult humanitarian circumstances they are experiencing.

In turn, His Highness the Amir thanked the UN chief for his sincere sentiments and invited him to visit Kuwait.



PM Diwan photo  
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah chaired the cabinet meeting.

## Cabinet session briefed on Kuwait Amir's Bahrain trip

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13, (KUNA): The cabinet held its weekly session on Monday and was briefed at the outset of His Highness the Amir's upcoming visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain.

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

After the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Shereeda Al-Mousherji, said the cabinet was briefed first on His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah upcoming visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain tomorrow (Tuesday), and wished His Highness the Amir and his accompanying delegation success and a pleasant time.

The Ministers then expressed their sincere congratulations and blessings to Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, and to the government and people of Qatar for their triumph in winning Asia football Cup 2023, praising the great efforts made by Qatar, including the great organization to host this tournament.

The Council of Ministers also expressed their congratulations to King Abdullah II of Jordan, for winning second place in the 2023 Asian Cup, praising the distinguished performance and high spirit in which the Jordanian national team demonstrated.

The cabinet then discussed the affairs of the National Assembly and reviewed the topics on the agenda of the regular National Assembly session on Tuesday, 2/13/2024,

and Wednesday, 2/14/2024.

The cabinet also reviewed the recommendation of the Ministerial Committee for Legal Affairs regarding a draft law amending some provisions of Law No. (120) of 2023 regarding elections for members of the National Assembly (General Elections Commission), and the Council of Ministers decided to approve the draft law and submit it to His Highness the Amir in preparation for referring it to the National Assembly.

Afterward, the cabinet mourned the demise of former Member of Parliament (MP), Rashid Saleh Al-Tawhid, for his extensive efforts and journey of giving to the legislative branch, since winning the membership in the National Assembly in 1963.

Meanwhile, the cabinet expressed the State of Kuwait's condemnation and denunciation of the terrorist attack that took place in the Federal Republic of Somalia in recent days, which led to the martyrdom and injury of a number of members of the Bahrain Defense Force and the UAE Armed Forces, while they were in Somalia for training purposes, stressing the State of Kuwait's support for its brothers in the Kingdom of Bahrain and UAE.

The cabinet stressing the need for the international community to continue to join forces to eliminate terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

The cabinet extended its deepest condolences and sincere sympathy to Bahrain and UAE, their people, and to the families of the victims, calling for a speedy recovery to the injured.

MANAMA, Feb 13, (KUNA): Bahraini Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullatif Al-Zayani underscored the importance, Monday, of Bahraini-Kuwaiti relations, which have unique historical and cultural relations that were laid out by fathers and grandfathers on solid foundations of friendship, mutual respect, unity of religion, blood, destiny, and ties of kinship and lineage.

In a press statement, Al-Zayani expressed the Kingdom of Bahrain's pleasure and admiration for His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visit as he described it as true embodiment of the depth of the strong, historical and distinguished fraternal relations between the leadership and peoples of the two countries.

The minister also stressed that the visit is a new addition to the process of fraternal relations that are becoming stronger, more established and more prosperous as a model of political and security alliance and close economic integration.

Al-Zayani praised the great care and attention bilateral relations received from the Bahraini King, King Hamad bin Isa and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The minister also appreciated keenness by the governments of the two countries, headed by Bahraini Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad, and his brother, His Highness Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait, to consolidate the bonds of this comprehensive strategic fraternal partnership through activating nearly 50 agreements, memorandums of understanding, and executive programs for bilateral cooperation.

Al-Zayani noted on his aspirations to hold meetings of the Joint Supreme Committee in its 11th session soon in the State of Kuwait in order to achieve common interests in various political, diplomatic, economic, social, cultural and media fields.

Al-Zayani stressed the importance of the Bahraini-Kuwaiti summit in affirming the wise and balanced diplomatic positions of the leadership and governments of the two brotherly countries in their concern for the unity of the Gulf House, strengthening the integrative process of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), including support to Arab and Islamic causes, mainly and foremost of which is supporting the rights of the Palestinian people to freedom, security, and self-determination by establishing their independent state.

### New horizons explored

Kuwait deep-rooted relations with the Kingdom of Bahrain have ambitious visions derived from close ties between the leadership and the people of the countries.

Mutual visits between the leaderships, like His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's upcoming visit to Bahrain, confirm the close relations and ties of kinship.

The continuation of visits give strong indications of the leaderships' keenness to launch joint relations for the benefit of their peoples and reflect the consensus on regional and international issues.

The strength of the Kuwaiti-Bahraini relations was represented throughout history, such as Bahrain's position and its pivotal role in providing logistical support and military ground, air and naval support to the coalition forces during Iraq's brutal invasion of Kuwait.

The Kingdom contributed to the drafting of resolutions condemning Iraq's invasion and calling for the regime's total withdrawal from Kuwaiti territory, as well as its support of the return of legitimacy to Kuwait in all international forums.

Bahrain also embraced about 12,000 Kuwaitis during the invasion and formed a committee to handle their affairs, as well as the Kingdom's efforts post-liberation through medical support and infrastructure rehabilitation.

In addition, the late King of Bahrain Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah visited Kuwait immediately after liberation on June 19, 1991 to congratulate the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people on the return of Kuwaiti legitimacy and the demise of the Iraqi occupation.

King Isa said, "It is a most joyful hour for me to meet my brother the Amir (Sheikh Jaber) in Kuwait after the scourge has been lifted of Kuwait and its return to its people."

Returning gratitude and in recognition of Bahrain's great efforts, the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah went to Bahrain to express his gratitude and Kuwait's appreciation for all what Bahrain has provided.

Moreover, in 2003, during the Iraq war, Bahraini troops headed to Kuwait to participate in protecting its borders during the entry of US forces into Iraq to oust the former Iraqi regime.

### Honorable

Kuwait also has honorable positions with Bahrain, the last of which was Kuwait's support of the Kingdom during the unfortunate events that occurred in February 2011; the Kuwaiti naval forces participated under the Peninsula Shield Forces in Bahrain to maintain security in the Kingdom.

Kuwait also partnered with Saudi Arabia and the UAE to support the efforts of the fiscal program in Bahrain as part of an aid package amounting to about USD 10 billion in 2018.

Over the past decades, Bahraini-Kuwaiti relations have witnessed significant development at all levels, especially since the establishment of joint higher committee for cooperation between the two countries in 2001, leading to the signing of eight agreements in the field of diplomatic, consular, tourism, air, cultural, educational and media cooperation, memorandum of understanding and executive programs for cooperation in various fields.

The trade between the two countries amounted to about USD 482 million by the end of 2022, and Kuwaiti direct investments in Bahrain exceeded USD 2.3 billion.

In addition, the signing of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development 19 agreements with Bahrain was worth about USD 1.5 billion; trade between Bahrain and Kuwait increased to USD 113 trillion in 2023 by 10 percent compared to 2022.

The two countries are constantly seeking to develop bilateral relations, which consistently witness remarkable growth for the benefit of both, Kuwait and Bahrain.



Yousef Al-Ruwaieh receiving an honoring plaque from the Minister of Education, Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, with Talal Al-Kharafi next to him.

## Strategic partnership with IIFME

# KFH supports Kuwaiti innovators

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) took part in the 14th International Invention Fair in the Middle East (IIFME), which was organized by Kuwait Science Club (KSC) and supported by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).

The award ceremony was attended by the Minister of Education and Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, representing His Highness the Amir, Chairman of the Kuwait Science Club and the Organizing Committee of IIFME Talal Al-Kharafi, who lauded KFH's significant contribution to the exhibition's success, inspiring Kuwaiti youth, promoting science, knowledge, and innovation initiatives. He also commended KFH's continuous participation in international events held in Kuwait, as well as its extensive collaboration with KSC across various initiatives.

During the ceremony, KFH Deputy General Manager Public Relations and Media, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh, received an honor on behalf of the bank for its outstanding contribution.

On this occasion, Al-Ruwaieh said that KFH's participation as a strategic partner demonstrates its constant commitment towards scientific endeavors and young innovators by providing

them with the opportunity to showcase their inventions and utilize them for societal development at all levels.

Al-Ruwaieh pointed out that the exhibition received 14 inventions from 21 Kuwaiti inventors representing various scientific institutions such as Kuwait University, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, and others, with six Kuwaitis being successful in winning prizes.

He noted that KFH is always committed to participating in such events as part of its social responsibility and supporting young talents. The Bank also focuses on supporting inventors from Arab and other regions, particularly Kuwaiti inventors, reaping the benefits for Kuwaiti society in general.

Al-Ruwaieh highlighted the importance of the ongoing support for initiatives that foster a culture of innovation, while also focusing on youth's potential. He added that this support is aligned with KFH's strategy to empower youth, promote innovation and digital transformation, stimulating sustainable development, and maintaining KFH's leading position in social responsibility.

It worth noting that over 200 inventions were submitted in the exhibition, which witnessed a participation of forty Arab and foreign countries.

## Iran embassy marks National Day

# 100,000 visas granted to Kuwaitis

By **Fares Al-Abdan**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the State of Kuwait Muhammad Toutouchi affirmed that the issuance of 100,000 visas to Kuwaiti citizens to visit Iran for the purpose of tourism and medical treatment is evidence of the authentic ties between the two countries.

He said this during the celebration of the Iranian National Day the day before yesterday evening in the presence of the Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Samih Hayat and a group of ambassadors and diplomats in Salwa Hall.

The ambassador said, "With the passage of 62 years of diplomatic relations between Iran and Kuwait, there are balanced relations between the two countries. Today we are in the process of investing in current experiences to create relations that are moving for the better. "We are also happy that this matter is of

interest to His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the honorable Amir of the State of Kuwait.

"We pray for success for the government of His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah. We hope that we will witness practical initiatives from both sides at this stage to strengthen the bilateral relations.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, with its realistic view of the political geography of the region, sought to establish balanced relations with neighboring countries and relied on reconciliation and religious and popular commonalities that trump points of difference to strengthen and consolidate these relations.

"In this context, we find that our relations with Kuwait transcend official relations due to the relations of kinship and intermarriage between the two peoples and the historical process of commercial communication, which has changed into deep and rooted relations."

Ambassador Toutouchi stressed that the Zionist aggression in Gaza and the killing of hundreds of Palestinian people are considered war crimes that occur in the face of silence and even support by major countries, adding, "After the global popular sympathy that we have witnessed in the world, there must be international solidarity to stop these massacres."



Toutouchi

# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## 'Cultural, touristic openness opens minds, leads to economic success'

"POLITICAL openness is a step that requires boldness in application. The countries that changed and developed positively were open countries, and co-existence is one of the most important means that make people progress, because it makes people respect the beliefs and ideas of others, which contributes to harmony and builds healthy relationships with those who are intellectually, culturally, and ethnically different from them," columnist **Dr. Ghadeer Muhammad Asiri** wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"To achieve balance in society, coexistence and acceptance of others, which reduces the gap of differences and puts the state's interest as a priority through acceptance and cultural pluralism, and moves the state to an advanced level that is better than it was before is vital.

"Intellectual openness is an urgent need when a person lives in a society of multiple races, origins and cultures, so the difference in practices Customs, needs, and fashions are among the healthy practices of civilized societies, and require the citizen to interact with those who are different from him at work, public places, and agencies that provide public services in the country.

"Updating old laws is an urgent need in many countries, especially since the laws were developed on the basis of a structure different from the present, and they contain a large gap. We find boldness in advanced legislation, and adopting what is suitable for society is in itself improving the practices of individuals and making them open to global policies and global peoples.

"Countries that open their doors to tourism with licensed official visas are more prosperous and developed, and have achieved leading numbers in indicators of success with the availability of infrastructure resources for development projects, such as the United States of America, which achieved the figure of 100%, Britain 98%, and Singapore 85%, as well as some Gulf countries such as Qatar.

"The UAE and Saudi Arabia, which have come topping the best indicators of connectivity with the rest of the world, have achieved amazing results in entrepreneurship and economic openness, which has moved many countries' budgets to the indicators of success and globalism.

"Cultural openness is a step that precedes political and economic openness, and prohibiting cultural openness closes minds and obscures them from the large, civilized world. It is one of the steps in the United Nations' adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan, and an engine for development and the integration of cultures into sustainable policy programs in the world, which can be achieved by being informed and involved in the importance of having arts, civilizations, museums, exhibitions and artistic performances in any society, to educate people and make them quick to accept other civilizations and homogeneous races, and the need for positive change has become a necessity



Dr. Ghadeer Asiri

in the country to keep pace with developed countries globally and regionally."

**Also:**

"What is the easiest thing in Kuwait? The answer is the easiest thing is to change the minister and bring in a new minister. What are the things we are most accustomed to in Kuwait? The answer: Getting rid of the government and forming a new one. What is something that was constant and has changed today? Answer: Change the Prime Minister. Of course, as a result of this, every year or two, under the best circumstances, we have new parliamentary elections and new representatives," columnist **Mubarak Fahd Al-Duwailah**, wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"What are the consequences of this abnormal situation? The answer: Every year we have a new government work program that undermines the government program which was approved less than a year ago, and was barely agreed upon with the National Assembly.

"This is the real reason for the stalled development in the country, and this is the reason why we lag behind the rest of the GCC countries.

"The reason is not the existence of parliamentary oversight, as some like to imagine, and the reason is not the existence of oversight institutions such as the Audit Bureau and others, but rather the instability of ministers in their ministries, and the lack of continuation of a government work program that was recently agreed upon -- all of this leads to the disruption of development.

"So why do we have a change in ministers, governments and representatives every day? The reason, I think, is that we cannot tolerate the opinion of others, and we can no longer tolerate criticism, and we quickly become frustrated with the political bickering that always occurs between representatives and ministers, and if we find a representative who has gone out of context and tact of speech, we generalize this event to everyone, and create a political crisis between the two authorities.

"The easiest way out of these crises is to dissolve Parliament and call early elections. A decision is soon issued to stop government work unless urgent matters are dealt with. Since when do we hear about the Silk City in the north of the country? Twenty years ago. A stable government and council could have built five silk cities.

"Since when do we demand street repair and maintenance? Since when do we demand repair and maintenance of the rain sewer network? Every minister who comes up with a plan to advance the country, but the lucky one among the ministers is the one who lasts two years before being dismissed for reasons he does not know. I say he is lucky because he saw whoever came before him did not last two months.

"Today, the MPs know the government's weak point. They ask any minister they do not want a number of questions and then an interrogation. He is changed and a number of ministers are changed before he ascends the podium. In order not to be unfair to the MPs, the selection of ministers is sometimes

a major cause of the crisis between the two authorities. As soon as there is a minister whose selection is announced, the people produce a list of his CVs that confirms the poor and rapid selection.

"Now what is the way out of these crises? Stability in the government apparatus is the way out. Make the best choice (the strong and honest one), then give him the opportunity to implement his agenda and vision, and let him bear the results of his work and face the National Assembly.

"If he is right, we support him and the people are watching over his representatives, and if he is wrong, let him go without regretting it. What is important is that we endure the democratic practice and bear its results, both good and bad. Only here will we see government programs transformed from ink on paper into tangible reality and sustainable development."

"The escalation of tension in the region ... and our national preparedness. An observer of the situation in the region does not need much analysis to know that the Middle East has become a hotbed of tension and conflicts -- regional and international, since Oct 7 last year, as well as the subsequent continuous escalation of tension between the regional parties, and between them and the United States and some western countries," columnist **M. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"Perhaps, the CIA director's statement that 'the region has not witnessed an escalation like this in four decades' comes in this context, although he did not indicate the role of American policy in this.

"The escalation in political discourse and armed skirmishes has reached a point that could turn our region into a war zone, and hostilities with dire consequences for the countries and peoples of the region.

"The bottom line here is our national security and the safety of our lands and our people if, God forbid, war breaks out. Many experts and observers expect the escalation of tension and the consequent outbreak of war. It is not only an exaggeration, but a possibility that can occur with any development in light of these data.

"The fundamental questions here are: Have we understood the risks? Are we prepared to preserve our national security, food security, territorial integrity and sovereignty? Are there security and strategic plans to deal with the changes if a regional war breaks out, because it is very likely that the events and consequences will affect us? Or, are we just observing and making preserving our national security a mere reaction to developments, which could be the worst and most severe scenario?

"It is not a secret that the developments in the region and the escalation of tension therein have become a worrying matter for the Kuwaiti citizen who, at this stage, needs reassurance about his security and that of his homeland.

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

## Ban sale of balloons, water pistols, foam sprayers; violators face law

Student, family attack teachers, vice-principals, many hurt

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) intends to implement a ban on the sale and distribution of "balloons" and "water pistols" an foam sprayers" across all commercial outlets in Kuwait, reports Al-Qabas daily.**

The *Al-Qabas* daily has learned that this ban will encompass cooperative societies, supermarkets, and stores, with significant penalties

imposed on violators, including closure of the point of sale and legal prosecution, reports *Al-Qabas* daily.

According to informed sources, the anticipated decision from the ministry will enforce the ban for a specific period, including the month of February. This action follows numerous complaints regarding the misuse of balloons, pistols, and water sprayers during national holiday celebrations.

The sources further revealed that the Ministry of Commerce has decided to prohibit the sale of balloons and water pistols based on pertinent data, which

has been detailed as under:

■ The huge annual waste of water, specifically during February 25 and 26.

■ The phenomenon of using balloons and water sprinklers causes an increase in the number of car accidents and damage to other people's property.

■ The Ministry of Health annually records a large number of injuries to the face and eyes due to the injured being thrown into balloons from water pistols filled with liquids.

■ The Ministry of Interior records a large number of cases of physical assault during the holiday period, which are sparked by throwing balloons and throwing water.

□ □ □

**School staff attacked:** The Ministry of Education said legal measures have been initiated following an attack on the educational and administrative staff of a school in Al-Ahmadi saying the incident has been referred to investigation, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

The ministry sources said there should be no laxity in the application of systems, regulations and laws regulating work within the school campus.

According to a security source, a student and his family members attacked teachers and assistant principals which led to the injury to some. A case has been filed at the Jaber Al-Ali police station, and medical reports have been attached to the case papers. The source stated that detectives investigated the incident and arrested the accused.

□ □ □

**Fire in jewelry store:** Following investigations into a fire incident at a jewelry store and café in Sharq, authorities have confirmed that the blaze was sparked by an electrical short circuit, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

Upon receiving a report, the Ministry of Interior Operations dispatched patrols from the Directorate-General of Fire Department (DGFD) and Capital Security patrols to the scene.

Responding swiftly, the firemen managed to contain the flames, which had spread to the basement jewelry store, resulting in minimal material losses."

□ □ □

**11 injured in fire:** Fire broke out at an apartment on the second floor of a residential building in Salmiya, causing injuries and shortness of breath to 11 people, reports *Al-Rai* daily quoting sources. Sources said firefighters from Bidaa and Salmiya fire stations, and teams from the Search and Rescue Center, rushed to the location immediately after receiving information about the fire incident.

Sources revealed that the fire spread quickly, prompting seven tenants of different nationalities to jump from the second floor, resulting in fractures in various parts of their bodies, while four others suffered from shortness of breath -- one of whom is in serious condition. Sources added the medical emergency personnel dealt with the injured.

A case was registered and investigations are ongoing to determine the circumstances leading to the fire.



File photo: People of all ages, young and old, join the festivities marking the Kuwait Independence Day, and Liberation Day on the Gulf Street, spraying foam and water on the passersby last year. The presence of security men could not deter their jubilation.

### Bid to boost skills of officials

## Guards launch 'CPX Nasr 19' drill

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13:** The activities of the Kuwait National Guard Command Center exercise, 'CPX Nasr 19', were launched recently at the Operations Center at the National Guard headquarters, under the patronage of Deputy Chief of Staff of the National Guard Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf, with Undersecretary of the National Guard Lieutenant General Hashim Al-Rifai and senior officials in attendance, reports *Al-Rai* daily.

Al-Rifai conveyed to the participants the greetings of the National Guard leadership including Chief of the National Guard His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali, as well as Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf. He stressed the importance of the exercise in developing the

skills of officials in planning and dealing with crises by coordinating efforts, developing communication channels, and improving capabilities in carrying out tasks, and supporting all parties in the State with high efficiency to maintain the security of the nation under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah -- the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. He said the exercise aims to train commanders and corps of staff, assess their ability to deal with emergency situations, solve various problems, and carry out tasks and duties according to the operational plans of their units. He added this is one of the major exercises held annually to improve the level of combat readiness.

### Court Cases

#### Death sentence commuted

## Court reopens pleadings, to hear 'terror' case on April 22

By **Jaber Al-Hamoud**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13:** The Court of Cassation has decided to reopen pleadings in the appeal submitted by the Public Prosecution against the verdict issued to acquit 13 citizens on charges of joining a banned Lebanese party (Hezbollah) and financing terrorism through donations to a charitable committee. It has set the session of April 22 to hear the defense.

Earlier, the Court of First Instance had confirmed in its ruling that, "There is no legislation in the country that criminalizes collection of money for public purposes without a license since the establishment of the Department of Social Affairs on December 14, 1954."

This is the matter that tied the court's hands and distanced it from using its authority stipulated in article 132 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and Trials by amending the description of the accusation in question to a legal description - which is supposed to exist - that is more correct and accurate.

According to its view, this is considered a legislative loophole and flaw that requires careful control and correction in order to place all individuals and groups in the field of fundraising with their various beliefs and orientations under the scrutiny of the auditor, and under the eye of the censor who prevents the recurrence of the incident in question, and protects the country from any harm that may

befall it or its position internally or externally at the local, regional, or international levels."

□ □ □

**Death ruling commuted:** The Court of Appeals commuted the sentence of death penalty to life imprisonment for three Asian drug traffickers who were accused of bringing into the country drugs and psychotropic substances for the purpose of trafficking.

During the court session, the defendants admitted to bringing 169 kilograms of psychotropic substances and ten kilograms of hashish and heroin for trafficking in Kuwait.

□ □ □

**Ruling on Feb 19:** The Criminal Court adjourned to February 19 to pronounce the ruling on the case filed against a Kuwaiti citizen who is accused of joining ISIS and supporting them with a donation of KD 4,000.

