



Parliament, gov't align for Kuwait's future

MP calls for tougher DUI penalties

Opinion

Prevent legislative authority from overstepping on executive branch

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

WE received the statement of the new Council of Ministers with much caution, even though there were several points mentioned in it that could be built upon. However, it would depend on the sincerity of intentions, determination to implement, and the firm decisions.

This is needed in order to ensure that it is not treated like the previous government statements, which were drawn up 60 years ago, but turned out to be just ink on paper and either did not see the light of day or were hindered by a number of considerations.

What matters to the Kuwaitis is implementation. There is a proverb - "A child who gets burnt will dread the fire". We have been stung over the past decades, before the invasion and after the liberation, as a result of either a lack of seriousness, or disdain for entitlements, or the overstepping of parliamentarians on the powers of the executive authority. This overstepping has been happening especially in the last three decades. It can even be considered as the parliamentarians bullying the ministers, and the latter submitting to them, to the extent that they appeared as "employees" instead of people with the decision-making authority.

There is no doubt that this undermined the relationship between the two authorities. In fact, it obstructed the work of all authorities, and made ministerial programs mere doors to achieve personal goals, or for blocs and groups, which pushed for laws and decisions that were in the interest of their agendas, and not the interest of the country.

Some of the prime ministers were either not up to the level of ambition or they took the path of safety through non-confrontation, so as to avoid ascending the platform of parliamentary accountability, as if that was a political death sentence for them. For this reason, they were merely Trojan horses in the hands of the National Assembly.

Since 1992, several prime ministers have been given multiple chances. On each occasion, they presented ministerial programs promising the sun and the moon to a hopeful population. Yet, these pledges were soon revealed to be nothing more than a mirage.

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Kuwait Airways weighs options to slash airfare

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: According to informed sources, the Board of Directors of Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) is now studying the possibility of reducing airline ticket prices. The study also includes reducing the cost for modifying the reservation.

They explained that such a study was launched following several repeated complaints from citizens and others, especially since the competing airline companies are benefiting from the high prices of the Kuwait Airways tickets.

The Board of Directors of KAC, which was formed at the beginning of September 2023, took it upon itself to develop the path of Kuwait Airways in all its sectors as a national carrier to achieve the ambitions of its customers.

Kuwait Airways also seeks to increase the number of passengers to 5.5 million in 2025, and plans to increase its fleet from 33 to 50 by 2030.

New health center opens doors in Al-Mutlaa area

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, officially inaugurated Al-Mutlaa Health Center (1) in sector N11 on Sunday, a week after its handover from the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. This move is part of the Ministry of Health's strategy to expand health centers in new residential areas.

According to a press release from the Ministry of Health, the newly launched center currently offers general medical clinics, emergency and observation rooms, and laboratories. It is slated to provide additional services such as nursing, dental, pharmacy, clinics for chronic diseases, pediatrics, gynecology, mental health, and surgeries in the near future.

The Ministry of Health disclosed its intention to receive Al-Mutlaa Specialized Health Center in the N10 suburb from the General Corporation for Housing Care in the upcoming days.

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KUWAIT'S Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi during a tour of the Al-Mutlaa Health Center (1) in sector N11.

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Kuwait's government and parliament appear to have reached an apparent consensus on what needs to be done for the foreseeable future, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sa-

bah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said on Sunday.

Citing "growing concerns" over the "fight" for national development, the Kuwaiti prime minister spoke of a number of suggestions, discussed amid a government-parliament joint coordination committee meeting, aiming to serve the nation's best interests.

As his government prepares to take the oath of office in parliament on Feb 6,

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His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun at the Parliament-Government Coordination Committee meeting on Sunday.

Call for Palestinian statehood

Kuwait issues strong warning following Israel strikes in Gaza

CAIRO, Jan 21, (KUNA): Representative of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Ambassador Tareq M. Al-Bannai denounced in the strongest terms the Israeli military aggression on the brotherly people of Palestine in Gaza Strip which kept escalating over 100+ days.

Delivering Kuwait speech to 19th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Kampala, capital of Uganda, on Saturday, Al-Bannai said the Israeli military campaigns aims to turn Gaza Strip into an unlivable territory through destruction of infrastructure, homes, hospitals and places of worship.

The Israeli bombardment target civilians, aid workers, medical staff, media people and UN staffers, he noted.

Ambassador Al-Bannai condemned the intensified construction of illegitimate Jewish settlements on the occupied Palestinian territories in stark breach of the provisions of international humanitarian law and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

The Israeli occupation authorities pursue systematically a policy aimed at changing the demographic status quo of, and imposing a new fait accompli in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Nevertheless, the Palestinian people showed unrivaled valiance and determination in countering the Israeli aggression; they (the Palestinians) are resolute and valiant in their comeback, he stressed.

Israel, as occupying power, persists in its repressive policies, and committing atrocities, arbitrary bombardment of residential areas,

eviction of harmless civilians forcibly from their homes and denying the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights.

The Palestinian people have come under collective punishment due to continuous Israeli air and artillery attacks which claimed dozens of civilian lives, including women, children and elderly people, Ambassador Al-Bannai pointed out.

He urged the NAM member states to start lobbying the other members of the United Nations that have yet to recognize the State of Palestine to do so and back the Palestinian bid for full UN membership.

He highlighted the need of working out a clear-cut timeframe for Palestinian statehood, noting that the only way forward is through establishing fair, full, durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on the UN resolutions and Arab peace initiative of 2002.

All efforts must focus on establishing an independent, fully sovereign State of Palestine within the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital city, he went on.

On the achievements made by NAM over the past six decades, he said the Movement remains to be a platform for coordinating the views of the third world countries since the Bandung Conference held in April 1955.

The State of Kuwait joined the Movement out of belief in the significance of the core principles agreed by the founding members at that conference, Ambassador Al-Bannai went on.

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News watch

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

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya received on Sunday a phone call from Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs Nasser Bourita congratulating him on assuming the new post. (KUNA)

CAIRO: Arab lawmakers on Sunday agreed to back a Kuwait-pitched suggestion to form a team of legal experts aiming to provide support for a case of genocide filed by South Africa against Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Kuwait has submitted a proposal to support South Africa's "honorable intentions" to defend the Palestinians from the "war crimes" being committed against them by Israel, said Kuwaiti lawmaker Dr. Mohammad Al-Huwaila said amid pan-Arab talks on the matter. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: An explosion occurred at a gas export terminal near the city of St Petersburg in Russia. BBC News quoted state-owned RIA Novosti news agency Sunday. The blast caused a large fire and it had been contained, with no reports of injuries, it added.

The cause of the fire is not known, but local media have reported that drones had been seen in the area. Regional governor Alexander Drozdenko said a "high alert regime" was in place after the incident at the terminal of gas producer Novatek, in Ust-Luga on the Gulf of Finland. (KUNA)

ISTANBUL: The Turkish Coast Guards recovered bodies of four irregular migrants and rescued 38 others off the coast in the Aegean province of Mugla on Saturday.

A group of irregular migrants on a rubber boat faced difficulty due to rough sea near the Datca district and sought help from the Turkish authorities, Anadolu Agency (AA) reported citing a statement from the Coast Guard Command.

A small vessel rushed to the scene first, and then a helicopter, ship and four search and rescue boats followed suit. (KUNA)

Dissolution of Parliament not on cards, say sources

By Raed Youssef

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Contrary to widespread expectations of an imminent dissolution of the National Assembly, particularly following the indications in the Supreme Proclamation at the commencement of the current session, reliable sources informed Al-Seyassah daily that protocol meetings held after the swearing-in of the new government, including the session between the heads of the legislative and executive authorities, Ahmed Al-Saadoun and His Highness Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Sabah, at the end of the previous week, did not provide any indication from the government about dissolving the Parliament in the current phase.

The sources added that expressions of commendation and a shared desire to rectify past mistakes, was evident in the meeting between the two leaders, and led to an agreement that the government requires some time to articulate its strategies for addressing the mutually agreed-upon priorities with the previous administration, without compromising the imperative of enhancing citizens' living conditions.

It was emphasized that the protocol meetings featured assurances and commitments at a high level regarding the necessity for both the government and the parliament to exhibit ample flexibility in reaching agreements on the priorities of the upcoming stage through committee and coordination meetings.

The first of these is scheduled for the current week, well before the next Parliament session slated for February 6.

The government is likely to seek an extension to present a new official stance concerning laws for which relevant committees have submitted reports.

The sources highlighted that the parliamentary majority's stance on popular laws, along with concerns about specific ministers, will shape the political landscape and the ability of the two authorities to endure without resorting to stringent constitutional measures, such as postponing sessions for a month in accordance with Article 106 or dissolving the National Assembly under Article 107 and calling for early legislative elections in the second half of April, hinges on these dynamics.

Committee eyes mandatory health insurance for expats

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Health Affairs Committee is convening a meeting with the participation of experts from the Ministry of Finance and the General Investment Authority to deliberate on two significant legislative proposals. The first proposal pertains to the enactment of a law governing health care services, while the second focuses on establishing the "Dawakum" zone dedicated to pharmaceutical industries and medical equipment and their storage facilities, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The primary objective of the health care proposal is to enhance the quality of health services in the country while concurrently alleviating the financial burden on the state budget. The proposed law is grounded in principles of administrative reform, aiming to enhance fairness within the health sector and extend health coverage to all citizens and residents.

Among its key provisions, the proposal mandates health insurance for all individuals residing in Kuwait. This includes citizens, whose costs are covered by the state, expatriates whose expenses are borne by employers or sponsors, and visitors who must secure health insurance before entering the country. The overarching goal is to ensure comprehensive health coverage for everyone, contributing to administrative efficiency and a fair healthcare system.

The second proposal seeks to establish the "Dawakum" zone, primarily focusing on achieving drug security, diversifying sources of income, generating employment opportunities for Kuwaiti citizens, and enhancing the proficiency of the national workforce engaged in the health sector.

This initiative aligns with the broader goal of promoting economic growth, self-sufficiency, and sustainability in the pharmaceutical and medical equipment industries.

Required

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Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:19 Asr 14:57
 Sunrise .. 06:42 Maghrib .. 17:17
 Zohr 11:59 Isha 18:37

Local

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

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Warm with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-35 km/h.
By Night: Rather cold to cold

and clouds will increase gradually with light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-35 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	24	16

Kuwait Airport	24	08
Abdaly	25	09
Jahra	25	11
Salmiyah	23	16
Nuwaisib	25	12
Wafra	24	09

Ifar meals will be provided at mosque, on streets: Director

Kuwaiti 'imams' to lead 'Taraweeh', other prayers during Ramadan

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Director of the Grand Mosque Administration Ali Shaddad Al-Mutairi announced the preparation of an integrated plan to organize the nights of the month of Ramadan and provide all the requirements for the congregation of worshippers who will arrive at the mosque to perform Taraweeh and other prayers during the nights of the month of Ramadan.

In an interview with Al-Seyassah, Al-Mutairi said, "The mosque administration has developed a comprehensive and integrated plan to welcome the month of Ramadan in the Grand Mosque and provide all means of comfort to the worshippers through solidarity and the spirit of work with the heart of one man in all employees and volunteers.

A total of 16 prayer halls are being prepared to receive the large numbers in Ramadan. In the first nights of Taraweeh prayers, the number could reach 2,000 worshippers per day.

Plans

The interview went as follows:-

Question: Tell us about the administration's plans to welcome the blessed month?

Answer: We have made comprehensive plans to welcome the blessed month, as Taraweeh prayers will be held this year through Kuwaiti imams who have memorized the Quran with its ten models of recitations and some of the imams present in this mosque. The night prayer will also be held through our famous reciters to spread the atmosphere of faith in the Grand Mosque.

There are 15 reciters who will perform the prayer according to the schedules that will be distributed to them. For each prayer, there are three correctors who stand behind the imam to correct him if he makes a mistake. However, this rarely happens. Likewise, we have 20 male and female preachers who give sermons to the male and female worshippers. Until the Eid prayer, we have made a plan to receive 50,000 worshippers.

Preparations have also been made to hold a number of activities during the month of Ramadan in the Grand Mosque, including a project to provide Ifar (breakfast) meals for fasting people in the Grand Mosque throughout the month in cooperation with the Naqsa Boubyan Project to distribute breakfast meals, and the Youth Cultural Club for girls during prayers and a recitation competition for memorizing the Quran.

We also have a plan to receive all family members during Ramadan, as many families now come together to worship and perform Taraweeh and other prayers. Therefore, we are keen, even after Taraweeh, to provide them with the duty of hospitality and the provision of services.

Q: Do you expect the number of worshippers to increase this year?

A: We expect the worshippers on normal days to not be less than 20,000. We are talking about our complete readiness for the worshippers in terms of hospitality, furnishings, and reception. Therefore, when we talk about a number, this is our readiness.

We are able to receive more and more. Last year, we received 45 thousand worshippers, and this year we raised the estimate of the capacity to provide the needs to receive 50 thousand worshippers.

For Taraweeh prayers, we expect no less than 2000 worshippers daily who will be received by five teams and 17 participating parties.

Q: What about preparing for Eid prayer?

A: Yes, the preparations do not stop with the end of Ramadan. During the Eid prayers, we have an independent activity through preparing the prayer rooms and serving the meals. Usually, we receive approximately 4,000 to 5,000 people. In the last Eid prayer last year, less than 12,000 worshippers prayed with us, and the mosque was filled with more. The atmosphere was good, and the people served and found comfort, and the numbers increased.

Q: How are the families' children received?

A: We created a mini club in the big tent, which has a games section supervised by male and female supervisors to receive students and young children to have fun and play. We also have a tent that we call the "Mothers' Tent". Mothers who come to pray with infants pray in that tent where full services will be provided, including cleaning ladies and other requirements, along with providing a faith-filled atmosphere because we are keen that everyone prays, worships, and lives in this atmosphere as one family.

Q: How are breakfast meals served to fasting people?

A: Every year, the mosque provides Ifar meals during the month of Ramadan. Either it is an Ifar meal in a furnished tent or the meals are distributed on the street.

They are meals suitable for those who are fasting. We eat from them and test them, because in the end we are looking for a reward and we want those who break their fast to enjoy and find rest.

The distribution begins every day after the afternoon prayer, a few minutes before breakfast time. The beneficiaries of the meals are 45 thousand fasting people, as well as the suhoor (night) meal for which there are no less than 15 thousand beneficiaries this year.

Q: Is there room to receive volunteers for the month? Is there a mechanism for receiving them?

A: We welcome volunteers in the month of Ramadan from all segments of society. They are all there to volunteer, and everyone loves to offer work in order to be paid. In the past, there was registration and an interview to meet with them, but in recent years, volunteers have come through the Public Authority for Youth and Sports.

Q: What about cooperation with other parties to welcome the month of Ramadan?

A: We are keen to activate the role of our supporting institutions and partners in this aspect. As for cooperation between us and other parties, there are several parties that are joining forces and cooperating for this season, as previously the effort used to increase only for the last ten days.

However, the effort has recently become inclusive of Taraweeh prayers. In the last ten nights, the activities inside the mosque include Quran competitions and others, as well as the Boubyan competition, Zain competition, and other competitions for more than one parties to compete to do good and memorize the Quran.

Entities

Q: What are the most prominent of these entities?

A: I say every one of the entities. However, we will start with the Ministry of Interior, which has a large and effective participation in organizing the smooth entry and exit of tens of thousands, and then the Ministry of Health through the clinics spread throughout Al-Musahad with a total of six clinics, in addition to the paramedics.

The Ministry of Electricity and Water also helped us with the provision of flashlights and an alternative to electricity. The Ministry of Public Works, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate, the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation and the Kuwait Red Crescent also play important roles.

The Ministry of Information, mainly the television and radio sector, also have a very important role, as they broadcast Taraweeh prayers throughout the month of Ramadan, as well as the night prayer and the daily message.



Photo by Mahmoud Jadedd
 Director of the Grand Mosque Administration Ali Shaddad Al-Mutairi talking to the Arab Times.

Minister visits airport on her 1st 'work day'

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan, made an inspection tour to the airport project on her first working day after assuming the ministerial position, to review the latest developments.

The objective was to ensure the seamless continuation of the works and accelerate the various implementation stages.

As of last August, Terminal 2 has achieved a completion rate of 72%, with the anticipated project completion date set for July 7, 2025.

Dr. Al-Mashaan also toured the southern regions, covering Al-Wafra Residential Area, Sabah Al-Ahmad, Ali Sabah Al-Salem, as well as various locations for road assessments and overall cleanliness inspections.

Save us from drowning: KFU

Lack of diesel, workers migration ruining industry: fishermen

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Amidst a hopeful atmosphere accompanying the formation of the new government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Sabah, the Kuwait Fishermen's Union (KFU) is infused with a sense of optimism and anticipation, reports Al-Rai daily.

Participants in this industry, grappling with longstanding challenges, are actively seeking holistic solutions to rescue the fishing sector from its persistent issues.

The gathering at the Fishermen's Diwaniya in Fahaheel witnessed an outpouring of optimism for the new government. Participants expressed their delight at Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah assuming the role of Prime Minister, extending congratulations and highlighting his patriotic commitment.

License holders in the fishing sector underscored the urgent need for comprehensive solutions to address challenges, particularly those related to subsidized diesel and the mandatory use of tracking devices for sailing operations.

Khaled Al-Azmi drew attention to the detrimental impact of the subsidized diesel crisis on fishing boats, resulting in their cessation and the migration of skilled workers to neighboring countries. He urged the new government to address the situation promptly, advocating for a restoration of the full share of subsidized diesel, as the current allocation proves insufficient for multiple fishing trips.

Al-Azmi emphasized that unresolved diesel issues could have devastating effects on the fishing sector and called for tangible support to prevent its collapse.

Concerns were raised about the imposition of tracking devices exclusively on fishermen, questioning why such devices were not mandated for all yachts and marine vessels.

Participants criticized the limited timeframe, monopolistic practices, and exorbitant pricing of these devices. They emphasized the need for suitable tracking devices for small ships and expressed concerns about potential theft. Fishermen called for fair compensation in case of theft and stressed the need for the government to comprehend the challenges facing their profession.

Entities

Walid Al-Jarki highlighted the increased fees for bringing in workers and called for a shift in the government's perception of the fishing profession. He stressed the importance of preserving subsidies for the local product, citing its role in maintaining prices and contributing to food security. Al-Jarki urged addressing the diesel crisis, resolving tracking device issues, and establishing a modern fishing village with essential services.

Muhammad Al-Azmi underscored the impact of reduced fishing trips due to the diesel crisis, resulting in a severe shortage of local fish and increased prices. He called for the recruitment of skilled workers from Egypt and the distribution of ship tracking devices at no cost.

Abdullah Al-Sarhid questioned the rationale behind restricting fishermen's access to diesel, expressing concerns about the motives behind such decisions. He called for reinstating the fishermen's quota of subsidized diesel, highlighting the sector's importance in achieving food security. Al-Sarhid urged the government to find a swift solution or appropriately value the sector, ensuring the continuity of the fishing profession.

Hazal Al-Azmi expressed frustration at the challenges faced by fishermen, indicating a potential halt to fishing activities if their demands continue to be neglected. The session revealed the deep-seated concerns and expectations of the fishing sector, urging the government to promptly and comprehensively address their issues.

During the meeting the fishermen have put forward seven claims

— Restoring the share of subsidized diesel as it was before May 2023.

— Disbursing the diesel quota before the beginning of the month, so as not to cause crowding and disruption.

— Forming a permanent committee of concerned parties to develop the fishing sector and resolve its issues promptly.

— Providing tracking devices for fishermen, similar to the Gulf countries, and giving a new grace period for their installation.

— Expediting the construction of a village for fishermen that includes all services.

— Gasoline subsidies for cruiser owners, similar to diesel subsidies for survival vehicles.

— Increase support for fisheries, in the same way as farmers, livestock breeders, dairy producers, and other food security sectors.

While the fishing trawler owners acknowledged the absence of a gasoline subsidy, they expressed their hope for the state to provide subsidized fuel for them, similar to diesel engines. They emphasized the need to find a designated place for the cruisers, especially since placing them in public squares has been met with opposition from the municipality.



Al-Rai photo
 Fishermen during a gathering at a diwaniya in Fahaheel.

Court Cases

Kuwaiti jailed for swindling expat

Police officer gets 15 years in jail for abducting, raping boy

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Court of Cassation issued a final ruling against a police officer, sentencing him to 15-year imprisonment for kidnapping and molesting children.

According to the case files, the accused, who was working in the Ministry of Interior, impersonated a detective in civilian clothing and lured three young boys between the ages of 9 and 11 years, who were playing football on a dirt playground in a residential area, into the playground's bathroom where he molested them.

He sexually assaulted the nine-year old boy before one of the kidnapped children contacted the Operation Rooms of the Ministry of Interior without the kidnapper's knowledge.

The police cordoned off the area and managed to arrest the accused, who admitted to kidnapping the young boys, and sexually molesting one of them in the bathroom near the playground.

The accused was referred to the Public Prosecution and Forensics where necessary legal measures were taken, and a case was registered against him.

Falling into own trap: The Criminal Court sentenced a Kuwaiti citizen to seven-year imprisonment, and imposed a fine of KD 1,800 for misleading an expatriate into believing he had influence (wasta) in the Ministry of Interior and could cancel a decision to expel his brother from the country due to a serious traffic violation in exchange for KD 900.

According to the case files, the Public Prosecution stated that the expatriate had agreed with the citizen, who claimed to be an influential person and had relatives in the Ministry of Interior, to pay KD 900 in order to release his brother from the police station and cancel the decision to deport him from the country for committing a serious traffic violation.

After receiving the sum of KD 900, the citizen started avoiding calls and then threatened to deport the expatriate, which prompted the latter to file a lawsuit against him.

Al-Hashash case referred: The Criminal Court decided to refer to the head of the court the case related to squandering of the Ministry of Interior's funds on a "food meals" contract, in order to determine another circuit for consideration.

The case was filed against former police official Adel Al-Hashash, who is serving a prison sentence in the "Interior Hospitality" case, and another Egyptian citizen.

Al-Hashash had previously denied the charge against him, saying during the court session that, "I was the director of public relations and had several departments under my supervision. I know nothing about this charge."

Court acquits woman: The Court of Cassation overturned the verdict issued by the Court of Appeals which sentenced a woman in her 50s to four-year imprisonment for the possession of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances with the intention of using them after she was caught behaving in a disoriented manner inside a famous restaurant and then falling asleep. The court instead acquitted her of all charges.

According to the case file, the woman was behaving in an abnormal manner at the time of her arrest. She was wearing medical glasses and claiming to be a Qur'anic scholar who can recite the Quran in the sky.

During the session at the Court of Cassation, the defense counsel representing the woman lawyer Tariq Al-Khars stressed that a person in an abnormal condition does not serve as cause enough for the police to arrest and search her.

He explained that there was an error in applying the law, which negatively impacted the ruling.

Lawyer Al-Khars urged the court to acquit his client due to the invalidity of the ruling because it did not include the provisions of the law with which the appellant was convicted.

He said the appealed appellate ruling was void due to various reasons, one of which is corruption in the reasoning and deficiency in the statement, which makes this court unable to monitor the correct application of the law to the incident.

Lawyer Al-Khars stressed that the allegations against his client are invalid because she was arrested without permission from the Public Prosecution and in cases other than those permitted by the law.

He also highlighted the invalidity of the procedures followed, including the procedures for taking the sample and the evidence derived from it, and not questioning the statements of the person conducting the procedure, which is invalid based on the principle "Whatever is built on falsehood is false itself."

'Investing in human capital vital'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21, (KUNA): Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) affirmed, on Sunday, the pivotal role of investing in human capital, declaring it as a priority for Kuwait's development.

This came in a statement by a KISR official at the 35th spring student training course launched with participation of 50 male and female students.

During the occasion, Director of KISR's Manpower Development Department Mona Al-Failakawi said in a press release that the training course — organized by the department for the intermediate level — will continue till February first as it aims to develop students' skills using scientific methods through laboratory experiments and field trips.

She stated the course included several scientific programs under the guidance of



Mona Al-Failakawi
 a team of the institute's researchers specialized in these fields.

Jail to fine for ex-military attache

2 get 10 yrs in fashionista 'lifting'

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Criminal Court sentenced two Kuwaiti citizens to ten-year imprisonment each with hard labor for kidnapping a famous fashionista.

The two defendants denied the charges leveled against them, insisting that they had a personal relationship with the victim and had not kidnapped her, but she accompanied them willingly.

