

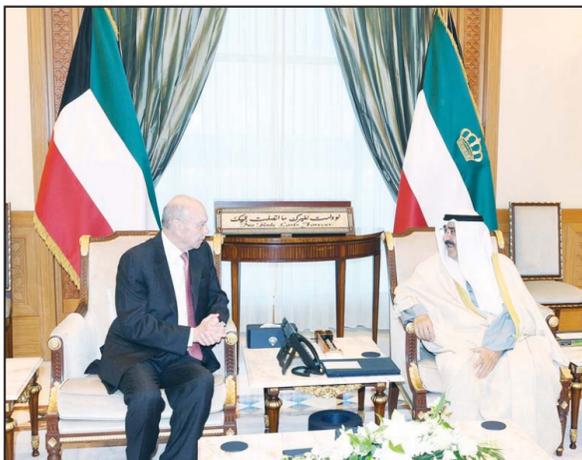


cricket
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Amir hosts Saudi PIF governor, chairman of Jordanian Senate



HH the Amir receives Governor of the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia Yasir Othman Al-Rumayyan (left) and Chairman of the Jordanian Senate Faisal Akef Al-Fayez (right).

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Sunday at Seif Palace the visiting Governor of the Public Investment Fund (PIF) of Saudi Arabia, Yasir Othman Al-Rumayyan and his accompanying delegation.

The meeting was attended by the Director General for Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority Sheikh Dr. Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received on Monday at Seif Palace the visiting Chairman of the Jordanian Senate Faisal Akef Al-Fayez on the occasion of his visit to the country. The meeting was attended by senior officials.

Also:

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace on Sunday His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

He also hosted Deputy Chief of the National Guards Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah.

HH Amir to grace cadet graduation

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces,

will patronize and attend the graduation ceremony of the 31st batch of cadets on Monday at Saad Al-Abdullah Academy of Security Sciences.

Opinion

We don't want to be like an ostrich

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

THE current Cabinet comes after 32 governments that have passed through Kuwait since liberation, with approximately 400 ministers, some of whom only lasted a few hours in office while some others lasted for about a month or two. This confirms the fact that there is political and administrative instability in the country.

This is also what prompted many of those ministers to be ignorant about what is happening in their ministries except in their offices. They sought to exploit their short time in office on frivolous endeavors, either in appointing their kinfolks and cronies, or hooking up their electoral keys, or parachuting people into positions they did not deserve, or squandering public funds.

This is what His Highness the Amir referred to in his lofty speech during the oath-taking ceremony. Among its outcomes were the many cases of corruption that became evident in the current situation that Kuwait is suffering from as a result of its decline in all fields. In fact, it became the world's talk as a typical example of corruption.

Kuwait was also plagued by parliamentarians who, to say the least, were not up to national responsibility, as they sought to close down the country through strict laws.

It has reached the point of even controlling people's behavior in their homes, and differentiating Kuwaitis based on where they are originally from or using discriminative statements such as "whether he is from outside the fence or inside the fence" and others. All this confirms that the goal is not only electoral gain, but rather to change the culture of society, which today is in dire need of unity in light of the sensitive circumstances that the region is experiencing.

It has led to an exodus of experienced people, and investments, in addition to the quest to make money for personal interest at the expense of public money, which made the state fall under a huge deficit.

This has been confirmed several times from the sovereign wealth fund classification, which at one stage reached a point where the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad had to ring the alarm bell in this regard. The classification still requires great efforts today to reach levels that will ensure the provision of many economic opportunities to Kuwait.

Here, it must be emphasized that what is established in management science regarding "what the subordinate is to the boss." That is, if the decision maker has a degree of determination and a clear vision for the interest of the nation, and has no fear, hesitation, or confusion, then his team will work according to his directives.

In this regard, there is no point in using democracy or the Constitution as an excuse because the former is the pursuit of the advancement of society, and the latter is based on the principle of securing the interests that serve the people,

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'TALENT RETENTION, ECONOMIC BOOST WITH VISIT RESUMPTION'

Kuwait decision to resume visits aligns with Gulf trend

Violators won't be tolerated: Sheikh Fahad

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef affirmed that the decision to reopen tourist, family, and commercial visits was made in response to the trend among most Gulf countries to resume such visits.

In a statement to Al-Qabas daily, the minister emphasized that comprehensive laws

and regulations have been established to govern these visits.

However, he stated, "Those who abide by these regulations will be welcomed, while those who violate them will face legal repercussions and be subject to punishment in accordance with the law."

Minister Fahad Al-Yousef underscored that the Ministry of Interior has implemented various measures and strategies to ensure the proper management of all types of visits under specific conditions, with continued vigilance to enforce regulations and deter violators.

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Children delight in playing in a fountain illuminated with vibrant colors representing the Kuwaiti flag, as the transition from winter to spring brings about a change in weather.

Kuwait FM meets Saudi counterpart in Munich

Maritime boundary delineation tops agenda

MUNICH, Germany, Feb 18, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met Saturday Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan on the sidelines of the 60th edition of Munich Security Conference, held in Munich in Germany from February 16-18.

During the meeting, they discussed means to bolster the historic relations between the two sisterly countries in all domains.

They reviewed several issues of common interest and the latest regional and international developments, especially the situation in the Gaza Strip and the efforts exerted to resolve it.

They touched upon means to ameliorate joint action among Gulf Cooperation Council member states and the latest developments related to demarcation of the maritime borders between Kuwait and Iraq beyond the 162 mark.

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met separately with his Canadian, Belgian, Sri Lankan and Maldivian counterparts, as well as the leader of the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council and President of Kurdistan Region of Iraq in Munich on Saturday.

The meeting with Foreign Minister Melanie Joly, of Canada, focused on the friendly relations and ways to strengthen cooperation in various fields as well as the latest developments of the situation in Gaza Strip.

Both sides also discussed the efforts to complete delineation of the maritime boundaries between the State of Kuwait and Iraq beyond mark 162.

During his meeting with Belgian Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib, Al-Yahya reviewed the bilateral ties and a range of regional and international

issues of common concern.

The efforts to delineate the Kuwait-Iraqi maritime boundaries and the situation in Gaza were also brought to the fore during the talks.

The meeting with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Ali Sabry dealt with the bilateral relations, regional and international issues of common interest, and the demarcation of the Kuwait-Iraqi maritime boundaries.

During his meeting with his Maldivian counterpart Moosa Zameer, the Kuwaiti foreign minister reviewed the efforts to promote economic cooperation as well as the role of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) in promoting economic development in the Maldives.

Both sides also discussed the latest developments of the situation in Gaza Strip and other regional and international issues of common interest.

Continued on Page 5



Kuwait FM meets Saudi counterpart in Munich.

Calls to limit voting rights face backlash

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The ongoing calls for amending the Election Law in order to limit the rights to vote and contest the elections to those who hold Kuwaiti citizenship as per Article One of the Nationality Law (natural-born citizens) have been met with massive opposition, as such calls are deemed to be aimed at dividing the people and tearing the national fabric.

Former Deputy National Assembly Speaker Muhammad Al-Mutair stressed that he and all the people of Kuwait wholeheartedly trust the political leadership, so he is sure the abovementioned amendment will never happen and that talking about it is just rumor mongering. He warned that such calls are too dangerous and could have the worst impact on the country.

Former MP Meteb Ayeed Al-Raathan stated that dividing the people of Kuwait is tantamount to undermining national unity. He wondered how one citizen and his children could go out to vote, while his Kuwaiti neighbor is not allowed to do so. He inquired how the latter would feel and what could be the negative effect of such a situation on him. He emphasized the need for tough action against those who adopted and spread calls for such amendment.

Former MP Muhammad Hayef pointed out that the nation's experience during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait put an end to discriminatory and racist calls. He said the period of invasion showed the unity of all the people of Kuwait, as well as the Bedouins who participated in the resistance movement.

Continued on Page 5

Winter to spring transition begins

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA): Al-Ojairi Scientific Center said, Sunday, that the gradual seasonal shift from winter to spring started today.

In a statement to KUNA, the center explained this seasonal shift included dusty winds accompanied with sudden sharp cold dips in temperature.

The center pointed out the change from winter to spring would show an increase in temperature until it settles in the spring season.

During this seasonal shift, the Adhan prayer time would start decreasing in one-minute decrements starting February 23 at 12:02 p.m.

The center concluded with stating that day-time would start lasting longer with the sun rising at 6:25 a.m. local-time and setting at 5:39 p.m., as it ushers in the spring.

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed by the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to guarantee timely and complete completion of citizens' transactions at state departments.

The MoU will lessen work for government agencies' personnel who serve the citizens.

In a joint press release on Sunday, the Ministry of Commerce and Capital Markets Authority said the MoU was signed by Chief Executive Officer **Ahmad Al-Melhem** who doubles as Chairman of the Capital Markets Authority's Board of Commissioners, and Minister of Commerce and Industry **Abdullah Al-Jouan**.

The memorandum of understanding comes in the context of updating all memorandums of understanding and agreements among state departments. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute affiliated with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a seminar titled Sports Diplomacy: concept and Practice.

President of the Qatar Press Center Saad Al-Rumaih said in the symposium, that Sports diplomacy contributes to enhancing and strengthening relations between individuals and people globally goes beyond geographical and cultural borders, and makes different cultures and languages easier to communicate with.

Al-Rumaih added that sport is used as a soft power to improve the relations between all countries, although there are political conflicts.

For his part, sports influencer MUSAED ALFOUZAN stressed the role of sports diplomacy in relations between countries and spoke about his e-program experience on social media, which 200 million people from different countries viewed. (KUNA)

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:05 Asr 15:14
 Sunrise .. 06:25 Maghrib .. 17:39
 Zohr 12:02 Isha 18:57

Local

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

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-28 km/h.
By Night: Rather cold to cold

Weather

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	23	16

Kuwait Airport	23	11
Abdaly	23	10
Jahra	24	13
Salmiyah	21	17
Nuwaisib	24	12
Wafra	23	10



PM Diwan photo
 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace today, His Excellency the President of the Senate of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Faisal Akef Al-Fayez, and his accompanying delegation, on the occasion of his visit to the country.



PM Diwan photo
 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace today, His Excellency the Governor of the Public Investment Fund in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Yasser bin Othman Al-Rumayyan, and his accompanying delegation, on the occasion of his visit to the country.



Photo by Ihab Qurtal
 Senior government and medical officials at the conference.

Annual nuclear med confab begins 29th

'MoH looks ahead to improve emergency medical services'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA): The Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health for Allied Medical Services Affairs, Dr. Abdullah Al-Faras, affirmed on Sunday the Ministry's keenness to improve the emergency medical system by honing the skills of the practitioners and services provided to citizens.

Al-Faras added in his speech during the emergency medical services... current reality and future aspirations conference that the ministry was keen, through the government's 100-day work program, to support and develop emergency medical services and launch a new fleet of ambulances equipped with the latest technologies.

The conference embodies the ministry's determination to keep up with technological and scientific developments related to medical emergencies, share experiences and exchange future visions to enhance cooperation between specialists in this field, he added.

Dr. Al-Faras said that the ministry would not skimp on supporting emergency medical practitioners and pointed to their role in the relief bridge for Gaza and their expected mission soon in accompanying and receiving the wounded in Gaza.

On his part, the President of the Conference, Director of the Medical Emergency Department, Dr. Ahmed Al-Shatti, revealed the launch of 10 ambulance centers in 2024, bringing the total number of ambulance centers and clinics to 86 centers and 200 ambulances.

Al-Shatti noted that in 2023, the total number of urgent reports reached 126,000, the total number of cases transported by ambulances reached 128,000, and the response rate reached 10 minutes, expressing optimism that the new ambulances would contribute to shortening this time.

He added that the number of cases of road accidents transported by ambulances

amounted to 8,757 cases, and the number of cases transported by air ambulance amounted to 808 cases.

He noted that medical evacuation to and from Kuwait amounted to 91 cases, and the number of coverage of various events reached 6,662 coverage, while mock exercises jumped from 9 in 2021 to 92 exercises, equivalent to seven times.

He explained that continuous medical training add to the credibility and accreditation for international recognition and stressed that training must include mental health and accommodation of the pressure that fall on the working team and patients.

The annual conference for medical emergencies included 40 scientific papers, 10 sessions and three workshops on emergency medical services, whether in terms of air or sea ambulance services, and how to deal with disasters and crises.

The conference coincides with the country's celebrations of national holidays, in addition to keeping pace with the Kuwaiti Ambulance Day, which falls on February 20, stressing the importance of attracting qualified cadres in light of global competition to cover shortage of qualified labor and advanced emergency technicians, Al-Shatti stated.

Meanwhile, Head of the Nuclear Medicine Department at the Ministry of Health (MoH) Dr. Abdulreda Ismail announced the start of the annual conference on nuclear medicine and molecular imaging titled "A new era," sponsored by Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, from February 29th to March 2nd, 2024, at Salwa Al-Sabah Hall.

In a press statement Sunday, Dr. Ismail mentioned that the conference will draw in renowned academics, researchers, and doctors in training programs, overseen by the Nuclear Medicine College affiliated with Kuwait Institute for Medical Specializations.

'Expo 965' team exhibition ends

'Provide creative people support'

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Abdulaziz Sari affirmed that the efforts exerted by Kuwaiti youth, craftsmen, and creative people require providing them with an incubator and continuous support.

He said this in a speech he gave during the closing ceremony of the Expo 965 team festival and exhibition for heritage and craft exhibitions and Kuwaiti innovators under the title of "National and Heritage Day of the Second Gulf and Maritime Expo" in the presence of representatives of the participating Gulf delegations and embassies of Arab and Asian countries.

Sari affirmed that the ministry will continue to support the efforts aimed to preserve the professions of parents and grandparents and those calling for the preservation of Kuwait heritage.



Abdulaziz Sari

He stressed that such festivals and exhibitions confirm the sophistication and development of societies, indicating the importance of continuing work to support efforts aimed at preserving various traditional crafts and professions.

Sari said, "I congratulate you, and I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to all team members, all supporters and workers, and all participants from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in this Kuwaiti, Gulf and maritime heritage, crafts and creative festival."

Meanwhile, the founder of the Expo 965 team and researcher Mohamed Kamal gave a similar speech in which praised the efforts exerted by the participants in the exhibition, which coincided with national holidays.

He revealed that the 185 team members, along with their colleagues from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, presented exhibits, artifacts and professions in 77 different specializations.

Kamal thanked the Minister of Information and Culture Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi, the Minister of Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Sabah, and the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Adel Al-Adwani.

'Fingerprint attendance to control negligence, improve productivity'

'Need to address surplus in some specializations'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Former Minister of Education Dr. Badr Al-Issa, has ignited a parliamentary and media uproar with his proposal to implement fingerprinting for teaching staff at the Ministry of Education, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In the midst of all this, many teachers have expressed their opposition. They argue that such a system does not align with the nature of their work and deems it unnecessary and potentially demeaning.

However, Al-Issa has defended his proposal, calling the fingerprint attendance a measure to control negligence and improving productivity in the workplace. He emphasized the need for optimal working conditions for teachers to fulfill their educational duties effectively. Addressing concerns about the practicality of fingerprinting, Al-Issa suggested tailored approaches for different categories of educational and administrative staff. For mentors who visit multiple schools daily, he proposed a system where they would fingerprint at each school visited, with data linked to educational districts.

Regarding teaching staff, he proposed categorizing them based on workload and specialization, with varying fingerprinting requirements. He also recommended exempting certain specialized teachers, such as those in high-demand subjects like physics and mathematics, from fingerprinting as a recognition of their scarcity. Al-Issa further stressed the importance of addressing surplus in certain specializations to prevent crises in schools, which can lead to irregular attendance and laxity among teachers. He called for transparency in publishing data on teacher numbers and specialization percentages to facilitate adjustments and maintain a balanced workforce.

While acknowledging potential challenges in implementing fingerprinting, Al-Issa urged for gradual adaptation and emphasized the necessity of preventive measures to address systemic issues within the education sector.

Campaign to rebuild trust in public sector

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) says in collaboration with the Public Authority for Anti-Corruption (Nazaha) it has launched the 'Performance' campaign across all public sector institutions as a joint initiative underscoring the Authority's unwavering dedication to national integrity, professionalism, and excellence in public service, reports Al-Jarida daily.

PAFN in a statement emphasized that its participation in this campaign signifies a significant stride effort in governance model built on ethical conduct and transparent operations. By partnering with Nazaha, the Authority plans to uphold the highest standards of integrity and professionalism and fostering a culture where ethical behavior is the norm, not the exception.

This initiative underscores its commitment to ethical behavior and transparency as foundational principles, integral to its operational ethos and community service and marks a pivotal moment in the Authority's journey.

By focusing on promoting consistent ethical behavior and transparent practices, the "Performance" campaign aims to rebuild and reinforce public trust in government institutions -- a crucial aspect for maintaining public confidence.

The Authority reiterated that its collaboration with Nazaha in this campaign reflects their shared goal of enhancing governance standards in the public sector and creating a legacy of integrity, excellence, and trust for future generations.

Through collective efforts, they seek to establish a culture where integrity and professionalism serve as cornerstones, ensuring effective and transparent public service delivery.

'Meet 7 conditions before banning import of goods'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Joan issued Ministerial Resolution number 32/2024, in which he specified seven conditions that must be met before banning the import, display or sale of goods; provided all or some of the conditions are excluded from cases requiring the immediate ban of goods, reports Al-Anba daily.

The resolution authorizes the Undersecretary to carry out duties legally prescribed by the Minister in relation to prohibiting the import, display and sale of goods and dangerous materials in the interest of the public or as per the personal safety requirements.

It states that a decision to ban the import, display or sale of goods is issued only if the following conditions are met: presented to the minister before signing and issuing; based on a decision and an official letter from the concerned authority; based on objectives stipulated in the relevant law; accurate description of the commodity to be banned in terms of trade name and international code; rationale behind the ban; a statement on whether the ban includes the import, display or sale all together or any of them only; and an appropriate grace period before the ban takes effect according to the nature of the commodity that will be banned.

HH Amir, PM congratulate Gambia

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Sunday a cable to the President of Gambia Adama Barrow, congratulating him on his country's national day.

In the cable, His Highness wished him further health and wellness, and

further progress and prosperity to his country and people.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah also sent on Sunday a cable to the President of Gambia Adama Barrow, congratulating him on the occasion of his country's national day.



PM Diwan photo
 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah receives invitation to visit Saudi Arabia.

PM receives invitation to visit S. Arabia

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received Sunday Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud. During the meeting,

Prince Sultan handed His Highness the Prime Minister an invitation from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud to visit the Kingdom. (KUNA)



KUNA photo
 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah chairs the meeting.

PM chairs PMA meeting

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, chaired Sunday a meeting of the Government Performance Monitoring Agency (PMA), in the presence of the Agency's Chief, Sheikh Ahmad Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

During the meeting, the agency's tasks were reviewed in following up on the latest developments in some government pro-

jects, their completion rates, and ways to overcome the difficulties and obstacles they encounter in cooperation and coordination with the relevant government agencies.

His Highness the Prime Minister praised the great efforts made by the PMA in monitoring and following up on all state projects, which contributes to saving effort and time and preserving public funds. (KUNA)

325 students take part in fair

KU launches engineering exhibition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA): Kuwait University (KU) launched its three-day 45th Engineering Design Exhibition with Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS), in participation of 325 student engineers in Sabah Al-Salem University City.

Acting Director of KU, Dr. Mishari Al-Harbi, affirmed in a press statement during the exhibition's opening, 90 engineering projects, ranging from the digital to the technical, have offered remarkable designs that fit into a clean and renewable energy future plan.

Dr. Al-Harbi called for all participating students to showcase their progressive skills during the exhibition, learn from each other,

and grow to benefit Kuwait's future endeavors.

On his part, Acting Dean of the College of Engineering and Petroleum, Dr. Khaled Al-Hazza, reiterated in a similar statement explaining the exhibition included projects by engineering students who have recently graduated and are excited to utilize their learned skills.

Dr. Al-Hazza said the exhibition has helped produce thousands of novel engineering projects, provide a motivational space for innovative ideas to flourish, and initiate dialogues between like-minded innovators to encourage friendly competitions between participants.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Glut of surplus jobs, need for expats fail to modify demographics'

"A FEW days ago, the social media circulated statistics showing that the number of teachers in some specializations, such as physical education and Islamic education, exceeds thousands, while their number in other specializations, such as physics and chemistry, is 11 and 29, respectively," columnist **Ahmad Ya'aqoub Baqer** wrote for *Al-Jarida* daily.

"This confirms the error and seriousness of the education and employment policy in the country, and despite the suggestions and recommendations that tried to remedy this error years ago, but relying on the policy of appeasement, populism, and turning a blind eye to the future has prevailed all along. In the 1992 Parliament, the Legislative Committee submitted a comprehensive report in which it called for coordination between work needs and educational outcomes, but it was not implemented.

"In the Planning Council, a special committee was formed for this issue in 2015, and hosted by Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Zaben, head of the civil services, who presented frightening statistics that confirmed the existence of a large surplus in many specializations. And that hiring them in the future will be impossible or will be delayed (and this is what is being seen today), but nothing has changed because populist desires were stronger than sound thinking.

"The government also acknowledged that populist and parliamentary pressure on private cadres of some parties led to a large disparity in the salaries of some specialties. The nation had a cadre of teachers despite the government's refusal, so the situation worsened until it reached what it has reached in an apparent contradiction between populist slogans and useful practical achievements, and between the euphoria of imaginary championships and a reality whose badness and danger have been shown by statistics.

"If the government's glut of surplus jobs continues and the need for expatriate workers continues, it will be impossible to modify the demographics and statistics, and not a single statistic, will show the deficit and need for necessary specializations such as nursing, technical and technological professions in every field, and other important and manual work that are today assigned to companies and expatriates.

"These statistics will also show the huge surplus and the rapid increase in specializations that are not required in the labor market, which will accumulate in the government and whose cost will exceed all oil and non-oil income.

"In short, the current situation perpetuates the old Arab proverb, 'Barakesh has committed a crime against herself', and the fear is that Barakesh will continue to commit crimes against Kuwait."



Ahmad Baqer

Also:

"Every time I observe the conduct of certain MPs today, I am reminded of the dignified demeanor of past council members, whose presence graced Abdullah Al-Salem Hall with a sense of honor and responsibility. These representatives exemplified decorum, mutual respect, and a refined approach to opposition. Even amidst staunch disagreements, they upheld a standard of civility, earning the admiration and applause of their peers, including myself," columnist **Youssef Al-Shehab** wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"Yesterday's representatives were pillars of labor, productivity, and constructive engagement with the government, all within the bounds of the constitution.

"They understood their constitutional roles and limitations, as well as those of the government, respecting the balance of powers delineated in the constitutional contract. Unlike today, they never overstepped their authority, nor did they resort to threats or manipulation to achieve personal or political ends.