In his confessions, he explained that he met an ISIS member through the Telegram app, and spoke to him more than once. He then expressed his interest in joining the banned group, and went on to donate a sum of KD 4,000 to them, which they told him was for charitable work. Through that app, he pledged allegiance to the group at the request of the ISIS organization. At the time of his arrest, a firearm, a machine gun and ammunition were found on him.

## Bedoun sprays gunfire, injures 2 Kuwaitis, surrenders

By **Munaif Naif**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13:** A Bedoun resident shot two Kuwaiti citizens in the diwaniya of their house in Waha in Jahra, fled the scene, and surrendered himself at the police station later.

According to security sources, when the Operations Room of the Ministry of Interior received information about the incident, securitymen and paramedics rushed to the location.

They learned that the suspect - a Bedoun resident - went to his friend's diwaniya in Waha, Jahra and shot him in the leg and his brother in the back, after which he fled from the scene. The two victims were referred to Jahra Hospital for treatment.

The 1998-Bedoun man surrendered himself at the police station with the firearm he used to shoot the victims, revealing that he opened fire due to disagreements between him and his friend.

The sources affirmed that the injured victims are still receiving treatment in the hospital, and a case has been registered.

□ □ □

**Naval drill concludes:** Kuwait Naval Force recently concluded the activities of the Ready Defender Exercise (24), which was held from Jan 28 to Feb 7, with the participation of units from the Coast Guard General Department at the Ministry of Interior, as well as forces from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries,

US Navy and the British Royal Navy, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

In a press statement, the Office of the Kuwait Army Chief of Staff disclosed that the activities included naval shooting and training for specific strike operations, such as conducting a multi-party amphibious raid consisting of mixed special forces, storming and searching commercial ships and oil carriers to reach the highest level of coordination in order to increase joint capacity and interoperability among participants. It explained that the exercise, which is held periodically, aims to enhance combat and defense capabilities; and contribute to achieving stability and peacekeeping in the Arabian Gulf region in general, and maritime security in particular.

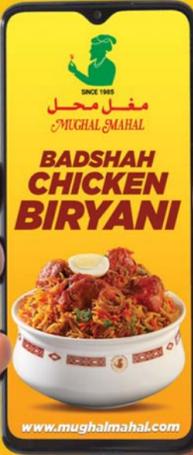
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Kuwait National Robotics Competition's practice sessions continue

## Zain, SACGC continue to support KU Computer Science initiative to foster youth's digital skills

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Kuwait National Robotics Competition (KNRC)'s scrimmage practice sessions continue to prepare the participating students for the anticipated contest that will take place in 2-3 March. The competition is organized by the Computer Science Department, College of Science, Kuwait University in strategic partnership with Zain and Sabah Al Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) – a center of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).

KNRC embodies the joint vision of the three partners to continue fostering the digital skills and capabilities of young Kuwaitis by presenting a world-class, empowering, and informative environment to embrace the youth's creativity and fuel their passion for technology. This will ultimately contribute to draw their future career paths in STEM areas and prepare them for today's technology-driven market.

The Kuwait Technical College (ktech) recently hosted one of KNRC's scrimmage practice sessions, where students from across the participating schools got a chance to experience a simulation of the actual competition. The workshops and practice sessions continue in the upcoming weeks to upskill students in planning and executing strategies, building robots, coding and programming, using teamwork and critical thinking skills, and making use of the available tools to produce the best design to win the competition.

The Kuwait National Robotics Competition targets middle school, high school, and university-level students, and features a rich and comprehensive program to develop various technical skills related to building, assembling, and programming robotics. The initiative uses a unique combination of theoretical lessons and practical exercises, and also focuses on invaluable personal skills like teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

The competition features three levels, each designed for a specific age group. The middle school level



From the scrimmage practice sessions.



KNRC targets students of all age groups.



Initiative aims to invest in youth's digital capabilities.

centers around the basics of robotics and programming and encourages young minds to explore and innovate. The high school level brings a more advanced platform that pushes the boundaries of creativity, technical skills, and teamwork. The university level is the most advanced, with theoretical and practical skills put to the test. Each level has its special rules and challenges for a unique and informative experience for everyone.

KNRC represents an important step towards fostering creativity and empowering Kuwait's next generation of technology leaders and innovators. In addition, the winning teams in the

Kuwait National Robotics Competition will represent the State of Kuwait in the upcoming global VEX World Robotics Competition to be held in the United States in April.

The competition kicks-off on 2-3 March at Kuwait University's Conferences Center in Shadadiya. It is organized by the Computer Science Department, College of Science, Kuwait University in strategic partnership with Zain and Sabah Al Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) – a center of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS). It comes in collaboration with the Ministry of Edu-

cation, Kuwait Technical College (KTC), and private sector supporters. The initiative is a successful result of direct and active collaboration between the public and private sectors to empower the next generation of innovators in Kuwait.

This partnership comes under the umbrella of Innovation Nation, the initiative under which all of Zain's innovation and entrepreneurship programs fall, with a focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) areas. The initiative mainly targets young people and entrepreneurs and aims to foster a digitally capable generation.

Ministry expands services

## MEW aligns with CITRA's data classification policy: Al-Hajraf

By Mohammed Ghanem  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: According to the Minister of Electricity and Water, and the Minister of State for Housing Affairs Dr. Salem Al-Hajraf, the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy is committed to the data classification policy issued by the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA). The ministry follows the general strategy for cybersecurity issued by the Planning, Training and Information Systems Sector.

In his response to a parliamentary question directed by a member of the National Assembly MP Fahad Al-Masoud, Dr. Al-Hajraf explained that the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has an infrastructure that includes the latest technology, servers and storage devices to save and manage customer data securely. This is under the responsibility of several departments, namely the Automation Center Administration, the Customer Services Sector, the Information Systems Center Administration, and the Planning, Training, and Information Systems Sector.

In line with the state's policy and directives towards digital transformation, the ministry launched its services in several applications in order to facilitate customers and speed up the completion of transactions. A total of 20,357 services were completed during the year 2023.

There are external parties that manage the applications and provide a high degree of security, including Zain Company, which manages the MEW-PAY application in accordance with Contract No. 5211.

According to the terms of the contract, the company provides a high degree of security, as does the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) and the Sahel application management. There are no electronic websites affiliated with the ministry that have stopped working due to lack of need for them or due to lack of updating.

Strongest sign

## KPC plans to establish fuel trading company

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) is reviving a plan to establish a fuel trading company as part of its preparations to deal with increasing quantities of products after the start of operation of a new refinery, reports Al-Anba daily.

Sources privy to the plan disclosed that KPC sent five employees from its International Marketing Department to undergo training at Oman Oil Company, which is considered the strongest sign that a long-term plan for the trading business is beginning to take shape.

Last week, Kuwait and Oman opened a joint oil refining project in the Sultanate of Oman, giving the two partners additional quantities of diesel and jet fuel to sell in global markets.

Kuwait aims to establish the company early next year, most likely in Dubai, to trade refined products instead of crude ones, according to sources who requested anonymity as the plans are confidential.

They said that the five Kuwaiti employees are working in the Dubai office of OQT – the Omani commercial arm, where they are being trained in buying and selling fuel, logistics and finance. However, KPC did not respond to an email requesting for its statement in this regard as it was sent outside working hours.

State oil companies in the Middle East are working to build commercial arms to benefit from additional profits from buying and selling various types of fuel, such as gasoline and diesel; instead of leaving these activities to traditional commodity trading companies. Global companies like Shell and BP have units that trade huge amounts of oil and gas, which help boost their overall profits.

Kuwait's efforts to establish a trade unit date back to at least 2017, and the project did not take off in part due to political opposition. Since then, KPC has increased its refining capacity, giving it more fuel to sell.

## MPW treated 73mn cubic meters of water last year

Ministry secures building licenses

By Mohammed Ghanem  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Ministry of Public Works announced that the total volume of tertiary and quaternary treated water amounted to 73 million cubic meters in the year 2023, with the volume of tertiary treated water being 24 million cubic meters, and quaternary treated water 49 million cubic meters.

It indicated that the number of entities benefiting from treated water is 26, in addition to food security farms in Abdali and Wafra.

It is worth noting that the ministry's sanitary engineering sector is responsible for treating wastewater in its stations. It has been used in afforestation projects and fodder farms for more than 30 years. The treated water has now become the main source for irrigation of agricultural projects of all kinds.

Treated water is used for agricultural purposes in Wafra and Abdali farms through the treated water network from the Sulabiya Control Center to the treated water stations in Wafra and Abdali.

On the other hand, sources in the ministry explained that the ministry has ob-

tained the necessary licenses from the concerned authorities to establish the office building of the Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs. The building project is also scheduled to be included in the ministry's budget for 2024/2025 in coordination with the Ministry of Finance to allocate a budget for the project.

The project is part of the construction projects implemented by the ministry for the benefit of government agencies, and the Ministry of National Assembly Affairs is one of these agencies. The plot of land was allocated for the construction of the office building earlier, and after receiving it, it became clear that there are some obstacles to it. The Ministry of Public Works, which is the competent authority for implementing the project, requested the removal of these obstacles to be consistent with the design of the building, which has been completed.

The sources revealed that the Office of the Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, in coordination with the concerned authorities, removed these obstacles and then handed over the land free of these obstacles.

They indicated that the location of the building is in Sharq, and it is an administrative building consisting of the offices of the Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs and assistant undersecretaries, as well as open offices for employees, a multi-use hall, a theater, a library, a cafeteria and warehouses.

## Ministry of Social Affairs' request granted

## Farwaniya Committee approves Ardiya rainwater tank expansion

By Inaas Awadh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Farwaniya Committee of the Municipal Council, during its third meeting of the second session yesterday headed by Khaled Mufleh Al-Mutairi, approved the request of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) to allocate site for the expansion of a rainwater collection tank in Ardiya for government uses and two connecting paths for rainwater drainage.

It approved the request of the Ministry of Social Affairs for the allocation of a temporary location for the central market in Firdous Block 9.

The committee referred to the executive branch the letter sent by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior in response to the request of the Municipal Council's Farwaniya Committee regarding the inquiries related to the five proposals to improve traffic movement on Salem Al-Muzain Street located in Khaitan.

It also referred to the executive branch the letter submitted by a Kuwaiti citizen for the approval of the construction of a service street in Sabah Al-Nasser on the side of the Sixth Ring Road, and the letter submitted by a Kuwaiti citizen for the construction of an exit way from the roundabout in West

Abdullah Mubarak Block 6.

The committee kept on its agenda the question submitted by the Deputy Chairman of the Municipal Council Khaled Mufleh Al-Mutairi regarding the Kabd Road extending from Sulabiya Bridge to Jawakhir Kabd, and the letter submitted by the Ministry of Public Works for the allocation of sites for construction and temporary offices in various parts of Kuwait.

It also reserved the request submitted by PART for the allocation of sites for open basins to collect rainwater, open water channels, underground water connections, and rainwater drainage paths around the South Abdullah Al-Mubarak housing area.

In a related context, the Committee for the Practice of Engineering Professions in the Municipal Council, during its first meeting of the second session yesterday headed by Farah Al-Roumi, preserved all the items on its agenda. This included the proposal submitted by the head of the committee regarding the role of engineering offices in supervising construction work, and two questions submitted by Al-Roumi - one regarding issuing a letter to end the supervision of an engineering office, and the other regarding the role of engineering offices in supervising construction work.



# February

## Room Promotion






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## Aid solidifies friendship

## Serbia and Kuwait bolster bilateral ties

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Diplomatic relations between Serbia and Kuwait were established on May 7, 1963, meaning they have been in place for

more than 60 years, indicating a mostly traditionally friendly and good relationship. Kuwait confirmed its friendly rela-

tions with Serbia by providing emergency financial aid amounting to one million dollars, intended for repairing the damage caused by the large floods that hit Serbia in May 2014. On that occasion, 25 houses were built in areas affected by the floods.

Over the past few decades, mutual visits by the leaders of both countries have served as an incentive for strengthening ties between the two nations.

On the multilateral level, Serbia and Kuwait share the same values and provide mutual support in numerous specialized bodies and agencies of the UN, the UN Security Council, and UNESCO. Last year, Serbia supported Kuwait's election as a member of the UN Human Rights Council for the 2024-2026 term. It is expected that mutual support on the multilateral level will continue in the coming period.

Multifaceted relations between the two countries continue to develop in various areas, including trade, tourism, culture, and education. Filip Katic emphasized the importance of improving economic, investment, educational, cultural, and transport ties with Kuwait. The harmonization of three agreements in the field of scientific and technical cooperation is in progress.



Filip Katic – Charge d'Affaires, Embassy of Serbia in Kuwait



Part of the signing of the protocol amending the memorandum of understanding.

KUNA photo

## Kuwait-UK joint steering group reinforces bilateral ties in talks

Visa scheme marks new chapter

**KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13, (KUNA):** A joint steering group linking Kuwait and the United Kingdom (UK) met for fresh talks focusing on bilateral relations some 125 years after their establishment, the foreign ministry said on Tuesday.

The talks were presided over on the Kuwaiti side by Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarah Al-Sabah and Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, Commonwealth and United Nations at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Lord Tariq Ahmed, both of whom were joined by senior officials from both sides.

The topics discussed ran the gamut from healthcare and defense to security and trade, the statement underlined, while more cybersecurity cooperation in line with relevant agreements was also among the topics discussed by the ministers, according to the statement.

On bilateral trade, they agreed on the need to ramp up exchange and volume, subsequently paving the way for a steady flow of two-way investment, a matter scheduled to be discussed during talks in London next month.

In the wake of a new British visa scheme for Kuwaiti and other Gulf Arab nationals, they agreed that the measure would be instrumental in boosting the number of Kuwaiti tourists visiting London, which has long been a hotspot for them.

The talks also yielded a number of judicial agreements, in addition to other similar deals on healthcare cooperation and common efforts to boost cybersecurity cooperation.

Also, Kuwaiti Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Jarah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

Feb witnessed high demand

## Kuwaiti visitors to UK surge

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis revealed that the month of February witnessed a high demand from Kuwaitis to visit her country; disclosing there are 19 direct flights weekly from Kuwait to London this month, in addition to three flights from Kuwait to Manchester – a route that opened in May 2022, reports Al-Rai daily.

In a statement to the daily, Lewis pointed out that this reflects the increasing number of Kuwaitis traveling to the United Kingdom for study and tourism purposes, compared to the period before the application of the electronic travel authorization (ETA). She said thousands of Kuwaitis have applied for the ETA since its implementation at the beginning of the month.

Lewis said: "As the Kuwaiti nationality is one of the first nationalities in the world to benefit from the issuance of ETA; we hope that Kuwaiti visitors will enjoy the beauty, culture and business opportunities that the United Kingdom has to offer. I know that many Kuwaitis are particularly attracted to London

with an array of world-class dining, sporting events, theme parks, museums and more. But I encourage people to explore other areas of England too, including North England, as well as everything that Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have to offer."

She then pointed out that the visit of British Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden to Kuwait last week, during which he attended a reception hosted by the embassy to launch the 2024 celebration of the 125th anniversary of the British-Kuwaiti partnership, was the first of many high-level visits this year. She hopes to see many Kuwaiti officials traveling to the United Kingdom after the three visits made by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah last year, in addition to the trip of former Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah to London to attend the inaugural strategic dialogue in March 2023.

She also announced the visit of British Secretary of State for the Middle East Tariq Mahmood Ahmad, Baron Ahmad of Wimbledon, to Kuwait in order to co-chair the 20th meeting of the Kuwaiti-British Joint Steering Group along with Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Jarah Al-Jaber. She disclosed that Lord Ahmad is scheduled to visit different locations throughout Kuwait.



Lewis

met Tuesday with the British Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and the UN, Lord Tariq Ahmed.

Both sides touched on the historical bilateral ties between the UK and Kuwait as well as the latest regional and global developments.

## Kuwaiti artist showcases artwork in Doha

DOHA, Feb 13, (KUNA): Kuwaiti pioneering artist Thuraya Al-Baqsammi launched her exhibition (Al-Mazyouna) on Monday, in the Qatari capital, Doha with the attendance of Kuwait's Ambassador for Qatar Khaled Al-Mutairi.

The artist told KUNA that she displayed many of her works old and new, noting that some of her art took two months to finalize and be presented to the public in the exhibition.

She praised the Qatari audience for their love and appreciation for art and culture, adding that the Qatari people have a great taste in art and that she is proud to display her artwork in Qatar.

The artist is displaying her artwork at Al-Markhiya Gallery in Doha until upcoming April, and her last exhibition in Doha was in 1995.



Thuraya Al-Baqsammi during the exhibition.

KUNA photo

Al-Baqsammi won several awards in art and literature. She introduced many special artwork and she wrote

many novels, poems, short stories, and her books were translated to many different languages.

## MoF's request for reallocation rejected

## Hawally Council OKs key infrastructure amendments and U-turn installations

**By Inaas Awadh**  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Hawally Council of the Municipal Council, during its sixth meeting of the second session yesterday headed by member Nasser Al-Jadaan, agreed to amend the status of the plots No. 145 to 153, transferred from A55 - B55, in Siddeeq Block 4, in accordance with the provisions of the law 40/1978. This was based on the request of the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, to allocate a site for a secondary transformer station (Station 5) in Mishref Block 6, and to allocate and install a site for the construction of a

secondary transformer station (Station 2) in Mishref Block 6.

The committee also approved the creation of a U-turn on Nasser Al-Mubarak Street, and another in Rumaithiya.

The committee referred to the executive branch, to conduct a study, the Ministry of Health's letter for the allocation of land in Hawally Governorate to establish a specialized dental center. It also referred to the executive branch the letter submitted by a Kuwaiti citizen for converting a plot in Salmiya Block 6, Street 3 into a commercial one.

It also referred to the executive branch the request of the Ministry of

Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy for allocating a secondary station site in Surra Block 5 to a proposed site.

The committee expressed its disagreement with the Ministry of Finance's request to reallocate the site decided upon by the Municipal Council's decision in favor of the Ministry of Finance.

The committee retained the proposal submitted by member Fahad Al-Abduljader for the construction of industrial speed bumps on Khalid Abdul Latif Al-Musallam Street in Al-Salaam Block 3, as well as the proposal submitted regarding traffic congestion in Jabriya and Surra areas.

## Blessed be

Continued from Page 1

The changes observed in Gulf countries over the past three decades, particularly in the advancement of local economies, have been centered on a single notion - the genuine welfare of citizens. This stands in contrast to the superficial progress driven by outdated legislation, which stifles individual initiative under the pretext of entitlement, without considering future implications.

This also happened in Kuwait when parliamentarians imposed false welfare laws that increased the state's financial deficit, curbed ambitions, and strengthened the spirit of dependence in society.

On the other hand, Bahrain's steps in this regard were consistent by strengthening individual initiative in an effort to make the citizens self-reliant in exercising their economic freedom based on the principle that an individual is the first partner in the renaissance of the state.

Blessed was the visit of His Highness the Amir to Bahrain, an ambitious and pioneering kingdom in many fields. It was also an opportunity to present the Head of State to the conditions that can be mimicked in Kuwait so that it can become a reliable partner in the Gulf economic integration process.

## Bahrain bestows

Continued from Page 1

Arab neighbors, they said that talks on security cooperation held in July 2023 led to the formation of "working groups" between the two sides aiming to keep intact peace and security in the two countries, which would be a step forward towards "preserving the unity" of the six-member of Gulf Cooperation Council bloc.

On recent happenings around the region, Kuwait and Manama called on Iraq to "respect the sovereignty" of Kuwait, which entails a total commitment to relevant United Nations agreements and conventions over the "complete demarcation" of Kuwaiti-Iraqi maritime borders.

They urged Baghdad to commit in equal measure to an agreement signed by the two Gulf Arab neighbors in April of 2012, which ultimately came into effect in December of 2013, while they rejected any "unilateral" Iraqi measure to nix joint security protocols aiming to regulate maritime navigation in the Khor Abdullah waterway between the two countries.

Kuwait and Manama went on to give their backing to the works of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), which provides assistance and support to Iraqis, in addition to efforts aiming to identify the remains of "Kuwaitis and third-country nationals."

The two sides also stressed that Al-Durra Field is located entirely within the maritime borders of the State of Kuwait, affirming that its natural resources are shared between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, both sides touched on the situation in Palestine and other Arab-occupied territories, expressing deep concern regarding the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. Kuwait and Bahrain urged the International Society and the UN Security Council to end the ongoing war in Gaza and protect civilians, calling to prevent any Israeli displacement attempts on the Palestinians.

The two sides agreed on the necessity of allowing international organizations to carry out their tasks in providing humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people.

Further, both sides called on the international society to support the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), stressing the agency's important role in providing aid to about 5.7 million refugees.

Both sides affirmed the need to reach a just settlement of the Palestinian cause by the principle of the two-state solution as stated in the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant international legitimacy resolutions in a way that guarantees the Palestinian people their right to establish their independent state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Regarding Yemen, the two sides

stressed the importance of reaching a comprehensive political solution to the Yemeni crisis in accordance with the three terms of reference, the Gulf Initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcomes of the comprehensive national dialogue, and Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 2216.

Regarding navigation in the Red Sea, the two sides stressed the importance of maintaining the security and stability of the Red Sea region and respecting the right to maritime navigation therein per the provisions of international law and the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to preserve the freedom of global trade.

On the other hand, King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa granted His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah the Order of Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa at Bahrain's Sakhr Palace, in recognition and appreciation for his efforts to reinforce the bilateral ties between the two nations.

In turn, His Highness the Amir thanked the Bahraini King for his hospitality and warm welcome during his visit to the country, showing the deep brotherly ties between the two countries.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and an official delegation accompanying him arrived in Manama on a state visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain Tuesday.

Fighter jets of Bahrain's Air Force accompanied His Highness the Amir's aircraft when it entered the Bahraini airspace.

