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Amir dissolves parliament by decree

'Constitutional breach'

Consumer Protection calls for action

Commerce ensures price stability before Ramadan

Day by Day

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

Digital deceit triggers alarm

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: An Amiri decree was issued on Thursday dissolving the National Assembly, citing the parliament's violation of the Constitution.

The decree, which cited Article 107 of the Constitution, said the National Assembly had violated the Constitution within the context of using improper terms in addressing His Highness the Amir.

It added that the Prime Minister, Ministers and other concerned parties must implement this decree, effective as of the time of its issuance. It is to be published in the official Gazette.

Article 107 states the Amir may dissolve the National Assembly by a decree in which the reasons for dissolution shall be indicated.

Earlier, MP Dr Abdul Karim Al-Kandari has asked Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah about the opening of the visa for joining a family.

The lawmaker stated in his query: "The State is keen on setting conditions and regulations in accordance with well-studied short and long-term plans aimed at attracting competent and expert foreign manpower, while combating the localization of ineffective or marginal workers and illegal over time. This is based on the idea that family stability for expatriates is a guarantee of attracting competencies that the State needs, as well as the necessity to provide psychological stability which helps increase the efficiency of individuals. These decisions were taken after laying down plans and carrying out studies to control the demographic structure in order to estimate the number of expatriates who will enter the country, and will benefit from the subsidies disbursed by the State and the services it provides to everyone, in addition to the impact of all of this on the State budget, along with a study on the financial and economic returns deemed beneficial for the country."

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KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: Mishal Al-Mana, the head of the Consumer Protection Association, has sounded the alarm on the rising incidence of electronic commercial fraud, particularly via social media platforms like Instagram.

Al-Mana revealed that his organization receives approximately two thousand complaints annually, with an average of 4 to 6 daily complaints from consumers who have fallen victim to various forms of commercial fraud on Instagram.

Speaking after the first meetings of the newly formed Consumer Protection Committee, Al-Mana emphasized the urgency of completing the preparation of the electronic commerce law. This law aims to address and prevent consumers from falling prey to fake business accounts and websites. He stressed the need to raise awareness and implement protective measures to combat this growing threat.

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By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: The management of the technical staff of the Advisory Committee for Supervising Commodities and determining their prices at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has secured pledges from date shops and mills to maintain the prices of 11 essential food commodities before and after the month of Ramadan.

During an inspection tour conducted by the price monitoring

team for the month of Ramadan in the Shuwaikh area, pledges were obtained from workers in date shops and mills to uphold the prices of various items, including dates, coffee, cardamom, and saffron. This initiative aims to ensure price stability and affordability for consumers during the upcoming holy month.

The monitoring team, established in accordance with Administrative Resolution No. (108) of 2024, is tasked with overseeing

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THE notion that "all trains return to their same stations" can indeed be interpreted as a philosophical perspective on life. It suggests that there are no truly missed opportunities because circumstances often cycle back around, providing second chances or alternative paths to success. Everything you missed was not yours, and you did not fail, even if you worked hard. Failure is only a temporary defeat, and it creates a lot of opportunities for you, all or some of them are successful.

This viewpoint encourages individuals not to dwell on perceived failures or setbacks but to instead remain optimistic and resilient. It implies that even if something didn't work out initially, it doesn't mean it won't ever work out in the future. ... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, takes part in a group photo at a ceremony hosted by the Public Authority for Sport to recognize and honor Kuwaiti athletes. — See Page 16

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired on Thursday a border demarcation committee meeting held at the Ministry Headquarters, where the most prominent topics related to the work of the committee were discussed. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The Qurain plastic art exhibition, one of the main activities of the 29th Qurain Cultural Festival, kicked off Wednesday, with the participation of 62 Kuwaiti artists.

Musaed Al-Zamel, assistant secretary general for arts sector at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL), said it is the most important activity of the Qurain festival, referring to declaring the winners of creative Isa Al-Sager award given to 10 participants in this exhibition.

He pointed out that the one-week show features artists, professors and talented youngsters.

For his part, **Duajj Al-Ghownaim,** an NCCAL official, said the event includes varied creative visions and experiences from 62 Kuwaiti male and female artists in different plastic arts fields. (KUNA)

JEDDAH: Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) **Hissein Taha** and Iranian Foreign Minister **Hossein Amir-Abdollahian** discussed by phone on Thursday the current situation in Gaza.

Both sides addressed the continuation of the Israeli military aggression against the Gaza Strip and the threats to expand to Rafah, said an OIC statement.

They also stressed the need to continue and intensify political efforts to halt the Israeli military aggression and to ensure humanitarian assistance to all parts of the Gaza Strip, particularly the northern parts, where the civilian population is facing the danger of famine. (KUNA)

DOHA: The Amir of Qatar Sheikh **Tamin bin Hamad Al Thani** on Thursday held talks with Indian Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** on various common issues, Amiri Diwan said in a statement.

The two sides discussed areas of cooperation between the two countries, especially in the economic, investment, development and energy fields, according to the statement.

They also exchanged views on key regional and international issues of common concern, it added. (KUNA)

ISTANBUL: Turkish rescue teams in NW Türkiye are working to recover the crew of a sunken cargo ship (BATUHAN) in the Sea of Marmara, Türkiye's Anadolu news agency reported.

Rescue speedboats were also urgently sent to the scene to rescue the 69-meter-long ship descended beneath the waves, according to the agency.

Governor of Bursa **Mahmut Demirtas** said in a press statement that "Intensive efforts are underway to rescue the crew of six people, believed to be Turkish nationals." (KUNA)

Course enhances anti-human trafficking strategy

Kuwait and IOM fortify expat worker protection

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: Director General of the General Department of Training at the Ministry of Interior Brigadier General Abdul Qader Ahmed Al-Shaaban has stressed the importance of the role of the International Organization for Migration in preserving the rights of expatriate workers.

He said this in a press statement issued on the sidelines of the conclusion of a five-day training course titled "Criminal and electronic investigations into cases of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants" organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) - the United Nations migration agency in Kuwait - in partnership with the Ministry of Interior.

Brigadier General Al-Shaaban highlighted the establishment of the organization's office in the State of Kuwait in 1991 and Kuwait's accession as an active member to IOM in 2017.

He revealed that Kuwait hosts about 60 to 70 percent of expatriate contractual workers of various nationalities on its soil.

Brigadier General Al-Shaaban affirmed the keenness of the General Department of Training in the Ministry of Interior to organize workshops and training courses with the concerned local and international authorities for officers of various ranks in the Ministry of Interior in order to acquaint them accurately with the rights of expatriate workers and their duties towards them.

He explained that the training course organized by the General Department of Training at the Ministry of Interior, with the cooperation of the United Nations Migration Organization in Kuwait, took place during the period from February 11 to 15. It was aimed to enhance the capabilities of police officers in confronting the crime of human trafficking. A total of 30 officers of the Ministry of Interior from various departments participated.

Brigadier General Al-Shaaban recalled the efforts of the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah the Humanitarian Leader, his prominent international role in preserving the dignity of everyone living on the land of Kuwait, and his emphasis on treating expatriates well, preserving their rights and duties, and giving them the opportunity to work comfortably within the country.

He concluded by revealing that several more training courses and



Minister of Information and Culture - Abdul-Rahman Al-Mutairi, participates in the Expo 965 at Palestine Secondary School in Al-Rumaithia, Kuwait.

Minister Al-Mutairi highlights heritage conservation at Expo 965

Kuwait's Minister of Information and Culture Abdul-Rahman Al-Mutairi has said the Expo 965 helps fostering national and Gulf skills in the field of heritage conservation.

The annual event kept gaining eminence and distinction over the past years as it coincides with preparation for the national days' celebrations, he said.

The Minister, a co-sponsor of the expo, noted that the event is themed this year "feast, homeland and heritage, voicing hope that Kuwait will continue to enjoy peace, security and prosperity under the wise leadership of His

Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. "A galaxy of creative talent from the sons of Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf will be honored at the Expo, which signals care for investment in human capital in our countries and interest in human development," Al-Mutairi said.

"Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) is keen on creating suitable environment for skilled youths from both genders to improve their capacities and promote development in Kuwait in collaboration with the state institutions and non-government agencies," he

affirmed. The minister congratulated the honored youths and thanked the team of, and the participants in, the three-day Expo which opened yesterday.

The Expo, is being held at Palestine secondary school in Al-Rumaithia area under joint patronage of Al-Mutairi; Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, and Acting Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Feras Al-Sabah; and Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Adel Muhammad Abdullah Al-Adwani. (KUNA)

events will be held for national cadres in the ministry in parallel with the developments occurring in the labor and immigration laws in the State of Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Head of the IOM's mission in Kuwait Mazen Abu Al-Hassan said, "Preventing human trafficking, protecting and assisting victims, and prosecuting perpetrators are essential elements for combating human trafficking."

In a speech he delivered at the conclusion of the session, he stressed that IOM is proud of its long-term partnership with the Ministry of Interior through a series of workshops conducted in cooperation with the ministry over the years.

Abu Al-Hassan explained that the topics covered during the training included indicators for identifying cases of human trafficking,

national legislation related to human trafficking and international agreements, using information technology for investigating cases of human trafficking, identifying symptoms associated with psychological trauma for victims of trafficking, and establishing strategies for conducting interviews with victims and suspects.

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'Allow aid'

Kuwait condemns Israeli aggression

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15, (Agencies): Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah renewed Kuwait's condemnation and rejection of the Israeli occupation's continued aggression on Gaza Strip, reiterating call for the international community and UN Security Council to fulfil its obligations in this matter.

This came during Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah's speech Thursday on behalf of Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, sponsor of the regional conference "Arab Women, Peace and Security", organized by the Kuwaiti Federation of Women's Associations in cooperation with the Arab Women's Organization affiliated with the Arab League.

The deputy minister called upon the international community to allow humanitarian aid to enter Gaza without obstacles and provide protection for defenseless Palestinians, as well holding Israel accountable for violating the international law and put a stop to it.

He explained that women were and still are the first victims of wars, conflicts and security, social, economic and political unrest, but they have proven their ability to withstand and face difficulties, stressing the importance of governmental and nongovernmental organizations' support for women issues.

Women empowerment policies in various fields have a direct impact on stability and security in the Arab world, he added, which prompts the need for concerted efforts to strengthen state policies in empowerment, especially at an economic and social levels, and boost their rights in the decision-making process.

He pointed out that despite challenges facing women in the Arab world; they were able to earn many of their civil, political and economic rights, stressing confidence that this conference will achieve more goals and objectives aimed at promoting women's rights.

He stressed Kuwait keenness, since its establishment of legislative foundations of the state, to preserve women's rights and support them, pointing out that the Constitution guaranteed the rights of Kuwaiti women in Article 29, which emphasized equality between men and women.

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Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:08 Asr 15:13
Sunrise... 06:28 Maghrib .. 17:37
Zohr 12:02 Isha 18:55

Local

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

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather hot and partly cloudy with moderate to fresh southeasterly wind to southwesterly wind, with speeds of 18-55 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

By Night: Rather cold, colds will decrease and chance of rain will decrease gradually with decrease gradually with light to moderate freshening at times southerly wind changing to northwesterly wind, with speeds of 15-40 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	27	20
Kuwait Airport	28	19
Abdaly	28	19
Jahra	28	19
Salmiyah	23	18
Nuwaisib	28	19
Wafra	29	18

'Diplomatic passports, officials to be exempt from visas soon'

Gov't eager to facilitate Kuwaitis' travel to Japan: Envoy Yasunari

By Ahmad Al-Hamili and Ahmad Al-Hudaibei

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15, (KUNA): The Japanese government is looking to facilitate travel of Kuwaitis to Japan, taking several measures to realize this goal, said Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait Morino Yasunari on Wednesday.

"What we are now trying to do, is to exempt the Kuwaiti people who hold official and diplomatic passports from visas... We have already reached an agreement in principle with the Kuwaiti government and we are waiting for (the) final procedure," Ambassador Morino told KUNA on the sideline of the embassy's reception commemorating the birthday of the Emperor of Japan.



Yasunari

Asked if tourism visa would follow the approval of official and diplomatic passports, Ambassador Morino stated, "Of course that would be the next step, we will consult with the Kuwaiti government how to facilitate the peoples movement".

"Many Kuwaiti tourists have visited Japan for the past year (more than 5,000); there have been more exchanges of students," said the Ambassador in a speech during the reception.

The event was attended by guest of honor Kuwaiti Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, scores of diplomats, media, and other attendees.

During his speech, Ambassador Morino lauded the longstanding relations between Kuwait and Japan.

"We are confident that Kuwait will attain further development and prosperity under the excellent guidance and wisdom of the respected leaders," said Ambassador Morino who expressed "sincere congratulations" to His Highness the Amir Sheikh

Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Salem Al-Sabah on their assumption to posts.

He noted that Japan would also like to attract foreign investments from all over the world, including Kuwait.

"Japan upholds free and open economic order under the well-established rule of law, which provide stable, secure and predictable business environment."

"We are proud of our high-quality human capital and competitive R&D. Japan is aiming to reach 100 trillion yen (about 670 billion USD) as the investment balance in 2030," the envoy clarified.

Ambassador Morino expressed special thanks for all encouraging messages received from the Kuwaiti government, citizens, and many members of the diplomatic corps in the wake of the earthquake that hit the norther region of Japan on January first.

Touching on the current regional and global situation, Ambassador Morino indicated that "Looking upon the condition of the world, many people suffer from very challenging situation in various parts of the world, especially in Gaza and Ukraine."

"The Embassy would like to work closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government offices of Kuwait as well as various organizations and individuals to enhance collaboration between our two countries for peace, prosperity and a better world," he added.

Touching on cultural ties, Ambassador Morino said that "Japanese anime (cartoons) has gained wider currency in this country."

"Japanese voice actors and musicians visited Kuwait to join anime-related events. This year such interactions between the two countries are expected to be further deepened and expanded," he said.

The Japanese Ambassador affirmed, "cultural exchanges are not only important for friendship and mutual understanding, but also can inspire further development of the respective cultures."



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Ambassador to Tunisia Mansour Al-Omar, Tunisian Minister of Finance Sihem Boughdiri and Minister of Family, Women, Children and Seniors Affairs Amel Moussa and other officials at the cake-cutting ceremony.

Kuwait Embassy in Tunisia celebrates National Days

Kuwait's Embassy in Tunis celebrated National and Liberation Days on Wednesday. The event saw the presence of Tunisian Minister of Finance Sihem Boughdiri and Minister of Family, Women, Children and Seniors Affairs Amel Moussa.

In a press release, Boughdiri expressed happiness for witnessing Kuwait's celebrations, praising the strong and historical ties between the two countries and their bilateral relation in various fields.

In a similar statement, Moussa wished Kuwait further progress,

praising Kuwaiti-Tunisian relation and cooperation in various fields since the 1970s.

Kuwait's Ambassador to Tunisia Mansour Al-Omar and the embassy's diplomats celebrated Kuwait's 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day, as Al-Omar congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people on the happy occasions. (KUNA)

Work hours cut to 4, grace period decided during month of Ramadan

'ECMO' saves lives of hundreds

3-day confab on 'ECLS' launched

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: Head of the Council of Anesthesia, Intensive Care and Pain Management Departments at the Ministry of Health Dr. Huda Al-Foudari announced the launch of the three-day conference "Extracorporeal Life Support" (ECLS) for the countries of Southwest Asia and Africa today under the patronage of the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel.

Dr. Al-Foudari explained that the State of Kuwait is hosting this global conference for the first time due to the great status enjoyed by the health sector, and through the distinguished external life support centers "ECMO" in the Ministry of Health, which are accredited by the World Health Organization.

ECMO is considered one of the advanced services provided to patients with acute respiratory and cardiac failure in intensive care, and gives critically ill patients a chance of survival.

The lives of more than 500 patients have been saved through ECMO over the previous years since the service began in the

State of Kuwait in a systematic manner in 2017.

The conference will be held under the title of "Crossing Boundaries" and will involve discussions on many topics related to extracorporeal life support through more than 120 lectures.

It will be presented by 80 lecturers who are experts and consultants in the field of intensive care for adults and children in the world, specifically extracorporeal life support.

Seven workshops were held on the sidelines of the conference on caring for adult and pediatric ECMO patients, and dealing with urgent cases through the simulation system. Through it, more than 120 multidisciplinary medical teams will be trained to care for ECMO patients, at the hands of the organization's experts and local trainers affiliated with the ECMO training center at Adan Hospital, which is accredited by the organization.

Dr. Al-Foudari affirmed that there is a great demand for registration for the conference from all countries of the world, as the lectures will be broadcast live, allowing virtual attendance, which will facilitate the process of disseminating special knowledge in this field.

LuLu Hypermarket marks National, Liberation Days with artistic display

KUWAIT CITY Feb 15: LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, has become a household name when it comes to buying quality products at competitive prices. The brand is also known for its amazing promotions throughout the year that offer customers astounding discounts and attractive prizes. The hypermarket has also been in the forefront when it comes to holding celebrations to mark community festivals and commemorate national events.

The brand's celebration of Kuwait's National Day and Liberation Day on 25th and 26th February each year is an event the shoppers look forward to, not only for the incredible offers that await them on these national holidays but also for the innovative manner and unique style with which these events are celebrated at the hypermarket annually.

This year, as part of celebrations to mark Kuwait's 63rd anniversary of National Day and the 33rd anniversary of Liberation Day, LuLu Hypermarket is displaying an astonishing demonstration of artistic creativity and dexterity at its Al-Qurain outlet. Creative craftspeople at LuLu Hypermarket

have created a replica of the iconic Kuwait Towers using only tetra packs of milk and fruit juices.

The towering display, made from more than 17,000 individual milk and fruit juice packets, sourced from local firm Kuwait Danish Dairy (KDD), are stacked and balanced one above the other to reach a height of over six meters.

The decision to use Kuwait Towers as the model for the breathtaking display was not an accidental choice. The hypermarket wanted to recreate a Kuwaiti landmark that best represented the country's independence and the free-spirit of its people. And when it came to these two attributes there was no better choice than the three structures that together constitute the Kuwait Towers.

Tens of thousands of shoppers and visitors are reportedly heading to the Al-Qurain branch of the hypermarket daily to witness this stunning display of creative ingenuity and to pose for 'selfies' in front of the artistic creation. LuLu Hypermarket, which has long prided itself on offering customers an exciting shopping experience has certainly outdone itself this time with this dramatic display.



A replica of Kuwait Towers made out of milk and fruit juice packets on display.



KUNA photo
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait Morino Yasunari at the cake-cutting ceremony.

HH Amir, HH PM congratulate Serbia

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Thursday a cable of congratulations to President of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic on the occasion of his country's National Day.

His Highness the Amir wished the president good health and the Re-

public of Serbia further progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah also sent Thursday a cable of congratulations to President of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic on the occasion of his country's National Day.

Deal to include testing, calibration labs

MPW, GAC ink cooperation MoU

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: The Ministry of Public Works and the Gulf Accreditation Center (GAC) signed a memorandum of understanding, which included areas of cooperation, the obligations of both parties, and the governance of cooperation between them. This comes in a step towards strengthening the capabilities of the Government Center for Testing, Quality Control and Research.

The MoU was signed by acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Works Eid Al-Rashidi, and a representative of the Gulf Accreditation Center Miteb bin Saeed Al-Mizani in the presence of the Acting Undersecretary for the Government Center Affairs Eng. Iman Al-Omar.

The Ministry of Public Works explained that the first article, related to areas of cooperation, included the keenness of both parties to activate cooperation in all the specializations of the Gulf Accreditation Center according to the need of the Ministry of Public Works in the field of accreditation and confirmation of competence, provided that this includes testing and calibration laboratories operating in any of the conformity assessment areas determined by the Ministry of Public Works in accordance with the international standard ISO/IEC 17025.

The inspection authorities working in any of the fields under the memorandum will evaluate the conformity determined by the ministry in accordance with the international standard ISO/IEC 17020.



KUNA photo
Dr. Fatma Al-Salem with the Canadian envoy.

KUNA chief & envoys discuss media co-op

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15, (KUNA): Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr. Fatma Al-Salem held separate meetings with foreign Ambassadors, discussing ways to boost media cooperation.

During her meetings with South Korean Ambassador to Kuwait Chung Byung-ha and Canadian Ambassador Aliya Mawani at KUNA's headquarters, Dr. Al-Salem affirmed the agency's interest to boost cooperation with media entities in both respective countries. The cooperation would build bridges of mutual understand and bring people in the world together, she affirmed.

On his part, the South Korean Ambassador commended the deep-rooted relations with the State of Kuwait, pointing out that this year coincided with the 60th anniversary of the first shipment of oil from Kuwait to Korea.

'Excellent work bonus sanctioned'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: The Financial and Administrative Affairs Sector in the Civil Service Commission (CSC) has completed the review of the employees' performance evaluation for the year 2023, reports Al-Anba daily.

Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Administrative Affairs Salah Khaled Al-Saqabi revealed that the excellent job performance bonus will be disbursed to the deserving employees during Ramadan, affirming the bonus is included in the budget for fiscal 2023/2024.

He stated that most ministries, public institutions and government agencies have completed the review of employees' performance evaluation reports, while stressing the need for all these entities to complete the review before the new budget year begins on April 1.

Agreement

Meanwhile, sources told the daily that an agreement has been reached to reduce the working hours to four during Ramadan for women who will also be given two grace periods -- 15 minutes in the morning and another 15 minutes at the end of the working day; meaning, they can arrive 15 minutes late and leave 15 minutes early. The working hours for men will be four hours and 15 minutes with only one grace period -- 15 minutes in the morning.

Sources clarified each government agency will be given the freedom to choose appropriate work hours and shifts, taking into account the working hours that will be approved by the Civil Service Commission (CSC). Sources said the agreement includes retaining the grace period of 15 minutes in the morning for all employees, so those who report for work on time could leave 15 minutes early, while the number of hours of permitted partial absence during the holy month is two hours maximum and one hour minimum.

Asked if the working hours will be flexible or in shifts, sources disclosed the discussion focused on flexible working hours; such that the employees has the opportunity to prove attendance within an hour or two. They confirmed that the flexible working hours system has been proven to have reduced tardiness among employees, adding that the three-shift system was implementing in Ramadan 2023.

Iftar banquets allowed in mosques courtyards

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs recently issued a decision on allowing Iftar banquets in the courtyards of mosques in accordance with the regulations -- the most important of which is the requirement for the organizer of the banquet to submit an official letter to the department in charge of managing mosques in each governorate to obtain approval after coordinating with the Imam of the mosque, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decision, which is included in the circular of Assistant Undersecretary for the Mosques Sector Badr Al-Otaibi to the directors of mosque departments in the governorates, stipulates allowing Iftar banquets in the courtyards of the mosques. It also allows setting up tables for the banquet half an hour before the call for prayer and removal of the tables immediately after prayer.

While the circular put responsibility for the Iftar banquets on the shoulders of those in charge of the Iftar project under the supervision of the Imam of the concerned mosque; it prohibits the establishment of Ramadan tents in the premises of mosques, in addition to the total ban on connecting the mosque's electricity to the Ramadan tents close to the walls of the mosque in order to protect the health and ensure the safety of worshippers. It also clarified that these tents are not subject to the supervision of the ministry.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Opposition to removal of parts of MP's slurs unconstitutional

"IN THE 1996 Assembly, I had submitted a proposal to amend the National Assembly's internal regulations law stipulating, 'Public sessions shall be broadcast via audio and video broadcast (television) on the same day unless the Speaker of the National Assembly decides without discussion to prevent the broadcast of some of what was discussed therein', and the Assembly approved it, despite refusal from the opposition," columnist **Ahmad Yaqoub Baqer**, wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"The government returned it by decree, and the Council did not succeed in obtaining two-thirds of the votes in the same session, and it was voted on in the next session, and it obtained the majority in accordance with the constitution, so it was approved and Law No. 73 of 1998 was published, and it was added to the list with No. 69.



Ahmad Baqer

"I was precise in drafting this law, by stipulating that it would be broadcast on the same day and not directly, so that the president could delete everything that violates the constitution and the regulations, because some MPs sometimes make mistakes, and their words affect the dignity of people or violate the constitution or the law, and all of that is limited to the law of the regulations.

"In the last session of the Parliament, MP Abdul Karim Al-Kandari objected to the removal of his speech from radio and television, so the Speaker read the text of this article, and explained to him that the Speaker's authority is to remove it without discussion before showing it on television, and Al-Sa'adoun was correct in that.

"Al-Sa'adoun also had the right to delete Al-Kandari's speech in response to the Amir's speech from the register, but unfortunately this deletion was presented to the Council at the request of the representative, and 44 members voted against the deletion, in a clear constitutional violation, as it is not constitutionally permissible because it violates Article 54 of the Constitution, and the expungement may not be put to a vote.