"These exemplary representatives prioritized their duty to monitor the executive authority and hold it accountable, without transgressing the constitutional boundaries. It pains us, as proud citizens of a democratic nation, to witness the deterioration of parliamentary decorum and the erosion of the National Assembly's role as the voice of the people.

"While freedom of speech is a cornerstone of democracy, it must be exercised responsibly, with due regard for the dignity of the state and its institutions. Just as in Britain's Hyde Park, where diverse opinions are expressed freely but within limits of respect and decorum, parliamentary discourse must be guided by principles of humility and restraint.

"In reflecting upon the Quranic injunction to 'not walk upon the earth arrogantly,' we find wisdom in humility and a reminder to conduct ourselves with dignity and respect, both within and outside the halls of governance. It is my hope that our representatives heed these timeless teachings as they carry out their sacred duties."

□ □ □

"The Saudis and Argentines succeeded, so will we succeed? One morning, the Argentines woke up to an agreement between poultry and egg traders to increase the price of eggs once. They made the agreement without thinking, even for a single moment, that some people could not obtain food for the day, as well as those who toiled day and night to feed their hungry children," columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawaas** wrote for *Al-Seyassah*.

"But, the Argentines were more resourceful and intelligent. One would go to the supermarket and when he found the price of eggs was high, he would return them to their place. This was the case with all Argentines, as they agreed on the

idea of 'let them spoil.'

"So what happened next? Days later, as usual, the poultry company's distribution vehicle arrived to deliver new quantities of eggs, but they were surprised that the shop owners refused to accept them, so the merchants returned the items to their warehouses. They decided to be patient for a few days, hoping the Argentines would return to buy eggs.

"The merchants waited for days and the people waited. Days passed and the 'greedy' merchants got involved. The eggs piled up in refrigerators, stores, warehouses and grocery stores without a buyer, while the chickens in the farms continued to produce eggs and the owners of the supply stores did not ask for new deliveries as the eggs they had at the new prices were still in the shelves.

"The story did not end here. After a few days, the merchants agreed to sell the eggs at the previous price, but the proud Argentines still refused to buy them, so that the merchants would be polite and not do the same thing again. The merchants then reduced the price again.

"Did the story end there? No, the people did not buy the eggs and the merchants were very upset, because the losses were accumulating. Finally, the merchants agreed to sell the eggs at a quarter of the price before the increase, while offering an official apology to the people in the newspapers, promising not to repeat what happened.

"Here, the story ended. The conscious Argentine people emerged victorious in their battle with the merchants. They were able to buy eggs at a discount of 75 percent of the original price. Congratulations to those people who agreed intellectually and knew their interests. They won the battle against the greedy merchants.

"This situation is somewhat similar to what happened in Saudi Arabia in 2013. Some Saudis launched a campaign called, 'Let it be cheap.' They meant that everyone would refrain from buying tomatoes when the price increased. In Kuwait, we can apply the same approach to all consumer goods, so we refrain from buying tomatoes or any high-priced item to force the sellers to reduce the prices. It is unreasonable that a country like Kuwait overlooking the sea has high prices for fish, as the sea is supposed to be generous so the price should be low.

"From time to time, Kuwaiti merchants and the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry use the excuse of cost. Their interests come into play and their efforts are weak in confronting monopoly, so the prices rise and they reap profits. We should be like the Argentines and Saudis whenever the price of a commodity increases. Basically, what happened is based on a theory in economics: 'If demand decreases, the price decreases.'"

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

Other Voices

Not a dinar or a salary raise

By Ahmad alsarraf

High orders were issued to the government on the need to work to improve the citizen's standard of living.

Raising the standard of living does not lie in increasing salaries, as these increases will create a wave of inflation, which will devour these increases, and the citizen will then discover that he has placed huge financial burdens on public funds, and the increase has eroded, and on top of that, the state of government services remains backward, and therefore one must think outside the box how to improve the citizen's standard of living, and this requires thinking about implementing all or most of the following matters:



alsarraf

1 - The necessity of declaring that the state of our roads constitutes a national disaster that cannot be solved within the requirements of "speed, cost and quality", without calling in a global monitoring company, the size of the American "Bechtel", for example, which saved the oil industry immediately after the liberation, to provide oversight assistance. And the technical staff of the Ministry of Public Works, which is almost devoid of any competencies that can be trusted and relied upon to carry out the road repair process.

The core of this company's work will be to supervise the awarding of tenders to various local and other companies, and to supervise the paving operations, starting with the asphalt factory, which is approved by it, through transporting the material to the road, and ending with paving and inspecting it, and issuing clearance certificates.

2 - Accelerating the launch of vital projects and moving the wheel of the economy.

3 - Conducting a review of the salary structure of state employees, and make them equal to each other, even if this leads to reducing the salaries of some sectors.

4 - Reconsidering Law No. 44/1994.

5 - Expediting the filling of vacant senior positions.

6 - Ending the issue of forged and unaccredited certificates, by declaring that anyone who comes forward and declares that his university degree, or what follows it, is illegal, has the right to continue in his job for a period of six

months, provided that he is re-employed at a lower level, after that, with a job that is commensurate with the latest certificate he holds, and is exempted from any financial fines or else face punishment if identified and proven to hold forged documents and end up with referral to the prosecution.

7 - Re-issuing the Election Commission law free of any defects.

8 - Proceed as quickly as possible in awarding Kuwait 2040 projects.

9 - Accelerating the improvement of the level of medical care, allocating government hospitals for citizens only, and hosting international doctors to Kuwait, periodically.

10 - Opening up the state, similar to what is happening in the Gulf countries, and curbing politicized religious parties.

11 - Approval of the new traffic law, which includes imposing deterrent fines for violations!

12 - Preventing mediation when appointing employees, and subjecting candidates for senior positions to competency tests and personal interviews.

13 - Immediately complete the process of automating "all" government transactions using the "online" method thus greatly reducing the need for parliamentary intermediaries.

14 - Putting an end to the conflicts of some family members and bring their disagreements within manageable limits.

This is in addition to other reforms that we have called for several decades ago but none of them have been implemented, even though the majority of them fall within the powers of the executive authority.

We have learned from our relatively short democratic history that the productivity of the government apparatus, during all periods of the dissolution of Parliament, without exception, reached very low levels, despite having time and a large margin of freedom of movement.

This lack of productivity and the failure to meet the citizen's minimum demands, during these periods have always pushed the latter to choose the confrontational representative, who finds in the government's failure an opening to tickle the feelings of his voters and convince them of his ability to achieve what the government was unable to achieve.

The period remaining until the next elections is not long, but the government can do miracles in the same period by approving many things through thoughtful and selected decrees.

□ □ □

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

Your money or your life!

Expatriate robbed of KD 4,000 at knifepoint; Man commits suicide

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The Ministry of Interior has initiated an investigation following an incident reported by an expatriate to the Al-Ahmadi police station on Sunday, February 18, 2024. The victim recounted being forcefully robbed at knifepoint, losing 4,000 dinars in front of a gas station in Al-Ahmadi, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to the expatriate's statement, he had just withdrawn an amount totaling 4,000 dinars from a national bank, intended for workers' salaries. Shortly after leaving the bank premises, he was intercepted by an individual driving a white four-wheel-drive vehicle. This assailant brandished a knife, compelling the victim to surrender the withdrawn sum.

Speculation arises that someone within the bank premises might have tipped off the perpetrator regarding the victim's possession of a substantial amount, making him a target for theft.

Authorities have confirmed the initiation of a thorough investigation, intending to ascertain the veracity of the victim's account and gather further details about the assailant and the vehicle used in the crime.

The incident has been formally registered as a case of forcible robbery.

□ □ □

Expatriate commits suicide: On Sunday, February 18, 2024, tragedy struck in Al-Mutlaa as an expatriate took his own life by hanging. The incident has prompted authorities to launch an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the tragic event, reports Al-Anba daily.

The deceased, whose identity has not been disclosed, was discovered by his sponsor in a distressing state within the confines of his living quarters.

He had utilized a rope to end his life by hanging himself. The sponsor, undoubtedly shaken by the grim discovery, promptly alerted the authorities.

The body has been transferred to forensic medicine as part of the investigative process to ascertain the motives behind the expatriate's drastic decision. Details regarding the events leading up to the incident remain scarce as authorities delve deeper into the matter.

This tragic occurrence serves as a poignant reminder of the complexities and challenges faced by expatriates living far away from their homelands.

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Two held with drugs: Two individuals with a known history of drug abuse were apprehended by patrol officers from the Jahra Security Directorate yesterday evening. During a routine inspection at a checkpoint along Jahra Road, the suspects were found in possession of a bag containing the narcotic drug Shabu, along with drug paraphernalia. They were promptly arrested and taken into custody. The confiscated items, as well as the individuals, were handed over to the General Administration for Drug Control for further investigation, according to Al-Anba daily.

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Miraculous escape: In an incident on the Wafra Farms Road, a vehicle and a truck collided at an intersection, fortunately leaving both drivers unharmed, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to information provided by a firefighting source to Al-Rai, the Wafra Fire Station's team, under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Khaled Saad Al-Ajmi, promptly responded to the accident scene. They successfully rescued the drivers of the involved vehicles, both of whom were found to be in good condition. Additionally, the vehicles were swiftly cleared from the road to ensure the safety of other road users.

□ □ □

4 hurt in two fires: Fire broke out in two houses recently - one in Sabahiya and another Abu Halifa, causing injuries to four people, reports Al-Rai daily.

In a press statement, Kuwait Firefighting Force (KFF) revealed that firefighting teams from Mangaf and Ahmadi fire stations extinguished the fire that broke out in a house in Sabahiya.

Two people were injured in the fire incident and both of them were taken to the hospital.

In Abu Halifa, firefighters from Mangaf and Fahaheel fire stations doused the fire that broke out in a house in the area. Two people were injured and they were rushed to the hospital.



Both the drivers escaped this horrendous accident.

Judge refuses bail for 'fashionista'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The Court of Appeals presided over by Judge Salem Al-Asousi rejected the request to release on bail the fashionista Fatima Al-Moumen, who was accused of causing a traffic accident that resulted in the death of two people and injuries to two others, crossing a red traffic signal, and speeding above the allowed limit. The court decided to reserve the case for judgment on March 14, re-

ports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

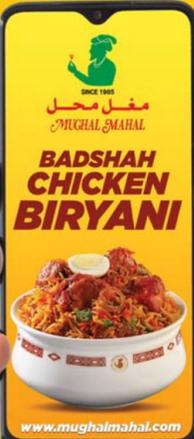
On October 25, the Misdemeanor Court had sentenced the fashionista to three-year imprisonment in the case, which was famously known as the Soor Street accident in Capital Governorate and had preoccupied Kuwait and Arab public opinion for two months. The court had also ruled to withdraw her driving license for a period of one year.

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Garages, workshops raids in Al-Rai

28,000 traffic citations in 1 week

By Munaif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Officers of the General Traffic Department issued 28,000 traffic citations, and seized 78 vehicles and 40 wanted vehicles during traffic campaigns last week.

According to weekly statistics issued by the General Traffic Department, 31 reckless motorists were arrested and referred to traffic police, and nine juveniles were caught driving vehicles without a driver's license. Also, 14 people without identification documents, 14 wanted for civil and criminal cases, two in possession of narcotic drugs and a person in abnormal condition were arrested. Necessary legal measures were taken

against them.

Meanwhile, the General Traffic Department (GTD), in cooperation with Kuwait Municipality, carried out a traffic and inspection campaign covering workshops, garages and craft shops in Al-Rai in the Capital Governorate, reports Al-Anba daily.

This campaign resulted in the issuance of 90 citations for traffic violations and impounding of two vehicles. The violations include failure to follow the height conditions, paint damage, expiration of insurance and license; while the Municipality put warning stickers on 18 abandoned vehicles.

GTD confirmed the continuation of these campaigns, and that it will not be lax in enforcing the law on violators, calling on the public to strictly comply with the traffic regulations to ensure the safety of everyone.

Awqaf's request for a site to build mosque, parking lot tops agenda

Council member queries about classification of engineering offices

By Inass Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The Municipal Council was to hold its 13th regular meeting of the second session headed by Abdullah Al-Mahri, Monday, to discuss a number of items on its agenda, the most important of which is the request of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs for a site to build a mosque and parking lot within Sabahiya Block 1.

Other items to be discussed by the Municipal Council at the meeting are:

1. the request of the Ministry of Health for the allocation of a location for Khairan Health Center within Khairan Block 1.

2. the request of the Environment Public Authority for the reallocation of the Qurain waste landfill site within Adan Block 5 in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate to the Kuwait Municipality, with a modification of the area.

3. the request of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation for the allocation of an expansion of the rainwater collection tank site within Ardiya for government uses and connecting paths for rainwater drainage.

4. the Ministry of Finance's request to reallocate the site decided upon by the Municipal Council's decision taken on May 31, 1999 with an area of 750 square meters and dimensions of 25 x 30 meters in Salmiya for the benefit of the Ministry of Finance on a permanent basis instead of its

temporary capacity, and to cancel any previous decisions regarding the site.

5. a request from the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to allocate and install a site for the construction of a secondary transformer station with an area of 12 x 7 meters in Mishref Block 6, station 2

6. a request from the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to allocate a secondary transfer station site with dimensions of 12.5 x 16.5 meters in Mishref Block 6, Station 5.

7. the complaints submitted by the residents of Dasma Block 5 against Asrar Al-Qabandi Private School for demolishing the school's fence and opening a large door without the municipality's permission.

8. the letter sent by some residents of Firdous Block 9 regarding the objection to the proposal to allocate parking in the square in front of private residential homes in Firdous Block 9.

9. the complaint submitted by some residents of South Khaitan Block 1 regarding the transfer of an electricity transformer adjacent to plot 681.

10. the complaint submitted by a group of West Abdullah Al-Mubarak plot holders regarding the entrance to the gas station in West Abdullah Al-Mubarak, Block 6.

Suggestions

The Municipal Council will

also discuss members' suggestions, including the proposal submitted by member Alia Al-Farsi regarding traffic congestion in the Jabriya and Surra areas, and also the proposal submitted by member Nasser Al-Jadaan regarding creating a U-turn on Nasser Al-Mubarak Road, and the proposal submitted by member Dr. Hassan Kamal regarding creating a U-turn in the Rumaithiya residential area.

In another development, the Municipal Council member Abdullatif Al-Daei submitted questions to the executive body regarding the classification of engineering offices, referring in the preamble to his letter to Article 72 of the internal regulations to organize the work of the Municipal Council.

Focused

In his questions to the municipality, Al-Daei focused on three basic axes - the classification of engineering offices, the mechanism and conditions for their classification, the department concerned with that, and the categories of offices in the municipality and the features of each category.

He asked to be provided with a list of the names of the offices approved by the municipality.

He also asked about measuring the performance of offices classified in the municipality, the mechanism for monitoring their work, the requirements for renewing the classification periodically, and the evaluation of workers and engineers for offices registered under the municipality.

Al-Daei inquired about the accreditation and classification of the owner's representative or the

project manager, either an individual or a company in the municipality.

The second axis in Al-Daei's questions focused on the role and obligations of the engineering office in the residential sector and its obligations before the municipality in all stages of construction work in the residential sector, as well as the obligations of the engineering office towards the owner in the residential sector according to the regulations and systems approved in the municipality.

He asked the municipality to provide him with a form of supervision undertaking for the residential and investment sector, and asked whether the engineering office was required to approve the contract concluded between the owner and the contractor.

The final part of Al-Daei's questions focused on the oversight of engineering offices in the residential sector, how to activate it, and the penalties and procedures followed by contracting engineering offices in the event of a violation or defective buildings.

He also inquired about the incentive programs for engineering offices, and how to measure their performance in terms of quality and compliance with regulations and laws.

Al-Daei requested to be provided with a copy of the regulations and systems that regulate the process of classification, supervision and control of the work of engineering offices in the residential sector of the municipality. He also asked about the approval of the contract concluded between the owner and the engineering office by the municipality, and if there are approved models for those contracts.



Kuwait's FM with his Bahraini counterpart in Munich.

KUNA photo

Talks held with Ban Ki-moon Centre's chief

Kuwaiti FM meets with his Bahraini, Jordanian & Egyptian counterparts

MUNICH, Germany, Feb 18, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya met with his Bahraini counterpart Abdullatif Al-Zayani during the three-day 60th Munich Security Conference in Germany.

The Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement on Saturday explaining that the meeting took place on Friday where both Al-Yahya and Al-Zayani reviewed the historical and fraternal relationship that ties the two countries.

They discussed a myriad of topics ranging from regional and global affairs to the Israeli occupation's war on Gaza, hoping to enrich and strengthen the bond between Kuwait and Bahrain.

They also discussed the latest updates on the demarcation maritime borders between Kuwait and Iraq.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Al-Yahya met with Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Al-Safadi on the sidelines of the sixtieth session of the Munich Security Conference.

During the meeting, they reviewed the bilateral relations and cooperation in various areas as well as regional and international issues, including the situation in Gaza Strip.

Al-Yahya also met with Chairman of

Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens Ban Ki-moon on the sidelines of the 60th edition of Munich Security Conference in Munich.

During the meeting, held on Friday, they discussed major regional and international issues put on the conference's agenda, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a press release on Saturday.

They also touched upon the center's significant role in supporting global sustainable development and peace, protecting citizens across the world, ensuring gender equality, defending the rights of women, children and youth, and integrating women and youth into society.

Also, Al-Yahya met on Friday Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukry on the sidelines of the 60th Munich Security Conference.

The Foreign Ministry said, in a statement on Saturday that Friday meeting focused on ways to strengthen the bilateral relations in various fields as well as a range of regional and international issues of common concern, including the latest developments of the situation in Gaza Strip.

The meeting also dealt with the efforts to complete delineation of the maritime boundaries between Kuwait and Iraq beyond the mark 162.



Photos by Mahmoud Jadedd
Top and above: Some photos from the World Elite Assault Team Competition.

15 Arab and foreign countries participate

Kuwaiti teams excel in the Int'l Elite Assault Team Competition

By Munaif Nayef

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The Assistant Undersecretary for Private Security Affairs at the Ministry of Interior Major General Abdullah Saffah affirmed the support of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior (acting) Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, and the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Salem Al-Nawaf, for the International Elite Assault Team Competition, which is being held for the first time in Kuwait with the participation of 15 Arab and foreign countries.

In a press statement issued while attending the competitions at the Special Forces building in Sulaibiya yesterday morning, Major General Saffah announced that the Kuwaiti team won first place in the anti-terrorism competition in storming the airplane. The Russian team won second place despite their professionalism in the field of storming.

He affirmed that the results of the participating Kuwaiti teams were excellent, indicating that the Kuwaiti team participated with two Special Forces teams and two National Guard teams.

Major General Saffah said, "The conclusion of the activities and coronation will be held on Thursday under the patronage of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior (acting) Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef."

Meanwhile, Head of the committee supervising the International Elite Assault Teams Competition Colonel Abdulaziz Al-Tabeeh affirmed that the Elite Teams competitions are military, not sports, and

are specialized in the S.W.A.T. Teams.

Highlighting the participation of 15 Arab and foreign countries, he explained that the competition is honorable, strong, global, and tactical. It is aimed to exchange information and experiences between the Kuwaiti storming teams and the teams from Arab and foreign countries, as well as to gain experience.

The Kuwaiti team affiliated with the Ministry of Interior came out on top in the plane storming competition.

The names of the competitions, such as "Hijacking of the Jabriya Plane", "Umm al-Hayman Operation", "Maidan Hawally Operation", "Salmiya Operation", "Saad Al-Abdullah Operation", and "Operation 2/8" were chosen to commemorate the martyrs through these operations and their heroic role.

In addition, members of the Kuwaiti teams participating in the International Elite Assault Team Competition affirmed that the enthusiasm is high and the competition is strong among the participants.

They stressed that they will win first places in all competitions due to their great experience, high competence and the professionalism that they enjoy.

Despite the presence of about 15 Gulf, Arab and foreign countries and about 19 teams, the organization of the competition appeared in the most amazing and distinguished manner under the supervision of the Assistant Undersecretary for Private Security Affairs Major General Abdullah Saffah, the Chairman of the organizing committee Colonel Abdul Aziz Al-Tabeeh, and the Chairman of the Information Committee Major Abdul Aziz Al-Mawash.



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Doha hosts 53rd session of Arab Permanent Committee for Human Rights

Kuwaiti official calls for ending Israeli practices against Palestinians

DOHA, Feb 18, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs, Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Sabah, stressed on Sunday the necessity of confronting the Israeli violations and racist practices against the Palestinian people.

In a statement to KUNA during the 53rd session of the Arab Permanent Committee for Human Rights, hosted by Doha, Sheikh Jawaher called on the international community to take

immediate action to stop the aggression of the occupying entity against the Gaza Strip and open corridors to send humanitarian aid.

She stressed the importance of the items included on the session agenda, such as confronting the violations of the Israeli occupation and racist practices in the occupied Arab territories, in addition to the Arab prisoners and detainees in the occupation prisons.

National Day greetings

Assalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatul-lahi Wa Barakatuhu

On behalf of the people and the Government of Bangladesh and from my own behalf, would like to extend to the brotherly people and the Government of the State of Kuwait our heartiest congratulation and warm greetings on the auspicious occasion of the 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait.

The existing bond of fraternal relations between our two countries is a matter of great satisfaction for us and it will surely be strengthened in depth and dimension in the coming years by prudent leadership of His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait and Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh

Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina.

I believe that both our countries have the potential to further consolidate these relations through more interactions for mutual benefit of our two countries.

I wish continued peace, progress and prosperity to the brotherly people of Kuwait.



Ashikuzzaman

H.E. Major General Md Ashikuzzaman, ndc, afwc, psc, G (Retd.) Ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait

Martyr's Office opens 'The Most Precious Homeland is Survival & Existence' festival

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The festival titled "The Most Precious Homeland is Survival and Existence", organized by the Martyr's Office on the occasion of national holidays, was launched Friday evening and will continue for three days at the Shaheed Park, under the patronage and presence of the Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs and Chairman of the Board of Trustees Sheikh Mohammed Al-Abdullah. The opening ceremony was also attended by a number of ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps, officials of the Amiri Diwan, and participating parties.

Director General of the Office for Honoring Martyrs and their Families Salah Al-Aufan explained in a press statement issued during the opening ceremony that the festival was launched this month as it is the month of celebrating Kuwaiti holidays. It includes many diverse programs and activities for all age groups. Also, the martyr's mural will be revealed in a new look at the park in memory of the honorable martyrs, in addition to another mural expressing the facts of martyrdom, which is the work of female students of the College of Basic Education's Department of Art Education.

Al-Aufan revealed that there was

great interaction between the participating parties and visitors to the park.

He highlighted the exciting performances of the popular bands, the army and police bands, and competitions for adults and children.

