



basketball
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PM hosts Saudi Info Minister



PM Diwan photo

His Highness the PM receives Saudi Info Minister.

KUWAIT CITY, March 7, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, in the presence of Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, received on Thursday at

Seif Palace visiting Saudi Minister of Information Salman Yousef Al-Dossari and his accompanying delegation. Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al-Saud also attended the meeting.

Arab FMs shape May summit discussions in Bahrain

Kuwait calls for global action against Gaza aggression

CAIRO, March 7, (KUNA): The international community, the UN, and the Security Council must embark on measures to stop the unfathomable aggression against the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian people, said Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya on Wednesday.

Heading the Kuwaiti delegation to the 161st meeting of the Arab League's Foreign Ministers in Cairo, Minister Al-Yahya said that the Israeli war machine had pushed the people of the Gaza Strip to the edge, displacing some 2.3 million people of which tens of thousands were either killed, injured, or still missing under the rubble.

Countries around the world and international organizations for human rights, and law must put an end to such atrocities committed day by day against innocent civilians, he said, indicating that the Israeli aggressors had violated all laws and norms governing humanity.

The heinous actions of the Israeli aggressors should stop and relief aid should enter the Gaza Strip to help those who are in dire need, he affirmed.

The Kuwaiti minister welcomed the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for temporary measures, which called the Israeli occupation to follow

all necessary international agreements to prevent genocide from occurring in Gaza.

He renewed the State of Kuwait's commitment to the just solution of the Palestinian cause under the premise of the Arab peace initiative, which called for the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders with east Jerusalem as the future capital of the country.

In regards to Sudan, the Kuwaiti minister reiterated Kuwait's calls for a ceasefire in the fellow Arab country, prioritizing in the security and stability of Sudan to achieve peace.

He commended in this regard Saudi Arabia and the United States' efforts through the Jeddah 1 and 2 talks, expressing also gratitude to Egypt for hosting the summit for Sudan's neighboring state, which aimed at achieving a ceasefire in the conflict-torn country.

Minister Al-Yahya touched upon the situation in Yemen as well, saying that peace in the Arab country must come through the outcome of the national Yemen dialogue conference, the UNSC resolution 2216, as well as the efforts of Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the UN in this context.

He stressed the need for a secure passage of mari-

time vessels and ships in the Red Sea in accordance to international laws to prevent any further escalation.

On Libya, the minister expressed Kuwait's unwavering stance in support of the unity of the Arab country through constructive political dialogue, pushing for political stability via Presidential and parliamentary elections as soon as possible, in addition to unifying the security forces and military.

On Somalia, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister welcomed UNSC resolution 2714, which called for lifting the weapons imports embargo on Somalia, which would help the government to maintain security in the country and bolster economic reforms.

The rapid political, economic, security, and environmental developments around the world required from the Arab world to enhance cooperation in the region and develop partnerships with others countries around the world to face challenges and prevent catastrophes from occurring as much as possible, concluded, the Kuwaiti official.

The outcomes of the Arab Foreign Ministers meeting will be forwarded to the upcoming Arab summit to be held in Bahrain next May.

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NewsWatch

VIENNA: Kuwait on Wednesday called on Iran to continue cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Iran should also commit to the framework set by the UN Security Council, said Kuwait's Ambassador and Representative in international organizations in Vienna **Talal Al-Fassam**, reaffirming the right to produce and develop atomic energy. (KUNA)

TOKYO: Director of the Chinese Foreign Ministry's China-Arab States Cooperation Forum Affairs **Li Chen** said Thursday that Beijing will host the 10th session of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum at the end of May, with Arab foreign ministers participating.

The Chinese official made the remark during a meeting with Kuwaiti Ambassador to China **Jasem Ibrahim Al-Najem**, according to a statement received by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) from the Kuwait Embassy in Beijing. (KUNA)

TEHRAN: A fire at an oil refinery in the southern Iranian port city of **Bandar Abbas** killed at least one person and injured three, state media said Thursday.

A furnace at the refinery caught fire as it was being repaired at about 11 a.m local time, state TV reports. A 38-year-old man was killed and the three people injured were taken to hospital, where they are receiving treatment, state TV said. One of the three is said to be in critical condition. (AP)

TOKYO: Chinese Foreign Minister **Wang Yi** said Thursday that China supports Palestine in becoming a full member of the UN, state-run Xinhua News Agency reported.

Noting that the failure to end the humanitarian disaster caused by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict today in the 21st century is a tragedy for humanity and a disgrace for civilization, Wang called on the international community to act to give priority to an immediate ceasefire. (KUNA)

IDLIB: Islamic State militants attacked villagers collecting truffles in eastern Syria on Wednesday, killing at least 18 people and leaving dozens injured and missing, opposition activists and pro-government media said.

The attack against the truffle hunters was one of the deadliest strikes by the Islamic State group in the area in more than a year. It took place in a desert area near the town of **Kobajeb** in the eastern province of **Deir el-Zour** that borders Iraq. Some of the truffle gatherers may have been kidnapped, opposition activists said. (AP)

Optimism and anti-corruption set tone for election dynamics



KUNA photo

Runners dash towards the finish line at CAN's cancer awareness marathon, showcasing their commitment to promoting awareness and supporting the cause.

CAN's marathon promotes cancer awareness

Kuwait's Cancer Aware Nation (CAN) organized a sports marathon Thursday, titled "Your Health First," at Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium as part of the Colorectal Cancer Awareness Campaign, with participation from Health and Interior Ministries, General Sports Authority, and Patient Helping Fund Society.

During the marathon, Chairman of the Board of Directors of CAN Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh emphasized in a press statement that this collaboration with a specialized academy aims to embed sports concepts in the minds of citizens and residents, underscoring its crucial role in boosting immunity and battling chronic diseases, particularly cancer.

Al-Saleh underlined the pivotal role of sports in improving human life, citing its ability to strengthen muscles, improve circulation, boost metabolism, stimulate appetite for healthy food, reduce fat accumulation, ward off chronic diseases, and stave off aging symptoms.

He clarified that colorectal cancer ranks first among men and second among women in Kuwait, according to recent statistics, mentioning that 89 Kuwaiti men and 78 Kuwaiti women are diagnosed with colorectal cancer annually, warning that these

are large numbers that need awareness to prevent this disease. (KUNA)

Al-Saleh commended the Kuwait Sports Day initiative, scheduled for March ninth, noting CAN's participation in this event, set to take place the day after tomorrow, Saturday, pointing out that participation is encouraged for all residents of Kuwait.

On his side, Director of the Department of Prevention and Response to Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases at the Ministry of Health Dr. Hammoud Al-Zoubi emphasized the department's partnership with CAN to combat chronic diseases through community engagement, stressing the need for awareness about risk factors like physical inactivity, unhealthy diet, and smoking.

He explained that combating cancer tops the national strategy for combating chronic diseases at the ministry, including early detection through established programs such as the National Program for Early Diagnosis of Colorectal Cancer, the National Breast Cancer Detection Program, and primary healthcare programs. (KUNA)

32 more join race

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: Thirty-two citizens, including one woman, on Thursday filed their candidacy for the parliamentary election on April 4, 2024.

The total number of candidates reached 134 -- 130 men and four women -- at the end of the fourth day of the 10-day registration period for candidates.

Following are the candidates who registered on Thursday as per constituency:

First Constituency: five men (Ahmad Khalifa Al-Shohoumi, Khalid Marzouq Al-Omaira, Adel Jassim Al-Damkhi, Abdullah Al-Khabbaz and Ali Falah Al-Sabri)

Second Constituency: eight male men (Ahmad Mohammad Al-Ajmi, Jaber Ali Al-Houli, Hamad Humoud Al-Shimmari, Talal Abdulrahman Al-Mehteab, Abdullah Turki Al-Anboui, Falah Lafi Al-Mutairi, Mohammad Humoud Al-Harbi and Hazza Faisal Al-Mutairi)

Third Constituency: five men and one woman (Alaa Shakir Faras, Hamad Adel Al-Obaid, Khalifa Khalil Al-Tamimi, Saeed Mohammad Tawfiqi, Mohammad Salem Al-Juwaihil and Mohalhal Khaled Al-Mudhaf)

Fourth Constituency: four men (Thamer Saad Al-Dhfeeri, Shuaib Shabab Al-Mowaziri, Abdulrahman Abdulhadi Al-Hajri and Abdullah Salem Al-Shimmari)

Fifth Constituency: nine men (Badi Husayan Al-Dousari, Bader Fadhel Karam, Hassan Mahmoud Ashkanani, Salem Hussein Al-Ajmi, Saud Batel Al-Ajmi, Abdullah Salem Al-Hajri, Abdullah Abbas Al-Tattan, Abdullah Ali Al-Sanad and Fahad Falah Al-Azmi)

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Sheikh Fahad, US defense chief discuss cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, March 7, (KUNA): Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah discussed Wednesday, over phone, means of enhancing cooperation with his US counterpart Lloyd Austin.

The call initiated by Austin also covered some topics of mutual concern, and the latest developments on international and regional arenas, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense said in a statement.

Austin congratulated Sheikh Fahad on his post, thanking Kuwait for its support to enhance bilateral ties, it noted.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Fahad expressed thanks and appreciation to Austin for the call, which included good sentiments that show deep-rooted relations between Kuwait and the US, it stated.

Iran to confiscate \$50m Kuwaiti crude oil

2 Filipinos among Houthi missile attack dead



The bulk carrier True Confidence is seen at Shimizu Port in Japan on July 6, 2023. A missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels on the ship in the Gulf of Aden on Wednesday, March 6, 2024, killed three of its crew members and forced survivors to abandon the vessel, the U.S. military said. (AP)

DUBAI, March 7, (AP): A missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels on a commercial ship in the Gulf of Aden on Wednesday killed three of its crew members and forced survivors to abandon the vessel, the U.S. military said. It was the first fatal strike in a campaign of assaults by the Iranian-backed group over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The attack on the Barbados-flagged, Liberian-owned bulk carrier True Confidence further escalates the conflict on a crucial maritime route linking Asia and the Middle East to Europe that has disrupted global shipping. The Houthis have launched attacks since November, and the U.S. began an airstrike campaign in January that so far hasn't halted their attacks.

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Kuwaiti medical team set to enter Gaza Strip Friday

CAIRO, March 7, (KUNA): A Kuwaiti medical team, comprising of surgeons and other health professionals, will enter the Gaza Strip to provide much-needed assistance, said the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), Thursday.

Head of KRCS operations Dr. Musa'ad Al-Enezi told KUNA that the team would provide treatment to the Gazan people who face daily aggression by the Israeli occupation forces.

The team -- currently in Al-Arish city, Egypt -- would perform surgeries and give treatments to thousands of those injured in the ongoing onslaught, he added.

The KRCS official affirmed that the society would be coordinating with the Egyptian and Palestinians Red Crescent societies to facilitate the four-member team's entry into Gaza through the Rafah border crossing until they reach those need of medical care.

The 46th humanitarian planeload took off from Kuwait Thursday morning heading to Gaza Strip through Egyptian Al-Arish airport, with the plane carrying a

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The 46th humanitarian flight, organized by Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), sets off from Kuwait en route to Gaza Strip via Egypt's Al-Arish airport, with a dedicated volunteer medical team on board.

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:48 Asr 15:21
 Sunrise .. 06:07 Maghrib .. 17:51
 Zohr 11:59 Isha 19:08

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Warm and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate northwesterly wind to north-easterly wind, with speeds of 10-35 km/h.
By Night: Rather cold to cold

Weather

and partly cloudy with light to moderate variable wind to north-easterly wind, with speeds of 06-30 km/h.

Station **Max Exp** **Min Rec**
 Kuwait City 26 16

Kuwait Airport 28 11
 Abdaly 27 11
 Jahra 28 14
 Salmiyah 22 17
 Nuwaisib 26 12
 Wafra 28 11

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

Nobody above law; Kuwait's ranking on CPI rose: PM

'We are determined to fight corruption, recover stolen money'

KUWAIT CITY, March 7, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said Wednesday the government has paid much attention to fight corruption and recover stolen money.

