



basketball



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Kuwaitis safe after deadly 7.6-magnitude earthquake

Amir receives PM, two ministers

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received, at Bayan Palace on Tuesday, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir, separately, received First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

He also hosted Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the same venue.

Kuwait Amir sends cable of condolences to Japan's Emperor

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday a cable of condolences to Japanese Emperor Naruhito following the Ishikawa earthquake.

His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy over the victims of the earthquake that struck Ishikawa Prefecture in Japan, resulting in the death and injury of dozens of people and the destruction of property and public facilities.

His Highness the Amir wished quick recovery for the injured and that the officials will be able to overcome the effects of this natural disaster.

Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun sent on Tuesday two cables of condolences to the Japanese President of the House of Councilors Hidehisa Otsuji, and Speaker of the House of Representatives Fukushima Nukaga following the Ishikawa earthquake.

Al-Saadoun expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy over the victims of the earthquake that struck Ishikawa

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Kuwait suspends private pharmacies' licenses

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: Minister of Health Dr Ahmed Al-Awadi on Tuesday issued ministerial deci-

sions aimed at regulating work and controlling the provision of medicines and psychotropic substances.

These decisions include the suspension of the issuance of licenses to private pharmacies until the com-

pletion of a study evaluating the status of these pharmacies as part of ongoing efforts to reform and regulate the conditions of private pharmacies.

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Opinion

What's wrong with having a popular prime minister?

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

WE are in a new era today, and its first characteristic is the reform that His Highness the Amir emphasized throughout his career in public affairs, and was best interpreted on the ground when he assumed the position of Head of the National Guard. At that time, his policy was - "I came for reform. To me, there is no difference between the son of a guard or the son of a minister. Anyone who does not like it should stay in his house, as that would be better for him."

This policy was the key to a vision for a modern state, if the rest of the institutions followed suit at the time. However, what happened during the past two decades made the reform process closer to imagination.

At that time, while a new approach was established based on equality between citizens in the most important security facility, the game of interests was intensifying in the rest of the state's facilities.

That is why we have reached the current situation, which threatens the state as a result of the absence of a serious ministerial vision for preserving national gains.

The country was also plagued with parliamentarians who, to say the least, were not up to national responsibility.

In this regard, there is no dispute that the Constitution granted His Highness the Amir the full right to choose a Crown Prince whom he deemed appropriate to assist him.

We have seen young, educated crown princes being chosen in neighboring countries who are able to deal with the needs of the times according to a new vision, in accordance with the Holy Quran verse: "... Indeed, Allah has chosen him above you and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature..."

Also, His Highness may choose whomever he wishes to assume the presidency of the Council of Ministers, as long as the Constitution stipulates that "the Amir shall assume his powers through his ministers."

There is no doubt that these people must have a high degree of trust, knowledge, and understanding of the requirements of the institution they supervise. Any mistake in this, either intentional or inadvertent, represents a betrayal of trust.

In these two matters, the Prime Minister and his team must have a high level of awareness about the extent of the responsibility they assume.

They should not submit to the game of circumventing the Constitution that parliamentarians play. They should not misunderstand democracy as having the right to do what they want and say what they want.

Rather, it is an ongoing reform integration process between the two powers - the legislative and the executive.

Unfortunately, over the past three decades, Kuwait lived through a struggle over interests between members of the two authorities, while the interest of the nation was absent.

This is either as a result of the lack of success in choosing a Prime Minister, or because of the pressure exerted by parliamentarians and influential people to appoint incompetent ministers, except the "blessed" ones.

Therefore, if there is no person from the ruling family who is up to the task of assuming the position of Prime Minister, why not seek the help of a person among the people for a temporary period?

It works to dismantle the causes of the ongoing conflict between the two authorities, and to confront the political stubbornness between them that the country is experiencing. This will be a new experience that can be judged after a while.

In this regard, the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem said, "My people and I are a group. Our religion is one and the goal is to serve the people."

Hence, everyone is at the service of Kuwait, especially after citizens noticed the weakness of successive councils of ministers.

Appointment-related deals that put the wrong person in a position of sensitive responsibility, the National Assembly's approval of strict laws that do not suit Kuwaiti culture, and others have caused many negative impacts, both economically and socially. Almighty Allah said in the decisive revelation, "Indeed, the best among whom you hire is the strong and trustworthy one."

This is what Kuwait needs today. These are not the feelings of one citizen, but rather a general vision that we convey in these lines.

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Kuwait gov't returns amended Penal Trials Law to parliament



Employees commence work at the Ministries Complex on the first official day of 2024. — See Page 2

'Income' quizzed

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: The government has returned the bill on amending Procedures and Penal Trials Law Number 17/1960 to the National Assembly according to Decree Number 228/2023.

The bill that was ratified on Oct 12, 2023 stipulates reducing the required period for the rehabilitation of convicts in order to restore their social, career and political rights to be the same as the prison term or 10 years maximum.

According to the bill, the convict is considered rehabilitated upon completion of the similar period that he spent in jail, if he is granted amnesty or after five years if the punishment is nullified because of seniority provided he does not commit another crime. In case the punishment is a fine, the convict is considered rehabilitated upon payment of the fine.

On the other hand, the government justified its decision to reject the bill; stressing the proposed period for a convict to be rehabilitated is not in line with the relevant legislation, which stipulates the latter can go back to society if he fulfills the pledge of good conduct and proves he is rehabilitated by completing the specified period as a righteous citizen. The government highlighted the right of the society to make sure that the convict is rehabilitated before allowing him to return to society, which stressing the need to complete the rehabilitation period similar to the penalty period. It argued that the periods specified in the bill are not enough to protect the right of the society and to prove that the convict has recovered from the influence of the crime he committed. It pointed out that in some cases, the imprisonment period is too short and does not match the gravity of the crime committed due to various factors like the opinion of the judge. In such a case, the rehabilitation period is not enough to protect the society and guarantee that the social interests are secured, the government elaborated.

The government said the bill does not consider equality among the convicts as it stipulates similar period of rehabilitation for convicts who committed different crimes, some of which are more serious than others yet the perpetrators must complete the same rehabilitation period. It argued that specifying the rehabilitation period as half of the penalty term or by obtaining amnesty with a maximum rehabilitation period of five years is unjust as it does not make any difference between someone convicted of a crime and one who is convicted of misdemeanor.

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Economists sound alarm

Populist laws could push Kuwait towards 'fiscal impasse': experts

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: Experts and economists are sounding the alarm about the repercussions of succumbing to economically irrational populist demands and parliamentary pressures, warning of the potential catastrophic financial consequences that could push Kuwait into a fiscal impasse, jeopardizing its economic stability and sovereign credit rating, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The ongoing chaos of parliamentary demands, characterized by a lack of economic rationale and a failure to assess their financial impact, has raised concerns. It appears as if there is a plan to deplete the "generations" reserve, exacerbated by the government's struggles to pass laws promoting financial sustainability and its inability to make tangible progress in financial and economic reforms.

Experts emphasize the state's limited capacity to meet ill-considered parliamentary demands with high costs. They stress that all financial and economic indicators point towards a looming financial crisis for Kuwait.

Without real, executable reform programs backed by a strong will to implement them, the situation is expected to worsen. Adding to the gravity of the financial predicament is the fact that approximately 80% of the country's budget is allocated to salaries and subsidies, leaving meager spending on capital projects that often face numerous obstacles.

Experts warned that the deficit for the upcoming fiscal year 2024-2025 may soar to 6.1 billion di-

Palestinian spokesman decries 'genocide'; S. Africa files case

RAMALLAH, Jan 2, (Agencies): The Palestinians are the victims of a "genocide" committed against them by Israeli forces, the spokesman for the Palestinian President Nabil Abu Rudeineh said on Tuesday, citing death of some 22,000 Palestinians amid the violence.

The "barbaric" acts committed by Israeli forces aim to "forcibly displace" thousands of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, the spokesman said in a statement, emphasizing that the situation is at the precipice of "explosion."

He went on to underline the commitment of the Palestinians towards a "two-state solution" to the Middle East conflict, based on 1967 border lines with East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestinian state.

nars, assuming optimistic oil prices around \$80 per barrel. If oil prices drop to \$70 per barrel, the deficit could reach 9 billion dinars. At this point, salaries, wages, and subsidies would constitute about 113% of general budget revenues, exceeding current expenses.

This calculation does not even account for the cost of absorbing 20,000 to 25,000 citizens entering the labor market.

Israel will defend itself before the United Nation's top court against charges that it has engaged in genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, officials said Tuesday, a rare engagement with the world body, which Israel often denounces as biased against it.

South Africa launched the case Friday at the International Court of Justice at The Hague, Netherlands, saying the magnitude of death, destruction and humanitarian crisis in Gaza from the Israeli military campaign against Hamas meets the threshold of genocide under international law. South Africa asked the court to order Israel to halt its attacks in Gaza.

Israel dismisses international cases against it as unfair and biased and rarely cooperates.

It is emphasized that any cash spending in the form of increases or allocations, though appearing as grants on the surface, will not contribute any added value to the economy.

Instead, such funds are expected to evaporate in the market, with tangible repercussions, as seen in the example of the housing loan increase reflecting in rising land prices in Kuwait.

Newswatch

IRBIL: The General Counter-Terrorism Directorate in Iraq's Kurdistan Region announced Tuesday shooting down a booby-trapped drone that was targeting The Global Coalition against Daesh's airbase in Irbil airport, North of Iraq.

The booby-trapped drone was shot down by coalition's forces before reaching its intended target, said the Directorate, an offshoot of Kurdistan's Region Security Council, in a statement without elaborating on damage. (KUNA)

ANKARA: Turkish authorities have detained 33 people suspected of spying for Israel, Turkey's state-run news agency reported on Tuesday.

Authorities were still searching for 13 others believed to have links to Israel's Mossad security service, the Anadolu Agency reported. (AP)



A Japan Airlines plane is on fire on the runway of Haneda Airport on Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024 in Tokyo, Japan. The passenger plane collided with a Japanese coast guard aircraft and burst into flames on the runway of Tokyo's Haneda Airport on Tuesday, officials said. (AP) — See Page 7

Prayer Timings

Fajr	05:18	Asr	14:43
Sunrise ..	06:42	Maghrib ..	17:02
Zohr	11:53	Isha	18:21

Local

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

Local rise in prices linked to global trends

'Limited industrial base, import of gadgets gives rise to inflation'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: A government report stated that the whole world is expected to continue witnessing commodity price hikes, especially the prices of food products; which will put more pressure on countries that depend on food imports, those whose climate or conflicts could disrupt local food production, and those suffering from macroeconomic fragility, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The report stressed the need to take urgent decisions to reduce the impact of global food price increases on the local market, especially since the cost on the national economy will be high. It indicated that food prices will continue to rise in the next five years -- higher than the prices prior to the Corona crisis. The same applies to the prices of agricultural products and grains.

Data from the Central Statistics Bureau showed that the consumer price index (inflation) in Kuwait rose by 3.79 percent in November, explaining that the annual rise in inflation rate stems from the increase in the prices of all the main groups affecting the movement of index numbers, particularly foodstuffs, education, clothing and apparel.

Merchandise imports

Government data indicate that merchandise imports to Kuwait are concentrated in appliances, machinery, equipment and industrial inputs, and that the country imports approximately 80 percent of its food needs. They indicate that the steady growth in merchandise imports over the last 10 years is reflected in the nature of the Kuwaiti economy, represented by the high per capita income and the limited industrial base.

Datas show that cooperative societies are the most important outlet for selling food commodities and account for about 80 to 85 percent of the total food commodities in the local market. Therefore, any measure to neutralize price increases in the local market must be centered on cooperative societies.

In addition, the delivery by ship method is the most important channel for transporting merchandise imports to Kuwait, exceeding about 85 percent of total imports; while delivery by land does not exceed 10 percent. This reflects the extent of the exposure of Kuwaiti imports to delivery by ship method, as well as the associated disruption in the ports and shortage of containers.

Global inflation

A number of financial institutions said that global inflation may return to normal for the first time next year -- after about four years. Goldman Sachs indicated that core inflation, which excludes food and energy in economies that witnessed an inflation boom in the post-Corona stage, specifically the United States, Europe and many emerging markets, reached 2.2 percent during

the three months ending last November. It expects that average inflation among these countries would be at or close to the inflation targets of most major central banks by the end of 2024.

Oxford Economics expects inflation to reach 1.3 percent in the last quarter of next year in the Euro zone and 2.7 percent in the United Kingdom, while it will decline to 2.2 percent in the United States.

10 recommendations to curb inflation

The report indicated that to reduce the impact of global price increases on local prices, it is necessary to adopt the following recommendations:

1. Most countries in the world have witnessed record rises in commodity prices, especially food commodity prices, which threaten to spread more severely to the local economy. Therefore, this requires us to adopt a clear and strict mechanism to implement the relevant treatments.

2. The necessity of adopting the proposed treatment mechanism and linking it to a specific time period for implementation, as the concerned authorities must implement their own treatment mechanism and not fail to implement it as required.

3. These treatments in pricing policy must be accompanied by consensus in the direction of fiscal and monetary policies, ensuring that price inflation in the country is addressed, and in a way that does not conflict with the growth of economic activities.

4. Reconsidering the Cooperatives Law to allow more oversight of the practices of boards of directors in cooperative societies.

5. Price control to avoid large differences in commodity prices.

6. Activating the role of the competition agency in cooperative societies to ensure that their monopolistic practices are consistent when displaying goods in them, to ensure that there are sufficient substitutes for the commodity, which encourages competition and the consumer's choice of the commodity with the appropriate price for his needs.

7. Studying the increase in the spaces allowed for displaying goods in cooperative societies to facilitate the process of supplying goods.

8. Creating job opportunities for nationals and reducing current expenses (salaries) in the State budget.

9. Intensifying media and awareness campaigns to rationalize food consumption.

10. Taking the necessary measures to ensure the application of governance, digitization of services, reducing the costs of cooperative societies and the costs borne by suppliers, preventing the collection of any amounts by cooperative societies from suppliers, and ensuring that profits are directed towards providing goods in cooperative prices.

AIU announces appointment of Mr Richard Johnson as new CEO

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: American International University (AIU) proudly announces the appointment of Mr. Richard Johnson as its new Chief Executive Officer. This pivotal move marks the beginning of a promising chapter in AIU's prominent history, with the institution set to reach new pinnacles of success under Mr. Johnson's visionary leadership.

As we welcome Mr. Johnson into his new role, we also take this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to Ms. Jacqueline Shaw for her invaluable leadership as the founding CEO. Ms. Shaw has been a cornerstone of AIU's growth and her contributions have been pivotal in shaping our institution's success. Moving forward, Ms. Shaw will continue to play a critical role in the development of AIU as she shifts her focus to private projects. We are delighted to announce that she will remain a central figure in our journey as the Chair of the Board of Directors. Her ongoing guidance and vision will undoubtedly continue to inspire and steer AIU towards greater heights.

In his tenure of two and a half years with AIU, Mr. Johnson has showcased an unparalleled dedication, rising through the ranks and taking on progressively senior roles. His journey at AIU stands as a testament to his exceptional leadership capabilities, acute business insight, and corporate finesse. These qualities align perfectly with AIU's mission and strategic goals, making him the ideal leader to guide the institution forward.

Mr. Johnson's rich background in higher education adds another layer to his impressive profile. Prior to his association with AIU, he held significant dean positions at esteemed institutions, including Northwestern University, The University



Richard Johnson

of Illinois Urbana-Champaign College of Business, and Harry S Truman College. A dedicated scholar, Mr. Johnson boasts an impressive academic background. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from the prestigious Knox College and furthered his education with a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Illinois, Chicago.

As AIU embraces this new leadership, we are excitedly gearing up for the upcoming Spring Semester. This semester symbolizes a fresh start, and with Mr. Johnson leading the way, and the continued guidance of Ms. Shaw in her new role, we invite students, faculty, and the entire community to join us in this exciting phase of growth and transformation.

'Don't exploit salary increments'

'Shops to be shut if prices raised'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: Director of the Technical Department for Supervising Goods and Determining their Prices in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Faisal Al-Ansari confirmed that the Price Monitoring Team monitored 160 central markets and commercial stores in Shuwaikh Industrial Area, making the owners promise not to take advantage of citizens' salary increment by increasing prices, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a statement to the daily, Al-Ansari disclosed that the team focused on stores selling food, tea, coffee, dates, cardamom and other items that are in demand during the New Year. They stressed to the store owners that if the ministry's decisions are violated and prices are raised, measures will be taken against the violators who will be referred to the Commercial Prosecution.

He added: "We informed the store owners about the need to coordinate with the

ministry in the event of any price increase by the exporting body, so that they do not commit a violation which could lead to the closure of the commercial establishments. I submitted an action plan to the ministry's officials regarding surveying the markets and monitoring prices."

He stressed that the ministry is intensifying inspection tours and price monitoring operations; hence, it will not hesitate to impose the maximum penalty on anyone who exploits the salary increments granted to citizens by increasing the prices.

He advised the consumers that if they fall victims to commercial fraud or violations, they should visit the nearest center affiliated with the Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Sector or call Hotline No. 135 or send the complaint on through WhatsApp No.: 55135135 or the ministry's electronic platform.

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Mild and partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speeds of 08-30 km/h.

By Night: Rather cold to cold

Weather

and partly cloudy with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 10-32 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain.	Kuwait Airport	23	08
	Abdaly	22	08
	Jahra	22	11
	Salmiyah	20	16
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait City	23	15	10
			09

Staff turn up in huge number

67%-95% attendance; visitors few and far between

By Abdul Rahman Al-Shammari, Mohammad Ghanem, Marwa Al-Bahrawi, Jaber Al-Hamoud, Munaif Nayef, Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami, Inaas Awad and Fares Al-Abdan
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: With the end of the New Year holidays, employees of government agencies and state institutions resumed work as usual in their sectors. The attendance rate ranged between 80 and 90 percent, with the exception of the Ministry of Justice, which witnessed an attendance

rate of 67 percent, followed by the Ministry of Electricity and Water with 70 percent.

While work was organized in all sectors of ministries and government institutions, it was noticeable that the number of visitors to most government agencies was lesser than usual, as most of them expected that the majority of employees would not show up.

The Ministry of Education recorded full attendance, as schools appeared fully prepared to receive students in the tenth and eleventh grades to resume their exams. The schools in the elementary and intermediate levels started distributing certificates for students.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health recorded an attendance rate of 95 percent.

Also, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi accepted the resignation of the Director of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital Dr. Najah Al-Zenki.

The following are the details of the work activities in the state ministries on the first day after the New Year holidays:

Ministry of Education

Employees at the Ministry of Education resumed their work yesterday morning in full swing such that the attendance rate was 90 percent, and only those with medical excuses or on vacations were absent. A large number of visitors rushed to the employees' offices to complete their transactions.

Meanwhile, elementary and intermediate schools yesterday morning started announcing the results of the first semester exams. The students in the tenth and eleventh grades will be completing their remaining exams today and tomorrow. The twelfth grade students will sit for their exams from Sunday until January 18.

Ministry of Public Works

Employees at Ministry of Public Works resumed their work at the headquarters of the ministry located in the south of Sorra with average attendance of roughly 75 percent at the different technical and administrative departments including drainage plants, emergency sections at the entire governorates as well as the construction departments, major projects and road maintenance. According to sources, the employees work according to shift systems as stated by Civil Services Commission CSC which stipulates that technicians and engineers must follow up the work during vacations in addition to the hotline of the ministry which is available 24/7.

Employees of the Ministry of Public Works flocked to their shifts yesterday morning in the ministry's offices in South Surra, such that the attendance rate was about 75 percent in most administrative and technical sectors, especially in wastewater treatment and purification plants and emergency centers affiliated with the ministry in all governorates, as well as the sectors related to construction, major projects and road maintenance.

Ministry of Electricity, Water

Employees of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Energy resumed work in all sectors of the ministry such that the attendance rate was about 70 percent in most of the administrative and technical sectors and external sites affiliated with the ministry, especially electricity and water production plants, consumer affairs offices, and other departments and units affiliated with the ministry in the various governorates.

According to informed sources in the ministry, the corridors of the ministry witnessed the influx of visitors, both from outside the ministry who came to complete their transactions related to customer affairs and connecting electricity, and from within the ministry, who are employees wishing to obtain "To Whom It May Concern" certificates and other transactions.

Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health witnessed a remarkable attendance by both employees and visitors in various sectors and departments since the early hours of yesterday morning. The attendance rate of employees ranged between 80 percent to 95 percent, depending on the nature of work in these sectors.

The attendance rate in hospitals and dispensaries ranged from 90 percent to 95 percent. The attendance rates in the administrative and technical sectors reached about 90 percent.

It is worth highlighting that the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi accepted the resignation of the Director of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital Dr. Najah Al-Zanki, applicable from January 2, 2024, after 33 years of service.

Ministry of Justice

The corridors of the Ministry of Justice and the courts witnessed an attendance rate of about 67 percent by employees. Most of the employees were keen to come to work early in the morning and register their attendance using their fingerprint, with the exception of official absences.

However, it was noticeable that there was a weak turnout of visitors. A tour of the Justice Palace revealed regular work flow since the early morning hours.

One of the administrators in the Ministry of Justice said the rate of attendance after the New Year's holiday in the ministry's sectors, both within the ministries complex and in its affiliated departments in the courts, was normal. The attendance rate was 67 percent and the rate of absenteeism was 33 percent. The majority of absences are legal, either through periodic leaves or medical leaves.

Ministry of Interior

From the early morning hours of January 2, civilian employees of the Ministry of Interior began work at their workplaces such that the rate of attendance was normal, except for those absent on sick or regular leave in accordance with the regulations.

Despite the digital transformation in the ministry's service sectors, employees did not miss their work in the sectors of residency affairs, citizen service centers, nationality, passports, and the General Traffic Department. All departments worked at full capacity, but the low number of visitors was evident.

Ministry of Social Affairs

The employees of the Ministry of Social Affairs resumed work yesterday morning such that the attendance rate reached 88 percent. The absences among employees were due to normal leaves and sick leave. However, the less number of visitors was noticeable.

Ministry of Awqaf

The employees of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs resumed work as usual, such that the ministry recorded an attendance rate of about 90 percent. However, the rate of visitors to the ministry's sectors was weak to moderate.

Kuwait Municipality

The Director General of Kuwait Municipality Saud Al-Dabbous affirmed the commitment of the employees in all departments of Kuwait Municipality to the official working hours on the first working day of 2024.

He indicated that all employees began their work smoothly and received visitors, adding that the transactions and services available on the municipality's website were completed smoothly.

In a press statement, Al-Dabbous affirmed that the employees who were absent had committed to submitting their leave requests an appropriate period before the holiday and obtained approvals for their leaves in accordance with the controls and laws in force in the Department of Personnel Affairs in the municipality and approved by the Civil Service Commission.

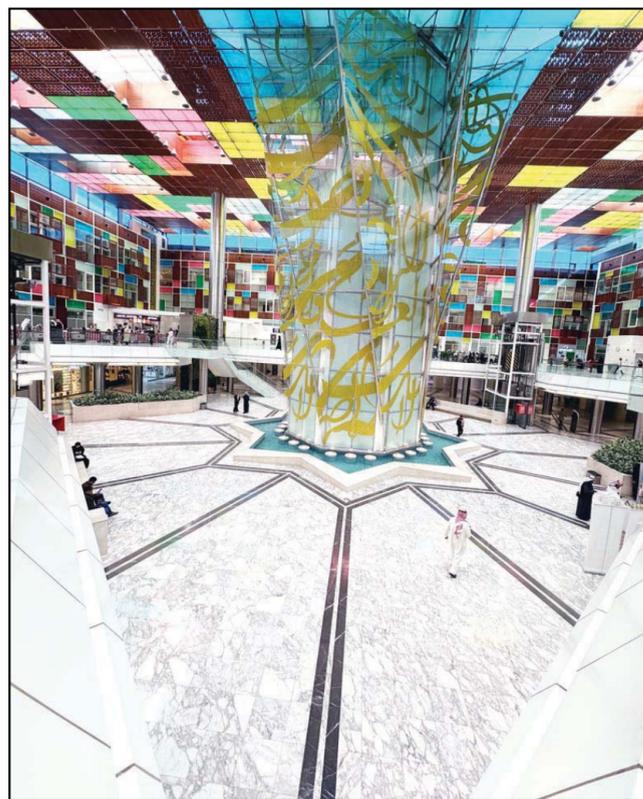


Photo by Mahmoud Jadeed

The new-look Ministries Complex opened for business, Jan 2, 2024.

Kuwait network to get power generated

PPPA, MEW seek local, foreign bidding in two energy projects

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: The Public-Private Partnership Authority (PPPA), in collaboration with the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, has extended invitations to both international and local companies and alliances to participate in a bidding process. This initiative pertains to the design, financing, construction, operation, maintenance, and transformation of the Al-Dabdaba Electrical Power Generation Project and Al-Shaqya Renewable Energy Project - Phase Three, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The project entails the establishment of a renewable energy production station with a net capacity of 1,100 megawatts, with the intention of exporting the generated energy to Kuwait's electricity network. This will be facilitated through a power purchase agreement with the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy for a duration of 30 years.

The PPP revealed that a consortium of companies, spearheaded by Ernst & Young as the main financial advisor, DLA Piper as the legal advisor, and DNV Company serving as the technical and environmental advisor, has been appointed to provide support to the Public-Private Partnership Projects Authority and the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy in preparing the project documents and procedures for its launch.

