



Kuwait-Saudi strategic talks in Amir's historic visit

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Amiri Diwan photo His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah takes the oath as the Deputy of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

PM MAKES HISTORY WITH DEPUTY AMIR OATH



A view of the National Assembly during a special session Monday for His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet to take the constitutional oath.

Opinion

Kuwait, outside of time

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

THERE is no doubt that the current government has a heavy legacy to deal with, and it needs a clear vision to get out of the impasse.

This is because what the previous Cabinets left behind represented a great damage to all vital sectors in the country, and led to an exacerbation of the decline in government performance.

In fact, it made Kuwait appear to be outside of time. What we recently saw of the ministers, undersecretaries, and other public employees being sent in a wholesale manner to the Public Prosecution indicates the extent of corruption.



Here, we beg to ask - Was the plundering systematic to this extent?

When an executive official is accused of stealing public funds, which he did while preaching abstinence and concern for the interests of the state, this calls us to doubt the entire government structure.

When the Council of Ministers flatters fanatic parliamentarians with a set of laws that make the country appear to be following in the footsteps of the Taleban, or when some of the retrogressive parliamentarians defend saboteurs and those who adhere to destructive ideology or work to insinuate themselves through the channel of other components, while the successive governments remain silent about them, this definitely means only one thing, which is a change in the social nature of the country. This is a historical crime against Kuwait.

The insistence on closing the country based on the need in the hearts of some short-sighted people, and the issuance of laws that led to expelling expertise abroad under the slogan of reforming the demographic composition without appropriate study, means obstructing the economic cycle and restricting its ability to move.

When the Bedouin issue becomes a dilemma because there are those who do not want to solve it for personal motives and considerations, this means seeking to plant a social, economic, and security minefield, the mines of which explode every day.

Yes, this government has many issues that cannot be postponed, as every day that passes without solutions means adding more fuel to the fire of administrative, economic, and ministerial failure.

In other countries, residents, for example, are three times more than citizens. They generate a lot of revenue from it because they add value. However, Kuwait is a closed country. When the family visa was opened, we saw the reactions of economists, traders, and other experts, as these people will spend their money here, and their overseas transfers will not increase.

Likewise, when a citizen complains about potholes on the roads and the high cost of repairing his car due to the lack of restoration of the streets and with no one taking any action, this indicates the extent of the failure of ministers and their ministry staff, because the employee sees his job as an acquired right, and no one will hold him accountable, because he is convinced his back is covered by a parliamentarian or an influential person.

This also is an indication that corruption has become a general phenomenon, and it cannot be eliminated unless there is a strict decision to hold "head of the snake" accountable in the ministry in order to make things right.

In order for this government to get rid of the corrupt legacy, it must confront without hesitation, fear, shame or complacent, and put things in their right place.

The reform workshop begins by amending or abolishing backward laws, which cost the State a lot of time and money, such as banning co-education, closing the country, and other laws that brought harm to the country.

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NewsWatch

BAGHDAD: Kuwait Ambassador to Iraq Tariq Al-Faraj on Sunday, discussed separately with the Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein and the President of the Iraqi Supreme Judicial Council, Faiq Zaidan, ways to enhance cooperation between the two brotherly countries.

Al-Faraj told KUNA that he discussed with the Iraqi Foreign Minister bilateral relations, cooperation between the two countries, and aspects of cooperation and coordination in the political and economic fields between them, in addition to regional and international issues. (KUNA)

COLUMBIA, S.C.: US President Joe Biden said Sunday that the U.S. "shall respond" after three American troops were killed and dozens more were injured in an overnight drone strike in northeast Jordan near the Syrian border. Biden blamed Iran-backed militias for the first U.S. fatalities after months of strikes by such groups against American forces across the Middle East since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.

Biden, who was traveling in South Carolina, asked for a moment of silence during an appearance at a Baptist church's banquet hall. (AP)

RIYADH: The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized on Monday the critical need for enhancing review mechanisms and conducting thorough investigations into allegations leveled against personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed in a statement its commitment to investigating these allegations, underscoring the humanitarian efforts of UNRWA personnel. (KUNA)

ISTANBUL: The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for an attack on a Roman Catholic church in Istanbul during a Sunday Mass that killed one person.

The extremist group said in a statement late Sunday on Amaq, the media arm of the militant group, that it "attacked a gathering of Christian unbelievers during their polytheistic ceremony" inside the Santa Maria Church in the Buyukdere neighborhood in Istanbul. (AP)

Domestic workers recruitment begins under new fee structure

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Acting General Manager of Al-Durra Labor Recruitment Company Muhammad Fahd Al-Zoubi said the implementation of contracts for the recruitment of domestic workers has started based on the fees set by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, including air tickets, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a statement to the daily, Al-Zoubi confirmed this step was taken with the support and guidance of the company's Board of Directors; indicating that the decision was carefully considered. He pointed out the ministry is a gov-

ernmental body that takes decisions based on technical studies and bilateral agreements, and in coordination and consultation with other government agencies concerned with labor recruitment; thereby, setting fair fees.

He stressed that the first and last goal is to reduce the burden on the citizens in recruiting a domestic worker, especially when the fees reached shocking levels as some took advantage of the citizens' domestic manpower needs, particularly before the holy month of Ramadan.

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Blueprint unveiled

Kuwait's health-centric cities take shape in MoH workshop

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Dr. Amal Al-Yahya, the Head of the Kuwait Healthy Cities Office at the Ministry of Health (MoH), provided insights into the continuous progress of the "Healthy Cities" initiative during a workshop on "Review for Healthy Cities" held on Monday.

Dr. Al-Yahya emphasized the commitment to the initiative through applied strategies, ensuring alignment with updated plans and the establishment of these health-centric cities.

One key aspect highlighted by Dr. Al-Yahya was the signing of cooperation agreements with more companies, resource mobilization efforts, and the initiation of various health-related initiatives. She underscored the importance of staying abreast of national, regional, and global trends, with the office working diligently in recent years to formulate a national strategy for healthy cities.

The workshop served as a platform to review the features and objectives in creating a national strategy for healthy cities spanning from 2023 to 2030. Dr. Al-Yahya stressed the significance of enabling both currently registered healthy cities and those aspiring to join the initiative to implement development plans in coordination with the current applied approaches.

Furthermore, Dr. Al-Yahya delved into the methods used in preparing the strategies, including the components of the package of new initiatives. She emphasized the need to achieve health development standards for healthy cities in alignment with the national strategy.

Dr. Al-Yahya reiterated the vital importance of creating and implementing healthy cities within various areas in Kuwait. Beyond mere accessibility to medical facilities, these cities

are envisioned to enrich the environment, stimulate economic growth, and foster national values within the community, ultimately promoting the highest level of health and well-being among Kuwaiti society members.

In addition to Dr. Al-Yahya's insights, Dr. Maitham Husain, Director of the Planning and Development Department at the MoH, highlighted the significance of the four-day workshop. He emphasized the acquisition of skills and preparation for Kuwait's fourth development, aligning with the government's current legislative session action plan. Dr. Husain also mentioned the Ministry of Health's strategic vision in plan, in line with the aspirations of the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi.

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Dr. Amal Al-Yahya, the Head of the Kuwait Healthy Cities Office at the Ministry of Health.

'Accountability'

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

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: In a special session of the National Assembly held Monday upon the request of the government, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah took the constitutional oath as Deputy Amir, as well as the ministers who are not members of the Assembly in accordance with Article 91 of the Constitution.

Article 91: "Before taking up his functions at the Assembly or at its Committees a member of the National Assembly shall, at a public meeting of the Assembly, take the following Oath: 'I swear by God Almighty to be loyal to the Amir, to respect the Constitution and the laws of the State, to defend the people's liberties, their interests and their properties, and to perform my duties faithfully and sincerely.'"

National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun inaugurated the special session early, which started with the reading of the Amiri Orders and Decrees on the formation of the government as per Article 68 of the Assembly's bylaw; including the Amiri order approving the resignation of HH the former Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah issued on Dec 20, 2023; Amiri order issued on Jan 4, 2024 to appoint Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah as Prime Minister and assign him to form the new government; Amiri Decree number 1/2024 issued on Jan 17, 2024 to approve the formation of the new government; Amiri order issued on Jan 24, 2024 to appoint Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah as Deputy Amir in the absence of HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah until the Crown Prince is named; Amiri Decree number 2/2024 to assign Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh

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Day by Day

DO not anticipate kindness from someone who hates you, or seek generosity from a miser. Do not hope for compassion from a mean person, avoid forming alliances with traitors, and refrain from stepping into the abode of a scoundrel. These are the reflections of a wise person who has passed through numerous life experiences.

However, it is essential to understand that people characterized by negativity and deceit often find themselves entangled in pain, affliction, the shadows of confinement, persecution, harm, and the collective prayers of those they have wronged.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 05:17 Asr ..... 15:02  
 Sunrise .. 06:39 Maghrib .. 17:23  
 Zohr ..... 12:01 Isha ..... 18:43

# Local

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

## Weather

## Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Mild with light to moderate northeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear with a chance for light fog forming at night.

**By Night:** Rather cold to cold with light variable wind to light to moderate northerly wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear and a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	22	14
Kuwait Airport	21	07
Abdaly	21	06
Jahra	22	10
Salmiyah	19	15
Nuwaisib	22	12
Wafra	23	07

## Regional, global issues on agenda; further boost eyed in ties

# HH Amir of Kuwait heads to Saudi Arabia on state visit Jan 30

Report by Amna Al-Shimmari

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is scheduled to visit the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on a state visit Tuesday, January 30, that will be marked with a scheduled summit meeting with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

His Highness the Amir's visit is the latest step by the top leadership for bolstering further the close relations between the two brotherly Gulf countries, bonded with family affiliations, geographic proximity, joint history and destiny.

The mission falls within the framework of regular coordination between the two neighboring countries' leaderships regarding regional and international issues.

Leaders of the two Gulf States regularly reciprocate visits. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal's last visit to the Kingdom was on June 1, 2021, when he was the State of Kuwait's Crown Prince. He went there again on October 25, 2021, for partaking in the first Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) Summit, followed with another one on, December 14, heading a delegation at the 42nd session of the Supreme Council of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

On July 16, 2022, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad visited Saudi Arabia to address a speech at Jeddah Security and Development Summit, followed with another mission, on December 8, participating in the 43rd session of the GCC Supreme Council, the GCC-China Summit and the Arab-China Summit, hosted by Riyadh.

On May 19, 2003, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad went to the Kingdom to head the State of Kuwait's delegation at the Arab Summit that convened in the Red Sea city of Jeddah. He went there again on July 19 to take part in the 18th consultative meeting of the top GCC leaders and the Gulf Summit with Central Asia States.

On October 20, 2023, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad was in the Kingdom, leading the State of Kuwait's delegation at the Gulf-ASEAN summit in Riyadh, and he was there on November 11 chairing the Kuwaiti delegation at the Arab-Islamic Summit, organized in Riyadh.

The late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited Saudi Arabia, in January 2021, heading a delegation at a GCC meeting, against the backdrop of a visit to Kuwait by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, in December 2016.

Kuwaiti and Saudi officials have regularly reciprocated visits for coordination on various issues of common concern.

In June 2022, then foreign minister, Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, visited Riyadh. Later, in February 2023, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal Bin Farhan Al-Saud, came to Kuwait and the country's deputy prime minister and minister of defense, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Ahmad, travelled to the Kingdom last October.

Moreover, the former prime minister, His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, visited the Kingdom in September 2022, on the first such mission abroad since taking the office, signaling

Kuwait's acknowledgement of Saudi Arabia heavyweight.

The historic and brotherly relations between Kuwait and Riyadh stood out, starkly, when the Kingdom supported the State of Kuwait in defending its legitimacy and independence during the blatant Iraqi aggression that began on August 2, 1990.

The Kingdom hosted the Kuwaiti leaders, officials and ordinary citizens providing them with all forms of backing, in addition to its effective participation in the international coalition that liberated the country in 1991.

Upon the basis that the security of the two countries is inseparable, the brotherly relations have deepened with a host of cooperation agreements at the media, cultural, economic, aviation, commercial and energy levels.

The two countries, key oil producers, maintain close coordination regarding the policy of maintaining the international oil markets. Moreover, the signed accords have ensured steady two-way flow of commodities across the borders between the two neighboring Gulf countries.

On December 11, 2022, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to develop the offshore Al-Durra gas field with a projected daily output of one billion cubic feet of gas and 84,000 barrels of liquid gas a day.

On September 26, 2023, the Saudi Cabinet approved the Kuwait-Saudi accord for establishing joint railways.

In aerial transports, on May 14, 2023, Kuwait Airways signed a code-sharing deal with Saudia (formally known as Saudi Arabian Airlines).

At the parliamentary level, cooperation between Kuwait's National Assembly and the Saudi Shura Council has been growing through the joint friendship committee, reciprocal visits and coordination with international and external quarters.

In May 2023, a Saudi delegation visited Kuwait for coordination against cross-border trafficking. And in tourism, a Saudi delegation came to Kuwait in September 2022 to promote tourist attractions in the Kingdom. During the 2023, hajj season, Kuwait staged 75 flights for transporting the devotees to sacred sites in the Kingdom.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah stressed on Monday the strength of fraternal relations between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and their leaderships.

Speaking to KUNA on the occasion of the planned visit to the Kingdom by His Highness the Amir (of Kuwait) Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the ambassador affirmed the two countries' support for peace and stability in the region and the world, noting also their common vision for the two peoples' prosperity.

He added that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber's upcoming visit to Saudi Arabia will be the first after assuming the top office, noting that the mission will reflect sisterly deep-rooted ties between the two countries.

The envoy concluded that His Highness the Amir and the Saudi leaders, during the visit, will discuss political topics and ways to promote investment exchange by using all means to achieve stable and strong economies that fulfill ambitions and aspirations of the two sisterly countries' peoples.

Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the Saudi-Kuwaiti Coordination Council was established with joint vision of augmenting cooperation, and ensuring sustainability of ties, in line with Gulf Cooperation Council objectives.

The Council sets out to reinforce an integrated economic system, find innovative solutions for the utilization of resources, and build an efficient cohesive educational system founded on strength points of both nations.

In June 5 of 2021, the first council meeting was held as per directions of late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

The two nations are aspiring towards a more expanded trade exchange with official data showing that in 2019 it reached SAR 39.8 billion (approx. USD 10.61 billion), with Saudi exports to Kuwait at SAR 83.7 billion (approx. USD 22.32 billion), and imports at SAR 56.1 billion (approx. USD 14.96 billion).

The countries' leadership have regularly reciprocated visits over the past few years for coordination on various issues of common concern, latest of which was His Highness the Amir's Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, then Crown Prince, visit to Riyadh on 11 November 2023 heading Kuwaiti delegation at the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit.

# 'Abdali, Salmi, Kabd roads perilous'

Get rid of potholes, gravel urgently: minister



KUNA photo  
 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah holds talks with the UK Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for the Cabinet Office, Member of Parliament, Oliver Dowden.

## HH PM meets UK Deputy PM

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received Monday Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya accompanied by UK Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for the Cabinet Office, Member of Parliament, Oliver Dowden.

During the meeting, both sides touched on bilateral ties between the

two friendly countries and the latest regional and global developments.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received Monday Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Al-Quds Fund and Endowment, Prince Turki Al-Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, and his accompanying delegation, on the occasion of his visit to the country. (KUNA)

## Other Voices

### Amir and State of institutions

By Sattam Ahmed Al-Jarallah

The 'politeness' of some representatives has gone beyond the limits. Kuwait is a State with an Amir and everyone knows his powers that are stipulated in the Constitution. Therefore, it is shameful that some representatives are ignorant of a matter which is not within their jurisdiction, especially with regard to the powers of His Highness the Amir, specifically who he chooses as the Crown Prince. Thus, it is necessary to stop some representatives and citizens from issuing statements in this regard.



Al-Jarallah

"It is known, and even self-evident, that whoever seeks to represent the people in any parliament should know the Constitution well. He must be familiar with the laws, or has a team of advisors or legal experts. In the end, he is a legislator. The legislator does not throw sand and does not enact a law on his own or according to his mood. He does not listen to those in his Diwaniya and then propose a law. As long as some representatives do not understand their limits when it comes to a matter that is the core of the powers of the head of State, in which no one has the right to interfere, we know why Kuwait has fallen behind over the past three decades.

"When some representatives issue statements or post on X (formerly Twitter) about who they think should be given the Crown Prince post and they do not have any authority over this matter, and in fact, no one consulted them about it, we must know that majority of the laws issued since 1992 till date are the reasons behind the frightening decline that Kuwait has been suffering from, because they drafted laws without knowledge or experience. One of them even spent 30 years in the prosecution.

"It is unfortunate that the legal cul-

ture of some representatives has descended to this level. It is even more disgraceful that these people are in charge of legislation, but the responsibility falls on the voters who choose even those who are ignorant of the constitutional rights of citizens, and the duties of representative towards the people and other authorities.

"Without a doubt, there is a big problem with regard to parliamentary work and how the Constitution is utilized to deal with the issue of His Highness the Amir's choice of the Crown Prince. For this reason, some representatives should read Article Four of the Constitution. They must understand its purpose and how the founders of the Constitution sought to explain it in great detail, because they realized from the beginning that Kuwait is a State of institutions and it has an Amir whom no one disputes with on the selection of the Crown Prince.

"Rather, the article specifies the jurisdiction of the representatives, and that the appointment of the Crown Prince must be through an Amiri order. The matter is known in the language, as well as the meaning of an order. The same article stipulates that 'his appointment shall be through an Amiri order based on the recommendation of the Amir and a pledge of allegiance from the National Assembly that takes place in a special session, with the approval of the majority of the members.'

In the event that the appointment is not made in the aforementioned manner, the Amir shall recommend at least three of the descendants entitled to the succession of the Crown Prince and the Assembly shall pledge allegiance to one of them as Crown Prince.

"Did those involved in this matter realize that they are attacking the Amir's powers? Do they know that the law punishes them for that? If they know, it is a disaster. If they do not realize it, then the disaster is greater. The question remains: Why this impudence?"

□ □ □  
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## 'Kuwaiti-Saudi ties deep-rooted'

RIYADH, Jan 29, (KUNA): Kuwaiti-Saudi relations have traversed through pivotal and historical points over the course of 130 years, passing over stepping-stones that solidified and deepened relations between leadership and people alike.

The evocative words of late Saudi King Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud during Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, "Either Kuwait is restored, or Saudi is gone with it," still reverberate through the hearts and minds of Kuwaitis.

The exceptional nature of these share bonds is rooted all the way back in 1891 when Amir of Kuwait at the time Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah (Mubarak Al-Kabeer) hosted Imam Abdulrahman Al-Faisal Al-Saud and his son King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman in Kuwait, standing by their side until they regained Riyadh in 1902.

This took Kuwaiti-Saudi relations beyond the point of neighboring nations, to a relationship of kinship and joint destiny in the face of challenges and mitigating circumstances.

The relationship between Sheikh Mubarak and Imam Abdulrahman was passed down the line of successive Kuwait Amirs and Saudi Kings, and further solidified bonds.

In 2018, during the reign of late Kuwait Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and King Salman bin

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: According to informed sources, the Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr. Noura Al-Mishaan recently met with the leaders of the ministry and the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART), and discussed ways to develop a quick plan to correct the defects and address dangerous sites on Abdali, Salmi and Kabd roads.

They explained that Minister Al-Mishaan instructed the leaders of the Ministry of Public Works and PART to carry out urgent maintenance work on the dangerous sites on the three roads such as potholes, flying gravel, and subsidences, and send a report in that regard through the concerned ministry teams in the Road Engineering Sector and PART.

Minister Al-Mishaan plans to hold subsequent meetings to follow up the plan that will be prepared by the leaders, and the actions that will be taken on the ground to overcome all obstacles that will face this plan.

She said, "The three roads are considered important highways that have recently witnessed a number of serious accidents due to the deterioration of their conditions, as reported on social media. These roads have areas that have not witnessed maintenance for more than 20 years, which has led to a large number of potholes, flying gravel, and subsidences that put lives and properties at risk."

Earlier, the Minister Dr. Noura Al-Mishaan, accompanied by the acting Director of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) Khaled Al-Osaimi and a number of PART's engineers, took a tour recently to follow up the repair work being implemented by PART on King Fahad Expressway and the Sixth Ring Road.

According to informed sources in the Ministry of Public Works, the minister's tour comes within the framework of a series of tours that she is conducting to learn the latest developments in the projects being implemented by the ministry and PART, especially the contracts for road maintenance projects, as it is the most important file on the ministry's table.

The minister gave direct directives on the necessity of accelerating the pace of completion of road projects and removing all obstacles facing these projects, especially maintenance projects and the development and modernization of the country's road network.

Meanwhile, the sources indicated that PART has placed the project related to linking the Sixth Ring Road and the south Mutlaa residential city among its priorities, as it is one of the important projects that serve the new residential city, which the state is counting on to provide adequate housing for citizens.

They indicated that PART intends to implement all the requirements set by the Municipal Council regarding the proposal of the council member Ahmed Hadhyan Al-Enezi to submit a traffic study to highlight the preferred route, road and method of connection according to the traffic density of the area and surrounding areas under the supervision of PART.

## Awqaf devotes Friday sermon to 'unity' talk

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): The Ministry of Awqaf (Endowment) and Islamic Affairs announced on Monday that next Friday prayer's sermons would be devoted to talk about national unity and tolerance.

The Ministry's spokesman, Salman Al-Kandari told KUNA that the Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Faisal Al-Gharib, directed officials to make the speech about the concept of national unity and tolerance.

Al-Kandari explained that this directive by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs comes in order to consolidate the concept of tolerance and acceptance of others.

He added that the tolerance that the Kuwaiti society has achieved is derived from following the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), which leads to supporting national unity and achieving peace and security among society.

### Human rights

**Core concern:** Kuwait is committed to protect human rights in the most exemplary way possible, a diplomat said on Sunday, citing the matter as among the nation's core concerns.

These efforts primarily entail the works of a national committee tasked with compiling a routine report on measures Kuwait has taken to protect human rights on a local level, Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Sheikhha Jawaher Al-Sabah told a workshop co-organized by the foreign ministry and the UN's human rights office.

On the purpose of the workshop, the Kuwaiti diplomat said it comes in line with national commitment to human rights protection, which includes pushing further a close rapport with the UN's human rights office as part of efforts to hone skill development on the matter.

Echoing the Kuwaiti diplomat's sentiments, the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa Mazen Shaqoura said such workshops revolve around national efforts to protect human rights, in addition to looking into regional experiences on dealing with such a pressing issue.

He went on to express hope that such initiatives would be instrumental in boosting awareness on the magnitude of the matter, in addition to developing the skills needed to ensure maximum human rights protection, he added.

## 'Make people active partner in running the government'

"THE government's work program is between constructivism and realism ... A smart government knows how to communicate and interact with the public, as well as monitor trends, opinions and reactions to benefit from the good ones and invest in them to improve its performance and productivity on one hand, and gain realistic insight into the most important needs of citizens and their aspirations in various aspects of their lives on the other hand," media consultant **Abdul Rahman Al-Misfer** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.



Al-Misfer

"His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah expressed his hope that the work program of the new government will realize the aspirations of the Kuwaiti people and gain their satisfaction.

"Logically, this requires knowing the citizens' priorities, the challenges and issues that concern them. In this manner, the program is in line with the needs of the public. It becomes realistic and practical, far from the constructive and theorizing approach that was one of the characteristics of the work programs of most of the previous governments, making it difficult to implement the programs.

"This prompts us to raise this worthy question and place it under the gaze of His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah: Why do you not make the Kuwaiti people, who I hope will be satisfied with the upcoming government work program, an active partner in weaving the ideas and contents of this program?"

"The method for achieving this partnership is simple and technically available. For example, an icon can be placed in the 'Sahel' platform with the title, 'Share an idea to create a work program that meets your aspirations'. This title shall come with various points like social, economic, educational, health and cultural. Thus, everyone can make his contribution to various fields.

"It is also possible to develop general questionnaires to explore opinions, analyze them later and extract commonalities between them. Indeed, the issue does not stop there, as it rather takes an encouraging dimension by granting a lucrative financial reward accompanied by honoring deep and distinguished contributions. In this way, we actually change the approach in dealing with the government work program file.

"This leads us to opening the horizons of thinking outside the box and soaring into the worlds of creativity and the genius of non-standard treatment. Today, we need bright national minds that contribute to correcting the course and creating true leadership for this country and its nation. I believe that His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah can create this climate to attract talent and push them to unleash their energies in the field of positive national competition to move the wheel of achievements and transformations with tangible and beneficial effects.

"His Highness the Prime Minister, the government's work program is supposed to be an arena for proactive intellectual exchange with the legislative authority, to present its perspective towards by way of seeking the views of its members. It is also important to involve the elites, academicians, public benefit associations, unions and others. The government agencies and bodies will be the final stop within which all sound ideas and opinions will crystallize.