His Highness the Premier made the statement during his visit to Kuwait University earlier in the day, saying that the government filed a corruption complaint regarding the army fund.

Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Sabah added the complaint has been presented and its measures are before the court of the ministers.

He affirmed that a group of nationals have been tasked with filing law cases in some countries to restore money stolen.

"The most important matter is not only to punish those who stole money, but also to restore those funds," His Highness affirmed.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah reiterated that the message the government is keen to deliver to the public is that "we are serious in fighting corruption and there is none, whoever, is above the law."

The premier highlighted achieving justice and equality on which the values of Kuwait's society were built throughout history.

Kuwait's ranking in Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) rose about 17 points, thanks to the efforts of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha).

His Highness said that resources could be everlasting when they are better exploited, referring to some countries which could not make use of their resources.

The Premier went to say that Acting Director of Kuwait University Dr. Mishri Al-Harbi is reviewing all academic certificates from the year 2000 until 2024 that were submitted to official authorities, noting that some of them were approved and were not fake.

This is a practical, real and serious act in implementing law and combating administrative corruption, as opposed to financial, His Highness noted.

His Highness elaborated that admin-

istrative corruption has much harm than the financial one as the former creates a great state of unrest.

Since the first day in office, the government has been keen on restoring confidence in its institutions and constitution, His Highness the Premier said.

His Highness also affirmed that the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is based on turning Kuwait into a robust economy in parallel with oil economy and in line with Kuwait's 2035 Vision. He voiced confidence in Kuwaitis to build a new economy depending on human resources and innovation, not on oil.

Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Sabah said that there is a serious desire in regaining the glory of Kuwait, given the country's potential, such as the distinguished geographical location closer to the centers of economic weight like Iraq, Iran and Gulf states, referring to the "Silk Road" project among GCC members that will be launch toward East Asia and India.

Kuwait seeks to better use its location starting from Kuwait Bay to establish an outstanding logistic center to offer banking and financial services to neighboring countries, in addition to attracting global universities and medical centers to Kuwait, His Highness noted.

This is the vision of His Highness the Amir, with which he tasked the government, Sheikh Dr. Mohammad said.

During his state visits to GCC countries, His Highness the Amir highlighted economy during his talks, the premier noted.

His Highness the Premier said the government is considering carrying out with the high-speed train project to transport passengers and goods between Riyadh and Kuwait, adding that its cost is reasonable and takes into account environmental safety.

His Highness the Amir's visit to the Sultanate of Oman witnessed the inauguration of Al-Duqm Refinery, overlooking the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, the Premier said, noting it is one of the pioneering projects that could be expanded in the future, and pointing out that it links Kuwait's oil exports to the world.

His Highness the Amir also held talks with brothers in Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE on enhancing security, political and economic bonds and ties for wider horizons, His Highness the Premier concluded.



Sheikh Mohammad



Fire Department officers who will man the office at the airport.

Fire Dept inaugurates office at T2 airport project

In a proactive move to ensure the seamless implementation and uncompromised safety standards, the General Fire Force has established an office within the premises of the new airport project, T2. Spearheaded by Major General Khaled Abdullah Fahd, the acting Chief of the Fire Force, this initiative underscores a commitment to vigilant oversight throughout the project's completion, reports Al-Rai daily.

The Fire Department has assembled a dedicated team of officers and engineers with specialized expertise in safety and fire prevention. Their presence within the project premises is consistent and unwavering, with a focus on continuous monitoring until the project achieves full operational status.

This strategic decision to establish an office at T2 comes at a pivotal juncture, as the project progresses into advanced stages of imple-

mentation. With the installation of specialized firefighting equipment and systems underway, the Fire Department's role in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works, consulting offices, and contractors remains pivotal.

Through seamless cooperation and proactive engagement, the Fire Department is poised to ensure the highest safety standards are upheld throughout the duration of the project.

Petitions filed on unconstitutionality of election law; 'suspend April 4 poll'

Absence of state of necessity: lawyer

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The Constitutional Court received the first set of petitions demanding the cessation of the elections scheduled to be held on April 4 based on the unconstitutionality of the election law and the unconstitutionality of decree law No. 4/2024 regarding elections for members of the National Assembly, considering it as if it did not exist, along with the consequences that result from that, most notably the cessation and invalidation of the elections that were called according to decree No. 29/2024.

Lawyer Saad Al-Lamie, who submitted the petition, said the decree law No. 4/2024 regarding elections for members of the National Assembly is unconstitutional due to the absence of a state of necessity requiring its issuance, which is as per article 71 of the Constitution.

He said, "The decree law No. 4/2024 regarding the National Assembly elections is undoubtedly a necessary decree according to the constitutional concept.

It may not amend the electoral law, but we go further than that. We believe that the decree-law may only amend laws that are approved by an ordinary majority. It is not permissible to infringe on the scope reserved for the legislator. This is in response to what was stated in the explanatory memorandum of the decree law regarding the legislative dispute resulting from the repeal of law No. 35/1962 with the issuance of law No. 120/2023, which established the General Elections Commission.

Formation

After its formation, it was required to draw up an executive regulation for the law within six months from the date of implementation of the law. The date of its publication in the official gazette is August 27, 2023 under the number 1650. These justifications do not provide a situation of urgent necessity to issue decree laws. Law No. 120/2023 was issued by the National Assembly, and a government draft law on August 20, 2023 and published in the official gazette on August 27, 2023.

The government had a period exceeding six months from the date of publication to form the commission. The National Assembly was in session and had the right to amend any text that was tainted by a constitutional or legal defect throughout that period, as it was not dissolved until February 2024.

At that time, the Legislative Council, which had the authority to issue the law, was the one to amend it, but the government was represented in the Council of Ministers, and by its approval of the judges' objection to joining the commission, as the text required them to leave their work in the judiciary.

The Judicial Council expressed this reservation, but the government was slow in correcting what it claimed was an error in Law 120 of the year 2023, until after the dissolution of the council so that it could amend the electoral law, which negates the state of necessity.

Article 50 of the Kuwaiti Constitution stipulates, "The system of government is based on the separation of powers and their cooperation in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. No authority may waive all or part of its jurisdiction stipulated in the Constitution."

'Ramadan in mid-spring'

'Moon will not be seen in Kuwait'

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The Al-Ujairi Scientific Center said the Crescent of the month of Ramadan this year will not be visible in Kuwait, saying the Ramadan this year will be in the midst of spring atmosphere as it coincides with the winter season for the next 9 years, reports Al-Qabas

According to astronomical calculations, Ramadan next year will fall in winter, and it will return to coincide with the days of Al-Murabbaniyya in 4 other years, starting from 2028. During this time, the weather will be moderate and cold until 2034.

The beginning of Ramadan during the winter season is characterized by different seasons, including the predominance of night hours over daylight hours, resulting in shorter fasting periods that typically occur during the summer months.

The month of Ramadan for the year 1445 AH – 2024 AD will be the last Ramadan in the spring season, and it will return in this season again after 27 years.

Regarding the sighting of the crescent of the month of Ramadan this year in Kuwait, the center confirmed that it was impossible to see it according to Al-Ajiri's special criterion related to the period of the crescent's stay in the sky, its height, declination, and other factors.

This year, the fasting hours will reach 13 hours and 10 minutes, with the dawn call to prayer at exactly 44 minutes in the morning, decreasing by one minute with each new day. The Maghrib call to prayer will be at exactly 5 minutes past 5:00 in the evening.

10 am to 1.30 pm

Bank time in Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: Deputy Secretary General of the Kuwait Banking Association, Sheikh Al-Issa, stated that the timing of receiving customers at local banks during the holy month of Ramadan will be from 10 am to 1:30 pm, based on the circular issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait in this regard, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Al-Issa added local banks will receive customers as follows:

Main centers and branches operating one shift from 10 am to 1:30 pm. Branches operating at Kuwait International Airport: 24/7, based on working hours determined by each bank at its discretion.

Branches in commercial complexes — from 11:00 am to 3:30 pm except and from 8:00 pm to 11:30 pm Fridays.

She went on to say, "With the possibility of a slight discrepancy in the working hours of commercial bank branches, determined by each bank at its discretion, in coordination with the management of the commercial mall in which the branch is located, customers can also complete their banking transactions easily, conveniently and securely through bank applications on smart phones, or via devices."

The automated withdrawals and deposits, however, will be available in various regions of Kuwait.

KUNA and SPA ink MoU to boost ties

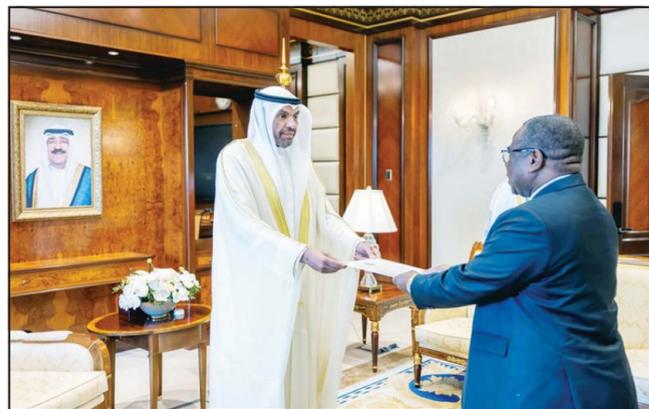
KUWAIT CITY, March 7, (KUNA): Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) and Saudi Press Agency (SPA) on Thursday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to boost cooperation with the presence of Minister of Information and Culture Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi and Saudi Minister of Information Salman Al-Doussari.

The MoU was signed by Director General of KUNA Dr. Fatima Al-Salem and SPA President Dr. Fahad Al-Aqran with the presence of Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad Al-Saud.

The MoU aims to boost media cooperation between the two agencies, exchange news, pictures and expertise in order to enhance relations between the two sides.

After the signing ceremony, both ministers and accompanying delegations toured KUNA headquarters and were briefed on agency operations and the newly-constructed (Smart Oasis) that specializes in AI technologies.

Cooperation between KUNA and SPA goes back to five long decades filled with joint efforts in various fields.



KUNA photo

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya receives the credentials of the new Tanzanian Ambassador to Kuwait Saidi Hussein Massoro.

New Tanzanian envoy in Kuwait

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received credentials of the newly assigned Ambassador of Tanzania to the State of Kuwait Saidi Hussein Massoro, during a meeting at the Foreign Ministry headquarters on

Thursday.

Minister Al-Yahya wished the new ambassador success and further promotion and development of bilateral relations between the two friendly countries. (KUNA)

CSC finalizes discussions

Plan to terminate staff working for 38 years; bonus by mth end

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) finalized discussions on the allowances and incentives of employees in some government agencies during its meeting Thursday, which was presided over by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sharida Al-Maousherji, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources disclosed that in its meeting on Wednesday last week, the CSC reviewed the required bonuses and requests for transfer between various sections of the budget; and discussions in this regard continued Thursday in preparation for taking the appropriate decisions before the end of this month -- the date for closing the 2023/2024 budget.

Sources said the CSC will also look into referring some employees for retirement, as they have reached 38 years in service and are over the legal retirement age. Sources pointed out: "Our responsibility stems from the fact that the CSC, as the entity authorized to circulate rules and regulations to ministries and government agencies, has the

Employment Affairs Sector that monitors their implementation.

Asked about the number of employees eligible for the retirement referral decision, sources revealed: "We have a group of employees and some occupying supervisory positions whose period of service has reached 38 years; while others have been in service for 31, 32, 33, 34 and 35 years."

Regarding the reasons for continuing the service of some employees despite reaching the specified number of years for retirement due to the need for their specializations and academic qualifications; sources disclosed that some of these employees hold a middle school certificate, others high school and some hold a bachelor's degree.