By offering this project, the Public-Private Partnership Authority and the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy aim to achieve the following goals:

- Attracting private sector expertise in the field of renewable energy.
- Reducing the financial and operational burden on the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy.
- Reducing local dependence on fuel.
- Reducing the total costs incurred by Kuwait for providing energy generation.
- Increasing the capacity of renewable energy within the country's energy mix.

The Authority stated that the invitation is to all local and international companies, including companies listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange, indicating a number of criteria that must be met, all or some of them, which are:

- A statement of the applicant's financial capacity, as the company or alliance leader must have a net asset value of \$150 million (or its equivalent) as a minimum for at least one of the last three financial years.
- A statement of the applicant's financial capacity, as the coalition members must possess an asset value of \$50 million (or its equivalent) as a minimum for at least one of the last three financial years.
- A statement of technical and financial experience in the field of project development, which includes financing projects,

Mubarakiya raids

120 kg food destroyed

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: Inspection supervisor in the Capital Governorate Department at the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) Abdullah Al-Siddiqi said the inspection teams assigned in the governorate visited the Mubarakiya Market recently during which they uncovered several violations in the meat, fish, and vegetable sections, reports Al-Anba daily.

The tour resulted in the issuance of 14 pledge reports and a report on the destruction of 124 kilos of food items not fit for human consumption.

In a special statement to the daily, Al-Siddiqi confirmed: "We conducted an inspection tour at the Mubarakiya Market, during which we uncovered a violation at the fish section and this led to the disposal of a large quantity of food products found to be unfit for human consumption."

He said the inspection teams also checked the restaurants in the market to ensure strict compliance with the food safety and storage regulations, indicating the teams recorded several comments on the food storage locations of some restaurants. He explained that the main goal of the inspection tour is to guarantee that the food products sold to consumers are safe and healthy.

He added the inspection tour covered Shuwaikh Industrial Area as well, where three commercial establishments were shut down for operating without a license.

managing or implementing contracting contracts, and managing or implementing operation and maintenance contracts, through previous work in projects.

■ The experience must cover at least operation and maintenance for a period of one year months after the date of commencement of operation. In the event of forming an alliance, the alliance leader must pledge to retain, throughout the period stipulated in the request for proposals, no less than 30% of the shares in the alliance. The alliance leader must also have explicit administrative control over the alliance, and be authorized by the other alliance members. To represent the coalition and act on their behalf.

■ Alliance members, excluding the Alliance Leader, must own at least 10% of the shares in the Alliance for the period stipulated in the RFP.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Strategic recalibration of foreign policy imperative'

"KUWAIT finds itself immersed in precarious zones of tension, contributing to a pervasive state of instability that is poised to intensify further amid escalating regional conflicts," columnist **Dr. Saleh Al-Saidi**, wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"The ongoing Zionist war on the Gaza Strip looms large, promising consequential aftermaths that demand attention. Simultaneously, internal challenges, particularly those surrounding the borders with Iraq (Khor Abdullah Agreement) and Iran (Durra Field), necessitate the expertise of a prime minister and diplomatic leader.

"A strategic recalibration of the country's foreign policy is imperative, aiming to reinstate Kuwait's influential role in regional and international diplomatic endeavors. This is crucial to proactively address conflicts and challenges, thereby averting the region from enduring higher human and economic costs.

"Concerns about regarding Kuwait's diminishing presence in the global diplomatic landscape, with conversations circulating in both Kuwaiti streets and offices.

"The decline is lamented in contrast to past years when Kuwait, under the astute leadership of the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, spearheaded numerous initiatives to resolve conflicts, earning the nation a distinguished position in global affairs.

"The need for a political figure with diplomatic acumen and international relations becomes evident, with Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem emerging as a prominent candidate due to his prior role as Minister of Foreign Affairs (2001-2011) and his notable diplomatic achievements during tumultuous times.

"Amidst the current turbulent regional events, the imperative is underscored for a leader well-versed in handling complex external issues, coupled with a keen awareness of the economic challenges burdening the country.

"Kuwait's heavy reliance on a singular income source and the overwhelming expenditure on salaries and subsidies demand a leader capable of formulating a comprehensive economic policy. Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem, equipped with a doctorate in economics from Harvard University, brings a wealth of experience as a former Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Foreign Investment Company and as a Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of Planning.

"Sheikh Mohammad's unwavering commitment to public funds integrity over a decade in government sets him apart. Unlike some previous administrations, he avoided political concessions that could compromise national interests. Kuwaitis view his tenure favorably, especially in contrast to unsettling revelations in the amnesty and citizenship files, as highlighted by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad.

"Sheikh Mohammad's academic qualifications, national standing, and

unblemished reputation make him a compelling choice for the Kuwaiti populace, echoing sentiments reminiscent of their attachment to figures such as Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, whose commitment to accountability and clean governance earned him trust and preference among the citizens."

Also:

"The recent historic address by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, delivered during the swearing-in session before the National Assembly, has instilled a sense of relief and wisdom in the hearts of the people," columnist **Dr. Muhammad Khaled Al-Hujajifa** wrote for **Al-Anba** daily.

"The speech's foresight and meticulous examination of issues have cast a calming influence across all segments of Kuwaiti society, allowing individuals to attend to their daily concerns with a profound sense of comfort.

"This impactful speech, laden with insights, has the potential to be dissected in numerous articles, given its succinct encapsulation of reality and its presentation of solutions aligned with the hopes and aspirations of the people.

"Personally, I attentively listened to the elevated speech, revisiting it multiple times. Each word resonated with me, as I comprehend the challenges not only faced by Kuwait but also by the global community. These challenges predominantly manifest in the political and economic realms, where stability becomes a prerequisite for the well-being of other facets such as education, security, and health. Societal stability in these arenas empowers the capacity to construct and reconstruct various aspects of life.

"Addressing the performance of legislative and executive authorities, the Royal Speech emphasized His Highness's commitment to advancing the nation's interests without causing harm to its citizens. It underscored the importance of steering the Kuwaiti ship along its intended course.

"A poignant warning against corruption featured prominently in the speech, with His Highness calling upon every Kuwaiti to be vigilant in eradicating this destructive menace. When our Amir addresses such matters, a collective readiness to implement the prescribed measures becomes imperative.

"National unity and Kuwait's enhanced regional standing were highlighted, emphasizing the need for cohesion among the citizens. The speech, in essence, becomes a directive to listen and obey, presenting a roadmap, pinpointing areas of peril, and offering solutions that, if followed, promise to elevate Kuwait to the esteemed position it aspires to attain.

"In conclusion, we extend our prayers to guide the steps of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, beseeching for Divine Guidance, strength, and success in carrying the entrusted responsibilities."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Dr. Saleh Al-Saidi

Cleaners selling students drugs

Don't employ illegals, Mol warns schools

Other Voices

The Palestinian conundrum

By Ahmad alsarraf

Delving into the historical trajectory of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, spanning the early 20th century up to the point preceding the acknowledgment of Israel's right to exist by the Palestine Liberation Organization, is a complex and contentious matter. Assigning blame solely to Palestinian leaders is an inadequate approach, as it neither facilitates the restitution of rightful rights nor is it justifiable to continue holding all Palestinians accountable for the missteps of others after more than a century.

Since the Oslo Accords and subsequent events, it has become evident that a significant portion of the Palestinian population has grown disillusioned with the "armed struggle," often characterized by guerrilla operations. Instead, they opted for the path of peace, aspiring to secure their right to a free and independent state. However, the refusal from the Israeli side, coupled with corresponding Palestinian rejections, has fostered a conviction among Israelis over time.

This conviction holds that the recognition of a Palestinian state signals the potential demise of their own state. Consequently, some believe that the only viable solution lies in settling those seeking a homeland on the territory of another Arab state or states.

The Israeli mindset, particularly after the events of October 7, has solidified around the notion that "Palestinian peace" poses a threat to their existence, prompting a belief that the Palestinian presence must be terminated through various means.

In an interview with Natalie Bennett, a former Prime Minister of Israel and a formidable candidate to succeed Netanyahu, expressed to the BBC that the act of ceding land to the Palestinians, as Israel has done on multiple occasions for the establishment of their state, has proven perilous and should not be repeated.

Additionally, former Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben Ami emphasized in a lecture that events have demonstrated how Israel's withdrawal from any previ-

ously controlled territory transforms it into a launching pad for missile attacks. This reality unfolded in southern Lebanon and Gaza, leading to a steadfast determination within Israel to prevent any recurrence of such instances.

I never agreed with Hamas, nor was I impressed for a moment with the words of its leaders, nor with their positions and policies, and I mentioned this in more than one article and interview. I firmly believe that handing over the fate of Palestine to the movement, as an ideological organization imbued with Brotherhood thought, and with ties to radical regimes in the region, will not end the conflict, nor will it achieve the desired peace, because they lack the minimum understanding of the logic of matters, and there will only be more innocent victims.

I also believe that the Palestinian issue was and must remain a Palestinian issue, and without the precious Palestinian blood it is not possible to achieve any victory, or reach any peace, and relying, as I have written several times, on the help of Arab countries in liberating their homeland is closer to an illusion, as most of them are too incapable of that. Palestine frees herself from the restrictions that bind her. Seeking help from Arab countries automatically means transferring all their differences to the issue and its people.

I also believe that the Palestinian blood that will be spilled will not build a free, united and independent state in the presence of a Palestinian-Palestinian conflict or disagreement.

The international sympathy and support that has been poured so far, and the overwhelming support that Palestinian rights have received, have shaken even the foundations of the US Congress, and the overwhelming and unprecedented support for Palestinian rights will be lost, especially among Western educated elites, especially among the Jews of Israel and abroad, in the first clash between Hamas and the PLO.

And all the factors of this clash are present on the ground and in the hearts. Therefore, the path to the future state begins with unifying the Palestinian decision. The world is unable or unwilling to impose it on Israel, without American approval and support and a unified Palestinian will.

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: Information deemed confidential from the Ministry of Interior has brought to light a concerning situation involving cleaners engaged in the illicit drug trade targeting students. An individual has been apprehended, with evidence of materials intended for distribution and sale, leading to the subsequent arrest of four additional individuals, according to Al-Rai local Arabic daily.

According to sources privy to the matter, the Ministry of Interior successfully dismantled a network comprising individuals of Asian nationalities who were actively involved in the sale of narcotics within schools, specifically targeting student groups and other young individuals.

Details provided by the sources revealed that the Ministry of Interior received confidential information indicating the involvement of individuals working as cleaners in an (Asian) school. These individuals were allegedly engaged in the sale of suspected narcotic substances, with a focus on students both within and outside the school premises.

Taking swift action upon receiving this information, the relevant authorities at the Ministry of Interior monitored the criminal network. Following careful observation and verification of the provided data, security personnel executed a controlled ambush, resulting in the initial arrest of a network member found in possession of narcotic substances prepared for distribution and sale.

Subsequently, four other individuals from three different Asian nationalities were also apprehended, and appropriate legal measures were taken against them.

In response to the incident, the Ministry of Interior notified the Ministry of Education, urging them to emphasize the importance of not employing individuals with residency violations or those wanted by security forces in educational institutions. They further urged educational facilities to conduct inspections to ensure the safety of students.

Top officer gets 14 yrs jail for drug trafficking

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: The Criminal Court has issued a verdict sentencing an officer from the Ministry of Interior to 14 years in prison for "trafficking in psychotropic substances."

The officer was acquitted of the charge of bringing hashish by sea. Additionally, two Kuwaitis were sentenced to 15 years and 4 years in prison respectively, while an Iranian received a life sentence, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to the daily, the lieutenant colonel was arrested in collaboration with the Coast Guard who had exploited his position and workplace to facilitate the smuggling of large quantities of narcotic substances into the country.

The arrested suspects, including the lieutenant colonel who worked at the Shuwaikh Port Office, were involved in an attempt to smuggle approximately 800 kilograms of hashish into the country.

Acting on received information about the smuggling attempt, a dedicated squad was deployed to the site, resulting in the arrest of the officer.

23 held on NY's eve: In the final week of the year 2023, the deployment of rescue policemen in various security operations led to the arrest of 23 people found in abnormal conditions and in possession of alcohol and drugs, reports Al-Anba daily.

Additionally, law enforcement officers succeeded in arresting 143 wanted persons. Throughout these rescue campaigns, 11,154 citations were issued, and crucial support was extended to firefighters in managing and extinguishing 13 fires.

Simultaneously, officers from the General Traffic Department took action against traffic-related offenses. They intercepted 11 minors found driving without a license and referred 50 violators to police custody for further investigation, and issued a total of 19,540 violations.

Furthermore, the department responded to and managed 1,170 traffic accidents during the same period, with 255 of these incidents classified as serious.

Major events in Kuwait in 2023

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2, (KUNA): Kuwait witnessed many local events in 2023 that covered plenty of domains. Following are major events throughout the year:

Oil and energy:
Jan 17: Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) launched Al-Zour refinery's laboratories, one of the largest in the Middle East.

Jan 19: Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company k.s.c.c. (KUFPEC), was awarded the new exploration license PL 1174S by the Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy.

Jan 19: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) signed a contract with Worley Consulting to conduct a detailed feasibility study for the exploitation of renewable energy in its fields.

Jan 22: The joint Kuwaiti-Saudi Standing Committee held a meeting in the Al-Khafji Joint Operations Area, Saudi Arabia, to review reports on onshore oil operations in the divided Zone and the adjacent submerged divided Zone.

Jan 25: Kuwaiti candidate Professor of International Law at Kuwait University, Dr. Nasser Al-Rushaid, was granted position of legal consultant at the organization of petroleum exporting countries (OPEC).

Jan 30: Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) exported the first shipment of modified diesel fuel from the Ahmadi Refinery to the European market onboard the (POLAR ACE) tanker.

Jan 31: Japanese government data showed that Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan in December jumped 19.4 percent from a year earlier to 8.11 million barrels, or 262,000 barrels per day (bpd), marking the first increase in four months.

Feb 9: Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) announced that its subsidiary, KUFPEC Norway AS, has divested its 10 percent equity in the Yme field.

Feb 28: Japanese government data showed that Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan in January surged 26.8 percent from a year earlier to 8.45 million barrels, or 272,000 barrels per day (bpd), for the second straight monthly expansion.

March 1: The newly appointed Secretary General of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), Jamal Al-loughani, assumed office.

March 7: Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) inaugurated second phase of Al-Zour refinery.

March 8: An explosion erupted at a main electrical transformer in Salmiya during periodical maintenance, resulting in a fire that left four people injured.

March 14: Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) announced the first shipment of 44,000 tons of solid sulfur from Al-Zour Refinery in cooperation with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC).

March 19: Crude oil futures recorded losses of 12 percent in trading the previous week as a result of banking turmoil from the bankruptcy of the US Silicon Valley Bank.

March 20: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) declared state of emergency as an oil leakage occurred in a location west of Kuwait.

March 22: Mina Abdullah and Ahmadi Refineries received advanced international ranking of risk engineering quality.

March 30: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation announced new propane prices, sold at USD 555 and the one metric ton of butane to be sold at USD 545.

March 31: Japanese government data showed that Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan in February hit a six-month high of 8.08 million barrels, or 288,000 barrels per day (bpd).

April 4: Kuwait Oil Company selected Sami Al-Sawwagh, director of offshore operations, as head of the regional organization for preservation of seas.

May 11: Ministry of Electricity and Water announced said it connected electricity to the first house in Mutlaa city.

May 13: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and Shell signed a MoU on exchange of expertise in oil and gas industries.

June 3: Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) said its aircraft fueling company, Q8Aviation, won a contract to supply planes with fuel at Melbourne airport in Australia.

June 5: Kuwait Petrochemicals Industries company announced KD 108.7 million (USD 353.1 million) profits for fiscal year 2002-23.

June 12: Kuwait Oil Tankers Company

(KOTC) launched construction operations of two solar-power stations.

June 13: KOC announced operation of a new gas pipeline from North Kuwait to Ahmad Port.

July 2: Kuwait integrated petroleum industries company (KIPIC) announced that a fire had erupted in Al-Zour's refinery unit 12, but no injuries were logged.

July 5: Ministry of electricity, water and renewable energy announced operating four new main transfer units to power some 3,265 land plots in Al-Mutlaa.

July 10: Deputy Prime Minister and minister of oil and state minister for economic and investment affairs Dr. Saad Al-Barak stated that Al-Durra field rightfully belongs to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

July 24: Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) announced exporting first low-Sulphur gasoline shipment, consistent with global international environmental standards and European norms.

July 25: KNPC announced record breaking revenues in the fiscal year ending in March 2023 with KD 1.016 billion (approx. USD 3.32 billion)

July 30: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and subsidiaries announced KD 2.6 billion (USD approx. 8.4 billion) net profits for the fiscal year ending March 2023.

July 31: Ministry of Oil launched Pioneers in Oil Sector book, the first book in artificial intelligence technology aiming to create new content.

Aug 6: Kuwait Oil Tankers Company announced attaining three ISO certificates in quality control, environment management, and security management as well as ISO for risk management.

Aug 20: Heavy Engineering Industries and Shipbuilding (SHIP) inked agreement with KPC worth KD 91.7 million (approx. USD 279.6 million) to provide maintenance services to Mina Abdullah refinery for a duration of 63 months.

Sept 7: Al-Khafji joint operations announced successfully resuming production in the divided zone between Kuwait and Saudi.

Sept 8: Several areas experienced electricity outage due to damage in Hawally A substation and a limited fire in Abdullah Al-Salem station, but teams of the ministry of electricity, water and renewable energy managed to restore power gradually to affected areas.

Sept 11: KPC announced that percentage of achievement in Duqm refinery in Oman reached 98.9 percent last July.

Sept 14: Minister of electricity water and renewable energy Dr. Jassem Al-Ostad opened a customer service center and in Sabah Al-Ahmad residential area.

Sept 16: KUFPEC announced that KUFPEC Norway AS submitted plan for development of operation of Eirin gas field, in cooperation with Equinor, to the Norwegian oil and energy ministry.

Sept 18: KPC and OAPEC inked a memorandum of understanding to boost research cooperation and facilitate the exchange of technical expertise.

Sept 20: KUFPEC signed partnership agreement with Shell's PG international limited in which KUFPEC Egypt acquires 40 percent operational share of Nile Delta three sector.

Sept 22: Kuwait National Petroleum Corporation (KNPC) announced that a fire had erupted in Al-Ahmedi refinery but firefighting teams managed to contain it with no injuries or effect on production and exporting operations.

Sept 25: KIPIC announced completing 60 million safe working hours with no incidents, losses, injuries or damages to health, environments, property or halt in operations in Al-Zour refinery.

Oct 3: KIPIC announced the start of supplying the Western Doha station with low-sulfur fuel.

Oct 10: Kuwait Gulf Oil Company announced drilling of first well in joint Wafra operations.

Oct 19: KNPC's Mina Abdullah Refinery, obtained an average score of 100.5 in the latest field survey for risk engineering conducted by the American company (Marsh).

Oct 31: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation announced new prices for propane which will be sold for USD 610, and butane USD 620 dollars per metric ton.

To be continued

'Benefits of breastfeeding aplenty'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: Dr. Marzouq Al-Azmi, Pediatrics and Pediatric Emergency Consultant at Kuwait Hospital, has recommended that mothers breastfeed their babies for a minimum of the first 6 months, emphasizing its numerous benefits, reports Al-Anba daily.

International studies have validated that breastfeeding enhances children's immunity while reducing the likelihood of allergies and eczema symptoms.

In a statement to the daily, he highlighted that if breastfeeding extends beyond 6 months, it is advisable to introduce iron-rich foods or provide iron supplements to prevent iron deficiency in the child.

Underlining the significance of adhering to the vaccination schedule, Dr. Al-Azmi emphasized that vaccinations are pivotal in preventing diseases, especially during the winter season.

His Highness wished success in continuing progress and development in Kuwait

Amir receives congratulations from OIC chief on assuming office

MoSA studying various options in favor of co-ops, shareholders

Ministry eyes cutting percentage of profits to governorates

By Fares Al-Abadan
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: According to informed sources at the Ministry of Social Affairs, the ministry is studying a number of options and decisions that are aimed

at enhancing the interest of the shareholders of cooperative societies, and is examining all possible proposals for developing cooperative work.

The sources explained that the ministry is considering increasing the percentage of profits of cooperative societies so that the maximum

amount distributed to shareholders is 15 percent instead of the currently specified maximum of 12 percent. This percentage will be for cooperative societies whose budgets allow the distribution of these profits.

The ministry is also considering reducing the percentage of the profits distributed to the governorates from five percent to only one percent because of its conviction that the current rate of five percent is a little high, especially since there are large numbers of cooperative societies in some governorates, which means that those governorates receive large sums of money from these cooperative societies but do not have huge expenses.

The new rate of one percent allocated to the governorates seems like a logical percentage and falls within the scope of community support and services that cooperative societies provide to shareholders and residents of the region. However, it is assumed that there will be a greater development of the role of the governorates in residential areas, the development of the services they provide, and the launch of plans.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday a cable from the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation Hussein Brahim Taha, congratulating His Highness the Amir on assuming office.

In the cable, OIC Secretary General wished His Highness the Amir success in continuing progress and development in Kuwait and good health.

His Highness the Amir sent the OIC Secretary General a cable thanking him for his wishes, and wishing him good health.

HH PM sends greetings

HH Amir congratulates Viola Amherd over Swiss Presidential Elections win

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Tuesday a cable of congratulations to Viola Amherd following her election as President of the Swiss Confederation.

His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere congratulations on the occasions of her election, wishing her good health, and further development and growth for relations

between the two friendly countries.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to Viola Amherd following her election as President of the Swiss Confederation.

His Highness the Prime Minister expressed his sincere congratulations on the occasions of her election.

39 complaints handled

National Diwan for Human Rights' complaints committee completes 146 tasks in 2023, claims Dr Assiri

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2, (KUNA): The National Diwan for Human Rights' standing committee for complaints issued its statistical review for 2023 as stipulated in the provisions of Law 67/2015 that established the Diwan.

Chairman of the committee Dr. Abdulredha Assiri said that the committee had completed 146 tasks in 2023, of them were 39 complaints.



Dr Assiri

The committee, said added in a statement, also presented two researches about human rights issues, two seminar, and 19 field visits to correctional and social care centers.

The committee also visited 12 police stations and released 13 reports of its work and collaborated with three organizations of the civil society, as well as participating in six events and media interviews, nine meetings and conferences abroad, and 26 meetings inside Kuwait.

Dr. Assiri added that through the committees work they were able to initiate different practical activities for prisoners in cooperation with a number of the civil society organizations and charities including the Human Construction Society for Social Development.

The committee also raised public awareness about human rights issues by collaborating with the Center for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies, and handled the complaints positively, said Assiri.

The committee has different educational and discussion programs to be announced in due time, directed to social care homes' residents including the elderly, children with unknown parents, juveniles, as well as law enforcement officials through collaborating with official institutions in the country, Dr. Assiri added.

The committee is also keen on interacting with regional and international organizations by participating in various formal meetings and training programs to gain experience and learn about new policies and programs regarding humanitarian issues.

First of its kind in banking sector

KFH wraps up Arabic language initiative with 'Sama Academy'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: In collaboration with Sama Academy, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has wrapped up its Arabic Language initiative, the first of its kind in the banking sector, geared towards teaching employees' kids the Arabic language by Kuwaiti talents using the Scandinavian method.

The program witnessed over 100 participants engaging in two major activities: "Writing Story Contest" and "Reading Marathon".

The initiative reflects KFH's interest in its employees and their families as well as its keenness to launch valuable initiatives for the community.

Undoubtedly, such programs motivate children to engage in beneficial and enjoyable activities during their free time. Through these two activities, children gained proficiency in reading, speaking, writing, and listening skills, all rooted in studies covering various aspects of life. This is part of KFH's recognition of the pivotal role families play in enhancing employees' performance in the workplace.

Hind, the daughter of Saleh Mohammed Al-Fahad and a participant in the contest, won the writing story competition with her piece titled "The Gift". Her story holds profound lessons on saving, generosity, and entrepreneurship, and will be distributed to all employees.

Meanwhile, KFH teamed up with the Kuwaiti artist Lulwa Al Mathkour to illustrate the narrative of the story in its effort to foster youth talents.

The linguistic proficiency of participating children increased by 20%, which is a significant improvement considering their age and the timeframe. Modern



Sara AlSalem

studies have shown that language proficiency is a measure of language strength, and the more a child reads, the better their command of language becomes.

KFH Senior Manager Employee Communication and Engagement, Sara AlSalem, said that the significant participation witnessed in this initiative reflects the high awareness of parents of the importance of the Arabic language, investing in kids and innovative sciences in contributing to creating a generation able to lead the present and build for the future.

She added that the initiative reflects the passion for the Arabic language and providing the necessary sources for establishing a cohort of active writers from Kuwait.

AlSalem pointed out that KFH is constantly organizing activities and initiatives for employees and their families throughout the year. This is part of KFH's view that taking care of employees' well-being promotes employee engagement in the workplace.

Project comprises 7 neighborhoods

PAHW issues report regarding South Sabah Al-Ahmad infrastructure tender

By Abdunnasser Al Aslami
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) has released a report regarding the infrastructure tender in the South Sabah Al-Ahmed residential area.

The project comprises seven neighborhoods with a total of 13,812 plots, scheduled to be completed within 900 days.

PAHW highlighted that the infrastructure work includes the application of three layers of asphalt on the highways and streets within the neighborhoods,

implementation of rainwater and sewage networks, irrigation networks, and drinking water networks, and the implementation of civil services related to traffic, telephone and electricity, along with the installation of light poles.

