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KUWAITIS REACH 1.546m AS INDIAN EXPATS BREAK ONE MILLION MARK Kuwait population hits 4.859mn in 2023

Egyptians decline

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The latest government data showed that the population of Kuwait reached about 4.859 million by the end of 2023, including 1.546 million citizens and 3.3 million expatriates -- an increase of 2.6 percent or 122,700 compared to about 4.7 million in 2022, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to data from the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) as at the end of December 2023, the Indian community in the country reached more than one million, while the number of Egyptians declined.

Following are the top 10 nationalities residing in the country:

1. Kuwaitis: 32 percent of the total population -- 1.546 million. The number of Kuwaitis increased by about two percent or 28,690 in 2023 compared to 1.517 million in 2022.

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P.M. CHAIRS MINISTERIAL ECONOMIC COMMITTEE



His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah chaired on Wednesday a meeting of the Ministerial Economic Affairs Committee with the attendance of several ministers and senior officials of the Ministry of Finance, Public Institution for Social Security, Civil Service Commission and Public Authority of Manpower.

PM Diwan photo

Opinion

Kill rumors by its flames

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

FROM 1963, Kuwait has gone through major changes, especially after the harsh and painful experience of the Iraqi invasion.

The most important lesson was the need to fortify the home front and unify ranks to confront any dangerous possibilities that could ravage the region and affect the country. This necessitates strengthening the power of the economy and society, and opening up to others.

However, the parliamentary and ministerial practices unfortunately contradicted ambitions and aspirations, and tended to undermine social and economic security through parliamentary-ministerial mashups,

which represented the obstruction of development projects, and the increase of division between the people of Kuwait through the enactment of counterproductive laws.

Therefore, what was considered as reform somehow turned into venom that was injected into the society.

This was evident in the expression of allegiance to the sect and tribe with all impudence at the expense of national affiliation.

With the revolution of social media and press, palliative treatments have become useless, and the fragility of state institutions in the face of opinions issued through these means has become apparent.

As if it were a fateful threat to its existence, it can be said that after six decades of democratic experience with about 20 parliaments and 46 governments, the decision makers have failed to fortify the home front, and reform the society.

In fact, the surprise element was that it became more stringent in the face of some rumors that were broadcasted on social media via accounts either from abroad or under pseudo names, as if they were declaring war against Kuwait.

Nonetheless, what is important is to examine what is published and work to benefit from it, irrespective of whether they are positive or negative. This is what all democratic governments in the world have done, including the Gulf countries, which sought to build and develop without paying attention to those opinions.

Even if there are some that affect its leaders, there is no interest because the goal was and still is societal and developmental progress, without being distracted by skirmishes between parliamentarians and ministers, like the way it happens here.

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Release order for detained soldiers

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: In celebration of the country's national holidays, Major General Engineer Dr. Ghazi Al-Shammari, acting on behalf of the Chief of General Staff of the Army, has ordered the release of all disciplinary detainees, with each individual's time served to be limited.

The Ministry of Defense announced this decision today in accordance with the directives of Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior.

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Wednesday a cable of congratulations to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on the occasion of the kingdom's Founding Day, hailing its development covering various fields.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed pride in firm fraternal relations between both ruling families, which reflected joint historical positions and close bonds between the State of Kuwait and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at all levels.

His Highness the Amir wished the Saudi king good health and wellness, and continued development and progress for the kingdom under his wise leadership.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on Wednesday also sent a congratulatory cable to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on his country's Founding Day.

Kuwait Deputy Prime Minister, Defence Minister and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to his Saudi counterpart Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on the kingdom's Founding Day.

The Defence Ministry said in a statement on Wednesday that Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef emphasized in the cable his sincerest regards and wishes for prosperity and advancement under the wise leadership of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and his Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia celebrates Thursday the Founding Day of the first Saudi state which was established on February 22, 1727, by Mohammad bin Saud in Diriyah. (KUNA)

Speculation swirls over Assembly election date

Municipal Council member eyes Fourth Constituency seat



Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi tours the Ministry of Defense pavilion.

KUNA photo

MoH holds exhibition celebrating national days

The Health Ministry celebrated national days in attendance of Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi on Wednesday.

Around 1,000 participants, along with some 58 government bodies took part in the accompanying exhibition.

Media and public relations director at the Ministry Dr. Mohammad Al-Azmi said the ministry is poised and ready for the upcoming national celebrations' season.

The exhibition came to reinforce the sense of patriotism and solidarity, as well as recalling the role of the ancestors, he noted.

Meanwhile, Brigadier Dr. Nawaf Jandoul from the Ministry of Defense spoke highly of the level of coordination and exchanged support between the two ministries.

On his part, Interior ministry's Brigadier Nawaf Al-Hayan underlined that guaranteeing safety and smooth sailing of the celebrations is the ministry's main objective.

In this regard, Kuwait Fire Force Captain Ahmad Bushehri said preparations for upcoming celebrations would not be exclusive to safety, but also to raising awareness on avoiding hazardous situations. (KUNA)

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The local political arena is abuzz with speculation on the date of the 2024 National Assembly election, while citizens are waiting for the issuance of a decree on conducting the election.

Disproving the speculation that the election will be held on April 16, former MP and Constitutional Law Professor Hesham Al-Saleh said this is not possible, because it exceeds the grace period stipulated in Article 107 of the Constitution; that is, within two months after the issuance of the legislative dissolution decree. "Considering the dissolution decree was issued on Feb 15, the election will most likely be conducted on April 13,

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Day by Day

IN the past, Ali bin Abi Talib was asked to describe the world for us.

He said: "I will describe it as a house which begins with trouble and ends up being annihilated."

What is permissible is judgment and what is forbidden is punishment. Whoever is rich therein will be subjected to trial, and whoever is poor therein will be sad.

Whoever wants to treat people fair as himself must love them as he loves himself. It's simple; be fair to yourself and to your people.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

UNSC veto sparks Kuwait warning

Kuwait's ICJ plea challenges Israeli presence in Palestine

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21, (KUNA): Kuwait is set to deliver a plea before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over the legal ramifications of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

The plea will be given before the United Nations' top court by Kuwait's Ambassador to the Hague Ali Al-Thefeeri, its permanent representative to the UN Tariq Al-Banay and Assistant Foreign Minister for Legal Affairs and Minister Plenipotentiary Tahani Al-Nasser, according to a ministry statement on Wednesday.

Kuwait had previously submitted a "written plea" to the ICJ as part of global efforts to back the "rights of the Palestinian people," added the statement, underlining the measure as a testament to Kuwait's "unflinching stance" towards Palestinian statehood rights.

Meanwhile, Kuwait regretted Wednesday the renewed use of the veto at the UN Security Council (UNSC) on a draft resolution submitted by Algeria on behalf of the Arab group, calling for Gaza ceasefire and cessation of the brutal aggression launched by occupation forces against the disarmed Palestinian people for over four months.

In a statement, the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry reiterated the country's support for an immediate and complete ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, warning of the consequences of the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the territory and the incessant bloodshed of Palestinian civilians.

It reaffirmed that the UNSC's failure to adopt the draft resolution regrettably reflects the size of challenges the international will is facing, something that necessitates a swift move to address it in order to ensure that the UNSC can do its basic duties of safeguarding international security and peace. The United States of America vetoed Tuesday a draft resolution presented to the UN Security Council on an immediate ceasefire in Gaza for humanitarian reasons.

There were 13 votes in favor and the United Kingdom abstained. Before the voting process, Algeria's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Amar Bendjama said that the resolution was a result of detailed discussions, calling on the UNSC to take an action to reach an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

Collaboration on agenda

Kuwait hosts UK defense delegation

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21, (KUNA): Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah received UK Defense Senior Advisor for the Middle East Air Marshal Martin Sampson on Wednesday, accompanied by new Middle East Advisor Admiral Edward Ahlgren.

The Ministry of Defense said in a statement that Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef hailed historic Kuwaiti-British relations, hoping for further cooperation on all levels between the two countries.

During the reception, the two sides discussed topics of mutual interest and joint action, especially in the defense field. They also discussed recent regional and international developments, the statement noted.

The meeting was attended by Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah, UK Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis and senior ministry officials, as well as the British military attaché.

Kuwait Deputy PM, DM submits financial statement to 'Nazaha'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah on Wednesday submitted his financial statement to Kuwait Anti-Corruption Public Authority (Nazaha) on Wednesday at the authority's headquarters.

The Ministry of Defense said in a press statement that this came in accordance with Law No. (2) of 2016 regarding the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Public Authority (Nazaha).



Kuwait's Deputy PM, DM submits his financial statement.

MoD photo

KRCS provides 15,000 aid packages to Gaza

GAZA, Feb 21, (KUNA): Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) launched on Wednesday a campaign to distribute 15,000 medical and food supply packages to displaced families in Gaza.

Director of the Palestinian Aid Delivering Committee Dr. Ibrahim Al-Farra told KUNA that the campaign aims to alleviate the suffering of thousands in shelters and camps in southern Gaza.

Al-Farra said the food supply would last up to 10 days, noting that medical crews working in the Palestinian health ministry will also receive packages.



Aid packages for displaced families in Gaza.

KUNA photo

Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:03	Asr	15:16
Sunrise ..	06:22	Maghrib ..	17:42
Zohr	12:02	Isha	18:59

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Warm with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h.
By Night: Rather cold to cold with light variable wind to light

Weather

to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec		
Kuwait City	23	16	Kuwait Airport	24
			Abdaly	26
			Jahra	25
			Salmiyah	20
			Nuwaisib	23
			Wafra	25

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

Kuwait embassy celebrates national days

Japan, Kuwait 'important partners' for decades: minister

By Miyoko Ishigami

TOKYO, Feb 21. (KUNA): Japan and Kuwait have been important partners, not only in the energy sector but also in economic, cultural, and other areas since the establishment of the diplomatic relations in 1961, Japanese State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji Kiyoto said.

This affirmation came during the Kuwaiti Embassy in Tokyo reception on Wednesday to celebrate the occasion of Kuwait's 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day, which brought some 200 guests including Tsuji.

In an amicable atmosphere, high-ranking officials, political, military, parliamentary and media figures, businessmen, academics, diplomats and representatives of the Japan-Kuwait Society also attended the event.

Tsuji also said the two countries have helped each other as friends when facing historic difficulties.

"In the wake of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Japan provided a total amount of USD 13 billion of financial aid and dispatched mine-sweeping units of the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force to the Gulf. Following the Great East Japan Earthquake, Kuwait extended us one of the most generous assistance in the world to the affected areas, which includes donation of crude oil worth JPY 40 billion (300 million). Japan will never forget the kind assistance from Kuwait," the official said.

Commending the efforts of Kuwait in sending relief aid to Gaza more than 42 times so far, Tsuji said the two countries are committed to the international efforts for conflict resolution and humanitarian

assistance. In addition, Tsuji pledged that Japan will continue to make every effort to cooperate with Kuwait both bilaterally and internationally, based on our shared values.

On his part, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Japan Sami Al-Zamanan said in his address that Kuwait's independence constituted the historical beginning of its exceptional diplomatic relations with Japan.

The ambassador also extended his sincere condolences to the Japanese people and the victims' families from the destructive earthquake that struck the Noto Peninsula in Japan last month.

"I assured them that the people of Kuwait would always stand by the people of Japan in all circumstances," Al-Zamanan said.

"I want to reiterate my determination to promote bilateral relations to keep pace with the changes and challenges that our world is witnessing today and to preserve the interests of the people of Kuwait and Japan," he said, noting that today's event coincides with several "bloody crises that are sweeping the world."

In a statement to KUNA on the sidelines of the reception, Tsuji stressed that Japan and Kuwait have a special relationship that goes beyond the energy supply and demand. Describing the two countries as "friends in need," Tsuji said they are not just superficial acquaintances, but they try to help each other when their countries are in trouble due to war or disaster. "The current situation in the world is very harsh for both countries. But at such times, I believe it is important to build stronger ties between Kuwait and Japan in order to lead to peace," the official said.



KUNA photo
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visits Qatar's Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifah Al-Thani.

Kuwait's Amir visits Qatar Father Amir

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited Tuesday Qatar's Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifah Al-Thani at Wajba Palace. Meanwhile, headlines of Qatari newspapers highlighted on Wednesday the state visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Qatar on Tuesday.

Qatari Newspaper headlines, editorials, and coverage expressed the great welcome to this visit and the close relations between the two brotherly countries, covering the reception and the long history of Kuwaiti-Qatari relations. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited Qatar on a state visit on Tuesday, during which he met with the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

Amir, PM congratulate St. Lucia

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Wednesday a cable of congratulations to Saint Lucia's Governor-General Cyril Errol Charles on the occasion of his country's National Day. In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished Charles everlasting health and further progress and prosperity for his country.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah also sent Wednesday a cable of congratulations to Saint Lucia's Governor-General Cyril Errol Charles on the occasion of his country's National Day. (KUNA)

Obey guidelines, revelers warned

'Spraying foam, water, crime punishable by law'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Ministry of Interior has advised citizens and expatriates to strictly comply with the guidelines and instructions on the celebration of the upcoming national holidays, warning that any violation of the law will be dealt with firmly, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In a press statement, the Public Relations and Security Media General Department in the ministry confirmed the completion of security and traffic preparations for the national celebrations. It pointed out that this is in compliance with the directives of Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah. Undersecretary of the ministry Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf is closely monitoring the implementation of these directives.

According to the ministry, security and traffic awareness campaigns will be intensified, which will be supervised and implemented by the Public Relations and Security Media General Department in cooperation with various audio, print and visual media and communication platforms.

Leadership

It stated that the senior ministerial leadership stressed the need to achieve balance between decorum in dealing with the revelers, and being firm in handling violations and wrong behavior.

It emphasized the need for everyone to comply with the guidelines and instructions regarding the national celebrations; which include preserving the flag of the State of Kuwait during and after the occasion, maintaining public morals and public order, and to refrain from hurling waste, water balloons or foam at others as such acts are considered crimes punishable by law.

It also underscored the importance of respecting the laws and instructions of security personnel, paying attention while driving, refraining from speeding and constantly monitoring children to guarantee the safety of everyone. It added that emergency number 112 receives security, traffic and other related reports round the clock.

Salaries as per schedule: The salaries of State employees for the months of March and April will be paid as scheduled, reports Al-Anba daily.

Asked about the possibility of the early payment of March and April salaries – before the Eid Al-Fitr holiday, sources stressed the abovementioned salaries "will be deposited into the bank accounts of employees on the usual dates, unless official instructions are given to disburse them early, while the pensions of retirees will be paid before the holiday."

Sources revealed that the Civil Service Commission (CSC) asked the ministries to input all types of employees' leave in its integrated systems. They explained that holidays and official vacations falling between two non-working days are counted as work interruptions. "If the employee stops working before and after the official leave, the entire period of absence from work is counted and there will be salary or end-of-service deductions," sources added.

Sources said this step aims to regulate work, guarantee employees' rights, contribute to improving their satisfaction, emphasize justice and equality, and increase productivity by providing regular rest periods. They added this procedure is being implemented based on Article 32 of CSC Resolution number 41/2006, stipulating that holidays and official vacation days falling between two non-working days are considered work interruption.



KUNA photo
Ambassador Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi and Kuwait's Ambassador Nassar Abdulrahman J. Almutairi jointly unveil the new stamp.

Pakistan issues postage stamp on 60 years of ties with Kuwait

ISLAMABAD, Feb 21, (KUNA): Pakistan on Tuesday issued a postage stamp to commemorate 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the State of Kuwait here in Islamabad.

Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi jointly unveiled the stamp with Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Pakistan, Nassar Abdulrahman J. Almutairi at the Pakistan Foreign Office in Islamabad.

On the occasion, the Kuwaiti Ambassador expressed immense pride and happiness, celebrating six decades of strong and solid friendship between the State of Kuwait and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan representing the deep bonds of cordiality, mutual respect, and shared values that have always nourished our relationship.

He mentioned that this occasion coincides with the glorious anniversary of the State of Kuwait's celebrations of the 63rd Independence Day and the 33rd Liberation Day, which are occasions dear to the hearts of Kuwaitis who pray to Allah Almighty to protect their wise leadership and to preserve security, stability and peace in their country.

The Kuwaiti envoy recalled the historic day in 1963 when diplomatic relations were formally established between the two brotherly countries.

"Since its inception, relations between the State of Kuwait and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have witnessed understanding and consensus on most regional and international issues, advocating for peace and stability," said the Ambassador.

Economic

He said that our economic landscape reflects the vibrancy of our partnership, adding that bilateral trade flourishes, driven by strong energy cooperation and a shared commitment to economic diversity. The Ambassador highlighted Agriculture and life stock, technology, renewable energy and Mining as fields holding immense potential. "However, the true

strength of our relations lies beyond formal agreements.

It resides in the hearts and minds of our people. The warmth and hospitality extended by Kuwaitis to Pakistanis, and vice versa, is legendary," said the envoy. He said that the two countries stood by each other in prosperity and adversity.

Milestone

He pointed out that as we celebrate this milestone, we must not rest on our successes and further strengthen our economic ties by exploring new investment opportunities and promoting joint ventures. "Today, we celebrate NOT just sixty years of friendship, but also the promise of a future filled with even stronger collaboration," he concluded.

On his part, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary said that the stamp reflects six decades of fraternal ties. It also signifies the will and determination on both sides to further strengthen the longstanding brotherly relations that have flourished over the years between the two countries.

Pakistan and Kuwait have come a long way in strengthening and solidifying their relations.

It is aptly illustrated by successful Pakistan-Kuwait ventures in banking, oil exploration and renewable energy. "We have also established institutional mechanisms of cooperation including Bilateral Political Consultations (BPC) and Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) to promote and expand our ties in diverse fields; while cooperating with each other at various international and regional fora, said the Foreign Secretary."

He said that our two countries have firmly stood by each other in hours of trial as well as moments of celebration and look forward to expanding our collaboration in areas of mutual interest including food security, IT & engineering, construction and medicine. "Issuance of the stamp today is a celebration of friendship, cooperation and fraternity. Long live Pakistan-Kuwait relations," he concluded.



KUNA photo
Kuwaiti Ambassador Sami Al-Zamanan and Japanese State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji Kiyoto with officials.

National days marked in Riyadh, Italy

RIYADH, Feb 21, (KUNA): Kuwaiti students in Riyadh celebrated the 63rd anniversary of the Independence Day and the 33rd anniversary of the Liberation Day at Alfaisal University in Saudi Arabia.

The pavilion showcased Kuwaiti heritage and modern shops, adorned with Kuwaiti flags, and reflected the joy of students on this occasion.

The Kuwaiti Consulate General in Milan and Northern Italy celebrated, Monday, the 63rd National Day and the 33rd Liberation Day of Kuwait.

The Consulate General, in a statement to KUNA, said that the Consul General Sheikh Jaber Duaij Al-Malik Al-Sabah welcomed the party's guests in the Hotel Principe di Savoia in Milan, Italy's economic capital.

The statement said the guest of honor was Italy's government representative and Milan's Mayor, Prefetto Claudio Sgaraglia, with important officials in Milan and Northern Italy, the Dean of the foreign consular corps in Milan and Lombardy, and other

diplomatic members of foreign and Arab missions in the city.

In his opening speech, the Consul General Sheikh Jaber Al-Sabah expressed his well wishes to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and the people of Kuwait, on the occasion of national celebrations.

He praised bilateral relations between Kuwait and the friendly Italy, where the relationship between two countries runs deep through economic and trade.

More cause to celebrate is the 60th anniversary of forging relations with Italy, and Italy's part in the Allied forces liberating Kuwait in 1991, with hopes of a prosperous and strengthened bond ahead, the Consul General added.

Kuwait Airways and Kuwait Petroleum Italia were a part of the celebrations as they gave out commemorating souvenirs to all the guests during the party.



The ribbon-cutting ceremony.

LuLu Exchange unveils its 3rd Customer Center in Abbasiya

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: LuLu Exchange Kuwait, a trailblazer in cross-border payments and foreign currency exchange, proudly inaugurated its 37th Customer Engagement Center in the nation, reaffirming its commitment to exceptional service and customer satisfaction.

LuLu Exchange Kuwait, a name synonymous with trust and reliability, has firmly positioned itself as a significant player in the financial landscape of the nation. The new customer engagement centre was inaugurated by Ali Nasser Abdulla Al-Jabri, in the esteemed presence of Sanjay K.Muluka, Indian Embassy Counsellor, Mr. Adeb Ahmed, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings, and other esteemed members from the senior management of LuLu Exchange Kuwait.

This momentous occasion signifies the opening of the 316th Global Customer Engagement Center, highlighting LuLu Financial Holding's global footprint and dedication to providing unparalleled financial services.

Speaking at the event, Mr. Adeb Ahmed, MD, LuLu Financial Holdings quoted "Kuwait is a key market for our operations,

and we extend our gratitude to our valued customers and partners for their unwavering support towards our continued growth."

"We are thrilled to open our 3rd customer engagement center in Kuwait's vibrant Abbasiya region. This strategic location will serve as a gateway to our diverse range of services, fostering a hub of engagement and simplifying our customers' seamless adoption of our digital payment solutions" said Mr. Rajesh Rangray, Deputy General Manager, LuLu Exchange Kuwait.