We must be the first body committed to implementing these rules and regulations in general. This is in addition to referring for retirement those whose years in service have exceeded the limit and approved for retirement due to the commitment of all government agencies to implement the relevant regulations."

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Sound mind in sound body; bright future, stable trade

"THERE is no doubt that our traditional eight-hour workday, five days a week, has placed a lot of pressure on the resources available in our society, especially humanity, which is the most important resource and its weakest link," columnist **Dr. Randa Diab Bahman** wrote for *Al-Anba* daily.



Dr. Randa Bahman

"As a social researcher, my job is to investigate social issues that intersect between social norms and economics. I confirm, through my experience and research, that the common denominator for almost all failed social indicators is the lack of time and energy. As an example: Have you ever thought about the common denominators between the following:

"First: An unhealthy lifestyle, which leads to health problems, and may include ordering from restaurants many times per week, and may reach children, who in turn acquire unhealthy habits, due to the lack of sufficient time to prepare meals at home or exercise.

"Secondly, there are ethical issues that include discipline, and require spending time with the family on an ongoing basis, but this does not happen due to lack of time due to the lack of balance between work and private life. Here we see that the common denominator in both cases is the lack of time.

"Through these unfortunate daily habits stemming from workplace policies, we have contributed to the rise in the obesity index, and made Kuwait one of the countries that suffer from it the most in the world. We have also lost control over matters that require discipline and morals, such as education, and other extreme social behaviors, such as car accidents.

"It is no surprise who really benefits from the current labor system. In light of this, I encourage the private sector to pick at least one social indicator that plagues our society, and build a "marathon" to sustain their ongoing efforts and tangible benefits rather than stand-alone events. My advice is to consider allowing all shareholders to benefit from the profits generated, in ways that actually benefit society.

"For example, let's think about pumping in a large amount of profits in simple and unconventional ways. Think about working a four-day week, five hours a day, and longer vacations.

"Productivity is unlikely to decline as most research shows, and making profits in the millions is also a sign of it. The only thing likely to decline when the private sector is giving back properly is shareholder profits, while the larger circle of stakeholders benefits greatly, including this country.

"Social responsibility is a means to maintain a healthy society, which is what our new government truly aims for, with the contribution of the private sector, achieving a sustainable future and a stable economy, which cannot be achieved without a stable societal foundation, first and foremost."

Also:

"Perhaps the greatest success credited to the United States of America is creating the idea of the "American Dream" and marketing it across generations. It was invented by the writer James Turslow Adams, in his book "The Odyssey of America" in 1931. Adams described America as a country that guarantees a better life and abundant livelihood for everyone, regardless of their ethnic or religious background, as long as they intend to work hard," columnist **Abdulaziz Mubarak Al-Maousherji** write for *Al-Rai* daily.

"The US government adopted this idea and marketed it to attract immigrants from all over the world, and it was in urgent need of skilled workers to contribute to building modern America. "I mention this incident to show the role of the national media in creating countries despite the difficulty of life in the country itself. The United States was built on an idea that the government embraced and aggressively promoted. It embraced creative people, gave them opportunities, and invested in skilled labor in construction and craft jobs. Society can only be built with the solidarity of all sectors of society and the cooperation of the government to enable these groups to succeed.

"Today we see a strange economic picture in Kuwait. Some of the most important sectors that were profitable for the state were privatized, Kuwaiti farmers were fiercely fought, Kuwaiti ingenuity was also eliminated, and successful Kuwaiti projects became the monopoly of a certain class of society.

"The gap between the large and medium merchant increased terrifyingly, and the small Kuwaiti merchant became extinct. I thought this was due to the nature of the market and buyer choice, but I discovered the naivety of this idea after spending some time in politics.

"When you restrict the medium and small merchant, you kill competition, and accordingly prices rise and quality decreases because there is no alternative. I specifically mention the field of agriculture, fish, poultry and meat because they are the basis of the country's food security. Choices became less and Kuwaitis refrained from these fields due to the lack of support and the difficulty of competing with major merchants..."

"Promoting small and medium enterprises revitalizes the Kuwaiti economy. These projects produce new jobs, increase competition in the market, and increase the circulation of money within the country instead of going abroad, and thus quality increases and prices decrease.

"Support these merchants and mar-

ket these fields to Kuwaiti youth. Your adoption of the dreams of the people of Kuwait will advance the country and reduce overcrowding in government jobs that serve no one. Our children are creative and ambitious.

"I ask God Almighty to grant us success, but I believe in the many benefits that will come when the government supports small and medium enterprises. Let us build the "Kuwait dream" together and build a Kuwait that will flourish and grow, generation after generation.

"I still remember the keenness of my late father, Mubarak Al-Maousherji's to support Kuwaiti projects and his keenness to buy national products because of his belief in supporting the local product over the foreign one."



"Honestly, a pen is between freedoms and lawlessness ... Some groups and political parties have been attempting to demonize our government by depicting it as an entity that oppresses the people, and that it is against freedom of opinion. Thus, they keep on trying to incite the people against the government for political gains," columnist **Hamad Salem Al-Marri** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"The more firmly the government implements the law, the more our ears are silenced by the cries of these political groups, shouting that the government is suppressing freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. The latest of these cries was an attempt to organize a political demonstration without obtaining permission from the competent authorities, while claiming to support Gaza and arguing that the Constitution guarantees their freedom of assembly.

"These groups tried to fool the people by saying that the Constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, deliberately forgetting the explicit phrase in Article 44 of the Constitution, that "individuals have the right to meet and gather without the need for permission or prior notification, and no member of the security forces may attend their private meetings. Public meetings, demonstrations and gatherings are permissible in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth by the law, and provided the purpose and means of the meeting or gathering are peaceful and do not contradict morals."

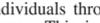
"The Constitution clearly stipulates that public meetings and demonstrations are permissible in accordance with the laws, which stipulate the need to obtain a permit for organizing such activities. So, why did these groups not obtain permission from the competent authorities to organize the gathering? Do they want to instigate chaos as they have done in the past without any benefit for Gaza or Kuwait?"

"We have been disturbed by these political groups that profit from the events in Gaza. Since the outbreak of war in the Gaza Strip, these groups have brought Kuwait into a state of political tension through the ongoing demonstrations at Erada Square. They launched a campaign demonizing anyone who disagrees with them. They described everyone who did not boycott the companies purported to support Israel as a Zionist, even though these companies and their agents are Kuwaiti businesspersons known for their advocacy of the Palestinian cause, and their huge donations for the Palestinians.

"However, we did not see any of their members traveling to Gaza and participating in the war to defend it, especially since the path to enter Palestine for these groups is very easy, given that South Lebanon is controlled by Hezbollah, which these groups support and consider a symbol of resistance.

"These groups live on chaos, so they want to instigate chaos in the country, particularly since we are gearing up for the National Assembly election. They want to obtain electoral gains from a certain political event.

"Indeed, some former members of the Assembly and some new candidates rode on this event to obtain electoral advantage. They released fiery statements against the government, threatening that they will question it politically because it implemented the law firmly and prevented chaos that some want to continue."



"Honoring military leaders ... Undoubtedly, the State honors pioneers, innovators, artists, writers and other deserving individuals through its various institutions. This is an initiative worthy of praise, considering it is a way of expressing appreciation for those who have rendered valuable services or distinguished works throughout their lives," columnist **Major General Faizal Al-Jazzaf** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"This should be done as well for former and distinguished military leaders who left an indelible mark in their workplaces. These people worked in the most difficult and dangerous conditions, including the martyrs of wars -- security officers and soldiers. The most recent of these wars was the brutal Iraqi invasion. Honoring military leaders is a moral gesture that affects the souls of honorees, and has a direct positive impact on their families and children.

"Hence, I appeal to His Excellency the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and acting Minister of Interior, who is a military veteran, to specify a day for honoring his former military brothers annually. A committee should be formed and tasked to specify the basic honoring conditions. We propose that the honoring date should be during the National and Liberation holidays. God willing, I am certain that His Excellency will adopt this proposal and make it an annual event."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



KUNA photo

Lieutenant General M. Hashem Al-Rifai (center) with the newly commissioned officers.

National Guard appoints 15 new officers

The National Guard recently celebrated the commissioning of 15 officers who graduated from Ahmad Bin Mohammad Military College in Qatar and Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the United Kingdom, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

The event was under the patronage of Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf, with Undersecretary of the National Guard Lieutenant General M. Hashem Al-Rifai and senior commanders

and officers in attendance.

Al-Rifai conveyed the congratulatory messages of National Guard Chief His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali and Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf to the newly appointed officers. He affirmed that the leaders are keen on meeting the new officers to bless them with the honor of joining the National Guard. He pointed out these officers will continue their lofty mission, along with their colleagues, to defend the homeland

and guarantee the safety of citizens under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The new officers took oath in front of Al-Rifai who urged them to fulfill their oath, be committed to being an honorable image of the National Guard, and arm themselves with the flag in their military career. He also honored the outstanding officers.

Court overrules 'gag' decision on e-media platforms reporting poll

Constitutional Court rejects three appeals

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The Constitutional Court today rejected three appeals submitted against the laws on capital markets, the practice of medicine, and social security.

The first appeal was submitted by a financial consulting company against the Capital Markets Law. The second appeal was submitted by a doctor, who is the owner of a dental clinic center, against the Law on the Practice of the Medical Profession.

The third appeal was submitted by a citizen against the Director General of the Public Institution of Social Security in his capacity, claiming the unconstitutionality of the Minister of Finance's decision regarding the conditions and rules according to which the subscription start bracket in chapter 5 of the Social Security Law is amended.



Gag order overruled: In a significant verdict, the Criminal Court of Appeal, presided over by Counselor Muhammad Ghazi Al-Mutairi clarified that electoral gag does not extend to electronic media platforms, as there is no provision to punish such conduct, reports *Al-Jarida* daily.

The court made this announcement as it overturned a lower court verdict to fine an elec-

tronic media platform on a social media network, deeming it a legal violation due to the absence of specific legislative punishment.

The court stated in its ruling that it disagreed with the Public Prosecution's assertion that applying criminal statutes concerning publication restrictions before elections constitutes a punishable offense in the absence of explicit legal provisions.

The court emphasized that the accusation against the accused was based on evidence from a legal researcher at the Ministry of Information, who claimed that the accused, on a specific date, had failed to verify the accuracy of information published on their Twitter account regarding electoral silence violations.

The Ministry of Information's complaint cited a violation of Article 7 of Ministerial Resolution No. 143 of 2016, which prohibits the broadcast or publication of any content, related to candidates for the National Assembly elections on polling day and the preceding day. However, the court determined that while such actions may contravene regulations and regulatory decisions, they do not constitute a criminal offense in the absence of specific legal penalties.

The court concluded that the prosecution failed to substantiate the accusation against the accused, as there was no evidence to prove that the published information was inaccurate or untrue. Consequently, the court annulled the lower court's verdict and acquitted the accused of all charges.

The prosecution had initially charged the accused with failing to ensure the accuracy of published information and violating electoral silence, seeking punishment under various articles of the Electronic Media.

'Clean environs'

Plan to convert waste into fuel on the cards

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The Kuwait Municipality and the State Property Administration of the Ministry of Finance will finalize a contract for an innovative project aimed at converting municipal solid waste into dry fuel, reports *Al-Rai* daily.

This groundbreaking initiative seeks to supply fuel for kilns in cement production factories affiliated with the Kuwait Cement Company. The signing ceremony, to be attended by Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, alongside key officials, marks a significant step towards environmental sustainability.



Dr. Al-Mashaan

The 20-year contract underscores a commitment to addressing environmental challenges by reducing waste, conserving natural resources, and reclaiming land currently utilized for waste disposal. By utilizing waste for energy production, the project not only mitigates environmental impacts but also offers alternative energy sources while minimizing landfill waste.

Expected to process around 20 percent of the state's municipal solid waste, the project promises substantial environmental, economic, and social benefits.