Meanwhile, housing activist Salman Al-Mutairi said the latest statistics on the South Saad Al-Abdullah residential project until January 1 reveals that the project consists of 23,551 plots, divided into 11,897 plots that have already been distributed and 11,654 plots that are yet to be distributed.

He stressed that the requests for the distributed plots date back to the year 2008.

Big Zubaidi costs KD16, small KD12 per kilo

By Inass Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: The Fish Market recorded remarkable price hikes at the beginning of the year, especially the local fish, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The daily's staff, who toured the Fish Market on the first day of the year, noticed the scarcity of fish and the merchants attributed this to the lack of rain; which made the species that flood seasonally decrease in noticeable proportions, in addition to the suspension of shrimp fishing until August.

Fish trader Nasser Bawi told the daily that rainfall is beneficial for both the sea and land; hence, the lack of rain led to the scarcity of fish in general, which in turn leads to an increase in prices. He disclosed that the fish available locally include Zubaidi, which now costs KD16 per kilogram for the large size and KD12 for the small ones. He added the price of a kilogram of 'bulul' reached KD8, KD3 for 'shaman' and KD4.5 for squid.

Earlier, the Kuwaiti Fishermen Un-



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

A kilo of large local Zubaidi reached 16 Kuwaiti dinars.

ion confirmed the lack of fish due to the forced cessation of many fishing trips after the subsidized diesel ran out. At the time, the union asked the Subsidies Committee: "Who is responsible for paralyzing the fishing sector? We call on the concerned officials to clarify the issue, as it seems that no one is keen on supporting the sector and solving its problems."

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Municipality has granted approval to the Ministry of Finance's request to allocate a

site measuring 750 square meters in Salmiya, which is currently occupied by the Fish Market.

The Department of Legal Affairs at Kuwait Municipality explained that the Ministry of Finance is the only public institution authorized to utilize state properties in accordance with the applicable regulations. The municipality's role is limited to providing technical opinions on the allocation of public properties for a specific purpose.

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Room Promotion

Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
NOW	NOW
BHD 53.361/-net	BHD 119.173/-net
Weekends (Thursday & Friday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
NOW	NOW
BHD 61.000/-net	BHD 136.198/-net

Promo period from 1st - 31st January 2024

Terms & conditions apply*

Tanker projects mark initiation of 4th phase of fleet modernization initiative

KOTC formally submits plans for design, construction of gas tankers

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: An authoritative source in the oil sector said the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company has formally presented plans for the design and construction of three gas tankers and a colossal crude oil tanker to prominent international shipyards and shipbuilding companies, reports Al-Anba daily.

The source outlined that the designs for the three gas tankers were submitted to major entities such as Korean Hyundai Heavy Industries Limited, Chinese Shanghai Wagaoqiao Ship Company, Japanese Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Company, and Japanese Kawasaki Heavy Industries Company.

Regarding the massive crude oil tanker, proposals for its design, construction, and delivery were extended to Korean Hyundai Heavy Industry Co., Ltd., Chinese Shanghai Wagaoqiao Ship Company, and Bohai Heavy Industry and Shipbuilding Company.

These tanker projects mark the initiation of the fourth phase of the fleet modernization initiative, which encompasses the development of a substantial crude oil tanker and four petroleum product tankers, in addition to the construction of three liquefied gas tankers.

The source noted that the decision to embark on the fourth phase was prompted by a downturn in construction activities at international shipyards.

Despite the challenges, the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company remains committed to sustaining a marine fleet of optimal size and quality, aligning with long-term strategic coverage and marketing requirements. This commitment is further tailored to meet targeted production rates within Kuwait while strategically operating and leasing surplus tankers to address global market needs on commercial grounds.

Review of employees' files at 'Social Affairs'

KPC updates work regulations of top purchasing panel

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) has updated the work regulations of the Supreme Purchasing Committee, whereby fees will be imposed on the tenders presented by the committee for the internal oil sector, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources revealed the fees for purchasing tender documents will be determined during the invitation announcement for each tender at the time of its issuance. The bidder must deposit the amount specified in the tender notification into KPC's account and submit the receipt with the bid. All bids without a payment receipt will be excluded. In the event that the bid is submitted electronically, a copy of the payment receipt must be attached to the bid electronically.

Sources said KPC charges a fee of KD250 for requests to add the company's name to the lists of limited tenders, indicating the receipt for the deposit in KPC's account must be attached to the application submitted for this purpose to the Secretariat of the Supreme Purchasing Committee.

Sources added a fee of KD250 will

be collected for grievance against the decisions of the Supreme Purchase Committee submitted to the Board of Directors of KPC, indicating this fee is refunded to the complainant if his grievance is accepted in form and substance; while the grievance requests submitted to the Supreme Purchase Committee are free.

Meanwhile, the committee formed by acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Abdulaziz Al-Mutairi to collect, update and review the certificates of the ministry's employees since 2000 started working last week to scrutinize the employees' files and review the certificates and then submit a detailed report with documented data to the Civil Service Commission (CSC), reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources from the ministry.

Sources added the final review of the certificates is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Higher Education; clarifying that the role of the committee is to collect data, take notes, if any, and attach them to the report that will be submitted to the CSC which, in turn, submits it to the Ministry of Higher Education.

Kuwait Amir

Continued from Page 1

Prefecture in Japan, resulting in the death and injury of dozens of people and the destruction of property and public facilities.

Japanese authorities announced the number of victims reached 55 deaths from the massive 7.6-magnitude earthquake that hit Ishikawa Prefecture in central Japan Monday. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, sent on Tuesday a cable of condolences to Emperor Naruhito of Japan following the Ishikawa earthquake.

His Highness the Prime Minister expressed his deepest condolences and sympathy to the victims of the earthquake that struck Ishikawa Prefecture in Japan.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has expressed the State of Kuwait's sympathy with the Japanese government and people over the earthquake that hit central Japan and caused damage in several regions.

The ministry affirmed in a statement that Kuwaiti citizens in Japan "were safe" in the wake of the quake. However, it noted that the Japanese authorities warned of possible tsunamis.

It appealed to the Kuwaiti nationals in Japan to be as much cautious as possible, abide by guidelines declared by the local authorities and communicate with the State of Kuwait Embassy in Tokyo if the need arises. (The embassy is reachable on the emergency phone number: +819088849650, and the regular number: +80334550361).

— See Also Page 7

Kuwait suspends

Continued from Page 1

The decision stipulates the formation of a committee of specialists, headed by the assistant undersecretary for Pharmaceutical and Food Control Affairs. The committee's functions include assessment of the current situation of private pharmacies and the observations received in line with the laws and decisions regulating the practice of the pharmacy profession and distribution of medicines, as well as the submission of a detailed report including the results and recommendations within three months from the date of the first meeting of the committee.

In the context of following up reform steps and tightening control over the provision of psychotropic medications, Al-Awadhi issued another decision on the establishment of a central electronic system under the supervision of the ministry; through which the regularity of recording prescriptions for psychotropic substances and preparations dispensed from private pharmacies is followed up and monitored.

The decision obligates all private pharmacies licensed to trade in psychotropic substance preparations and regulate their circulation to register in the electronic system in accordance with the conditions and procedures specified in the decision.

Kuwait gov't

Continued from Page 1

The bill does not consider if the period that the convict spent in jail is enough to be rehabilitated or not, hence, it does not guarantee the consequences of restoring the convict's political rights within a short period. The government said the laws that the concerned parliamentary committee used as basis in preparing its report on the bill were not taken into consideration, pointing out that these laws stipulate the need to fulfill the rehabilitation requirements such as completing the specified period with full commitment to maintaining good behavior and not committing any crime. The focus was on specifying the rehabilitation period without paying attention to the type of crime committed. The bill does not consider the case of those convicted of more than one crime in the same lawsuit, the government added.

For the abovementioned reasons, the government concluded that the bill failed to serve its purpose; so it was returned to the Assembly for the necessary action.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Disabled Affairs Committee MP Saud Al-Asfour disclosed that the committee received a copy of government decree number 229/2023 on returning the ratified bill on amending Disabled Affairs Law number 8/2010 to the Assembly.

Al-Asfour clarified that this is one of the rights granted to the head of the State and the government as per Article 65 of the Constitution. He added the Assembly has the right to take measures as per Article 66 of the Constitution.

Article 65: (1) The Amir has the right to initiate, sanction, and promulgate laws. Promulgation of laws takes place within 30 days from the date of their submission by the National Assembly to the Amir. This period is reduced to seven days in case of urgency. Such urgency is decided upon by a majority vote of the members constituting the National Assembly.

(2) Official holidays are not counted in computing the promulgation.

(3) If the period of promulgation expires without the Head of State demanding reconsideration, the bill is considered as having been sanctioned and is promulgated.

Article 66: Reference of a bill for reconsideration is by a decree stating the grounds therefore. If the National Assembly confirms the bill by a two-thirds majority vote of its members, the Amir sanctions and promulgates the bill within 30 days from its submission to him. If the bill does not receive the said majority, it may not be reconsidered during the same session. If the National Assembly, in another session, considers the same bill by a majority vote of its members, the Amir sanctions and promulgates the bill as law within 30 days from its submission to him.

Al-Asfour confirmed that the decree specified the reasons for rejecting the bill as follows:

- High cost,
- Failure to provide a clear definition of the person assigned to take care of the disabled,
- The beneficiaries include non-Kuwaitis,
- Article 25 of the bill regulates the right of the first degree relative assigned to take care of the disabled to pass the task to the next of kin,
- The last clause of Article 25 states that the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs (PADA) has the

'Hunting trips'

Kuwaitis in Iraq urged to abide by local rules

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2, (KUNA): Kuwaitis visiting Iraq for hunting purposes are advised to comply with local laws and regulations, the Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday, a week after a national was found dead while on a hunting trip to Kuwait's larger neighbor.

Iraqi visa regulations stipulate that all tourists visiting the country are required to cite the purpose of their visits, said a ministry statement, urging those who are planning hunting trips to Iraq to follow the rules outlined by local authorities in order to ensure their own safety.

In case of an emergency, Kuwaitis in Iraq are urged to dial the embassy hotline at 009647802604123 for immediate help, added the statement.

right to assign two individuals to take care of an individual with severe and permanent disability without defining the phrase 'permanent disability'.

- Article 32 of the bill allows obtaining housing loan from Kuwait Credit Bank (KCB) regardless of the number of disabled family members.

- The privileges stipulated in articles 40 and 41 of the bill such as reducing the working hours for the disabled employees and those assigned to take care of them are already included in the current law.

- Reducing the required service period for a disabled employee or the caregiver to be referred for retirement.

- The option to provide the equipment to the beneficiary or grant him cash instead of the equipment.

He added the committee will soon discuss all these points in order to expedite the completion of its report about the bill.

In another development, MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri forwarded queries to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd about the official authorized to sign contracts for supplying and maintaining medical equipment for Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital; procedures followed to settle the contracts; role of the director of the Medical Services Department and manager of Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital in the settlement of the contracts; copies of contracts signed from 2014 to 2023; if the purchased equipment were handed over to the concerned departments; copies of the regular maintenance schedule and complaints of doctors about equipment malfunctions; if annual inventory is carried out to determine which equipment are functioning well and those with frequent malfunctions since 2018 till date; number of surgeries done in the hospital and if they include plastic surgeries.

MP Meteb Al-Anzi asked Minister of Finance Fahd Al-Jarallah about the number of small business owners who are suffering from financial problems and are included in the small and medium enterprises portfolio of Kuwait Industrial Bank, measures that the bank took to solve these problems, number of small business owners who were referred to the court for non-payment of loans, and reasons why the bank did not postpone the collection of loan payments similar to what the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises has done.

MP Bader Nashmi Al-Anzi forwarded queries to Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of State for National Assembly and Cabinet Affairs Essa Al-Kandari; Minister of Finance Fahd Al-Jarallah; Minister of Commerce and Industry and State Minister for Youth Affairs Muhammad Al-Aiban; Minister of Electricity and Water and acting Minister of Public Works Jassem Al-Ostad; Minister of Justice and State Minister for Housing Affairs Faleh Al-Raqaba; and State Minister for Municipal and Communication Affairs Fahd Al-Shaulah. He wants to know the strategy of each ministry to diversify sources of income in order to guarantee the sustainability of national income, if each ministry has conducted a study on diversification of income sources, copies of such studies if the answer is 'yes', if these ministries established enterprises for the purpose of diversifying sources of national income, and list of enterprises if the answer is 'yes'.

Kuwait's society gets 2nd place in Arab Anti-Smoking Award contest

'Award reflects Kuwait's interest in combating smoking'

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Society for Combatting Smoking and Cancer Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh announced that the society won second place in the Arab Anti-Smoking Award (Makeen) competition as the best non-governmental association in the field of smoking awareness at the level of the Arab world.

In a press statement issued yesterday, Dr. Al-Saleh expressed his pride in this achievement, explaining that the award came as an initiative of the Arab Union for Human Resources Development, which includes a large group of success partners such as the Council of Arab Economic Unity, the International Society for Preventive Cardiology, and the League of Arab Doctors to Combat Cancer.

The initiative aims to mobilize Arab efforts to create motivating Arab societies to combat the scourge of smoking, as well as to encourage creativity and innovation in confronting it.

Dr. Al-Saleh said, "The award reflects Kuwait's interest in combating smoking, as well as its ongoing and tireless work at the governmental and civil levels to combat this scourge."

"The society submitted its report for the competition, with details about its work since its establishment under the umbrella of the Ministry of Social Affairs in Kuwait, which has supported the society's activities since 1980. The report also included details about the programs, conferences, campaigns and initiatives held by the society to raise awareness on the scourge of smoking, as well as the achievements of the smoking cessation clinic."

He revealed that more than 350 people visited the clinic within two years.

Dr. Al-Saleh stressed that the honoring ceremony was held in Ismailia Governorate in the Arab Republic of Egypt in the presence of those in charge of this award and the winning participants based on the criteria prepared by the award's arbitration committee.

Inspection tour held by Farwaniya Municipality

By Inass Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: On the first day after the New Year holiday, oversight teams from the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department in Farwaniya Municipality carried out an inspection tour yesterday morning in West Abdullah Al-Mubarak to detect violations related to construction work, and ensure the extent of the commitment of business owners and contractors to implementing projects and carrying out all construction, restoration, and excavation works. It was also aimed to ensure they have the necessary licenses and implement the regulations and decisions issued by the Kuwait Municipality regarding construction work and the maintenance of public facilities related to engineering control of buildings within the scope of the governorate's work.

Director of the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department in the Farwaniya Municipality Saeed Al-Azmi explained that three citations on building violations, and four warnings against the violation of the regulations and decisions issued by the municipality regarding construction work were issued. Through the department, 90 percent of the building permits were issued, and 85 percent of the electricity connections were established.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of the tour, Al-Azmi said the department's tours will continue periodically.

He explained that the detected violations vary between violations of gardens, buildings, contractors, and rubble. Each department determines its specialized team which is based on the nature of the tour and the inspection campaign. Most of the violations in modern areas are related to closing the passages next to the transformers, and the presence of communication towers.



KUNA photo
The Kuwaiti Ambassador to Jordan lays the foundation stone for the Educational Evacuation Academy with a Kuwaiti donation.

Major events in Kuwait during 2023

July 11: National Assembly approved during ordinary session a number of recommendations submitted by a number of MPs on the desecration of holy Quran in Sweden aiming to curb the recurrence of such incidents.

July 11: National Assembly speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun announced that the assembly approved resignation of audit bureau chief Faisal Al-Shayaa.

July 13: National Assembly condemned in a statement desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden.

July 13: National Assembly approved in special session residential cities law and referred it to government, as well as amending pensioners health insurance law to include housewives.

July 18: National Assembly approved a number of recommendations submitted by MPs on government program for the 17th legislative term.

July 18: The National Assembly elected a number of MPs by acclamation for the parliamentary caucus including Dr. Hamad Al-Mutar, Mohammad Al-Mahan, Hamad Al-Obaid, Dawood Maarafi, Shuaib Shaaban and Fahad bin Jame.

July 26: National Assembly approved amending constitutional court law.

Aug 1: National Assembly approved law on National Assembly elections (Elections General Commission), and rejected public prosecution request lift immunity of MP Abdulwahab Al-Essa.

Aug 2: National Assembly approved a number of draft bills on government budgets, ministries, administrations, and so on as well as recommendations relating to paychecks.

Sept 17: Executive-Legislative coordination committee held a meeting at the National Assembly to coordinate legislative priorities expected to be discussed during the term's second session.

Sept 23: Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun stated that verdict of the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court, rescinding the agreement on maritime navigation in Khor Abdullah with Kuwait, runs counter to the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council and is inconsistent with previously signed agreements.

Oct 16: Parliament Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun during emergency meeting of assemblies' heads of the OIC member states urged pan-Islamic cooperation to halt Gaza "genocide".

Oct 18: Kuwait National Assembly delegation participating at the 35th emergency conference of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU) categorically rejected the coercive eviction of Palestinians in northern Gaza.

Oct 25: Kuwait proposal on Palestine received 607 votes in IPU.

Nov 1: Parliament signed off several recommendations on Zionist violations in Gaza Strip.

Nov 7: Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun spoke at the 17th GCC heads of parliaments meeting underlining the importance of adhering to international legitimacy resolutions on Palestinian issue to "embarrass the Zionist entity."

Nov 14: Parliament approved amendments on retirement pension and ended discussion of interpellation against Commerce and Industry Minister with no further suggestions.

Nov 21: The legislative parliamentary committee organized a forum on a modified electoral system.

Nov 28: National Assembly approved amendments on industry law and chamber of commerce law, as well as nomina-

tion of Essam Al-Roumi as Audi Bureau Chief and ended Prime Minister interpellation with no further suggestions.

Nov 29: Parliament amended law for people with disabilities as well as voted on laws regulating real estate agencies and combating monopoly on vacant lands.

Dec 18: National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun called for a special public session to be held for Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to be sworn in as the country's Amir.

Kuwait Foreign Policy:

Jan 9: Kuwait Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and State Minister for Nazaha Enhancement Abdulaziz Al-Majed inked haj agreement with Saudi haj and Umrah Minister Tawfeeq Al-Rabeah allowing for 8,000 Kuwaiti pilgrims.

Jan 15: Kuwait's Foreign Ministry welcomed United Arab Emirates decision to task climate change special envoy Sultan Al-Jaber with presiding over COP28 hosted by UAE Nov 30 to Dec 12 this current year.

Jan 15: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Sabah met with Jordanian counterpart Ayman Al-Safadi and the two discussed boosting bilateral ties and regional and international developments.

Jan 26: The Foreign Ministry vehemently condemned Israeli occupation horrific attack on city of Jenin.

Jan 30: Kuwaiti Ambassador Jassem Al-Budaiwi was appointed Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary General.

Feb 4: Top Diplomat Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Sabah hosted Saudi counterpart Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud on occasion of official visit to the country.

Feb 6: Regional center for the cooperation initiative between NATO and Istanbul in Kuwait held first meeting of its kind with experts and corporations to examine climate change issues.

Feb 12: Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Sabah headed Kuwait's delegation to Al-Quds 2023 conference, called for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and held at Arab League's quarter in Cairo.

Feb 13: Kuwait Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah relayed a speech at the world government summit held in Dubai.

Feb 14: State minister for social affairs and societal development and state minister for women and childhood affairs, Mai Al-Baghl, paid a visit to a number of quake-hit sites in southern Turkiye.

Feb 16: Ambassador Mohammad Al-Mohammad presented his credentials to President of Ireland Michael Higgins, becoming Kuwait's first Ambassador to the country.

Feb 19: The Kuwaiti-Iraqi joint technical committee held its fifth meeting in Iraqi capital of Baghdad, and heading the Kuwaiti side was deputy foreign minister Mansour Al-Otaibi.

Feb 19: Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Sabah headed the state's delegation to participate in 59th session of Munich's security conference.

Feb 27: Kuwaiti delegation to donors' conference for humanitarian situation in Yemen, taking place at the UN headquarters in Geneva, is headed by top diplomat Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Sabah.

To be continued

CAPT okays direct contract for services at Govt Cybersecurity Operations Center

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: The Central Agency for Public Tenders has approved the direct contract for the implementation, development and support services at the Government Cybersecurity Operations Center, reports Al-Anba daily.

The Central Agency for Information Technology had earlier requested a direct contract with Impulse International Communications Company -- the authorized provider of services as per the agreement signed between the Government of Kuwait and Google Cloud valued at

\$169.34 million for a period of five years.

The decree on establishing the National Center for Cybersecurity stated that it will build, develop and organize an effective cybersecurity system at the national level to protect the State from cyberspace threats and confront them in a way that ensures the sustainability of work, maintains national cybersecurity and protects vital interests in cyberspace, while supervising the building of specialized national capabilities in the field of cybersecurity.

World News Roundup

Year-ender

Major world events

This is Part 2 of AP's year-ender. — Editor
□ □ □

July 20: UK imposed new sanctions on individuals and companies linked to Russia's Military group (Wagner) and its activities in Mali, the Central African Republic and Sudan.

July 24: EU allocated EUR 10 million (USD 11 million) in humanitarian aid to Chad, to help the country cope with the needs of the large number of people fleeing from the conflict in neighboring Sudan.

July 26: Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen announced he would resign and hand position to his son.

July 28: EU imposed sanctions on nine individuals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda over serious human rights violations and abuses in Congo.

July 29: France suspended all development aid and budget support to Niger over military coup on President Bazoum.

July 29: US offered USD 345 million worth of military aid to Taiwan in a step that may aggravate jitters between the US and China.

Aug 1: US launches a new Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy, aimed at international cooperation to help improve global health and counter infectious diseases.

Aug 1: Heads of the Rome-based UN food and agriculture agencies called for greater investments in South Sudan to avoid a catastrophic food crisis.

Aug 1: Italy arranged a special evacuation flight to repatriate nationals from Niger's Capital Niamey, as its embassy continues its political efforts with the military council.

Aug 1: France announced preparations to evacuate its citizens from Niger, after the military coup.

Aug 2: The first group of British nationals have been evacuated from Niger, after the military coup.

Aug 2: Italy ruled out any military intervention in Niger and stressed that the Italian forces and the West military units are at the airport.

Aug 2: China refused US accusation of "forced labor" in China's autonomous region Xinjiang.

Aug 2: France accused Russia of threatening global food security, after Moscow attacked a key Ukrainian port across the Danube River, which inflicted damage on grain storage facilities.

Aug 2: Italy evacuated a group of Italians and others from Niger.

Aug 3: EU banned exporting aviation and space technology to Belarus as part of a new package of sanctions that also included 38 citizens and three companies.

Aug 3: Paris completed evacuating French nationals and foreign nationals from Niger.

Aug 3: US decreased the number of non-emergency personnel and family members from Niger.

Aug 7: A group of 50 immigrants arrived to the UK and were transferred to the Bibby Stockholm barge in Portland Port.

Aug 9: UK and Turkiye agreed on a new partnership to enhance cooperation on tackling the illegal movement of migrants, and keep both countries safer.

Aug 10: ECOWAS bloc in West Africa has ordered the deployment of a standby force to restore constitutional order in Niger, after the military coup.

Aug 10: Washington confirmed that the five Americans detained in Iran had been released and placed under house arrest.

Aug 11: UK transfer immigrants from the Bibby Stockholm barge due to water contamination.

Aug 11: World Food Program (WFP) successfully delivered first food assistance to West Darfur four months after Sudan conflict started.

Aug 13: Greek coast guard rescued 48 immigrants from rudderless boat near Lesbos Island.

Aug 15: US hosted tripartite summit at camp David, alongside Japan and South Korea.

Aug 16: The new US ambassador to Niger will travel to the capital Niamey to perform her duties but does not plan to provide her credentials to the leaders of the coup that toppled President Bazoum.

Aug 16: ECOWAS Defense Ministers held an emergency meeting in the Ghanaian capital Accra to discuss military intervention aimed at ending the Niger coup.

Aug 17: US Treasury Dept. designated two Syria-based armed militias and three members of the groups' leadership structures, in connection with serious human rights abuses in Afrin northern Syria.

Aug 18: Russia barred 54 British citizens from entering the country, in response to the UK's sanctions against its citizens and enterprises.

Aug 18: Russia has banned entry to several Moldovan officials following Moldova's "unfriendly" decision to expel 22 Russian diplomats.

Aug 18: US, Japan, S. Korea agreed in Camp David to "inaugurate a new era of trilateral partnership."

Aug 19: Mali and Burkina Faso dispatched warplanes to Niger in response to a potential armed intervention by ECOWAS.

Aug 21: US State Department has approved the potential sale and related equipment to Poland in a deal valued at up to USD 12 billion.

Aug 21: ECOWAS rejected a proposal by Niger's military junta to hold elections within three years.

Aug 24: Singapore and Qatar signed five memoranda of understanding (MOU) to cooperate in areas of social development and family, education, water-related research, enterprise digitalization and innovation, and commercial partnerships.

Aug 24: The BRICS announced that six countries, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, Argentina, Iran and Ethiopia will join the bloc as full members in January next year.

Aug 26: India and EU agreed to deepen commercial and economic partnership during the Third India-EU High Level Dialogue on Trade and Investment held in New Delhi.

Aug 28: India and Bangladesh agreed to boost defense ties following the fifth Annual Defense Dialogue held in Dhaka.

Aug 30: Malaysia rejected a new Chinese map that claims waters off Malaysia's coast in the South China Sea.

Aug 30: US urged citizens in the Caribbean country Haiti to leave "as soon as possible" citing security and infrastructure challenges, as escalating violence has left thousands displaced and sent homicides soaring.