They revealed that she had previously bargained with them for a sum of money in exchange for her dropping the charges, which they refused.

The victim said that the two defendants, whom she did not know prior to the incident, had kidnapped her.

From jail to fine: The Court of Cassation sentenced a former military attaché at one of the country's embassies abroad to two-year imprisonment with hard labor, suspended the immediate execution of the ruling, and imposed a fine of KD 3,000 on charges of squandering the state funds.

The Court of Appeals had previously sentenced him to seven-year imprisonment, imposed a fine of USD 536,000, and ordered his dismissal from his job.

The Public Prosecution had charged the aforementioned, who worked as the head of the military office of the State of Kuwait in an embassy overseas, with misappropriation of more than USD 100,000 by forging cheques, seizing a deposit to purchase a house contract for one of the officers, and facilitating other foreigners to obtain more than USD 64,000 worth of travel tickets despite not working in the office.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Wait and see ... hopes pinned on new PM's new government

"WE received the new government that was announced a few days ago with different reactions and feelings. Some of us were happy and cheerful, some of us were 'half and half,' and others were more inclined to pessimism than optimism, and each of course has its reasons," columnist **Iqbal Al-Ahmad**, wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"I am certain that His Highness the Prime Minister, His Highness Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Sabah Al-Salem, has placed his trust in his ministers, each in his field of specialization, and His Highness knows very well that he has an extremely difficult task in his hands, and it may be "the most difficult" compared to the tasks of previous prime ministers.



Iqbal Al-Ahmad

"The negative general atmosphere that has prevailed in the country for a long time, due to the amount of frustration, pessimism, and sadness, is a general feeling, and as the people felt, I am certain that His Highness the Prime Minister, Dr. Muhammad Al-Sabah felt, who I also assert that he is certain that the hopes of the Kuwaiti people were pinned entirely on the weight placed on his shoulders.

"I am certain that the weight and gravity of this task is due to the sensitivity and difficulty of this stage. The magnitude of the message with which His Highness the Prime Minister was entrusted with restoring the wheel of development and combating corruption forcefully and in all available ways, comes with the intensification of competition between the surrounding countries in terms of growth and development and moving towards a promising and modern future with all enthusiasm.

"There are those whose optimism increased after the announcement of the new ministry. There are those who felt some pessimism for one reason or another, and there are those who had some question marks surrounding some of the names, and there are also those who remained silent waiting for performance and work to begin, and I fall into this category.

"I do not blame those who were somewhat pessimistic, because we were very disappointed ... and we were more disappointed with some of the names on which we placed our hopes in previous governments, and they disappointed us.

"However, this does not mean that we make prejudgments without justification and certain knowledge.

"There may be one or more names in any government that so-and-so or so-and-so is dissatisfied with, but that does not justify frustration extending to the entire ministerial staff.

"It is sad that some people cut the rope of optimism just because they picked up a word from here and a word from there, spreading their frustration and pessimism to everyone.

"I hope that all the new ministers realize the enormity of the responsibility that His Highness the Prime Minister has placed on them, and that they are

fully confident that the microscope has been prepared for each of them. "The oversight will be harsh, and some have prepared in advance, waiting for the first signs of failure.

"Ministerial solidarity is what should be the title of the coming period, in addition to dedication to serious and honest work to lift up the nation, so that Kuwait can put its foot on the beginning of the ladder of progress and development, with the help of God Almighty.

"May God grant you success, Your Highness the Prime Minister and all the ministers, in fulfilling your difficult mission in the coming period, and help you withstand any criticism or attack, especially if it is not in its proper place."

Also:

"His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah studied at Harvard -- one of the most prestigious American universities. He knows the meaning of 'public opinion' and its importance, especially in the context of political action, as well as issues of public nature." Media Consultant **Abdul Rahman Al-Mesfer** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Systematically and professionally, the new Council of Ministers is supposed to read the reactions of the street, media and political arena, to the government formation that apparently emerged after difficult struggles. Some ministerial portfolios are still assigned to other ministers! In light of this, it is necessary to re-evaluate the situation and correct the course of any choices that occurred as a result of haste, lack of information or failure to scrutinize the files and biographies of the candidates.

"Ministerial responsibility is not an easy task. The entitlements resulting from those who hold these positions are heavy and complex, and require qualitative capabilities and skills, especially in light of the aspirations of citizens and their overwhelming desire to break out of the stagnation, advance the nation again and build a bright future for its generations.

"We are still at the beginning of the bumpy road. His Highness Sheikh Mohammad can deal with the surprises of this journey as long as there are tools for monitoring and analyzing, and making professional and honest decisions. He has the ability to act wisely, objectively and quickly in terms of dealing with challenges and failures.

"It is not in the nature of His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah to be arrogant or to ignore honest advice, according to trustworthy people who worked alongside him in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"The Prime Minister's team is supposed to be carefully selected, far from emotions, because by the grace Allah, it will be one of the most important reasons for the chances of achieving success for His Highness Sheikh Mohammad. Without a doubt, he will undertake the tasks of arranging priorities at various levels, contributing to decision-making, supervising the formulation of the government work program, and drawing the features of the relationship between the executive and legislative authorities, in addition to a potentially long list of tasks such that there is no room to mention everything.

Therefore, the process of arranging the internal house, I mean the office of His Highness the Prime Minister, could be a very sensitive issue.

"His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah, before you is an exceptional national historical test, which we can call 'the test of public wishes and aspirations.' All eyes are directed towards you with caution, anticipation and optimism mixed with feelings of fear of returning to square one, and uncertain relief in the form of significant achievements in political and social arena whose positive effects are reflected in public life. This is a real glimmer of hope after previous stages of stagnation, decline and the increasing manifestations of financial, administrative and political corruption.

"Finally: Success includes sincere intentions, a rational vision, an actual will to change, and a thoughtful and resolute decision."

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"Kuwait and the right direction ... Since the establishment of the Constitution -- the contract between the ruler and the ruled -- in accordance with the democracy practiced by the people of Kuwait and over the course of 50 years, we have been in a fragile and sterile situation due to the failure to implement the Constitution based on its stipulations, the most important of which is the separation of powers, in the presence of a weak government and members of the National Assembly who are concerned about their seats," columnist **Jassar Al-Jassar** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"This has become clear to everyone, particularly the randomness, individual action and weak interrogations, most of which are aimed at serving personal interests.

"Today, we see the acceleration of reconstruction and development in neighboring Gulf countries. They have become comparable with developed countries in terms of organizing international events.

"On the other hand, we, in Kuwait, do not have any clear plan for the future of the country up to this day, while political rivalry dominates the general scene, and all fields -- economic, sports and social -- have been politicized.

"Our message to the head of the Council of Ministers appointed by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and widely supported by the public -- Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Sabah -- is that you have a huge responsibility to lift the country out of recession and work towards its advancement.

"This means you must ignore those who lost the country, those keen on taking revenge, those who hinder the implementation of the law and make 'parachute' appointments to serve certain interests. You must achieve what was stated in the historical speech of His Highness the Amir, may Allah protect him.

"Oh Bou Sabah, Kuwait expects you to apply the law on everyone, ensure justice and equality, and be firm in decision-making. A proverb says: 'Do not make a sound, do not be afraid.' May Allah protect Kuwait, its Amir and its people from all forms of harm."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Traditional tea pots are always on the glowing coal.

Crime, Fraud

Expat robbed by 'online' thief

Foreign gang sentenced to 40 years; Kuwaitis swindled

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21, (Agencies): The Criminal Court, headed by Judge Abdullah Al-Osaimi, sentenced a foreign gang consisting of five members of Arab and Asian nationalities in absentia to 40 years in prison each for carrying out major fraud operations victimizing several Kuwaitis who were lured into bogus investments, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

The ruling came after the gang was charged with money laundering. It is the first gang whose identity was revealed through investigations by detectives at home and abroad. It was discovered that the gang, which is based in Turkey, used advanced equipment to transfer the money they received through Gulf and Turkish bank accounts.



Al-Osaimi

For the first time, the Criminal Court asked the Public Prosecution to conduct investigations in cooperation with the Central Bank and the Financial Investigation Unit to determine the procedures, dealings and ways to confront this fraud, which has become troubling for many citizens.

A reliable source told the daily that the court's action to address the prosecution and request that investigations be conducted are necessary, as it is unreasonable that everything needs a license in Kuwait, except for trading platforms.

The source stated that the Kuwaiti au-

thorities will contact Interpol in view of this ruling to request for the extradition of those who swindled a number of Kuwaitis. He added the gang received millions of Kuwaiti dinars from the victims who were deceived into investing in various companies.

Meanwhile, despite the repeated warnings issued by the Ministry of Interior about the need to be wary of people who have been scammed by gangs impersonating as employees or securitymen; the Public Prosecution confirmed receiving fraud cases and one of the recent victims reported that KD3,000 was stolen from his bank account, reports **Al-Anba** daily quoting a reliable source.

The source disclosed that an expatriate filed a report at Maidan Hawally Police Station where Case No. 11/2023 was registered under the felonies category, specifically forgery of a bank document. The expatriate stated in his complaint that he received a call from someone who impersonated police using a local telephone number and asked him for his OTP in order to suspend his account, because someone tried to steal from it.

He later found out that a total of KD3,000 was withdrawn from the account -- KD1,000 first and then KD2,000.

The source added that initial investigations revealed the amount was transferred to the account of an expatriate who was summoned, but he denied knowledge of the incident. Further investigations revealed that the money went to a Bangladeshi. When the officers checked the latter's records in the Ministry of the Interior, they found out that he had left the country.

KFF representative in Gulf Forum

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Kuwait Fire-fighting Force (KFF), represented by acting Deputy Director of the Prevention Sector and the Engineering and Information Technology Sector Major General Khaled Abdullah Fahd, attended the Gulf Forum for Development and Sustainable Project Management recently, reports **Al-Anba**.

The forum was aimed at shedding light on the challenges that the Gulf society is cur-

rently facing, as well as the best solutions to overcome these challenges and ways to achieve a sustainable Gulf.

Fahd participated in the panel discussion entitled, 'Decision Makers', during which he presented a working paper entitled, 'The Environmental Impact of Damaged Tyre Fires and Sustainable Preventive Solutions'.

A number of officials, diplomats and experts in Gulf environmental affairs attended the forum.

Cold revives coal market

Consumers prefer imported firewood: seller

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: With the temperature dropping these days and the cold getting noticeably worse, especially in the evening; the charcoal and firewood market has witnessed a significant boom and high demand from citizens; particularly the owners of camping sites, farms, chalets and those who frequent the desert areas as they buy charcoal and firewood during this period every year for heating, making coffee and tea or cooking, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Every winter, camp owners prefer to buy certain types of firewood whose smell is similar to incense, the most famous of which are samr and arata. Many other types are being sold as well; the most in demand are carbis, sidr, olive, citrus and green wood.

A recent tour conducted by the staff of the daily revealed that many vendors are selling various types of firewood near the camping areas, including different types of firewood imported from several countries in Africa including Tunisia, as well as from Turkey, in addition to local firewood like sidr and carbis.

Vendors

The vendors told the daily that customers who own camps and farms prefer imported firewood over the local ones. Ramth is prohibited.

These vendors revealed that many customers are asking for 'ramth', but the concerned authorities prohibit the sale and cutting of this type of wood to protect the environment. Whoever is caught cutting 'ramth' will be required to pay an environmental fine, and whoever sells this wood will be held legally accountable as well.

Firewood prices usually start from KD2 and could reach KD10 per bundle, depending on the type and quantity. Vendors confirmed that the demand for firewood increases during this month every year and the demand decreases after this month. They also affirmed that customers prefer firewood whose smell is similar to incense, in addition to high-quality firewood, which is distinguished by its long burning time.

On the other hand, many customers confirmed that firewood is indispensable in winter, especially in camps, farms or land trips when the temperature drops.

They pointed out that the prices are reasonable, and that they sometimes deal with a farm which buys local firewood like sidr or carbis. Most of them agreed that samr, ramth and arata are in demand because of their incense-like smell and for the long time they remain burning.

The rhubarb is an endangered wild plant and the Environmental Law prohibits destroying crops, plants and trees; picking flowers in squares, streets and public facilities or uprooting trees and wild plants on public land. Penalties include a fine of not less than KD250 and not more than KD5,000.

60 people arrested in crackdown on crime

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Capital Governorate Patrol Unit at the Police Rescue Patrols General Department in the Interior Ministry carried out a traffic security campaign in Jaber Al-Ahmad over the weekend, under the guidance of acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Security, Traffic Affairs and Operations Major General Abdullah Al-Rajaib and field supervision of Director General of the Police Rescue Patrols General Department Brigadier General Faris Al-Qahtani and Director of the Capital Governorate Patrol Unit Brigadier General Hamlan Al-Hamlan, with the participation of the police rescue patrol departments in all governorates, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

During the campaign, two people were arrested for the possession and consumption of narcotic substances and they were referred to the Drug Control General Department, two others were arrested as they were found to be in abnormal condition and were referred to Jaber Al-Ahmad Police Station, 13 expatriates were arrested as they were reported absconding by their employers, 16 others for holding expired residency permits, two expatriates who hold expired entry visas, nine people wanted by law for committing various crimes and 18 people who failed to present valid identification documents.

900 bottles liquor seized

24,000 traffic citations in week

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Under the field supervision of Major General Yousef Al Khadda, the Director General of the General Traffic Department, traffic police issued over 24,000 various traffic violations during the past week, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

During the campaign several juveniles were arrested for driving the vehicles of their relatives without driving license.

The daily added, their vehicles were impounded and towed to the Interior Ministry garage.

A security source emphasized that the traffic campaigns aim to enforce traffic laws, ensuring the safety of road users and promoting adherence to regulations.

The source highlighted a specific campaign in the Jaber Al-Ahmad area, resulting in the arrest of four people in possession of narcotic substances.

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Liquor seized: Personnel from the Ahmadi Governorate Security Directorate,

"Fahaheel Command," have taken into custody an unidentified bootlegger and seized from him 900 bottles of locally made booze ready for sale, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The daily said the suspect had stored the booze in a mini bus which remained parked on an open ground.

The booze and the suspect have been handed over to the General Department of Drugs and Alcohol Control (GDDAC).

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Diesel-sellers held: Personnel from General Department of Criminal Investigation have arrested 14 people for illegally selling subsidized diesel at the lowest cost across different regions, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Moreover, one of the suspects is believed to be a violator of the residence and labor laws. The arrested individuals, along with the confiscated items, have been handed over to the relevant authorities to initiate all necessary legal measures against them.

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Jahra Hospital achieves milestones in maternal care

Hospital achieves global recognition for excellence in obesity surgery

Both cards are specifically designed to meet youth's requirements

ABK introduces A+ Student account, ISIC Youth Mastercard to university students

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is pleased to announce its recent presence at Kuwait University and International University in Kuwait (IUK) to introduce new students to the advantages of the A+ Student account and the ISIC Youth prepaid card. This endeavor also aimed to enhance financial literacy, foster the importance of saving, and attract new clients.

ABK's team engaged with students, presenting the unique benefits offered by the A+ Student account, specifically tailored to individuals aged between 16 and 25. By encouraging them to open an account, ABK intended to enable them to enjoy a wide range of benefits that suit their lifestyles.

This includes a complimentary ISIC Youth prepaid card for two years, in addition to an exclusive VOX Cinemas' Buy One Get Two Tickets Free' offer, along with various discounts at numerous stores and partner outlets in Kuwait.

Students were also introduced to the functionalities of the ISIC Youth card, emphasizing its use as both a prepaid and a university access identification card. Notably, it offers discounts at over 150,000 establishments across 130 countries, featuring exclusive travel offers on Emirates Airline and accommodation bookings through Booking.com, among other benefits.

On this occasion, Johair Marafi, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, underscored the significance of the Bank's engagement with universities. She expressed, "ABK is dedicated to delivering an exceptional banking experience. Both the A+ Student account and ISIC Youth prepaid card are specifically designed to meet youth's requirements thereby enhancing their satisfaction with the Bank's diverse range of products and services."

Marafi shared that ABK's ISIC Youth prepaid card was recently acknowledged as the Best Banking Product by World Business Outlook, further highlighting how its features make it an optimal choice for university students.

Marafi stressed, "This represents a positive beginning towards experiencing a distinctive and unparalleled banking journey with ABK. We remain committed to delivering diverse banking and financial services that cater to the needs of all segments of Kuwaiti society." Furthermore, she emphasized the Bank's proactive approach to promoting a culture of saving, particularly among the youth, and fortifying its competitive standing in Kuwait's banking sector.

Marafi concluded with an invitation to follow the Bank's social media accounts to remain up to date with the latest marketing initiatives and to



Bank pavilion at the university.

benefit from the current promotional campaigns and offers.

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 45 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 eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Head of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department at Jahra Hospital Dr. Hanan Al-Husseini revealed that the department witnessed a qualitative leap and a remarkable development in maternal and child health clinics through the expansion of morning and evening clinics and specialized clinics.

In a special interview with Al-Seyassah daily, Dr. Al-Husseini revealed that 2,357 surgical operations were performed, including Cesarean delivery (C-section) and major, medium and minor gynecological operations.

She explained that the activities of the 26th International Conference on Gynecology and Obstetrics will be launched in the State of Kuwait on February 8. It will continue for three days from February 8 to 10 with the participation of 20 experts and consultants from inside and outside Kuwait.

The conference will discuss many important topics related to pregnancy and childbirth, maternal and fetal medicine, treatment of problems related to weak fertility in men and women, and therapeutic interventions for embryos and genetic genes.

It will also provide an opportunity to learn about the latest scientific findings to improve the medical services provided to female patients, the future of embryology and genetics, and the future of robotic surgeries.

When asked about what distinguishes the conference this year, Dr. Al-Husseini responded by saying the conference will discuss the latest findings of scientists in the field of genetic and hereditary testing before pregnancy. It will also address the use of artificial intelligence for improving the quality and results of in-vitro fertilization, assisted fertilization, and embryo ultrasound, and the legal and religious perspective of artificial intelligence applications in medicine, particularly in the field of obstetrics and gynecology, with the assistance and presence of legal experts specialized in the fields of legislation.

International participation

Regarding the size of local and international participation, Dr. Al-Husseini explained that the conference is scheduled to host 20 international experts from the United Kingdom, Spain, Russia, Cyprus, India, Slovenia, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, in addition to an elite group of leading local doctors and consultants in the field of obstetrics and gynecology.

The conference includes three workshops on advanced detailed ultrasound in obstetrics and gynecology, hysteroscopy and male surgeries for fertility operations.

Concerning the developments in the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department at Jahra Hospital for the year 2023, she explained that the department witnessed many achievements during the year, as it hosted visiting doctors to treat patients and hone the skills of doctors and medical staff by informing them about everything new in maternity science and research, in addition to using modern devices to diagnose and treat patients, such as the use of the latest 3D surgical laparoscopic devices, 3D and 4D sound waves, a laser device to treat women's urinary incontinence and gynecological problems, and an electric chair device to tighten the pelvic floor muscles with high-intensity electromagnetic waves.

She said, "We also held periodic meetings for the medical, technical and nursing staff and specialized committees to conduct a self-assessment of performance on the level of service provided to patients and to evaluate the department's protocols and treatment policies from time to time."

Regarding the maternal and child health clinics, Dr. Al-Husseini explained that the maternal and child health clinics are witnessing a qualitative shift and tremendous development in various specialties, as the number of clinics in the morning and evening periods, as well as specialized clinics, has increased. The hospital includes a clinic for monitoring gestational diabetes, clinics for delayed childbearing, clinics for treating recurrent miscarriage, clinics for women's laser sessions, electromagnetic chairing to strengthen the pelvis, a clinic for following up on menopausal cases, a urodynamic planning clinic, a day clinic for administering intravenous iron treatment to anemia patients, and a diagnostic colposcopy clinic.

Amir congratulated by Philippines Prez

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Sunday a cable of congratulations from the Philippines' President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on assuming the top office.

In the cable, President Marcos Jr. stressed his keenness to continue developing and strengthening relations between the two friendly countries, wishing His Highness the Amir everlasting wellbeing and more progress and prosperity for Kuwait.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply message, enclosed with utmost appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments expressed by the President, praising the close relations between Kuwait and the Republic of Philippines.

The Amir wished President Marcos Jr. good health, and progress and prosperity for The Philippines.

Similarly, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Sunday a cable of congratulations from President of Zambia Hakainde Hichilema for assuming the top office.

The President wished His Highness the Amir good health, and more progress and prosperity for Kuwait.

His Highness the Amir sent a cable to the Zambian president, expressing his utmost appreciation for the kind words, wishing him long-lasting health.

Regarding the expansion of therapeutic services which is always accompanied by the expansion of specialized surgeries, she revealed that the department witnessed about 2,357 surgical operations last year, including Cesarean delivery and major gynecological operations such as hysterectomy, ovarian cyst removal, ectopic pregnancy, pelvic infections, endometriosis, and other medium and small operations and gynecological laparoscopic operations.

In this regard, the Women's and Maternity Emergency Department witnessed an increase in the number of examination rooms, observation rooms, fetal pulse tracing, emergency ultrasound work, and an increase in medical staff, which reduced the waiting time for patients in the emergency room and the speed of the necessary work done for them.

The department organized five workshops last year, during which it performed 150 successful gynecological laparoscopic surgeries using 3D technology, which led to a reduction in the number of cases referred for treatment abroad.

A total of 2,500 births were performed during the year, including 1,672 natural births and 828 Cesarean delivery. The pain-free delivery service using an anesthetic back needle was activated at the beginning of February, and the department witnessed 455 pain-free births within ten months. It treated 5,000 cases of delayed childbearing for women and 1,000 cases of infertility for men during the year.

Meanwhile, Head of the Surgery Department at Jahra Hospital Dr. Mohammed Al-Jasmi revealed that the hospital obtained international accreditation as a center of excellence in obesity surgery from the American Surgical Evaluation Foundation, which reflects the quality of health services provided to patients.

In a press statement issued yesterday, Dr. Al-Jasmi explained that the department succeeded in adhering to and obtaining international accreditation standards by establishing a committee to review and scrutinize surgical operations and learn about ways to deal with complications. It also ensured the implementation of the hospital's requirements and infrastructure in terms of clinical capacity, type of beds, surgical operating tables, and devices, as well as presence of highly experienced medical competencies.

The committee includes a group of consultants from various specialties, including sub- and general obesity surgery, general internal medicine, nutrition, endocrinology, and pediatric surgery, in addition to consultants in psychological and social health, and other specialties that aim to ensure the safety of patients before and after operations.

Regarding the preparations that precede the operations, Dr. Al-Jasmi affirmed that many laboratory tests are conducted to ensure that the patient is free of any diseases or health problems that may hinder the operation, and to work on fully preparing the patient for the operation.

Study reveals health risks

MoH recommends plastic usage reduction

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Ministry of Health has recommended a reduction in the use of plastic containers and packaging, given their widespread use globally and locally in daily life.

The ministry emphasizes the importance of minimizing exposure to plastic in various forms, including water bottles, food containers, and other materials. Instead, the recommendation is to opt for alternatives such as glass, metal containers, or other safe materials.

Addressing concerns shown recently by international and local media about the potential contamination of plastic water bottles with NATO plastic chips, public health specialist Dr. Muhammad Al-Saeed told Al-Seyassah daily, that a 2023 study conducted by a university in Colombia, which developed a powerful optical system for the rapid analysis of nanoplastic materials concluded that human exposure to these tiny particles resulted from consuming bottled water stored in plastic containers, with the potential for these particles to enter various biological cells.

Dr. Al-Saeed explained that while the study provides theoretical conclusions about potential health problems arising from exposure to these nanoplastic materials, it does not specify the necessary quantity of water consumption or the duration required to

Trade Union seeks GA attendance list

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Trade Union Organizations Department within the Public Authority for Manpower has formally requested the attendance lists for the General Assembly held on December 25, 2023, from the "Kuwait Oil" Syndicate Council, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The purpose of this request, made ahead of the union elections scheduled for the Jan 24, is to review the outcomes of the assembly, which focused on deliberating new amendments. These amendments encompass an increase in the General Assembly members from 15 to 19, an augmentation in the monthly subscription fee, and various other modifications.

cause such changes or health issues.

He emphasized that studies focusing on the health impact of exposure to plastic materials are relatively recent, considering the issue of plastic pollution a complex subject that requires extensive research to fully understand the health implications resulting from exposure to these materials.