Al-Aufan explained that the children's pavilion, which is supervised by Gulf Oil Company as a strategic partner for the festival's activities, was the focus of everyone's attention due to the fun and exciting activities it contains.

The public was also interested in seeing the section dedicated to the drawings of female students of the College of Basic Education's Department of Art Education, which depicted the events of martyrdom from the time of independence to the present day.

A special corner of the Martyr's Office has been dedicated for displaying pictures and names of the 1,329 martyrs of Kuwait, as well as screens to search for the stories of the martyrs and the reasons for their martyrdom. An AI camera device has also been installed which carries the personalities of the nation's heroes whose stories were revealed during this event.

Gifts and office publications will be distributed to the public during the event. An external photo exhibition containing the effects of brutal aggression and the joy of liberation will also be organized.

political rights.

The ICM asked the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Information and Public Prosecution to strictly deal with suspicious individuals adopting such a destructive idea.

Meanwhile, the Legal Affairs Committee at the Cabinet has submitted its recommendations regarding the upcoming parliamentary election to the Council of Ministers, such as holding the election on the Saturday before the last 10 days of the holy month of Ramadan or one day before the end of the two-month period between the date of issuing the legislative dissolution decree and the Election Day.

The committee also recommended the amendment of the Election Law in order to delegate judges to the Higher Commission for Elections, instead of appointing them.

On the other hand, constitutional expert Professor Ibrahim Al-Homoud explained the meaning of the phrase, 'original Kuwaiti citizen' who has the right to vote and run for elections in Article 82 of the Constitution. He cited the explanatory memorandum of the Constitution, stating that the original citizen is anyone born a Kuwaiti whether his father was born a Kuwaiti or acquired the citizenship. He clarified further that the child must be born after his father was granted the Kuwaiti citizenship (naturalized) to be considered an original Kuwaiti citizen (natural-born). He added all other countries in the world differentiate between the natural-born citizens and those who are naturalized.

Maritime boundary

Continued from Page 1

The talks with leader of the Presidential Leadership Council Rashad Muhammad Al-Alimi focused on the historical relations between Kuwait and sisterly Yemen in various areas, and the efforts to promote the security and stability in Yemen.

The efforts to complete the delineation of the Kuwait-Iraqi maritime boundaries and the situation in Gaza were also reviewed during the talks.

A similar meeting with President of Kurdistan Region Nechirvan Barzani explored ways to promote cooperation between Kuwait and the Iraqi region in such areas as economy, investment and development.

Both sides also discussed the efforts to complete delineation of the maritime boundaries between the State of Kuwait and Iraq beyond mark 162.

Al-Yahya had these separate meetings on the fringes of the 60th Munich Security Conference (MSC), which opened Friday, will commence Sunday.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Acting Assistant Under-secretary for Public Education Affairs Dr Salman Al-Lafi recently issued a decision on the schedule of the electronic test for candidates to leadership positions in the primary, middle and secondary schools, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources revealed the electronic test for applicants in the Special Education Department, Religious Education Department and Special Education Department will be from March 3-7, 2024 at the Jabriya Training Center. The test timings will be from 9:00 am to 11:15 am and from 6:00 pm to 8:15 pm according to the jobs stated in the schedule.

Candidates must be present one hour before the test and they must bring their civil identification card. It is strictly prohibited to bring a mobile phone or electronic watch to the testing facility. It is also prohibited to enter the facility 10 minutes after the test starts.

Grievances regarding the test results should be submitted through the Ministry of Education's website -- electronic services section for the employees -- within a maximum of three days from the date of the test.

A decision will be later issued regarding the date of the postponed electronic test for the candidates for educational supervisory positions. Educational districts must inform those concerned about the testing date.

The decision also indicated that in the event of absence from the first electronic test due to sickness, the medical report must be submitted to the Department of Coordination and Follow-up for Public Education in the ministry's building within a maximum of three days from the date of the test and it will not be received after this date.

The decision explained that no transfer, secondment or appointment decisions will be issued until another Amiri decree is issued allowing these procedures.

Egypt set to host just peace forum

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Under the theme 'Just Peace for Development', the Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation is preparing to host its third forum for the culture of just peace in Cairo, Egypt, from Feb 20 to Feb 22, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The forum, which enjoys the patronage of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, will commence with an inauguration ceremony presided over by Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi, Minister of Information and Culture, and Dr. Nevin Al-Kilani, Egyptian Minister of Culture.

The event will be attended by heads of state and government, parliamentary leaders, ministers, as well as politicians, intellectuals, and media professionals from across the globe.

Kuwait decision

Continued from Page 1

Violators, including both visitors and sponsors, will be flagged by the General Administration of Residency Affairs Investigations, and appropriate legal actions will be taken in accordance with the Foreigners' Residence Law.

Explaining the rationale behind the decision, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef highlighted the importance of preventing the misuse of visits and ensuring they serve their intended purpose. He noted instances where qualified individuals left the country due to the inability to live without their families, emphasizing that the decision to reopen visits aims to retain such talent and prevent their departure from the country.

Moreover, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef emphasized the potential economic benefits of opening up to visitors, noting the expansion of airport facilities. He asserted, "There is no reason why we cannot increase the number of visitors to the country within established frameworks, laws, and specific visitation periods. Those who fail to adhere to these regulations will face consequences."

'Candidates need to be present one hour before test'



A group photo from the event.



Some photos from the trip to the farms.

Bid to promote sustainable agriculture, permaculture activities

NBK supports LOYAC agricultural trips to farms

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) and LOYAC concluded four environmental local trips to Sulaibiya and Al Wafra. The four trips go with the UNSDGs goal 15 life on land and in line with NBK's Strategy focusing on integrating the UNSDGs into its social programs. In addition to an intensive two weeks of internship of daily learning and application in permaculture at different locations in Kuwait.

NBK's support to LOYAC's trips comes as part of the bank strategic partnership with the organization.

74 volunteers from different backgrounds ages between 14 and 28 participated in these trips which were designed to introduce regenerative farming principles, explore techniques for maintaining healthy soil; practice cover cropping & mulching techniques; demonstrating composting; introducing crop rotation; creating swales & learning about keyline designs; in addition to the importance of companion planting.

This support reflects NBK's commitment to its social responsibility as well as the vital role it plays in supporting students, youths and self-building initiatives in Kuwait.

"Sulaibiya and Al Wafra field trips were truly an inspiring

environmental learning experience that added profound value to the young people involved", said Joanne Al Abduljaleel, NBK Public Relations Manager. "This is not the first-time we go with Loyacers in field trips. We were happy to join Loyacers in lots of inspiring cultural trips around Asia and Africa. This time, we had the chance to know better our local farms and actively participate in sustainable agriculture and permaculture activities, including planting, maintaining farms and greenhouses, and applying permaculture principles".

"NBK always strives to empower Kuwaiti youth to realize their potentials, build their personalities and motivates their ambition. These agricultural trips with LOYAC comes in line with our strategy to invest in our society," Al Abduljaleel added.

Throughout the program, Loyacers had practical training in agriculture with the aim of achieving advanced skills in the field that will allow the trainee to find job opportunities in existing and expected agricultural initiatives and projects.

LOYAC is a nonprofit organization that runs several programs for the youth to develop their professional skills, enhance their personal growth and help them find their sense of purpose by extending themselves to others.



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The New India Assurance Co Ltd, Kuwait (NIA Kuwait) intends to appoint an Audit firm for Statutory Audit & Internal audit services for a period of three years as stated below. Interested Audit Firms are invited to submit their tender as detailed in the tender document separately for Statutory Audit & Internal Audit services.

Scope of Tender

Statutory Audit:
Tenderer will be required to provide Statutory Audit Services to conduct audits of core activities and processes as per the tender document for appointment of Statutory Auditor (including but not restricted to) for a period of three years as under:

- 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025
- 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026
- 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2027

Internal Audit:

Tenderer will be required to provide Internal Audit Services to conduct audits of core activities and processes as per the tender document for appointment of Internal Auditor (including but not restricted to) for a period of three years as under:

- 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024
- 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025
- 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026

Please note that the same audit firm shall not be appointed for Statutory Audit & Internal Audit services.

Terms & Conditions:

- The applicant entity / audit firm may be a Partnership Firm/ Limited liability partnership/body corporate, licensed by concerned authorities & registered with Insurance Regulatory Unit (IRU) in Kuwait.
- The Audit firm should have carried out the audit of at least 5 general insurance companies in the immediately preceding 5 financial years.
- The contract will be for an initial period of three (3) years with an option exercisable at the discretion of NIA Kuwait to extend the term for a further period based upon a review of the performance of the successful Tenderer during the initial term.
- Right of Acceptance -NIA Kuwait reserves all rights to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason.
- Successful bidder shall give acceptance within 10 days from the date of receipt of the work order, failing which the work order issued stands cancelled.
- All submissions to be sent via email including any supporting documentation to Mail Id- soo@newindiakuwait.com

Tenders must be received before 4.00 p.m. (local time in Kuwait) on Wednesday 28th February 2024.

Tender document can be downloaded from our website <https://newindiakuwait.com/>

or
Scan the QR code



For any clarifications, write to soo@newindiakuwait.com

Address

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World News Roundup

Europe

Navalny's death provokes Western outrage: As outrage over the death of chief Kremlin foe Alexei Navalny reverberates across the world, Russian President Vladimir Putin is turning a deaf ear to Western anger as he prepares to extend his 24-year rule in an election next month and police across Russia continue to squelch any protest attempts.

The US and its allies are pondering new sanctions against Russia over Navalny's death and the Kremlin's recent actions in Ukraine. But as US aid for Ukraine remains stuck in Congress and NATO allies in Europe struggle to fill the gap, many wonder what the West can actually do to stop the ruthless Kremlin leader, given that multiple previous rounds of penalties have failed to.



Navalny

"There isn't really the room for any great value in additional sanctions" against Russia, already one of the most sanctioned countries in the world, Mark Galeotti, head of the London-based Mayak Intelligence consultancy firm noted in a YouTube commentary.

Instead, Galeotti said, the West should focus more on working with Navalny's allies and helping ordinary Russians get access to information channels that counter Kremlin propaganda.

Such efforts are key especially now, according to Galeotti, who described Navalny's death as yet another step in Putin's transition from "hybrid authoritarianism" to "brutal thuggish despotism."

But the 71-year-old leader has vowed to press on, refusing to relinquish any of his gains and declaring in an interview with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson last week that the West will "sooner or later" be forced to negotiate a deal - on his terms. (AP)

Over 400 detained in Russia: Over 400 people were detained in Russia while paying tribute to opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who died at a remote Arctic penal colony, a prominent rights group reported.

The sudden death of Navalny, 47, was a crushing blow to many Russians, who had pinned their hopes for the future on President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe. Navalny remained vocal in his unrelenting criticism of the Kremlin even after surviving a nerve agent poisoning and receiving multiple prison terms.

The news reverberated across the globe, and hundreds of people in dozens of Russian cities streamed to ad-hoc memorials and monuments to victims of political repressions with flowers and candles on Friday and Saturday to pay a tribute to the politician. In over a dozen cities, police detained 401 people by Saturday night, according to the OVD-Info rights group that tracks political arrests and provides legal aid.

More than 200 arrests were made in St. Petersburg, Russia's second largest city, the group said. Among those detained there was Grigory Mikhnov-Voitenko, a priest of the Apostolic Orthodox Church - a religious group independent of the Russian Orthodox Church - who announced plans on social media to hold a memorial service for Navalny and was arrested on Saturday morning outside his home. (AP)

Russia takes control of city in eastern Ukraine: Russia said its forces took complete control Saturday of a city in eastern Ukraine that was the focus of intense combat for months, a development that Moscow could use to boost morale as the second anniversary of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine approaches with the war largely at a stalemate.

The Russian Defense Ministry's announcement came the same day Ukraine's military chief said he was withdrawing troops from the city of Avdiivka, where the outnumbered defenders had battled a Russian assault for four months.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu told the Kremlin that Russian forces were working to clear final pockets of resistance at the Avdiivka Coke and Chemical Plant, officials said in a statement. Videos on social media Saturday appeared to show soldiers raising the Russian flag over one of the plant's buildings.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent a personal message of congratulating to his troops in the city, state news agency Tass reported. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov described Avdiivka's capture as an "important victory." (AP)

Britain's Cameron visits Falkland Islands: Foreign Secretary David Cameron will visit the Falkland Islands this week to show they are a "valued part of the British family," the U.K. government said Sunday. Britain's top diplomat is making the trip amid renewed calls by Argentina for negotiations over the contested South Atlantic archipelago.

The Foreign Office said Cameron will meet Falklands government officials, pay his respects to war dead and visit some of the islands' 3,500 people and 1 million penguins.

He's the first British Cabinet minister since 2016 to visit the Falklands, over which Britain and Argentina fought a brief war in 1982.

Argentina's recently elected new president, Javier Milei, has called for the islands - known as the Islas Malvinas in Argentina -- to be handed over to Buenos Aires. Argentina has long claimed sovereignty over the islands, which lie about 300 miles (480 kilometers) from South America and 8,000 miles (13,000 kilometers) from Britain.

Argentina argues that the islands were illegally taken from it in 1833. Britain, which says its territorial claim dates to 1765, sent a warship to the islands in 1833 to expel Argentine forces who had sought to establish sovereignty over the territory. (AP)

Orban addresses Hungary: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán sought to contain the political fallout of a presidential pardon scandal during an annual state of the nation address on Saturday, his first public appearance since Hungary's president, his ally, resigned a week ago.

The nationalist Orbán is under intense pressure from multiple angles as his obstructionist conduct on the international stage has spurred growing frustration among his European Union and NATO allies.

Meanwhile, widespread public outrage has gripped Hungary over a pardon the president issued to a convict in a child sexual abuse case.

In his speech, which marked the 25th anniversary of his first address to the nation during his freshman term as prime minister in 1999, Orbán immediately addressed the resignation last week of President Katalin Novák. He said that 2024 "could not have begun any worse" and that her resignation was a "nightmare" for the country.

International news organizations, including The Associated Press, and Hungary's independent media outlets were not permitted to attend the speech.

Orbán sought to mitigate outcry over the scandal that has shaken his nationalist Fidesz party in recent weeks, saying that Novák had made a responsible decision in stepping down. (AP)

Senators to submit resolution: Two US senators will submit a bipartisan resolution to Congress condemning democratic backsliding in Hungary and urging its nationalist government to lift its block on Sweden's accession into the NATO military alliance.

The resolution, authored by US Sens. Jeanne Shaheen, a New Hampshire Democrat, and Thom Tillis, a North Carolina Republican, comes as Hungary's government is under increasing pressure to ratify Sweden's bid to join NATO, something it has delayed for more than 18 months.

Unanimity is required among all NATO member countries to admit a new ally, and Hungary is the only one of the 31 member states not to have backed Sweden's bid.

In the resolution, obtained by The Associated Press, the senators note "the important role Hungary can have in European and trans-Atlantic security," but point out its failure to keep earlier promises not to be the last NATO ally to sign off on Sweden's membership. (AP)

Police cars torched during rioting: Rioting broke out between two rival groups of Eritreans in the Netherlands on Saturday night, police said. Officers used tear gas in an attempt to quell the unrest in The Hague as rioters torched police cars and a bus.

Images from the scene showed vehicles in flames and dozens of men in the street, some throwing rocks.

"It got seriously out of hand," The Hague Municipality spokesman Robin Middel said.

Middel said a group loyal to Eritrea's government was holding a meeting when the venue was attacked by Eritreans who oppose the African nation's government. (AP)



US Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally in Waterford Township, Mich., on Feb 17. Trump railed against the judge who slapped him with a \$355 million fine in his New York civil fraud trial and went after the long list of prosecutors with cases against him as he campaigned in Michigan Saturday night while facing penalties that, with interest, could exceed half-a-billion dollars. (AP)

Politics

Biden reaffirms commitment to supporting Kyiv

US aid to Ukraine hinges on Johnson

WASHINGTON, Feb 18, (Agencies): When Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke with congressional leaders in Washington late last year he told them privately what is now public: With US weapons, they could win the war against Russia, but without them Russian President Vladimir Putin would be victorious.

In a subsequent meeting with new House Speaker Mike Johnson, a looming deadline for the supplies came into focus.

Now, with US aid for Ukraine teetering in Congress, it's up to Johnson to decide what happens next.

The Republican's leadership will determine whether the House will agree to approve more aid for Ukraine or allow the US commitment to wither, the end of the line for the embattled young democracy in Kyiv.

President Joe Biden said he told Zelenskyy in a Saturday phone call after Ukraine announced it was withdrawing troops from the eastern city of Avdiivka that he remained confident that the US funding would eventually come through. But asked in an exchange with reporters if he was confident whether a deal could be made before Ukraine loses more territory to Russian, Biden responded, "I'm not."

"Look Ukrainians have fought so bravely," he said. "There is so much on the line. The idea now when they are running out of ammunition that we're going to walk away. I find it absurd."

Zelenskyy said at a news conference with Vice President Kamala Harris in Germany that Ukraine was counting on a "positive decision" from Congress for the "vital" aid from its "strategic partner." Earlier at a security conference in Munich, he warned of an "artificial deficit" of arms for his country.

Also:

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden called President Zelenskyy on Saturday to underscore the United States' commitment to continue supporting Ukraine ahead of the two year anniversary of Russia's brutal invasion.

This morning, Ukraine's military was forced to withdraw from Avdiivka

Santos sues Kimmel

Trump rails against NY fraud ruling

WATERFORD TOWNSHIP, Mich., Feb 18, (AP): Former US president Donald Trump railed against the judge who slapped him with a \$355 million fine in his New York civil fraud trial and went after the long list of prosecutors with cases against him as he campaigned in Michigan Saturday night while facing penalties that, with interest, could exceed half-a-billion dollars.

Trump was making his pitch in a state that is expected to be critical in November as he pivots toward a likely general election rematch against President Joe Biden. While Biden narrowly beat Trump here in 2020, the president is facing deep skepticism in the state, especially from Arab-American voters angry over his support for Israel in the Israel-Hamas war as the Palestinian death toll has climbed.

Trump, meanwhile, has been working to appeal to the blue-collar and union voters who were critical to his victory in 2016. On Saturday, he again made his pitch to auto workers, railing against electric vehicle mandates that he argues will ultimately lead to lost jobs and

touted tariffs he put in place.

"We have to let them know a freight train is coming in November," Trump told more than 2,000 supporters gathered in a freezing plane hangar in Waterford Township, in the suburbs of Detroit.

But Trump was again most focused on his grievances, opening with a 15-minute screed about the criminal and civil cases against him.

Also:

NEW YORK: Former US Rep George Santos alleged in a lawsuit filed Saturday that late-night host Jimmy Kimmel deceived him into making videos on the Cameo app that were used to ridicule the disgraced New York Republican on the show.

The lawsuit filed in US district court for the southern district of New York names Kimmel, ABC and Walt Disney Co as defendants. A Disney representative listed as a media contact for the Jimmy Kimmel Live! show didn't immediately respond to an email from The Associated Press seeking comment.

that Russia has an incentive to negotiate peace.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, US Vice President Kamala Harris and others have advocated passage of the \$60 billion in aid at the Munich Security Conference, which coincided with Ukraine withdrawing troops from the eastern city of Avdiivka after months of intense combat.

But Sen J.D. Vance, an Ohio Republican and ally of Donald Trump, said "the problem in Ukraine ... is that there's no clear end point" and that the US doesn't make enough weapons to support wars in eastern Europe, the Middle East and "potentially a contingency in East Asia."

But Sen J.D. Vance, an Ohio Republican and ally of Donald Trump, said "the problem in Ukraine ... is that there's no clear end point" and that the US doesn't make enough weapons to support wars in eastern Europe, the Middle East and "potentially a contingency in East Asia."

strep throat and other life-threatening illnesses, the autopsy released by the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office showed.

Contributing factors in his death were listed as COVID-19, adenovirus and rhinovirus, the autopsy showed.

The boy was a resident at a warehouse retrofitted as a shelter in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood when he suffered a medical emergency, the city has said. He was pronounced dead shortly after arriving at a hospital. (AP)

Judge under investigation: A Northern California judge is under investigation by a state agency for allegedly making antisemitic remarks when addressing a deputy public defender, failing to recuse himself from cases involving attorneys and other people he socialized with, harassing women, and other ethical violations.

Humboldt County Superior Court Judge Gregory Kreis was notified last week he is charged with 19 ethical violations going back to 2015.

California's Commission on Judicial Performance, which investigates complaints against members of the judicial branch, said in its notice of formal proceedings that Kreis is charged with "willful misconduct in office, conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice that brings the judicial office into disrepute, and improper action." (AP)



A police officer guards an area as people walk to lay flowers paying their last respects to Alexei Navalny at the Wall of Sorrow memorial to victims of political repression, in Moscow, Russia, on Feb 18. (AP)



Johnson



Kreis

America

Leaking propane tank found: When firefighters arrived at a home in a Washington, DC, suburb to investigate a report about a gas smell Friday night, they discovered a 500-gallon underground propane tank with a leak on the side of the residence.

Shortly after they arrived, the house exploded and burst into flames, with multiple mayday calls coming from the firefighters trapped inside. Crews rushed in to try to rescue them from the debris that covered them, but one firefighter was killed and 10 others were injured, Loudoun County Fire and Rescue officials said Saturday.

Four of the firefighters hurt in the blast remained in hospitals Saturday morning, according to Loudoun Fire and Rescue System Chief Keith Johnson.

Johnson said all four are expected to survive. A total of 11 first responders were sent to hospitals with "varying degrees of injuries" Friday night, including the one who died.

He was identified as 45-year-old Trevor Brown, a volunteer with Sterling Volunteer Fire Company. Brown was married with three children and had been with the county firefighting services since 2016, Johnson said. (AP)

4.7 quake outside of Texas city: An earthquake of 4.7 magnitude that struck early Saturday morning near a small Texas city, one of several that have occurred in the area in recent days, could be felt dozens of miles away, including in San Antonio.

There were no immediate reports of major damage or injuries from the earthquake at 12:32 a.m. that was centered about 2 miles (3 kilometers) southeast of Falls City, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. Falls City, which has a population of about 500 people, is about 45 miles (72 kilometers) southeast of San Antonio.

About 10 minutes earlier, the area had a 4.4 magnitude earthquake, the US Geological Survey said. There have been several earthquakes in the area in recent days and about 30 in the area over the past three weeks. But all the others have been lower in magnitude. (AP)

'Migrant boy died from sepsis': The cause of death for a 5-year-old Venezuelan

boy who died in December after becoming ill at a temporary shelter for migrants in Chicago was sepsis and a bacterial infection that causes strep throat, an autopsy released

Friday shows.