"This is a greater constitutional mistake that the president bears as well as the 44 members who did not agree to the expungement. The representatives should have distinguished between the sublime speech and the princely speech, as the latter is delivered by the prime minister and expresses the government's directions and is subject to discussion and disagreement, while the sublime speech is specific to the Amir, and it is not permissible to discuss or object to it.

"I now see that the President and the Council corrected this mistake, and deleted the phrases responding to His Highness the Amir from the record, and God knows best."

Also:

"The threats and intimidation of some MPs, and the sit-in of teachers, are these considered a healthy phenomenon or a rope that pulls us back?" columnist **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"If everyone had self-responsibility for work, an active and alert conscience for everyone, and sincere and honest self-giving at the same level, and we should not forget fair follow-up, reward and punishment, we would not need any automatic control system, and the Ministry of Education or others would not need to impose this system.

"This is our government's first test of how to deal with this type of parliamentary threat, and the way in which some MPs deal with it as an excuse to flex their muscles, far from logical and scientific propositions and the method of expressing this opinion.

"By what right can someone issue a threat without having a logical reason based on confirmed and established information, and there is no room to deny, refute, or even question it, or that this has become an easy and successful way to subjugate the government and pressure ministers and officials to retract correct decisions that are in the interest of work and the nation?"

"Unfortunately, some MPs succeeded in this method, due to the weakness of some ministers and officials, the weakness of the government in general, its hesitation and fear of confrontation, its inability to deal with loud voices, and the decline in the style of communication and dialogue among some representatives, unfortunately."

"The fingerprint system, regardless of whether it is useful or not, is a system that has been applied to many areas of work to control attendance, as the law stipulates, to ensure that work begins on time. I personally believe that work and production are more important than just showing up and drinking tea and coffee.

"But what prevents them from being disciplined in attendance and achievement as well and commitment to work and production. Why protest against a law pending the completion of certain studies, for example? What is this study?"

"They applied the law like others (90,000 teachers who applied the fingerprint) and resumed their work. If, for example, the fingerprint was proven to be useless, the situation can be modified according to work requirements, and everyone is committed to attending and leaving at the specified times without production or achievement.

"But for the issue to be rejected immediately, and crowds of teachers gathering, led by MPs threatening interrogations and accountability, this is a surprising fact, in a country that is supposed to have begun reform steps in the areas of life and work in it.

"The logic of rejecting fingerprinting in the Ministry of Education will easily apply to the rest of the ministries, because each ministry has its own specificity and different nature, and then the word 'wax me' will be raised to demand reciprocal treatment.

"The 'urgent' order is to apply fingerprint attendance, which is the argument stated by the protesters and the MPs who agree with them, is only an excuse because the basic intention is a complete rejection of the obligation to fingerprint attendance system when the work begins and ends."



"Office of the Vision Realization Authority ... The government has adopted and approved the 'Kuwait Vision 2035' since 2014. It is such an alluring and beautiful title. Great hopes were pinned on this vision, but it faltered for multiple reasons, and the number of obstacles is such that there is no room to mention all of them," Major General **Faissal Al-Jazzaf** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"A friend told me that he submitted a project for the renovation of hospitals in a neighboring country. He was invited to a meeting with the medical team there. He attended as per the schedule and found more than 20 people gathered around the meeting table, including a high-ranking official, and that office had a 'Vision Realization Authority'.

"The medical and financial aspects, the rate of change and the desired results were discussed. In the second part of the meeting, he visited all the areas where the health facilities need renovation, accompanied by the Ministry of Health officials. Other procedures followed ending with what my friend said.

"What is this office? It consists of a group of experts in different fields -- scientific, medical, services, etc., and there is a group of financial observers for approving tenders once the committee approves the project. Therefore, any project that the State agencies submit to this office -- whatever the type -- does not stay there for more than two months. The project is put forward for implementation immediately after obtaining approval from the decision-makers.

"The aim of this model is to remove suspicion on government agency officials that they are biased in selecting companies before issuing a tender. It also achieves governance, transparency and speedy implementation, away from any interference or pressure to obtain projects.

"It has become necessary to adopt such a distinctive model in accordance with the desire to break the stagnation in the implementation of projects. This will achieve the highest degree of integrity towards the realization of the vision and ensure its success. This will turn the page on stagnation, delay and corruption in order to catch up with the time of change in the development process.

"We ask Allah to protect Kuwait and its people, and that we will soon see a beautiful and prosperous Kuwait overcoming all negatives under the leadership of His Highness the Amir, may Allah protect him, and for His Highness the Prime Minister to be entrusted with the realization of 'Kuwait Vision 2035'.

"May Allah have mercy on our righteous martyrs."



— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

Minister refers alleged funds crimes for probe

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15, (KUNA): Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Youssef Saud Al-Sabah has referred the suspected crimes related to public funds, money laundering and financial disclosure to Public Prosecution.



Sheikh Fahad

The move was taken in line with findings of the final report provided by the team formed under the Cabinet's resolution No. 830/2023, the Ministry of Defense said in a statement of which KUNA obtained a copy.

Launched by late Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the step came to complete taking actions against crimes of public funds and enhance transparency, as well as cementing justice and neutrality, it noted.

It also aims to materialize the Amiri speech regarding taking all legal measures to protect public and ministry funds, it concluded.



One of the motorists attacking the other.

Two held for head-butts, fisticuffs on public road

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: According to a security source, two expatriates were apprehended by Hawalli security personnel after engaging in a physical altercation, exchanging head-butts and punches in a public street. A video capturing the altercation was widely circulated on social media platforms, depicting the two individuals involved in the heated exchange, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The source revealed that the incident originated from a dispute between a taxi driver and another individual operating a four-wheeler on the public road. The disagreement escalated into a verbal altercation, culminating in both parties exiting their vehicles and resorting to physical violence.



Raids in Al-Rai: In collaboration with the Kuwait Municipality, the General Traffic Department recently conducted a comprehensive inspection campaign targeting workshops, garages, and craftsmen situated in the Capital Governorate's Al-Rai area, reports **Al-Anba** daily. The operation resulted in the issuance of 90 traffic violations encompassing various infractions. Additionally, two vehicles were impounded due to violations such as exceeding height regulations and paint damage, as well as possessing expired insurance and licenses. Moreover, Kuwait Municipality addressed 18 cases of abandoned vehicles, taking appropriate action against them.

Mystery dug out

Video cams 'destroyed' by owner's son – report

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: In a peculiar turn of events, detectives have unraveled the mystery behind the deliberate destruction of external CCTV cameras at a family's residence. The incident stemmed from complaints by neighbors alleging that the father of the household was covertly monitoring them through the cameras. What makes this story particularly intriguing is that initially, a case was filed against an unidentified perpetrator. However, with the persistence of the father, who lodged an official report seeking to unveil the culprit responsible for damaging the cameras, detectives were prompted to delve deeper into the matter, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The saga began when a concerned citizen, born in 1972, approached the Abdullah and Ali Sabah Al-Salem Port police station to report the deliberate vandalism of a surveillance camera by an unknown individual. The case, registered as No. 92/2024, was initially categorized as a misdemeanor and subsequently referred for investigation. As detectives probed further, they uncovered a surprising revelation—the perpetrator turned out to be none other than the 28-year-old son of the complainant.

During interrogation, the son disclosed his motivation for his actions, citing numerous complaints from neighbors alleging his father's intrusive surveillance activities. According to him, these complaints were fueled by suspicions of his father suffering from psychological disorders. With this revelation, the case was swiftly concluded, and the perpetrator was apprehended, closing the chapter on the puzzling incident.



Man dies in machine: Tragedy struck in Barr Al-Salmi when a person became ensnared within a plowing machine, leading to their demise.

Emergency responders from Al-Shaqaya Center swiftly responded to the distress call on Wednesday. They promptly intervened to extricate the individual from the machinery, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Despite their efforts, the victim succumbed to their injuries. Following the incident, the area was turned over to the appropriate authorities for further investigation and handling.



Kuwaiti fish for sale at a stall in Souq Sharq fish market.

Zubaidi, shrimp cheaper in Qatar

Big gap in Kuwait, Gulf fish rates

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: During the first nine months of last year, Kuwait witnessed the sale of approximately 2,000 tons of local fish, amounting to over 4.69 million dinars in value, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Data from the Central Administration of Statistics reveals fluctuations in fish sales throughout the year. In the first quarter of 2023, sales amounted to about 732.8 tons, valued at 1.64 billion dinars. However, sales dipped by 43.4 percent in the second quarter, totaling 399.26 tons with a value of 927.8 million dinars. Subsequently, sales rebounded in the third quarter, reaching 866.7 tons valued at 2.12 billion dinars.

Fish prices in Kuwait experienced a notable increase compared to 2022. The price per kilogram of Zubaidi rose by 2.8

percent, reaching 10.5 dinars, while shrimp prices surged by 15.5 percent to 1.88 dinars per kilogram and the prices of shari and subaiti increased by 19 percent and 21.6 percent, respectively.

Comparisons with other Gulf markets revealed significant price disparities. For instance, the price of Zubaidi in Kuwait is approximately 2 percent higher than in Bahrain but 385 percent higher than in Qatar. Similarly, the price of shrimp in Kuwait is higher compared to Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar.

These statistics underscore a considerable gap between fish prices in Kuwait and those in neighboring Gulf markets, with Kuwaiti prices being notably higher across various fish species.

Salary cut warned if 'biometrics' ignored

Flexible school hours begin

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: From today, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is implementing on experimental basis a mechanism for flexible school hours across all types of schools, including general education, Arab private, religious education, and special education institutions, reports Al-Rai daily.

Under this new system, kindergartens and special education schools will operate for 5 hours per day, while other stages will have a 6-hour schedule, inclusive of a 45-minute grace period.

Additionally, the Ministry has announced the mandatory implementation of fingerprint registration for all employees, including teachers and administrators. According to sources, failure to comply with this requirement within a week will result in the suspension of salary without prior notice.

Emphasized

The Ministry has emphasized that all school administrations are responsible for ensuring that their employees register their fingerprints. Legal measures will be taken to halt salary disbursement for those who fail to comply.

The Ministry has urged all teachers and administrators to promptly register their fingerprints to avoid facing legal repercussions, stressing that this measure applies to all employees without exceptions.

Flexible working hours at all stages
Kindergarten -- starting from 6:45 until 7:30 in the morning; the end is from 11:45 to 12:30 pm

Primary education -- starting from 6:45 until 7:30 in the morning; the end is from

Hunt for motorist

Cop hurt in accident

By Munaif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: A police officer working in a rescue patrol team sustained various injuries when he was hit by a speeding vehicle while he was dealing with an accident in Sabahiya.

According to security sources, the police officer was dealing with a collision of two vehicles in Sabahiya when the speeding vehicle ran over him. He was referred to Adan Hospital. Investigations have been launched to find the motorist.



Registration soon: The Ministry of Interior is planning to open the door to register the children of Gulf Kuwaiti women with the rank of police officer, batch 12, with registration likely to begin next week.

According to security sources, the course will be allocated for motorbike riders at the General Traffic Department, with registration being open for April.

12:45 to 1:30 pm

Intermediate school -- starting from 6:55 until 7:40 am; the end is from 12:55 to 1:40 pm

High school -- starting from 7:10 until 7:55 am; the end is from 1:10 to 1:55 pm

Special Education -- starting from 6:45 until 7:30 in the morning; the end is from 11:45 to 12:30 pm

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Acquittal of top officials upheld

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: In the case of forgery of the Amiri Diwan letter in the Army Fund case, the Court of Cassation rejected the Public Prosecution's appeal and upheld the acquittal of Mubarak Al-Faisal Al-Sabah, Ali Al-Jarrah, and Salah Al-Musaad.

Earlier, the Court of Appeals had upheld the Criminal Court's ruling which acquitted Mubarak Al-Faisal Al-Sabah, Ali Al-Jarrah, and Salah Al-Massad in the case of forging the Army Fund letter.

The Public Prosecution had charged the defendants with committing, by means of agreement and assistance, the forgery of an official document that was dated March 31, 2021, during the period from March 31, 2021 to June 23, 2021 at the Criminal

Investigation Department in the State of Kuwait.

The forged letter was sent to the Court of Ministers, where the third defendant, in his capacity as head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department at the time, drafted and prepared its words and phrases after he attributed these phrases, contrary to the truth, to His Highness the late Amir of the country Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. This was done despite having prior knowledge and approval of the events that took place regarding criminal report No. 1/2020 of the Court of Ministers related to the Army Fund case. Another defendant, in his capacity as Minister of the Amiri Diwan at the time, had signed it and attributed its issuance to his employer in the Amiri Diwan, contrary to the truth, and sent it to the Permanent Committee for the Trial of Ministers, which sent it to the Court of Ministers.

Opportunities unveiled for India-Kuwait educational partnership

Indian Embassy organizes seminar on 'Higher Education Landscape'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: The Indian Embassy in Kuwait organized a seminar on 'India's Higher Education Landscape' to showcase the advancements and future prospects of Indian higher education sector for potential collaboration between Kuwait and India.

The chief guest was Lana Othman Al-Ayyar, CEO Al Rayan Holding Co, and the Guest of honour was Ms. Nourah Al Ghanim, Chairperson of Union of Private Schools in Kuwait.

Speaking during the event the Ambassador of India to Kuwait, Dr AdarshSwaika; Dr. Ashwin Fernandes, Executive Director at QS World University Rankings and author of the book 'India's Knowledge Supremacy: The New Dawn' and Dr. Ramakrishna Raman, Vice Chancellor of Symbiosis International University, Pune, shed light on several key aspects of India's higher education sector.

The New Education Policy 2020 has been pivotal in driving significant transformations within India's educational landscape with India rapidly emerging as a global education hub, with the sector's value expected to skyrocket from USD 117 billion to USD 313 billion by FY30.

With an expansive network comprising 45,000 degree-colleges, over 1000 universities, and approximately 1500 premier institutes, India boasts one of the world's largest higher education systems.

India's prowess in the field of Ed-Tech is evident, with seven out of 36 Ed-Tech unicorns being Indian, collectively valued at USD 34.05 billion as of June 2022.

The education sector in India has been open to 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) through automatic route, with a significant influx of USD 9.3 billion between April 2000 and September 2023.

Moreover, India stands out in the QS Asia list with the highest number of universities (148) among all Asian countries, and boasts 45 universities in the QS World ranking. The Indian government has set an ambitious target of achieving a Gross Enrollment Ratio of 50% by 2035.

India also hosts a quarter of the global school population, reflecting its significant educational footprint on the world stage at a time when the Indian



Photos during the seminar on 'India's Higher Education Landscape' organized by Indian Embassy in Kuwait.

universities are expanding their reach globally, with notable examples including the establishment of campuses abroad by prestigious institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (in Abu Dhabi and Tanzania), Birla Institute of Technology (in Pilani), and Amity University (in Dubai), among others.

Moreover, India is a frontrunner in patent filings and the publication of research papers in international journals.

Indian Universities are successfully setting up campuses abroad including premier institutions like Indian Institutes of Technology (Abu Dhabi and Tanzania); Birla Institute of Technology, Pilani and Amity University (Dubai); Sharda and Sambroom Universities (Uzbekistan), etc. Foreign Universities like Deakin University is setting up IBC at GIFT city, Gujarat

in patent filing and publication of research papers in international journals

The seminar was useful in projecting opportunities for greater collaboration between the two countries in the educational sector, including setting up campuses of Indian Universities in Kuwait, enrollment of Kuwaiti students in Indian Universities, enrollment of Indian students in Kuwaiti Universities, recruitment of faculty-members and exchange programs between Universities of both countries.

The event was attended by around 350 people, including representatives of Kuwait University, Kuwait College of Science and Technology, AUM, faculty members of other Universities in Kuwait, Principals of Indian and International schools, prominent members of Indian community, teachers, students and friends from media.



New mandates approved

KCCI undergoes major overhaul with formation of a transitional committee

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: The transitional committee, led by Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Joan, has taken decisive actions, including the cancellation of all authorizations held by banks on the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During its inaugural meeting, the committee approved new mandates for its members, extending expired deposit deadlines. Notably, former Undersecretary Abdullah Al-Afasi has been appointed as vice-chairman.

Furthermore, the committee suspended appointments to the Chamber until further notice, halted the activities of sectoral committees stemming from the Board of Directors, and formed a legal team comprising three law professors from Kuwait University's Faculty of Law to draft executive regulations. The committee also decided

to reassess the formation of the Board of Trustees of the Abdul Aziz Al-Saqr Center for Human Development and the members of the Board of Directors of the Commercial Arbitration Center. Additionally, it reviewed issues raised within the Chamber and addressed parliamentary inquiries posed by MPs Shuaib Al-Muwaizri and Badr Al-Nashmi regarding executive regulations and Chamber data.

A sub-financial committee, chaired by Undersecretary Ziyad Al-Najem and dedicated to Small and Medium Enterprises represented by Khaled Al-Duwaikh, was established to oversee the handover of the Chamber building, along with all relevant administrative and financial documents.

This process will include a thorough examination of the Chamber's financial status and the inventorying of all registered agreements under the Board of Directors.

Arab Media Forum celebrates 11th Kuwait Creativity Award

Diverse excellence honored

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information Dr. Nasser Muhaisen affirmed that the Ministry of Information's

strategy supports activities that strengthen the community partnership of media institutions, and sheds light on the competition between media professionals, artists, and everyone who works in the field of directing or photography.

He said this in a press statement issued on the sidelines of the ceremony organized by the Arab Media Forum Authority on Tuesday under the patronage of the Minister of Information and Culture Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi to honor the winners of the 11th Kuwait Creativity Award. They are innovators and influencers in the fields of art, culture, media, advertising, public relations, marketing, medicine, humanitarian work, and national works of art among others.

The Arab Media Forum, which is affiliated to the Arab League, seeks to encourage such events that are held in Kuwait, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Information as it is a governmental media institution, to celebrate creators from all Arab countries, and to honor everyone who contributed in their field of specialization, including media figures and others, out of loyalty and appreciation to them.

In this regard, the Secretary-General of the Arab Media Forum Madi Al-Khamees, said the number of awards in the 11th edition reached 66 in the fields of medicine, science, culture, media, volunteer and charitable work, the environment and many activities as well as in the field of advertising creativity, to which a large part is devoted to the best advertisements that were implemented in 2023, and in the field of national action and national songs throughout the past work.

He explained that more than 700 participants had applied and 66 of them were selected. There are awards of appreciation for specific personalities and competitive awards in business chosen by specialized committees.



Photo during the Qatar-Kuwait caricature exhibition.

Qatar-Kuwait caricature exhibit kicks off in Doha

DOHA, Feb 15, (KUNA): Qatar-Kuwait caricature exhibition was inaugurated by Al Jasrah Cultural Club, in the presence of Kuwait's Ambassador to Qatar Khaled Al-Mutairi and honorary president of the club Sheikh Hamad bin Suhaim.

Speaking to KUNA, Mohammad Thallab, head of Kuwait Caricature Association (KCA), said it is imperative to partake in such exhibitions to develop this art in the Arabian Gulf region, and help share artistic expertise and culture.

He added that the exhibition, which is a common artistic panorama with Qatar, displays some paintings on social, economic and sports issues, which concern society, in addition to comics.

Meanwhile, the secretary of KCA Bader Al-Mutairi said that the society previously took part in displaying some portraits by Kuwaiti caricaturists, in partnership with their Qatari counterparts.

"Through caricature, we display social issues, which concern society, in a simple and comic manner," he said. For her part, caricaturist Sara Al-Nomas expressed her delight at partaking in the exhibition, referring that she is displaying eight paintings on Qatar's national day.

Kuwait is partaking in the one-week exhibition with four caricaturists, namely Thallab, Al-Mutairi, Al-Nomas and Zeinab Dashti.

Many active figures and institutions in the State of Kuwait and abroad were honored in the fields of creativity, media, art, medicine, and others.

Meanwhile, the forum honored a number of prominent figures with the "Personality of the Year" award, such as the Egyptian scientist Dr. Hossam Mowafi, the Jordanian artist Munther Rayahna, and the Iraqi artist Muhammad Hashem.

It also honored the Kuwaiti journalist Barakat Al-Waqyan, the Lebanese journalist Jamal Fayyad, the Qatari journalist Hamad Al Jamila, the great Kuwaiti artist Abdul Aziz Al-Mufarrej (Shadi Al-Khaleej), and the great Kuwaiti journalist Majid Al-Shatti.

The awards for creativity in the field of awareness were won by the advertisement "Psychological Tremors" by Zain Company, the advertisement "Bullying is in all

of us, but in disguise" by the Joint Program Production Foundation for the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, and the "Together Against Violence Campaign" for the Ministry of Interior in Bahrain. The award was received by the Assistant Undersecretary for Nationality, Passports and Residency Affairs in Bahrain Sheikh Hisham Al-Khalifa.

The Media Excellence Award was won by the radio program "Diwaniyat Al-Yaqout and Al-Ansari." The award was received by journalist Talal Al-Yaqout and journalist Khaled Al-Ansari. The Lamoda program produced by Kuwait TV, presented by journalist Sheikh Ibrahim and journalist Shumukh Al-Sawah also won the award.

As for all students' graduation projects, the College of Mass Communication at Ajman University in the United Arab Emirates was honored.

KU registers patents in 14th IIFME edition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15, (KUNA): Kuwait University said on Thursday that its patent and intellectual property office won international medals during its participation in 14th International Invention Fair in the Middle East (IIFME).

The University said in a press release that the exhibition included a group of Kuwait University researchers, who registered their inventions in the US Patent Office of the Department of Commerce.

Prof. Bader Al-Enzi from the Department of Environmental Technology at the College of Life Sciences received the gold medal with honors and the Panda Medal

from the Chinese Invention Society for an air pollution control invention.

Dr. Fawaz Al-Zaabi from the dentistry department received the gold medal for his invention of a technique to replicate soft tissue anatomy using a multi-purpose 3-dimensional resin printed prototype for implant supported fixed prostheses.

Dr. Osama Mohammad, Dr. Ammar Bahman, and Dr. Sarah Barghash from Mechanical Engineering Department at the College of Engineering and Petroleum received a medal for their patent for "Air Conditioning System with Solar-powered Subcooling System."




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Jordan chairs Arab League summit as 113th meeting addresses key regional priorities

Arab Economic and Social Council convenes in Cairo

CAIRO, Feb 15, (KUNA): The Arab Economic and Social Council's 113 meeting kicked off on Thursday at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo, chaired by Jordan, in the presence of the league's Secretary-General Abul-Gheit.

The meeting's agenda discusses various topics, including the report of the Arab League's secretary-general, and the follow up to the 112th meeting's decisions between the 112-113 sessions.

The meeting will also address the economic and social cases at the Arab League's summit in its 33rd regular session, scheduled in Bahrain for May 2024, in addition to Arab and international cooperation in social and development fields.

The council will also discuss reports and decisions of ministerial councils and committees, including the Arab Youth, Sports Ministerial Council's ex-

traordinary session, held in September 2023, as well as the Arab social affairs ministerial council's 8th extraordinary session, held in Tunis in October 2023.

It will also look into the Arab Ministers of Health extraordinary session in November, the Arab Population and Development Council's 5th regular session in November, and the 43rd regular session of the Arab Ministers of Social Affairs Council in December.

The agenda also focuses on the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) and the Arab Customs Union, Arab countries investments, the Arab Common Electricity Market's two agreements, and the Unified Arab Economic Report for 2024, in addition to the modified Arab Agreement to exchange exemptions from taxes and customs duties of the Arab air carrier.

It also includes Tunisia's proposal to establish the Arab Housing and Development Bank, as well as topics related to organizations of joint Arab action,

in addition to reports and decisions of ministerial councils and committees.

The Council discussed the follow-up of the implementation of the Arab Strategy for Sustainable Management of Pastoral Resources (2020-2040), the Sustainable Arab Agricultural Development Strategy work progress in (2020-2030), the follow-up of the implementation of the Sustainable Program for Arab Food Security.

The council also explores the expansion of Arab countries' membership in the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the ICAO's Air Navigation Committee.

Kuwait is participating in the 113th meeting with a delegation from the ministries of finance, foreign affairs and commerce, headed by Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Finance Talal Al-Namseh.



The meeting of senior officials of the Arab Economic and Social Council begins, with the participation of Kuwait. KUNA photo

Hasan Al-Kandari monthly winner of 1kg gold

KFH announces winners of Al-Rabeh draw

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced the winners of the AlRabeh draw with 20 customers winning cash prizes worth KD1,500 each for the 5th and 6th weeks of 2024. KFH announced Hasan Al-Kandari as the monthly winner of 1 kilo Gram of KFH Gold for the month of January 2024.

The winners of KD 1,500 are: Reham Ekrayem, faye Al-Awadi, Hany Badawy, Fatemah Al-Orf, Mohamed Hussein, Ayedh Al-Ajmi, Nourah Al-Ajmi, Fahad Al-Rasheedi, Saud Al-Azmi, Salma Al-Shammari, Manar Al-Shallan, Khaled Al-Qallaf, Shareefah Al-Baker, Khalifah Al-Fadhli, Wafaa Aboudouh, Amin Aboumslam, Abdullah Al-Msaieed, Nasser Al-Hamdan, Mohammad Al-Mubarak, Adlah Al-Jassar.