LuLu Exchange Kuwait has consistently pioneered digital transformation initiatives, introducing industry-first innovations to enhance services for retail and corporate customers alike. The company's focus on technology is evident through its mobile payments app - LuLu Money, providing financial services with timeliness, transparency, and reliability.

LuLu Exchange's commitment is further strengthened by its proprietary IT infrastructure and robust industry partnerships. These collaborations facilitate swift digital transactions, enabling near real-time payments to major international corridors.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

The most harmful and ugliest form of constitutional violations

"THE Kuwaiti Constitution established a set of rules and provisions regarding Kuwaiti citizenship in 5 constitutional articles, with rules stated in its explanatory memorandum, and with comprehensive provisions and definitions established by Nationality Law No. 15 of 1959," columnist **Dr Mohammad Abdulmohsen Al-Maqatei**, wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"They are originally Kuwaitis, given their birth to founding Kuwaitis, and this is an intentional design that is legally and conventionally controlled, because they were born to founding fathers. Instead of giving them the title 'founder' (which is an adjective that was given to them on many occasions and in multiple documents), it is then proven to them immediately after their birth with one of the two previous descriptions -- 'Founding Kuwaiti' or 'Originally Kuwaiti,' which is a status that is proven immediately after birth to a founding father.



Al-Maqatei

"Here we find that the Constitution and the Nationality Law have adopted three different and disciplined logical terms, which are: Kuwaiti by establishment: He is the Kuwaiti founder who existed before 1920 and his sons and branches. Kuwaiti by origin: It is only applied to a Kuwaiti born to a founding father and his descendants, even if descended.

"Kuwaiti by naturalization: A person who acquires citizenship by naturalization is called a trait that is proven to his children and descendants, even if he descends. What is fixed for the parent is automatically transferred to the branch, and the parent cannot give the branch a characteristic other than its own, for 'one who lacks something does not give it.'

"The behavior of the Kuwaiti legislator has been consistent with what is stipulated in the Constitution and the laws related to the Constitution from 1959 until 1994. In that year, the National Assembly issued Law No. 44 of 1994, describing and giving someone born to a naturalized father another characteristic, 'innovative', 'deviant', and different from that of his father, giving the description 'original in accordance with the third paragraph of Article Seven,' and this was a legislative and political deviation.

"For electoral purposes, despite the lack of authority of the legislator to effect this change to a characteristic proven by birth by virtue of the Constitution and the laws supplementing it, according to the characteristic of origin, and non-existent effects results have been arranged for this application, including nomination.

"According to Article 2 of Law No. 15 of 1959 regarding nationality, everyone who is born to a Kuwaiti father is considered Kuwaiti, and this law specifies that whoever is born to a Kuwaiti father is Kuwaiti according to what is established as to the status of his father (noting that on the day the nationality law was issued, there was only one Kuwaiti by establishment, or an original Kuwaiti - born to a father by establishment).

"There was no naturalized Kuwaiti at that time, until after the naturalization movement began. Therefore, everyone who is born to a father who has a fixed characteristic of his nationality that is proven to him is by extending the same nature and fixed nationality characteristic of his father.

"The characteristic of the descendant follows the characteristic of the parent, and

the origin cannot prove to the descendant a characteristic that he lacks and is not fixed for him, even if the authority or legislation came and granted or it gave a person a description that is different from the truth, as the truth does not change by a decision or legislation from the executive or legislative authority and a general rule, as this is a distortion and legislative cover-up that contradicts the truth and does not exist, and does not fall within the jurisdiction of legislation, and whoever claims to have achieved citizenship status must resort to the judiciary and obtain a ruling.

"Therefore, changing the capacity, changing the name, and changing any matter related to the personality of a natural person, may not be done to anyone except by a judicial ruling, and this is not within the authority of the legislator nor the nature of his work, in accordance with the principle of constitutional limits to the work of the authorities, and here we are talking about a number of constitutional texts, and it must be that each case be presented to the judiciary individually, so that it can exercise its authority to decide on it according to the merits and documents presented before it.

"The second article of the Nationality Law, which some rely on, to extend its application to those it does not include, is legally invalid, and it is invalidated by the fact that this article is linked to the first article and is legally related to it and complementary to it, and it applies to the children of those born to the founder and his children who complete his terms, according to the context contained in the first article, is limited in its ruling to those whom Article 1 of the law defines as Kuwaiti, and there is no room to extend its ruling to those who were not present when the nationality law was issued.

"Therefore, an attempt was made to deviate from the text of Article 82 of the Constitution with Law No. 44 of 1994, which not only granted the son of a naturalized person, born after the issuance of the law a status and description (originally), in violation of the aforementioned constitutional article, but rather included an even uglier violation by extending the effect of its ruling retroactively to grant it to the son of a naturalized person.

"A person born before the issuance of the law, regardless of how much time has passed, and regardless of his age, becomes an original Kuwaiti, and this is the most harmful and ugliest form of constitutional violations."

Also:

"I recently visited the city of Riyadh, and I was impressed, not only by its growth, construction and development, but also by the speed of this growth and development, which is no longer a secret to anyone," columnist **Asrar Johar Hayat** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Returning to Riyadh after a decade, I was struck by the city's remarkable transformation, where time seemed to move at an accelerated pace, propelling it into a new era of urbanization, development, and prosperity across various sectors.

"Attending the 42nd Gulf Development Forum in Riyadh provided insight into the city's rapid evolution, evident even to frequent visitors who witness its continuous growth and urbanization within mere months.

"Saudi Arabia's emergence as a top destination for tourists underscores Riyadh's pivotal role in developing tourism into a robust industry, potentially rivaling oil as a significant economic resource in the future."

"The city's remarkable progress is a testament to the vision, determination, and unwavering commitment to positive change. Despite initial opposition, Riyadh's transformation has fulfilled the aspirations of its youth, driving prosperity and innovation.

"As Saudi Arabia recognizes the limitations of relying solely on oil, Riyadh has become an economic beacon in the region, diversifying its revenue streams through investments in tourism and other sectors.

Riyadh's vibrant entertainment scene mirrors its newfound vitality, with joyous celebrations and events enriching the city's cultural landscape and fostering a sense of community and productivity among its residents.

"Moreover, Riyadh's emphasis on sports and recreation underscores its commitment to nurturing talent and promoting healthy lifestyles, epitomizing a city that values the well-being and interests of its inhabitants.

"From the warm welcome at the airport to the hospitable demeanor of its residents, Riyadh embodies the essence of Arabian hospitality, making every visitor feel like an honored guest. Congratulations to Riyadh for transforming into a city of dreams, fueled by its progressive mindset and inclusive ethos."

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"Citizenship rumor... It became clear to everyone how 'fragile' our society is after the spread of rumors about limiting participation in the elections to those who hold Article One citizenship. The government categorically denied this rumor after it was widely circulated among the people! Some applauded the rumor, while others got mad, thundered and frothed, and considered it a blow to national unity," columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Every account holder on social media considered himself a protector of national unity and expressed his opinion on the issue, even after the government's denial, up to the point that some are demanding research into the origin of the rumor and to hold those who started it accountable, as if the matter was hearsay or as if he does not know the Kuwaiti Nationality Law. All of us, those who agree and object, know with certainty that the articles of the Nationality Law are not the same, and that holders of the Kuwaiti nationality are divided into categories according to the decisions to grant them nationality. This has been the reality since the issuance of the Nationality Law. So, the question is: Why are you upset?"

"Every person who holds the Kuwaiti citizenship knows exactly the basis for granting it to him, and he has accepted it because he knows well that he deserves it. We mean the parent who was naturalized, not the branches that do not know about the basis for granting citizenship. Even if nationality is unified, the information in the files is fixed, it does not change and can be used as reference if necessary!"

"Let us be realistic. Recently, there were demands from the entire Kuwaiti street, without exception, especially the husbands of non-Kuwaiti women who turned their backs on them, after obtaining citizenship. We say: 'The demand was to withdraw Article Eight citizenship from the Kuwaiti wife after a dispute broke out or at the end of marital relationship!'"

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

MoE minister acts to curb nepotism, favoritism; MPW to check sand theft

Road issues in north, south of country tackled

Other Voices

Human body ... and water need

By Ahmad alsarraf

Since our Prime Minister is a graduate of Harvard University, it is important to pay attention to the health advice issued by this university's periodicals.

There is no definitive answer about the amount of water that the body needs daily. There are differences between the need of men and women, the nature of their work, and the nature of the atmosphere in which they live, but the number closest to health came from the "American" National Academy of Medicine, which stated that healthy men usually maintain water and moisturize their bodies by drinking at least three liters (about 13 cups) of water daily, and for women, 2.2 liters of water (or 9 cups) daily.

Dr. Hans says, most people do not follow this recommendation, and we find that they are fine. A nephrologist at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital, who specializes in hydration, says water helps us get rid of waste, maintain blood pressure, and regulate body temperature, and some people need water more than others. Those who exert physical effort, or who exercise, lose more water through sweat, and they urgently need to replace it. An emergency medicine specialist at Northwestern Medicine and the nation's Chief Medical Officer, says people may also need to drink more water if they have larger bodies or more muscle mass, or have loose stools.

Also, pregnant or breastfeeding women, or those who have kidney stones, or suffer from frequent urinary tract infections, need to drink more

water than others.

A person's need for water changes from one period to another, and according to the degree of aging. With age, a person loses muscle and gains fat, and therefore needs to consume a smaller amount of water to maintain healthy tissues.

However, some elderly people still do not consume the necessary amount of water because after sixty, their bodies become no longer good at detecting thirst.

He explained that the level of dehydration that makes you thirsty at the age of forty may not make you thirsty at the age of eighty.

If you feel thirsty, this is a sign of dehydration, such as feeling constantly cold or dry skin. People who suffer from acute or chronic dehydration may also suffer from headaches or dry eyes.

Since people don't get water while they sleep, "most people wake up already dehydrated."

Therefore, it is necessary for a person to start his day with a glass of water. It is also okay to add flavors to the water. Coffee and caffeinated drinks are not as hydrating as decaffeinated drinks, as they reduce the kidneys' ability to absorb water, leading to more water being lost through urine. Alcoholic drinks also cause dehydration.

A person gets 20% of his water need from fruits and vegetables.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises drinking no more than 48 ounces of water per hour. Also keep in mind that there may be no health benefit to consuming large amounts of water, and it is not advisable to carry very large water bottles with us. The vast majority of people do not need to drink an excessive amount of water in a short time, but rather it is advisable to distribute drinking over the hours of the day.

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

By Abdul Rahman Al-Shammari/ Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, has taken decisive action to curb nepotism and favoritism in the appointment of supervisory positions within the education sector.

Education sources have confirmed that he has stopped the transfer, assignment, and placement of individuals into these roles unless done so directly by him.

This decision is aimed at eliminating any undue influence that may compromise the integrity of the educational process. The minister has requested detailed information on assistant undersecretaries, directors of central departments, and supervisors currently holding positions, including their civil identification numbers, areas of expertise, and years of experience.

Furthermore, the Minister of Education is actively engaged in reassessing performance and devising new selection criteria and transparent mechanisms to identify candidates for leadership roles within the ministry. These measures are intended to uphold the principles of equal opportunity and to attract qualified individuals.

Initial assessments of some leaders' performance have been modest, particularly after reviewing their sector plans within the first 100 days.

This evaluation serves as a basis for identifying areas for improvement and for swiftly identifying and appointing competent leaders who can effectively manage their respective sectors.

These changes will extend to the management of the minister's office, where standards of experience and performance will also be rigorously applied.

Overall, these initiatives aim to foster a more efficient and effective educational system that meets the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders in the education field.

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Check on sand theft: Sources within the Ministry of Public Works have disclosed plans aimed at combating the 'theft' of sand, colloquially referred to as "savage" sand, by implementing a strategy to recycle it for sustainable financial and environmental benefits.

The ministry is preparing to initiate a bidding process to execute this plan, which involves analyzing past sand contracts and studying quantities and prices of sand removal (Safi).

Additionally, the ministry has developed several solutions to address road issues in both southern and northern regions, which were included in previous bids.

However, these solutions were postponed due to high prices offered.

They included constructing metal barriers to combat sand encroachment, creating open channels parallel to roads to collect sand during windy conditions, stabilizing high sand dunes, and elevating road levels.

The ministry is committed to integrating measures to counter sand encroachment within ongoing projects, such as the development of the Abdali Expressway and new road projects.

Furthermore, a committee comprising members from the ministry and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences was established to prepare a comprehensive document on mitigating and combating sand theft in Kuwait.

This initiative involves reviewing, providing observations, and cooperating with relevant institutions to exchange necessary information.



Photo by Iehab Qurtal

All the supermarkets have stocked up for the coming month of Ramadan, which is likely to commence by March 11, 2024. Not much difference has been noted in commodity prices.

Ex-minister in funds scam

Hearing adjourned to April 23

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Court of Ministers has adjourned to April 23 the first trial session of the case filed against a former minister who is accused of looting public funds, forgery and other charges.

The court also has set the session of March 12 for the trial of the former minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah who was accused of forgery because he submitted false data to one of the investigation authorities, which resulted in the case being reserved for defendants in a case.

During the court session, the minister was presented with his defense team. He denied

the accusations against him, and requested an adjournment of the session in order to photocopy the documents.

It is noteworthy that the former minister transferred two industrial plots, one when he was an MP in the National Assembly, and the other after he assumed the ministerial portfolio. He had registered the two plots under the name of a retired officer to hide the real ownership of the plot. He also abused his position to loot public funds.

This issue involving the former minister was discussed after the retired officer, who was referred with him in the same case to the Court of Ministers, sold one of the two plots and transferred the amount of KD 700,000 to the account of the accused minister.



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Father refused custody of his kids

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Personal Status Court recently dismissed the lawsuit filed by a citizen to obtain custody of his children by submitting excerpts of the supposed social media conversation between his ex-wife and another man, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

However, the court discovered that the plaintiff fabricated conversation, since he has the passport to his ex-wife's social media account.

The defendant's lawyer, Attorney Hawraa Al-Habib, argued in court that: "Those who insult and distort the image of the mother of

their children should not be trusted in raising the children as they cannot instill good qualities in the latter. How can morality be cultivated by someone who disdains the honor of Muslims?"

After dismissing the case, the court instructed the plaintiff to pay the lawyer's fees amounting to KD800.

Meanwhile, teams from the Public Sanitation Department at the Kuwait Municipality branch in Ahmadi Governorate continued the removal of waste in Wafra Agricultural Area, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Kuwait's peace efforts praised

Kuwait's embassy in Portugal celebrates national days

stc concludes 'Journey in Kuwait' competition

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, attended the closing ceremony of the "Journey in Kuwait" robotics competition organized by the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity ('SACGC'), part of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences ('KFAS'), and hosted by the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center. The award ceremony recognized 20 winners out of the 70 contestants that participated in the competition.

It is worth mentioning that since the registration for the competition opened, about 100 children in the age group of 7-10 years have registered, and about 70 qualified contestants were trained for the competition within 6 days. In recognition of the hard work and effort placed forth by all contestants, the award ceremony, which took place at the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center, witnessed the participation of families, friends, organizers and partners, who joined together to celebrate the finalists in the competition. The "Journey in Kuwait" competition focuses on the exciting world of robotics, programming, and artificial intelligence (AI), and is for children between the ages of 7 and 10 years old.

stc's sponsorship of the competition comes under its strategic partnership with SACGC, where stc and SACGC signed an MoU to organize collaborative programs and activities as part of stc's educational 'upgrade' initiative.

In line with its commitment to social responsibility and fostering a knowledge-based society, stc aims to leverage the MoUs that it has signed with its various partners, such as SACGC. These partnerships are designed to leverage the com-



A group photo of the stc family at the closing ceremony of the competition.

bined strengths of stc and its partners across various fronts to create a wider impact in the community and reach a broader audience. By collaborating with market leaders and integrating their expertise and resources, stc aims to amplify its contributions towards community development, particularly in the realms of education, technology, and innovation. The goals of stc's educational 'upgrade' initiative are focused on supporting local education and empowering the younger generation through knowledge. This initiative seeks to equip children and young adults with the skills and competencies required for the digital age, nurturing their talents in various technological areas.

Danah AlJasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "On behalf of stc, I would like to congratulate all the winners of the 'Journey in Kuwait' robotics competition, and equally commend every participant who took part in this challenging and enlightening journey."

Your dedication and creativity in this initiative sets a remarkable standard for what young minds can achieve. stc is proud to have been part of this exciting competi-

tion where students expressed their creativity and tech savviness in a unique way. Participating in initiatives similar to the "Journey in Kuwait" competition reflect the core objectives behind stc's extensive CSR program, especially within the key pillar of education. stc is proud to have been a part of this journey, and we look forward to supporting and witnessing the continued growth and success of these bright young innovators."

AlJasem added, "stc is deeply engaged in initiatives that target community development, focusing particularly on enhancing educational and leadership capabilities among the youth. These initiatives offer more than conventional education, they aim to improve hands-on skills, tech-savviness, and equip the younger generation for future challenges. stc's commitment to these educational trajectories places it as a leader in cultivating a knowledgeable, skilled workforce for the future. This dedication highlights stc's strategy to empower communities through education, seeking to engage more youth in future projects and partnerships that promise widespread social advantages."

MADRID, Feb 21, (KUNA): The Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has praised Kuwait's efforts in achieving peace and understanding through political and humanitarian mediation to resolve conflicts.

This came in a statement by Director General of Foreign Policy at the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Rui Vinhas during a reception hosted by the Embassy of Kuwait in Lisbon, on the occasion of Kuwait's 63rd National Day and 33rd Liberation Day.

The Portuguese official affirmed Portugal's appreciation of Kuwait's indiscriminate humanitarian and peace-seeking policies, especially during the world's current unrest in Ukraine and the Middle East.

He extended his well wishes and congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and to the people of Kuwait.

The Director General expressed his satisfaction with the level of friendly ties Portugal and Kuwait share, emphasizing the Portuguese Government's aim in enriching the relationship further.

Though geographical distance separates Kuwait and Portugal, they both have shared values concerning freedom and the goal of realizing worldwide peace.

Therefore, Portugal's bilateral relations with Kuwait are precious regarding economy, tourism, and investments in the two countries, he added.

During the reception, the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Portugal Hamad Al-Hazeem extended his congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal, his government and the Kuwaiti people on the occasion of national celebrations.



KUNA photo
Ambassador Al-Hazeem with the Chief of Protocol at the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Jorge Silva Lopes during the Kuwaiti Embassy national days celebrations in Lisbon.



KUNA photo
Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro with Kuwaiti Ambassador Fadhel Al-Hassan and other embassy officials.

Kuwaiti envoy to Venezuela submits credentials

Kuwait's Ambassador in Caracas Fadhel Al-Hassan presented his credentials on Wednesday to the President of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro.

In a statement to KUNA, Kuwait's Embassy said that Al-Hassan conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya to the President

of Venezuela and his people.

The statement added that during the meeting both sides discussed ways to strengthen their bilateral relations in various fields of common interest, noting that the two countries are preparing to celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations in 2025.

It also added that President Maduro conveyed his heartfelt greetings to His Highness the Amir, remembering with pride his official visit to the state of Kuwait in June 2022. (KUNA)

Embassies send National Day greetings

The Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Korea to the State of Kuwait, Chung, Byung-ha, in his congratulatory message on the occasion of the National & Liberation days of the State of Kuwait said, "On behalf of the Government and the People of the Republic of Korea, and on my own behalf, I have the honor to convey my warmest congratulations and best wishes to the Government and the friendly people of Kuwait on the occasion of the 63rd anniversary of the National Day and the 33rd anniversary of the Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait, and wish them joyous celebrations."



Byung-ha

"I wish also to take this opportunity to convey my warmest congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on his accession to power. I sincerely wish His Highness every success in his leadership as well as good health and prosperity."

"I am confident that His Highness's noble and wise leadership will lead the State of Kuwait into a much more prosperous and promising future."

"The Republic of Korea holds its relationship with the State of Kuwait in the highest regard. In particular, the year 2024 is an important milestone in our relationship as it marks the 45th anniversary of the diplomatic relations as well as 60th anniversary of energy cooperation between our two nations. I believe that our unwavering trust and ever deepening friendship will be further strengthened in the decades to come."

"I wish His Highness the Amir good health and success, and the friendly Kuwaiti people continued progress and prosperity. I wish Happy National Day and a happy Liberation Day to all."

The Embassy of Mexico to the State of Kuwait has the honour to extend the heartfelt congratulations and best wishes on this auspicious occasion of the 63rd Independence Day and 33rd Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait to His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Prime Minister, the Government and people of the State of Kuwait.

Throughout history, the nations of Mexico and Kuwait have shared a bond characterized by warmth and productive collaboration. Kuwait has every reason to celebrate its progress and accomplishments since achieving independence. The nation stands as a paragon of stability and economic development, and it is my hope that it remains a bastion of calm and prosperity in its area. I am hopeful that the already strong ties of friendship and cooperation between our countries will only deepen, leading to greater mutual benefits for both our peoples.