Aug 31: France summoned Iran's chargé d'affaires at the Embassy of Iran, on the grounds of Iran closing the French Institute for Research in Iran (IFRI), despite France's full compliance with Iran's unilateral decision to close the institute in January 2023.

Sept 1: South Korea and Japan expanded sanctions against North Korea, following Pyongyang's attempted missile launch.

Sept 7: UNESCO granted temporary enhanced protection to twenty cultural sites in Ukraine.

Sept 7: Britain announced it would rejoin the EU's Horizon science research programme, ending a two-year post-Brexit standoff with the EU over science funding.

Continued on Page 7



Fire rises after a Russian attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024. Inset: A Ukrainian police officer inspects a rocket part near a residential building damaged by a Russian missile strike in Kharkiv, Ukraine. (AP)

Russian ballistic missiles strike Ukraine's largest cities

Ukraine's two largest cities came under attack from Russian hypersonic ballistic missiles on Tuesday morning, killing at least four people and injuring almost 100, officials said, as the war approached its two-year milestone and the Kremlin's forces stepped up their winter bombardment of urban areas.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on his Telegram channel that four civilians were killed and 92 injured in the capital, Kyiv, and in northeastern Kharkiv as hypersonic Kinzhal missiles that can fly at 10 times the speed of sound slammed into city blocks.

Russia fired almost 100 missiles of various types, Zelenskyy said on X, formerly Twitter. He claimed that at least 70 missiles were shot down, almost all of them in the Kyiv area, and said Western-supplied air defense systems such as Patriots and NASAMS had saved hundreds of lives.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it had launched missile and drone strikes on military industrial facilities in and around Kyiv. Depots storing missiles and munitions supplied by Ukraine's Western allies were also targeted, it said.

"The goal of the strike has been achieved, all the

targets have been hit," it said without elaborating. It was not possible to independently verify either side's claims.

Since Sunday, Zelenskyy said, Russian forces have launched about 170 Shahed drones and "dozens of missiles of various types" in an onslaught against Ukrainian targets. Most were aimed at civilian areas, he said.

The Kh-47M2 Kinzhal is an air-launched hypersonic ballistic missile. Russian forces rarely use such expensive missiles against Ukraine due to their limited stocks. (AP)

Politics

Fate of American democracy hangs in balance

Biden, Trump poised for potential rematch

LACONIA, N.H., Jan 2, (AP): U.S. presidential elections have been rocked in recent years by economic disaster, stunning gaffes, secret video and a pandemic. But for all the tumult that defined those campaigns, the volatility surrounding this year's presidential contest has few modern parallels, posing profound challenges to the future of American democracy.

Not since the Supreme Court effectively decided the 2000 campaign in favor of Republican George W. Bush has the judiciary been so intertwined with presidential politics.

In the coming weeks, the high court is expected to weigh whether states can ban former President Donald Trump from the ballot for his role in leading the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. Meanwhile, a federal appeals court is weighing Trump's argument that he's immune from prosecution.

The maneuvers are unfolding as prosecutors from New York to Washington and Atlanta move forward with 91 indictments across four criminal cases involving everything from Trump's part in the insurrection to his efforts to overturn the 2020 election and his hush money paid to a porn actress.

Depending on how Trump's appeals play out, he could be due in court as early as March 4, the day before Super Tuesday, raising the unprecedented prospect that he could close in on the GOP nomination from a courtroom.

On the Democratic side, President Joe Biden is seeking reelection as the

parent "cyber kidnapping" scheme to extort \$80,000 from the student's family. The 17-year-old student was reported missing Friday, a day after he was last seen

at the home where he had been staying in Riverdale, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) from Salt Lake City. Riverdale police initially said that they

believed the student had been forcefully taken from his home. But on Sunday night they said he was found safe in a tent about 25 miles (40 kilometers) away from Riverdale in the Brigham City area.

He was convinced that his family in China was threatened and that he needed to isolate himself, according to police. It's unclear how he received this information or why he was isolating himself. (AP)

3 killed on New Year's Day: A woman was killed and four people were wounded in a Los Angeles County shooting shortly after the arrival of the new year, police said.

Officers from the Hawthorne Police Department responded to a shooting report around 12:30 a.m. Monday, KABC-TV reported.

The Hawthorne police said a male victim who suffered gunshot wounds was transported to a hospital from the scene near a shopping mall on Crenshaw Boulevard and Roscreans Avenue, KABC reported.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department said four other victims arrived at area hospitals by other means. An adult female victim was later pronounced dead. One of the others was listed in critical condition and three were listed as stable, KABC reported.

There were no immediate arrests in the shooting, which was being investigated by the sheriff's department.

Hawthorne is part of the Los Angeles metropolitan area in southwestern Los Angeles County. (AP)



People attempt to clear the snow off a vehicle, in Kristiansand, Norway, Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024. Finland and Sweden have recorded this winter's cold records on Tuesday as temperatures plummeted to over minus 40 degrees as a result of a cold spell prevailing in the Nordic region. (AP)



Gonnelli



Adams

America

Migrant buses ignore NYC order: A New Jersey mayor says buses of migrants bound for New York City have been stopping at the train station in his town and others in an apparent effort to evade an executive order by New York's mayor trying to regulate how and when migrants can be dropped off in the city.

Secaucus Mayor **Michael Gonnelli** said Sunday that Secaucus police and town officials had been told by Hudson County officials about the arrival of buses at the train station in Secaucus Junction beginning Saturday. He said four buses were believed to have arrived and dropped off migrants who then took trains into New York City.

Gonnelli said the executive order signed recently by Mayor **Eric Adams** of New York requires bus operators to provide at least 32 hours' advance notice of arrivals and to limit the hours of drop-off times.

"It seems quite clear the bus operators are finding a way to thwart the requirements of the executive order by dropping migrants at the train station in Secaucus and having them continue to their final destination," Gonnelli said in a statement. He suggested that the order may be "too stringent" and is resulting in "unexpected consequences."

Gonnelli called the tactic a "loophole" bus operators have found to allow migrants to reach New York City, and added that state police have reported that "this is now happening at train stations throughout the state." Gonnelli vowed to work with state and county officials and to "continue to monitor this situation closely." (AP)

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Exchange student found safe: A foreign exchange student from China who was reported missing last week in Utah has been found in what authorities said was an ap-



Duane 'Keffe D' Davis, left, with deputy special public defenders Robert Arroyo, right, and Charles Cano, rear, appears for his arraignment at the Regional Justice Center, Nov. 2, 2023, in Las Vegas. The former Los Angeles-area gang leader accused of murder in the killing of hip-hop music icon Tupac Shakur in 1996 in Las Vegas is seeking to be released to house arrest ahead of his murder trial in June 2024. A Nevada judge on Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023, set a Tuesday trial in June 2024. A Nevada judge on Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023, set a Tuesday trial in June 2024, hearing on the request by Davis. (AP)

Year-ender

Continued from Page 6

Sept 8: US government seized nearly one million barrels of Iranian crude oil allegedly bound for China, in violation of US imposed sanctions.

Sept 8: Indian and French Naval forces conducted second phase of the 21st edition of naval exercise Varuna-23 in the Arabian Sea.

Sept 9: India and several countries launched development initiatives including Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor and the Global Biofuels Alliance during G20 summit in New Delhi.

Sept 10: EU welcomed the accession of the African Union as a permanent member of the G20.

Sept 10: US and Vietnam signed an amended bilateral Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement.

Sept 11: India and Saudi Arabia signed eight agreements to cement bilateral cooperation, and more than 20 MoUs.

Sept 12: Italy activated Civil Protection Mechanism to support Libya, in the wake of devastating floods caused by Daniel hurricane that hit eastern Libya.

Sept 13: US and Bahrain signed Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement, to strengthen the strategic partnership.

Sept 13: China appointed first ambassador to Afghanistan under Taliban rule.

Sept 13: Italy's Defense Ministry announced dispatching field reconnaissance teams in preparation to send the Italian armed forces to help flood-swept areas in eastern Libya.

Sept 13: EU activated Civil Protection Mechanism to support Libya, in the aftermath of the devastating floods that left thousands of casualties.

Sept 14: US expanded sanctions related to Russia's military operation in Ukraine to include elites and entities specializing in Russia's military and technological industries and financial sector as well as non-Russian individuals and entities based outside Russia.

Sept 14: France provided emergency medical aid to Libya, in the aftermath of the devastating floods caused by Daniel hurricane.

Sept 14: US appointed former Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker to serve as the new US special representative for Ukraine's economic recovery.

Sept 14: Italian Red Cross delivered first batch of relief aid and materials to flood-swept areas in eastern Libya.

Sept 16: Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger signed the Charter Establishing the Alliance of Sahel States (Alliance of Sahel States) as a structure to coordinate their efforts in "collective and joint defense, economic cooperation and mutual assistance for the benefit of their people."

Sept 17: UK banned its retired officers from participating in training rival countries' armies without official permission.

Sept 18: Five Americans detained in Iran have been freed and landed in Doha in route to their home country as part of a prisoner swap deal between Washington and Tehran.

Sept 18: Russia announced its withdrawal from the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and claimed that the responsibility for the cooperation's collapse lies solely with the council's western members.

Sept 18: EU approved law to exchange digital information in terrorism cases with European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust).

Sept 19: India and Malaysia agreed to further deepen defense cooperation at the 12th Malaysia-India Defense Cooperation Committee meeting held in New Delhi.

Sept 19: Transitional government in Niger announced taking part in the high-level meetings of the 78th United Nations General Assembly.

Sept 19: EU Ministers Council appointed Bulgarian Iliana Ivanova as new EU Commissioner for innovation and research.

Sept 20: Leaders of the UN member states pledged, in a political declaration, to prevent a repeat of the devastating health and socioeconomic crises caused by COVID-19 and shore up the world's ability to head off another pandemic.

Sept 21: Talks on disarmament began between Azerbaijani officials and members of the Armenian community in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Sept 21: US extended protection to Afghans in its territory for 18 months.

Sept 22: European Parliament announced adding 15 extra seats in its 2024-2029 configuration, making the total to 720 MEPs.

Sept 23: Niger's military council accused UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres of "obstructing" the West African nation's full participation at the UN's annual meeting of world leader. (more)

Sept 23: UN Member States have adopted the Political Declaration of the High-Level Meeting (HLM) on the Fight Against Tuberculosis.

Sept 24: France announced withdrawing its ambassador from Niger followed by the French military contingent by the end of this year.

Sept 25: Nigerian government banned French aircrafts from entering its airspace, following France's decision to withdraw its ambassador and forces stationed there.

Sept 26: US announced that it had recognized the Pacific nations of Cook Islands and Niue, establishing diplomatic relations with both countries.

Sept 26: More than 28,000 people took refuge in Armenia from Nagorno-Karabakh, since local forces surrendered to Azerbaijan.

Sept 27: US confirmed the return of American soldier Travis King who was detained in North Korea.

Sept 27: Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced that 42,875 people, who entered Turkey irregularly, were deported between June 1 and Sept 22.

Sept 28: Armenia announced that the number of Armenians who took refuge there from the Nagorno-Karabakh region has exceeded 74,000.

Sept 28: US and Japan agreed to enhance alliance between them.

Sept 28: Eleven countries have been newly elected to serve on the 35-member IAEA Board of Governors for the 2023-2024 period, among of which is Algeria.

Oct 5: France announced military disengagement with Niger.

Oct 6: Britain announced the arrival of 200 soldiers to work in NATO-led peacekeeping mission in Kosovo.

Oct 9: EU approved new regulations that would make renewable energy account for 42.5 percent of energy consumption by 2030.

Oct 9: Sudan and Iran resumed diplomatic relations after seven years hiatus.

Oct 9: Spain opposed EC announcement of suspension of aid for the Palestinians, and OXFAM said EC decision unacceptable.

Oct 10: Belgium said it would not suspend aid for Palestinians, and EU asserts non-suspension of aid, while Turkey suspended flights to Israel.

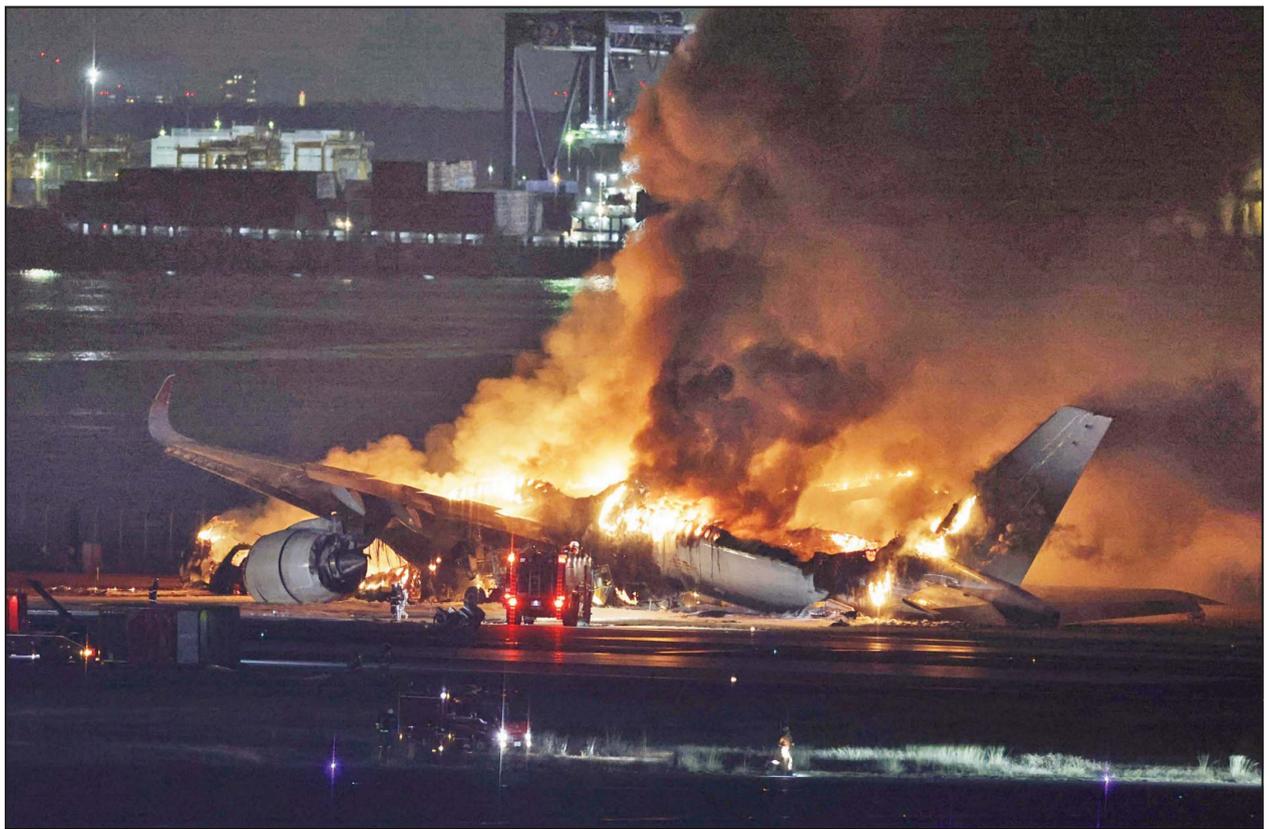
Oct 15: Rallies in Spain and Brussels in support of the Palestinians and rejection of the Israeli occupation aggression.

Oct 17: Malaysia withdrew from Frankfurt book fair because of its bias to the Israeli occupation.

Oct 18: UNSC failed to pass a draft resolution regarding Israeli occupation aggression.



A man carries his belongings past a collapsed house following an earthquake in Wajima, Ishikawa prefecture, Japan Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024. (AP)



A Japan Airlines plane is on fire on the runway of Haneda airport on Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024 in Tokyo, Japan. (AP)

Japan

Planes collide at Japan's busy Haneda airport, killing 5

Powerful earthquakes leave at least 55 dead

WAJIMA, Japan, Jan 2, (AP) — A series of powerful earthquakes that hit western Japan have left at least 55 people dead and damaged thousands of buildings, vehicles and boats. Officials warned Tuesday that more quakes could lie ahead.

Aftershocks continued to shake Ishikawa prefecture and nearby areas a day after a magnitude 7.6 temblor slammed the area.

Damage was so great that it could not immediately be assessed. Japanese media reports said tens of thousands of homes were destroyed.

Government spokesperson Yoshimasa Hayashi said 17 people were seriously injured and gave a slightly lower death toll, saying he was aware of the prefecture's tally.

Water, power and cell phone service were still down in some areas. Residents expressed sorrow about their uncertain futures.

"It's not just that it's a mess. The wall has collapsed, and you can see through to the next room. I don't think we can live here anymore," Miki Kobayashi, an Ishikawa resident, said as she swept around her house.

The house was also damaged in a 2007 quake, she said.

Although casualty numbers continued to climb gradually, the prompt public warnings, relayed on broadcasts and phones, and the quick response from the general public and officials appeared to have limited some of the damage.

Toshitaka Katada, a University of Tokyo professor specializing in disasters, said people were prepared because the area had been hit by quakes in recent years. They had evacuation plans and emergency supplies in stock.

"There is probably no people on earth other than Japanese who are so disaster-ready," he told The Associated Press.

Japan is frequently hit by earthquakes because of its location along the "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin.

Katada warned the situation remains precarious and unpredictable. The March 2011 quake and tsunami in northeastern Japan had been preceded by other quakes.

Also:

TOKYO: A passenger plane and a Japanese coast guard aircraft collided on the runway at Tokyo's Haneda Airport on Tuesday and burst into flames, with five people on the smaller plane killed, officials said.

All 379 people on Japan Airlines flight JAL-516 got out safely before the plane was engulfed in flames, Transport Minister **Tetsuo Saito** confirmed. The pilot of the coast guard plane escaped but the five crew members died, Saito said.



South Korean opposition leader Lee Jae-myung on a stretcher, is carried by rescue team in Busan, South Korea, Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024. Lee was attacked and injured by an unidentified man during a visit Tuesday to the southeastern city of Busan, emergency officials said. (AP)



Masra



Deby

Africa

Chad appoints Masra as PM: Chad's transitional government appointed a former opposition leader who recently returned from exile as its new prime minister.

Succes Masra will serve as the country's prime minister through the transition to civilian rule, Mahamat Ahmad Alhabo, Chad's new secretary-general of the presidency, said on state television.

Masra, president of The Transformers opposition party, fled Chad in October 2022. The country's military government at the time suspended his party and six others in a clampdown on protests against interim leader **Mahamat Idriss Deby**'s decision to extend his time in power by two more years.

More than 60 people were killed in the protests, which the government condemned as "an attempted coup."

An agreement between the country's minister of reconciliation and Masra's po-

litical party two months ago allowed the exiled politician and other opposition figures to return to Chad.

The passage last month of a referendum

on a new constitution was a crucial stepping stone toward scheduled elections this year, which could return the country to civilian rule. (AP)



Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, (center), arrives to appear before a labor court in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Monday, Jan. 1, 2024. A labor court in Bangladesh's capital Monday sentenced Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus to six months in jail for violating the country's labor laws. (AP)

2 arrested in Kiplagat's killing: Two men were arrested in connection with the killing of Ugandan Olympic runner Benjamin Kiplagat, who was found fatally stabbed in a car in Kenya on New Year's Eve, police said Monday.

A knife suspected of being used in the killing of the 34-year-old Kiplagat was found on one of the suspects, Moiben sub county police commander Stephen Okal said.

The motive for the killing appears to have been robbery, he said, because money and a cell phone had been taken from Kiplagat. (AP)

Man believed attacked by lion:

Police in Kenya on Monday recovered the body of a man believed to have been attacked by a lion while he was riding a motorcycle near a national reserve in the south of the country.

Police were notified by community members of an abandoned motorcycle along a road near the Marere forested area near the Shimba Hills National Reserve.

Officers saw lion footprints that led from the motorcycle to a thicket where they found the remains of an unknown dead man, according to a police report. (AP)

Prices announced

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) announced Tuesday new prices of Propane and Butane liquefied gases for month of January.

In a statement to KUNA, KPC said a metric ton of Propane would be sold by USD 620 while the Butane would be USD 630.

Propane and Butane are used in petrochemical industries as well as domestic uses like cooking and heating. Liquefied gases' prices are affected by changes in crude oil prices in international markets as well as supply and demand. (KUNA)

80 countries participate in Roundtable

The Future Minerals Forum (FMF) announced today that its Ministerial Roundtable, due to be held on 9 January, 2024, ahead of the third edition of the Forum, is set to break attendance records.

Of the eighty countries so far confirmed to attend, more than forty-five will be sending ministers to take part in discussions with stakeholders in this one meeting, in addition to 20 official international organizations, 30 non-gov-

ernmental organizations and 13 business associations.

As the highest level gathering on minerals in the world, the Roundtable represents a historic and also a turning point for the global mining and metals sector, the contribution of the Super Region extending from Africa to West and Central Asia, and the Kingdom's leadership role in this sector and region. (Globe Newswire)

Egypt's oil well commences production

Egypt announced Monday that the Gulf of Suez Petroleum Company (GUPCO) has successfully placed the first well of the North Safa oil field in the northeastern Ramadan region of the Gulf of Suez on its production map, hitting 6,000 barrels a day.

This is part of the strategy of the Egyptian Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources aiming at boosting the country's crude oil production, speeding up the development of discovered oilfields and optimally tapping available

opportunities to maximize production, the ministry said in a release.

The first phase of the oilfield's early production project aims to reach 6,000 barrels a day in mid-January after the first well was placed on the production map at a rate of 2,500 barrels a day, it added.

The second well is planned to be completed in mid-January only to take production up to the targeted rates amid expectations to increase it once more to 12,000 barrels a day by means of drilling seven new oil wells, it noted. (KUNA)

Market Movements

02-01-2024

		Change	Closing pts
UAE	- DFM	+0.77	4,091.05
PHILIPPINES	- PSEI	+1.61	6,554.04
SAUDI	- Tadawul	+0.71	12,123.08
EGYPT	- EGX 30	+2.44	25,501.94

		Change	Closing pts
JAPAN	- Nikkei	-0.22	33,464.17
PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	-0.45	64,427.26

Business

Financing of Kuwaiti imports by local banks sees jump of 31.8%

Bulk of the financing in US dollars

By Ahmad Fathi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: Financing provided to support Kuwaiti imports from local banks has exhibited substantial growth over the 11 months of 2023, demonstrating a notable increase of 31.8% compared to the same period last year. The total financing rose from 7.282 billion dinars during the 11 months of 2022 to an impressive 9.6 billion dinars in the corresponding period of 2023. This robust growth is particularly noteworthy given the challenging economic circumstances experienced globally.

However, it is essential to note that despite the impressive year-on-year increase, there was a monthly decline of 12.9%, with

the financing dropping from 697.5 million dinars at the end of October to 607.4 million dinars at the end of November 2023. This monthly fluctuation underscores the dynamic nature of financial markets and economic activities.

Breakdown by Currency:

1. US Dollars Dominance: Financing provided in US dollars constituted a significant majority, representing 85.17% of the total import financing. This category experienced a remarkable increase of 34.4% during the 11 months of 2023, reaching 8.178 billion dinars compared to 6.082 billion dinars in the same period of 2022. Despite a 14.6% monthly decline in November to 486.9 million dinars, the overall annual growth is substantial.

2. Other Currencies Contribution: Financing in other currencies occupied the second position, making up 6.3% of the total. This category witnessed a 32.3% increase during the 11 months, totaling 610.7 million dinars. In November alone, there was a 1% rise to 52.3 million dinars.

3. Euros and Other Currencies: Financing provided in euros accounted for 4.3% of the total import

financing, although it experienced a 22.1% monthly decline in November to 30.9 million dinars. On an annual basis, there was a decrease of 2.2%, reflecting the volatility in currency markets.

4. Diversification with Dirhams and Riyals: Financing in UAE dirhams represented 1.8% of the total, marking a 16.4% increase to 174.2 million dinars. Simultaneously, financing in Saudi riyals surged by 71.6%, amounting to 127.5 million dinars, contributing about 1.3% to the total financing.

5. Japanese Yen and British Pound: Financing in Japanese yen and the British pound reached 46.2 million dinars and 41.6 million dinars, respectively, showcasing diversified currency support.

Quality of Financing:

The nature of financing also offers valuable insights into the mechanisms employed for supporting imports:

1. Other Payment Orders Dominance: Financing provided through other payment orders claimed the majority, occupying 73.2% of the total financing. This category experienced a notable increase of 38.4%

during the 11 months of 2023, amounting to 7.033 billion dinars. Despite a 14.3% monthly decline in November to 426.7 million dinars, the overall growth is substantial.

2. Role of Documentary Credits: Financing through documentary credits contributed 23.5% to the total import financing, witnessing a robust growth of 30.9% during the 11 months, reaching a total of 2.26 billion dinars. However, there was a 10.9% monthly decline in November to 153.8 million dinars.

3. Collection Policies Impact: Financing through collection policies represented 3.1% of the total, with a decrease of 35.5% to 304.9 million dinars during the 11 months of 2023. However, there was a slight 0.4% monthly increase in November to 26.8 million dinars.

In conclusion, the financing landscape for Kuwaiti imports demonstrates resilience and adaptability, showcasing growth and diversification in currency and financing mechanisms. This nuanced analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the economic dynamics and financial strategies employed to support import activities in Kuwait.

Year-ender

West aids Ukraine

Sanctions against Moscow dominate world economy

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2, (KUNA): The following were the main events that took place in the world and affected the world economy.

Jan 4: The US launched the first-ever Strategy on Global Women's Economic Security.