The AlRabeh campaign provides prizes and draws that offer customers several chances of winning "weekly, monthly and quarterly". The campaign crowns 536 winners throughout the year.

The draw took place under the supervision of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The campaign is part of KFH's on-



Al-Rabeh campaign visual

going efforts to offer exceptional products and services that meet customers' aspirations, enhance the Bank's leadership in the local and global markets, as well as reflect its excellence in offering innovative banking solutions as per the highest quality standards.

The Al-Rabeh account is a salary account available to customers wishing to transfer their salaries and manage their personal accounts. Customers can open Al-Rabeh account in any of KFH branches in Kuwait, or through the

Bank's online channels. The account can be opened in the Kuwaiti Dinar and is targeted for customers wishing to transfer their salaries and manage their personal accounts. Salary transfer is a prerequisite for customers to enter the draw provided that the transfer of salary to Al-Rabeh account is constant.

Regarding the terms and conditions of the prizes and draws, a customer is able to deposit 3 salaries during the 3 months prior to the draw, and the minimum balance of the account should not be less than KD 50 at the end of each month during the 3 months prior to the draw. Ten draws take place on a weekly basis for the amount of K.D 1,500 for 10 winners each, 1 KG of KFH gold will be drawn monthly for one winner and K.D 25,000 for one winner every quarter, reaching a total number of 536 winners during the year.

KFH is keen to further meet customers' requirements and aspirations and their increasing needs as well as offer innovative and modern services, therefore achieving customer satisfaction, which is one of the fundamentals at KFH. The Bank has achieved a qualitative shift in the level of financial services by utilizing technology.

organizational structure for the teaching profession. If yes, he requested for copies of these documents.

MP Fahd bin Jame'e forwarded queries to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Emad Al-Atiqi about the steps that his ministry and Kuwait National Petroleum Corporation (KNPC) took to address the observations in the 2022 report of the State Audit Bureau (SAB) about the accumulated losses incurred by Al-Duqum Refinery in Oman; which was established in partnership with Kuwait Petroleum International, especially since the losses reached \$1.789 billion.

He requested for copies of the relevant decisions issued by the Higher Petroleum Council and the Board of Directors of KNPC since the beginning of the project till date, total value of the contract, total value of the variation orders, current economic gains, the expected gains in the next five years, reasons for the delay in the commercial production of the refinery from 2022 to 2024, and the total amount of loans obtained by Al-Duqum Refinery including the interest.

On the other hand, five parliamentary committees met on Thursday to discuss their agendas.

The parliamentary committee tasked to investigate the armament deals -- purchase of Eurofighter aircraft and Caracal helicopters -- continued its investigation into the issue.

The Digitalization, Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence Committee deliberated on a number of bills.

The Women, Family and Childhood Affairs Committee discussed Children's Rights Law number 21/2015. Committee Chairman MP Osama Al-Shaheen revealed that the representatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Higher Council for Family Affairs, Human Rights Bureau, and civil society organizations like Kuwait Lawyers Society and National Society for Children Protection attended the meeting.

He said the meeting tackled the implementation of the laws on protection against domestic violence and children's protection, affirming that the committee will submit its reports to the Assembly upon completion.

He disclosed that the meeting was allocated for following up the public institutions' implementation of the Children Protection Law; indicating that the committee was informed about the allocation of nine parks for children, hoping this number will increase soon.

He also affirmed that 48 minors are under the care of the Social Care for Minors in the Ministry of Social Affairs, while the Ministry of Health allotted hotline number 147 to receive calls concerning children from 7:30

am to 7:00 pm. He added the Ministry of Education allocated centers for providing social and psychological services for children in every educational district, adding that these centers are open in the afternoon to accommodate those who are not free in the morning. He said the committee requested for advertising the locations and work timings of the centers on social media and other platforms to inform all the concerned parties.

The Education, Culture and Guidance Affairs Committee discussed the bills on scholarships for masteral and doctorate students, in addition to the proposal to establish the Students Fund, and the directive of the National Assembly to determine the consequences of implementing the fingerprint attendance system on teachers.

Chairman of the committee MP Hamad Al-Elyan disclosed that they approved the proposal for the government to shoulder the educational fees, living expenses and health fees of the masteral and doctorate students once they are registered in any of the accredited universities. The specializations covered by the bill are those specified by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) based on the actual manpower needs of the labor market.

He also confirmed the presence of the representatives of the Ministry of Higher Education, National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance, and CSC in the meeting. He added the committee will soon submit its report on the bill to the Assembly for inclusion in the agenda of the upcoming session.

The Business Environment Improvement and Small Enterprises Committee discussed the bills on amending National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Law number 98/2013.

Furthermore, constitutional expert Professor Muhammad Al-Fili affirmed that no article in the Constitution stipulates banning the discussion of the context of the Amiri speech. He clarified it is true that the Amiri entity is sacred, but it does not entail banning the discussion of the ideas and opinions of HH the Amir. He warned that such a ban could negatively affect the communication lines between HH the Amir and the people. He was quick to stress that such discussion necessitates decorum. He pointed out that in case the discussion of the Amiri speech in the Assembly Hall becomes inappropriate, the speaker must stop the concerned MP from talking.

Regarding the minutes of sessions, Al-Fili stated that this is a neutral document, which should record details of the sessions. He explained that while the inadequate phrases should be omitted, the MPs' opinions should be recorded.

Spanish delegation boosts bilateral trade with Kuwait

Spain aims to bolster meat exports

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: A Spanish delegation has arrived in Kuwait with the aim of bolstering trade in beef and goat and sheep meat. This initiative underscores Spain's commitment to expanding its market presence beyond Spanish borders including in Kuwait and promoting its high-quality meat products, says the Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait HE Miguel Jose Moro Aguilar.

During a reception at his residence, the Spanish envoy said, with a focus on enhancing bilateral trade relations, the delegation's visit signals a concerted effort to explore new opportunities and forge stronger partnerships in the Kuwaiti market. As both countries seek to strengthen economic ties, the arrival of the Spanish delegation marks an important step in facilitating increased collaboration and trade exchanges between Spain and Kuwait.

He added, the compliance with European Production Model (EPM), the diversity of breeds, protected geographical indications, and the variety of meat by age at slaughter, and in particular the production and sale of young animals fed with highly nutritional grains and oilseed, "give our beef a unique set of qualities for flavorful, tender, juicy and easy to digest meat.

Antonio Carrion Molina, CMO of Deovino S.L., told the Arab Times, "The versatility of our beef offer many alternatives on the plate, and all of them are exquisite. The variety of possibilities depending on the age of the animal, the nuances provided by a diet of grain and strict compliance with EPM make our beef of excellent quality. He went on to say, farm-to-table



Spanish Ambassador speaking at the event.

traceability requirements established by EPM guarantee a healthy, safe and high quality product that conforms to the strict environmental standards. The breeding of healthy animals and the production of meat is done in compliance with EU legislation on animal disease prevention and control measures and bio-safety measures for livestock operations and processing industries, feeding regulations are a standard component of these measures and the use of hormones for growth promotion is prohibited.

"Our beef sector," he said, "is clearly setting sights beyond Spanish borders in a bid to access new markets, thanks to the high quality of our products. Our success comes from the possibility of actually tasting our products, demonstrating our meat, which is recognized as a premium product."

A significant rise in our beef exports has been recorded in recent years, with a particular focus on third countries, boosting our foreign operations both in volume and in value.

Carolina Aranda, of the Carnicas Coviher SL, the company that produces

and exports sheep and goat meat said, since the very beginning "we have been experts in the production and processing of sheep meat and goat meat. On this basis we have grown and evolved, focusing on new presentations, new cuts, and always striving to offer our customers value through innovation and quality.

When it comes to native breeds, she added, and in some cases endangered, animal welfare becomes even more important. Protecting endangered animals -- whether by limiting production numbers or making changes based on the climate and mountainous terrain of a particular area -- is vital if we are to protect our natural wealth.

Animal welfare is a crucial aspect of livestock farming, particularly in the goat and sheep sector. Providing free access to feed and water is fundamental, from small farms to large herds, as it directly impacts the well-being and quality of produce. Animals raised in stressful or overcrowded conditions produce lower-quality meat and milk compared to those living freely.

Understanding the natural behavior of goats and sheep is essential for their welfare. Allowing them to roam in their natural environment, especially in rugged areas, promotes stronger muscles and contentment, resulting in higher-quality products for consumers.

In the goat and sheep sector, every stage of the value chain is significant, from breeding to slaughter. Proper management practices, regardless of the production system being extensive, semi-extensive, intensive, or semi-intensive, are essential to maintain high-quality standards.

Starting from birth, providing ideal conditions for growth and fattening is crucial. Resting areas should allow animals to move freely, and handling techniques should minimize stress. Attention to diseases and living conditions is necessary throughout the animals' lifespan to ensure the production of nutritious products.

ABK announces Tarek Ibrahim AlMoosa as the winner of Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw prize

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced Tarek Ibrahim AlMoosa as the KD10,000 Alfouz weekly draw winner on Monday, 12 February 2024, where-by the draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Since its launch, the Alfouz account continues to offer an impressive weekly draw of KD10,000. The Bank has recently expanded its offering by adding a new alluring monthly draw of KD20,000, and an exceptional quarterly draw of KD100,000.

The account also retains its hallmark mega annual draw of a KD5,000 monthly salary for ten years. Furthermore, the Bank now offers customers an increased opportunity to win for every KD10 as opposed to KD100 previously.

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account and/or increase their balances to have more chances in winning in the upcoming weekly draw winner announcement, which will take place on Monday, 19 February 2024. The higher the deposits, the higher the chances to win.

For more information about ABK, please follow the



Alfouz weekly draw winner.

Bank's Instagram account @abk_kuwait, visit eahlh.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

Digital deceit

Continued from Page 1

Al-Mana highlighted that electronic commercial fraud and artificial intelligence pose significant challenges for consumer protection associations in the Gulf region and globally.

These issues will be central themes during the upcoming Gulf Consumer Protection Week and World Consumer Day in March. The focus will be on Artificial Intelligence, how to protect the consumer from payment systems and artificial intelligence transactions.

Acknowledging the increasing use of artificial intelligence in payment systems and consumer goods production, Al-Mana underscored the importance of legal regulations and awareness campaigns to keep pace with technological advancements.

Many sales outlets have adopted artificial intelligence machines to streamline payment and purchasing processes, necessitating robust measures to safeguard consumers from fraudulent practices.

Kuwait and

Continued from Page 1

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals call for immediate and effective measures to eliminate forced labor, modern slavery, and human trafficking.

The training course is part of the efforts undertaken by the State of Kuwait in its various ministries and institutions,

such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Public Authority for Manpower and the permanent national committee concerned with implementing the national strategy to prevent human trafficking and smuggling of migrants.

Abu Al-Hassan concluded by highlighting the efforts exerted by Kuwait to combat the crime of human trafficking, including the issuance of law No. 91/2013 regarding combating human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, establishing a center to accommodate expatriate workers, and forming the permanent national committee concerned with implementing the national strategy to prevent human trafficking and smuggling of migrants.

Commerce ensures

Continued from Page 1

and regulating the prices of food commodities in central markets, cooperative societies, and other food outlets. The team's two-month work period, from January 29 to March 29, involves conducting inspection tours of various establishments to enforce price regulations and prevent unjustified price hikes.

Faisal Al-Ansari, Director of the Technical Staff Department of the Advisory Committee for Supervising Commodities and Determining Their Prices at the Ministry of Commerce, emphasized that these efforts are in line with the directives of Minister of Commerce Abdullah Al-Joan and the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce.

Kuwait condemns

Continued from Page 1

He noted that Kuwait has contributed over the past years to supporting the empowerment of women, and the Kuwaiti women's representation in leadership positions have reached 28 percent in various sectors, in addition to them occupying 64 percent of the total national workforce in the public sector and 48 percent in the private sector.

Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah said that the UN Security Council issued Resolution No. 1325 entitled "Women, Peace and Security" in 2000, which came to emphasize the role of women in preventing and resolving conflicts, maintaining peace, reconciliation and mediation endeavors.

In this regard, Kuwait recently established a National Committee to implement UNSC Resolution No. 1325, chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and includes relevant national authorities, as it is important to strengthen joint international action aimed at preventing the outbreak of international conflicts and protecting women.

Sheikh Jarrah offered greetings and respect to Kuwaiti women, remembering with pride how they faced occupation with courage and bravery and had a major role in the ranks of the resistance.

For her part, President of the Kuwaiti Federation of Women's Societies, Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, in her speech, appreciated the political leadership's historic position since 1948 with the Palestinian people and their legitimate and just demands.

World News Roundup

Europe

Missile strike kills 5

US Secretary of State Blinken visits Albania

TIRANA, Albania, Feb 15, (AP): US Secretary of State **Antony Blinken** visits Albania on Thursday to reaffirm relations with a key partner in the Balkans and an ally in supporting Ukraine's fight against Russia's full-scale invasion.

Blinken was to meet with top officials and focus on the future of the Western Balkans as Albania and several neighbors seek to join the European Union, according to top U.S. officials. Washington has strongly supported Albania's integration into the EU.

The US has praised Albania's leadership in the former war-torn region and its recent role on the United Nations Security Council as a non-permanent member. Albania is a NATO member and has regularly assigned small army units to international peacekeeping missions and NATO operations.



Blinken

Albania will host an international summit on Ukraine later this month, with Ukraine's president expected to attend. Tensions between neighbors Kosovo and Serbia may be addressed during Blinken's visit. EU-facilitated negotiations to normalize their relations have had slow progress, while occasional violent incidents have fueled fears of instability. The United States and EU have expressed concern over Kosovo's recent ban on the dinar as currency in its Serb-majority municipalities.

5 killed, 18 injured by missile strike: A missile strike on the Russian city of Belgorod near the Ukraine border on Thursday killed five people, including a child, and injured 18 others, a Russian official said, in what appeared to be the latest exchange of long-range missile and rocket fire between the two countries. Hours earlier, Russia fired cruise and ballistic missiles at a broad area of Ukraine, hitting multiple regions after a midnight strike in Ukraine's northeast killed four people in an apartment building, authorities said.

Five of the 18 people injured in Belgorod were children, regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Telegram. A shopping center and a school stadium were hit in the Belgorod attack, according to Roman Starovoi, the governor of Russia's Kursk region, which is next to Belgorod. "There are many casualties: dead and wounded," he said on Telegram.

Russia prefers to see Biden win: Russia's President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday that Russia would prefer to see President Joe Biden win a second term, describing him as more experienced than Donald Trump. Speaking in an interview with a correspondent from Russian state television, Putin declared that he will work with any U.S. leader who is elected, but noted that he would prefer Biden's victory when asked who would be a better choice from the point of view of Russia.

"Biden, he's more experienced, more predictable, he's a politician of the old formation," Putin said. "But we will work with any U.S. leader whom the American people trust."

NATO chief warns member countries: The head of NATO warned member countries on Thursday against allowing a wedge to be driven between the United States and Europe, as concern grows about Washington's commitment to its allies should Donald Trump return to office. Faced with a war in Ukraine that is draining military and financial resources, and with a U.S. package of support held up by fighting in Congress, European leaders and senior officials have warned that Europe must invest more in its armies and new technologies and ramp up weapons production.

"I welcome that the European allies are investing more in defense, and NATO has called for that for many, many years," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters at the alliance's Brussels headquarters, where he was chairing a meeting of the organization's defense ministers.

France, Ukraine to sign security agreement: French President Emmanuel Macron will sign a bilateral security agreement with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Friday in Paris as part of a trip that will also go through Germany, the French presidency said in a statement. It did not release specific details about the agreement, to be signed at the Elysee presidential palace. Macron said earlier this year that France was negotiating a bilateral deal on the model the one Ukraine recently agreed with the United Kingdom, which covers 10 years.

This will be the third visit by Zelenskyy to Paris since Russia's invasion of Ukraine almost two years ago, following those in February and May 2023, the statement said.

Swiss plan to boost defense spending: Switzerland's government plans to boost its defense spending by up to 19% over the next four years, citing a rise in global instability, including wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, and gaps created when Swiss authorities cashed in on a peace dividend from the fall of the Berlin Wall decades ago. Laying out mid- and long-range projections for military spending, Defense Minister Viola Amherd, who also holds the rotating Swiss presidency this year, said that as a result of cost-cutting measures over the last 30 years, "the army has been weakened," and it would take time to make up lost ground.

Queen Camilla comes to the rescue: What a difference a few decades can make. Queen Camilla, once seen as the scourge of the House of Windsor, the woman at the heart of King Charles III's doomed marriage to the late Princess Diana, has emerged as one of the monarchy's most prominent emissaries. With Charles and Kate, the Princess of Wales, sidelined by illness, Camilla has stepped lightly into the void, increasing her schedule of appearances and taking on the all-important role of keeping the royal family in the public eye.

"It's been a remarkable transformation," said long-time royal commentator and former BBC correspondent Michael Cole. "And, I think, Camilla, Queen Camilla, has certainly earned the respect that she's receiving. ... She has done a remarkably good job."

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Kansas City Chiefs chairman and CEO Clark Hunt holds the Vince Lombardi Trophy as their bus arrives at the victory rally in Kansas City, Mo., on Feb 14. The Chiefs defeated the San Francisco 49ers Sunday in the NFL Super Bowl 58 football game. Inset: Emergency crew arrive at the scene after an incident following the Kansas City Chiefs victory parade in Kansas City, Mo., Wednesday. (AP)

Gunfire at Chiefs' Super Bowl celebration kills 1 and injures 21, including kids

A historic railway station on the edge of downtown Kansas City became the latest backdrop for a mass shooting as gunfire near the end of the Kansas City Chiefs' Super Bowl celebration sent terrified fans scrambling for cover and left 21 people wounded - including at least eight children - and a mother of two dead.

Wednesday's shooting outside Union Station happened despite the presence of more than 800 police officers who were in the building and nearby, includ-

ing on top of nearby structures, said Mayor Quinton Lucas, who attended with his wife and mother and ran for safety when the shots rang out.

"Parades, rallies, schools, movies. It seems like almost nothing is safe," Lucas said.

Three people were detained and firearms were recovered, Police Chief Stacey Graves said at an evening news conference. She said police were still piecing together what happened and did not release details about those who were detained or a possible

motive. "I'm angry at what happened today. The people who came to this celebration should expect a safe environment," Graves said.

It is the latest sports celebration in the US to be marred by gun violence, following a shooting that wounded several people last year in Denver after the Nuggets' NBA championship, and gunfire last year at a parking lot near the Texas Rangers' World Series championship parade. (AP)

Politics

Russian efforts to create 'weapons' cause for US concern

Dems embrace tougher border enforcement

WASHINGTON, Feb 15, (AP): The Senate's border proposal was one of the toughest bipartisan bills to emerge on the issue in decades. Yet it quickly collapsed when Republicans - galvanized by Donald Trump, the likely Republican presidential nominee - rejected the compromise as insufficient.

Now Democrats see an opening. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer called Trump's rejection of the border legislation "a gift" for Democrats and said they plan to "constantly over the next year" remind voters that it was Republicans who torpedoed the deal. And he says the strategy has already paid dividends, with Democrat Tom Suozzi, who campaigned on tougher border enforcement, winning a special election this week in New York, flipping a House seat away from Republicans.

Schumer said the race in his home state of New York "says something very significant - that border is no longer the province of Republicans." That calculation is already having far-reaching effects, transforming the way President Joe Biden and Democrats talk about one of the biggest issues in this year's elections and shaping the policy debate over immigration.

It's a strategy with significant political risk. Republicans have campaigned on border security for years, and public frustration is running high with the record number of illegal U.S. border crossings.

While arrests for illegal border crossings dipped by half in January, they reached 249,735 in December, the highest monthly tally on record. Cities, including many run by Democratic

America to confront Trump-driven political turmoil at Munich confab

MUNICH, Feb 15, (AP): Long regarded as a celebration of the US-led post-World War II international order, the Munich Security Conference this year will be more of a reflection of America's political turmoil.

The annual event kicks off Friday after former President Donald Trump threatened not to come to the defense of European allies in the event of an attack by Russia. There also are broad concerns about whether the US will be able to keep providing billions of dollars in defense assistance for Ukraine and about increasing American isolation over its support for Israel's war in Gaza.

As if that weren't enough, Vice President Kamala Harris and Secretary of State Antony Blinken will be accompanied to the conference by Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas just days after

he was impeached by the Republican-led House on charges that Democrats say are specious.

The increasingly dire developments in Ukraine and Gaza, coupled with Trump's inflammatory comments, mean the event may be overshadowed by the unwanted ghosts of Munich's past - authoritarianism, appeasement and antisemitism - rather than dominated by an optimistic outlook for the future.

The Bavarian capital is known for many positive things, but recent developments in Europe and the Middle East and the volatile U.S. political situation have combined to recall Munich's history as the birthplace of the Nazi Party in the 1920s, European appeasement of Adolf Hitler in the 1930s, and the massacre of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympics.

mayors, are straining under an influx of migrants.

Also:

WASHINGTON: The US has gathered highly sensitive intelligence about Russian anti-satellite weapons that has been shared in recent weeks with the upper echelons of government, according to four people who have been briefed on the intelligence. The people, who were not authorized to comment publicly, said the capability was not yet operational.

The intelligence sparked an urgent but vague warning Wednesday from the Republican head of the House Intelligence Committee, who urged the Biden administration to declassify information about what he called a serious national security threat.

Rep. Mike Turner gave no details about the nature of the threat, and the Biden administration also declined to address it. But several leading lawmakers, including House Speaker Mike Johnson, cautioned against being overly alarmed.



Russian President Vladimir Putin arrives to attend a plenary session of the Future Technologies Forum at the World Trade Centre in Moscow, Russia on Feb. 14. Putin said Wednesday that Russia would prefer to see US President Joe Biden win a second term, describing him as more experienced than Donald Trump. (AP)



Osteen



Adam

America

Shooting injures 4 students: Four students were shot and wounded Wednesday afternoon outside an Atlanta high school, officials said.

Shortly after dismissal, shots were fired from an unknown vehicle, striking four students in the parking lot of Benjamin E. Mays High School, Atlanta Public Schools said in a news release.

Police and fire rescue responded immediately, officials said. The victims were taken to a nearby hospital, and the injuries weren't considered life-threatening. (AP)

3 police officers shot: Three police officers were shot trying to make an animal cruelty arrest that touched off an hours-long standoff in the nation's capitol on Wednesday, which ended late at night with a man's arrest. The officers were hospitalized and expected to recover from gunshot wounds, authorities said. A fourth officer was hurt at the scene, but not shot.

The standoff started Wednesday morning as officers attempted to make an arrest on an animal cruelty warrant, but the suspect refused to leave the home, Metropolitan Police Department Chief Pamela Smith said. As officers tried to get inside, a person opened fire. (AP)

Skier dies, 2 hurt in avalanche: An avalanche on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula killed one backcountry skier and injured two others, prompting warnings for people to stay away from steep slopes as warm weather and high winds raise the risk of

more snowslides around the state.

The avalanche occurred Tuesday afternoon between the communities of Cooper Landing and Moose Pass in the Chugach

National Forest, about 90 miles (145 kilometers) south of Anchorage.

It occurred as the three men hiked up a mountain about a mile (1.6 kilometers) east



Britain's Queen Camilla (front row third left), smiles as she poses with Dames, from left, back row, Joanna Lumley, Floella Benjamin, Twigg Lawson, Harriet Walter, Penelope Wilton, Maureen Lipman, from left, front row, Virginia McKenna, Siân Phillips, Judi Dench, Vanessa Redgrave, Penelope Keith and Patricia Routledge at the 'Celebration Of Shakespeare' event, at Grosvenor House, in London on Feb 14. (AP)

off the Seward Highway, the main thoroughfare between Anchorage and Seward, so they could ski back down, Alaska State Troopers wrote in an online report Wednesday.

Eight people have now died in avalanches in the country this winter, according to the Colorado Avalanche Information Center. The toll includes deaths last weekend in Colorado and Wyoming.

The surviving skiers in Alaska said they fell approximately 800 feet (245 meters) to 1,000 feet (305 meters), said **Clay Adam**, deputy EMS chief at Cooper Landing. (AP)

'Warning signs mounted': The former mother-in-law of the woman who opened fire at a Houston megachurch tried for years to alert authorities and others, including church staff, about her ex-daughter-in-law's mental health struggles, she said Wednesday. But Walli Carranza said nothing came of her actions.