The Asian expat with liquor bottles.

Local booze seized

Police in Fahaheel detained an expatriate for illicitly selling homemade liquor in the area. The arrest led to the confiscation of 28 bottles of locally produced booze intended for distribution. According to a security official, the suspect attracted suspicion while carrying a bag on foot, prompting the authorities to take action, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

Farm equipment stolen

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: Equipment valued at KD 6,750 was reportedly stolen from a farm situated in the Abdali area, reports *Al-Anba* daily. A forensic team was dispatched to the farm to investigate and remove any potential evidence that could lead to the identification and apprehension of the perpetrators. The stolen items include various electronics, with an estimated value of 6,750 dinars.

The theft, categorized as a case of burglary, has been officially recorded at the Al-Qashaaniyah police station and is being treated as a felony. A source within the security apparatus revealed that a concerned citizen reported the incident. The unknown thieves reportedly gained entry into the farm by forcibly breaking the door of the electrical room. The stolen items include two air conditioning units, two electrical machines, and two air cylinders. The estimated value of the stolen goods was verified through a general power of attorney issued by the farm owner's father.

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3,700 participants of 47 nationalities take part in competition

Al-Kharafi expresses happiness to honor Qur'an memorizing winners

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: Sponsor of the Muhammad Abdul Mohsen Al-Kharafi Competition for Memorizing the Holy Qur'an Marzouq Al-Kharafi expressed his overwhelming happiness to honor a group of above 25-year-old Qur'an memorizers who won the competition, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement on the sidelines of the honoring ceremony held recently at his office in Shamiya, he affirmed: "I am happy to honor this group of memorizers of the Book of Allah in the 25th edition of the competition with more than 3,700 participants of 47 nationalities."

He appreciated the tremendous efforts exerted by Di-

rector of the House of Qur'an-Fahaheel branch Nasser Al-Dabbous and his team to guarantee the success of the competition.

He also greeted all the participants and their families on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, imploring Allah Almighty to be in the balance of everyone, especially those who have memorized the Qur'an and those who worked on this competition.

He affirmed that Al-Kharafi's children and grandchildren continue to support the competition, hoping that the prize budget will increase to match the efforts exerted and the number of participants.

He recalled that his late uncle Jassim Al-Kharafi - may Allah Almighty have mercy on him - came up with the idea of the competition, which was launched with categories for males, then expanded to include male and female citizens, followed by the inclusion of different nationalities.

At the conclusion of his statements, Al-Kharafi confirmed that support for the late Muhammad Abdul Mohsen Al-Kharafi's competition for memorizing the Qur'an will continue, God willing, stressing that this is one of the best works that we support and that it remains with God Almighty.

For his part, the director of the House of the Qur'an, Fahaheel branch, and the head of the organizing committee of the Muhammad Abdul Mohsen Al-Kharafi Holy Qur'an Memorization Competition, Nasser Al-Dabbous, said: "We remember 28 years ago, specifically in the year 1996, when we went with a delegation from the House of the Qur'an to the office of the late Jassim Al-Kharafi, and he presented to us the idea of a competition to memorize the Holy Qur'an." He bears the name of his father, Muhammad Abdul Mohsen Al-Kharafi - may God have mercy on him.

MoE needs non-Kuwaiti teachers for academic year '24/'25: official

Appointment of successful job applicants in gov't sector

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education Anwar Al-Hamdan said the ministry needs non-Kuwaiti male and female teachers for academic year 2024/2025, reports Al-Anba daily.

The daily obtained a copy of the undersecretary's announcement, stating that priority for appointment after all Kuwaitis are accepted in the specializations required for the outcomes of local teacher preparation colleges as follows: children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis, Bedouns and citizens of other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Following are the conditions for applying for the post:

- 1- The general grade for the university qualification should not be less than good.
- 2- The applicant must not be more than 45 years old.
- 3- Three years experience for those with non-educational qualifications and two years for those with educational qualifications.
- 4- A certificate of experience in the field of government teaching is received for appoint-

ment only, not according to the quota and wage system, and it must be certified by official authorities.

5- The following categories are excluded from the experience requirement: children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis and Bedouns, holders of a doctorate degree with a grade of not less than 'very good' in their university qualification, holders of a master's degree with a grade of no less than distinction in their university qualifications, graduates of the College of Education at Kuwait University and College of Basic Education at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, and all other public colleges in the country.



Al-Hamdan

Appoint

Meanwhile, a government entity requesting to fill the announced positions is obligated to appoint the successful applicants, as long as they meet all the conditions for appointment and these individuals must apply to this entity within 15 days of being notified whether by

text message from the Civil Service Commission (CSC) or through the website to complete the appointment procedures; otherwise, their acceptance will be considered as done and the authority must record the relevant applications in a special register for this purpose and provide a confirmation to the applicants, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Asked if the successful candidate's right to appointment is forfeited if he is late for more than 15 days, sources clarified the appointment is not forfeited; but the entity has the right to return the application to CSC.

Article Seven of CSC Resolution No. 4/2001 on the appointment of successful applicants in ministries, departments and institutions states that if the entity needs the applicant, the abovementioned period can be overlooked.

This is in response to a question about the return of 300 citizens from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) after they were nominated by the CSC. Sources explained that the return of the applicants was due to the lack of job grades, so DGCA requested to stop the appointments and return the nominations to the central employment system. Sources confirmed that CSC will re-nominate for other government agencies that need them.



Top and above: Some of the winners of Qur'an Memorizing Competition being honored. Al-Anba photos

Authority participates in HSBC forum

CMA exerts efforts in bid to attract foreign investments

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The Capital Markets Authority, in collaboration with the Kuwait Clearing Company, took part in the HSBC Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey Forum for 2024, held in Dubai at the end of February, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This activity marks a continuation of CMA's efforts to attract foreign investments and align with best international practices.

During the forum, the authority held a series of meetings with major foreign investment institutions and international investment banks. These discussions aimed to introduce the Kuwaiti capital market system, present investment opportunities, and highlight recent developments in the capital market system development project. Of particular focus were the ongoing tests in preparation for the launch of the central broker and the establishment of a separate entity by the Kuwait Clearing Company to fulfill this role.

Through these meetings, the authority

received various proposals and inquiries concerning the investment environment in the region and the potential application of similar models in Kuwait. This exchange of ideas and information underscores the authority's commitment to fostering a robust and dynamic investment landscape.

The forum also featured workshops and panel discussions involving stakeholders from stock exchanges, clearing agencies, regulatory bodies, and investment banks. These sessions provided a platform to discuss key financial market projects in the region and address significant issues and developments shaping these markets.

By actively engaging with international stakeholders and participating in forums like the HSBC event, the Capital Markets Authority demonstrates its dedication to enhancing Kuwait's capital market ecosystem and attracting foreign investment to fuel economic growth and development.

'Serious negotiations underway'

Key Land project's success paves way for expansion opportunities beyond Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The remarkable success of the "Key Land" project, covering an 8,000-square-meter area along the Arabian Gulf shoreline, has paved the way for its parent company, Key Land Advanced Company, to explore expansion opportunities beyond Kuwait, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Since its launch last November, the "Key Land" project has redefined family entertainment in Kuwait by introducing the first beachfront family entertainment park, boasting a picturesque location by the Arabian Gulf. Buoyed by this success, Key Land Advanced Company is setting its sights on establishing a theme park with cutting-edge technologies, in collaboration with international partners. With numerous serious offers from private firms and regional government bodies, negotiations are underway to replicate the project in another Gulf country.

Fahd Al-Baghli, Managing Partner of Key Land Advanced Company, revealed that the company generated revenues exceeding one million dinars within the initial three months of its launch. As the company seeks to further expand its innovative family entertainment offerings, plans are underway to increase its capital.

Al-Baghli emphasized that "Key Land" is a registered Kuwaiti trademark, developed and executed by local talent and expertise.

Looking ahead, Al-Baghli outlined the company's strategy to establish entertainment parks featuring innovative technologies in partnership with international entities. Through a careful and deliberate approach, Key Land Advanced Company aims for regional expansion via the fran-

chise system. Serious negotiations are underway with an investment group to launch "Key Land" in another Gulf country.

Al-Baghli extended appreciation to the Tourism Projects Company for their support during the initial launch, expressing the company's eagerness for continued collaboration with fresh ideas in the future.

The "Key Land" project's inaugural launch, strategically partnered with the Tourism Projects Company, seamlessly blends activities, games, and facilities while infusing modern Kuwaiti identity into its design. Inspired by Kuwaiti landmarks, the project introduces innovative concepts tailored to appeal to new generations.

Featuring games resembling iconic structures like Kuwait Towers and the National Assembly, as well as elements from Souq Al-Mubarakiya and traditional Kuwaiti architecture, the project stands as a testament to Kuwait's rich heritage and vibrant culture.

Over three months, "Key Land" has offered visitors unparalleled experiences, including suspended bicycle rides, rope sliding, and a range of unique activities designed to boost motor skills and sensory interaction. Its scenic waterfront location adds to the project's allure, with scientifically proven positive effects on visitor psychology.

Al-Baghli expressed gratitude to the Tourism Enterprises Company for their support, reflecting the government's commitment to Kuwait's entertainment sector. Looking ahead, the company remains enthusiastic about further collaboration to introduce innovative entertainment concepts.

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Officials, employees extend sincere condolences to his family

NCCAL mourns renowned Kuwaiti software pioneer Al-Sharekh

KUWAIT CITY, March 7, (KUNA): The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) mourned Wednesday Kuwaiti software entrepreneur Mohammad Abdulrahman Al-Sharekh who introduced the first Arabic language Operating System into computers.

Al-Sharekh died earlier on Wednesday at the age of 82.

In a press statement issued by the NCCAL Secretary, the NCCAL Chairman and Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and the NCCAL officials and employees extended



Al-Sharekh

sincere condolences to Al-Sharekh's family.

Al-Sharekh was the founder and Chairman Emeritus of Sakhr Software Company.

Through his company he developed a new generation of Arabic Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques that were used in the development of automated morphology and automatic diacritizer.

His company obtained three patents from the US Patents and Trademark Office in the field of Arabic language for automatic pronunciation, automatic translation and optical character recognition.

He won several Kuwaiti and international awards and prizes including the Outstanding Achievement Award in the field of Localization in 2005, the World Summit Award in 2007, the Kuwait's State Prize in 2018 and the Saudi King Faisal International Prize in 2021.

Optimism and

Continued from Page 1

The Elections Affairs General Department in Ministry of Interior will continue receiving the applications of candidates until March 13, 2024.

Meanwhile, former MP Adel Jassim Al-Damkhi, who filed his candidacy in the First Constituency, stressed that the recent period pushed everyone to be optimistic, owing to the latest measures and the court verdicts punishing those proven to be corrupt. He affirmed that HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah is keen on combating corruption.

He said the election will be held during the holy month of Ramadan, which is allocated for worship; indicating that participating in the election is a form of worship and it is one of the duties of mankind.

He pointed out that the 2023 Parliament had numerous achievements like the unprecedented coordination with the government, agreement on the legislative agenda, and ratification of important bills which contributed to the reduction of real estate prices and pushed for economic reform.

First Constituency candidate Ali Falah Al-Sabri revealed that his electoral program is based on the beliefs of HH the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem; particularly the concepts of equality, justice and democracy.

He criticized the work program of the government, claiming it is just a copy of the programs adopted by successive governments for 20 years. He then stressed the need for a feasible work program, which should be implemented within a certain period.

Second Constituency candidate Falah Lafi Al-Mutairi stated that if he wins in the election, he will file a grilling motion against HH the Prime Minister if the latter does not take action to improve the living standards of citizens.

Third Constituency candidate Alaa Shakir Faras said she filed her candidacy even if she has no political experience due to her belief in democracy and freedom of speech, as well as in response to the Amiri speech. "Whenever we look into the causes of any problem, we are informed that it is due to the lack of legislation and this is the MPs' task. Many MPs spent almost half of their life in the legislature, but the bills they submitted were not ratified," she stated.