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Agreement promises advanced solutions for education and enterprise in Kuwait

NEST and Gulfsat announce strategic partnership for AR/VR innovation



NEST and Gulfsat officials signing the agreement.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: National Company for International Educational Services and Training (NEST), a subsidiary of National Technology Enterprises Company (NTEC), and Gulfsat Communications Co., a subsidiary of KIPCO Group are pleased to announce their collaboration through a Teaming Agreement aimed at providing seamless AR/VR experiences to educational and enterprise entities in Kuwait, which would help enhance the education and training for the clients.

Through this teaming agreement, NEST and Gulfsat would work hand-in-hand in delivering AR/VR experiences that are powered via Artificial Intelligence (AI) to potential third-party customers in the region.

NEST is an exclusive partner in Kuwait and the GCC region with EON Re-

ality Co., a US company that is based in Irvine, California, and specializes in providing AR/VR powered experiences to both education and enterprises.

Under this agreement, the Parties have identified significant Collaboration Opportunities to work together and leverage their respective strengths to deliver exceptional solutions to customers in the GCC region and beyond. The collaboration will combine NEST's extensive and concentrated experience in education and training and Gulfsat regional presence and commercial partnerships, enabling the provision of high-capacity services to meet the growing demands of customers.

Mr. Tareq Al-Own, Chairman of NEST, stated that NEST is focused on the spread of knowledge and technol-

ogy in Kuwait and the GCC, especially those technologies that are related to education. He added, "One of the important aspirations that we have is collaborating and joining forces with local business partners such as Gulfsat to accelerate the dissemination of technology."

Moreover, Mr. Mahmoud Al Sanea, Chairman of Gulfsat, expressed his enthusiasm for the collaboration, stating, "We are delighted to partner with the National Technology Enterprises Company "NTEC" through its subsidiary NEST to deliver seamless AR/VR experiences that are powered by AI to customers in the region. This strategic alliance combines our regional expertise and capabilities with NEST's extensive experience, allowing us to provide comprehensive and reliable

services to meet the evolving needs of businesses in the region."

Both NEST and Gulfsat are committed to delivering exceptional AR/VR experiences that are powered via AI, and this Teaming Agreement represents a significant step towards that goal. By combining their expertise and resources, they aim to provide seamless intra-regional expansion to customers in the region, strengthening the educational and training sector, which would benefit the customers significantly with the latest technologies available that utilizes AI.

For more information about NEST visit nest.edu.kw or contact us at: info@nest.edu.kw

For more information about Gulfsat visit Gulfsat.com or contact us at: info@gulfsat.com



KUNA photo
The 42nd relief plane carrying 10 tons of medical supplies, blankets and necessities for Gaza.

Kuwait sends 42nd relief aid to Gaza

The 42nd relief plane for Gaza left Kuwait on Sunday to Al-Arish Airport, Egypt, carrying 10 tons of medical supplies, blankets, and necessities.

The Director of Disaster and Emergency Department at the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), Yousef Al-Maraj told KUNA that KRCS assistance to Gaza would continue to help ease the pain of Palestinians being killed and injured by the ruthless Israeli occupation forces.

He pointed out that the Kuwaiti Air Bridge planes were accompanied by volunteers to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza through

Egypt, hoping it will alleviate the suffering of the Palestinians.

He stated that the campaign to aid Palestine aimed to deliver humanitarian assistance to thousands of people, provide food, medical supplies and help families.

Al-Maraj thanked the Kuwaiti Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense for their keenness to facilitate the operations and aid entry, while praising the people of Kuwait's response to the campaign.

He expressed his gratitude to the Egyptian Red Crescent for facilitating Kuwaiti aid entry through Rafah Border Crossing. (KUNA)

Al-Hajraf inspects 2 power stations

MEW fails to adhere to specified timeframe to study technical bids

By **Saud Al-Farhan and Mohamed Ghanem**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: In light of the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah's emphasis on enhancing confidence in government performance and focusing on developing public services and infrastructure projects, as well as the need to review decision-making mechanisms and restructure government agencies, informed sources have criticized the Ministry of Electricity and Water for its perceived "lack of commitment."

The sources note that the ministry has failed to adhere to the specified duration for studying technical bids, as mandated by the Public Tenders Law, with 83 project tenders facing delays during the fiscal year (2022/2023).

The sources argue that this situation necessitates a re-examination of the ministry's policies and procedures to prevent potential withdrawal by the lowest-priced bidder or the imposition of additional financial burdens on public funds in the future.

The sources highlight that such delays contradict the authority's claim that project implementation setbacks are primarily due to procedural sluggishness and prolonged approval processes from regulatory authorities.

Revealing instances where bid evaluations took an excessive 785 days (over two years) or a minimum of 216 days (7 months) while the law specifies a 30-day period, the sources express concern about the impact on project timelines.

They further point out that the ministry's delay in studying technical bids and sluggishness in contract signing, even after obtaining approval from the Audit Bureau, led to the withdrawal of the lowest-priced tender in three projects totaling 46.7 million dinars, resulting in substantial financial losses.

In a related development, it has been disclosed by informed sources that the

Ministry of Electricity is owed approximately 750 million dinars by oil companies and other government institutions, a debt that remains uncollected.

The sources assert that the former Minister of Electricity was informed of this matter by their predecessor, but no action was taken to address the issue with the Minister of Finance or inform the Council of Ministers about the necessary steps to recover these substantial sums.

Despite the Audit Bureau's involvement in examining the outstanding debts owed to the Ministry of Electricity and Water by government entities, no progress has been made in resolving the issue.

The Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy and the Minister of Housing Dr. Salem Al-Hajraf yesterday held an inspection tour of the Doha East and Doha West stations in order to determine the progress of work there.

According to informed sources, Minister Al-Hajraf, after assuming his ministerial role, began his work in the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy by visiting the Doha West and East stations, to see the progress of work in the power stations.

He is scheduled to visit the main control center to review the details of the work there and the role played by the center in managing the electrical network.

The sources praised the minister's decision to start his work by inspecting the power stations and the control center to see for himself the progress of work in those sites, indicating that the minister was given detailed explanations in that regard from the officials of the Doha East and Doha West stations.

Likewise, their employees made some observations related to the procedures for offering and awarding tenders, and the ministry's suffering with the slowness of the Central Agency for Public Tenders in offering and awarding its tenders.

to solving citizens' problems, as they cannot continue to be treated with painkillers, as has been the norm in the past three decades, because it will increase Kuwaitis' distrust towards the current Council of Ministers on whom they have bet a lot. This is because they were optimistic in past governments, and placed their bet on some prime ministers, but they were shocked by the results. This had increased their frustration, and affected their view of the future.

Yes, the legacy is heavy and large before His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem. Liquidating it requires a lot of effort, but the people will not wait indefinitely.

Opportunities seldom knock twice, especially when Kuwaitis see that the neighboring countries preceded them by light years, while they are still sitting on the pavement of time waiting for agreement between the two authorities on self-evident priorities, which are at the core of their work, and are not achievements attributed to anyone.

Arab Parliament awards leadership medal to late Kuwaiti writer Abdulaziz Al-Babtain

Significant contributions to noble goals

CAIRO, Jan 21, (KUNA): Arab Parliament President Adel Al-Asoomi announced the posthumous award of the leadership medal to the late Kuwaiti writer and poet Abdulaziz Al-Babtain for his significant contributions to noble goals for the Arab nation.

This announcement came through a speech by Al-Asoomi Sunday during the opening of the second session of the fourth legislative term of the Arab Parliament at the headquarters of the Arab League.

Presenting the award to Al-Babtain is an acknowledgement of his diligent efforts and outstanding role in the fields of culture, poetry, and literature at both Arab and global levels, Al-Asoomi stated.

Al-Babtain passed away last December after a remarkable journey filled with numerous achievements and contributions in supporting literature and culture in the Arab world, contributions that will be immortalized by history along with those of his foundation, Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation, and its various programs, he added.

Al-Babtain received around 17 honorary doctorates from various prestigious universities, a testament to his impactful contributions in the cultural field, humanitarian efforts, and advocacy for peace, receiving several medals and awards for his significant impact on culture, both within the Arab world and internationally, he explained.

He emphasized that his efforts went beyond enriching cultural, educational, and humanitarian initiatives solely within the Arab region, extending globally, as he actively worked to enhance global recognition of Arab culture and its great civilization, initiating programs to develop a culture of peace and dialogue in collaboration with the United Nations and multiple international organizations.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti MP and Arab Parliament Member Khaled Al-Otaibi stated that awarding Al-Babtain the



KUNA photo
Honoring the late writer Abdulaziz Al-Babtain on the sidelines of the plenary session of the Arab Parliament and awarding him the 'Leadership Medal'.

MoE minister to meet educational leaders

By **Abdul Rahman Al-Shammari**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Adel Al-Adwani will hold a meeting with the educational leaders in charge of managing the various sectors in order to hear from them the nature of the workflow, the obstacles to its completion, and their role in addressing the educational needs.

According to educational sources, the heads of these sectors are required to inform the minister about the most

important files in the Ministry of Education, even if they include negatives in their work, so that the picture is clear and can be addressed without resorting to the repeated phrase in every meeting - "All is well."

They stressed that the minister only wants to hear the truth of the situation, review the most prominent work priorities for the next stage, and address many files that require his direct attention and follow-up, in order to work on addressing these files successively in cooperation and coordination with the relevant sectors.

leadership medal is in recognition of his pioneering works and contributions in the cultural and scientific fields.

Al-Otaibi underlined that Al-Babtain dedicated his life to reviving and promoting Arab and Islamic culture, language, sciences, and preserving cultural heritage and literature, achieving this through the establishment of the foundation, libraries, organizing conferences, and forums not

only in Arab and Islamic countries but globally.

"Today, gathered at this Arab institution that unites representatives from across all Arab nations, we pay tribute to the literary legacy of a figure who devoted a lifetime in service to the dissemination of Arab culture throughout the world," he added.

In his speech, Kuwaiti MP and Arab Parliament Member Dr. Mohammed

Al-Huwaila highlighted that honoring Al-Babtain with the medal acknowledges the exceptional nature and profound impact of his role in Arab and Islamic spheres.

Al-Babtain, recognized as an unpretentious poet, demonstrated exceptional creativity in three beautiful poetry collections, expressing depth of emotion with clarity and simplicity, Al-Huwaila stated.

Parliament,

Continued from Page 1

he said the talks provided him with the opportunity to share the government's "workplan" to ensure a prosperous future for the nation, while keeping an eye on present requirements.

The government's workplan, pending completion, will be presented in parliament as planned, he underlined, saying any alterations to the agenda along with the "legislative roadmap" will be addressed in due course.

Meanwhile, MP Fares Al-Otaibi has submitted a bill on amending Cooperative Societies Law No. 24/1979 to impose harsher penalties on violators.

The bill stipulates a maximum fine of KD 5,000 on whoever violates the law or its executive regulations. The current maximum fine is KD 500.

The bill stipulates adding a clause in Article 12 to grant the chairman or members of the board of directors of cooperatives full or partial leave from their public sector job according to a decision that will be issued by the Social Affairs minister.

Another article is added stating that a joint committee will be formed by the Social Affairs minister to investigate the complaints filed by or against the cooperatives. Members of the committee are from a number of public institutions - Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), Public Authority for Industry (PAI), Kuwait Industries Union, Kuwait Faraand Kuwait Association for Small and Medium Enterprises.

One more article shall be added stipulating a maximum fine of KD 10,000 for whoever violates Article 40 of the law. This amount is doubled in case the violation is repeated. The bill adds Article 39bis on obligating cooperatives to prioritize the nationals, followed by the children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis, Bedouins, citizens of other Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) and foreigners to occupy administrative, technical and supervisory posts. Appointments in cooperatives will be based on the published vacant positions under

the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Cooperatives are prevented from purchasing foreign commodities unless the supply of local product is lower than the market's demands. They are not allowed to earn a profit of more than 10 percent of the prices offered by suppliers of local products, while the profit must be at least 50 percent of the price offered by the supplier of foreign commodities with matching domestic products.

Cooperatives are obligated to specify conspicuous places for displaying domestic products without collecting any fee for this purpose from the local supplier. They must display circulars in conspicuous places, showing the right of the consumer to complain against the cooperatives and explanation of the method for reporting erring cooperative societies.

The Central Markets Administration must regularly conduct training courses for members of the board of directors of cooperatives.

In addition, MP Muhammad Hayef submitted a bill to toughen penalties for whoever drives under the influence of drugs or liquor to three years in prison and a fine of KD 3,000. In this case the driving license will be suspended for five years starting from the date of completing the prison term. The penalty decision will be published by three local newspapers.

Earlier, His Highness the Prime Minister Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah attended the meeting of the Parliament-Government Coordination Committee on Sunday. National Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadon, Deputy Speaker Muhammad Al-Mutairi, MPs Mubarak Al-Tasha, Hassan Jawhar and Shuaib Al-Muwaizri; and Minister of State for National Assembly, Youth and Communication Affairs Dawoud Maarefi were also present at the meeting.

They discussed the legislative agenda for the coming parliamentary year with the aim of reaching an agreement in this regard.

Sources confirmed that the MPs are open to the idea of modifying the parliamentary agenda agreed with the former government. However, the MPs will not accept total change of the agenda. The meetings of the coordination committee are expected to yield positive results, because the prosperity and interest of

the citizens are common factors in the agenda of the previous and current governments, sources added.

Meanwhile, MP Fahd bin Jame'e asked Minister of Health Ahmed Al-Awadhi to provide him with the list of senior officials appointed since January 2020 till date. He asked if these officials met the conditions and if any of them was exempted from the conditions.

He also requested for the list of employees at the Ministry of Health and its subsidiaries who applied for retirement, those who were referred for retirement or resigned since January 2020 till date, comments of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) on the appointment of employees to leadership positions from January 2020 till date, steps taken to address these comments, number of cases filed by employees against the decisions to fill vacant senior positions from January 2020 till date, copies of the relevant court decisions, and current number of vacancies at the ministry and its subsidiaries.

MP Majed Al-Mutairi forwarded queries to Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Yousef Al-Sabah about the deal to buy US manufactured Oshkosh military vehicles. He wants to know if the Ministry of Defense conducted comparative technical studies on Oshkosh military vehicles and other brands used by the US Army, and reason behind the purchase of 8x8 trucks that ply through unpaved and hilly roads which do not exist in Kuwait. He requested for copies of all direct and indirect correspondences concerning the deal with DENEL Company and clarification of the rumor that DENEL is on the verge of bankruptcy. He asked if the Ministry of Defense has received offers from other companies in the last 12 months to supply MM 155 guns, including copies of such offers, if any.

New health

Continued from Page 1

It is set to operationalize the new Abdali Health Center soon, aligning

with the ministry's plan to expand primary health care centers as the primary defense against diseases.

It is noteworthy that Minister Al-Awadhi inaugurated an emergency center in Al-Mutlaa district on November 9, marking the first of its kind in the area. Operating 24/7, the center serves approximately 28,000 households and features facilities such as a control room for receiving reports, equipment storage, consumables and oxygen tank storage, a unit for sterilizing and washing equipment, and ambulances.

Kuwait issues

Continued from Page 1

He called for stepping up efforts to realize the aspirations of the NAM nations for justice, equality, security, development and prosperity.

The Movement, founded 62 years ago by 25 Asian and African nations, convenes its 19th summit today with the participation of 120 member states, 18 observer states and 10 regional and international organizations.

"The huge participation signals the growing political, economic, social and cultural influence of the Movement which could be of great benefit for our nations in their march towards prosperity and progress," he noted.

Ambassador Al-Bannai thanked Azerbaijan for its successful presidency of NAM over the past four years, expressing best wishes for Uganda, the new presidency of the Movement (2024-2027).

Al-Bannai, also Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, leads his country's delegation to the NAM summit and will represent His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the Third South Summit of Group 77 and China on January 21-11.

The Bandung Conference in April 1955 agreed 10 core principles which led to the creation of NAM and outlined its role as a voice of the Third World at the onset of the Cold War.

World News Roundup

Europe

Zelensky slams Trump

25 dead as Kyiv 'shells' Donetsk

KYIV, Ukraine, Jan 21. (AP): At least 25 people were killed Sunday by shelling at a market on the outskirts of the city of Donetsk in Russian-occupied Ukraine, local officials reported Sunday.

A further 20 people were injured in the strike on the suburb of Tekstilshchik, said Alexei Kulemin, the city's Russian-installed mayor. He said that the shells had been fired by the Ukrainian military.

Kyiv has not commented on the event and the claims could not be independently verified by The Associated Press.

Emergency services continue to work on the scene, said Denis Pushilin, head of the Russian-installed authorities in Donetsk.



Pushilin

Also Sunday, fire broke out at a chemical transport terminal at Russia's Ust-Luga port following two explosions, regional officials said. Local media reported that the port had been attacked by Ukrainian drones, causing a gas tank to explode.

The blaze was at a site run by Russia's second-largest natural gas producer, Novatek, 165 kilometers southwest of St. Petersburg.

In a press statement to Russian media outlet RBC, the company said that the fire was the result of an "external influence." It also said that it had paused operations at the port.

Yuriy Zapalatskiy, the head of Russia's Kingisepp region, where the port is based, said in a statement that there were no casualties, but that the district had been placed on high alert.

News outlet Fontanka reported that two drones had been detected flying towards St Petersburg Sunday morning, but that they were redirected towards the Kingisepp region. The Associated Press could not independently verify the reports.

Jet believed to have crashed in Afghanistan: A Russian private jet carrying six people is believed to have crashed in a remote area of rural Afghanistan, authorities said Sunday.

The crash happened Saturday in a mountainous area near Zebak district in Badakhshan province, regional spokesman Zabihullah Amiri said, adding that a rescue team had been dispatched to the area. Zebak is some 250 kilometers (155 miles) northeast of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul. It is a rural, mountainous area, home to only several thousand people.

Badakhshan police chief's office also confirmed the report of the crash in a statement.

In Moscow, Russian civil aviation authorities said a Dassault Falcon 10 went missing with four crew members and two passengers. The Russian-registered aircraft "stopped communicating and disappeared from radar screens," authorities said. It described the flight as starting from Thailand's U-Tapao-Rayong-Pattaya International Airport.

Russia to consider property confiscations: Russia's parliament will consider a law allowing for the confiscation of money, valuables, and other property from those deemed to spread "deliberately false information" about Moscow's military actions, a senior lawmaker said Saturday.

Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of the State Duma, wrote in a Telegram update that the measure would apply to those publicly inciting "extremist activities" or calling for the introduction of sanctions against Russia, as well as those "discrediting" the armed forces, a criminal offense under a law adopted as part of Moscow's crackdown on dissent after it sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

"Everyone who tries to destroy Russia, betrays it, must suffer the deserved punishment and compensate for the damage inflicted on the country, at the cost of their property," Volodin said. He added that under the law, those found guilty of "discrediting" the army also face being stripped of any honorary titles.

Ukrainian president slams Trump: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he was worried at the prospect of Donald Trump returning to the White House, branding Trump's claim that he could stop Ukraine's war with Russia in 24 hours as "very dangerous."

In an interview with the UK's Channel 4 News that aired Friday, Zelenskyy invited the former president and front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination to visit Kyiv, but only if Trump delivers on his promise.

"Donald Trump, I invite you to Ukraine, to Kyiv. If you can stop the war during 24 hours, I think it will be enough to come," Zelenskyy said.

Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung did not respond to a message seeking comment Saturday.

Protests against far right gain momentum: Tens of thousands of people protested the far right in cities across Germany on Saturday, attending events with slogans such as "Never Again is Now," "Against Hate" and "Defend Democracy." The large crowds were the latest in a series of demonstrations that have been gaining momentum in recent days.

The demonstrations came in the wake of a report that right-wing extremists recently met to discuss the deportation of millions of immigrants, including some with German citizenship. Some members of the far-right Alternative for Germany party, or AfD, were present at the meeting.

Police said a Saturday afternoon protest in Frankfurt drew 35,000 people. Demonstrations in Stuttgart, Nuremberg and Hannover, among other cities, also drew large crowds.

Three police officers convicted: A French court convicted three police officers of "voluntary violence" towards a youth worker in a Paris suburb who suffered serious injuries to his rectum after being assaulted with a police baton during an identity check seven years ago.

All three officers received suspended prison sentences. The officer who used the baton to strike Théo Luhaka was given a suspended sentence of 12 months, while the other two present on the scene got three months each.

Luhaka, a youth worker of African descent who was 22 years old at the time, filed a lawsuit accusing the officers of assaulting him during an identity check in February 2017 in Aulnay-sous-Bois, a working-class suburb northeast of Paris with a large immigrant population.



US Republican presidential candidate former president Donald Trump speaks during a campaign event in Manchester, NH on Jan 20. (AP)

Politics

Ex-president joined by SCarolina leaders at NH

Haley questions Trump's mental fitness

COLUMBIA, SC, Jan 21. (AP): Nikki Haley on Saturday questioned whether Donald Trump is mentally capable of serving as president again after he repeatedly seemed to confuse her with former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in a campaign speech.

As she campaigned in Keene, New Hampshire, Haley referenced Trump's speech the night before, in which he mistakenly asserted that Haley was in charge of Capitol security on Jan 6, 2021, when a mob of Trump supporters stormed the building seeking to stop the certification of his loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Trump first said that Haley turned down security offered by his administration on Jan. 6 and then again mentioned Haley, adding, "They destroyed all of the information, all of the evidence, everything, deleted and destroyed all of it."

Trump, 77, has accused Pelosi of turning down security he says his administration offered, but a special House committee empaneled to probe the attack found no evidence to support that claim.

"They're saying he got confused, that he was talking about something else, he's talking about Nancy Pelosi," Haley said on Saturday.

Pressures

"He mentioned me multiple times in that scenario. The concern I have is - I'm not saying anything derogatory - but when you're dealing with the pressures of the presidency, we can't have someone else that we question whether they're mentally fit to do this," Haley said. "We can't."

Speaking at a Bloomberg News forum on Saturday in Manchester, Haley campaign manager Betsy Ankeney referenced Haley's remarks and said Trump "made a pretty apparent gaffe last night."

"It's a distinction without a difference. It's Nikki and Nancy," Trump campaign senior adviser Chris LaCivita said to reporters Saturday night. "What's the difference?"

At his rally Saturday night in Manchester, Trump said that he took a cog-

nitive test and "aced it."

"I'll let you know when I go bad. I really think I'll be able to tell you," he added. "I feel my mind is stronger now than it was 25 years ago. Is that possible?"

Trump, who won Monday's Iowa caucuses and is the current GOP front-runner, picked Haley to serve as his United Nations ambassador and has ramped up his criticism of her campaign as the year's votes have gotten underway.

Meanwhile, former Republican presidential candidate and ex-Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson endorsed Haley on Saturday, days before she tries to take on frontrunner Trump in the New Hampshire primary.

Hutchinson is a conservative whose opposition to Trump became central in his longshot bid for the GOP primary before he dropped out Tuesday.

Donald Trump surrounded himself with leaders from Nikki Haley's home state in a show of strength ahead of Tuesday's New Hampshire primary.

Trump was joined at a rally at the NHU Arena in Manchester Saturday night by South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, the state's lieutenant governor and a slew of other senior officials, including the state's attorney general, treasurer and House speaker. The statewide officials, along with US Reps **Joe Wilson**, **William Timmons** and **Russell Fry**, appeared on stage with Trump.

"Almost every politician from South Carolina is endorsing me," Trump declared.

The South Carolinians urged the voters to carry Trump to a win in New Hampshire before the contest moves to their state and its decisive early contest set for next month.

"If you do that and you win by a big margin here, we'll finish the job in South Carolina," said **Murrell Smith**, the speaker of the South Carolina House of Representatives.

The appearances are yet another blow from South Carolina against Ha-

ley, who is hoping her appeal among independent and unaffiliated voters will propel her to a strong enough finish in New Hampshire to turn the race into a two-person contest against Trump.

It comes a day after Trump received the endorsement of South Carolina Sen. **Tim Scott**, who joined him at a rally in Concord. Scott dropped his own bid for the Republican nomination in November. A dozen years ago, Haley, then serving as governor of their state, elevated Scott from the House by appointing him as senator, making him one of the nation's most prominent Black Republicans.

McMaster and other top officials had already endorsed Trump. Haley has a famously fractious relationship with many of her state's Republican power brokers even as she was twice elected governor - defeating McMaster in the GOP primary the first time.