Both Mexico and Kuwait are nations that deeply cherish peace and actively promote it both within their borders and internationally. Their commitment to fostering a peaceful global environment is evident in their diplomatic endeavors and participation in peacekeeping missions. These countries understand the transformative power of peace in creating a safer, more prosperous world for future generations. By advocating for dialogue and understanding in conflict resolution, Mexico and Kuwait exemplify their dedication to the ideals of harmony and cooperation. Their joint efforts in various international forums to encourage peace and stability underscore a shared vision that transcends cultural and geographic differences, making a convincing case for their role as pillars of peace in the international community.

Wishing the friendly Kuwaiti people continued progress and prosperity.

'Largest varsity exhibition in Kuwait'

Over 100 universities participate

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Easy Apply Educational Consulting Company launched the international education exhibition at Waldorf Astoria Avenues Hotel recently, reports Al-Anba daily.

This is considered the largest university exhibition in Kuwait entitled, 'Scholarship', with the participation of more than 100 universities regarded as the best in the world.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the company Eng Abdullah Al-Aifan disclosed that the educational exhibition is being organized for the 10th year in a row, and that the number of universities participating this year exceeded 100 -- from the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand -- offering more than 1,500 courses. He explained that this year's exhibition is titled, 'Scholarship', "as we want the students to experience the atmosphere of studying abroad. This also assists the students in determining their future, because we help those who wish to study abroad choose their specializa-

tions."

He also pointed out that the exhibition shortens the travel time for students and parents to the universities for enrollment purposes, considering it presents the specializations needed by the labor market in Kuwait.

He added Kuwaiti students are highly interested in medical specializations, pharmacy, cybersecurity, engineering, business administration, accounting and finance. He affirmed the stiff competition among those planning to pursue medical studies in prestigious universities. He said parents who wish to enroll their children in medical courses must start contacting universities during 10th grade in order to avoid competing with students in Britain.

He confirmed that the exhibition is accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education, British Embassy and the British Council. He expects the number of visitors to the exhibition to reach 10,000 students; indicating that 4,500 students visited the exhibition last year.



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Al Rashed Int'l Shipping Co marks Kuwait national days with grandeur



A group photo from the national days celebration.



A photo from the event.

Activities include decoration and quiz competitions among different depts

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Al Rashed International Shipping Company, a prominent player in Kuwait's shipping industry, celebrated the nation's National Day and Liberation Day with grandeur and enthusiasm. The festivities, organized to honor Kuwait's rich heritage and commemorate its independence, included a series of events aimed at engaging employees and fostering a sense of pride and camaraderie.

The celebrations kicked off with a spirited competition among the various departments of Al Rashed International Shipping Company. Each department was tasked with adorning their workspaces in a manner that captured the essence and flavor of Kuwait. The competition inspired teams to unleash their creativity and patriotism, resulting in a breathtaking array of decorations that showcased Kuwait's cultural heritage and national pride.

From the moment one stepped into the office premises, it was evident that the spirit of Kuwait was alive and vibrant. The hallways were adorned with Kuwaiti flags, traditional textiles, and images of iconic landmarks such as the Kuwait Towers and the Liberation Tower. Intricate displays featuring scenes from Kuwait's history and culture adorned the walls, while traditional music filled the air, transporting visitors to the heart of Kuwait's festivities.

A panel of esteemed judges, comprising senior management and distinguished guests, undertook the challenging task of evaluating the decorations. Each department's display was meticulously scrutinized based on criteria such as creativity, adherence to the theme, and overall visual impact. The judges were impressed by the attention to detail and the innovative use of materials in bringing the spirit of Kuwait to life within the office space.

After much deliberation, the winners of the decoration competition were announced amidst much anticipation and excitement. The winning departments were lauded for their exceptional efforts in capturing the essence of Kuwait through their creative displays. Certificates of appreciation trophies and cash awards were

presented to the winning teams, who basked in the glory of their achievements and the recognition bestowed upon them by their peers and management.

In addition to the decoration competition, Al Rashed International Shipping Company organized a quiz competition focusing on the facts and history of Kuwait. Employees from across departments participated enthusiastically, putting their knowledge of Kuwait to the test. The quiz covered a range of topics, including Kuwait's founding, key historical events, notable landmarks, and cultural traditions.

The quiz competition served as an educational opportunity for employees to deepen their understanding of Kuwait's history and heritage. It also fostered a sense of camaraderie and teamwork as participants worked together to answer questions and solve challenges. The competition was designed not only to entertain but also to promote knowledge and awareness among employees about the country they call home.

Addressing the staff the Chairman Mr. Basim Al Rashed emphasized the significance of these historic occasions in Kuwait's journey. He highlighted the importance of unity, resilience, and patriotism shown by the expat employees, traits that are integral to a company's

ethos. Mr. Ravi Warriar, the CEO reiterated the company's commitment to excellence and its role in contributing to Kuwait's progress. The CFO of the company, Mr. Pradeep Menon stressed upon the economic significance of the shipping industry in Kuwait and expressed pride in the company's contributions. Collectively, they commended employees for their hard work and dedication, underscoring the importance of teamwork in achieving success. They encouraged everyone to continue striving for excellence and to be proud ambassadors of Kuwait's heritage. In conclusion, they expressed gratitude for the opportunity to celebrate these significant milestones together as a company.

The Kuwait National Day and Liberation Day celebrations at Al Rashed International Shipping Company were a testament to the company's commitment to honoring Kuwait's heritage and fostering a sense of pride and unity among its employees. The events, including the decoration competition and quiz competition, provided a platform for employees to showcase their creativity, knowledge, and patriotism. As the festivities concluded, employees left with cherished memories and a renewed sense of pride in their country and workplace.

aim of undermining the people's will. He said they want to replace the National Assembly with a consultative council or a senate.

He then cited Article Six of the Constitution, stating that Kuwait's system of government is democratic; hence, sovereignty is vested in the nation as the source of all authorities and the exercise of that sovereignty shall be as set out in the Constitution. He expects the government to be responsible in terms of respecting the Constitution and making sure the Election Decree is empty of violations that could delay the electoral process or result in nullifying or dissolving the next legislature.

Kuwait population

Continued from Page 1

2. Indians: 21 percent of the total population -- more than one million. They constitute 30 percent of the total number of expatriates in the country. Their number increased by 3.6 percent or 34,950 last year.

3. Egyptians: 13 percent of the total population -- 644,440. They constitute 19 percent of the total number of expatriates, although their number decreased by 1.6 percent or 10,790 in 2023 compared to 655,230 in 2022.

4. Bangladeshis: Six percent of the total population -- 274,790; constituting eight percent of the total number of expatriates.

5. Filipinos: Five percent of the population -- 267,250; constituting eight percent of the total number of expatriates.

6. Syrians: Three percent of the population -- 161,430; constituting five percent of the total number of expatriates.

7. Sri Lankans: Three percent of the population -- 145,630; constituting four percent of the total number of expatriates.

8. Saudis: Three percent of the population -- 139,480; constituting four percent of the total number of expatriates.

9. Nepalese: Two percent of the population -- 107,480; constituting three percent of the total number of expatriates.

10. Pakistanis: Two percent of the population -- 91,950; constituting three

percent of the total number of expatriates.

Other nationalities constitute 10 percent of the population -- 480,160; constituting 14 percent of the total number of expatriates.

In addition, the data revealed that the number of workers reached 2.97 million or 61 percent of the total population in 2023; while the number of expatriate workers reached 2.5 million or 75 percent of the total number of expatriates in the country. This means that 25 percent of expatriates in the country are families.

Following are the nationalities with the highest number of workers:

1. Indians: 30 percent of the total workforce with 885,900

2. Egyptians: 16 percent of the total workforce with 477,480

3. Kuwaitis: 15 percent of the total workforce with 470,150

4. Bangladeshis: 9.5 percent of the total workforce with 267,680

5. Filipinos: Nine percent of the total workforce with 254,640

Also, the number of workers in the government sector reached 509,540 and 1.638 million in the private sector. Kuwaitis constitute 78 percent of the total workforce in the government sector with 397,560; followed by Egyptians at 7.38 percent (37,580) and Indians at 4.54 percent (23,117).

In the private sector, Indians topped the list at 30 percent (495,263); followed by the Egyptians at 27 percent (438,800) and Bangladeshis at 10 percent (171,190).

Moreover, Kuwait witnessed the birth of 47,791 children in 2023; which is lower than 48,452 in 2022. The number of Kuwaitis born last year reached 31,841; while the number of expatriates reached 15,950.

The number of people holding American citizenship reached 11,120 by the end of 2023 -- 420 lower than 11,540 in 2022; while historical data stated that the largest number of Americans in the country was recorded in 2022 -- 14,790.

The number of deaths declined -- 7,149 in 2023 compared to 7,726 in 2022. Last year's deaths included 3,792 Kuwaitis and 3,357 non-Kuwaitis.

Kill rumors

Continued from Page 1

That is why the scene seemed so painful when a government statement was issued with a police-like tone regarding what was published on social media about corruption without evidence.

It is as if the disease that is widespread in state institutions is not apparent to everyone. That is why the concerned agencies are like those fighting windmills instead of seeking serious reform.

This indicates our retreat from the democratic gains that Kuwait achieved when it declared its Constitution in 1962. When the Council of Ministers tried to stop the so-called rumors in the media,

some of them turned out to be true. This is because "There is no smoke without fire", as the saying goes. Either no work is being done to correct it, or the MPs in some of the national assemblies proceeded to enact legislation that prevented citizens from expressing their opinion.

They themselves reach the point of obscurity in their opinions in the parliament, and undermine the dignity of ministers, which undoubtedly represents a duality of personality.

We are not revealing a secret when we say that the country is full of devastation. This cannot be covered with a fig leaf of oppression. What should be done is that an official spokesman must refute what is published, and the Prime Minister and his ministerial team must work with complete transparency, so that this leads

to reforming what has been corrupted over time because of some half-educated people who came by chance to the parliament or the ministry, and continued with their practices that confirm they are not qualified to run a country like Kuwait.

Speculation swirls

Continued from Page 1

especially since it falls on a Saturday," he explained. He pointed out there is no difference whether the month of February has 28 or 29 days; as Article 107 of the Constitution specified a grace period of two months, not 60 days.

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KUWAIT NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS

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كل عام والكويت وأميرها وأهلها متوجة بالخير والازدهار والأمن والأمان على الدوام.

Opening up a world of opportunity

World News Roundup

Europe

UK sanctions 6

Alexei Navalny's mom files lawsuit

MOSCOW, Feb 21, (AP) — The mother of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has filed a lawsuit at a court in the Arctic city of Salekhard contesting officials' refusal to release her son's body, Russia's state news agency Tass reported Wednesday.

A closed-door hearing has been scheduled for March 4, the report said, quoting court officials.

Lyudmila Navalnaya has been trying to retrieve her son's body since Saturday, following his death in a penal colony in Russia's far north a day earlier. She has been unable to find out where his body is being held, Navalny's team reported.

Navalnaya appealed to Russian President Vladimir Putin Tuesday to release her son's remains so that she could bury him with dignity.

"For the fifth day, I have been unable to see him. They wouldn't release his body to me. And they're not even telling me where he is," a black-clad Navalnaya, 69, said in the video, with the barbed wire of Penal Colony No. 3 in Kharp, about 1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow.

"I'm reaching out to you, Vladimir Putin. The resolution of this matter depends solely on you. Let me finally see my son. I demand that Alexei's body is released immediately, so that I can bury him like a human being," she said in the video, which was posted to social media by Navalny's team.



Navalny

'No intention of putting N-weapons in space': Russian President Vladimir Putin declared Tuesday that Moscow has no intention of deploying nuclear weapons in space, claiming that the country has only developed space capabilities similar to those of the US.

Putin's statement follows the White House confirmation last week that Russia has obtained a "troubling" anti-satellite weapon capability, although such a weapon is not operational yet. White House national security spokesman John Kirby said it would violate the international Outer Space Treaty, but declined to comment on whether the weapon is nuclear-capable.

The treaty signed by more than 130 countries, including Russia, prohibits the deployment of "nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction" in orbit or the stationing of "weapons in outer space in any other manner." The White House said it would look to engage the Russians directly on the concerns.

UK sanctions 6 people: Britain has issued sanctions against six people who led the penal colony where Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny died last week, the UK Foreign Office said Wednesday.

The six prison officials, who were sanctioned under UK human rights regulations, include Vadim Konstantinovich Kalinin, who oversaw the brutal prison camp where the anti-corruption campaigner was kept in solitary confinement. Navalny also suffered from being denied medical treatment and from having to walk in temperatures dropping to minus 32 degrees Celsius, the Foreign Office said in a statement.

"It's clear that the Russian authorities saw Navalny as a threat and they tried repeatedly to silence him," Foreign Secretary David Cameron said. "That's why we're today sanctioning the most senior prison officials responsible for his custody in the penal colony where he spent his final months."

'Assange should face spying charges': Lawyers for the American government argued on Wednesday before a London court why they think Julian Assange should face espionage charges in the United States, in response to a last-ditch bid by his defense to stop the extradition of the WikiLeaks founder.

Assange's lawyers are asking the High Court to grant him a new appeal - his last legal roll of the dice in the long-running legal saga that has kept him in a British high-security prison for the past five years.

The 52-year-old Australian has been indicted on 17 charges of espionage and one charge of computer misuse over his website's publication of classified U.S. documents almost 15 years ago. American prosecutors allege Assange encouraged and helped U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal diplomatic cables and military files that WikiLeaks later published, putting lives at risk.

PM defends record on rule of law: Greece's prime minister insisted Tuesday that the rule of law in the country was "stronger than ever," despite mounting criticism from press freedom and human rights groups.

Kyriakos Mitsotakis blamed political opponents for the criticism of his center-right government and argued that the "country was at the center of a slander (campaign)."

He hosted Roberta Metsola, the European Parliament president, who is touring European Union capitals ahead of elections to the EU's legislative branch in June.

Thousands protest corruption in Cabinet: Thousands of supporters of Albania's opposition held a protest Tuesday accusing the Cabinet of corruption.

Protesters threw stones and flares at police officers, and some pulled down an iron fence around the main government building in Tirana, but the protest ended peacefully.

The demonstration also marked 33 years since the toppling of the main statue of the country's late communist dictator, Enver Hoxha.

Since October, opposition lawmakers have regularly disrupted parliament sessions to protest the ruling left-wing Socialists' refusal to create parliamentary commissions to investigate alleged cases of corruption involving Prime Minister Edi Rama and other top officials.

Leader accuses West of fueling unrest: The authoritarian leader of Belarus on Tuesday accused the West of trying to foment protests during parliamentary and local elections this month in order to undermine his rule, while the country's opposition leader-in-exile denounced the vote as a "cynical farce" and called for its boycott.

President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus for nearly 30 years, charged that the West will try to use "new triggers to destabilize the society" after the Feb. 25 vote.



US Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump interacts with supporters after speaking during a rally in the closing weeks ahead of South Carolina's Feb 24 Republican presidential primary on Feb 10, in Conway, S.C. Trump is backed by a number of South Carolina elected officials who have endorsed him over former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley, who also served as the state's governor, in the GOP primary campaign. (AP)

Politics

Biden team signals aggressive posture toward press

'Stay focused on what's at stake in reelection'

LOS ANGELES, Feb 21, (AP) — US President Joe Biden kicked off a three-day fundraising sprint in California, making the case to supporters to stay focused on what's at stake in his reelection battle where he will likely again face Donald Trump in November.

In remarks at a campaign reception on the grounds of billionaire Haim Saban's Los Angeles home, Biden told supporters that a Trump win could lead to a nationwide abortion ban, more Republican efforts to undo Obamacare and a deteriorating American reputation on the world stage. Biden also addressed head-on the concerns among his supporters and detractors alike about his age - a lingering issue that's become a drag on his reelection hopes.

Run

"I may not run as fast as I used to. I may not be able to play flanker back at Delaware," Biden told the audience that included actor Jane Fonda and comedian Greg Proops. "But I tell you what... I've been around long enough to know what's going on."

The president will also make campaign stops in San Francisco and Los Altos Hills this week and will deliver a policy speech near Los Angeles on Wednesday, in an effort to collect as much cash as he can for his reelection bid.

Going into the trip, Biden's campaign and the Democratic National Committee announced that they had collected \$42 million in contributions during January from 422,000 donors. Biden ended January with \$130 million in cash on hand. Campaign officials said that is the highest total amassed by any Democratic candidate at this point in the cycle.

Biden campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez called the haul "an indisputable show of strength to start the election year."

"While Team Biden-Harris continues to build on its fundraising machine, Republicans are divided - either spending money fighting Donald Trump, or spending money in support of Donald Trump's extreme and losing agenda," she said.

The figures suggest Biden is confident, he said. (AP)

Trump compares criminal indictments to imprisonment and death of Navalny

GREENVILLE, SC, Feb 21, (AP) — Donald Trump doubled down Tuesday on comparing his criminal indictments to the circumstances of Russian dissident Alexei Navalny, the top political opponent of Russia's autocratic leader Vladimir Putin who died in a remote arctic prison after being jailed by the Kremlin leader.

Appearing on a Fox News Channel town hall pre-taped before a live audience in Greenville, South Carolina, Trump bemoaned Navalny's death, which President Joe Biden and other Western leaders have blamed on Putin. Trump then pivoted to himself, repeating his assertions that the prosecutions against him are driven by politics despite no evidence that Biden or the White House ordered them.

"Navalny is a very sad situation and he's very brave, he was a very brave guy," Trump said in response to a question from Fox News Channel's Laura Ingraham. "He went back, he could have stayed away, and frankly probably would have been a lot better off staying away and talking from outside of the country as opposed to having to go back

in, because people thought that could happen, and it did happen.

"And it's a horrible thing, but it's happening in our country, too," Trump continued, suggesting his criminal indictments - which include two cases stemming from his efforts to overturn his 2020 defeat - are proof that the U.S. is "turning into a communist country in many ways."

Also:

WASHINGTON: The White House said Tuesday it is preparing additional "major sanctions" on Russia in response to opposition leader Alexei Navalny's death last week in an Arctic penal colony.

National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said the sanctions, on the eve of the two-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, "will be a substantial package covering a range of different elements of the Russian defense industrial base, and sources of revenue for the Russian economy that power Russia's war machine, that power Russia's aggression, and that power Russia's repression."

handling of classified documents. In addition, the president's campaign objected to its perception that negative stories about Biden's age got more attention than remarks by Donald Trump about the NATO alliance.

It's not quite "enemy of the people" territory. But it is noticeable.

"It is a strategy," said Frank Sesno, a professor at George Washington University and former CNN Washington bureau chief. "It does several things at once. It makes the press a foil, which is a popular pattern for politicians of all stripes."

It can also distract voters from bad news. And while some newsmen quickly dismiss the criticism, he says, others may pause and think twice about what they write.



Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, left, shakes hands with European Parliament President Roberta Metsola before their meeting at Maximos Mansion in Athens, Greece on Feb 20. Mitsotakis is in Athens on Tuesday, as part of her campaign to raise awareness and encourage people to vote in the European Parliament elections in June. (AP)



Nunley



Hunter

America

Girl's family friend faces charges: A family friend of 11-year-old Audrii Cunningham was in jail Wednesday as prosecutors say they plan to charge him in the girl's death after her body was found in a river near her rural Texas home.

Polk County Sheriff Byron Lyons said the body of the young girl - who went missing last week - was found Tuesday during a search in the Trinity River in a rural area north of Houston. Lyons said cell phone data was used to help identify places to look and that the local river authority slowed down the outflow of a reservoir to help search teams that were in the water.

Cunningham's body was found about 10 miles (16 kilometers) from her home near Lake Livingston.

"My heart aches with this news," Lyons said.

Audrii's family had reported her missing on Thursday after she failed to return after school to her home in Livingston. After she was reported missing, investigators discovered that she never got on the bus to go to school that morning. (AP)

Man held in mall explosion: A man was arrested Tuesday after allegedly setting off a homemade firework near a Southern California shopping center, police said.

Reports of an explosion at The Village at Tustin Legacy prompted authorities to evacuate several businesses, including Chipotle, said Eric Davidson, a spokesperson for Regency Centers, which owns and operates The Village. There were no injuries and there was no damage to the shopping mall.

Tustin Police Lt Matt Nunley said a 30-year-old man was detained after a witness reported smoke and someone walking away from the scene.

The man was cited for three misdemeanor health and safety code violations related to the firework, and then released, the Orange County Register reported.

The firework was tube-shaped and looked potentially like a pipe bomb, Nunley said. Investigators believe it was an isolated inci-

dent, he said. (AP)

Sand collapse kills girl: A young girl was buried in sand and died Tuesday when a deep hole she was digging with a little boy collapsed on them both at a south Florida

beach, authorities said.

Emergency crews responding around 3 pm to Lauderdale-by-the-Sea found the boy, who is about 8 years old, buried up his chest in sand, said Sandra King, a spokesperson for Pompano Beach Fire Rescue.

The girl, about 7 years old, was com-

pletely buried underneath the boy, King told the South Florida Sun-Sentinel.

The hole was 5 or 6 feet (1.8 meters) deep when the collapse happened, she said.

Rescuers used support boards to keep more sand from collapsing in as they used shovels to dig the children out, King said. She didn't know how long they were buried.