She highlighted the housing issue, indicating that Kuwait Municipality hands over land to the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW); but the latter waits for years before launching a housing project. She said the citizen grows old, receives the plot, is obligated to build his house and relocate to the new house even if the infrastructure and basic services have yet to be completed.

She said many countries have achieved advancement through the comprehensive development of education, wondering how the educational issue in the country is addressed if the main pillar -- the teacher -- has no job security. She added whoever was born after 2010 has not seen any entertainment cities in the country; hence, the need to pay attention to this field.

Former MP and Third Constituency candidate Hamad Adel Al-Obaid stressed that the 2023 Parliament never tolerated any act deemed offensive to HH the Amir, stating that the Amiri entity is secured as per the Constitution.

On the election of the next speaker, Al-Obaid disclosed it will be decided according to the elections results. He believes the next speaker will be elected after coordinating the positions of MPs. He praised the achievements of the 2023 Parliament, especially since four bills were ratified in its first year. He said the parliamentary committees worked hard during the summer break and seven bills were ratified in the second year.

Former MP and Third Constituency candidate Mohalhal Khaled Al-Mudhaf has warned HH the Prime minister if he appoints ministers who are subject of cases which have yet to be settled through a final verdict, grants exceptional salaries to ministers, refuses to improve the standard of living of citizens, allocates the Council of Ministers for the benefit of certain individuals, and disrupts the State Audit Bureau's auditing of the accounts of Kuwait Army Fund.

Activist Saeed Mohammad Tawfiqi posted on X (formerly Twitter) that he filed his candidacy for the Third Constituency, as he decided to pass through the difficult road. He explained it is easy for a candidate to express support for popular issues like increasing salaries and improving services, but this is not the way to establish advanced countries. He stated that Kuwait has 600,000 students in different educational stages and this means 600,000 jobs will be required in almost 10 years; in addition to services like health, housing and others. He argued the salary increment should not be for everyone, wondering how a citizen with a salary of KD10,000 could ask for an increment.

He suggested limiting the basic food-stuff subsidy to low-income families, adding that the local economy solely depends on oil which is not sustainable; hence, the need to find alternative sources of income, rather than withdrawing investment gains, because these are allocated for the future generations.

Former MP and Fourth Constituency

candidate Shuaib Shabab Al-Mowaziri disclosed some parties do not believe in the Constitution, particularly Article Six, which states: "Kuwait's system of government is democratic; sovereignty is vested in the Nation as the source of all authority, and the exercise of that sovereignty shall be as set out in this Constitution."

He asserted that "even if the Parliament is dissolved every week, we will never stop participating in the elections. The citizens are the judges."

Kuwaiti medical

Continued from Page 1

volunteer medical team from Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS).

KRCS Secretary General Maha Al-Barjas told KUNA prior to departure that the medical team, specialized in surgery, is setting out to support Palestinian medical crew, ease the extreme pressure on doctors and nurses, and provide necessary treatments.

She took note of the Kuwaiti volunteer team, praising their sense of duty.

Al-Barjas further underlined that medical equipment need to be permitted entry into Gaza as the Strip is suffering a great shortage.

She explained that KRCS will be installing a field hospital in cooperation with Palestinian and Egyptian counterparts as the Gaza medical sector is deteriorating with the Israeli aggression continuing to target hospitals.

Kuwait calls

Continued from Page 1

Also:

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait's Foreign Ministry has condemned the Israeli occupation's decision to build 3,500 new illegal settlement units in the West Bank, in addition to the continued attempts to Judaize large parts of the Bank, including Jerusalem.

In a statement on Thursday, a ministry statement renewed demanding the international community and the Security Council to stand firmly to stop these violations, calling on the world not to recognize the Israeli illegal decision, which eliminates any chance for peace in the region.

It reaffirmed Kuwait's support to the Palestinian people to restore their legitimate rights, clearly stipulated in international resolutions, stressing that all Palestinians have the right to enjoy a safe and stable life.

2 Filipinos

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, Iran announced Wednesday that it would confiscate a \$50 million cargo of Kuwaiti crude oil for American energy firm Chevron Corp. aboard a tanker it seized nearly a year earlier. It is the latest twist in a years-long shadow war playing out in the Middle East's waterways even before the Houthi attacks began.

The U.S. military's Central Command said an anti-ship ballistic missile launched from a Houthi-controlled area in Yemen struck the True Confidence, causing significant damage to the ship. In addition to the three deaths, at least four crew members were wounded, with three in critical condition.

Two aerial photos released by the U.S. military showed the ship's bridge and cargo on board ablaze.

"These reckless attacks by the Houthis have disrupted global trade and taken the lives of international seafarers simply doing their jobs, which are some of the hardest jobs in the world, and the ones relied on by the global public for sustenance of supply chains," Central Command said.

The attack came after the ship had been hailed over radio by men claiming to be the Yemeni military, officials said. The Houthis have been hauling ships over the radio in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden since beginning their attacks, with analysts suspecting the rebels want to seize the vessels.

After the missile hit, the crew abandoned the ship and deployed lifeboats. A U.S. warship and the Indian navy were on the scene, trying to assist in rescue efforts.

The ship's managers and owners said the ship's crew of 20 included one Indian, 15 Filipino and four Vietnamese. Three armed guards, two from Sri Lanka and one from Nepal, also were on board. The ship had been carrying steel from China to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

"One Vietnamese and two Filipino crew members have lost their lives," a statement from the owners and managers of the True Confidence said early Thursday. "A further two Filipinos crew members have suffered serious injuries. All crew members were taken to Djibouti."

The Philippines' Migrant Workers Department confirmed the deaths and the number of wounded from the attack.

The Philippines "calls for continued diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions and to address the causes of the current conflict in the Middle East," it said.

Sheikh Firas inspects new juvenile care homes complex in Sulaibiya

'Transfer of inmates of Correction Facility begins'

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Al-Malik held an inspection tour of the building of the new juvenile care homes complex in Sulaibiya, reviewed the progress of work there, and ensured the availability of all services for the inmates.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of the tour, Sheikh Firas Al-Malik stressed the keenness to follow up the ministry's work in all sectors, communicate directly with the beneficiaries of the services, and overcome the obstacles they face.

He affirmed that caring for and serving minors is among the ministry's work priorities, indicating that the complex provides all educational, instructional, psychological and counseling services to inmates in accordance with the latest international models.

During the tour, Sheikh Firas Al-Malik was briefed on the technical and vocational workshops and training of children.

He said the workshops contribute to building and developing their skills and honing their experiences, adding, "We have national energies and competencies in the sector capable of qualifying and raising this generation."

In turn, the Acting Undersecretary of the ministry Abdulaziz Sari said the aim of the visit was to review the progress of work inside the new complex after the start of the process of gradual transfer of juvenile inmates and to ensure that all their needs were met, adding that the visit included an extensive inspection tour of all facilities of the building.

In a press statement issued yesterday, he explained that the administration has been training inmates in all aspects through various technical workshops related to blacksmithing, carpentry, car mechanics, Arabic calligraphy, drawing, computers, and others.

The commitment of inmates to attend these workshops and interact with them reflects positively on the content of the report that is submitted to the concerned authorities. Through it, the legal penalty applied to them may be reduced, and this also helps them to integrate into society quickly.

Regarding the transfer of inmates from the Sulaibikhat complex to the new building, Sari affirmed that the Juveniles Department has developed a plan to transfer the inmates and administration departments to the new building.

He indicated that the transfer of inmates of the Correction Facility has begun, provided that all inmates and the rest of the administration departments will be transferred successively in the coming period.

Sari revealed that the capacity of the new building is 300 inmates, but the total number of inmates in the administration is 56, in addition to the judicial examination, which is about 2,000.

In addition, the Director of the Events Department Dr. Jassim Al-Kandari said the current stage witnessed the transfer of the Social Evaluation House, which contains 17 inmates, to the new building, adding that an integrated gym and a modern and advanced library were designed.



KUNA photo

Kuwaiti officials lay the foundation stone for Kuwait's pavilion in the next edition of Expo Osaka 2025 in Japan.

Dignitaries from Kuwait and Japan attend

Kuwait holds groundbreaking ceremony for pavilion at World Expo 2025 in Osaka

TOKYO, March 7, (KUNA): Kuwait held a groundbreaking ceremony for its pavilion at World Expo 2025 in Osaka Thursday, a major step in its participation in the upcoming event.

The ceremony, held at the site on the Expo's artificial island of Yumeshima, was attended by dignitaries from Kuwait and Japan, including Kuwait's Commissioner General for Expo 2025 Osama Salem Al-Watyan, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Japan Sami Al-Zaman and Supreme Council for Planning and Development Secretary-General Dr. Khaled Mahdi.

In his speech, Al-Watyan said that, "We celebrate the laying of the foundation stone to announce the actual implementation phase of Kuwait's Pavilion at the Expo,

which is the transition phase from theoretical planning to practical implementation."

He added that as Kuwait lays the foundation stone for the Kuwait Pavilion, "we look forward to completing everything we started in an effort to strengthen the close ties between Kuwait and Japan, as well as the rest of the world," as the expo welcomes international visitors.

Under the theme of the "Visionary Lighthouse," the Kuwait pavilion, opening in April 2025, will display Kuwait's history and culture, noting that visitors can experience a journey through the past, present and future in four exhibition rooms that combine tradition and cutting-edge technology.

Kuwait emphasizes tourism's role in global economy at tourism communication confab

By Inass Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information and Culture Dr. Nasser Al-Muhaisen says the tourism industry has become the vital artery of the global economy, as it contributes to the prosperity and progress of countries, especially since it is one of the most important sectors that provide investment opportunities and is considered an essential source of countries' resources.

In a speech he delivered on behalf of the Minister of Information and Culture Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi at the opening ceremony of the Tourism Communication Conference, which was held on Monday under his auspices at the Regency Hotel, Al-Muhaisen affirmed that Kuwait possesses a civilizational and cultural heritage, climatic diversity, and urban development that enables it to raise the level of touristic attraction.

He highlighted the need to enhance the concept of intra-tourism and work to improve the quality of facilities and services for this vital sector and the way it contributes to enhancing economic growth.

Al-Muhaisen stressed that tourism in Kuwait, with its potential, promises more projects of a touristic nature, accompanied by promotional programs that will contribute to advancing tourism recovery, to be a tributary towards raising the domestic product with the participation of the private sector and for attracting foreign investments.

Effective

He concluded by expressing his hope that the Tourism Communication Conference will contribute to producing effective decisions and recommendations to support and promote tourism in the Gulf countries, especially since the conference includes an elite group of Gulf specialists and academics from the government and private sectors who will discuss the vital role played by civil society organizations in the tourism industry.

Meanwhile, Director of the Regional Department for the Middle East at the World Tourism Organization Basma Al-Maiman explained that tourism in the Middle East is considered a pillar of the economy. It plays a vital role in society and the life of the individual. It also provides solutions to some of the biggest challenges facing countries,

including the climate emergency and the urgent need to shift to more sustainable economies.

The Middle East region is at the forefront of recovery operations, as it witnessed the strongest performance of 122 percent among global regions and was the first region in the world to recover from pre-pandemic numbers until December 2023, according to the latest release of the United Nations Tourism Organization's scale in January 2024. So far, the Middle East remains the only region in the world that has exceeded 2019 levels.

She pointed to some of the factors that supported this performance, including facilitating obtaining visas, developing new destinations, and investments in new projects related to tourism and hosting major events.

Support

Al-Maiman affirmed the importance of joint Gulf communication to support the promotion of tourism on social media platforms with interesting and attractive content.

She explained that high-quality tourism infrastructure enhances the visitor's experience in general, which has had a positive impact on most airports in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries that witnessed a significant increase in the number of travelers during the year 2023. The increase represents additional evidence that the region is turning into centers for global travel.