Jan 9: Malaysia and Indonesia, signed eight memorandums of understanding covering shipping, export-import financing, green energy, the development of battery industry.

Jan 12: The US House of Representatives passed a bill aimed at restricting sales from the country's strategic oil reserves to China.

Jan 12: European Union's Foreign Subsidies Regulation (FSR) entered into force.

Jan 13: French Foreign Ministry signed two agreements with the French Development Agency to rehabilitate electricity infrastructure and increase food security in northern Ethiopia.

Jan 17: European Union announce providing EUR 3 billion (USD 3.2 billion) for Ukraine as first installment of the EUR 18 billion European Financial aid.

Jan 17: World Economic Forum launches global initiative to generate USD 3 trillion to protect the environment from negative repercussions of climate change

Jan 17: Croatia imposed fines up to a quarter million euros on economic entities that caused commodity prices to rise after the euro was officially adopted in the country.

Jan 18: The US announced providing an additional USD 125 million to support Ukraine's energy sector.

Jan 18: The US Justice Department announced the arrest of Anatoly Legkodymov founder of the Bitzlatto cryptocurrency trading platform, in Hong Kong, on charges of managing illegal financial transactions.

Jan 20: US tech giant Google announced laying off 12 thousand employees, joining other major US tech companies in reducing staff by thousands amid growing fears of economic downturn.

Jan 26: The European Commission announced the launch of the Multi-agency Donor Coordination Platform to support Ukraine's repair, recovery and reconstruction.

Jan 27: Eleven countries joined the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity, a historic initiative to drive sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Jan 27: The Republican-led House passed a bill to curb President Joe Biden's ability to tap the nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).

Feb 2: The Reserve Bank of Australia announced it will replace the portrait of Queen Elizabeth II from its Australian 5-dollar note with a new design to reflect and honor the history of its authentic culture.

Feb 6: Italy provided more than USD 195 million to Ethiopia to fund development and infrastructure projects for youth employment as part of efforts to address migration.

Feb 6: Statistics Indonesia said that its economy grew by 5.31 percent in 2022, which is the highest rate achieved in nearly a decade.

Feb 8: Istanbul stock exchange decided to shut trading in stocks for five days, for the first time in 24 years, in the wake of the destructive earthquake.

Feb 8: UK and Italy signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a Strategic Dialogue on Export and Investment Promotion, adapting it to the 'post-Brexit' context.

Feb 9: Austria's Ministry of Climate Action and Energy announced that Austria's dependence on Russian gas had increased significantly at the end of last year despite Western sanctions on Moscow.

Feb 10: The US extended the status of Britain and New Zealand as countries exempt from the U.S. foreign investment screening program, as part of new extensions by Washington to the "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance.

Feb 14: Indian civilian aviation company Air India signed an agreement with the Airbus company to purchase 250 aircraft.

Feb 14: The EU announced setting a Working Group to look at using frozen Russian assets for the

reconstruction of Ukraine.

Feb 14: The EU Economic and Financial Affairs Council decided to add Russia to its blacklist of non-cooperative jurisdictions on tax matters.

Feb 17: Austria and Germany signed an agreement to store large quantities of German gas in two storage facilities located in Austria.

Feb 17: Moscow said that Bangladesh has closed its ports to Russian ships due to Washington's pressure on Dhaka in the matter.

Feb 20: Austrian bank Raiffeisenbank announced that it had received a US inquiry on banking and financial transactions with Russia, as it most likely violates the Western sanctions on Russia.

Feb 22: Websites of several Italian ministries, security agencies, banks and companies have come under attack from pro-Russian hackers in response to Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's visit to Kyiv.

Feb 23: President Joe Biden nominated Indian American businessman Ajay Banga to lead the World Bank.

Feb 24: The US issued a new round of sanctions against Moscow that includes doubling tariffs on most Russian metal products to 70 percent as well as on the mining and banking sectors.

March 9: EU Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson urged member states to stop buying Russian LNG and not to sign any new contracts with Russia once the existing ones are expired.

March 9: The Netherlands imposed new restrictions on exports of advanced chip-making technology.

March 10: US Authorities closed Silicon Valley Bank in California.

March 11: Rating agency Fitch has lowered the outlook for its credit rating for Belgium from "stable" to "negative," referring to the increasing cost of an ageing population and automatic wage indexation, in addition to the Belgian government budget deficit.

March 12: US Treasury, Federal Reserve and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation announced "decisive actions to protect the US economy by strengthening public confidence in our banking system," after the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank.

March 13: Germany's Federal Financial Supervisory Authority close Silicon Valley Bank's branch in the country after the sudden collapse of the U.S. lender.

March 13: UK government and Bank of England facilitated a private sale of the UK arm of Silicon Valley Bank to HSBC Bank, to protect the tech sector.

March 14: Galeria Karstadt Kaufhof stores planned to close 52 branches all over Germany, which would lead to more 5000 workers losing their jobs.

March 16: Several US banks decided to deposit USD 30 billion in First Republic Bank, amid concerns of new financial collapse in the banking sector.

March 17: SVB Financial Group, the company that owned the failed Silicon Valley Bank filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

March 18: India and Bangladesh inaugurated the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline (IBFP) to transport diesel.

March 19: Swiss Federal Council approved that UBS Bank acquire Credit Suisse Bank, after financial crisis.

March 20: UK signed a digital trade agreement with Ukraine, aimed at supporting the country's economy and greatly enhance the UK-Ukraine trade and investment relationship.

March 21: The International Monetary Fund reached a staff-level agreement with Ukraine for a four-year financing package worth about USD 15.6 billion.

March 24: The UK and EU officially adopted the Windsor Framework agreement that allows Northern Ireland to remain in the EU single market.

March 30: The US provided direct economic aid of USD 22.9 billion to Ukraine through US-AID and the World Bank's Peace mechanism.

To be continued

Economy shrinking, public finances in continuous deficit: Al-Shall report

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: Al-Shall's weekly report reveals that between 2006 and the end of September 2020, Kuwait witnessed the formation of 15 governments, averaging approximately 350 days in office each, reports Al-Qabas daily.

However, from December 2020 to December 20, 2023, when the government resigned, there were 8 governments formed, with an average lifespan of about 105 days. This reflects a significant decrease, with the average lifespan of a government reduced by about 70%.

Highlighting Kuwait's unique situation, where the public sector generates around 70% of the economy and employs about 84% of the national workforce, the report emphasizes the critical role of a stable and efficient government. With the economy heavily dependent on oil, a stable government with clear and definitive visions is deemed essential.

The lack of stability and inefficiency in Kuwait's governance has had adverse effects on various performance indicators. The economy is shrinking, public finances are continuously in deficit, and populist decisions have led to labor imbalances. The business environment has become unattractive for both domestic and foreign direct investments.

Infrastructure projects, despite their high cost, have not met citizens' needs. The inability to address road repairs, even for potholes on main streets, indicates a broader issue. The oil sector, on which Kuwait

Life span of govt reduced by about 70%

Local banking sector's deposits with foreign banks stand at 6.5 bln dinars

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: As of the end of November 2023, the value of loans from local banks to foreign banks, including subscribed bonds, reached 2.18 billion dinars, reflecting a 10 percent growth compared to the corresponding month in 2022, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The banking sector's deposits with foreign banks stood at 6.5 billion dinars by the end of November 2023, slightly lower than the balance of December 2022, which was 6.6 billion dinars.

Total foreign assets of the banking sector increased from 22.749

heavily relies, faces challenges, with the Oil Minister expressing concerns about the sector's flabbiness and potential failure to meet production targets.

With a new era beginning after the death of the Emir and the resignation of the government, Kuwait stands at a crossroads. The report underscores the need for a stable government formed based on efficiency criteria rather than genes and quotas. It emphasizes that Kuwait deserves a public administration adhering to the best standards, even if the initial path

billion dinars in December 2022 to 24.438 billion dinars in November 2023, marking a growth rate of 7.4%.

Among these foreign assets, foreign investments amounted to 10.368 billion dinars at the end of November 2023, compared to 9 billion in December 2022.

Additionally, the volume of foreign loans acquired by local banks from foreign banks increased to 1.3 billion dinars at the end of November 2023, compared to 1 billion dinars at the end of December 2022.

The total foreign liabilities of the

banking sector are estimated at about 12.6 billion dinars, comprising 9.4 billion in deposits from non-residents, including certificates of deposit, and 4.3 billion in other miscellaneous deposits.

This represents a marginal increase of approximately 300 million dinars over the 11 months from December 2022.

The overall balance of local banks' assets reached a historical high of 87.189 billion dinars at the end of November 2023, indicating a 3.433 billion dinar increase compared to November 2022.

banking sector are estimated at about 12.6 billion dinars, comprising 9.4 billion in deposits from non-residents, including certificates of deposit, and 4.3 billion in other miscellaneous deposits.

This decision is deemed detrimental, as it hinders the measurement of economic performance and overlooks the importance of information flow and accuracy.

In conclusion, the report stresses the importance of human commitment and excellence for progress. It calls for a government formed based on efficiency and performance criteria, urging Kuwait to respect work values and production for meaningful reform.

Two key factors that influence oil prices

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: The market focus is currently honed in on two pivotal factors influencing oil prices, with their strength dictating market dynamics.

The first key factor is the degree of adherence by oil producers to the production adjustment agreement. An improvement in this commitment signifies a more substantial reduction in the overall supply available in the market, leading to an acceleration in the pace of depleting oil reserves, reports Al-Anba daily.

The second influential factor centers around developments in the American market. This encompasses aspects such as production levels, the count of active drilling rigs, oil reserves, and the volume of exports to diverse markets. Keeping a close eye on these elements provides valu-

able insights into the overall health and trends within the oil market.

The current weakness in oil prices is due to several factors, including:

■ Refining capacity in promising markets has begun maintenance programs, which means weak demand for crude oil.

■ Conflicting statements about OPEC's intention to extend the production adjustment agreement do not help the market in examining and anticipating the path of the oil market.

■ Libya's oil production has recovered and increased by more than 200,000 barrels per day, which is an indication of a new increase in supply.

■ Oil stock withdrawals, although they occurred, were below expectations, and thus meant a delay in restoring the balance of oil markets.

■ The number of rigs and American oil production continues to rise beyond expectations, which means confirming the increase in supply in the oil markets.

In the oil industry, there is a prevalent conviction that the current dip in prices is transitory, primarily attributed to the anticipation of imminent withdrawals from oil reserves. The existing price level is seen as a stimulant for the rebound of global oil demand. Additionally, expectations align with the notion that exploration, drilling, and production activities in key oil-producing nations like Venezuela, Nigeria, and Mexico are being hampered, thereby curbing the overall supply.

Consequently, the market is eagerly anticipating the monthly projections released by the OPEC Secretariat,

the US Energy Information Administration, and the US Energy Agency. These forecasts play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of the demand and supply equilibrium in the oil markets. The market is also closely monitoring the actions of speculators, with the hope that it will maintain a sense of calm until after the OPEC Ministerial Conference, as these events can significantly influence oil prices.

Kuwaiti oil prices reached their zenith at \$53.3 per barrel on February 3, 2017, only to dip to \$45.5 per barrel in recent weekend trading. There is an optimistic outlook that Kuwaiti prices may recover towards \$53 per barrel again, contingent upon the acceleration of oil stock withdrawals, ultimately contributing to a more balanced state in the oil markets.

Political turmoil persists despite economic success

Brazil's economy improves during President Lula's first year back

RIO DE JANEIRO, Jan 2, (AP): Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva likes to boast he had a good first year after returning to the job. The economy is improving, Congress passed a long-overdue tax reform bill, rioters who wanted to oust him are now in jail, and his predecessor and foe Jair Bolsonaro is barred from running for office until 2030.

Still, the 78-year-old leader has struggled to boost his support among citizens and lawmakers. Some major setbacks, including a series of votes by Congress to override his vetoes, signaled that Lula's future could be less productive in a Brazil almost evenly split between his supporters and Bolsonaro's.



Da Silva

"Brazil's political polarization is such that it crystallized the opinions of Lula and Bolsonaro voters beyond the economy," said political consultant Thomas Traumann, the author of a recent best-selling book on Brazil's political divisions. "These groups are separated by very different world views, the values that form the identity of each group are more important than food prices or interest rates."

Lula took office on Jan. 1, 2023, after a narrow victory over Bolsonaro in October 2022. At the beginning of his four-year term, only one fourth of Brazil's Congress sided with him. Business and opposition leaders feared Lula had gone too far to the left.

A riot led by Bolsonaro supporters destroyed government buildings in the capital of Brasilia on Jan. 8 and more turmoil looked certain. Former Finance Minister Paulo Guedes, among other conservatives, forecast Lula's policies would make Brazil's economy soon turn as sour as those in crisis-ridden Argentina and Venezuela.

"Six months to become Argentina. One year and a half to become Venezuela," Guedes said in an interview.

Fast forward to December. Brazil's economy is set to grow 3% this year instead of the 0.6% expected by market economists. Inflation looks controlled at about 4.7% on a yearly basis, slightly above projections but far from the double digits of recent years. The unemployment rate fell to 7.5% in November, one percentage point below the day Bolsonaro left office.

The Sao Paulo stock exchange hit record levels in December, rising above 134,000 points for the first time in its history. Brazil's real currency is also rising against the U.S. dollar. All that

brought back the optimistic, keen-to-travel-abroad Lula who had been missing during almost a decade of personal gloom.

"We needed to get our house fixed (in 2023), put things into place," Lula said in a meeting at the presidential palace on Dec. 12. "And now I say get ready. Next year, the Brazilian economy will not let anyone down."

Yet some polls have shown unchanged support for the president, at between 38% and 40% since January 2023. The numbers didn't pick up even after the announcement of a higher minimum wage in 2024, the buildup of Bolsonaro's legal woes or Brazil's return as a player in foreign affairs under Lula.

Powerhouse

About a third of Brazilians consider Lula's presidency about average and another third deeply dislike the way he governs Latin America's powerhouse economy, which rose once again to the top 10 biggest in the world after years of sinking. Lula's supporters are at home, but Bolsonaro's are still taking to the streets.

Though not as numerous as in the recent past, the few thousand protesters asking Congress to impeach Lula on corruption allegations have shown the resilience of the far-right leader's political base.

Bolsonaro was barred in June 2023 from running for office again until 2030 after Brazil's electoral court ruled that he abused his power and cast unfounded doubts on the country's electronic voting system.

Engineer Eduardo Carlos Santos, 73, believes Brazil's economy recovered due to the work of Bolsonaro. A devout evangelical, as with many in the former president's base, he says there is a cultural war against conservatives and that leftists should have no place in government.

"Like it or not, Bolsonaro left a better economy and Lula is just reaping the fruits of that," said Santos, who blames the economic difficulties during the previous presidency on the COVID-19 pandemic and health restrictions. "Lula is a former inmate, sentenced for corruption. He had his time in office, we needed to move the country to another direction. I don't see a bright year coming ahead."

Lula was imprisoned for alleged corruption in 2018, when he led polls to return to the presidency. He was released after the country's Supreme Court ruled the following year that prison sentences could only take place after every appeal has been exhausted - which was not the case with Lula.

Later, the same court ruled that the judge in Lula's case, now a pro-Bolsonaro senator, was biased against him.

ABK wins Best Banking Product award for innovative ISIC Youth prepaid card from World Business Outlook

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is proud to announce that it has been recognized with the Best Banking Product award from World Business Outlook for its ISIC Youth prepaid card.

This innovative offering, established in partnership with the International Student Identity Card (ISIC) and Mastercard, has set a new standard for providing practical and valuable financial solutions to students.

Commenting on the achievement, Loai Muqames, CEO - Kuwait at ABK, said, "We are honored to have received this recognition which demonstrates our commitment to empowering Kuwait's student community with innovative and practical financial solutions."

The ABK ISIC Youth prepaid card is a game-changer in the student financial market. Specifically designed to cater to students' needs, it combines the functionality of a prepaid card with the official identification capability of the ISIC card. This means that students can not only utilize it for convenient and secure transactions but also as their official student ID for accessing university campuses - a feature that has been warmly welcomed by students looking to streamline their everyday lives.

On her part, Johair Marafi, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, said, "We strive to provide an unparalleled customer experience for



Loai Muqames CEO - Kuwait at ABK.



Johair Marafi Acting General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK.

students and remain committed to delivering worthwhile products and services tailored to the specific needs of youth."

By holding an ABK ISIC Youth prepaid card, students gain access to a host of exclusive benefits aimed at making their lives more enjoyable. These include access to over 150,000 discounts across 130 countries using the special ISIC benefits. Additionally, students can take advantage of exclusive flight offers on Emirates Airline and benefit from discounted hotel accommodation through booking.com, making travel more accessible and affordable for young individuals seeking to explore the world. Furthermore, reloading the card is

effortless, allowing students to manage their finances without any hassle at any ABK branch or through the Bank's online banking service.

The acknowledgement of ABK's ISIC Youth prepaid card with the Best Banking Product award demonstrates ABK's attention to the unique financial needs of students. The Bank continues to set itself apart as a strong competitor in the banking industry, dedicated to providing effective and customer-centric products and services.

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking

products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital.

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 44 branches. This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients.

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

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

World markets are mixed on the first trading day of 2024

European benchmarks higher after Asian markets mostly fell

BANGKOK, Jan 2, (AP): European benchmarks were higher Tuesday after Asian markets mostly fell on the first trading day of 2024.

U.S. futures were higher and oil prices gained more than \$1.

Hong Kong's benchmark fell more than 1% and Shanghai also declined after data showed more signs of weakness in the Chinese manufacturing and property sectors.

The future contract for the S&P 500 edged 0.1% higher and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average added 0.2%.

Germany's DAX gained 1% to 16,927.63. In Paris, the CAC 40 was 0.6% higher to 7,587.62. Britain's FTSE 100 was up less than 0.1% to 7,734.75. Investors were awaiting the release of euro-zone manufacturing statistics later in the day.

The Hang Seng index in Hong Kong sank 1.6% to 16,784.00 and the Shanghai Composite index dropped 0.4% to 2,962.28.

Investors were selling property developers like debt-laden China Evergrande, which fell 6%, and LongFor Group Holding, which lost 6.9%. Sino-Ocean Holding declined 4.6%.

The December survey of the official purchasing managers index, or PMI, in China fell to 49 for the third consecutive month, signaling weak demand and underscoring the challenging economic conditions in the world's second-largest economy.

That contrasted private-sector survey, by financial publication Caixin, which registered a slight improvement in the manufacturing PMI to 50.8, driven by increased output and new orders. However, it showed that business confidence for 2024 remained subdued.

The latest data also showed that the value of new home sales by China's top 100 developers fell nearly 35% from a year earlier in December despite moves by regulators to lift limits on such transactions.

South Korea's Kospi gained 0.6% to 2,669.81 and the S&P/ASX 200 in Australia rose 0.5% to 7,627.80. Bangkok's SET added 1.2% while the Sensex in Mumbai lost 0.5%.

Japan's markets were closed for a holiday.

Stocks fell Friday on Wall Street from their near all-time high amid easing inflation, a resilient economy and the prospect of lower interest rates which buoyed investors.

The S&P 500 slipped 0.3%. The benchmark index still posted a rare ninth consecutive week of gains and is just 0.6% shy of an all-time high set in January of 2022. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.1% and the Nasdaq composite slipped 0.6%.



The New York Stock Exchange is seen in New York, Tuesday, June 14, 2022. The signs of life shown by the IPO market, especially in the second half of the year, are giving analysts hope that more companies will be enticed to go public in 2024. (AP)

Inflation eases, confidence rises

IPO market poised for 2024 recovery

Advocates seek to eliminate tipped wage

Workers in New England states looking forward to bump up in minimum wages

BOSTON, Jan 2, (AP): Workers in several New England states are looking forward to a bump up in the minimum wage in 2024 while advocates in Massachusetts are pushing a ballot question aimed at phasing out the state's subminimum wage of \$6.75 per hour for tipped workers.

In Rhode Island, the state's current \$13 minimum wage will jump by \$1 to \$14 an hour on Jan. 1. It is the next step in a phased-in increase that will reach \$15 in 2025.

In Vermont, the state's minimum wage will reach \$13.67 - climbing \$0.49 from the current \$13.18 wage. The annual adjustment also affects the minimum wage for tipped workers, which will tick up from \$6.59 to \$6.84 per hour.

Maine will see its hourly minimum wage tick up from \$13.80 to \$14.15 per hour. Maine requires annual adjustments to the minimum wage based on the cost-of-living. Portland is pushing its city minimum wage from \$14 to \$15. The state's new tipped wage in 2024 will be \$7.08 per hour.

The minimum wage in Connecticut will rise from the current rate of \$15.00 per hour to \$15.69 - the highest in New England. Beginning Jan. 1, and occurring annually each following Jan. 1, the wage will be adjusted according to the U.S. Department of Labor's calculation of the employment cost index.

Massachusetts' minimum wage will remain at \$15 per hour in 2024, although there is a campaign to hike the wage again to \$20.

New Hampshire continues to have the lowest minimum wage in New

England, matching the federal wage of \$7.25. State lawmakers have defeated multiple attempts to increase it in recent years.

The New England states are among 20 raising minimum wages for workers, further widening the gap between state requirements and the federal minimum wage, which has been static at \$7.25 an hour since July 2009. In several states, the new minimum will more than double that rate.

In Massachusetts, advocates are pushing a ballot question that would phase out the state's "service rate" which lets restaurants pay workers \$6.75 an hour if tips make up the difference between that and the state's \$15 minimum wage. Under the question, the service rate would end by 2029.

Organizers for the group One Fair Wage said they have collected enough signatures to clear an initial hurdle to gaining a slot on next year's ballot.

"Massachusetts voters are ready to move away from outdated wage practices and towards a system that guarantees dignity, justice, and economic security for all workers," Saru Jayaraman, president of One Fair Wage, said in a written statement.

The Massachusetts Restaurant Association opposes the question, saying the highest-paid employees in any restaurant are tipped employees, frequently averaging \$20, \$30, and sometimes even \$50 per hour.

A restaurant owner can employ more than two full time waitstaff employees for the same hourly rate as one minimum wage employee, said Jessica Muradian of Massachusetts Restaurant Association.



Supporters of outgoing President Jair Bolsonaro who refuse to accept the presidential election results, protest as they are forced to breakdown a pro-Bolsonaro encampment outside a military building, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Jan. 9, 2023. (AP)

Sharp run-up lift borrowing costs

Average long-term mortgage rates dip for 9th straight week

NEW YORK, Jan 2, (AP): The average long-term U.S. mortgage rate retreated for the ninth straight week to reach its lowest level since May.

The average rate on a 30-year mortgage dipped to 6.61% from 6.67% last week, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said. In 2022, the rate averaged 6.42%.

Borrowing costs on 15-year fixed-rate mortgages, popular with homeowners refinancing their home loans, also inched down this week, with the average rate falling to 5.93% from 5.95% last week. In 2022, it averaged 5.68%, Freddie Mac said.

"Heading into the new year, the economy remains on firm ground with solid growth, a tight labor market, decelerating inflation, and a nascent rebound in the housing market," Sam Khater, Freddie Mac's chief economist.

Mortgage rates have been easing since late October, when the average rate on a 30-year home loan reached 7.79%, the highest level since late 2000.

The decline has tracked the trajectory of the 10-year Treasury yield, which lenders use as a guide to pricing loans. The yield, which in mid October surged to its highest level since 2007, has been falling on hopes that inflation has cooled enough for the Federal Reserve to shift to cutting interest rates

after yanking them dramatically higher since March of 2022.

The Fed has opted to not move rates at its last three meetings, which has also given financial markets a boost.

Investors' expectations for future inflation, global demand for U.S. Treasuries and what the Fed does with its benchmark federal funds rate can influence rates on home loans.

The sharp run up in mortgage rates that began early last year has pushed up borrowing costs on home loans, reducing how much would-be home buyers can afford even as home prices have kept climbing due to a stubbornly low supply of properties on the market. That's weighed on sales of previously occupied U.S. homes, which are down 19.3% through the first 11 months 2023.

Despite the recent decline, the average rate on a 30-year home loan remains sharply higher than just two years ago, when it was 3.11%. The large gap between rates now and then is contributing to the low inventory of homes for sale by discouraging homeowners who locked in rock-bottom rates two years ago from selling.

Some housing economists are forecasting that home sales will increase in 2024, on the assumption that mortgage rates ease further.

Deutsche Bank pledges to help combat human trafficking

SANTA FE, N.M., Jan 2, (AP): Deutsche Bank pledged nearly \$5 million in funding to help combat human trafficking in New Mexico, the bank announced in a joint statement with Attorney General Raúl Torrez.

The announcement comes seven months after Deutsche Bank settled a U.S. lawsuit for \$75 million that claimed the German lender should have seen evidence that the late Jeffrey Epstein engaged in sex trafficking when he was a client.

Torrez's office has been investigating several financial service companies and their role in what he says is a failure to identify sexual abuse and trafficking of underage girls at Epstein's ranch in Santa Fe County, according to the state-

ment.

"I am pleased that Deutsche Bank recognizes its ongoing responsibility to help us combat this problem," Torrez, a Democrat, said in the statement. "We appreciate the steps they have taken since terminating Jeffrey Epstein as a client in 2018 to strengthen their oversight capabilities and intend to use their pledge to support our ongoing efforts to apprehend traffickers and expand our victim services."

A spokesperson for Deutsche Bank said the lender is pleased to support Torrez "in this important effort, which reflects our industry's shared responsibility to play an active role in safeguarding the financial system."