The girl was rushed to Broward Health Medical Center in Fort Lauderdale, where she was pronounced dead, King said. The boy was hospitalized in stable condition.

It wasn't immediately known whether an adult was helping the children dig the hole. (AP)



Britain's Prince William, the Prince of Wales, is guided by chair Liz Padmore, (centre), and Beatrice Butsana-Sita, British Red Cross CEO, as he visits the British Red Cross at its headquarters in London on Feb 20. (AP)

Ex-FBI informant charged: A former FBI informant charged with making up a multimillion-dollar bribery scheme involving President Joe Biden, his son Hunter and a Ukrainian energy company had contacts with Russian intelligence-affiliated officials, prosecutors said Tuesday.

Prosecutors revealed the alleged contact as they urged a judge in Las Vegas to keep Alexander Smirnov behind bars while he awaits trial. But US Magistrate Judge Daniel Albrechts allowed Smirnov to be released from custody on electronic GPS monitoring.

He is accused of falsely telling his FBI handler that executives with the Ukrainian energy company Burisma paid Hunter and Joe Biden \$5 million each around 2015 - a claim that became central to the Republican impeachment inquiry in Congress. (AP)

Asia

Blogger won't appeal

Japan chides utility president over leak

TOKYO, Feb 21, (AP) — Japan's industry minister summoned the president of the utility that runs the Fukushima nuclear power plant to his office Wednesday and chided him for a radioactive water leak at the plant earlier this month.

Mishaps related to the massive amount of contaminated water at the tsunami-damaged Fukushima Daiichi plant are especially sensitive while the government tries to get support for discharging treated wastewater into the sea - a process that will take decades and has worried people inside and outside Japan.

Industry Minister Ken Saito called for heightened safety awareness and preventive measures and urged company President **Tomoaki Kobayakawa** to take it seriously as a management issue.



Kobayakawa

The move followed a series of mishaps led by human errors at the plant, where three nuclear reactors melted down after the massive 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Most recently, 1.5 metric ton of highly radioactive water escaped in early February during valve checks at a SARRY treatment machine designed to remove cesium and strontium from the contaminated water, according to the plant operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, or TEPCO. The leakage has been downgraded from an initial estimate of 5.5 tons.

No one was injured and the spill did not escape the plant compound.

Preventing

Saito called on TEPCO to fully examine the mishaps to find whether they may have common causes, while considering using digital technology as a way of preventing human errors.

"The mishaps would trigger unease in the local community as well as many others in and outside Japan about the safety of the ongoing decommissioning carried out by TEPCO," the minister said.

In the February incident, workers left several air valves open while they flushed the machine with filtered water - a process intended to reduce radiation levels before the maintenance work. The valves should have been closed, but workers started the flushing without checking.

The leaked water was 10 times more radioactive than the legally releasable limit, according to TEPCO.

In another accidental leak in October, four workers were sprayed with radioactive liquid waste while cleaning a treatment facility. Two were briefly hospitalized for skin contamination, though none showed symptoms of poisoning.

Democracy blogger won't appeal: A China-born Australian democracy blogger will not appeal his suspended death sentence imposed by a Beijing court, with his family saying Wednesday a legal challenge would be detrimental to his welfare.

Yang Hengjun was found guilty of espionage following a closed trial and sentenced two weeks ago to death with a two-year reprieve. Such sentences are often commuted to life in prison after the two years.

A statement from Yang's family and close friends said they strongly supported the 58-year-old's decision to waive his right to appeal.

"There are two practical reasons why an appeal would be detrimental to Yang's welfare," the statement said.

First, there were no grounds to believe the judicial system would remedy his "unjust" sentence, it said. And second, an appeal would only delay the possibility of Yang receiving adequate medical care after five years of "inhumane" treatment and "neglect" in custody, the statement added.

Yang's supporters urge Australia to pressure China to release him from prison on medical parole or to transfer him to Australia.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Australia objected to the sentence handed to Yang and would continue to call for his release.

Truck accident kills 14 in Philippines: A farm truck carrying villagers drove off a cliff in the central Philippines on Wednesday in an accident that left at least 14 passengers dead, police said.

Three other people on the truck, including the driver, were seriously injured in the midday accident in Mabinay town in Negros Oriental province, police spokesperson Lt. Stephen Polinar said.

It was not immediately clear what caused the accident, but the driver initially told an investigator that something was wrong with the brakes and he lost control of the truck, which veered off the concrete road and plummeted into a 40-meter- (131-foot) deep ravine, Polinar told The Associated Press by telephone.

The mountainous region has experienced heavy rains in the past two days and the road may have been slippery, he said.

Most of the passengers were traveling to a village to buy pigs and other farm animals, Polinar said.

Deadly road accidents are common in the Philippines because of weak enforcement of traffic laws, rickety vehicles and inadequate road safety railings and signs especially in the countryside.

Taekwondo instructor kills student: A taekwondo instructor killed a 7-year-old student at his academy and the boy's parents before going to a Sydney hospital with stab and slash wounds on his body, police said Wednesday.

Kwang Kyung Yoo, owner of the Lion's Taekwondo and Martial Arts Academy and known to his students as Master Lion, will eventually be charged with three counts of murder, Homicide Detective Superintendent Daniel Doherty said.

The crimes were discovered after the instructor admitted himself to a hospital on Monday night suffering "stab wounds or slash wounds" to his chest, stomach and arms, Doherty said. He said the man told police he had been attacked in a supermarket carpark.

Police allege Yoo killed Min Cho, 41, and her son at his academy after a class on Monday before driving to their home, where he killed Cho's husband and the boy's father, Steven Cho, 39. Police did not officially release the victims' names, but the adults were identified in media reports.

Police discovered the bodies Tuesday and arrested Yoo at the hospital.

Police have yet to reveal a motive. They knew all four were born in South Korea and the slain boy had been a regular taekwondo student.



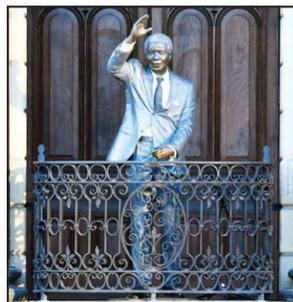
Motorists move past a worker, center bottom, standing guard on a closed ramp of an expressway following a snowfall in Xi'an in northwest China's Shaanxi province, on Feb 21. Inset: Workers clear ice and snow on a road during a snowfall in Huaibei city in central China's Anhui province on Wednesday. (AP)

Heavy snow in north & central China disrupts travel, schools and kills 1

Heavy snow has blanketed northern and central China, disrupting travel and forcing schools to cancel classes. One person was killed on Wednesday in a roof collapse at a supermarket in Hebei province, state broadcaster CCTV said.

Flights and intercity trains on which many of China's commuters rely were delayed or canceled. Authorities in several provinces issued severe weather warnings. Tens of thousands of workers with brooms and shovels were deployed, assisted by snowplows in

the hardest-hit regions. The severe weather started in western China last weekend, with snowstorms and sandstorms closing roads and stranding drivers, many returning home at the end of a weeklong Lunar New Year holiday. (AP)



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa gestures while standing next to Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, (left), as a statue of former South African president Nelson Mandela is seen in the background, ahead of the state of the nation address at the City Hall in Cape Town on Feb 8. (AP)



Musa



Wood

Africa

'Walk back from brink of war': The United States told Rwanda and Congo on Tuesday that they "must walk back from the brink of war," the sharpest warning yet of a looming conflict between the African neighbors.

US deputy ambassador **Robert Wood** delivered the warning at an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council called by France as violence has worsened in Congo's mineral-rich east which borders Rwanda.

Wood said Rwanda and Congo, along with "regional actors," should immediately resume diplomatic talks. "These regional diplomatic efforts, not military conflict, are the only path toward a negotiated solution and sustainable peace," he stressed.

The US warning follows the Rwandan Foreign Ministry's rejection on Monday of US calls for the withdrawal of its troops and surface-to-air missile systems from eastern Congo.

The US State Department on Saturday also criticized the worsening violence caused by M23, a "Rwanda-backed" armed group.

The Rwanda ministry's statement said its troops are defending Rwandan territory as Congo carries out a "dramatic military build-up" near the border.

The ministry spoke of threats to Rwandan national security stemming from the presence in Congo of an armed group whose members include alleged perpetrators of the 1994 genocide in which more than 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutus who tried to protect them were killed. (AP)

Safrica sets May 29 elections: South Africa will hold pivotal national elections May 29 as polls show the ruling African National Congress could lose its majority for the first time since it came to power with the fall of apartheid 30 years ago.

President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the date Tuesday as Africa's most developed economy faces a myriad of problems under his ANC party. They include record unemployment, an electricity crisis that's led to crippling blackouts for homes and businesses, and widespread voter mistrust following a stream of corruption allegations over the years.

Several polls predict that the party once widely admired across the world and led by Nelson Mandela will slip below 50% of the vote for the first time since it won South Af-

Lat/Am

'Neruda's death should be reinvestigated'

Lavrov reaffirms support of Venezuela's prez

CARACAS, Venezuela, Feb 21, (AP) — Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has reaffirmed his government's support for the administration of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, expressing commitment to strategic cooperation in numerous sectors, including technology, energy and culture, during an hours-long visit to the South American country.

Lavrov's meetings with Vice President Delcy Rodríguez and Foreign Minister Yván Gil in the capital, Caracas, took place as Venezuela's government and a U.S.-backed faction of the opposition continue to negotiate conditions to level the playing field ahead of this year's presidential election.

During the difficult negotiation process, which started in 2021 and has been guided by Norwegian diplomats, Russia has completely backed the Venezuelan government.

Imposed

Unconditional Russian and Chinese support has allowed Venezuela to circumvent crippling economic sanctions, imposed primarily by the U.S.

Lavrov told reporters Russia's support of Maduro's representatives in the negotiations "remains in force." His second visit to Caracas in less than a year, which came after a stop at Cuba, was part of a three-country tour of Latin America. His next and final stop is Brazil, where he will participate in a meeting of the Group of 20 foreign ministers.

Gil said ongoing discussions with Russia include increasing the number of flights between both countries which are operated by Venezuela's state-owned airline, as well as opening an insulin production plant equipped with Russian technology.

"Venezuela and Russia are two countries that are victims on the international stage of the illegal, irrational, illegitimate application of unilateral coercive measures," Gil said, referring to economic sanctions. However, he said, both countries "have woven a close relationship, a functional, struc-

tural relationship that allows us today to show concrete results to our people."

Also:

SANTIAGO, Chile: The death of Nobel laureate **Pablo Neruda** days after Chile's 1973 military coup should be reinvestigated, an appeals court ruled Tuesday, saying new steps could help clarify what killed the poet.

Last December, a judge rejected a request by Neruda's nephew to reopen the case to look for causes other than cancer, which was listed on his death certificate. The nephew, **Rodolfo Reyes**, said forensic experts from **Canada, Denmark and Chile** had found evidence pointing to Neruda being poisoned.

Reyes said forensic tests carried out in Danish and Canadian labs indicated Neruda's body had "a great quantity of Clostridium botulinum, which is incompatible with human life." The toxin can cause nervous system paralysis and death.

The ruling was the latest turn in one of the great debates of post-coup Chile. The long-stated official position has been that Neruda died of complications from prostate cancer, but his driver argued for decades that he was poisoned.

In December, a judge ruled that the forensic results had already been carried out or were "late," and didn't lead anywhere.

Several years earlier, other international forensic experts had already rejected the official cause of death as cachexia, or weakness and wasting of the body due to chronic illness - in his case, cancer. But at that time they said they had not determined what did kill Neruda.

On Tuesday, the appeals court in Santiago unanimously revoked the judge's resolution and ordered that the procedures requested by the nephew be done. These steps include a calligraphic analysis of the death certificate, a meta-analysis of the test results carried out by foreign agencies, and

subpoenas for statements from Chile's documentation project and an expert on Clostridium botulinum.

Neruda was best known for his love poems and accumulated dozens of prizes, including the 1971 Nobel Prize for Literature.

BOGOTÁ, Colombia: Holding white carnations, hundreds of Colombians marched in front of congress Tuesday to mourn the killings of human rights leaders and the murders of hundreds of former rebel fighters killed after signing a peace deal with the government that ended five decades of war.

The protest was organized by human rights groups that have become increasingly concerned about attacks against civilians in rural pockets of Colombia where violence persists despite a 2016 peace deal between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - known by their Spanish acronym FARC - that had raised hopes among Colombians exhausted by years of armed conflicts.

"All lives must be lived fully" said **Gloria Arias**, an activist with the group Let's Defend Peace. "We are here to ask armed groups who are killing those who want to build peace to stop their violent actions, once and for all."

According to the United Nations, more than 400 former FARC fighters have been murdered since they laid down their guns in 2016, including 47 last year.

Elizabeth Dickinson, a Colombia analyst at the International Crisis Group said the government's inability to protect these former fighters could undermine its efforts to negotiate peace deals with the nation's remaining rebel groups -- including the National Liberation Army and the EMC, a group led by former FARC fighters who did not join the 2016 peace deal.

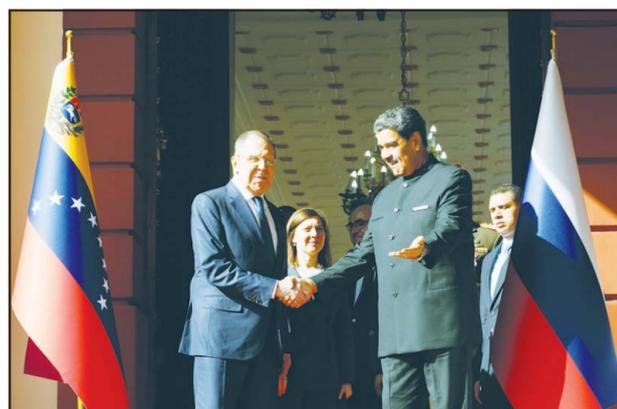
The administration of President **Gustavo Petro** has signed cease-fires with both groups, but little progress has been made on other issues.

rica's first all-race election in 1994 to herald a new democracy following the end of white minority rule.

If it loses its majority, the ANC would need to enter into a coalition to remain in government and keep Ramaphosa - a political protégé of Mandela - as president for a second and final five-year term. South Afri-

ca has never had a coalition at national level because of the ANC's dominance. (AP)

Rebels kill 2 dozen civilians: Extremist rebels in eastern Congo have killed at least two dozen civilians in separate attacks this week, local authorities and a civil society group said Tuesday.



Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, (left), shakes hands with Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as Lavrov leaves Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela on Feb 20. Lavrov reaffirmed Tuesday his government's support for Nicolás Maduro. (AP)

Rebels with the Allied Democratic Forces, which has ties to the Islamic State group, killed 13 people in Mambasa territory of Ituri province on Tuesday, said Christophe Munyanderu, coordinator for the Convention for the Respect of Human Rights.

Most of the victims were killed in their homes, he said.

In neighboring North Kivu province, the ADF killed at least 11 people with machetes and guns in Beni territory on Monday, said Col. Charles Ehuta Omeonga, the area's administrator.

Civilians were also targeted in their homes, and the death toll is likely higher because some people are missing, he said. (AP)

General expresses frustration: Nigeria's defense chief expressed frustration Tuesday with what he called the "double standards" of some countries that won't sell his military weapons because of human rights concerns.

Gen **Christopher Musa**'s comment underscores one of the biggest challenges for Africa's most populous nation in combating a deadly and complex security crisis, from the Islamic militant insurgency in northeast to the dozens of armed groups targeting travelers and communities in the northwest and central regions.

"Even with our money, it is difficult getting equipment," Musa told reporters in Nigeria's capital of Abuja, acknowledging a huge need for items such as helicopters, drones and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles. (AP)

Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan down 48.6%

Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan in January narrowed 48.6 percent from a year earlier to JPY 56.8 billion (USD 377 million), down for the first time in two months, due to slow exports, government data showed Wednesday.

However, Kuwait stayed in black ink with Japan for 16 years on a monthly basis, as exports still outpaced imports in value, the Finance Ministry said in a

preliminary report.

Overall exports from Kuwait to Japan plunged 44.8 percent year-on-year to JPY 69.9 billion (USD 464 million) for the first decline in two months. Imports from Japan also fell 18.9 percent to JPY 13.1 billion (USD 86 million), the first fall in two months.

Middle East's trade surplus with Japan also narrowed 21.0 percent to JPY 797.8 billion (USD 5.3 billion) last month, with Japan-bound

exports from the region sliding 14.1 percent from a year earlier, it said. Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 95.2 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, shrank 14.5 percent.

The region's overall imports from Japan grew 16.6 percent on robust demand for automobiles, machinery, manufactured goods and electrical machinery. (KUNA)

KNPC enhances refinery dept

Sources informed the Al-Seyassah that the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) has given the green light to enhance the efficiency of maintenance departments within the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC).

This approval encompasses the establishment of new maintenance departments at the Abdullah and Al-Ahmadi port refineries.

The decision to expand the maintenance departments aims to curtail expenditure on maintenance tenders, while simultaneously ensuring the uninterrupted performance of the Al-Ahmadi and Mina Abdullah refineries. The goal is to prevent any defects, leaks, accidents, or fires, thereby bolstering safety measures and protection protocols.

oil soars

The price of Kuwait crude oil rose by 48 cents on Wednesday to reach USD 83.01 per barrel, compared to USD 82.53 on Tuesday, said the Kuwait petroleum corporation (KPC) on Thursday.

In international markets, Brent crude oil went down by USD 1.22 to USD 82.34 per barrel, while West Texas Intermediate fell by USD 1.01 to reach USD 78.18. (KUNA)

Market Movements

21-02-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
SAUDI - Tadawul	+27.83	12,634.33	UAE - DFM	-22.37	4,254.99
PHILIPPINES - PSEI	+42.70	6,897.36	JAPAN - Nikkei	-101.45	38,262.16
PAKISTAN - KSE 100	+1,124.25	61,620.86	EGYPT - EGX 30	-38.61	29,292.05

Business

Kuwait's CPI surges by 3.28% in January

Monthly inflation rises by 0.15%

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: According to the data released by the Central Administration of Statistics, consumer price indexes (inflation) in Kuwait witnessed a 3.28 percent increase during January compared to the same period last year, reports Al-Rai daily.

The statistics indicated a 0.15 percent monthly rise in inflation compared to December of the previous year. The annual increase in inflation was primarily driven by rising prices across key groups affecting the overall index movement, notably in clothing, food, education, and housing services.

Specifically, the food and beverages group index surged by 4.80 percent compared to January 2023, while the index for cigarettes and tobacco experienced

a slight uptick of 0.22 percent annually.

The clothing group's index notably increased by 6.43 percent, followed closely by a 2.35 percent increase in housing services and home furnishings saw a 3.92 percent inflation rate.

The health group index rose by 2.74 percent in January, while transportation experienced a 2.36 percent increase compared to the same month in 2023, despite witnessing a 0.28 percent decrease on a monthly basis from December.

Communication prices increased by 2.63 percent annually, and entertainment and culture witnessed a 2.71 percent rise, with education prices increasing by 0.88 percent.

Restaurants and hotels recorded a 2.39 percent annual inflation rate in January, while miscellaneous goods and services saw a 3.68 percent increase.

Excluding food and beverages, the consumer price index (inflation) for December rose by 3.79 percent annually.

'Excessive reliance on oil revenue'

Kuwait's government program faces scrutiny and praise, reports Al-Shall

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Al-Shall weekly report highlighted the significance of the current government's program in addressing the economic and financial challenges facing Kuwait, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The report emphasized the government's awareness of the urgent need for reforms, particularly in managing public finances and combating corruption and underscored the importance of diagnosing the root causes of economic issues and setting realistic targets to address them effectively.

From a diagnostic perspective, the report acknowledges the government's recognition of the unsustainable nature of current financial and economic policies. It highlights the risks associated with high public spending, declining GDP growth, and excessive reliance on oil revenue. The report stresses the need for immediate action to extinguish the "public finance fire" and implement structural reforms to restore fiscal balance.

In terms of targets, the report applauds the government's focus on managing liquidity wisely, combating waste and corruption in public spending, and implementing a gradual tax system to diversify revenue sources. It also emphasizes the importance of opening partnerships with the private sector to stimulate economic growth and create employment opportunities outside the public sector.

The report also raised several observations and recommendations for the government program. It calls for strengthening the management of the sovereign fund to ensure sustainable income generation, restructuring or dissolving redundant government bodies to reduce waste, and avoiding the establishment of new government entities unless absolutely necessary.

Furthermore, the report criticized the misplaced priorities in public discourse, citing the controversy over the implementation of a fingerprint system for teachers as an example and argued that genuine concerns about education quality and integrity should take precedence over resistance to administrative reforms.

Overall, the report commends the government's awareness of the need for reform and urges decisive action to address the country's economic challenges. It emphasizes the importance of implementing the proposed measures effectively to restore fiscal stability and promote sustainable economic growth in Kuwait.

Meanwhile, the economic report highlighted the significant role played by Gulf sovereign wealth funds in the development plans of their respective countries, emphasizing their contribution to strategic sectors and their increasing importance in both local and international economies.