"Here, we can say that the Kuwaiti people truly formulated the government's action program, to be a mirror of what they want and desire. With such steps, initiatives and effective partnership between the government and society, the great equation of advancement will be achieved. We will then enter the space of leadership in the Arab and Islamic regions... better than ever."

### Also:

"I liked the saying, 'Speak so I can see you' and I liked it very much and stopped at this saying a lot, because of the depth of understanding it contains, and not rushing to prejudge those we hear about and meet for the first time," columnist **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Beauty is often the measure of initial opinion about a woman, as her beauty is what attracts the attention of the majority, before the meeting or conversation develops, even if it is sideways.

"When a person describes a woman he saw as beautiful only, this opinion is often an initial image that determines the acceptance of this woman. This also applies to a man, when the judgment is based on external appearance only.

"When Socrates said: 'Speak so that I may see you,' it has a very deep meaning, which is that the components inside a person, whether in the

style of speech, culture, intelligence, or acumen, are criteria among many other criteria that determine the true image of this person.

"This often causes many people to be shocked by some people, whom they previously had an idea about, which may reach a stage of contradiction with the real picture, after a few minutes of sitting with them and talking to them.

"The external appearance of beauty, body and elegance are just cheap paint that does not last a moment with a few words exchanged between a person and whoever sits in front of him, whether a man or a woman.

"These coatings quickly fade and disappear if this person is insignificant and empty on the inside, because the depth of the person is what remains with him and endures, no matter how simple the temptations of the external appearance are.

"This makes it imperative for us, as people, to pay attention to this depth and add it day after day, in a way that strengthens our personalities, increases their knowledge and experience, and chooses well what is said and how it is said.

"I greatly appreciate and respect those who refuse to judge others before getting to know them, not only up close, but also from a distance, in a way that qualifies them to confirm information they have about this person, whether negative or positive.

"This is what happened with the new ministry, which was affected by prejudices, some of which were harsh and others were exaggeratedly optimistic.

"There is nothing better than waiting until the wheel of work and achievement for each minister turns, then we can judge this team objectively.

"We all hope that this team will surpass itself and the people's expectations, because today is the rope that will pull us as a people and a nation forward, saving us from drowning, which we were approaching day after day in previous year."

□ □ □

"Once again, I carefully listened to the Amiri speech during the swearing-in session at the National Assembly. People are still talking about that lofty speech until now, because in a very brief way, he spoke about what the Kuwaiti street has been obsessed with. He put dots above the letters. The expert diagnosed the situation. We are still hearing the speech. We learned a lot from him, especially when he said: 'We did not see any correction or change in course. Rather, the matter reached the point where the executive and legislative authorities cooperated to harm the interests of the country and its people!'" columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The executive authority has departed with all its dues and duties, but the legislative authority has remained. It still stands as it is! It is part of the damage that has befallen the country and its people. Will the scene change after the appointment of the new Prime Minister? Or will the situation turn from an agreement to a dispute that begins with escalation and ends with non-cooperation, especially since the tap of benefits has been permanently closed? Apparently..."

"His Highness the Prime Minister extended both his hands to cooperate with the current Assembly. Does His Highness know what kind of cooperation this Assembly wants, considering it cooperated with the previous government in an unprecedented manner? As per the supreme speech, what happened in terms of transfers and appointments to some positions lacked the most basic standards of justice. What happened in the Kuwaiti citizenship file led to a change in the Kuwaiti identity, not to mention the amnesty file and its repercussions, as well as the race to approve the Rehabilitation Bill.

"According to the noble speech, the silence of the two authorities regarding this absurdity is painful. All of this means there are deals to exchange interests and benefits between the two authorities!"

"This is just a small part of the supreme speech. Did His Highness the Prime Minister meet the members, describe them as his partners in development and state that his history is not a reason for dissolving the Assembly? This entails his adherence to the current composition of the Assembly, which the Amiri speech described as harming the interests of the country and its people.

"The supreme leadership is the constitutional head of the three authorities, and the government is supposed to be the first to implement the supreme directives and act upon them. Now, they are talking about the work program of the new government that will be presented to the Assembly after taking the oath. Will the government's work program be in agreement with the supreme speech or is there something we do not know? If this is the case, then we have to hear the speech again, but it should be very loud this time... Good?"

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

# 'Be vigilant 24/7 at borders'

Top Mol official visits 'Umm Sedira' post

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf has underscored the imperative of addressing all incidents and implementing necessary measures to counter any violations threatening the country's security, stability, and territorial integrity, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

During an inspection tour at the northern border post of "Umm Sedira," Al-Nawaf emphasized the need to maintain high levels of readiness among Ministry personnel stationed on both the northern and southern borders.

According to a statement issued by the ministry's Public Relations and Security Media Department, Al-Nawaf conveyed greetings and appreciation from Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef.

He praised the continuous efforts, diligent work, and around-the-clock commitment displayed by Ministry personnel in safeguarding the country's security and border safety.

Al-Nawaf highlighted the unsurprising dedication of the Ministry's personnel to serving Kuwait and emphasized that the border security sector plays a crucial role in maintaining national security.

Commending the collaborative efforts of workers at border crossings and the supervisory role played by Ministry employees in various locations and specializations, Al-Nawaf called for continued work, increased effort, and cooperation to accomplish all tasks with precision and mastery.

During the inspection tour, Al-Nawaf received a detailed explanation from Brigadier General Faisal Al-Subaie, the Director of the Northern Borders, about the security system in place. He also learned about the tasks, working mechanism, electrical security system, security force preparations, and technical and administrative equipment at the center.

The tour saw the participation of Major General Mansour Al-Awadhi, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Ports and Border Security Affairs, Major General Hamid Al-Baloul, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for the Office of the Minister of Interior, and several other security leaders.



Lt Gen Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf is briefed on the border situation.

Mol photo

## Other Voices

### The cell ... and the lost hope

The Interior Ministry announced the referral of residents and citizens to investigation authorities, on charges of planning to carry out acts of sabotage, terrorism, and murder.

The matter is with the concerned authorities, and I do not care much about the outcome of the investigation, as the matter was not a surprise to everyone who repeated his warning to those concerned, on dozens of occasions and through articles, of the danger of the decline of society, and the state in turn, towards religious extremism and the continued move away from the civil state, which we have known for a long time. Our awareness of life!

The intellectual and sectarian thought, the Salafist and the Brotherhood, and by extension the Shiite, is taking root every day, gaining more space in the minds of the youth, and spewing its terrorist, sectarian and racist poisons in various religious gatherings, without caring about the challenges the nation faces, internal and external, and the problems it suffers from beyond the power of any person.

A government against it, especially if it is obsessed with the theory that security can only be achieved through isolation and the use of pistols and machine guns, not through thought, and by eliminating the sources of terrorism, closing its schools, and drying up its sources. This is a more important and difficult task than using oppression and security force.

For nearly seventy years, charity organizations affiliated with religious parties with foreign allegiances have been depleting the state's resources and diverting them abroad, so that whoever comes next to spread their destruction among us, and at our expense, can benefit from them.

For half a century, the Ministry of Awqaf has been increasing in strength and influence, and its ability to intervene in the culture of society and in what we should read and listen to, and in the school curricula, private rather than public, and in determining what art means and what literature we should read, and in the quality of educational curricula, and in prohibiting the teaching of philosophy, logic, and critical thinking and as its size increases, its budgets grow, and its problems and violations increase, but there is no party capable of restraining it.

A body affiliated with it has not succeeded in printing a single copy of the Qur'an for 13 years, and yet four prime ministers hesitated to accept the recommendation to reintegrate it into the ministry.

Various parties also compete in holding memorization competitions, and there is nothing wrong with that, but many parties exploit these occasions to sabotage young minds and recruit young people to be their followers in the future. There are also at least ten associations established to memorize the Qur'an, most of which receive large donations, and are attended by thousands of young people. No one knows what ideas are being taught to those who join them.

Several influential parties also complained when a former Minister of Awqaf tried to stop absenteeism in Qur'an memorization centers, which number approximately two hundred, and force thousands of their workers to work full-time, instead of working for an hour or two, or even not showing up. But the minister's decision to be firm relaxed after a few hours, and laxity returned to its previous state, and this is further evidence of the strength of the centers of extremism and backwardness.

We also find that all state decisions related to employment include exceptions, for the lion's share of the category of imams and muezzins, to whom memorizers of the Qur'an have recently been added!!

The human need for religion is an important need, and it will not stop, but if this need is not monitored from misuse, it will, over time, pose a danger to society.

We have fallen far behind our surroundings, which advanced after rejecting extremism and welcoming openness, and there is no way for us to advance other than liberalism, in politics and study, so where is anyone who understands these matters, when the new ministry is bombarded with so many beneficiaries of everything we have criticized in this article?

Note: The security services know the names of dozens of extremists, including preachers, university "professors," Sharia teachers, former representatives, political activists, and a group of unruly people, and learn the truth about their danger, but certain parties do not want them to approach them. The owner of the stick, who had been pardoned, also returned to the cemetery to wreak havoc there.

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

## Licenses of violating campers withdrawn

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** The Public Relations and Media Department of Kuwait Municipality has approved the recommendation submitted by the Camps Committee which calls for cancellation of spring camps licenses in case of committing violations, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

The statement from the municipality outlined that the committee identifies violations in accordance with the conditions and controls for establishing spring camps. During a meeting, the municipality confirmed the cancellation of 8 licenses due to violations of rules and regulations.

If the license holder is found to exploit the camp for a purpose other than it is licensed for or establishes negative phenomena conflicting with Islamic teachings and conservative customs and traditions, the necessary measures will be taken to cancel the camp license.

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**Rain readiness:** Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, the Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, took charge of a meeting of the Rain and Floods Repercussions Committee. The gathering aimed to assess the readiness of relevant authorities to tackle the ongoing rainy season (2023/2024), reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The committee session, attended by representatives and members from concerned authorities, delved into discussions led by Minister Al-Mashaan.

The focus was on delineating specific tasks assigned to each party in the event of heavy rain and examining the emergency plan actively implemented by the concerned authorities. This plan is being executed in coordination with the joint operations room to effectively confront any challenges anticipated during the current rainy season.

### 'Treat all equally'

## 'Intensify security, traffic campaigns nationwide'

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf recently issued a directive on the intensification of security and traffic campaigns throughout the country, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf ordered the arrest of those proven to have committed violations and crimes; stressing the need to firmly deal with anyone who dares tamper with the security of the country and violates laws and traffic regulations in order to guarantee the safety of citizens and expatriates.

He also emphasized the need for security officers to remain committed to treating citizens and expatriates well, taking into account the humanitarian aspect in dealing with them during the implementation of security plans and procedures. He added the security officers must open channels of communication with the public to ensure positive interaction and to achieve the goal of the security message.

Meanwhile, a statement from the Ministry of Interior disclosed that the security deployment covers all main and secondary roads and intersections in a bid to confront any wrong behavior, monitor sites of reckless activities, and intensify awareness campaigns to enhance the security and traffic culture.

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**Trucker hurt in accident:** A tanker overturned on Artal Road, going towards Kabd, resulting in the injury of the expatriate driver, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Security and rescue officers were dispatched to the location immediately after receiving information about the accident. They removed the vehicle from the road to ease traffic movement, while the injured driver was referred to the nearest medical facility.

A case was registered and investigations are ongoing to establish the circumstances that led to the accident.

On the other hand, an expatriate filed a report at Jahra Police Station, stating that a Japanese vehicle collided with his car opposite the Jahra Roundabout, but the driver fled from the scene.

A case was registered and investigations are underway to identify the person who caused the accident in order to take legal action against him.

## SPIN & WIN

### JANUARY REWARDS

#### FOR LOYAL GUEST



### DON'T FORGET

### TO SPIN THE WHEEL

WHEN YOU DINE IN AT ANY BRANCH

# MUGHAL MAHAL

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# Education Minister holds meeting with ministry leaders to assess sector plans

Al-Adwani stresses teamwork, prioritization for achieving success

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

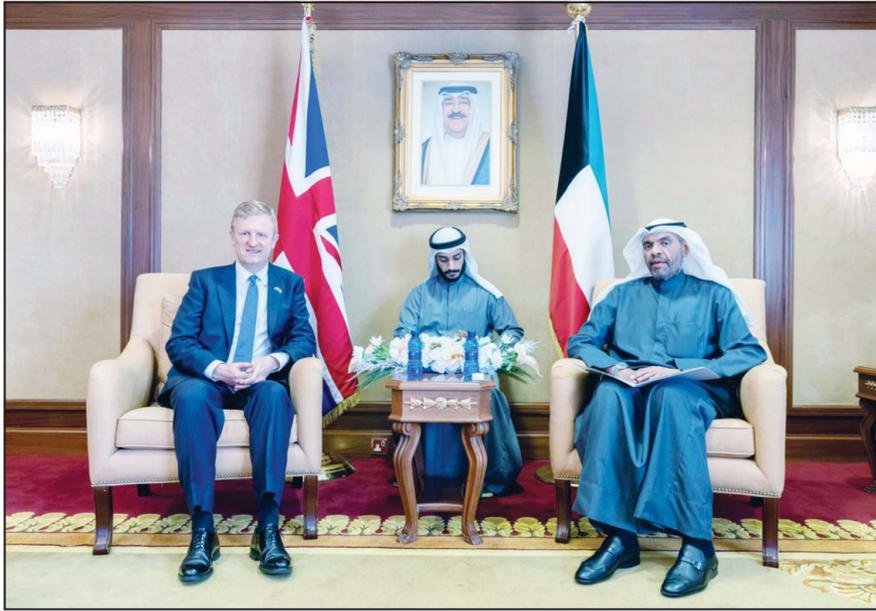
KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: In confirmation of the article published last Tuesday, the Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Adel Al-Adwani met yesterday morning with the leaders of the various sectors of the Ministry of Education to review the plans of their sectors.

Dr. Al-Adwani listened to a detailed explanation from each official separately about the work mechanisms, the projects and executive plans that are being worked on, the obstacles they face, and the solutions proposed to overcome these obstacles in a way that contributes to the speedy implementation of plans and programs.

During the meeting, he stressed the necessity of working hard in team spirit, and arranging priorities to realize achievements.

The minister affirmed the importance of enhancing communication and coordination between sectors to achieve the integration and coordination required to ensure the best workflow, as well as the importance of adhering to plans and programs, and working to implement short-term and long-term strategies and plans, provided that they are implementable according to a specific timetable, ranging from 100 days to one year, as well as for the next four years.

He stressed the need to work on



The Foreign Minister meets the Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on the occasion of his official visit to the country.

## Kuwait FM receives visiting UK official

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received Sunday evening at Kuwait International Airport United Kingdom Deputy Prime Minister, Oliver Dowden, on the occasion of his official visit.

The visit by the official along with accompanying delegation comes to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the establishment of historical relations between the two countries. (KUNA)

overcoming all obstacles facing the educational process in order to advance it in a way that benefits the educational field.

Dr. Al-Adwani highlighted the importance of concerted efforts to advance and develop the educational

process to keep pace with developments and achieve ambitions towards building a generation that is aware of the importance of education, and is capable of competing in the local, regional and international labor markets.

He indicated that the next stage is a decisive and important stage to launch serious steps towards achieving a qualitative shift in the performance of the ministry's sectors to implement educational, pedagogical and administrative plans and programs.

Valid until Feb 25 for all destinations

## KFH offers 15% off on Turkish Airlines tickets to cardholders

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: As part of its continuous efforts to provide the best benefits and exclusive offers, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has collaborated with the Turkish Airlines, offering a 15% off on flight ticket for KFH cardholders (Visa, Mastercard, ATM, Credit, and Prepaid Cards).

The discount offer is valid for flights booked between January 25 and February 25 for a travel period up to the end of August. The offer only covers flights departing from Kuwait to all Turkish Airlines destinations.

The discount applies to the original rate, excluding taxes and additional fees. Customers can benefit from the offer by booking online, using Turkish Airlines app, or by visiting Turkish Airlines office in Kuwait.

To get this offer, travelers can use the Promo Code



Turkish Airlines 15% Offer

(KFH2024) on their reservations several times during the promotion period for travel plans made up to the end of August.

KFH cardholders can also enjoy a 15KG free extra luggage weight for every ticket booked during the promotional campaign by sending an email to Kuwait@THY.com or visiting the Turkish Airlines office in Kuwait.

## DGCA: 15.6mn passengers travelled through Kuwait Int'l Airport in 2023

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29, (KUNA): The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said on Sunday that the total of passengers that traveled through to and from Kuwait International Airport in 2023 reached 15,616,800 passengers.

In a statement to KUNA, DGCA's Acting Director-General Emad Al-Jalawi noted that Kuwait's International Airport witnessed a rise in passenger traffic by 26 percent and in flights by 23 pct. Whereas air shipping increased by three pct compared to the year

prior. He affirmed that in 2023, the number of arrivals reached 7,932,222 and the departures reached 7,684,578.

He explained that the number of flights operated from and to Kuwait International Airport reached 128,584 flights compared to 104,147 in 2022.

Al-Jalawi revealed that in 2023, the cargo traffic amounted to a total of 210 million kgs, where the volume of inbound cargo reached 170 million kg and the outbound cargo reached 40.3 million kg.

## Delegations wrap up Vietnam, Tunisia trip

### Outstanding Kuwaiti students end enriching learning journeys abroad

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Delegations of male and female students, participants in the "Be Among the Best" initiative organized by the Kuwait Fund for Development for exceptional secondary stage students, have completed their educational journeys to Tunisia and Vietnam, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the initiative sought to reward outstanding students and provide them with enriching learning experiences.

Fatima Al-Tarkait, supervisor of the student delegation to Vietnam, expressed satisfaction with the outcomes, highlighting that the visit successfully achieved its intended goals.

During the trips, students had the opportunity to witness Kuwait's developmental contributions to sisterly and friendly countries, particularly through projects funded by the Kuwait Fund for Development. The delegations engaged with officials and project managers, gaining insights into the positive impact of Kuwait's contributions on people's lives and the economies of the host countries.

The Vietnam trip included comprehensive cultural and entertainment tours, allowing students to explore the country's significant products and industries. They visited Lam Wah Farm in Quan Phu Co, learning about Vietnamese incense stick production, and toured a ceramic factory, a key export industry for Vietnam.

The female student delegation visited the Coastal Infrastructure Development Project in Response to Cli-



Kuwaiti students during their travel abroad.

mate Change in Tai Toei District, Tai Penh Province. This project aims to support coastal infrastructure to mitigate climate change's adverse effects, contributing to sustainable development goals.

Lulwa Al-Hindi, one of the students, expressed pride in the Kuwait Fund for Development's ongoing support to poor and needy countries, praising the organization for its humanitarian efforts.

On the other hand, Saleh Al-Taqi, supervisor of the student delegation to Tunisia, highlighted the trip's purpose of rewarding academically outstanding students. The delegation enjoyed cul-

tural and recreational activities, exploring the iconic Sidi Bou Said region and the Dar Al-Annabi museum reflecting Tunisian architectural art and heritage.

Al-Taqi emphasized the strong historical relationship between Kuwait and Tunisia, dating back to 1963 when the Kuwait Fund for Development financed the first electricity project in Halak Valley. Student Hussein Mirza shared his positive experience, mentioning visits to an olive oil press, the Tunisian countryside, and the X20 beltway project, a Kuwait Fund-funded initiative aimed at easing traffic congestion around the capital.

## Demand for food commodities increases

### MoCI keen to monitor commodity prices

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 28: According to informed sources, the relevant authorities in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry are working to monitor the prices of food commodities, especially the price of onions, in order to prevent the rise in prices, considering the approach of the month of Ramadan when the demand for food commodities increases.

They revealed that a team from the management of the technical staff in the control and consumer protection sector of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry made a number of visits to cooperative societies and supermarkets to follow up on the goods and food items and check the prices of vegetables and their availability to consumers.

The sources indicated that the most prominent commodity that was scrutinized was onions, adding that they checked their availability in the markets and cooperative societies, and their quantities, and prices.

They said the price of a kilogram of onions at the present time ranges from 350 to 450 fils, adding that there are sufficient quantities available and there is no indication of a shortage in quantities.

The sources revealed that onions are available from a number of countries, including Iran, Yemen, Turkey and Pakistan.

They reassured consumers of stable prices in preparation for the month of Ramadan, reiterating that the department is conducting a number of tours and campaigns to ensure the availability of goods and to avoid any increase in their prices under any justification.



# February

## Room Promotion






Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
<b>NOW</b>	<b>NOW</b>
<b>BHD 49.550/-net</b>	<b>BHD 110.661/-net</b>
Weekends (Thursday & Friday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
<b>NOW</b>	<b>NOW</b>
<b>BHD 57.173/-net</b>	<b>BHD 127.685/-net</b>

Promo period from 1<sup>st</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Terms & conditions apply\*

# MoH opens new tests facility for food handlers

Initiative aims to reduce spread of diseases

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** The Ministry of Health has opened the Food Handlers Examination Center at the Old Farwaniya Hospital, marking the second center nationwide to offer this service, reports Al-Jarida daily.

## KAC highlights legacy and achievements

## Kuwait Airways shines as main sponsor in Jeddah Int'l Travel and Tourism Exhibition

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Kuwait Airways participated in the Jeddah International Travel and Tourism Exhibition (JTTX) as the main sponsor of the exhibition, held in the city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia during the period from 28 to 30 January 2024. The Kuwait Airways pavilion witnessed successful participation and attendance at the exhibition, highlighting its role as a distinguished national carrier in the region, with its legacy of achievements since 1954. This included the visit of the Consul General of the State of Kuwait and its Permanent Representative to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Mr. Muhammad Saud Al-Mutairi and his accompanying delegation to KAC's pavilion at the exhibition.

Speaking on the occasion, Kuwait Airways' Senior Country Manager for Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain, Mr. Faisal Al-Dhafiri stated, "Kuwait Airways is pleased to participate in one of the most prominent exhibitions in the travel and tourism industry of Saudi Arabia and the region, providing an open platform for KAC to showcase its products and services as well as connections in the travel industry. This venue brings together numerous international exhibitors, global tourism companies and well-known airlines under its platform. Kuwait Airways' participation at this exhibition arises from its keenness to develop great connections with GSA's, travel agencies, travel technology companies, tourism boards, in terms of advanced technology systems related to the latest entertainment features, and services, in addition to examining the latest features, and future projects present in the aviation industry."

Al-Dhafiri added, "Kuwait Airways' participation at this exhibition gives it the opportunity to showcase its services and development which has been achieved in terms of its fleet, including the latest passenger services and customer centric enhancements which are in pace with the latest international standards of the air transport sector and meet their requirements."

Al-Dhafiri concluded by extending his sincere



Mr. Faisal Al-Dhafiri presents a memorial shield to Consul Muhammad Saud Al-Mutairi in a group photo with the work team.



Visit to the Kuwaiti pavilion at the exhibition.



Kuwait Airways work team during the exhibition.

thanks and appreciation to officials in charge of the Jeddah International Travel and Tourism Exhibition for their tireless efforts and cooperation in making the exhibition a success and for their coordination

with participating companies, while extending best wishes to the organizers for the upcoming exhibitions. Visit the Kuwaiti pavilion at the exhibition.

## Kuwait, outside

Continued from Page 1

Also, no parliamentarian or influential person should be allowed to interfere with its powers. They must implement the principle of separation of powers and cooperate without the encroachment of one authority over another.

May Allah help His Highness the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. The next stage will be tough, but it is not impossible if everyone puts hesitation behind their backs and makes firm decisions. We believe that this is within their reach, because they are facing the test of proving themselves, before anything else. The question that begs to be asked is - "Will they succeed?"

## Ceremony marks

Continued from Page 1

Fahd Yusuf Al-Sabah to carry out the tasks of HH the Prime Minister whenever the latter represents HH the Amir; and Amiri Decree 4/2024 to appoint Sheraida Saad Al-Meoshherji as Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs.

The session proceeded with the oath-taking of the ministers who are not members of the Assembly, followed by that of His Highness the Deputy Amir and Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah as per Article 63 of the Constitution.

Article 63: "At a special session of the National Assembly and before assuming his functions, the Deputy Amir shall take the oath prescribed in Article 60 to which shall be added the phrase 'and to be loyal to the Amir.' Should the Assembly not be in session, the aforementioned oath shall be taken before the Amir."

During his oath-taking, HH the Deputy Amir and Prime Minister promised to respect the Constitution and the laws of the State; protect freedoms, interests and funds of the citizens; preserve the homeland's independence and territorial sanctity; and be faithful to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun disclosed that the swearing-in of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem as Deputy Amir established a new precedent in the history of the country.

In his speech at the session, Al-Saadoun said he reviewed all precedents, but he did not find similar instances. He then pointed out that the Amiri Decree on the appointment of His Highness the Prime Minister as Deputy Amir outlined two key points stipulated in the following articles:

Article One: The appointment remains valid throughout the periods of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's absence from the country.

Article Two: This procedure shall continue until the Crown Prince is appointed.

Therefore, the Deputy Amir will be sworn in only once during His Highness the Amir's absence until a Crown Prince is appointed.