According to a recent statistic issued at the end of 2023, Dubai International Airport attracted 86.9 million passengers, Hamad Airport in Doha attracted 45.9 million passengers, and King Abdulaziz Airport in Jeddah attracted 42.7 million passengers. Kuwait International Airport attracted 15.6 million passengers, Muscat Airport 12.6 million passengers, and Bahrain Airport 8.7 million passengers.

This is a sign that reflects the continued growth in the air transport industry in the region and indicates the importance of airports as leading centers for travel and trade not only in the region but globally.

She stressed the need to exchange experiences and expertise between the Gulf countries regarding international tourism in order to build capabilities and develop policies and regulations in the tourism field, and unify efforts to encourage policies that enhance the growth of tourism as an important economic sector.

Al-Otaibi praises Mol's efforts

Kuwait Integrity Society emphasizes candidate registration transparency

By Mohammad Al-Measab

KUWAIT CITY, March 7, (KUNA): Kuwait Society of National Integrity (KSNI) Director Mohammad Al-Otaibi said, Thursday, KSNI's monitoring is a display of transparency within Parliament 2024 candidates, and demonstrates the equal chances in the elections registration.



Al-Otaibi

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Otaibi said the KSNI's presence in the Election Affairs Department of the Ministry of Interior

during the fourth day of candidate registrations is to monitor and review the process of registration, prepare a report, and submit it to the appropriate authorities.

While urging media outlets to report the elections with credibility and objectivity.

Al-Otaibi praised the Ministry of Interior's efforts for providing necessary services for, and praised the Ministry of Information for covering the democratic electoral process.

The Ministry of Interior's Electoral Affairs Department started accepting candidate applications for the 2024 National Assembly Elections on March 4, and will continue until March 31, with the elections taking place on April 4.

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World News Roundup

Europe

EU's EPP endorses Von der Leyen bid for 2nd term: The European Union's largest political party on Thursday endorsed Ursula von der Leyen's bid for a second five-year term at the helm of the bloc's powerful Commission.

Von der Leyen's nomination at a gathering of her center-right European People's Party in Romania's capital, Bucharest, comes ahead of June 6-9 elections for the European Parliament, the EU's only democratically elected institution. The endorsement places her firmly as a frontrunner for the top job in the 27-nation bloc.

The EPP is expected to remain the biggest in the bloc's legislature after the June voting, but von der Leyen's posting would still require approval from leaders of the EU's member states. Almost half of the EU's 27 national leaders are members of the EPP.

As the two-day EPP meeting came to a close Thursday, von der Leyen warned of the expected rise of populists in the bloc's upcoming elections and Russia's attempt "to wipe Ukraine off the face of the earth."

"Our peaceful and united Europe is being challenged like never before by populists, by nationalists, by demagogues, whether it's the far right or it's the far left," she said. "The names may be different, but the goal is the same. They want to trample on our values and they want to destroy our Europe ... the EPP will never let that happen."

Since von der Leyen was elected in 2019 as the Commission's executive representing the EU's 450 million citizens, she has steered the bloc through a series of crises. (AP)

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Putin's crackdown casts a wide net: It's not just opposition politicians who are targeted in the crackdown by Russian President Vladimir Putin's government in recent years. Also falling victim are independent voices as well as those who don't conform to what the state sees as the country's "traditional values."

Russia's once-thriving free press after the collapse of the Soviet Union has been largely reduced to either state-controlled media or independent journalists operating from abroad, with few critical outlets still working in the country. Prominent rights groups have been outlawed or classified as agents of foreigners. Lawyers who represented dissidents have been prosecuted.

A look at some of those who have come under attack during Putin's 24-year rule that is likely to be extended by six more years in this month's presidential election:

Independent news sites largely have been blocked in Russia since the first weeks of the war in Ukraine. Many have moved their newsrooms abroad and continue to operate, accessible in Russia via virtual private networks, or VPNs. Reporting inside Russia or earning money off Russian advertisers has been difficult. (AP)

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Navalny's widow calls for election day gatherings: The widow of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who died in an Arctic prison three weeks ago, called on his supporters on Wednesday to join a protest of this month's presidential election that Navalny devised shortly before his still-unexplained death.

Yulia Navalnaya asked Russians opposed to President Vladimir Putin to get in line at voting stations on March 17, the last and main day of voting.

Putin is certain to win a fifth term in office, potentially extending his rule to 2030, in the election that includes only token opponents.

Navalnaya acknowledged that in a video message on X, formerly Twitter, saying "Putin will imagine any result that he likes, even 80, even 180%."

But the gathering "will help millions of people see like-minded people and realize that we are not alone, we are surrounded by people who are also against war, against corruption and against lawlessness," she said. (AP)

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Corruption high profile issue in election: Home furnishings giant Ikea recently placed billboards in Portugal advertising a self-assembly bookcase, with a wink at the country's political upheaval. "A good place to stash books. Or to stash 75,800 euros," it said.

That's the amount of cash, equivalent to \$82,000, police found stuffed in envelopes on bookshelves when they searched the office of the prime minister's chief of staff last year during a corruption investigation.

The discovery triggered a scandal that brought down the government and led to an early general election on Sunday.

Corruption is a high-profile issue in the election after the cases "caused a lot of public dismay," said Paula Espirito Santo, an associate professor at the University of Lisbon's Superior Institute for Social and Political Sciences. The outrage could give further momentum to a rightward drift in European politics as a radical right populist party benefits from disenchantment with mainstream political parties. (AP)

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'8,565 migrants died on land and sea': At least 8,565 migrants died on land and sea routes worldwide last year, the highest number since the UN migration agency began counting deaths a decade ago.

The biggest increase was on the treacherous Mediterranean Sea crossing, to 3,129 from 2,411 in 2022, the International Organization for Migration said Wednesday. However, that was well below the 5,136 deaths recorded on the Mediterranean in 2016 as huge numbers of Syrians, Afghans and others fled conflicts in their homelands toward Europe.

The 2023 count was nearly 20% more than the previous year. Most of the deaths last year, about 3,700, were people who drowned. The count also includes migrants who vanished - often while trying to cross by sea - and are presumed dead even if their bodies were not found.

The Geneva-based migration agency cautioned that their count likely underestimates the true death toll and said improved data collection methods are a factor in its calculations.

"Every single one of them is a terrible human tragedy that reverberates through families and communities for years to come," IOM Deputy Director General Ugochi Daniels said in a statement. (AP)

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Huge fire engulfs police station in London: About 175 firefighters tackled a blaze at a police station in east London on Wednesday, battling thick black smoke that forced emergency officials to warn residents to stay inside with their doors and windows shut.

Some 30 fire engines responded to the Forest Gate police station on Romford Road, with reports that the roof was completely on fire, the London Fire Brigade said. Four ladder trucks were being used to attack the flames from above.

Road closures were in place, and the fire brigade warned people to avoid the area.

The cause of the fire was not yet known. (AP)

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Pope appears unable to climb a few steps: Pope Francis again asked an aide to read his remarks and was unable to get back onto his popemobile Wednesday, as lingering respiratory and mobility problems continued to take their toll on the 87-year-old pontiff.

Francis presided over his weekly general audience, held outside for the first time this year in a chilly St. Peter's Square. But he had an aide read his catechism lesson, as he has done for the past several days.

Last Wednesday, Francis went to the hospital for unspecified diagnostic tests, the results of which have not been released. He has been suffering on and off this winter from what he and the Vatican have said was a cold, bouts of bronchitis and the flu.

Late last year, Francis underwent a CAT scan that ruled out pneumonia, but the pope was still forced to call off a trip to the Gulf because of a bad bout of acute, infectious bronchitis.

Francis has also been suffering from a fracture in the knee and inflammation of its ligaments that starting in 2022 pushed him to use a wheelchair. But he has usually managed to get around with a cane or walker and the help of aides to get him to a standing position. (AP)



US Republican presidential candidate former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley gestures to the audience as she concludes a speech at a caucus night party in West Des Moines, Iowa, Jan 15, 2024. Haley has suspended her Republican presidential campaign. The former South Carolina governor ended her White House bid Wednesday, March 6. (AP)

Politics

Senate expected to act before shutdown deadline

House passes \$460B govt funding deal

WASHINGTON, March 7, (AP) — The House passed a \$460 billion package of spending bills Wednesday that would keep money flowing to key federal agencies through the remainder of the budget year. The Senate is expected to take up the legislation before a midnight Friday shutdown deadline.

Lawmakers are negotiating a second package of six bills, including defense, in an effort to have all federal agencies fully funded before a March 22 deadline. In the end, total discretionary spending set by Congress is expected to come in at about \$1.66 trillion for the full entire year.

Packages

A significant number of House Republicans have lined up in opposition to the spending packages, forcing House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., to use an expedited process to bring the bill up for a vote. That process requires two-thirds of the House to vote for the measure for it to pass.

The House passed the measure by a vote of 339-85.

The nondefense spending in this year's bills is relatively flat compared to the previous year. Supporters say that keeping that spending below the rate of inflation is tantamount to a cut, forcing agencies to be more frugal and focus manpower on top priorities. Johnson cited a 10% cut to the Environmental Protection Agency, a 7% cut to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and a 6% cut to the FBI.

But many Republican lawmakers were seeking much steeper cuts and more policy victories. The House Freedom Caucus, which contains dozens of the GOP's most conservative members, urged Republicans to vote against the first spending package and oppose the second one being negotiated.

"Despite giving Democrats higher spending levels, the omnibus text released so far punts on nearly every single Republican policy priority," the group said.

Johnson countered that House Republicans have just a two-vote majority in the House while Democrats control the Senate and White House.

"We have to be realistic about what we're able to achieve," Johnson said.

Haley suspends campaign & leaves Trump as last major GOP candidate

NEW YORK, March 7, (AP) — Nikki Haley suspended her presidential campaign on Wednesday after being soundly defeated across the country on Super Tuesday, leaving Donald Trump as the last remaining major candidate for the 2024 Republican nomination.

Haley didn't endorse the former president in a speech in Charleston, South Carolina. Instead, she challenged him to win the support of the moderate Republicans and independent voters who supported her.

"It is now up to Donald Trump to earn the votes of those in our party and beyond who did not support him. And I hope he does that," she said. "At its best, politics is about bringing people into your cause, not turning them away. And our conservative cause badly needs more people."

Haley, a former South Carolina governor and UN ambassador, was Trump's first significant rival when she jumped into the race in February 2023. She spent the final phase of her campaign aggressively warning the GOP against embracing Trump, whom she argued was too consumed by chaos and personal grievance to defeat President Joe Biden in the general election.

Her departure clears Trump to focus solely on his likely rematch in November with Biden. The former president is on track to reach the necessary 1,215 delegates to clinch the Republican nomination later this month.

Democrats staved off most of the policy riders that House Republicans sought to include in the package. For example, they beat back an effort to block new rules that expand access to the abortion pill mifepristone.

Democrats also said the bill would fully fund a nutrition program for low-income women, infants and children, providing about \$7 billion for what is known as the WIC program. That's a

Haley's defeat marks a painful, if predictable, blow to those voters, donors and Republican Party officials who opposed Trump and his fiery brand of "Make America Great Again" politics. She was especially popular among moderates and college-educated voters, constituencies that will likely play a pivotal role in the general election. It's unclear whether Trump, who recently declared that Haley donors would be permanently banned from his movement, can ultimately unify a deeply divided party. Haley planned to address donors on a Zoom meeting Wednesday afternoon, according to two people familiar with the plans.

Also:

HONOLULU: US President Joe Biden won the Democratic caucuses in Hawaii on Wednesday, propelling him closer to winning his party's nomination again after romping through the Super Tuesday contests earlier this week.

The president defeated long-shot candidates including US Rep Dean Phillips and author Marianne Williamson.

Biden went into the vote with the advantage of incumbency and name recognition. He's expected to formally clinch the Democratic nomination later this month and will almost certainly face Donald Trump in the general election after his last major Republican rival, Nikki Haley, exited the race.