As the assets under management

Kuwait's capital project spending hits KD 715m

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The government spending on capital projects during the first nine months of fiscal 2023-2024, has hit approximately 715 million dinars, staying within the 40% threshold of total capital expenditures allocated in the general budget of 1.8 billion dinars, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Official data from the Ministry of Finance for the same period (April - December) unveiled a predominant focus on current expenditures like salaries and subsidies, accounting for around 16.4 billion dinars out of the allocated 24.4 billion dinars in the current general budget, reflecting a disbursement rate of 60%. Worker compensation spending reached about 6.1 billion dinars out of the designated 9.8 billion dinars, demonstrating a 62.9% spending rate.

Among government entities, the Ministry of Electricity and Water led in spending, disbursing 3.2 billion dinars over nine months, followed by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, each spending approximately 1.8 billion dinars.

Despite these expenditures, the new government work program for 2024-2027 acknowledged several challenges hindering project implementation, including financial corruption, budget mismanagement, irregular financial payments, geopolitical conditions, global inflation, claims and change order costs, value-price imbalances, non-compliance with international standards and contract terms,

of these funds are expected to grow substantially in the coming years, they are poised to play an even more prominent role in driving sustainable economic growth and supporting investment initiatives.

According to the report, Gulf sovereign funds have benefited from the recent oil boom and economic prosperity, emerging as major global investors and significantly increasing their deal-making activities. Despite their relatively recent establishment, these funds have continuously evolved their investment strategies and have been supported by the expertise of foreign managers and experts.

Diversification strategies are a key focus for Gulf sovereign wealth funds, aligning with the region's efforts to reduce dependence on oil and achieve sustainable economic growth. These funds have become drivers of green investment initiatives and environmental and corpo-

rate governance globally, while also actively investing in developed markets such as America and Europe.

Furthermore, Gulf sovereign wealth funds are increasingly directing investments towards supporting their local economies and creating wealth for future generations. They are financing large-scale financial rescue packages, investments, and acquisition deals globally, while also driving investments to support economic diversification plans and the transition to low-carbon economies in the region.

Overall, Gulf sovereign wealth funds are playing a vital role in shaping the economic landscape of the region, driving diversification efforts, and contributing to sustainable growth and development. Their continued evolution and strategic investments are expected to have a lasting impact on both local and international economies in the years to come.

delayed awarding, and financial flow issues.

In response, the government introduced new criteria for project selection, aiming to address these challenges effectively such as:

- The output must be clear and specific.
- The initiative should not be part of the entity's routine work other than reducing an existing negative practice.
- Clarity of title and description of the initiative or project.
- List existing projects that expire within 100 days.
- Delete initiatives that are not compatible with Kuwait's vision and economic identity.
- The entity's ability to implement the project.

Meanwhile, the sources said, Kuwait has suffered for many years from inefficient government investment spending, as this spending did not achieve the tangible development impact that would maximize the size of the economy, create new jobs for citizens, and increase foreign investment.

Strategic development projects have always faced several challenges, the most important of which are financial and administrative challenges, which have caused the cancellation and delay of some of them, while the cost of projects is increasing day after day with the continued rise in global prices of raw materials, disruptions to supply chains, and other obstacles.



ABK team at the new branch in Al Jabriya



Abdullah Al-Sumait and Loai Muqames cut the opening ribbon.

Integration of design and technology at new branch

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait launches state-of-the-art Al Jabriya branch

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is proud to announce the revamp of its Al Jabriya branch, further cementing its dedication to providing its customers with convenient and innovative banking solutions.

The grand opening was attended by Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, Loai Muqames, CEO-Kuwait, and Johair Marafi, General Manager of Retail Banking, among other members of the Bank's Executive Management.

ABK has also allocated a section in the new Al Jabriya branch to serve it Private Banking customers, ensuring the highest levels of privacy and meeting all their needs according to the highest standards of excellence in the banking sector.

This initiative is a testament to ABK's commitment to modernity and customer-centric designs. On this occasion, Muqames expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "The Al Jabriya branch reflects our unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional banking and meeting the evolving needs of our customers. We are excited to introduce a space that embodies convenience, aesthetics, and technological advancement."

He continued, "This initiative aligns with our strive to provide accessible banking services complemented by sophistication. We aspire for our customers to continue to experience our



Mr. Loai Muqames, CEO-Kuwait at ABK



Ms. Johair Marafi, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK

commitment to convenience and excellence firsthand."

Adding to this, Marafi conveyed her content, stating, "The integration of design and technology in our new branch showcases our dedication to serving our customers in a comfortable and forward-thinking environment. We are thrilled to continue to deliver exceptional customer service."

Revamping the Al Jabriya branch plays a significant role in enhancing ABK's banking experience. Through its well-thought elements, the modern and welcoming atmosphere contributes to a positive customer journey, making banking transactions more pleasant and engaging. By creating an inviting space, ABK expressed its desire to strengthen brand loyalty, foster

trust, and make banking more accessible.

Furthermore, the integration of digital technology into the new branch is a strategic move to enhance convenience and efficiency. With interactive displays and self-service options, the Bank offers streamlined options, reducing waiting times and offering the flexibility to manage transactions independently.

This milestone marks ABK's ongoing endeavor to build and maintain its brand image, solidifying its commitment to enhancing customers' banking experiences across the country. The Al Jabriya branch is part of the Bank's continuous mission to provide cutting edge banking solutions, improve service quality, and elevate the overall customer journey overtime.

Kuwait affirms cooperation with ICAO in aviation fields

CAIRO, Feb 21, (KUNA): Deputy Director General for Air Navigation Services in Kuwait Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Engineer Duajj Al-Otaibi affirmed, Tuesday, Kuwait's cooperation with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in technical and legal fields. This came in a statement made by Al-Otaibi to KUNA after he met with the Regional Director for the Middle East at ICAO, Mohammad Abubaker during the international Air Navigation Meeting, organized by ICAO, taking place in Cairo, Egypt.

Al-Otaibi said that Kuwait is expressing its interest in collaborative work regarding safety, air navigation, and developing legislation and laws with ICAO's regional office.

He pointed out that ICAO is a United Nations organization that is responsible for monitoring worldwide air transport safety and enforcing the Chicago Convention: a worldwide agreement on air transport safety signed after World War II.

While praising Arab countries' civil aviation achievements, Al-Otaibi affirmed Kuwait's progressive civil aviation performance and total adherence to ICAO's regulations. He stated that the DGCA was able to accomplish many project such as building the new control tower that meets the highest of global standards.

Further innovations occurred at Kuwait International Airport: the building of a new, third runway, the installing of modern, state-of-the-art navigational devices, and the installing of a new training simulator device, Al-Otaibi said.

The construction of Kuwait's T2 airport is ongoing and will be able to accommodate 20 million passengers annually in cooperation with ICAO officials to oversee all training to Kuwait DGCA employees, he added.

In a similar statement to KUNA, Abubaker affirmed the ICAO's cooperation with Kuwait. He said that through his meeting with Al-Otaibi, Abubaker discussed the many ways the ICAO could help Kuwait by providing aid and experience to enrich the Middle East region.



DGCA Deputy Director General meets Regional Director for the Middle East at ICAO.

Governor of Al-Ahmadi, bank's executive management grace event

Gulf Bank opens its 1st eco-friendly branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad City

■ Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled: The Gulf Bank branch located in Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City enhances the banking system.

■ We appreciate Gulf Bank's endeavors to enhance its presence and broaden its services to a larger customer base across Kuwait.

■ Mohammad Al-Qattan: We plan to transform our branch network into environmentally friendly facilities, aligning them with the new brand identity.

■ All newly constructed and refurbished branches strive to offer a more unique customer experience while embracing the self-service concept.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: As part of its ongoing efforts to promote sustainability principles, Gulf Bank launched its first environmentally friendly branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad city. This branch, the initial one bearing the bank's new identity independently, was unveiled in the esteemed presence of His Excellency Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, the Governor of Al-Ahmadi, acting CEO of Gulf Bank, Mr. Waleed Khaled Mandani, General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mr. Mohammed Al-Qattan, and various executives from the bank's leadership team.



Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and Mr. Waleed Khaled Mandani cutting the opening ribbon.

During his attendance at the opening of Gulf Bank's latest branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City, Sheikh Fawaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah praised the exemplary standard of Kuwait's banking sector and the commitment to establishing new branches across Kuwait, with a particular focus on Al-Ahmadi Governorate. This expansion enhances the banking and financial services framework in the governorates, especially in emerging residential areas, thus making services more accessible, and alleviating the load on residents.

The governor expressed optimism regarding the possibility of numerous local and international banks opening additional branches in Al-Ahmadi Governorate. He highlighted the area's unique economic, commercial, and tourism attractions, stemming from its expansive territory, dense population, and evolving urban infrastructure.

Al-Khaled expressed appreciation to the Chairman of the Board of Directors and the staff of Gulf Bank for their collaborative efforts in successfully setting up the new branch in Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City. He conveyed his best wishes for their ongoing success, as well as for the Kuwaiti private sector, in keeping pace with global advancements in the banking industry.

Introducing a new identity for the branches, Mr. Mohammad Al-Qattan, General Manager of Consumer Banking, said: "We are delighted today to open the first environmentally friendly branch, paving the way for the transformation of our branch network into eco-friendly facilities. These branches will be designed in accordance



A group photo of Gulf Bank's executive management officials in front of the new branch.

with the new branch identity, based on an ongoing plan and schedule. This aligns with our leading role in promoting sustainability principles, and our proactive involvement in transitioning towards a sustainable, low-carbon economy, in line with our 2025 strategy and Kuwait Vision 2035.

Al-Qattan emphasized that the Sabah Al-Ahmad branch leads the way as the first environmentally sustainable branch among the Bank's independent branches, and aligns with the new branch identity. Additionally, he noted that the Al-Fanar branch was the first among the bank's branches located in commercial complexes to adopt the refreshed appearance, presenting a unique experience for our customers with its vibrant new design.

He emphasized that the new and refurbished branches embrace the self-service concept, enabling customers to manage the majority of their transactions independently. This can be done either through the designated self-service area equipped with tablets or via ATMs and Interactive Teller Machines (ITMs), accessible 24/7, seven days a week.

He further stated, "At Gulf Bank, we operate with a defined strategy focused on enhancing the customer experience, be it through our

mobile banking application, recognized as the simplest, fastest, and most efficient in the banking industry, or through branch visits and ATM services. Additionally, we continuously upgrade our customer service center and interactive voice response system."

Gulf Bank is committed to providing exceptional banking services to customers 24/7 through various channels, including the website, the mobile app, call center, social media platforms, and ATMs. Additionally, its branches are conveniently located across various areas to serve customers effectively.

Contemporary Design

Furthermore, Al-Qattan emphasized the environmentally friendly features of the new branch, alongside its contemporary design and advanced banking services. They have incorporated state-of-the-art technologies to improve customer service, aligning with current trends in the global banking industry.

Moreover, the Sabah Al-Ahmad branch stands out for its unique design, prioritizing customer comfort, convenience, and efficiency, all while adhering to green building standards. These standards prioritize reducing electricity consumption, utilizing solar panels as a key energy source, implementing sensor technology for energy efficiency,

and providing facilities for charging electric vehicles.

Al-Qattan concluded by emphasizing the special consideration given to ensuring accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This includes installing elevators for easy access to all floors and providing a safe deposit box room accessible by wheelchairs.

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.

China slams US, EU protectionism against the Chinese auto industry

TOKYO, Feb 21, (KUNA): China said Tuesday that trade protectionist measures taken by the US and Europe will hurt their own long-term development and encumber the progress and prosperity of the world, state-run Xinhua News Agency reported.

"China is dissatisfied with the comments made by Secretary Blinken," it was reported that the US is considering restricting imports of Chinese smart cars and related components by non-tariff means.

The EU has also launched an anti-subsidy investigation into the imports of electric cars from China. In response, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told a news briefing in Beijing that division of labor and mutually beneficial collaboration are distinctive features of the auto industrial chain.

"The leapfrog development of China's auto industry has provided cost-effective products with high quality to the world," she said, adding that every one in three exported automobiles from China is an electric car, which contributes significantly to the world's green and low-carbon transition.

Mao said the trade protectionist measures taken by relevant countries against China, just as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi pointed out, to turn normal trade activities into security and ideological issues, build "small yards with high fences" in the name of "de-risking", and attempt to "trip others up" instead of "running faster" may seem like a win, but are actually a loss of one's own long-term development and have encumbered the progress and prosperity of the world.

Founder of Japanese dollar-store chain dies

TOKYO, Feb 21, (AP): Hirotake Yano, who founded the retail chain Daiso known for its 100-yen shops, Japan's equivalent of the dollar store, has died. He was 80.

Yano died Feb. 12 of heart failure, Daiso Industries Co. said in a statement Monday.

Yano founded his business, based in Hiroshima, as Yano Shoten in 1972, changing the name to Daiso in 1977. The discount retailer began working with 100 yen stores in the 1980s and opened its first under the Daiso name in 1991. The company now runs more than 5,000 shops in 26 nations and regions. They raked in more than 580 billion yen (\$4 billion) in sales in the latest fiscal year.

One hundred yen is equivalent to about 67 American cents at current exchange rates.

The stores carry some 76,000 products, Daiso says, ranging from stationery items and kitchen sponges to stuffed animals, housewares, cosmetic and hair care products, and food items such as nuts and dried fruit.

Not all items cost just 100 yen.

Some are double or more that price, but all are relatively affordable.

Yano, a graduate of Tokyo's Chuo University, was both hailed and criticized as "the 100-yen man." The popularity of the shops is seen as a reflection of Japan's deflationary woes. But the model of selling just about everything at one price was a hit.

Yano argued the concept would spur consumer spending, make shopping fun, and contribute to Japan's economic growth.

He was said to be prone to self-deprecating jokes.

"I like to tell people it's fortunate to have bad luck. If you are too lucky, you tend to start losing your strengths," he told Diamond, a Japanese business magazine.

"You work harder if you see yourself as a person without luck or talent. That's who I am," he said.

Following nationwide expansion in Japan, the first Daiso abroad opened in Taiwan in 2001. A Daiso opened in South Korea later that same year. (AP)

Japan's trade deficit 'dwindles' as its exports continue to grow

Exports total 7.3 trl yen

TOKYO, Feb 21, (AP): Japan's exports grew nearly 12% in January as shipments jumped in vehicles, auto parts and machinery, according to government data Wednesday.

That helped the nation's trade deficit shrink to 1.76 trillion yen (\$12 billion), or about half of what it was a year ago, as imports declined 9.6% from the previous year.

By region, exports grew to North America, the rest of Asia and the Middle East, while imports generally fell from all global regions.

Imports, which have been declining on-month for nearly a year, totaled 9 trillion yen (\$60 billion), with the biggest drops in oil, natural gas and iron ore.

Exports totaled 7.3 trillion yen (\$48 billion), marking the second straight month of growth, according to the Finance Ministry's preliminary report. The export rise was better than what analysts had expected at about a 10% growth.

Japan has slipped to become the world's fourth-largest economy, after the U.S., China and Germany, according to nominal gross domestic product, or GDP, data for last year.

It also recorded a technical recession, marking the second straight quarter of contraction in October-December, as consumer spending weakened on the back of surging prices.

While prices have been gaining steadily, policy makers are also worried about deflation, or the continuous fall in prices, which they see as a chronic problem dragging economic growth.

Gauging inflationary trends will be crucial for the Bank of Japan's decision on its current super-easy monetary policy.

Rising energy prices have hurt a resource-poor nation that depends on manufacturing exports to drive growth.



Cars for export park at a port in Yokohama, near Tokyo, on July 6, 2020. Japan's exports grew nearly 12% in January as shipments jumped in vehicles, auto parts and machinery, according to government data Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024. (AP)

China slashes key interest rate in a move to boost ailing property sector

BANGKOK, Feb 21, (AP): China's central bank announced Tuesday that it cut its 5-year loan prime rate while leaving its 1-year rate unchanged in the latest move to ease pressures on the ailing property market.

The 5-year rate was lowered by 0.25 basis points to 3.95% while the 1-year rate remains at 3.45%. It was the first time the 5-year rate was cut since May, and analysts said it was the largest cut on record for that rate.

Since markets reopened Monday after a weeklong Lunar New Year holiday break, state-owned banks have

announced a flurry of plans for billions of dollars worth of loans to support developers struggling after a crackdown on excessive borrowing.

"On its own it will not revive new home sales. But coupled with efforts to provide increased credit support to developers, today's cut should help to reduce pressure on the property sector somewhat," Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a commentary.

The surprise cut to the 5-year LPR could improve affordability for buyers by lowering the mortgage rates, said Lynn Song of ING Economics.

China's economy, the world's second largest, depends heavily on the property sector to drive growth and provide employment. Since the crackdown on what the leadership viewed as dangerous levels of borrowing in a housing bubble, dozens of developers have defaulted on their debts and many others are struggling to recover.

But Song said the People's Bank of China has limited room to maneuver given downward pressure on the Chinese yuan at a time when Western central banks have not yet begun cutting rates.

What's On

For 8- to 14-year-olds, with intuitive features tailored for both kids and parents

Weyay Bank unveils the Jeel Card ... The first of its kind for kids

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Weyay, Kuwait's first digital bank, proudly introduces the Jeel Card, a pioneering innovation designed to transform the financial experience of 8- to 14-year-olds within the Weyay app. With the Jeel Card, children embark on a journey of financial empowerment, supported by intuitive features tailored for both kids and parents.



Al-Duwaisan

For parents, the Jeel Card represents the ideal tool to introduce children to the world of finance in a safe and controlled manner. With instant onboarding and a hassle-free digital sign-up process, parents can quickly and effortlessly set up accounts for their children, ensuring a seamless experience from the start. Our secure authorization process prioritizes parental control and peace of mind, while comprehensive transaction monitoring enables effortless tracking of children's spending habits.

The Jeel Card embodies simplicity and autonomy for children, fostering financial responsibility from an early age. Young users enjoy ownership and control over their finances, facilitated by a sleek and user-friendly app interface. Integrating seamlessly with e-wallets such as Apple Pay, the Jeel Card offers swift and convenient payments on the go, enhancing accessibility and ease of use.

Personalization is at the heart of the Jeel Card experience, with three vibrant color options—yellow, pink, and blue—allowing children to express their individuality and style. This focus on personal preference puts children in the driver's seat of their financial journey, fostering a sense of ownership and pride in their financial decisions.

During the card launch event, Amal Al-Duwaisan, Deputy Head at Weyay Bank by the National Bank of Kuwait, mentioned, "we are proud to launch the first-of-its-kind debit card for children aged 8 to 14 years old. The Jeel card puts empowerment in the parents' hands as they have unparalleled control and security, instantly freezing spending with a simple tap. It also prioritizes safety with its numberless design, eliminating visible card numbers to enhance security in every transaction."

Weyay is committed to revolutionizing the banking experience, offering innovative solutions that empower individuals of all ages to achieve financial well-being. Through cutting-edge technology and a dedication to user-centric design, Weyay continues to shape the future of finance.

The Jeel Card transcends traditional banking solutions by empowering children with financial responsibility while providing parents with the tools to guide and moni-



Jeel Card flyer



The card launch event.

tor their progress. With Jeel, families embrace the future of banking, confident in their children's ability to navigate the world of money responsibly.

Since its inception as Kuwait's first digital bank in 2021, Weyay has created a forward-looking concept, by combining technology with a dynamic design for a seamless and comprehensive banking experience, while relentlessly striving to develop new products and services to serve the needs of its customers.

Within a short period since launch, Weyay widely captured the interest of GenZ-ers to open new accounts in a simple and fully digital process without any of the usual paperwork. The bank also received many accolades including the "Outstanding Innovation in Mobile Banking" Award in Global Finance's annual Innovators Awards for 2022.

New services designed to meet customers' expectations

NBK Mobile Banking ... The Ultimate Travel Companion

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always strives to enrich its digital banking services provided through the NBK Mobile Banking App by introducing new features and enhancements that are meticulously designed to meet customers' expectations and enable them to manage their accounts, and make more transactions easily and securely, anytime, anywhere, especially during the official holidays and travel seasons.

Managing cards during travel

Customers can manage their debit, credit, and prepaid cards while traveling. They can inform the bank by selecting the cards they would like to use while being abroad.

Report lost/stolen cards

Users can report/lost stolen cards with a click of a button via the App. Once the card has been reported, a replacement card will be issued automatically.

Temporarily block/unblock credit cards

Users have the capability to easily block or unblock their credit cards using the App with just a few simple steps. The service is instant, safe, and available around the clock.

Easier transfers

Transfers are made easier now, as customers don't need an OTP. Instead, they can authenticate with their password or biometrics (Face ID).

FlexiPay

FlexiPay is available on the App providing eligible NBK Credit Cardholders with the flexibility to make payments for their in-store or online purchases, whether made locally or internationally.

Quick Pay

Customers can use the enhanced service of Quick Pay to send links and receive money, anytime, even during the weekends and official holidays, and choose the preferred method of sharing the link.

Transfer receipt

App users will get a transfer receipt after making transfers. They can also refer to the account statement, go to the transfer transaction, and get the transfer receipt.

Manage registered devices

Users can manage their registered devices on NBK Mo-



Al Dakheel

bile Banking through the App itself. They can add a device or delete it. For the safety and security of the customer, NBK is keen to limit the number of devices allowed to register for the service.