After the oath-taking of HH the Deputy Amir and Prime Minister, Al-Saadoun adjourned the session until the next regular session scheduled for Feb 6-7.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah expressed, Monday, gratitude towards the trust bestowed by the country's leaderships, saying it was a huge responsibility to execute all ministerial duties with utmost diligence.

Speaking to the press after taking the constitutional oath at parliament, Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah - who is also Acting Minister of Interior - said the responsibilities "placed upon us" was great, and the cabinet has to work toward achieving the aspiration of the people.

He stressed on, "No one is above the law", affirming that the government would be fighting corruption through accountability.

The pivotal cooperation between legislative and executive authorities would ensure the best interest of the country and the people of Kuwait, he added.

He added, the security and stability of the country was a crucial factor, as it was significant to reform and improve the military establishments and the competence of the members.

On the other hand, MPs Fahd Al-Masoud, Hamad Al-Obaid, Dawoud Maarefi, Hamad Al-Medlej and Osama Al-Shaheen submitted a bill to regulate the delivery and promotional services provided by e-platforms.

The bill sets the maximum charges at 10 percent for marketing, and 19 percent for both marketing and delivery. The delivery fee should not exceed KD1 for orders from restaurants, coffee shops, ice cream delivered by using a motorcycle, foodstuff shops, central markets, flowers shops, cacao, pharmacies, clothing shops, electric machines, electronics, food supplements, make up, and children's toys delivered by using a motorcycle or a vehicle.

The bill states that marketing and delivery platforms are not allowed to impose discriminating terms and extra fees or refuse to provide services.

The concerned establishments must modify their conditions within one month of enforcing the bill.

MPs Osama Al-Shaheen, Hamad Al-Matar, Hamad Al-Obaid, Abdulaziz Al-Saqaabi and Hamad Al-Elyan submitted a bill on the establishment of Kuwait Institute for Leaders. According to the bill, the institute shall organize leadership and development programs for ministries, other public institutions, public and private companies, and civil society organizations; in addition to providing consultations.

The institute's objectives include discovering talented students with leadership capabilities in schools, colleges and institutes; conducting long-term leadership programs to prepare these students to occupy leadership positions in the future; revising the relevant laws; and submitting bills on the amendment and development of these laws.

The institute will be managed by a five-member Board of Directors nominated by the concerned minister. The board members should be Kuwaitis who hold a doctorate degree in leadership and administration from an accredited university. A national who holds a Doctor of Philosophy degree in a different specialization can be appointed as board member, provided he already published three research works on leadership and administration in accredited universities. The candidates should have served at least four years in a leadership position such as minister, undersecretary, assistant undersecretary, board chairman or chief executive officer in the private sector.

The seat of a board member is considered vacant in these cases: resignation, suffering from a serious disease, death, end of term, absent in three consecutive meetings or six meetings in one year without a valid excuse, and declared bankrupt as per a final court verdict.

The Board of Directors shall lay down the general strategies to achieve the objectives of the institute, and specify the terms and conditions for the general manager who will be appointed according to the nomination of the board with a four-year term renewable only once.

In another development, 36 MPs signed a statement calling on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to request for an extraordinary session of the Human Rights Council at the United Nations and assign an international fact-finding committee to investigate the Israeli crimes against the Palestinians in Gaza. The MPs pointed out that the request is in line with the recommendations presented by the Assembly during the special session allocated for this purpose; indicating Kuwait is a member of the Human Rights Council from Jan 1, 2024 until the end of December 2026.

Moreover, Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun presided over the recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Division. Undersecretary of the Division MP Hamad Al-Matar, Secretary MP Muhammad Al-Mahan, Treasurer MP Hamad Al-Obaid, members MP Shuaib Shaaban, Fahd bin Jame'e and Hani Shams; Assembly Secretary General Khalid Busleeb, and acting Assistant Secretary General for the Organizations and Relations Sector Meshal Al-Anzi attended the meeting.

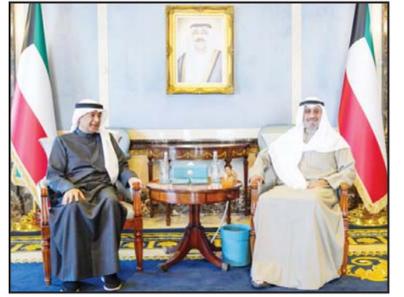
The initiative aims to ensure the safety of workers involved in various stages of food processing and other professional groups with direct interaction with the public, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Dr. Al-Mundhir Al-Hasawi, the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs, explained that the center will provide examination services for food handlers, workers in food establishments, and other professional groups such as beauty salon workers, health institute employees, florists, and ornamental fish handlers.

The examinations include blood tests to check for HIV, hepatitis B and C, chest x-rays, and various other tests related to food safety and general health. The center will also offer vaccination services for targeted groups, including typhoid, hepatitis A, tetanus, influenza, and the updated COVID-19 vaccine.

The digital transformation of health services is being promoted, allowing individuals to receive their health fitness card electronically through the "Kuwait Health" and "Sahl" applications, valid for one year and renewable without the need for in-person renewal.

The Farwaniya center is expected to handle about 2,000 appointments per day. This initiative aims to enhance food safety, reduce the spread of diseases transmitted through contaminated food and hands, and provide health awareness for workers in relevant sectors. The electronic services are part of efforts to streamline processes and digitally transform health services.



KUNA photo  
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received on Sunday GCC Secretary-General Jassim Al-Budaiwi. Al-Budaiwi congratulated His Highness the Prime Minister on the new post and on forming the new government.



KUNA photos  
Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmad Al-Saadoun received at his office on Monday Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji. Speaker Al-Saadoun also received Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya.

## Professional qualifications under scrutiny

## MP stresses need for regulation in Kuwait's psychological counseling

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: MP Dr. Jinan Boushahri says psychological counseling has become a profession for those who do not have a profession due to the absence of a law regulating the practice of this profession in Kuwait.

She highlighted the entry of non-specialists and those who do not have the necessary work experience and qualifications to be in this profession, and the increase in the number of institutions, offices and centers in this regard, causing confusion between psychological counseling and psychiatry.

In the explanatory memorandum for the proposed law that she submitted regarding regulating the practice of the psychological counseling profession, MP Boushahri explained that this profession serves the old and the young, the students, the teachers, the employees, the mothers and the fathers, and people with normal behavior and people with abnormal behavior.

This requires those who practice this profession to be armed with knowledge and practical training in the field of psychological counseling and its theories. Many countries even require those who wish to practice this profession to obtain a license from a competent authority.

In order to achieve the lofty goal of this profession, based on ethical and social principles, in confirmation of the state's duties towards society, and in order to guarantee the rights of individuals, and determine the entities entrusted with monitoring the extent of compliance with the application of the law, this proposal applies to clinical psychology and mental health, and does not include the educational counselor in the Ministry of Education.

MP Boushahri went on to explain that her proposal includes six articles centered around the fields of psychology whose graduates are allowed to practice the profession, and the requirements to be met by those who wish to open a counseling center, as well as the provi-

## MP unveils 4 proposals to improve traffic flow

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: MP Muhammad Al-Mahan has presented four proposals, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

These four proposals are -

1. Establishing a direct exit from Sabahiya to King Fahad Expressway towards Nuwaiseeb
2. Creation of a roundabout at the intersection of street No. 101 and street No. 6 opposite the wedding hall of the Ali Sabah Al-Salem Cooperative Society.
3. Taking quick and necessary measures to pave the entrance and exit to the Dhahar and Jaber Al-Ali areas, especially the link between Dhahar roundabout to the King Fahad Road exit in Block 2.
4. Installing information signs and reconsidering the status of its infrastructure. The timings during which trucks are prohibited on street No. 320 in East Ahmadi are set to be from 7:00 am to 8:00 am and from 1:00 pm to 2:00pm.

sions for practicing the profession of psychological counseling.

The articles include the terms and conditions for obtaining a license, the academic degree of the license applicant, the category under which the holder of each qualification falls, the duration of practical training, the committee for supervising and monitoring the practice of the profession, and the method and procedures for working in the profession.

## Decision of the Department of Bankruptcy in the application No. 4/2023 a preventive settlement

### Al-Turath Al-Areeq General Trading and Contracting Co. (W.L.L)

Opening the procedures of preventive settlement with regard to the application submitted by the debtor (Al-Turath Al-Areeq General Trading and Contracting Co., W.L.L) with suspending all judicial claims and executive procedures taken against it for a period of three months as of the date of this decision, and the Department of Bankruptcy shall notify the Central Bank, the General Department of Execution, Kuwait Clearing Company, Kuwait Bursa Securities Co., Capital Markets Authority, the applicant company, the respondent bank, and also, the bankruptcy committee, of this decision as per the Article (55) of Bankruptcy Law, and publish it in the official gazette, and register it within ten days, with entrusting the applicant company to disclose this decision in its website and announce it in two local newspapers, one of them is issued in English, at its expense, and submit what is evidencing that, and entrusting it to prepare the proposal of preventive settlement including the details required by Article (73) of Bankruptcy Law, with exerting the necessary care to convince the respondent bank (creditor) to agree on the proposal of preventive settlement, and to deposit a copy of the proposal of preventive settlement within a period not exceeding three months as of the date of issuance of this decision, by virtue of the provision of Article (74) of Bankruptcy Law.

## Domestic workers

Continued from Page 1

He disclosed that Al-Durra Company modified the contracts according to the new fees set by the ministry, including the plane ticket.

Commenting on the report of a Sri Lankan non-governmental body that 50 percent of the recruitment value will be returned within six months if the domestic worker escapes, Al-Zoubi asserted this is not true. He considers this a strong indication that the report was issued by an irresponsible party, and it is a means to put pressure on behalf of internal parties to raise the fees for the recruitment of domestic workers.

He added that Al-Durra Company, which operates in accordance with the government's plans, has ensured that the new fees are compatible with the cost of recruitment. He affirmed coordination with the government agency; which includes more than 900 offices, companies and agencies accredited by the Government of Sri Lanka that has bilateral agreements with Kuwait in this regard.

He clarified that the entity, which issued the statement from the Republic of Sri Lanka, is a non-governmental entity and only 200 offices fall under its umbrella; reiterating the statement was not issued by the Sri Lankan Government, Ministry of Labor or Embassy in the country.

He was surprised that some people resorted to comparing the latest fees with that in other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries; as each market has its own economic nature, price balance and work environment, and each country has its own decisions regulating this matter, which means the company adheres to everything issued by the official State authorities.

He explained that the statement of a non-governmental agency that the domestic labor recruitment cost is KD600 and that the fee announced by the ministry is KD750 is a confirmation of a profit -- KD150 for each recruitment contract, which is a logical amount and sufficient profit for the recruitment office, and does not burden the citizens. He added that demanding for other fees or leaving such an area open would lead to seeking excessive profit and exhausting the citizens by exploiting their need for domestic workers, wondering what profit some recruitment office owners are aspiring for.

He continued: "We, at Al-Durra Labor Company, believe that recruitment offices are supposed to work for the benefit of citizens and to serve our country by unifying the word against any unjustified price hike from abroad, cooperating with government agencies and not creating crises for financial purposes, especially since the holy month of Ramadan is fast approaching."

## Kuwait's health-centric

Continued from Page 1

Dr. Husain underscored Kuwait's commitment to achieving the third goal out of the 17 sustainable development goals related to health. Additionally, he stressed the commitment to realizing Kuwait Vision 2035, which involves 20 projects contributing to health enhancements.

These projects span a variety of state sectors, including initiatives for combating chronic non-communicable diseases, the national project for cities, the establishment of the Kuwait Medical City, and the medical city in Sabah Al-Ahmad Area. The projects also include assurances of the quality of healthcare services and other health-related initiatives.

## World News Roundup

## Europe

## Stubb wins 1st round

## Officials 'register' Putin to run in March election

MOSCOW, Jan 29, (AP) — Russia's election commission on Monday formally registered President Vladimir Putin as a candidate for the March presidential election, a vote in which he's all but certain to win another six-year term in office.

Putin, 71, is running as an independent, but he retains tight control over Russia's political system that he has established during 24 years in power. With prominent critics who could challenge him either jailed or living abroad and most independent media banned, his re-election in the March 15-17 presidential vote looks all but assured.

In 2018, Putin also ran as an independent, snubbing the United Russia party that nominated him to run in 2012. With his approval ratings hovering around 80 percent, Putin is far more popular than United Russia, which is widely seen as a part of the Kremlin-controlled state bureaucracy rather than a political force.



Putin

The Central Election Commission formally cleared Putin for the race after reviewing 315,000 signatures gathered by his campaign from all 89 regions of Russia. Russian election law requires independent candidates to present at least 300,000 signatures to get on the ballot.

The commission already has approved three other candidates who were nominated by parties represented in parliament and weren't required to collect signatures: Nikolai Kharitonov of the Communist Party, Leonid Slutsky of the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party and Vladislav Davankov of the New People Party.

All three parties have been largely supportive of the Kremlin's policies. Kharitonov ran against Putin in 2004, finishing a distant second.

Boris Nadezhdin, a 60-year-old liberal politician who serves as a local legislator in a town near Moscow, is also seeking to run. He has openly called for a halt to the conflict in Ukraine and starting a dialogue with the West.

Thousands of Russians have lined up across the country to leave their signatures in support of Nadezhdin's candidacy to allow him to qualify for the race, an unusual show of opposition sympathies in the rigidly controlled political landscape that raised a challenge for the Kremlin.

The Central Election Commission is expected to review Nadezhdin's papers later this week to decide whether to register him for the race.

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**Stubb wins first round of Finland election:** Former Prime Minister Alexander Stubb won the first round of Finland's presidential election Sunday and will face runner-up ex-Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto in a runoff next month.

The vote largely centered on the Nordic nation's new role as a NATO front-line country with Russia, and the security situation in Europe, particularly Russia's assault on Ukraine.

With all the votes counted, Stubb led the first round with 27.2% of the votes, while Haavisto, Finland's top diplomat in 2019-2023, took second place with 25.8%. Parliamentary Speaker Jussi Halla-aho came in third with 19%, followed by Bank of Finland governor Olli Rehn with 15.3%.

The first-round election result will be officially confirmed Tuesday. The result will push the race into a runoff on Feb. 11 between Stubb and Haavisto, because none of the candidates received more than half of the votes.

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**Caretaker government approved:** North Macedonia's parliament on Sunday approved a caretaker government with a mandate to organize a general election in May.

The government of the small Balkan country of 1.8 million people will be headed by the country's first-ever ethnic Albanian prime minister, current parliament speaker Talat Xhaferi, 61.

The 120-member parliament approved the caretaker government 65-3, with the main opposition, center-right VMRO-DPMNE lawmakers abstaining.

Despite the abstention, VMRO-DPMNE will join the government with two ministers (interior and labor and social welfare) out of the 20 total ministers, plus three deputy ministers.

VMRO-DPMNE attacked Xhaferi in a statement. "Talat Xhaferi is the man who is known for violating the Constitution, the laws, the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly. ... Talat Xhaferi is a man who comes from a party in which all the leaders' mouths are full of European values, but whose actions only show how they are violated. Hence, one can only expect and think that Talat Xhaferi can only do worse," the statement said.

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**Far-right party popularity produces rallies:** Hundreds of thousands of people in Germany turned out for a third weekend to protest the popularity and policies of the far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD party.

A rally in Hamburg took place Sunday with a theme of "For diversity and our democracy - Hamburg stands united against the AfD." Organizers said that up to 100,000 people marched through the northern city.

In the western city of Duesseldorf, 100,000 demonstrators rallied Saturday under the slogan "Against the AfD - We will not remain silent. We do not look away. We are taking action!"

Dozens of smaller protests took place over the weekend, including in the cities of Aachen, Osnabrueck, Kiel, Sigmaringen and Wittenberg, German news agency dpa reported.

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**Police detain man who had knife:** Police detained an Italian man found with a knife in his bag on the boulevard leading to St. Peter's Square hours before Pope Francis made his weekly appearance at a Vatican palace window Sunday.

The Italian news agency ANSA said the knife was discovered during an inspection of the bag as part of routine security for the public approaching the square.

The man, 52, from the southern Italian region of Calabria, is believed to be mentally disturbed and authorities said there was no suspicion of terrorism, ANSA reported.

Italian media said the man scuffled with police, and one officer was slightly injured.

The pope's noon window appearance went ahead as scheduled, as he greeted some 20,000 people in the square during the customary Sunday tradition.



US President Joe Biden speaks at the First in the Nation Celebration held by the South Carolina Democratic Party at the State Fairgrounds, Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024, in Columbia, SC. (AP)

## Politics

## Republicans see opportunity with voters

## GOP unveils Mayorkas impeachment articles

WASHINGTON, Jan 29, (AP) — US House Republicans released two articles of impeachment against Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas as they vowed to swiftly push forward with election-year efforts to oust him over what they call his failure to manage the US-Mexico border. The rare step against a Cabinet member drew outrage from Democrats and the agency as a politically motivated stunt lacking the constitutional basis to remove Mayorkas from office.

Republicans contend Mayorkas is guilty of "high crimes and misdemeanors" that amount to a "willful and systemic refusal to comply with the law" on immigration and a "breach of the public trust." Impeachment, they say, is "Congress's only viable option."

"Alejandro N. Mayorkas willfully and systemically refused to comply with the immigration laws, failed to control the border to the detriment of national security, compromised public safety, and violated the rule of law and separation of powers in the Constitution, to the manifest injury of the people of the United States," the impeachment resolution says.

Only once in American history has a Cabinet secretary been impeached: William Belknap, President Ulysses Grant's war secretary, in 1876, over kickbacks in government contracts. Going after an official for a policy dispute, in this instance over the claim that Mayorkas is not upholding immigration laws, is unprecedented.

## Drive

Ever since taking control of the House in 2023, Republicans have pushed to impeach Mayorkas. Sunday's announcement comes as their other impeachment drive - to impeach Democratic President Joe Biden in relation to his son Hunter's business dealings - has struggled to advance.

But Republicans have moved with rapid speed against Mayorkas after a series of hearings in recent weeks. It all comes at a time when border security and immigration are key issues in the 2024 campaign and as Donald Trump, the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination, is promising to launch the "largest deportation

operation" in U.S. history if he returns to the White House.

The Republican-controlled House Homeland Security Committee is set to vote Tuesday on the articles of impeachment, aiming to send them to the full House for consideration. Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has said the House will move forward as soon as possible with a vote after that.

Passage requires only a House majority. The Senate would hold a trial, and a two-thirds vote is required for conviction, an exceedingly unlikely outcome in the Democratic-run Senate.

The GOP push also comes at a curious time for Mayorkas.

Even as the House is taking steps to try to remove him from office, Mayorkas has been engaged in arduous negotiations with senators seeking to reach a bipartisan deal on border policy. He has won praise from senators for his engagement in the process.

## Solve

Democrats have lambasted the impeachment proceedings, calling them a waste of time when lawmakers should be working together to solve the problems. They also say Republicans are part of the problems at the border, with Republicans attacking Mayorkas even as they have failed to give his department the tools it needs to manage the situation.

"They don't want to fix the problem; they want to campaign on it. That's why they have undermined efforts to achieve bipartisan solutions and ignored the facts, legal scholars and experts, and even the Constitution itself in their quest to baselessly impeach Secretary Mayorkas," the department said in a statement Sunday.

Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, the top Democrat on the House committee, said the GOP resolution did not have "a shred of evidence of high crimes or misdemeanors -- the Constitutional standard for impeachment."

The two articles mark the culmination of a roughly yearlong examination by Republicans of the secretary's handling of the border and what they describe as a crisis of the administration's own making. Republicans contend that the administration and Mayorkas specifically either got rid of policies in

place under Trump that had controlled migration or enacted policies of their own that encouraged migrants from around the world to come to the US illegally via the southern border. They also accused Mayorkas of lying to Congress, pointing to comments about the border being secure or about vetting of Afghans airlifted to the US.

They cite growing numbers of migrants who have at times overwhelmed the capacity of Customs and Border Protection authorities to care and process them.

## Also:

**WASHINGTON: Donald Trump** isn't known for fostering deep connections with the Black community.

From his earliest days as a New York real estate developer, Trump has faced accusations of racist business practices. He spent years spreading the lie that Barack Obama, America's first Black president, was ineligible to hold office.

But as he seeks the presidency for a third time, Trump is aiming to win over an unlikely constituency: Black voters.

"Have you seen our poll numbers with African Americans and with Hispanic Americans? But I'm not that surprised because I see it, I feel it," Trump declared during a rally in Atkinson, New Hampshire, days before the state's primary. "We did great in 2016, we did much better in 2020 but there is much more enthusiasm now."

There's little evidence that Trump is making significant inroads with Black voters, who polls show remain overwhelmingly supportive of President Joe Biden. But even minor changes in voting patterns in critical states could shift the race in unexpected ways.

For Biden, the biggest risk isn't a dramatic move among Black voters toward Trump. It's that such voters - frustrated by a range of issues, including the lack of progress emerging from the 2020 racial justice movement - simply don't show up at all. In some of the most narrowly divided states that could decide next year's election, including Georgia, Pennsylvania and Michigan, even minor shifts in turnout could sway the results.



Talat Xhaferi, nominated to serve as prime minister of the caretaker government, speaks to lawmakers during a session of the parliament in Skopje, North Macedonia, on Jan 28. North Macedonia's parliament has approved on Sunday a new caretaker government installed ahead of general elections this May. (AP)



Augello



Muniz

## America

**Teen fugitive caught:** A teenager awaiting trial in a homicide case who escaped outside a Philadelphia hospital last week was captured on Sunday, police said.

Shane Pryor was taken into custody by the US Marshals Service, said Sgt Eric Gripp with the Philadelphia Police Department.

The marshals will hand the 17-year-old over to police homicide detectives, Gripp said.

"A special thanks goes out to the media and public for sharing their tips and information," Gripp said in a statement. "No further information is available at this time." (AP)

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**AA hard landing hurts 6:** An American Airlines flight from Los Angeles made a hard landing at Maui's main airport, sending five flight attendants and one passenger to the hospital.

The six were later released, the airline said in a statement.

Flight 271 arrived at Kahului Airport around 2 p.m. Saturday, according to the Federal Aviation Administration, which said it was investigating. Neither American Airlines nor the FAA provided additional details.

The Airbus 320 was carrying 167 passengers and seven crew, according to the airlines. (AP)

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**2 people in custody:** Two people were taken into custody as part of an investigation into the abandonment of a newborn girl who was found last week behind dumpsters in Mississippi, authorities said.

The two people were arrested Friday, the Marshall County Sheriff's Office said on social media, without providing further details.

The newborn was found bundled in several blankets in a car seat Wednesday behind dumpsters at the Grove of Cayce mobile home park, near the Tennessee border, the sheriff's office said.

The baby was taken to a hospital and was in good condition, authorities said Friday. The mobile home park is about 35 miles

(56 kilometers) southeast of Memphis. (AP)

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in his 80s shot and killed his wife and two adult children before killing himself Saturday at a Los Angeles home, authorities said.

A witness at the residence reported a

'Man kills wife, adult kids': A man



Concertina wire lines the path as members of Congress tour an area near the Texas-Mexico border, Jan 3, in Eagle Pass, Texas. As congressional negotiators try to finalize a bipartisan deal on the border and immigration, their effort is drawing the wrath of hard-right lawmakers and former US president Donald Trump. That vocal opposition threatens to unravel a delicate compromise. (AP)

shooting around 7 pm in the Granada Hills area, according to the Los Angeles Police Department.

Responding officers forced their way in and the witness directed them to four people dead at the scene in what police characterized as a murder-suicide.

The survivor was barricaded in a room during the shooting and called police, but details on who that person is were not immediately released, ABC 7 reported.

"The only positive point is that you at least have one witness that has survived this incident," police Capt Kelly Muniz said during a press briefing. (AP)

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**Gunfire injures two officers:** Two police officers along Florida's Space Coast were wounded by gunfire and had non-life-threatening injuries after responding to a domestic call Sunday, authorities said.

The wounded officers from the Palm Bay Police Department were being treated at a hospital and are going to survive, Police Chief Mariano Augello said at a news conference.

The officers were responding to a call about a domestic dispute at a home in a residential neighborhood when they were shot, according to the chief. He said the suspect was killed during the exchange of gunfire.

"Two of our officers were shot today as a result of doing their jobs and that's protecting our community," Augello said. "We will not tolerate anybody raising their guns or any type of lethal force against officers." (AP)

## Africa

## 52 killed in clashes

## Mali, Niger, Burkina withdraw from bloc

ABUJA, Nigeria, Jan 29, (Agencies): West African nations Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have withdrawn from the regional economic bloc known as ECOWAS, their respective juntas announced Sunday. They accused the bloc of "inhumane" sanctions to reverse the coups in their nations.

ECOWAS said in a statement that it wasn't notified of the countries' decision to withdraw.

The juntas said in a joint statement read on state television in all three countries that they have "decided in complete sovereignty on the immediate withdrawal of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)," alleging that the bloc has "moved away from the ideals of its founding fathers and pan-Africanism" after nearly 50 years in existence.