His Highness the Amir was received at the Airport by King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, head of Bahrain national guard Sheikh Mohammad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, Special Representative of the King Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, King's Representative for Humanitarian and Youth Affairs Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, First Deputy President of supreme council for Youth and Sport, Chairman of Bahrain Olympic Committee and head of the Public Authority for Sport Sheikh Khaled bin Hamad Al-Khalifa.

Also receiving His Highness the Amir were Head of the Royal Court Sheikh Khaled bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa, Commander of the Defense Force Field Marshal Sheikh Khalifa bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa, Head of the Mission of Honor and Interior Minister General Sheikh Rashed bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa, Kuwait's Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Bahrain's Ambassador to Kuwait Salah Al-Malki.

His Highness the Amir is accompanied by Sheikh Ali Khalifa Al-Athbi Al-Sabah, Sheikh Ali Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Sheikh Khalifa Abdulrahman Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Sheikh Fawaz Saud Al-Nasser Al-Saud Al-Sabah, and senior officials of the Amiri Diwan.

An official reception was held at Sakhr Palace for His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of his state visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain on Tuesday.

The motorcade of His Highness the Amir and King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain headed to Sakhr Palace accompanied by cavalry, and students on sides of the road holding flags of Kuwait and Bahrain as well as performance by traditional bands.

A 21-gun salute marked arrival of His Highness the Amir, then national anthems of the two countries were played.

Meanwhile, official talks between the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Bahrain were held at Sakhr Palace Tuesday afternoon, in which His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah chaired the Kuwaiti side, while King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa chaired the Bahraini side.

During the discussion session, they reviewed the distinguished relations linking Kuwait and Bahrain and the bilateral cooperation, and ways to boost the established strong relations.

Discussions also addressed the pursuit of more partnership to expand frameworks of action to support and enhance the progress of the Gulf Cooperation Council, highlighting issues of common interest, as well as the latest regional and international developments.

His Highness the Amir congratulat-

ed the King of Bahrain on the twenty-third anniversary of the National Action Charter of Bahrain, and wished perpetual development and prosperity for the Kingdom of Bahrain and its people under the leadership of King Hamad Al-Khalifa.

The accompanying delegation of His Highness the Amir attended the session.

King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa then granted His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah the Order of Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa at Bahrain's Sakhr Palace on Tuesday, in recognition and appreciation for his efforts to reinforce the bilateral ties between the two nations.

The Bahraini King also dedicated His Highness the Bahraini Sword on this occasion.

Poet Mohammad Hadi Al-Halwaji recited a poem that was appreciated by the attendance.

## Assembly objects

Continued from Page 1

Request of the Education, Culture and Guidance Affairs Committee for it to hand over the assignment to discuss the suffering of students residing in the southern areas to the Modern and Remote Areas Development Committee.

The Assembly also tackled the parliamentary questions forwarded to ministers. MP Marzouq Al-Ghanim disclosed that he has forwarded almost 70 queries; but he received only 28 responses, some of which are inaccurate. He said he asked the former oil minister to clarify the news published by Al-Jarida daily that Iran has been ignoring Kuwait and distorting facts about Durrat offshore oilfield. He added the former oil minister's response was that such queries must be forwarded to the foreign affairs minister; which he did, but he has not received any response till date. He pointed out that since the issue concerns national security, it requires a clear reply - either to deny or affirm the published information.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya asserted that he is ready to respond to the MPs' queries, confirming that Al-Ghanim will receive the reply soon.

MP Hamad Al-Matar commented on the queries he forwarded to Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Adel Al-Adwani about the private universities. He stressed that no other country provides 90 percent of the revenues of private universities like Kuwait, yet these universities are not hiring national academic staff and they impose extra fees on students for absurd purposes. He said the government provides private universities with almost KD300 million revenues (about \$1 billion); so he wants to know the strategy adopted by the minister in dealing with private universities.

MP Jenan Bushehri stated that she forwarded three queries about Dhaman Hospitals Company to the minister of commerce and industry; but the latter's replies were sent to the Secretariat General of the Assembly, claiming they contain confidential information. She wondered what could be the secrets included in the answers to her queries. She urged the Assembly Office to review these answers and then reclassify them.

MP Falah Al-Hajri revealed that he asked the former defense minister to provide him with certain information like the number of military personnel who participated in the 1967, 1973 and 1990 wars; but the response he got was unclear and there was no exact figure, as he was merely informed that there were thousands.

## Kuwait FM

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, Israel and Hamas are making progress toward another ceasefire and hostage release deal, officials said, as talks continued in Egypt on Tuesday, with Israel threatening to expand its offensive to Gaza's southern edge, where some 1.4 million Palestinians have sought refuge.

Israeli forces rescued two captives held in the packed southern city of Rafah along the Egyptian border on Monday in a raid that killed at least 74 Palestinians, according to local health officials, and caused heavy destruction, offering a glimpse of what a full-blown ground advance would look like.

## World News Roundup

## Europe

## 'Make Europe stronger'

## Russia puts Estonia PM on a wanted list

TALLINN, Estonia, Feb. 13. (AP) Estonia's prime minister has been put on a wanted list in Russia because of her efforts to remove Soviet-era World War II monuments in the Baltic nation, officials said Tuesday as tensions between Russia and the West soar amid the war in Ukraine.

The name of Prime Minister **Kaja Kallas** appeared on the Russian Interior Ministry's list of people wanted on unspecified criminal charges, although it was unclear when she was added, according to Mediazona, an independent Russian news outlet. The list includes scores of officials and lawmakers from other Baltic nations.

The move was related to her efforts to remove World War II monuments, other Russian officials said. There was no immediate reaction from Estonian authorities.

Estonia and fellow NATO members Latvia and Lithuania have pulled down monuments that are widely seen as an unwanted legacy of the Soviet occupation of those countries.



Kallas

**Russia and West clash over Ukraine:** Russia accused the West on Monday of sabotaging agreements that would have prevented the war in Ukraine - but the U.S. and its allies put the blame squarely on Moscow, saying there is no escaping that President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of its smaller neighbor.

Days before the second anniversary of Russia's invasion on Feb. 24, 2022, Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia again put the cause of the war down to the failure to implement the 2015 Minsk agreements, which he blamed on "Kyiv's sabotage" supported by the West.

The agreements aimed to resolve the conflict between Ukraine and Russia-backed separatists that flared in April 2014 after Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support for the separatists in the mostly Russian-speaking industrial east called Donbas.

**France criticizes Russia:** France condemned "hostile" disinformation maneuvers after the country's authorities on Monday accused Russia of operating a long-running online manipulation campaign against Ukraine's Western backers, in the lead up to the second anniversary of Moscow's military invasion of its neighbor.

The French foreign ministry said in a statement "no manipulation attempt will distract France from its support for Ukraine in the face of Russia's war of aggression."

Earlier Monday, French Foreign Minister Stéphane Séjourné said that a network of "at least 193" websites had been set up with the aim "to spread Russian disinformation," speaking alongside his German and Polish counterparts after a meeting near Paris involving Ukraine-related talks and other issues.

Séjourné said "Russia seeks to destroy Europe's unity and even worse, wants to make our democracies exhausted ... by blurring the limit between real and fake (news), by manipulating information."

**Charles returns to London:** King Charles III returned to London from his country retreat on Tuesday for what is expected to be further treatment following his cancer diagnosis.

Charles, 75, and his wife Queen Camilla flew by helicopter to Buckingham Palace from the royals' Sandringham estate in Norfolk, eastern England. The monarch was seen waving to well-wishers as the couple were driven from the palace to nearby Clarence House.

Royal officials announced last week that the king was diagnosed with cancer and will suspend public engagements, though he will continue with state business such as signing papers. They did not disclose what form of cancer he has, but said it's not related to his recent treatment for a benign prostate condition.

**3 nations vow to make Europe stronger:** The governments of Poland, France and Germany vowed Monday to make Europe a security and defense power with a greater ability to back Ukraine, amid concerns that former US President Donald Trump might return to the White House and allow Russia to expand its aggression on the continent.

The foreign ministers of the three countries met in the Paris suburb of La Celle-Saint-Cloud to have talks about Ukraine, amid other issues. They discussed reviving the so-called Weimar Triangle, a long dormant regional grouping that was designed to promote cooperation between France, Germany and Poland.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, who met with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin on Monday, said he wanted to "revitalize" his nation's relations with its key European partners.

**Hungary PM faces political crisis:** Hungary's long-serving government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán faces a rare political crisis after the president, a member of Orbán's ruling party, resigned amid public anger over her pardoning of a man convicted in a child sexual abuse case.

President Katalin Novák's weekend resignation came after it was revealed that she issued a pardon in April 2023 to a man convicted of hiding child sexual abuses in a state-run children's home. Former Justice Minister Judit Varga also announced her resignation from a seat in parliament over her role in endorsing the decision.

Some of Orbán's opponents say the resignations of two senior members of his nationalist Fidesz party are not enough, and that Orbán must bear the political consequences.

"Viktor Orbán was not ashamed to hide behind the skirts of two women instead of taking responsibility," said Anna Donáth, a lawmaker in the European Parliament for the Hungarian opposition party Momentum. "That is why this matter cannot be allowed to close like this."

**One park employee missing:** Firefighters in Sweden were struggling for the second day on Tuesday to put out a blaze at a water park that's under construction at one of the country's biggest amusement centers. One park employee is missing and 16 people, mainly workers, were slightly injured.

Authorities could not say what had caused the fire at the Oceana water park in the popular Liseberg amusement complex in Goteborg, Sweden's second-largest city. The fire broke out on Monday and spread over several water slides and the pool area.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (left), welcomes Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk with military donors in Berlin, Germany on Feb. 12. The governments of Poland, France and Germany vowed Monday to make Europe a security and defense power with a greater ability to back Ukraine, amid concerns that former US President Donald Trump might return to the White House and allow Russia to expand its aggression on the continent. (AP)

## Politics

## Biden forms task force to avoid docs mishandling

## Put off election interference trial: Trump

WASHINGTON, Feb. 13. (AP) Former US president Donald Trump is asking the Supreme Court to extend the delay in his election interference trial, saying he is immune from prosecution on charges he plotted to overturn his 2020 election loss.

His lawyers filed an emergency appeal with the court on Monday, just four days after the justices heard Trump's separate appeal to remain on the presidential ballot despite attempts to kick him off because of his efforts following his election loss in 2020.

"Without immunity from criminal prosecution, the Presidency as we know it will cease to exist," Trump's lawyers wrote, repeating arguments that have so far failed in federal courts.

## Intervene

The filing keeps on hold what would be a landmark criminal trial of a former president while the nation's highest court decides what to do. It met a deadline to ask the justices to intervene that the federal appeals court in Washington set when it rejected Trump's immunity claims and ruled the trial could proceed.

The Supreme Court's decision on what to do, and how quickly it acts, could determine whether the Republican presidential primary frontrunner stands trial in the case before the November election.

There is no timetable for the court to act, but special counsel Jack Smith's team has strongly pushed for the trial to take place this year. Trump, meanwhile, has repeatedly sought to delay the case. If Trump were to defeat President Joe Biden, he could potentially try to use his position as head of the executive branch to order a new attorney general to dismiss the federal cases he faces or even seek a pardon for himself.

The Supreme Court's options include rejecting the emergency appeal, which would enable U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan to restart the trial proceedings in Washington's federal court. The trial was initially scheduled to begin in early March.

The court also could extend the delay while it hears arguments on the immunity issue. In that event, the schedule the justices set could determine how soon a trial might begin, if indeed they agree with lower court rulings that Trump is not immune from prosecution.

## Senate passes \$95.3 billion 'aid' package for Ukraine and Taiwan

WASHINGTON, Feb. 13. (AP) The Senate early Tuesday passed a \$95.3 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, pushing ahead after months of difficult negotiations and amid growing political divisions in the Republican Party over the role of the United States abroad.

The vote came after a small group of Republicans opposed to the \$60 billion for Ukraine held the Senate floor through the night, using the final hours of debate to argue that the U.S. should focus on its own problems before sending more money overseas. But more than a dozen Republicans voted with almost all Democrats to pass the package 70-29, with supporters arguing that abandoning Ukraine could embolden Russian President Vladimir Putin and threaten national security across the globe.

"It's been years, perhaps decades, since the Senate has passed a bill that so greatly impacts not just our national security, but also the security of our allies, but also the security of western democracy," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck

Schumer, who worked closely with Republican Leader Mitch McConnell on the legislation.

The bill's passage through the Senate was a welcome sign for Ukraine amid critical shortages on the battlefield. Yet the package faces a deeply uncertain future in the House, where hardline Republicans aligned with former President Donald Trump - the front-runner for the GOP presidential nomination, and a critic of support for Ukraine - oppose the legislation.

Speaker Mike Johnson cast new doubt on the package in a statement Monday evening, making clear that it could be weeks or months before Congress sends the legislation to President Joe Biden's desk - if at all.

Still, the vote was a win for both Senate leaders. McConnell has made Ukraine his top priority in recent months, and was resolute in the face of considerable pushback from his own GOP conference.

Speaking directly to his detractors in a floor speech on Sunday, McConnell said that "the eyes of the world" were on the US Senate.

## Also:

**WASHINGTON:** US President Joe Biden on Monday launched a task force aimed at addressing the "systemic" problem of mishandling classified information during presidential transitions, days after a Justice Department special counsel's sharply critical report said he had done just that.

The Presidential Records Transition Task Force will study past transitions to determine best practices for safeguarding classified information from an outgoing administration, the White House said. It will also assess the need for changes to existing policies and procedures to prevent the removal of sensitive information that by law should be kept with the National Archives and Records Administration. The report from special counsel

**Robert Hur** listed dozens of sensitive documents found at Biden's home in Wilmington, Delaware, and at his former Washington office. The papers were marked as classified or later assessed to contain classified information.

The majority of the documents, Hur's report stated, appeared to have been mistakenly removed from government offices, though he also detailed some items that Biden appeared to knowingly retain. He concluded that criminal charges were not warranted in the matter.

"I take responsibility for not having seen exactly what my staff was doing," Biden said last week after Hur's report was released. He added that "things that appeared in my garage, things that came out of my home, things that were moved were moved not by me but my staff."



Police officers gather following a shooting at the Mount Eden Avenue subway station on Feb. 12 in the Bronx borough of New York. (AP)



Kemper



Madigan

## America

**NY subway shooting kills 1:** An argument between two groups of teenagers riding the New York City subway exploded into deadly violence Monday when shooting started after the train's doors opened at a station, killing a man and wounding five others.

The gunfire broke out on an elevated train platform in the Bronx at around 4:30 p.m., a time when stations throughout the city are filled with kids coming home from school and many workers are beginning their evening commute.

A 34-year-old man was killed, police said. The wounded included a 14-year-old girl, 15-year-old boy and three adults, ages 28, 29 and 71. Some of the victims were believed to have been involved in the dispute and others were bystanders waiting for the train, police said, describing four of the injuries as serious.

"We don't believe this was a random shooting. We do not believe that this was an individual indiscriminately firing into a train or a train station," NYPD's chief of transit, **Michael Kemper**, said at a news conference. (AP)

**Shooter had mental illness:** The shooter at a Texas megachurch on Sunday had a history of mental illness and brought their young son to the attack that was carried out using an AR-style rifle and ended in an exchange of gunfire with two off-duty officers, authorities said Monday.

Houston police identified the shooter as Genesse Ivonne Moreno, 36, who they say wore a trenchcoat and carried a backpack upon entering Lakewood Church, which is led by the pastor Joel Osteen. Moreno used both male and female aliases, but investigators who looked at past police reports found that Moreno identified as female, Houston Police Commander Chris Hassig said.

The attack happened in between services at the Houston megachurch - located in a former NBA arena - and sent worshippers scrambling for safety.

During the shooting, Moreno's 7-year-old son was shot in the head and remained in critical condition Monday, authorities said. Moreno, who was killed by the officers, was not a known member of Osteen's congregation, said church spokesman Don Hoff. (AP)

**Boy charged with murder:** A 15-year-old boy is being held and charged with capital murder after the bodies of three people were found shot dead at a home in a central

Arkansas community over the weekend.

The Saline County Sheriff's Office on Monday said three victims were found shot dead when officers responded to a structure fire on



Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla arrive back at Clarence House in London on Feb. 13 after spending a week at Sandringham in Norfolk, following the announcement of King Charles III's cancer diagnosis. (AP)

Saturday west of Traskwood, a city about 35 miles (57 km) southwest of Little Rock.

The Sheriff's Office identified the victims as 47-year-old Jacob Martin Sr., 53-year-old Dara Martin and 16-year-old Aleah Martin.

The sheriff's office didn't identify the suspect, who they said was questioned that day and later charged as an adult with capital murder. The sheriff's office said the teen, who is also being charged with arson, abuse of a corpse and tampering with physical evidence, is being held without bond. (AP)

**Madigan's ex-aide gets 2.5 yrs:** A federal judge in Chicago sentenced a former chief of staff to longtime Illinois House Speaker **Michael Madigan** to two and a half years in prison Monday for lying under oath to a grand jury to protect his once-powerful boss.

US District Judge John F. Kness imposed the sentence on Timothy Mapes, 69, of Springfield. A jury in US District Court in Chicago last year convicted Mapes of making false declarations before a grand jury and attempted obstruction of justice.

"I don't understand why. You were immunized by the grand jury, and all you had to do was go in and tell the truth," Judge John Kness said. "You knew the testimony was false. ... I can't ignore that finding."

Mapes is to report to prison in mid-June to begin his sentence, the judge said. (AP)

## Lat/Am

**Ex-Puerto Rico mayor faces 5 yrs in jail:** A former Puerto Rico mayor who was caught on film in a high-profile bribery case was sentenced Monday to more than five years in prison as part of an ongoing federal crackdown on government corruption in the US territory.

**Angel Pérez Otero**, a former lawmaker who also was president of the island's Federation of Mayors and served as mayor of Guaynabo from 2017 to 2021, had been found guilty of conspiracy, bribery and extortion in March.

He had been accused of awarding contracts and expediting invoice payments in exchange for thousands of dollars in cash as part of a scheme that federal authorities said ran from late 2019 through May 2021.

Attorneys for Pérez said they plan to appeal.

Pérez is one of several former mayors who have been sentenced in federal bribery cases in recent years, including those of the towns of Rincon, Guayama, Humacao, Aguas Buenas and Trujillo Alto. (AP)



Otero

**Whereabouts of attorney, family unknown:** The whereabouts of a prominent human rights attorney, her daughter and ex-husband remained unknown Monday, three days after Venezuelan authorities detained her at the airport near the capital as she and her adult child awaited a flight to Miami, setting off condemnation inside and outside the South American country.

Attorneys for lawyer and activist Rocío San Miguel, Miranda Díaz San Miguel and Victor Díaz Paruta could not locate their clients Monday at detention facilities in Caracas despite confirmation Sunday from Attorney General Tarek William Saab of San Miguel's detention.

Authorities have not acknowledged the detention of Miranda Díaz and Victor Díaz, but a family spokeswoman told The Associated Press Monday both were last seen Saturday at Simon Bolivar International Airport where they had returned to pick up the luggage left behind after San Miguel's detention. Two brothers of San Miguel also went missing after she was taken into custody and are presumed detained.

Amid the uncertainty, more than 200 non-governmental organizations demanded their immediate release in a letter that also urged the international community to condemn the actions against San Miguel and her family. The United States government also expressed concern.

San Miguel, 57, has specialized in studying Venezuela's shadowy, often corrupt armed forces. She is the head of the non-governmental organization Control Ciudadano, which focuses on the defense of human rights, security and the armed forces.

Saab claimed San Miguel had been linked to a plot to kill President Nicolás Maduro and other officials and attack military units. (AP)

**Mexico seized over 40 tons of meth from drug lab:** Mexican law enforcement agencies said Monday they seized over 40 tons of methamphetamine at the biggest drug lab found during the current administration.

The Mexican navy said Monday that the lab was located in Quiriego, a township in a remote part of the northern border state of Sonora.

It said the 91,000 pounds (41,310 kilograms) of meth found there was equivalent to about half of the 162,000 pounds of the drug Mexico has seized all year so far. Another 28,000 pounds (12,705 kilograms) of meth chemicals were found, the navy said.

Photos distributed by the navy showed a series of large metal boilers and chemical reactors arranged in a line amid the brush and low trees of the site, which was visible from the air. Over 200 centrifuges, boilers and condensing chambers were discovered, according to the navy.

The navy said its personnel destroyed the equipment by blowing it. The Navy said the raid Thursday involved helicopters and suggested the meth was bound for export to Europe, Asia and the United States. But Mexico also has a big problem with domestic use of meth.

The 72 boilers indicated the facility was capable of producing multiple times the amount of drugs than the second-biggest meth lab uncovered during the administration of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. (AP)

**Mexican police arrest members of drug gang:** Prosecutors said Monday they have arrested six members of a drug gang in the Mexican resort of Cancun that allegedly killed and hacked up five people with a machete, and dumped three other victims in a shallow grave.

The gang, which prosecutors say also engaged in extortion, was protected by a network of motorcycle taxis and minors who acted as lookouts.

Authorities also announced the arrest of 23 people on charges they operated a fake tour agency that served as a cover for drug sales in Cancun.

The suspects operated a call center in which they offered sports equipment and tour packages to tourists, but then failed to deliver them. On the second floor they had a complex operation in which drug deals were allegedly made over the phone and delivered by motorcycle.

Another suspect was arrested in Cancun who allegedly both ordered drugs on social media sites - which were delivered to him by express package service - and sold them also on social media, with home delivery included.

The revelations Monday came one day after prosecutors confirmed an American woman and a man from Belize were shot to death late last week in what appears to have been a dispute between drug dealers at a beach club in the resort city of Tulum, south of Cancun. (AP)

**Uncertainty surrounding Martinelli roils race:** Not a 10-year prison sentence for money laundering nor going into political asylum in Nicaragua's embassy have weakened the political aspirations of Panama's former President Ricardo Martinelli who still seeks to retake the presidency.

Just last week a judge sentenced the former leader to prison. Then Wednesday, he popped up in Nicaragua's embassy and received political asylum from President Daniel Ortega's government before he could be arrested.