Her response on Saturday made clear she hadn't forgotten that rivalry.

"I'm sorry, is that the person I ran against for governor and beat?" she said. "Just checking."

Haley campaign manager Betsy Ankeney also brushed off the appearances at an event hosted by Bloomberg News, insisting endorsements had "never been Nikki's game."

Trump on Saturday repeatedly railed against Haley and New Hampshire's voting laws, which allow unaffiliated voters to participate in either the Republican or Democratic primary. The state's more moderate electorate is expected to make the contest much closer than it was in leadoff Iowa.

"Don't listen to polls. Get out and vote. We need a big big win against these terrible people," Trump said.

"I'm a strong Republican, and I just vote Republican because I think they have a lot in common with supporting the United States and the regular citizens of the United States," said Sandra Chase, following an event for GOP presidential candidate **Ron DeSantis** in Lexington, South Carolina, on Saturday afternoon.



The Rev. Ai Hironaka, resident minister of the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, walks through the grounds of his temple and residence destroyed by wildfire, Dec. 7, 2023, in Lahaina, Hawaii. (AP)



Green



Bates

America

Man pleads guilty to kidnapping: A Texas man has pleaded guilty to kidnapping a 13-year-old girl who was rescued in Southern California when a passerby saw her hold up a "Help Me!" sign in a parked car.

A statement Friday from the US Attorney's Office in the Central District of California said Steven Robert Sablan, 62, of Cleburne, Texas, admitted in a plea agreement that he assaulted the victim while driving her from Texas to California.

The girl was rescued July 9 in Long Beach, south of Los Angeles, after a passerby called 911 to report seeing her hold up the piece of paper with the handwritten desperate plea for help.

Sablan, who has been in federal custody since July 2023, pleaded guilty to one count of kidnapping, prosecutors said.

His attorney, Deputy Federal Public Defender Nadine Hettle, declined to comment Saturday. (AP)

'911 calls capture pleas': The day after the deadliest US wildfire in a century destroyed a seaside community on Maui, the barrage of 911 calls didn't stop: Reports of missing people, stranded family members and confused tourists trapped without food or water lit up the emergency lines every few minutes, interspersed with reports of new fires starting and older ones flaring back up.

The 911 recordings from the morning and early afternoon of Aug 9 were the third batch of calls released by the Maui Police Department in response to a public record request. They show how first responders and emergency dispatchers - many of whom had already worked long hours during what was likely the most harrowing experience of their lives - continued to be hindered by limited staffing and widespread communication failures. Hawaii's governor is **Josh Green**.

Several callers reached out to 911 throughout the morning asking for wellness checks for relatives or friends they couldn't reach. Cell communications were still down in some areas. Authorities told people to call the non-emergency police number to file missing person reports or so that police could check with the Red Cross and other volunteers who had registered evacuees at the shelters. (AP)

Kansas couple charged: A Kansas

couple has been charged with fraudulently collecting more than \$215,000 in retirement benefits on behalf of a dead relative while they concealed his body inside their home

for six years.

Authorities say Mike Carroll's pacemaker showed that he died in 2016 at age 81, but Overland Park police didn't discover his



People march in the streets of Aulnay-sous-Bois, north of Paris, France, holding a sign reading 'Justice for Theo' during a protest, a day after a French police officer was charged with violence during an identity check on Feb 6, 2017. A French court convicted three police officers of 'voluntary violence' towards a youth worker in a Paris suburb who had a police baton forcibly inserted into his rectum during an identity check seven years ago. (AP)

body until 2022 after his son-in-law, Kirk Ritter, called police to report his death in the Kansas City suburb.

Prosecutors say Lynn Ritter and Kirk Ritter, both 61, continued depositing and spending from Carroll's bank account even while his body became "mummified" on a bed in the home he owned. Lynn Ritter is Carroll's daughter.

Family members told the Kansas City Star that the Ritters would repeatedly give them excuses about why Carroll could never take a phone call or visit while leading them to believe that Carroll was still alive. (AP)

Cold weather brings misery: Arctic weather brought more misery to much of the US on Saturday, especially for people unaccustomed to such bitter cold in places like Memphis, Tennessee, where residents were urged to boil water and some had no water at all after freezing temperatures broke water mains across the city. Temperatures weren't expected to rise until after the weekend.

The bracing cold followed a week of storms blamed for at least 61 deaths around the US, many involving hypothermia or road accidents.

At the Four Way Grill in Memphis, owner **Patrice Bates Thompson** said the water problems have closed their soul food kitchen for days.

"This is our staple, and this is what basically drives the force of my family financially," Thompson told Fox-13 Memphis. "We depend on business, and we have been at home." (AP)

Lat/Am

Outspoken Colombian lawmaker dies: Piedad Córdoba, an outspoken Colombian lawmaker who for decades championed the rights of her fellow Afro-Colombians while undertaking huge risks as a go-between to leftist rebel groups, has died. She was 68.

The senator's death was confirmed Saturday by President Gustavo Petro, who praised Córdoba as a true liberal who "fought all her mature life for a more democratic society."

No cause of death was given but Colombian media reported she was found dead Saturday by her bodyguards at her home in Medellín from an apparent heart attack.

Known throughout Colombia for her colorful turbans evoking her African heritage, Córdoba stood out as a leftist stalwart in one of Latin America's most conservative countries and paid dearly for her vociferous defense of some of the country's most dispossessed.



Córdoba

Whether kidnapped by right-wing paramilitary groups, or expelled from Congress for promoting the country's last remaining rebel army, Córdoba never shied away from conflict and frequently bounced back from adversity in remarkable ways. A trusted ally of the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, Córdoba played a key behind-the-scenes role in bringing leaders of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, to the negotiating table that resulted in a historic 2016 peace deal ending a half century of guerrilla conflict.

However, her final political battle was an almost impossible fight - one that complicated her comeback on the coattails of former rebel Petro's historic election as Colombia's first leftist president.

In 2010, she was expelled from Congress and banned from holding office for 18 years for allegedly promoting the FARC. But the decision was later overturned and Córdoba regained her Senate seat last year on the coattails of Petro's historic victory. (AP)

4 officers in Mexico under investigation: Four local police officers in Mexico were placed under investigation in connection with the shooting death of a man in the Gulf of Mexico state of Veracruz, after neighbors in the town surrounded the officers and attacked them.

The Veracruz Public Security Department said in a statement the officers from Lerdo de Tejada, a coastal town in the south of the state, were detained late Friday. They were handed over to the prosecutor's office to investigate the death of 27-year-old Brando de Jesús Arellano Cruz, it said.

The identities of the officers were not released. Arellano Cruz was shot Friday night while in his vehicle. His family speculated the police may have flagged Arellano Cruz down and he didn't stop out of fear of the local security forces, who are highly mistrusted by local residents.

The victim phoned his father, Delfino Arellano Ramírez, and told him that the officers were following him and that he was on his way to his grandmother's house.

Arellano Ramírez said that just after the call he went to the grandmother's house and that when he arrived, his son's vehicle was stopped and he heard two gunshots. (AP)

Some 500 migrants depart northern Honduras: Some 500 Honduran migrants in a caravan departed Saturday before dawn from the northern city of San Pedro Sula in hopes of reaching the United States.

It was the first such group since January 2022 and was comprised of men, women and children mostly from inland and southern Honduras, where many farm workers lost their jobs due to the closure of some plantations.

"We are determined to keep going because here we are worse off. We have no jobs. We are hungry," said Edgar Iván Hernández, a 26-year-old farm worker who was traveling with three relatives.

His cousin, Arnold Ulises Hernández, said they were encouraged to join the caravan after finding out about it on social networks. "The best way is to leave in a group because that way we are not stopped much by the police or immigration," he said.

The vast majority of migrants cross Central America and Mexico in small groups, using all types of transportation and smuggling networks. Only a few form caravans.

The San Pedro Sula bus terminal is where migrants leave daily in buses headed north toward the US, but it was also the origin of the massive caravans of late 2018 and 2019. (AP)

Officials in Martinique rescue 2 boaters: Authorities in the French Caribbean island of Martinique say two people have been rescued and they are searching for three others after their boat capsized.

The search is focused along Galleon Bay, off Martinique's east coast, according to the Antilles-Guyana Regional Operational Surveillance and Rescue Center.

Local media reported that the two were rescued by fishermen, and that one of them remains hospitalized. They have not been identified. (AP)

Police in Jamaica detain ex-parliament member: A former member of Jamaica's Parliament has been detained and named a suspect in his wife's death, police said.

Jolyan Silvera was taken into custody after an autopsy found that his wife, Melissa Silvera, did not die of natural causes in November but of possible gunshot wounds, police said late Thursday, calling the development a "major breakthrough."

As a result, the investigation was upgraded to possible murder, officials said.

Melissa Silvera was found dead at her home in November. Fitz Bailey, deputy police commissioner of crime, said authorities are "satisfied ... that there is sufficient evidence to mount a viable prosecution."

Silvera has not been charged. It was not immediately clear if he has an attorney. (AP)

3 charged with murdering comedian: Three people have been jailed in the kidnapping and killing of a Hmong American comedian and activist who was found dead near Medellín after going out to meet a woman he reportedly met on social media, Colombian officials announced.

The Prosecutor's Office said in a statement that two men and a woman were charged with the crimes of aggravated kidnapping for extortion and aggravated homicide in the death last month of Tou Ger Xiong, 50. The suspects denied the charges at a hearing, the statement said.

A minor who presented himself to the Public Prosecutor's Office admitting to having participated in the crime also was charged in the case and transferred to a special detention center for minors, it added.

The US Embassy in Bogota warned a week ago about Colombian criminals who use dating apps to lure victims and then assault and rob them. The embassy said it was aware of eight suspicious deaths of US citizens in Medellín in the final two months of 2023, several involving the use of online dating apps. (AP)

Suspect arrested in art dealer slaying: A suspect was arrested in the brutal killing in Brazil of an American art dealer who was the co-owner of a prominent gallery in Manhattan, police said.

Brent Sikkema, 75, was found dead on Monday with 18 stab wounds in his Rio de Janeiro apartment.

Rio state police arrested a man who they identified as Alejandro Triana Trevez near the city of Uberaba, in the neighboring state of Minas Gerais. The man, who local media say is Cuban, was on the run and was found resting in a gas station.

Police said that Trevez allegedly took \$3,000 from Sikkema's home. Detective Felipe Curi, who leads the state police homicide unit, told CBN Rio that the main line of investigation is theft leading to homicide.

"Initial findings of our investigation indicate that Alejandro (Trevez) came from Sao Paulo specifically to commit this crime," Curi said. He then returned to Sao Paulo, leading investigators to believe he had "some kind of privileged information."

Law enforcement obtained a 30-day prison warrant against Trevez, which Curi said would allow them to explore other leads and answer questions such as whether the two men knew each other. (AP)



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, fourth from left, meets with Mexican Foreign Secretary Alicia Bárcena, not pictured, to discuss US Mexican migration, in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the State Department in Washington on Jan 19. (AP)

Asia

Envoy offers assurances to Washington, Beijing

NKorea stresses alignment with Russia

SEOUL, South Korea, Jan 21. (AP): North Korea said Sunday that Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed his willingness to visit the North at an unspecified "early date" as the countries continue to align in the face of their separate, intensifying confrontations with the United States.

The North Korean Foreign Ministry highlighted Putin's intent for a visit following North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui's meetings with Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Moscow last week. The ministry said in a statement published by state media that the two countries agreed to further strategic and tactical cooperation with Russia to establish a "new multi-polarized international order," a reference to their efforts to build a united front against Washington.

Putin had already confirmed his willingness to visit the capital, Pyongyang, at a convenient time during his meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Russia's Far East in September. One of the few world leaders openly supporting Putin's war on Ukraine, Kim has been actively boosting the visibility of his ties with Russia in an attempt to break out of diplomatic isolation and strengthen his footing, as he navigates a deepening nuclear standoff with Washington, Seoul and Tokyo.

Test

In a separate statement on Sunday, the North's Foreign Ministry condemned the UN Security Council for calling an emergency meeting over the country's latest ballistic test, which state media described as a new intermediate-range solid-fuel missile tipped with a hypersonic warhead. The ministry said the test-firing on Jan. 14 was among the country's regular activities to improve its defense capabilities and that it didn't pose a threat to its neighbors.

South Korea on Thursday urged the Security Council "to break the silence" over North Korea's escalating missile tests and threats, Russia and China, both permanent members of the council, have blocked U.S.-led efforts to increase sanctions on North Korea over its recent weapons tests, underscoring a divide deepened over Russia's war on Ukraine.

The alignment between Pyongyang and Moscow has raised international concerns about alleged arms cooperation, in which the North provides Russia with munitions to help prolong its fighting in Ukraine, possibly in exchange for badly needed economic aid and military assistance to help upgrade Kim's forces. Both Pyongyang and Russia have denied accusations

by Washington and Seoul about North Korean arms transfers to Russia.

North Korea's Foreign Ministry, in comments published by state media, said Choe and the Russian officials in their meetings expressed a "strong will to further strengthen strategic and tactical cooperation in defending the core interests of the two countries and establishing a new multi-polarized international order."

Russia expressed "deep thanks" to North Korea for its "full support" over its war on Ukraine, the North Korean ministry said. It said Choe and the Russian officials expressed "serious concern" over the United States' expanding military cooperation with its Asian allies that they blamed for worsening tensions in the region and threatening North Korea's sovereignty and security interests.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula are at their highest point in years, after Kim in recent months used Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a distraction to ramp up his weapons tests and military demonstrations. The United States, South Korea and Japan have responded by strengthening their combined military exercises, which Kim portrays as invasion rehearsals, and sharpening their deterrence plans built around nuclear-capable US assets.

In the latest tit-for-tat, North Korea on Friday said it conducted a test of a purported nuclear-capable underwater attack drone in response to a combined naval exercise by the United States, South Korea and Japan last week, as it continued to blame its rivals for tensions in the region.

Choe's visit to Moscow came as Kim continues to use domestic political events to issue provocative threats of nuclear conflict.

At Pyongyang's rubber-stamp parliament last week, Kim declared that North Korea is abandoning its long-standing goal of a peaceful unification with war-divided rival South Korea and ordered the rewriting of the North's constitution to cement the South as its most hostile foreign adversary. He accused South Korea of acting as "top-class stooges" of the Americans and repeated a threat that he would use his nukes to annihilate the South if provoked.

Analysts say North Korea could be aiming to diminish South Korea's voice in the regional nuclear standoff and eventually force direct dealings with Washington as it looks to cement its status as a nuclear weapons state.

Also:

WASHINGTON: Taiwan's top diplomat in Washington has a message for

both the island's Chinese adversaries and its American friends: Don't worry that Taiwan's new president-elect will worsen relations with Beijing and possibly draw the US into a conflict.

President-elect **Lai Ching-te** plans to keep the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, **Alexander Tah-Ray Yui** told The Associated Press in his first interview with an international news organization since he arrived in the US in December.

The Chinese government has called Lai a troublemaker who will push Taiwan toward independence. But Yui said Lai is willing to engage with Beijing, even as the island seeks to strengthen its unofficial ties with Washington for stability in the region.

"We want the status quo. We want the way it is - neither unification, neither independence. The way it is the way we want to live right now," said Yui, Taiwan's de-facto ambassador to the US, noting the stance is largely supported at home and will guide the new administration.

Yui spoke to the AP five days after Lai won the presidential election with more than 40% of the vote in a three-way race. Lai will succeed **Tsai Ing-wen** when he is inaugurated in May.

His victory, which gives the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party an unprecedented third presidential term, was not welcomed by Beijing, which claims Taiwan as its own, to be taken by force if necessary.

Military action in the Taiwan Strait could draw in the **United States**, which is obligated under a 1979 law to provide Taiwan with sufficient military hardware and technology.

Beijing refused to have any dialogue with Tsai because her party rejects **China's** claim of sovereignty over the island, and before the election had suggested to voters that they could be choosing between war and peace.

It remains unclear if Beijing will be willing to engage with Lai, who in the past described himself as a "pragmatic worker of Taiwan's independence."

Two days after Lai was elected, China wooed away **Nauru**, a small Pacific island nation, which has left Taiwan with only 12 countries around the world that recognize its statehood. However, China has not launched massive military exercises around the island, as it has in past times of increased tensions.

Yui said Lai intends to follow the same line as his predecessor "but also to offer an olive branch to mainland China by saying that he's also willing to engage with mainland China."



Special forces police officers stand guard after residents protested the death of Brando Arellano Cruz, fatally shot by police after he failed to pull over, in Lerdo de Tejada near Veracruz, Mexico, on Jan 19. (AP)



Museveni



Wade

Africa

Army carries out op against militia: The Somali Army launched a military operation on Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabab militia in villages within Bakool region under Southwest State in Somalia, reported the national news agency (SONNA) on Sunday.

Somali National News Agency (SONNA) said that these operations resulted in the expulsion of "terrorist elements" from neighboring villages of Bakool region.

The Somali Army succeeded in destroying "terrorist sites" and securing the liberated villages.

The Somali Army with the help of national forces and international partners would continue targeting Al-Shabab militia in central Somalia. (KUNA)

Tshisekedi sworn into office: Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi was sworn in Saturday following a disputed December election, promising to unite the Central African country during his second five-year term and to protect lives in the conflict-hit eastern region.

"I am taking back the baton of command that you entrusted to me. We want a more united, stronger and prosperous Congo," Tshisekedi, 60, said during the inauguration ceremony in Kinshasa attended by several heads of state. His first inauguration in 2019 marked Congo's first democratic transfer of power since the country's independence from Belgium in 1960.

Tshisekedi won reelection with more than 70% of the vote, according to the election commission. However, opposition candidates and their supporters questioned the validity of the election, which was mired in logistical problems.

Many polling stations were late in opening or didn't open at all while some lacked materials. Voter turnout was 40%, the election commission said. (AP)

Wade renounces French nationality: Karim Wade, the son of a former president of Senegal and a strong political figure in the country, has renounced his French nationality to pave the way for him to run in next month's presidential election.

Wade said in a statement on X formerly known as Twitter, that France's interior minister confirmed his renunciation. His dual French and Senegalese nationalities have been a subject of debate because Senegal's constitution says candidates can run only if they are exclusively Senegalese.

The announcement comes days ahead of when the final list of candidates will be announced and weeks ahead of Senegal's presidential elections scheduled for the end of February.

Another candidate, Thierno Alassane Sall, launched an appeal with the Constitu-

tional Council to invalidate Wade's candidacy.

Wade, seen as one of the main contenders, is part of the Senegalese Democratic

Party. The party, under his father, former President Abdoulaye Wade, ran the country between 2000 and 2012.

In 2013 the younger Wade was charged



Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi reviews an honor guard during his swearing in ceremony for a second term in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo on Jan 20. Tshisekedi promised a huge crowd of supporters and several heads of state to unite the Central African country during his second five-year term and to protect lives in the conflict-hit eastern region. (AP)

with corruption and served three years in jail before going into exile in Qatar. (AP)

Explosives kill 1, injure 4: A donkey cart carrying a suspected improvised bomb blew up at a checkpoint on the Kenya-Somalia border Thursday, killing one Kenyan police officer and critically wounding four others, authorities said.

A Kenyan police report seen by The Associated Press said the cart pulled by two donkeys and ridden by one man passed the Somali checkpoint of Bula Hawa and entered Kenyan territory, where it was stopped by officers to check the load.

The rider jumped off and ran back into Somalia moments before the cart exploded, causing a huge fire at the border post in the northern county of Mandera, the report said.

The report said that the cart's driver was arrested by Somali police as he tried to flee, and that the Mandera county security team was negotiating with the Bula Hawa police to have him handed over to Kenyan authorities.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack, but suspicion immediately fell on al-Shabab, a Somalia-based extremist group linked to al-Qaida.

Al-Shabab has vowed retribution on Kenya for sending troops into Somalia in 2011 to fight the militants. The group had staged a string of kidnappings of Westerners inside Kenya that threatened the country's tourism; a key pillar of its economy. (AP)

USD stable

The US Dollar's rate against Kuwaiti Dinar was stable at KD 0.0307 on Sunday, while the Euro went up to KD 0.335 compared to last Thursday rates, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), Thursday.

The CBK revealed in its daily bulletin that the exchange rate of the Sterling Pound went up 0.15 percent to reach KD 0.390 while the Swiss Franc went down by 0.05 percent to reach KD 0.353, while the Japanese Yen was stable at KD 0.002. (KUNA)

Gold prices closed high at USD 2029 per ounce at the end of last week's trading following the surge of geopolitical risks in the Red Sea region.

A report by Dar-Alsbaek said on Sunday that the prices of gold futures contracts rose last Friday in the midst of ongoing military tensions in the Middle East, in conjunction with expert analysts' expectations that the United States' Federal Reserve will begin reducing interest rates.

The report explained that the reduction in US interest rates comes with its publication of economic data predicting a decline in inflation in the United States which was revealed by data from University of Michigan. The decline in inflation is predicted to reach 2.9 percent by the end of January, in comparison to 3.1 percent last December. Furthermore, it is worthy to note the decline in inflation had had the lowest reading since December 2020.

Moreover, the report went on to explain an increasing interest in gold as a safe haven asset against rising tensions and risks, first in Gaza, and second in the possible suspension of Bab Al-Mandab Strait to commercial and international navigation.

It also mentioned the prices of futures contracts for the yellow metal for a February 2024 delivery rose to 0.4 percent which equates to USD 7.7, whereas a decrease in the index that measures

the performance of the American currency against other major currencies by 0.2 percent at 103.33 points.

In regards to local markets, the report stated that the price of a gram of 24 karat was KD 20.26 (USD 61.7), 22 karat was KD 18.57 (USD 56.6), while silver closed at KD 268 (USD 817) per kilogram. An ounce is one of the units' measurements of mass, which is equal to 28.349 grams, while a troy ounce of gold equals 31.103 grams. (KUNA)

Dar-Alsbaek: Gold prices at USD 2029 per oz last wk

Market Movements

21-01-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts		
UAE	- DFM	+0.71	4,081.71	PHILIPPINES	- PSEi	-0.11	6,503.54
JAPAN	- Nikkei	+1.40	35,963.27	SAUDI	- Tadawul	-0.86	11,959.07
PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	+0.03	63,281.07				
EGYPT	- EGX 30	+0.32	26,842.67				

Business

UK CPI came in 4% against expectations of 3.8%

Resilient US consumer spending undermines early Fed cuts

By National Bank of Kuwait

United States

US retail sales expand in December

Retail sales in December expanded at a rate of 0.6% in the month-over-month figure, higher than the 0.4% expected figure. Meanwhile, core retail sales, which excludes automobile, building material, gas, and food services, expanded by 0.4%, beating expectations of a 0.2% increase. The news release followed strong employment and wage gains in December, as well as an increase in consumer prices. The positive figure was met by a rising dollar against major currencies, stocks, and commodities.

The US dollar index rose to 103.45 on Wednesday, while the USDJPY pair rose to 148.02, up from 140.73 in the beginning of the year, making the Japanese yen this year's worst-performing currency. The equity market fell as the dollar gained, with the NASDAQ index falling 0.6% on the day. Similarly, the S&P500 index and the Dow Jones also ended the day lower.

Despite anticipation of interest rate cuts, investors shifted their focus on the stronger than expected data releases from the US, driving the 10-year treasury note yield to its highest levels in over a month, reaching around 4.102%. The 2-year note yield also experienced gains trading at around 4.352% on Wednesday, as markets are starting to expect prolonged higher inflation rates to remain amidst a resilient economy.

US jobless claims

The US labor market showed resilience at the start of the year as initial applications for benefits surprisingly fell last week to the lowest level in almost a year. Initial claims decreased by 16,000 coming in at 187,000 in the week ending Jan 13, versus the prior reading of 203,000 indicating that job growth remained steady in January. Moreover, along with the drop in weekly claims, continuing claims decreased by 26,000 to 1.906 million during the week ending in Jan 6, the lowest since October.