"Furthermore, ECOWAS, under the influence of foreign powers, betraying its founding principles, has become a threat to its member states and its populations whose happiness it is supposed to ensure," their statements read.

ECOWAS said in a statement that it had not been notified of the countries' decision

to quit the bloc. Its protocol provides that withdrawal takes up to one year to be completed.

"Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali remain important members of the Community and the Authority remains committed to finding a negotiated solution to the political impasse," it said.

Widely seen as West Africa's top political and regional authority, the 15-nation bloc of ECOWAS - formed in 1975 to "promote economic integration" in member states - has struggled in recent years to reverse rampant coups in the region where citizens have complained of not benefiting from rich natural resources.

## Interests

In parts of West Africa, ECOWAS is fast losing its effectiveness and support among citizens, who see it as representing only the interests of the leaders and not that of the masses, said **Oge Onubogu**, director of the Africa Program at the Washington-based Wilson Center think tank.

Sunday's announcement is the latest twist in a series of events that have deepened political tension in West Africa since it experienced its latest of a string of coups - in Niger - last year. It also comes as the three nations have formed a security alliance after severing military ties with France and other European nations and turning to Russia for support.

The joint statement accused ECOWAS of failing to assist those three countries in fighting "existential" threats like terrorism - the common reason cited by their militaries for deposing their democratically elected governments.

"When these States decided to take their destiny into their own hands, it (ECOWAS) adopted an irrational and unacceptable posture in imposing illegal, illegitimate, inhumane and irresponsible sanctions in violation of its own texts," the statement noted.

Rather than improve their situations, the juntas said the ECOWAS sanctions have "further weakened populations already bruised by years of violence."

Last week's botched meeting between Niger and ECOWAS - which said its delegation couldn't visit Niger because of a flight problem - was seen by Niger's junta as an opportunity to blame the bloc for how it has responded to the coup there, according to Cheta Nwanze, an analyst at Lagos-based SBM Intelligence geopolitical research firm.

**Clashes in Abyei kill 52:** Gunmen attacked villagers in the oil-rich region of Abyei claimed by both Sudan and South Sudan, leaving at least 52 people dead, including a U.N. peacekeeper, and 64 wounded, a regional official said Sunday.

The motive for the attack Saturday evening was not immediately clear but it was suspected to revolve around a land dispute, Bulis Koch, Abyei information minister, told The Associated Press in a telephone interview from Abyei.

Deadly ethnic violence has been common in the region, where Twic Dinka tribal members from neighboring Warrap State are locked in a land dispute with Ngok Dinka from Abyei over the Aneet area, located at the border.

The attackers in Saturday's violence were armed youth from the Nuer tribe who migrated to Warrap state last year because of flooding in their areas, Koch said.

**Airstrikes kill number of militants:** A number of "Kharjite" militants were killed on Monday - commanders included - in an airstrike in Hiran district, said Somali National Army.

In their statement broadcasted by Somali National News Agency (SONNA) said, the army targeted two vehicles that had wanted commanders and militants.

The airstrikes have been increased in the past hours, as they targeted commanders and other terrorist elements.

**'Mass graves still being found':** A Rwandan official said that the remains of 119 people believed to be victims of the 1994 genocide have been discovered in the country's south, as authorities continue to find mass graves nearly three decades after the killings.

The remains of more victims continue to be found because perpetrators of the genocide tried their best to hide possibly incriminating information, Naphthal Ahishakiye, executive secretary of the genocide survivors' organization Ibuka, told The Associated Press.

In October, authorities first found six bodies under a house that was being built in Huye district. They have since found more bodies there after investigating further, he said.

**'60 civilians killed last year':** Human Rights Watch said that Burkina Faso's security forces last year killed at least 60 civilians in three different drone strikes, which the group says may have constituted war crimes.

The West African nation's government claimed the strikes targeted extremists, including jihadi fighters and rebel groups that have been operating in many remote communities.

The accusation by the New York-based watchdog were the latest in a string of similar charges raised by various rights groups.



Onubogu



Representatives pose for a group photo during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers' retreat meeting in Luang Prabang, Laos, on Jan 29. From left: Myanmar's ASEAN Permanent Secretary Marlar Than Htike, Philippine Foreign Undersecretary Theresa Lazaro, Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, Thai Foreign Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara,

Vietnam's Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son, Laos' Foreign Minister Saleumxay Kommasith, Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan, Brunei's Second Foreign Minister Erywan Yusof, Cambodia's Foreign Minister Sok Chenda Sophea, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, East Timor's Foreign Minister Benedito dos Santos Freitas and ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn. (AP)

## Asia

## 'Kim supervised tests of cruise missiles'

## Myanmar, Sea conflicts top agenda at ASEAN

LUANG PRABANG, Laos, Jan 29, (AP): China's increasingly assertive posture in the South China Sea and escalating violence in Myanmar topped the agenda for Southeast Asian diplomats at their meeting in Laos on Monday, with the Laotian foreign minister expressing guarded optimism that progress could be made this year on both acrimonious issues.

Laos Foreign Minister Saleumxay Kommasith told reporters that Thailand was moving ahead with plans to provide more humanitarian assistance to Myanmar, where more than 2.6 million people have been displaced by civil war.

## Sign

He said it was a good sign that the military leaders who seized control of Myanmar in February 2021 from the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi had for the first time sent a high-level representative to attend the meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers in the historic city of Luang Prabang in Laos.

"We feel a little bit optimistic that the engagement may work, although we have to admit that the issues that are happening in Myanmar will not resolve overnight," Saleumxay said. "I think there is probably a small light at the end of the tunnel."

Myanmar has been prohibited from sending its foreign minister or any political representative to high-level ASEAN meetings since the end of 2021, when it blocked the group's envoy from meeting with Suu Kyi. Instead, it has sent non-political representatives to lower-level working meetings but has refused to send anyone to high-level meetings.

In Laos, however, it sent a Foreign Ministry civil servant, ASEAN Permanent Secretary Marlar Than Htike, which Saleumxay called "a positive sign."

ASEAN member nations Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Brunei and Laos have a combined population of nearly 650 million and GDP of more than \$3 trillion.

Landlocked Laos, which has taken over this year's rotating ASEAN leadership, is the bloc's poorest nation and one of its smallest, and many have expressed skepticism about how much it can accomplish while the crises mount. Still, it is the first ASEAN country that

## Duterte assails Marcos, accusing him of 'plotting to expand grip on power'

MANILA, Philippines, Jan 29, (AP): Former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte is throwing allegations at his successor, Ferdinand Marcos Jr., and even raising the prospect of removing him from office, bringing into the open a long-rumored split between the two.

In an expletive-laden speech late Sunday, the former populist leader alleged Marcos' legislative allies are plotting to amend the constitution to lift term limits and warned that could lead to him being ousted like his father - the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Duterte also accused Marcos of being a drug addict.

Marcos laughed off Duterte's allegations, speaking to reporters before he flew to Vietnam for a visit. Marcos said he would not dignify the question with an answer, but claimed his predecessor is using fentanyl, a powerful opioid.

In 2016, Duterte said that he had used fentanyl in the past to ease pain caused by spinal injuries from a motorbike accident, but has not acknowledged ongoing use of the drug.

"I think it's the fentanyl," Marcos said. "Fentanyl is the strongest pain killer that you can buy.... After five, six years, it has to affect him that's why I think this is what has happened."

shares a border with Myanmar to serve as chair since the military took control of the country, giving it a perspective different from that of previous chairs.

Laos has already sent a special envoy to Myanmar for meetings with the head of the ruling military council and other top officials in an attempt to make progress on ASEAN's "five-point consensus" plan for peace.

The plan calls for the immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar, a dialogue among all concerned parties, mediation by an ASEAN special envoy, provision of humanitarian aid through ASEAN channels, and a visit to Myanmar by the special envoy to meet all concerned parties.

The military leadership in Myanmar has so far ignored the plan, and the vio-

## Also:

**KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia:** Malaysia charged a former minister on Monday with failing to declare assets, the latest step in a corruption probe that's targeting several people connected to a former prime minister.

Former Finance Minister Daim Zainuddin, who left office more than 20 years ago, is a key ally of ex-Prime Minister **Mahathir Mohamed**. Both argue that the probe is politically motivated and that prosecutors have ignored potential corruption among allies of the current government.

**TOKYO:** A group of Japanese citizens, including a man of Pakistani descent, launched a civil lawsuit against the country's police on Monday, accusing the authorities of racial profiling and discrimination and demanding an end to the alleged practice.

The case, to be heard in Tokyo District Court, comes as Japan in recent years has seen an influx of workers from abroad. The number of non-Japanese living in Japan reached a record high last year, at nearly 3 million people.

lence and humanitarian crisis has been growing at a rapid pace.

## Also:

**SEOUL, South Korea:** North Korean leader **Kim Jong Un** supervised test-firings of new cruise missiles designed to be launched from submarines and also reviewed efforts to build a nuclear-powered submarine while reiterating his goal of building a nuclear-armed navy to counter what he portrays as growing external threats, state media said Monday.

The report came a day after South Korea's military said it detected North Korea firing multiple cruise missiles over waters near the eastern port of **Sinpo**, where the North has a major shipyard developing submarines.



Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte gestures during his speech in Davao, southern Philippines on Jan 28. (AP)



Machado



Maduro

## Lat/Am

**Group criticizes Venezuela:** Condemnation of the Venezuelan government for its decision to block the presidential candidacy of an opposition leader strengthened Sunday when the Organization of American States declared the move eliminates any possibility of a free election this year.

The regional body in a statement said the decision announced Friday against **Maria Corina Machado**, as well as the recent "prosecution and political imprisonment of opponents," was evidence the government of President **Nicolas Maduro** "had no intention of allowing" a clean election. That had been his commitment under a key agreement that earned him some relief from economic sanctions imposed by the United States.

"This dictatorial logic of political persecution and violation of the political rights of citizens - absolutely foreseeable and to be expected given the background of the regime - once again eliminates for Venezuela the possibility of free, fair and transparent elections," the organization said in a statement.

Machado, a former lawmaker, won a presidential primary held in October by the faction of the opposition backed by the US. She secured more than 90% of the vote despite the Venezuelan government announcing a 15-year ban on her running for office just days after she formally entered the race in June.

The longtime government foe was able to participate in the primary because the election was organized by a commission independent of Venezuela's electoral authorities. Machado insisted throughout the campaign that she never received official notification of the ban and said voters, not ruling-party loyalists, were the rightful decision-makers of her candidacy.

In December, Machado filed a claim with Venezuela's Supreme Tribunal of Justice arguing the ban was null and void and seeking an injunction to protect her political rights. Instead, the court on Friday upheld the ban, which alleges fraud and tax violations and accuses her of seeking the economic sanctions the US imposed on Venezuela last decade.

The court and the National Electoral Council, the country's electoral body, are stacked with people affiliated with the ruling party.

Machado's administrative ban was signed in June by Elvis Amoroso, at the time the nation's comptroller and under whose tenure state coffers lost billions to corruption

schemes. He is now the head of the electoral council. (AP)

**Bullfighting resumes in Mexico:** With protesters outside a full arena, bullfights re-

sumed in Mexico City on Sunday after the country's highest court temporarily revoked a local ruling that sided with animal rights defenders and suspended the events for more than a year and a half.

The resumption of bullfights in the Plaza



Animal activists protest against the return of bullfighting at the Plaza Mexico, in Mexico City on Jan 28. Bullfighting returned to Mexico City after the Supreme Court of Justice overturned a 2022 ban that prevented these events from taking place in the capital. (AP)

México, the largest bullfighting arena in the world, raised expectations of fans in the face of a lengthy legal battle between enthusiasts and opponents, who argue the practice violates animal welfare and affects people's rights to a healthy environment.

Bullfighting is still allowed in much of Mexico. In the capital, the legal fight for its future is full of twists and turns. The first bullfighter to enter the ring was the renowned Mexican matador Joselito Adame, with thousands of people cheering the return of "fiesta brava," as bullfighting is also known in Spanish. "Long live freedom," some shouted as the first bull entered an arena jammed with spectators.

In all, six bulls were fought Sunday, and all were killed.

Outside, hours before the formal beginning, about 300 people gathered in front of Plaza México to protest against bullfights. Some activists yelled "Murderers!" and "The plaza is going to fall!" while others played drums or stood with signs reading "Bullfighting is sadism."

Police with shields stood by. The protest was mainly peaceful, although there were some moments of tension when some activists threw plastic bottles and stones.

"Why the bullfights were allowed to return when there is so much evidence of all the damage they do to a living being, such as the bull," questioned activist Guillermo Sánchez, who was holding up a sign that read "Sadism disguised as culture, sport and tradition." (AP)

**bonds**

The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK Bonds and Related Tawarruq at a total value of KWD 200 millions for 3 months with Interest Rate/Return of 4.375%.

**dollar stable**

The US Dollar exchange rate against Kuwaiti Dinar was stable at KD 0.307 on Monday, as well as the Euro at KD 0.333 compared to Sunday rates, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) on Monday. The CBK revealed in its daily bulletin that the exchange rate of the Sterling Pound stabilized at KD 0.390, while the Swiss Franc went up by 0.13 percent to reach KD 0.356, while the Japanese Yen firmed at KD 0.002. (KUNA)

**Mitsui Chemical turns down KIPC proposal to waive loan interest**

After the initial approval of Kuwait International Petroleum Company on the proposal to drop the interest on partners' loans to the lowest possible level, down to 0% if necessary in the Vietnam refinery, informed sources revealed that the Japanese partner, Mitsui Chemical Company of Japan, which owns a 4.7 percent stake in the refinery, rejected the proposal, reports Al-Qabas daily. The same sources said the reasons for the rejection was that it is not possible to obtain internal approvals in the company to waive important contractual rights such as reducing the interest rate on the secondary loan and the completion guarantee loan without there being a viable economic justification or strong justifications for doing this postponement. The sources indicated that the interest on the partners' loans in the Vietnam refinery amounts to approximately \$4 billion until 2029, of which "International Petroleum's" share amounts to approximately \$1.4 billion.

The refinery company had revealed in a letter sent to the partners at the end of last December that it had discussed reducing interest rates on loans, and in view of the large burden and negative impact of the financing cost (especially the cost of the partners' loan) on the expected financial performance of the refinery company in 2024 due to the very high interest rate, it proposed reducing the interest rate. Interest on loans. It is noteworthy that the Nghi Son refinery is an oil refinery located in Vietnam. It was opened in November 2018. The capacity of the refinery is 200,000 barrels per day, and the total cost of the refinery project amounted to nine billion dollars, in which Japan's Idemitsu Kosan and Kuwait Petroleum International Company each own a 35.1 percent stake; while Vietnam Oil and Gas Group owns 25.1 percent, and Japan's Mitsui Chemicals owns 4.7 percent.

**Market Movements** 29-01-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
UAE	-	DFM	+7.26	4,170.59	
JAPAN	-	Nikkei	+275.87	36,026.94	
EGYPT	-	EGX 30	+602.03	29,227.79	
SAUDI	-	Tadawul	-11.36	12,252.81	
PHILIPPINES	-	PSEi	-55.41	6,630.68	
PAKISTAN	-	KSE 100	-1,023.90	62,759.38	

# Business

## Kuwaiti consumer spending abroad surges by 12% in economic rebound

Domestic spending rises by 8.5%

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** In a noteworthy indication of the swift recovery of the Kuwaiti economy, official figures reveal a 12% increase in consumer spending outside Kuwait, reaching 2.7 billion dinars in the past year. This surge reflects an accelerated pace compared to the 2.4 billion dinars spent in 2022, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Domestic consumer spending by citizens and residents totaled about 45.7 billion dinars, with 43 billion dinars spent within Kuwait and 2.7 billion abroad – an 8.5% increase from 2022.

Central Bank of Kuwait statistics highlight that the majority of overseas spending occurred through point-of-sale devices and online transactions using bank or credit cards. Foreign website transactions alone amounted to approximately 1.2 billion dinars, with the last quarter of 2023 witnessing an unprecedented quarterly spending figure of 11.5 billion dinars.

As oil prices continued to rise, government deposits saw a significant jump of 37.2% in 2023, reaching 4.63 billion dinars, compared to 3.37 billion dinars in 2022. Total deposits increased by 3.8%, totaling 48.72 billion dinars by the end of December 2023.

The breakdown of total deposits reveals growth in private sector deposits by 1.1%, reaching 37.34 billion dinars, while public institutions' deposits increased by 2% to 6.753 billion dinars.

Local banks witnessed a 3.7% growth in total assets, reaching 87.666 billion dinars at the end of 2023. Net foreign assets surged by 17.9%, totaling 12.21 billion dinars, and shareholders' equity increased by 0.12% to 14.39 billion dinars.

Credit facilities provided by banks experienced a 2.1% increase, totaling 53.5 billion dinars at the end of 2023. Personal cash facilities grew by 1.5%, reaching 18.7 billion dinars, with consumer loans at 1.967 billion dinars.

Housing facilities exhibited a 1.7% increase, totaling 16.01 billion dinars in 2023. However, private and typical housing loans decreased by 7% to 303.4 million dinars. New credit facilities declined by 2.75%, reaching 22.431 billion dinars. The Central Bank of Kuwait reported a 1% annual decline in the official reserve assets, recording about 14.6 billion dinars at the end of December 2023, compared to 14.7 billion dinars in December 2022.



KPMG team in third annual tax event.

## KPMG Kuwait wraps third annual tax event, offering in-depth insight into BEPS & proposed CIT in country

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** KPMG Kuwait's annual tax seminar Talking Tax came to a close after an eventful showing at the Four Seasons Hotel, Kuwait City.

The event was announced soon after Kuwait joined the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on BEPS, anticipating key shifts in the country's tax landscape, to support businesses in Kuwait.

Dr. Rasheed Al-Qenae, Chairman of the KPMG Middle East, South Asia, and Caspian (MESAC) region and Managing Partner, KPMG Kuwait, kicked-off the event by acknowledging the significance of the step and welcoming the guests.

He said, "Kuwait joining the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on BEPS is a positive step toward achieving tax transparency. I would like to thank H.E. Mr. Ngo Toan Thang, Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, and Mr. Nguyen Huu Duc, Attaché, Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, Ms. Anchita Kethwas, Second Secretary, Embassy of India, Kuwait, and Mr. Hu Hanming, Counsellor, and Mr. Wu Donghu, Economic and Commercial Affairs, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the State of Kuwait. I am also thankful to the representatives of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the German Business Council of Kuwait, and the French Business Council of Kuwait for taking the time to attend our event."

The primary goal of the event was to bring out the impact of Kuwait joining

the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on BEPS and shed light on the potential changes to corporate income tax (CIT)/ Business Profit Tax (BPT) in the country.

Zubair Patel, Head of Tax Steering group in KPMG Middle East, South Asia, and the Caspian (MESAC) region and Head of Tax & Corporate Services, KPMG in Kuwait, followed in after Dr. Rasheed and provided critical regional updates with respect to CIT, BEPS, transfer pricing and contract reporting.

"I believe, 2024 will pave the path for tax transparency and prove to be a critical year with regards to Kuwait's tax landscape. In the recent years gone by, we have seen substantial changes in the GCC tax landscape with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar reflecting increased alignment with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) principles. So, Kuwait signing the Inclusive Framework on BEPS is a transition to align with recent global and regional tax legislation and will open a new chapter for the tax ecosystem in the country," he said, speaking about the outlook of Kuwait's tax landscape.

During his session, guest speaker, Daniel Kaye, Group Chief Economist, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), laid out an economic outlook covering an international summary, overview of the global oil market, and Kuwait's economy and outlook.

The subsequent sessions focused on the Impact of BEPS and Pillar 2, and the Business Profit Law in Ku-

wait. They were facilitated by Anand Krishnan, Director – International Tax Services, KPMG in Qatar and Naveen Bohra, Director – Tax & Corporate Services, KPMG in Kuwait, and Mubeen Khadir, Partner and Head of Tax & Corporate Services, KPMG in Bahrain and Fahim Bashir, Partner – Tax & Corporate Services, KPMG in Kuwait, respectively.

In his session, Fahim Bashir called attention to why organizations must take a proactive approach to deal with the upcoming changes in the tax landscape.

Addressing how businesses can prepare for them, he said, "Companies can start by performing an impact assessment to evaluate at high-level implications to shareholders' returns. They can then review the way their finance functions are structured to understand how they can incorporate tax responsibilities and accountability. Finally, they need to consider factoring in 15% tax in their business models."

One of the highlights of the event was the insightful panel discussion on Kuwait Tax Landscape, comprising Mussab Ahmed, Group Controller and Treasurer, Alghanim Industries, David Li Guang, Director of Finance, China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC), Heba Abd El Rahman, Senior Manager, Tax & Corporate Services, KPMG in Kuwait, and Omar Ahmad, Senior Manager, Tax & Corporate Services, KPMG in Kuwait. The discussion was moderated by Hanan Tariq – Director Tax & Corporate Services, KPMG in Kuwait.

**Contracts skyrocket to \$20 bln**

## Water project spending surges in MENA, hits three-year high

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** MEED magazine has reported a significant upswing in spending on water projects throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in 2023, reaching its highest levels in three years, as per Al-Anba daily.

The collective value of contracts awarded in the water sector soared to \$20 billion, marking a noteworthy 74% increase compared to the \$11.5 billion awarded in 2022 and surpassing the highest annual contract values in the region recorded in 2021 at \$14.5 billion.

The magazine underscored the MENA region's recognition of the critical importance of water security due to geopolitical tensions, water scarcity, and climate change. Sustainable investments in water projects align with the region's long-term economic diversification agendas.

Presently, projects valued at approximately \$77.5 billion are in the pre-implementation stage across the five water sub-sectors in the MENA region, indicating a 29% increase compared to the previous year's projects under implementation.

This presents substantial opportunities for facility developers and engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) project contractors seeking to secure more projects in this sector. Saudi Arabia remains a dominant force in future opportunities, with planned and non-awarded projects valued at around \$30 billion.

**Developers**

Private utility developers are expected to play a more significant role, particularly in Saudi Arabia, where numerous desalination, wastewater treatment, water transportation, and storage projects are in the planning stages. In 2023, Saudi Arabia led with over 56% of the contracts awarded, totaling around \$11 billion, signifying a 69% increase from 2022.

The UAE, the second-largest market in the region, witnessed a substantial surge of over 250% in the value of contracts awarded, reaching ap-

proximately \$4.9 billion. This growth was driven by independent water production projects and major water infrastructure initiatives.

While all other MENA countries recorded higher values of contracts awarded in 2023 compared to 2022, exceptions were noted for Qatar (decreased by 72%), Jordan (decreased by 58%), and Algeria (decreased by 57%).

Water transmission and distribution network projects retained a significant share, contributing 37% (\$7.7 billion) in 2023, a 1% increase from the previous year. Water treatment plant projects saw a substantial increase of 180%, reaching \$6.8 billion in 2023, and the value of water desalination contracts rose from \$1.8 billion to nearly \$4 billion.

**Awarding**

Noteworthy developments include Morocco awarding its first major independent water production contract, Jordan's Ministry of Water and Irrigation receiving a bid for the Aqaba-Amman water transfer and desalination project, and the expected launch of the first batch of seawater reverse osmosis (SWRO) plants powered by renewable energy in Egypt within the next 12 to 24 months.

Dubai and Qatar present lucrative short-to-medium-term opportunities in sewerage tunnels and infrastructure projects. Qatar's Public Works Authority is set to issue a tender for four pumping station projects, while Dubai Municipality revived the strategic sewerage tunnels project, requiring an investment of up to \$22 billion.

In conclusion, MEED magazine anticipates that water transmission and distribution projects will continue to be a priority in the MENA region, representing the largest water sub-sector. Utility companies aim to expand their networks to accommodate population, commercial, and industrial growth, connect new desalination and water treatment plants, and replace aging infrastructure to minimize water losses.

**Q4 sees legal changes and fiscal proposals**

## Positive indicators accompany new leadership in Kuwait's 2023 conclusion

**By National Bank of Kuwait**

The Kuwaiti economy ended 2023 on a relatively positive note, with the final quarter of the year showing tentative signs of a turnaround in bank credit growth, real estate activity and stock market performance. Inflation finally ticked lower in December after being rangebound for most of the year. Sentiment was also hopeful, with new Emir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah taking the oath and appointing former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammad Al-Salem Al-Sabah as Prime Minister to lead a new, predominantly technocratic government.

Q4 2023 was notable for a pick-up in the pace of legislation. Several laws were passed including to annul the local agent requirement for foreign companies, allowing foreign companies to participate in the bidding process for public tenders and penalizing owners of unused, so-called 'white' lands to free up land for residential housing. Measures with potentially positive fiscal implications were also proposed, including excise taxes on tobacco and sugary drinks ('sin taxes') and a 15% tax rate for multinational corporations. The latter follows Kuwait's joining in November the OECD-BEPS inclusive framework against tax avoidance.

**Non-oil activity picked up pace in Q2 2023**  
In terms of economic data, the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) released national accounts figures after a three-year delay. These show that the non-oil economy was more resilient during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic than originally thought, but that from 2021 onwards activity was less robust than inferred from the strong performance of associated, higher frequency metrics.