Jean Carlos Martinez died Dec. 17 as a result of sepsis due to streptococcus pyogenes group A infection, which can cause



British Foreign Secretary David Cameron, center right, arrives for the Munich Security Conference at the Bayerischer Hof Hotel in Munich, Germany, on Feb 16. The 60th Munich Security Conference (MSC) is taking place from Feb 16 to Feb 18. (AP)

Africa

Party lays out plans

US condemns Rwanda support of M23 rebels

KAMPALA, Uganda, Feb 18, (AP): The US has condemned Saturday Rwanda's support of the armed M23 group in eastern Congo, whose rebellion has caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, and called on the rebel group to "cease hostilities."

The US State Department in a statement strongly criticized "the worsening violence ... caused by the actions of the Rwanda-backed, US- and UN-sanctioned M23 armed group." It called on Rwanda "to immediately withdraw all Rwanda Defense Force personnel from the (Congo) and remove its surface-to-air missile systems," which it said threatened civilian lives and peacekeepers. It also urged the rebels to retreat from their current positions near two urban areas in Congo's North Kivu province.



Tshisekedi

This is likely to put pressure on Rwanda, whose government has repeatedly denied any links to the M23 group.

Congolese President **Felix Tshisekedi** has accused Rwanda of destabilizing Congo by backing the rebels. UN experts previously said they had "solid evidence" that members of Rwanda's armed forces were conducting operations there in support of the M23 group.

Fighting near Goma, the capital of North Kivu province and the largest city in the region, has intensified in recent days as the rebels threatened to take over the metropolis. Residents of the nearby town of Sake have been fleeing fierce fighting between Congolese government troops and the group.

Conflict

The armed conflict has so far displaced more than one million people in eastern Congo since November, according to the aid group Mercy Corps.

Many M23 fighters, including Congolese Tutsis, were once members of Congo's army. The group's leaders say they are fighting to protect local Tutsis from extremist Hutu groups such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, whose members were among the perpetrators of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

M23 is one of more than 100 armed groups active in eastern Congo, seeking a share of the region's gold and other resources as they carry out mass killings.

The rebel group rose to prominence just over a decade ago when its fighters seized Goma, which borders Rwanda. It derives its name from a March 23, 2009, peace deal which it accuses the Congo government of not implementing. After being largely dormant for a decade, the M23 resurfaced in late 2021.

The U.S. statement urged all sides to de-escalate and to "participate constructively in reaching a negotiated solution" to the conflict.

"It is essential that all states respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and hold accountable all actors for human rights abuses in the conflict in eastern (Congo)," it said.

Also:

PRETORIA, South Africa: Thousands of South Africans gathered in the capital Saturday to show support for the country's biggest opposition party as it prepares for a much-anticipated national election in which it hopes to wrest control of the government from the ruling African National Congress.

Many of the Democratic Alliance backers assembled in the Union Buildings, the official seat of South Africa's government in Pretoria, expressed faith the party would deliver better basic services and address some of the country's daunting challenges.

These include a worsening electricity crisis that has caused rolling power blackouts for households and businesses on a daily basis. Participants at the Democratic Alliance conference also highlighted South Africa's unemployment rate of over 32%, with the party promising to create at least 2 million new jobs if it prevails in this year's general election.

The date for the National Assembly and provincial elections has not been set, but it is expected to be sometime between May and August.

Democratic Alliance supporters marched through the streets of the capital before listening to a spirited speech by party leader **John Steenhuisen**, who vowed to unseat the African National Congress and accused President **Cyril Ramaphosa** of enabling corruption by ANC members and leaders.

South Africa's upcoming elections have been touted as one of the toughest yet for the ruling party, with recent polls suggesting the ANC may receive less than 50% of the national vote for the first time since the country's white minority rule ended in 1994.

During the 2019 elections, the Democratic Alliance received just over 20% of the national vote to remain the second-biggest party in the country after the ANC. The party is now exploring the possibility of forming a governing coalition with several other opposition parties in order to remove the ANC from power if they together win more than 50% of the national vote.

"By bringing an end to opposition infighting and consolidating like-minded parties into a cohesive bloc, this formation offers voters the best prospect for political change since 1994," Steenhuisen told party loyalists Saturday.

Under South Africa's system of government, lawmakers elect the president, so a party or coalition with a majority in parliament control both the executive and legislative branches. If the ANC's support falls below 50% at the polls, the party would have to make deals with smaller parties to secure Ramaphosa's reelection.

Steenhuisen described the Democratic Alliance's manifesto as South Africa's "rescue plan." He said the Democratic Alliance had successfully delivered services in **Western Cape** province, home to the only provincial government not governed by the ANC.

DAKAR, Senegal: Protestors took the streets in Senegal's capital Saturday to keep the pressure on President **Mack Sall** to hold elections quickly.

Hundreds of people walked and biked through downtown Dakar chanting "Macky dictator," while others called for the release of imprisoned opposition figures.

Sall issued a decree earlier this month to postpone the presidential election originally scheduled for Feb 25, citing unresolved disputes over who could run. The National Assembly then voted to reschedule the election for Dec 15.

However, the country's Constitutional Council ruled Thursday that those moves were unconstitutional and ordered the government to hold the election, presumably allowing enough time for campaigning. The panel acknowledged that Feb 25 wouldn't now be feasible, but said the government should act fast.



Former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, right, sits in a vehicle in front of his residence after being released on parole on Feb 18 in Bangkok, Thailand. Thaksin was released from Police General Hospital where for the last six months he had been serving time for corruption-related offenses. Inset: A supporter waits in front of Thaksin's residence before Thaksin was released on parole on Sunday. (AP)

Asia

China to ramp up patrols near Taiwan's Kinmen

Thai ex-PM Thaksin released on parole

BANGKOK, Feb 18, (AP): Thailand's former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the Southeast Asian nation's most controversial politician for more than two decades, was released on parole early Sunday from a Bangkok hospital where he spent six months serving time for corruption-related offenses.

The telecoms billionaire was toppled in a 2006 coup but voluntarily returned from self-exile to Thailand in August last year and reported to prison to begin serving an eight-year sentence. Critics charged that the 74-year-old Thaksin's early release reeked of a deal that short-circuited justice for political reasons.

Current Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, a leading member of the ruling Thaksin-backed Pheu Thai party, expressed congratulations to his predecessor.

Thaksin was seen wearing a neck brace, a sling on his right arm and a surgical mask inside one of the cars in a convoy that left the Police General Hospital just before sunrise. He was accompanied by his two daughters on his way to his residence in western Bangkok.

Conduct

"Thaksin is still believed to wield huge influence, and will still maneuver for sure, he will conduct the music behind the scenes," Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a political science professor at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University, said. "But Pheu Thai has less power than they used to and we'll have to see how he does it."

After his return from exile, Thaksin was moved almost immediately to the hospital on grounds of ill health and about a week later, King Maha Vajiralongkorn reduced his sentence to a single year.

The former leader had won unprecedented electoral support but also influential enemies among Thailand's traditional royalist ruling class during his time in office in 2001-2006.

He was accused of corruption and abuse of power as well as disrespect for the monarchy when the military removed him from power in 2006. Thailand's conservative elite, including the army, regarded his popularity and brash populist politics as a threat

to the royal institution, which they see as a linchpin of Thai society.

Even after his ouster, Thaksin's supporters and opponents had continued their struggle for power with violent street fighting, election battles, confrontations in the courts and another coup in 2014 that ousted a government that had been formed by Thaksin's sister.

Last year's elections brought change when the progressive Move Forward party unexpectedly finished first, the first time since 2001 that a Thaksin-backed party failed to top the polls. Move Forward's proposals for reforms to the monarchy and the military resonated with large numbers of younger voters, weary of the army-backed governments that had held power since a 2014 coup.

Refused

Move Forward was stymied when the military-appointed Senate refused to approve its candidate for prime minister, paving the way for Pheu Thai to form a coalition government including parties linked with the military. Pheu Thai also softened its longstanding anti-military line and reform proposals it promised during the election campaign.

Critics charged the deal included a soft landing for Thaksin upon his return last year.

"In one sense, Thaksin going home to his family is an end to a personal and political journey that began with the 2006 coup when Thailand's most popular prime minister was ousted," Kevin Hewison, a professor emeritus at the University of North Carolina and a veteran Thai studies scholar, told The Associated Press.

He said the deal to bring him home and allow his Pheu Thai Party to lead a coalition government with military-backed parties "shows how the progressive politics of Thailand's younger generation and the electorally successful Move Forward Party have left Thaksin and Pheu Thai behind."

Move Forward, which now leads the parliamentary opposition, issued a statement Sunday reflecting widespread suspicion that Thaksin had received a sweetheart deal because of the political influence he can still wield. The circumstances raised questions

over whether he benefited from double standards in the justice system, it said.

At the same time it acknowledged that Thaksin's ouster was unfair and undemocratic. Thaksin has insisted that his prosecution in the courts was politically motivated.

Thaksin will still have to report to parole officers every month for the remainder of his sentence and will have a travel restriction, but he is not required to wear an ankle monitor due to his age and health conditions, officials have said.

He is not yet clear of all legal challenges. Thai officials said earlier this month that they have reopened an investigation into allegations of defaming the monarchy made against Thaksin almost nine years ago. If the Office of the Attorney General decides to indict him, Thaksin could be detained again.

His youngest daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who recently became Pheu Thai party chief, on Sunday afternoon posted a photo on her Instagram account of Thaksin sitting in shorts by a swimming pool, still wearing a neck brace and a sling on his arm.

"After not breathing air and seeing the sun on the outside for 180 days, and not being back to this house for 17 years ... Dad came to sit outside like this. He sat there for quite some time. #finallyhome she wrote, adding a heart emoji at the end.

Also:

BANGKOK: China is stepping up patrols in the waters off the coast of Taiwan's Kinmen archipelago, days after two of its fishermen drowned while being chased by the Taiwanese coast guard, which accused the boat of trespassing.

The Chinese coast guard's Fujian division will regularly monitor the waters off the southern coast of the city of **Xiamen** - a few kilometers from Kinmen - to strengthen maritime law enforcement, said the coast guard's spokesman, **Gan Yu**, in a statement Sunday.

Fishermen from Taiwan and China regularly sail that stretch of water which has seen a rise in tensions as the number of Chinese vessels - including sand dredgers and fishing boats - have notably increased in the area.



State police maintain a security checkpoint at the entrance of Chilpancingo, Mexico on Feb 15. Four Roman Catholic bishops met with Mexican drug cartel bosses in a bid to negotiate a possible peace accord, according to the Bishop of Chilpancingo-Chilapa, José de Jesús González Hernández. (AP)



Arévalo



Mayorkas

Lat/Am

Mayorkas meets with Arévalo: US Secretary of Homeland Security **Alejandro Mayorkas** met Saturday with newly elected Guatemalan President **Bernardo Arévalo** and discussed regional migration, security and the economy in the Central American nation, they said.

The meeting at the Munich Security Conference came days after the Republican-controlled US House of Representatives voted to impeach Mayorkas for the administration's handling of migrants at the U.S. southern border.

"Guatemala is a key partner of ours in regional economic development, managing hemispheric migration, combating transnational crime, and much more," wrote Mayorkas in a post on X, formerly Twitter, on Saturday.

The US has pushed allies in Latin America like Guatemala to put up barriers to slow migration north. It has also sought to address the root causes of migration from countries like Guatemala, which has seen hundreds of thousands of its own citizens migrate to the US every year.

While arrests by the US Border Patrol sharply dipped in January, down 50% in from a record-breaking 249,735 in December, immigration remains a top priority for the Biden administration and voters in the lead up to the 2024 election.

Both Mayorkas and Arévalo on Saturday reaffirmed their commitment to collaborating on issues in the Americas. "Together we will work for the security and well-being of the region," Arévalo wrote in a post on X.

The meeting also comes after a tumultuous couple of months for progressive anti-corruption crusader Arévalo. The leader has posed a threat to the country's elite who have long benefited from high levels of corruption and impunity in Guatemala, something the Biden administration has said contributed to migration. (AP)

'Huge increase in migrants': Mexican authorities say they saw a huge increase in the number of migrants from Africa and Venezuela entering the country in 2023.

Those migrants generally enter Mexico from Central America, and cross the country in a bid to reach the US border.

Mexico's Interior Department said year-end figures showed that nine times more migrants from Africa entered Mexico in 2023, with numbers rising from 6,672 in 2022, to 59,834 in 2023.

The report also showed the number of migrants from Venezuela more than doubled last year, rising from 96,197 in 2022 to

222,994 in 2023.

In part, that may reflect more rapid and more numerous movements of migrants through the jungle-clad Darien Gap that connects South America to Panama.

Smugglers are moving migrants more quickly through the dangerous route, which

last year was traversed by over half a million migrants. Once in Panama, migrants make their way through Central America to Mexico.

Overall, the number of all irregular migrants found in Mexico in 2023 rose by 77%, going from 441,409 in 2022 to



In this handout photograph provided by Taiwan Coast Guard Administration, Taiwanese coast guards inspect a vessel that capsized during a chase off the coast of Kinmen archipelago in Taiwan on Feb 14. The unnamed vessel had been sailing about one nautical mile off the coast of an islet of Kinmen island and was trespassing, said Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration. Four fishermen fell into the water and two survived and are in 'good shape,' while resuscitation efforts on the other two failed, the vice director of the Coast Guard in Kinmen, Chen Jien-wen, told a local TV channel. (AP)

782,176 last year. (AP)

Bishops, drug cartel bosses meet: Four Roman Catholic bishops met with Mexican drug cartel bosses in a bid to negotiate a possible peace accord, one of the bishops said, and President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said he approves of such talks.

The revelation by Bishop of Chilpancingo-Chilapa, José de Jesús González Hernández, in remarks at a public appearance, illustrate the extent to which the government's policy of not confronting the cartels has left average citizens to work out their own separate peace deals with the gangs.

López Obrador acknowledged it wasn't the first time church leaders had held such talks, and that they have done so before in the neighboring state of Michoacan and in other states.

"Priests and pastors and members of all the churches have participated, helped in pacifying the country. I think it is very good," López Obrador said the day after the existence of the negotiations was revealed.

He said such talks had been held in the neighboring state of Michoacan and in other places in Mexico as well. "The church does it, I can vouch for this, in Michoacan, and they do it in other places."

López Obrador said that while he had no problem with the talks, he wouldn't approve of "any agreement that meant granting impunity, privileges, or licenses to steal."

That rang hollow to one parish priest whose town in Michoacan has been dominated by one cartel or another for years. "It is an implicit recognition that they (the government) can't provide safe conditions," said the priest, who cannot be quoted by name for security reasons. (AP)

	Change	Closing pts
SAUDI - Tadawul	+17.41	12,502.00
PHILIPPINES - PSEI	+199.42	29,125.57

Change Closing pts

Business

KD 222 million in revenue and KD 43.5 million in net income reported

Burgan Bank records operating profit of KD 106 million in 2023

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Burgan Bank ("Burgan" or "the Bank") announced its financial results for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2023 (FY'23). The Bank capped off a pivotal transformational year with healthy revenue, stable asset levels and a solid capital base.

By year-end, Revenue reached KD 222 million, supported by 8% growth in Non-Interest Income to reach KD 87million, along with a solid Net



Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Al-Sabah, Chairman

Interest Income of KD 135 million. The Bank's operating profit for the year reached KD 106 million.

The Bank generated Shareholders Net Income of KD 43.5

million in FY'23, with income falling marginally due to the impact of Turkey's hyperinflation-related monetary loss and no income from Bank of Baghdad (BoB), which was sold in Q1'23. On the other hand, Burgan's asset quality continues to be stable with a Non-performing Loan (NPL) ratio of 2% for 2023, with the Cost of Credit for the year falling to 10bps, an improvement of 40bps compared to last year.

Burgan also continued to implement one of the key facets and top priorities of its new transformational roadmap, with the strategic reallocation of its asset portfolio. After having sold its stake in BoB in Q1'23, the Bank subsequently sold 52% of its stake in Burgan Bank Turkey (BBT) in Q4'23.

As a result of these transactions, the Bank's Capital levels increased substantially in 2023, while also improving its risk profile. Burgan's CET1 ratio increased by 270bps to 13.5% and Tier 1 ratio increased by 290bps to 16.1% while the Bank's Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) increased by 320 bps to 20.0% as of FY'23.

Commenting on Burgan's financial results, the Bank's Chairman, Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Al-Sabah, said: "This past year proved to be one of the most pivotal in Burgan Bank's almost fifty-year history, as we set about laying the groundwork for our expansive and progressive

long-term strategy, with a new mission and vision in place. We have long-maintained a solid financial base and a responsive business model, but to ensure our sustainable growth in the years to come, it was essential that we adopt a much more aggressive and progressive approach to development." Adding: "Our strategy necessitates major investments in our operations, our digital and technology infrastructure, and our human capital. Therefore, it was crucial that we balanced the ambitious growth potential with a prudent risk profile, safeguarding the Bank and its shareholder value."

The Chairman further stressed Burgan's renewed focus on its Kuwait operations, saying: "One of the central tenets of our transformational roadmap is strengthening our core Kuwait business. Our goal is to continue to reallocate assets across our portfolio, reassessing and optimizing certain aspects of our overall operations in line with our core business goals." According to the Bank's Chairman, this includes restructuring Burgan's portfolio, pursuing the sale of non-core assets, investing in new markets and seeking growth opportunities in untapped segments.

The Chairman also noted that a clear indication of Burgan's solid financial core and its stable standing is its credit rating, as the Bank continues to be rated in investment grade by all the leading rating agencies with a stable outlook.

The Bank continues to be rated well by all the major credit rating agencies. Burgan's Long-term Issuer Default Rating by Fitch is "A" with stable outlook, its Long-term Deposit Rating by Moody's is "Baa1" with stable outlook, and its Issuer Credit Rating by S&P is "BBB+" with stable outlook. Lastly, Capital Intelligence has affirmed the Bank's Long-term Foreign Currency ratings at "A+" with stable outlook.

Leading with innovation for a seamless, modern banking experience

In 2023, Burgan Bank continued to accelerate its efforts to enhance and develop its banking experience for all segments of customers. According to the Chairman, streamlining and enhancing the banking experience is at the heart of Burgan's new strategy.

"When it comes to our banking journey and our solutions, we have adopted an integrated, innovation-driven approach. We seek to interweave our digital transformation with



Burgan Bank headquarters

our ESG commitments to deliver the most modern, most inclusive and most personal experience possible to our customers. Digitization undoubtedly remains a central theme, but it goes beyond that. Our aim is to enable and empower our customers to bank better, bank smarter and bank more sustainably," said the Chairman. Adding: "Our transformation has only just started, but 2023 set the stage for what we seek to establish as the 'Burgan way of banking.'"

In line with its new vision, Burgan Bank continues to pursue focused development across its entire business and operations. This includes continuing to grow its segment base; serving retail, corporate, and SME clients with a more diversified product portfolio; maintaining a constantly evolving offering of modern financial solutions; and providing an elevated, customized level of service.

In 2023, Burgan Bank launched Tajarati Pay, a new and unique enhancement to its market-leading small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) platform, Tjarati. The Bank's one-of-a-kind offering to local businesses, especially entrepreneurs and SMEs, is the first of its kind in the region, and it integrates multiple aspects of payment collection and monitoring, thereby transforming how merchants

manage their finances.

Additionally, in another first for the market, Burgan Bank introduced biodegradable and braille-friendly debit cards to facilitate transactions for visually impaired customers, offering a smart solution that promotes sustainability and inclusivity. In the last quarter of 2023, the Bank also launched its new virtual card; an eco-friendly alternative, this innovative product combines the security and utility of traditional bank cards with the convenience and versatility of a digital experience.

The Bank also expanded its digital payment offerings in 2023 by launching Google Pay and Apple Pay to allow its customers to make secure contactless payments across Android and iOS platforms. Burgan was also the first bank in the MENA region to implement a Visa solution allowing cardholders to easily enroll in multiple digital wallets and eCommerce merchants within their mobile banking app.

On another front, Burgan Bank continued to expand its segment offerings. In late 2023, and in an effort to elevate the banking experience it offers to its more affluent customer segment, the Bank announced the launch of Elite Banking, a new banking segment for distinguished customers with an array of the finest services that unlock a world of luxury.

The Bank also revamped its existing Premier Banking to better serve another segment of customers.

Additionally, in 2023, Burgan revamped its Kanz Draw Account, which is already considered one of the strongest in the market, in order to reward its customers and maximize their chances of winning valuable and life-transforming prizes. The remodeled draw account prizes grant customers an exclusive opportunity to win KD 2,000 in the monthly draw and KD 500,000 in the semi-annual draw, while the annual draw awards one lucky winner with the grand prize of KD 1,500,000.

A continued investment in Kuwaitization and long-term human capital development

Furthermore, the Chairman noted that one of the most important components of Burgan's new strategy is its investment in people and human capital. He said: "This year, we rolled out a comprehensive restructuring across the entire organization, including a number of strategic appointments and promotions at the leadership level, in order to truly position Burgan as the most progressive and dynamic Bank in Kuwait."

Burgan Bank continued to prioritize investing in its human capital and empowering it stop Kuwaiti talents, especially in critical leadership positions. In fact, the Bank remained dedicated to nurturing employee potential and fostering a culture of dynamic development and constant growth, enabling all employees to collectively lead the Bank's ambitious transformation plans.

In 2023, Burgan Bank became the first bank in Kuwait to be officially certified as a 'Great Place to Work', in addition to being named one of the 20 Best Workplaces in Kuwait and being ranked 27th on the 'Large Organizations' list of Best Workplaces in Asia™ 2023. This serves as the ultimate testament to the Bank's people-first commitment and the soundness of its human capital investment and proves Burgan is well positioned as an employer of choice in the Kuwaiti market.

By year-end, the Bank had reached an impressive 83% Kuwaitization rate among its workforce – surpassing the minimum regulatory requirements by 13% - and marking one of the highest rates in Kuwait and across the banking sector. In fact, in 2023, 95% of all new hires during the year were Kuwaitis. Additionally, female employees accounted for 48% of the workforce at Burgan Bank by year-

end, cementing the Bank's inclusive and equity-based approach to human capital development.

The Bank's impressive human capital philosophy resulted in it receiving the GCC Excellence Award in the Recruitment and Development of Nationals from the Council of Ministers of Labor and Council of Ministers of Social Affairs in the GCC States Executive Bureau for the year 2023. The coveted award, which recognizes private institutions' outstanding efforts in employment and localization across the GCC, underscores Burgan's unwavering commitment to the localization of its workforce.

In addition to the dedication to recruiting Kuwait's brightest professionals, Burgan Bank sought to ensure a path of continued growth and improvement for all employees, with the Bank dedicating more than 46,994 training hours to the development of its Kuwaiti talents.

Burgan's commitment to bespoke development tracks is also reflected in the Bank's dedication to designing the ideal model for professional bank employees through the Ro2ya Program, which is regarded as one of the most forward-looking human capital development programs of its kind in the local market. In 2023, a total of 52 Burgan employees graduated from the Ro2ya program. The Bank's development strategy led to it receiving the prestigious Brandon Hall Human Capital Management (HCM) Excellence Silver Award for its outstanding application in the "Learning and Development – Learning in the Flow of Work" category.