\$1 billion increase from the previous year.

As part of those negotiations, House Republicans pushed to give a few states the ability to disallow the purchase of non-nutritious food, such as sugary drinks and snacks, in the food stamp program known as SNAP. The GOP's effort was unsuccessful for now, but supporters say they'll try again in next year's spending bills.



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, (left), and Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis lay flowers at a place of Russian attack in a residential area on March 2, in Odesa, Ukraine, on March 6. The sound of a large explosion reverberated around the Ukrainian port of Odesa as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Greece's prime minister ended a tour of the war-ravaged southern city Wednesday. (AP)



Bethel



Hochul

America

8 hurt by gunfire at bus stop: Police say eight Philadelphia high school students waiting to board a city bus after classes Wednesday were wounded by gunshots from suspects who jumped from a car and opened fire, the fourth shooting on the transit system in as many days.

The previous three shootings each involved a fatality. Those wounded at the bus stop included a 16-year-old who was hit nine times and was in critical condition. Kevin Bethel, the city's police commissioner, said at a news conference. Police said later that a second victim was also in critical condition. The others were said to be in stable condition.

Bethel said the Northeast High School students, ranging in age from 15 to 17, were waiting for the bus around 3 p.m. when three people emerged from the car, which was waiting at the scene, and fired more than 30 shots. Police said the attackers were masked and the car was a dark blue Hyundai Sonata.

Police then received numerous 911 calls about a "mass shooting on the highway near Dunkin' Donuts," in northeast Philadelphia, according to police spokesperson Tanya Little. (AP)

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Four sentenced to life in prison: A US judge on Wednesday sentenced four family members to life in prison for convictions stemming from a federal terrorism and kidnapping case that began in 2017 with the search for a toddler who went missing from Georgia and was later found dead when authorities raided a squalid compound in northern New Mexico.

The sentencing comes months after jurors convicted the four defendants in what prosecutors had called a "sick end-of-times scheme."

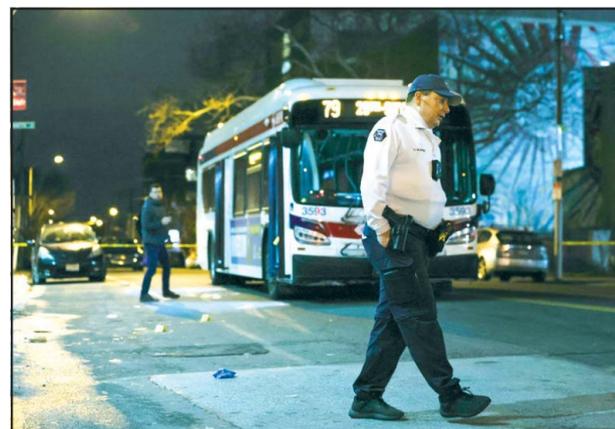
The defendants were unsuccessful in their arguments that the severity of the sentences violated their constitutional rights. That will be just one of the arguments they plan to bring up when appealing their convictions. At trial, they suggested that the case was the product of "government overreach" and that they were targeted because they are Muslim. (AP)

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Nat'l Guard in NY subways: New York Gov. Kathy Hochul announced plans Wednesday to send the National Guard to the New York City subway system to help

police search passengers' bags for weapons, following a series of high-profile crimes on city trains.

Hochul, a Democrat, said she will deploy



Police respond to a deadly shooting on a SEPTA bus in South Philadelphia on March 5. Police say eight Philadelphia high school students waiting to board a city bus after classes Wednesday were wounded by gunshots from suspects who jumped from a car and opened fire, the fourth shooting on the transit system in as many days. (AP)

750 members of the National Guard to the subways to assist the New York Police Department with bag searches at entrances to busy train stations.

"For people who are thinking about bringing a gun or knife on the subway, at least this creates a deterrent effect. They might be thinking, 'You know what, it just may just not be worth it because I listened to the mayor and I listened to the governor and they have a lot more people who are going to be checking my bags,'" Hochul said at a news conference in New York City. (AP)

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Baltimore man convicted: A Baltimore man was convicted Wednesday of first-degree murder in the 2021 deadly shooting ambush of a city police officer - a verdict the jury reached without hearing evidence about a potential motive during a trial that spanned several days.

Jurors agreed that Elliot Knox, 34, participated in the killing of Baltimore police officer Keona Holley and the fatal shooting of another man, who was found dead hours later in a different neighborhood. Holley was shot multiple times while sitting in her marked patrol car during an overnight shift.

Police detained Knox after identifying him as the owner of a vehicle captured on surveillance footage leaving the scenes. He then gave a statement to detectives in which he admitted to some involvement but identified another man as the shooter: Travon Shaw, who would become Knox's co-defendant. (AP)

Africa

Rebels kill 10 in Congo

Senegal govt sets poll for March 24

DAKAR, Senegal, March 7, (AP): The Senegalese government has set March 24 as the new date for the country's delayed presidential election, its spokesperson said Wednesday after a meeting of the Council of Ministers, also announcing the dissolution of the government and appointment of a new prime minister.

President Macky Sall, who is prevented from running for president again because of term limits, said in early February that he was postponing the election for 10 months, just weeks before it was set to take place on Feb 25. The announcement plunged Senegal into chaos as opposition protests filled the streets.

Senegal's highest election authority, the Constitutional Council, rejected the move to delay the vote and ordered the government to set a new election date as soon as possible.

On Wednesday, following a meeting of the Council of Ministers, government spokesperson Abdou Karim Fofana said in the statement the president had informed the council that the date for the new election had been set for Sunday, March 24, 2024.

"The President of the Republic also informed the Prime Minister and ministers of the formation of a new Government," the statement said.

Prime Minister Amadou Ba, an election frontrunner who has been endorsed by the outgoing president, was replaced by Sidiki Kaba who was the interior minister.

Wednesday's announcement came as news broke that the Constitutional Council had rejected a proposal by civil, political and religious leaders that the election be held on June 2.

Senegal's election authority, which now has less than three weeks to prepare for the crucial vote, did not immediately issue any public statement on the new date.

Sall already said he will step down by April 2 when his tenure is due to end but there had been concerns over who would take over from him if elections were not held before then.

In postponing the election, he had cited the controversies over the final list of candidates - some of whom were disqualified - as a major concern that could threaten the country's stability.

But the opposition accused him of a "constitutional coup," alleging that he was plotting to prolong his stay in office. Sall denied this in an interview with The Associated Press, saying the country needed more time to resolve the controversies.

New attacks leave over 70 kids missing: A surge of new attacks by an Islamic State-affiliated group in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province has left more than 70 children missing, with fears they may have drowned in a river or been kidnapped by militants as thousands of families fled, local authorities and a group of aid agencies said.

Around 30 families now seeking shelter in Namupa province to the south have asked police to help locate their children, according to a report released Wednesday by the Protection Working Group, a network of non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies.

The attacks have hit areas that had been relatively untouched since the start of the jihadist insurgency in Cabo Delgado in 2017. They may mark a new stage in a crisis that aid agencies say forced more than a million people to flee their homes during nearly seven years of violence. Thousands were killed.

200 abducted by extremists in Nigeria: At least 200 people, mostly women and children displaced by violence in northeastern Nigeria, were abducted by Islamic extremists while they were searching for firewood near the border with Chad, the United Nations office in Nigeria said late Wednesday.

The victims had left several displacement camps to look for firewood in Borno state's Gamboru Ngala council area when they were ambushed and taken hostage, the U.N. said, in the latest attack in the conflict-ridden region where frequent abductions and killings limit movement.

"The exact number of people abducted remains unknown but is estimated at over 200 people," the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Nigeria Mohamed Fall said in a statement about the attacks, which occurred several days ago but whose details are only emerging now because of limited access to information in the area.

"While an unspecified number of older women and children under 10 have reportedly been released, scores of IDs remain unaccounted for, according to protection partners," Fall added.

10 killed in Congo, rebels seize town: A rebel group with alleged links to neighboring Rwanda seized a town in Congo's conflict-hit eastern region following attacks that killed at least 10 people and displaced thousands, reports said Wednesday.

The seizure of Nyanzale by M23 rebels came after days of fighting with security forces, local civil society leader Jonas Pandasi said. He said thousands of people had fled toward Goma, which is eastern Congo's largest city and the capital of North Kivu province. It is more than 100 kilometers (62 miles) away.

"Initial reports put the death toll at around 10, with houses burnt down and shops looted of their goods. The humanitarian situation is catastrophic as almost the entire village of Nyanzale has moved towards Kikuku," Pandasi said.

It was not immediately clear when the rebel group took control of the town, though M23 announced on the X social media platform Tuesday that Nyanzale "exudes the tranquility and deliverance," suggesting it was overrun then.

Burkina Faso plane crash kills 5: A private aircraft with seven people aboard crashed into a tree Wednesday after failing to take off successfully in Burkina Faso's eastern region, killing five people and injuring two, authorities said.

The plane was taking off from a local airport in the city of Diapaga en route to the city of Fada N'Gourma when it "ended up in a tree," the government news agency Agence d'Information du Burkina said.

The two injured people were rushed to a health facility, and authorities had begun an investigation into the crash, Burkina Faso's Transportation Ministry said in a statement.

Photos published by the government news agency showed burned parts of an aircraft scattered at what appeared to be the scene of the crash as residents gathered.



South Korea army soldiers take part in a military exercise in Paju, South Korea, near the border with North Korea on March 6. Inset: In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, (center), visits a western operational training base in North Korea on Wednesday. (AP)

Asia

Anwar urges Washington, Beijing cooperation

'US devising tactics to suppress China'

BEIJING, March 7, (AP): China's foreign minister accused the US on Thursday of devising tactics to suppress China's rise and criticized the Biden administration for adding more Chinese companies to its sanctions lists.

Wang Yi, speaking to media during the annual meeting of China's legislature, said China's relations with the US have improved since Presidents Xi Jinping and Joe Biden met in November, but America has not fulfilled its promises.

"If the US always says one thing and does another, where is its credibility as a major power? If the US gets nervous and anxious when it hears the word 'China,' where is its confidence as a major power?" he said. "If the US is obsessed with suppressing China, it will eventually harm itself."

Wang also demanded that members of the UN Security Council stop blocking Palestine from becoming a member of the United Nations.

The 70-year-old veteran diplomat, who has earned Xi's trust, returned to the foreign minister's post last summer after his successor, Qin Gang, was abruptly dismissed without explanation after a half year on the job. Wang is also the ruling Communist Party's top foreign affairs official, a more senior position that he moved to when Qin became foreign minister at the end of 2022.

Analysts had speculated the Communist Party might use the weeklong meeting of the National People's Congress to name a new foreign minister, but that appeared off the table after an agenda released on the eve of the opening session did not include personnel changes.

China's UN ambassador, Zhang Jun, said during a Security Council debate in January that China supports Palestine becoming a full member as soon as possible, as a first step toward creating a Palestinian state, according to Chinese media reports.

Also:

BANGKOK: The top American diplomat for East Asia and the Pacific criticized China on Thursday for using intimidation tactics against other countries in the region to press its sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea.

Speaking to reporters after returning to the United States from meetings with officials in Singapore, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam and Brunei, Daniel Kritenbrink said he had used

Kim calls for 'stronger' war fighting capabilities against US, South Korea

SEOUL, South Korea, March 7, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called for greater war fighting capabilities against the United States and South Korea, state media reported Thursday, after his defense ministry vowed to respond to the ongoing South Korean-US military drills that it views as an invasion rehearsal.

During a visit to a western operational training base on Wednesday, Kim said the military must "steadily intensify the actual war drills aimed at rapidly improving its combat capabilities for perfect war preparedness," the official Korean Central News Agency said.

Kim said the heightened readiness is required to "contain the constant threat of the enemies with overwhelming force," KCNA said.