Carranza said she believes systemic failures as well as lax gun laws ultimately led to Sunday's shooting at celebrity pastor **Joel Osteen's** Lakewood Church in which Genesse Moreno entered the church with her 7-year-old son and opened fire in a hallway. Two people were wounded in the shooting, including Moreno's son, who was shot in the head. Moreno was gunned down by security officers she exchanged gunfire with. (AP)

Lat/Am

'Release attorney'

Venezuela government urged to tackle hunger

CARACAS, Venezuela, Feb 15, (AP): A United Nations-backed expert on food security on Wednesday urged Venezuela's government to develop a robust plan to address hunger and malnutrition affecting its population, and called for an end to the crippling economic sanctions imposed on the South American country.

Michael Fakhri, UN special rapporteur on the right to food, acknowledged progress made by the government of President Nicolás Maduro in recent years to address food insecurity, including its effort to boost local production of food. But at the end of a 14-day visit across the country, he told reporters that the root causes of hunger and malnutrition have not been addressed.

He said social programs created in response to severe food shortages have morphed into "charitable hand-outs" and have become "susceptible to patronage."

"Food is an expression of love," Fakhri said after highlighting the role of food in carnival celebrations, which coincided with this visit. "But love with hunger does not last. I learned that in Venezuela. Hunger is insidious. Hunger is not a member of this political party or that political party."

Fakhri told reporters he witnessed first-hand how economic sanctions have "constrained the government's fiscal ability" to implement social programs and deliver public services. Their impact, he said, has been felt disproportionately by the poor.

Maduro's government has long denounced sanctions, the most crippling of which were imposed after his 2018 re-election. But, Fakhri said, sanctions are not the only cause behind malnutrition. Corruption, lack of transparency, and the lack of enforcement of existing legislation have also played a role.

Migrate

Venezuela's complex social, economic and political crisis has driven more than 7.4 million people to migrate and pushed millions of others into poverty. Food insecurity has been a deciding factor for many migrants.

Fakhri's visit comes as Venezuela's protracted crisis continues to evolve. Gone are the empty grocery store shelves that marked the initial years of Venezuela's complex crisis. Stores these days carry varieties of olive oils and even imported ice creams. Supply issues have been replaced by affordability ones.

The average public employee earns a minimum wage of about \$3.60 plus bonuses of around \$100 every month, while private sector workers make \$202 a month on average. Neither is enough to buy food for a family of four. At the same time, people, particularly in rural areas, must cope with gasoline rationing, roads in poor condition and other transportation challenges that limit their ability to reach markets, grocery stores and other food supplies.

"Venezuela's best bet is to empower peasants, fishers, pastoralists, ranchers, urban and peri-urban farmers - especially women and Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples," Fakhri said. "Not only will that enhance food sovereignty, but it will also improve local livelihoods."

Also:

CARACAS, Venezuela: Human rights organizations in Venezuela on Wednesday demanded the release of a prominent attorney and activist whose detention last week has heightened concerns over the government's use of repression against real and perceived adversaries.

The representatives of several rights groups expressed concern over Rocio San Miguel's well-being and condemned her inability to access legal representation of her choice.

"The prolonged isolation and lack of communication to which the defender Rocio San Miguel and her family have been subjected represent forms of cruel and inhuman treatment, harmful to the psychological and moral freedom of the person," Claudia Carrillo, coordinator of victims' psychological care at the Venezuela-based organization Cofavice, said during a press conference in Caracas, the capital.

San Miguel was detained Friday at the airport near Caracas while she and her daughter awaited a flight to Miami. Her arrest set off a wave of criticism inside and outside the South American country.

Attorney General Tarek William Saab on Wednesday reiterated the accusations against San Miguel he announced earlier in the week, telling reporters that the activist was allegedly linked to an alleged plot to kill President Nicolás Maduro and other officials and attack military units.

Saab said members of the military arrested in connection with the foiled plot revealed her alleged role to authorities. He claimed to have evidence but did not reveal any.

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

Following San Miguel's detention, authorities also took into custody her daughter, Miranda Díaz, ex-husband, Victor Díaz, two brothers and former partner.



SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico: Haiti's government announced Wednesday that it is working on an official agreement with Kenyan officials to secure the long-awaited deployment of a police force from the east African country.

High-ranking officials from both countries met in the U.S. for three days this week to draft a memorandum of understanding and set a deadline for the arrival of Kenyan police forces. The closed-door meetings included top US officials and were held weeks after a court in Kenya blocked the U.N.-backed deployment of police to help Haiti fight a surge in gang violence, saying it is unconstitutional.

It was not immediately clear if or how a memorandum of understanding could circumvent the court's ruling, which the president of Kenya has said he would appeal.

Haiti's government said in a statement that there were "intense discussions" to bring a memorandum of understanding into compliance with legislation of both countries.

"A final decision on the text should come early next week as well as its signature by both parties," Haiti's government said.

It said the talks also focused on the mission's operations, logistics and compliance, as well as surveillance, required equipment and human rights issues.



This photo provided by the North Korean government, shows what it says a test of surface-to-sea missiles in North Korea on Feb 14. Inset: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, (front center), provides direction as it conducts a test firing of what it says surface-to-sea missiles in North Korea on Wednesday. (AP)

Asia

'Opening diplomatic ties with Cuba would shock rival'

North Korean leader supervises missile test

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 15, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised a test of new surface-to-sea missiles and warned that the country would take a more aggressive military posture in disputed seas, the North's state media said Thursday.

The report by the Korean Central News Agency came a day after South Korea's military detected the North firing multiple cruise missiles into waters off its eastern port of Wonsan. The launches were the sixth such event this year and added to a provocative run in weapons demonstrations since 2022.

Some experts say Kim may seek to further dial up pressure in an election year in South Korea and the United States. There are growing concerns in South Korea about a direct military provocation, and a possible area of conflict could be the Koreans' poorly drawn western sea boundary, where several bloody skirmishes have occurred in past years.

Kim supervised the test launches of the new weapon, named Padasuri-6, and said the North would strengthen its deployment of surface-to-sea missiles to fend off any "adventurous" attempts by the South Korean navy. He accused South Korea of frequently violating what he decried as North Korean territorial waters with its maritime patrols and interdiction of third-party ships. He ordered his navy to strengthen its defense posture in waters near the South Korean border islands of Baekryeong and Yeonpyeong, where a North Korean artillery bombardment killed four people in 2010.

"It is not important how many lines exist in the (western sea) and there is no need to thrash out the rights and wrongs. What is clear is that when the enemy intrudes into the maritime border recognized by us, we will regard it as an encroachment upon the sovereignty of (North Korea) and an armed provocation against it," KCNA paraphrased Kim as saying.

Also:

SEOUL, South Korea: South Korea's presidential office claimed Thursday that the country's move to establish diplomatic relations with Cuba would deal a "political and psychological blow" to the South's war-divided rival North Korea, whose diplomatic footing is largely dependent on a small number of Cold War allies.

The comments followed an announcement by South Korea's Foreign

Albanese becomes 1st Australian premier to get 'engaged' in office

MELBOURNE, Australia, Feb 15, (AP): Anthony Albanese has become the first Australian prime minister to get engaged while in office, revealing Thursday that his partner accepted his marriage proposal on Valentine's Day.

He and Jodie Haydon, a financial services professional, have been together for three years. Albanese said he proposed on a balcony of his official residence, known as the Lodge, following a romantic dinner at an Italian restaurant.

"She said yes," Albanese posted with a love heart symbol on the X social media platform.

The first-term prime minister said he had planned both the date and place of the proposal and even helped design Haydon's diamond ring. But he did not know if the wedding would be held before he sets the date for Australia's next election, sometime between this August and May of next year.

"We'll now have those discussions between us, which I think people would understand, and sort out those details, but we just want to live in the moment at this point," Albanese told reporters at a brief news conference on a lawn outside the Lodge.

"It is such a joy to be able to share this news with people and it's wonderful I found a partner who I want to spend the rest of my life with. Last night was a very great occasion here at the Lodge. We couldn't be more happy," he added.

Ministry on Wednesday night that it has agreed to open ambassador-level relations with Cuba following a meeting between their United Nations representatives in New York.

With authoritarian leader Kim Jong Un embracing the idea of a "new Cold War," North Korea has recently been boosting the visibility of its ties with Russia and China in an effort to break out of isolation and join a united front against Washington amid tensions over its nuclear weapons ambitions. North Korean state media has yet to comment on the South Korea-Cuba agreement.



BANGKOK: Two Chinese fishermen

have drowned while being chased by Taiwan's Coast Guard off the coast of Taiwan's Kinmen archipelago, the coast guard said Wednesday while accusing them of trespassing.

The deaths are unusual despite the level of Chinese activity in the waters near Kinmen, which is closer to China than it is to Taiwan's main island. China claims all of Taiwan as part of its territory.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office strongly condemned the deaths and called for an investigation, saying "such a malicious event during the Spring Festival seriously hurts the feelings of compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait." Both China and Taiwan are celebrating the Lunar New Year holiday.

Also:

MELBOURNE, Australia: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Thursday he hoped for an amicable end to the prosecution of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange after lawmakers ramped up pressure on the United States and Britain by passing a motion calling for the Australian citizen to be allowed to return to his home country.

Albanese told Parliament the days before Britain's High Court of Justice hears Assange's appeal next week against extradition to the United States on espionage charges were a "critical period."

"I hope this can be resolved. I hope it can be resolved amicably. It's not up to Australia to interfere in the legal processes of other countries, but it is appropriate for us to put our very strong view that those countries need to take into account the need for this to be concluded," Albanese said.



Lawyer and Penal Forum President Alfredo Romero gives a press conference about the previous week's detention of human rights lawyer and activist Rocio San Miguel outside the office of the UN Development Program (UNDP) in Caracas, Venezuela on Feb 14. Rocio San Miguel is accused by the government of terrorism for allegedly plotting to kill President Nicolas Maduro. (AP)



He



Tallamy

Africa

Mortar explosion kills 2 soldiers: Two South African soldiers were killed and three injured when a mortar landed in their base in eastern Congo amid increased unrest in the region, the South African armed forces said Thursday.

The South African National Defence Force, which oversees all of the country's armed forces, said it believed the mortar explosion on Wednesday was a result of "indirect fire" and an investigation was underway to determine who was responsible.

South Africa has sent soldiers to Congo as part of the Southern African Development Community's mission to fight against armed rebel groups in the east.

South Africa announced this week it would be sending a new contingent of 2,900 soldiers to eastern Congo. It wasn't immediately clear if those killed and injured were part of that new deployment.

The base that was hit was in the North Kivu province, South African National Defence Force spokesperson Siphiwe Dlamini said. The injured were taken to a hospital in the city of Goma.

Violence in the conflict-hit region has increased in recent weeks, with many blaming attacks on the M23 rebel group that has been fighting Congolese soldiers in the region for years.

The Congo government says M23 is receiving military support from neighboring Rwanda, which Rwanda denies.

But M23 has indicated in recent statements that it is in the midst of a new advance in eastern Congo, leading to fears the group is again targeting Goma, which it once seized 10 years ago.

More than 1 million people have been displaced by the conflict since November, aid groups say. That adds to the 6.9 million who already fled their homes in one of the world's biggest humanitarian crises.

On Thursday, the Norwegian Refugee Council said the recent advance of armed groups toward the key town of Sake, near Goma, "poses an imminent threat to the entire aid system" in eastern Congo. (AP)



'Outbreaks hard to prevent': Extreme wind and rain may lead to bigger and worse desert locust outbreaks, with human-caused climate change likely to intensify the weather patterns and cause higher outbreak risks, a new study has found.

The desert locust - a short-horned species found in some dry areas of northern and eastern Africa, the Middle East, and South

Asia - is a migratory insect that travels in swarms of millions over long distances and damages crops, causing famine and food insecurity. A square kilometer swarm con-

sumes 80 million locusts that can in one day consume food crops enough to feed 35,000 people. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization describes it as "the most destruc-

tive migratory pest in the world."

The study, published in Science Advances on Wednesday, said these outbreaks will be "increasingly hard to prevent and control" in a warming climate.

Xiaogang He, author of the study and an assistant professor at the National University of Singapore, said more frequent and severe extreme weather events due to climate change could add unpredictability to locust outbreaks.

But he hoped that the study could help countries understand and address "the impacts of climate variability on locust dynamics, particularly in the context of its repercussions on agricultural productivity and food security" and urged better regional and continental cooperation among countries and control organizations to respond quickly and build early warning systems.

To assess the risk of locust outbreaks in Africa and the Middle East and the connection to climate change, scientists analyzed incidents of desert locust outbreaks from 1985 to 2020 using the Food and Agriculture Organization's Locust Hub data tool. They created and used a data-driven framework to examine the insects' patterns to find out what may cause outbreaks to happen across long distances.

University of Delaware entomology professor Douglas Tallamy, who wasn't part of the research, said erratic weather and rainfall trigger spurts in vegetation and therefore fuels enormous population growth in locusts. (AP)



South African troops drive past thousands who are fleeing the ongoing conflict between government forces and M-23 rebels reach the entrance of the Democratic Republic of Congo eastern city of Goma on Feb 7. Two South African soldiers were killed and three injured when a mortar landed in their base in eastern Congo amid increased unrest in the region, the South African armed forces said on Feb 15. (AP)

Bursa faces fluctuations in main indices

The Kuwait Stock Exchange was subjected to fluctuations in its main indices while the general and primary market indices incurred losses; the main market index saw gains and the liquidity surged, largely driven by KFH stock, which dominated 48 percent of transactions during the fourth trading session, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The general market index closed with a 0.26 percent loss, totaling 7,331.26 points, despite significant

liquidity of 82.2 million dinars. KFH stock, a focal point during the auction period, experienced a 6 fils decrease with liquidity amounting to 38.2 million dinars. In total, 268 shares were traded through 14,546 transactions, with 52 gaining, 61 losing, and 16 remaining unchanged.

The Premier Market Index experienced a 0.35 percent decline, ending at 8,040.95 points, accompanied by liquidity totaling 66.6 mil-

lion dinars. Trading activity included 137.4 million shares through 7,649 transactions, where 9 shares gained, 20 lost, and 4 remained unchanged.

On a positive note, the main market index rose by 0.16 percent, reaching 5,990.97 points, with liquidity amounting to 15.6 million dinars. Trading involved 130.5 million shares through 6,897 transactions, with 43 shares gaining, 41 losing, and 12 settling unchanged.

The Capital Markets Authority (CMA) has announced winning a position as a board representative for the Growth and Emerging Markets Committee (GEMC) in the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) for two years, for the second consecutive time.

In a press release, CMA said that the GEMC is the largest committee in IOSCO, with

115 members representing 75 percent of its regular and observer members.

The committee's goal is to develop and enhance the effectiveness of emerging markets by establishing controls and standards that will increase the efficiency of these markets, in addition to providing training programs for member countries.

CMA aims to open new

CMA secures IOSCO board seat

avenues of cooperation and closely follow the experiences of representatives from advanced markets in the areas of regulating and supervising financial markets, as well as new and advanced investment instruments, in addition to benefiting from the participation of the IOSCO board in various prestigious international organizations. (KUNA)

Market Movements

15-02-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts		
SAUDI	- Tadawul	+45.82	12,484.59	PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	-1,150.14	61,023.96
UAE	- DFM	+15.47	4,238.95				
JAPAN	- Nikkei	+454.62	38,157.94				
EGYPT	- EGX 30	+51.16	28,926.15				
PHILIPPINES	- PSEI	+27.62	6,882.15				

Business

Kuwaiti import financing surges by 34.8% monthly

US dollar dominates Kuwait's import financing

By Ahmad Fathi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: There is a significant growth in financing provided to Kuwaiti imports from local banks, with a notable increase of 34.8 percent on a monthly basis. The total financing reached approximately 211.7 million dinars by the end of December, rising from 607.4 million dinars at the end of November to 819.1 million dinars.

The majority of import financing, accounting for 84.9 percent, was provided in US dollars, indicating a strong reliance on this currency for trade transactions.

According to a report dollar financing saw a significant increase of 25.3 percent during 2023, totaling 8.849 billion dinars compared to 7.059 billion dinars in 2022.

Other currencies also contributed to import financing, with financing in euros accounting for 4.3 percent of the total; financing in Euros increased by 38.8 percent on a monthly basis, reaching 42.9 million dinars in December; however, financing in Euros decreased by 0.95 percent during 2023, totaling 456.5 million dinars.

Additionally, financing in UAE dirhams increased by 15.4 percent, financing in Saudi riyals increased by 72.3 percent, financing in Japanese yen grew by 24 percent, and financing in British

Survey aims to improve credit access

Kuwait Central Bank initiates SME financing questionnaire

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: Basil Al-Haroun, Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait, announced the launch of a comprehensive questionnaire aimed at facilitating financing for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and owners of new initiatives. This initiative aims to provide insights into the processes of obtaining and utilizing credit, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Al-Haroun emphasized that the questionnaire is part of the bank's efforts to create a conducive business environment that enhances companies' ability to secure appropriate financing. He urged business owners and entrepreneurs to participate by completing the questionnaire on the Central Bank of Kuwait website.

The questionnaire will be available year-round, with data being analyzed periodically every three months. The Central Bank seeks to survey small

and medium business owners across various sectors to understand their experiences in obtaining financing. The goal is to promote a healthy and supportive environment for this vital sector of the economy.

By gathering data on the challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs in obtaining financing and managing their financial needs, the questionnaire aims to shed light on financing conditions and identify trends and potential risks in the financing market. This information is crucial for maintaining a stable and supportive environment for entrepreneurs.

The results of the questionnaire will be instrumental in helping policymakers, lenders, and stakeholders better understand the challenges and opportunities in SME financing, ultimately contributing to the development of effective policies and strategies in this area.

pounds increased by 7.9 percent.

Overall, the data reflects a strong growth trend in import financing, with the majority of financing

being conducted in US dollars, followed by other currencies contributing to a smaller percentage of the total.

Oil price rises on Wednesday

Kuwait's oil production dips in Jan

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15, (Agencies): In January 2024, Kuwait's crude oil production experienced a decline, dropping by approximately 109 thousand barrels per day to reach 2,434 million barrels per day, according to the monthly report released by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), reports Al-Rai daily.

This decline positioned Kuwait as the fifth-largest producer within the organization. Saudi Arabia maintained its lead with a production of 8.965 million barrels per day, followed by Iraq with 4.194 million barrels per day, and the UAE with a production of 2.927 million barrels per day.

In addition to Kuwait, six other OPEC member states also reduced their daily oil production in January. Libya recorded the largest decline, reducing its production by about 106 thousand barrels to 1.015 million barrels per day. Overall, OPEC's production experienced a decrease in January, totaling 26.342 million barrels per day compared to 26.692 million barrels per day in December 2023.

Meanwhile, in early Thursday trading, oil prices experienced a decline as data revealed a larger-than-expected increase in US crude inventories, prompting concerns about demand in the world's largest economy.

Brent crude futures fell by 34 cents, or 0.4 percent, to \$81.26 per barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate crude futures dropped 36 cents, or 0.5 percent, to \$76.28 per barrel by 01:35 GMT.

The previous day, both benchmarks had lost more than a dollar per barrel due to the surge in US crude inventories, with refining

falling to its lowest levels since December 2022.

According to the Energy Information Administration, US crude inventories soared by 12 million barrels to 439.5 million barrels in the week ending February 9, significantly surpassing analysts' expectations.

However, there were reductions in gasoline and distillate inventories, with gasoline stocks declining by 3.7 million barrels to 247.3 million barrels, and distillate stocks falling by 1.9 million barrels to 125.7 million barrels.

In terms of supply adjustments, Kazakhstan announced its intention to decrease oil production over the next four months following January's surplus production, aligning with its OPEC+ commitments.

Similarly, Iraq stated its plan to review its oil production and address any surplus that exceeds its voluntary OPEC+ cuts in the coming months.

ANZ analysts noted, "This precedes the OPEC meeting in March, as the group deliberates on whether to extend supply cuts in the second quarter," emphasizing that indications of an unlikely extension could impact sentiment in oil markets.

Also:

KUWAIT CITY: The price of Kuwaiti crude oil rose by 53 cents to reach USD 82.67 per barrel on Wednesday, compared to USD 82.14 on Tuesday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Thursday.

In international markets, Brent crude futures went down USD 1.17 to USD 81.60 per barrel, and West Texas Intermediate fell by USD 1.23 to USD 76.64 pb.

Middle east tensions and supply concerns propel oil prices above \$80

Mixed outlook for oil demand and production amid global uncertainties

By KAMCO Invest

Oil remains elevated on Middle East tensions & US supply cut forecast...

Crude oil prices regained the USD 80/b mark and traded at the highest level this month after seeing consistent gains last week. The gains were mainly led by supply concerns due to the tensions in the Middle East, mainly the attacks on Red Sea cargo and the retaliation, as well as the war on Gaza. Further support came from estimates that longer routes taken by cargos by avoiding the Red Sea could marginally add to oil demand. Moreover, a forecast that showed slower growth in US crude oil output this year also supported prices. On the other hand, worries that rate cuts in the US would be delayed due to higher-than-expected inflation in January-2024 dented the overall rally in crude oil prices as slower economic growth could result in lower crude oil demand. Moreover, a fall in manufacturing activity in China continued to affect sentiments in the oil market.

On the regional geopolitical front, peace talks on the war on Gaza had little progress despite efforts from various fronts. As a result, the attacks on Red Sea cargoes continued impacting global freight rates. According to a Bloomberg report, shipping rates have surged closed to 200%-300% on some routes this year due to the attacks led by rising cost of insurance and longer routes. The IMF also warned about spillover effects of the attack that has affected 40% of commercial traffic volume passing through the Suez Canal and its impact on global economic growth.

On the demand front, the IEA said that demand growth is expected to be significantly weaker than last year impacted by slow growth in China and the demand for EVs. The agency expects oil demand growth of around 1.2 mb/d - 1.3 mb/d this year. Meanwhile, the CEO of Saudi Aramco projected a slightly better picture for oil demand with an expected demand growth of 1.5 mb/d. The Secretary-General of OPEC also stated robust demand expectations and was relatively more positive on continued demand from China further supported by strong growth in demand from India.

On the supply front, the latest forecast in the short term energy outlook report from the IEA showed a sharp fall in expected growth in oil production in the US. The agency expects US oil output to grow by 170 tb/d this year as compared to its previous growth projection of 290 tb/d. The sharp decline in expected production reflects several factors including the cold weather that has limited production to 12.6 mb/d in January-2023, higher global crude oil inventories as well as limited capital investment expected from oil drillers in the US with a focus on shareholder returns as seen from recent comments from some oil drillers. Nevertheless, North America is expected to lead crude oil production growth this year. Meanwhile, OPEC oil production showed a decline during January-2024 as new production cuts were implemented as a short term measure by the OPEC+ producers.

Oil Prices

Crude oil futures witnessed the longest running positive streak in five months during the second week of February-2024 with prices breaching the USD 80/b mark after briefly trading below this level during the first week of the month. The 6.3% gain last week was mainly led by expectations of a tight market this year as well as fears of a supply disruption led by the conflict in the Middle East region. News that the US would not continue the pace of output growth as expected previously also supported prices. The oil rig count data from Baker Hughes showed flatish trend over last few weeks as the count stayed at 499 over the last three weeks until the week ended 9-February-2024. Analysts have also projected maturing shale production as one of the key reasons for the slow output growth this year.

Crude oil prices witnessed steep declines at the start of the month led by data showing faster-than-expected job creation in the US that dampened the chance of an earlier rate cut, slowing economic activity in China as well as higher crude oil inventories in the US after refinery shut down due to the cold weather. This also affected gasoline prices in the US that hovered around 3 month highs at gas stations and are forecasted to stay elevated. Data from American Automobile Association showed gasoline prices averaging at USD 3.2/b across the country. Refinery utilization also dropped to around 82.4% during late January-2024, according to data from Bloomberg.