The data showed non-oil GDP expanding 1.5% y/y in Q2 2023 after several quarters of negative growth. Growth in Q2 was driven by strong gains in the transportation (+35% y/y) and construction (+21%) sectors, with the latter reflecting the rebound seen in project awards in 2023.

Oil sector output, on the other hand, declined by -3.9% y/y as Kuwait lowered its crude production level as part of its voluntary participation in OPEC+ cuts. The negative performance of the weighty oil sector explains the 1.3% y/y contraction in overall GDP in Q2.

The CSB data also published revisions to the historical GDP series. These showed non-oil activity performing better than expected both in 2019 and in pandemic-affected 2020.

Looking ahead to 2024, additional oil sector cuts will likely keep headline growth flat to slightly negative, even as we

- GDP figures published recently after a long delay show non-oil growth accelerating to 1.5% y/y in Q2 2023, after several quarters of contraction. Overall GDP growth was -1.3% on declining oil sector output.
- Real estate activity ended a weak 2023 on a slightly better note, with sales up 13.6% q/q (-8.3% y/y) and with parliament passing new laws to stimulate supply in the medium term.
- Inflation finally notched a decline in December (3.4% y/y), after spending most of the year stuck at 3.8%.
- Private credit witnessed a third consecutive month of increase in November thanks to gains in both business and household lending. Annual growth slowed to 1.5% y/y, however.
- The pace of policy proposals picked up in Q4 2023 with measures unveiled to improve the business environment and address the housing shortage.

expect the non-oil sector to post gains of over 3.0%, spurred on by refining gains and still growing private consumption.

Oil prices decline in Q4 despite spike in geopolitical risk. Oil prices fell sharply in Q4 2023, with Kuwait Export Crude (KEC) ending the year at \$79.6/bbl (-18.7% q/q; -3.3% y/y) and erasing most of Q3's OPEC supply-curtailement gains.

While Q4 saw a spike in geopolitical risk in the aftermath of hostilities in Gaza in October, including subsequent Houthi rebel attacks on Red Sea shipping, the effect on oil prices was negligible. Markets weighed that there was enough idle global spare production capacity to offset any potential supply disruptions, especially amid weakening oil demand. KEC averaged \$84.3/bbl (-16.7% y/y) in 2023, having traded at a premium to the usually more expensive physical Brent on the back of tighter medium sour crude fundamentals.

For 2024, we see KEC at \$82/bbl on softer but still solid oil demand growth and supportive OPEC+ supply management. At November's ministerial meeting, Kuwait agreed with the OPEC impulse to deepen and extend 2023's voluntary production cuts into Q1 2024 and possibly longer to balance the market and prevent further oil stock builds. Kuwait's output in Q1 2024 will therefore fall by 135 kb/d to 2.41 mb/d.

**Consumer spending growth continued to stabilize**  
Central bank card data showed consumer spending growth

Table 1: Key economic data

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Estimates/forecasts	2023	2024
Nominal GDP	36.6	41.7	42.1	(KD billion)	42.8	56.0	50.9	50.8	
Real GDP	-4.7	2.4	1.4	(percent change)	-5.3	1.7	6.1	-0.7	-0.2
Oil	-9.2	2.4	1.0		-8.9	-0.9	12.1	-4.3	-2.9
Non-oil (including refining)	1.3	2.5	4.2		-1.2	4.4	0.3	3.3	2.6
Inflation (% y/y, average)	1.6	0.6	1.1		2.1	3.4	4.0	3.6	2.5
Fiscal balance (before FGF transfers)	-8.9	-3.1	-9.3	(percent of GDP)	-32.7	-10.2	11.5	-6.7	-5.9
Revenues	43.7	49.3	40.9		32.0	43.5	51.4	42.5	42.3
Oil	39.0	44.2	36.5		26.7	37.9	47.7	37.9	37.1
Non-oil	4.7	5.1	4.4		5.3	5.6	3.7	4.6	5.2
Expenditures	52.6	52.4	50.2		64.7	53.7	39.9	49.2	48.2
Public debt	19.0	13.9	9.7		10.6	4.4	2.9	3.0	2.8
Current account balance	8.0	14.4	12.9		4.5	26.4	34.5	26.5	17.6
Exchange rate (KD per US\$1, average)	0.305	0.302	0.304		0.302	0.307	-	-	-
CBK discount rate (percent, end-year)	2.75	3.00	2.75		1.50	3.50	4.25	-	-
Kuwait export crude price (\$/bbl, avg)	51	69	64		41	70	101	84	82
Oil production (million b/d, average)**	2.70	2.74	2.68		2.44	2.41	2.71	2.59	2.51

Source: Central Statistical Bureau, Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Kuwait, NBK estimates. \*\*Based on estimated figures by CSB and NBK. \*\*Uses JODI/OPEC direct communication figures.

continuing to normalize post-pandemic. Total card spending grew 8.7% y/y in Q3 2023, similar to the 8.4% rise recorded in Q2 2023.

Looking to the year ahead, consumer spending faces headwinds including an uncertain global macroeconomic backdrop, lower year-on-year oil prices, heightened geopolitical risk and still-elevated global interest rates, though these are expected to begin easing in H2 2024. But the bulk of the slowdown in spending growth is likely behind us, with growth now more in line with historic trends after a post-pandemic surge. Moreover, consumer confidence could be boosted if the government tackles its economic agenda with renewed vigor.

**Real estate activity improved in Q4 2023**

Q4 2023 saw the real estate sector post its best quarterly sales performance in more than two years, with sales rising 13.6% q/q to KD771 million. Strong investment and commercial sector activity, the latter including sizable deals in Kuwait City and Al-Ahmad governorates, as well as a less marked decline in residential sector sales were behind the improvement. Activity benefitted from the end of the summer lull and an expansion in credit to the real estate sector in the final months of the year. Cumulative sales of KD2.8 billion in 2023 were still an acute 22% drop on 2022. Higher interest rates, pricier residential valuations and uncertain prospects were some of the factors at play.

Nevertheless, the government did provide some much-needed legislative clarity with its 'white land law' bill in November, with which it aims to free up the supply side by penalizing the practice of keeping lands idle for a prolonged period. This comes on the heels of the residential cities law, approved in July, which hopes to stimulate large-scale residential development and other key projects through private sector participation. The authorities also hope to shift more of the financing to the private sector to help reduce the fiscal burden. These laws could support supply in the medium-to-long term while demand could be boosted by passage of the draft mortgage law through parliament.

**Project activity dips in Q4 but still logs an impressive year**

Project award momentum slipped slightly in Q4 2023 with KD621 million worth of projects being awarded, a drop of 9.6% q/q. This mainly reflects the high base of the previous quarter-a large one-off infrastructure award-since awarded contract values in absolute terms remain elevated by post-pandemic standards. Total awards in 2023 reached KD2.47 billion, an almost three-fold increase on the previous year and by some margin the best projects market performance since 2017. Last year's strong performance was probably a reflection of the large backlog of pandemic-era projects finally coming alongside an unwinding in labor and material shortages.

Continued on Page 10



A group photo of the participating parties with Mr. Jassim Mustafa Boodai in the middle.

In collaboration with the Environment Public Authority and five cooperative societies, marking the initial phase

## Gulf Bank launches 'A Step Towards Change' environmental sustainability initiative

Yesterday, on Monday, January 29, 2024, Gulf Bank launched the environmental sustainability initiative "A Step Towards Change," striving to alter societal behaviors by encouraging the use of reusable bags. The initiative is a collaborative effort with the Environment Public Authority and five cooperative societies in its initial phase, including Al-Dahiya and Al-Mansouriah, Al-Shamiya and Shuwaikh, Al-Rawda and Hawally, Kaifan, and Mishref.

Mr. Jassim Mustafa Boodai, Chairman of the Board at Gulf Bank, and a considerable number of executives from the bank's management attended the launch event for the initiative. Dr. Hamad Al-Mutair, Chairman of the Committee for Environmental, Food, and Water Security Affairs in the National Assembly, and Engineer Abdullah Al-Otaibi, representing the General Authority for the Environment, were also in attendance.

Furthermore, the launch event featured the participation of presidents and officials from the cooperative societies engaged in the initiative.

### Sustainable Development

At the launch event, Mr. Ahmed Al-Amir, Deputy General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, stated, "Gulf Bank is pleased to announce its achievement in reaching Sustainable Development Goal 17 through the 'A Step Towards Change' initiative. This goal highlights the promotion of implementation methods through collaborations across various public and private sectors, as well cooperative societies. We anticipate that this collaboration will result in the development of governmental policies and laws, that reinforce and enhance the efforts of the private sector and civil society, in safeguarding Kuwait's environment by minimizing plastic usage."

### 2025 Strategy

Al-Amir expressed, "The initiative is integral to Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy, centered on strengthening environmental, social, and governance (ESG) sustainability principles. It aligns with Kuwait's environmental strategy outlined in the 'New Kuwait 2035' vision, accompanied by relevant environmental legislation addressing resource conservation, pollution reduction, environmental safety, ecosystem rehabilitation, biodiversity protection, waste management efficiency, renewable energy utilization, and the advancement of national capabilities in environmental initiatives."

He highlighted the bank's significant role in instilling environmental sustainability principles within the community through the launch of impactful initiatives. He stated, "Understanding that a thousand-mile journey begins with a single step, we considered it fitting to launch this initiative with a specific group of prominent cooperative societies in Kuwait. Approximately 100,000 reusable bags will be distributed to participants, representing the initial move towards transforming behaviors and culture, seamlessly integrating the habit into their daily routines."

### Sustainability Milestones

The Amir highlighted that the bank's commitment to integrating sustainability principles, both internally and externally, was emphasized with the publication of the third annual Sustainability Report. This report showcased significant accomplishments in the realms of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) initiatives. The bank also launched its 2024/2030 ESG strategy, providing the fundamental framework for sustainability endeavors in the upcoming phase. Additionally, a high-level Sustainability Committee, led by board member Ms. Reem Al-Saleh, was established to oversee the execution of sustainability programs.

Moreover, a comprehensive high-level training initiative for the senior leadership of the bank was launched, intending to prioritize sustainability in all facets of the bank's operations and services.

Al-Amir concluded his remarks by acknowledging the Environmental Authority, the Environmental Affairs Committee in the National Assembly,



Ahmad Al-Amir speaking.

Ahmad Al-Amir:

- We aim to change societal behaviors by promoting the use of reusable bags.
- We have successfully achieved the implementation of Goal No. 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals by strengthening partnerships among the various sectors of society.
- The initiative united the public

and private sectors, along with cooperative societies, to achieve a shared objective.

■ We anticipate the success of this partnership in issuing government decisions and enacting laws to reduce plastic consumption.

■ We plan to distribute 100,000 reusable bags across participating cooperative societies.



Honoring Adel Al-Doukhi, the Chairman of Al-Shamiya and Al-Shuwaikh Cooperative Society.



Honoring Ahmed Al-Rashed, Chairman of Al-Dahiya and Al-Mansouria Cooperative Society.



Honoring Dr. Hamad Al-Matar.



Mr. Jassim Mustafa Boodai honors engineer.



The audience during the national anthem.

and the cooperative societies involved in the initiative. He also delivered a closing message, emphasizing, "Preserving Kuwait's environment is a shared responsibility that requires collective collaboration from us all."

### Cooperative Societies

The chairmen and officials of the cooperative societies participating in the press conference expressed their appreciation to Gulf Bank for launching this noteworthy initiative, commending its goals aimed at reshaping societal behaviors by encouraging the

use of reusable bags.

It is worth mentioning that Gulf Bank, with its Chairman of the Board, Mr. Jassim Mustafa Boodai, and Mr. Ahmed Al-Amir representing the bank, acknowledged and honored the entities involved in the initiative.

Gulf Bank aims to be at the forefront in Kuwait by prioritizing employee engagement within an inclusive and diverse environment. The goal is to provide exceptional customer service while actively contributing to sustainable community development. Lever-

aging its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the bank provides customers the flexibility to choose how, and where, they manage their banking transactions, ensuring a seamless and efficient banking experience.

Aligned with its commitment to Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its collaboration with diverse shareholders to achieve these goals, Gulf Bank is committed to making significant advancements in sustainability across all environmental, social, and

governance aspects. This commitment is evident through carefully chosen sustainability initiatives implemented both within and outside the bank.

### Dr. Hamad Al-Matar: Thank You Gulf Bank

Dr. Hamad Al-Matar, the Chair of the Environmental, Food Security, and Water Affairs Committee in the Kuwaiti National Assembly, remarked that Kuwait is lacking such ambitious initiatives and expressed gratitude to Gulf Bank for undertaking this initiative. It is evident that the individuals

responsible for this initiative fully comprehend the importance of the environment and how to engage with the community.

Additionally, he mentioned that the Environmental Committee is currently in the process of drafting legislation that would mandate government entities, particularly municipalities, to utilize environmentally friendly bags. This proposed legislation will be presented to the Kuwaiti National Assembly for expedited discussion. Emphasizing the significant environmental harm resulting from plastic bags, he highlighted the distinctive challenges that Kuwait encounters, due to its compact size and widespread use of plastic bags.

Dr. Al-Matar continued, stating, "I am pleased and honored to be part of this event, and I am impressed by the professional alignment with sustainable development goals. This indicates that Gulf Bank is in step with global trends in advancing sustainability principles. We encourage all banks and companies to initiate efforts at this level, with the hope that this positive trend will extend to other private sector entities."

### The Environment Public Authority: A Distinguished Initiative and a Leading Role by Gulf Bank

Engineer Abdullah Al-Otaibi, the representative of the Environment Public Authority, expressed appreciation to Gulf Bank for its prominent role in the private sector, particularly through its outstanding initiative for environmental sustainability - 'A Step Towards Change.' He highlighted their dedication to collaborating with all relevant entities to ensure the success of this initiative.

In a press statement at the event, Al-Otaibi emphasized the significant environmental awareness among the Kuwaiti people. He highlighted that altering societal behavior and encouraging the use of reusable bags becomes less challenging when appropriate conditions are established.

Moreover, he expressed, "We urge all banks and private sector entities to follow Gulf Bank's lead in introducing top-notch initiatives for environmental protection." Al-Otaibi further highlighted the pressing necessity to decrease the excessive use of plastic, which is having adverse effects on landfills.

Emphasizing the crucial role of the Environment Public Authority in safeguarding the environment, he highlighted its engagement in awareness campaigns and its supervisory role in overseeing violations. The Environment Public Authority actively arranges a variety of workshops and informative lectures for the community.

### Bank Employees as Ambassadors for the Initiative

In line with its dedication to promoting sustainability both within and outside the bank, Gulf Bank initiated an awareness campaign among its employees. The campaign underscores the significance of transitioning to reusable bags, urging employees to serve as ambassadors for the initiative within the community.

### 'A Step Towards Change' Initiative Set to Launch on February 5th

Ahmed Al-Amir revealed that the official launch of the "A Step Towards Change" initiative is scheduled for February 5th, 2024, at the Al-Dahiya and Al-Mansouria cooperative society. The initiative's activities will span a week, offering exclusive services to individuals using reusable bags within the cooperative societies. Services include the "Fast Track" service, and the initiative will be accompanied by an awareness campaign across various social media platforms and street advertisements in the specific area of the cooperative society each week. Moreover, engaging competitions for the public are set to be organized.

### The Environmental Consequences of Plastic Pollution

The Kuwaiti diving team extracts around 10 tons of plastic waste weekly from the shores of northern and southern Kuwait, including the Kuwaiti islands. Additionally, international reports emphasize that approximately one million seabirds perish annually worldwide, due to plastic ingestion, and certain plastic components take up to 500 years to decompose.

most Americans feel they pay too much in taxes: Poll

Majority of taxpayers feel they pay too much in taxes, with many saying that they receive a poor value in return, according to a new poll from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Two-thirds of U.S. taxpayers say they spend "too much" on federal income taxes, as tax season begins. About 7 in 10 say the same about local property taxes, while roughly 6 in 10 feel that way about state sales tax. Generally speaking, Rep-

ublicans are more likely than Democrats to view taxes as unfair, to say they are paying too much in taxes, and to see taxes as a poor value.

The poll found that few U.S. adults have a high level of confidence that the institutions that ultimately use their tax dollars - whether the federal government or local school districts - spend those taxes in the best interest of "people like them." But people tend to trust governing bodies closer to home with their tax dollars slightly more: 16% are extremely or

very confident in their local school district, compared to 6% for the federal government.

Adults who are 60 and older are more likely than younger adults to perceive taxes, generally, as fair.

Chris Berry, a professor at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy who was involved in the creation of the poll, said that, overall, public opinion about taxes and trust in government has declined. He sees the poll results as partly reflecting increased political polar-

ization but says the public has long typically trusted local government more than the federal government.

"One of the things you'll hear said is, 'There's no Democratic or Republican way to collect the trash or pave the streets,'" he said. "We tend to think of local government as less partisan."

Among those who pay federal income taxes, half say they would prefer having fewer government services if it meant reducing their bill. One-third would keep their taxes the same in exchange for the

same services, and 16% would opt to increase taxes for more services.

Danny Velasquez, 39, a business manager and Democrat in Boston who answered the poll, said he trusts local government to spend his tax dollars better than the federal government.

Asked how he would prefer his federal tax dollars be spent, Velasquez said the government "spends too much on war-making" and that he'd prefer "national healthcare and investment in education." (AP)

European natural gas market remained constrained

Natural gas market rebalances in 2023 despite new geopolitical challenges

By Kamco Invest

Natural gas market rebalances in 2023 despite new geopolitical challenges...

After a tumultuous 2022 in which natural gas prices reached record highs, 2023 has been somewhat of a stabilizing year for the commodity. The ensuing repercussions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict forced a global natural gas rebalancing as European countries tried to find immediate substitute for their supply of cheap Russian gas. On the other hand, Russia had also to find new buyers for the excess natural gas stock that previously used to be supplied to European countries. Natural gas prices witnessed significant decline during 2023 but also managed to stay well above historical averages in Europe and Asia.

The European natural gas market remained constrained in 2023 as Russia supplied 38 bcm less gas to European countries than it did in 2022. On the other hand, global LNG production increased by only 13 bcm in 2023 which was inadequate to fill Europe's natural gas demand gap left by the restrictions on Russian pipeline gas. However, despite the shortfall in natural gas supplies in Europe, the combination of unexpected milder winter and increase in alternative sources of energy consumption such as renewables relieved pressure on natural gas consumption in Europe. China overtook Japan as world's largest LNG importer in 2023. Comparatively, natural gas consumption in Europe declined by 7% to its lowest level in 28 years. In terms of global natural gas trade, global LNG trade increased by 12 bcm in 2023 in which the US alone accounted for over 10 bcm.

In terms of monthly price performance, according to the World Bank, US average monthly natural gas prices for December-2023 decreased by 54.0% y-o-y to reach USD 2.53/MMBtu. Similarly, European natural gas prices for December-2023 declined by 68.1% y-o-y averaging the month at USD 11.51/MMBtu, while average monthly Japanese LNG price for December-2023 witnessed 38.7% y-o-y drop at USD 12.61/MMBtu.

According to the IEA, global natural gas demand is set to increase by 2.5% in 2024, mainly due to expected strong growth in the Industrial and Power sectors mainly in fast-rising economies in Asia as well as countries in the Middle East and Africa. Moreover, the return of average winter temperatures is expected to add to natural gas consumption growth primarily as a heating fuel in the Northern Hemisphere in 2024 after an exceptionally mild winter in 2023.

Overall, according to LNGPrime.com, China's natural gas imports improved 9.9% in 2023 to reach 120 million tones. The surge in China's natural gas consumption was supported by decreasing spot prices, growth in terms of contracted volumes and extreme weather conditions in the country's southern parts during middle of the year. Natural gas consumption in China is expected to grow in the coming years as the country goes ahead with its plans to increase the share of natural gas in its power generation sector.

On the other hand, Japan's LNG imports declined by 8% y-o-y in 2023 to 66.2 million metric tons marking its lowest level in 15 years. The fall in Japan's LNG imports was mainly driven by the increase in the re-introduction of electricity generating nuclear reactor to the country's energy mix. Furthermore, Japan increased its renewable consumption including wind and solar as well as nuclear power that allowed the country to reduce its LNG imports.

Natural gas consumption in North America increased by over 1% y-o-y mainly due to an increase in gas consumption in the region's Power Sector. Natural gas production in the US rose 4% to reach a record high of 1065 bcm in 2023. The combination of natural gas production growth and mild weather increased the downward trend and pressure of gas prices in the US which declined approximately 60% during 2023, according to the International Energy Agency.

In its latest short-term energy outlook, the EIA forecasted that US natural gas consumption in 2024 would reach 1.1% higher than the consumption in 2023 at 89.89 bcf/d (2.54 bcm/d), reflecting an overall expected consumption stabilization in the country. The EIA also estimates that US natural gas marketed production to reach 105.04 bcf/d (3.0 bcm/d) in 2024, witnessing an increase of 1.4% from 2023 to 2024.

Overall, OECD Europe consumed 35 bcm less natural gas in 2023 (488 bcm) than it did in 2022 (524 bcm). Most of the decline in Europe natural gas consumption was because of the gas-to-power sector which recorded 15% y-o-y drop during 2023 mainly due to stronger renewable power output and falling electricity consumption. According to the IEA, natural gas demand in OECD Europe is expected to grow 3% in 2024 due to the expected growth of gas consumption in the residential, commercial, and industrial sectors. On the other hand, Europe's gas use in the Power Sector is expected to drop by 10% mainly due to accelerated growth of renewable energy usage and increasing nuclear power availability in France.

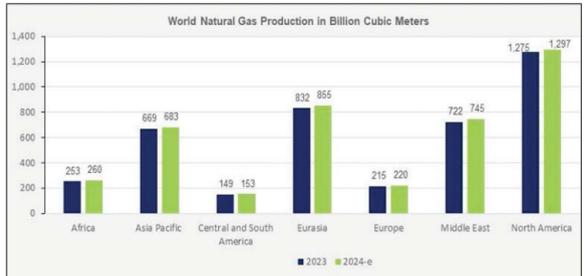
The EIA forecasts that the US natural gas share of electricity generation to remain at 42% in 2024 and then witness a marginal drop to 41% in 2025. In terms of natural gas prices in the US, the EIA forecasts the Henry Hub natural gas spot price to average at around USD 2.66/MMBtu during 2024 and then increase to USD 2.95/MMBtu in 2025 due to expected rising demand LNG exports which is expected to reach an annual record in 2025. According to the EIA, US net LNG exports would grow 17% in 2023 to reach 14.43 bcf/d (0.41 bcm/d) driven by growth in LNG exports Europe and South Asia. The US managed to export more LNG than any other country during 2023.

According to the IEA, the Middle East natural gas production increased from 716 bcm in 2022 to 722 bcm in 2023. The Middle East was natural gas net producing region in 2023. In comparison, the Middle East consumed 591 bcm of natural gas in 2023 up from 580 bcm in 2022. The IEA expects the Middle East region to be one of the key drivers of natural gas production in 2024 as it penciled the regions gas production to reach 745 bcm.

However, the region is facing security challenges due to the ongoing war on Gaza as well the recent attacks of the Yemeni Houthis to ships travelling their transit routes in the Bab Al-Mandab strait. In context, 4% of global LNG trade or 21 bcm passed eastward through the Suez Canal while another 4% of global LNG trade passed westward through the Suez Canal; all Qatari LNG deliveries passes through the Bal Al-Mandab straight and through the Suez Canal. Recently Qatar has announced that it is halting sending its LNG cargo through the Bal Al-Mandab straight due to Houthi attacks. This development is expected to put upward pressure on global natural gas prices.

EIA Forecast - US Natural Gas Supply and Consumption in Billions Cubic Feet Per Day	2022	2023	2024-e	2025-e
Marketed Production	99.60	103.55	105.04	106.38
Consumption	88.46	88.90	89.89	89.66
LNG Exports	10.59	11.84	12.36	14.43
Henry Hub Spot Prices (\$/thousand cubic feet)	6.42	2.54	2.66	2.95

Sources: EIA and Kamco Invest Research



Sources: IEA and Kamco Invest Research

Unleashing the power of data: 'Zain Data Office' established

Data is the 'digital fuel' of modern business landscape



Nawaf Algharabally with Zain Kuwait's Business Intelligence team.



Zain Kuwait Headquarters.

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Data has stormed the modern business landscape, presenting itself as an invaluable, decisive resource to today's businesses and organizations. It has become the backbone that companies rely on when exploring new growth venues, as it not only helps understand market trends and customer behavior, but also gives the ability and sufficient knowledge to make more insightful decisions and achieve the best possible value.**

Many who have insight into market trends see it as the 'digital fuel' behind new growth engines in companies. Today, setting up a data office is no longer an option with a fast-changing world driven by technology. The need for data offices emerged when companies needed a solution to organize and govern a method for using, storing, classifying, and transferring data inside and outside the organization. The rhythm in which businesses operate today exponentially increased with digital transformation, especially for those companies looking for growth, expansion, or even ensuring survival in a fiercely competitive market.