Finally, the Chairman concluded his statement by thanking the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) for their support to Burgan and the wider banking sector. He also extended his gratitude to Burgan Bank's Board of Directors, Executive Management, shareholders, customers, and all employees across every department for their dedication, loyalty, and notable contributions to the Bank.

It serves to note that the consolidated financials for Burgan include the results of the Group's operations in Kuwait, as well as its share of results from its subsidiaries, namely: Burgan Bank Turkey, Gulf Bank Algeria, and Tunis International Bank. Through this regional reach, Burgan Bank has one of the largest regional branch networks across Kuwait, Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia and a representative office in the United Arab Emirates.

OQ Group and International Petroleum to boost Duqm refinery capacity by 20%

Firm seeks Kuwaiti expertise for operations

Sheikh Nawaf commits to open dialogue

KPC CEO assures worker rights amid merger plans

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Oil industry insiders have revealed that Oman's OQ global integrated energy group and the International Petroleum Company have reached an agreement to boost the production capacity of the Duqm refinery by 20% by May 2025.

This decision comes in response to the increasing demand for petroleum derivatives, as the current capacity of refining 230 thousand barrels of oil per day falls short of future ambitions.

According to reliable sources, OQ Group is actively seeking the expertise of retired Kuwaiti professionals in refinery operations for the Duqm Refinery.

The appointment process for Kuwaitis at the refinery involves two avenues -- those seconded by Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, operating under secondment regulations, and direct appointments for qualified retirees and recent graduates.

Interested candidates can apply through the refinery's website, with selections based on CV submissions and appointments carried out in accordance with Omani labor laws.

While requests for additional Kuwaiti delegates at the Duqm Refinery have been made, decisions are pending until the cessation of assignment, transfers, and appointments. However, there is no mandate for mandatory appointments of Kuwaiti youth and qualified individuals, with progress reliant on positive and flexible negotiations between Omani and Kuwaiti counterparts.

The refinery's Omani management remains open to leveraging Kuwaiti expertise in oil refinery operations, underscoring the collaborative approach between the two nations.

Kuwait oil price rises to \$82.33 per barrel

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The price of a barrel of Kuwaiti oil rose by \$1.52 to reach \$82.33 per barrel in Friday trading, compared to \$80.81 in Thursday trading, according to the price announced by the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In global markets, Brent crude futures rose 61 cents to reach \$83.47 per barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate crude futures rose \$1.16 to reach \$79.19.

The number of oil explora-

tion rigs in the United States declined during the week ending February 16, recording its lowest level in 14 weeks, while the number of American gas rigs stabilized at its highest level in 27 weeks.

Baker Hughes data showed that the number of oil exploration rigs decreased by two rigs to 497 rigs, which is the lowest level since the week ending November 10, 2023 (494 rigs), following stability for 3 weeks in a row.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: In a recent high-level meeting, Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, the esteemed CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), reiterated his steadfast commitment to upholding the rights of workers within the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company, as reported by the Al-Seyassah daily.

During the gathering, Sheikh Nawaf emphasized that the impending merger of two liquefied gas filling plants with the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) would not compromise the employment status of any worker. He assured all concerned parties, particularly Nawaf Fahd Al-Enezi, the head of the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company Workers Union, that safeguarding the rights of employees remains a paramount concern for KPC.

Acknowledging the importance of maintaining an open channel of communication with union representatives, Sheikh Nawaf pledged ongoing dialogue to promptly address any emerging issues. He underscored the significance of collaboration and transparency, reaffirming KPC's commitment to an inclusive approach in decision-making processes.

In response, Al-Enezi articulated the pressing need for implementing effective

measures such as the TPL ladder and job title activation within the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company. He emphasized that such initiatives are vital for combating issues like job stagnation and ensuring the continuous professional development of employees. Al-Enezi also stressed the importance of fostering technical expertise, particularly in specialized fields such as liquefied gas filling factories, to optimize operational efficiency and maintain competitiveness.

Meanwhile, against the backdrop of Kuwait's imminent evaluation of bids for drilling towers, signaling its ambitious plans to expand energy production capabilities, the "BNN" newspaper has hailed the nation's proactive stance. With a strategic vision aimed at boosting crude oil and gas production by 2040, Kuwait is poised to reinforce its global energy presence and contribute significantly to meeting growing international demand.

Amidst recent adjustments in production quotas by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Kuwait's unwavering commitment to enhancing its production capacity signals a notable shift in the dynamics of the global energy landscape.

Investment sector stagnates

Kuwait real estate market faces sectoral disparities

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Investor sentiments in the real estate market are subject to various economic, social, and political factors, both locally and regionally. Recent years have seen significant shifts in the growth and activity of different sectors within the real estate market, reports Al-Jarida daily.

While the residential and industrial sectors have flourished, the investment sector has experienced stagnation and declining occupancy rates and prices.

Despite these challenges, the residential sector remains a significant contributor to the real estate market, albeit with a declining share of overall market liquidity. Positive expectations for the revival of investment real estate, as indicated by the National Bank of Kuwait, underscore the dynamic and evolving nature of the real estate market.

Several factors have contributed to the decline in demand for investment real estate. These include increases in electricity and water tariffs in 2017, along with stricter regulations on entry visas and visit cards for expatriate workers' families, who are significant players in this sector.

Additionally, changes in demographic composition and government policies aimed at protecting residential real estate from speculation and land monopoly have further dampened demand in the investment sector.

As a result, many investors have redirected their focus towards the residential sector, which has seen significant price increases in recent years, especially after being exempted from electricity and water tariff hikes. However, recent legislative measures aimed at curbing speculation and facilitating housing construction for eligible citizens have renewed interest in investment real estate.

Government initiatives such as abolishing real estate agencies, preventing land monopoly, and imposing annual fees on large landowners have contributed to the resurgence of demand in the investment sector. Moreover, proposed amendments to residency laws may stimulate demand among expatriates, who comprise the majority of residential apartment users.

The revival of the investment sector is expected to exert pressure on residential real estate prices. Unlike residential properties, investment real estate offers advantages such as company registration, mortgage eligibility, and bank financing, making it an attractive option for investors.

Several factors have contributed to the pressure on residential real estate prices, including unprecedented price levels, which have diminished the purchasing power of many citizens. Housing regulations and rising interest rates on loans have also impacted residential real estate prices and liquidity.

Vacancy rates surge as companies embrace remote work

Commercial real estate sector faces challenges post COVID-19 pandemic

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The commercial real estate sector has faced significant challenges since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, with many buildings sitting vacant as companies adopt remote work models or hybrid systems, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This trend has led to a reduction in the size of office spaces and a surge in vacancy rates, particularly in older buildings. As a result, property owners are losing leases, and the value of commercial real estate properties is decreasing.

Data from real estate company Cushman & Wakefield suggests that there could be up to one billion square feet of unused office space by the beginning of the new decade.

This surplus of vacant space poses a financial risk not only to property owners but also to the banking industry, as buildings lose value and loans come up for refinancing. Nearly \$1 trillion in US commercial real estate debt is set to be renegotiated in the next two years, representing a significant portion of the market.

Recent news about loans in banks, including American, Japanese, and German institutions, has raised concerns about their exposure to the commercial real estate market. The potential for defaults on these loans adds to the overall uncertainty in the sector.

Meanwhile, the real estate crisis in China is exacerbating the situation, as Chinese investors may need to sell off foreign assets to raise cash. This could further depress real estate values globally.

While the residential real estate market in the United States experienced a significant decline in value during the 2007-2009 financial crisis, commercial properties may be more resilient to similar shocks.

Even if every office building in America were to lose value, the losses would be smaller compared to the residential sector, and lenders, particularly smaller banks, may be better protected against losses.

However, the current challenges facing the commercial real estate sector underscore the need for careful monitoring and proactive measures to address potential risks and mitigate financial losses.

BUSINESS

trying to cut China out of trade would be a historic mistake

China's foreign minister told a gathering of international security policy officials Saturday that trying to shut China out of trade in the name of avoiding dependency would be a historic mistake.

Wang Yi spoke at the Munich Security Conference. Host Germany wants to avoid over-reliance on trade with an increasingly assertive China and diversify its supply of key goods in an approach it calls "de-risking." That's in line with the approach of other industrial powers in the Group of Seven, which has stressed

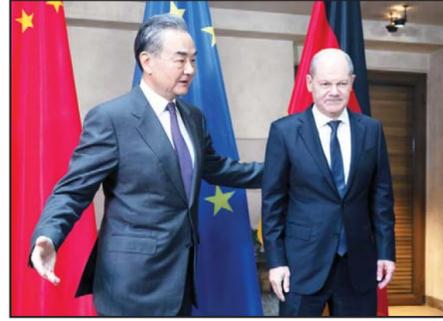
that it doesn't seek to harm China or thwart its development.

Beijing has criticized the strategy. "Today ... more people have come to realize that the absence of cooperation is the biggest risk," Wang said through an interpreter. "Those who attempt to shut China out in the name of de-risking will make a historical mistake."

"The world economy is like a big ocean that cannot be cut into isolated lakes," he added. "The trend toward economic globalization cannot be reversed. We need to

work together to make globalization more universally beneficial and inclusive."

Wang also renewed China's pushback against allegations of forced labor in the western Xinjiang region, where it is accused of running labor transfer programs in which Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities are forced to toil in factories as part of a longstanding campaign of assimilation and mass detention. He complained of "fabricated information from different parties" and asserted that the aim is "to stop the development of China." (AP)



Wang Yi, left, Foreign Minister of China and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, right, line up for a photo during a meeting as part of the Munich Security Conference in Munich, Germany, Saturday, Feb. 17, 2024. The 60th Munich Security Conference (MSC) is taking place from Feb. 16 to Feb. 18, 2024. (AP)

Through the 'Ya Shams' commercial which garnered 7.7 million views

Gulf Bank's digital leap: Shuail shares experience with the new mobile app

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Gulf Bank has recently made significant strides in its digital services, notably with the launch of a new mobile banking app. As a result, the statement "Switch to Gulf Bank today and enjoy its benefits forever" has shifted from just words to a concrete reality.

Customers are now directly reaping the benefits, as this application distinguishes itself as the most user-friendly, efficient, and top-tier option in the banking industry. Its recognition stems from its innovative technology, which not only surpasses customer expectations, but also sets new standards in digital banking experiences.

Therefore, it's not surprising that this exact phrase serves as the closing statement of a Gulf Bank commercial starring the acclaimed singer Nabil Shuail, promoting the "Ya Shams" campaign. In this entertaining and witty commercial, Shuail and his team shifted the spotlight to showcase their excitement for Gulf Bank's digital progress and the diverse benefits offered by its mobile app.

The commercial features a group of young talents alongside Nabil Shuail, presenting an engaging and humorous narrative that praises the

bank's digital advancements and the extensive features and services offered by its mobile app.

Najla Al-Eisa, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank's Marketing Department, voiced her satisfaction regarding the partnership with the acclaimed singer Nabil Shuail and the commercial team. She also emphasized the commercial's rapid success, accumulating over 7.7 million views on YouTube, and various social media platforms within days. Additionally, she announced plans for ongoing collaboration with Nabil Shuail in upcoming projects.

Al-Eisa highlighted that the new mobile application from Gulf Bank represents a substantial improvement in customer experience, encompassing an extensive array of banking services. This enhancement ensures that banking with Gulf Bank becomes more accessible and convenient for customers globally, featuring a user-friendly, fast, and secure interface.

She elaborated on the features of the new application, such as account management, statement access, quick payment links, expense tracking, account transfers, increased transfer limits, dark



Gulf Bank's marketing team, with Najla Al-Eisa in the middle, in a group photo with star Nabil Shuail.

Najla Al-Eisa:

The entirely revamped Gulf Bank's mobile app signifies a significant improvement in customer experience.

mode, information updates, and secure local and international

transfers. Additionally, customers can handle bill payments, financial installment repayments, electronic voucher purchases, ATM and credit card management, pre-paid card requests, new credit card activations, and card blocking for security purposes.

Furthermore, customers can access their debit or credit card PIN and Gulf Rewards points, redeem-

able for complimentary flight reservations, manage their security settings, update profile information, and safeguard accounts through biometric registration (facial recognition and fingerprint).

In conclusion, Al-Eisa highlighted Gulf Bank's digital transformation journey, which includes branch and ATM developments, customer service center updates,

and enhancements to the interactive voice response system. These efforts align with the bank's 2025 strategy to reinforce its prominent role in Kuwait's banking industry and deliver exceptional solutions and services to its customers.

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

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

Marmore: Private credit seeing an increasing investor interest

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Marmore MENA Intelligence, a subsidiary of Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" released its research report on private credit, an emerging asset class that has entered the radar of many investors given its strong past performance and attractive estimated returns. The report seeks to unwrap the basics of private credit, addressing key questions such as reasons for investor interest, private credit vs private equity, role of private credit in one's portfolio etc. It also discusses the performance of the asset class, major players, institutional interest, key risks and regulatory environment.

Private credit's market size is estimated to have grown from USD 137 billion in 2006 to USD 1.5 trillion in 2022. According to Marmore's report, private credit's growth has been driven by pull back in bank lending following the global financial crisis, amid regulatory oversight and market turbulence. In recent months, monetary tightening, macroeconomic uncertainty and banking crisis in the U.S have led to tightening of lending by the banks, spurring growth in private credit.

In terms of long-term performance, private credit has outshone other debt instruments. According to the report, a comparison of risk-return profiles of asset classes, direct lending, a segment of private credit, has lower risk and higher return than its more liquid public market peers. Over the long term, 2009-19 vintage funds have generated a median net IRR of 9.3%.

Many major global fund managers offer exposure to private credit. The report discusses major players and the cost structure of private credit funds.



Markaz logo

Sovereign investors are also evincing increasing interest in private credit. According to Global SWF, among top 10 global state-owned investors (SOIs) by AuM, average allocation to private credit has grown from 2% in 2015 to 3.2% in 2020.

Marmore's report also discusses the risks associated with private credit such as credit risk, illiquidity risk, opacity etc. As private credit funds are typically closed ended, investors might not be able to take their money out during downturn. Higher interest rate environment also increases default risk. Given the growth of the industry and involvement of retail investors, there is growing concern amongst regulators about the systemic risk posed by the segment. In this backdrop, the report also highlights recent key regulatory developments in private credit.

Going forward, tightening lending standards by the banks amid expected moderation in economic activity, borrowers' preference for speed and customization offered by private credit, investors' desire for diversification are likely to drive growth of private credit. However, given the emerging nature of this asset class, lack of transparency and evolving regulatory space, the segment is more suitable for institutional investors and high net worth individuals.

File linked to transnational crime

Hong Kong customs arrests 7 in a \$1.8b money laundering case

HONG KONG, Feb 18, (AP): Hong Kong customs officials have arrested seven people linked to the territory's largest ever money laundering case, involving about 14 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$1.8 billion) some of it linked to a scam case in India.

The seven local residents, aged between 23 and 74, were part of a large-scale transnational syndicate that used various shell companies and bank accounts to transfer large sums from overseas to the city under the guise of running international trading businesses, customs officials said Friday.

One account once received as much as 100 million Hong Kong dollars (\$12.8 million) on a single day, they said.

Ip Tung-ching, the head of customs financial investigation bureau, said 2.9 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$371 million) of the total was suspected to be linked to a scam case involving a mobile application in India. But she did not say which application it was.

Some of those arrested were non-Chinese residents of Hong Kong, she said without giving details.

Authorities believe the syndicate received remittances from India in

name of exporting electronic devices, diamonds, gems and precious metals, Ip said. Proceeds were then transferred to bank accounts in Hong Kong for money laundering.

"These acts of money laundering provide protective umbrellas for the illegal profits of criminals," she said.

Law enforcement in Hong Kong, India and elsewhere cooperated in carrying out the operation, enabling its success, Ip said.

Yu Yiu-wing, the bureau's divisional commander, said officers exchanged intelligence with Indian authorities and found some of the money came from two jewelry companies that Indian authorities said were connected to the scam.

A 34-year-old Hong Kong resident arrested in late January is suspected to be the syndicate's mastermind, she said.

Officials have confiscated electronic devices, documents, and over 8,000 carats of suspected synthetic gem stones apparently meant for export to India.

The investigation was continuing.

The previous record money laundering case involved about 6 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$767 million) and arrests of nine people in January 2023.

Indian farmers strike to 'demand' guaranteed prices for their crops

Others attempt to march to New Delhi

How did things get so bad?

Nigeria's currency has fallen to a record low as inflation surges

ABUJA, Nigeria, Feb 18, (AP): Nigerians are facing one of the West African nation's worst economic crises in years triggered by surging inflation, the result of monetary policies that have pushed the currency to an all-time low against the dollar. The situation has provoked anger and protests across the country.

The latest government statistics released Thursday showed the inflation rate in January rose to 29.9%, its highest since 1996, mainly driven by food and non-alcoholic beverages. Nigeria's currency, the naira, further plummeted to 1,524 to \$1 on Friday, reflecting a 230% loss of value in the last year.

"My family is now living one day at a time (and) trusting God," said trader Idris Ahmed, whose sales at a clothing store in Nigeria's capital of Abuja have declined from an average of \$46 daily to \$16.

The plummeting currency worsens an already bad situation, further eroding incomes and savings. It squeezes millions of Nigerians already struggling with hardship due to government reforms including the removal of gas subsidies that resulted in gas prices tripling.

With a population of more than 210 million people, Nigeria is not just Africa's most populous country but also the continent's largest economy. Its gross domestic product is driven mainly by services such as information technology and banking, followed by manufacturing and processing businesses and then agriculture.

The challenge is that the economy is far from sufficient for Nigeria's booming population, relying heavily on imports to meet the daily needs of its citizens from cars to cutlery. So it is easily affected by external shocks such as the parallel foreign exchange market that determines the price of goods and services.

Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on crude oil, its largest foreign exchange earner. When crude prices plunged in 2014, authorities used its scarce foreign reserves to try to stabi-

lize the naira amid multiple exchange rates. The government also shut down the land borders to encourage local production and limited access to the dollar for importers of certain items.

The measures, however, further destabilized the naira by facilitating a booming parallel market for the dollar. Crude oil sales that boost foreign exchange earnings have also dropped because of chronic theft and pipeline vandalism.

Shortly after taking the reins of power in May last year, President Bola Tinubu took bold steps to fix the ailing economy and attract investors. He announced the end of costly decades-long gas subsidies, which the government said were no longer sustainable. Meanwhile, the country's multiple exchange rates were unified to allow market forces to determine the rate of the local naira against the dollar, which in effect devalued the currency.

Analysts say there were no adequate measures to contain the shocks that were bound to come as a result of reforms including the provision of a subsidized transportation system and an immediate increase in wages.

So the more than 200% increase in gas prices caused by the end of the gas subsidy started to have a knock-on effect on everything else, especially because locals rely heavily on gas-powered generators to light their households and run their businesses.

Under the previous leadership of the Central Bank of Nigeria, policymakers tightly controlled the rate of the naira against the dollar, thereby forcing individuals and businesses in need of dollars to head to the black market, where the currency was trading at a much lower rate.

There was also a huge backlog of accumulated foreign exchange demand on the official market - estimated to be \$7 billion - due in part to limited dollar flows as foreign investments into Nigeria and the country's sale of crude oil have declined.

Authorities said a unified exchange rate would mean easier access to the

dollar, thereby encouraging foreign investors and stabilizing the naira. But that has yet to happen because inflows have been poor. Instead, the naira has further weakened as it continues to depreciate against the dollar.

CBN Gov. Oluyemi Cardoso has said the bank has cleared \$2.5 billion of the foreign exchange backlog out of the \$7 billion that had been outstanding. The bank, however, found that \$2.4 billion of that backlog were false claims that it would not clear. Cardoso said, leaving a balance of about \$2.2 billion, which he said will be cleared "soon."

Tinubu, meanwhile, has directed the release of food items such as cereals from government reserves among other palliatives to help cushion the effect of the hardship. The government has also said it plans to set up a commodity board to help regulate the soaring prices of goods and services.

On Thursday, the Nigerian leader met with state governors to deliberate on the economic crisis, part of which he blamed on the large-scale hoarding of food in some warehouses.

"We must ensure that speculators, hoarders and rent seekers are not allowed to sabotage our efforts in ensuring the wide availability of food to all Nigerians," Tinubu said.

By Friday morning, local media were reporting that stores were being sealed for hoarding and charging unfair prices.

The situation is at its worst in conflict zones in northern Nigeria, where farming communities are no longer able to cultivate what they eat as they are forced to flee violence. Pockets of protests have broken out in past weeks but security forces have been quick to impede them, even making arrests in some cases.

In the economic hub of Lagos and other major cities, there are fewer cars and more legs on the roads as commuters are forced to trek to work. The prices of everything from food to household items increase daily.

sides will meet again Sunday.

"We believe we will all find a solution together peacefully," Munda told reporters.

The protests come at an important time for India with elections to be held in a few months. Modi is widely expected to secure a third successive term.

In 2021, Modi's decision to repeal the agricultural laws was seen as a move to appease farmers, an influential voting bloc, ahead of crucial state polls.

Some economists say that implementation of the demands could risk food inflation. However, experts also point out that a key cause of the farmers' frustration is the lack of implementation of policies that are already in place.

"The system of MSP is already there, but the government doesn't follow through on what it is promising," said Himanshu, an economist at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University who goes by his first name.

The system of guaranteed prices -

which applies to 23 crops - has been in place for decades, but the government mostly pays those prices for crops like rice and wheat, he said. "For the remaining 21 crops, the government hardly buys at those prices. That's a problem. That's why they want a guarantee."

Several meetings between farm leaders and government ministers have failed to end the deadlock.

Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda, who met farm leaders on Thursday, said the talks were positive and the two

HUMAN RESOURCES

Business Plus



Dynamics of job satisfaction and workplace challenges complex

Work as ‘calling’ a double-edged sword



A hiring sign is displayed outside of Golf Center in Des Plaines, Ill., Thursday, Feb. 1, 2024. The US Labor Department reports on the number of people who applied for unemployment benefits last week. (AP)

more disposed to stay in their current role regardless of unfair treatment or working conditions that take advantage of them, such as being underpaid or overworked. Specifically, in previous work we found that people who do feel called to their work report higher job satisfaction - even when they are experiencing discrimination - than people who do not feel called to their work.

A sense of calling may make people less likely to initiate changes to problematic workplace situations. Indeed, as we found in our research, those who view their work as a calling but also perceive discrimination in the workplace report being less likely to speak up in these situations compared with those who do not attach the same meaning to their work.

This can be especially detrimental for those of racial and religious minority groups who are more likely to experience discrimination at work in the first place. As one woman who works in government told us, "It is difficult being an African American woman in my field, so my faith allows me to step back sometimes and remove myself from the situation."