In terms of monthly trends, prices of almost all crude grades reported gains during January-2024 after three consecutive months of declines. Average Brent crude prices was up by 2.9% to reach USD 79.9/b. The gain in average OPEC reference basket price and Kuwait export grade prices was slightly smaller at around 1.0% to reach USD 80.0b and USD 80.8/b, respectively. Meanwhile, the consensus estimate for Brent crude underwent minimal changes from last

Average Crude Oil Prices, USD/b	Dec-2023	Jan-2024	Change (USD)	YTD Avg. 2023	YTD Avg. 2024
OPEC Reference Basket	79.0	80.0	1.0	81.6	89.0
Arab Light	81.3	82.1	0.9	83.8	82.1
Basrah Light	77.6	78.2	0.6	77.8	78.2
Bonny Light	79.9	80.9	1.0	82.4	80.8
Djeno	70.5	72.9	2.4	75.4	72.9
Es Sider	77.8	79.7	1.9	81.0	79.7
Iran Heavy	79.1	80.1	1.1	81.6	80.1
Kuwait Export	80.1	80.8	0.7	82.9	80.8
Mexico	65.2	65.5	0.3	61.7	65.5
Murban	77.7	79.1	1.4	82.5	79.1
Rabi	77.5	79.9	2.4	82.4	79.9
Saharan Blend	78.8	81.4	2.5	83.8	81.4
Zafra	79.4	81.7	2.3	81.3	81.7
Other Crudes					
Brent	78.0	80.3	2.3	82.9	80.3
Dubai	77.3	78.7	1.4	80.8	78.7
Isthmus	70.7	72.3	1.7	68.8	72.3
LLS	75.0	76.4	1.4	80.7	76.4
Mars	72.6	74.2	1.7	74.7	74.2
Miras	76.7	78.1	1.4	81.5	78.1
Urals	60.0	62.4	2.4	44.4	62.4
WTI	72.1	73.9	1.8	78.2	73.9
Differentials					
Brent/WTI	5.9	6.4	0.5	4.7	6.4
Brent/LLS	3.0	3.9	0.8	2.1	3.9
Brent/Dubai	0.7	1.5	0.9	2.1	1.5

Source: OPEC Monthly Oil Market Report - February-2024

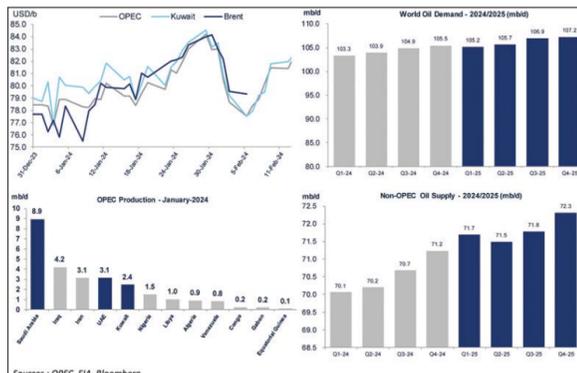
month's forecast. Prices are now expected to average at USD 82.5/b in Q1-2024 and show gradual growth until Q4-2024 to reach 84/b. Price forecasts from the US EIA also showed minimal changes as the agency marginally lowered its forecast for Brent to USD 82.42/b for 2024 vs. USD 82.49/b in its last month's forecast whereas forecast for 2025 was kept unchanged at USD 79.48/b.

World Oil Demand

Global oil demand growth forecast was kept unchanged from last month in OPEC's latest monthly report at 2.25 mb/d with average demand expected to reach 104.4 mb/d in 2024. However, there were revisions at the country level with upward adjustment to oil demand data for the US led by upgraded forecast for the US economy that could cause higher demand for crude oil. This was offset by downward revision to demand data for the OECD Europe region. In terms of regional trends, the OPEC expects continued improvements in air travel and road mobility in the US this year resulting in higher demand for jet/kerosene and gasoline. Demand for LPG is also expected to see growth led by healthy petrochemical feedstock requirements for ethylene. However, demand for diesel is expected to remain relatively soft due to weak manufacturing activity. As a result, OPEC forecast shows oil demand growth of 170 tb/d during 1H-2024. For the OECD Europe region, economic growth in the Eurozone is expected to remain sluggish, although recent indicators like PMI, bank lending and inflation rates suggest a bottoming of the sluggish trends. As a result, oil demand growth is expected to average at 30 tb/d during 1H-2024 and at 25 tb/d for the full year supported by higher demand for transportation fuel partially offset by sluggish demand for diesel and naphtha. For the Asian region, OPEC continues to remain positive on oil demand coming from China led by healthy manufacturing and driving activity in the near term. Data from Kpler quoted by Bloomberg showed overall crude oil imports in China were marginally lower in January-2024 but remained above 10 mb/d mark. Russia and Brazil were key suppliers to China, although the import of Iranian crude oil was the lowest in 11 months last month. India is expected to be another growth factor for oil demand in 2024 as the country experiences robust investment and services demand. The IEA recently said that India is expected to be the world's biggest oil demand growth driver through 2030. In terms of products, distillates are expected to be the key driver of crude oil demand in India supported by agriculture, construction and manufacturing activities. Oil demand forecast for 2025 was also broadly unchanged at 106.25 mb/d (vs. 104.21 mb/d expected last month) resulting in a y-o-y growth of 1.85 mb/d.

World Oil Supply

Global liquids production once again dropped during January-2024. According to preliminary data, global oil supply averaged at 101.8 mb/d in January-2024 following a m-o-m decline of 0.6 mb/d. According to OPEC, the decline was led by lower production by both OPEC and non-OPEC producers. Non-OPEC suppliers showed a decline of 0.2 mb/d during the month with production averaging at 75.5 mb/d in January-2024 led by a drop in production in the US and Other Eurasia partially offset by higher output in China, Canada and Brazil. Non-OPEC oil supply (liquids production) growth forecast for 2024 was lowered by 150 tb/d by the OPEC in its latest report. Supply is now expected to



Sources: OPEC, EIA, Bloomberg

grow by 1.2 mb/d and average at 70.5 mb/d. The lowered forecast reflected downward revision in output from Russia (-81 tb/d), US (-61 tb/d), Kazakhstan (-35 tb/d) and Oman (-31 tb/d) partially offset by upward revision to supply forecast for Guyana (+38 tb/d). Forecast for oil production growth in the US is also lowered by the IEA which now expects production to average at 13.1 mb/d in 2024 as compared to 13.21 mb/d forecasted last month. The decline reflects a drop in production during January-2024 due to shut ins related to cold weather mainly in key oil producing states like North Dakota. The IEA forecasted that monthly production increase to almost 13.3 mb/d in February-2024 followed by a small decline by mid-2024 and will not reach the record set in December-2023 until February-2025. In addition, spending restraint from shale explorers and a focus on shareholder returns is also expected to impact production this year. Meanwhile, OPEC's supply forecasts for 2025 remained unchanged at a growth of 1.27 mb/d to average at 71.82 mb/d during the year.

OPEC Oil Production & Spare Capacity

Oil production by the OPEC witnessed a steep decline during January-2024 after the new production cuts of 2.2 mb/d as agreed in November-2023 were implemented by members in the OPEC+ group. Aggregate production reached 26.2 mb/d during the month registering a decline of 350 tb/d, as per OPEC secondary sources, mainly led by lower production in Libya, Kuwait, Iraq and Algeria during the month partially offset by higher production mainly in UAE and Saudi Arabia. Data from Bloomberg monthly forecast showed a much steeper decline of 490 tb/d during the month to average at 26.57 mb/d during January-2024 as the data showed lower output even in Iran and Saudi Arabia during the month. Data for January-2024 excludes oil production figures for Angola as the country decided to leave the OPEC group following disagreements over production quotas.

The biggest monthly decline in production in January-2024 was seen in Libya with average production reaching 1.0 mb/d after seeing a decline of more than 100 tb/d during the month. The decline came after production at the biggest oil field in the country was suspended following protests over fuel shortages. The NOC declared force majeure at the start of January-2024 at the Sharara oil field that pumped around 270 tb/d resulting in stoppage of crude oil supplies to the western Zawiya terminal. The force majeure was lifted by the end of the month and the output quickly increased to 1.2 mb/d, according to the country's oil minister.

Oil production in Iraq declined by 98 tb/d as per OPEC secondary sources to reach 4.2 mb/d in January-2024. However, the decline fell short of agreed cuts and was 190 tb/d above the limit as per Bloomberg, while Reuters data showed a slightly smaller shortfall of 140 tb/d. Rest of the members in OPEC were mostly in compliance with the agreed cuts during the month.

In a significant development, Saudi Aramco recently announced that the company would not go ahead with the planned capacity expansion to 13.0 mb/d by 2027 from the current 12.0 mb/d. The company said it has postponed the investment due to energy transition. The announcement raised doubts over Saudi Arabia's view on future growth in crude oil demand, but the existing capacity within the Kingdom and in the OPEC at over 6.0 mb/d dampened the impact of the news on oil prices.

Cisco Systems to lay off more than 4,000 workers

Internet networking pioneer Cisco Systems is jettisoning more than 4,000 employees, joining the parade of technology companies in a trend that has helped boost their profits and stock prices while providing a sobering reminder of the job insecurity hanging over an industry increasingly embracing artificial intelligence.

The mass layoffs announced Wednesday in conjunction with Cisco's latest quarterly results represent about 5% of its worldwide workforce of 84,900. The purge follows Cisco's late 2022 cutbacks that shed 5,000 workers and ahead of its \$28 billion acquisition of Splunk, a deal that management now expects to

complete by April 30. Cisco - a company best known for making much of the technology that connects the internet - expects its reorganization to cost an additional \$800 million.

The double whammy of two big layoffs in two years has been a phenomenon affecting other prominent technology companies, such as Google and Amazon, both of which have trimmed their once-steadily growing payrolls multiple times since the end of 2022. The reductions are being made even though most of the companies are still big moneymakers. Cisco, which is based in San Jose, California, earned \$2.6 billion, or 65 cents per share, during its fiscal second quarter

covering October-January, a 5% decrease from the same time during the previous year. Revenue for the period fell 6% from the prior year to \$12.8 billion.

But Cisco foresees sluggish demand for its products and software services during the next three to six months while its customers exercise "a greater degree of caution" amid an uncertain economic outlook, CEO Chuck Robbins said Wednesday during a conference call with analysts.

Cisco's streamlining follows a succession of significant layoffs since the beginning of the year at Microsoft, TikTok, Riot Games, eBay and PayPal, in addition to both Google and Alphabet. Combined with

a wave of layoffs last year, the workforce reductions have helped the companies lift their already lofty profit margins - a goal that has also elevated their collective market values.

Since the end of 2022, the tech-driven Nasdaq composite index has soared by about 50% in a rally that has put it back within reach of its all-time high hit in 2021 when pandemic-driven lockdowns shifted more of the economy to online services.

But Cisco's stock price has gained just 6% during the same period, a factor that might have played into management's decision to make even deeper payroll cuts than some of the company's tech brethren. (AP)



Attendees of the Tamakan program pose with the executive management of NBK

Program focused on unlocking the creativity of Kuwaiti youth

NBK concludes the 5th edition of 'Tamakan' training program

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has concluded the Fifth Edition of "Tamakan" training program for Kuwaiti fresh graduates, organized by "Creative Confidence" with the bank's strategic sponsorship.

The closing ceremony was attended by Mr. Isam Al-Sager, Vice-Chairman and Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait, Mrs. Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO of NBK, Mr. Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO of NBK - Kuwait, Mr. Faisal Al-Hamad Chief Executive Officer - Global Wealth Management, Mr. Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO-Consumer and Digital Banking, Mr. Mohammed Al Kharafi,

COO - Head of Group Operations and Information Technology, Mr. Zaid Isam Al-Sager, GM - Deputy Head of International Banking Group, Mr. Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources.

The ceremony held at NBK's HQ, included a discussion session where the bank's executive management listened to trainees' presentations of their outstanding graduation projects, showcasing creative ideas and visions from the ambitious Kuwaiti youth.

Over the course of the program spanning 10 weeks, NBK hosted 34 trainees at different departments where it provided them with courses aimed to upskill, qualify and prepare

them to start a successful career.

Tamakan offers an innovative training experience for Kuwaiti fresh graduates who need support to overcome the challenges ahead as they seek to start their career or set up their own business, thanks to developing the required skills, as well as expertise to stand on solid grounds as they navigate their way into the highly challenging labor market.

"Tamakan" aims to develop the personal skills needed to become compelling candidates, in addition to motivating Kuwaiti youth to explore their potentials and energies. It also unleashes the creativity of young talent through workshops about creativ-

ity and innovation, design thinking, business model design, career exploration and innovative de-risking solutions.

On their part, the trainees expressed their pleasure with participation in this program and extended thanks to NBK for supporting them and providing its long-standing expertise to develop their skills and qualify them for the labor market in a professional manner, thanks to the bank's highly professional organizational approach.

The trainees also thanked NBK's executive management, who participated in open discussions with them where they conveyed their long experience in the banking

industry, in addition to providing them with valuable advice to build a successful career. They referred to the significant development achieved and knowledge acquired during the program, which adds value to their upcoming career. They also highlighted they benefited from upskilling on various sides, and regarded "Tamakan" as their gateway from the academic world to career exploration and working life.

NBK strongly believes in the importance of nurturing the Kuwaiti youth by attracting and developing talents and providing all means of support to help them navigate their way into the labor market. It also

supports different social initiatives that align to Kuwait National Development Plan (KNDP), and serve the country's strategic agenda to drive growth, and create job opportunities for the Kuwaiti youth in the private sector, being the country's most valuable resource and the cornerstone for national development.

It is worth mentioning that "Tamakan" received "The Social Work Pioneer Project Award" from the GCC Council of Ministers of Social Affairs and Labor, recognizing it as an innovative training experience for Kuwaiti fresh graduates to achieve professional self-development in pursuit of emerging as active and efficient workforce.

Arab states import \$8.436 billion worth of US vehicles, spare parts

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: Official data reveals that three major Arab countries -- Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, and Kuwait -- collectively imported vehicles and spare parts worth \$8.436 billion from the United States of America during the past year, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Kuwait's imports from America totaled \$853 million, with \$600 million allocated to passenger cars, \$204 million to passenger trucks and buses, and \$49 million to spare parts. In December alone, Kuwait imported \$76 million worth of goods, including \$56 million in passenger cars, \$17 million in passenger trucks and buses, and \$4 million in spare parts.

The UAE ranked highest in car imports from America, with total imports reaching approximately \$4.863 billion for the year. This includes \$3.826 billion for passenger

cars, \$306 million for passenger trucks and buses, and \$731 million for spare parts. In December 2023, the UAE imported cars and spare parts worth \$472 million, comprising \$392 million for passenger cars, \$27 million for passenger trucks and buses, and \$53 million for spare parts.

Saudi Arabia's imports totaled \$2.72 billion, with \$2.124 billion for passenger cars, \$368 million for trucks and passenger buses, and \$228 million for spare parts. In December, Saudi Arabia imported goods worth approximately \$186 million, including \$142 million for passenger cars, \$25 million for trucks and buses, and \$19 million for spare parts. According to recent statistics released by the US Department of Commerce, this total value includes \$6.55 billion for passenger cars, \$878 million for passenger trucks and buses, and \$1.008 billion for spare parts.

Japan slips into recession, loses spot as the world's third-largest economy

TOKYO, Feb 15, (AP): Japan's economy is now the world's fourth-largest after it contracted in the last quarter of 2023 and fell behind Germany.

The government reported the economy shrank at an annual rate of 0.4% in October to December, according to Cabinet Office data on real GDP released Thursday, though it grew 1.9% for all of 2023. It contracted 2.9% in July-September. Two straight quarters of contraction are considered an indicator an economy is in a technical recession.

Japan's economy was the second largest until 2010, when it was overtaken by China's. Japan's nominal GDP totaled \$4.2 trillion last year, while Germany's was \$4.4 trillion, or \$4.5 trillion, depending on the currency conversion.

Comparisons

A weaker Japanese yen was a key factor in the drop to fourth place, since comparisons of nominal GDP are in dollar terms. But Japan's relative weakness also reflects a decline in its population and lagging productivity and competitiveness, economists say.

Real gross domestic product is a measure of the value of a nation's products and services. The annual rate measures what would have happened if the quarterly rate lasted a year.

Japan was historically touted as "an economic miracle," rising from the ashes of World War II to become the second largest economy after the U.S. It kept that going through the 1970s and 1980s. But for most of the past 30 years the economy has grown only moderately at times, mainly remaining in the doldrums after the collapse of its financial bubble began in 1990.

Both the Japanese and German economies are powered by strong small and medium-size businesses with solid productivity.

Like Japan in the 1960s-1980s, for most of this century, Germany roared ahead, dominating global markets for high-end products like luxury cars and industrial machin-

Germany now occupies Japan's position

Output shrank more than expected in Q4

UK fell into recession at the end of 2023

LONDON, Feb 15, (AP): The British economy fell into recession at the end of 2023 for the first time since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, as output shrank more than anticipated in the final three months of the year, official figures showed Thursday.

In what is a blow for the governing Conservative Party ahead of a general election this year, the Office for National Statistics estimated that economic activity, as measured by gross domestic product, declined by 0.3% in the fourth quarter of the year from the previous three-month period. It said all three main sectors - services, industrial production and construction - were down.

That was far more than the 0.1% decline anticipated by economists.

The quarterly decline followed a 0.1% fall in the previous three-month period and highlights how the economy has been hobbled by high interest rates that have been raised to reduce inflation.

A recession is officially defined as two straight quarters of economic decline.

It is the first time the British econ-

omy has fallen into recession since the first half of 2020, when output dived during the country's first COVID-19 lockdown.

Being in recession is hardly the ideal backdrop for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak as he mulls when to call the election. Opinion polls show that his Conservative Party is heavily trailing the main opposition Labour Party.

Inflation

Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt blamed high inflation for the weakness of the economy.

"Low growth is not a surprise," he said. "Although times are still tough for many families, we must stick to the plan - cutting taxes on work and business to build a stronger economy."

In a budget statement next month, Hunt is expected to try to turn the political momentum back for the Conservatives by cutting taxes, though with public finances stretched, government spending may have to be trimmed too.

Rachel Reeves, who would replace Hunt at the Treasury if Labour wins the election, said the news of

the recession highlighted "14 years of economic decline" under the Conservatives.

"This is Rishi Sunak's recession and the news will be deeply worrying for families and business across Britain," she said.

One of the main reasons why the economy has stagnated is that the Bank of England has raised its main interest rate aggressively to a 16-year high of 5.25% to get inflation down to 4% from a peak of over 11%. Higher interest rates help cool the economy by making it more expensive to borrow, thereby bearing down on spending.

Though interest rates appear to have peaked, the central bank has expressed caution about cutting interest rates too soon as lower borrowing rates may bolster spending and put renewed upward pressure on prices.

"The big picture is that Britain remains a stagnation nation, and that there are precious few signs of a recovery that will get the economy out of it," said James Smith, research director at the Resolution Foundation think tank.

Microsoft: US rivals beginning to use generative AI in offensive cyber ops

BOSTON, Feb 15, (AP): Microsoft said Wednesday that U.S. adversaries - chiefly Iran and North Korea and to a lesser extent Russia and China - are beginning to use its generative artificial intelligence to mount or organize offensive cyber operations.

The technology giant and business partner OpenAI said they had jointly detected and disrupted the malicious cyber actors' use of their AI technologies - shutting down their accounts.

In a blog post, Microsoft said the techniques employed were "early-stage" and neither "particularly novel or unique" but it was important to expose them publicly as U.S. adversaries leverage large-language models to expand their ability to breach networks and conduct influence operations.

Cybersecurity firms have long used machine-learning on defense, principally to detect anomalous behavior in networks. But criminals and offensive hackers use it as well, and the introduction of large-language models led by OpenAI's ChatGPT upped that game of cat-and-mouse.

Microsoft has invested billions of dollars in OpenAI, and Wednesday's announcement coincided with its release of a report noting that generative AI is expected to enhance malicious social engineering, leading to more sophisticated deepfakes and voice cloning. A threat to democracy in a year where over 50 countries will conduct elections, magnifying disinformation and already occurring.

Here are some examples Microsoft provided. In each case it said all generative AI accounts and assets of the named groups were disabled:

- The North Korean cyberespionage group known as Kimsuky has used the models to research foreign think tanks that study the country, and to generate content likely to be used in spear-phishing hacking campaigns.

- Iran's Revolutionary Guard has used large-language models to assist in social engineering, in troubleshooting software errors, and even in studying how intruders might evade detection in a compromised network. That includes generating phishing emails "including one pretending to come from an international development agency and another attempting to lure prominent feminists to an attacker-built website on feminism." The AI helps accelerate and boost the email production.
- The Russian GRU military intelligence unit known as Fancy Bear has used the models to research satellite and radar technologies that may relate to the war in Ukraine.
- The Chinese cyberespionage group known as Aquatic Panda - which targets a broad range of industries, higher education and governments from France to Malaysia - has interacted with the models "in ways that suggest a limited exploration of how LLMs can augment their technical operations."
- The Chinese group Maverick Panda, which has targeted U.S. defense contractors among other sectors for more than a decade, had interactions with large-language models suggesting it was evaluating their effectiveness as a source of information "on potentially sensitive topics, high profile individuals, regional geopolitics, US influence, and internal affairs."

In a separate blog published Wednesday, OpenAI said its current GPT-4 model chatbot offers "only limited, incremental capabilities for malicious cybersecurity tasks beyond what is already achievable with publicly available, non-AI powered tools." Cybersecurity researchers expect that to change. Last April, the director of the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Jen Easterly, told Congress that "there are two epoch-defining threats and challenges.

ery, selling so much to the rest of the world that half its economy ran on exports.

But its economy, one of the world's worst performing last year, also contracted in the last quarter, by 0.3%.

Britain's likewise contracted late last year. Britain reported Thursday that its economy entered a technical recession in October-December, shrinking 0.3% from the previous quarter. The quarterly decline followed a 0.1% fall in the previous three-month period.

As an island nation with relatively few foreign residents, Japan's population has been shrinking and aging for years, while Germany's has grown to nearly 85 million, as immigration helped to make up for a low birth rate.

The latest data reflect the realities of a weakening Japan and will likely result in Japan's commanding a less-

er presence in the world, said Tetsuji Okazaki, professor of economics at the University of Tokyo.

"Several years ago, Japan boasted a powerful auto sector, for instance. But with the advent of electric vehicles, even that advantage is shaken," he said. Many factors have yet to play out, "But when looking ahead to the next couple of decades, the outlook for Japan is dim."

The gap between developed countries and emerging nations is shrinking, with India likely to overtake Japan in nominal GDP in a few years.

The U.S. remains the world's largest economy by far, with GDP at \$27.94 trillion in 2023, while China's was \$17.5 trillion. India's is about \$3.7 trillion but growing at a sizzling rate of around 7%.

Immigration is one option for solving Japan's labor shortage problem, but the country has been relatively unaccepting of foreign labor,

except for temporary stays, prompting criticism about discrimination and a lack of diversity.

Robotics, another option, are gradually being deployed but not to the extent they can fully make up for the lack of workers.

Another key factor behind Japan's sluggish growth is stagnating wages that have left households reluctant to spend. At the same time, businesses have been invested heavily in faster growing economies overseas instead of in the aging and shrinking home market. Private consumption fell for three straight quarters last year and "growth is set to remain sluggish this year as the household savings rate has turned negative," Marcel Thie-liant of Capital Economics said in a commentary. "Our forecast is that GDP growth will slow from 1.9% in 2023 to around 0.5% this year."

Kuwaiti artists bridging past and present through Sadu craft

'Materiality of the Desert' weaves unique tale at SADI 2024

By Chaitali B. Roy
Special to the Arab Times

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: In 2016, Sadu House, the Museum and nerve centre of weaving and traditional crafts in Kuwait, initiated SADI, an artistic residency based on the contemporary reinterpretation of traditional textiles, culminating in thought-provoking exhibitions. Over the years, SADI has helped initiate a discussion on the meaning of tradition in contemporary art.

The idea for SADI sparked many years back in the eighties through a collaboration between Sadu House and renowned artist Sami Mohammed to design and produce new and modern Sadu patterns and weaves. In later years, sporadic attempts followed with Nuqat, Bader Al Mansour and others before SADI was initiated by Sheikha Bibi Duajj Al Sabah, Chairperson of Sadu House. Since taking charge of the heritage craft, Sheikha Bibi Al Sabah has led a multi-pronged approach, leading to Sadu House becoming a stronghold of sustainable heritage craft in the region.

This year, the SADI 2024 theme is 'Materiality of the Desert.' "We mean by 'materiality' the unique quality of textiles, their tools, techniques and design paradigms," Sheikha Altaf Al Sabah, Patron of Sadu House notes. Sheikha Bibi adds, "This year's theme adds an interesting twist to the art pieces and helps direct the artists regarding the research and development of the pieces." Talking about challenges associated with continuing a programme like SADI, Sheikha Bibi says, "There haven't been challenges as we keep evolving and tweaking the programme each year to make sure the artists in residence are well taken care of in terms of the agenda of workshops, lectures, critique sessions, as well as artistic guidance."

On Monday, February 12, the efforts of five young Kuwaiti artists who were provided access to research on different aspects of Kuwait's weaving heritage for them to reinterpret and rethink traditions in a contemporary way were showcased. SADI 2024 inspired the artists to immerse themselves in the intricacies of Sadu, both in its materiality and application, exhibiting pieces that reflect the knowledge and curiosity they have built to bridge past and present, practicality and expression, as well as constraint and innovation.

The resulting pieces of SADI 2024 are very interesting and stimulating. Five artists have created work using different mediums, drawing inspiration from tradition and historical roots. They presented their reinterpretation of the concepts of the local versus the universal, tradition, and the contemporary. "SADI keeps pushing the envelope with cutting-edge artistic interpretations of the Al-Sadu craft," says Sheikha Bibi Al Sabah. "Each cohort brings in a fresh perspective and keeps adding to the collection of SADI pieces, building a strong base for a movement of Modern Art inspired by age-old traditions."