Today, successful enterprises are equipped with the tools and technologies needed to establish data offices to transform raw data into usable information that decision makers can rely on. Although the term "data office" is a relatively new one in some industries and markets, it is not the case for any aspiring company that realizes the value that data provides to stay on track when managing business strategies and growth plans.

The data office consists of a team that specializes in data management and analytics who work together as a single mind to transform data into a clear vision that can help direct the organization. This team uses the latest technology and tools built on artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), and other evolving innovations to define, clean, and organize data and reveal patterns and trends companies usually do not notice in raw data. These findings can help make accurate and fast decisions to increase customer satisfaction, enhance the competitive edge, improve operational efficiency, and increase revenue.

As data becomes an invaluable resource for businesses, Zain Kuwait is pioneering in starting the Data Governance

Framework Program, which sets the foundational blueprint of data management, practices, goals, responsibilities, technology, and culture that helps ensure usability of all data an enterprise collects.

The Data Governance Program is driven by the global association DAMA to set up standardized data frameworks, policies, procedures, and performance measures across the organization. Data governance leads to improved data quality, improved efficiency, decreased data management costs, and increased access to data for all stakeholders. The result is better decision making, business outcomes, and ROI.

With the higher volume of data streaming into organizations today, and the variety of formats, both structured and unstructured, it is critical to get the right information at the right time to the right people to enable the entire organization to grow and capitalize on new opportunities. Zain understands the full- and long-term impact of data as a true and valued asset and treats it in a consistent manner through a complete data governance strategy, so that it can use data more intelligently to empower its business for success and achieve its strategic goals.

While data governance initiatives can be driven by a desire to improve data quality and regulate its use, some believe the main drive behind it is achieving operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. As Zain puts innovation leadership at the heart of its business, it steadily follows a structured approach to data governance, fully understanding that relying on a comprehensive, data-driven workflow will help it identify new opportunities and maintain its competitiveness.

To realize this vision, Zain Kuwait Acting CEO Nawaf Algharabally announced establishing the 'Zain Data Office' that operates a comprehensive program to strengthen the company's commitment to data governance: "This office is a testament to Zain's dedication to not only manage data effectively, but also ensure that data governance is deeply integrated into all aspects of the organization's operations".

Algharabally continued: "To unleash the power of data and harness its full potential, Zain fostered and powered a data-driven culture through world-class management of its data assets so that they are proactively and efficiently managed throughout the organization to ensure their accountability, availability, usability, auditability, trustworthiness, and security. The Zain Data Office aims to enhance data management by implementing effective governance policies, standardizing practices across departments, and significantly improving data quality and privacy."

"We adopted the Zain Data Office initiative because we believe data governance management is a critical step

towards meeting the regulatory compliance obligations under personal data protection legislation, cloud computing frameworks, and sector-specific obligations. Data governance will ensure that Zain can comply with any mandatory data privacy, storage, transfer and processing restrictions." He added.

Algharabally further noted: "To build a holistic understanding of our performance and impact, we want to truly understand what impact we are having on our data citizens and service users and use data effectively to optimize and re-design our service offerings. This means moving beyond KPIs to a more complete understanding of performance."

Nadia Al Saif, Zain Kuwait Business Intelligence Director, said: "Zain ensures that all necessary security, legal, and ethical implications are considered in a consistent, timely, and proportionate way. We want to have a clear understanding of data usage, adopt the principle of sharing data ownership, and ensure that this is proportionate to the risk of using them. In addition, we also want officers at all levels in the organization to be data literate, and to be confident in managing and analyzing that data."

Al Saif added: "We make sure every member of the organization understands the value of data and treat them as assets, and that's why we've launched this initiative. It represents a significant step in Zain Kuwait's journey towards becoming a data-driven enterprise, further solidifying its position as a leader in data governance. Right now, the Zain Kuwait Data Office is not just a functional entity; it is a reflection of the company's commitment to leveraging data as a key driver of innovation, growth, and competitive advantage."

Based on research conducted by various international firms, 20-35% of operating revenue is lost due to poor data quality (Total Information Quality Management). 30-40% of time is spent by data users searching for data if a clear inventory of data is not available (McKinsey). In addition, 40% of CEOs identify poor data integration as a key barrier to performing their regular operations (Deloitte). Over 12% of lost revenue could be the value of hidden costs of data redundancy (Experian Data Quality Research).

With this strategic initiative, Zain underscores the importance of data governance in the modern business landscape. The company is keen on ensuring data quality and reliability, which is instrumental in maintaining the integrity of data, and crucial for accurate and informed decision-making. The Data Governance Office helps protect sensitive information, something that is more important than ever today, and plays a key role in safeguarding data against threats and breaches.

As the company's operations grow,

the complexity of managing data increases. The Zain Data Office helps streamline this process, ensuring easy access and effective data utilization to rapidly adapt to market changes and seize new opportunities, fostering agility in business decisions and strategies. The Office encourages the company to promote the goals of data governance as a culture where decisions are centered on data and its analysis.

**Data governance goals:**

- Enhance data quality in reports and analytics.
- Uphold customer personal data protection and privacy.
- Promote a data-driven culture: build a culture where decisions are grounded in data and analytics, leading to more strategic and effective outcomes.
- Meet the requirements of artificial intelligence: as AI tools rapidly grow, data governance plays a central role to ensure commitment and innovation.
- Comply with data legislation: keeping pace with changing legislation by taking a proactive approach to data governance, ensuring privacy and security when using data.
- Data Monetization: explore new venues for the commercial use of data, which leads to gaining valuable insights and implementing innovative projects.

**Key positive impacts of implementing data management**

Based on the survey conducted by various international firms

- Decision making:**
  - 70% faster, more informed decision-making - SnapLogic
  - 23% higher accuracy level by business intelligence and analysis - IDC
  - 64% improvement to current business operations - SnapLogic

**Data growth:**

- According to the latest estimates, 328.77 million terabytes of data are created each day.

- It is estimated that 90% of the world's data was generated in the last two years alone.

- In the space of 13 years, this figure has increased by an estimated 60x from just 2 zettabytes in 2010.

- The 120 zettabytes generated in 2023 is expected to increase by over 150% in 2025, hitting 181 zettabytes.

- Video is responsible for over half (53.72%) of all global data traffic.

<https://explodingtopics.com/blog/data-generated-per-day>

**Impact of data breaches:**

- Loss of trust and business: 65% lost trust in an organization due to data breach - Varonis
- 80% of consumers will defect from a business if their information is compromised in a breach - Varonis
- Lose out to competitors: 52% of customers will be lost to competitors who provides better security aspects - Varonis

Positive indicators

Continued from Page 8

Plans to expand the country's oil, electricity and water production capacities with Al-Zour (phases 2&3) and Al-Khairan IWPPs, in particular, are set to top the priorities list going forward. Kuwait Petroleum Corporation also plans to invest \$9-10 billion annually over the next five years to raise upstream oil and gas production capacity. For 2024, MEED projects has identified KD6.2 billion worth of projects awards that are up for sign-off.

**Inflation rate moderates as food price pressures ease**

Inflation softened in December, slowing to 3.4% y/y from 3.8% in November and 3.7% at end-Q3. (Chart 5.) The slowdown reflected moderating price rises in the food & beverages (4.7% y/y in December from a peak of 7.7% in April), housing (2.3%

from 3.1% in November) and transport (2.4% from 3.0% in November) categories. Inflation accelerated, however, in the furnishings, education, health and recreation & culture categories, though not enough to positively influence the core rate, which fell slightly to 3.4%. Inflation averaged 3.6% in 2023 (vs. 4.0% in 2022) and is forecast to slow again in 2024 to 2.5% as food price and supply chain pressures ease further and consumer spending strength lessens.

**Credit and deposits tick up as weak 2023 draws to a close**

Private credit to residents showed signs of improvement in Q4, with growth edging up to 1.5% YTD (+1.5% y/y) in November. (Chart 6.) Business credit was the primary driver (+1.8% YTD; +1.3% y/y), helped by the construction (+15.6% YTD) and trade (+8.3% YTD) sectors especially, while the real estate sector, the largest component of business credit, was up 2.6% YTD after being broadly flat-to-

negative for most of 2023. Household credit, after being flat in H1 2023, showed further signs of a pick-up (+1.7% YTD; +2.1% y/y). Resident deposit growth also strengthened in Q4 (+2.9% YTD; +2.5% y/y). Recent momentum has largely been driven by growth in public institution deposits (+15% in Sep-Nov), though these were still down 2.1% YTD after declines earlier in 2023.

Private-sector deposit growth remained muted (+1.3% YTD) after drops in five of the last six months. In contrast, government deposits surged 31% YTD. Within private-sector KD deposits, the outflow from current and savings accounts (CASA), -11.2% YTD, to higher-yielding time deposits continued (+12.6% YTD).

The CBK's key discount rate ended the year at 4.25%, after a cumulative 275 bps increase since March 2022-around half of the US Fed's 525 bps rise over the period. Attention now shifts to the pace of monetary loosening

after the Fed signaled that its rate hiking cycle was all but complete. Fed dot-plots projections point to three, 25 bps rate cuts in 2024; futures markets see five to six cuts.

**Equities rallied in December, off to strong start in 2024**

Equities continued to decline in Q4, with the Boursa Kuwait All-Share Index falling 1% q/q (-6.5% y/y) and significantly underperforming the MSCI GCC Index (+6.3% q/q). (Chart 7.) Average turnover by traded value in Q4 was KD46 million, improving on Q3's 3-yr low of KD41 million (but still well below 2021-22 levels).

Towards the end of December, sentiment shifted in a more positive direction as markets looked for Fed rate cuts in 2024. The relief rally extended into the New Year, with sentiment buoyed by the formation of a new Kuwaiti cabinet. The All-Share Index was up 6.1% as of January 18, with turnover recovering to an elevated daily average of KD69 million-a strong start to the year.

# What's On



Group photo during the Indian Doctors Forum – Kuwait's Sports Day on the auspicious occasion of Indian Republic Day.

## Indian Doctors Forum – Kuwait observes Sports Day

Indian Doctors Forum – Kuwait is one of the elite Indian organisations in Kuwait. Presently it is comprising of more than 650 doctors of all specialities.

Indian Doctors Forum observed its Sports Day on the auspicious occasion of Indian Republic Day (26th January) at Wafra. There was a huge turnout of the Doctors and their families. The event started with the welcome address by the President Dr Diwakara Chaluvaiah followed by the National Anthem of India and Kuwait. All the participants irrespective of age group played under the banner of four houses having four different colours, – Blue, Green, Orange and Yellow – named after ancient methodology of Indian Medicine – Charaka, Sushruta, Dhanwantari and Arogya. The captains of the houses, Dr Asit Mohanty, Dr Sateesh Tadepalli, Dr Antony Decruz and Dr Naquib Inamdar had an inaugural relay lap with the Sports

Day Torch around the sporting arena. Finally, they assembled at the starting point where the President lit the Inaugural flame. This was a unique Olympian experience by all who witnessed.

There were plenty of kids' games, games of teen age and also for the adult age category. There were group events like Volleyball, Dogs and bones and Tug of War etc. The event was anchored brilliantly by Rachna and her team. She was ably supported by all the Office Bearers who worked relentlessly to make the event candid and colourful. Attractive prizes were distributed and the whole event was conducted in a jubilant sporting spirit.

The meritorious students of doctors' families who came out with outstanding results in Tenth and Twelfth standard Examination in the years 2022 and 2023 were awarded with Certificates of Merit and gifts at the venue.

The students participating in Shastrotsav 2023, the theme of which was based on Basic Life Support (BLS), were also awarded with Certificates and medals.

Two senior doctors -Dr Mrinmay Kumar Mallik and Dr Sanjay Thuruthel who had been in prolonged close active association with Indian Doctors Forum were felicitated as they are going to leave Kuwait for good.

Everybody was in a bright mood in a pleasant weather with the sun playing hide and seek behind the clouds. Indian Doctors Forum promises to conduct more such colourful events in the days to come.

Indian Doctors Forum expresses gratitude towards their esteemed sponsors for this event – Centerpoint, Grand Hypermarket, City center and Sagar Transport.



Photos during the Indian Doctors Forum – Kuwait's Sports Day on the auspicious occasion of Indian Republic Day, 26th January at Wafra.

## Fostering community engagement through strategic collaborations

# stc's Winter Wonderland booth sparks innovation, competition and creativity

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, concluded several entertaining educational activities at its booth in Winter Wonderland Kuwait (WWL). Following its strategic partnership with Touristic Enterprises Company (TEC), stc organized the activities alongside strategic partners, demonstrating the Company's commitment to its extensive Corporate Social Responsibility Program (CSR). These initiatives, aimed at creating a positive social impact, highlighting stc's dedication to fostering community engagement through strategic collaborations.

### Innovation, Education & Digital Transformation

In one of the activities, stc's booth became a hub of innovation and learning. In collaboration with Dawrat.com and DJI Kuwait, stc hosted a comprehensive photography course. Under the guidance of Abdullah Almashouh, a renowned trainer and content creator, participants explored the intricacies of drone photography and reel production. The course culminated with the distribution of gifts from stc and a high-end drone provided by DJI Kuwait for the competition winner. Each participant left the workshop enriched with knowledge and a certificate of participation.

### Gaming & Entertainment

Adding to the excitement, stc hosted a PlayStation 5 FC 24 tournament, a football game highly popular amongst the youth in Kuwait and around the world. This special tournament welcomed professional gamers, witnessing the participation of 64 youthful competitors, supported by an enthusiastic crowd of over 200 fans. The event served as a unique platform for emerging gamers to showcase their skills while fostering a sense of community and sportsmanship among participants. In the grand finale, the top three champions were honored with valuable gifts from stc, celebrating their exceptional



Ahmed Al-Nuwaibit and Abdullah Al-Mashouh are intermediate in the work teams.

performance. The tournament's success sheds a positive light on the local gaming community, re-

inforcing stc's role in promoting digital sports and youth engagement in the region.

### Sustainability and Environment amongst youth

Furthering its commitment to nurturing the younger generation, stc, in collaboration with Aspire Club, conducted a unique workshop for children. This workshop focused on sustainable gardening practices using biodegradable newspaper sheets rather than plastic. The objective through the workshop was to educate children on the importance of environmental stewardship and practicing eco-friendly activities. The event, attended by 50 children aged 4 to 13 years, also included a creative writing workshop titled "My Story from My Creativity," aimed at enhancing their intellectual and writing skills. Guided by professional instructors, the students practiced their creative writing skills by writing a story from the location based on their various senses and experiences.

The activities organized at stc's booth in Winter Wonderland Kuwait in collaboration with its partners showcases the Company's dedication to empowering the community with knowledge, skills, and entertainment. By engaging with various segments of the community, stc aims to create a sustainable and positive impact on the community. The programs emphasized the importance of education, environmental sustainability, and the promotion of technology and innovation as key pillars. Through these efforts, stc aspires to contribute to the economic and social development of Kuwait, aligning with the country's vision for a prosperous future.

stc's CSR program extends beyond single events, encompassing a wide range of activities throughout the year. These include supporting educational initiatives under stc upgrade umbrella, promoting digital literacy, and engaging in environmental conservation projects. The Company also actively collaborates with various non-profit organizations, government entities, and educational institutions to reach a broader audience and make a meaningful difference in the community.



Left: Playstation 5 Championship Participants. Center: Abdullah Al-Mashwah during his lecture on drone photography. Right: Children participate in a workshop on sustainable agricultural and gardening practices.

## People &amp; Places

## Music

## 'Hackney Diamonds'

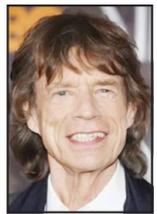
## Rolling Stones' album to give 'party' FOMO

LOS ANGELES, Jan 29, (AP): "How ya doing?" Mick Jagger asks the crowd, arriving for a club gig in Manhattan.

You read that right: A club gig. And how would YOU be doing if you were in a club and the house band turned out to be The Rolling Stones?

True, it wasn't a total surprise when Jagger, Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood, plus some invited musicians and one very high-profile guest, showed up to play at Racket NYC, capacity around 600, back in October. The crowd, industry folk and VIPs like Elvis Costello and Trevor Noah, had gathered to fete the release of "Hackney Diamonds," the Stones' first album of new songs in 18 years.

There were hopes, but most didn't know the band would be playing seven tunes - four from the new album and three longtime hits, including "Jumpin' Jack Flash." Few can say they were there, but now there's one way to recreate the experience: "Hackney Diamonds (Live Edition)," a two-disc CD out recently, includes both the studio album and the live show.



Jagger

"We're gonna play old, we're gonna play new!" Jagger tells the crowd. First, the old: "Shattered," in which the band sings about New York, of course, where the crime rate's "going up, up, up." That was back in 1978, but guess what, we've still got "rats on the West Side" (arguably more) and yes, "bed bugs uptown," too.

We next get "Angry," the big (now Grammy-nominated) single from "Hackney Diamonds," in which Mick pleads, "Don't get angry with me, I never caused you no pain." By the end, though, he's off to Brazil. And then "Whole Wide World," with Richards and Wood sounding like they're having an especially good time (in videos, the band is smiling a lot - surely energized by enthusiasm over the new album).

"Everywhere I'm looking there's memories of my past," the song goes, but these lads - now 80 (Mick and Keith) and 76 (Ronnie) - also give a nod to the future: "And you think the party is over, but it's only just begun..."

Another oldie, "Tumbling Dice," features terrific backup vocals from Chanel Haynes. That aggressive vibe from "Angry" returns with "Bite My Head Off" - but alas no Paul McCartney, who played bass for the studio album. Might Sir Paul join the band on a tour date? One can dream.

A rollicking "Jumpin' Jack Flash," often the band's encore song, closes out the show - well, for a second, because we know the Stones always come back.

And they do, with the gospel-infused "Sweet Sounds of Heaven." Mick starts it off and then, sure enough, Lady Gaga comes out to do her vocal dueling thing with the frontman, the two trading "Oh yeah!" howls.

At the end, Gaga salutes this up-and-coming bar band: "New York City, The Rolling Stones!" Jagger suggests: "Let's take a bow."

And now, on to the arenas. To anyone who saw them in this tiny venue: Congrats. For everyone else, the FOMO is real.



Avery Hellman possesses an affable alto that's quirky, as is the perspective from which Hellman writes.

"Sitting alone on the porch I think / About the things we washed down the sink," goes one couplet.

Hellman, whose grandfather founded the Hardly Strictly Bluegrass festival, is the rural California singer-songwriter behind the musical moniker IS-MAY and the new album "Desert Pavement," a captivating set with indeterminate antecedents.

Hellman and producer/multi-instrumentalist Andrew Marlin create rich colors and hazy atmospherics in a sweet and savory mix. Fetching melodies are the kind one might whistle, and on "Stranger in the Barn," Marlin does.

Disembodied backing vocals dart in and out, tricky fingerpicking patterns on guitar provide syncopation and drums reverberate as though they're inside drums themselves. The result is mostly acoustic music that sounds good loud.

Animals, nature and farm life are recurring subjects. On "The Ohio," Hellman sings of desert cracks, wild winds and the tug of a river. "Coyote in the Road" considers the encounter from both points of view, while "The Shearer & the Darby Ram" spins a tale from British lore.

Topics elsewhere include family skeletons, domestic dysfunction, empathy, decency and creativity. "My pathway to others," Hellman sings "is paved out in records."

And this record is an inviting pathway to ISMAY.

## Also:

LOS ANGELES: Bob Marley & The Wailers, The Clash, Beastie Boys - what do these legendary artists have in common? They owe much to Lee "Scratch" Perry, a pioneer of the dub music scene celebrated as one of reggae's founding fathers. Perry (real name Rainford Hugh Perry) died in 2021 - but during the pandemic, he worked on new music material, which will be posthumously released in his final album, "King Perry," out Friday, Feb 2. It features guest performances from Greentea Peng, Shaun Ryder, Tricky, Marta, Rose Waite and Fifi Rong. The final track, appropriately titled "Good-bye," is Perry's final vocal recording - an ambitious and celebratory song that features Perry repeating his farewell over and over again. It's a fitting coda, and still an experiment, bringing his reggae into synth wave, drum'n'bass, big beat, and electronica. Even in death, Perry is looking towards the future.

When you're done streaming "The Greatest Night in Pop," stay in the musical mid-'80s with "Kings from Queens: The RUN DMC Story." This Peacock original documentary offers a close look at the early days of Joseph "Rev Run" Simmons, Darryl "DMC" McDaniels, and Jason "Jam Master Jay" Mizell's revolutionary group - finding inspiration in the streets, bringing hip-hop to the masses, and, in doing so, validating and legitimizing what will soon become the most popular style of music - and assisting in turning it into a billion-dollar business. Let's face it, "It's Tricky to rock a rhyme, to rock a rhyme that's right on time," is both an earworm for the ages - and some astute musical analysis.



Billy Idol appears at the Los Angeles premiere of 'The Irishman' on Oct. 24, 2019. Idol will headline a pre-game concert ahead of the Super Bowl on Feb. 11 just outside Allegiant Stadium, where the NFL's two best teams face off. (AP)

## Music

## Iconic rocker takes center stage in Vegas

## Billy Idol's music still strikes a chord

LOS ANGELES, Jan 29, (AP): Billy Idol normally takes advantage of riding his motorcycle on the open road knowing there's hardly any traffic because millions are usually glued to watching the Super Bowl.

But this year, Idol's bike won't be leaving his garage on game day. Instead, the legendary British rocker will be strolling on stage to headline a pre-game concert in Las Vegas ahead of the big game on Feb. 11 just outside Allegiant Stadium, where the NFL's two best teams face off.

Idol, 68, is expected to perform some of his biggest hits including "Dancing with Myself," "Mony Mony" and "Rebel Yell" during a 35-minute set on two different stages at On Location's Club 67 and Touchdown Club in front of nearly 9,000 anticipated guests. It's the second time the singer has taken part in a pre-Super Bowl show after he rocked out with Miley Cyrus three years ago outside Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida.

In a recent interview, Idol exclusively chatted with The Associated Press about his Super Bowl halftime aspirations, the inspiration behind his Hoover Dam show, if he would ever consider doing Broadway and looking to soon release his first studio album in a decade.

Remarks have been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: What will be your mentality heading into your show hours before the Super Bowl?

Idol: It's about adding excitement to the event. You're pumping people up. That's a fun feeling. You can tell the people are excited, what's going to happen and you're entertaining them in those moments before it really happens.

AP: Would you ever want to perform during Super Bowl halftime?

Idol: That would be incredible. But I don't know. It would be fantastic, but I cannot imagine me being asked to do it. It would be great. I'd love to do it.

would be amazing if it involved some other artists or a combination of people. That would be great. It would be one of the craziest things in the world to play. Everybody in the country watches it. Playing the pregame for me is good. Pumping people up before it and getting them ready is kind of a fun thought.

AP: You celebrated the 40th anniversary of your album "Rebel Yell" and had a five-night residency in Las Vegas last year. How does it feel to have your music still resonating today?

Idol: When we were starting out, I couldn't have imagined the effect of (our) music. We were living one day at a time. The songs were for that time period. They were just for that moment. You weren't thinking about any long-term effects. You're just thinking right now. But the songs have legs. It's like "Wow, people have really embraced this crazy idea I had years ago." They're still enjoying it, and I am too. Who would have thought that 40 years later? I'm still pinching myself.

AP: You released a couple EPs and recently rereleased "Rebel Yell." Will you drop any new music soon?

Idol: We have a new album coming out in October this year. We're still carrying on and enlarging what my music is about. I enjoy doing it. Me and (guitarist) Steve (Stevens) are still finding ways to excite ourselves. We're not out there going through the motions. We're actually out there taking prisoners. That's how we feel.

AP: How far along are you in the process?

Idol: We've got most of it recorded with just some finishing touches. We're doing a cover. We're thinking about videos and all the promotional things that go along with it. There's a lot of stuff we're going to be thinking about this year. But ... playing at the Super Bowl, that's pretty fantastic.

AP: You have a built-in fanbase. With your new album, have you taken a different approach musically with

your upcoming project compared to past works?

Idol: Not really. We're bouncing off our last album "Kings & Queens of the Underground." We did that in England and had strings on it. With this, we tried to make a lot more of an up-tempo album. There are nine songs and six of them are up-tempo. Three of them are kind of slower. It's more of a youthful sounding record. I think it'll allow our audience to have a lot of fun.

AP: What inspired you to perform at Hoover Dam?

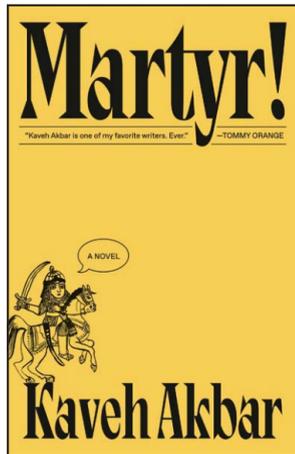
Idol: It was something like I would see in movies when I was a child. There was an Alfred Hitchcock movie ("Saboteur") that referenced Hoover Dam. There was another film "711 Ocean Drive" that ended on the Hoover Dam. You know, it had a shootout. For someone like me, growing up in England, I saw this iconic place in movies then I got to play in front of it. Hoover Dam was right behind me with my logo on it, which was insane.