Election authorities are expected to rule at any time that he is ineligible to compete in the May 5 election, because Panama's constitution bars anyone given a sentence of five years or more from running for president or vice president.

Martinelli has denied any wrongdoing and calls his legal troubles a political persecution, which were the grounds for granting his asylum request, according to the Nicaraguan government.

On Friday, Brian A. Nichols, the US State Department's assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs, tweeted on X that Nicaragua's decision to grant Martinelli asylum "is yet another move to undermine the rule of law and subvert justice." (AP)

**Prez jailed 1% of El Salvador's population:** Tears welled in Alex's eyes and he pressed his head into his hands as he thought about more than a year of birthdays and holidays without his mother, who was swept up by El Salvador's police as she walked to work in a clothing factory.

"I feel very alone," the 10-year-old said last month when he sat next to his 8-year-old brother and their grandmother. "I'm scared, feeling like they could come and they could take away someone else in my family."

Forty thousand children have seen one parent or both detained in President Nayib Bukele's nearly two-year war on El Salvador's gangs, according to the national social services agency.

The records were shared with The Associated Press by an official with the National Council on Children and Adolescents, who insisted on anonymity due to fear of government reprisal against those violating its tight control of information. The official said many more children have jailed parents but are not in the records.

By arresting more than 1% of his country's population, Bukele, who won reelection to a second five-year term Sunday, is trying to break the chain of violence that has ravaged El Salvador for decades. But many worry that debilitating poverty, long-term trauma and government failures to protect their children could instead fuel a future wave of gang warfare.

"Kids aren't spared when their dad, brother or mom is detained, they carry this trauma with them," Nancy Fajardo, a lawyer and aid provider working with 150 such families. "They feel as if the president has robbed them of their family. ... It could push the kids to later join a gang as a form of vengeance for everything they're suffering." (AP)



Presidential candidates, (from left), Anies Baswedan and his running mate Muhaimin Iskandar, Prabowo Subianto and his running mate the eldest son of Indonesian President Joko Widodo Gibran Rakabuming Raka, and Ganjar Pranowo and his running mate Mahfud MD stand on the stage as they sing a national song 'For You My Country' after a televised presidential candidates' debate in Jakarta, Indonesia on Feb 4. (AP)

## Asia

## Indonesia election has high stakes for US, China

## Jailed former Thai PM Thaksin gets parole

BANGKOK, Feb 13, (AP): Thailand's former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who last year returned from more than a decade of self-imposed exile to serve a prison sentence for misdeeds committed while in office, has been granted parole and could be released this weekend, the country's justice minister announced Tuesday.

Parole for Thaksin would be a symbol of reconciliation between his populist political party and the country's conservative establishment, a rivalry that defined Thai politics for nearly 20 years and led to two military coups.

Justice Minister Tawe Sodsong told reporters ahead of the weekly Cabinet meeting in Bangkok that Thaksin qualified for early release because he is in the eligible category of inmates who have serious illnesses, are disabled or are aged over 70. Thaksin is 74 years old.

Tawe did not confirm the date that Thaksin will be released, but it is widely expected he could be released as soon as this weekend.

He is currently confined to a police hospital in Bangkok where he is serving time for convictions related to corruption and abuse of power while in office, convictions he decried as politically motivated.

## Also:

**JAKARTA, Indonesia:** When Indonesians cast their votes on Wednesday for a new president in one of the world's biggest elections, the stakes will also be high for the United States and China and their mounting rivalry in the region.

The Southeast Asian nation is a key battleground economically and politically in a region where the global powers have long been on a collision course over Taiwan, human rights, U.S. military deployments and Beijing's aggressive actions in disputed waters, including the South China Sea.

Outgoing President Joko Widodo's foreign policy has avoided criticizing either Beijing or Washington, but also rejected alignment with either power.

The delicate balancing act has paved the way for substantial Chinese trade and investment for Indonesia, including a \$7.3 billion high-speed railway that was largely funded by China, while Jakarta has also boosted defense ties and intensified military exercises with the U.S.

armed groups in Central African Republic (CAR) more than a decade after civil war broke out, the government said Monday.

Marthe Kirima, the minister for family

## USAID provides nearly \$1.25m in disasters response to Philippines

WASHINGTON, Feb 13, (KUNA): The United States, through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), is providing nearly USD 1.25 million in humanitarian aid to respond to the needs of communities affected by severe flooding and landslides in Mindanao.

USAID said in a statement, "This new funding will provide emergency food, shelter, water, sanitation, and essential hygiene items to support disaster-affected communities in Davao de Oro, Davao del Norte, and Davao City in Mindanao."

It added that USAID would work with other partners to "ensure this life-saving assistance reaches the most vulnerable groups, including single-parent households, persons with disabilities, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, low-income families, and indigenous peoples."

In addition, and at the request of the Philippine government, the US Department of Defense, through the III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF), provided two C-130s to assist the Philippines Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Philippines Office of Civil Defense, and USAID in delivering 15,000 DSWD food packs to affected families.

Last week, USAID partnered with the Philippines Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development and the International Organization for Migration to provide emergency shelter for more than 5,000 affected persons. USAID also supported the World Food Program (WFP) to transport DSWD food packs to 65,000 families.

**PALU, Indonesia:** Indonesian police on Monday named two Chinese nationals as suspects in the explosion of a smelting furnace at a Chinese-owned nickel plant on Sulawesi Island that killed 21 workers and injured dozens of others.

Four Chinese and nine Indonesian workers died instantly on Dec. 24 when the furnace at PT Indonesia Tsingshan Stainless Steel, or PT ITSS, exploded while they were repairing it. Eight others died in the following days while being treated at hospitals, bring-

## Also:

**TOKYO:** The US and Japan pledged on Tuesday their continued close coordination, including cooperation at the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council, in addressing human rights issues in North Korea, Japan's Foreign Ministry said.

This came during a Tokyo meeting between the US special envoy for North Korean human rights Julie Turner and Japanese State Foreign Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshifumi Tsuge.

Tsuge said the issue of Japanese abductions by North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s is a top priority for the Prime Minister Fumio Kishida administration with a time constraint, the ministry said in a press release.

**WASHINGTON:** Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken stressed late Monday the need to strengthen cooperation with Thailand across a range of bilateral and global issues.

This came in a discussion Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken had with Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara during official visit to Washington, D.C., said spokesperson for the US Department of State Matthew Miller.

He emphasized the importance of strengthening security cooperation with Thailand in the Indo-Pacific region and increasing collaboration on trade and investment.

ing the total number of fatalities to 21, including eight workers from China.

The furnace was located inside a nickel processing-based industrial area under the management of PT Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park, known as PT IMIP, in Morowali regency of Central Sulawesi province.

Following their investigation, police have enough evidence to designate the two Chinese nationals, identified only by their initials, ZG and Z, as suspects, said Djoko Wienartono, the Central Sulawesi Police spokesperson.



Jesús Esperanza Ventura, who helps care for her great-grandchildren, sits on the bed her granddaughter Juana Guadalupe Recinos used to sleep on, in Santa Ana, El Salvador, on Jan 31, 2024. Recinos, a single mother of two, was detained last year during the government's crackdown on its war against drugs, leaving her sons motherless for more than a year. (AP)



Kiptum



Bozize

## Africa

**'Hopes, dreams shattered':** Kelvin Kiptum's family said Monday their dreams and future hopes have been shattered following the death of marathon world-record holder in a car crash Sunday night.

Kiptum and his Rwandan coach, Gervais Hakizimana, were killed in the crash near the town of Kaptagat in western Kenya, in the heart of the high-altitude region that's renowned as a training base for the best distance runners from Kenya and across the world.

Kiptum's father, Samson Cheruiyot, a farmer, said in an interview with regional network Citizen TV that he had lost his only child, one who had promised - a day before his death - to build him a house and buy him a car through running.

Kiptum's mother had complications following their son's birth and doctors advised against further pregnancies, Cheruiyot said in the interview. He recalled that in their last conversation Saturday night, Kiptum told him that he was at peak condition and felt he could run the upcoming Rotterdam Marathon in April in under two hours, predicting to bring down his record to 1:58-1:59. (AP)

**Search underway for doctor:** A search was underway for a Polish doctor kidnapped in southern Chad, officials and media in Poland reported Monday.

The woman was volunteering at the Saint-Michel Hospital, several hundred kilometers (miles) from the capital in the Central African nation, when attackers pretending to be patients abducted her and a Mexican doctor, Polsat News, a private Polish broadcaster, reported.

Dr Carlos Soldado told The Associated Press by phone that he escaped during an altercation between the abductors and Chad's security forces while the Polish woman was taken away.

He said the attack happened Friday morning when four armed men on two motorbikes came into the hospital. Soldado said the kidnappers told them they just wanted money and didn't intend to kill them.

Kidnappings for ransom are frequent in the Tandjile region, where the abduction occurred.

Poland's Foreign Ministry said Chadian and French forces were searching for the woman and Polish diplomatic and consular services were in contact with local authorities and her family. (AP)

**10K kids still fighting - CAR:** About 10,000 children are still fighting alongside



The wreckage of the vehicle in which world marathon record holder Kelvin Kiptum and his Rwandese coach, Gervais Hakizimana, were traveling in before they were involved Sunday night in a fatal road crash, is brought at Kaptagat police station, near Eldoret, Kenya, on Feb 12. According to Kenyan police, Kiptum was driving the sedan when he lost control and crashed along a road in Uasin Gishu county on their way to his training camp in Kapsabet, western Kenya, killing him and Hakizimana on the spot. (AP)

rebel forces, she said, many are traumatized and find it difficult to return to normal life.

The mineral-rich but impoverished nation has had conflict since 2013, when predominantly Muslim Seleka rebels seized power and forced then-President Francois Bozize from office. Mostly Christian militias fought back, also targeting civilians.

The United Nations, which has a peace-keeping mission in the country, estimates the fighting has killed thousands and displaced over a million people, or one-fifth of the population. In 2019, a peace deal was reached between the government and 14 armed groups, but fighting continues.

The UN is trying to prevent children from joining armed groups and make it easier for those released to reintegrate into society. It has created training programs for them to become mechanics, masons, carpenters or take up other professions.

Some former child soldiers told The Associated Press that their harrowing experiences had pushed them to become peace ambassadors.

"I took up arms because Seleka killed by mother and father," said Arsene, who insisted on only his first name due to the sensitivity of the situation. He said a Christian rebel group recruited him when he was 14. After three years of fighting, he now tells young people not to join rebel groups.

Ousmane, another former child soldier, said that joining the rebels ruined his life and that of those around him. "What we did is indescribable," he said. (AP)

## call to boost local content in oil sector

Lawyer Sultan Al-Qahtani, the founding partner of Al-Iqan Legal Group, has urged the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries to increase the percentage of local content in oil projects undertaken by the state while at the same time emphasizing the importance of strengthening relationships with local suppliers, contractors, and manufacturers to ensure they have a significant share of business opportunities

within the oil sector, reports Al-Seyassah daily. Al-Qahtani highlighted the need for a review of tender contracts and practices conducted by oil companies directly with foreign entities. He pointed out that such contracts may be invalidated if they do not comply with Kuwaiti legislation, which requires foreign companies to conduct commercial activities in Kuwait either through a local agent or by establishing a local branch.

## Kuwait partakes in IPTC

The International Petroleum Technology Conference (IPTC) took place in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia on Monday, with the participation of Kuwait Business Council in Dubai (KBC).

The representative of the KBC in the IPTC, Feras Al-Salem, told KUNA that the conference's patron was Prince Saud bin Nayef and was attended by the Minister of Energy Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman.

Al-Salem mentioned that the Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security (JOGMEC), in collaboration with the University of UAE, delivered numerous studies and viable solutions for promoting sustainability in the Kuwaiti oil sector, during the 2024 conference. (KUNA)

## KOC extends date for \$380M project bid

The Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) has announced an extension of the bid submission deadline for the Depletion Pressure Systems and Sulfur Recovery Units (SRUs) project, valued at \$380 million, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The project aims to install compression systems and SRUs at the Early Production Facility 50 (EPF-50) and the Jurassic Production Facility 3 (JPF-3). Originally, bidding documents

were released on September 17, with a deadline of December 17. However, due to an expansion in the project's scope, including additional pressure systems, the deadline was delayed and now has been extended until February 18, 2024 to submit their bids.

With the project's scope expansion, it is expected that its value will exceed the initial estimate of \$380 million.

## Market Movements 13-02-2024

		Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts	
SAUDI	Tadawul	+108.68	12,404.59	PAKISTAN	KSE 100	-25.11	61,254.21
UAE	DFM	+8.35	4,219.31				
JAPAN	Nikkei	+1,066.55	37,963.97				
EGYPT	EGX 30	+109.82	28,604.54				
PHILIPPINES	PSEI	+20.10	6,827.92				

# Business

## 'Private sector vital for Kuwait's economic growth and sustainability'

# UIC and UNDP hold conference on Kuwait's private sector transformation

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Union of Investment companies (UIC), in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) held a round table conference to discuss the strategic transformation of Kuwait's private sector. UNDP Resident Representative in Kuwait, Ms. Emma Morley stated in her opening speech "The United Nations development Programme acknowledges the integral role of the private sector in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) especially in response to global challenges like climate change and economic disruptions."

She added: "The private sector in Kuwait plays a pivotal role in driving economic growth in alignment with Vision 2035/2040 and the national development plan, fostering innovation, addressing societal challenges, and promoting environmental sustainability. Its active involvement and collaboration with government agencies, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders are essential for achieving comprehensive and sustainable development goals."

She continued: "In its ongoing commitment to support Kuwait's private sector, the UNDP has declared its backing in crafting sustainability strategies, bolstering individuals' capacities, and highlighting opportunities for sustainable investment. The partnership between the UNDP, UIC and Kuwait's private sector is demonstrating dedication to showcasing Kuwait's achievements in sustainable development, both domestically and internationally."

The objective of the meeting was to provide the necessary support and guidance through communication and mutual learning. The topics mainly revolved around



The Union of Investment companies (UIC), in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) holds round table conference to discuss the strategic transformation of Kuwait's private sector.

exploring insights empowering leaders in the private sector in Kuwait including the investment, banking, and financial sectors, to advance their sustainable initiatives beyond conventional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices and towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)-aligned strategic initiatives.

The discussions revolved around tailoring unique strategies for institutions with a vested interest in sustainable finance, emphasizing the need to elevate awareness of the SDGs to the board-level. Participants also engaged in conversations about sustainable investment prospects in Africa and Kuwait, underscoring the importance of fostering partnerships and raising awareness regarding sustainable development and SDG-alignment moving forwards.

On her part, the Secretary General of UIC, Ms. Fadwa Darwish stated: "The Union of Investment Companies (UIC) is pleased to collaborate with The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on this significant initiative as a key participant. This collaboration reflects UIC's commitment to advancing sustainable economic growth and contributing significantly to achieving Kuwait's Vision 2035/2040."

She noted, "At this pivotal juncture, where Kuwait's economy is poised to make a substantial impact nationally and internationally, businesses are being encouraged to transcend traditional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) models and integrate sustainability into their core strategies."

Ms. Fadwa Darwish concluded her statement, clarifying that this initiative came as part of UIC's ongoing endeavors to enhance responsible investment practices and contribute to Kuwait's journey towards sustainable development.

# KAMCO Invest and Burgan Bank host '24 investment conference

## Conference highlights global and geopolitical factors

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: KAMCO Invest and Burgan Bank launched the 2024 Investment Conference under the slogan "Global Perspectives: Uncovering Future Challenges and Opportunities."

The conference discussed many vital topics including the global economy and geopolitical factors, in addition to challenges and investment opportunities in a number of asset classes, in the presence of more than 600 experts and economic specialists, in addition to institutional and high-net-worth investors in Kuwait and the region.

The CEO of KAMCO Invest and Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Burgan Bank, Faisal Sarkhou, said that the experiences enjoyed by the participants make the conference occupy an advanced position at the forefront of innovation and strategic thinking efforts, and provides a positive and Constructive discussion environment about the dynamics of the global economy.

The Burgan Bank Group CEO Tony Daher explained the most important points related to some of the changes that have occurred in the bank recently, and discussed a group of internal and external initiatives that have been taken to strengthen the management team and formulate a strong strategic framework,

in addition to highlighting the strategic cooperation with KAMCO Invest.

Faisal Al-Othman, Head of Equity and Fixed Income Management at KAMCO Invest, opened the second discussion session with a general assessment of the regional stock markets.

He raised questions regarding the catalysts identified to be drivers of performance for 2024, interest rate expectations and market pricing in expectations of interest rate cuts, foreign investor participation in regional capital markets, and the sensitivity of regional markets to geopolitical events occurring in the region.

Regarding the participation of foreign investors in regional capital markets, Abdullah Al-Sharekh, Executive Director of Markets and Investment Banking at KAMCO Invest, responded, saying: "In 2023, the weight of Gulf markets in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index witnessed significant growth, rising from 1.2% in 2017, it reached approximately 7.1%."

Hassan Farran, CEO of KAMCO Invest London, reviewed the past three years and focused on some of the structural changes that the arena has witnessed, especially with regard to how tenants use commercial properties.

Participants agreed that the years 2024 and 2025 will provide tremendous opportunities to enter the international real estate investment market -- whether in terms of stocks or debt instruments -- after going through a period of severe correction.

Dalal Al-Shaya, Senior Vice President of Alternative Investments at KAMCO Invest, shared some of the extensive experiences the company has gained and

## CMA imposes fines for violations

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Disciplinary Board of the Capital Markets Authority convened yesterday and issued several financial penalties against various companies and individuals for non-compliance and violations, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Nakheel Agricultural Production Company (Nakheel) was fined 2,000 dinars for failing to disclose on the Kuwait Stock Exchange the ruling of the Court of Appeal, resulting in financial impact non-disclosure.

Al-Taameer Real Estate Investment Company (Al-Taameer) was penalized 1,000 dinars for not complying with property evaluations listed under "Investment Properties" in its financial statements.

The Chairman of the Board of Directors of Salbukh Commercial Company (Salbukh) received a 1,000 dinar penalty for various infractions, including delayed disclosure of management changes and improper asset disposal and Al-Safat Investment Company (Al-Safat) was warned for repeated financial dealings that violated Islamic Sharia, resulting in a 10,000

dinar penalty. Securities Group Company was fined 10,000 dinars for falling below the minimum eligible regulatory capital requirements while the KFIC Financial Brokerage Company received a 1,000 dinar penalty for an employee providing unauthorized advice to clients.

Giad Holding Company was fined 5,000 dinars for failure to disclose essential information regarding a shareholder meeting, resulting in trading suspension.

Gatehouse Capital, an economic and financial consulting company, faced a 7,000 dinar penalty for conducting subscription contracts before obtaining necessary licenses from the Capital Markets Authority and Azian Capital Company was fined 23,000 dinars for non-compliance with International Financial Reporting Standard No. 9 (IFRS 9), related to financial instruments.

These penalties reflect the Capital Markets Authority's commitment to ensuring compliance and transparency within Kuwait's financial markets.

sector trends by tracking the operating environment of startups.

Participants explained that the number of deals invested in emerging and innovative companies reached 204, through

which \$291 million were raised to finance projects, while 2023 witnessed startups in the Middle East raising more than \$2.67 billion through 477 deals, according to the MAGNITT platform.



Markaz takes part in PwC's yearly seminar on taxation in Kuwait.

## Institute commits to govt reforms

# Markaz takes part in PwC's annual seminar on taxation

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" affirmed its commitment to staying abreast of the latest developments and trends in the industry and creating awareness of changes in industry standards, regulations, and requirements across local, regional, and global markets. This was reflected in the participation of Mr. Ali H. Khalil, Markaz's CEO, at the "Kuwait Annual Tax and Legal Seminar" organized by PwC, along with the presence of government officials, prominent tax experts, and business leaders from various sectors across the country.

Speaking at a panel discussion on the impact of Kuwait's taxation laws, Mr. Khalil emphasized the relevance of the new taxation laws in Kuwait's ongoing efforts to align with global taxation namely, the OECD/G20 inclusive framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS). He explained that the company's focus is on the opportunities rather than the commonly perceived challenges of the new tax regime.

Mr. Khalil elaborated on the impact of corporate tax regimes on four major areas of such laws: company's earnings, market values of companies, investors' behavior, asset allocation preferences and mindset, as well as operational readiness towards compliance and enforceability. Stressing that

the implementation of taxation in Kuwait will also contribute to the government's effort to diversify its revenues, but will have a wide-ranging impacts on consumers' purchasing power and their investment behavior.

The government can also use tax policy as a tool to encourage long term investments and other behavior conducive for economic growth, business formation and job creation. Mr. Khalil remarked the importance of adopting the right mindset when it comes to taxation. For corporate taxpayers, he recommended being proactive and equipped with the right knowledge to handle their tax responsibilities, including outsourcing to tax professionals due to the level of knowledge required, the cost of operation, and the need to focus on the core business. As for the Kuwait Tax Authority, he stressed the importance of close collaboration with the tax payers such as organizing information and discussion seminars and round-table that speed up and facilitate implementation.

Concluding, he stated that the concept of taxation is a partnership between the private sector and the government. Taxation creates an alignment of interest between the two sectors, whereby the growth in earnings and the success of the private sector increase positively impacts the tax collection by the government.

## 'Distribution of 20,000 reusable bags at cooperative society'

# Gulf Bank launches environmental sustainability initiative in partnership with Al-Shamiya and Al-Shuwaikh Co-op society

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Following the specified timeline, Gulf Bank has launched the "A Step Towards Change" environmental sustainability initiative, aimed at shifting societal habits by promoting the use of reusable bags, in partnership with Al-Shamiya and Al-Shuwaikh cooperative society. Over the course of a week, the initiative involves distributing around 20,000 reusable bags at the Al-Shamiya and Al-Shuwaikh co-op, accompanied by various informative events.