This year, the SADI cohort featured five young, inspiring Kuwaiti artists. Zainab Dashti, Mo-



Photos by Iehab Qurtal

SADI 2024 showcases Kuwaiti artists' reinterpretation of Sadu craft.

ammed Khesroh, Maha Al Shimmery, Ahmed Al Saffar and Fatemah Dashti experienced, witnessed, explored and expressed the heritage of the desert through contemporary art. Through her artwork, the effervescent Zainab Dashti explored how Man's relationship with the desert has changed over time. Zainab is a filmmaker whose work is focused on exploring culture and identity through filmmaking and visual storytelling. Her display titled 'Products of the Desert' includes a woven Sadu piece crafted using traditional materi-

als and processes. On the other side is a piece conceived only using materials sourced from the contemporary desert, directly reflecting modern desert life and its environment. "In the past, the weavers themselves had to use the materials in their environment to make the piece of Sadu," says Dashti. "Idida traditional piece using traditional methods and traditional materials. Plus, I did another piece where I went out to the desert and, using only materials I found in the desert, made a centrepiece out of that. I did that because I wanted to explore how

our relationship with the desert has changed with time. Both the pieces reflect our way of life now and how we treat the desert and the environment." When asked what she would take away from the SADI programme, she said, "I am taking away a lot. There's so much depth to Sadu. It has a lot of cultural and historical importance. Basically, we need to preserve this craft and hopefully spread it." To give a craft longevity, it must undergo a process of change. Sheikha Altaf Al Sabah has always reiterated the need to adapt tradition and traditional

craft to contemporary times. The objects and ideas on exhibit at SADI 2024 highlighted that need and expressed a fresh feeling, a feeling of renewal. Maha Al Shimmery is an architect, urban sketcher, and explorer who investigates the relationship between people and their built environment. Her artwork 'The Lost Path to the City of Weavers' is a journey of self-discovery told through an extensive hand-drawn depiction of the story she narrates, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in the narrative and witness the story as it unfolds. It was a journey of self-discovery for the artist. "For my piece, I was inspired by the women weavers and how they use Sadu to weave what they think," says Al Shimmery. "It is fascinating how women in the desert were responsible for making the tent and everything else that is related to home. I wanted to reflect that by creating a story." Speaking of her takeaway from SADI, she said, "I knew about Sadu, but I didn't know how deep it is or the connection between women and weaving. I never understood the old women in the desert. Women made the whole tent, and the men only brought the material. It blows my mind. It is a celebration of women's power."

Mohammed Khesroh is an architect, cross-disciplinary researcher and designer. His piece 'Desert Alchemy' delves into foundational philosophies and human elements that allowed early weavers to translate their observations into tangible representations. Speaking of his experience with the SADI residency, Khesroh said, "What makes SADI so unique is the direct connection you have with the female weavers who have hereditary knowledge. Usually, these types of information or knowledge cannot be found elsewhere. So when you see it directly being made by a master weaver, it's incredible because they hold the history and the spirit of making, which is passed on from the grandmother to the mother, daughter, or granddaughter and so on. So being exposed to it is unique."

Fatemah Dashti is an artist who works across various mediums like digital illustration, acrylic paint, and mixed media, drawing inspiration from society, mental health and self-care. Her piece titled 'Resilience' features fabric woven around a wire grid frame to reflect Sadu and its process, interweaving desertscapes and the vital role of weavers onto a grid frame. "I tried to work around the idea that although the desert is a very harsh environment, some beauty can still be found within. And I reflected this by creating desertscapes out of fabric woven into a wire grid. I hand-dyed some fabrics using natural raw materials inspired by one of the workshops the weavers gave us here. I really tried to reflect the beauty that can be found in the desert. I also have a piece on the weavers because they embody and mirror resilience. They took raw materials and made beauty from the desert. It is amazing." Ahmad Al Saffar is an architect who is currently engaged in greenhouse design and land-race architecture. His artwork titled 'Transformed Pattern' took inspiration from the concept of Al Shajarah, creating a versatile structure capable of being refabricated using a diverse range of materials.

Sessions designed to catalyze fruitful exchanges across industries

Business Councils and groups host 1st in-person speed networking event

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: ABCK - AmCham Kuwait, in conjunction with the British Business Forum-Kuwait, Canadians in Kuwait, Indian Business and Professional Council, Lebanese Business Council-Kuwait, and Portuguese Business Council-Kuwait, successfully hosted a Speed Networking Event.

The ABCK - AmCham Kuwait, together with esteemed partners, orchestrated a dynamic Speed Networking Event. This collaborative initiative, marking the first-ever in-person speed networking event done in partnership with other Business Councils, aimed to foster meaningful connections and facilitate professional interactions among their respective members and associates.

The event brought together a diverse array of professionals, experts, and business leaders from various sectors. Attendees seized the opportunity to engage in structured networking sessions designed to catalyze fruitful exchanges and forge valuable relationships across industries.

The event was successful as it provided participants with a fun, effective, and efficient way to connect with other businesses and expand their knowledge of the current news and local business market. Both members and non-members were able to network with other businesses, as well as get acquainted with local businesses.

The Speed Networking Event underscored the commitment of participating organizations to empower their members and create platforms for professional development and collaboration. By leveraging the collective expertise and re-



Group photo during the collaborative speed networking event.

sources of diverse business communities, the event served as a testament to the spirit of partnership and innovation prevalent within Kuwait's dynamic business landscape.

The AmCham Kuwait team organized a raffle to conclude the evening, featuring exciting prizes. These include two dinner vouchers at Crowne Plaza Al-Thuraya City, five vouchers from Al Rifai Arabia, four vouchers from China Garden, ten goodie bags from Hectare's Group, and one voucher for a complimentary tennis lesson at Rafa Nadal Academy.

ABCK-AmCham Kuwait: Is a non-profit organization operating since 1985 and is composed of Fortune 500 corporations, small and medium-sized companies, and prom-

inent business leaders and entrepreneurs, both American and Kuwaiti. ABCK-AmCham Kuwait has acted as an advocate for American interests in the state of Kuwait. For More Information, please visit our website at www.amchamkuwait.org or follow us on our social media channel @abck1985.

A night of tradition and elegance

IWG commemorates Kuwait National and Liberation Days

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: The International Women's Group celebrated Kuwait National and Liberation Days on Sunday, 11 February 2024, at the Crowne Plaza. To mark this special occasion, guests and members arrived in Kuwaiti attire where they were greeted with rose water and bokour.

A Kuwaiti-corner especially constructed as a replica of the sitting-room of a traditional Kuwaiti house and shop was greeted with delight by all attendees who enjoyed a first-hand view of a traditional Kuwaiti lifestyle represented by its authentic furnishings and handicrafts.

The event commenced with the national anthem of Kuwait.

Mrs. Antonia Dimitrova, President of IWG and wife of the Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria, welcomed the distinguished attendees and in her opening speech congratulated HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the people of Kuwait on the occasion of National and Liberation Days and extended the very best wishes of the IWG Executive Board and members for the continued prosperity, peace and progress of Kuwait.

Mrs Layla Boulos, IWG Public Relations Coordinator, served as master of ceremonies and introduced the enchanting and culturally rich program commencing with a talk by Ms Maysa Al-Mutawa who spoke about the history of Kuwaiti woman's clothing.

She opened her very informative talk by saying, "the dresses that you are going to see today represent Kuwait's tradition and story over the ages. Despite globalization, Kuwaiti women continue to wear these dresses on many occasions,



Photos during the International Women's Group celebration of Kuwait National and Liberation Days with cultural extravaganza at Crowne Plaza.

sometimes tweaked for the times, but always preserving the allure of our mothers and grandmothers".

The wonderful presentation on Kuwaiti traditional clothing for women included various Abayaas, young girls with Bokhnag and a re-enactment of a traditional Kuwaiti wedding with the bride adorned in traditional jewellery and wearing a Kuwaiti Thob embroidery

in gold thread.

Mrs. Ameena Al-Mutawa, who served as the bride, also gave an enlightening presentation on the different pieces of bridal jewellery that she wore.

Primary students and their teacher Miss Heba-allah Gomaa, from the British School of Kuwait performed several traditional dances in the various segments of the program including the

Kuwait National Day celebrations and in the traditional wedding re-enactment. The beautiful choreography was meticulously done by Mrs. Anwar Alhasan and the costumes by Mrs Dalal Alshatty.

The event continued with two very interesting and important presentations, the first by Mrs Dana Al-Jouder who spoke about the physical aspects of the old city of Kuwait. She showed some

rare images of the city, the old gate and city wall and spoke of the various changes that have taken place over the years with modernization.

EngMaha Al-Baghli, former Municipal Council Member and Founder of Safira CSR Co. spoke eloquently of corporate and social responsibility and women's empowerment. She stressed the importance of the promotion of

entrepreneurship and sound business practices amongst Kuwaiti women and youth. In closing shields of appreciation were presented to the esteemed speakers and certificates of thanks to the participants and performers.

An outstanding Kuwaiti buffet prepared by the chefs of Crowne Plaza was enjoyed by the attendees who enjoyed and appreciated the event immensely.

Art

Tate Modern showcases Yoko Ono's multifaceted artistry

Exhibition to bring Ono's art out of Lennon's shadow

LONDON, Feb 15, (AP) - Before there was John and Yoko - and after - there was just Yoko Ono.

The Japanese-American artist became a global celebrity through her marriage to John Lennon, her partner for more than a decade until his murder in 1980, as well as her collaborator on peace-protest "bed-ins" and in the Plastic Ono Band.

Yet that period forms just a small part of an exhibition opening this week at the Tate Modern gallery in London. One of the largest shows of Ono's work ever mounted, it includes seven decades of work by the artist, who turns 91 on Sunday.

More than 200 artworks - including film, music, soundscapes, paintings, drawings and sculptures - trace Ono's career from the 1950s and 1960s New York, where her apartment became a hangout for bohemian artists, to Japan, where she brought together artists from east and west.

Then it's on to London, where Ono met the movers and shakers of Swinging Sixties counterculture - including, fatefully, Lennon, who came to see her show at a London gallery.

"It was really important to give that kind of texture and set the foundation of how she developed her practice before she came to London - before the moment of meeting John Lennon," co-curator Juliet Bingham said on Tuesday at a preview of the exhibition. "She was really at the forefront of conceptual art."

Ono's art was interactive long before that was all the rage.

In her landmark 1964 performance "Cut Piece," she gave gallery

visitors scissors and invited them to snip away at her clothes.

In this show, visitors can stomp on "Work to be Stepped On," hammer a nail into canvas, trace their shadows on a wall, shake hands through a hole in "Painting to Shake Hands" and play chess with a set where all the pieces are white - "playing for as long as you remember what your pieces are," Bingham said.

"That very much is emblematic of her ongoing campaign for peace," the curator added. "It becomes about participation and something other than winning."

Enigmatic

Visitors also can ponder Ono's many "instructions" pieces, which she began creating in the 1950s. Gallery walls are lined with bits of paper suggesting "Listen to the sound of the earth turning," "Watch the sun until it becomes square" and other enigmatic prompts.

It's occasionally hard to know whether Ono is being intentionally funny with instructions like "Imagine letting a goldfish swim across the sky ... Drink a liter of water."

Other pieces show a cheeky humor - literally so in "Film No. 4 (Bottoms)," a montage of 200 posters that was banned in 1960s Britain. It's shown alongside photos of Ono protesting outside the censor board with a bouquet of flowers and a poster adorned with bums.

For an exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art in the 1970s, Ono falsely claimed to have released hundreds of flies soaked

in perfume for gallery visitors to find.

Ono's relationship with Lennon took her peace message and avant-garde art to an audience of millions, but also cast her in the unwanted role - to some fans - of the woman who broke up The Beatles.

The exhibition includes the couple's "War is Over" billboard and footage of their famous 1969 Montreal bed-in, as well as an earlier work in which they sent world leaders pairs of acorns, asking them to plant "oak trees for world peace." Politicians' terse typed replies are displayed alongside.

Despite the often sexist and racist barbs directed her way, Bingham says Ono flourished creatively alongside Lennon.

"She talks about them both crossing over into each other's fields - from avant-garde left field, where she was coming from in New York and Japan, and from left-field rock 'n' roll," Bingham said. "They inspired and contributed to each other's lives in a really positive and fruitful way."

In the more than four decades since Lennon's death, Ono has continued to create works steeped in humanism and cries for peace. The Tate show includes "Wish Trees," with branches where visitors can hang messages of hope.

One of the final rooms is devoted to "Add Color (Refugee Boat)," a wooden boat painted white in a white-walled room. Markers are supplied for visitors to add words or images. Several have already written: "All you need is love."

Variety



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Timothee Chalamet, (foreground left), and Austin Butler in a scene from 'Dune: Part Two.' (AP)

Film

Chalamet and Butler share the epic fight secret

'Dune 2' cast rise to the challenge

LOS ANGELES, Feb 15, (AP) - Timothee Chalamet and Austin Butler were really looking forward to their fight.

The actors had been training, separately, with a Kali instructor in Los Angeles to prepare for the climactic showdown between Paul Atreides and Feyd Rautha in Denis Villeneuve's "Dune: Part Two." When they finally met in Budapest, they weren't even technically supposed to do a run through. But they couldn't hide their excitement.

"We got after it right away," Chalamet said.

Everyone in the ensemble gets a little starry-eyed talking about that fight. It was a spectacle watching Butler and Chalamet do it all themselves, a few times in near continuous takes for the wide shots.

"It felt like standing in the wings before you walk out on stage or something, that incredible intensity that you feel. And then 'Action!' is called. And we just got to work," Butler said. "That's the moment of truth where you want to just leave it all on the field."

But it was also the rare occasion in which most of the cast, including Zendaya,

Florence Pugh, Josh Brolin, Stellan Skarsgard, Christopher Walken, Charlotte Rampling, Rebecca Ferguson and Javier Bardem, were in the same room together.

Pugh, a newcomer to the world of "Dune" as the Emperor's daughter, Princess Irulan, described the atmosphere in the room as a "fizzing energy that can only at that point, you hope, create greatness."

Leaving it on the field wasn't just Butler's goal in the fight. It seemed to be the guiding principle for everyone who got the chance to return to Arrakis for "Part Two," which opens March 1. The sequel had not been a given and was dependent on the success of "Part One," which had its own handicap being released simultaneously on Max (formerly HBO Max) and in theaters.

Chalamet worried that they'd end on an incomplete arc. Other actors, like Zendaya as a Freman fighter (and object of Paul's affections) Chani and Dave Bautista as Harkonnen thug Beast Rabban, had barely even scratched the surface of their characters in "Part One."

"That uncertainty was uncomfortable," said Bautista. "My payoff for the character was in the second film."

The time in between gave Zendaya and Chalamet breathing room to establish a real friendship with one another, before their characters would have to fall in love in "Part Two" - in the midst of all the heightened

stakes. "What I appreciate about the love story is that it is earned," Zendaya said. "A real wall has to be broken down."

But it was a relief to get the official go, even if they knew a lot of sweat and discomfort awaited in order to bring this ambitious and visionary science fiction world to life, with the action upped threefold.

"It's grueling, but it's a grueling that I like personally," said Brolin, returning as Gurney Halleck. "I like challenging my idea of comfort often."

Some were more daunted by the return, like Skarsgard, knowing that he'd once again have to endure eight hours of sitting completely still to become Baron Harkonnen. The look would include a cooling vest and over 80 pounds (36 kilograms) of rubber suiting that made moving difficult and bathroom breaks impossible.

Character

"I wasn't that thrilled by it because I thought about those hours in makeup," Skarsgard said. "But on the other hand, I really love the character, not because he's psychologically portrayed very elegantly, but because we managed to create a presence ... He is used in very few scenes, but he will still hover over the entire film as a dangerous, dangerous thing."

One thing he wasn't prepared for was Butler as his character's "psychotic" nephew Feyd Rautha. Butler came in with the idea to model his voice off Skarsgard's.

"That's sort of a funny detail," Skarsgard said. "But then, God, he was razor sharp. It's like a snake. It was fantastic to see."

Butler also transformed to play a character that Villeneuve described as "a cross between a sword master and Mick Jagger." That took about three hours in hair and makeup, and one at the end of the day to cut him out of the cap.

"It's a real gift as an actor when you look in the mirror and you don't see yourself," Butler said. "I knew I had a lot of latitude to play."

For Pugh, it was a "dream" to witness the scale of the sets and be part of not only a transformative experience but also "to be around such dedication and such love and passion and such talent."

Like most of her peers, she said being in that room during the week the fight was a highlight of her career. "It was impressive," said Brolin. "(These were guys

that) really rehearsed that were truly going at it, that were hurting themselves, that were falling... You're like 'yes, this is old school.'"

Brolin was particularly impressed with the young cast, none of whom leaned on their celebrity, he said.

Of course, at the heart of "Dune" is Chalamet, an actor who was only 23 years old when he made the first. He'd been nominated for an Oscar and was quickly establishing himself as the next capital M movie star. But it was the first time he'd ever led a production of that scale.

By the time he'd return to start production on "Dune: Part Two," just a few years later, the difference was striking: Like his character Paul Atreides, he'd also grown up.

"He was like a little kid and he didn't hide it. He's like, 'What is this? What do we do? Oh my God. So big. So many cameras,'" Brolin laughed. "And right now he's exactly where he should be."

Chalamet is self-deprecating about this, laughing that he was "but a boy" on the first and in the interim got some furniture. But everyone around him noticed the change.

Bautista was particularly impressed at his dedication to a training and eating schedule to transform himself into a believably powerful fighter (and rider of sandworms).

"I know he trained his butt off because he wanted to look the part," Bautista said. "He literally goes from being a boy to being a man, like he is commanding in the second film."

Villeneuve was sure he'd get there, too, but still a little relieved that it worked out as he'd imagined.

"Timothee had learned a lot about filmmaking in between both movies," Villeneuve said. "In 'Part One' it was the first time he was in a movie of that scale, surrounded by a lot of movie starts. But in 'Part Two' he was the one leading. And he did a tremendous job of bringing Paul's tragedy to life."

"Dune: Part Two" is the kind of "event cinema" that the cast seems genuinely (and not just contractually) excited to be part of and to see on the big screen - a propulsive and action-packed spectacle that will surely satisfy anyone who complained the first was too meditative.

"It's storytelling. It's heart. It's visually stunning. The soundtrack is incredible," Bautista said. "It's a special film and they just don't come along very often."

LOS ANGELES: Pedro Pascal is jumping from Star Wars to Marvel. The "Last of Us" and "Mandalorian" actor is set to play Reed Richards (also known as Mister Fantastic) in the newest incarnation of "The Fantastic Four," the studio announced Wednesday.

The rest of his squad was revealed, too, with Vanessa Kirby stepping up as Susan Storm (The Invisible Woman), Joseph Quinn of "Stranger Things" as Johnny Storm (The Human Torch), and Ebon Moss-Bachrach of "The Bear" as Ben Grimm (The Thing). In the announcement, the gang was depicted in a retro illustrated Valentine's Day card that had fans guessing this version takes place in the 1960s.

"The Fantastic Four" is among Marvel's longest-running comics series and the titular crew is one of its most beloved groups. Created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, the scientists-turned-superheroes are relatable and wry in their interactions as a team - even when they aren't fighting supervillains. When it debuted in November 1961, it was a refreshing revelation that helped inform the Marvel voice and set a path for Iron Man and Spider-Man.

But the so-called first family of Marvel has not had the most distinguished transition to the big screen, with false starts and bad reviews often trailing. First came a \$2 million Roger Corman production in 1994 that was never ultimately released, with Alex Hyde-White as Reed Richards, Rebecca Staab as Susan Storm, Jay Underwood as Johnny Storm and Michael Bailey Smith as Ben Grimm. The shoestring production was directed by Oley Sassone.

Just a year after Corman's was shelved, 20th Century Fox acquired the rights to the characters and began developing what would become two films under director Tim Story, though that would take about 10 years and see several directors come and go (including Chris Columbus, Raja Gosnell and future "Ant-Man" helmer Peyton Reed). In 2005's "Fantastic Four" and its 2007 sequel "Rise of the Silver Surfer," Ioan Gruffudd was Reed, Jessica Alba was Susan, Chris Evans was Johnny and Michael Chiklis was Ben. (AP)

NEW YORK: Nearly four years after Harvey Weinstein was convicted of rape and sent to prison, New York's highest court

appeared torn at oral arguments Wednesday about potentially overturning the landmark #MeToo-era verdict.

Weinstein's lawyers urged the state's Court of Appeals to dismiss the disgraced movie mogul's 2020 conviction, arguing that the trial judge, James Burke, trampled his right to a fair trial with pro-prose-



Pascal



Weinstein

cution rulings that turned the trial into "1-800-GET-HARVEY."

"It was his character that was on trial. It wasn't the evidence that was on trial," Weinstein's lawyer Arthur Aidala told the seven-member court in Albany.

Weinstein, 71, was convicted of a criminal sex act for forcibly performing oral sex on a TV and

film production assistant in 2006 and rape in the third degree for an attack on an aspiring actress in 2013. He was sentenced to 23 years in prison. Last year, he was convicted in Los Angeles of another rape and sentenced to an additional 16 years in prison.

A lawyer for the Manhattan district attorney's office, which

prosecuted Weinstein's New York case, told the appeals court that Burke's rulings were proper and the conviction should stand.

Weinstein's lawyers want a new trial, but only for the criminal sexual act charge. They argue the rape charge can't be retried because it involves alleged conduct outside the statute of limitations. (AP)

People & Places

Film

From home to Oscars

Grandson's tribute to grandmoms goes big

NEW YORK, Feb. 15, (AP): Sean Wang's two grandmothers live together. They read the newspaper together. They dance together. They share the same room and complain about each other. The older of the two, Yi Yan Fuei, is 96. The younger, Chang Li Hua, is 86. They're in-laws but they act more like sisters.

When Wang, their 29-year-old grandson, was getting into filmmaking, one of the first he made was a short where Yi and Chang feed him blueberries. When Sean refuses, they kill him and bury him in the backyard.

Wang kept shooting them in their Bay Area home, especially after he moved back in with his nearby mom during the pandemic. They got accustomed to his camera being around. But they never thought it would lead to the Academy Awards.



Sean

"Wai Pó and Nai Nai," Wang's deeply charming portrait of his grandmothers, is nominated for best documentary short at the Academy Awards. In it, Wang films Yi and Chang going about their daily lives with bits of playfulness mixed in. They arm wrestle. They play dress-up. They watch "Superbad." But mostly, "Wai Pó and Nai Nai," which translates as maternal grandmother and paternal grandmother in Mandarin, captures the joy of two spirited ladies in older age as they occasionally chide their grandson's attempts to turn them into movie stars.

"When you first asked us to be movie stars, we were like, 'This must be a joke,'" Chang says in an interview by Zoom alongside Yi, with Wang joining from Los Angeles. "But now that we made this movie and it's going to the Oscars, we do kind of feel like movie stars. Now that this whole experience has happened, we do feel a little prettier."

When Oscar nominations were announced last month, it wasn't Bradley Cooper's or Emma Stone's reactions that went viral. It was the celebration, caught on video, of Yi and Chang, with Wang, his mom and producer Sam Davis standing over them.

Mortality

In the film, which is streaming on Disney+, Yi and Chang reflect on mortality and the essential things in life. "As long as I have the newspaper, I can live," says Yi in the film, with magnifying glass in hand. Now, they're in the news, themselves.

"Every day I open the newspaper and if I got to see you, that'd be amazing," Yi tells Wang, who, after translating, shrugged: "I don't think we've made it into the Taiwanese newspapers yet."

A prominent news story a few years ago partly inspired Wang to make the movie. During the pandemic, when Asian and Asian-American hate crimes were escalating, he saw his grandmothers as a perfect antidote to the hateful stereotyping that followed COVID-19. At the same time, the short, which premiered last year at SXSW, was meant to essentially just be a simple home movie.

"That's kind of why we made this movie," Wang says. "It's just so we could have this recollection, this time capsule that captures the essence of these two women. Long after they've passed away, we can have some sort of memento to remember what their lives were like."

Yi and Chang both grew up in poverty in wartime Taiwan. Their vivacious attitude ("Doesn't matter if we know how to dance," Chang says in the film. "We'll shake our hips.") is a conscious reaction to hardship they've experienced. In the film, Chang notes that days spent sad pass the same as those spent happy. "So I'm going to choose joy."

"There was so much pain in our childhoods," Chang says now, tearing up. "Our late lives are so much more fortunate than what we experienced when we were young. And then to be surrounded by our family, there's so much more joy around us than when we were young."

That includes Wang who, when not brightening the days of his grandmothers, has emerged as one of the breakthrough filmmakers of the year. At the same time that "Wai Pó and Nai Nai" was landing its Oscar nomination, Wang's feature film directorial debut, "Didi," was a sensation at the Sundance Film Festival.