This also shows how religion may help individuals cope with discrimination at work, but sometimes in a way that could detract from actively seeking change.

Experiencing work as a calling can be a double-edged sword. Because those who feel called to their work have a high level of commitment to their jobs, they tend to be more likely to tolerate, endure or ignore work situations that are unreasonable, inequitable or even discriminatory.

According to organizational ethics scholars Stuart Bunderson and Jeffery Thompson, workers who feel called to their jobs are "more likely to see their work as a moral duty, and to sacrifice pay, personal time and comfort for their work." Thus, it can become easier for organizations to exploit these employees, whether they do so intentionally or unintentionally.

Having and being led by a sense of calling is also linked to financial stability. According to our data, 68% of people who do not feel called to their work agree that "the primary reason" they do the work is to make money. In comparison, 47% of those who experience a sense of calling view making money as their primary reason for working.

The discrepancy could also speak to gender, race and class privileges. In her research on the "passion principle" - the idea that Americans feel the need to follow their passion and choose jobs they find fascinating, intriguing or fulfilling - sociologist Erin Cech notes how the concept of pursuing paid work that one loves or feels called to can inadvertently foster structural and cultural inequalities. According to Cech, race and class can influence the freedom to choose their work. Not surprisingly, Cech found that white, upper-class men who did not need to worry about money as much enjoyed the most liberty to do so. (AP)

6 According to our data, 68% of people who do not feel called to their work agree that "the primary reason" they do the work is to make money. In comparison, 47% of those who experience a sense of calling view making money as their primary reason for working.

By Elaine Howard Ecklund, Rice University; Brenton Kalinowski, Rice University, and Denise Daniels, Wheaton College (Illinois)

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

Many Americans — especially young adults — want to do work that feels meaningful. Creating meaning for oneself may be especially important as fewer workplaces provide good pay and benefits to their employees.

Those who are religious or spiritual often want to connect their faith to their work through a sense of calling. But there can be unexpected downsides for those who do so. People who say they feel "called" report better work and life satisfaction, but they may also be less likely to address

workplace problems or unfair treatment when it arises.

As scholars who study religion in the workplace, we have found that about 1 in 5 American workers agree with the statement, "I see my work as a spiritual calling." Most of those who see their work in this way link it to religious sensibilities and practices.

Even though faith can be deeply connected to work, there are few comprehensive studies on this topic. In 2018 and again in 2021, we gathered responses from across the United States on how people see their faith in relation to their work.

Over 15,000 people representing a cross section of American adults filled out our surveys. These respondents included individuals from many different faith traditions and also those who did not follow a religious tradition. We also conducted in-depth interviews with over 250 of our survey-takers.

We found that 53% of Americans who feel called to their work are "very satisfied" with their current job

compared with 39% of those who do not feel called.

The "concept of calling" has roots in Christian history, where people felt called to serve the church. More recently, calling has been extended to a possibility for any person in any job that serves the world.

There is no widely agreed-upon definition of what a modern-day spiritual calling might entail. Business scholars Mitchell Neubert and Katie Halbesleben define it as "a summons from God to approach work with a sense of purpose and a pursuit of excellence in work practices."

Findings that relate calling to positive workplace outcomes are consistent with previous research that shows viewing work as a calling has a positive effect on worker satisfaction, mental health and well-being, including feeling one's talents are being well used. As one respondent whom we interviewed told us, "I definitely feel more fulfilled in my work because of my faith, and vice versa. I feel like I'm being a better Christian by doing

the work that I do ..."

Yet, less is known about the specifics of how people see their work as a calling. Interviews we conducted found that a sense of calling provides workers with higher purpose in their work, especially when facing work that is either extremely challenging or mundane.

For example, teachers talked about dealing with the bureaucracy of state educational systems, and medical service workers discussed the daily grind of mopping floors and handling bodily waste. However, despite the challenges of their work, these people also acknowledged that they were able to get through the day-to-day aspects of their jobs because they felt spiritually called to their work.

There is reason to be cautious, however, in touting the advantages of viewing work as a calling without also considering the detrimental effects that can emerge.

For example, people who feel that God intended them to be in their current workplace or industry might be

Psychological distance a powerful tool

Workplace bullying threat to employee well-being

By Jason Walker, Adler University and Deborah Circo, University of Nebraska Omaha

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

6 Workplace bullies often target those who possess qualities highly valued by employers: self-sufficiency, cautiousness and innovativeness.

The phenomenon of bullying, harassment and sexual abuse in workplaces throughout North America is widespread and harmful to both individuals and organizations. In fact, bullying at work affects up to 30% of workers over time.

As practitioners and researchers who study workplace violence, including bullying, harassment and sexual abuse, we define workplace bullying as harmful acts of mistreatment between people that go beyond incivility and cross the line to intentionally causing harm.

Bullying behaviors range from verbally insulting or socially excluding someone to sabotaging the victim's work, inflicting psychological terror and engaging in sexual abuse or physical aggression. Manipulation and provocation also play a role in bullying dynamics, and cyberbullying has

emerged as a new form of workplace harassment. Research suggests the impacts of workplace bullying affect employee health and safety and the workplace overall.

In a grocery store line, if someone invades your space, shoves you aside or threatens physical harm, the police may intervene, potentially resulting in an arrest. However, in the workplace, incidents involving bullying, assault, sexual abuse or other forms of violence are typically addressed through internal investigations. Our research suggests that treating workplace bullying as a matter of public health rather than employment law is necessary to protect those being targeted.

Targets of workplace bullying often experience serious repercussions, including stress and burnout, along with other diagnosed mental health issues and, in extreme cases, suicide.

Bullying can affect physical health, with symptoms including sleep disturbances, cardiovascular diseases, body aches and pain, loss of appetite and headaches. Targets often describe an inability to concentrate; since they're spending time worrying about what is going to happen to them next, job

performance suffers. The negative impacts can spill over to a target's personal life and affect their relationships with family and friends.

It's not unusual for targeted workers to feel uncomfortable coming forward and talking about their experiences. But suffering in silence can lead to an even more toxic climate at work that can undermine your victims' sense of security, with long-term consequences for their well-being.

Workplace bullies often target those who possess qualities highly valued by employers: self-sufficiency, cautiousness and innovativeness. Those targeted typically are motivated, have a kind perspective and prefer to avoid getting involved in office politics or engaging in competitive behavior. They take charge of their work and responsibilities.

Bullying often involves an imbalance of power, where the perpetrator acts to obtain power and control over the target.

Researchers find that bullies tend to have low self-esteem, problems with anger management and even personality disorders. Bullies often target people based on their appearance, behavior, race, religion, educa-

tional background, gender identity or because of perceived threats to their own career.

There's no hard-and-fast profile, but males tend to exhibit more of the traits associated with bullying. Those who possess tendencies toward what psychologists call dark triad traits - Machiavellianism, subclinical psychopathy and subclinical narcissism - often gravitate toward jobs that offer high levels of freedom and hierarchical structures.

Have you noticed a decline in your emotional or physical health? Is your job performance being affected? Feeling constantly stressed, anxious or demoralized are signs that something isn't right.

Think about whether you feel singled out. Do you sense that you're being isolated because of how others treat you?

If you do conclude you're being bullied, your first priority is keeping yourself safe. Defending yourself against workplace bullying takes courage, but there are steps you can take to diffuse, distance and document what is happening to you.

In the moment when bullying is occurring, focus on trying to keep

your emotions in check and avoid being reactive. For example, try to gain some psychological distance in an emotionally charged situation - politely walk away, don't engage, give yourself time to settle your emotions. Taking space by stepping away can disrupt the immediate intensity of the situation. It helps you stay in control rather than allowing a bully to force you to respond impulsively in the moment, which can lead you to say or do something you'll regret.

Try your best to de-escalate the situation. Some tips for how to stop an interaction from spiraling include:

- Using polite, firm language to ask the bully to stop the conversation.
- Asking the bully to leave.
- Removing yourself from the situation if the bully won't go.
- Informing your supervisor immediately.

If you feel threatened, calmly and politely stop the interaction by removing yourself in a nonthreatening way. As challenging as it can be, the key here is to stay composed and remain respectful.

It may be helpful to engage in some advanced planning with a friend or colleague. (AP)

editor's choice



Exclusive offers and exciting contests at the all-things-barbecue celebration

LuLu Hypermarket's week-long BBQ Bliss promotion sizzles

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: LuLu Hypermarket's week-long 'BBQ Bliss' promotion riveted the interests of grilling gurus and grilled food lovers alike. The promotion, which runs from 14-20 February at all outlets of the hypermarket, was inaugurated on 14 February at the Al-Rai branch by renowned Arabic chef Aqeel along with LuLu's top management, in front of a gathering of shoppers and well-wishers.

The celebration of 'all things barbecue' offered amazing deals, exciting contests, and of course, the tantalizing aroma of grilled meat. During the promotion period, the entire range of BBQ products, including barbecue grilling sets, accessories and tools, as well as, succulent meats, fresh fish, flavorsome BBQ sauces, and anything else you might need to make a perfect barbecue were offered at special prices.

The heat of the promotion was turned higher on 17 February when the live BBQ contest at the Al-Rai outlet saw more than 100 contestants vying with each other to create that perfectly grilled wonder, and take home the coveted top prizes.

Sizzling spectacle

With Al Youm as the main sponsor, and Sadia, Americana, Seara, Khazan, McCain, and Al Tayyeb as co-sponsors, the competition was a sizzling spectacle. At the end of the contest, the best grillers of the day were presented with superb prizes and gifts by top management of LuLu Hypermarket and Al Youm. Consolation prizes were also handed to all participants in the competition.

The seven days of BBQ Bliss witnessed specially set up stalls in the hypermarket showcasing full-set barbecue equipment and accessories, while food sampling counters and food trucks allowed shoppers to relish grilled delights and other foods. A dedicated play-zone kept the little ones engaged in various activities.

Adding to the sizzle of BBQ Bliss was live music, captivating performances by mascots, tallest man/flower costumes, mirror show performances and even a cooking demonstration by Chef Aqeel himself, all of which ensured there was something blissful for everyone to enjoy.

The BBQ Bliss promotion reiterates LuLu Hypermarkets' commitment to offer shoppers not only the best products from around the world at competitive prices, but also to make shopping at the hypermarket an exciting and fun-filled experience.



Photos during the LuLu Hypermarket's BBQ Bliss promotion.

Display lineup includes EQA, EQS SUV and EQE sedan

Al Mulla Automobiles showcases latest Mercedes-Benz electric vehicles at the Kuwait Sustainability Exhibition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Al Mulla Automobiles Co., a member of Al Mulla Group and the sole authorized distributor of Mercedes-Benz vehicles in Kuwait, participated in the Kuwait Sustainability Exhibition, held at Murouj between February 8-10, 2024.

Highlighting its commitment to sustainability initiatives, Al Mulla Automobiles Co. showcased the latest vehicles from the all-electric range from Mercedes-Benz. The display lineup included the EQA, EQS SUV and EQE sedan.

The event was full of activities, music, and entertainment, and took visitors through an educational journey while learning about what local organizations are working on in terms of recycling, sustainability and EVs. The event was well received by guests and presented a great platform to showcase the range of EVs from Mercedes-Benz, while providing them with the opportunity to test drive the vehicles throughout the eventful weekend.

Al Mulla Automobiles is proud to announce its robust network of electric chargers, comprising of 42 AC chargers and 2 Fast

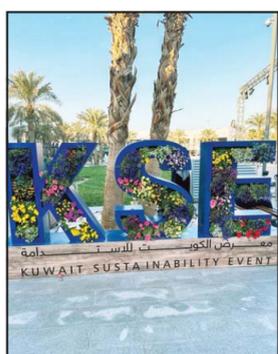
Charge DC chargers with 160KW Capacity powered by Siemens Sicharge D. Strategically installed at Al Mulla Automobiles locations and diverse spots across Kuwait such as Shopping Malls, Hotels etc., these chargers feature a user-friendly screen and two side supports. As we prioritize accessibility and convenience, our foreseeable expansion plan for 2024 aims to enhance the availability of these charging stations.

Furthermore, we are excited to unveil a new addition to our services—a mobile charging option. Expected to be operational in Q1'24, this innovative feature underscores our commitment to providing comprehensive solutions for electric vehicle users.

In its Ambition 2039, Mercedes-Benz has targeted making its fleet of new vehicles net carbon-neutral over the vehicles' entire life cycle by 2039. And by the end of this decade, the brand will offer all-electric vehicles wherever market conditions allow.

The future is electric and intelligent. Intelligent electric mobility - this is what the new Mercedes-Benz product brand stands for. An attractive design, exceptional driving fun, high levels of suitability for everyday use and maximum safety are further attributes.

For more information and queries related to the fully electric lineup of vehicles from Mercedes-Benz, please visit Al Mulla Automobiles Mercedes-Benz showroom in Al Rai, Mercedes-Benz Boutique in The Avenues, WhatsApp or call the customer center at 1887888, follow the account on Instagram @MercedesBenzKuwait, or visit the website at www.mercedes-benz-mena.com/kuwait/en



Photos from the event.



KMRM's newly elected office bearers.

KMRM elects new office bearers

Kuwait Malankara Rite Movement (KMRM) an organization working more than three decades in Kuwait elected the new office bearers of the Central Managing Committee (CMC) for the year 2024. The new office bearers had taken the oath in front of the spiritual director of KMRM, Rt. Rev. John Thundiath, Cor Episcopo in the Virgin Mary Hall of the Holy Family Co-Cathedral, Kuwait City.

Babuji Bathery - President, Binu K John - Secretary, Rana Varghese - Treasurer

Joseph K Daniel - Senior Vice President

Jubin P Mathew - Vice President, Thomas John - Vice President, Mathew Koshy - Working Secretary, Joben Joy - Office Secretary, Gijo John - Joint Treasurer

Joji Vellappalli - Area President - Ab-

bassiya

Sharon Tharakan - Area President - Ahmadi

Jose Varghese - Area President - City

Shinu M Joseph - Area President - Salmiya

Jiju Varghese - Joint Treasurer

Bindu Manoj - President - FOM

Jilto James - President - MCYM

Liju Parakkal - Headmaster - SMCFF

Jojimon Thomas - Chairman - Advisory Board, Shaji Varghese - Chief Auditor

George Mathew - Chief Election Commissioner, the four Area committees, FOM, and MCYM office bearers were elected in together with the Central Managing Committee (CMC), and their various offices commenced functioning. Over five hundred members from all over Kuwait had attended the ceremony to take the oath.

Royal Britannia Kindergarten celebrates diversity & inclusion in special education at the int'l fair event

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: The three-day event, held at the picturesque Hyde Park Garden, aimed to provide a holistic learning experience for students by immersing them in the customs, cultures, habitats, weather, fauna and flora, traditions, food, and clothing of different countries. The event not only fostered cultural awareness but also created an engaging environment for students to explore and appreciate global diversity. The RB Academic team meticulously transformed Hyde Park Garden into a vibrant setting, where each country had its dedicated stand adorned with beautifully decorated traditional items, featured food tastings, accompanied by authentic country music, enabling students to engage their senses fully.

Students were also introduced to the flags of the countries, enhancing their understanding of global symbolism. The event provided an opportunity for hands-on learning, with therapists and specialists on-site guiding students through holistic sensory activities at every stand. This interactive approach allowed students to connect with different cultures in a curious and intriguing manner.

Royal Britannia Kindergarten for Special Needs's founder DrHanan Al-Mutawa has been instrumental



Photos during the Royal Britannia Kindergarten three-day celebration at the international fair event.

in shaping the institution's ethos of inclusion and diversity and she together with her team at RB are

committed to providing innovative and enriching educational experiences for their students, ensuring

that every child receives the support and opportunities they need to thrive in a diverse world.

People & Places

Film

Film sparks global call

'Io Capitano' inspires brutal migrant quest

CASTEL VOLTURNO, Italy, Feb 18, (AP) — Mamadou Kouassi's searing, epic journey over African deserts, through illegal prisons and across the Mediterranean Sea in a smugglers' boat informed Italian director Matteo Garrone's Oscar-nominated film "Io Capitano." Some episodes that the Ivorian migrant witnessed on his three-year odyssey were too strong to make the final cut.

Garrone's film, which is nominated in the best international feature film category, traces the journey of two teenage boys who follow the migrant route from Senegal across the Niger desert to Libya, where they board a rusty smugglers' boat packed with migrants.

Smugglers force one of the teenagers to "captain" the boat, because as a minor he won't be jailed in Italy.

In the movie, no one dies on the perilous passage. But on Kouassi's boat, "people died. And I was lucky to survive."

Kouassi, who completed his journey in 2008 and advised Garrone on the film, provided horrific details of torture that contribute to the film's powerful message, including prisoners being burned and beaten, as well as his experience as a slave laborer working as a mason on the desert villa of a wealthy Libyan.

More graphic episodes were cut, including repeated rapes of women by traffickers along the route, or scenes of migrants who can't provide family contacts for traffickers to extort being driven back to the desert and left to die.

"Matteo removed it because we want the film to reach a wide audience," Kouassi explained.

Garrone's previous films include the 2008 organized crime drama "Gomorra," and the 2019 fantasy "Pinocchio" starring Roberto Benigni. The Italian director cast two Senegalese high school students, Seydou Sarr and Moustapha Fall, to play the teenage protagonists. Sarr won the Marcello Mastroianni prize for best emerging actor at the Venice Film Festival, where the film premiered.

In the film, the boys are lured to Europe by a dream of becoming singers fueled by TikTok videos. In real life, the actors had little knowledge of the horrors of the migrant route before they began filming in their native Senegal.

"Matteo made this movie to let you see what happens in fact, the reality of what we (Africans) suffer to come to Europe," Sarr said.

Sarr and Fall's lives have been overturned by the sudden success of the film, and have been splitting their time since filming between Garrone's mother's beach house near Rome and touring cities promoting "Io Capitano." Both nurture dreams of continuing in acting and Sarr hopes to become a soccer star.

The 40-year-old Kouassi, on the other hand, has continued his work as a cultural mediator in the city of Castel Volturno, near Naples, helping immigrants get work papers and health care. He already has a sequel in mind: his life after arriving in Italy, where he was among the legions of young Africans exploited working 10-hour days picking tomatoes and oranges for as little as 10 euros a day.

His dream is that "Io Capitano" will influence migrant policy around the globe by focusing public attention on the often untold horrors.

He notes the attention placed on the thousands of people who die crossing the central Mediterranean each year, while no one knows how many people die in the deserts. "And these prisons, nobody knows how many people are dying inside," he said.

Kouassi, the two young actors and the director are currently in the United States promoting "Io Capitano" in its Oscar campaign. During recent screenings in Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York, he said audience members were moved by the movie's depiction of migrants' hardships, many walking away with the determination that "something must be done."

"We think that this film, 'Io Capitano,' should be one of the powerful instruments for governments, for the whole world, to change the policy of migration," Kouassi said.

In addition, Kouassi has been invited to schools in Italy to talk to students after screening the film.

"I have to be the voice of people because if nobody starts to let people understand what we face before coming to Europe, people would think that we just take the boat and we enter Europe," Kouassi said. "So for me it was important to explain the beginning."

For him, getting the message out is worth more than any industry award.

"To win, for example, the statute of the Oscar is important. But change is more important," he said.

Also:

LONDON: Zendaya is on a fashion roll, in a cyborg "Dune: Part Two" kind of way.

The co-star of the highly anticipated film sequel stunned Thursday at its world premiere when she hit the sand-strewn carpet in a silver robot suit straight from the archive of Mugler. It's from the French fashion house's fall/winter 1995 "Cirque d'hiver" 20th anniversary collection, according to a company statement.

That translates to "Winter Circus," not unlike the fanfare surrounding the March 1 release of Denis Villeneuve's second half of his sci-fi epic.

Zendaya's body-hugging armor outfit with sheer plexiglass inserts has built-in gloves she paired with matching silver heels. Mugler gave special thanks to her stylist, Law Roach, in an email detailing the vintage look. While the runway version included a matching headpiece, Zendaya opted for a short sleek hairdo and a blue diamond necklace from Bulgari.

She was joined on the carpet by fellow stars **Timothée Chalamet**, **Josh Brolin** and **Rebecca Ferguson**, along with new cast members **Austin Butler**, **Florence Pugh** and Villeneuve.

The new film picks up where 2021's "Dune" left off. Chalamet's **Paul Atreides** unites with Zendaya's Chani and the Fremens in order to seek revenge against those who killed his family members. Pugh, a newcomer to the world of "Dune" as the Emperor's daughter, plays Princess Irulan with Austin Butler as Feyd-Rautha.



This image released by Archimede shows a scene from the film 'Io Capitano.' (AP)



Mayor Linda Horning Pitt stand amid railroad-themed displays at the Crestline Historical Museum in Crestline, Ohio, on Feb. 8, 2024. (AP)



Florence Pugh, from left, Timothee Chalamet, Zendaya and Austin Butler pose for photographers at the photo call for the film 'Dune: Part Two' on Wednesday, Feb. 14, 2024 in London. (AP)

Books

Riding the Rails of Democracy

Truman's whistle-stop triumph

CRESTLINE, Ohio, Feb 18, (AP) — From its earliest days as a village, Crestline was synonymous with trains. A railroad station inspired this northern Ohio town, railroad workers populated it and the passengers who flocked here helped it grow.

So it seems only fitting that a politician's stop in Crestline would go on to popularize the word "whistle-stop."

The tale of underdog 1948 presidential candidate Harry S. Truman's decision to capitalize on the remark of an opponent - Ohio's own "Mr. Republican," U.S. Sen. Robert Taft - to own the term, and win the election, is just one of dozens of colorful anecdotes in Edward Segal's new book, "Whistle-Stop Politics: Campaign Trains and the Reporters Who Covered Them."

Segal, a former press secretary and aide to both Democratic and Republican candidates, explains that whistle-stop was a railroad term at the time to describe small towns without regularly scheduled train service. The conductor would signal the engineer that passengers needed to disembark, and the engineer "would respond with two toots of the whistle," he writes.

By 1948, though, the term had become shorthand for describing a community that was viewed as backward or undesirable. So when Taft accused Truman - not long after his "special" train had stopped in Crestline - of going around the country on this campaign train tour "blackguarding (attacking) Congress at every whistle-stop," Truman embraced the opportunity.

The Democratic National Committee asked voters, "Was it nice

of the Senator to call you a whistle-stop?" Seventy-three percent of respondents said they didn't approve. Truman began using the term himself, Segal writes, and it soon lost its pejorative meaning.

Altogether, Segal has cataloged at least 180 campaign train trips throughout U.S. history - from William Henry Harrison to Joe Biden, with dozens of presidents, vice presidents, first ladies, representatives, senators and governors in between. He continues to update the record on this uniquely "American invention" on the book's website: www.whistlestoppolitics.com.