In addition, the bank has recently released new useful services and enhanced some so the transactions can go through easily including: applying for cards, loans, or increasing credit card limit prior to travel, displaying amount on hold for credit cards and accounts, finding currency exchange rates, in addition to the existing services such as increasing or amending monthly transfer limits, making bill payments, and much more.

Commenting on this, Mohammed Al Dakheel, Head of Mobile Banking, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "Through NBK Mobile Banking App, we provide a full-fledged banking experience aiming to empower customers digitally and provide them with the latest and most advanced banking services."

"The NBK Mobile Banking App is well deservedly called the "Ultimate Companion" for NBK Customers. It is also considered the bank's main digital channel, which accounts for the major share of banking transactions with over 600,000 registered users and over 68 million transactions made through the App in 2023," he added.

"During 2023, we introduced over 50 releases, each included a bundle of new services and enhancements. With the new interface and enhancements, the App has become more user-friendly, smarter, enabling users to make their transactions faster with less screens," he explained.

Through the NBK Mobile Banking App, NBK aims to offer customers a secure platform to conveniently manage their finances at any given moment. This service facilitates a wide range of banking activities, including opening new accounts, monitoring transactions on accounts and credit cards, accessing accumulated NBK Miles and NBK Rewards Program points, settling credit card dues, making payments for electronic bills, locating the nearest NBK Branches, ATMs, and CDMs across Kuwait, submitting requests for account statements, updating personal information, as well as toll-free numbers to call when they are abroad to reach the bank for any help/inquiry.

Customers can easily download the NBK Mobile Banking App, which is currently available on various platforms including the Apple Store, Google Play Store, and the Huawei App Gallery.

Iconic complex lights up colors of pride

St. Regis Kuwait, Sheraton Kuwait & Four Points celebrate Kuwait's National and Liberation Days

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: To celebrate the 63rd National Day and the 33rd Liberation Day of Kuwait, The St. Regis Kuwait, Sheraton Kuwait and Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait join the country's celebration as it lights up with colors of the national flag, offering a majestic view of Kuwait City.



Abushaar

The flag of Kuwait standing proud, a symbol of history, resilience and independence. Watch as it adorns the facade of the three hotels, illuminating the 42 floors of the Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait Hotel.

This hotel complex in the heart of Kuwait City continues to serve with an aim to continue elevating Kuwait's name through its prestigious hospitality and upscale services for over five decades

since its inception in Kuwait, which has become a landmark, carrying forward a rich record of achievements and a history filled with successes.

Marking the occasion of the national holidays, Fahed Abushaar, the Cluster Director of St. Regis Kuwait & Sheraton Kuwait, and Mounir Amer, the General Manager of Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait expressed their pride in serving Kuwait and its gracious people through unparalleled and personalized service within the integrated hotel complex. They offer their sincere congratulations and utmost appreciation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-



Sheraton Kuwait complex

Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

On this significant occasion, exclusive hotel packages await for rooms and suites during the national holidays, promising a staycation with the highest standards of luxury and hospitality. In addition to the exquisite dining experiences offered at the restaurants offering traditional dishes for all the affluent tastemakers. We invite you to visit our Cake Boutique for a glimpse of our holiday-themed cakes and sweets.

Affirming its ongoing efforts to build human capabilities

Markaz a gold sponsor for Career Opportunities Fair at College of Administrative Sciences in Kuwait University

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Underscoring the importance of empowering Kuwaiti youth and continuing its efforts to support recent graduates, the Kuwait Financial Center "Markaz" announced its gold sponsorship for the freshman and the Career Opportunities Fair organized by the Student Association of the College of Administrative Sciences at Kuwait University, held from February 11-15, 2024.

Commenting on this initiative, Ms. Sondos Saad, Vice President, Corporate Communications at Markaz said: "This sponsorship enforces Markaz's key CSR pillars of building human capacity, aligning the business environment with sustainable development principles, and promoting good governance in the business environment, thereby affirming its role as a leading institution in community service.

For over five decades since its inception, Markaz has been



Markaz logo

committed to collaborating with esteemed institutions to support programs that enhance human resources and empower Kuwaiti youth. This commitment enables effective participation in society by fostering and honing their professional and personal skills."

The Career Opportunities Exhibition aimed to acquaint new students and recent graduates with the requirements and needs of the job market, assisting them in charting their professional paths.

Additionally, it provided graduates the opportunity to engage with participating companies,

explore suitable employment opportunities across various sectors tailored to their professional capabilities and technical skills, and address their inquiries to clarify their future objectives.

It is noteworthy that the Career Opportunities Exhibition rank among the largest job fairs in Kuwait, in terms of the number of participating entities and students.

The exhibition aims to serve new students and graduates of the College of Administrative Sciences, as well as a broad segment of graduates from other colleges at Kuwait University.

Indian Embassy Counsellor inaugurates shopping haven

Freshness redefined with launch of LuLu Express Fresh Market in Abbasiya

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The opening of the latest Lulu Express Fresh Market in Abbasiya, on 21 February, drew enthusiastic crowds eager to experience the elevated grocery shopping that the brand defines through its stores. Marking the brand's 16th store in the country, the event was inaugurated by the Indian Embassy Counsellor (Commerce) Mr. Sanjay K. Muluka, Mr. Talal Al Mutairi, Mr. Humood Al-Jabri, Mr. Khalid Al-Ruwais alongside other distinguished guests. Also present on the occasion from the Lulu Hypermarket Management were Mohamed Haris, Lulu Kuwait Director, Sreejith, Lulu Kuwait Regional Director and other officials.

Spread over a total area of 9000 square feet, the modern streamlined interior with its premium ambience provided a welcome respite from the ordinary grocery store experience, offering a sophisticated yet user-friendly environment for everyday shopping needs.

Convenience and hygiene were paramount, with well-organized aisles and a clean atmosphere ensuring a comfortable and safe shopping experience. Ample and easily accessible parking facilities added to the convenience provided to shoppers.

But the true star of the show was the diverse and premium product selection offered at the store. From fresh to frozen grocery essentials, to succulent meat, premium seafood, and fresh produce, as well as a chilled and dairy section that showcased an array of tantalizing products, and a frozen delights section that offered quick meal options.

In addition, the market offered a curated selection of top quality products that included a wide range of freshly roasted delights and indulgent confectionery, and a variety of non-food items, including health and beauty products.

The successful launch of the Lulu Express Fresh Market in Abbasiya highlights the brand's commitment to meet and exceed the evolving needs of customers. The innovative market offers a unique and elevated grocery shopping experience, proving to be a welcome addition to the neighborhood and setting a new standard for convenience and fresh food selection.



Photos during the opening of the latest LuLu Express Fresh Market in Abbasiya.

Novel blends friendship with enigmatic secrets

Melissa Albert's 'The Bad Ones' unravels supernatural mystery

Four people have disappeared in a single night, and Nora's best friend, Becca, is one of them. If they weren't three months into a huge fight, maybe Nora would be able to parse out the clues Becca left for her.

Melissa Albert's fifth young adult novel, "The Bad Ones," is both chilling and heart-warming - a story of limitless friendship clashing with fantastical supernatural power in the cold winter of a little Illinois town.

On the surface, Palmetto is the kind of unremarkable place that 17-year-olds Becca and Nora dream of leaving. But if you dig a little deeper, you find a recurring pattern of strange disappear-

ances, seemingly centered around the high school and dating back to the 1960s. The locals all know some version of the story, and that it birthed the "goddess game" that has been passed down through generations since.

There are two iterations of this game, both Palmetto exclusives: a schoolyard jump-rope rhyme, and a trust-fall-style game of teenage daredevilry.

But Nora and Becca have their own connection with this supernatural side of Midwestern suburbia: a secret art series in which they've crafted dozens of goddesses. Nora, lifelong storyteller and the main narrator of the novel, researches mythos to create their lore. Becca



This cover image released by Flatiron shows 'The Bad Ones' by Melissa Albert. (AP)

fluently wields her camera to illustrate each goddess' beauty and power.

The project started as a more grown-up way to carry on their childhood make-believe, but perhaps the Goddess Series holds as much power as Becca hoped and Nora feared.

Nora follows Becca's clues like breadcrumbs around Palmetto, gathering stories shared by a population so realistically rendered that it's sometimes tough to remember it's fiction. Strange things are happening to Nora, including hyper-realistic dreams and an insatiable sweet tooth, ramping up the urgency until we finally learn the truth behind the town lore - and what re-

ally happened to the four who went missing without a trace - in a satisfying, epic whirlwind of an ending.

The novel is freckled with alluring metaphors and the kind of grand revelations that flow through a perceptive, open mind. Albert's ethereal descriptions capture specific vibes as well as big-picture issues; the thickness of the air or the haunted way everything in the art wing of the old school seems slightly askew.

Albert's talent for YA fiction is magical and undeniable. I was sucked right into "The Bad Ones" from the start, and on the edge of my seat until the end. (AP)

Books

Variety



This photo provided by Joyce Theater shows from top, John Selya, Cassandra Trenary, Daniel Ulbricht in 'Twyla Tharp Dance', at New York's intimate Joyce Theater. Choreographer Twyla Tharp has been making dances for six decades, and she's still creating at 82. Her latest production is a three-part show, 'Twyla Tharp Dance', at New York's intimate Joyce Theater. (AP)

Theater

Twyla Tharp displays her latest creations

Choreographer still inventing at 82

NEW YORK, Feb 21, (AP): There are many adjectives one might use to describe the force of nature that is Twyla Tharp. "Shy" is not one.

This includes at curtain calls. At the opening of her current show at New York's Joyce Theater, her dancers went to escort the 82-year-old choreographer onto the stage for a bow - but she was in more of a rush, bounding out from the wings in her black leathery pants and boots. As if there were no time to waste, an attitude that infuses her dances as well.

Try to get a ticket to "Twyla Tharp Dance," a two-week engagement, and you'll likely see "sold out" (it's worth the try anyway) - a testament to the enduring enthusiasm of dance audiences for both her classics and her continued urge to create. Of the three dances featured, two are new.

Rebellious

The evening begins with an oldie, though, the 1975 "Ocean's Motion," set to Chuck Berry songs with five dancers strutting the stage, exuding the youth and cool of the music and somehow seeming rebellious even in 2024. Clad in shorts and tanks and tights, with hot pink the dominant color, the dancers (Miriam Gittens, Daisy Jacobson, Skye Mattox, Reed Tankersley, and Jake Tribus) bump and grind and act like the world is their oyster.

The highlight of the evening comes next - especially for fans of Herman Cornejo, the longtime, dashing Argentine star of American Ballet Theatre who clearly feels a synergy with Tharp, especially late in his career. The choreographer sets this solo, "Brel," which the two have been working on for several years, to the songs and



This photo provided by Joyce Theater shows Herman Cornejo in 'Twyla Tharp Dance' at New York's intimate Joyce Theater. (AP)

voice of Jacques Brel. It seems all at once a piece about Brel and about the dancer himself, surveying his past, present and future.

At moments on opening night, it was to Cornejo's expressive eyes that one's attention was drawn, whatever his limbs were doing. Every once in a while he broke into a flourish of virtuosic steps that, in an opera house, would get an immediate cheer from balletomanes. But here,

dressed not in tights but in a subdued costume of black trousers and long-sleeved shirt, it felt like Cornejo and Tharp were going for a more soulful, personal connection with the audience. At the end, bowing to the biggest cheers of the evening, Cornejo simply sat down on the stage and smiled.

Alternates

Cornejo alternates evenings with Daniel Ulbricht of New York City Ballet - just two of the many prominent dancers who wisely grab the chance to dance with Tharp when they can. Another is the gifted Cassandra Trenary of ABT, whose blazing technique was a highlight of Tharp's 2022 engagement at New York City Center, a much larger venue than the intimate Joyce, featuring the classics "In the Upper Room" and "Nine Sinatra Songs."

Trenary is featured here in "The Ballet Master," the last dance of the evening, a happily chaotic affair about a choreographer (John Selya, Tharp's collaborator of more than two decades) trying to run a rehearsal that morphs into a performance of "Don Quixote" (sort of) with Selya as the titular windmill-fighting dreamer and Ulbricht as Sancho Panza.

Trenary, channeling Dulcinea, begins delicately on pointe and ends up in sneakers and gold spandex shorts, moving like an elite athlete - the two very different sides of a Tharp ballerina.

Speaking of Tharp and adjectives: "Tireless" is one often used, to describe both her and her dancers, of whom she always expects much. They always seem to rise to the challenge. "Twyla Tharp Dance" runs though Feb. 25.

Features

ARABIC TIMES

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2024

NEW YORK: A curious criminal case involving handwritten lyrics to the classic rock megahit "Hotel California" and other Eagles favorites is going to trial in a New York courtroom, with opening statements set for Wednesday.

The three defendants, all well-established in the collectibles world, are accused of scheming to thwart Eagles co-founder Don Henley's efforts to reclaim the allegedly ill-gotten documents.

The trial concerns more than 80 pages of drafts of the words to songs from the "Hotel California" album, the 1976 release that stands today as the third-biggest selling disc ever in the U.S.

Rare-book dealer Glenn Horowitz, former Rock & Roll Hall of Fame curator Craig Inciardi and memorabilia seller Edward Kosinski have pleaded not guilty to conspiracy and various other charges. Their lawyers have said the case "alleges criminality where none exists and unfairly tarnishes the reputations of well-respected professionals."

The documents include lyrics-in-development for "Life in the Fast Lane," "New Kid in Town" and, of course, "Hotel California," the more than six-minute-long, somewhat mysterious musical tale of the goings-on at an inviting, decadent but ultimately dark place where "you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave."

If scorned by some as an overexposed artifact of the '70s, the Grammy-winning song is still a touchstone on classic rock radio and many personal playlists. The entertainment data company Luminate counted over 220 million streams and 136,000 radio plays of "Hotel California" in the U.S. last year.

The case was brought in 2022, a decade after some of the pages began popping up for auction and Henley took notice - and took umbrage. He bought back a bit of the material for \$8,500 but also reported the documents stolen, according to court filings.

At the time, the lyrics sheets were in the hands of Kosinski and Inciardi, who had bought them from Horowitz. He had purchased them in 2005 from Ed Sanders, a writer and 1960s counterculture figure who worked with the Eagles

on a band biography that was shelved in the early '80s. Sanders, who also co-founded the avant-garde rock group the Fugs, isn't charged in the case and hasn't responded to a message seeking comment about it. Sanders told Horowitz in 2005 that Henley's assistant had mailed along any documents he wanted for the biography, though the



Henley



Horowitz

writer worried that Henley "might conceivably be upset" if they were sold, according to emails recounted in the indictment.

But once Henley's lawyers began asking questions, Horowitz, Inciardi and Kosinski started maneuvering to gin up and disseminate a legally viable ownership history for the manuscripts, Manhattan prosecutors say.

According to the indictment, Inciardi and Horowitz floated evolving accounts of how Sanders obtained the documents. The explanations ranged over the next five years from Sanders finding them abandoned in a backstage dressing room to the writer getting them from Eagles co-founder Glenn Frey, who died in 2016. Emails show some input and

assent from Sanders, but he also apparently objected at least to the backstage-salvage story. In messages that didn't include him, Horowitz wrote about getting Sanders' "explanation" and giving him "gentle handling" and assurances "that he's not going to the can," the indictment says. (AP)

People & Places



The Beatles address the media in the press room of Kennedy International Airport on their arrival, Feb. 7, 1964 in New York. The Beatles are getting the big-screen biopic treatment in not just one but a Fab Four of movies that will give each band member their own film, all of which are to be directed by Sam Mendes. (AP)

Film

Baldwin's case progresses

'Rust' armorer stands trial in fatal shooting

SANTA FE, N.M., Feb. 21, (AP): Prosecutors in New Mexico want more accountability for the 2021 death of a cinematographer who was fatally shot by actor **Alec Baldwin** during a rehearsal for the Western film "Rust."

Before Baldwin's case progresses, the armorer on the set will be tried on charges of involuntary manslaughter and tampering with evidence. Jury selection in Hannah Gutierrez-Reed's trial starts Wednesday in Santa Fe.

Gutierrez-Reed has pleaded not guilty to the charges and maintains she's not directly to blame for Halyna Hutchins' death. Baldwin also has pleaded not guilty to an involuntary manslaughter charge in a separate case.

Prosecutors say they'll present evidence that Gutierrez-Reed loaded a live round into the gun that killed Hutchins after unknowingly bringing live ammunition onto a set where it was expressly prohibited. They contend the armorer missed multiple opportunities to ensure safety on the movie set.

The evidence and testimony has implications for Baldwin, who was pointing a gun at Hutchins during an October 2021 rehearsal outside Santa Fe when the gun went off, killing her and wounding director Joel Souza.

Here are some things to know about the Gutierrez-Reed trial:

Charges

Gutierrez-Reed, the stepdaughter of renowned sharpshooter and weapons consultant Thell Reed, was 25 at the time of Hutchins' death. "Rust" was her second assignment as an armorer in a feature film.

Gutierrez-Reed faces up to 18 months in prison and a \$5,000 fine if convicted of involuntary manslaughter. The evidence tampering charge stems from accusations she handed a small bag of possible narcotics to another crew member after the shooting to avoid detection by law enforcement.

Her attorneys say that charge is prosecutors' attempt to smear Gutierrez-Reed's character. The bag was thrown away without testing the contents, defense attorneys said.

More than 40 people are listed as witnesses during the trial that's scheduled to run through March 6.

Ammunition

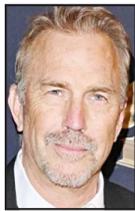
Authorities located six rounds of ammunition on the movie set, in locations including in a box, a gun belt and a bandolier worn by Baldwin. Baldwin has said he assumed the gun only had rounds that couldn't be fired.

Special prosecutors say they will present "substantial evidence" that Gutierrez-Reed unwittingly brought live rounds onto the set. They also argued in court filings that Hutchins died because of a series of negligent acts by Gutierrez-Reed, and say that she should have noticed live rounds and intervened long before the shooting.

Gutierrez-Reed's attorneys say she's unfairly been scapegoated. They contend live rounds arrived on set from an Albuquerque-based supplier of dummy rounds. They also pointed to a broader "atmosphere" of safety failures that were uncovered during an investigation by state workplace safety inspectors that go beyond Gutierrez-Reed.



Writer/director Ethan Coen, left, and writer Tricia Cooke pose for a portrait to promote 'Drive-Away Dolls' on Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2024, in New York. (AP)



Costner



Baumgartner

Variety

SANTA BARBARA, Calif.: A judge has declared that **Kevin Costner** and his wife of nearly two decades, **Christine Baumgartner**, are now legally divorced, according to court records filed Tuesday.

The couple's marriage ended, and both became single, on Friday, nine months after she filed for divorce, a judgment entered in Santa Barbara County court showed.

In the first months after their split, Costner and Baumgartner fought in court over child custody and support payments and appeared to be headed for a contentious trial. But they reached a settlement agreement in September that allowed them to avoid it.

The two will have joint custody of their sons, ages 16 and 15, and daughter, age 13. A judge in September ordered Costner to pay about \$63,000 per month in child support, after she had sought about \$175,000 per month.

Costner, 69, and Baumgartner, 48, a model and handbag designer, began dating in 1998 and married at his Colorado ranch in 2004.

It was the second marriage for Costner, the Oscar and Emmy winning star of TV's "Yellowstone" and films including "Dances With Wolves," "The Bodyguard" and "Bull Durham."

He also has four adult children from previous relationships. (AP)

NEW YORK: Streaming service FuboTV has filed an antitrust lawsuit against ESPN, Fox, Warner Bros. Discovery and Hulu, which are planning to launch a sports-streaming venture in the fall.

The lawsuit has been filed in the Southern District of New York. FuboTV, which focuses primarily on live sports, is seeking

Film

Movies give each band member their own spotlight

Beatles to get a Fab Four of biopics

NEW YORK, Feb. 21, (AP): The Beatles are getting the big-screen biopic treatment in not just one film, but a Fab Four of movies that will give each band member their own spotlight - all of which are to be directed by Sam Mendes.

For the first time, the Beatles, long among the stingiest rights granters, are giving full life and music rights to a movie project. Sony Pictures announced Monday a deal that may dwarf all music biopics that have come before it, with the stories of Paul McCartney, John Lennon, George Harrison and Ringo Starr spread out over a quartet of films.

The films, conceived by Mendes, are expected to roll out theatrically in innovative fashion, with the movies potentially coexisting or intersecting in theaters. Precise release plans will be announced at a later date. Sony is targeting 2027 for their release.

McCartney, Starr and the families of John Lennon and George Harrison have all signed off on the project through the band's Apple Corps. Ltd. Sony Music Publishing controls the rights to the majority of Beatles songs.

"I'm honored to be telling the story of the greatest rock band of all time, and excited to challenge the notion of what constitutes a trip to the movies," Mendes said in a state-

ment.

Each film will be from the perspective of a Beatle.

"We intend this to be a uniquely thrilling, and epic cinematic experience: four films, told from four different perspectives which tell a single story about the most celebrated band of all time," said producer Pippa Harris. "To have The Beatles' and Apple Corps' blessing to do this is an immense privilege."