Company concluded year with plethora of social programs and initiatives

Zain in 2023: A journey of fostering innovation and community engagement

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: In 2023, Zain continued its pledge to actively participate in the nation's biggest and most vibrant segments, becoming closer to its customers and the entire Kuwaiti community. Throughout the year, the company has contributed a plethora of programs, initiatives, and campaigns that covered every aspect of the community to reflect the values of its brand and achieve its vision of creating 'A Wonderful World'.

To make this vision a reality, Zain has outlined a comprehensive sustainability and social responsibility strategy, which inspired every program and initiative the company undertook from the first day of the year. These contributions centered around a number of pillars, such as shouldering sports and local athletes, supporting volunteer efforts during Ramadhan, fostering innovation and nurturing the youth's creativity, empowering entrepreneurs and accelerating tech startups, and doubling down on efforts to serve sustainable goals.

Zain believes that its success and distinguished track of social contributions during the year was only possible thanks to a solid and versatile ecosystem of strategic partnerships with civil society establishments, NGOs, international entities, volunteer groups, and key public and private sector players. Hand in hand with its partners, Zain contributed to empowering community members to pursue their passion and achieve outstanding successes under Kuwait's name in every field.

In this report, Zain showcases some of its most notable social activities and community programs from 2023:

Shouldering sports and local athletes

In 2023, Zain took its support of sports beyond Kuwait's borders by supporting Kuwaiti athletes in the biggest local, regional, and international sporting arenas. In January, the company dedicated 10 buses and three trips to transport over 400 of Kuwait's loyal football fans to the Arab Gulf Cup competition 'Khaleeji Zain 25' held in Basra, Iraq with Zain Group as the title sponsor, where they cheered on Kuwait's National Team.

The company also continued its year-long support of the thrills of Kuwait's top football flight in partnership with the Kuwait Football Association. The partnership included the biggest two contests: the Kuwait Premier League (Dawri Zain) and the Zain First Division League, as well as support to H.H. the Amir's Cup, H.H. the Crown Prince's Cup, and the KFA Cup (Zain Cup).

The company continued its pledge to support athletes and promote excellence in the league, dedicating - this season alone - over KD 60,000 worth of cash prizes for players and fans, the biggest prize pool in the local league's history.

Zain also interacted with fans through its special fan zones, hosting exciting activities to create the best atmosphere for fans, especially during big games like derbies and finals. Spectators at stadiums and followers



Bader Al Kharafi with ZGI entrepreneurs in Riyadh during the regional accelerator program.

on social media got the chance to compete in special contests and win valuable prizes.

Last year, Zain was also the proud Official Partner of Team Kuwait at the 19th Asian Games, held in Hangzhou, China, in collaboration with the Kuwait Olympic Committee. The company's team accompanied the nation's athletes and administrators to China, reflecting its unwavering support to local sports in the biggest international arenas.

The company was keen on being among the first to welcome the returning champions at Kuwait International Airport, expressing its utmost pride in the accomplishments of Kuwaiti athletes in the biggest competitions. Team Kuwait's total tally reached 11 medals at the end of the Hangzhou games, with three Golds, four Silvers, and four Bronzes.

Zain Alshuhoor Ramadan Campaign

In 2023, Zain concluded yet another successful season of its annual social campaign for the Holy Month of Ramadan, Zain Alshuhoor. The month-long program saw the company join the Kuwaiti community in sharing the blessings of the Holy Month with a plethora of social and humanitarian contributions.

The campaign kicked-off by delivering 'Ramadan Machla' (food supplies) to underprivileged families in collaboration with three of Zain's non-profit strategic partners. In addition, Zain's volunteers team directly distributed supplies at Taimaa, Jahra in partnership with KRCS.



Innovation Nation initiative empowered youth's creativity and tech skills.

Zain's Iftar program also came back for its 16th year, where the company provided daily meals at the Iftar hall in Ardiya throughout month, while also distributing meals across Kuwait via trucks in partnership with the Kuwait Food Bank. The program saw nearly 40,000 meals distributed throughout Ramadan.

In one of the company's most notable social programs in Ramadan, Zain hosted a special event to celebrate the Kuwaiti tradition of Girgeaan (candy distribution) at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's Social Care Centers. The event came in partnership

with the Public Authority for Disability Affairs to share the joys and blessings of the Holy Month with foster care children, people with special needs, and the elderly.

In recognition of the tremendous efforts of frontliners during the Holy Month, Zain hosted a special Ramadan Iftar banquet for personnel operating at Nuwaiseeb Border Port. The step came as a gesture of gratitude and appreciation to the staff of the Ministry of Interior and Customs who dedicate their time and effort to Kuwait's safety.

To promote fitness during the Holy

Month, the company continued to present the Zain Ramadan Challenge at Al Shaheed Park, which featured walkathons and marathons throughout Ramadhan, with advanced technology solutions used to monitor the participants' progress. Zain also organized a first-of-its-kind drive-thru Girgeaan celebration at its main HQ in Shuwaikh, which witnessed a great turnout.

Towards the end of the Holy Month, Zain partnered with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to present hospitality services and facilitate the transportation of worshippers at the Grand Mosque of Kuwait during Qiyaam prayers throughout the last 10 days of Ramadan. The company also shared the blessings of Eid prayers with worshippers during the first day of Eid.

Delivering on its annual promise to bring the most spectacular of theatrical performances to its loyal fans, Zain presented its all-new play "Nothing is Ever Like Zain" with daily mesmerizing shows throughout Eid holiday at the Arena Kuwait. Mixing stunning theatrical performances with the latest technologies, the company presented a show like no other, reflecting positive values and hosting top local and regional stars.

Innovation Nation and ZGI

In 2023, Zain kicked-off Innovation Nation, its new initiative under which all of the company's innovation and entrepreneurship programs fall, especially within STEM areas. The initiative mainly targets the youth, and centers around a number

of pillars, including entrepreneurship, investment, startup acceleration, supporting inventors, fostering innovation, and more.

Under this initiative, Zain signed an MoU with Sabah Al Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) to build a new strategic partnership that focuses on elevating the digital literacy of the youth, empower creativity and innovation, and enhance the local startup ecosystem in the community. The partnership saw many successful programs throughout the year, most notably a summer camp that developed digital and tech skills of over 800 children and young people through over 130 workshops and informative sessions.

Zain also signed an MoU with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) to reflect their unwavering efforts to support and grow the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems in the community. The two organizations joined forces to accelerate capacity building, upskill national talents in the private sector, grow research & development in innovation, enable social enterprises, and empower local entrepreneurs. One of the most notable programs under this partnership was Science Month, an initiative that encouraged Kuwaiti youth to pursue STEM careers.

2023 also saw the successful conclusion of the seventh season of the company's award-winning Zain Great Idea tech startup accelerator program, which early in the year was recognized with the E-Business Award from the prestigious Entrepreneur Middle East magazine. Zain's program was awarded 'Ecosystem Enabler of the Year' to acknowledge the company's ever-growing endeavors in accelerating the regional tech startups ecosystem and empowering entrepreneurs in Kuwait and the region throughout 13 years.

In its 7th season, ZGI continued on its core mission, but grew in its vision, and expanded its programs to new horizons. With it, the company opened a bridge to connect aspiring entrepreneurs to the biggest destinations that target business owners in the region, including Dubai, Riyadh, and Cairo.

In addition, Zain and SACGC became the official Kuwait Country Partners of Beban, the regional entrepreneur reality TV show, joining forces to include and enable Kuwaiti entrepreneurs' participation in the upcoming third season of the show which will air in January 2024.

Through Beban, Zain and SACGC offered 40 Kuwaiti entrepreneurs the opportunity to undergo an intensive 2-week training bootcamp at the Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC). During the bootcamp, entrepreneurs were provided with insights to enhance their business plans and ensure their readiness to pitch their businesses to a panel of investors for strategic business development and equity investment on the TV show, where 5 shortlisted Kuwaiti entrepreneurs were accepted to represent Kuwait in the program.



Zain travelled to the Asian Games in China with Kuwait's champions.



Zain Alshuhoor's volunteers built bridges during Ramadan.



Company transported Kuwait's fans to Khaleeji Zain in Basra.

Canadian fan's ashes to join 'Star Trek' stars in orbit

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, Jan. 2, (AP) — The family of a mother of eight who was a huge "Star Trek" fan has ensured the final frontier will be her ultimate resting place.

Gloria Knowlan was 86 at the time of her death 12 years ago. A small quantity of ashes from her cremated body are to be in one of 250 memorial capsules set to be launched into space later this month.

Launch organizers are hoping the rocket carrying the capsules will wind up approximately 330 million kilometers (205 million miles) from Earth, roughly past the orbit of Mars.

The remains or DNA samples of "Star Trek" creator Gene Roddenberry, his wife, Majel Barrett Roddenberry, and Original Series stars Nichelle Nichols, DeForest Kelley and James Doohan also are expected to make the trip.

Their final journey will take place through American company Celestis Inc., which has offered what it calls "memorial space flights" for more than two decades.

Knowlan's son said his mother dove headlong into things she loved, including the show, after his father died in 2002. Her love of "Star Trek" prompted her to collect replica starships and deck out her Christmas tree each year with a homemade alien space-

craft known as the Borg cube, complete with working lights.

Rod Knowlan said he thinks his mother would be "just tickled" by the idea that a part of her remains were going to space alongside some of the people she saw on TV.

"She was a fan of 'Star Trek,' of the concept, from the outset," he said in a telephone interview.

For prices ranging from a few thousand dollars to \$13,000, Celestis Inc. takes small capsules of human remains or DNA to space and either returns them, drops them in Earth's orbit or takes them to the moon as a tribute to late loved ones.

Co-founder and CEO Charles Chafer said the rocket carrying Knowlan's remains, scheduled to take off from Cape Canaveral, Fla. on Jan. 8, will mark the first time the company has offered a trip into "deep space," meaning the capsules won't eventually fall to Earth.

"I believe it's an awful lot like why people choose to be scattered at sea," Chafer said. "There's a calling there. There's something about the sea that either interests them or attracts them as a location for a memorial service."

The capsules will be taken into space by the commercially owned and aptly named Vulcan rocket.

Chafer said the main purpose of the trip is for the rocket to test its capabilities to become the first commercial spacecraft to land on the moon and his company's cargo is getting taken along to serve a "secondary" purpose.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Fox is adding some new game shows to its roster in the new year. **Rob Lowe** executive produces and hosts a new trivia show called "The Floor" beginning Jan. 2 while **Anthony Anderson** and his mother **Doris Bowman** co-host the musical "We Are Family" beginning Jan. 3. The latter was originally intended to star **Jamie Foxx** and his daughter **Corinne** but the Oscar winner, who experienced an undisclosed medical condition in 2023, will now executive produce. Both shows will also stream on Hulu.

The acclaimed Hulu series "Only Murders in the Building" comes to broadcast television in early 2024. The comedy whodunit stars **Steve Martin**, **Martin Short** and **Selena Gomez** as neighbors in a posh New York apartment building who start their own true crime podcast after another resident is murdered. The first three episodes of season one begin airing on ABC on Tuesday, Jan. 2.

Television

Variety



This image released by Searchlight Pictures shows Emma Stone in a scene from 'Poor Things'. (AP)

Film

A cinematic laboratory of Victorian sci-fi

Allure & monstrosity in 'Poor Things'

NEW YORK, Jan. 2, (AP) — "Poor Things" is a Frankenstein-esque fantasia about a young woman (Emma Stone) reanimated by a demented surgeon (Willem Dafoe), but the behind-the-scenes work that went into crafting the movie's wildly warped world may be the film's greatest act of mad science.

Though Yorgos Lanthimos' earlier films — at least leading up to "The Favourite" — were more spare productions, "Poor Things" fuses all the tools of classic Hollywood filmmaking — grand sets, miniatures, sumptuous costumes — with subtler touches of modern technology. The movie is, itself, a Frankenstein.

Only the scars (not counting the ones on Dafoe's elongated face) don't show in the magpie design of "Poor Things." The film's style is rooted in an 1890s Victorian setting, but it expands surreally from there.

"We were looking at the Victorian era as if it had been written about in a sci-fi movie," says Shona Heath, one of the two production designers on the film along with James Price. "We basically gave ourselves an open book to do what we wanted."

The result is something wholly original. "Poor Things," based on Scottish novelist Alasdair Gray's 1992 book, conjures an elaborately demented world as seen through the childlike eyes of Bella Baxter (Stone), a woman, as Dafoe's Dr. Godwin Baxter describes, whose mental age and body "are not quite synchronized."

"Poor Things" is one of the most acclaimed films of the year. (It won top prize at the Venice Film Festival and was nominated for seven Golden Globes on Monday.) And a lot of that is owed to the richness of its craftsmanship.

To understand how they tackled it, The Associated Press spoke to Lanthimos and several key collaborators — the productions designers, costume designer Holly Waddington and cinematographer Robbie Ryan — about bringing "Poor Things" to life.

"From the moment I read the novel, I always felt that we needed to build a world that Bella would inhabit," says Lanthimos. "Like Victorian era, but tweaked."

The sets built by Heath and Price would be the foundation of "Poor Things." The movie begins in Baxter's London townhouse, which houses a laboratory inspired by "Young Frankenstein." It then travels to Lisbon, Alexandria and Paris, with a steamship voyage in between. It's a journey of self-discovery and sexual liberation for Bella, set against a delirious fairy-tale backdrop.

Lanthimos had some guiding references, including films like Francis Ford Coppola's "Bram Stoker's Dracula," Luis Buñuel's "Belle du Jour" and Fellini movies. But he gave his production teams wide latitude.

"Yorgos encouraged every extremity," says Heath. "He wanted something he hadn't seen before."

The designers gradually assembled a reference guide of 200 pages. Inside were everything from paintings by Hieronymus Bosch, Egon Schiele, Francis Bacon and John Singer Sargent; drawings of medical surgeries; and grotesque blob fish.

On soundstages in Budapest, the production designers built massive, immersive sets for the London townhouse, a Paris square in winter and the cruise ship. The Lisbon street scene set, 170 feet long and 60 feet tall, was so large it needed to be erected separately at nearby Korda Studios. LED screens were typically used for backdrops.

"We did 10 years worth of work in one movie, creatively," says Price.

Creative

Price and Heath are particularly proud of the London townhouse, which was so fully built, with something down every corridor, that to some on set it seemed like an actual house. Lanthimos didn't save anything from the production but he took pictures of the London house's slow demolition.

Price ("Paddington 2," "Judy") has grown accustomed to seeing his works built and destroyed.

"I find it quite cathartic that you can go from conception, the birth of an idea, to the death. It's kind of rare as a creative. It lives on in cinema," says Price. "I'm odd, though. Everyone else finds it tragic."

Lanthimos' guidance for Waddington was even less: a single image of some inflatable trousers. But that was enough to set her thinking about expressing Bella's nature through her clothing. In one striking example, Bella wears a wedding dress with airy, balloon-like sleeves.

"She is a reanimated person. This idea of air and breath. That manifested itself in these sleeves that were huge and lung-like and organic," says Waddington.

Waddington initially thought Bella's wardrobe would be small, since she's traveling. But as she dug more deeply into her work, Waddington began to chart Bella's growing independence through her attire.

"I realized quickly that it would not do to do that. Her evolution is rapid, and the clothes needed to grow with

her," says Waddington.

Early on, Bella's clothing is more doll-like and animalistic. The bustle of one dress was made of rolls of crinoline that resemble a judge's wig or a lobster tail. To Waddington, it's a perfect combination of period and contemporary, almost like a puffer jacket.

"If you look at the late Victorian clothes, the women's wear is full of bits of animals, bits of unborn Persian lambs — quite grotesque things," she says. "I wanted to capture something of the animal in the clothes."

For the Paris brothel chapter of the film, Waddington used yellow latex to create what she terms Bella's "condom coat." Throughout the process, she leaned into bodily shapes and textures.

"It's partly the subject matter," she says. "All I could see was genitalia in everything I was doing."

Yet by the time Bella is fully realizing herself and finding her professional future, her clothing grows closer to modernity. Once in medical school alongside rows of men, Bella, in a formal black top, initially seems to blend in.

"Then I wanted a subtle shift," Waddington says. "I still wanted to subvert it, so when she got up, you would see these legs without any skirt on."

Ryan is best known as the cinematographer of naturalist filmmakers like Andrea Arnold, Ken Loach and Noah Baumbach. But beginning with "The Favourite," Ryan and Lanthimos have found a strong collaboration.

Ryan, who operates the camera himself, found he could bring some of the same approaches to the florid design all around him.

"Ironically, we shot in a very similar way to 'The Favourite.' We didn't use much lighting on set. Everything was lit from afar," says Ryan. "We shot it in a way that didn't feel complicated."

Ryan and Lanthimos shot "Poor Things" on film. He was typically working with only one camera and shot as much as possible in camera, not depending on visual effects for much except things like the movie's many computer-generated hybrid creatures.

"The visual references and ideas they had were wild. I was like: 'How are we going to do that?'" Ryan says. "We used a lot of tricks and techniques and old camera styles that were very practical in a way, and lent themselves to being more visual. That was the great ambition, to try and follow it in an old-school way of '30s cinema. That made it easier to imagine."

Features

ARABO TIMES

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2024

people at risk of ending their lives at the railway. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: A civil rights leader was escorted by police out of a North Carolina movie theater after he insisted on using his own chair for medical reasons, prompting an apology from the na-



Bassey



Scott

tion's largest movie theater chain. The incident occurred Tuesday in Greenville during a showing of "The Color Purple." The Rev. **William Barber II** said he needs the chair because he suffers from ankylosing spondylitis, a disabling bone disease. Barber, 60, leads a nonprofit called Repairers of the Breach,

which focuses on issues including voter suppression and poverty. He also co-chairs the national Poor People's Campaign, which is modeled after an initiative launched in 1968 by the late Rev. **Martin Luther King Jr.** During an hourlong news conference on Friday, Barber spoke in support of people with disabilities

and the need for businesses to provide the accommodations required under the Americans with Disabilities Act. "I know that if I cannot sit in my chair in a theater in Greenville, North Carolina ... that there are thousands of other people who will be excluded from public spaces in this nation," Barber said. (AP)

People & Places

Obituaries

Les McCann dead

Magubane, fearless photographer, dies

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, Jan 2, (AP): Peter Magubane, a fearless photographer who captured the violence and horror of South Africa's apartheid era of racial oppression, and was entrusted with documenting Nelson Mandela's first years of freedom after his release from prison, has died. He was 91.

Magubane died Monday, according to the South African National Editors' Forum, which said it had been informed of his death by his family.

He was a "legendary photojournalist," the editors' forum said. The South African government said Magubane "covered the most historic moments in the liberation struggle against apartheid."

Magubane photographed 40 years of apartheid South Africa, including the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, the trial of Mandela and others in 1964, and the Soweto uprising of 1976, when thousands of Black students protested against the apartheid government's law making the Afrikaans language compulsory in school.

The Soweto uprising became a pivotal moment in the struggle for democracy in South Africa after police opened fire on the young protesters, killing at least 176 of them and drawing international outrage. Magubane's award-winning photographs told the world about the killings.

Magubane became a target of the apartheid government after photographing a protest outside a jail where Mandela's then-wife Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was being held in 1969.

Magubane was jailed and kept in solitary confinement for more than a year-and-a-half. He was imprisoned numerous times during his career and subjected to a five-year ban that prevented him from working or even leaving his home without police permission. He said he was shot 17 times with shotgun pellets by apartheid police while on assignment and was beaten and had his nose broken by police when he refused to give up the photographs he took of the Soweto uprisings.

Apartheid

Faced with the option of leaving South Africa to go into exile because he was a marked man by the apartheid regime, he chose to stay and continue taking photographs.

"I said, 'no I will remain here. I will fight apartheid with my camera,'" he said in a recent interview with national broadcaster SABC.

While Magubane photographed some of the most brutal violence, he also created searing images of everyday life under apartheid that resonated just as much.

One of his most celebrated photographs was a 1956 image of a Black maid sitting on a bench designated for whites only while seemingly caressing the neck of a white child under her care in a wealthy Johannesburg suburb. The photo spoke of the absurdity of the forced system of racial segregation given that so many white children were looked after by Black women.

Magubane began his career at the South African magazine, Drum, gained fame at the Rand Daily Mail newspaper and also worked for Time magazine and Sports Illustrated, earning international recognition.

He was appointed official photographer to Mandela after the anti-apartheid leader was released from prison in 1990 and photographed Mandela up until he was elected the first Black president of South Africa in historic all-race elections in 1994.

He said his favorite photograph of Mandela was him dancing at his 72nd birthday party months after being released after 27 years in prison.

"You can see the joy of freedom shining in his eyes," Magubane said.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Les McCann, a prolific and influential musician and recording artist who helped found the soul-jazz genre and became a favorite source for sampling by Dr. Dre, A Tribe Called Quest and hundreds of other hip-hop performers, has died. He was 88.

McCann died Friday in Los Angeles a week after being hospitalized with pneumonia, according to his longtime manager and producer, Alan Abrahams.

A Lexington, Kentucky, native, McCann was a vocalist and self-taught pianist whose career dated back to the 1950s, when he won a singing contest while serving in the U.S. Navy and appeared on "The Ed Sullivan Show," the top variety program of its time. With admirers including Quincy Jones and Miles Davis, he went on tour worldwide and released dozens of albums, starting in 1960 with "Les McCann Ltd. Plays the Truth."

He was best known for "Compared to What," a funky protest song on which he first teamed up with his future musical partner, saxophonist Eddie Harris. Written by Eugene McDaniels and recorded live at the 1968 Montreaux Jazz Festival, "Compared to What" blended jazzy riffs and McCann's gospel-style vocals. The song condemned war, greed and injustice with such couplets as "Nobody gives us rhyme or reason/Have one doubt, they call it treason."

Among those covering "Compared to What" was Roberta Flack, a McCann protégé whose career he helped launch by setting up an audition with Atlantic Records. McCann was a pioneer in merging jazz with soul and funk. He would record with Flack and tour with such popular musicians as Wilson Pickett, Santana and the Staples Singers.

His other albums included "Talk to the People" (1972), "Layers" (1973) and "Another Beginning" (1974). Last month, Resonance Records issued "Never A Dull Moment! - Live from Coast to Coast (1966-1967)."

MEXICO CITY: Mexican actor Ana Ofelia Murguía, who gave voice to the character of "Mama Coco" in the popular Pixar film "Coco," has died, Mexican officials said. She was 90.

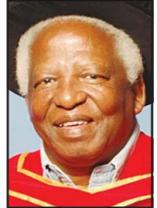
Mexico's National Fine Arts Institute announced Murguía's death Sunday without providing a cause of death.

"She leaves an enormous void on our country's sets," Culture Secretary Alejandra Frausto Guerrero said in a statement.

"Coco," which was released in 2017, brought Murguía to an international audience late in life.

But the actor had a long acting career in Mexican film and television, and on the stage. She appeared in some 70 plays and 90 movies, including "Life Sentence" (1979) and "The Queen of the Night" (1994).

In the animated "Coco," she voiced the soft-spoken great-grandmother of a boy discovering his family's musical history.



Magubane



The UPS Store Rose Parade float, 'The Beat of Achievement' received the Bob Hope Humor award for most whimsical and amusing entry on Monday, Jan. 1, 2024 in Pasadena, Calif. The 35-foot-tall animated crocodile float highlights the company's support of the next generation of entrepreneurs with Junior Achievement USA. (AP)



Record producer and recording artist Hit-Boy poses for a portrait, Tuesday, March 8, 2022, in Los Angeles. When Hit-Boy walks the Grammy red carpet, he expects to proudly strut into the Feb. 4, 2024 awards ceremony with his father beside him for the first time. (AP)



Brosnan



Cher

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Cher has filed a petition to become a temporary conservator overseeing her son's money, saying the 47-year-old's struggles with mental health issues and addiction have left him unable to manage his assets and potentially put his life in danger.

The Oscar and Grammy winning singer and actor on Wednesday filed the petition in Los Angeles Superior Court that would give her temporary control of the finances of Elijah Blue Allman, her son with musician Gregg Allman.

Cher's petition says that Elijah Allman is entitled to regular payments from a trust fund. But "given his ongoing mental health and substance abuse issues," she is "concerned that any funds distributed to Elijah will be immediately spent on drugs, leaving Elijah with no assets to provide for himself and putting Elijah's life at risk," the petition says.

Reached through his attorney, Elijah Allman said in a phone call with The Associated Press, "I am well, and able, and of sound mind and body."

He declined to say whether he planned to oppose the petition, or give any further comment.

A court-ordered conservatorship is "urgently needed," Cher's filing says. A judge scheduled a January hearing on the issue.

The filing explicitly seeks to keep control of Elijah Allman's finances from his wife, Marieangela King, from whom he filed for divorce in 2021.

The two remain legally married. A filing from King in October says the couple had agreed to pause the divorce proceedings and work on their marriage, but she had not seen him in person in six months.

Cher's petition says the couple's "tumultuous relationship has been marked by a cycle of drug addiction and mental health crises" and that she believes King "is not supportive of Elijah's recovery."

Emails seeking comment from an attorney for King and representatives for Cher were not immediately returned. (AP)

CHEYENNE, Wyo.: Pierce Brosnan, whose fictitious movie character James Bond has been in hot water plenty of times, is now facing heat in real life, charged with stepping out of bounds in a thermal area during a recent visit to Yellowstone National Park.

Brosnan walked in an off-limits area at Mammoth Terraces, in the northern

Music

Emotional waves and Grammy goals

Hit-Boy building legacy with family

LOS ANGELES, Jan 2, (AP): When Hit-Boy walks the Grammy red carpet, he expects to proudly strut into the Feb. 4 awards ceremony with his father beside him for the first time.