The project was inspired by Segal's personal experience organizing a whistle-stop campaign tour for Republican U.S. Rep. Mickey Edwards of Oklahoma, for whom he was serving as press secretary in 1984.

"He wanted press coverage, and I said, 'Congressman, how are we going to generate press coverage for you?' He said, 'I don't know. That's your problem to figure out,'" Segal said in an interview.

Segal, a self-described "recovering political science major," thought immediately of Truman's famous underdog campaign of 1948. "And it turns out there was a set of workable train tracks in the congressman's district," he said.

The letters and interviews used to inform the book date back to that time. They include: George McGovern, Adlai Stevenson III, Jody Powell, other candidates and candidates' relatives and a host of journalists. Other details are drawn from books, news accounts, and historical documents, photographs and political cartoons.

the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission. According to the documents, Moonves acknowledged working closely with



Swift



Moonves

then-Capt. **Cory Palka** of the Los Angeles Police Department in 2017 to obtain information about a sexual assault victim's confidential police report against him.

Palka, who had provided private security for Moonves between 2008 and 2014 at the Grammy Awards, which CBS produced, notified network officials about the complaint against the executive in November 2017, the documents show.

Through Palka, they say, Moonves obtained an unredacted copy of the police report, which also included personal information such as the home address and phone number of the accuser. Moonves also met with Palka for an hour at a restaurant to discuss the complaint and ways to quash it. (AP)

Music

Got back!

Paul McCartney's stolen bass found

LONDON, Feb 18, (AP) — **Paul McCartney** no longer gently weeps for his original bass guitar.

A five-year search by the manufacturer of the instrument that was aided by a husband-and-wife team of journalists helped reunite The Beatles star with the distinctive violin-shaped 1961 electric Höfner that went missing a half century ago and is estimated to be worth 10 million pounds (\$12.6 million).

McCartney had asked Höfner to help find the missing instrument that helped launch **Beatlemania** across the universe, Scott Jones, a journalist who teamed up with Höfner executive Nick Wass to track it down, said Friday.

"Paul said to me, 'Hey, because you're from Höfner, couldn't you help find my bass?'" Wass said. "And that's what sparked this great hunt. Sitting there, seeing what the lost bass means to Paul, I was determined to solve the mystery."

McCartney bought the bass for about 30 pounds (\$37) in 1961 when The Beatles were developing their chops during a series of residencies in Hamburg, Germany. The instrument was played on the Beatles first two records and featured on hits such as "Love Me Do," "Twist and Shout," and "She Loves You."

"Because I was left-handed, it looked less daft because it was symmetrical," McCartney once said. "I got into that. And once I bought it, I fell in love with it."

It was rumored to have been stolen around the time The Beatles were recording their final album, "Let it Be," in 1969. But no one was sure when it went missing.

What began as a long and winding road for Wass to track down the bass picked up speed when Jones serendipitously joined the hunt after seeing McCartney headline the Glastonbury Festival in 2022. The stage lights at one point seemed to illuminate nothing but the sunburst pattern on his bass and Jones wondered if it was the same instrument McCartney had played in the early '60s.

When he later searched the internet he was stunned to find the original bass was missing and there was a search for it.

"I was staggered, I was amazed," Jones said. "I think we live in a world where The Beatles could do almost anything and it would get a lot of attention."

Jones and his wife, Naomi, both journalists and researchers, got in touch with Wass to spread the word more broadly.

After hitting a dead end following a lead about a roadie for The Who, they relaunched The Lost Bass Project in September and within 48 hours were inundated with 600 emails that contained the "little gems that led us to where we are today," Jones said.

One of those emails came from sound engineer Ian Horne, who had worked with McCartney's band Wings, and was the first big breakthrough in the hunt. Horne said the bass had been swiped from the back of his van one night in the Notting Hill section of London in 1972.

The researchers published the new information on their website in October, adding that Horne said McCartney told him not to worry about the theft and that he continued working for him for another six years.

"But I've carried the guilt all my life," Horne said.

After publishing that update, a bigger break came when they were contacted by a person who said their father had stolen the bass. The man didn't set out to steal McCartney's instrument and panicked when he realized what he had, Jones said.

The thief, who was not named, ended up selling it to Ron Guest, landlord of the Admiral Blake pub, for a few pounds and some beers.

As the Joneses were starting to look for relatives of Guest, word had already reached his family. His daughter-in-law contacted McCartney's studio.

Cathy Guest said that the old bass that had been in her attic for years looked like the one they were looking for.

It had been passed from Ron Guest to his oldest son, who died in a car wreck, and then to a younger son, Haydn Guest, who was married to Cathy and died in 2020.

The instrument was returned to McCartney in December and then it took about two months to authenticate it.

Health

'Kuwait's in my blood'

Health Ministry launches blood donation campaign

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18, (KUNA): The Ministry of Health's blood transfusion services management launched the blood donation campaign "Kuwait's in my blood," Sunday, under the auspices of Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi in the Kuwait Central Blood Bank.



Dr Al-Awadhi

The blood donation campaign is in celebration of Kuwait's National and Liberation days, and will last until February 29.

The blood transfusion services department chief Dr. Reem Al-Radhwan, in a statement to KUNA, said the campaign was in its eighth consecutive year, promoting selflessness to all those living in Kuwait.

She emphasized that donating blood is not only a humanitarian duty, but also a patriotic one. Souvenirs will be given to all those who donate in gratitude for their action, and in commemoration of Kuwait's national holidays, she added.

Dr. Al-Radhwan noted the services department constantly organizes blood donation campaigns in both governmental and private sectors to enrich and provide the healthcare system with copious amounts of blood and its transferable components.

It is worthy to note that the overall units of donated blood in 2023 went over 93,000 units with a significant five percent increase from 2022. She explained this increase exceeded expectations, with the blood transfusion services department aiming to reach an additional three percent more.

Annual Blood donation campaigns make up approximately 24 percent of overall causes of donations, which is a considerable increase from previous years at 15 percent, Dr. Al-Radhwan said.

The noteworthy increase of donations in 2023 was from providing more blood donation service locations such as Al-Adan Hospital, Jahra Hospital, as well as Farwaniya Hospital, with the intention of offering more donation sites in the future.

Dr. Al-Radhwan called on Kuwaiti citizens and residents to participate in donating blood, especially people with negative blood types, in order to save lives. Donation sites are available throughout the month, and throughout weekends and national holidays.

Reporting requirements altered

Lyme disease case counts in US rose by almost 70% in '22

NEW YORK, Feb 18, (AP): Lyme disease cases in the U.S. jumped nearly 70% in 2022, which health officials say is not due to a major increase of new infections but instead a change in reporting requirements.

Reported cases surpassed 62,000 in 2022, after averaging about 37,000 a year from 2017 through 2019, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a report released Thursday. Numbers for 2023 will be released later this year.

Lyme disease is the most common tick-borne infection in the U.S., occurring mostly in the Northeast, Midwest and mid-Atlantic states.

An estimated 476,000 Americans are diagnosed with it each year, but only a fraction are officially reported.

Traditionally, health departments received positive lab tests and went back to doctor's offices to gather more information about the patients. But reporting fell off in 2020 and 2021 when health department staffers were busy working on COVID-19.

Starting in 2022, all that's required to report cases - at least in high-incidence states - is a positive lab test. It's possible that better, more sensitive testing is being used more and that may have contributed to the increase, but it's too early to tell, CDC officials said.



Ashley Herkins, right, prepares a part for a trachea tube made from guayule latex as Sarah Davis, left, a lab technician, works, Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024, in Wooster, Ohio. Many companies tout the promise of alternative crops such as dandelions or guayule to fight climate change. Inset: Harvested rubber dandelions sit on a table inside a laboratory. (AP)

Science

Are alternative crops realistic?

Dandelions and desert shrubs set to replace rubber, new grains and more

WOOSTER, Ohio, Feb 18, (AP): Katrina Cornish spends her days raising dandelions and desert shrubs. She harvests the stretchy rubber substances they produce and uses special machines to dip them into condoms, medical gloves and parts for trachea tubes. And she thinks those products could forever alter the landscape of agriculture in the United States.



Katrina Cornish, a professor at Ohio State University who studies rubber alternatives, poses for a portrait, Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024, in Wooster, Ohio. (AP)

Cornish, a professor at Ohio State University who studies rubber alternatives, isn't the only one pouring energy into alternative crops like that desert shrub, guayule, or the rubber dandelions that bloom with yellow petals in the greenhouse where Cornish works. In Arizona, too, guayule thrives amidst drought, its blue-green leaves set apart from dry dirt at a research and development farm operated by the tire company Bridgestone. And in Nebraska and other parts of the central U.S., green grasses of sorghum spring up, waving with reddish clusters of grains.

They're not the corn, soybeans, wheat or cotton that have dominated those areas for decades. Instead, they're crops that many companies, philanthropic organizations and national and international entities tout as promising alternatives to fight climate change. But while some researchers and farmers are optimistic about the potential of these crops, many of which are more water-efficient and important in certain parts of the world to fight hunger, they also say drastic changes would need to happen in markets and processing before we ever see fields full of these out-of-the-box plants or many products in stores made with them, especially in the United States.

Most rubber processing happens

overseas, and the U.S. isn't prepared to process rubber domestically. But Cornish also says the threats of disease, climate change and international trade tensions also mean that it would be a smart investment to work on growing and processing domestic alternatives.

With sorghum, too, grown for people to eat as well as for farm animals or even pet food, processing would need to be scaled up, said Nate Blum, chief executive officer of Sorghum United, an international non-governmental organization focused on spreading awareness about sorghum. Though the U.S. is the world's largest producer of sorghum, it still represents only a small fraction of acres grown compared to commodity crops like corn and soybeans. And though corn and soybeans are heavily incentivized in the U.S., Blum is hopeful that consumer demand will encourage more investment in the sorghum and millets industry.

However, farmers are more likely to plant whatever crops get subsidies, said James Gerber, a senior scientist with climate solutions nonprofit Proj-

ect Drawdown. Gerber, who recently published a paper in Nature Food about which crops will continue to see yield growth and which may stagnate in the coming years, said comparing sorghum production in India and the U.S. illustrates this principle. India has invested heavily in improving sorghum yields there, but the U.S. has not, he said.

Still, Blum thinks there are real benefits to pursue with sorghum, and perhaps more urgent benefits in other parts of the world than in the U.S. On the heels of last year, when the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization declared a focus on millets including sorghum, Blum thinks there's still much more to be done. "The end of the international year is not the end. It's actually just the beginning," he said.

With climate change bearing down on agriculture around the world, the need for crops that can withstand extreme weather like persistent drought is especially important in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia where smallholder farmers rely on just a few acres of land. Some of the breeding programs for those crops are based in the U.S., but they are much less frequently included in the American diet or lifestyle.

That's why specialty markets will be critical if these crops have any hope of taking off here, Cornish said. She thinks that, just as Tesla opened up the possibility of mainstream electric cars by first marketing the product as a luxury good, premium goods like condoms, trachea tube parts and radiation-protected surgical gloves need to be made with dandelion and guayule to inspire producers to grow more meaningful amounts of either of those crops.



This undated file photo provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows a black-legged tick, also known as a deer tick, a carrier of Lyme disease. U.S. Lyme disease cases jumped nearly 70% in 2022, according to a report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024. But health officials say it's due to a change in reporting requirements, and not an explosion of new infections. (AP)

India successfully launches weather satellite

NEW DELHI, Feb 18, (KUNA): The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully launched the meteorological satellite INSAT-3DS from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota Island in southern state of Andhra Pradesh, at 17:30 pm., Saturday.

The Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F14) which is 51.7-meter tall and 4 meter wide placed the satellite into a geosynchronous transfer orbit, then to a geosynchronous stationary orbit in space, the Indian Ministry of Earth Science said in a statement.

"INSAT-3DS will augment the country's meteorological (weather, climate, and ocean related) services with the presently operational INSAT-3D and INSAT-3DR in-orbit satellites," according to the statement.

The newly launched satellite aims to enhance capabilities of monitoring earth's surface, atmosphere, oceans, and environment.

It is expected to enhance capabilities of various Indian agencies in data collection and dissemination and search and rescue services.

The NSAT-3DS weighing 2,275 kilograms is equipped with state-of-the-art payloads including an imager payload to generate images of the earth and its environment, a 19-channel sounder payload to provide information on the atmosphere, a data relay transponder to receive meteorological, hydrological and oceanographic data from automatic data collection platforms and a satellite aided search and rescue transponder.

The mission will boost India's weather, climate, and ocean-related observations and services. It will also help boost disaster mitigation and preparedness in the future. It can also help public fisher folk and farmers by giving climate prediction and forecasts, alerts and early warnings.

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Lillard defends his NBA 3-point contest title

McClung takes 2nd straight NBA Slam Dunk Contest title

INDIANAPOLIS, Feb. 18, (AP): Mac McClung went back to school to win his second consecutive NBA Slam Dunk Contest.

He asked Shaquille O'Neal to squeeze into McClung's old high school jersey, then grabbed the ball out of the big man's hands and leapt clear over him to draw five perfect scores on his final attempt Saturday night.

McClung compiled 98.8 points on his last two dunks, while Boston Celtics All-Star Jaylen Brown finished with 97.8. "Shaq was so cool to put that high school jersey on, man, it almost made me emotional that he would do that," McClung said. "When he put it on, he said, 'You better not miss it.' I said, 'OK, I won't miss it.'"

Unlike some of his previous attempts, McClung made this dunk on his first try and was rewarded handsomely by the five judges. As a result, the high-flying, 6-foot-2 guard who plays for Orlando's G League affiliate, the Osceola Magic, became the sixth player with two or more Slam Dunk titles and the first to win in back-to-back seasons since Zach LaVine in 2015 and 2016.

Hey Mac, gonna go for an unprecedented third straight title next year? "I don't know. We'll think about it," said McClung, who led his team to the

G League championship last year. "I'm not sure yet."

The only player with three NBA Slam Dunk crowns is Nate Robinson, but those didn't come in a row.

McClung jumped over two people on his first dunk in the final round. Brown paid tribute to the late Terrence Clark, a Massachusetts prep star who died in a car crash at age 19 in April 2021.

McClung needed an even higher score after four judges gave Brown a 49 and the other one awarded a 50 on his final

BASKETBALL

dunk, a left-handed slam over one person with a Michael Jackson-style sequin glove covering his left hand.

McClung then picked O'Neal out of the crowd, asked him to stand in as the prop and delivered the dunk of the night. "It was like, 'OK, you've really got to bring something, and I think they want us to make our dunks on the first try, which I completely understand,'" McClung said. "So I knew it was time to lock in for the finals."

3-point contest

Milwaukee Bucks star Damian Lillard defended his NBA 3-point contest title by finishing with 26 points in the

final round.

Lillard, who won with Portland last season, became the eighth player to win at least two 3-point crowns and the first since Jason Kaponi in 2007 and 2008 to do it in consecutive years.

Lillard beat out Trae Young of Atlanta and Karl-Anthony Towns of Minnesota, who both had 24 points in the last round. "I think last year it was a lower score to win. Like, nobody really shot the ball great," Lillard said. "This one, I felt like everybody shot at a pretty high clip in the first round, in the tiebreaking round and the final round. Everyone shot well, so this one was, I'd say, a little more fun."

Skills challenge

Indiana Pacers guard Tyrese Haliburton, a two-time All-Star, made the tie-breaking half-court shot with 20.5 seconds left in a timed contest Saturday night to give Team Pacers the NBA's Skills Challenge crown over Team All-Stars.

Haliburton, Myles Turner and Bennedict Mathurin teamed up to win the night's first two competitions - the team relay and the passing competition - at Lucas Oil Stadium, just a short walk from their home arena.

It took Team All-Stars 58.8 seconds to make its first half-court shot. Haliburton needed just 38.3 seconds to win



Osceola Magic's Mac McClung waves after winning the slam dunk competition at the NBA basketball All-Star weekend, Saturday, Feb. 17, 2024, in Indianapolis. (AP)

MLS to lock out referees

Miami could open season with replacement officials

WASHINGTON, Feb. 18, (AP): Major League Soccer will lock out referees after its union rejected a tentative contract, putting Lionel Messi's Inter Miami on track to open the season next week with replacement officials.

The Professional Soccer Referees Association said Saturday that 95.8% voted against a tentative agreement with the Professional Referee Organization, which supplies match officials to MLS, the NWSL and some lower-tier leagues. The union said 97.8% of eligible members voted.

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Their previous five-year agreement had been set to expire on Jan. 15, and a pair of brief extensions ended Monday.

"We are left with no choice but to institute a lockout and use qualified non-bargaining unit officials so that games can go ahead as scheduled," Mark Geiger, the former referee who became PRO's general manager in February 2023, said in a statement.

Messi and Miami play the MLS opener at home against Real Salt Lake on Wednesday.

The PSRA, which has about 260 members, said the tentative agreement lacked a sufficient economic package and quality-of-life improvements.

"The skyrocketing growth of MLS has significantly increased demands on officials mentally and physically, and as such has increased demands on both our professional and personal time," union president Peter Manikowski said in a statement. "Our members are asking not only for fair compensation at a time when the league is reporting record growth, but also for the ability to take care of themselves on the road and at home to continue officiating at the highest level that this sport demands."

MLS said PRO's proposal for wages, benefits and travel was a 25% improvement from last year.

PRO said the tentative five-year agreement included guaranteed pay increases this year of 10-33% for referees, 75-104% raises for assistant referees and 15-100% for video match officials along with increased match fees. Salaries and match fees would have increased 7% in 2027 and 3% in other years.

First-class or business-class air travel would be added for the postseason and for the final day of the regular sea-

son in 2028.

MLS used replacement officials for the first two weeks of its 2014 season before reaching a five-year contract after the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service entered talks.

League executive vice president Nelson Rodriguez said the union rejected a no-strike-no lockout proposal. He said in statement that PRO would use "experienced professional match referees supported by veteran VAR officials," a reference to the video assistant referees.

PRO had 66 officials committed to work during a lockout, according to information provided to The Associated Press. Among that group, 26 could be referees or fourth officials and six referees, assistant referees or fourth officials. Five could be fourth officials or video assistant referees and 29 could be assistant referees.

Eleven of the referees have past experience at FIFA events or first-, second- and third-tier professional leagues.

PRO managers who have been certified for VAR in the past will be available for video referee work.

Venier wins women World Cup 'super-G'

Overall leader finishes 6th

CRANS-MONTANA, Switzerland, Feb. 18, (AP): Austrian downhill specialist Stephanie Venier won a women's World Cup super-G for the first time Sunday, giving new impetus to the battle for the discipline title as leader Lara Gut-Behrami placed sixth.

In a tight race on the sunbathed Mont Lachaux course, Venier beat Italians Federica Brignone by 0.04 seconds and Marta Bassino by 0.15 for her third career win overall, a day after Bassino and Brignone went 1-2 in a downhill on the same course.

Venier bounced back from disappointing results in the two recent downhills, when she placed 10th and 17th, respectively.

"The skiing was good, better than the days before. I did some mistakes, but I'm very happy now," the Austrian said. "The last days weren't that easy for me with all the pressure and I had nothing to lose today. So, my ground speed is good and I handled it great, I think."

Venier decided the super-G on the straight middle section, where she



Austria's Stephanie Venier celebrates winning an alpine ski, women's World Cup super-G, in Crans Montana, Switzerland, Sunday, Feb. 18, 2024. (AP)

with that." The result set up a tight race to the super-G season title. Gut-Behrami, who won the globe for the fourth time last season, had her lead cut back to just five points from Cornelia Huetter. The Austrian was fifth on Sunday.

Brignone and Venier now also rank within 100 points of Gut-Behrami, with four more super-G races

coming up this season, including two in Val di Fassa, Italy, next weekend.

The race was briefly interrupted after Ragnhild Mowinckel's nasty crash. The Norwegian caught a bump and lost control over her right ski before sliding into the safety netting, but ultimately got up and seemed to have avoided major injury.

SKIING

found a better line than her rivals to take speed into the twisty finish stretch.

Venier's previous wins came in downhills in Germany in 2019 and in Italy last month - the race in Cortina d'Ampezzo where Mikaela Shiffrin hurt her left knee in a crash.

Shiffrin's team said the American planned to resume training next week, but that she likely won't return to the circuit earlier than the second weekend of March for a GS and slalom in Sweden.

Shiffrin lost her lead in the overall standings to Gut-Behrami last week. The Swiss star, who won the last two super-G races and a downhill Friday, finished nearly half a second off the lead in sixth on Sunday, extending her lead over the American to 205 points.

"I had some struggles on the slope, on that soft snow, it was not the best. I just tried to attack," Gut-Behrami said. "But in the end, it's a really solid weekend and I'm happy

Mbappé comes off bench and scores penalty as leaders PSG win at Nantes

PARIS, Feb. 18, (AP): Kylian Mbappé came off the bench to score a late penalty as French league leader Paris Saint-Germain won at Nantes 2-0 and moved 14 points clear of second-placed Nice.

Mbappé was fouled and confidently put his spot kick to the right of goalkeeper Rémy Descamps in the 78th minute, then pointed at a pitchside television camera and smiled before vigorously clenching his fist.

It took his league-leading tally to 21 and his season's haul to 32 in 31 games. After the final whistle he took off his jersey and gave it to PSG's traveling fans.

He was put on the bench by coach Luis Enrique, two days after finally telling PSG he's leaving at the end of the season. He came on in the 61st just after Lucas Hernández scored with a shot that deflected and looped over Descamps.

Enrique may well have been resting Mbappé since he has been nursing a

sore left ankle recently and also sat out last Sunday's home game against Lille.

Left winger Bradley Barcola forced a save from Descamps 10 minutes into a tight first half. Near the end of it, Nantes twice went close following quick counterattacks and had a goal from defender Nicolas Pallois disallowed for offside.

Pallois forced PSG goalkeeper

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Gianluigi Donnarumma to tip over with a dipping shot from 25 meters early in the second half, and lively forward Mostafa Mohamed drew another save from him with 10 minutes remaining.

In an earlier game, Canada striker Jonathan David showed he is back in the scoring groove by grabbing a hat trick as Lille beat Le Havre 3-0 to move up to third place.

Lewandowski converts a penalty to give Barca win

MADRID, Feb. 18, (AP): Robert Lewandowski converted a penalty kick in stoppage time after missing his first attempt for Barcelona to win at Celta Vigo 2-1 on Saturday, relieving some pressure on the club ahead of a Champions League playoff.

Lewandowski's first attempt was saved by Celta goalkeeper Vicente Guaita, but the Poland striker received a chance to retake the penalty after video review determined Guaita moved off the goal-line before Lewandowski shot.

The veteran then rolled the ball into the corner in the seventh minute of stoppage time to give Barcelona the victory after the home draw against Granada in the previous round, when it was jeered by its fans.