Documentaries

The Beatles' most famous forays into film were in their early years. Between 1964 and 1970, they appeared in five movies, including "A Hard Day's Night" (1964) and the animated "Yellow Submarine" (1968). They've, of course, been the subject of many documentaries, most recently Peter Jackson's 2021 "The Beatles: Get Back."

In 2023, the Beatles reunited with the aid of artificial intelligence in the newly released song "Now and Then." The recording was made possible by technology used by Jackson on "Get Back," and featured a music video made by the New Zealand director.

Attempts to dramatize the Beatles' story have been more sporadic and less impactful. A 1979 biopic, made when Lennon was still alive,

called "The Birth of the Beatles" was produced with Beatles original drummer Pete Best as an adviser. The 1994 indie drama "Backbeat" chronicled Lennon's relationship with Stuart Sutcliffe before the Beatles were famous. "Nowhere Boy" (2009) starred Aaron Taylor-Johnson as a teenage Lennon.

But in the last decade, music biopics have become big business. Box-office hits like "Bohemian Rhapsody,"

"Rocketman" and "Elvis" have sent Hollywood executives chasing the next jukebox blockbuster. Over Presidents Day weekend, "Bob Marley: One Love," produced with the Marley estate, was the No. 1 movie in theaters. A Michael Jackson biopic is in production.

"Theatrical movie events today must be culturally seismic. Sam's daring, large-scale idea is that and then some," said Tom Rothman, chair and chief executive of Sony Pictures' Motion Picture Group.

The combination of Mendes' team "with the music and the stories of four young men who changed the world, will rock audiences all over the globe," Rothman said. "We are deeply grateful to all parties and look forward ourselves to breaking some rules with Sam's uniquely artistic vision."

a jury trial.

The Wall Street Journal was the first to report on the lawsuit.

"Each of these companies has consistently engaged in anticompetitive practices that aim to monopolize the market, stifle any form of competition, create higher pricing for subscribers and cheat consumers

from deserved choice," **David Gandler**, Co-founder and CEO of FuboTV, said in a statement. "Simply put, this sports cartel blocked our playbook for many years and now they are effectively stealing it for themselves."

ESPN, Fox, Warner Bros. Discovery and Hulu declined to comment about the

lawsuit.

FuboTV says in its filing that it has tried for years to offer a sports-only streaming service but has been prevented from doing so because of ESPN, Fox and Warner Bros. Discovery has imposed bundling requirements on FuboTV which it says forces "Fubo to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to license and broadcast content that its customers do not want or need."

"Faced with the threat of disruptive competition from Fubo and other upstarts, Defendants have responded by locking arms (and locking others out) to steal Fubo's core business idea - a sports-centric package of channels - while blocking Fubo from offering that same package," the company said in its court filing.

ESPN, Fox, Warner Bros. Discovery and Hulu announced their plans to offer a sports streaming service on Feb. 6. The three companies will each share one-third ownership in the joint venture. A name for the service and pricing will be announced at a later date.

FuboTV not only wants the proposed joint venture shut down, but it is seeking cash damages. If the court does not rule to do either, FuboTV is seeking restrictions on the joint venture so that competition remains in the marketplace.

FuboTV was founded in 2015. In its most recent quarterly filing last November, it reported 1.48 million paid subscribers in North America for the third quarter, an all-time high for the company. (AP)



This image released by AMC shows Andrew Lincoln as Rick Grimes from "The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live." (AP)

The Conversation

Pumping iron or hitting the pavement

Exercise can impact your heart size and shape, can pose risks for some athletes

By William Cornwell

University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

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



Exercise has long been recognized by clinicians, scientists and public health officials as an important way to maintain health throughout a person's lifespan. It improves overall fitness, helps build strong muscles and bones, reduces the risk of chronic disease, improves mood and slows physical decline.

Exercise can also significantly reduce the risk of developing conditions that negatively affect heart health, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and obesity. But large amounts of exercise throughout life may also harm the heart, leading to the development of a condition called athletic heart.

As the sports cardiology director at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, I'm often asked how much and what kind of exercise is necessary to get the benefits of exercise. Many people also wonder about the risks of exercise, and what happens if you exercise too much.

The American Heart Association generally recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, such as brisk walking, or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise, such as running, each week. It also recommends muscle strengthening exercises at least twice per week.

When people exceed these guidelines, the heart may remodel itself in response - that is, it begins to change its size and shape. As a result, heart function may also change. These changes in heart structure and function among people who engage in high levels of exercise are referred to as the athletic heart, or athlete's heart. Athletic heart doesn't necessarily cause problems, but in some people it can increase the risk of certain heart issues.

To understand how exercise affects the heart, it's important to consider what kind of exercise you're participating in.

Exercise is generally divided into two broad categories: dynamic and static.

Dynamic exercises

Dynamic exercises, like running, cross-country skiing and soccer, require the heart to pump an increased amount of blood, compared to the amount delivered to the body at rest, in order to sustain the activity. For example, when running, the amount of blood the heart pumps to the body may increase by threefold to fivefold compared to at rest.

Static exercises, like weightlifting, gymnastics or rock climbing, require the body to use skeletal muscle in order to push or pull heavy amounts of weight. While the heart does pump more blood to skeletal muscles that are working during these activities, these kinds of exercises depend on a muscle's ability to move the weight. For example, in order to do curls with dumbbells, the biceps must be strong enough to lift the desired weight.

Some exercises, like rowing or cycling, are both highly dynamic and highly static because they require the heart to pump large amounts of blood while simultaneously requiring a large amount of muscle strength to sustain effort.

It is important to distinguish between dynamic and static exercise because the heart adapts differently according to the type of exercise you engage in over time. Dynamic exercise increases the volume of blood pumping through the heart and can cause the heart to become enlarged, or dilated, over time. Static exercise increases the amount of pressure on the heart and can

also cause it to become enlarged over time but with thickened walls.

Exercise that exceeds guidelines, such as exercising more than an hour most days of the week, may lead to development of athletic heart. Athletic heart commonly occurs among endurance athletes, who regularly compete in activities like marathons or other long-duration events. Many exercise several hours per day and more than 12 to 15 hours per week.

Among runners, for example, the heart remodels itself in response to having to pump a high volume of blood. As a result, the chambers of the heart enlarge to hold and pump more blood. Among weightlifters, the heart remodels itself by thickening in response to the increase in pressure applied on the heart.

Exercise is good for the body, and athletic heart results from a lifelong commitment to an activity that promotes good health. But there may be some issues that arise from an athletic heart.

First, athletes with markedly enlarged hearts may be at risk of developing atrial fibrillation, which is abnormal heart rhythms that typically occur among older adults or people with high blood pressure or heart failure. Abnormal heart rhythms are worrisome because they may lead to a stroke.

Potential reasons

There are many potential reasons atrial fibrillation occurs in athletes. A dilated atrium - the top chamber in the heart - may become inflamed and develop scar tissue, increasing the risk of atrial fibrillation. Stress and environmental factors may also work together to increase the risk of arrhythmia.

Coronary artery calcification, or CAC, is another concern among elite athletes. Coronary artery calcification, which commonly occurs in older adults or those with risk factors for coronary artery disease, increases the risk of having a heart attack or stroke. In recent years, doctors have been using imaging tests to monitor calcium buildup in the arteries of their patients to try to determine their risk of heart attack or stroke over time.

It is not entirely clear why elite athletes develop coronary artery calcification. Fortunately, it does not appear that athletes have an increased risk of heart attack, even among those with very high levels of CAC. For example, a large study of almost 22,000 participants found that even athletes who engaged in high amounts of exercise and had elevated levels of CAC did not have an increased risk of death from cardiovascular disease over a decade of follow-up.

Some athletes are appropriately concerned about having calcium buildup in their heart arteries and may wonder whether or not they should be taking medications like aspirin or statins. But risks vary from person to person, so anyone concerned about CAC should talk to their doctor.

Though elite athletes may have an increased risk of developing athletic heart, exercise undoubtedly remains one of, if not the best, methods to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

For example, if someone does not exercise routinely, their heart will become stiff and not pump blood as well as it once did. Routine exercise - especially dynamic exercise like running - maintains a compliant heart and prevents stiffening. A compliant heart will expand a lot more as it fills with blood and, in turn, pump out more blood with each heartbeat. A stiff heart has difficulty filling up with blood and has difficulty pumping blood through the body.

Generally, routine exercise throughout adulthood encourages the heart to remain strong and flexible even in old age. Even if someone were only to begin regularly exercising in their 40s to 50s, it is possible to reverse some of the effects of sedentary aging.

For example, a 2018 study of 53 sedentary people mostly in their early 50s found that those who participated in a two-year exercise training program using a combination of running, cycling and elliptical exercise had hearts that became more compliant compared to the hearts of those who did not exercise.



Cornwell

Pacemaker for the brain helped a woman with crippling depression

Device delivers constant low-voltage pulses

NEW YORK, Feb 21, (AP) — Emily Hollenbeck lived with a deep, recurring depression she likened to a black hole, where gravity felt so strong and her limbs so heavy she could barely move. She knew the illness could kill her. Both of her parents had taken their lives.

She was willing to try something extreme: Having electrodes implanted in her brain as part of an experimental therapy.

Researchers say the treatment - called deep brain stimulation, or DBS - could eventually help many of the nearly 3 million Americans like her with depression that resists other treatments. It's approved for conditions such as Parkinson's disease and epilepsy, and many doctors and patients hope it will become more widely available for depression soon.

The treatment gives patients targeted electrical impulses, much like a pacemaker for the brain. A growing body of recent research is promising, with more underway - although two large studies that showed no advantage to using DBS for depression temporarily halted progress, and some scientists continue to raise concerns.

Meanwhile, the Food and Drug Administration has agreed to speed up its review of Abbott Laboratories' request to use its DBS devices for treatment-resistant depression.

"At first I was blown away because the concept of it seems so intense. Like, it's brain surgery. You have wires embedded in your brain," said Hollenbeck, who is part of ongoing research at Mount Sinai West. "But I also felt like at that point I tried everything, and I was desperate for an answer."

Depression symptoms

Hollenbeck suffered from depression symptoms as a child growing up in poverty and occasional homelessness. But her first major bout happened in college, after her father's suicide in 2009. Another hit during a Teach for America stint, leaving her almost immobilized and worried she'd lose her classroom job and sink into poverty again. She landed in the hospital.

"I ended up having sort of an on-and-off pattern," she said. After responding to medication for a while, she'd relapse.

She managed to earn a doctorate in psychology, even after losing her mom in her last year of grad school. But the black hole always returned to pull her in. At times, she said, she thought about ending her life.

She said she'd exhausted all options, including electroconvulsive therapy, when a doctor told her about DBS three years ago.

"Nothing else was working," she said. She became one of only a few hundred treated with DBS for depression.

Hollenbeck had the brain surgery while sedated but awake. Dr. Brian Kopell, who directs Mount Sinai's Center for Neuromodulation, placed thin metal electrodes in a region of her brain called the subcallosal cingulate cortex, which regulates emotional behavior and is involved in feelings of sadness.

The electrodes are connected by an internal wire to a device placed under the skin in her chest, which controls the amount of electrical stimulation and delivers constant low-voltage pulses. Hollenbeck calls it "continuous Prozac."

Stimulation

Doctors say the stimulation helps because electricity speaks the brain's language. Neurons communicate using electrical and chemical signals.

In normal brains, Kopell said, electrical activity reverberates unimpeded in all areas, in a sort of dance. In depression, the dancers get stuck within the brain's emotional circuitry. DBS seems to "unstuck the circuit," he said, allowing the brain to do what it normally would.

Hollenbeck said the effect was almost immediate.

"The first day after surgery, she started feeling a lifting of that negative mood, of the heaviness," said her psychiatrist, Dr. Martijn Figee.



In this file photo, a Somali baby receives a polio vaccine, at the Medina Maternal Child Health center in Mogadishu, Somalia. Zimbabwe has started an emergency campaign to inoculate more than 4 million children against polio after health authorities detected 3 cases caused by a rare mutation of the weakened virus used in oral vaccines, including a 10-year-old girl who was paralyzed in January. (AP)

Zimbabwe starts an emergency polio vaccination drive

Zimbabwe began an emergency campaign to inoculate more than 4 million children against polio on Tuesday after health authorities detected three cases caused by the rare mutation of the weakened virus used in oral vaccines, including a 10-year-old girl who was paralyzed in January.

The health ministry said laboratory tests from samples collected from sewage sites in several areas of the capital, Harare, late last year showed the presence of a mutated polio virus that originated in an oral vaccine used in the global eradication effort.

In rare instances, the live polio virus in vaccines can mutate into a form capable of sparking new outbreaks, especially in places with poor sanitation and low vaccination levels.

The number of polio cases globally has dropped by more than 99% since the global effort to wipe out the disease led by the World Health Organization and others began in 1988. But the majority of children being paralyzed by polio these days are being crippled by a virus that was originally

linked to a vaccine.

Vaccination teams in Zimbabwe are moving from house to house to deliver more doses to protect children, while others will be stationed at health facilities, authorities said.

Officials said it was the first time Zimbabwe would be using a new oral polio vaccine specifically designed to reduce the risk of the virus within it mutating into a dangerous form.

Zimbabwe aims to roll out more than 10 million new vaccine doses targeting just over 4 million children below the age of 10 in two rounds in February and March. More than 95% of that population needs to be immunized against polio to stop new outbreaks.

Last year, the wild polio virus caused a dozen cases in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the only countries that still have that virus. In comparison, polio viruses linked to the vaccine caused more than 500 cases in nearly two dozen countries globally, mostly in Africa. (AP)



A sample pacemaker-like device, used for deep brain stimulation therapy, and its electrodes which are implanted into a specific site in the brain are displayed at Mount Sinai West in New York on Dec. 20, 2023. (AP)

"I remember her telling me that she was able to enjoy Vietnamese takeout for the first time in years and really taste the food. She started to decorate her home, which had been completely empty since she moved to New York."

For Hollenbeck, the most profound change was finding pleasure in music again.

"When I was depressed, I couldn't listen to music. It sounded and felt like I was listening to radio static," she said. "Then on a sunny day in the summer, I was walking down the street listening to a song. I just felt this buoyancy, this, 'Oh, I want to walk more, I want to go and do things!' And I realized I'm getting better."

She only wishes the therapy had been there

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Islamabad let down by some sloppy fielding

Multan defeat Islamabad through pace for back-to-back wins

MULTAN, Pakistan, Feb 21, (AP): Multan Sultans limited the batting power of Islamabad United through pace and notched their second straight win in the Pakistan Super League on Tuesday.

Fast bowler Mohammad Ali grabbed 3-19 as he swung the new ball well and delivered some eye-catching yorkers in the death overs to bowl out Islamabad for 144.

Reeza Hendricks then followed his unbeaten 79 in Multan's win over Karachi Kings with 58 off 46 balls to lead last year's finalist to 145-5 for a five-wicket win in the last over.

Islamabad were let down by some

sloppy fielding as Imad Wasim dropped first Hendricks and then Mohammad Rizwan, who went on to score 43 off 33 balls and shared a 71-run stand with Hendricks.

Naseem Shah, returning from a shoulder injury, bowled an eventful first over when he clean bowled Dawid Malan for zero as the fast bowler looked to get into rhythm with figures of 2-29 off his four overs.

Islamabad lost the wickets of Alex Hales and Colin Munro cheaply inside the batting powerplay after Rizwan won the toss and elected to field.



Karachi Kings' Kieron Pollard plays a shot during the Pakistan Super League T20 cricket match between Peshawar Zalmi and Karachi Kings, in Lahore, Pakistan Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024. (AP)

Ali shattered the stumps of Munro with a sharp delivery that darted into the lefthander from around the wicket and Hales was caught at deep square leg while attempting a big shot against David Willey.

Salman Ali Agha (52) and Jordan Cox (41) both capitalized on dropped catches by Khushdil Shah and raised a 68-run stand. Leg-spinner Usama Mir (2-29) chipped in with quick wickets of Cox and power-hitter Azam Khan (13) that pushed back Islamabad.

CRICKET

Skipper Shadab Khan, who scored a prolific half-century in Islamabad's opening win over Lahore Qalandars, added 35 with Agha, but Abbas Afridi (3-33) and Ali struck with regular intervals in the death overs before Islamabad innings folded.

Afridi varied his pace intelligently and had Shadab clean bowled off a length ball and then Khushdil made amends of his two early fielding lapses by having Agha caught in the deep off Afridi's leg-cutter.

Ali wrapped up the tail by grabbing two wickets in the last over before running out Naseem off the last ball.

Multan joined Quetta Gladiators atop the table with four points from two wins while Islamabad has two points from two games.

Australia snatch last-ball win over Kiwis in 1st T20



New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra falls as he bats during the T20 cricket international between Australia and New Zealand in Wellington, New Zealand, Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024. (AP)

Moultreie stars as US women rout Dominican Republic

CARSON, Calif., Feb 21, (AP): Olivia Moultrie scored twice in her first national team start and the United States defeated the Dominican Republic 5-0 on Tuesday night in the inaugural CONCACAF Women's Gold Cup tournament.

Moultrie, 18, making just her third appearance with the national team, scored her first goal in the seventh minute when she stretched to tap the ball across the goal line.

Lynn Williams added a goal off a pass from Midge Purce in the 30th minute to make it 2-0 in the U.S. team's first game of the year.

Purce also fed Moultrie for her second goal in the 59th minute. Moultrie, who plays for the Portland Thorns in the National Women's Soccer League, is the third-youngest player to score multiple goals in a game for the United States.

"I'm pretty ecstatic right now. I

was just so happy to be on the field tonight, to have the opportunity to start is amazing," Moultrie said.

Jenna Nighswonger scored her first goal for the U.S. on a penalty in the 86th minute to make it 4-0.

Alex Morgan, who was brought into the team earlier Tuesday, came in as a second-half substitute. Morgan was a roster replacement for Mia Fishel, who tore a ligament in her right knee in practice a day earlier.

SOCCER

Morgan, who normally wears No. 13, wore Fishel's No. 7 because of CONCACAF rules.

Morgan converted a penalty kick in stoppage time to wrap up scoring. It was her 122nd international goal.

It was the sixth victory for the United States under interim coach Twila

Kilgore, who took over when coach Vlatko Andonovski departed the team following the Americans' disappointing finish at the Women's World Cup last summer.

Kilgore will coach the United States until May, when Emma Hayes, currently coach of Chelsea, takes over. Purce said Kilgore did a good job of making sure everyone was on the same page.

"I think that we're playing against a low block so it gives us an opportunity for a lot of creativity," Purce said. "And we have a lot of creative players on the front line. So it really fun. It was a fun day."

Korbin Albert, who plays for Paris Saint-Germain, also made her first start.

Veteran defender Becky Sauerbrunn, the captain for the match, was also a late addition to the roster because Alana Cook sustained a minor knee injury. It was Sauerbrunn's 216th cap.

Visitors lead 3-match series 1-0

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Feb 21, (AP): Tim David hit a four from the last ball of the match to give Australia a six-wicket win over New Zealand on Wednesday in the first Twenty20 international.

New Zealand made 215-3 batting first in an innings which included 13 sixes and 10 fours. Captain Mitch Marsh piloted Australia's innings with an unbeaten 72 from 44 balls and was man of the match for his role in Australia's third-highest successful run chase.

But David took over at the end, hitting two sixes and a four from the last three balls of the 19th over to leave Australia needing 16 runs from the last six balls.

Veteran seamer Tim Southee was given the responsibility of bowling the last over for New Zealand as the highest wicket-taker in T20 cricket.

CRICKET

His first two balls were wides, then there was a leg bye and Australia needed 12 from three balls. David came close to settling the issue when he just caught up with a ball from Southee heading down leg and hit a remarkable six behind square.

That left Australia needed six from two balls. Marsh and David ran two from the penultimate ball of the innings, leaving Australia needing a four to win with David on strike.

Southee bowled full and David clubbed the ball through the mid-wicket and just wide of Glenn Phillips' despairing dive to the boundary. David finished 31 not out from only 10 balls.

"It was a very good wicket and I felt we were just on the run rate right

through the innings," Marsh said. "There was no doubt if we were going to chase down 216 we were going to need a bit of luck."

"That was just a great game of cricket to start the series. These two teams have played a lot of great games over time and it's really nice to be on the right end of it tonight."

Australia's 216-4 was its third-highest successful run chase in T20s.

Earlier, Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra put on 113 from 66 balls for the third wicket to lift New Zealand to 215-3 as it batted first.

Conway broke a form slump with an innings of 63 from 46 balls. It was Conway's first half century in 23 innings across all formats.

Ravindra came into the New Zealand team as a placeholder for Kane Williamson who is absent awaiting the birth of his third child. He staked a strong claim for a place in New Zealand's squad to the Twenty20 World Cup later this year, hitting six sixes in

an innings of 68 from 35 balls.

The New Zealand innings was given an explosive start by Finn Allen who made 32 from 17 balls in a 66-run opening partnership with Conway. Glenn Phillips finished 19 not out, Mark Chapman 18 not out and every New Zealand batter hit at least one six.

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner decided to bat on winning the toss on a new drop-in pitch at Sky Stadium.

Allen missed at times early in his innings but settled into his work and hit three sixes and two fours in an innings of only 17 balls.