FOMC member Christopher Waller speaks

US FOMC member Christopher Waller, who was responsible for a big repricing of Fed expectations back in November, spoke on Tuesday and stated that the US is "within striking distance" of hitting the desired 2% inflation rate goal, adding that the central bank should not rush into any rate cuts until it is clear that a downward inflation trend is sustained. The FOMC member added that regardless of when

- US Retail sales came in at 0.6% versus expectations of 0.4%.
- Unemployment claims in the US came in at 187,000 versus expectations of 206,000.
- FOMC member Christopher Waller Speaks
- UK CPI came in at 4.0%, versus expectations of 3.8%.
- UK retail sales m/m came in at -3.2%, versus expectations of -0.5%.
- China GDP came in at 5.2%, versus expectations of 5.3%.

the central bank starts cutting rates, policy makers should proceed "methodically and carefully", to avoid large and fast reductions. Traders continued to price in rate cuts to begin in March, where the next Fed meeting scheduled in late January will be watched closely for any signals regarding interest rate decisions. The US dollar was seen rising.

The greenback is up over the past week, closing at 103.236.

United Kingdom

UK Consumer Price Index

The latest news release shows that Inflation in the United Kingdom rose beyond expectations for the month of December, with annual headline CPI coming in at 4% versus forecasts of a 3.8% print. The reading also surpassed November's figure of 3.9%, showing the first rise in over a year. Core inflation, which excludes food and energy prices, remains sticky, coming in at 5.1% as expected. The rise in inflation figures was driven by the services sector, with the print showing an acceleration of services inflation to 6.4% from 6.3% previously.

UK retail sales m/m fell sharply

British retail sales plunged in December, marking the biggest decline since January 2021 when the reintroduction of pandemic restrictions knocked sales heavily. This raises the risk that the UK economy fell into a technical recession at the end of last year. In December, which is traditionally boosted by Christmas gift buying, UK Retail Sales MoM fell sharply by -3.2%, significantly worse than the -0.5% that

Rates - January 21st, 2024

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0953	1.0843	1.0967	1.0897	1.0700	1.1000	1.0938
GBP	1.2747	1.2593	1.2765	1.2700	1.2500	1.2800	1.2710
JPY	144.90	144.85	148.80	148.14	145.00	150.00	146.08
CHF	0.8518	0.8513	0.8704	0.8685	0.8500	0.8800	0.8605

had been expected by economists. Commenting on the data, Heather Bovill from the UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS) said, "food stores performed very poorly, with their steepest fall since May 2021 as early Christmas shopping led to slow December sales". Core Retail Sales, excluding auto fuel, also declined by 3.3% MoM, compared to the forecasted fall of -0.6%. On a YoY basis UK Retail Sales fell by -2.4% last month vs an anticipated rise of 1.1% while Core Retail Sales for the same period decreased by -2.1% vs the 1.4% gain that had been expected.

The Sterling traded sideways over the past week. However, the currency pair lost its footing following the disappointing retail sales on Friday and closed the week lower at 1.2700.

Asia-Pacific

Japan Producer Price Index

In Japan, wholesale inflation data came in flat for the month of December, compared to forecasts of -0.3%, marking the 12th consecutive slowdown for the figure. The slowdown in wholesale inflation can be partly attributed to government subsidies to curb petrol and utility bills, where some BoJ officials expected it to have contributed to a 0.9% drop in wholesale prices. The BoJ is scheduled to have a meeting later in the month, where it is expected that they will keep the policy rates unchanged but cut their core consumption

inflation forecast for 2024.

The Yen underperformed over the week, closing at 148.14.

China's gross domestic product

The latest from China comes to show that the world's second largest economy continues to struggle to get back to where it once was pre-pandemic. Weak consumer, business confidence and a significant real estate crisis have all exerted pressure on the economy. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew 5.2% in Q4, slightly above the third quarter growth of 4.9%, but still below the forecast 5.3% growth. The weak demand in the Chinese economy, along with deflationary pressures, have increased expectations that the government will have to introduce more stimulus measures soon. The latest discouraging data has seen stocks in China, already near five-year lows, drop even further. According to the China Beige Book International's latest survey, "any true acceleration (this year) will require either a major global upside surprise or more active government policy," and that is in line with market expectations that policymakers will have to commit soon.

The USD/CNY currency pair traded sideways the week, last trading at 7.1931.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30745.

Dinar-denominated savings deposits for private sector in local banks 'dip'

First 11 months of 2023 saw a 14% contraction

By Ahmad Fathi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Dinar-denominated savings deposits for the private sector at local banks witnessed a significant decline during the first 11 months of 2023, experiencing a 14 percent contraction amounting to about 946 million dinars.

This decline led these deposits to reach their lowest recorded level in two years, plummeting from 6.798 billion dinars at the end of December to 5.817 billion dinars by the end of November. According to data from the Central Bank, there was an annual decrease of 14.4 percent, equating to 984.1 million dinars, compared to the 6.801 billion dinars recorded in November 2022.

Simultaneously, private sector "demand" deposits in dinars also registered a decline of 9.3 percent over the 11-month period, representing a decrease of 932.7 million dinars. These deposits contracted from 9.948 billion dinars in December 2022 to 9.015 billion dinars in November 2023. On an annual basis, this decline was 10 percent, with a value of 1.01 billion dinars, compared to the 10.03 billion dinars reported at the end of November 2022. Additionally, there was a monthly decline of 3.8 percent, amounting to 362.1 million dinars, compared to the 9.377 billion dinars reported in October.

Conversely, private "time" deposits in dinars experienced a notable increase of 12.6 percent, reaching a total of 2.321 billion dinars during the 11-month period. These deposits rose from 18.427 billion dinars in December 2022 to 20.749 billion dinars in November 2023. On a monthly basis,

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has maintained its leading position in the primary and secondary markets for the Sukuk issuance of the International Islamic Liquidity Management (IILM) Sukuk Program. KFH achieved the top rank as a Primary Dealer and ranked first as a Secondary Dealer for the third year in a row amongst the IILM primary dealers that include several local, regional and international banks.

KFH General Manager Treasury Kuwait, Ahmad Al-Sumait said that maintaining this excellence emphasizes the KFH's leading position and the confidence it enjoys in the Sukuk market, as well as its pioneering role in activating and developing the primary and secondary Sukuk market.

He added that KFH is top-ranked in this program, with an issuance volume of US\$ 11.5 Billion covering 36 Sukuk, noting that Standard & Poor's (S&P) rated IILM Sukuk Program a short-term A-1 sukuk program.

"Being one of the most active market

makers, KFH will continue its investment activities in the primary and secondary markets", he said.

"KFH continued to persistently expand its short-term Sukuk trading and succeeded in enhancing its active role as a market maker, maintaining its lead-



Ahmad Eissa Al-Sumait

ership in professionalism and efficiency standards, thus contributing to the development and improvement of the Sukuk market" added Al-Sumait.

He noted that this achievement has been made by KFH despite the unstable global economic environment, in terms

of the fluctuations of returns in the fixed income market due to the global high inflation and the interventions by central banks to withdraw liquidity.

"As markets expect interest rates to decline this year, forecasts indicate that 2024 would be an active year in terms of the volume of issuances for the primary market and trading for the secondary market. This will offer attractive investment opportunities," said Al-Sumait.

Meanwhile, the International Islamic Liquidity Management (IILM) commended KFH's strong performance in the Sukuk Market and its high efficiency in marketing sukuk issuances. IILM praised the extended relationship it has with KFH since IILM's first sukuk issuance in 2013 as part of a short-term wide-ranging sukuk program.

IILM added in its statement that the top rank in the primary and secondary markets for KFH is an earned achievement and confirms its leadership and significant role in activating and developing the Sukuk market.

For the third consecutive year

KFH top primary dealer in IILM Primary and Secondary Sukuk Markets in 2023

nars reported in October. On an annual basis, this growth was 2 percent, with a value of 704 million dinars, relative to the 34.877 billion dinars reported at the end of November 2022.

In the realm of foreign currency deposits, local banks experienced a 1.4 percent increase over the 11-month period, amounting to 24.8 million dinars. This led foreign currency deposits to

rise from 1.774 billion dinars in December 2022 to 1.799 billion dinars in November 2023. Despite a monthly decline of 1.9 percent, equivalent to about 35.4 million dinars, from the 1.834 billion dinars reported in October, foreign currency deposits saw a 5.1 percent annual growth, equivalent to 88.4 million dinars, compared to the 1.711 billion dinars recorded in November 2022."

Conversely, foreign direct investments in Kuwait increased by 597 million dinars, a 13.6% rise, reaching 4.9 billion dinars at the end of the third quarter of 2023 compared to approximately 4.3 billion dinars in the same period in 2022. Additionally, Kuwaiti investments in financial derivatives saw an increase of about 510 million dinars, reaching 2 billion dinars, marking a 34% growth from 1.4 billion dinars.

varied rates of growth within economic and geographical groups globally. A major contributor to the weak economic performance was identified in the diminished growth of advanced economies, with their rates projected to drop from 1.5% in 2023 to 1.2% in 2024.

The sluggish growth was attributed to

2020-2025 to witness weakest global economic growth in three decades

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Al-Shall's weekly report has highlighted the release of a World Bank report on January 9, encapsulating its assessment of the global economic outlook, reports Al-Anba daily.

The report touches on a nuanced per-

spective, combining elements of both pessimism and optimism. On the downside, the World Bank projected that the current five-year period (2020 to 2025) would witness the weakest global economic growth in three decades.

Contrastingly, the report indicated a

more favorable present scenario compared to projections a year ago, emphasizing the increased likelihood of a secure economic landing.

This positive shift was predominantly attributed to the robust performance of the American economy, aligning

with findings from a January 4 report on the same subject by the United Nations' economic and financial management.

While the global economy is anticipated to sustain positive growth, the report anticipated a third consecu-

tive year of deceleration. Following a 2.6% growth in 2023, the forecast for 2024 hovered around 2.4%, marking a 0.75% decrease from the growth rates observed in the previous decade (2010 to 2020).

The sluggish growth was attributed to

BUSINESS

JetBlue and Spirit Airlines will appeal judge's ruling that blocked their merger

JetBlue and Spirit Airlines have said they will appeal a federal judge's ruling this week that blocked their plan to combine into a single carrier.

The airlines said they filed a notice of appeal with the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, following the terms of their agreement.

The Justice Department, which sued to block JetBlue's proposed \$3.8 billion purchase of Spirit, declined to comment.

JetBlue and Spirit are the nation's sixth- and seventh-largest carriers. JetBlue, which outbid

Frontier Airlines, said it needed to acquire Spirit to compete more effectively against even bigger airlines.

But on Tuesday, a federal judge in Boston ruled that the deal violated antitrust law. The U.S. Justice Department had sued to stop the deal, arguing that consumers would be harmed and forced to pay higher fares if Spirit - the nation's biggest discount airline - were eliminated. The airlines announced their appeal in a statement that provided no other details.

Earlier Friday, Spirit said that a strong holiday-

travel season in December boosted its fourth-quarter revenue. The Miramar, Florida-based airline also said that it is trying to refinance \$1.1 billion in debt that is due for payment in September 2025.

Spirit also said that negotiations with Pratt & Whitney over engines that need to be reworked - resulting in the grounding of an average of 26 planes a day throughout 2024 - "have progressed considerably since October." The airline said it expects compensation that will provide "a significant source of liquidity over the

next couple of years."

Spirit has been losing money since the start of 2020. Some analysts said it could face bankruptcy without the merger with JetBlue.

The airlines announced their intention to appeal U.S. District Judge William Young's ruling after the stock market closed on Friday.

Shares of Spirit, which fell 62% over three days following the ruling, gained 17% in regular trading Friday, and rose another 13% in after-hours trading. JetBlue's shares fell 2% in extended trading. (AP)

Fitch Ratings affirms bank's Viability Rating at 'bbb-'

Gulf Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A' with Stable Outlook



Algharabally with ControlCase officials and Zain's Enterprise Risk Management team.

Demonstrating compliance with best security standards

Zain renews PCI Data Security Standard certification

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Reflecting its unwavering commitment to the best global practices and security standards, Zain announced the successful renewal of the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) certification, Version 3.2.1. The accreditation attests Zain's compliance with the best information security standards and payment card requirements to protect customers' data and ensure the most secure experience.

The certification was presented to Zain Kuwait Acting Chief Executive Officer Nawaf Algharabally by Suresh Dadlani, President of ControlCase, and Karolien Holsters, Director of Business Development, ControlCase. In attendance were Zain Kuwait's Enterprise Risk Management team.

In 2010, Zain became the first telecom operator in the MENA region to gain this recognition from the PCI Security Standards Council, the global forum that brings together payments industry stakeholders like financial institutions, banks, and regulatory bodies to develop and drive adoption of data security standards and resources for safe payments. Today, Zain's renewal of this certification demonstrates its ongoing efforts to bring the safest payment experiences to its corporate and consumer customers, who make up the nation's largest customer base.

The certification was successfully renewed after a thorough audit process was conducted by ControlCase, an independent body that evaluates and assesses systems and processes to monitor compliance with PCI requirements and standards. The company assesses several aspects like protection against hacks, identifying vulnerabilities, and reviewing policies and proce-



Nawaf Algharabally receives the certification.

dures related to payments.

Zain was certified after the company's systems were found to be fully compliant with all PCI DSS requirements and standards. Throughout the years, Zain continues to introduce strict security procedures and implement core-level changes to its systems to assure the highest levels of security when customers complete payment transactions on the company's various channels, including the website, smartphone app, and the biggest network of branches in Kuwait.

Recently, Zain also announced the successful renewal of six ISO certifications, attesting to the company's adherence to the highest standards and its compliance with the best global practices, reinforcing its leadership position in the Kuwaiti market.

Zain successfully renewed the following ISO certifications: Quality Management System (ISO 9001:2015), Environmen-

tal Management System (ISO 14001:2015), Information Security Management System (ISO/IEC 27001:2022), Business Continuity (ISO 22301:2012), IT Service Management (ISO/IEC 20000-1:2018), and Occupational Health and Safety Management (ISO 45001:2018).

Zain is proud to be one of the Kuwaiti private sector's first companies to prioritize quality management and operational excellence, including obtaining ISO certifications throughout the past three decades to ensure its commitment to international standards.

In the beginning of its journey, Zain Kuwait obtained its first ISO certification for its Quality Management System (QMS), marking the company's pledge to maintaining high-quality standards. Over time, and as Zain expanded its services and operations, it continued to be certified across various other areas such as information security, business continuity, environmental management, and more.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Fitch Ratings has affirmed Gulf Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A' with a Stable Outlook. Fitch has also affirmed the Bank's Viability Rating (VR) at 'bbb-'.

According to the recently published Fitch Ratings commentary, Fitch stated that: "Gulf Bank's Issuer Default Ratings reflect potential support from the Kuwaiti authorities, as reflected in its Government Support Rating (GSR) of 'a.'" Fitch also added in their commentary: "Gulf Bank's Viability Rating (VR) reflects its good domestic franchise, cautious risk approach, healthy loan quality, good capitalization and stable funding despite high deposit concentration. The VR also considers modest, but improved profitability, and high loan concentrations, albeit similar to peers."

The Stable Outlook on Gulf Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating reflects that on the Kuwaiti



Dalal Al-Dousari

sovereign rating.

Commenting on Fitch's credit rating announcement, Ms. Dalal Al-Dousari, Gulf Bank's Deputy

General Manager of Investor Relations said: "We are very pleased to receive the affirmation of our Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A' with a 'Stable' outlook by Fitch Ratings. This is an international acknowledgement of Gulf Bank's good domestic franchise, healthy loan quality and stable funding."

Gulf Bank continues to be well recognized in terms of its credit worthiness and financial strength internationally as it is rated 'A' by three major credit rating agencies. In addition to Fitch Ratings' recent affirmation of Gulf Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A' with a Stable Outlook, Gulf Bank has a Long-term Foreign Currency Rating of 'A+' with a 'Stable' Outlook by Capital Intelligence Ratings and a Long-Term Deposits rating of 'A3' with a 'Positive' Outlook by Moody's Investor Services.

2023 registers slowest year for US home sales in nearly 30 yrs

High mortgage rates frustrated buyers

LOS ANGELES, Jan 21, (AP): Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes sank in 2023 to a nearly 30-year low, as sharply higher mortgage rates, rising prices and a persistently low level of homes on the market combined to push homeownership out of reach for many Americans.

The National Association of Realtors said Friday that existing U.S. home sales totaled 4.09 million last year, an 18.7% decline from 2022. That is the weakest year for home sales since 1995 and the biggest annual decline since 2007, the start of the housing slump of the late 2000s.

The median national home price for all of last year edged up just under 1% to record high \$389,800, the NAR said. Last year's home sales slump echoes the nearly 18% annual decline in 2022, when mortgage rates began rising, eventually more than doubling by the end of the year. That trend continued in 2023, driving the average rate on a 30-year mortgage by late October to 7.79%, the highest level since late 2000.

The sharply higher home loan borrowing costs limited home hunters' buying power on top of years of soaring prices. A dearth of homes for sale also kept many would-be homebuyers and sellers on the sidelines.

Still, a pullback in mortgage rates since late last year, and forecasts calling for a further rate declines this year, is fueling hopes that home sales will begin to bounce back from their dismal showing in 2023.



A for sale sign appears outside a condominium complex Monday, Jan. 15, 2024, in Denver. On Thursday, Freddie Mac reports on this week's average U.S. mortgage rates. (AP)

"The latest month's sales look to be the bottom before inevitably turning higher in the new year," said Lawrence Yun, the NAR's chief economist. "Mortgage rates are meaningfully lower compared to just two months ago, and more inventory is expected to appear on the market in upcoming months."

Mortgage rates have been mostly easing since November, echoing a pullback in the 10-year Treasury yield, which lenders use as a guide to pricing loans. The yield has largely come down on hopes that inflation has cooled enough for the Federal Reserve to shift to cutting interest rates this year.

The average rate on a 30-year home loan was 6.6% this week, according to mortgage buyer Freddie Mac. If rates

continue to ease, as many economists expect, that should help boost demand heading into the spring homebuying season, which traditionally begins in late February.

Still, the average rate remains sharply higher than just two years ago, when it was 3.56%. That large gap between rates now and then has helped limit the number of previously occupied homes on the market by discouraging homeowners who locked in rock-bottom rates from selling.

"Prospective homebuyers have been shut out of the market by a lack of inventory," said Lisa Sturtevant, chief economist at Bright MLS. "If there had been more listings on the market in 2023, we would have had more home sales."

The Conversation

Boeing door plug blowout highlights possible crisis of competence: expert

By Daniel Kwasi Adjekum
University of North Dakota

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

In the wake of the in-flight blowout of the side of a Boeing 737 Max 9, federal regulators have grounded planes and are stepping up scrutiny of Boeing's manufacturing process.

The Jan. 5, 2024, explosive decompression after takeoff was related to a component called a "door plug" being ejected from the fuselage of the aircraft. This was after three prior flights of that plane had registered warning signals about cabin pressurization. The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating that incident.

In addition, the Federal Aviation Administration has launched an investigation into Boeing's manufacturing process. Other incidents have raised concerns about other 737 Max aircraft - not just fatal crashes in 2018 and 2019, but more recent examples of bolts or other fittings or fasteners not being up to standards.

The Conversation U.S. asked Daniel Kwasi Adjekum, an aviation safety expert and professor of aviation at the University of North Dakota, to explain the significance of the incident, the government's response and what it all means for the flying public.

Under U.S. federal requirements, the number of occupants in an aircraft and the seating arrangements determine the number and placements of emergency exit doors. Airplane manufacturers build fuselages with enough openings to accommodate all the doors that might be needed. If airlines choose to use the highest-density seating arrangements, they need to use all of the openings for actual exit doors. But not

all airlines pack the seats in that tightly; on those planes, some emergency doors are not needed. Those spaces are filled by door plugs.

In the case of the Boeing 737 Max 9 aircraft, the door plugs are fitted by Spirit AeroSystems in Wichita, Kansas, which is the supplier of the airframe to Boeing. The final assembly of the aircraft is carried out at the Boeing plant in Renton, Washington. Quality control checks are done at Spirit AeroSystems, and then another round of quality checks is done by Boeing. These include a high-pressure test to ensure that the cabin can be pressurized safely and to ensure the integrity of the fuselage and pressure bulkheads.

Normally, the plugs are not removed during those tests at the Boeing facility, though they are checked to ensure they are correctly aligned with the rest of the fuselage. Overall, it is Boeing's responsibility, as the original equipment manufacturer, to ensure the components conform to the FAA's design, manufacturing, installation and performance requirements.

Under normal circumstances, once they are delivered and initially inspected, door plugs and their components are not adjusted by the airline maintenance team, though their integrity is checked as part of stipulated maintenance checks. Records from Alaska Airlines suggest that on previous flights before this incident, pilots had received cockpit alerts indicating a failure of the aircraft's cabin auto-pressurization system.

In a situation like that, where there are suspected cabin pressurization issues, it may be possible for airline maintenance crews to check all cabin doors, windows, seals and potentially door plugs as part of a thorough troubleshooting process, but they would be subject to Boeing's procedures for inspecting a door plug.

The design, testing, certification and approval process for any new aeronautical product is supposed to

be in compliance with strict legal and FAA regulatory standards.

As part of the investigations in this case, the FAA will review the engineering and manufacturing processes for the Boeing 737 Max 9, including the processes for vendors and suppliers, to determine if those standards were met. The FAA will review documentation on quality control and assurance processes and analyze components.

The FAA has said it is considering bringing in a third party to conduct an audit of the engineering and manufacturing processes for the Boeing 737 Max 9. The findings and recommendations from the National Transportation Safety Board incident investigation may also provide valuable information.

With all these aircraft grounded, you need hangars and parking places for temporary storage. And it costs. In the U.S. alone we're talking about 171 airplanes on the ground.

That is a huge financial loss to airlines, which are otherwise benefiting from a surge in air service demand and increased passenger interest.

Airlines' fleet plans - entailing which aircraft they send on which routes and in what sequence - will be disrupted. Some high-traffic routes normally served by these aircraft will have to be done by other aircraft with limited seat and load capacities. That can reduce expected revenue.

The current scenario will also affect flight crew scheduling. Some crew members may have their work hours reduced or eliminated, at least for a period of time.

Once investigators have determined what went wrong, and how to fix whatever it was, that corrective action will also take a lot of maintenance work, in addition to the normal maintenance work for keeping the rest of the planes fit for flying. (AP)

Microsoft reveals state-backed Russian hackers breach corporate email system

BOSTON, Jan 21, (AP): State-backed Russian hackers broke into Microsoft's corporate email system and accessed the accounts of members of the company's leadership team, as well as those of employees on its cybersecurity and legal teams, the company said Friday.

In a blog post, Microsoft said the intrusion began in late November and was discovered on Jan. 12. It said the same highly skilled Russian hacking team behind the SolarWinds breach was responsible.

"A very small percentage" of Microsoft corporate accounts were accessed, the company said, and some emails and attached documents were stolen.

A company spokesperson said Microsoft had no immediate comment on which or how many members of its senior leadership had their email accounts breached. In a regulatory filing Friday, Microsoft said it was able to remove the hackers' access from the compromised accounts on or about Jan. 13.

"We are in the process of notifying employees whose email was

accessed," Microsoft said, adding that its investigation indicates the hackers were initially targeting email accounts for information related to their activities.

The Microsoft disclosure comes a month after a new U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission rule took effect that compels publicly traded companies to disclose breaches that could negatively impact their business. It gives them four days to do so unless they obtain a national-security waiver.

In Friday's SEC regulatory filing, Microsoft said that "as of the date of this filing, the incident has not had a material impact" on its operations. It added that it has not, however, "determined whether the incident is reasonably likely to materially impact" its finances.

Microsoft, which is based in Redmond, Washington, said the hackers from Russia's SVR foreign intelligence agency were able to gain access by compromising credentials on a "legacy" test account, suggesting it had outdated code.

Call to businesses for sustainable practices and environmental responsibility

AmCham Kuwait organizes a successful beach clean-up at Kuwait Free-trade Zone

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: ABCK-AmCham Kuwait in partnership with Sultan, K-PAK and its members engage in environmental sustainability through a proactive beach clean-up initiative held at the Kuwait Free-trade Zone. The event, saw enthusiastic participation from AmCham members and friends, reflecting a collective commitment to preserving Kuwait's coastline and addressing the global challenge of plastic pollution.

Against the backdrop of the stunning Kuwait Free-trade Zone, AmCham Kuwait brought together a group of individuals who joined forces to collect plastics and waste, contributing to the ongoing efforts to maintain a cleaner and healthier shoreline. The event served as a to enhance AmCham Kuwait's dedication to corporate social responsibility and its proactive approach to fostering a sustainable future for the community.

The participants, armed with gloves, bags, and a shared sense of responsibility, diligently combed through the beach area, collecting and properly disposing of plastic waste and other debris. This hands-on approach not only contributed to immediate environmental improve-

ment but also raised awareness about the importance of responsible waste management.