Gulf Bank had earlier revealed the timetable for executing the initiative within the participating co-ops, which include Al-Dahiya and Al-Mansouriah, Al-Shamiya and Al-Shuwaikh, Al-Rawda and Hawally, Kaifan, and Mishref. This disclosure took place in the presence of bank officials, representatives from the Environment Public Authority, and the Committee for Environmental, Food, and Water Security in the National Assembly.

On this occasion, Mr. Fahad Al-Sharrah, Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, stated: "We are thrilled to partner with Al-Shamiya and Al-Shuwaikh co-op in the next stage of our environmental sustainability initiative, following the successful launch at Al-Dahiya and Al-Mansouriah co-op last week."

He continued, saying: "Our primary objective is to instigate a change in behavior within society, and we are working closely with Al-Shamiya and Al-Shu-



Gulf Bank team with officials of the cooperative society in a group photo.

waikh co-op to achieve this. Through the distribution of reusable bags and encouraging customers to reduce their plastic consumption, we hope to make significant progress."

Al-Sharrah conveyed optimism that this initiative would actively contribute to shaping government decisions and laws, compelling both institutions and individuals to minimize plastic usage. Ultimately, this effort is expected to contribute significantly to the protection of Kuwait's environment from the significant harm caused by plastic bags.

He further emphasized that this initiative is part of Gulf Bank's annual commitment to implement various initiatives aimed at reinforcing the principles of environmental sustainability within the

community. Gulf Bank believes that the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, and they found it fitting to initiate this program with selected major co-ops in Kuwait. Around 100,000 reusable bags will be distributed to the selected co-ops, marking the first step towards changing behavior, and becoming an integral part of their daily lives.

He added, "This initiative is rooted in Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy, with the goal of establishing principles of environmental, social, and governance sustainability. It aligns with the country's environmental strategy under the vision of 'New Kuwait 2035', as well as legislation related to the environment, laws safeguarding the environment, resource conservation, pollution reduction, environmental safety,

ecosystem rehabilitation, biodiversity protection, waste management efficiency improvement, utilization of renewable energy, and building and developing national capabilities in environmental work."

Mr. Adel Aldokhi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al-Shamiya and Al-Shuwaikh co-op, conveyed his contentment with the partnership with Gulf Bank in the "A Step Towards Change" initiative, highlighting their commitment to driving societal progress towards decreased plastic consumption.

He observed the synergy between Gulf Bank's initiative and the cooperative society's environmental conservation efforts, which involve promoting the use of biodegradable bags. Furthermore, he stressed the introduction of a "Fast Track" service by the co-op for shareholders who utilize reusable bags, with the aim of promoting their ongoing use.

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.

## General market index grew by 0.36%

# Bursa continues upward trend for second consecutive session

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Kuwait Stock Exchange indices continued their upward trend for the second consecutive session this week, albeit at a slower pace compared to the first session, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The Al-Jarida daily, quoting KSE sources said the general market index grew by 0.36 percent, closing at 7,360.02 points, with a liquidity of 66.5 million dinars.

A total of 245.2 million shares were traded through 17,650 transactions. Among the 127 shares traded, 70 gained, 37 lost, and 20 remained unchanged.

The Premier Market Index increased by 0.27 percent, closing at 8,079.57 points, with liquidity exceeding 51 million dinars. A total of 126.5 million shares were traded through 9,168 transactions. Among the 33 shares traded, 16 gained, 12 lost, and 5 remained unchanged.

The Main Market index rose by 0.78

percent, closing at 5,990.38 points, with a liquidity of 15.4 million dinars. A total of 118.6 million shares were traded through 8,482 transactions. Among the 94 shares traded, 54 gained, 25 lost, and 15 remained unchanged.

The following are the key observations:

- The session saw growth in liquidity levels and selective stock increases, particularly IFA and Kuwait Finance House (KFH).

- Some small stocks recorded increases and attracted buying interest.

- Notable gains were seen in Nakheel stock, which initially rose by 70 percent before settling at 50 percent, and - Wethaq shares, which rose by 40 percent.

- Positive performance was observed in Industries stock, KFH, and National Investments stock.

- Agility stock experienced a clear percentage decline, ending the session nearly flat.

### US applications for unemployment benefits fall again

The number of Americans filing for jobless claims fell last week despite more layoff announcements from high-profile companies recently.

Applications for unemployment benefits fell by 9,000 to 218,000 for the week ending Feb. 3, the Labor Department reported Thursday.

The four-week average of claims, which evens out some of the weekly volatility, increased

by 3,750 to 212,250.

Weekly unemployment claims are seen as a proxy for the number of U.S. layoffs in a given week. They have remained at extraordinarily low levels despite efforts by the U.S. Federal Reserve to cool the economy.

The Federal Reserve raised its benchmark rate 11 times beginning in March of 2022 in an effort to bring down the four-decade high inflation that took hold after

an unusually strong economic rebound from the COVID-19 recession of 2020.

Though inflation has eased considerably in the past year, the Labor Department reported recently that overall prices rose 0.3% from November to December and were up 3.4% from 12 months earlier, a sign that the Fed's drive to slow inflation to its 2% target will likely remain a bumpy one. (AP)

### average long-term US mortgage rate edged higher this wk

The average long-term U.S. mortgage rate edged higher last week, reflecting a recent uptick in the 10-year Treasury yield.

The average rate on a 30-year mortgage rose to 6.64% from 6.63% last week, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday. A year ago, the rate averaged 6.12%.

"Mortgage rates remain stagnant, hovering in the mid-6% range over the past several weeks," said Sam Khater, Fred-

die Mac's chief economist.

The move echoes an increase this week in the 10-year Treasury yield, which lenders use as a guide to pricing loans. The yield moved above 4% this week as bond traders reacted to the government's January's jobs report. The surprisingly strong report stoked worries that it could persuade the Federal Reserve to wait longer before it begins cutting interest rates.

Hopes for such cuts amid signs

that inflation has declined from its peak two summers ago have been a major reason the 10-year Treasury yield has mostly pulled back since October, when it climbed to its highest level since 2007.

In an interview broadcast Sunday night, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said that the central bank remains on track to cut its benchmark interest rate three times this year, a move that economists expect could begin as early as May. (AP)



ABK employees and their families display the national flags as they wait for the commencement of the Open Day at Dar Shaikha Farm.



Some of the participants pose for the camera.

### Event takes place at Dar Shaikha Farm

## ABK hosts Open Day for employees and their families

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently organized a vibrant open day in an atmosphere that was filled with fun activities, sports competitions, and cultural events. The open day provided a refreshing opportunity for employees to bond outside of their regular work environment, strengthening relationships and fostering a sense of camaraderie.

On this occasion, Loai Muqames, CEO-Kuwait at ABK, said, "We recognize the significant role our employees play in our success, and we continuously strive to create a supportive and enjoyable work environment for them. The open day represents a gesture of our appreciation and the spirit of collaboration in a healthy work environment. We remain committed to organizing more events in the future to enhance employee wellbeing and provide an opportunity to build relationships."

Held at Dar Shaikha, the open day took employees from a corporate environment to the outdoors, providing the opportunity for attendees to enjoy nature and the great weather. Furthermore, by inviting their families, ABK aimed to support a better work-life bal-



A view of Dar Shaikha farm.



Kids having a good time at the ABK Open Day.



Mr. Loai Muqames CEO – Kuwait at ABK.



Ms. Afrah Al Arbash, GM of Human Resources at ABK.

ance and strengthen family ties.

The event embodied ABK's core values, emphasizing the importance of family spirit and unity within the team. Throughout the day, team-building activities were planned to foster a healthy sense of competition and engagement among employees revolving around teambuilding and collaboration.

On this occasion, Afrah Alarbash, General Manager of Human

Resources, said, "This event highlights the significance of connecting employees' personal values with our corporate values, reinforcing the importance of remaining engaged and connected to the Bank's mission and culture."

Alarbash also emphasized the importance of fostering a cohesive team dynamic, highlighting the Bank's efforts to promote teamwork and healthy competition among employ-

ees. She emphasized, "ABK is dedicated to understanding and meeting the needs of our workforce by regularly conducting surveys to enhance the overall work experience. We continuously invest in the professional development of our employees, offering extensive training programs and educational workshops in collaboration with industry experts."

Furthermore, ABK is committed

to promoting employee wellness through informative workshops, health seminars, and sporting events. This comes in recognition of the significance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance and actively encouraging employees to adopt a holistic approach to their wellbeing.

Al Arbash concluded, "We believe that a healthy workforce is a productive workforce. ABK remains com-

mitted to providing the necessary resources and support to thrive both personally and professionally and maintain its strong team spirit."

Looking ahead, ABK persists in its dedication to fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment, with plans to host a range of engaging initiatives and events to further strengthen employee relationships and morale.

### The Conversation

'Driving best possible bargain now is not the best long-term strategy'

By Kate Vitasek

University of Tennessee

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

Conventional wisdom says that you should never leave money on the table when negotiating. But research in my field suggests this could be exactly the wrong approach.

There's mounting evidence that a short-term win at the bargaining table can mean a loss in terms of overall trust and cooperation. That can leave everyone - including the "winner" - worse off.

As a former executive, I've managed large contracts as both a buyer and a seller. Now, as a business professor, I study these trading partner relationships, exploring what works in practice. My work supports what economic theorists and social scientists have been arguing for years: The best results come when people collaborate to create long-term value instead of fighting for short-term wins.

Research into art, science and practice of collaborative approaches dates back to the 1940s when the mathematician John von Neumann and economist Oskar Morgenstern used mathematical analysis to model competition and cooperation in living things.

Interest in collaborative approaches grew when researchers John Nash, John C. Harsanyi and Reinhard Selten won a Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1994. Their work inspired academics around the world to delve deeper into what's known as game theory.

Game theory is the study of the outcome of strategic interactions among decision makers. By using rigorous statistical methods, researchers can model what happens when people choose to cooperate or choose to take an aggressive, power-based approach to negotiation.

Many business leaders are taught strategies focusing on using their power and playing to win - often at the other party's expense. In game theory, this is known as a zero-sum game, and it's an easy trap to fall into.

But not every game has a clear winner or loser. In economics, a win-win game is called a nonzero-sum game.

In this sort of situation, people aren't fighting over whose slice of a pie will be larger. They're working to grow the pie for everyone.

A second dimension of game theory is whether people are playing a one-shot or a repeated game. Think of a one-shot game as like going to the flea market: You probably won't see your trading partner again, so if you're a jerk to them, the risk of facing the consequences is low.

An interesting twist uncovered by studying repeated games is that when one party uses their power in a negotiation, it creates the urge for the other party to retaliate.

The University of Michigan's Robert Axelrod, a mathematician turned game theorist, coined this a "tit-for-tat" strategy. His research, perhaps best known in the book "The Evolution of Cooperation," uses statistics to show that when individuals cooperate, they come out better than when they don't.

Another Nobel laureate, American economist Oliver Williamson, has offered negotiating advice that most would call a paradigm shift - and some, a heresy. That advice? Always leave money on the table - especially when you'll be returning to the same "game" again. Why? According to Williamson, it sends a powerful signal of trustworthiness and credibility to one's negotiating partner when someone consciously chooses to cooperate and build trust.

The opposite approach leads to lost trust and what the Nobel laureate economist Oliver Williamson calls "shading." This is a retaliatory behavior that happens when a party isn't getting the outcome it expected from a deal and feels the other party is to blame.

Simply put, noncollaborative approaches cause distrust and create friction, which adds transaction costs and inefficiencies.

The million-dollar question is whether collaborative approaches work in practice. And from my vantage point as a scholar, the answer is yes. In fields as diverse as health care to high-tech, I see growing real-world evidence backing up the insights of game theory.

The lessons are simple yet profound: Playing a game together to achieve mutual interests is better than playing exclusively with self-interest in mind. (AP)

## ExxonMobil to 'explore' for oil and gas in offshore area under dispute

Move could escalate tensions between Guyana and Venezuela

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, Feb 13, (AP): ExxonMobil said it plans to explore for oil and gas in a disputed area off South America's coast where the Venezuelan military had previously expelled two U.S. oil companies. The move could escalate tensions between Venezuela and neighboring Guyana, which awarded the exploration license.

Guyana considers the area part of its Essequibo region, but Venezuela has long claimed it as its own, holding a referendum in December in which voters supported a push to annex it.

Robert Persaud, Guyana's foreign secretary, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that ExxonMobil has every right to work in that region "because it is within established Guyana waters in a fully demarcated area."

The oil giant said Tuesday that it expects to drill two exploratory wells north and west of its prolific Stabroek block, where three oil fields are producing close to 650,000 barrels of oil a day.

The president of ExxonMobil Guyana, Alistair Routledge, told reporters that the concessions were granted by Guyana and that the company is committed to its operations despite the country's ongoing tensions with Venezuela.

"We are not going anywhere," he said.

Previous attempts to explore for oil and gas in that area have failed. In 2019, ExxonMobil was forced to abandon exploration activities after a Venezuelan military helicopter tried to land on a seismic vessel. And in 2013, officials aboard a Venezuelan gunboat detained the crew of a seismic vessel contracted by a Texas petroleum com-

## Japan's Toyota group automaker Daihatsu reshuffles its leadership

New president appointed

TOKYO, Feb 13, (AP): Japanese automaker Daihatsu on Tuesday named a veteran at its parent company Toyota to replace its president as it tries to repair the damage from a scandal over cheating on vehicle safety tests.

The troubles at Daihatsu Motor Co. surfaced after a whistleblower reported the cheating. A third-party review found violations, such as carrying out tests on just one side of a car when both sides had to be tested, that had persisted for decades.

The appointments of a new president, executive vice president and director highlight Toyota's determination to play a leading role in the reforms at its 100% owned subsidiary.

Masahiro Inoue, now overseeing Toyota's business in South America, will become Daihatsu President effective in March, Toyota Chief Executive Koji Sato told reporters in Tokyo.

Inoue replaces Soichiro Okudaira, who is resigning. Okudaira also had been sent in by Toyota. Daihatsu's chairman, Sunao Matsubayashi, also resigned, while two other directors left the board but kept their positions at the company.

pany for a week before releasing them.

The latest push by ExxonMobil comes as Guyana and Venezuela prepare to meet for a second time to try and diffuse the dispute over the Essequibo region. Following mediation talks in December, both sides agreed not to threaten or use force against

Masanori Kuwata, now at Lexus International Co., Toyota Motor Corp.'s luxury brand, becomes Daihatsu's Executive Vice President, under the changes announced Tuesday. Keiko Yanagi, a deputy chief officer at Toyota, was named a director at Daihatsu.

Inoue apologized to Daihatsu's customers, suppliers and dealers, saying he knows how to be a good listener to win people's trust because of his decades of working overseas.

"We will make our hearts one and aim for a new start," Inoue said.

The appointments highlight Toyota's determination to play a leading role in the reforms at its 100% owned subsidiary and prevent scandals.

Inoue said a business plan will be disclosed in April, including a new managerial direction.

The Japanese government has ordered production halted on an array of Daihatsu models until tests can be carried out properly and approved.

The companies said some production has already resumed but work on other models will take time.

No major accidents have been reported in connection with the cheat-

ing, but the news has raised serious questions about oversight at Daihatsu and its corporate parent Toyota.

Daihatsu has said its workers were under heavy pressure to meet tight deadlines. Management neglected to address problems on the factory floor and the causes of the cheating were complex, Sato said.

Daihatsu has recently handed an investigation of its wrongdoing to the Japanese government. Daihatsu, which has a 100-year history and employs 40,000 people, is known for small models popular in Japan and the rest of Asia.

Daihatsu products are known as "kokuminsha" in Japan, or "the people's cars," often used by small businesses for deliveries and transport. Sato said that embodied the spirit of Daihatsu.

He said Daihatsu will fix its corporate culture, management and "monozukuri," or "the act of making things," long the basis of the Toyota Way of manufacturing that empowers individual workers.

"We are ready to return to our roots to recreate Daihatsu," he said.

Essequibo is a mineral-rich territory that accounts for two-thirds of Guyana and lies near big offshore oil deposits. Military confrontation with Venezuela appears unlikely for now, but several countries have echoed Guyana's concerns over an annexation by its neighbor to the west.

Inviting children between the ages of 7 and 10 to participate in this unique educational initiative

## stc sponsors 'Journey in Kuwait' competition organized by SACGC hosted by Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Center

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its sponsorship of the "Journey in Kuwait" robotics competition organized by the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity ("SACGC"), part of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences ("KFAS"), hosted by the Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Center. The sponsorship follows the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between stc and SACGC, which comes under stc's educational "upgrade" umbrella.

The "Journey in Kuwait" competition is specifically designed for children between the ages of 7 and 10 years old in the area of robotics, held in two phases, the first being the qualifications and the second phase being the finals. The competition seeks to engage young minds in the exciting world of robotics, programming, and artificial intelligence (AI). Through this competition, children will have the opportunity to program robots to navigate through a maze featuring unique landmarks of

Kuwait, accomplishing specific tasks that challenge their problem-solving skills and creativity.

stc stated in a statement that registration for the competition started on Wednesday, February 7 and lasted for 5 days, where the preparation and training for the competition begins on Wednesday, February 14, and lasts for 6 days until the 19th.

This hands-on experience is not only entertaining but educational, encouraging participants to develop their programming skills and understand the practical applications of AI. The training sessions, which are already underway, will be held at the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center, along with the awards ceremony that will take place on February 20th.

The competition reflects stc's commitment to fostering talent and creativity among Kuwait's youth, aligning with its dedication to supporting sustainable development goals through innovative technology. In addition to its extensive CSR program, stc has focused on strengthening and widening its sustainability framework in terms of activities and events that align with the program's objectives.



stc-sponsored 'Journey in Kuwait' competition poster.

Danah AlJasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "We are thrilled to support the 'Journey in Kuwait' competition, which aligns with stc's commitment

to innovation, education, and technology, while also investing in our future leaders. This event provides a platform for the younger generation to showcase their talents, explore the possibilities of

AI, and contribute to the development of a technologically advanced society."

AlJasem added, "stc actively supports community-focused initiatives, with a strong emphasis on nurturing the next generation's education and leadership skills. These programs go beyond traditional learning to bolster practical abilities, technological fluency, and readiness for professional life, thus preparing youths for future endeavors. By prioritizing such educational paths, stc is at the forefront of developing a competent, well-informed future workforce. This commitment underscores stc's dedication to community empowerment through education, aiming to attract more young individuals through upcoming projects and collaborations that yield to broader societal benefits."

Neda Aldaihani, General Manager of SACGC said, "We are proud to witness our partnership with stc take effect through the sponsorship of this innovative program, which we have successfully organized over the years. This program is also one of the local and International Programs offered by the center throughout the year. This event will bring together young minds to learn more about robotics, as well as

technology, in a fun and engaging way. Our objective through programs like these, and by collaborating with established partners such as stc, is to broaden the educational platforms in Kuwait with the sole objective of empowering the youth. Having said that, I would like to thank stc once again for their sponsorship and we also thank Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Center for hosting this competition for the second time and we look forward to witnessing this exciting initiative unfold."

Hadeel A. Al-Homoud, Head of Education, Marketing and PR at the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center, expressed her happiness to host the second "Journey in Kuwait" competition in Kuwait and incubate this unique competition to develop interest in programming, artificial intelligence, robotics as well as developing creative thinking to find creative solutions. She also stressed the importance of cooperation with state institutions and the private sector to make the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center a cultural, scientific and artistic platform to incubate all youth talents.



Photos from the event.

Redefining shopping experience

## Indian Heritage opens new store

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: With the recent grand opening of Indian Heritage, nestled in the heart of South of Kuwait in Al-Khيران Mall, their store aims to redefine the shopping experience for individuals who seek elegance, quality, and unparalleled craftsmanship.

The Khairan store was inaugurated on 12 February by Indian Ambassador H.E. Adarsh Swaika in the presence of Indian Heritage's executives, as well as a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers.

Having embraced the philosophy of preserving the Indian heritage and blending it with rich traditions of Kuwait's culture, Indian Heritage began its journey as an exclusive Indian textile house back in 2000. Over the years, it has become one of Kuwait's largest and most reputable stores, offering a diverse range of exclusive designer and heritage products from India.

From sumptuous silks to opulent cashmeres, every piece in their store reflects meticulous attention to detail and a commitment to excellence and exceptional quality. The brand ensures that all its products are crafted with the finest materials, providing customers with a luxurious and high-quality product. The brand is slated to open another store at the prestigious Avenues Mall by the end of the month and has plans to introduce more lifestyle products in the future.

The new Khairan store promises an unparalleled shopping experience with a meticulously curated collection of items to ensure that customers have

access to the latest trends and timeless classics, all under one roof and at competitive prices.

Indian Heritage is now present in Kuwait and Bahrain with 4 stores in operations: one in Souk Safat, Kuwait City, another at the Magic Mall in Abu Halifa, a third at Al Sama Mall in Egaila, and a fourth in Bahrain. With

the opening of its fifth branch in Kuwait's heart of the south, the brand looks forward to celebrating the appreciation for design and quality in Kuwait, and to provide customers with an immersive experience in the exquisite tapestry of Indian fashion that harmoniously blends with rich traditions of Kuwait.

## Community healthcare initiative

### SSSO Kuwait, IDAK and IDF conduct medical screening camp in Salmiya

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Sri Sathya Sai Service Organization (SSSO) Kuwait, in collaboration with Indian Dentists' Alliance Kuwait (IDAK), Indian Doc-

tor's Forum (IDF) and Indian Heart Foundation successfully conducted a medical and dental screening camp on Friday, 9th February, 2024 at Salmiya



Photo of the medical screening camp.

Indian Model School, Salmiya.

IDAK's Community Welfare Committee (CWC) Chair Dr. Prashanth R. and Co-chair Dr. Ajay Vazhiyodan, along with members Dr. Dhanalakshmi, Dr. Jane John Thomas, Dr. Resmy Nair, Dr. Srikanth Reddy, Dr. Jijan Sam volunteered and actively participated in the camp which successfully screened around 100 patients.

IDAK's CWC Advisor, Dr. Rajesh Alexander addressed the audience, and expressed appreciation towards the SSSO volunteers for their continued efforts and the selfless service being rendered towards children with special needs and various other community activities. Dr. Rajesh Alexander collected the memento from SSSO chief organiser on behalf of IDAK.