Comedy

At Sundance, "Didi," a semi-autobiographical coming-of-age comedy about a teenage Taiwanese American skater kid growing up in Los Angeles, won the US Dramatic Audience Award and the special jury award for best ensemble cast - a cast that includes Chang as his mother-in-law. Focus acquired the film, the title of which can mean both "little brother" or a term of endearment for a family's youngest son in Mandarin. "Surreal and bonkers," Wang says of the twin successes. "To have these spotlights on global platforms for these stories that come from such a deep personal place is bonkers."

A through line for Wang in his rapidly unfolding filmography is family. An earlier short of his, "3,000 Miles," tenderly stitches together voicemails left by his mother while Wang was living in New York. It concludes sweetly in their reunion. To Wang, his role as a filmmaker is to consider his strongest emotions - and more often than not, those feelings are connected to family.

"Making films about my family helps me bridge the gap in my life as a human - seeing my mom not just as my mom or my grandmother not just as my grandmother but as people," Wang says. "I'm still learning to bridge that gap."

Now, Wang's family life will converge, of all places, at the Academy Awards.

"We're going to the Oscars and I'm going with my grandmas," Wang says, smiling. "It's just, like, a sentence I never thought I would say."

For their part, Yi and Chang describe their feelings about attending the Oscars with their grandson in excited unison. "Wonderful! Wonderful!" they shout in English. Asked who they're looking forward to meeting, Chang considers for a moment.

"Will Ang Lee be there?" she says.

But amid their disbelief, Chang and Yi think there's an important lesson to be found in the success of "Wai Pó and Nai Nai" that doesn't have to do with them, but in the grandson behind the camera. Even if the film concludes with Chang cursing Wang as a "freakin' brat."

"I want people to realize, especially parents: Don't force your children to walk the path that you want them to walk," Yi says. "Encourage them and support them in their interests, and be open to the paths that they're naturally gravitating towards. Try to water those seeds."



Boy George, (center), is pictured on stage during the curtain call for his debut performance in 'Moulin Rouge! The Musical' at the Al Hirschfeld Theatre on Tuesday, Feb. 6, in New York. (AP)

Stage

Singer takes on theatrical role in 'Moulin Rouge'

Boy George brings 'joy' to Broadway

NEW YORK, Feb. 15, (AP): Rock stars famously don't get up before noon, and rock stars in big Broadway shows each night surely stagger awake late in the afternoons. Not Boy George.

"I'm not really rock 'n' roll," he says, laughing. "I'm more frock 'n' roll."

The singer-songwriter and beating heart of the iconic band Culture Club is these days playing the role of the impresario in the Tony-Award winning "Moulin Rouge" until May 12.

The jukebox musical is a stage adaptation of director Baz Luhrmann's iconic 2001 film of the same name starring Nicole Kidman and Ewan McGregor. It's packed with pop tunes by Katy Perry, the Rolling Stones and Elton John.

"One of the great things about 'Moulin Rouge,' which proves my point, is that pop music works in a theatrical space and theatrical music works in a pop space," Boy George says.

Boy George, previously on Broadway in 2004 with "Taboo," is a trailblazer in fashion and music, with a string of hits including "Karma Chameleon," "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me" and "Time (Clock of the Heart)."

In a recent conversation, he spoke to The Associated Press about returning to the Great White Way, his musical inspirations and how he's mellowed.

AP: Welcome back to Broadway. How does this feel in comparison to "Taboo"?

Boy George: It's very different to my last experience, because, obviously, breaking a show on Broadway is a different story altogether. It is an entirely different experience stepping into this big, boisterous, colorful show.

AP: Is singing live with a band much different from being part of a stage show?

Boy George: I think all the best music is a mixture of everything you

love. You know, people say to me all the time, "Oh, that sounds like Bowie." And I'm like, "Not by accident!"

AP: What is making new music like for you?

Boy George: You're always dipping into this pantry of ideas. There's this huge sort of creative pantry that you go in and depending on your mood, you might pick out a bit of Nina Simone. You might find some Drake and think, "Oh, that's interesting. What would Bowie do with Drake?" That's how I think: What would Bowie do with a disco track?

AP: You're seemingly always putting out new music - on Instagram, or with the band We Are Brando, or on the "Argyle" soundtrack.

Boy George: I probably am the most prolific songwriter I know. I just write every day. I'm not saying every single one of them is a gem, but I think when you keep doing stuff, you just get better at it, you know? When people talk about writer's block, what does that even mean? Because every word that you could possibly use already exists. Where's the block?

AP: Which comes first for you - melody or words?

Boy George: I tend to hear a melody and then think of a really interesting lyric. I always think if you find what you want to say, you will find a way to say it.

AP: In your latest memoir, "Karma," you write that you've grown kinder to yourself and others. That's nice, right?

Boy George: If you told me 10 years ago, 20 years ago, that I could actually change the way I think about things, I would have laughed at you. I would of gone, "Yeah, no, I'm definitely stubborn and opinionated." And, you know, it's quite nice to discover you're wrong.

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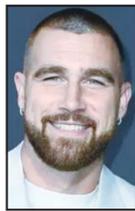
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Yi Yan Fuei, (from left), Sean Wang, and Zhang Li Hua pose for a portrait during the 96th Academy Awards Oscar nominees luncheon on Monday, Feb. 12, at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)



Baldwin



Kelce

Variety

SANTA FE, N.M.: A New Mexico judge warned special prosecutors and defense attorneys Wednesday that she will not consider any more motions as the court prepares for the involuntary manslaughter trial of the weapons supervisor on the "Rust" movie set when Alec Baldwin fatally shot the cinematographer during rehearsal.

State District Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer was stern with her warning during a virtual hearing, saying the start of the trial next week would not be delayed. She considered a series of last-minute challenges by both sides that sought to narrow the scope of evidence that could be considered by jurors.

Defense attorneys for Hannah Gutierrez-Reed had accused prosecutors of compromising a crucial trial witness by handing over text messages about their case to an Albuquerque-based supplier for "Rust" - whom they contend is the source of live ammunition that made its way onto the set in place of dummy ammunition.

Prosecutors acknowledged during the hearing that others, including Baldwin's attorneys, also would have had access to the communications before they were deleted from a server that was meant to be used by defense attorneys.

Attorney Jason Bowles called the release of the information by prosecutors "cavalier and reckless" and suggested that the fact-finding process had been corrupted and that a key witness was now tainted.

"Out of fundamental fairness, how can a defendant have a fair trial when a chief adverse witness has all the attorney-client texts?" Bowles asked the judge. (AP)

NEW YORK: Tiler Peck, principal dancer for the New York City Ballet, choreographed her first ballet there, "Concerto for Two Pianos," and found it a joyful new way to lead the dancers.

"I have never been so nervous and excited at the same time," Peck told The Associated Press. "Normally when there's a performance, you know, I get a little nervous. But mostly, I know I can count on myself, but this is putting it in other dancers' hands, and I have to just hold and have hope, and just trust in them that they will pull through."

Sometimes it's difficult to manage your peers in a new role, but Peck says the transition was easy.

"I have so much joy and respect for them that I think it was... honestly just the best process," Peck said. "I looked forward to it

every single day."

The most satisfying part was mentoring the dancers and seeing their skills improve.

"What I was hoping for more than anything was to inspire them as dancers and to give them tools that they could use in all of their ballets throughout their career, not just my ballet," Peck said. (AP)

GLEN ARBOR, Mich.: William Post, a Michigan man who played an important role in the development of Pop-Tarts, has

died at age 96.

Post died Saturday, according to a family obituary which provided no details on his death but says he was raised in Grand Rapids as "one of seven children of Dutch immigrants" and had retired at age 56 as a senior vice president with Keebler Company and settled in Glen Arbor, Michigan.

Kellanova, formerly known as Kellogg Co., said in a statement Wednesday that it was "deeply saddened" by Post's death.

"He played an important role in co-creating the iconic Pop-Tarts brand and we are



A member of staff hangs a note on a work entitled Wish Trees for London, first realization Wish Tree 1996, exhibition realization 2024, at the Yoko Ono: Music of the Mind exhibition at the Tate Modern, the works of art are copyright Yoko Ono, in London, Tuesday, Feb. 13. (AP) — Details Page 11

grateful to Bill for his legacy and lasting contributions to our company," Kellanova said without elaborating. (AP)

□ □ □

LOS ANGELES: Travis Kelce is already making moves in Hollywood. The Super Bowl champ has his first executive producer credit on a new film that will have its world premiere in March at the South by Southwest Film Festival in Austin, Texas.

"My Dead Friend Zoe" is described as a darkly comedic drama about a U.S. Army veteran, the dead best friend she can't let go and her estranged grandfather. The film stars Ed Harris, Sonequa Martin-Green and Natalie Morales, who are all credited as executive producers alongside Kelce. Directed and co-written by Kyle Hausmann-Stokes, "My Dead Friend Zoe" will debut on March 9 at the festival. It does not yet have a distributor in place for wider release.

Kelce, whose high-profile romance with Taylor Swift has sparked a frenzy, has hinted about plans to dip his toes into entertainment following his "Saturday Night Live" appearance last year. Last week before the Super Bowl, he told the Los Angeles Times that he's been focused on football but that "there's definitely Hollywood talks out there." (AP)

□ □ □

ITALY: Two climate activists on Tuesday targeted Botticelli's masterpiece "The Birth of Venus" hanging at Florence's Uffizi Gallery, attaching images of recent flood damage in the Tuscany region on the protective glass.

Authorities immediately cleared the room and the two protesters were brought by carabinieri for questioning. Under a new law, the protesters risk up to six months of jail time. (AP)

The Conversation

Experts raise concerns over tricky advertising methods

Beware: 'FDA-approved' or 'patented' labels in ads may mislead

By Michael Mattioli
Indiana University

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

If you've ever reached for a bottle of moisturizer labeled "patented" or "FDA approved," you might want to think twice. In a recent study of hundreds of advertisements, I found that supplements and beauty products often misleadingly use these terms to suggest safety or efficacy.

As a law professor, I suspect this is confusing for consumers, maybe even dangerous. Having a patent means only that you can stop others from making, using, selling or importing your invention. It doesn't mean the invention works or that it won't blow up in your face.

"FDA approved," meanwhile, means a product's benefits have been found to outweigh its risks for a specific purpose - not that it's of high quality or low risk in general.

I wanted to know whether companies exploit these sorts of misunderstandings, so I analyzed hundreds of ads from print, television and social media that men-

tion patents or FDA approval. I found that advertisers throw these terms around in confusing ways.

For example, I found an ad for a probiotic supplement stating, "The proof is in the patent"; an ad for an earwax removal product stating its "patented formula is safe, effective, and clinically proven"; and an ad for a headache remedy that made the words "FDA approved" a bold visual focal point.

Here's the concerning part: I looked at all kinds of products and found that these terms appear most often in ads for things you eat or rub onto your skin, such as supplements, insecticides, toothpaste and lotions.

Consumers

That's probably no coincidence. Products like this aren't tightly regulated, yet consumers want to know they're safe. It seems likely that advertisers are name-dropping the government to make people think just that.

One danger is clear: Ads with vague references to government authorities could dupe consumers into thinking products are safer or more effective than they actually are. In fact, there's some evidence this is already happening.

Another risk is that this creates perverse incentives for business. Companies could choose to forgo actual innovation, focusing instead on securing dubious patents or regulatory nods to keep up in the advertising race.

These practices could distort competition, burden government agencies with frivolous patent applications and deter new entrants from competing in markets where they can't employ similar advertising tactics.

Even though my study has shed light on how often these tricky advertising methods are used, it leaves some big questions unanswered. What exactly makes consumers respond so favorably to terms like "patented" or "FDA approved"? And who is most likely to be confused by these tactics?

As a next step, I plan to conduct comprehensive surveys of consumers, along with in-depth interviews, to explore how these labels resonate emotionally. I hope to coordinate with researchers from psychology and media studies. Research along these lines could offer policymakers the robust evidence they need to make changes to the law.

What might those changes look like? For one thing, the law could make it easier for groups of consumers to sue in federal courts over misleading ads. The Federal Trade Commission could also place more of a burden on companies to prove their ads are honest. These changes could make a big difference in ensuring companies persuade shoppers without confusing them.

At a time when ads are everywhere and Americans are losing trust in institutions - and each other - the stakes for truthful product claims are high. (AP)



Lurie Children's Hospital signage is seen at the hospital as patients walk in, Feb. 5, in Skokie, Ill. A cyberattack on a renowned children's hospital in Chicago has left some parents scrambling. (AP)

Experts urge action

Hospital cyberattacks set to rise, put lives in danger

WASHINGTON, Feb 15, (AP): Cybersecurity experts are warning that hospitals around the country are at risk for attacks like the one that is crippling operations at a premier Midwestern children's hospital, and that the US government is doing too little prevent such breaches.

Hospitals in recent years have shifted their use of online technology to support everything from telehealth to medical devices to patient records. Today, they are a favorite target for internet thieves who hold systems' data and networks hostage for hefty ransoms, said John Riggi, the American Hospital Association's cybersecurity adviser.

"Unfortunately, the unintended consequence of the use of all this network and internet connected technology is it expanded our digital attack surface," Riggi said. "So, many more opportunities for bad guys to penetrate our networks."

The assailants often operate from American adversaries such as Russia, North Korea and Iran, where they enjoy big payouts from their victims and face little prospect of ever being punished.

Emergency

In November, a ransomware attack on a health care chain that operates 30 hospitals and 200 health facilities in the United States forced doctors to divert patients from emergency rooms and postpone elective surgeries. Meanwhile, a rural Illinois hospital announced it was permanently closing last year because it couldn't recover financially from a cyberattack. And hackers went as far as posting photos and patient information of breast cancer patients who were receiving treat-

ment at a Pennsylvania health network after the system was hacked last year.

Now, one of the top children's hospitals in the country, the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, has been forced to put its phone, email and medical record systems offline as it battles a cyberattack. The FBI has said it is investigating.

Brett Callow, an analyst for the cybersecurity firm Emsisoft, counted 46 cyberattacks on hospitals last year, compared with 25 in 2022. The paydays for criminals have gotten bigger too, with the average payout jumping from \$5,000 in 2018 to \$1.5 million last year.

"Unless governments do something more meaningful, more significant than they have done to date, it's inevitable that it'll get worse," Callow said.

Callow believes the government should ban cyberattack victims such as hospitals, local governments and schools from paying ransoms. "There's so much money being paid into the ransomware system now there's no way the problem is going to simply go away on itself," he said.

The dramatic increase in these on-line raids has prompted the nation's top health agency to develop new rules for hospitals to protect themselves from cyber threats.

The Department of Health and Human Services said it will rewrite the rules for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act - the federal law commonly called HIPAA that requires insurers and health systems to protect patient information - to include new provisions that address cybersecurity later this year.

NEW YORK, Feb 15, (AP): Derry Oliver was in fifth grade when she first talked to her mom about seeing a therapist.

She was living in Georgia with her uncle and grandparents while her mom was in New York scoping out jobs and apartments ahead of moving the family. It was a rough year apart. Oliver, now 17, was feeling depressed. A school staffer raised the idea of a therapist.

Oliver's mom, also named Derry Oliver, questioned the school's assessment and didn't give consent for therapy. "You're so young," the mom recalled thinking. "There's nothing wrong with you. These are growing pains."

Isolation

The issue boiled over again during the COVID-19 pandemic when the younger Oliver, struggling with the isolation of remote learning, reached out to her Brooklyn high school for help. School-based mental health professionals like social workers can provide some counseling without parent permission. But in New York, referring a student to more intensive therapy almost always requires a parent's agreement. In Oliver's case, that led to more conflict.

"It was very emotional for both of us because I understood her frustrations and fears," the younger Oliver recalled. "But at the same time it's sometimes best for your child to be able to access this rather than hold it away from them."

As schools across the country re-



Derry Oliver, 17, (right), hugs her mother, also Derry Oliver, during a visit to a playground near home, Friday, Feb. 9, in New York. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the younger Oliver embraced therapy as she struggled with the isolation of remote learning, even as her mother pushed back. (AP)

spond to a youth mental health crisis accelerated by the pandemic, many are confronting the thorny legal, ethical, and practical challenges of getting parents on board with treatment. The issue has become politicized, with some states looking to streamline access as conservative politicians elsewhere propose further restrictions, accusing schools of trying to indoctrinate students and cut out parents.

Differing perspectives on mental

health aren't new for parents and kids, but more conflicts are emerging as young people get more comfortable talking openly about mental health and treatment becomes more readily available. Schools have invested pandemic relief money in hiring more mental health specialists as well as telehealth and online counseling to reach as many students as possible.

"It's this disconnect," said Chelsea Trout, a social worker at a charter school in Brooklyn. "The kids are all

on TikTok or the internet and understand therapy speak and that this is something that could be helpful for their mental health and are interested in, but don't have the explicit buy-in from their parents."

Research suggests that having to obtain parental permission can be a significant barrier to teens accessing treatment.

Suicide

Access to therapy can be critical, particularly for youth, who are significantly more likely than their peers to attempt suicide, and whose parents may not know about or approve of their sexual orientations or gender identities. Jessica Chock-Goldman, a social worker at Bard Early College High School in Manhattan, said she's seen many cases where mental health issues turn severe in part because teens didn't get earlier access to therapy.

"A lot of kids would be hospitalized because of suicidal ideations or intent because the preventative work didn't come into fruition," she said.

The question of when young people can consent to mental health treatment is getting increasing attention from policymakers. States like California and Colorado have recently lowered the age of consent for treatment to 12. But in some states like North Carolina, the issue has been swept up into larger political debates about parents' input on curriculum and the rights of transgender students.

Legal and ethical challenges

Teens seek mental therapy amid pandemic, face parental hurdles

New healthier workplaces and schools

New eBook to help in airborne disease risk management

FALLS CHURCH, Va., Feb 15, (Agencies): As more employers are examining their workplace health protocols to minimize the risk of airborne infectious diseases such as COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) infections, AIHA - the association for scientists and professionals committed to preserving and ensuring occupational and environmental health and safety in the workplace and community - announced the launch of a comprehensive new resource that employers and employees can utilize to address current, and future, health threats.

AIHA's "Healthier Workplaces and Schools" eBook is available in English and Spanish to view and download at no charge on AIHA's Commit to C.A.R.E. website. It is designed to help workplace

decision-makers properly assess their specific risks and includes a practical approach to help mitigate the risk of spreading airborne infectious diseases in workplace settings, a risk assessment quiz to determine an organization's risk of airborne virus transmission among workers, and specific actions to help manage these risks.

The eBook was developed by experts with background, training, and experience in industrial hygiene (IH) and occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS), providing practical, evidence-based guidance to protect workers and their communities across all industry sectors - from service sector businesses and healthcare facilities to manufacturing/warehouses and public transit systems.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that we cannot afford to be caught unprepared responding to future health risks that jeopardize worker health and our communities. Our new 'Healthier Workplaces and Schools' eBook is a natural evolution of our initial COVID-19 guidance documents that have helped countless workplaces around the world get back up and running safely," said AIHA CEO Lawrence Sloan. "The multi-layered approach outlined in this new eBook includes five overriding strategies to keep employees safe, and provides scientifically sound solutions written in terms a non-technical person can understand. The more layers of protection that employers can implement, the more they can reduce their risk of infectious diseases in the workplace."

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Nadal pulls out of the Qatar Open

Wawrinka loses to Jarry at Argentina Open



Rafael Nadal, of Spain, waves to the crowd at his doubles match against Australia's Max Purcell and Jordan Thompson during the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane, Australia, Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023. Nadal put off his return to the tennis tour because he isn't yet healthy enough to play, announcing Wednesday, Feb. 14, 2024, that he will sit out next week's Qatar Open. (AP)

BUENOS AIRES, Feb 15, (AP): Three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka was broken while serving for the match and lost 6-7 (3), 6-2, 7-6 (5) to third-seeded Nicolás Jarry on Wednesday in the round of 16 at the Argentina Open.

The 38-year-old Wawrinka, who is ranked No. 60, was up a break in the third set and had a chance to serve it out in the 10th game but Jarry rallied and won the almost three-hour match in a tiebreaker.

Jarry will face Tomás Martín Etcheverry in the quarterfinals of the clay court tournament in Buenos Aires.

Etcheverry beat Colombia's Daniel Galán 6-3, 6-0.

Defending champion and top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz will face home crowd favorite Camilo Carabelli on Thursday.

TENNIS

Also:

Rafael Nadal put off his return to the tennis tour because he isn't yet healthy enough to play, announcing Wednesday that he will sit out next week's Qatar Open.

"I would have loved to play in Doha, where the tournament team, as well as the amazing Qatar fans have always supported me greatly. Unfortunately I am not ready to compete and I won't be able to come to Doha where I really wanted to be and play again after that unforgettable win in 2014," Nadal wrote on social media. "I will focus on keep working to be ready for the exhibition in Las Vegas and the amazing Indian Wells tournament."

The 37-year-old Spaniard is scheduled to participate in an exhibition match with Carlos Alcaraz on March 3, then head to Indian Wells, California, for the hard-court tournament there next month.

Nadal played in three matches at the Brisbane International in early January - his first competitive action in nearly a full year - but then pulled out of the Australian Open and hasn't been back since.

He hurt his hip flexor during the Australian Open in 2023, and eventually needed surgery, missing the rest of last season.

Nadal has indicated this year might be the last of his career, and he's pointed to the French Open - where he won 14 of his 22 Grand Slam titles - as his focus.

Barcelona face tricky game at Celta Vigo

BARCELONA, Spain, Feb 15, (AP): Xavi Hernández will have one more chance to get his Barcelona playing well before its first Champions League knockout-round game in three years.

Barcelona crosses northern Spain to Celta Vigo on Saturday, four days before it travels to Napoli in the Champions League round of 16.

Xavi stunned Barcelona less than three weeks ago, when he announced he would not continue as coach after this season. He cited "mental fatigue" and said he hoped his announcement would release the tension he felt on his team. But Barcelona still looks like a side ill equipped to make a deep run in Europe's elite competition.

SOCCER

After wins over Osasuna and Alaves, Barcelona had to endure jeers from its fans last weekend when it struggled to salvage a 3-3 draw against a relegation-threatened Granada. And that was with goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen back in the lineup after he missed several weeks injured.

"Our defensive errors are killing us and have marked our season," Xavi said after being irate at his team's mistakes. "We cannot have any more slips."

At first glance, the game against Rafa Benítez's Celta looks like just what Barcelona needs. Celta is one spot and three points above the drop

zone and has lost four of its last five games across La Liga and the Copa del Rey.

But Balaidos Stadium has proven to be one of the toughest grounds for Barcelona in recent years. Barcelona has won only one of its last eight visits to Celta, in 2020.

Celta striker Iago Aspas has done most of the damage against Barcelona, scoring 10 goals in 18 career league games against the Catalan club. The 36-year-old Aspas, however, is no longer a sure bet to start for Benítez after scoring only three times in this campaign.

Jorgen Strand Larsen is Celta's top scoring threat with nine league goals. United States midfielder Luca de la Torre and Aspas have helped with five assists each.

Barcelona is in third place at 10 points behind leader Real Madrid.

Its game at Napoli comes after it failed to advance from the Champions League group phase in the previous two seasons.

Madrid leads second-placed Girona by five points before the frontrunner visits cross-town rival Rayo Vallecano on Sunday.

Rayo, in 14th place, will play its first game under new coach Iñigo Pérez after the club fired Francisco Rodríguez following a run of bad results.

Girona has a tough visit to fifth-placed Athletic Bilbao on Monday. Girona is coming off a scoreless draw with Real Sociedad and a 4-0 loss at Madrid last weekend.

Davis & Hachimura help Lakers rout Jazz 138-122



Los Angeles Clippers guard Terance Mann, bottom, dunks in front of Golden State Warriors forward Jonathan Kuminga, left, and forward Andrew Wiggins during the first half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 2024. (AP)

Clippers humble Warriors

SALT LAKE CITY, Feb 15, (AP): Anthony Davis had 37 points and 15 rebounds, Rui Hachimura scored a career-high 36 points and the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Utah Jazz 138-122 on Wednesday night while resting LeBron James.

The team cited an ankle injury for James, who sat out the second game of a back-to-back in the final game before the All-Star break. He is set to play in his 20th All-Star Game on Sunday in Indianapolis.

Hachimura made a career-best six 3-pointers and topped his previous high of 30 points, which he had reached four times in his five-year career. The Lakers have won six of seven, including four straight on the road. Collin Sexton scored 18 points for Utah. The Jazz have lost nine of 13 to fall out of the final play-in spot in the Western Conference.

Clippers 130, Warriors 125

In San Francisco, Norman Powell made four 3-pointers over the final 7:03 to score 21 points and outduel Stephen Curry down the stretch, and Los Angeles Clippers rallied from 12 down in the fourth quarter to beat Golden State.

James Harden had 26 points, eight rebounds and seven assists, and Paul George scored 24 points before fouling out on a night the Clippers were missing leading scorer Kawhi Leonard because of a left leg injury.

Curry scored 41 points and became the first player in NBA history to make seven or more 3-pointers in four straight games, shooting 9 for 19 from deep and 15 of 31 overall.