AmCham Kuwait acknowledges the crucial role of businesses in addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable practices. By organizing events like the beach clean-up, AmCham Kuwait aims to inspire its members to integrate eco-friendly initiatives into their corporate strategies, fostering a culture of environmental consciousness.

In the spirit of collaboration, AmCham Kuwait looks forward to partnering with other organizations, and stakeholders to amplify the impact of such initiatives and work towards a cleaner, greener Kuwait.

ABCK-AmCham Kuwait: Is a non-profit organization operating since 1985 and is composed of Fortune 500 corporations, small and medium-sized companies, and prominent business leaders and entrepreneurs, both American and Kuwaiti. ABCK-AmCham Kuwait has functioned as an advocate for American interests in the state of Kuwait. For More Information, please visit our website at www.amchamkuwait.org or follow us on the social media channel @ abck1985



AmCham Kuwait organized a beach clean-up in partnership with Sultan and K-PAK, and in collaboration with AmCham members and friends to collect plastics and other waste at the Kuwait Free-Trade Zone as part of the chamber's sustainability initiatives.

Nithin's heroic unbeaten 36 seals triumph

White Elephants crowned champions of KEC TEC Challengers Cup 2024



Photos during the final of KEC TEC Challengers Cup.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: In a gripping showdown at the iconic KOC cricket stadium, White Elephants snaggd victory from the jaws of defeat to beat Black Panthers in the final of KEC TEC Challengers Cup, conducted by Thriassur Engineering College Alumni Association Kuwait Chapter (TECAL KUWAIT). Cricket world for Kuwait Engineers Forum (KEF) has never been the same ever since the tournament's 2024 edition presented them a taste of franchises and player auctions. When the league matches resumed on final day of tournament, 12th of January, the tournament was excitingly poised with fair chance for all 5 clubs to join White Elephants in the semifinals.

The light drizzles made the toss more important than before, and Black Panthers had no hesitation to put High Range Blasters to bat in the day's first match, eighth game of the league. They did not allow Blasters' batters to settle down and had them struggling at 17 runs for 5 wickets, midway of their innings. The sixth wicket partnership of 17 runs between Stephen and Francis took Blasters to a total of 45 all out in 9.2 overs. Black Panthers ensured their place in semifinals when they chased down the target in 8 overs, with their opening batter, Binu Kailas scoring bulk of the runs. Binu remained not out on 28 runs. Brief Scores: High Range Blasters 45 all out in 9.2 overs (Francis-13, Stephen-11, Sebastian 3-5, Jasir 2-7) lost to Black Panthers 45/1 in 8 overs (Binu Kailas-28*).

Black Panthers' win made the last league match between Orange Warriors and Kuwait Super Kings more attention grabbing as any club from the remaining four could still make for the two semifinal slots. Kuwait Super Kings were asked to bat and requiring a big win to qualify, they started the innings with their big hitters only to see them back in quick succession. KSK lost half their side for a meagre 22 runs. A counterattack from Joseph James with two mighty sixes helped them to a total of 46 runs. In a remarkable display of batting prowess, Ajin and Shajeer finished the game in 6 overs for Orange Warriors to power into the semifinals. Brief Scores: Kuwait Super Kings 46 all out in 9.1 overs (Joseph-25, Abhilash 3-6, Ajin3-11) lost to

Orange Warriors 47/2 in 6 overs (Ajin-20, Shajeer-11*). With Orange Warriors win, High Range Blasters also ensured a place in the semifinals.

First semifinal was between the mighty White Elephants and High Range Blasters. High Rangers got off to a good start with a solid opening partnership of 30 runs between Rajesh and Joby. With some good hits, Stephen and Skipper Ronnie tried to convert the start into a good total but after their fall, High Rangers struggled and could pose only 63 runs from 10 overs. In reply, an outstanding batting display from Skipper Nithin and Rakesh delivered White Elephants a resounding victory by chasing down the target in 6.5 overs. High Range bowlers erred in line and length, conceded 19 extras and paid the brunt for it by helping White Elephants to secure their deserved place in finals. Brief Scores: High Range Blasters 63/8 in 10 overs (Rajesh-23, Ronnie -12, Joby -12, Arjun 2-10, Basith 2-11) lost to White Elephants 64/0 in 6.5 overs (Nithin-27*, Rakesh-18*).

Momentum

Much was expected when the two formidable clubs, Black Panthers and Orange Warriors with emphatic wins in their last league games were locking horns in the second semifinal. Orange Warriors was put into bat and soon found them struggling when Sebastian picked 2 wickets with consecutive deliveries in his first over. Young Ryan handed Warriors another blow when he had Ajin holed out at deep cover. Warriors regained the momentum with a good partnership between Shajeer and Robin and were aiming at a good total with their score at 47/3 in 7 overs. But Ryan's 3 wickets burst in 8th over, turned the game in Panthers' favor, and succeeded in restricting Orange Warriors' total to 60 runs for 8 wickets in 10 overs. It was a comfortable chase for Black Panthers as none of the Orange Warriors' bowlers could pose a threat to their top order. Binu Kailas and Manish with their characteristic knocks secured Black Panthers a place in the final. Brief Scores: Orange Warriors 60/8 in 10 overs (Shajeer-14, Robinson-10, Ryan 4-9, Sebastian 2-7) lost to Black Panthers 62/2 in 7.4 overs (Binu Kailas -22, Maneesh -15, Nimesh-10, Ajin1-14)

In the super over match to determine the winner of the third place, High Range Blasters won the toss and decided to bowl first with their ace bowler, Stephen. Ajin and Shajeer started the innings for Orange Warriors in the super over and struggled to place the shots in the first four balls of the over. Shajeer hit a four and followed that with a couple to take Warriors' score to 9 runs. Skipper Ronnie and Stephen started the chase for High Rangers against Warriors' best bowler, Abhilash. Stephen ran hard with his skipper and took doubles on first two balls. A wide from Abhilash made the equation easier for High Rangers. Orange Warriors fought back with Stephen's wicket in the next ball. The game swung in favor of High Rangers again when Francis took 3 runs in the next ball. Requiring just 2 runs from 2 balls, and with skipper Ronnie on strike, it was all High Rangers' game. Abhilash then reminded us of why cricket is often referred to as a game of glorious uncertainties, produced a great bowl to get Ronnie bowled and to win the third place for Orange Warriors.

The stage was set for an epic final encounter between White Elephants, with their stellar run, positioned as the dominant force and Black Panthers embracing the role of resilient underdogs. White Elephants were riding the momentum standing as the only unbeaten side in the competition. On the other side, Black Panthers were basking in red-hot form from the last two games. White Elephants won the toss again, put Black Panthers into bat and got the initial advantage with Binu Kailas's wicket in first over by Shyam. Nimesh with good shots took the momentum back for Black Panthers and had a good partnership of 16 in 9 balls with Ryan.

After Nimesh's wicket, Renju joined Ryan and both maintained the momentum, played impressive shots, ran hard, and stole the show with a partnership of 41 from 28 balls. Towards the end, Manish's explosive 23 runs, with 3 huge sixes, powered Black Panthers to a substantial total of 88 runs despite facing a mini batting collapse towards the end. In reply, White Elephants were tied down by the spirited bowling and fielding of Black Panthers and lost Rakesh's wicket at 28 runs in 5th over. Basith then joined Skipper Nithin and at that stage, White Elephants were facing an uphill task with required run rate more than 12. Basith smashed 3 sixes and fell to Manish in 8th over but his cameo of 26 runs from 11 balls brought the game back for White Elephants. 20 runs still required to win, fortunes swung in the last 2 overs.

Brilliant

Shyam Madhusoodanan played a brilliant innings under pressure with Nithin to take his team very close but fell when 3 runs were still required from 2 balls. New batter, Arjun smashed the very next ball for a six for White Elephants to clinch KEC TEC Challengers Cup. Black Panthers bled 56 runs in the last 5 overs and dropped many crucial catches to cost them heavily. Skipper Nithin showcased a sensational display of skill and composure, and his unbeaten 36 was instrumental in White Elephants' triumph. Brief Scores: Black Panthers 88/6 in 10 overs (Maneesh -23, Renju -22, Ryan-21, Nimesh-11, Shyam M 2-11) lost to White Elephants 92/3 in 9.5 overs (Nithin-36, Basith-26, Shyam M-13, Manish 1-14).

Guests of Honor for the day were Mr. Rajan Peter (Sales Director - KEC) and Mr. Husker Pared (Mohammed Al-Houti Gen. Trad. Cont. Co.). Basith for his scintillating knock was adjudged Player of the Finals. Special prizes were awarded to NithinVarughese (best batter, White Elephants), Abhilash (best bowler, Orange Warriors), Ryan Tibish (emerging player, Black Panthers), Ethan Cheriyan (most valuable player, Kerala Tuskers). Individual prizes, trophies and medals were presented by Messrs. Santhosh Abraham (GC-KEF), Hanan Shan (GCD- KEF), Abdul Jabbar (Chairman -TECAL Kuwait) and Sunil Chandran (TEC Challengers Cup Convener). Santhosh Joseph (TECAL Kuwait) presented the Vote of Thanks for making KEC TEC Challengers Cup 2024 a grand success.

IDAK participates in medical, dental screening camp organized by AAM

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Indian Dentists' Alliance in Kuwait (IDAK), Indian Doctors Forum & Kuwait Heart Foundation collaborated with the AAM (Anti Alcoholism Movement of Kuwait), affiliated to St. Gregorius Orthodox Indian Church, Kuwait to conduct a combined medical and dental screening camp on Friday, 19th January 2024. It aimed to benefit large number of individuals, especially those hailing from a lower socioeconomic status.

The well organised camp was conducted at the Integrated Indian School, Jleeb Al Shuyoukh, and saw residents attending in large numbers. IDAK's Community Welfare Committee (CWC), led by Dr. Prashanth R and Dr. Hardik Shetty, was present to actively participate and contribute towards this social cause. During the felicitation speech Dr. Prashanth R, IDAK CWC Chair, addressed the audience on the importance of a good diet in maintaining healthy gums, bone, teeth, along with the means of preventing infections. She also took the opportunity to express gratitude to the IDAK President, Dr. George P Alex and his Council, and fellow IDAK members Dr. Ajay Vazhiodan, Dr. Gireesh Krishnan, Dr. Dhanalakshmi, Dr. Santosh Varghese, Dr. Nadia Shoukat, Dr. Tiny Elsa Thomas, Dr. Suja Mary John and Dr. Jojen Thomas for their time and consistent efforts to serve the community.

IDAK extends its appreciation to the Doctors from IDF and the organisers, particularly Rev. Dr. Biju George Palackal, the visionary leader of the AAM mission and the AAM camp coordinator Mr. Ebey Samuel for their exemplary efforts.

All in all, it was an extremely fruitful day, serving the local community and proved to be a great kickstart to the activities of IDAK's new council for the term 2024-25.



Photos during the medical and dental screening camp.

Netflix explores turbulent kidnapping case in docuseries

VALLEJO, Calif., Jan 21, (AP) — The ordeal of Denise Huskins, whose kidnapping from her boyfriend's Northern California home was first dismissed as a hoax by law enforcement, is getting renewed attention as the subject of a new Netflix docuseries, "American Nightmare."

Here's a look at the facts of the case, which captivated the country: On March 23, 2015, Huskins was kidnapped by a masked intruder who broke into the home in Vallejo, a city in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her boyfriend, Aaron Quinn, told detectives he woke up to a bright light on his face and that intruders had drugged, blindfolded and tied both of them up before forcefully taking Huskins in the middle of the night. Quinn also said the kidnappers were demanding an \$8,500 ransom.

A Vallejo police detective interrogated Quinn for hours, at times suggesting he may have been involved in Huskins' disappearance. Quinn took a polygraph test which an FBI agent told him he failed, the couple said later in a book about their ordeal.

Huskins, who was 29 at the time, turned up unharmed two days later outside her father's apartment in Huntington Beach, a city in Southern California, where she said she was dropped off. She reappeared just hours before the ransom was due.

That same day, police in Vallejo announced in a news conference that they had found no evidence of a kidnapping and accused Huskins and Quinn of faking the abduction, which spurred a massive search.

Police said they became suspicious because Quinn waited hours to report the kidnapping. At the news conference, spokesman Kenny Park expressed disgust over the resources supposedly squandered, with 40

detectives assigned to the case, and the fear it caused among the community.

"It was such an incredible story, we initially had a hard time believing it, and upon further investigation, we couldn't substantiate any of the things he was saying," Park said.

But Quinn and Huskins were adamant that it wasn't a hoax and insisted they were the victims. Quinn's attorney explained the delay in reporting to police by noting that his client had been bound and drugged.

Charged

The couple were proven right when Matthew Muller, a disbarred, Harvard-educated attorney, was caught and charged in Huskins' abduction.

Muller was arrested on June 8, 2015, in South Lake Tahoe for a home-invasion robbery that occurred in Dublin, a city in the Bay Area, and that had similarities to the Vallejo case. Investigators found a laptop that resembled one that belonged to Quinn and had been taken.

A search of a stolen car connected to Muller turned up numerous other items, including a water pistol with a flashlight and laser pointer on it, and a pair of goggles similar to the ones Huskins and Quinn said they were forced to wear during the kidnapping. In the goggles was a strand of long blond hair, the same color as the victim's. Detectives also determined that the vehicle's navigation system history turned up a Huntington Beach address.

Muller pleaded guilty to the kidnapping and is serving a 40-year

prison term.

Huskins and Quinn sued the city of Vallejo and its police department for false imprisonment, defamation, false arrest and intentional infliction of emotional distress, and reached a \$2.5 million settlement in 2018.

During Muller's trial, prosecutors said he used a drone to spy on the couple before he broke into the home with the fake gun, tied them up and made them drink a sleep-inducing liquid. While they were blindfolded, Muller, who was dressed in a full-body wetsuit, played a recording that made it seem as if there was more than one kidnapper, they said.

Muller put Huskins in his trunk, drove her to his home in South Lake Tahoe and held her there for two days. Investigators said they found videos of Muller arranging cameras in a bedroom and then recording himself twice sexually assaulting his blindfolded victim. The Associated Press typically does not name victims of sexual assault unless they come forward publicly with their stories, as Huskins has frequently done.

During and after the kidnapping, Muller used an anonymous email account to send messages to a San Francisco reporter claiming that Huskins was abducted by a team of elite criminals practicing their tactics.

Huskins and Quinn married in September 2018 and have two young children. In 2021 they released their book, "Victim F: From Crime Victims to Suspects to Survivors."

That same year the city of Vallejo and its police department both apologized to the couple.

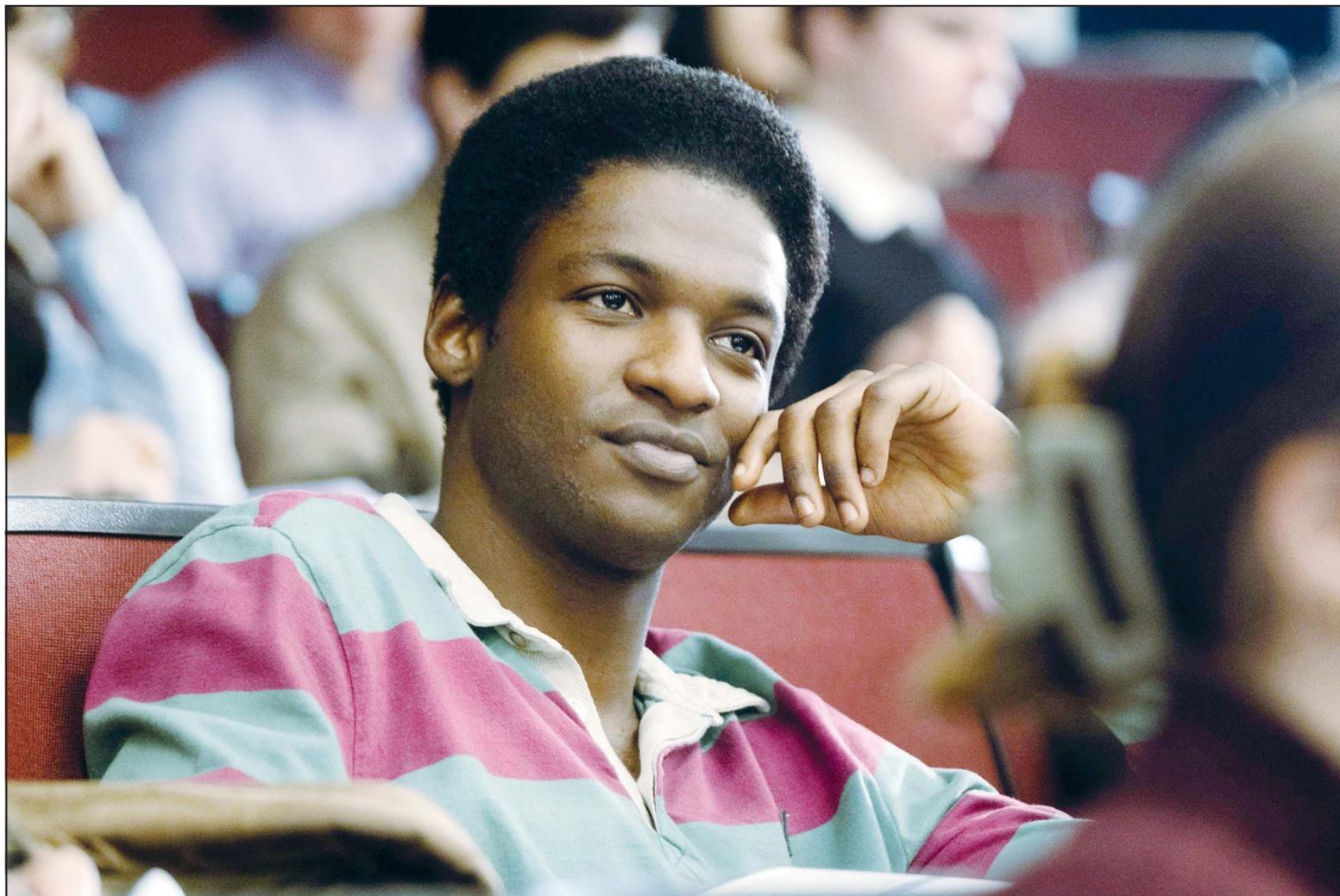
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This image released by Sundance Institute shows Jay Will in a scene from 'Rob Peace' by Chiwetel Ejiofor, an official selection of the Premieres Program at the 2024 Sundance Film Festival. (AP)

Film

A very special and very powerful biographical drama

In 'Rob Peace,' Ejiofor reframes a life

PARK CITY, Utah, Jan 21, (AP) — Chiwetel Ejiofor had read Jeff Hobbs' "The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace" years before Antoine Fuqua asked if he might consider writing and directing an adaptation.

The book, which explores the complex life of a brilliant boy who grew up in the crime ridden and blighted East Orange, New Jersey, was written by Peace's old Yale roommate. His story did not fit neatly into familiar tropes about rough beginnings, incarcerated fathers or overly simplistic ideas about success and "getting out." This was a person who wanted to remain tied to his community, to his father, and also to succeed in his schooling and athletics (water polo) first at St. Benedict's Preparatory School in Newark and then at Yale where he studied molecular biochemistry and biophysics.

Nine years after he graduated from university, in which he spent time teaching at his old prep school, traveled extensively, considered grad school and made money selling marijuana, Peace was killed. Some of the narratives chalked it up to the fact that he went back to where he came from. Ejiofor said Peace's mother told them that in the aftermath of his death, television crews came and filmed the garbage on the streets instead of the community.

But Hobbs and, subsequently, Ejiofor saw something more complicated and nuanced about the flawed idea of "social mobility" and about the "confluence of race, housing, education and the criminal justice system." And, most importantly, he felt like he hadn't seen these ideas engaged with in film.

"I thought it was very special and very powerful," Ejiofor told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "It was sort of coincidental that I had had this big response to the book, but I hadn't pursued it in any way. I jumped at the opportunity."

Fuqua, who had teamed up with Hobbs' wife, Rebecca, to adapt the film, thought Ejiofor would be the right person after seeing his feature debut,

"The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind," about a 13-year-old boy in Malawi who gets inventive after his family can no longer afford school.

"I knew it was meant to be a film," Antoine Fuqua wrote in an email. "It was clear that (Chiwetel's) humanistic approach to storytelling was a perfect fit to bring Rob's life to screen."

"Rob Peace" is having its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival on Monday, where it hopes to find a distributor to get it out to the world.

"Movies like this need to be loved into existence, and that takes a village," said producer Alex Kurtzman, who got close to Ejiofor while directing him in "The Man Who Fell to Earth" series. "You don't make movies like this for money. You don't make movies like this for any reason other than this is an important story to tell. And some reason, we are lucky enough to be able to tell it."

Traversed

To play Rob, who would have to carry the film and live in the very different worlds he traversed in his life, Ejiofor and his casting director found Jay Will, a recent Juilliard graduate.

"I never felt that it was a story about somebody who was able to play a role in different places," Ejiofor said. "It was a story about somebody who very naturally and consistently was all of these things at once. You really had to invest and believe that about him. Jay very naturally did that because that's part of his experience as well. He's also just a fabulous actor and has this great charisma and real charm."

The performance is a meaty showcase for a fresh face who had done some television, including "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" and Taylor Sheridan's "Tulsa King," which had not yet come out.

Mary J. Blige was already on board to play his mother, Jackie, and Camila Cabello plays an on and off girlfriend Naya. Ejiofor cast himself in the role of the father, Skeet, self-aware enough to know that

because it was in his wheelhouse, he'd just be directing another actor to play him as he would.

"He's kind of a mercurial character in a way," Ejiofor said. "There has to be a sequence of question marks about him, but you also have to be very compelled by him. And Rob's journey is pulled by that sort of magnetic link he has to this to his father."

As with "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind," the director-actor, father-son dynamic actually ended up helping the film, too.

Kurtzman marveled at Ejiofor's ability to elegantly and calmly navigate three very different roles - writer, director and actor - under the high pressure environment of making a low-budget indie in just 28 days with no money for overtime.

"I never saw him crack, break, get stressed ever," Kurtzman said. "That he was able to hold space for all of those three things at the same time and know how to put them in a box while the clock was ticking, that's a true artist."

Equally important to Ejiofor was to make the film look beautiful. He'd been appalled by the story of the TV crews and the garbage and sought out "Beanpole" and "The Last of Us" cinematographer Ksenia Sereda to realize this vision.

"What she's done here is elevated this with a real elegance and beauty and a style of telling the story, which doesn't necessarily feel like we've seen before within this kind of cinematic experience," he said.

All of these facets work together to upend stereotypes and expectations. Ejiofor wants audiences to have a sense of hope in Rob's story as well as to feel enriched by knowing him.

"By the end of the film, you're not just left with this bleakness. It's obviously a tragic story, but it's much, much richer than that," he said. "Understanding his journey, I think, is profoundly important and enriching and enlightening. It has been for me."

LAS VEGAS: Adam Harrison, one of three sons of reality TV show "Pawn Stars" celebrity Richard "Rick" Harrison, has died in Las Vegas, a family representative said Saturday. He was 39.

Harrison family spokesperson Laura Herlovich confirmed Adam Harrison died Friday, said his death was from a suspected drug overdose and issued a short statement.

"Our family is extremely saddened by the death of Adam," the statement said. "We ask for privacy as we grieve his loss."

The Las Vegas Review-Journal reported that police were investigating Adam Harrison's death, which was first reported by celebrity website TMZ. Las Vegas police did not immediately respond Saturday to messages from The Associated Press.

Herlovich said she did not know where Harrison died or the overdose substance.

Adam Harrison was not featured on "Pawn Stars." The show does feature Harrison's oldest son, Corey Harrison. (AP)

BRATTLEBORO, Vt.: A man arrested last month in Connecticut in the killing of a television news anchor's mother in Vermont last February has pleaded not guilty to second-degree murder.

Shawn Conlon, 44, was arraigned in Brattleboro on Friday.

Claudia Voight, 73, of Windham, Vermont, died in her home Feb. 20, 2023. She was the mother of Heidi Voight, an NBC Connecticut news anchor and Miss Connecticut 2006.

Law enforcement officials initially believed Claudia Voight suffered from a medical event but later determined she died from neck compression that was detectable only during an autopsy. (AP)

NEW ORLEANS: Country music singer Chris Stapleton, Foo Fighters, Queen Latifah and New Orleans' own Jon Batiste are among the star power set to join The Rolling Stones as headliners of this year's New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, organizers announced Thursday.