He hit the first six of the match from the second over, bowled by Josh Hazlewood, then hit two sixes and 20 runs from the third over, bowled by Glenn Maxwell. Allen hit another off Pat Cummins in his first over which yielded 15 runs as New Zealand reached 50 from only 3.5 overs.

He was out inside the power play when New Zealand was on 62. After six overs it was 68-1.

The New Zealand run rate dropped a little after the power play as the Australian bowlers made good use of slower deliveries. But Conway and Ravindra stepped things up again and Conway reached his half century, his 10th in T20s and third against Australia, from 34 balls.

Ravindra followed him to a 50 from 29 balls amid a barrage of sixes. Ravindra was out to the last ball of the 16th over and Conway to the first ball of the next over.

Santner appeared to have produced a key play near the end when he bowled the 17th over, conceding only three runs and taking the wicket of Josh Inglis (20).

But David came to the crease, hit the ball out of the middle from the start and clinched the game for Australia.

"I thought we didn't bowl too bad but the power they possess all the way down is the reason why they're pretty good," Santner said. "The only way to stop them is to take wickets and we didn't really do that today."



Australia's Tim David bats during the T20 cricket international between Australia and New Zealand in Wellington, New Zealand, Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2024. (AP)

Tuchel to leave Bavarians at the end of this season

DUESSELDORF, Germany, Feb 21, (AP): Thomas Tuchel is leaving Bayern Munich and taking the fall for a disappointing season. The players have been warned, too.

Bayern announced Wednesday that Tuchel will leave the club at the end of the season, after a run of three straight losses raised the prospect of the club's first campaign without a trophy in 12 years.

The announcement was accompanied by a pledge from chief executive Jan-Christian Dreesen to "hold the team accountable" for its performances on the field for the rest of the season.

With an eight-point deficit in the Bundesliga and Champions League hopes hanging by a thread, it seemed like a warning to players not to ease off and wait for a new coach.

SOCCER

Bayern said Tuchel's departure was decided when he spoke with chief executive Jan-Christian Dreesen. Tuchel's contract was due to run through the end of the 2024-25 season.

"In a good, open discussion, we came to the decision to end our working relationship by mutual agreement in the summer," Dreesen said in a club statement. "Our goal is to pursue a new footballing direction with a new head coach for the 2024-25 season. Until then, every individual at the club is expressly called upon to achieve the maximum possible in the Champions League and Bundesliga. I also explicitly hold the team accountable in this regard."

Tuchel has repeatedly said his squad trains well and then fails to perform to the same standard in games.

Tuchel said in the statement that "I will of course continue to do everything I can with my coaching staff to achieve maximum success" until he leaves the club. Bayern's next game is Saturday at home to Leipzig with a squad heavily depleted by injuries.

There was no word from the club on a possible successor. Tuchel's delayed departure could mean Bayern will be competing with Liverpool for the services of Xabi Alonso, as Jürgen Klopp is also leaving at the end of the season after nine years in charge of the English club.

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SPORTS

British billionaire vows to lift English club to top of world soccer

Ratcliffe completes purchase of 25% stake in Manchester United

MANCHESTER, England, Feb 21, (AP) — British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe expressed his desire to lift Manchester United "to the top of English, European and world football" after completing his purchase of a minority stake in the iconic club.

SOCCER

The 71-year-old Ratcliffe paid \$1.3 billion for up to 25% of United and has already invested \$200 million for additional shares, meaning he owns approximately 27.7%, the club said.

United said Ratcliffe intends to invest a further \$100 million by Dec. 31 "to enable future investment in infrastructure at Old Trafford."



In this file photo, British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe, the founder of the INEOS Chemicals company, is interviewed by The Associated Press at the Iffley Road Track, in Oxford, England. (AP)

The deal had already been approved by the English Football Association while the Premier League has cleared Ratcliffe to take up a minority share under its rules regarding who is allowed to be an owner or director of a soccer club.

Ratcliffe is one of Britain's richest people and the owner of petrochemicals giant INEOS. He agreed to a deal to buy a stake in United in December after the Glazer family, which owns the club, put it up for sale in 2022.

"To become co-owner of Manchester United is a great honor and comes with great responsibility," Ratcliffe said in a statement.

"This marks the completion of the transaction, but just the beginning of our journey to take Manchester United back to the top of English, European and world football, with world-class facilities for our fans. Work to achieve those objectives will accelerate from today."

The Glazers, who also own the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, eventually opted to sell a minority stake of the 20-time English champion after also fielding bids from Qatari banker Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani.

"I would like to welcome Sir Jim as co-owner," executive co-chairman Joel Glazer said, "and look forward to working closely with him and INEOS Sport to deliver a bright future for Manchester United."

United hasn't won the Premier League since 2013, the last season of Alex Ferguson's nearly 27 years as the team's manager. United's most recent Champions League title was in 2008.

Super Cup final spot on the line as Kuwait Club face Al-Qadisiya

Al -Arabi aiming to continue positive streak

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The semifinals of the sixteenth edition of the Super Cup competition are scheduled for today. At 4:45 pm, Al-Qadisiya will face Al-Kuwait at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium, while Al-Arabi will take on Kazma at 7:45 pm at Mohamed Al-Hamad Stadium.

SOCCER

This season marks a departure from the traditional format of the Super Cup, as it introduces a new system featuring four teams: the champions of the League, the Prince's Cup, and the Crown Prince's Cup, along with selected league teams based on their standings. This is a departure from the previous format, which involved a single match between the league and Crown Prince's Cup champions.

In terms of historical achievements, only three clubs have clinched the Super Cup title. Kuwait Club and Al-Qadisiya share the record with six titles each, while Al-Arabi has won it three times. The fourth team in today's match, Kazma, is yet to secure a title, despite its previous participation.

Kuwait Club holds the record for the most appearances in the Super



A file photo of Al-Qadisiya and Kuwait Club players in action.

Cup match with 13 times, followed by Al-Qadisiya with 11 appearances. Al-Arabi and Kazma have played four and two times, respectively.

The first match features defending champions Kuwait, aiming to retain their title after a 2-1 victory over Kazma in the previous edition.

Al-Qadisiya, on the other hand, seeks redemption and hopes to secure its first local title in five seasons. The team is eager to showcase a strong performance and reconcile with its fans after recent setbacks in the league.

In the second confrontation, league leaders Al-Arabi face Ka-

zma, aiming to continue their positive streak after a convincing 4-0 win in the league's earlier stage. Kazma, currently in seventh place in the league, is looking for a victory to restore its reputation and boost morale ahead of the upcoming league match against Al-Arabi on March 8th.

Burgan suffer second consecutive loss in Arab Club Volleyball Championship



Players challenge for the ball during a league match between Kuwait Club and Yarmouk.

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

AMMAN, Feb 21: Burgan volleyball team suffered its second consecutive defeat in the ongoing 42nd Arab Club Championship held in Amman, Jordan as it Burgan succumbed to Dar Kulaib of Bahrain in the second group. (25-18, 22-25, 25-17, 25-23).

Earlier, Kazma, the second Kuwaiti representative, experienced a similar outcome against Qatar, while Libyan Al-Suwaihi secured a 3-0 victory over Iraqi Al-Shamal Club. In the same vein, Libyan Al-Ahly Benghazi triumphed over Jordanian Shabab Al-Hussein with a 3-0 score.

Moving into the third round of the preliminary stage today, Kazma competes in the first group against Bahrain's Al-Ahly Benghazi, Qatar faces off with Al-Seeb of Oman, and Shabab Al-Hussein contends with Shabab Ayra of Jordan. In the second group, Dar Kulaib meets Masafi

Al-Shamal, Burgan clashes with Al-Suwaihi of Libya, and Shabab Ayra of Jordan competes against Al-Shorta of Qatar.

Additionally, the Volleyball League's postponed matches feature Yarmouk meeting Al-Qadisiya at 5:15 pm followed by Kuwait Club playing against Al-Sulaibikhat at 7:15 pm.

VOLLEYBALL

Recent league matches witnessed Kuwait Club victory over Yarmouk (3-1) and Al-Qadisiya's triumph over Al-Shabab (3-0). As a result, the league standings before today's matches are as follows: Kuwait Club and Al-Qadisiya leading with 37 points, Al-Arabi and Burgan with 35 points, Kazma with 34 points, Al-Shabab with 27 points, Yarmouk with 17 points, Al-Tadamon with 15 points, and Sulaibikhat and Al-Sahel with three points each.

Karlovic officially announces retirement

ZAGREB, Feb 21, (AP) — Ivo Karlovic, the towering Croatian known for his booming serve, has officially announced his retirement from tennis more than two years after playing his last tournament match.

The 2.11-meter (6 foot, 11 inch) Karlovic said in a post Wednesday on X, formerly Twitter, that "I've had a very gratifying, unorthodox and long career coming from extremely humble beginnings, especially for a tennis player."

The 44-year-old Karlovic - he will turn 45 next week - played his last ATP match in a second-round qualifying loss at Indian Wells, California in October 2021. His last Grand Slam tournament match was a first-round singles loss at the U.S. Open about six weeks earlier.

"Some of you have noticed that it's been a while since I played a tournament and still ask me on a daily basis if and when I'll be returning to the

tour," Karlovic wrote. "I'm sorry to disappoint, but with this letter, I want to make it official and finally announce my retirement."

Karlovic first made a name for himself in 2003 after coming through qualifying at Wimbledon and defeating defending champion Lleyton Hewitt in the first round at the All England Club. It was Karlovic's first match at a Grand Slam tournament and the result made Hewitt the first defending Wimbledon champion to lose in the first round since the start of the Open era in 1968.

Karlovic finished his 25-year career with eight singles titles and a record of 371 wins, 346 losses and \$10.1 million in prize money. His highest singles ranking was at No. 14 in August 2008.

His best Grand Slam singles performance was at Wimbledon in 2009, when he advanced to the quarterfinals. He also won the Davis Cup in 2005 with Croatia when it beat Slovakia in the final for the country's first title.



In this file photo, Ivo Karlovic, of Croatia, returns a shot to Richard Gasquet, of France, during the first round of the U.S. Open tennis championships in New York. (AP)

MADRID, Feb 21, (AP) — Signing Kylian Mbappé likely would not be a problem for Real Madrid financially, as it remains the Spanish club with the highest spending limit at 727 million euros (\$786 million).

Barcelona's financial struggles continue, though, with its cap being reduced to 204 million euros (\$220 million), the Spanish league said Tuesday. The Catalan club could be in a delicate situation going into the next transfer window. Atletico Madrid has the second-highest cap at 303 million euros (\$327 million).

Each Spanish league club has a different spending limit based on factors such as revenues, costs and debts. It is proportional to roughly 70% of a club's revenues. The limits denote the maximum amount each club can spend on players, coaches, youth systems and other areas.

Clubs that are overspending need to find ways to either reduce costs or attract new investment.

Barcelona's cap, which was at 270 million euros after the summer transfer window, has been gradually reduced after it had been boosted by financial maneuvers that helped the club restructure its debts and gain space to sign new players. If it can't restructure its finances again, the club will be in danger of not being allowed to register its players to compete.

Madrid has a much brighter outlook, with enough cap space to add Mbappé and possibly others. The club hasn't made many blockbuster signings in recent seasons and is free to spend now if it wants to.

SOCCER

Mbappé told Paris Saint-Germain last week that he will leave the French club at the end of the season, opening the door for another attempt by Madrid to sign him. Madrid made a big push to sign the France star in 2022, with one of its offers rejected by PSG reportedly reaching nearly 200 million euros (\$216 million).

Only four other clubs have spending limits surpassing 100 million euros (\$108 million) - Sevilla (152 million euros, \$164 million), Real Sociedad (144 million euros, \$155 million), Villarreal (143 million euros, \$154 million) and Athletic Bilbao (100 million euros, \$108 million).

Alavés has the lowest cap at 31

Barcelona still struggles

Real in good shape ahead of possible signing of Mbappé

Yarmouk seek first victory against Al-Qadisiya

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: Today marks the conclusion of the third round of the al Handball League at the Sheikh Saad Abdullah Complex. At 5:00 pm, Al-Qadisiya will face Yarmouk, followed by a 7:00 pm match between Al-Arabi and Khaitan.

In the previous matches, Kuwait Club secured its third consecutive victory, defeating Sulaibikhat 32-28, while Al-Salmiya also claimed its third win in a row by beating Al-Fahaheel 33-26. This places Kuwait Club and Al-Salmiya at the top of the standings with 6 points each, while Sulaibikhat has one point, and Al-Fahaheel has four points.

In today's matchups, Al-Qadisiya, with two points, aims to overcome Yarmouk, which has faced defeats in

million euros (\$33 million), just behind the 33 million euros (\$35 million) of Las Palmas.

Girona, the surprise team in Spain this season, has a cap of 52



Salmiya and Fahaheel players in action.

the last two rounds, in a bid to stay close to the leading teams. Yarmouk, on the other hand, seeks its first victory or, at the very least, to secure a single point.

The second match features a

clash between Al-Arabi and Khaitan, both with two points from a win or a loss. The outcome of today's match will determine whether the winner stays close to the top teams or if the loser falls behind.

HANDBALL

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Handball Club delegation departed for Doha, Qatar, to participate in the 40th edition of the Gulf Men's Cup Winners' Club Championship hosted by the Qatari Al-Arabi Club from the 25th of this month to the 5th of next March. The delegation, led by first-team manager Sameh Al-Hajri, includes the technical staff, led by national coach Haitham Al-Rashidi, along with players such as Qatari professional Frankis, Portuguese Hernandez, and Brazilian Vinicio.

league standings. Third-place Barcelona is eight points off the lead, while fourth-place Atletico trails Madrid by 11 points after 25 matches.



Barcelona's Andreas Christensen (front), and Celta's Renato Tapia jump for the ball during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Celta Vigo and Barcelona at the Balaídos stadium in Vigo, Spain. (AP)



PSV's Luuk de Jong (left), celebrates with teammate Hirving Lozano after scoring his side's first goal during the Champions League round of 16 first leg soccer match between PSV Eindhoven and Borussia Dortmund at Philips stadium in Eindhoven, Netherlands. (AP)

Sports

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Arnautovic rescues Inter with late winner

De Jong penalty earns PSV draw with Dortmund in CL round of 16

MILAN, Feb 21, (AP): Marko Arnautović came off the bench to help Inter Milan to a 1-0 win over Atlético Madrid in the first leg of the Champions League round of 16.

Arnautović replaced the injured Marcus Thuram at halftime and redeemed himself after missing a couple of golden chances by scoring the winning goal 11 minutes from time.

"I'm sorry for Marcus, I never want a player to get injured," Arnautović told Italian broadcaster Mediaset. "These are my opportunities, I come on to make the difference ... it's not an easy period for me but the third chance went in."

Initial reports were that Thuram injured a muscle in his right thigh and Inter will be hoping to have the France forward back for the second leg in Madrid on March 13.

Inter stretched its perfect record this year to nine wins, while it was a third loss in four matches for Atlético.

The Spanish team didn't have a single shot on target at San Siro but

SOCCER

will be hoping they can take lessons learned into the return at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium.

Inter was a surprise Champions League finalist last year but appears to have stepped up a level since and looks to be storming to the Serie A title after building a nine-point advantage and with a game in hand.

It was a cagey first half at San Siro until Inter appeared to wake up nine minutes before the break.

Neither goalkeeper had really been tested before Lautaro Martínez, who had fired a good opportunity over the bar moments earlier, saw his header smothered by Jan Oblak.

Lautaro had an even better chance two minutes later when Thuram went on a surging run and rolled across for the Argentina World Cup winner but he scuffed his shot and it was deflected behind off Atlético defender José María Giménez.

Thuram also had an opportunity on the stroke of halftime but had his effort saved by Oblak and immediately then went down with a problem.

The visitors had an even better opportunity moments later when Marcos Llorente was sent through on goal but Inter defender Stefan de Vrij managed to get back in time for a last-ditch tackle.

Inter upped the pressure and eventually broke the deadlock when Lautaro surged forward and although Oblak managed to parry his effort Arnautović drilled home the rebound.

Luuk de Jong converted a penalty to cancel out a goal by his former teammate Donyell Malen as PSV Eindhoven and Borussia Dortmund drew 1-1.

Malen scored against his old club in the 24th minute with a shot that appeared to deflect off the outstretched leg of defender Sergiño Dest.

Malen didn't wildly celebrate his first Champions League goal since December 2021, instead holding



The President of the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee, Sheikh Fahd Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad with the representatives of the clubs.

Optimism amid crisis: Minister of State for Youth Affairs and clubs seek resolution

Sheikh Fahad urges clubs to communicate with Kuwait Olympic Committee



Inter Milan's Hakan Calhanoglu (left), and Atletico Madrid's Alvaro Morata challenge for the ball during the Champions League, round of 16, first leg soccer match between Inter Milan and Atletico Madrid, at the San Siro stadium in Milan, Italy. (AP)

both hands in the air almost apologetically.

The goal was a familiar sight for the PSV fans. Malen scored 50 times in 81 appearances for the Eindhoven club from 2018-21. The crowd at PSV Stadium gave Malen a warm ovation when he was substituted late in the match.

De Jong equalized when he calmly slotted a low penalty past Alexander Meyer in the 56th minute after Mats

Hummels had brought down Malik Tillman. It took De Jong's Champions League goal tally to a PSV record nine, one more than Ruud van Nistelrooy.

Dest came close to snatching a late winner when he passed Julian Ryerson on the left but Meyer, a late replacement for the injured Gregor Kobel, saved his shot.

The second leg is in Dortmund on March 13.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The President of the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee, Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, convened several clubs whose declarations were revoked last December by the former Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Mohammad Al-Aiban, and the General Sports Authority. This meeting was prompted by the clubs' appeal, held last Saturday at the diwaniya of Dr. Falah Al-Mahwaish.

Discussions during the meeting focused on the latest developments, particularly the potential repercussions from international federations due to the absence of Kuwaiti players in foreign competitions for almost a year. The federations have informally inquired about this matter, and any resulting penalties could lead to the suspension of sports activities. If official letters are sent from Kuwait, indicating government interference by canceling the declarations of 43 specialized clubs, these letters may be escalated to the International Olympic Committee. Consequently, the external ramifications could be more severe than internal consequences, negatively impacting Kuwaiti sports reputation internationally. Kuwait may lose significant standing in international, conti-

Kuwaiti referee makes history

Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber 'congratulates' ref for successful completion of course

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 21: The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Tennis Federation, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber in the presence of the Federation's Secretary-General, Dr. Abdullah Abdulaziz, welcomed international referee Abdul Raouf Abdul Salam. The occasion marked his successful completion of the recently conducted international arbitration referee course in Thailand, where he earned the silver badge in arbitration.

Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber conveyed his heartfelt congratulations to referee Abdul-Raouf, recognizing him as the first dedicated Kuwaiti to achieve this prestigious



The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Tennis Federation Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber with the Kuwaiti referee.

TENNIS

qualification. He extended best wishes for continued success in Abdul-Raouf's refereeing career. In response, Abdul-Raouf expressed gratitude to Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber for the warm reception, honor, genuine interest in the sport, and unwavering sup-

port for its members. Abdul Raouf Abdul Salam stands as the sole Arab referee who participated in the comprehensive refereeing studies course (general referee), positioning him to officiate in the competitions of major international tennis tournaments.

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Haaland on target as Man City edge Brentford

MANCHESTER, England, Feb 21, (AP): Erling Haaland added Brentford to his list of Premier League conquests when he came to Manchester City's rescue with a 71st-minute goal to clinch a 1-0 win.

It looked like City would be dropping points in a tight title race for the second time in four days - after a 1-1 draw with Chelsea - only for Haaland to finally get some space behind Brentford's defense in a counterattack.

Julian Alvarez played the ball forward, Haaland collected it and raced past center back Kristoffer Ajer, who lost his footing. One on one with Mark Flekken, Haaland took his shot early and placed a low finish to the Dutch goalkeeper's right for his league-leading 17th goal of the campaign.

Of the 21 teams Haaland has faced since arriving in the Premier League

last season, Brentford was the only one he'd failed to score against.

Not anymore. "He's the best in the world," said Oscar Bobb, Haaland's City and Norway teammate who made his first Premier League start.

SOCCER

The narrow and nervy win moved the defending champions into second place in the standings, one point above Arsenal.

City extended its unbeaten run in all competitions since Dec. 6 to 16 matches, winning 14 and drawing two of them. Pep Guardiola's team is also into the last 16 in the FA Cup and is well-placed to get into the Champions League quarterfinals after taking a 3-1 lead over FC Copen-

hagen following the first leg of the round of 16. Could another treble of major trophies be on for the European champions?

"The players, for years, have done incredible things," Guardiola said "and they're still doing it." City found it tough to break down Brentford's packed defense - just as Guardiola predicted before the game.

The hosts had 25 shots in total, with Bobb having one cleared off the line in the first half as frustration among the City fans drew.

The first time Brentford left its defense exposed, Haaland pounced.

"After the weekend, we had to show a reaction and I feel we did that," City defender Manuel Akanji said. "Now we have to improve game by game."

City playmaker Kevin De Bruyne was an unused substitute and didn't even come out to warm up.



Manchester City's Erling Haaland (left), duels for the ball with Brentford's Christian Norgaard during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Brentford at the Etihad stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)