For three decades, Hit-Boy's dad was in-and-out of prison, with his recent stint lasting nine years until his release several months ago. With his father's newfound freedom, the super producer - who has worked with music heavyweights from Jay-Z, Nas and Kanye West - is focused on strengthening their father-son bond while navigating the music industry together.

Hit-Boy has the Grammys and a producer of the year, non-classical nomination in his sights. He's had three songs involving Brent Faiyaz, Blxst and The Alchemist. He also produced three Nas albums, including "King's Disease III," which is up for best rap album; one with Musiq Soulchild; and his two "Surf or Down" albums, which featured the producer as a rapper and his father on several tracks under the stage name Big Hit.

When Hit-Boy first heard about being a nominee again, he felt an instant "wave of emotions." He was one of the most productive producers this past year compared to others in his category - which includes Jack Antonoff, Metro Boomin, Dermot "D'Mile" Emile II and Daniel Nigro.

"I literally broke down in tears," said Hit-Boy, a three-time Grammy winner through Jay-Z and Kanye West's "... In Paris." Nipsey Hussle's "Racks in the Middle" and Nas' album "King Disease." He's worked with top performers including Beyoncé, Mary J. Blige, Drake, Mariah Carey, Ariana Grande and Jennifer Lopez.

But for Hit-Boy, this past year was different.

"When I really look back and had that moment to reflect, I was like 'Wow, I didn't have the biggest artists in the world that's going to stream,'" he said. "They are going to make it work. I was working with artists that don't have million-dollar budgets behind them."

Throughout the year, Hit-Boy said he worked mostly with Nas and his father, Big Hit, who recorded his lyrics for the intro on "Surf or Down Vol. 1" while incarcerated. After his father's release, Hit-Boy took him directly to the studio - where they both laid down tracks.

This month, Big Hit, 52, released his debut album "The Truth is in My Eyes," which features Snoop Dogg, Benny The Butcher, Musiq Soulchild, Dom Kennedy, The Alchemist and Mo'Nique. He said it was tough being away from his son and watching his success from afar.

"It was torture just knowing the kind of impact I could've had and what I missed in his life," said the rapper, who was arrested during a traffic stop in Illinois in 2014. Turns out, he had an outstanding warrant, which stemmed from a hit-and-run accident in Los Angeles that left several people injured.

Momentum

At the time, Hit-Boy said his father was gaining positive momentum and made good impressions with the likes of Jay-Z and 50 Cent before his arrest, which the producer called devastating. "I thought about how I could have shaped and molded him," Big Hit said. "Being a wonderful addition. Instead of bringing him down, I could have tightened him up. But I still did my best in the situation where I was at. But we're pushing full speed ahead. We're bridging that gap."

Since Big Hit's release, Hit-Boy has been laser-focused on keeping his father busy and spending time with him almost daily while creating an independent lane for their careers. The producer said he's funded "every single thing since he touched down."

"It's bigger than just doing the music," Hit-Boy said. "I'm creating that network, helping them to have a workflow. I'm spending money on these marketing plans. I'm coming with all the best ideas I can. Every day is an adventure. My whole life, he's got out and went back in. Stressed out that he

might do something to jeopardize it again. It's part of that brainwork where you just got to hold it down and financially. I wanted to build, put together pieces that would bring people completely into his world."

Hit-Boy said several labels have offered Big Hit deals, but they turned them down. The producer said they'll be better off on their own for now.

"They wanted to put some cool money in his pocket," Hit-Boy said. "But I've been in the game since I was 19. He got locked up at 19 until he was in his 30s. Now, I'm in my 30s and I'm locked up in the industry, because I'm still to this day in a bad publishing deal with Universal Music Publishing Group. I would feel so crazy to let my dad get caught up with these same systems, the same ways and ideologies that I've been fed since I was a kid. I just can't go for it."

Hit-Boy, 36, and his team decided against releasing Big Hit's new album on digital stream platforms. He wants people to buy directly from them, which according to his team has so far worked out.

"We got physical CDs. We're not going to do any DSPs, no streaming," the producer said. "I've been seeing a lot of people complain about that. Snoop just went on a platform and talked about how he got a billion streams, but only earned about \$40,000 or \$45,000. I feel like if we sell 10,000 CDs, we're going to blow that out the water. We're going to start small. We don't need to have a billion streams, because that might only equate to 10,000. We're going to let people buy the music directly from us."

Hit-Boy said he and his father are making music, doing business together like he always wanted. If he could win a Grammy with his dad, mother and young son in attendance, it would mean the world to him.

"Every time I won a Grammy, he was locked up," he said. "That would be dope to win. I'm going to speak it into existence."

part of Yellowstone near the Wyoming-Montana line, on Nov. 1, according to two federal citations issued Tuesday.

Brosnan, 70, is scheduled for a mandatory court appearance on Jan. 23 in the courtroom of the world's oldest national park. The Associated Press sent a request for comment to his Instagram account Thursday, and email messages to his agent

and attorney.

Yellowstone officials declined to comment. Brosnan was in the park on a personal visit and not for film work, the US Attorney's Office for Wyoming said.

Mammoth Terraces is a scenic spot of mineral-encrusted hot springs bubbling from a hillside. They're just some of the park's hundreds of thermal features, which range

from spouting geysers to gurgling mud pots, with water at or near the boiling point.

Going out-of-bounds in such areas can be dangerous: Some of the millions of people who visit Yellowstone each year get badly burned by ignoring warnings not to stray off the trail.

Getting caught can bring legal peril too, with jail time, hefty fines and bans from the park handed down to trespassers regularly. (AP)

NEW YORK: If you are an Amazon Prime Video user, get ready to see ads on movies and TV shows starting next month.

Prime will include ads beginning on Jan. 29, the company said in an email to U.S. members this week, setting a date for an announcement it made back in September. Prime members who want to keep their movies and TV shows ad-free will have to pay an additional \$2.99 per month.

Amazon is also planning to include advertisements in its Prime service in the United Kingdom and other European countries, as well as Canada, Mexico and Australia next year.

The tech giant follows other major streamers - such as Netflix and Disney - who have embraced a dual model that allows them to earn revenue from ads and also offer subscribers the option to opt out with a higher fee.

Amazon said in its email that it will "aim to have meaningfully fewer ads" than traditional TV and other streaming providers. (AP)



Actor Matthew McConaughey gestures as teams warm up before the Sugar Bowl CFP NCAA semifinal college football game between Washington and Texas, Monday, Jan. 1, in New Orleans. (AP)

Smart goals for a smart New Year

Psychologist's tips to setting attainable health resolutions

CLEVELAND, Ohio, Jan 2: New Year's resolutions are often abandoned almost as soon as they are made, but according to a psychologist from global health system Cleveland Clinic, the problem could lie in how the resolutions were formulated, rather than a perceived lack of willpower.

"To improve the chances of long-term success, individuals can carefully consider why they want to achieve a certain lifestyle goal, being as specific as possible, says David Creel PhD, who is a clinical psychologist, exercise physiologist and registered dietitian. "Regularly revisiting the 'why' behind the objective can help people keep up the momentum after the initial enthusiasm has worn off. Even if individuals have already broken their resolutions, they can reformulate these in a way that supports a successful outcome."

Once clear on their motivation, individuals can improve their chances of success by reviewing their work-life balance and committing to prioritizing self-care in the same way they would do for work success, for example.

The next step, says Dr. Creel, would be to formulate the health objective using the concept of smart goals, meaning goals that are Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic and Time-bound. He gives the following example of goal that is smart: "I am going to get up at 7am, four days a week, to take a 30-minute walk."

Another useful approach, says Dr. Creel, could be to reframe outcome-oriented goals as behavior-oriented goals. "Sometimes people start out with an outcome goal such as wanting to lose 15kg, whereas it could be more effective to identify behaviors that need to change to achieve this goal. For example, they could aim to walk on the treadmill, rather than sitting on the couch, when watching a favorite TV show."

Keeping up the momentum

Building in a time frame for the regular reevaluation of goals is also important, especially when overarching goals have been broken down into short-term, measurable goals, says Dr. Creel. This reassessment can be done by the individual themselves, or with support from a loved one. Other options are to join a virtual or in-person group, program or app that holds them accountable or keeps them motivated.

"This has to be well thought out, so your choice of accountability partner is not counterproductive," says Dr. Creel. "For example, if you are new to exercising and decide to work out with a friend who doesn't enjoy exercising, you could easily end up talking each other out of any activity."

Another helpful measure is the use of rewards. "In general, internal motivation is more powerful than external motivation," Dr Creel says. "However, when it comes to starting something new, judicious use of rewards can be really helpful. A non-food reward, such as a massage, after a certain number of weeks can keep you motivated as you head towards achieving your overall goal."

Setting some 'one and done' goals, such as signing up to complete a 5km walkathon, could also help support the achievement of a long-term goal, says Dr. Creel. He says that by achieving several smaller, realistic goals, the person can build their confidence and motivation.

Preparing for success

To increase their chances of success, individuals can also prepare and rehearse for temptations and challenges. "For example, if you want to commit to taking an exercise class every second day, but have previously found that some days leave you too tired to exercise, you could decide beforehand that on days like these you will do at least 10 minutes of exercise, which you can easily fit in while watching a TV program," says Dr. Creel.

Similarly, he says, a person can identify obstacles such as moods that interfere with good intentions and then think about what has helped to overcome this obstacle in the past, for example socializing might help if someone feels down. If people normally 'stress-eat', they could anticipate this by having a prepacked calorie-controlled treat at the back of the cupboard to reach for, which helps eliminate the 'all or nothing' feeling that could lead to overeating.

"If there are specific mood disorders that get in the way of success or a person is experiencing an ongoing struggle in an issue such as managing their weight, they could consider seeking support from a psychologist specialized in that area to help them to explore and manage the issue," Dr. Creel concludes.



Crowds gather for the Surfing Santa event Christmas Eve morning in Cocoa Beach Fla., on Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023. (AP)

World population hits 8 billion on Jan 1, up by 75 million

The world population grew by 75 million people over the past year and on New Year's Day it will stand at more than 8 billion people, according to figures released by the US Census Bureau on Thursday.

The worldwide growth rate in the past year was just under 1%. At the start of 2024, 4.3 births and two deaths are expected worldwide every second, according to the Census Bureau figures.

The growth rate for the United States in the past year was 0.53%, about half the worldwide figure. The US added 1.7 million people and will have a population on

New Year's Day of 335.8 million people.

If the current pace continues through the end of the decade, the 2020s could be the slowest-growing decade in US history, yielding a growth rate of less than 4% over the 10-year-period from 2020 to 2030, said William Frey, a demographer at The Brookings Institution.

The slowest-growing decade currently was in the aftermath of the Great Depression in the 1930s, when the growth rate was 7.3%.

"Of course growth may tick up a bit as we leave the

pandemic years. But it would still be difficult to get to 7.3%," Frey said.

At the start of 2024, the United States is expected to experience one birth every nine seconds and one death every 9.5 seconds. However, immigration will keep the population from dropping. Net international migration is expected to add one person to the US population every 28.3 seconds. This combination of births, deaths and net international migration will increase the US population by one person every 24.2 seconds. (AP)

US lawmakers rally for Medicare to cover latest drugs

WASHINGTON, Jan 2, (AP): New obesity drugs are showing promising results in helping some people shed pounds but the injections will remain out of reach for millions of older Americans because Medicare is forbidden to cover such medications.

Drugmakers and a wide-ranging and growing bipartisan coalition of lawmakers are gearing up to push for that to change next year.

As obesity rates rise among older adults, some lawmakers say the United States cannot afford to keep a decades-old law that prohibits Medicare from paying for new weight loss drugs, including Wegovy and Zepbound. But research shows the initial price tag of covering those drugs is so steep it could drain Medicare's already shaky bank account.

A look at the debate around if - and how - Medicare should cover obesity drugs:

The Food and Drug Administration has in recent years approved a new class of weekly injectables, Novo Nordisk's Wegovy and Eli Lilly's Zepbound, to treat obesity.

People can lose as much as 15% to 25% of their body weight on the drugs, which imitate the hormones that regulate appetites by communicating fullness between the gut and brain when people eat.

The cost of the drugs, beloved by celebrities, has largely limited them to the wealthy. A monthly supply of Wegovy rings up at \$1,300 and Zepbound will put you out \$1,000. Shortages for the drugs have also limited the supplies. Private insurers often do not cover the medications or place strict restrictions on who can access them.

Last month, a large, international study found a 20% reduced risk of serious heart problems such as heart attacks in patients

who took Wegovy.

Long before Oprah Winfrey and TikTok influencers alike gushed about the benefits of these weight loss drugs, Congress made a rule: Medicare Part D, the health insurance plan for older Americans to get prescriptions, could not cover medications used to help gain or lose weight. Medicare will cover obesity screening and behavioral treatment if a person has a body mass index over 30. People with BMIs over 30 are considered obese.

The rule was tacked onto legislation passed by Congress in 2003 that overhauled Medicare's prescription drug benefits.

Lawmakers balked at paying high costs for drugs to treat a condition that was historically regarded as cosmetic. Safety problems in the 1990s with the anti-obesity treatment known as fen-phen, which had to be withdrawn from the market, were also fresh in their minds.

Medicaid, the state and federal partnership program for low-income people, does cover the drugs in some areas, but access is fragmented.

Studies

New studies are showing the drugs do more than help patients slim down.

Rep. Brad Wenstrup, R-Ohio, introduced legislation with Rep. Raul Ruiz, D-Calif., this year that would allow Medicare to cover the now-forbidden anti-obesity drugs, therapy, nutritionists and dietitians.

"For years there was a stigma against these people, then there was a stigma about talking about obesity," Wenstrup said in an interview with The Associated Press. "Now we're in a place where we're saying this is a health problem we need to deal with."

He believes the intervention could allevi-

ate all sorts of ailments associated with obesity that cost the system money.

"The problem is so prevalent," Wenstrup said. "People are starting to realize you have to take into consideration the savings that comes with better health."

Last year, about 40% of the nearly 66 million people enrolled in Medicare had obesity. That roughly mirrors the larger U.S. population, where 42% of adults struggle with obesity, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Complications

Notably, Medicare does cover certain surgical procedures to treat medical complications of obesity in people with a BMI of 35 and at least one related condition. Congress approved the exception in 2006, noted Mark McClellan, a former head of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the FDA.

The 17-year-old law may provide a blueprint for expanding coverage of the new drugs, which mirror the results of bariatric surgery in some cases, McClellan said. Evidence showed that the surgery reduced the risks of death and serious illness from conditions related to obesity.

"And that's been the basis for coverage all this time," McClellan said.

Still, the upfront price tag for lifting the rule remains a challenge.

Some research shows offering weight loss drugs would assure Medicare's impending bankruptcy. A Vanderbilt University analysis this year put an annual price of about \$26 billion on anti-obesity drugs for Medicare if just 10% of the system's enrollees were prescribed the medication.

Other research, however, shows it could also save the government billions, even trillions over many years, because it would reduce some of the chronic conditions and problems that stem from obesity.

An analysis this year from the University of Southern California's Schaeffer Center estimated the government could save as much as \$245 billion in a decade, with the majority of savings coming from reducing hospitalizations and other care.

"What we did is we looked at the long-term health consequences of treating obesity in the Medicare population," said the study's co-author, Darius Lakdawalla, the director of research at the center. The Schaeffer Center receives funding from pharmaceutical companies, including Eli Lilly.

Lakdawalla said it's nearly impossible to put a cost on covering the drugs because no one knows how many people will end up taking them or what the drugs will be priced at. The Congressional Budget Office, which is tasked with pricing out legislative proposals, acknowledged this difficulty in an October blog post, with the director calling for more research on the topic.

Overall, the agency "expects that the drug's net cost to the Medicare program would be significant over the next 10 years."

The cost of the legislation is the biggest hang up in getting support, Ruiz said.

"When we talk about the initial cost, I often have to educate the members that the CBO does not take into account cost savings in their cost benefit analysis," Ruiz told the AP. "Taking that number in isolation, one does not get the full picture of the full economics of reducing obesity and all of its comorbidities in our patients."

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Australia lock horns with Pakistan

It's all about Warner in his final test at the Sydney Cricket Ground

Djokovic helps Serbia reach quarterfinals of United Cup



Croatia's Borna Coric serves to Tallon Griekspoor of the Netherlands during their United Cup tennis match in Sydney, Australia, Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024. (AP)

Gauff starts 2024 with win over Liu in Auckland

PERTH, Australia, Jan 2, (AP): Novak Djokovic endured a wrist injury to lead Serbia into a United Cup mixed teams quarterfinal showdown against host Australia.

The world No. 1 was troubled by his right wrist during practice on Tuesday morning and he received intense treatment from his physio.

Djokovic was cleared to play his singles match against Jiri Lehecka later in the day, and it was just as well given that Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova defeated Olga Danilovic 6-1 3-6 6-3 to give the Czech Republic a 1-0 lead.

Djokovic looked on track for an easy victory against Lehecka while leading by a set and 3-1. But with his wrist troubles growing, Djokovic started making unforced errors. He took a medical timeout after losing the second-set tiebreak and came out

strongly with a double break in the third set to win 6-1, 6-7 (3), 6-1.

"I managed to play through," Djokovic said. "It's not the first time or the last time, these things happen. You just have to manage. You have to find a solution and thankfully I managed to finish the match."

There was confusion after the match as to whether Serbia had done enough to qualify for the quarterfinals.

Officials initially said that even if Serbia lost the mixed doubles and the tie, it would still make the quarterfinals as the best second-place team in Perth. But organizers later clarified that Serbia would be out if it lost the mixed doubles in straight sets.

Djokovic opted out of the mixed doubles, most likely thinking Serbia had already qualified. Serbia still won 4-6, 7-6 (2), 10-8.

Serbia topped Group E, and will take on Group C winner Australia on Wednesday in a quarterfinal in Perth. Poland will face China in the other Perth quarterfinal.

In Sydney on Tuesday, Chile defeated Greece 2-1.

Stefanos Tsitsipas - runner-up at last year's Australian Open - was scheduled to face Chile's Nicolas Jarry in the men's singles but withdrew with a back injury. He was replaced by 19-year-old Stefanos Sakellaridis, who lost to Jarry 6-3, 3-6, 7-5 to level the tie.

Tsitsipas and Maria Sakkari then lost to Daniela Seguel and Tomas Barrios Vera 6-7 (5), 6-3, 10-6 and Chile leads the group ahead of Canada, which plays its final group game on Wednesday against Greece.

Greece needs to beat Canada to have any hope of advancing to Thursday's quarterfinals in Sydney's Ken Rosewall Arena.

Netherlands (1-0) was scheduled to play Croatia (0-1) late in Sydney.

In Auckland, New Zealand, U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff started her 2024 season and her defense of the Auckland Tennis Classic title Tuesday with a rusty-at-times 6-4, 6-2 win over American compatriot Claire Liu.

Gauff used her powerful forehand well but took time to find her range, over-hitting at times in the first set.

She raced to an early 4-0 lead then dropped serve, served for the first set at 5-2 and lost serve again to love before composing herself to overcome a tenacious performance by Liu.

Gauff defeated Aryna Sabalenka in the U.S. Open final 2-6, 6-3, 6-2 for her first major title last year. On Tuesday, Gauff mostly stuck to the baseline while Liu came more often and effectively to the net. But as Gauff settled in and found her service rhythm, she took the second set more convincingly in 35 minutes, the match in 82 minutes.

Emma Raducanu, the 2021 U.S. Open champion, was given a thorough workout in her first match since April before beating Romanian qualifier Elena-Gabriela Ruse 6-3, 4-6, 7-5.

Raducanu had begun to feel the effects of wrist and ankle injuries when she played in Auckland last year. In April she bowed to the inevitable and broke from the tour for surgery and rehabilitation.

She couldn't have asked for a more searching test of her fitness than she received from Ruse who kept her on court for 2 hours, 25 minutes.

Raducanu took the first set comfortably with a single break of serve. But from then on Ruse made her fight for every point.

Ruse swung hard, forcing Raducanu on the defensive and had three service breaks to two in taking the second set.

Raducanu served for the match at 5-2 and 5-4 in the deciding set but Ruse broke back on both occasions. The Briton served again for the match at 6-5 and, with the help of a timely ace, prevailed on her fourth match-point.

SYDNEY, Jan 2, (AP): The leadup to the third test between Australia and Pakistan at David Warner's home Sydney Cricket Ground was always going to be about the opening batter himself playing his final test in the sport's traditional format.

Warner has helped to hype what amounts to a match with little really on the line for the home side - Australia has already clinched the three-test series with victories in Perth and Melbourne. The visitors still have something to play for - the last time Pakistan beat Australia in a test Australia was 1985 - at the SCG.

Warner announced during a New Year's Day news conference that he will also add one-day internationals to his retirement list. But in typical Warner fashion, he said he'd make a comeback at the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy if asked.

He said the time was right to conclude his ODI career following Australia's recent World Cup triumph in India, where he was the champion team's leading run-scorer.

Warner will continue to play Twenty20 cricket for Australia, at least until



Australia's Mitchell Starc, right, attempts a run out of Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan, left, during the fourth day of their cricket Test match in Melbourne, Friday, Dec. 29, 2023. (AP)

expires at the end of this season.

Warner will have a commentary role with Fox Sports television later this year but beginning Wednesday he will again open the batting for an Australian lineup aiming for a test sweep of Pakistan.

On Tuesday, Warner took to social media to plead for the return of his "baggy green" test cricket cap which was in a bag that went missing in transit between Melbourne and Sydney this week.

"It's sentimental to me. It's something I'd love to have in my hands walking out there this week," Warner said in the post on Instagram.

Australian selectors have confirmed there'll be no change from the starting XI that won by 79 runs in Melbourne.

Pakistan, meanwhile, decided to rest ace fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi and drop opening batter Imam-ul-Haq for the third test.

With World Test Championship points to play for, Pakistan made the call to leave out Afridi and to call in spinner Sajid Khan. First-choice spinner Abrar Ahmed remained on the sidelines because of a right leg injury.

Captain Shan Masood had earlier said Pakistan was keen to play two spinners in Sydney.

"We think that it might turn in Sydney. So we want to give ourselves the best possible opportunity," Masood said. "We've kept Abrar on the Australian tour. They have looked after him very well. His rehab process has been going very well. But we have to be absolutely sure he is close to 100% fit."

The call to drop Imam comes after the opener made scores of 62, 10, 10 and 12 in the first two tests. In his place, 21-year-old Saim Ayub will make his test debut.

In an expecting change to the fielding positions, Pakistan warmed up with Babar Azam in the slips on Tuesday and Abdullah Shafique not featuring in the cordon. Shafique put down three chances at first slip in the opening two tests.

CRICKET

T20 World Cup in the United States and Caribbean in June.

"It was a (ODI) decision that I was very, very comfortable with," the 37-year-old Warner told Australian Associated Press. "To win in India, from where we were, was absolutely amazing."

Australia lost two early games in the group stage of the World Cup, denting its title hopes, but Warner said it helped inspire the squad.

"The bond just got stronger with each other and it's not by fluke or by chance that we were able to get to where we were," he said.

In 111 test matches Warner has accumulated 8,695 runs at an average of 44.58, including 26 centuries and a career-high score of 335 not out, scored against Pakistan in 2019.

Warner retires from the 50-over format as the sixth-highest run-scorer in Australian ODI history, having scored 6,932 runs from his 161 matches, and a two-time World Cup winner. His 22 ODI centuries are the second-most by any Australian ODI player, behind only Ricky Ponting, who made 29 in 105 more innings than Warner played.

The Champions Trophy, set to be played in Pakistan next year, is among the only pieces of silverware missing from Warner's resume; the last time Australia won it in 2009, he was not yet a certainty for selection in the starting side.

"If I'm playing decent cricket in two years' time and I'm around and they need someone, I'm going to be available," he said.

Warner said the decision to quit ODIs would create more opportunities to play franchise cricket overseas, including in the United Arab Emirates-based ILT20. He is also eager to remain in Australia's Big Bash League after his contract with the Sydney Thunder

Purdue faces big tests in Big Ten, with Maryland, Illinois coming up

WASHINGTON, Jan 2, (AP): Purdue should be accustomed to playing highly ranked opponents by this point of the season.

The top-ranked Boilermakers rolled through Tennessee, Gonzaga and Marquette in consecutive days to win the Maui Invitational when all three of them were among the top 11 teams in the country. A few weeks later, they took down Arizona for their first win over a team ranked No. 1 since beating the Wildcats on Nov. 25, 2000.

Now, they will face ninth-ranked Illinois on Friday night in one of the early showdowns in Big Ten play.

Purdue (12-1), which also faces Maryland on Tuesday night, has already dropped a conference game to Northwestern, and another loss this week would put coach Matt Painter's crew in catch-up mode before they even hit mid-January.

"We still haven't won a road game and we're going into a beehive where they didn't lose in the Big Ten last season," Painter said of the Terps (9-4), who have won six straight games. "I feel like we've made strides. We have experience. We've some guys who went through some things. We have different guys off the bench that play off the bench, depending how the night unfolds."

Zach Edey, the reigning national player of the year, has done nothing to dissuade voters from crowning him again, averaging 23.2 points and 10.3 rebounds. But along with their usual

contributions from Fletcher Loyer and Braden Smith, the Boilermakers have been getting more from Mason Gillis and Trey Kaufman-Renn, extending their lineup and making them more dangerous.