Celtics 136, Nets 86

In Boston, Payton Pritchard scored 28 points and NBA-leading Boston routed Brooklyn to give Joe Mazzulla his 100th victory as head coach.

Derrick White finished with 27 points. Jayson Tatum added 20 points, nine assists and seven rebounds for the Celtics, who beat the Nets on back-to-back nights and for the fourth time this season in both teams' final game before the All-Star break.

Boston is 43-12. The Celtics went 57-25 in Mazzulla's first season as coach. Wednesday marked the fifth 50-point win in team history.

Trendon Watford had 15 points for the Nets, losers of five of their last six. They trailed by 56 points in the fourth quarter.

Suns 116, Pistons 100

In Phoenix, Kevin Durant scored 25 points and Phoenix overcame fellow All-Star Devin Booker's early ejection to rout Detroit in Pistons coach Monty Williams first game in Phoenix since being fired by the Suns.

BASKETBALL

Williams coached the Suns from 2019 through last season, leading them to the NBA Finals in 2021. He received a video tribute and a loud ovation from the sellout crowd before the game.

Booker was ejected 5:24 into the game after his second technical foul. He received the first technical for arguing with officials about a foul call against him. During a subsequent timeout and, after the Pistons' Cade Cunningham shot free throws, Booker received the second one and an automatic ejection. Booker finished with seven points on 2-of-5 shooting. Simone Fontecchio led Detroit with 18 points.

Kings 102, Nuggets 98

In Denver, De'Aaron Fox had 30 points, eight assists and eight rebounds, Domantas Sabonis had 20 points and 13 rebounds and Sacramento overcame a 16-point, second-half deficit to beat Denver.

The win was the Kings' second in a five-day stretch against the Nuggets, who they also beat 135-106 on Friday night in Sacramento.

Coming off a 40-point effort in a loss the previous night against the Phoenix Suns, Fox ignited his team's

comeback. He scored 15 points in the fourth quarter.

Aaron Gordon had 25 points and season-high 15 rebounds for Denver. Nikola Jokic had an uncharacteristically poor night, missing 11 of his 17 shots and finishing with 15 points, his lowest scoring output since Jan. 7.

Mavericks 116, Spurs 93

In Dallas, Kyrie Irving scored 34 points, Luka Donic had 27 before leaving early in the fourth period and Dallas overcame an early 15-point deficit to beat San Antonio.

Donic left three minutes into the fourth quarter holding his neck. He also had nine rebounds and eight assists in 31 minutes.

The game was the last for both teams before the NBA All-Star break, with the Mavericks winning a season-best sixth straight and Spurs falling for the eighth time in nine contests.

Spurs rookie Victor Wembanyama had 26 points - 20 in the first half - and nine rebounds in his belated Dallas debut.

Cavaliers 108, Bulls 105

In Cleveland, All-Star Donovan Mitchell scored 30 points, including the go-ahead free throw with 44 seconds left, and Cleveland overcame a 17-point deficit to beat Chicago.

Coby White had a chance to force overtime as time expired, but his 3-pointer from the top of the key rimmed out.

Isaac Okoro scored 16 points and Jarrett Allen had 13 points and 10 rebounds for Cleveland, which has won 18 of its last 20 and is an NBA-best 23-5 since Dec. 16.

White scored 23 of his 32 points in the second half. DeMar DeRozan added 24 points for Chicago.

Magic 118, Knicks 100

In Orlando, Fla., Paolo Banchero scored 36 points, Franz Wagner added 21 and Orlando beat injury-riddled New York.

Jalen Brunson led the Knicks with 33 points and six assists. Precious Achiuwa added 23 points and 14 rebounds, and Alec Burks had 13 points in his first start since coming back to the Knicks in a deadline trade last week.

Brunson scored 20 points in the first quarter, and the Knicks led 39-27 when Burks opened the second quarter with a 3-pointer. But with Brunson on the bench, the Magic ran off 17 straight points - 12 of them by Franz and Moritz Wagner - and moved ahead for the rest of the game.

The Knicks played their final game before the All-Star break without six players, including All-Star forward Julius Randle, who missed a ninth game with a shoulder injury. Donte DiVin-

cenzo (sore hamstring), Bojan Bogdanovic (sore calf) and Isaiah Hartenstein (Achilles tendon) were all ruled out just before the game.

Heat 109, 76ers 104

In Philadelphia, Bam Adebayo had 23 points and 14 rebounds to help Miami beat Philadelphia.

Adebayo's thundering dunk capped a 10-2 run in the fourth quarter that gave Miami a lead it never relinquished.

Tyler Herro also had 23 points, and Duncan Robinson added 20 in the Heat's fourth victory in five games.

Tyrese Maxey scored 30 points for Philadelphia. Buddy Heild had 22 points and 10 assists, and Paul Reed, filling in for the injured Joel Embiid (left knee meniscus procedure), added 18 points and 12 rebounds.

Pacers 127, Raptors 125

In Toronto, Tyrese Haliburton had 21 points and 12 assists, Pascal Siakam scored 23 against his former team and Indiana beat Toronto.

Isaiah Jackson added 15 points and 11 rebounds. Obi Toppin had 15 and Andrew Nembhard 14 to help Indiana rebound from a loss at Charlotte on Monday night.

Scottie Barnes had 29 points and 12 rebounds for Toronto.

Hornets 122, Hawks 99

In Charlotte, N.C. Brandon Miller scored 26 points, Tre Mann added 21 points, eight rebounds and six assists and Charlotte beat Atlanta for its first three-game winning streak of the season.

Charlotte is 3-0 since adding Mann, Grant Williams, Vasilije Macic, Seth Curry and Davis Bertans at the trade deadline. De'Andre Hunter had 21 points for Atlanta.

Grizzlies 121, Rockets 113

In Memphis, Tenn. GG Jackson scored 20 points, Jaren Jackson Jr. had 18 and Memphis beat Houston to end a nine-game losing streak.

Luke Kennard finished with 17 points, including a pair of free throws in the closing minute, and Lamar Stevens had 14 points.

Dillon Brooks, Alperen Sengun, Amen Thompson and Aaron Holiday each scored 19 points in Houston's fifth loss in six games.

Pelicans 133, Wizards 126

In New Orleans, Zion Williamson scored 36 points, CJ McCollum added 26 and New Orleans beat Washington, overcoming Deni Avdija's career-best 43 points for the Wizards.

Avdija, a fourth-year player from Israel, blew past his previous high of 25 points before the midpoint of the third quarter, finishing with 20 points in that period. He also matched a season high with 14 rebounds.



Sacramento Kings guard Chris Duarte, left, struggles to recover a loose ball as Denver Nuggets guard Collin Gillespie defends in the second half of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Feb. 14, 2024, in Denver. (AP)

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Bayern beaten at Lazio in 1st leg of CL last 16 to pile pressure on Tuchel

Mbappé scores again as PSG blank Sociedad

ROME, Feb 15, (AP): High and wide. Headers and half-volleys. Free kicks and more.

No matter what Bayern Munich tried, the German club simply couldn't find the goal.

None of Bayern's 16 shots were on target in a 1-0 loss at Lazio in the first leg of the Champions League's round of 16.

Four days after a damaging loss in the Bundesliga, Bayern again didn't meet expectations.

Lazio captain **Ciro Immobile** converted a penalty kick when Bayern was reduced to 10 men midway through the second half after the German club failed to capitalize on a series of chances.

Together with the 3-0 defeat at Bayer Leverkusen, the result puts pressure on Bayern and coach **Thomas Tuchel** ahead of the return leg March 5.

Bayern, a six-time European champion, has reached the quarterfinals or better in 11 of its last 12 Champions League campaigns - the exception being a last-16 elimination by Liverpool five years ago.

Lazio, which sits seventh in Serie A, lost to Bayern in its only other round-of-16 appearance three years ago. But **Maurizio Sarri's** team, which finished second behind runaway Italian champion **Napoli** last season, has been in solid form lately, winning five of its last seven league matches.

Bayern defender **Dayot Upamecano** was sent off for a foul on **Gustav Isaksen** and **Immobile** sent goalkeeper **Manuel Neuer** the wrong way with the ensuing spot kick. The Italy forward has now scored Lazio's last four goals in the competition, having reached the 200-goal mark in Serie A over the weekend.

Paris Saint-Germain beat Real Sociedad 2-0 in the night's other match. Having already seen its chances of extending a run of 11 straight Bundesliga titles placed in jeopardy after falling five points behind **Leverkusen**, Bayern now faces an uphill struggle in Europe, too.

"Our quality and our expectations as a club is that in moments like these, we stick together," **Müller** said. "We will give everything we have in every competition until the very last second."

SOCCER

... We know we have it in us, even if we didn't show it tonight. And who's to say things won't look a lot different in three weeks' time."

Bayern controlled the game but couldn't quite find the target early on.

Leroy Sané also missed a free kick narrowly wide after the half-hour mark.

After the break, **Neuer** did well to smother a close-range effort from **Isaksen**, who had only the goalkeeper to beat after receiving a ball over the top from **Luis Alberto**.

Then **Kane** missed again with a header.

Before kickoff, Bayern fans launched flares onto the field and filled the visitors' section with fire and smoke.

After the final whistle, Lazio fans danced in the stands as techno music blasted through the stadium speakers.

It was only Lazio's second ever win in the knockout phase, after beating **Valencia** in 2000.

Kylian Mbappé scored yet again in the Champions League and emerging winger **Bradley Barcola** grabbed his first goal in the competition as Paris Saint-Germain beat Real Sociedad 2-0 in the first leg of the round of 16.

The 25-year-old **Mbappé** joined PSG in 2017 in a deal worth 180 million (\$193 million) and has netted a club record 243 goals since then. The 21-year-old **Barcola** arrived from Lyon in a deal worth a hefty 50 million euros (\$54 million) for a relative unknown, and is starting to impress with his skill and poise.

"I'm really happy tonight," **Barcola** said. "It's a childhood dream come true."

However, **Sociedad** dominated the game for long spells despite missing key players through injury, until **Mbappé's** goal in the 58th minute.

The breakthrough came when **Marquinhos** headed on **Ousmane Dembélé's** corner from the right and **Mbappé** was unmarked at the back post to volley in.

"That's where we lose the control of the game," **Sociedad** coach **Imanol Alguacil** said. "We can't allow that to happen."

A few minutes later, **Mbappé's** strike from the edge of the penalty area was tipped onto the crossbar by goalkeeper **Alex Remiro**.

Remiro was beaten again in the 70th when the speedy **Barcola** broke down the left, skipped past right back **Hamari Traoré** with ease and poked the ball in - prompting coach **Luis Enrique** to jump off the bench to celebrate.

Sociedad went scoreless for a fifth straight game in all competitions.

"We managed to score at key moments in the game. We have a good lead," **Mbappé** told broadcaster **Canal Plus**. "The clean sheet is important for us, we've been looking for that in the Champions League, although it's true that they (**Sociedad**) have not been



Tuchel

Thomas Tuchel ahead of the return leg March 5.

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Officials gear up for the finale of the championship.

Al-Jahra play Al-Shabab

Al-Arabi looking to leapfrog Kuwait Club, 'face' Al-Nasr

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: Zain Premier League sixteenth round kicks off with Al-Jahra taking on Al-Shabab at Abdullah Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah Stadium at 4:45 pm.

The action continues tomorrow with two matches. First, Al-Arabi looking to leapfrog leader Kuwait Club when it faces Al-Nasr at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium at 4:45 pm. Later, Al-Salmiya goes head-to-head with **Khaitan** at Nasser Al-Osaimi Stadium at 7:30 pm.

The round concludes the day after tomorrow, Sunday, with Al-Fahaheel meeting Kuwait at the Friendship and Peace Stadium at 4:45 pm. The round culminates with a match between Al-Qadisiya and Kazma at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium at 7:30 pm.

Kuwait Club leads the standings with 36 points, closely followed by Al-Arabi on the same points, but trails on goals for and Al-Qadisiya in third with 32 points. Other teams in the league include **Salmiya** with 23 points, **Al-Nasr** with 21 points, **Al-Fahaheel** and **Kazma** both with 18 points, **Al-Shabab** with 14 points, **Khaitan** with 8 points, and **Al-Jahra** at the bottom with only two points.

The clash between Al-Jahra and Al-Shabab is dubbed "Saving what can be saved." Al-Shabab aims to cling to hope for playing with the Big Six, counting on today's match



Bayern's **Harry Kane** goes for the header with Lazio's **Mario Gila** during a Champions League round of 16 first leg soccer match between Lazio and Bayern Munich, at Rome's Olympic Stadium. (AP)

scoring much at the moment."

There was relief, too, that **Mbappé** lasted the whole game.

Mbappé's sore left ankle kept him on the bench for Saturday's French league game, but he showed no ill effects when he latched onto **Dembélé's** pass and forced a save in the sixth minute.

After that chance, however, **PSG's** intensity dropped right off.

Even though **Alguacil** was without goal-scoring midfielder **Mikel Oyarzabal** and left back **Kieran Tierney**, the intensity and organization of **Sociedad's** high pressing pushed **PSG** back at a subdued Parc des Princes.

André Silva glanced a header wide and captain **Mikel Merino** struck the crossbar with a superb dipping shot from 25 meters moments before the break.

points while hoping for stumbles from Al-Fahaheel and **Kazma** in future rounds.

Meanwhile, Al-Jahra aims to make an impact before participating in the "Avoid Relegation" league, seeking its first victory after enduring 13 defeats and two draws.

SOCCER

In tomorrow's match, Al-Arabi faces Al-Nasr, with Al-Arabi looking to reclaim its reputation after defeating Al-Nasr 3-1 in the first division. Al-Nasr, on the other hand, aims to halt the point losses after a 1-2 defeat to Al-Fahaheel in the last round and seeks revenge for a 3-1 loss in the Emir Cup quarter-finals.

In another match, Al-Salmiya aims to continue its positive streak, asserting its dominance over **Khaitan**, having previously defeated them 3-1 in the league and 4-2 on penalties in the Emir Cup preliminary round.

GENEVA, Feb 15, (AP): More than 300 soccer clubs were in ownership groups involving multiple teams in a trend driven by American investors that could threaten the integrity of European games, UEFA said on Thursday.

UEFA detailed the growing popularity of "multi-club ownership" - with investors, if not always the fans - in its annual analysis of the European soccer economy it predicts was worth about 26 billion euros (\$27.9 billion) in revenue for clubs in 2023. Multi-club groups led to an "increased risk of seeing two clubs with the same owner or investor facing each other in the same competition, creating potential integrity risks at the European level," UEFA director of research **Andrea Traverso** acknowledged in the 118-page report.

The report was published while two teams among 13 in the Abu Dhabi-backed City Football Group network - Manchester City and Girona - are second, respectively, in the English Premier League and La Liga standings and shape to qualify for next season's Champions League.

UEFA already used competition entry rules drafted 25 years ago to act against two American multi-club groups plus one English owner ahead of this season's European competitions.

"The multi-club investment trend has been fueled predominantly by US-based investors, with 44 multi-club investment groups originating in the United States," UEFA said. Investors have been attracted to clubs in Europe, UEFA suggested, "where access to players and business fundamentals is deemed to be better than elsewhere."

UEFA said fewer than 40 clubs

Excitement 'builds' for final showdown of international show jumping championship

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: All eyes are set on Marina Beach tomorrow as the final round of the KIB International Championship unfolds. Sponsored by Kuwait International Bank,

the competition promises intense battles, especially in the eleventh round, known as "the Grand Prize" at a height of 145 cm. This marks

the conclusion of the third tournament, held along the Arabian Gulf coast.

Tomorrow's rounds, set at altitudes of 110, 125, and 135 cm, are eagerly anticipated, with spectators waiting the crowning of the champion who will claim the prestigious title.

EQUESTRIAN

Heading the tournament's refereeing committee is Kuwaiti international referee **Nader Al-Mustafa**. The committee comprises **Lama Abdel-Al**, **Ibtisam Al-Aroui**, female horsewoman **Raghad Al-Dabbous**, and Lebanese international referee **Karim Badaro**, representing the International Equestrian Federation.

Nader Al-Mustafa, the head of the judging committee, expressed confidence in Kuwaiti equestrianism, stating that the country showcases excellence across all age levels in equestrian sports. Kuwait boasts artistic talents, attracting beginners to the sport, and some riders have rapidly gained recognition for their skills.



A file photo of Al-Jahra and Al-Shabab players waiting for proceedings to start.

\$28 billion European soccer industry

UEFA details trend, risks of teams in multi-club owner groups

worldwide were in ownership networks in 2012. Now it identified 105 top-division clubs in Europe having a "cross-investment relationship" with at least one other club. There were 112 more European clubs involved who play in lower tier divisions.

American investor groups combined to have majority stakes in 37 top-tier European clubs, the UEFA report said, and 65 clubs in total - almost five times more than the next highest total of 14 clubs in Italian ownership groups.

American ownership groups include **RedBird** whose prize asset is **AC Milan**, **Eagle Football** which has **Lyon**, and **777 Partners**, whose pursuit of English club **Everton** has intensified scrutiny on legal issues for its companies in the U.S.

RedBird and another American-backed group, **Aston Villa's** owner

V Sports, were investigated by a UEFA-appointed panel last year. **Milan** and its French sibling **Toulouse**, plus **Villa** and **Vitória Guimarães** in Portugal all qualified for European competitions.

UEFA judged the multi-club owners had some "decisive influence" over both teams and the cases led to board members being removed, investment stakes cut or divested, one-year transfer embargoes, and ending

SOCCER

shared use of scouting databases.

"These changes substantially restrict the investors' influence and decision-making power over more than one club," UEFA said last July.

Those interventions were seen as tougher than a 2017 ruling by a different UEFA panel that accepted

separation in **Red Bull's** ties to **Leipzig** and **Salzburg** that let both enter the Champions League. When those clubs met in the 2018-19 Europa League, **Salzburg** won both games and **Leipzig** failed to advance from their group.

Asked last week about a likely **Man City-Girona** investigation, UEFA general secretary **Theodore Theodoridis** said it was not yet appropriate to comment.

Collusion in the transfer market between clubs in shared ownership has been cited by UEFA as another integrity risk, though its latest research suggested this was "perhaps not the main (driver of multi-club purchases), as most people tend to think."

UEFA also insisted its club monitoring rules previously known as **Financial Fair Play** will "prevent advantages from related-party loans or transfers."

While being in a multi-club network has been welcomed at **Girona**, fans have protested against American owners in recent weeks in **England**, **Belgium** and **France**.

Crystal Palace and **Molenbeek** fans have been unhappy with **Eagle**, and **Strasbourg** fans have objected to being seen as less important to owner **BlueCo** which has a multi-billion dollar investment in **Chelsea**.

UEFA acknowledged on Thursday the multi-club trend "marks a significant shift in traditional ownership structures, with far-reaching implications for the interconnected relationships between clubs, sponsors and fans."

The UEFA-recognized **Football Supporters Europe** group has urged soccer bodies to "adopt firm regulations before the whole game is (irreversibly) compromised."



Real Sociedad's **Igor Zubeldia** (left), tries to block a shot from **PSG's Kylian Mbappé** during the Champions League round of 16 first leg soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Real Sociedad, at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris, France. (AP)



A section of the crowd who attended the honoring ceremony organized by Public Authority for Sport.

Sports

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Kuwaiti sports champions honored

Prime Minister commends athletes for World Cup and Paris Olympics qualifications



KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15, (KUNA): Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah expressed his pride in the accomplishments of Kuwaiti athletes during the Asian Handball Championship, securing qualification for the World Handball Championship, and earning spots in the Paris Olympics. Speaking at a ceremony organized by the Public Authority for Sport to honor these athletes, Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah lauded the achievement, emphasizing the athletes' strong belief, high self-confidence, and unwavering determination to achieve their goals.

Praising the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in supporting national renaissance and Kuwaiti sports, Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah conveyed the Amir's belief that the athletes are the result of a legacy sown by forefathers.

Encouraging Kuwaiti athletes to continue making strides in sports for the benefit of the nation, Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah assured unwavering support from the Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Minister of State for Communications Dawood Marafi, Public Authority for Sport, and Kuwait Olympic Committee. The aim is to elevate Kuwait's standing across all domains.

During the event, Abdullah Al-Khamees, the captain of the Kuwaiti national handball team, and Kuwaiti shooting champion Eman Al-Shamma delivered speeches. Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, accompanied by Minister Marafi, PAS Director-General Yousef Abdullah Al-Bidan, and KPC Chairman Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, later honored the Kuwaiti sports champions.



Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Dawood Marafi and other officials stand up for the Kuwait national anthem during the honoring ceremony.



The Prime Minister congratulates Kuwait athletes after honoring them.



Left to right: Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah honors Kuwaiti athletes during a ceremony organized by Public Authority for Sport.

Kazma under-19 crowned champions in nail-biter

Burgan and Kuwait Club face tough groups in Gulf Cup Champions Club Championship

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 15: The Kazma Club's under-19 youth team clinched the handball league championship by triumphing over Al-Qurain in a thrilling match with a scoreline of 32-31. The decisive game took place at the Martyr Fahd Al-Ahmad Center in Daiya, crowning Kazma's youth as the champions. Shabib Al-Hajri, Vice President of the Handball Federation, Abdullah Al-Dhiyab, Assistant Secretary, Omar Al-Mulla, Head of the Handball Authority, and the Treasurer of Kazma Club were present to witness the victory.

HANDBALL

In the ongoing handball league's second round at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, two matches are scheduled for today. Al-Qadisiya will face Al-Nasr at 5:00 pm, followed by the match between Al-Qurain and Al-Kuwait at 7:00 pm.

The draw for the 40th Gulf Cup Champions Club Championship took place in Doha, with Qatari Al-Arabi Club hosting the event from the 25th of this month to the 5th of next March. Burgan is placed in the "first" group alongside Qatar's Al-Arabi, Oman's Oman, and Bahrain's Al-Dair. Defending champion Al-Kuwait is in the "second" group with Qatar's Al-Rayyan, UAE's Maliha, and Bahraini Al-Shabab. The tournament schedule has been released, with Burgan kicking off against Al-Dair on the 25th, and Al-Kuwait playing against Maliha on the following day.

Burgan is currently in a training camp in Manama to prepare for the championship, while Al-Kuwait is focusing on local preparations through matches in the first three rounds of the league. Both teams are set to head to Doha on the 21st of this month.

In a historic victory, "The Dean" secured the 39th Gulf Championship title for the first time in its history, defeating the defending champion Bahraini star 29-27 in the final match held in Manama in March 2023.



Kazma Club's under-19 youth team celebrate after winning the handball league championship.

Centuries by Sharma, Jadeja help India reach 326-5 on day one

RAJKOT, India, Feb 15, (AP): Centuries by Rohit Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja underpinned India reaching 326-5 against England on day one Thursday of the third test.

India was 33-3 but Sharma and Jadeja rebuilt the innings with a 204-run stand. Sarfaraz Khan equalled the record for the fastest India half-century on test debut, 50 off 48. He was eventually run out for 62 just before stumps.

Jadeja was unbeaten on 110 and Sharma opened with 131.

England pacer Mark Wood took 3-69 from 17 overs.

Sharma and Jadeja played out the first wicketless session of the series in the afternoon. Jadeja reached 50 off 97 balls, and the two batters

brought up 150 runs together.

India went to tea at 185-3, then Sharma brought up his 11th test hundred off 157 balls.

The skipper opened up a bit more to hit three sixes and looked set for more but faced a short ball barrage from Wood after tea. Sharma mishit one Wood delivery straight to counterpart Ben Stokes at midwicket and was out within the first hour after tea.

That brought to the crease Khan, who belied his maiden test appearance by smashing the bowlers. Khan hit seven fours and a six, and a quick-fire 50 off 70 balls with Jadeja.

Khan was intent to race to three figures but his stay was cut short in a mixup with Jadeja, who was on 99 not out. He hit straight to mid-on,

changed his mind about a single, but Khan was too far out of the non-striker's end and Wood hit the stumps directly.

Khan added 77 off 110 balls with Jadeja for the fifth wicket.

CRICKET

The left-handed allrounder Jadeja registered his fourth test hundred off 198 balls, but didn't celebrate with much enthusiasm.

It was his second test hundred at his home ground Rajkot, where he has two first-class triple hundreds and averages 142.18 with the bat.

Jadeja also became the third India allrounder to

record 3,000 runs and 200 wickets in test cricket after Kapil Dev and Ravichandran Ashwin.

Earlier, Sharma and Jadeja helped India reach 93-3 at lunch.

India was reduced to 33-3 within nine overs after winning the toss.

Wood removed in-form batters Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill in the space of six deliveries.

Jaiswal, who scored a maiden double hundred in the second test, was caught at slip for 10 in the fourth over. Gill, who also scored a century in the previous test, was caught behind for a nine-ball duck.

Rajat Patidar, batting at No. 4 in the continued absence of Virat Kohli, was out for 5. He was caught at cover off Tom Hartley, fending off extra bounce.