Art of giving power to words

## Open Mic Toastmasters Club – an evening with world champion of public speaking

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Toastmasters International (TI) is a non-profit organization headquartered in the US, that operates in 148 countries through innumerable clubs for the purpose of helping people develop communication, public speaking and leadership skills.

Open Mic Toastmasters Club Kuwait is celebrating its 100th meeting on Saturday Feb 17, 2024 at 6 pm (online).

To commemorate this event the 2013 World Champion of Public Speaking Pres Vasilev will be joining us as the keynote speaker. This will be a golden opportunity for all to learn and interact with the champion himself.

In today's era where communication skills are vital to succeed in any discipline it would be a great opportunity to interact with him. Through his talk titled "How to uncover the glory of your story" he will provide valuable insights into his journey to the championship and also give tips to conquer our communication skills.

This event will also showcase a delivery evaluation by DTM Alka Kumra. Delivery evaluation is a special segment unique to Open Mic Toastmasters club. The speeches made during the impromptu session - table topics session - will be evaluated and improvements will be sug-

**OPEN MIC TOASTMASTERS CLUB**  
AREA 26, DIVISION G

**SATURDAY, 17TH FEB 2024**  
**6 PM AST**

TO CELEBRATE OUR 100TH MEETING,  
WE INVITE YOU ALL TO AN EVENING WITH  
**PRES VASILEV**  
WORLD CHAMPION OF PUBLIC SPEAKING 2013

**HOW TO UNCOVER  
THE GLORY OF YOUR STORY™**

**JOIN US VIA ZOOM**

[Register now](#)

Open Mic Toastmaster Club – an evening with world champion of public speaking poster.

gested thereby improving our communication skills.

Division G Director TM Dahlia Eldeeb will provide a few insights on the benefits of toastmasters. There are innumerable testimonies that tell the positives that toastmasters has brought into their lives.

All are invited to be a part of this

online meeting.

Registration is important as the entries are limited. To register please click on the link below. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88165489795?pwd=N3QyM041aGhJTDJvTmoyYzNETDk3UT09>

For more information please contact 51513999, 97242980

## Renewed commitment to Christian service

### New leadership of KTMCC gazes towards the dawn of its 72nd year

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: It has been 71 years since the establishment of The Kuwait Town Malayalee Christian Congregation (K.T.M.C.C.)

Having done numerous works and deeds in Kuwait, the KTMCC is a salient part of the Christian churches in Kuwait.

KTMCC has been the backbone and stronghold of the Christian Malayalee Churches in Kuwait, for 7 decades! KTMCC helped in the start of many prayer meetings and church meetings, helped them gather at various places, and helped them get a place to worship. In fact, the deeds pondered by KTMCC, are truly remarkable, and can never be forgotten by the Christian Malayalee's in

Kuwait.

KTMCC represents more than 28 churches from its Marthoma, CSI, Evangelical, Brethren and Pentecostal denominations. KTMCC also handles the main responsibilities of NECK (National Evangelical Church, Kuwait), which is the foremost centre and place of worship for 85 congregations, hailing from over 100 different countries! Mr. Roy K. Yohannan (NECK Secretary), Mr. Shijo Thomas and Mr. Saju V. Thomas will represent KTMCC in the NECK Common Council.

KTMCC held its annual general body meeting on 24th January 2024. The newly elected committee members are, Mr. Vinod Kurian

(President), Mr. Shijo Thomas (Secretary), Mr. Jeas George Cherian (Treasurer), Mr. Jino Areekal (Vice President), Mr. Jerald Joseph (Joint Secretary), Mr. Aju Abraham (Joint Treasurer), Mr. Ajosh Mathew, Mr. Jim Cherian Jacob, Mr. Aju Abraham, Mr. Joseph M. P., Mr. Kuruvilla Cherian, Mr. Shilu George, Mr. Varghese Mathew, Mr. Ebin T. Mathew (Committee Members), Mr. Thomas Philip, Mr. Godly Joseph and Mr. John Thomas were selected as auditors. Under the leadership of Mr. Biju Philip, Mr. Shibu V. Sam, Mr. Noel Cherian, Mr. Justin Thomas Varghese, and Mr. Biju Samuel coordinated and regulated the election process.



Photos of the KTMCC newly elected leaders.

New music 'Act II' to arrive in March

Beyoncé drops new songs 'Texas Hold 'Em' and '16 Carriages'

LOS ANGELES, Feb 13, (AP): Beyoncé is back with two new country tracks - "Texas Hold 'Em" and "16 Carriages."

After a Verizon commercial starring Beyoncé aired during the Super Bowl ended with the superstar saying "They ready, drop the new music," the question became - was she serious? Later, a cryptic Instagram video with country iconography appeared on her page, teasing "act ii" on March 29. (Beyoncé's 2022 album "Renaissance" is frequently referred to as "Act I: Renaissance.")

At the end of the clip, a plucky acoustic guitar riff plays, and Bey's unmistakable voice kicks in. She sings, "This ain't Texas/Ain't no hold 'em/So lay your cards down down down," in a Southern twang.

It appears on her official website as well. Under the "music" tab, two titles were listed - "Texas Hold 'Em" and "16 Carriages," which later appeared as full songs on Tidal, YouTube and Spotify. The first is an uptempo country and western stomp. She sings in the earworm bridge: "And I'll be damned if I cannot dance with you/ Come pour some liquor on me honey, too/It's a real-life boogie, and a real life hoedown/Don't be a bitch, come take it to the floor now."

The second, "16 Carriages" is a soulful slow-burn with ascending organs and steel guitar, Beyoncé singing an ode to hard work and legacy. "I miss my kids/Overworked and overwhelmed," she

sings in the pre-chorus. "Still workin' on my life, you know/Only God knows, only God knows." A quick examination of the credits shows she may be working closely with Tony! Toni! Toné!'s Raphael Saadiq.

In a mostly fictional Verizon commercial that aired moments before the Instagram announcement, Beyoncé tried several tactics to try to break the internet.

Version

With former "Veep" star Tony Hale playing an adviser, she opens a "Lemonade" stand, releases a saxophone album called "Let's Get Saxy," does her own version of the "Barbie" movie called "Bar-Bey," sells a cyborg version of herself, runs for "Beyoncé of the United States," and blasts off in a rocket to become the first woman in space.

After Hale tells her none of that worked, she says on the space ship intercom, "OK, Bey ready: drop the new music."

Beyoncé was also shown soon on the telecast soon after at Allegiant Stadium watching the Super Bowl with husband Jay-Z.

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Music

Variety



This image released by Focus Features shows Kathryn Newton, (left), and Cole Sprouse in a scene from 'Lisa Frankenstein.' (AP)

Film

Gugino steals the show with over-the-top performance

'Lisa Frankenstein' delivers nostalgic fun

By Mark Kennedy

It will come as no surprise that the new movie "Lisa Frankenstein" is a real monster - stitched together from previous movies, painfully incoherent and deeply, deeply dumb.

This is a baffling display of filmmaking, what appears to be a sort of feminist take on the reanimated creature trope that has been shoehorned into a late-1980s setting, complete with New Wave songs, teased hair and brightly colored spandex. Why? Presumably to giggle at shoulder pads, hairspray and Echo and the Bunnymen.

Kathryn Newton stars as the goth-like high school misfit Lisa Swallows, who befriends a reanimated zombie bachelor who died in 1837. Cole Sprouse plays the corpse, who is missing body parts, uses grunts to communicate and resembles Johnny Depp from "Edward Scissorhands." Whoever suggested he'd shine deserves to be made mute.

Lisa's mother has met a grisly death and she has found herself in a new town with a new family after her dad remarries. Her stepmother (gloriously over-the-top Carla Gugino) hates her and her stepister (Liza Soberano, hopefully not making a career-ending mistake) is a friendly cheerleader.

The arrival of a Victorian-era zombie into 1989 offers many possibilities but all the interesting ones are avoided as the filmmakers embark on a "Weird Science"-like, "My Fair Lady" reversal - cleaning him up and hiding him in her bedroom. "OK, Sparky, we've got to get you some new duds," Lisa says helpfully. Those duds include a blazer and a Violent Femmes T-shirt.

The other thing the zombie really needs is replacement body parts. "You're a dead man, not a Chrysler LeBaron," Lisa tells him in a line that's sure to kill with Gen Z. So parts are naturally harvested from people who are deemed to have crossed the pair. They use an axe to procure an ear, some fingers and a penis. (Yes, this is a quality movie: Chrysler AND weenie jokes.)

Director Zelda Williams is simply overmatched here, unable to conjure tension, interest, connection or coherence. "Lisa Frankenstein" lurches from idiocy to whimsy to grossness to ultra-violence, obsessed along the way with grade-school toilet humor, like putting worms in fruit salads.

But the blame needs to be spread around. I mean, how many jokes can you legally try to make about vibrators and menstrual cycles in one movie? "I got to go change my pad" is one of the lines expected to trigger howls of laughter.

Written by Diablo Cody - unhappily a million miles now from "Juno" - who has tried, if we use the best possible motive, to write a satire of '80s teen movies, but has made something unwatchable - unfunny, unclever and dull. "Weekend at Bernie's," which also dealt with a corpse, looks like a Christopher Nolan film in comparison.

Murderous

Maybe, like Cody's previous stab at horror "Jennifer's Body," this will become a cult hit one day. But that at least had some fun parts. This is pure lazy storytelling, like thinking that just showing us a clip of Bob Ross painting is somehow uproariously funny.

Lisa, who by the end of the movie is dressing as Madonna circa "Desperately Seeking Susan," has embarked on a murderous rampage and is rushing to lose her virginity before it all ends. Will she find love? Will she recognize true love before it's too late? Will we have to endure more jokes at the expense of REO Speedwagon's "Can't Fight This Feeling?" Who cares?

Filmgoers will note with alarm that by the time the credits roll, the sweet, goth-inclined outcast Lisa has evolved into an unheinged, violent, self-involved, murderous monster while the zombie has gone the other way, becoming more human and compassionate. Talk about losing your way.

"Lisa Frankenstein," a Focus Features release, is

rated PG-13 for "violent content, bloody images, sexual material, language, sexual assault, teen drinking and drug content." Running time: 101 minutes. Zero stars out of four.

Also:

**NEW YORK:** Nearly 20 years after their last collaboration, **Spike Lee** and **Denzel Washington** are reuniting for an adaptation of **Akira Kurosawa's** "High and Low."

Apple Original Films announced Thursday that it is co-financing the film, which A24 will release theatrically before it streams on Apple TV+. It marks Lee and Washington's first film together since 2006's "Inside Man." Their previous films include "Mo' Better Blues," "Malcolm X" and "He Got Game."

Kurosawa's "High and Low," released in 1963 and starring Toshiro Mifune, was adapted from the **Ed McBain** novel "King's Ransom." The film, a potent thriller rich in class commentary, follows a wealthy industrialist targeted by kidnapers.

Filming starts in March.

**LOS ANGELES:** Moana and Maui are sailing back to the big screen, very quickly. "Moana 2" is coming to theaters in November, Walt Disney Company CEO **Bob Iger** said Wednesday.

Originally planned as a television series, the movie finds Moana journeying on a dangerous mission to the far seas of Oceania after getting a call from her ancestors. It is, the company said, "an adventure unlike anything she's ever faced."

"Moana remains an incredibly popular franchise and we can't wait to give you more of Moana and Maui," Iger said in a statement. The film will open in theaters on Nov. 27.

"Moana 2" was directed by **Dave Derrick Jr.** and will feature music by Grammy winners **Abigail Barlow** and **Emily Bear**, **Mark Mancina**, and Grammy nominee **Opetia Foa'i**. No details were given about the voice actors. (AP)

Features

ARABO TIMES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024

**LOS ANGELES:** "Lisa Frankenstein" didn't come to life at the North American box office in its first weekend in theaters. The horror comedy written by **Diablo Cody** and starring **Kathryn Newton** and **Cole Sprouse** earned \$3.8 million, according to studio estimates Sunday. It debuted in second place on a very slow Super Bowl weekend, behind the spy thriller "Argyle."

**Matthew Vaughn's** "Argyle" got first place with only \$6.5 million, which brings its running domestic total to \$28.8 million in two weekends. The \$200 million production is Apple's first major theatrical flop. Universal Pictures oversaw the North American release for the streamer, where it is playing in 3,605 locations. Globally, it's earned \$60.1 million to date.

Focus Features released "Lisa Frankenstein" in 3,144 locations. A 1980s-set teenage riff on **Mary Shelley's** classic tale, "Lisa Frankenstein" was the directorial debut of **Robin Williams's** daughter **Zelda Williams**. Reviews overall were mixed to negative with a 49% on Rotten Tomatoes. AP's **Mark Kennedy** wrote in his review that it was "a real monster - stitched together from previous movies, painfully incoherent and deeply, deeply dumb."

Audiences were mostly female (61%) and under the age of 35 (71%), according to exit data. But while the opening weekend was low, the production budget was also relatively modest at a reported \$13 million.

The movie is set in the same universe as "Jennifer's Body," which was written by Cody and directed by **Karyn Kusama**. That film underwhelmed on its release in 2009 with critics and audiences but has gained appreciation and a cult cache in the past 15 years.

"The Beekeeper" landed in third place in its fifth weekend with an additional \$3.4 million. The faith-based "The Chosen" series, showing its fourth season's first three episodes, placed fourth with \$3.2 million while "Wonka" rounded out the top five with \$3.1 million. (AP)

**LOS ANGELES:** **Christopher Nolan** was awarded the top prize at the Directors Guild Awards for "Oppenheimer" Saturday, solidifying his front-runner status for next month's Oscars.

Other winners at the untelevised ceremony in Los Angeles included **Celine Song**, for first time directorial achievement for her romantic drama "Past Lives," and **Mstyslav Chernov** for the documentary "20 Days in Mariupol," a joint project between The Associated Press and PBS "Frontline."

The Directors Guild of America



Sprouse



Nolan

also recognizes achievements in scripted and non-scripted television, with the drama series prize going to **Peter Hoar** for "The Last of Us" episode "Long, Long Time," and the comedy trophy for **Christopher Storer** for the "Fishes" episode of "The Bear."

The DGA award is a first for Nolan who had been nominated

for the same award four times previously, for "Memento," "The Dark Knight," "Inception" and "Dunkirk." This year, Nolan was up against some formidable competition in **Martin Scorsese** for "Killers of the Flower Moon," **Yorgos Lanthimos** for "Poor Things," **Alexander Payne** for "The Holdovers" and **Greta**

**Gerwig** for "Barbie," who some pundits thought might have been capable of an upset win in response to her snub in the same category at the Oscars.

The guild's voting body consists of over 19,000 members, which is nearly double the entire membership of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. (AP)

## People & Places



Co-founders of KMA Mrs. Fajer Al-Mazidi (right) and Prof. Cezary (left) with two generations of pianists, Karol Masternak with son Witold and student Tejia Wang (center).



UK Ambassador Belinda Lewis (sitting on chair) graces the event as applause fills the air after the final concert.



Young performers pose with their teachers after the second concert.



Students with teachers and Prof. Cezary



A group photo of performers of the 6th concert.



Young talents during the 3rd concert of the festival.

## Music

### Variety

**LAS VEGAS:** Usher and longtime partner **Jenn Goicoechea** married in Las Vegas just hours after the R&B superstar's headline appearance at the Super Bowl halftime show, according to officials and documents. The officiant who wed the pair is known to dress as an **Elvis Presley** impersonator.

The couple married Sunday at Vegas Weddings, according to a marriage certificate made public Monday. The ceremony was officiated by the **Rev. Ronald Joseph Polrywka**, better known locally as **Ron DeCar**. Witnesses included **Jonnetta Patton**, Usher's mother.

"Congratulations to the Newly-weds!" chapel owner **Melody Willis-Williams** said in a statement. "We were beyond thrilled to host in this epic day for Usher and his new wife."

"As much as we love, love," the statement adds, "this is the couple's news to share any further details on. We'll always be fans of Usher! Yeah!"

Usher, 45, and Goicoechea, 40, have been together since 2019 and have two young daughters. A representative for Usher, **Lydia Kanuga**, did not immediately respond to questions from The Associated Press, including whether the service was conducted in the chapel, on a balcony or in the drive-thru lane. (AP)

**BEVERLY HILLS, Calif.:** The casts of "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" gathered Monday at the annual Academy Award nominees luncheon alongside dozens of less famous and first-time Oscar hopefuls for handshakes, hugs, a huge group picture and instructions on nailing an acceptance speech.

The event at the Beverly Hilton is a warm, feel-good affair where nominees in categories like best animated short get to rub shoulders and share tables with acting nominees like **Ryan Gosling** and **Emma Stone**.

**Greta Gerwig** and **Margot Robbie**, whose snubs for best director and best actress, respectively, for "Barbie" caused a major stir, both showed up for the nominations they did get, and were all smiles.

Gerwig, nominated for adapted screenplay, was surrounded by selfie-seekers as soon as she entered the banquet hall while Robbie, up for best picture as a "Barbie" producer, beamed nearby as she hugged and chatted with a woman who got one of the best actress spots, **Sandra Hüller** of "Anatomy of a Fall." (AP)

**NEW YORK:** **Bob Edwards**, who anchored National Public Radio's "Morning Edition" for just under 25 years and was the baritone voice who told many Americans what had happened while they slept, has died.

## Blossoming talents delight audience

# Kuwait Music Academy hosts Winter Festival

By **Cezary Owerkowicz**

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: People living in Kuwait know that even the desert turns green in winter; many types of grass, bushes, even flowers blossom and make the desert colorful. Greenery brings excitement, freshness to life.

These are the rules of nature and social life seems to be similar with young people full of energy like blossoming flowers in the gardens of society.

To having said this, the Kuwait Music Academy organized its annual Winter Fest on February 2 at its native location in Salwa.

Seven consecutive concerts ran from 9 pm until late evening, showcasing the talents of KMA students with performers, ranging from 5-year-old children to adult musicians, playing various instruments – piano, viola, flute, and more, in addition to singing to the warm applause of the audience. The highlight of the day was the Gala Concert, which featured distinguished guests including ambassadors, making it a memorable event for all involved.

Prof. Cezary Owerkowicz, co-founder of KMA, opened the event by welcoming families, friends, teachers, and young talents as dear guests, emphasizing the students as the hosts of the day. He expressed his admiration for the students' efforts, developments, and achievements, making the day truly special.

Mrs. Fajer Al-Mazidi, also a co-founder, thanked parents and teachers for their support in nurturing young musicians, highlighting talent development as the main goal of KMA. She announced the opening of a new branch at Al Barakha

Complex in Mahboula (Blk 2).

The concerts began with very young performers, who appeared confident and well-prepared. It was impressive to see tiny pianists climbing onto piano chairs with the help of their teachers, and young violinists barely bigger than their instruments. Some performed alongside their teachers as accompanists.

One notable performance was by 6-year-old **Giorgia Haddad**, who played her own composition titled "Having Fun." She was introduced by KMA's new teacher, **Mr. Kamil**, who teaches vocal and piano. **Giorgia's** piece received warm applause from the audience, showcasing her talent at a young age.

After **Giorgia's** performance, her sister **Fabienne Haddad** took the stage to perform the popular song "Jingle Bells." Family performances like these were a common sight at the Winter Fest concerts, with numerous siblings showcasing their musical talents.

Whether it was the **Raeisi** sisters, **Daoudi** sisters, **Kendirjian** siblings, or others, these family performances added a special flavor to the event.

### Audience

The close and friendly relationships between the staff and students, fostered by administrative coordinator **Mrs. Malak**, created a warm and welcoming atmosphere akin to a musical family.

Each concert was punctuated by a family photo session, further enhancing the sense of community.

One of KMA's new teachers, the virtuoso guitarist **Mr. Alex**, not only showcased his exceptional skills by performing the famous Spanish piece "Leyenda" by **Isaac Albeniz** but also introduced his

new students on guitar and piano.

**Mr. Alex**, who also teaches percussion, delighted the audience with a duet alongside **Yousef Al Awadhi**, performing **Eric Clapton's** hit song "Layla."

The Winter Fest concerts also featured a diverse repertoire presented by young singers like **Kholoud Salman**, who performed popular songs to the delight of the audience.

Listeners always like wide repertoire presented by young singers, from **Kholoud Salman** in popular song

### Performances

The Gala Concert commenced with performances by young yet highly talented musicians such as **Witold Masternak**, **Farah Dashti**, and the aforementioned sisters **Lizbeth** and **Dana Tu**.

The repertoire featured a wide range of composers, from classical masters like **Haydn**, **Mozart**, **Beethoven**, **Paganini**, and **Chopin** to modern composers like **Debussy** and **D. Brubeck**. The performances were characterized by their high level of skill and interpretation.

The highlights of the Gala Concert included **Keisha Mokashi's** rendition of **Chopin's** Nocturne, **Danah Rabea's** performance of **Mozart's** Fantasy, **Tejia Wang's** interpretation of **Debussy's** "Sunken Cathedral," **Sara Soliman's** execution of **Chopin's** Polonaise in C, and **Dr. Mohamad El Maraghy's** rendition of **Beethoven's** Pathetic Sonata. These performances truly highlighted the depth of musical talent present at the event.

The Winter Fest in Kuwait serves as a platform for nurturing and showcasing musical talents, and it is evident that these talents are flourishing even in the winter months. The event celebrates the beauty and diversity of music, much like flowers blooming in the desert, and is a testament to the vibrant cultural scene in Kuwait.

**Edwards**, who died Saturday, was 76 years old. NPR had no further details.

He became co-host of "All Things Considered" with **Susan Stamberg** in 1974 shortly after joining NPR, and was the founding anchor of "Morning Edition" in 1979. He left NPR after being replaced on the show in 2004 - a programming move that led to protests by thousands of listeners - and he joined SiriusXM satellite radio.