AP: Are there any other locations like Hoover Dam where you would like to perform?

Idol: Mount Rushmore. I couldn't have ever imagined Hoover Dam, so now the world is my oyster. There's the incredible Crazy Horse statue that's carved out in the Black Hills. We can play anywhere. Nothing can stop us.

AP: Have you ever thought about doing Broadway?

Idol: Of course, we have. We haven't quite worked out our direction. We've had several different ideas we've sort of fielded. Nothing has come to fruition yet. As you can see, they're doing Prince's "Purple Rain" on Broadway, so it's not out of the question that we would do one. It's just been sort of trying to work out how to do it. That's what's fun about having a catalog. It does resonate with a lot of people and there are possibilities like that in the future.



This cover image released by Knopf shows 'Martyr!' by Kaveh Akbar. (AP)



Garland



Martin

## Variety

MINNEAPOLIS: A dying thief who confessed to stealing a pair of ruby slippers that Judy Garland wore in "The Wizard of Oz" because he wanted to pull off "one last score" is expected to stay out of prison after he's sentenced Monday.

Terry Jon Martin, 76, stole the slippers in 2005 from the Judy Garland Museum in the late actor's hometown of Grand Rapids, Minnesota. He gave into temptation after an old mob associate told him the shoes had to be adorned with real jewels to justify their \$1 million insured value, his attorney revealed in a memo to the federal court ahead of his sentencing in Duluth.

The FBI recovered the shoes in 2018 when someone else tried to claim a reward. Martin wasn't charged with stealing them until last year. He pleaded guilty in October to theft of a major artwork, admitting to using a hammer to smash the glass of the museum door and display case to take the slippers. But his motivation remained mostly a mystery until defense attorney Dane DeKrey revealed it this month.

Martin, who lives near Grand Rapids, said at the October hearing that he hoped to remove what he thought were real rubies from the shoes and sell them. But a person who deals in stolen goods, known as a fence, informed him the rubies were glass, Martin said. So he got rid of the slippers.

DeKrey wrote in his memo that Martin's unidentified former mob associate persuaded him to steal the slippers as "one last score," even though Martin had seemed to have "finally put his demons to rest" after finishing his last prison term nearly 10 years ago. "At first, Terry declined the invitation to participate in the heist. But old habits die hard, and the thought of a 'final score' kept him up at night," DeKrey wrote. "After much contemplation, Terry had a criminal relapse and decided to participate in the theft."

Both sides are recommending that Chief US District Judge Patrick Schiltz sentence Martin to time served because he is housebound in hospice care and is expected to die within six months. He requires constant oxygen therapy for chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder and was in a wheelchair when he pleaded guilty.

Federal sentencing guidelines would normally recommend a sentence of about 4 1/2 years to 6 years, though someone with Martin's criminal history could get an even longer term. But his health "is simply too fragile," prosecutors wrote in a court filing. Another prosecution filing said both sides agreed he should be ordered to pay \$23,500 in restitution to the museum, even though

he apparently does not have the money.

According to DeKrey, Martin had no idea about the cultural significance of the ruby slippers and had never seen "The Wizard of Oz." Instead, DeKrey said, the "old Terry" with a lifelong history involving burglary and receiving stolen property beat out the "new Terry" who had become "a contributing member of society" after his 1996 release from prison. (AP)

NEW YORK: An \$8,000 Facebook Marketplace deal has gone bad on Long Island, with a man who was selling a Rolex watch jumping onto the hood of the thief's car in a quixotic attempt to keep from being robbed.

"I was not going to roll over and let this man take it ... without a fight," Steve Mauro, the seller, told The Associated Press on Sunday.

The 43-year-old had arranged to sell the Rolex, purchased just days prior, on

Friday in front of his home in Massapequa Park. A would-be buyer showed up and asked Mauro to approach for the money. But instead of handing over the cash, the thief locked his doors and started speeding away, Nassau County Police said.

Officers coincidentally patrolling the area saw a gray Honda SUV launch into reverse and knock Mauro over. Mauro jumped on the hood, but was thrown off as the driver fled with the luxury watch, police said. Mauro was treated at the scene for minor cuts to his hand, elbow and knee.

Describing himself as a seasoned Facebook Marketplace seller, Mauro said he didn't expect foul play. (AP)

DENVER: A motorcyclist who authorities say posted a video of himself on YouTube speeding through Colorado Springs to the Denver metro area on Interstate 25 in 20 minutes - a trip that typically takes about an hour - is wanted on multiple charges.

Rendon Dietzmann, a 32-year-old from Texas, recorded himself Sept. 28 going more than 150 mph (241 kph), squeezing through small gaps in traffic and traveling on the shoulder, according to a Colorado State Patrol news release sent Wednesday. The video has since been deleted from YouTube, but the State Patrol shared a clip with the news release.

Dietzmann, who is known as Gixxer Brah on YouTube, has posted multiple similar videos from different parts of the country. He is wanted on charges of menacing, engaging in a speed contest, reckless endangerment, reckless driving, speeding 40 mph (64 kph) over the limit, engaging in an exhibition of speed and driving without license plates attached. (AP)



From left: Producer Francesca Silvestri, Woody Harelson, director Laura Chinn and Nico Parker pose for photographers during a photo call to promote the film 'Suncoast' in London, Sunday, Jan. 28. (AP)

## Scientific vigilantes uncover flaws in cancer research

## Science sleuths use tech to find fakery in research papers

NEW YORK, Jan 29, (AP): Allegations of research fakery at a leading cancer center have turned a spotlight on scientific integrity and the amateur sleuths uncovering image manipulation in published research.

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, a Harvard Medical School affiliate, announced Jan. 22 it's requesting retractions and corrections of scientific papers after a British blogger flagged problems in early January.

The blogger, 32-year-old Sholto David, of Pontypridd, Wales, is a scientist-sleuth who detects cut-and-paste image manipulation in published scientific papers.

He's not the only hobbyist poking through pixels. Other champions of scientific integrity are keeping researchers and science journals on their toes. They use special software, oversized computer monitors and their eagle eyes to find flipped, duplicated and stretched images, along with potential plagiarism.

## Errors

A look at the situation at Dana-Farber and the sleuths hunting sloppy errors and outright fabrications:

In a Jan. 2 blog post, Sholto David presented suspicious images from more than 30 published papers by four Dana-Farber scientists, including CEO Laurie Glimcher and COO William Hahn.

Many images appeared to have duplicated segments that would make the scientists' results look stronger. The papers under scrutiny involve lab research on the workings of cells. One involved samples from bone marrow from human volunteers.

The blog post included problems spotted by David and others previously exposed by sleuths on PubPeer, a site that allows anonymous comments on scientific papers.

Student journalists at The Harvard Crimson covered the story on Jan. 12, followed by reports in other news media. Sharpening the attention was the recent plagiarism investigation involving former Harvard president Claudine Gay, who resigned early this year.

Dana-Farber said it already had been looking into some of the problems before the blog post. By Jan. 22, the institution said it was in the process of requesting six retractions of published research and that another 31 papers warranted corrections.

Retractions are serious. When a journal retracts an article that usually means the research is so severely flawed that the findings are no longer reliable.

Dr. Barrett Rollins, research integrity officer at Dana-Farber, said in a statement: "Following the usual practice at Dana-Farber to review any potential data error and make corrections when warranted, the institution and its scientists already have taken prompt and decisive action in 97 percent of the cases that had been flagged by blogger Sholto David."

California microbiologist Elisabeth Bik, 57, has been sleuthing for a decade. Based on her work, scientific journals have retracted 1,133 articles, corrected 1,017 others and printed 153 expressions of concern, according to a spreadsheet where she tracks what happens after she reports problems.

She has found doctored images of bacteria, cell cultures and western blots, a lab technique for detecting proteins.

"Science should be about finding the truth," Bik told The Associated Press. She published an analysis in the American Society for Microbiology in 2016: Of more than 20,000 peer-reviewed papers, nearly 4% had image problems, about half where the manipulation seemed intentional.

Bik's work brings donations from Patreon subscribers of about \$2,300 per month and occasional honoraria from speaking engagements. David told AP his Patreon income recently picked up to \$216 per month.

Technology has made it easier to root out image manipulation and plagiarism, said Ivan Oransky, who teaches medical journalism at New York University and co-founded the Retraction Watch blog. The sleuths download scientific papers and use software tools to help find problems.

## Publication

Others doing the investigative work remain anonymous and post their findings under pseudonyms. Together, they have "changed the equation" in scientific publication, Oransky said.

"They want science to be and do better," Oransky said. "And they are frustrated by how uninterested most people in academia - and certainly in publishing - are in correcting the record." They're also concerned about the erosion of public trust in science.

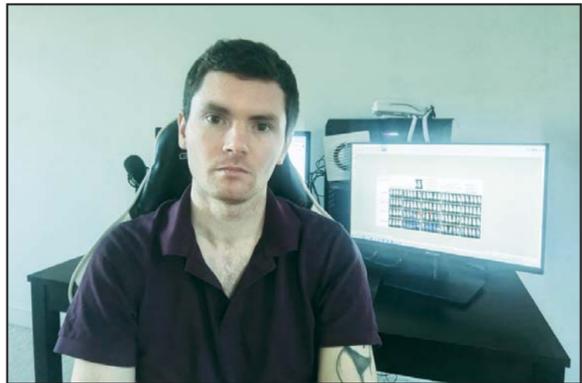
Bik said some mistakes could be sloppy errors where images were mislabeled or "somebody just grabbed the wrong photo."

But some images are obviously altered with sections duplicated or rotated or flipped. Scientists building their careers or seeking tenure face pressure to get published. Some may intentionally falsify data, knowing that the process of peer review - when a journal sends a manuscript to experts for comments - is unlikely to catch fakery.

"At the end of the day, the motivation is to get published," Oransky said. "When the images don't match the story you're trying to tell, you beautify them."

Scientific journals investigate errors brought to their attention but usually keep their processes confidential until they take action with a retraction or correction.

Some journals told the AP they are aware of the concerns raised by David's blog post and were looking into the matter.



This photo provided by Sholto David shows David at his home in Pontypridd, Wales, Friday, Jan. 26. David is a scientist-sleuth who detects image manipulation in published scientific papers. (AP)

## Dark side of Dominican Republic's medical tourism exposed

## 93 Americans die after cosmetic surgery

NEW YORK, Jan 29, (AP): US health officials say 93 Americans have died after cosmetic surgery in the Dominican Republic since 2009, with many of the recent deaths involving a procedure known as a Brazilian butt lift.

The operation has grown in popularity recently and has led to deaths in other countries as well, including the US. A report issued Thursday by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention could not say how common these deaths are or whether they are more common in the Dominican Republic.

The report suggests steps that medical tourists should consider before traveling to get work done.

"Be informed about who is doing your surgery, the qualifications of the person doing your surgery, and whether or not the facility is capable of doing the surgery and whether it is capable of providing adequate post-operative care - which is crucial," said Dr. Matthew Hudson, the study's first author.

## Complications

A Brazilian butt lift involves injecting fat. The report included details of about two dozen of the deaths, and most were the result of fat or blood clots getting into the lungs or bloodstream.

Complications from cosmetic surgery are not unique to the Dominican Republic. Reports of deaths after cosmetic surgeries have repeatedly surfaced in the United States, perhaps most often in Florida. The CDC on Thursday issued a separate report about 15 cases of bacterial infections in women who went to one Florida cosmetic surgery center in 2022.

Sporadic reports also have come out of Mexico, including last year when US patients were stricken with fungal meningitis after undergoing cosmetic procedures in the border city of Matamoros. Two clinics were closed and a dozen deaths reported.

The Dominican Republic is known as a friendly island vacation spot, and some doctors there advertise in the US, offering breast implants, liposuction and other operations at lower prices. After an increase in US deaths in 2019 and 2020, the US Embassy contacted the CDC, which investigated along with the Dominican Republic Ministry of Health.

They tallied 93 cosmetic surgery-related deaths of US citizens in the Dominican Republic from 2009 to 2022, or an average of about seven a year. All but one were women. More than half of the deaths occurred since 2019, coinciding with the increasing popularity of Brazilian butt lifts. In the US, nearly 29,000 of those procedures were done in 2022, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

The procedure commonly involves liposuction of fat from the hips, lower back, thighs or other areas. The fat is then injected in the buttocks to change the shape or size. Risks include fat being injected too deeply, making its way into the bloodstream and blocking key arteries or veins.

Autopsy records show that was the cause of death for 11 of 20 deaths, said Hudson, who is now at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

## Treatment shows mild or moderate adverse events

## Breakthrough therapy offers hope for CIDP patients

JAPAN, Jan 29, (Agencies): Takeda has announced that the European Commission (EC) approved HYQVIA [Immune Globulin Infusion 10% (Human) with Recombinant Human Hyaluronidase] as maintenance therapy in patients of all ages with chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy (CIDP) after stabilization with intravenous immunoglobulin therapy (IVIg). Takeda previously announced a positive opinion from the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) on December 15, 2023 and approval as a maintenance therapy for adults with CIDP by the US Food and Drug Administration on January 16.

As the first and only facilitated subcutaneous immunoglobulin (fSCIG) for CIDP, HYQVIA offers the potential for patients to infuse up to once monthly (every two, three or four weeks), as the hyaluronidase component facilitates the dispersion and absorption of large immunoglobulin (IG) volumes in the subcutaneous space between the skin and the muscle. HYQVIA can be administered by a healthcare professional or self-administered in the comfort of a patient's own home after appropriate training.

Following the FDA approval of the HYQVIA CIDP indication in January 2024, the EC's approval of HYQVIA for CIDP is a critical step towards giving people in the EU living with CIDP access to a maintenance treatment with proven efficacy that can be administered up to once monthly, at-home or in-office," said Kristina Allikmets, senior vice president and head of Research & Development for Takeda's Plasma-Derived Therapies Business Unit.

"This expanded indication for HYQVIA also reflects Takeda's commitment to bring the benefits of our immunoglobulin therapies to people with neuroimmunological disorders and provide treatment options that have the potential to positively impact their lives and elevate the standard of care."

CIDP is an acquired, immune-mediated condition affecting the peripheral nervous system that is characterized by progressive, symmetric weakness in distal and proximal limbs and impaired sensory function in the extremities. The role of IG therapy for this

rare, debilitating and slowly progressing or relapsing disease has been well-established and is considered a standard of care for this complex and heterogeneous condition in guidelines from the European Academy of Neurology and Peripheral Nerve Society due to its broad immunomodulatory and anti-inflammatory effects.

This approval is based on data from the pivotal Phase 3 Advance-CIDP 1 trial, which was a multicenter, placebo-controlled, double-blinded study that evaluated the efficacy and safety of HYQVIA as a maintenance therapy to prevent relapse in patients with CIDP. The global study included 132 adults with a confirmed diagnosis of CIDP who had remained on a stable dosing regimen of IVIg therapy for at least three months prior to screening. Results showed a clinically significant reduction in CIDP relapse rate with HYQVIA versus placebo 15.5% (95% CI: 8.36, 26.84) in the HYQVIA and 31.7% (95% CI: 21.96, 43.39) in the placebo groups. The treatment difference was -16.2 (95% CI: -29.92, -1.27), favoring HYQVIA over placebo.3

LONDON, Jan 29, (AP): The British government says it will ban the sale of disposable vapes and limit their cornucopia of flavors in an effort to prevent children becoming addicted to nicotine.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is due to announce details of the plan on Monday.

It is currently illegal to sell vapes or tobacco to children under 18 in the UK, but officials say that youth vaping has tripled in the past three years, and that cheap, colorful disposable vapes are a "key driver."

As well as banning disposable vapes, the government says it will "restrict flavors which are specifically marketed at children" and ensure that manufacturers put vapes in "less visually appealing packaging."

"As any parent or teacher knows, one of the most worrying trends at the moment is the rise in vaping among children, and so we must act before

it becomes endemic," Sunak said.

"The long-term impacts of vaping are unknown and the nicotine within them can be highly addictive, so while vaping can be a useful tool to help smokers quit, marketing vapes to children is not acceptable."

Sunak's government also said it will push on with a plan announced last year to gradually raise the minimum age to buy cigarettes, so that no one born after Jan. 1, 2009 can ever legally buy them.

The idea has been welcomed by health experts, but outraged some members of the Conservative Party who view it as excessive state intervention. The plan was modeled on a proposal in New Zealand that was scrapped late last year after a change of government in that country.

The number of people in the UK who smoke has declined by two-thirds since the 1970s, but some 6.4 million people, or about 13% of the population, still smoke, according to official figures.



A selection of colourful disposable vapes on display for sale in a souvenir shop in London, Monday, Jan. 29. The British government says it will ban the sale of disposable vapes and limit their cornucopia of flavors in an effort to prevent children becoming addicted to nicotine. (AP)

## Bid to protecting youth

## UK to ban disposable vapes and curb candy-flavored e-cigarettes

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# Magic pull away in 4th quarter to 'dispose of' Booker, Suns 113-98

## Hawks soar past Raptors

ORLANDO, Fla., Jan 29, (AP): Paolo Banchero scored 26 points and the Orlando Magic beat the Phoenix Suns 113-98 on Sunday night, overcoming Devin Booker's 44-point effort two days after he had 62 in a loss at Indiana.

Phoenix went more than eight minutes without a field goal in the fourth quarter, losing its second straight after a seven-game winning streak.

Booker was 17 of 26 from the field, making 1 of 2 3-point attempts, and

hit 9 of 11 free throws. But he had only two points in the Suns' 11-point fourth quarter.

Moritz Wagner added 16 points and 12 rebounds for Orlando. Markelle Fultz had 14 points and five steals, and Franz Wagner finished with 11 points, eight rebounds and seven assists.

Kevin Durant had 15 points for the Suns, who extended the franchise record for consecutive games with 40-point scorers to six.

### Hawks 126, Raptors 125

In Atlanta, Saddiq Bey dunked off Trae Young's miss with 1.1 seconds left to lift Atlanta past Toronto.

Bey finished with a season-high 26 points and had 13 rebounds. Young had 30 points and 12 assists, and Clint Capela finished with 19 points and 14 rebounds.

Jordan Nwora had 24 points and nine rebounds for Toronto. The short-handed Raptors have lost five straight.

### Pistons 120, Thunder 104

In Detroit, Jalen Duren had 22 points and a career-high 21 rebounds and Detroit beat Oklahoma City to end the Thunder's winning streak at five.

## BASKETBALL

Jaden Ivey added 19 points to help the NBA-worst Pistons improve to 6-40. Detroit played without leading scorer Cade Cunningham because of what the team termed "injury management." Cunningham returned from a knee injury Saturday.

Duren had a career-high nine of Detroit's 15 offensive rebounds. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 31 points.

### Bulls 104, Trail Blazers 96

In Portland, Ore., DeMar DeRozan had 20 points and Chicago beat Portland to snap a two-game losing streak.

Coby White added 15 points and 10 assists, and Andre Drummond also had 15 points.

Jerami Grant led Portland with 24 points, and Deandre Ayton had 22 and 12 rebounds. The Blazers have lost four of their last five.

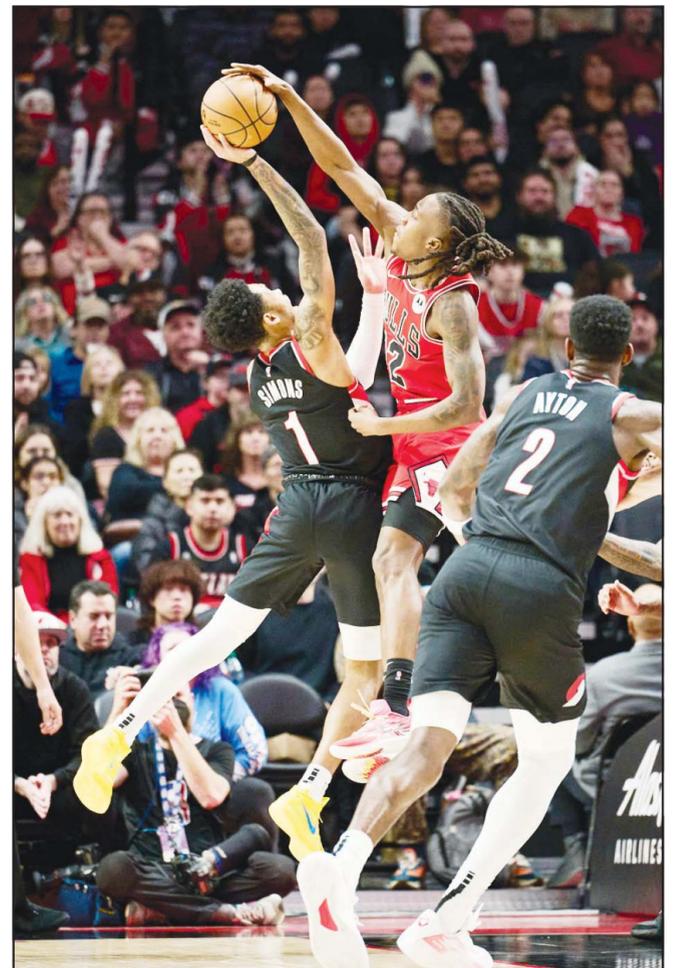
### Pacers 116, Grizzlies 110

In Indianapolis, Benedict Mathurin scored 24 points, Jalen Smith made the go-ahead 3-pointer and Indiana beat Memphis.

Smith made it 110-107 with his 3-pointer with 3:10 remaining. He finished with 19 points and 10 rebounds. Pascal Siakam also had 19 points.



Atlanta Hawks guard Trae Young (11) dribbles against Toronto Raptors forward Jalen McDaniels (2) during the second half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024, in Atlanta. (AP)



Chicago Bulls guard Ayo Dosunmu, second from left, blocks a shot by Portland Trail Blazers guard Anfernee Simons, left, during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Portland, Ore., Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024. (AP)

## SC follows up LSU win by beating Vanderbilt

COLUMBIA, S.C., Jan 29, (AP): South Carolina coach Dawn Staley learned something new about her No. 1 Gamecocks - they didn't let their big win over LSU steal their focus from rising Vanderbilt.

Kamilla Cardoso scored 23 points and South Carolina won its 16th straight over Vanderbilt, 91-74, on Sunday, just a few days removed from rallying for a 76-70 win against the defending national champions.

The past few days have been a fan's delight and a coach's worst nightmare to make sure her players didn't get caught up in the achievement.

"I was a little nervous about how they'd respond," Staley said.

Not great at first, it turned out.

South Carolina looked like it still had the LSU triumph on its mind at first. The players danced and shim-

mied during pregame warmups and Staley came out in black hoodie with "Boo," on it - a clapback to her joke about her treatment by LSU fans.

And Vanderbilt (17-4, 4-3), which came in on its best 20-game start in 17 years, stuck with the powerhouse Gamecocks early on. The Commodores were up 21-20 on Sacha Washington's foul shot with 8:56 left in the half.

"I kept wondering, 'When are we going to turn it on?'" Staley said.

Soon enough, Cardoso and the Gamecocks (19-0, 7-0 Southeastern Conference) found their stride to win their 51st straight at home.

South Carolina used a 22-9 run the rest of the period to take control. Tessa Johnson, Te-Hina Paopao and Bree Hall all hit 3-pointers and Ashlyn Watkins had a three-point play during the stretch.

1st since 1969 with Newgarden

## Penske wins Rolex 24 at Daytona

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla., Jan 29, (AP): Roger Penske snapped a 54-year losing streak at the Rolex 24 at Daytona on Sunday when Felipe Nasr held off two-time defending race winner Tom Blomqvist in the final 45 minutes of the most prestigious endurance race in the United States.

The win for Team Penske at Daytona International Speedway was its first since "The Captain" restarted his sports car program in 2018, first with Acura and then last season as a two-car Porsche factory team. Penske's only other overall win at the Rolex came in 1969 with a lineup of Mark Donohue and Chuck Parsons, who was flown in the day before the race because regular driver Ronnie Bucknum fractured his finger in a motorcycle accident.

Team Penske also won the GT class in 1966, but he has chased the overall Rolex victory since '69.

"To come back here and have both cars run for 24 hours, and then win the race, it's hard for me to believe," Penske said. "This goes down as one of the biggest wins we've had."

He lauded the crowd - the largest in recent history for the Rolex - and praised IMSA for staging such a competitive race. Five of the 10 cars in the top GTP class finished on the lead lap and Nasr's margin of victory was .0861 seconds.

"When we won in 1969 with a Lola, it was a lot different in those days," Penske said. "But to think about today, the biggest crowd they've had here for a sports car race, just to see the competitiveness, a win by (eight-) tenths of a second, that's unbelievable. That's what I'll say."