The event will take place over two weekends, starting April 25 and ending May 5.

Also playing at this year's festival are Hozier, The Killers, Anderson .Paak & The Free Nationals, Bonnie Raitt, Earth, Wind & Fire, Widespread Panic, Rhiannon Giddens, Fantasia, The Beach Boys, Irma Thomas, Steel Pulse, KEM, Jeffrey Osborne, Big Freedia and Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue. There also



Stapleton



Harrison

will be a celebration of Jimmy Buffett, who died last September, with the Coral Reef Band. (AP)

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia: Konoza, an initiative of the Saudi Ministry of Media's Center for Government Communication, launched "Horizon," a new documentary

documenting the Kingdom's rich biodiversity and natural resources. Produced in collaboration with the National Center for Wildlife, the documentary is currently streaming on Netflix.

The film, the latest production of the Konoza Initiative, aims to raise awareness of Saudi Arabia's species richness and biodiversity and

its distinctive geographical areas, and highlights the leading efforts exerted by the Kingdom to protect wildlife, preserve rare species, and acquaint the world with its various rich resources. The documentary showcases Saudi Arabia's picturesque nature, its diverse plant and animal life, and the abundant riches of its lands. (AP)

People & Places

PARIS
a guy thing



Hermes



Valentino

Hermes



Valentino

Valentino

Hermes

Above and below: Models wear creations for Valentino and Hermes as part of the Menswear ready-to-wear Fall-Winter 2024-2025 collections presented in Paris, Saturday, Jan. 20. (AP)

Historical fashion

Loewe explores social media and masculinity

PARIS, Jan 21, (AP) — In a dazzling universe where high-art, fashion and celebrity collide, Jonathan Anderson's latest collection for Loewe explored modern masculinity, set against the backdrop of our social media-saturated world. The show space, transformed by artist Richard Hawkins' vibrant pop art, was a visual assault on the senses, setting the stage for a collection as rich in narrative as in aesthetic. Amidst the audience, actor Jamie Dornan was spotted, amusedly gazing at fleeting images of himself woven into pulp fiction video collages that spanned from paparazzi shots to art history and social media.

Central to this digital-age collection was the theme of divergence. Anderson skillfully eschewed the idea of one single aesthetic, presenting a full, fabulous collage of social media characters, each uniquely styled - and seemingly caught off-guard, as they might be by the lens of TMZ or Us Weekly.

Be warned - these imagined figures were not typical celebrities. They were Anderson's vision, so the off-kilter and unexpected abounded.

A denim bow collar draped dramatically to the shin, while a pink top appeared to have accidentally slipped down, revealing a bare torso in an unintended fashion. A single-sided big buckle belt added an element of spontaneity, as if its VIP wearer had been caught without even enough time to fasten it.

Elsewhere, one oversized camel coat was nonchalantly draped over bare skin, paired with a blue sneaker sans sock, evoking the image of a celebrity hastily stepping out for breakfast, unwittingly becoming the subject of a paparazzi's lens. There were ridiculously long cardigans, leather pants and tracksuits - spanning the gamut of modern human existence.

Véronique Nichanian's latest men's show for Hermès was an interplay of history and modernity, reimagining 19th-century elegance with a contemporary twist. The show, a sartorial journey through time, blending her signature luxurious simplicity with an audacious foray into historical fashion.

Tradition

The collars this season were a nod to the past, evoking the ruffled cowls and buttoned neck fastenings of coats reminiscent of the 19th century. A standout piece was an urban hood, crafted to resemble a leather panel at the neck, pairing seamlessly with the collection's theme of thick, multi-layered clothing. This layering was not just about warmth but also about creating a rich, textural narrative - sweaters upon shirts, coats layered on coats, all accentuated by large lapels and dramatic, upturned collars. Adding to the dramatic flair were the large black platform boots, grounding each outfit with a bold historic feel.

The traditional met the modern when Prince of Wales check suits arrived on the runway, diffused with a modern twist - a flash of yellow in a soft knit sweater, for instance. This mixing of the traditional with bursts of color is a significant trend this season.

Amid the gilded backdrop of the Monnaie de Paris, designer Pierpaolo Piccioli presented a vision of Valentino that subtly balanced artistic expression with practicality.

The collection opened with a clear nod to classic professionalism: suits in black paired with black ties and oversized jackets from the '80s era, signaling a readiness for the business world. This initial presentation of the "Men in Black" aesthetic was both a homage to traditional menswear and a hint at its evolution. The oversized white jacket added a touch of debonair flair, suggesting a new, more relaxed approach to formal wear - and a bid to appeal to a certain client.

Style



Valentino



Hermes



Valentino



Hermes

Fashion

It will also air on iHeartRadio stations across the US and the app. (AP)

NEW YORK: An estimated 320 journalists around the world were imprisoned because of their work toward the end of 2023, according to a report issued Thursday by the Committee to Protect Journalists, which called it a disturbing attempt to smother independent voices.

That's the second-highest number of jailed journalists since the committee began its annual census in 1992. It's down from 367 in 2022, due primarily to the release of many in Iran, either on bail or as they await sentencing, the committee said.

"Our research shows how entrenched authoritarianism is globally,

with governments emboldened to stamp out critical reporting and prevent public accountability," said Jodie Ginsberg, the committee's chief executive officer.

More than a third of the journalists in jail according to the CPJ's Dec. 1, 2023, census were in China, Myanmar and Belarus, the report said.

Israel is tied with Iran for sixth place, the country's highest ranking ever on CPJ's annual list. Each of the 17 that were held in Israel at the time of the census were Palestinians arrested in the West Bank since the start of the war between Israel and Hamas on Oct. 7, the report said.

Twelve of the 17 nonlocal journalists who CPJ says are imprisoned throughout the world were being held in Russia. They include two US citizens: Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich and Alsu Kurmasheva of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, both of whom are being held in pretrial detention. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Country music star Reba McEntire will grace next month's Super Bowl stage to sing the national anthem while Post Malone will perform "America the Beautiful."

The performances will take place Feb. 11 at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas before the championship matchup and halftime show featuring Usher.

Andra Day will also perform "Lift Every Voice and Sing" as part of the pregame performances that will air on CBS.

Actor Daniel Durant will perform the national anthem in American sign language. He'll follow his "CODA" film castmate and Oscar winner Troy Kotsur, who took on the role last year.

Model-dancer Anjel Piñero will sign "America the Beautiful" and "Lift Every Voice and Sing" will be signed by actor-dancer Shaheem Sanchez.

Emmy winner Adam Blackstone will produce and arrange the national anthem and "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

Jay-Z's Roc Nation company and Emmy-winning producer Jesse Collins will serve as co-executive producers of the halftime show.

McEntire, a three-time Grammy winner, has become a country music icon with more than 30 studio albums that includes a variety of hits such as "Fancy," "Consider Me Gone" and "Does He Love You." (AP)



Swift



McEntire

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Taylor Swift leads the 2024 iHeartRadio Music Awards nominations with nine, followed closely by Jelly Roll, SZA, and 21 Savage with eight. Behind them is Olivia Rodrigo, who received six. The iHeartRadio Music Awards

honor the most played artists of the year on their stations and app, and fans can vote in several categories including best lyrics, best music video, best fan army, social star award, favorite tour photographer, TikTok bop of the year, favorite top style and two new fields: favorite on screen and favorite debut album.

Social voting begins today at iHeartRadio.com/awards and will close on March 25 at 11:59 p.m. PDT for all categories.

There are a total of seven new categories this year, from the two aforementioned socially-voted category to pop song of the year, pop artist of the year, K-pop artist of the year, K-pop song of the year and best new K-pop artist.

For top song of the year, Taylor Swift's "Cruel Summer" faces off against Rema and Selena Gomez's Afrobeats banger "Calm Down," Metro Boomin, the Weeknd and

21 Savage's "Creepin'," Dua Lipa's "Dance the Night," Luke Combs' award-winning cover of Tracey Chapman's "Fast Car," Miley Cyrus' "Flowers," SZA's "Kill Bill," Morgan Wallen's "Last Night," Doja Cat's "Paint the Town Red," and Olivia Rodrigo's "vampire."

The 2024 iHeartRadio Music Awards will air live from Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, Monday, April 1 at 8 p.m. EDT on FOX.

CDC targets antibiotic-resistant germs

Wastewater tests uncover mpox, paving way for expanded tracking

NEW YORK, Jan 21, (AP): Wastewater testing does a good job at detecting mpox infections, US health officials said in a report Thursday that bolsters a push to use sewage to track more diseases.

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention researchers found that over the course of a week, there was a 32% likelihood the tests would detect the presence of at least one person infected with mpox in a population ranging from thousands to millions.

Amy Kirby, who oversees the CDC's wastewater surveillance work, said initially they didn't know if the tests would work for a rare infection like mpox.

"It turns out it worked really very well," she said.

The chance that the tests could detect infections rose as more people were infected. When there were 15 or more people infected in a community, there was a 76% chance wastewater testing could find mpox.

The water that goes down a sink, shower drain or toilet can carry bits of viruses or bacteria that come off the skin or are excreted in urine or poop. Studies have shown wastewater testing can be an early warning system, signaling a bug has hit a community even before doctors start reporting cases.

Whole cities can be watched from a single sample, said Joshua Levy, a researcher at the Scripps Research Institute in California who has studied wastewater monitoring and develops related technology.

"Almost every kind of virus that we've gone looking for is detectable," Levy said.

The US monitoring system is growing but still a patchwork. Currently, 863 of the nation's 3,143 counties - roughly a quarter - are reporting wastewater data to the CDC. Those are larger counties that are home to most of the US population, but it misses a lot of rural homes that aren't hooked up to municipal sewage systems.

Evidence

This approach to disease tracking rose to prominence in 2020, when health officials began testing wastewater for genetic evidence of the coronavirus. It has grown into a mainstay of the CDC's COVID-19 tracking as fewer nasal swab test results are reported.

In 2022, the CDC began working with a small group of cities to also look for polio in wastewater. That same year also saw a new effort to look for mpox, previously known as monkeypox, which erupted in outbreaks in the U.S. and other countries.

In the new study, the CDC looked at wastewater samples from 89 sites in 16 states, taken from August 2022 through May 2023. When mpox DNA was detected, the researchers checked cases reported by doctors "to basically see if we were seeing the same thing," said the CDC's Carly Adams, the lead author of the report.

It not only worked, the approach appears to be more sensitive for detecting mpox than COVID-19, CDC officials said. CDC officials, however, cautioned it is difficult to do head-to-head comparisons, because of differences among germs and how well doctors are diagnosing and reporting cases of various diseases.

The CDC has also begun collecting data for flu and RSV - about 40 states have been testing for those viruses and reporting that data. The agency isn't yet posting it publicly as officials work through the best ways to display it, though Kirby said it should go live by next fall.

The agency also plans to start tracking germs that are resistant to antibiotics. And Kirby said by early next year the agency would start monitoring some food poisoning bugs.

"Wastewater surveillance is outperforming everyone's expectations," Kirby said. "We are really excited to see where else we can apply this new tool to help us understand disease in communities."

Kuwait reports 199 annual thyroid cancer cases in women

CAN launches thyroid cancer awareness campaign

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh, the Chairman of the (CAN) Campaign's Board of Directors, disclosed that Kuwait registered a total of 199 annual cases of thyroid cancer among women.

Out of these, 107 cases were reported among Kuwaiti women, accounting for 54%, while 92 cases were identified among non-Kuwaiti women, making up 46% of the total cases.

During a press statement on the sidelines of the launch of the annual thyroid cancer awareness campaign titled "Knowledge is Life," Al-Saleh highlighted a global increase in thyroid cancer cases.

However, he emphasized that Kuwait's infection rates are comparatively lower, standing at 13 cases per 100,000 people in the country for women, and 6 cases per 100,000 in men.

Lectures

This suggests that thyroid cancer is twice as prevalent in women as in men. Al-Saleh underscored the critical importance of early detection, which can lead to recovery rates as high as 99 percent.

Speaking at a press conference held this



Photo by Mahmoud Jadedd
Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh (right) addresses the press during the launch of annual thyroid cancer awareness campaign.

morning to announce the commencement of the campaign activities from the 21st to the

28th of this month, Al-Saleh outlined various initiatives.

These include a series of awareness lectures for medical professionals in primary care centers and the (CAN) training center, along with the distribution of informative brochures.

The thyroid gland is one of the glands of the endocrine system which secretes hormones that enter the metabolic processes. Prevention and early diagnosis are important to ensure they function well.

Dr. Al-Saleh revealed that there is a significant acceleration in the development of modern technologies for the detection of tumors, explaining the increase in thyroid cancer cases is because they have helped doctors discover small cancer cells in the thyroid gland they were not able to see before.

Prevention

Various types of thyroid cancers can be treated, however, prevention is easier than curing.

Moreover, living a healthy lifestyle plays a part and annual tests and blood tests to determine the level of gland hormone are required for early detection.

Campaign officer Dr. Eman Alshemari reiterated the importance of raising awareness to all parties, by sending a message with correct and simplified information to the general public, through exhibitions or brochures about thyroid cancer.

Hand-washing, masks and vaccines

Tips to stay healthy during cold and flu season

NEW YORK, Jan 21, (AP): Winter is here, inflicting its usual array of symptoms - coughs, nasal congestion, fatigue and fever - and, this year, a new COVID-19 variant is dominating the scoreboard.

COVID-19 is leading hospital admissions among the respiratory viruses, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Last week, 25 US states had high or very high levels for respiratory illnesses with fever, cough and other symptoms. That's down from 37 states the week before, the CDC said.

Since the beginning of October, there have been at least 16 million illnesses, 180,000 hospitalizations, and 11,000 deaths from flu so far this season. The CDC said 47 children have died of flu.

January can be the worst month for these illnesses. With vaccination rates low, what can you do to protect yourself from respiratory viruses, including influenza, COVID-19 and RSV?

Hand-washing remains crucial to reducing the spread of viral infections.

Take your time at the sink. Twenty seconds is recommended. If you feel silly singing "Happy Birthday" twice while you scrub with soapy water, count to 20. Slowly.

Use hand sanitizer with 60% alcohol when you don't have access to soap and water.

Also, wear a mask in crowded areas. Increase ventilation in your workplace and home.

In the United States, only 17% of those eligible have received the updated COVID-19 vaccine, which provides good protection against the now-dominant JN.1 variant.

It's not too late to roll up your sleeve. While you're at it, make sure you've had

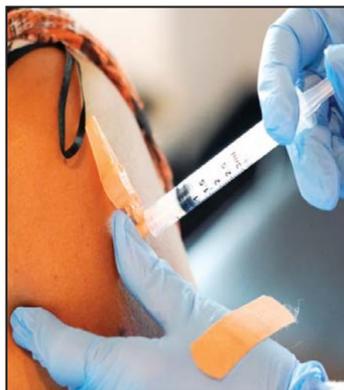
your annual flu shot. Those 60 and older may want to get the RSV vaccine, which also is recommended during pregnancy to prevent RSV in infants.

Immune

Young children seem to pick up every germ going around. Can their parents avoid getting sick?

This time of year, children are indoors in close quarters with other kids, touching the same toys and surfaces, said Jennifer Sonney of University of Washington School of Nursing in Seattle. Some haven't learned to cover their coughs and they simply haven't been exposed to many illnesses, so their immune systems are still developing.

It's important to take care of yourself if you're a parent or caregiver of young chil-



In this Sept. 21, 2021, file photo, Jackson-Hinds Comprehensive Health Center nurse Maggie Bass (right), injects a COVID-19 vaccine into an arm in Jackson, Miss. January can be the worst month for respiratory illnesses and vaccination rates are low. (AP)

dren, said Sonney who is immediate past president of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners.

"We know if you are sleep deprived or dehydrated or experiencing a lot of stress, that can compromise your immune function," Sonney said.

Having young children is very demanding, "so all of this advice needs to be interpreted within the context of reality," she said. "Despite doing everything right, kids are still going to get colds."

A special note if your baby is sick: It's a good idea to have saline drops and a bulb syringe at home.

They can be used to clear mucus from tiny nostrils.

"A couple drops of saline into one nostril and suction it and then do the other side," Sonney said. "Doing that before eating and sleep is going to help a lot."

A home kit for children could also include acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fevers, tissues for runny noses and water bottles of sippy cups for staying hydrated.

If you do get sick, prompt testing can help determine whether you have COVID-19 or influenza.

That's important to see if you need one of the medicines that can help prevent severe illness: Paxlovid for COVID-19 and Tamiflu for flu.

If you don't have a test kit at home, look for a test-to-treat site at a pharmacy clinic or health center near you.

There is also a free home-based test-to-treat program for adults who are uninsured or rely on government health insurance.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Health officials in Southern California are warning people to avoid eating raw oysters from parts of

Mexico after more than 200 people recently fell ill with suspected cases of norovirus.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has reported more than 150 suspected cases of gastrointestinal illness linked to raw oysters, while in San Diego County, health officials said Thursday that they had 69 confirmed and probable cases. Other cases were reported in Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an initial advisory Jan. 11 regarding oysters from one site in the Mexican state of Sonora, which is located along the Gulf of California.

That was based, at least in part, on the findings of an investigation conducted by San Diego County health officials.

On Wednesday the FDA issued another advisory for oysters from Laguna De Guerrero Negro and Laguna Manuela, both on the Pacific Coast of Baja California, Mexico.

That same day the agency also updated its initial Sonora advisory to include a second harvest location, Estero Morua.

The California Department of Public Health warned consumers that raw oysters harvested from those locations may be contaminated with the norovirus, which can cause diarrhea, vomiting, nausea and stomach pain. Other symptoms include fever, headache and body aches, according to FDA.

Health officials are recommending that restaurants throw away any oysters imported from locations in Mexico until further notice "given the expanding number of harvest locations associated with illness and the potential of other sites to be involved," San Diego County said in a statement.

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Dosunmu, DeRozan lead way as Bulls pound Grizzlies

Thunder beat Timberwolves in showdown



San Antonio Spurs forward Doug McDermott (17), forward Keldon Johnson (3) and guard Blake Wesley (14) pressure a shot by Washington Wizards forward Deni Avdija (8) during the second half of an NBA basketball game Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024, in Washington. (AP)

Season-ending injury for rival Vihova

Shiffrin gets career win 95 in 1st World Cup slalom race

JASNA, Slovakia, Jan 21, (AP) — Mikaela Shiffrin earned her record-extending career win 95 by triumphing in a women's World Cup slalom Sunday, a day after the American ski star's main rival sustained a season-ending injury.

In the first race without Olympic slalom champion Petra Vlhova, Shiffrin edged out Croatian teenager Zrinka Ljutic by 0.14 seconds. Sweden's Anna Swenn Larsson in third and Switzerland's Camille Rast in fourth were the only other racers to finish within a second of Shiffrin's time.

SKIING

"We're missing somebody really big today, we missed Petra a lot, so it's wonderful that you stayed," Shiffrin addressed the Slovakian spectators in a course-side interview.

"It was not easy on the second (run), now I feel the energy has gone," said the American, who led Ljutic by more than half a second after the opening

run. "I could hear you cheering for Zrinka, which was actually quite cool from the start to hear this noise. I knew she put down an amazing run and I had to push."

It was Shiffrin's fifth slalom win of the season and her 58th in total, a World Cup record for both men and women.

Shiffrin also set a record for most World Cup podiums in a single discipline with 82, having shared the previous best mark with Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark, who had 81 top-three results in slalom in the 1970s and '80s.

Vlhova crashed and tore ligaments in her right knee in Saturday's giant slalom near her hometown in the Tatra mountains.

Shiffrin and Vlhova have been dominating women's slalom skiing for years and combined to win 14 of the last 15 races, including all eight this season, in a series only interrupted by Lena Duerr when the German triumphed at the Czech resort Spindleruv

Mlyn a year ago.

"I have been thinking about (Vlhova) a lot the last 24 hours," Shiffrin said. "For me, personally, over these years I have grown to love the battles with her. I think today she would have been so strong. So, I really miss watching her ski today and having that battle."

With Vlhova out of the race, Shiffrin is close to wrapping up her eighth World Cup season title in slalom, leading third-ranked Duerr by 228 points with three events left. With a race win being worth 100 points, Shiffrin can secure the title at the next slalom in Soldeu, Andorra, on Feb. 11.

On Sunday, Duerr was 1.77 seconds off the lead in seventh.

Vlhova became the third former overall champion who had their season end prematurely this month. On the men's side, Alexis Pinturault and Aleksander Aamodt Kilde underwent surgery for various injuries after they crashed at speed races in Wengen, Switzerland.

CHICAGO, Jan 21, (AP): The Chicago Bulls know what they have to do to come away with a win when Zach LaVine is not in the lineup.

They're getting plenty of practice, after all. Ayo Dosunmu scored 20 points, DeMar DeRozan added 18 and Chicago pounded the Memphis Grizzlies 125-96 on Saturday night.

The Bulls regrouped after falling behind in the third quarter and went on a 17-0 run to pull away to their sixth win in eight games, even though LaVine sat out because of a sprained right ankle.

The two-time All-Star was hurt Thursday night in a victory at Toronto, and coach Billy Donovan had no timetable for his return. LaVine also missed 17 games because of inflammation in his right foot before returning two weeks ago. The Bulls went 10-7 in that span and are 11-8 overall in games he has missed this season.

"You just find a way," Patrick Williams said. "The end goal is to win the game (no matter) who's playing, who's not playing. That's your job as a team, that's your job as a player is to win games. We're all trying to find a way to do that. Would love to have him here. Can't wait 'til he gets back. But we've got to hold down the fort."

BASKETBALL

Coby White scored 17 points for Chicago. Williams added 15 and Andre Drummond chipped in with 15 points and 10 rebounds. The Bulls had seven players score in double figures and dished out 32 assists, just the sort of balance they needed with one of their top players unavailable.

"I thought we sustained it for the whole game, which was good to see," coach Billy Donovan said. "I know we didn't shoot it particularly well to start the game, but I thought we were really generating a lot of good looks. They missed a lot of 3s as well, so there wasn't much separation there in that first quarter. But I liked the fact that we kept staying with it and were really unselfish and guys moved the ball, shared it. Everybody kind of got involved in one way or another."

Jaren Jackson Jr. led Memphis with 26 points after scoring 36 points Thursday night in a loss at Minnesota. Luke Kennard and Vince Williams Jr. each had 14 points.

Thunder 102, Timberwolves 97

In Minneapolis, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 11 of his 33 points in the fourth quarter and the Oklahoma City Thunder rallied to beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 102-97 on Saturday night in a matchup of the top teams in the Western Conference standings.

Jaylin Williams added 20 points for Oklahoma City, and Minnesota native Chet Holmgren had 15. The Thunder trailed by 11 early in the fourth before rallying to win for the second time in four games to pull within a game of Minnesota.

Anthony Edwards and Karl-Anthony Towns each had 19 points for Minnesota and Naz Reid added 18. The Timberwolves had won four in a row to regain the West's No. 1 spot after losing four of six to drop behind Oklahoma City.

Knicks 126, Raptors 100

In New York, Julius Randle felt things were out of place when he saw Immanuel Quickley bringing the ball up the court after Toronto won the opening tip.

Randle made sure his former teammate's return to Madison Square Garden wasn't a winning one.

Randle finished with 18 points, 16 rebounds and 10 assists for his 14th career triple-double, and the Knicks routed the Raptors 126-100 on Saturday night in the first meeting



Chicago Bulls' DeMar DeRozan (11) drives to the basket and is fouled by Memphis Grizzlies' Ziaire Williams during the first half of an NBA basketball game Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024, in Chicago. (AP)

between the teams since a trade last month.

RJ Barrett and Quickley were welcomed back with loud cheers, but the Knicks improved to 9-2 since OG Anunoby joined their lineup after the Dec. 30 deal that has helped both teams.

Spurs 131, Wizards 127

In Washington, Victor Wembanyama returned after sitting out a game to score 24 points and grab eight rebounds, leading the San Antonio Spurs to a 131-127 victory over the Washington Wizards on Saturday night.

DeRozan added 11 points, 12 assists and eight rebounds for the Spurs, while Jeremy Sochan scored 23 points and Devin Vassell had 21 as the Spurs came back from a 12-point deficit in the final five minutes.