**Edwards's** deep, commanding voice gave many listeners the impression that he was older than he was. "His was the voice we woke up to," **Stamberg** said. For 12 years, he had regular conversations with veteran sportscaster **Red Barber**, which led to **Edwards's** book, "Friday with Red: A Radio Friendship."

**Edwards** would tell listeners about well-known people who were celebrating birthdays. He later found out that his announcement of **First Lady Rosa-**



Usher



Edwards

**lynn Carter's** birthday surprised and saved her husband, President **Jimmy Carter**, who heard **Edwards** while out jogging; he had forgotten the birthday. "I like sitting at the mic and being on the radio," **Edwards** said shortly before leaving NPR. "That's still a kick." (AP)

**PORTLAND, Ore.:** Former professional wrestler **William Albert "Billy**

**Jack Haynes Jr.** has been taken into police custody in connection with the death of his wife in Portland, authorities said.

Portland police said in a statement over the weekend that **Haynes**, 70, was in police custody at a local hospital, undergoing treatment "for a medical condition unrelated to the homicide or his contact with law enforcement." Police said charges would be announced when **Haynes** is booked into jail. (AP)

Discovery could lead to new screenings, treatment for under 50 people

Tumor-related bacteria tied to young-onset colorectal cancer: study

CLEVELAND, Feb 13: New research from global health system Cleveland Clinic has mapped changes in tumor-related bacteria to uncover potential new strategies to combat the rise of young-onset colorectal cancer (CRC) in people under the age of 50.

The research reveals differences in tumor-related bacteria associated with young-onset colorectal cancer. Published in eBioMedicine (part of

Lancet Discovery Science), the findings could lead to new screenings or treatments for this population.

From 1990 to 2019, global young-onset CRC cases more than doubled



Dr Khorana

from around 95,000 to more than 225,000, according to the Global Cancer Association.

"The unexplained rise of young-onset colorectal cancer is of great concern," said Alok Khorana, M.D., Cleveland Clinic oncologist and primary investigator of the study. "Our team discovered that bacteria were more abundant and compositionally distinct in tumors from young-onset patients. These insights help

us to better understand the disease causes and inform new prevention approaches, diagnostic markers, and therapeutic targets."

This retrospective study, funded by the Sondra and Stephen Hardis Family, used gene sequencing technology to compare tissue samples from 136 young-onset colorectal cancer patients with 140 average-age patients with the disease. They identified unique tumor-related bacteria

in the younger cohort and found that they were more likely to have left-sided, rectal and advanced stage tumors. Key microbes associated with young-onset cancers included Akkermansia and Bacteroides.

First authors of the paper were Shimoli Barot, M.D., of Cleveland Clinic Cancer Institute, and Naseer Sangwan, Ph.D., of Cleveland Clinic Lerner Research Institute. Dr. Khorana also holds the Sondra and Stephen Hardis Chair

for Oncology Research.

"By detailing this microbial signature of young-onset disease, we can look toward new screening biomarkers and drugs targeting related bacteria," said Dr. Barot.

Dr. Sangwan added that "further research is needed into how lifestyle factors such as diet, medications and obesity may impact gut bacteria and contribute to young-onset colon cancers."

Thailand to crack down on pot market

Push for smoking ban in cars with children gains 'momentum' in US

CHARLESTON, W. Va., Feb 13, (AP): Smoking in cars with children is banned in 11 states, and lawmakers are pushing to join them in West Virginia, where more adults use cigarettes than anywhere else in the nation, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The state Senate on Monday passed a bill calling for fines for anyone caught smoking or possessing a lit tobacco product in a vehicle when someone age 16 or under is present. The bill passed on 25-8 vote and now goes to the House of Delegates, where similar legislation has failed and it faces an uncertain future.

Senate Majority Leader Tom Takubo, a doctor-turned-lawmaker, made a promise long ago to a patient whose father was a heavy smoker that he would try to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children in West Virginia. Takubo has made it almost an annual effort since 2017 to introduce the legislation, but it didn't gain traction.

The Kanawha County Republican and lung doctor said the inspiration for the bill was a patient who was not a smoker but lost half of her lung function. When her father smoked, "she had to climb down to the bottom of the car and put her head underneath the seat," Takubo said.

Violators would face a misdemeanor subject to a maximum fine of \$25. But it would be a secondary offense: smoking with children present cannot be the main reason a driver is pulled over.

Sen. Mike Azinger, a Wood County Republican, said the state has no right to infringe on parents' freedoms.

"The arguments for the bill are essentially emotional arguments," Azinger said. "This is a cut at the fundamental rights of parents making a decision over their children in their vehicle. This is a state going where it has no business going."

Also:

**THAILAND:** Two years after Thailand made pot legal, the country appears set to crack down on its freewheeling drug market with a ban on "recreational" use.

Legal cannabis has fueled Thailand's tourism and farming trades and spawned thousands of neon green shops, but it's facing public backlash over perceptions that under-regulation has made the drug available to kids and caused crime.

The Health Minister Chonlanan Srikaew said last week that he had recommended a draft bill to the Cabinet that would ban recreational cannabis use while allowing medical. The Cabinet is expected to approve sending that Parliament soon, but has not yet taken it up as of its most recent meeting on Tuesday.

A draft version of the law that was circulated for public comment in January would make using cannabis "for entertainment or pleasure" a crime punishable by a 60,000 baht (about \$1,700) fine. It would allow medical marijuana, but didn't give details of how it would be controlled.

Thailand was the first country in Asia to legalize cannabis. Decriminalization was spearheaded by the Bhumjithai Party, which made it a major part of its platform in the 2019 general election campaign. The party's stronghold is in the poor Northeast, where it promised farmers cannabis would be a new cash crop.

Party leader Anutin Charnvirakul became health minister and an important member of the military-led coalition, pushing through a 2022 amendment to the Narcotics Law that dropped cannabis from the list of controlled drugs.

Anutin had promised that cannabis would be allowed only for medical use, but in practice the market was nearly unregulated.

The Health Ministry issued regulations that made cannabis a "controlled herb" that requires a license for planting or selling, as well as banning online sales, sales to pregnant women and people under 20, and public smoking. But cannabis can be purchased easily by practically anyone at many unlicensed establishments or online.

Thai media was quickly filled with reports of drug-fueled violence and abuse, including among young people, who were not supposed to have access to the drug.

The Health Ministry reported a spike in people seeking treatment cannabis-related psychological issues, from more than 37,000 patients in fiscal year 2022 to more than 63,000 patients in 2023. Other studies pointed to more young people

Bubonic plague case

Alaskapox virus claims 1st victim in US: report

ANCHORAGE, Alaska, Feb 13, (AP): An elderly man has died from Alaskapox, the first known fatality from the recently discovered virus, state health officials said.

The man, who lived in the remote Kenai Peninsula, was hospitalized last November and died in late January, according to a bulletin last week from Alaska public health officials.

The man was undergoing cancer treatment and had a suppressed immune system because of the drugs, which may have contributed to the severity of his illness, the bulletin said. It described him as elderly but didn't provide his age.

Alaskapox, also known as AKPV, is related to smallpox, cowpox and mpox, health officials said. Symptoms can include a rash, swollen lymph nodes and joint or muscle pain.

Only six other cases of the virus have been reported to Alaska health officials since the first one in 2015. All involved people were living in the Fairbanks area, more than 300 miles (483 kilometers) from the Kenai Peninsula, health officials said.

All had mild cases and recovered without being hospitalized.

The man who died "resided alone in a forested area and reported no recent travel and no close contacts with recent travel, illness, or similar lesions," the health bulletin said.

It's unclear how AKPV is transmitted but researchers say it may be zoonotic, meaning it can jump from animals to humans. The bulletin said that tests found evidence of current or previous infection in several species of small mammals in the Fairbanks area, including red-backed voles, and at least one domestic pet.

The man said he had cared for a stray cat at his home, the bulletin said.

The cat tested negative for the virus but it "regularly hunted small mammals and frequently scratched the patient," the bulletin said.

That opens the possibility that the cat had the virus on its claws when it scratched him. The bulletin said a "notable" scratch near the armpit area where the first symptom - a red lesion - was noted.

Health officials said there hasn't been any documented cases of humans passing on the virus but they recommended people with skin lesions possibly caused by Alaskapox to cover the affected area with a bandage.

Also:

**BEND, Oregon:** Public health officials in Oregon have reported a case of bubonic plague in a local resident who they said likely contracted it from a pet cat.

All close contacts of the person and the cat have been contacted and provided medication. **Dr. Richard Fawcett**, the health officer for **Deschutes County**, said in a statement last week.

The county said Wednesday the case was identified and treated in its early stages and poses little risk to the community.

Symptoms of bubonic plague include the sudden onset of fever, nausea, weakness, chills and muscle aches, county health services said. Symptoms begin two to eight days after exposure to an infected animal or flea.

using the drug.

In the 2023 election campaign, all major parties - including Bhumjithai - promised to limit cannabis to medical use. Kalyapat Rachitroj, a lawmaker from the opposition Move Forward Party who has a medical degree, said the plant has economic benefits, and has uses in health care to relieve pain and for terminally ill patients. But, she said, widespread recreational cannabis has created social problems such as youth drug abuse.

Given the current situation, "we have no option but to put

The Conversation

Potential solution or new form of isolation?

AI 'companions': A double-edged sword for combating loneliness

By Anna Mae Duane

University of Connecticut

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



The United States is in the grips of a loneliness epidemic: Since 2018, about half the population has reported that it has experienced loneliness. Loneliness can be as dangerous to your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, according to a 2023 surgeon general's report.

It is not just individual lives that are at risk. Democracy requires the capacity to feel connected to other citizens in order to work toward collective solutions.

In the face of this crisis, tech companies offer a technological cure: emotionally intelligent chatbots. These digital friends, they say, can help alleviate the loneliness that threatens individual and national health.

But as the pandemic showed, technology alone is not sufficient to address the complexities of public health. Science can produce miraculous vaccines, but if people are enmeshed in cultural and historical narratives that prevent them from taking the life-saving medicine, the cure sits on shelves and lives are lost. The humanities, with their expertise in human culture, history and literature, can play a key role in preparing society for the ways that AI might help - or harm - the capacity for meaningful human connection.

The power of stories to both predict and influence human behavior has long been validated by scientific research. Numerous studies demonstrate that the stories people embrace heavily influence the choices they make, ranging from the vacations they plan, to how people approach climate change to the computer programming choices security experts make.

Attached

There are two storylines that address people's likely behaviors in the face of the unknown territory of depending on AI for emotional sustenance: one that promises love and connection, and a second that warns of dehumanizing subjugation.

The first story, typically told by software designers and AI companies, urges people to say "I do" to AI and embrace bespoke friendship programmed on your behalf. AI company Replika, for instance, promises that it can provide everyone with a "companion who cares. Always here to listen and talk. Always on your side."

There is a global appetite for such digital companionship. Microsoft's digital chatbot Xiaoice has a global fan



Then Vice President Joe Biden, right, watches as U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, center, receives an epaulet on his uniform by his sister Rashmi Murthy during a ceremonial swearing in ceremony in Conmy Hall at Fort Myer in Arlington, Va. on April 22, 2015. Murthy, the country's top public health watchdog, warned that widespread loneliness in the US poses health risks as deadly as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day. (AP)

base of over 660 million people, many of whom consider the chatbot "a dear friend," even a trusted confidante.

In popular culture, films like "Her" depict lonely people becoming deeply attached to their digital assistants. For many, having a "dear friend" programmed to avoid difficult questions and demands seems like a huge improvement over the messy, challenging, vulnerable work of engaging with a human partner, especially if you consider the misogynistic preference for submissive, sycophantic companions.

Relationship

To be sure, imagining a chummy relationship with a chatbot offers a sunnier set of possibilities than the apocalyptic narratives of slavery and subjugation that have dominated storytelling about a possible future among social robots. Blockbuster films like "The Matrix" and the "Terminator" have depicted hellscape worlds where humans are enslaved by sentient AI. Other narratives featured in films like "The Creator" and "Blade Runner" imagine the roles reversed and invite viewers to sympathize with AI beings who are oppressed by humans.

You could be forgiven for thinking that these two stories, one of friendship, the other of slavery, simply represent two extremes in human nature. From this perspective it seems like a good thing that marketing messages about AI are guiding people toward the sunny side of the futuristic street. But if you consider the work of scholars who have studied slavery in the US, it becomes frighteningly clear that these two stories - one of purchased friendship and one of enslavement and exploitation - are not as far apart as you

might imagine.

chattel slavery in the US was a brutal system designed to extract labor through violent and dehumanizing means. To sustain the system, however, an intricate emotional landscape was designed to keep the enslavers self-satisfied. "Gone with the Wind" is perhaps the most famous depiction of how enslavers saw themselves as benevolent patriarchs and forced enslaved people to reinforce this fiction through cheerful professions of love.

In his 1845 autobiography, Frederick Douglass described a tragic occasion when an enslaved man, asked about his situation, honestly replied that he was ill-treated. The plantation owner, confronted with testimony about the harm he was inflicting, sold the truth-teller down the river. Such cruelty, Douglass insisted, was the necessary penalty for someone who committed the sin "of telling the simple truth" to a man whose emotional calibration required constant reassurance.

Danger

To be clear, I am not evoking the emotional coercion that enslavement required in order to conflate lonely seniors with evil plantation owners, or worse still, to equate computer code with enslaved human beings. There is little danger that AI companions will courageously tell us truths that we would rather not hear. That is precisely the problem. My concern is not that people will harm sentient robots. I fear how humans will be damaged by the moral vacuum created when their primary social contacts are designed solely to serve the emotional needs of the "user." (AP)

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# Spurs beat Raptors to end 7-game skid



Utah Jazz center Walker Kessler (24) blocks Golden State Warriors forward Jonathan Kuminga (00) during the second half of an NBA basketball game Monday, Feb. 12, 2024, in Salt Lake City. (AP)

## South Americans miss out on Paris Olympics

# Brazilian soccer crisis deepens

SAO PAULO, Feb 13, (AP): Brazilian soccer fans were already in a funk after a year that saw a string of poor results, a coaching void and a political tug of war at the country's federation.

Things got even worse Sunday after Brazil failed to qualify for the Paris Olympics thanks to a loss to archrival Argentina, meaning the two-time defending champion will not be part of the tournament this summer.

"It is sad, but it is more of an embarrassment," striker John Kennedy said after the 1-0 loss. "We should have wanted to win more than we did."

Brazil also failed to qualify for the 1992 and 2004 editions of the Olympic tournament, but those blips

didn't coincide with a crisis for the senior national team. Brazil is only in sixth place in South American qualifying for the 2026 World Cup and its biggest star Neymar has been out with a serious knee injury since October.

Some fans and analysts had hoped 17-year-old striker Endrick - who is set to join Real Madrid this summer - would provide some cause for optimism by showcasing his talent during the Olympic qualifying tournament. And many supporters had been hoping to see Endrick and the 32-year-old Neymar play together on the Olympic team in Paris and lead Brazil to an unprecedented third straight gold medal.

But the Brazilian teenager scored only twice in seven matches in

Olympic qualifying. Argentina's World Cup-winning midfielder Thiago Almada netted five.

The Olympic soccer tournament features mainly Under-23 players and does not carry nearly the same status as the World Cup or continental championships - such as the Copa America that starts in June - but missing out completely still stings the pride of many Brazilians.

Especially those who are viewing Endrick as the country's next big star, and had been expecting him to show that he could help lead the senior team's attack alongside Vinicius Jr. and Rodrygo at the Copa America.

Meanwhile, Brazil's senior team will return to action in March in friendlies against England and Spain

amid serious concerns about its current form.

Last year, Brazil lost a home match in World Cup qualifying for the first time ever; 1-0 to Argentina at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro. It also lost at Uruguay and Colombia in the South American round-robin competition after two poor performances.

New coach Dorival Júnior was only hired in January after the president of the Brazilian soccer confederation, Ednaldo Rodrigues, failed to fulfill his promise to bring in Madrid's Carlo Ancelotti. Previous coach Tite stepped down after Brazil lost in the quarterfinals of the 2022 World Cup, and the team had been led by Fernando Diniz on an interim basis last year.

The frustration of seeing Argentina win the World Cup in Qatar as well as the last Copa America has only added to the pressure facing Dorival as he takes up the job - even before Sunday's loss.

"Brazil wasted a full year in preparations because we waited for a top coach (Ancelotti) who had signed no contract with us," said former Brazil left-back Júnior. "We burned a promising coach,

## SOCCER

Fernando Diniz, just so he could be interim for a year. The time to fix all this for the next World Cup is very short."

Rodrigues, the confederation head, is also facing calls for his resignation. He was removed by a Rio de Janeiro court in December due to irregularities in his election but returned weeks later after a ruling from Brazil's top court. His full case is yet to be reviewed.

History, though, shows that missing out on the Olympics doesn't necessarily bode ill for the future.

The team that failed to qualify for the Barcelona Games in 1992 included Cafu, Márcio Santos and Roberto Carlos, who all went on to win the World Cup. And the squad that missed out on the Athens Games in 2004 included future stars Maicon, Diego and Robinho.

"They will have to prove this elimination is no different from those two," said 2002 World Cup winner Vampeta. "There's great players in this team, but they will be judged by whether they can drag the senior team out of the quagmire it is in now. It is an uphill battle to end this crisis."

## Timberwolves devour Clippers

TORONTO, Feb 13, (AP): Victor Wembanyama had 27 points, 14 rebounds and a career-high 10 blocks in his second triple-double, Devin Vassell added 25 points and the San Antonio Spurs snapped a seven-game losing streak by routing the Toronto Raptors 122-99 on Monday night.

Wembanyama made 10 of 14 attempts and had five assists and a pair of steals in 29 minutes as the Spurs won for the first time since Jan. 27 against Minnesota. His previous career high for blocks was eight, against Memphis on Nov. 18. He leads the NBA in that category.

It was the first triple-double with blocks since Clint Capela had 13 points, 19 rebounds and 10 blocks for Atlanta against Minnesota on Jan. 22, 2021. That had also been the last time anyone in the NBA blocked 10 shots in a game.

Jeremy Sochan scored 16 points and Keldon Johnson added 12 as San An-

## BASKETBALL

tonio snapped a four-game road losing streak.

Grady Dick scored 18 points, Kelly Olynyk had 17 and RJ Barrett 13 for the Raptors, who had won the past six meetings with San Antonio. Toronto has lost 14 of 18.

## Timberwolves 121, Clippers 100

In Los Angeles, Karl-Anthony Towns scored 24 points, Anthony Edwards added 23 and Minnesota pulled away in the second half and beat Los Angeles in a matchup of two of the top teams in the Western Conference.

Rudy Gobert had a double-double with 17 points and 10 rebounds as the Timberwolves (37-16) remained atop the Western Conference with their third win in the last four games.

Paul George and Kawhi Leonard led the Clippers (35-17) with 18 points apiece and James Harden added 17. George became the Clippers' career 3-point leader with 7:23 remaining in the third quarter, hitting his 739th to surpass Eric Piatkowski.

## 76ers 123, Cavaliers 121

In Cleveland, Buddy Hield scored 24 points in his third game with Philadelphia, Kelly Oubre Jr. also had 24 and the 76ers ended Cleveland's nine-game winning streak.

The Cavs nearly rallied from a 10-point deficit in the final 1:25. They had a chance to win at the buzzer, but Darius Garland missed a 3-pointer from the right corner.

All-Star Tyrese Maxey added 22 points for the Sixers. Maxey split a pair of free throws with 6.9 seconds left, giving Cleveland a last possession to extend its longest winning streak since it had LeBron James in 2018.

## Bucks 112, Nuggets 95

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 36 points, 18 rebounds and five assists as Milwaukee showcased its improved defense in beating Denver.

After losing five of their first six games under new coach Doc Rivers, the Bucks have won two straight by a combined margin of 53 points and allowed fewer than 100 points in back-to-back games for the first time this



Los Angeles Clippers guard Russell Westbrook, center, attempts to drive past Minnesota Timberwolves forward Kyle Anderson, left, and center Karl-Anthony Towns during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Feb. 12, 2024, in Los Angeles. (AP)

season.

Nikola Jokic had 29 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists for the Nuggets. Aaron Gordon scored 14 and Michael Porter Jr. had 11. Denver's Jamal Murray sat out the second half due to shin splints, and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope left with tightness in his right hamstring.

## Mavericks 112, Wizards 104

In Dallas, Luka Doncic had his 10th triple-double of the season despite missing five minutes of action after taking a charge and helped rally Dallas past Washington.

Doncic finished with 26 points, 15 assists and 11 rebounds. Kyrie Irving scored 26 points for the Mavericks, who have a season-best five-game win streak. Daniel Gafford, dealt to Dallas from Washington before last week's trade deadline, had 16 points and matched a career best with 17 rebounds.

Deni Avdija scored 25 points to tie a career high, and Kyle Kuzma added 23 for the Wizards, who have lost seven straight. Tyus Jones had 14 points and 16 assists.

## Warriors 129, Jazz 107

In Salt Lake City, Klay Thompson scored 26 points, Stephen Curry made five 3-pointers in the fourth quarter and had 25 and Golden State beat Utah without coach Steve Kerr.

Kerr was in Serbia for the funeral service for Golden State assistant coach Dejan Milojevic, who had a heart attack at a team dinner in Salt Lake City on Jan. 16 and died the next day.

Assistant coach Kenny Atkinson led the Warriors to their fifth straight victory, moving them above .500.

## Rockets 105, Knicks 103

In Houston, Aaron Holiday had 18 points, capped by two free throws with less than a second remaining after a disputed foul by Jalen Brunson behind the 3-point line, and Houston dealt New York its third straight loss.

Houston had a four-point lead with less than a minute to go before Brunson had the next four points, capped by a jump shot with 8.1 seconds left to tie it at 103.

Precious Achiuwa blocked a short shot by Jalen Green and Holiday grabbed the ball beyond the arc and shot it as Brunson rushed out at him. Holiday made the first two free throws before missing the third intentionally to run out the clock.

## Bulls 136, Hawks 126

In Atlanta, Ayo Dosunmu had a career-high 29 points and seven assists as Chicago scored a season-best point total.