The winning lineup consisted of Nasr, Dane Cameron, Matt Campbell and Indianapolis 500 winner Josef Newgarden, who would like to believe his win at Indy last May is what earned him a seat in the No. 7 Porsche 963. Newgarden is the 16th driver in history to win both the Indy 500 and the Rolex.

"I just showed up, that's all I did. Porsche and Team Penske delivered the result," Newgarden said. "I was just happy to be here. You gotta talk to RP, though, I think he was crying up there on the pit stand."

The second Penske Porsche finished fourth.

It was a fight to the very end, especially the final 30 minutes, when Nasr found himself trading the lead with Blomqvist, who was driving for reigning IMSA champions Action Express Racing. Blomqvist was part of the last two Rolex wins with Meyer Shank Racing, but that team shuttered at the end of last season when it lost its factory support in part because of a cheating controversy in last January's win.

The No. 31 Cadillac, which had dominated much of the race with the Cadillac from Chip Ganassi Racing, needed Blomqvist to close the race because, with only a three-driver lineup, regular Pipo Derani had driven more than eight hours and was exhausted.

Blomqvist pitted three laps earlier than Nasr with about 75 minutes remaining and was able to pass Nasr for the lead after Nasr made his own pit stop. But Nasr got it back under caution on the final pit stop with 44 minutes remaining when he beat Blomqvist off pit road.

Nasr pulled away on the restart with 31 minutes to go, and even though Blomqvist turned the fastest lap of the race 10 minutes later, he couldn't catch Nasr as the 86-year-old Penske watched from the pit stand. Penske is known for staying up the entire 24



Felipe Nasr celebrates with the Porsche Penske Motorsport team in Victory Lane after winning the Rolex 24 hour auto race at Daytona International Speedway, Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024, in Daytona Beach, Fla. (AP)

hours of the race.

The win capped a remarkable 246-day stretch for Penske, the most decorated team owner in motor sports history. In the last eight months, he won a record-extending 19th Indy 500 with Newgarden's victory, claimed back-to-back NASCAR Cup titles when Ryan Blaney won in November and celebrated the achievements at industry events in early December and this week. He and Newgarden were feted at the Henry Ford Museum in Michigan on Tuesday when they were presented with their own replica Indy 500 trophies.

Cadillac dominated most of the race, but the Ganassi car was eliminated with an engine failure during the overnight stints, and Penske took the lead with just under six hours remaining. Nasr passed Jack Aitken on track to take the lead and built a lead of more than four seconds.

Newgarden had been asking Penske for years to drive Team Penske cars in other racing series, and he wasn't certain the Indy 500 victory was enough to earn him a Rolex seat. But he was serious about not being a hindrance to a lineup that includes Nasr,

## CAR RACING

Cameron and Campbell.

"He's fit in perfectly with the team, he's easy to get along with and obviously very experienced within the Penske organization," Campbell said. "That makes it quite easy for him. It's good having a guy like him, he brings a lot of experience in different ways. I know coming from IndyCar, it is quite different. But he's brought some new ideas to the table."

"Having someone with his expertise in a different style of racing has really boosted us, and he's been able to adapt very well."

Newgarden said his only goal was to be a positive addition to the Porsche team.

"When I come to work with guys like Matt or Felipe or Dane, I'm learning something new and I'm seeing a new perspective that I've never seen before," Newgarden said. "I haven't run sports cars that often, definitely not as much as these guys. So they have a way of looking at things or approaching situations much differently than we do."

## Korda rallies to beat Lydia Ko in hometown

BRADENTON, Fla., Jan 29, (AP): Nelly Korda rallied to win her hometown LPGA Drive On Championship and delay Lydia Ko's LPGA Hall of Fame entry, outlasting the New Zealander on the second hole of a playoff Sunday after overcoming a three-stroke deficit with an eagle-birdie finish.

In calmer conditions after wind gusts to 30 mph at Bradenton Country Club, Korda won with a 3-foot par putt on the par-4 18th after Ko's 4-footer caught the lip and spun out.

Ko won the season-opening Tournament of Champions last week at home in Orlando for her 20th tour victory to move within a point of qualifying for the Hall of Fame.

Four strokes ahead of Ko beginning play Sunday, Korda shot a 2-over 73 to match Ko at 11-under 273. Ko, playing in the group ahead of Korda, also eagled the par-5 17th in a 69.

## GOLF

Korda dropped four strokes in a three-hole stretch - making a bogey on the par-4 14th, a double bogey on the par-3 15th and a bogey on the par-4 16th - before rallying with the eagle putt across the green on 17 and an approach to a foot on 18.

The 25-year-old Korda led wire-to-wire for the first time in her career en route to her ninth LPGA Tour victory and first since the 2022 Pelican Women's Championship.

Thorbjorn Olesen won the Ras Al Khaima Championship by six shots over fellow Dane Rasmus Hojgaard.

The 34-year-old Olesen shot a 5-under 67 to finish at 27 under for his eighth victory on the European Tour.

Olesen finished with a 69.

Kazuma Kobori won his second straight PGA Tour of Australasia event - a feat last accomplished by Adam Scott in 2013 - in the Webex Players Series Victoria. Kobori, the 22-year-old from New Zealand, made a 12-foot birdie putt on the final hole for a one-stroke victory over Ashley Lau.

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## Lille held 0-0 at Montpellier

## French leaders PSG blow two-goal lead in home draw with Brest

## Lautaro scores again as Inter pip Fiorentina to regain lead



Frosinone's Walid Cheddira (center), in action during the Italian Serie A soccer match between Hellas Verona and Frosinone at the Marcantonio Bentegodi Stadium in Verona, Italy. (AP)

## Lazio, Napoli draw

**MILAN, Jan 29, (AP):** It seems as if no one can stop Inter Milan or Lautaro Martínez.

The Argentina World Cup winner scored again to help Inter to a 1-0 win at Fiorentina, which had a penalty saved.

Inter moved back to the top of Serie A and with a game in hand, after its involvement in the Italian Super Cup in Saudi Arabia. Simone Inzaghi's side leapfrogged a point above second-place Juventus, which was held to a 1-1 draw at home to Empoli on Saturday.

Inter hosts Juventus next Sunday in a mouthwatering match at San Siro.

It was a league-leading 19th goal for Lautaro in as many matches. He also netted the goal that gave Inter the Italian Super Cup on Monday.

Fiorentina remained two points behind fourth-place Atalanta.

The home side had the ball in the back of the net in the 11th minute. M'Bala Nzola ran onto a long ball over the top and nutmegged Inter goalkeeper Yann Sommer but it was ruled out for offside.

## SOCCER

Instead, Inter took the lead three minutes later as a corner was whipped in from the left for Lautaro's header at the near post.

Fiorentina almost equalized 10 minutes before the break but Sommer pulled off a magnificent save to fingertip Giacomo Bonaventura's corner over the bar at full stretch.

The hosts felt they should have had a penalty from the resulting corner as Luca Ranieri was hauled down by Inter defender Alessandro Bastoni but a lengthy VAR check ruled that the official on the field was right to wave play on.

Fiorentina did get a penalty in the 75th minute, following another VAR

## Winter transfers in full swing

## Salmiya secure Bahrain's Mahdi Humaidan

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The winter transfer market is experiencing a surge in activity as the deadline approaches tomorrow. Clubs are intensifying negotiations with players to bolster their squads for the remainder of the 2023-2024 seasons, aiming to secure professionals of higher caliber than their current roster.

In Salmiya, club president Sheikh Turki Al-Yousef announced that the technical staff, led by Croatian Ante Misha, is actively addressing the professional file. This comes after the club successfully signed a contract with Bahraini Mahdi Humaidan. Al-Humaidan, set to join Al-Salmiya after his commitments with the national team in the Asian Cup, will replace Senegalese player Cesar Ousinou, who failed to make a significant contribution to the

team.

Reports indicate that the technical staff is seeking replacements for Brazilian Sebastiao Junior "Seba" and Ghanaian Issaka Abudu, as their performances fell short of expectations. Negotiations are underway with players from Brazil and Croatia, as recommended by Croatian coach Misha. Al-Youssef emphasized Al-Salmiya's commitment to strengthening the squad during the winter transfers and expressed the club's reluctance to part with any local players, particularly Mahdi Dashti and Fawaz Ayed. Ayed has a contract with the club for the next two seasons, while efforts are being made to renew Dashti's contract for a similar period.

In Al-Qadisiya, Ghanaian professional Sarfo Kingsley has commenced training with "Al-Asfar," becoming the fifth professional in the team, replacing Tunisian Youssef Ben

Souda. Despite criticism surrounding ethical concerns in Switzerland during his professional career, Sarfo, 28 years old, signed a contract with Al-Qadisiya for a season and a half. The decision to bring Sarfo into the team was made by the technical staff led by coach Dr. Mohamed Al-Mashaan, who sought a player proficient in pivoting and goal creation.

## SOCCER



Congolese star Arsene Zola.

check, after Sommer went to push the ball clear but instead punched Nzola in the face.

Sommer went from villain to hero for Inter as he comfortably saved a weak penalty from Nicolás González.

Remarkably it was the fifth failed spot kick in Serie A this weekend, out of seven.

Lazio and Napoli played out a tense 0-0 draw that did neither side any favors

in their fight for fourth spot in Serie A.

The result left Lazio two points below Atalanta, with Napoli two points further back.

Last year, Napoli and Lazio finished first and second in Serie A but had struggled this season. Napoli, which scored the most goals in the league last campaign, has now failed to find the back of the net in eight of Walter Mazzarri's 14 matches in charge.

## Atletico move past Barcelona into third

## Girona reclaim 1st place in Spain with win at Celta

MADRID, Jan 29, (AP): There's no easing off for Girona in the Spanish league.

The Catalan club rebounded from a setback in the Copa del Rey by beating Celta Vigo 1-0 in the league to extend its impressive run and return to the top of the standings.

Portu scored a first-half winner to move Girona a point ahead of Real Madrid, which won 2-1 at Las Palmas on Saturday. Madrid has played one game less than Girona.

Girona was coming off a 3-2 loss at Mallorca in the Copa del Rey, a result that kept it from reaching the tournament's semifinals for the first time and ended its 17-match unbeaten run in all competitions. The team's only other loss this season came against Madrid at home in the league in September.

Girona has 17 wins in 22 league matches, and the competition's best attack with 52 goals. No other team has scored more than 45.

Michel's team has won six of its last eight league games, but it has a tough stretch ahead with matches against sixth-place Real Sociedad, second-place Madrid and fifth-place Athletic Bilbao. It was the third straight loss for Rafa

Benítez's Celta, which was coming off two consecutive home defeats against Real Sociedad - one in the league and one in the Copa. The Vigo team stayed in 17th place in the league.

There were some jeers during and after the match toward Benítez, who is in the first year of a three-year contract with Celta.

Celta had risked dropping into the relegation zone later Sunday but Cadiz drew 0-0 with Athletic, and Sevilla was held to a 1-1 draw against Osasuna.

## SOCCER

Benítez complained about the poor field conditions at Balaidos Stadium, as did Michel and some Girona players.

Girona conceded some chances but was in control during most of the match.

Portu found the net from inside the area with a low shot by the near post in the 20th minute.

Atletico Madrid moved past Barcelona into third place by beating Valencia 2-0 with a goal in each half by Samuel Lino and Memphis Depay.



Barcelona's Ronald Araujo, center, kicks the ball during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Barcelona and Villarreal at the Olimpic Lluís Companys stadium in Barcelona. (AP)

PARIS, Jan 29, (AP): Paris Saint-Germain blew a two-goal advantage and saw its French league lead over Nice reduced to six points after a 2-2 draw with surprise front-runner Brest.

PSG led 2-0 at the break but an own-goal and an equalizer 10 minutes from the end exposed ongoing difficulties at the back when under pressure.

Luis Enrique is the latest PSG coach to be confronted with a problem with composure that resurfaces every season, especially when star striker Kylian Mbappé fails to paper over the cracks with his scoring.

He could not add to his league-leading 19 goals and was shown a yellow card early in the second half over a heated exchange with defender Kenny Lala.



PSG's Lucas Beraldo heads the ball during the French League One soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Brest at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris, France. (AP)

## SOCCER

Winger Jérémy Le Douaron went close with a header in the 19th minute as Brest settled well, and PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma had to make a smart save from Romain Del Castillo in the 28th.

At least that woke PSG up.

Attacking midfielder Marco Asensio opened the scoring 10 minutes later with an angled drive after being set up by left winger Bradley Barcola and, moments before the break, forward Randal Kolo Muani doubled the lead when he followed up a thwarted effort from Asensio.

But PSG has been blighted by sloppy defending in recent years, and Mahdi Camara's shot was deflected past Donnarumma by central defender Danilo Pereira in the 55th to give coach Eric Roy's Brest side hope.

Brest's first goal came moments after Mbappé's caution and a frustrating night for the World Cup star got worse as he watched PSG's defense capitulate again. Brest midfielder Mathias Pereira Lage expertly backheeled Martín Satriano's left-wing cross past Donnarumma for 2-2 in the 80th.

Mbappé grabbed a last-gasp winner when the sides met in October but this time saw a late effort blocked by defender Brendan Chardonnet.

PSG finished with 10 players at a deflated Parc des Princes when an agitated Barcola got a second yellow

card in the final seconds of stoppage time.

Brest is nine points behind PSG in third place and has a chance to knock PSG out of the French Cup when it returns to Paris in the round-of-16 match on Feb. 7.

Earlier, Lille missed the chance to go ahead of Monaco on goal difference and into fourth place when it drew 0-0 at Montpellier.

However, Lille still did well to earn a point with 10 players after Ayyoub Bouaddi's sending off in first-half stoppage time for a foul on playmaker Téji Savanier.

Lille remains in fifth place and two points ahead of Reims, which could only draw 0-0 with visiting Nantes.

Veteran midfielder Andre Ayew rolled back the years with a spectacular goal to earn Le Havre a 3-3 draw at rock-bottom Lorient.

The Ghana international scored his first two goals since joining Le Havre this summer. He twice equalized for his team, with a header in the 85th minute for 2-2 and in the fourth minute of stoppage time with an overhead kick to make it 3-3.

In other games, eighth-place Lens won 2-0 at struggling Toulouse with goals from midfielders David Pereira da Costa and Andy Diouf, while coach Patrick Vieira's midtable Strasbourg side drew 1-1 at Clermont.

## Al-Qadisiya dominate Al-Tadamon

## Al-Sulaibikhat bolster chances of securing a spot in semifinals

By Khaled El Anzi

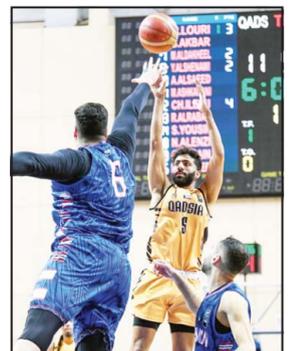
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29: The first basketball team of Al-Qadisiya Club secured a significant triumph against Al-Tadamon with a commanding score of 101-54 at Al-Itihad Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, marking the fourth round of the second division of the league. Concurrently, Al-Sulaibikhat also celebrated a victorious outcome, prevailing over Al-Nasr with a final score of 82-74. These outcomes propelled Al-Qadisiya to a total of 23 points, while Al-Tadamon trailed with 13 points. Al-Sulaibikhat, likewise, bolstered its chances of securing a spot in the semi-finals by accumulating 21 points, as opposed to Al-Nasr's 16 points.

## BASKETBALL

The league's structure comprises two segments, with the top four teams advancing to the semi-finals after the conclusion of the second section to vie for the championship.

Al-Qadisiya asserted control over the match effortlessly from the onset, concluding the initial quarter at 26-16, the second at 57-26, and the third at 72-43, ultimately sealing the victory at 101-55. Leading the scoring for Al-Qadisiya were Muhammad Ashkanani with 16



Al-Qadisiya player shoots as Al-Tadamon player defends.

points, Mohsen Mortada with 15 points, and Nawaf Al-Anzi with 14 points.

In the subsequent game, Sulaibikhat continued to showcase robust performances under the guidance of national coach Fahd Barjas, aspiring to guide the team to the semi-finals.

Al-Sulaibikhat displayed dominance early on, finishing the first quarter with a lead of 22-11 and the second at 40-29. The final quarter saw Al-Sulaibikhat solidify their triumph, securing an 82-74 win. Notably, American professionals Alexnir and Colbert stood out for Al-Sulaibikhat, contributing 24 points each to the team's scoring effort.

## Best of the Rest

**Malinin wins title:** Ilia Malinin established such a big lead after his peerless short program at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships that the phenom's free skate Sunday was less a competition and more a coronation.

Even though kings sometimes fall down.

After starting his program with a textbook quad axel - a jump only Malinin has landed in competition - he doubled a planned quad loop, fell on a quad lutz and doubled another planned quad. But even with those miscues, the 19-year-old "Quad God" was still nearly 30 points better than the rest of the competition, cruising to his second consecutive national championship.

"Even though it wasn't what I wished for," he said, "it was a fun experience. I enjoyed having the crowd with me every step."

Malinin finished with 294.35 points, well below the world-leading score of 314.66 points he had at the Grand Prix Final in December. But it

was well ahead of Jason Brown in second with 264.50 points, while Camden Pulkinen soared from fifth after his short program into the bronze-medal position with 262.33 points.

Malinin had been bothered coming into nationals by a boot problem, and he resorted to wearing an old pair that he used at the Grand Prix Final. And with that issue still in the back of his mind, he wasn't sure whether he would try the quad axel.

He did. And he landed it in spectacular fashion. (AP)

**Valieva disqualified:** Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva was disqualified from the 2022 Olympics on Monday, almost two years after the teenager's doping case caused turmoil at the Beijing Games.

The verdict from the Court of Arbitration for Sport means the Russians are set to be stripped of the gold medal in figure skating's team event. The United States finished second and is set to be named Olympic champion instead. (AP)



Jordan's Yazan Alarab celebrates after his teammate scores their second goal during the Asian Cup Round of 16 soccer match between Iraq and Jordan at Khalifa International Stadium in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

# Sports

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## Last-gasp drama as Jordan shock Iraq to secure Asian Cup quarterfinal spot

Al Rashdan nets winner

**AL-RAYYAN, Qatar, Jan 29, (AP):** Jordan scored two goals in stoppage time to advance to the quarterfinals of the Asian Cup on Monday after a 3-2 comeback win against 10-man Iraq.

Yazan Al Arab leveled the game at Khalifa International Stadium in the fifth minute of added time and Nizar Al Rashdan netted the winner two minutes later.

The round-of-16 match was turned on its head when Aymen Hussein was shown a second yellow card and sent off for excessive celebrations after putting Iraq 2-1 ahead.

### SOCCER

The 2007 champion couldn't hold on to its lead and eventually folded under the pressure as Jordan mounted a late fightback.

Iraq had beaten pre-tournament favorite Japan and advanced to the knockout stage as winner of Group D. And in Hussein, it had the most prolific striker in the competition with five goals in the group stage.

While Hussein added to that total, his red card proved pivotal to Iraq's elimination.

Jordan advanced as one of the best third-placed teams and took the lead against Iraq in the first minute of first-half stoppage time through Yazan Al Naimat.

Suad Natiq equalized for Iraq with a header in the



Jordan's Mousa Altamari and Iraq's Amir Fouad battle for the ball during the Asian Cup Round of 16 soccer match between Iraq and Jordan at Khalifa International Stadium in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

68th and Hussein fired low in the 76th to put his team ahead. His celebrations, however, earned him that crucial second booking.

Jordan took advantage as Al Arab scored from a rebound and Al Rashdan struck the winner from outside of the box.



AUK's winning Men's Basketball Team.



AUK's winning women's basketball team.



AUK women's basketball player challenged by two opponents for the ball.

## AUK teams shine in UAAK Tournament

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 29:** The American University of Kuwait (AUK) men's and women's basketball teams claimed the championship in the 2023-2024 UAAK Tournament. The teams' remarkable achievement was marked by an impressive streak of consecutive victories, underscoring their dominance and proficiency on the basketball court throughout the tournament.

### BASKETBALL

Eight universities participated in the league. The men's basketball team maintained an impeccable record, remaining undefeated throughout the league. Meanwhile, the women's basketball team secured victories in all but one game during this competitive season.

Commenting on this impressive achievement, Mohammed Al-Saleh, senior sports coordinator, stated, "AUK athletics have become an attraction for prospective students, and I am very happy about this. When team players win, they feel that they are recognized as athletes, however at AUK just being part of an AUK sports team makes our players immediately feel like athletes. I am very proud of both the men's and women's basketball teams and congratulate them for all their efforts and for winning in the UAAK Basketball League."

Omar Mehdi, director of the Office of Student Life, also shared the same sentiment, "The Office of Student Life is very proud of our champions who dominated both the men's and women's UAAK basketball league. Our student-athletes' character and passion led them to this well-deserved victory."

This victory not only underscores AUK's athletic excellence but also reflects their unwavering dedication. The values of discipline, hard work, and teamwork exemplified by the athletes are ingrained in the ethos of the University, fostering a culture of excellence that extends beyond the sports field.

## ICC lifts suspension of Sri Lanka Cricket

**DUBAI, Jan 29, (AP):** The International Cricket Council has lifted its suspension of Sri Lanka Cricket.

SLC was suspended in November over government interference in its administration after the ministry of sport fired the national cricket board following poor results at the men's World Cup.

But the sport's governing body is now "satisfied" that SLC is "no longer in breach" of its membership obligations.

Guinea loom

## Congo knock Pharaohs out of Africa Cup on 'penalties'

**ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast, Jan 29, (AP):** Congo knocked seven-time champion Egypt out of the Africa Cup of Nations with an 8-7 win on penalties after the teams finished 1-1 after extra time in the round-of-16 match.

Egypt goalkeeper Mohamed Abou Gabal struck the crossbar with his spot kick before Congo counterpart Lionel Mpsasi stepped up to send the Leopards into the quarterfinals.

Also known as Gabaski, Abou Gabal - whose saves almost won the title for Egypt in the last edition - was playing because regular goalkeeper Mohamed El Shenawy dislocated his shoulder in the team's final group game against Cape Verde.

### SOCCER

It was the latest misfortune for Egypt, which lost Liverpool star Mohamed Salah to a hamstring injury during the 2-2 draw with Ghana in their second match.

The Egyptian Football Association sacrificed a cow on Thursday in an effort to change the team's luck.

However, the Pharaohs' defense was caught out by a quick throw in for Congo's opening goal, scored by Meschack Elia in the 37th. Mostafa Mohamed equalized from the penalty spot in first-half stoppage time. But extra time was needed between two teams that had failed to win any of their games so far.

It was the eighth consecutive Africa Cup match that Egypt failed to win in normal time including the previous tournament.

Egypt finished the game with 10 players when defender Mohamed Hamdy was sent off in the first period of extra time with his second yellow card for a late challenge on Simon Banza.

In the shootout, Mohamed struck Egypt's second penalty to the right of the goal, but Congo's Arthur Masuaku reciprocated by sending his effort over and no other players missed until Abou Gabal did.

Congo will next face Guinea.

Mohamed Bayo scored in the eighth minute of stoppage time to send the National Elephants into the quarterfinals with a 1-0 win over 10-man Equatorial Guinea.

The game was heading for extra time when Ibrahim Diakité crossed for Boya to finally break the deadlock with a header inside the near post.

It was effectively the last play of the game, which left the exhausted Equatoguinean players slumped on the field. A majority of the 36,340 fans in attendance celebrated, mindful of Equatorial Guinea's 4-0 win over Ivory Coast in the previous match - a result that almost knocked the host nation out.

But the Guinea players and fans had their own reasons to celebrate.



DR Congo's goalkeeper Lionel Mpsasi, (top), celebrates with Rocky Bushiri after scoring the winning goal in a penalty shootout winning 8-7 during the African Cup of Nations Round of 16 soccer match between Egypt and DR Congo, at the Laurent Pokou Stadium in San Pedro, Ivory Coast. (AP)

## Australian Open champions won't see change in rankings

**MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 29, (AP):** Australian Open champions Jannik Sinner and Aryna Sabalenka will stay where they are when the new rankings are released on Monday.

Sinner consolidates his hold on a career-best No. 4 spot in the ATP rankings, and former top-ranked Sabalenka stays at No. 2 in the WTA rankings.

Sinner rallied from two sets down to beat Daniil Medvedev 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 to win the Australian Open final on Sunday for his first Grand Slam title. Sabalenka clinched back-to-back Australian Open titles with a 6-3, 6-2 win over Zheng Qinwen on Saturday.

### TENNIS

In the men's rankings, Novak Djokovic will stay top despite a rare defeat in the semifinals at Melbourne Park, where he is a 10-time champion. Medvedev missed the opportunity to move past No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz with a win against Sinner. He remains at No. 3.

Andrey Rublev is at No. 5 and Australian Open semifinalist Alexander Zverev is sixth. Holger Rune, Hubert Hurkacz, Taylor Fritz and Stefanos Tsitsipas are in the Nos. 7-10 spots.

Despite her third-round exit at Melbourne Park, Iga Swiatek holds on to the top ranking, ahead of Sabalenka.

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