"Playing as a team again," Wembanyama said of the difference down the stretch. "I think we were slow. I was very slow. My legs were heavy tonight. And getting some stops. We relaxed and I could feel the shift from all my teammates - me included - in the fourth quarter and fortunately, it worked. Everyone was involved."

Rockets 127, Jazz 126 OT

In Houston, Alperen Sengun scored a career-high 37 points and had a game-high 14 rebounds to lead the Houston Rockets to a 127-126 overtime win over the Utah Jazz on Saturday night.

Sengun missed two free throws with 8.1 seconds remaining in overtime, and Utah's Jordan Clarkson missed a mid-range jumper in the closing seconds as Houston hung on to snap a three-game losing streak.

Jabari Smith Jr. hit a free throw with 36.4 seconds remaining in overtime to put Houston up 127-126. On the next play, Amen Thompson had a high-flying block at the rim to deny Collin Sexton's layup attempt that could have given Utah the lead.

76ers 97, Hornets 89

In Charlotte N.C. Joel Embiid had 33 points to extend his franchise-record run of 30 or more to 20 games and the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Charlotte Hornets 97-89 on Saturday night for their fifth straight victory.

The reigning NBA MVP Embiid also had 10 rebounds. He was 11 of 23 from the field and made 11 of 12 free throws.

Tobias Harris added 21 points and Tyrese Maxey had 16 points and eight assists to help Philadelphia improve to 28-13. The 76ers - coming off a victory Friday night at Orlando - trailed by four entering the fourth quarter, then held the Hornets to 16 points in the final period.

Miles Bridges had 25 points and 11 rebounds for Charlotte. No. 2 overall pick Brandon Miller added 23. The Hornets are 9-31.

Visitors avoid a clean-sweep

Pakistan beat Kiwis by 42 runs in 5th T20

CHRISTCHURCH, Jan 21, (AP) — Pakistan had an unlikely hero as it bowled New Zealand out for 92 to win the fifth Twenty20 international by 42 runs Sunday and avoid a clean sweep in the five-match series.

The tourists' total of 134-8 after choosing to bat looked inadequate as it was their lowest of the series after their losing efforts of 180, 173, 179-7 and 158-5 in the four previous matches.

But it proved more than enough on a sub-standard pitch at Hagley and New Zealand only just surpassed its previous lowest total in a T20 international in New Zealand.

Ifthikhar Ahmed was the surprise hero for Pakistan. The 33-year-old hadn't bowled in Pakistan's last eight Twenty20s, hadn't taken a wicket since 2022 and had only four wickets in 53 matches before Sunday.

But he thrived on a pitch which gripped and turned as he took 3-11 to play the leading role in New Zealand's downfall. His previous best was 1-7.

Ifthikhar dismissed Tim Seifert (19), Matt Henry (1), Ish Sodhi (1), took a catch to remove Will Young (12) and played a part in the run

out of Mark Chapman (1).

"I just read the wicket, it was turning so I just tried to bowl wicket to wicket and that was the key to success," Ifthikhar said through captain Shaheen Afridi who interpreted.

"I was prepared for this game and I thought I might bowl today. I've been working very hard on my bowling and today was the result. It's up to the captain but I'm always available to the team to bowl if necessary."

Pakistan celebrated its win and the avoidance of an unprecedented 5-0 series loss. But it still has some soul searching to do before the T20 World Cup later this year in the Caribbean and the United States.

Veterans Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan remain the strength of Pakistan's batting and again provided the foundation of the Pakistan innings on Sunday with the 20th half century partnership of their joint careers.

Rizwan scored 184 runs in the series at an average of 46 and Babar 213 runs at 53.34. But Babar looked lost on a slow pitch Sunday and scored only 13 runs from 24 balls.

The 4-1 loss in this series follows Pakistan's 3-0 loss to

Australia in a three-test series prior to its arrival in New Zealand and it has now won only one of its last nine T20 series.

The pitch for Sunday's match was a used one at Hagley Oval and Shaheen's decision to bat on winning the toss was based on his belief it might stop and turn late in the match. In fact, it stopped and turned from the first over and batting was extremely difficult for both sides.

Pakistan handed the 20-year-old Haseebullah Khan an international debut and he was out to only the third ball of the match. Babar and Rizwan put on 52 for the second wicket but slowly: Pakistan was 29-1 after the six over power play, 53-2 after 10 overs.

Fakhar Zaman made 33 off 15 balls in an innings that gained stature in context. But after Rizwan was out for 38 there were few other innings of substance.

New Zealand would have begun with a sense of confidence that it wrap up a series sweep. But Rashin Ravindra was out in the second over, Finn Allen made only 22 and at the end of the power play it was 35-2.

Tim Seifert fell for 19, Will Young for 12 and Chapman's run out left New Zealand 54-4 with 10.1 overs gone. Glenn Phillips became New Zealand's main hope for a recovery but he managed only 26 from 22 balls before he was out in the 18th over.

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SPORTS

Sheikha Naima 'launches' women's handball tourney

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Under the auspices of Sheikha Naima Al-Ahmad, the Chairperson of Salwa Sports Club's Board of Directors, the women's handball tournament kicked off in the club's main hall. The event, featuring three participating clubs – Salwa Sports Club, Erbil from Iraq, and Bahrain from Bahrain – will run until the 24th of this month. In the opening match, Erbil faced off against Bahrain, and tomorrow, Salwa is set to compete against Bahrain. The tournament will



Sheikha Naima Al-Ahmad, the Chairperson of Salwa Sports Club's Board of Directors.

conclude the day after tomorrow with Salwa going head-to-head with Erbil.

Sheikha Naima Al-Ahmad, the tournament's sponsor, emphasized the significance of such events in adequately preparing handball teams for the upcoming season. She extended a warm welcome to the Bahrain Club of Bahrain and Erbil of Iraq, referring to them as "brothers" in Kuwait, their second home. Al-Ahmad highlighted Salwa Al-Sabah Club's commitment to team preparation and strategic planning aimed at elevating the teams' performance across various sports.

HANDBALL

Expressing well-wishes to all participating teams in the friendly handball tournament, Al-Ahmad emphasized the club's dedication to fostering excellence in sporting activities. Meanwhile, Mohammed Mirza, the women's handball coach at Salwa Handball Club, assured that his team is fully prepared for the tournament. Despite recent challenges due to players' academic commitments, Mirza expressed confidence in the team's sense of responsibility. He underlined the participation's goal, focusing on interaction with players and gaining valuable experience from the Bahraini and Iraqi teams in the game.

The 'annual' Kuwait men's chess championship kicks off

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Today marks the commencement of the highly anticipated Kuwait Men's Chess Championship, hosted by the Kuwait Handicapped Club at its headquarters in Al-Qadisiya. The championship is set to unfold over the course of the next month, culminating on February 1.

Adel Al-Amiri, Vice President of the



Adel Al-Omaire – Vice President of Kuwait Handicapped Club.

club, highlighted the tournament's significance as the premier annual chess event, attracting over 50 Kuwaiti players. The outcomes of this competition will play a pivotal role in determining the season's overall standings across various age levels.

The tournament will employ the Swiss system, spanning nine rounds from the inaugural matches today to the conclusive ninth round on February 1. All the action will take place at the club's headquarters in the Qadisiyah area, overseen

CHESS

by the organizing committee head, Bashayer Al-Zaid, and the judging committee head, Khalaf Al-Azmi.

Al-Amiri expressed his optimism for the tournament's success, anticipating fierce competition among the top Kuwaiti players and the emergence of new talents capable of delivering surprises throughout the championship.

In a related development, the Kuwait Schools Rapid Chess League is scheduled to take place at the club's headquarters on February 8th, further contributing to the vibrant chess scene in Kuwait.



Officials pose for a group photo after the dinner.

Al-Qadisiya honor Ibrahim

Rawad Diwan, a Board of Directors member at Al-Qadisiya Club, and the former Golden Football Director of the club, Mohammed Al-Bannai, hosted a dinner celebration in recognition of the team's technical director, General Mohammed Ibrahim. The gathering was a gesture of honor and joy as General Ibrahim experienced a swift recovery following a health setback that necessitat-

ed his admission to Jaber Hospital. In light of the health challenges he faced, Ibrahim regrettably stepped down from his role as the yellow football coach. However, he graciously accepted a new position as a consultant for the game, demonstrating his continued commitment to contribute his expertise to the team despite the change in responsibilities.

Best of the Rest

Maignan calls for action: AC Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan says too many people are "complicit" in allowing racism to continue blighting soccer, and urged authorities to take stronger action after he suffered racist abuse on Saturday night.

Maignan, who is Black, walked off after being abused by Udinese fans during a top-tier Italian league game, prompting the match to be suspended briefly during the first half. Maignan later told DAZN that he had been subjected to monkey noises.

"It's not the player who was attacked. It's the man, it's the father. It's not the first time it's happened to

me and I'm not the first person it's happened to," Maignan wrote in French on X, formerly known as Twitter. (AP)

Man U hire Berrada as CEO:

Manchester United announced Omar Berrada as its new CEO on Saturday night after raiding rival Manchester City in a dramatic statement of intent.

Man United had been looking for a successor to Richard Arnold, who left the club in November, and Berrada appears to fit the bill following his success both on and off the field with City Football Group.

Kuwaiti teams gear up for historic 7th edition of Arab Women's Club Games

Kuwait's Salwa Sports and Girls Club ready to shine



Girls basketball team.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: The Arab Women's Club Games stand as a significant milestone in the history of Arab women's sports, providing crucial support, valuable opportunities for interaction, and a platform for healthy competition. This steadfast commitment contributes to the continuous development and progress of women's sports across various domains.

Kuwaiti clubs are actively gearing up for the seventh edition of the tournament, scheduled to take place in the Emirate of Sharjah from February 2 to 12. Under the patronage of Sheikha Jawaher Al Qasimi, the wife of the Ruler of Sharjah and President of the Sharjah Women's Sports Foundation, the event encompasses eight diverse games: athletics, archery, volleyball, basketball, table tennis, fencing, karate, and bow and arrow.

This broad spectrum enables participants to hone their skills, fostering a positive impact and contributing to the advancement of Arab women's sports on regional and global stages.

Two Kuwaiti clubs, Salwa Sports Club and the Girls Club, are set to participate in the tournament. Salwa Sports Club will compete in volleyball and athletics, while the Girls Club will engage in basketball, karate, and table tennis.

Regarding the participation of Salwa Sports Club, Sheikha Naima Al-Ahmad, the club's president, said in a statement to Al-Seyassah that the players "stayed, prior to the start of the Arab Women's Club Games, an intensive internal training camp, and also participated in several tournaments with a number of teams hosted by the club."

Sheikha Naima Al-Ahmad, President of Salwa Sports Club, expressed gratitude to Sheikha Jawaher Al Qasimi for her unwavering efforts in empowering women and supporting the tournament. She emphasized the club's ambitions and commitment to ensuring that women's sports receive the recognition and acclaim equal to their male counterparts. Sheikha Naeema conveyed hope for victory for the Kuwaiti teams and success for all Arab clubs in this



Noura Al Shamsi, Director of the Arab Women's Club Games.

vibrant celebration of Arab women's sports in Sharjah.

Fadela Al-Shuwailan, President of Al-Fatah Club, affirmed the players' readiness to compete for top honors. The club conducted preparatory



Fadela Al-Shuwailan, President of Al-Fatah Club.

camp in Bahrain, Hungary, and Egypt to ensure peak performance. Al-Shuwailan shared that 12 players would participate in basketball competitions, with three being professionals, while five players would engage

in karate competitions. She expressed optimism for securing medals, citing the club's previous success with second and third-place achievements in the last tournament.

Al-Shuwailan extended gratitude to the Emirate of Sharjah and Sheikha Jawaher Al Qasimi for hosting this pivotal Arab event in women's sports. The Girls Table Tennis Club's previous bronze medal win in the 2020 Games adds to the anticipation of a competitive and spirited event.

In Sharjah, Noura Al Shamsi, Director of the Arab Women's Clubs Games, thanked all participating Arab clubs and teams for their remarkable engagement. She emphasized the organizing committee's commitment to ensuring the tournament reaches the highest level of excellence, with a focus on applying technical and operational processes tailored to the requirements of the women's sports sector. Al Shamsi expressed the committee's dedication to providing a distinguished experience for players and fans alike.



One of the teams.

Du Plessis outpoints Strickland at UFC 297 to win undisputed middleweight belt

TORONTO, Jan 21, (AP): The hostility brewing between Sean Strickland and Dricus Du Plessis finally hit its boiling point at UFC 297 on Saturday night.

The two battled through five rounds, taking the bout to the distance, but in the end it was Du Plessis taking Strickland's middleweight belt after bloodying the former champ over his left eye and winning a split decision.

Judges Derek Cleary and Eric Colon scored the bout 48-47 in favor of

Du Plessis, while Sal D'Amato had it 48-47 for Strickland.

"This is history!" Du Plessis (21-2) screamed in honor of his homeland. "South Africa... we can probably hear them from outside. That country is amazing."

It was December when Du Plessis referenced Strickland's abusive relationship with his father. Strickland let it be known that would not be tolerated, and violent recourse would result.

At UFC 296 in December, Strick-

land jumped over a row of seats and threw punches at Du Plessis - which both said was nowhere near a publicity stunt.

MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

Nothing about the fight was nowhere near a stunt, as the two traded blows, both delivering severe blows, especially in the latter rounds.

Despite the tension leading up to fight night, Du Plessis gave Strick-

land (28-6) his just due afterward.

"Every time he hits you with that jab it feels like someone hit you with a rock. You are one heck of a man, thank you for bringing out the best of me tonight," Du Plessis said. "The first three rounds were give and take, but the last two, I was desperate rounds four and five."

To which Strickland later replied: "I called it from day one - it was going to be a war."

At FanDuel, the fight closed a pick'em with both priced at -108,

which means a bettor would have to lay \$108 to win \$100.

Raquel Pennington (16-9-0) beat Mayra Bueno Silva (10-3-1) by unanimous decision to claim the vacant women's bantamweight championship in the co-main event. Pennington was listed as the underdog in the match.

Neil Magny (29-12-0) stopped Mike Malott (10-2-1) at the 4:45 mark of the third round of their welterweight match.

Chris Curtis (31-10-0) took a split

decision over Marc-Andre Barriault (16-7-0) in their middleweight bout. Curtis took two scores of 30-27 Curtis, while Barriault won 29-28 on a third scorecard.

In the first match on the undercard, Movsar Evloev remained undefeated (17-0-0) with a unanimous decision over Arnold Allen (19-3-0). All three judges scored it 29-28. Evloev, who owns the second-longest active winning streak in the UFC featherweight division (7), ran his overall UFC win streak to eight straight.



Oman's Khalid Nasser Al Braiki (right), and Thailand's Supachai Chaidee jump for a header during the Asian Cup Group F soccer match between Thailand and Oman at Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

Sports

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Kuwait qualify for 2025 Handball World Cup

Blues beat Iraq, advance to semis

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

MANAMA, Jan 21: Kuwait secured a commanding victory over Iraq with a score of 32-20 in the 21st Asian Handball Championship, propelling them into the semi-finals and securing a coveted spot in the 2025 Handball World Cup.

This triumph marks Kuwait's return to the World Cup after a 15-year hiatus, with their last participation dating back to the Croatian Championship in 2009.

With this significant win, the Kuwait now holds 4 points, ensuring advancement to the tournament's semi-finals and securing one of the



Kuwaiti player holds off an opponent to shoot.

four well-deserved qualification tickets for the 2025 World Cup. The national handball team expressed a profound sense of responsibility, emphasizing their commitment both in words and actions. They have effectively paved the way for Kuwait's honorable representation in this major continental forum.

The achievement is the result of concerted efforts, notably by the Federation's Board of Directors, which navigated sanctions and provided essential support. The appointment of the Algerian coach, Saeed Hegazy,

HANDBALL

played a crucial role. Hegazy led the team to a third-place finish and a bronze medal in the Asian Games in China, signaling the team's resurgence after lean years. The team also performed admirably in the 2024 Paris Olympic qualifiers held in Qatar.

It is worth mentioning that the Kuwait previously qualified for the World Cup finals eight times in 1982, 1995, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009.

Dedicating the historic achievement, Qayed Al-Adwani, the Secretary General of the Handball Federation, dedicated the Blue Hand qualification for the 2025 World Cup to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Al-Sabah, and the loyal Kuwaiti fans who steadfastly supported the team. Al-Adwani commended the



Kuwaiti players celebrate their victory over Iraq and qualification for the 2025 Handball World Cup.

players for showcasing resilience and responsibility, particularly in the match against Iraq, where they displayed remarkable performance from start to finish. After securing

the "Masters" bronze and World Cup qualification, the Kuwait has rightfully reclaimed its place among the top teams in the region. Al-Adwani expressed gratitude to the play-

ers, the technical and administrative staff, and the handball federation for their outstanding contributions that brought joy to Kuwaiti fans.

The tournament's main stage fea-

tures two groups, with Japan, Qatar, the UAE, and Iran comprising the first group, and Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, and South Korea forming the second group.

Al-Kharafi dominates Atyab Al-Marshoud Championship



Winners celebrate on the podium.

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21: Kuwait Equestrian Club rider, Ali Jassim Al-Kharafi, triumphed in the tenth edition of the "Atyab Al-Marshoud" International Show Jumping Championship, an annual event hosted by Walid Al-Marshoud at the Kuwait Equestrian Center in Subhan. Al-Kharafi clinched the title in the ninth and final round, "the Grand Prize," clearing obstacles at a height of 145 cm. His impeccable round, completed in 37.81 seconds without penalties, secured the victory and earned him the prestigious car prize.

Leading the pack, Al-Kharafi outpaced riders such as Fawaz Al-Rashed, Italian Antonio Moroso, Fawaz Al-Subaie, Anaz Al-Anaz, Ghazi Al-Jariwi, Madi Al-Khamis, Abdullah Al-Awadi, and Abdullah Al-Roudhan.

The awards ceremony, graced by the presence of the Minister

EQUESTRIAN

of State for National Assembly Affairs, the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and the Minister of State for Communications Affairs, featured the crowning of champions by key figures including Daoud Marafi, the tournament's sponsor Walid Sulaiman Al-Marshoud, Masoud Johar Hayat (President of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation), and representatives from sponsoring companies.

Al-Kharafi's stellar performance extended beyond the final round; he secured first place in the fifth round at 135 cm, the third round at 140 cm, and the second half at 130 cm. Meanwhile, jockey Hussein Al-Kharafi claimed the top spot in the first half at 120 cm, and Muhammad Al-Ajeel took the lead

in the fourth round at the same height. Ghazi Al-Jariwi dominated the sixth heat at 140 cm, and British rider Nick Channing Williams excelled in the seventh heat at 125 cm. Abrar Al-Musallam, a female equestrian, claimed the first-place position in the eighth heat at a height of 135 cm.

Expressing his admiration for

Al-Kharafi's achievements, Walid Al-Marshoud, Chairman of the Supreme Organizing Committee, remarked, "Ali Al-Kharafi is a world champion who consistently elevates Kuwait's standing in both local and international competitions. The Al-Marshoud Championship looks forward to many successful years ahead."

Al-Otaibi expresses satisfaction with accomplishments

Kuwaiti shooters win silver, Asian Shooting Championship wraps up

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 21. (Agencies): Kuwait's shooting team comprising of Abdullah Al-Tarqi, Muhammad Al-Daihani, and Saud Al-Kandari clinched silver, with India leading the pack and China securing the third spot at the Asian Shotgun Championships, bringing the nation's total to five medals of various distinctions.

SHOOTING

Meanwhile, the Championship concluded successfully at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah "Olympic" ranges complex, featuring the enthusiastic participation of 26 countries.

On the closing day, attention turned to the mixed doubles qualifiers for skeet shooting, culminating in the thrilling final of the competition. Kuwait's shooting contingent demonstrated remarkable prowess, securing four medals and earning two coveted



Kuwaiti shooters display their medals.

qualification cards for the upcoming 2024 Paris Olympics.

Engineer Duaij Al-Otaibi, President of the Arab and Kuwaiti Shooting Federations and Chairman of the Supreme Organizing Committee, expressed satisfaction with the championship's accom-

plishments. Al-Otaibi affirmed that the Asian Championship not only met but exceeded its goals by organizing high-level competitions that showcased the continent's world champions.

He commended Kuwait for setting exemplary standards in tournament organization, highlighting the seamless coordination and lack of complaints from the participating teams representing 26 countries. Al-Otaibi credited the success to the dedicated efforts of the organizing committee and various working committees.

Offering congratulations to shooter Muhammad Al-Daihani, who secured a bronze medal in the men's skeet competition and qualified for the 2024 Paris Olympics, Al-Otaibi recognized the pivotal role of divine providence and the unwavering support of Tawfiq Al-Daihani and the Kuwaiti Shooting Federation.

Emphasizing Kuwait's strong participation in the "Skeet and Trap" competitions at the 2024 Paris Olympics, Al-Otaibi expressed determination to build on the shooting achievements of previous Olympic events.

Al-Otaibi extended gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Prime Minister Dr. Sheikh Muhammad Sabah Al-Salem, Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser (Chairman of the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee), and the General Sports Authority for their steadfast support of the sport of archery.

Obaid Al-Osaimi, Secretary General of the Arab and Kuwaiti Shooting Federations and Director of the Championship, celebrated Muhammad Al-Daihani's achievement, emphasizing its significance as a new milestone in Kuwaiti shooting's illustrious history. Al-Osaimi expressed hope for the qualification of additional Kuwaiti male and female shooters in the upcoming World Championship scheduled for April. He underscored the high technical level witnessed at the Asian Championship, noting the intense competition among participating teams vying for medals.

Nole matches Federer's Grand Slam record

Djokovic reaches Australian Open quarterfinals

MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 21. (AP): Achieving yet another record at the Australian Open put Novak Djokovic in a reflective mood, revealing how he thought things might change after he'd clinched that historic 24th major title.

Djokovic played his best two sets "in a while" in a 6-0, 6-0, 6-3 demolition of Adrian Mannarino on Sunday to reach the quarterfinals at a major for the 58th time, equaling Roger Federer's Grand Slam record.

It's his 14th run to the last eight at Melbourne Park, where his conversion rate is incredible. Of the previous 13, he's gone on to win 10 Australian titles.

The 36-year-old Djokovic is meticulous in his planning and preparation and has had unprecedented success at the Grand Slam events in the Open era.

Even with two more major titles than any man in history, he said he can't relax and just enjoy it.

In the quarterfinals he'll be facing No. 12-ranked Taylor Fritz, who reached the last eight in Australia for the first time with a 7-6 (3), 5-7, 6-3, 6-3 win over 2023 runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Djokovic was in his post-match news conference when Fritz and Tsitsipas were still on court. He was asked about both potential rivals, and said he

was confident if he played to his level. No surprise to Fritz, who is 0-8 against Djokovic.

For Djokovic, it was a rare day session. He said it's no secret he prefers the 7 p.m. start but if the scoreline was any reflection of how he played in the daylight, he was content.

He dropped sets in his first two rounds and struggled with a virus but said his last two wins show "it's go-

ing in a positive direction, health-wise, tennis-wise."

No. 4 Jannik Sinner hasn't dropped a set en route to the quarterfinals, with the Italian beating No. 15 Karen Khachanov on Sunday, nor have women's defending champion Aryna Sabalenka and U.S. Open winner Coco Gauff.

Sinner will play a quarterfinal against Andrey Rublev after the No.

5 seed rallied to beat No. 10 Alex de Minaur 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-0.

Asked what was going through his head when he was down a set at 2-1 against an Aussie in the home of Australian tennis, Rublev said: "You don't want to be inside my head, it's like a scary movie!"

TENNIS

Sabalenka will next play 2021 French Open champion Barbora Krejickova, who dropped the first set but rallied for a 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 win that ended 16-year-old Mirra Andreeva's bid to become the youngest Australian Open quarterfinalist since Martina Hingis in 1997.

No. 2-ranked Sabalenka, who won her first Slam title here last year, beat Amanada Anisimova 6-3, 6-2. Gauff, who picked up her first major at the U.S. Open in September, beat Magdalena Frech 6-1, 6-2.

Anisimova had won four of their previous five meetings but she didn't have the answers this time.

Gauff, who next faces Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine, was the first woman through, needing just 63 minutes to see off Frech in a match played on Rod Laver Arena - in front of the Australian great.



Novak Djokovic of Serbia plays a backhand return to Adrian Mannarino of France during their fourth round match at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia. (AP)