DeMar DeRozan scored 29 points and Nikola Vucevic added 24 points and 11 rebounds. Coby White added 20 points and seven assists.

Bogdan Bogdanovic and De'Andre Hunter led the Hawks off the bench. Bogdanovic had 28 points and Hunter 23. Trae Young had 19 points, including 2-for-10 shooting from 3-point range.

## Hornets 111, Pacers 102

In Charlotte, N.C., Miles Bridges had 20 points and 10 rebounds and Charlotte won its second straight game since adding five new players via trade.

Newcomers Grant Williams, Seth Curry, Tre Mann and Vasilije Micic added an offensive spark for the Hornets, who finished with 27 assists. Williams led the way with 21 points and Curry added 18 off the bench. Mann got the start and finished with 11 points, nine rebounds and seven assists.

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## Kuwait Club kick off league campaign on winning note

## Kazma overcome Al-Qadisiya in nail-biting encounter

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The concluding match of the inaugural round in the Handball League, held at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, showcased a riveting clash between Kazma and Al-Qadisiya. The encounter, marked by relentless action from the first whistle to the final moments, proved to be the tournament's most intense and enjoyable confrontation.

Despite Kazma, also known as the "Sons of Hawalli," dominating the game and leading with varying margins throughout the

first half, Al-Qadisiya, or the "Sons of Al-Adiliyah," managed to level the score in the last two minutes. Kazma's Serbian coach, Bozo Rodic, who previously coached Al-Qadisiya, orchestrated a strategic turnaround, secur-

## HANDBALL

ing the match points in favor of the "yellow" team.

Standout performances were delivered by Kazma's Tunisian professional Anwar Ben Abdullah and goalkeepers Turki Al-Khalidi and Abdulaziz Al-Dhafiri, while

Al-Qadisiya's Montenegrin professional, Vladan Lipovina, showcased his goal-scoring prowess.

In another fixture, defending champions Al-Kuwait effortlessly defeated Al-Arabi in the league's debut for both teams, concluding with a scoreline of 34-20. After the first round, the handball league standings shaped up as follows: Al-Fahaheel, Al-Kuwait, Khaitan, Kazma, and Al-Salmiya each secured two points, while Sulaibikhat, Burgan, Al-Qurain, and Al-Nasr earned one point each. Notably, Yarmouk, Al-Qadisiya, Al-Sahel, and Al-Arabi clubs are yet to register any points.

Shawqi Al-Abad, the assistant coach of Al-Arabi, expressed that the team faced challenges in the first half, adding more than 13 goals, and had incomplete ranks until a week ago due to injuries. He emphasized the team's commitment to improving its performance in the upcoming weeks.

In a separate development, handball star Ahmed Mufarreh officially announced his retirement from the sport, marking the end of his illustrious career that spanned since 1996. Having represented Al-Jahra, Al-Qurain, and Kazma, as well as playing for the national team, Mufarreh leaves a lasting legacy in Kuwaiti handball.



Kazma player goes for a shoot against Al-Qadisiya.

## 'Wasteful' Juventus title hopes in tatters after loss to Udinese

Juve jeered off the field



Juventus' Adrien Rabiot (left), and Udinese's Lorenzo Lucca (right), go for a header during a Serie A soccer match between Juventus and Udinese, in Turin, Italy. (AP)

**TURIN, Italy, Feb 13, (AP):** Losing at Serie A leaders Inter Milan last week, stayed seven points behind the Nerazzurri, who also have a game in hand. Juventus are only one point above third-place AC Milan.

Lautaro Giannetti's first Serie A goal was enough to hand Udinese only their second win in 14 matches and lift them three points above the drop zone. Juventus forward Arkadiusz Milik missed a number of gilt-edged chances to equalize and also had a goal disallowed.

Milik was returning from a suspension and started in place of in-form forward Dušan Vlahović, who was out with a muscle problem.

## SOCCER

to Udinese left their title hopes in tatters.

Massimiliano Allegri's side, which lost 1-0 at league leaders Inter Milan last week, stayed seven points behind the Nerazzurri, who also have a game in hand. Juventus are only one point above third-place AC Milan.

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Milik was returning from a suspension and started in place of in-form forward Dušan Vlahović, who was out with a muscle problem.



Juventus' players walk on the pitch after a Serie A soccer match between Juventus and Udinese, in Turin, Italy. (AP)

Juventus started brightly but it was Udinese which took the lead in the 25th minute. Thomas Kristensen nodded on Lazar Samardžić's free kick and Juventus defender Alex Sandro's attempted clearance was straight at Giannetti, who fired it in from close range.

Milik could have leveled almost immediately but he mishit a cross and sent it woefully wide of the target from point blank range. The Poland forward headed another cross straight at Udinese goalkeeper Maduka Okoye shortly before halftime.

Juventus were jeered off the field at the break, and matters didn't improve much after the break.

Milik did get the ball in the back of the net in the 58th minute after Adrien Rabiot had nodded on a corner but it was ruled out as Federico Chiesa's corner delivery had crossed the byline.

Struggling Serie A club Salernitana are hoping for another "sporting miracle" after firing coach Filippo Inzaghi and replacing him with Fabio Liverani in the hopes of staving off relegation again.

It is the third coaching change of a troubled season for Salernitana, which are bottom of Serie A and five points from safety.

Even Salernitana general manager Walter Sabatini acknowledged at a news conference to present Liverani that, after the team's latest loss against Empoli, "our percentage chance of securing safety is 3.5%."

But Salernitana have been in this position before.

Two years ago, Davide Nicola - currently in charge at Empoli - became Salernitana's third coach of the season, with the team having spent most of the campaign rooted to the bottom of the table. However, he managed to pull off the great escape, with Salernitana recording 18 points in the remaining 15 matches to stay up.

"I accepted this challenge because I see the quality in this team and I believe we can aim to get closer to those ahead of us," the 47-year-old Liverani said. "There was a sporting miracle in this city a couple of years ago and the stadium and the fans were an added value."

It couldn't be a tougher start for Liverani, with his first match in charge coming at league leader Inter Milan on Friday. That game would have pitted Inzaghi against his younger brother Simone Inzaghi, who is the Nerazzurri coach.

## Team's resilience commended

## Salmiya's Al-Senussi unveils ambitious plan for title

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Salmiya's Libyan professional player, Al-Senussi Al-Hadi, unveiled the team's ambitious project to contend for the Zain Premier League title, emphasizing their aspiration to win every match in pursuit of this objective. Following their recent victory over Al-Shabab with a single goal by Mahdi Dashti, Al-Senussi expressed the team's commitment to giving their best, fueled by the positive energy gained from reaching the Amir's Cup final.

Despite a close win against Al-Shabab, propelling them to fourth place with 23 points, Al-Senussi acknowledged the challenging task ahead. Salmiya's Deputy Head of the Football Staff, Yousef Al-Jassem, highlighted the importance of the victory over Al-Shabab, aiming to narrow the points difference with the leading teams by the end of the second round.

Assistant coach of the youth team,

Malek John, remained optimistic about future matches, stating that the

## SOCCER

match result did not reflect the team's effort. He attributed the challenges



A file photo of Al-Salmiya's Al-Senussi in action.

faced by recently contracted players to time constraints and their need for better integration with the team.

In Al-Arabi, relief enveloped the club after securing a resounding six-point victory over Al-Jahra in the latest league round. With this triumph, Al-Arabi surged to 36 points at the

league's summit, while Al-Jahra languished at the bottom with two points and no victories in the current season.

Mishal Al-Abakal, the team's media coordinator, commended the team's resilience and quick recovery, praising the efforts of players and the entire technical and administrative staff. Al-Abakal emphasized the significance of defeating Al-Jahra despite their challenges, expressing confidence in Al-Akhdar's ability to delight fans by season-end.

Addressing the absence of player Abdul Rahman Al-Dhafiri from the match, it was clarified that coach Darko opted for Ali Aziz due to regulations restricting the use of players born in Kuwait. Jahra player Othman Al-Shammari acknowledged his team's performance and expressed optimism about future improvements, while acknowledging the clarity of Jahra's situation within the sports community and among fans.

## Enrique reluctant to talk about Mbappé

## Bavarians head to Lazio needing to bounce back

DUESSELDORF, Germany, Feb 13, (AP): This was meant to be the year that Harry Kane finally won a trophy. The Champions League might be his best chance now.

Bayern Munich heads to Lazio in the round of 16 on Wednesday needing to bounce back after a 3-0 loss to Bayer Leverkusen left it five points off the Bundesliga lead. Kane is on track to be a member of the first Bayern team since the 2011-12 season not to win the league.

Injuries are weighing Bayern down, coach Thomas Tuchel's tactics are in question and forward Thomas Müller questioned his teammates' mentality in the "nightmare" Leverkusen loss.

Kane has 24 Bundesliga goals already but never came close to a 25th on Saturday. He was shut out of the game as Bayern fell further behind the league leader. Bayern's attack was neutralized by Leverkusen and the entire team had just one shot on goal.

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There are 13 games left and much can still happen, but Bayern's title hopes now rest on Leverkusen slipping up. Not so easy when Leverkusen is unbeaten in 31 games.

That makes Wednesday's game at Lazio all the more important.

The Italian team, eighth in Serie A, may not be the hardest opponent Bayern could have faced in the round of 16, but the pressure is on the players and coach to improve.

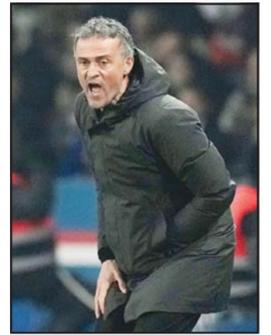
Left back Alphonso Davies, midfielder Konrad Laimer and forwards Serge Gnabry and Kingsley Coman all remain injured, while goalkeeper Manuel Neuer and right back Noussair Mazraoui were rested Monday before returning to training Tuesday ahead of traveling to Italy.

Tuchel defended his tactics after the decision to switch from a back four to a back three for the first time this season backfired. Leverkusen exploited space on Bayern's left flank, where Tuchel had deployed Sacha Boey, usually a right back.

Bayern's transfer strategy is also in question after Josip Stanišić, a Bayern right back on loan at Leverkusen, scored the first goal. The way Leverkusen overwhelmed the central midfield pairing of Aleksandar Pavlović and Leon Goretzka was a reminder that Bayern's season might look different had the club's plans to sign Joao Palhinha from Fulham in September not collapsed at the last minute.

Kane reeled off a list of Bayern's attacking faults after the Leverkusen loss. Against Lazio, Kane and his teammates are under pressure to do better.

Meanwhile, Paris Saint-Germain coach Luis Enrique seemed reluctant to talk about star striker Kylian



PSG's head coach Luis Enrique reacts during the French League One soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Lille at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris, France. (AP)

Mbappé ahead of the Champions League clash with Real Sociedad.

Mbappé has been nursing a sore left ankle and was an unused substitute in Saturday's league game against Lille. Asked on Tuesday if Mbappé was ready to start against Sociedad in the first leg of their last-16 contest, Enrique replied with a terse "Yes" at the pre-match news conference.

Mbappé's PSG contract runs out at the end of June and the France star has yet to say if he will stay, with reports heavily linking him with a move to long-time suitor Real Madrid.

So it was put to Enrique that Wednesday's match at Parc des Princes could - potentially - be Mbappé's last home game for the club in the Champions League, given that Sociedad might eliminate PSG.

PSG is 11 points clear in the French league while Sociedad is only seventh in the Spanish league. But competition in Spain is generally stronger and Ligue 1 has not produced a credible rival this season, like it did when Montpellier (2012), Mbappé's Monaco (2017) and Lille (2021) won the title, and when Lens fell short by one point last season.

Once again, all eyes are on the Champions League as a true indicator of PSG's level.

Enrique may deliberately be trying to take some pressure off his players and understandably so, given PSG's underwhelming record in the competition.

The cash-rich Qatari club has spent fortunes on buying stars and paying huge salaries - Zlatan Ibrahimović, Edinson Cavani, Mbappé, Neymar, Lionel Messi - yet PSG has been eliminated from the last 16 of the Champions League five times in the past seven seasons.

Arguably the most humiliating performance in PSG's history saw it hammered 6-1 by Barcelona in 2017 - with Enrique in charge of Barca back then - having won the first leg 4-0.

## Messila Equestrian Club soars with over 20 new riders 'under' Bahraini coach Al-Alawi

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: The Messila Equestrian Club has experienced a surge in demand for training, with over 20 new riders joining its ranks in recent times under the guidance of Bahraini international coach, Sayed Adnan Al-Alawi. His leadership has brought about a significant qualitative improvement in the club.

Expressing gratitude to the management of Al-Messila Club, led by Badr Tariq Al-Maillem, and Muhammad Tariq Al-Maillem,

## EQUESTRIAN

Al-Alawi highlighted their support and dedication in overcoming obstacles for the club's advancement in both administrative and technical aspects. He also mentioned the recent addition of Polish coach Camilla to train male and female riders.

According to Al-Alawi, the club is progressing according to the planned strategy set at the beginning of the season. The club's



Sayed Adnan Al-Alawi with Muhammad Ramadan.

management is actively encouraging Messila knights to participate in international tournaments at Marina Beach, featuring riders from Europe and the Gulf. The Messila knights have showcased impressive performances in the first and second tournaments, and they are geared up for the upcoming third tournament scheduled to start tomorrow at Marina Beach.



Ivory Coast supporters wait for their team to arrive at the Felix Houphouët Boigny Stadium in Abidjan, Ivory Coast after they defeated Nigeria and won the 2024 African Cup of Nations. (AP)

# Sports

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Hayat expresses optimism about the future

## Kuwait's success story: 17 medals bagged at Arab Women's Club Games in Sharjah

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 13: Kuwait demonstrated a commendable performance in the recently concluded Arab Women's Club Games held in the Emirate of Sharjah, securing a total of 17 medals. The achievements comprised two gold medals, six silver medals, and nine bronze medals, a testament to the prowess of Kuwaiti athletes.

Participating clubs such as the Al Fattah Club, Salwa Al-Sabah Club, and the Kuwait Shooting Club contributed significantly to this success. Notably, the shooting discipline earned four medals, strength events garnered five medals, karate secured five medals, while table tennis, archery, and volleyball each clinched one medal.

The accomplishment was the result of dedicated and organized efforts by the participating clubs, technical and administrative staff, and the athletes themselves, despite facing financial constraints. The absence of sufficient financial support, which could have further enhanced the teams' preparation, did not hinder their determination.

The moral backing provided by women's sports officials played a pivotal role in motivating the athletes. Figures such as Sheikha Naima Al-Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Salwa Al-Sabah Club, and Fatima Hayat, a member of the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee, actively attended and supported the players during the events.

Fatima Hayat emphasized the potential of Kuwaiti women's sports champions to secure titles and stand atop podiums with proper financial backing and preparation. She lauded the achievements of the female athletes at the Arab Women's Club Games, attributing their success to the ongoing support from His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, who fervently endorses and champions women's sports across various platforms.

Hayat expressed optimism about the future development of women's sports in Kuwait, despite the limited number of women's clubs, currently numbering only three. Despite this constraint, the Salwa Al-Sabah volleyball team's commendable performance, reaching the final match against Sporting Al-Masry from a league of 20 clubs, underscores the resilience and potential of women's sports in Kuwait.

### West Indies earn consolation win

PERTH, Australia, Feb 13, (AP): Andre Russell and Sherrane Rutherford smashed half centuries in a record-breaking sixth-wicket stand to propel the West Indies to 37-run consolation win over Australia in the third and final Twenty20 match on Tuesday.

Russell destroyed the pace and spin of Adam Zampa late in the innings to score 71 off just 29 balls while Rutherford contributed 67 off 40 deliveries as West Indies posted 220-6 after winning the toss and electing to bat.

David Warner briefly kept Australia in the hunt for a 3-0 sweep in the series with 81 off 49 balls before the home team faltered against offspinner Roston Chase and was restricted to 183-5.

Chase, one of the two changes West Indies made for the final game, derailed Australia's pursuit with the wickets of Warner and Josh Inglis in one over to end up with 2-19.

"It's a very good feeling to

### CRICKET

come here and get a win," West Indies captain Rowman Powell said after losing the series 2-1. "The boys showed some heart and courage. We had good plans through the three games but execution let us down."

Australia fast bowler Xavier Bartlett, who impressed in his ODI debut against the West Indies, continued to prosper in white-ball cricket by getting openers Johnson Charles and Kyle Mayers in his debut T20 after Josh Hazlewood was rested for the final game.

Charles edged Bartlett's fifth delivery to wicketkeeper Inglis and Mayers played a short ball back onto his stumps in the pacer's second over.

Zampa had Chase (37) clean bowled soon after the batting powerplay and when Powell edged Aaron Hardie behind the wickets the West Indies stuttered at 79-5 in the ninth over.



Salwa Al-Sabah Club volleyball team celebrate its win.

## Chelsea hold off Palace to ignite hopes

Gallagher the hero with a brace

LONDON, Feb 13, (AP): Conor Gallagher apologized to fans of former club Crystal Palace after scoring twice, including a crucial stoppage-time goal, to help Chelsea recover for a come-from-behind 3-1 win in the Premier League that ignited the team's hopes of a finish in the European positions.

The England midfielder spent a year on loan at Palace two seasons ago, when he scored eight goals and excelled in making late runs into the area.

Now he's doing that for Chelsea, steering home an equalizer at Selhurst Park barely 90 seconds into the second half and then putting his team ahead just after 90 minutes had been played with a strike from the edge of the box.

"I do love them," Gallagher said when asked how he felt to have inflicted pain on the Palace supporters. "It's sad but you can't beat that feeling. Sorry, Palace fans."

Argentina international Enzo Fernandez secured the points in the fourth minute of added time to leave Palace just five points above the relegation zone and its 76-year-old manager, Roy Hodgson, under more pressure.

Chelsea climbed to 10th place in

what remains another disappointing campaign for a club that has spent more than \$1 billion on players over the past two years. Yet it could still end in qualification for the minor European competitions, with seventh-place Newcastle only two points away.

"We are trying our best to keep improving," Gallagher said. "Consistency is the biggest thing for us - there have been games when we've been brilliant and games when we've been terrible."

The 24-year-old Gallagher isn't one of Chelsea's many costly recent

### SOCCER

arrivals - he is a product of the club's youth academy - but is proving to be one of the best-performing players under Mauricio Pochettino, whose own position has come under scrutiny this season.

A thumping long-range strike by Jefferson Lerma gave Palace the lead in the 30th minute of a first half when Chelsea was lackluster, failing to register a single shot on target.

"It was extremely cruel," Hodgson said, "but the game is about goals and unfortunately we made mistakes which led to goals."

"I don't think that is a fair reflection on the way the game was played. I think we deserved to come off with at least one point."

It was a 13th straight win for Chelsea over Palace.



Chelsea's Christopher Nkunku and Crystal Palace's Joachim Andersen (right), vie for the ball, during the English Premier League soccer match between Crystal Palace and Chelsea, at Selhurst Park, in London. (AP)

Eriksson granted wish to take charge of Liverpool

## Man Utd and Ratcliffe get Premier League approval over deal to buy 25% of the club

MANCHESTER, England, Feb 13, (AP): The Premier League has approved Jim Ratcliffe's proposed bid to buy a minority stake in Manchester United, the club said.

In a filing to the Securities and Exchange Commission on Monday, United said it had already been granted approval under its rules over who is allowed to be an owner or director of a soccer club. It also said it expected clearance from the Football Association as British billionaire Ratcliffe closes in on completion of his deal to buy 25% of the club.

League rules disqualify people from becoming owners or directors for reasons such as criminal convictions, sporting bans or involvement in other clubs.

Ratcliffe is one of Britain's richest people and the owner of petrochemicals giant INEOS. He agreed a deal to buy a stake in United in December and on Monday the deadline for completion was extended from Feb. 14 to Feb. 17.

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As part of the deal, Ratcliffe's INEOS Sport division will take over control of United's soccer operation after more than a decade since it won the Premier League title and consistent decline in its on-field performance.

The 71-year-old Ratcliffe was a boyhood United fan and last month described his proposed investment as the most exciting deal he has in his career.

"I have done a few exciting things, but there is no question (about that)," he said.

Ratcliffe has paid \$1.3 billion for "up to 25%" of the club and will invest a further \$300 million for "future investment into Old Trafford," United has said.

Ratcliffe will provide \$200 million upon completion of the deal and a further \$100 million by the end of 2024. That additional investment will eventually take Ratcliffe's stake up to 29%. Owners, the Glazer fam-



Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes (left) and Aston Villa's Matty Cash vie for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Aston Villa and Manchester United at the Villa Park stadium in Birmingham, England. (AP)

ily, will have a 49% stake under the deal.

Under the filing, more details were provided about Ratcliffe's personal wealth which said his "liquid assets (primarily consisting of cash and readily marketable securities) were in excess of \$4 billion."

It said his net worth was "significantly in excess of those liquid assets."

Shareholders must respond before 23:59 ET to tender their shares, United said.

Sven-Goran Eriksson will finally get his chance to take charge of Liverpool.

The Swedish coach, who is a Liverpool fan and has said his wish has always been to manage the English club, revealed last month that he has cancer and might have less than a year to live.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp responded by offering Eriksson, who coached England from 2001-06, the

opportunity to come over and help coach his team in a training session, use his office and "have a few great hours together."

Now Liverpool has announced that Eriksson will be part of the management team for a "Legends" charity match against Ajax at Anfield on March 23. Eriksson will be in the dugout alongside Liverpool greats such as Ian Rush and t, the club said on Tuesday.

"All connected with the club and LFC Foundation look forward to warmly welcoming LFC fan Sven and his family to Anfield - and seeing him in the dugout on the day - for a fantastic fundraising occasion," Liverpool said.

Eriksson, who turned 76 last week, said he has pancreatic cancer and that it is inoperable.

He was England's first ever foreign-born coach, after making his name winning league titles at club level with Lazio in Italy, Benfica in Portugal and IFK Gothenburg in his native Sweden.