"I don't know what happened in the first penalty, but the goalkeeper was off the line too fast and I had the chance to score as usual in the second penalty," Lewandowski said. "It was very important for us to get these three points, and now we can start focusing on the Champions League."

Barcelona visits Napoli on Wednesday in the first leg of the round of 16. The five-time European champion is back in the Champions League knockout rounds after two consecutive eliminations in the group stage.

"It was an agonizing win but it was well deserved," Barcelona coach Xavi Hernández said.

Xavi has been under added pressure despite announcing recently he will step down as Barcelona coach after the sea-

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Former two-division UFC champion Cejudo drops to 0-2 in his comeback bid

Topuria stops Volkanovski in 2nd round, claims featherweight title at UFC 298

ANAHEIM, Feb 18, (AP): Ilia Topuria boldly declared himself a UFC world champion in his social media biography for months before he actually became the first Georgian to win a title.

When Topuria finally got the belt strapped around his waist at UFC 298 on Saturday night, he cried at the feeling of dreams coming true.

Topuria stopped Alexander Volkanovski in the second round to claim the featherweight title, ending the Australian champion's four-year reign with a devastating series of strikes.

Topuria (15-0), who lives and trains in Spain, controlled the first round of his first UFC title fight with sharp punching before he sensationally finished off Volkanovski with more of the same.

Topuria staggered the 35-year-old Volkanovski to the cage with a left-right combination before putting him on the canvas with a perfect right hand followed by a big left. Topuria finished the champion on the ground with 1:28 left, improving to 7-0 since joining the UFC in late 2020.

"I feel so happy right now," Topuria said afterward with a combination

flag of Georgia and Spain wrapped around his shoulders. "They're going to tell you you can't do it. They're going to knock you down and doubt you. But guess what? The only person you need to have your back in this life is yourself. Just trust yourself, work tirelessly, have faith and everything is possible. Look at me now."

Topuria perfectly seized a moment several years in the making. He had stormed to the top of the list contenders for Volkanovski's belt with six consecutive UFC victories in less than three years, capped by a blowout decision over Josh Emmett last summer.

Volkanovski (26-4) had made five consecutive successful title defenses since winning his belt in late 2019, but his reign ended with his first featherweight loss in UFC competition. Volkanovski also lost twice in the past year to lightweight champion Islam Makhachev in a failed bid to become a two-division champ, and he didn't show his usual relentless work rate against Topuria before the fight abruptly ended.

Topuria didn't lack for confidence during the promotion of this fight. He repeatedly spoke of Volkanovs-

ki's reign in the past tense, and he even swiped the title belt off the table in front of Volkanovski at their news conference Thursday.

UFC President Dana White is hoping to make his promotion's debut in Spain with Topuria's next fight. White was delighted by Topuria's self-confidence in declaring himself a champion even before he won the belt.

"He definitely believes in himself," White said. "That's definitely putting yourself out there. You could call that a lot of things. Manifesting. Cocky. He came out and made it a reality tonight."

Volkanovski showed up to their news conference dressed like an old man, lampooning the notion he was too old to compete with the 27-year-old Topuria. Volkanovski even had the support of billionaire Mark Zuckerberg, who walked out with the champ and wore his cornermen's gear in his front-row seat at the sold-out Honda Center.

When they finally in the cage, Topuria backed up every word and action - to the delight of both of his home nations.

"Today is a historic moment for the country of Georgia," said Geor-

gian bantamweight Merab Dvalishvili, who beat Henry Cejudo earlier at UFC 298. "Everybody woke up early. Every restaurant was booked. They were watching in stadiums. They're celebrating now all night."

Former middleweight champion Robert Whittaker won a unanimous decision over Paulo Costa in the penultimate bout of the mixed martial arts promotion's first pay-per-view show in Southern California in more than two years.

Whittaker (25-7) rebounded from a loss to future middleweight champ Dricus De Plessis last summer with a comeback victory over Costa (14-3), who staggered Whittaker with a brilliant spinning head kick in the final seconds of the first round.

Whittaker was left with a bloody face, but he largely controlled the next two rounds on his feet against a largely inert Costa, who apparently injured his leg.

Earlier, former two-division UFC champion Cejudo dropped to 0-2 in his comeback bid with a unanimous decision loss to Dvalishvili. Cejudo had previously said he would retire again if he lost the bout.

Cejudo, the former U.S. Olympic



Ilia Topuria, (right), connects with Alexander Volkanovski during their featherweight bout at the UFC 298 mixed martial arts event in Anaheim, Calif. (AP)

wrestling gold medalist and UFC champ at flyweight and bantamweight, curiously retired at the height of his MMA reign in 2020. Now 37, he began his comeback last May with a loss to Aljamain Sterling.

Cejudo got carried across the cage at one embarrassing point against Dvalishvili, who trains on Long Is-

land. Dvalishvili won his 10th consecutive fight overall and his ninth at bantamweight.

Chinese light heavyweight Zhang Mingyang had the most spectacular finish on the undercard, knocking out Brendson Ribeiro with a dynamic combination in the first round of his UFC debut.

City 'lose' ground in title race after home draw with Chelsea



Manchester City's Kyle Walker (right), challenges Chelsea's Raheem Sterling during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Chelsea at the Etihad stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

Citizens drop to third on the table

MANCHESTER, England, Feb 18, (AP): Manchester City barely avoided a first defeat of 2024 after Rodri's deflected effort salvaged a 1-1 draw against Chelsea in the English Premier League.

The midfielder's 83rd-minute goal extended the defending champions' unbeaten run in all competitions to 15 games. But the draw

SOCCER

at Etihad Stadium saw City lose ground on league leader Liverpool and second-placed Arsenal, both winners earlier.

"We played incredible in the second half. The first half was not our levels," City manager Pep Guardiola said, "but to compete against them teams you have to play 90 minutes not just one half."

City dropped to third on the table, four points behind Liverpool and two off Arsenal, with a game in hand on both of its title rivals.

Former City forward Raheem Sterling gave Chelsea the lead when curling home in the 42nd.

He had the chance to extend the visitors' advantage after the break, but was denied by City goalkeeper Ederson from point-blank range.

Ederson then recovered to get to his feet and save from Ben Chilwell on the rebound.

City saw a host of chances go by as it went in search of an equalizer, with Erling Haaland missing twice from close range and Kevin De Bruyne curling a free kick just over the bar.

The defending champions eventually found the breakthrough when Rodri blasted goalwards from inside the box and his effort deflected off Trevoh Chalobah past Chelsea keeper Djordje Petrovic.

Haaland cut a frustrated figure after nine attempts on goal saw him fail to find the back of the net. It was his most



Newcastle's Anthony Gordon celebrates after scoring his side's first goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Newcastle and Bournemouth at the St James' Park, in Newcastle, England. (AP)

shots without success in a match for City.

By contrast, Sterling came back to haunt Guardiola after leaving City for Chelsea in 2022, following seven trophy-filled years in Manchester.

His curled finished looked for a long time like being enough to secure all three points for Mauricio Pochettino's team. Even though City rallied to draw, Sterling still delivered a blow to his former club's hopes of winning the title.

"At the end we can be pleased, but at the same time we're a little bit disappointed. We had chances to finish the game off," Sterling said. "We knew they're a team who use the ball really well and that there would be times when we need to use our brains. We're disappointed not to come away with a bit more."

The draw continued a positive run for Chelsea and will ease the pressure on Pochettino ahead of next week's League Cup final against Liverpool in a disappointing league campaign.

"I'm so pleased. I told the players I

feel so proud," Pochettino said. "In the last three games we've started to create a very good spirit. That's the way we want to build our team. Today was a very good opportunity to show we're going where we want."

Bukayo Saka scored twice as Arsenal kept the pressure on English Premier League leader Liverpool by routing Burnley 5-0.

Last week, Arsenal blew away West Ham 6-0. The Gunners have won their last six games in the league and scored five or more goals in three of them.

Saka scored on either side of half-time and Arsenal remained within two points of Liverpool.

Martin Odegaard put Arsenal ahead in the fourth minute and Saka doubled their lead from the penalty spot in the 41st.

Saka scored again two minutes after half-time and goals from Leandro Trossard in the 66th and Kai Havertz in the 78th completed the rout.

Second-from-bottom Burnley was above only Sheffield United on goal difference, having played a game more.

Sheffield United could move off the foot of the table on Sunday if it avoids defeat against Brighton.

Burnley has won one of its last 12 games in all competitions.

Two goals from Joao Gomes secured Wolves a surprise 2-1 win at Tottenham.

Defeat at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium saw Spurs drop to fifth on the table in a blow to their hopes of Champions League qualification.

Aston Villa moved above Spurs after winning at Fulham. Tottenham was two points behind Villa as the race for the top four tightens.

Gomes scored in each half as Wolves completed a league double over Ange Postecoglou's team. The Midlands club won by the same scoreline at Molineux in November.

Gomes headed Wolves ahead in the 42nd minute and Dejan Kulusevski levelled for Tottenham in the 46th.

Wolves' winner came after a wonderful solo run from Pedro Neto, who raced half the length of the field before setting up Gomes to side-foot home in the 63rd.

Islamabad opens PSL with emphatic win over Lahore

LAHORE, Pakistan, Feb 18, (AP): Captain Shadab Khan put on a scintillating all-round performance and led Islamabad United to an emphatic eight-wicket win.

Islamabad United won the opening game of the Pakistan Super League against defending champions the Lahore Qalandars by eight wickets.

Promoting himself to No. 3, captain Shadab Khan led the way by blistering an unbeaten 74 runs off 41 balls after taking 1-24 with the ball.

Two-time champion Islamabad



Islamabad United's Shadab Khan plays a shot during the Pakistan Super League T20 cricket match between Islamabad United and Lahore Qalandars, in Lahore, Pakistan. (AP)

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cruised to 200-2 in 18.2 overs after Lahore made 195-5.

Rassie van der Dussen led Lahore with an unbeaten 71 off 41 balls and Sahibzada Farhan added a rapid 57 up front.

Farhan dominated the power play against fast bowler Naseem Shah, who returned after five months out due to a shoulder injury. Naseem claimed the wicket of David Weise in the penultimate over. Naseem's younger brother, Ubaid, had a forgetful league debut, being smashed for 15 in his only over.

Van der Dussen crashed four boundaries and three sixes in the death overs.

Shadab and Salman Ali Agha plundered 138 off 67 balls in a third-wicket stand. Agha made 64 off 31.

Lahore badly missed leg-spinner Rashid Khan of Afghanistan, who was ruled out of the tournament because of back injury.

Also, Haris Rauf, whose Pakistan contract was terminated this week after he refused to play tests in Australia last year, conceded 38 in his three overs. Shaheen Shah Afridi, who dropped Shadab early on, ended up with 0-31.

IOC won't change boxing age 'limit'

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, Feb 18, (AP): The International Olympic Committee will not change its rules to let boxing great Manny Pacquiao compete at the Paris Games aged five years beyond the entry limit.

Pacquiao, who retired in 2021, wanted to box at age 45 in the Olympic tournament in Paris where medal bouts will be held in the Roland Garros tennis complex.

The IOC said Sunday it wrote to Olympic officials in Philippines explaining the age limit for boxers of 40 will be upheld. The IOC now oversees Olympic boxing after de-recognizing the International Boxing Association governing body.

Salmiya's Misha describes draw with Khaitan as fair result

Al-Nasr coach urges swift action after heavy loss

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Zaher Al-Adwani, the coach of Al-Nasr, expressed concern over the significant loss to Al-Arabi (3-6) in the recent round, emphasizing the need for prompt correction of identified issues. Al-Adwani hopes that his team will secure a position among the top six by the end of the second round, acknowledging that certain administrative matters beyond Al-Nasr's control, particularly related to financial issues and legal cases against the Board of Directors, have contributed to the team's challenges.

Al-Adwani highlighted the abnormal number of goals conceded against Al-Arabi and assured that he will work closely with the players to address defensive vulnerabilities

in upcoming matches.

Meanwhile, Salmiya's Croatian coach, Ante Misha, described the draw against Khaitan (0-0) as fair for both teams. Misha recognized Khaitan's effective defensive strategy, noting his team's efforts to penetrate the opponent's defense.

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Looking ahead, the Zain Premier League's twelfth round features two matches. Al-Tadamon will face Sulaibikhat at Al-Awwal Stadium, while Burgan and Al-Sahel will meet at Abdullah Al-Khalifa Stadium. Both matches are scheduled for 6:05 pm. Yarmouk will be absent from this round.



Players vie for the ball during the Zain Premier League match.



Barcelona's Andreas Christensen (left), and Celta's Jorgen Strand Larsen jump for the ball during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Celta Vigo and Barcelona at the Balaídos stadium in Vigo, Spain, Barcelona won 2-1. (AP) — See Page 14

Sports

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Dr. Al-Waleed calls for urgent action

Kuwaiti sports leaders decry arbitrary club registration cancellations

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Dr. Nasser Al-Waleed, the head of the Kuwaiti Modern Pentathlon Club, characterized the cancellation of registration for 43 specialized clubs in December by former Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Muhammad Al-Aiban, and the General Sports Authority as "bullying" and an attempt to exert control over Kuwaiti sports and the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee.

Al-Waleed urged the swift intervention of Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Dawood Marafi, to overturn the arbitrary decision. He called for the establishment of a neutral committee to restore the clubs to their legal status and eliminate those that exist only on paper.

Speaking at a press conference titled "The Truth About Canceling Club Advertisement," attended by 16 of the affected clubs, Al-Waleed criticized Youssef Al-Baidan, the director of the Sports Authority, accusing him of treating the authority like a club and making unilateral decisions, including canceling clubs and withholding budgets.

Al-Waleed emphasized that Al-Baidan, as a government official, should adhere to government direc-



Officials hold a news conference.

tion and policy, calling for his removal due to what he perceives as a failure to serve the youth of Kuwait.

He also challenged Al-Baidan's claims of financial waste in the 43 clubs, pointing out the contradiction that five specialized clubs with a combined budget of 21 million dinars have not faced cancellation. Al-Waleed accused Al-Baidan of misleading the public and called for an impartial committee, even suggesting involvement from organizations like the FBI or CIA, to investigate the statements made by

Al-Baidan.

The president of the Kuwaiti Pentathlon Club criticized the seventh floor of the General Sports Authority, describing it as a self-governing entity that makes decisions independently and disregards legal processes. He questioned why suspicious files have not been referred to the prosecution since Al-Baidan assumed office in June.

Dr. Falah Mahawish, the President of the Inspire Car Club, called for the restitution of the clubs, praising the decisions of Minister Daoud Marafi to

Kuwaiti champion Al-Bazzaz aims for world Ice diving glory

MOSCOW, Feb 18: Ahmed Al-Bazzaz, the champion of Kuwait and the Marine Sports Club for ice diving, concludes his two-week camp in Moscow and sets off for Vladivostok, overlooking the Sea of Japan, to embark on the second leg of his external training. This preparation is in anticipation of his participation in the World Ice Diving Challenge Championship scheduled to take place in Vladivostok on February 24 and 25.

In an exclusive statement to Al-Seyassah, Al-Bazzaz expressed his determination to give his best in this inaugural world championship appearance. He aspires to proudly raise the Kuwaiti flag in the distant and icy



Ahmed Al-Bazzaz gears up for the championship.

terrain, coinciding with Kuwait's national holidays and Liberation

Day celebrations.

Al-Bazzaz emphasized that the tournament, held under the harshest weather conditions with temperatures plummeting to approximately 15 degrees below zero and ice thickness reaching 40 centimeters, stands as one of the most challenging and demanding in the realm of sports. He extended sincere gratitude to the Kuwaiti Marine Sports Club, the General Authority for Sports, and the Olympic Committee in Kuwait City for their unwavering support.

Notably, Al-Bazzaz holds the distinction of being the first Kuwaiti and Gulf Arab participant in this prestigious world championship.

Barca, Napoli look to take last chance

Inter Milan 'surge' back on to Champions League stage

GENEVA, Feb 18, (AP): After Kylian Mbappé, Real Madrid and Manchester City seized center stage last week, the Champions League spotlight can now turn to shine on others.

The four remaining first-leg games in the round of 16 this week feature the beaten finalist last season, the champions of Italy and Spain, plus the team with the best record in any of the top European leagues this season.

Inter Milan hosts Atletico Madrid

on Tuesday as the clear leader in Serie A and looking a more solid contender now than on its run to the 2023 final against Man City.

Napoli hosts Barcelona on Wednesday in a pairing of teams unlikely to retain their domestic league titles and seem to have just one chance left to win a trophy this season.

PSV Eindhoven is a hot favorite to win the Dutch league having dropped the fewest points (four, drawing two of 22 games) and amassed the biggest goal difference (60) in any of the major European leagues.

PSV hosts Borussia Dortmund on Tuesday in a clash of clubs that each lifted the European Cup trophy once.

Arsenal goes to Porto on Wednesday after back-to-back away wins by a combined score of 11-0 in the Premier League.

Arsenal is the only English team in European action this week though its title rivals at home, Liverpool and Man City, each has a Premier League game in midweek.

Inter Milan was an unexpected finalist last season avoiding any English or Spanish opponent in the knockout rounds until the final. An unlucky 1-0 loss to Manchester City in Istanbul showed doubters the three-time European champion was worth its place.

Inter goes to Madrid after six straight wins in Serie A helped it build a nine-point lead ahead of Sunday's games.

Inter and Atletico will put up their traditionally solid defenses against productive attacks this season: Inter's Lautaro Martínez and Marcus Thuram have combined for 35 goals in all competitions while the Alvaro Morata-Antoine Griezmann duo has 37 for Atletico.

There is much at stake for Barcelona and Napoli in their two meetings over the next three weeks, starting at the

SOCCER

Italian club's stadium named for Diego Maradona.

Each trails by a distance in defense of their domestic league title, both are out of the domestic cup and whichever is eliminated in the Champions League cannot qualify for the lucrative 32-team Club World Cup that FIFA relaunches next year in the United States.

Barcelona coach Xavi will leave at the end of the season and his successor likely will inherit a Champions League entry.

Napoli is currently ninth in Serie A and the only route back to the Champions League for coach Walter Mazzarri, who replaced the fired Rudi Garcia during the group stage, could be to win this one.

Second-leg games are played three weeks after the first leg.

On March 5, Bayern Munich will host Lazio trailing 1-0, and Paris Saint-Germain takes a 2-0 lead to Real Sociedad. Mbappé scored the first goal Wednesday in Paris one day before it was confirmed he told the club he will leave as a free agent when his contract expires in June.

On March 6, Real Madrid - Mbappé's expected next employer - hosts Leipzig with a 1-0 lead and defending champion Manchester City has a 3-1 lead against visiting Copenhagen. The other second-leg games are played March 12-13. The draw for the quarterfinals and semifinals is made March 15 at UEFA headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland.

Jaiswal double hundred headlines India's record victory over England

Hosts triumph by 434 runs

RAJKOT, India, Feb 18, (AP): Yashasvi Jaiswal became only the third Indian batsman to score consecutive test double hundreds as India completed a record 434-run win against England in the third test on Sunday.

Jaiswal was 214 not out - following on from his 209 in Visakhapatnam - as India declared at 430-4 (98 overs) in its second innings, thus setting the touring side an improbable 557 runs for victory.

England was then routed for 122 runs (39.4 overs) in just over one session, falling to its heaviest test defeat (by runs) since World War II.

Ravindra Jadeja picked up 5-41 to bowl India to what seemed an unlikely day four win, as the hosts took a 2-1 lead in the five-test series. India won the second test by 106 runs after England beat the hosts by 28 runs in the opener.

It was India's biggest test win by runs. Its previous best came in a 372-run victory over New Zealand at Mumbai in 2021.

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"When you are playing test cricket, it is not played over two-three days," said Indian skipper Rohit Sharma.

"We do understand the importance of playing over five days. England played well and put us under pressure (on days one and two). I am really proud of how we came back the next day. The message was to stay calm because we have got class in our bowling attack."

Post lunch, Jaiswal followed in the footsteps of Vinod Kamble (1993) and Virat Kohli (2017) as he scored a magnificent double hundred off 231 balls.

He added 172 runs off only 158 balls with Sarfaraz Khan, who scored a second consecutive half-century in his debut match.

It was an exceptional hitting performance from the two young batters as India scored 116 runs in just 16 overs at more than seven runs per over.

Jaiswal smashed five more sixes



Al-Roudhan and Awadhi and Al-Jariwi on the podium after the awarding ceremony.

Al-Roudhan wins international show jumping title

- including a hat trick off James Anderson - taking his innings tally to 12. It was the most sixes hit by an Indian batter in a test innings. For his part, Khan hit three sixes, bringing up his half-century off 65 balls. He finished with 68 not out off 72 balls.

It was a complete change of gears from the morning session when India scored 118 runs in 31 overs. Shubman Gill was run out for 91, while night watchman Kuldeep Yadav had scored 27 runs, as India reached 314-4 at lunch.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 18: Abdullah Al-Roudhan, representing Hawally Club and the Kuwait national team, emerged victorious at the "KIB International Show Jumping Championship, sponsored by Kuwait Inter-

national Bank. The event took place at Marina Beach and concluded on Saturday.

Al-Roudhan demonstrated exceptional skill by securing a place in the distinction round of the Grand Prix,

clearing obstacles at a height of 145 cm without incurring any penalty points. Accompanied by fellow riders Ghazi Al-Jariwi and Abdullah Al-Awadhi, Al-Roudhan showcased his prowess in the Excellence Round, leading with a time of 40.11 seconds and 4 penalty points.

Ghazi Al-Jariwi claimed the second position, while Abdullah Al-Awadhi secured third and fourth

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places by participating with two horses. Other notable participants included Yara Al-Hunaidi, the Italian Antonio Moroso, and Anaz Al-Anaz.

Expressing his joy, international jockey Abdullah Al-Roudhan highlighted the intense competition with fellow male and female riders. He entered the Grand Prix round with the goal of qualifying for the distinction round and ultimately achieved the fastest time with the fewest mistakes, fulfilling his intended objective.



India's Yashasvi Jaiswal celebrates his double century on the fourth day of the third cricket Test match between England and India in Rajkot, India. (AP)

Real held to 1-1 draw at Rayo

MADRID, Feb 18, (AP): Real Madrid could see its Spanish league lead reduced after being held to a 1-1 draw at Rayo Vallecano on Sunday.

Joselu put Madrid ahead only three minutes into the match against its southern Madrid rival, but the hosts equalized through Raúl de Tomás in the 27th.

The draw moved Madrid six points clear of second-place Girona, which visits fifth-place Athletic Bilbao on Monday.

Third-place Barcelona, which won 2-1 at Celta Vigo on Saturday with a stoppage-time penalty kick converted by Robert Lewandowski, was eight points behind Madrid. Fourth-place Atletico Madrid, which routed Las Palmas 5-0 at home Saturday, was 11 points off the lead.

It was a disappointing result for Madrid against a Rayo team that had lost three consecutive league matches and hasn't won in seven straight.