The Illini (10-2) routed Fairleigh Dickinson last week in their first game without leading scorer Terrence Shannon Jr., who has been suspended after he was charged with rape for an alleged incident that occurred last fall in Lawrence, Kansas.

Much will be learned about how the Illini will fare without him this week. They face Northwestern (10-2) on

BASKETBALL

Tuesday night before taking on the Boilermakers in a top-10 matchup certain to draw plenty of attention.

"We have really, really good players and quality depth," Illini coach Brad Underwood said, "and it might not have shown with some of the young guys in some of these early games. We played a very demanding and challenging schedule. I think it's a blessing that I have an old team, and a team that is very dedicated and committed to each other and the process."

Gonzaga dropped from No. 11 to 24th in the Top 25 this week, barely staying in the poll for the 142nd consecutive week following its loss to San Diego State.



Phoenix Suns' Jusuf Nurkic, right, tries to block a shot from Portland Trail Blazers' Jerami Grant (9) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Phoenix, Monday, Jan. 1, 2024. (AP)

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SPORTS

Pistons 'blown' out by Rockets

Pacers snap Bucks home winning run

HOUSTON, Jan 2 (AP): Two nights after their NBA record-tying 28-game losing streak ended, the Detroit Pistons were blown out 136-113 on Monday night by the Houston Rockets, who got 26 points and nine assists from Alperen Sengun and 22 points from Jalen Green.

Detroit (3-30), which beat Toronto 129-127 on Saturday, failed to win consecutive games for the second time this season. Green and Sengun combined to score 37 points in the third quarter as the Rockets outscored the Pistons 47-25 in the period to take a 106-80 lead into the fourth.

Sengun shot 9 of 13 from the field and Green made five 3-pointers as the Rockets snapped a three-game skid.

Pacers 122, Bucks 113

In Milwaukee, Tyrese Haliburton had 26 points, 11 assists and nine rebounds, and Indiana snapped Milwaukee's 15-game home winning streak.

Benedict Mathurin added 25 points and a career-high 13 rebounds for the Pacers, and Isaiah Jackson had 18 points and nine assists. T.J. McConnell scored 12 of his 16 points in the fourth quarter and also had nine assists.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 30 points, 18 rebounds and 11 assists for his 38th career triple-double, and third this season. The two-time MVP is averaging 46.3 points, 13.5 rebounds and 4.8 assists in four meetings with Indiana this season, but the Bucks are 1-3 in those games.

Raptors 124, Cavaliers 121

In Toronto, Pascal Siakam scored 36 points, Jakob Poeltl had 14 points and 11 rebounds and new-look Toronto recovered after squandering a 19-point lead to



Toronto Raptors guard RJ Barrett, (center), scores as Cleveland Cavaliers defenders Craig Porter Jr. (9), Tristan Thompson (12), Georges Niang (20) and Caris LeVert (3) defend during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Toronto. (AP)

beat Cleveland.

RJ Barrett had 19 points and nine rebounds and Immanuel Quickley added 14 in the players' first start for the Raptors. Barrett and Quickley were acquired from the Knicks on Saturday in a trade that sent OG Anunoby to New York.

Scottie Barnes scored 20 points and Dennis Schroder added 12 points off the bench as Toronto bounced back after falling at Detroit on Saturday, when the Pistons snapped an NBA record-tying 28-game losing streak.

Nuggets 111, Hornets 93

In Denver, Jamal Murray scored 25 points and Michael Porter Jr. added 22 as Denver handed short-handed Charlotte its 11th straight loss.

Nikola Jokic had 13 points, 11 rebounds and six assists for the Nuggets. Two of the Hornets' losses during the streak have come against the Nuggets in the last 1 1/2 weeks.

Aaron Gordon, who suffered cuts to his hand and face when he was bitten by a dog on Christmas Day, had 10 points

BASKETBALL

in his return for Denver. Gordon played with a small protective bandage on his right hand and his facial cuts were barely visible.

Suns 109, Trail Blazers 88

In Phoenix, Bradley Beal scored 21 points and Phoenix beat Portland for its fourth straight win.

With Kevin Durant sidelined by right hamstring tightness, the Suns had seven players score in double figures. Jusuf Nurkic, playing against his former team, had 18 points. Chimezie Metu, starting for Durant, scored 14, and Grayson Allen and reserve Eric Gordon each had 12.

Phoenix star Devin Booker was held to 10 points on 4-of-16 shooting, but contributed eight rebounds and six assists. Bol Bol helped make up for Durant's absence with 11 points and nine rebounds.

Scott Henderson led the Trail Blazers with 17 points. Jerami Grant scored 15 points, and Malcolm Brogdon and Jabari Walker each had 10.

Knicks 112, Timberwolves 106

In New York, Julius Randle scored 39 points, OG Anunoby had 17 in a strong debut with his new team and New York beat Minnesota.

Jalen Brunson added 16 points and a career-high 14 assists for the Knicks, who snapped a three-game losing streak after putting Anunoby into the starting lineup for his first game since coming from Toronto in Saturday's trade that sent RJ Barrett and Immanuel Quickley to the Raptors.

Jazz 127, Mavericks 90

In Salt Lake City, Jordan Clarkson came off the bench to get 20 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds for Utah's first regular-season triple-double since 2008, leading the Jazz past Dallas.

Clarkson got the first triple-double of his career, and the first for the Jazz in a regular-season game since Carlos Boozer had one on Feb. 13, 2008, a stretch of 1,256 games.

Al-Nasr face Khaitan

Al-Kuwait look to bounce back after draw

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 2: The twelfth round of the Zain Premier League concludes today with two matches. In the first encounter, Al-Nasr will face Khaitan at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium at 5:35 pm, while Al-Kuwait will take on Al-Shabab at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium at 8:00 pm.

Al-Kuwait (27 points) is eager to regain its winning streak after being held to a draw by Al-Salmiya in the last round (2-2), resulting in a loss of two crucial points and a drop to third place in the league standings.

The coach of the Tunisian team "Al-Abyad," Nabil Maal-

SOCCER

oul, recognizes the critical nature of the situation and the necessity of avoiding any further point loss to prevent the gap from widening with the top two teams. Such a scenario could jeopardize their chances of securing the title for the third consecutive season. In recent training sessions, Maaloul emphasized capitalizing on opportunities and organizing the team's defensive strategies, addressing the issues that led to the draw against Al-Salmiya.

On the other side, Al-Shabab (11 points) is determined to halt the recent point losses, having failed to secure a victory or draw in the last four rounds. The team aims to restore its reputation against Al-Kuwait, a team it defeated 4-1 in the initial stages of

the competition.

In the second clash, Al-Nasr (22 points) aims to replicate its earlier victory over Khaitan, having triumphed with two goals in the first encounter. Simultaneously, the team seeks to maintain its pursuit of the leading teams and compete for an elevated position in the league.

Al-Nasr's coach, Zaher Al-Adwani, hopes to build on the positive results of the season, particularly in the last three matches, where they secured 7 points by



A file photo of players challenging for the ball during Zain Premier League game.

defeating Al-Shabab and Kazma 1-0 and 2-0, respectively, and drawing 1-1 with Al-Salmiya. These results have placed Al-Anabi in the fourth position.

Conversely, Khaitan's Romanian coach, Florin Matrock, is eager to secure his first victory with the team and accumulate nine points. Since taking over from Ibrahim Obaid, Matrock has faced three defeats, losing to Al-Arabi 0-4, Al-Fahaheel by a single goal, and Al-Qadsia in a clean sweep.

Kadish, Aoun Al-Saluli, Ali Al-Bulaihi, Ali Lagami, Hassan Al-Tambakti, Saud Abdul-Hamid, Fawaz Al-Saqour, and Abdullah Al-Khaybari. The midfield comprises Abdul-Ilah Al-Maliki, Mukhtar Ali, Faisal Al-Ghamdi, Eid Al-Mawlid, Salem Al-Dosari, Abbas Al-Hassan, Nasser Al-Dosari, Muhammad Kanno, and Sami Al-Naji. The attacking options feature Fahd Al-Mawlid, Ayman Yahya, Abdul-Rahman Gharib, Firas Al-Braikan, Abdullah Radif, and Saleh Al-Shehri.

During their current training camp in Doha, the team is scheduled to play three friendly matches, starting with Lebanon tomorrow, followed by a match against the Palestine national team five



Utah Jazz forward John Collins (20) steals the ball from Dallas Mavericks forward Derrick Jones Jr. (55) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Salt Lake City. (AP)

Egypt, UAE, Tunisia and Libya advance to semis

Kuwait bid farewell to Arab Basketball Championship

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

CAIRO, Jan 2: The initial foray of our Kuwait basketball team in the ongoing Arab Basketball Championship in Cairo, Egypt, concluded with a quarter-final loss to the Libyan, 76-89. Egypt, the Emirates, Tunisia, and Libya secured spots in the semi-finals, vying for the coveted Arab title.

Despite securing a quarter-final berth by finishing fourth in Group Two with a solitary win against Morocco and three defeats to Egypt, Tunisia, and the Emirates, Kuwait team exhibited commendable performance throughout the tournament. Despite facing opponents with superior capabilities, Kuwait consistently demonstrated resilience and competitiveness.

In their recent encounter with the Libya, Kuwait initially showcased an impressive performance. However, they faltered in the last two minutes, allowing their opponents to clinch the victory. The first quarter saw a closely contested match, with Kuwaitis holding their ground despite the physical advantage of the towering Libyan players. The quarter concluded with Libya leading 21-18. The second quarter ended in a 39-39, with Alexander Al-Ghais leading the scoring for Kuwait. Although Kuwait took the lead at the start of the third quarter, the Libyan team, fueled by standout performances from Omar Fawaz and Naseem Ismail, managed to secure a 66-60 lead by the end of the quarter. The closely matched performance continued, but Kuwait haste in the

last two minutes, coupled with the absence of player Mustafa Al-Rifai, allowed the Libyan team to capitalize on quick counterattacks and extend their lead to 76-89.

Looking ahead, the draw for the cup championships across all age groups for basketball teams is scheduled for today at 6:00 pm at the Fed-

eration's headquarters in the Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Indoor Hall Com-

BASKETBALL

plex. The Federation has invited clubs to attend the draw activities. Kuwait,

the reigning champions, secured their 16th title last season by defeating Al-Qadsia 97-77 in the final match. The tournament, held 57 times, has seen Al-Qadsia winning the title 21 times, Kuwait 16 times, Al-Arabi 9 times, followed by Kazma 3 times, Al-Jahra twice, and Al-Nasr and Al-Sahel once each.



A Kuwaiti player dribbles past an opponent during the Arab Basketball Championship match between Kuwait and Libya.

Saudis scheduled to play three friendly matches

Four players omitted as Mancini unveils Saudi Arabia final 'roster' for Asian Cup

RIYADH, Jan 2: The Saudi national football team's coach, Roberto Mancini, revealed the final roster for the upcoming Asian Cup in Qatar this month. This announcement came after the exclusion of four players from the initial squad he had disclosed last Saturday.

The omitted players are goalkeeper Mohamed Al-Yami, midfielder Ali Hazazi, and strikers Khaled Al-Ghanem and Mohamed Maran. The confirmed squad consists of 26 players, with Nawaf Al-Aqidi, Raghed Najjar, and Ahmed Al-Kassar as goalkeepers. The defensive lineup includes Hassan

SOCCER

Kadish, Aoun Al-Saluli, Ali Al-Bulaihi, Ali Lagami, Hassan Al-Tambakti, Saud Abdul-Hamid, Fawaz Al-Saqour, and Abdullah Al-Khaybari. The midfield comprises Abdul-Ilah Al-Maliki, Mukhtar Ali, Faisal Al-Ghamdi, Eid Al-Mawlid, Salem Al-Dosari, Abbas Al-Hassan, Nasser Al-Dosari, Muhammad Kanno, and Sami Al-Naji. The attacking options feature Fahd Al-Mawlid, Ayman Yahya, Abdul-Rahman Gharib, Firas Al-Braikan, Abdullah Radif, and Saleh Al-Shehri.

During their current training camp in Doha, the team is scheduled to play three friendly matches, starting with Lebanon tomorrow, followed by a match against the Palestine national team five



Roberto Mancini - coach of the Saudi national team.

days later, and concluding with a fixture against Hong Kong on January 10.

In the preceding three stages of preparation, Saudi Arabia engaged in six friendly matches against teams such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Costa Rica, South Korea, Nigeria, and Mali. Additionally, Al-Akhdar participated in two matches during the first round of the second phase of the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup, facing Pakistan and Jordan.

As a three-time Asian champion, Saudi Arabia is set to compete in Group 6 of the Asian Cup, alongside Oman, Kyrgyzstan, and Thailand, with the tournament kicking off on January 12.

Jenni 'testifies' in assault case

MADRID, Jan 2, (AP): The Spanish player assaulted by the soccer president at the Women's World Cup final appeared in court on Tuesday to testify against the former official.

Jenni Hermoso was at the Madrid court to give her version of the kiss by Luis Rubiales following Spain's victory over England in the final in Sydney in August.

The incident sparked outrage across the soccer world and ignited one of the worst crises in the history of the sport in Spain. It also led to a boycott of the national team by the World Cup-winning players, and to the eventual resignation of Rubiales despite his denial of wrongdoing.

The testimony was expected behind closed doors. Spanish media said Hermoso asked the judge to keep her court appearance as private as possible. She arrived wearing a grey coat and waved to journalists before entering the court through one of its main entrances along with her lawyers.

Spanish state prosecutors accused Rubiales of assault and coercion, alleging he tried to convince Hermoso and her relatives to publicly downplay his action.

The judge is also hearing testimony from other World Cup-winning players, coaches and federation officials, before deciding whether to start a trial.

Rubiales previously denied wrongdoing to the judge who imposed a restraining order on him not to contact Hermoso.

The 33-year-old Hermoso, the record scorer for Spain's women's team, said last year she received threats in the fallout from the incident, though she did not elaborate.



Washington tight end Jack Westover (37) makes the catch against Texas defensive back Jahdae Barron (23) during the second half of the Sugar Bowl CFP NCAA semifinal college football game in New Orleans. (AP)

Sports

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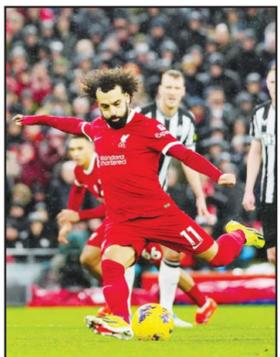
Liverpool open up 3-point lead in EPL

Salah scores 2 after changing boots

LIVERPOOL, England, Jan 2, (AP): Mohamed Salah headed off to the Africa Cup of Nations on the back of a starring role for Liverpool in their 4-2 win over Newcastle that opened up a three-point lead in the English Premier League.

An individual performance that started with his latest failure from the penalty spot ended with Salah scoring Liverpool's first and last goals and having a hand in the other two for his team in a chaotic game in wet and wild conditions at Anfield. All of the goals came in an end-to-end second half.

The league pauses for the FA Cup and then a winter break lasting much of the rest of January with Liverpool looking the team most likely to stop Manchester City winning an unprecedented fourth straight top-flight title. City are in third place, five points behind Liverpool - and two behind Aston



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah kicks the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Liverpool and Newcastle, at Anfield stadium in Liverpool, England. (AP)

Villa - with a game in hand. Salah, who could be missing until mid-February depending on how far Egypt advances in the Africa Cup, could be the player to lead Liverpool to a record-tying 20th league championship. He has 14 goals for the campaign, tied for the most with City's Erling Haaland.

"I said to myself, 'Are you going to leave for the national team with that performance? Not really,'" Salah said, referring to his penalty failure in the 22nd minute. "I just had to step up."

Salah said he changed his boots at halftime. "When I felt like it was playing with my head, I was like, 'OK, I change.' Make my mind calm, focus on the game."

SOCCER

Curtis Jones and Cody Gakpo scored the other goals for Liverpool in howling rain as Newcastle conceded 34 shots. Eighteen came in the first half, the most in the league this season.

Newcastle manager Eddie Howe is coming under pressure with his team in ninth place, out of Europe completely and also recently losing in the League Cup. The Saudi-controlled northeast club equalized through Alexander Isak and made it 3-2 through Sven Botman's header at a corner but was totally dominated by Liverpool.

"I know in time we will get the results we need," Howe said after Newcastle's seventh loss in their last eight games.

"I can always see a light at the end of the tunnel if the players continue to give everything they've got."

Salah had his first penalty saved by Martin Dubravka after Luis Diaz was tripped by Botman. That was his fourth failure from the spot in his last nine attempts.

He bounced back by finishing off a team move in the 49th for his 150th league goal for Liverpool, supplying a fine pass for Diogo Jota to set up Jones to tap in, then playing a pass with the outside of his left foot for Gakpo to turn home.

'Training camp is progressing'

Kuwait handball players 'ready' to shine at Asian Championship



A file photo of Kuwait handball players celebrating.

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

ZAGREB, Jan 2: Kuwait national handball team is nearing the conclusion of its international preparation phase as it readies itself for participation in the 21st Asian Championship for men's teams, also serving as the "2025 World Cup Qualifiers." This significant event is scheduled to take place in the Kingdom of Bahrain from January 11 to 25, where our team will compete in the first group alongside Qatar, Oman, and China Taipei. Kuwait underwent an extensive European camp in Slovenia and Croatia, engaging in several test matches to fine-tune their skills.

HANDBALL

Guided by coach Saeed Hegazy, supported by compatriot Mohamed Masoudan, the technical staff of our Algerian national handball team emphasized both the physical and technical aspects during the European training camp. The focus extended to implementing strategic plans for defense and offense, preparing the team comprehensively for the challenges they will face in the upcoming Asian

Championship. Hegazy made the final selections for the squad, concluding the camp this Saturday before the team returns home and subsequently heads to the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Faisal Siwan, the Director of the National Teams, affirmed that the training camp is progressing according to the established roadmap. He emphasized the significance of friendly matches in enhancing player understanding, harmony, and field experience. Siwan expressed satisfaction with the high fighting spirit displayed by the players and their determination to achieve peak physical and technical conditions. He noted the players' commitment to representing Kuwait at the Asian Championship, while the administrative body works diligently to overcome obstacles and create an environment conducive to their mental and artistic development.

In a separate development, our national junior and youth teams have resumed local training at the Martyr Fahd Al-Ahmad Center in Daiya. This preparation is geared towards upcoming matches, following the plan crafted by the Handball Federation's training body and national teams' technical staff.



Liverpool's Trent Alexander-Arnold, (second left), kicks the ball and missing a chance to score during the English Premier League soccer match between Liverpool and Newcastle, at Anfield stadium in Liverpool, England. (AP)

Oregon rolls over Liberty in Fiesta Bowl

Michigan sets up championship showdown with Washington

PASADENA, Calif., Jan 2, (AP): Blake Corum rushed for a 17-yard touchdown on the second snap of overtime, and top-seeded Michigan advanced to its first College Football Playoff championship game with a 27-20 victory over fourth-seeded Alabama in the Rose Bowl on Monday.

Michigan's defense ended only the second overtime game in the 110 editions of the Rose Bowl when Alabama quarterback Jalen Milroe was emphatically stopped as he attempted to sneak up the middle on fourth down from the Michigan 3.

Coach Jim Harbaugh's Wolverines (14-0) will play for their school's first national title since 1997 against Washington on Monday night in Houston, but only after a late comeback and a dramatic finish.

Roman Wilson made a 4-yard TD catch with 1:34 left in regulation for the Wolverines, who hadn't scored in the second half until that gritty 75-yard drive led by J.J. McCarthy.

Corum needed only two snaps to score in the first overtime period.

Milroe found Jermaine Burton at the Michigan 3 on third-and-goal in OT, and Alabama turned to its quarterback on the final play call. But, Milroe ran into a waiting Michigan defense and was stopped 2 yards short of the goal line.

FOOTBALL

Jase McClellan rushed for 87 yards and two touchdowns for Alabama (12-2), which fell short of the chance to play for Nick Saban's seventh national title at the school. The Tide led 20-13 on Will Reichard's 52-yard field goal with 4:41 to play, but their defense couldn't preserve the lead.

McCarthy passed for 221 yards and three TDs for Michigan. Milroe passed for 116 yards and rushed for 63 for the Tide, whose 11-game winning streak ended.

Sugar Bowl

Washington 37, Texas 31
In New Orleans, Michael Penix Jr. passed for 430 yards and two touchdowns, and Washington held off Texas in the Sugar Bowl to advance to the College Football Playoff championship game, earning both the sixth-year quarterback with two surgically repaired knees and the beleaguered Pac-12 one more game this season.

The second-ranked Huskies (14-0) will face No. 1 Michigan next Monday night in Houston, looking for their first national championship since 1991 and the Pac-12's first since Southern California in 2004. Washington is one of 10 schools fleeing the Pac-12 for other Power Five conferences next year, with the Huskies headed to join Michigan in the Big Ten.

No. 3 Texas (12-2) had four shots at the end zone after getting to the UW 12 with 15 seconds left, but Quinn Ewers missed on the last three. The final throw was a fade to a well-covered Adonai Mitchell that sailed long.

In Texas' first CFP appearance and final football game as a member of the Big 12 before it goes to the Southeastern Conference, Ewers passed for 318

yards and a touchdown. But it wasn't enough against Penix and his array of talented receivers.

Fiesta Bowl
Oregon 45, Liberty 6
In Glendale, Bo Nix threw for 363 yards and five touchdowns to cap a record-breaking career, and Oregon closed out a season that started with national title expectations by rolling over Liberty.

Nix played like a Heisman Trophy finalist after opting to join his teammates on the field one last time, throwing for 257 yards and four touchdowns as the Ducks built a 31-6 halftime lead. Nix finished 28 of 35 in just over three quarters and completed 77.44% of his passes this season, breaking the NCAA record of 77.36%, set by Alabama's

Mac Jones in 2020.

Tez Johnson had 11 catches for 172 yards and a touchdown, part of a 584-yard afternoon by the Ducks (12-2).

Liberty (13-1) overcame the death of freshman offensive lineman Tajh Boyd early in camp with the best season in the program's short FBS history.

Keidon Salter finished 15 for 24 for 126 yards with a touchdown and interception and Quinton Cooley rushed for 79 yards on eight carries. CJ Daniels had eight catches for 79 yards and Bentley Hanshaw caught a 17-yard touchdown pass.

Citrus Bowl
Tennessee 35, Iowa 0
In Orlando, Freshman quarterback Nico Iamaleava ran for three touch-

Rodionova upsets Kenin

Nadal returns with win in Brisbane in first competitive singles match in year

BRISBANE, Australia, Jan 2, (AP): His arms raised triumphantly, unable to conceal a winner's grin, Rafael Nadal took time to savor a victory that was 12 months and a lot of rehab in the making.

Sure, it was the first round of a season-opening tournament, but it felt momentous for the 22-time major winner because it was only a matter of weeks ago he wasn't certain he'd be ready to return from a long-term hip injury.

The 37-year-old Spaniard showed no signs of rust at the Brisbane International on Tuesday in a 7-5, 6-1 win over Dominic Thiem, who won the U.S. Open in 2020 and has a career-high No. 3 ranking but is making a slow return from injury himself.

Nadal hadn't played a singles match at the elite level since a second-round exit at the Australian Open last January. The protracted



Rafael Nadal of Spain plays a shot in his match against Dominic Thiem of Austria during the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane, Australia. (AP)

recovery from a surgically repaired hip didn't seem to slow him. He made just a handful of un-

forced errors, lost only six points on his serve in the entire match and hit some stunning forehand winners. After making the decisive break at 6-5 in the first set, he dominated the latter stages of the match.

Ranked No. 672 and playing on a wild card in Brisbane, Nadal said the last year had been the toughest of his professional career.

TENNIS

In the women's draw, 2020 Australian Open winner Sofia Kenin was upset by No. 113-ranked Arina Rodionova 7-5, 7-6 (7) in the second round.

No. 14-seeded Kenin was constantly under pressure on her serve despite having chances in both sets against Rodionova, a 34-year-old Australian who has never been ranked in the top 100.

downs and threw for one in his first career start, and Tennessee shut down Iowa's Division I-worst offense in the largest shutout in Citrus Bowl history.

Iamaleava, a prized recruit for the Volunteers, stepped in for senior Joe Milton, who opted out of the game to prepare for the NFL draft. The 19-year-old threw for 151 yards, and his 27 rushing yards included three scores.

Dylan Sampson rushed 20 times for 133 yards for the Vols (9-4), and Tennessee's defense did the rest against an Iowa offense that came in averaging 16.6 points per game and 238.8 yards.

Reliaquest Bowl

LSU 35, Wisconsin 31

In Tampa, Garrett Nussmeier threw for 395 yards and three touchdowns, helping LSU launch its post-Jayden Daniels era with a come-from-behind victory over Wisconsin.

Making his first college start after Daniels, the 2023 Heisman Trophy winner, opted out to begin preparing for the NFL draft, Nussmeier completed 31 of 45 passes and tossed TD passes of 14 yards to Chris Hilton Jr. and 38 and 4 yards to Brian Thomas Jr., whose second score put LSU ahead with 3:08 remaining.

Nussmeier rallied the Tigers (10-3) from a 14-point second-half deficit and overshadowed Wisconsin's Tanner Mordecai, who threw for a season-high 378 yards and three TDs for the Badgers (7-6), who played without star running back Braelon Allen.

Nussmeier set up the winning touchdown with completions of 37 yards to Kyren Lacy and 43 yards to Hilton. Thomas finished with eight catches for 98 yards, while Lacy had six receptions for 97 yards for the Tigers.