It said Kim guided maneuvers of military units at the site but didn't elaborate. State media photos showed Kim wearing a black leather jacket and standing in position to shoot a rifle and standing near soldiers who were lying on the ground and aiming their rifles.

Kim has previously made similar calls for a stronger military nuclear forces. But his latest demand came two days after North Korea's Defense Ministry threatened to conduct unspecified "re-

sponsible military activities" because South Korean-US military drills were allegedly getting more undisguised in their attempt for invading the North.

The South Korean and US militaries began their annual computer-simulated command post training and a variety of field exercises on Monday for an 11-day run. This year's drills were to involve 48 field exercises, twice the number conducted last year. The two countries have said their drills are defensive in nature.

Also:

HONG KONG: Criticizing laws or chanting anti-government slogans can be enough to jail someone for sedition in Hong Kong, an appeal court ruled Thursday in a landmark case brought under a colonial-era law increasingly used to crush dissent.

Hong Kong's Court of Appeal upheld a 40-month sentence for pro-democracy activist Tam Tak-chi, the first person tried under the city's sedition law since Hong Kong returned to Chinese rule in 1997. Tam's lawyers had argued that his conviction should be overturned because the prosecution did not show he meant to incite violence.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim advocated against taking sides in US-led Western rivalries against China for strategic influence in the region. He also rejected Western criticism that Malaysia is too accommodating of China as it becomes increasingly assertive in the South China Sea.

Anwar, in a speech at Australian National University on Thursday, promoted "empathy" toward China, which he said regarded negative reactions to its rise as an "attempt to deny their legitimate place in history."

"I believe that Malaysia and Australia have a duty to try the utmost to encourage the United States, China and other major players in the Asia-Pacific to conduct themselves in a manner that is conducive to the enhancement of regional cooperation and economic integration," Anwar said.

dead man lay on his back in the parking lot of a convenience store in late February when journalists rolled in to the north-central Mexico city of Celaya to interview

police. A spray of bullet casings and spent projectiles lay around the corpse, a sight all too common in Guanajuato state, which has Mexico's highest number of homicides.



Japan's Crown Prince Akishino, (from second right) and Crown Princess Kiko welcome Brunei's Prince Al-Muhtadee Billah and Princess Sarah as they arrive at the Haneda international airport in Tokyo on March 7. (AP)

A policeman had been driving his wife to work on Feb. 28 when cartel gunmen - who had apparently followed them from home - opened fire on their car. The policeman killed one attacker before dying.

His wife and 1-year-old daughter were unharmed. But a week earlier, cartel gunmen shot a police officer to death while she took her 8-year-old daughter to school. They killed the girl, too. (AP)

Military copter crash kills 3: Mexico's Navy said Wednesday that one of its helicopters crashed into the Pacific shortly after taking off from the deck of a patrol ship, leaving three navy personnel dead and two more missing.

The Navy said searches continued for those still missing after Wednesday's accident, and the possible causes of the crash were under investigation. Three of the eight people aboard the helicopter were rescued alive and have been taken to land for treatment, where their condition was listed as "stable." Two of the dead were female navy service members.

The Eurocopter Panther helicopter took off from a long-distance ocean patrol ship about 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) southwest of the Pacific coast port of Lazaro Cardenas. Mexico's Navy frequently patrols that area to detect clandestine sea-borne cocaine shipments. (AP)



A resident cradles an infant as she walks past a crime scene where a passenger was shot dead inside a bus, in Celaya, Mexico on Feb 29. As Mexico's June 2 presidential election approaches, this city lies at the crossroads of a national debate about security policy. (AP)



Hernández



Henry

Lat/Am

Hondurans glued to ex-prez trial: Hondurans call it the "Trial of the Century," but it's occurring in a New York courtroom some 3,500 miles (5,630 kilometers) away.

Former Honduras president Juan Orlando Hernández has been on trial since February in a federal courthouse in Manhattan, accused of taking bribes to protect drug traffickers, even as he portrayed himself publicly as an ally in the US drug war.

Testifying Tuesday and Wednesday in his own defense, Hernández denied conspiring with drug dealers or taking bribes. "Never," he insisted, adding that he was once warned that a drug cartel wanted to assassinate him. Deliberations were scheduled to start Thursday.

The trial is not televised, but some Honduran news outlets sent their own reporters to New York to cover the prosecution, with each pre-trial motion dissected by local news outlets. (AP)

Politicians seek new alliances: Haitian politicians started pursuing new alliances Wednesday, seeking a coalition that could lead the country out of the gang violence that has fueled lawlessness, closed the main airport and prevented embattled Prime Minister Ariel Henry from returning home.

Haiti remained largely paralyzed, with schools and businesses still closed amid heavy gunfire blamed on the gangs that control an estimated 80% of the capital, Port-au-Prince, where several bodies lay on empty streets. The country's two biggest prisons were also raided, resulting in the release of more than 4,000 inmates over the weekend.

Henry faces increasing pressure to resign, which would likely trigger a US-supported transition to a new government.

One new political alliance involves former rebel leader Guy Philippe and presidential candidate and senator Moïse Jean Charles, who told Radio Caraïbes on Wednesday that they signed a deal to form a three-person council to lead Haiti.

Philippe, a key figure in the 2004 rebellion that ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, returned to Haiti in November and has been calling for Henry's resignation. (AP)

Celaya declines to follow policy: A

oil soars

THE price of Kuwaiti crude oil rose by 26 cents to settle at USD 82.30 pb on Wednesday, compared with USD 82.04 pb on the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said on Thursday.

In international markets, Brent crude futures went up by 92 cents to USD 82.96 pb, while West Texas Intermediate crude futures rose by 98 cents to settle at USD 79.13 a barrel. (KUNA)

Saudi crown prince transfers another 8% of Aramco shares to sovereign wealth fund

SAUDI Arabia's crown prince transferred another 8% of shares in the kingdom's oil giant Saudi Aramco to the country's prominent sovereign wealth fund on Thursday. The shares are worth some \$160 billion.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's decision comes as the kingdom is trying to build a series of megaprojects and invest in sports and other fields aggressively abroad to wean the country off of relying solely on oil.

The country's sovereign wealth fund known as the Public Investment Fund, or

PIF, has been a key element of Mohammed's plans, known as Saudi Vision 2030.

"The transfer of part of the state's shares in Saudi Aramco is a continuation of Saudi Arabia's long-term initiatives to boost and diversify the national economy and expand investment opportunities in line with Saudi Vision 2030," a statement announcing the deal said. "The transfer will also solidify PIF's strong financial position and credit rating."

The statement said the kingdom's ownership in Aramco would now be 82.186%

of the company.

Saudi Aramco, formally known as the Saudi Arabian Oil Co., acknowledged the transfer in a corporate disclosure.

"This is a private transfer and the company is not a party to the transfer and did not enter into any agreements or pay or receive any proceeds from the transfer," it said.

Aramco has a market value of \$2 trillion, making it the world's fourth most-valuable firm, behind just Apple, Microsoft and NVIDIA respectively.

Aramco stock traded slightly up on Riyadh's Tadawul stock exchange to \$8.45 a share Thursday. Benchmark Brent crude traded Thursday above \$82 a barrel.

In February 2022, Crown Prince Mohammed transferred 4% of Aramco to the PIF. Last year, the prince transferred another 4% stake to the Saudi Arabian Investment Co., known as Sanabil Investments. Sanabil is under the PIF.

Just 1.73% of the company, a narrow sliver, is traded on the Tadawul since the company's 2019 initial public offering. (AP)

Market Movements

07-03-2024

| | Change | Closing pts | | Change | Closing pts | | |
|-------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------|
| SAUDI | - Tadawul | +15.98 | 12,577.88 | UAE | - DFM | -11.32 | 4,236.98 |
| EGYPT | - EGX 30 | +1,557.43 | 31,300.54 | JAPAN | - Nikkei | -492.07 | 39,598.71 |
| | | | | PHILIPPINES | - PSEi | -41.20 | 6,837.34 |
| | | | | PAKISTAN | - KSE 100 | -48.15 | 65,558.19 |

Business

Leader with 25 years of telecom experience

Nawaf Hisham Al-Gharabally appointed CEO of Zain Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced the appointment of Kuwaiti national, Nawaf Hisham Al-Gharabally to the position of CEO of Zain Kuwait, effective immediately. With an impressive 25-year track record of success within Zain and the telecom industry across the Middle East and Africa, Al-Gharabally held roles as Zain Group and Zain Kuwait Chief Technology Officer prior to his latest appointment.

Al-Gharabally joined the Zain family in 1998, and over the years has developed to become a key member of the organization's executive management team. He possesses extensive experience across a number of disciplines covering mobile technologies, digital transformation, strategy, and management with multiple career highlights notably Zain Kuwait emerging as the first company to successfully launch 5G services in the Gulf region, under his leadership in 2019.

Al-Gharabally also led the development and modernization of Zain Kuwait's networks in recent years, playing a key role in Zain's 5G expansion in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Jordan; and 4G expansions in Iraq, Sudan, and South Sudan. He also played key technology-related senior roles during Zain's presence across 15 countries in Africa between 2005 and 2011.

A statement from Zain said, "Promoting an existing Zain leader with such an impressive track record fulfills the company's Group-wide HR policy of capitalizing on and promoting talent from



Zain Kuwait CEO — Nawaf Al-Gharabally

■ Al-Gharabally is a 25-year veteran of Zain Group, with a career highlight of Zain Kuwait being the first company to successfully launch 5G services in the region in 2019

within. The appointment of Nawaf Al-Gharabally reflects the continuous investment in and development of Zainers, and the confidence in the capabilities

of existing talents as leaders. The company is confident that his deep understanding of the Zain brand, solid operational and digital innovation expertise, and a strong history of working within the telecommunications sector across the region will prove invaluable in driving Zain Kuwait to new heights."

Commenting on his appointment, Al-Gharabally said, "I am honored to assume the leadership of Zain Kuwait, a company which has played an instrumental national role in the telecom, economic and social landscape, pioneering numerous innovations regionally. I'm thankful of the Zain Group Board of Directors and leadership for their trust and confidence, and look forward to continue working with them and the many talented people we have in Kuwait and across the Group, particularly at this point-in-time when digital transformation is accelerating and changing the way we live and work."

Zain Kuwait remains the market leader with an active customer base of approximately 2.7 million. The company recently entered a marketing partnership with Red Bull aimed at appealing to the youth market, while Zain Kuwait's nationwide 5G network has continued to grow having the largest market share of 5G subscribers in the country. The operator continues to expand its offering in the B2B corporate segment, as well as to innovate in digital entertainment and digital services for consumers and businesses alike.

Al-Gharabally graduated from Kuwait University in 1998 with a Bachelor's degree in Engineering, and went on to attain an MBA from London Business School in 2021.

Nation raises interest rate

Egypt floats currency, IMF boosts bailout to \$8 bln

CAIRO, March 7, (AP) — Egypt on Wednesday floated its currency and announced a deal with the International Monetary Fund to increase its bailout loan from \$3 billion to \$8 billion, moving to shore up an economy hit by a staggering shortage of foreign currency and soaring inflation.

The flotation of the Egyptian pound, combined with a sharp raise of the main interest rate, is meant to combat inflationary waves and attract foreign investment. The measures, announced by the Central Bank of Egypt early Wednesday, were among the key demands of the IMF to increase its \$3 billion bailout loan that both parties agreed to in 2022. The central bank, known as CBE, increased the key interest rate by 600 basis points to 27.75%.

Following the announcement, the pound began floating and within hours lost more than 60% of its value against the dollar. By the end of the day, commercial banks were trading the U.S. currency at more than 50 pounds for \$1, up from about 31 pounds.

The value of a floating currency is determined each day by traders in global markets, rather than by government policies. In that way, a floating currency imposes discipline: Investors tend to buy the currency of a nation with prudent economic policies, driving up its value.

Conversely, the market typically shuns the currencies of poorly managed economies, keeping their value low. It often punishes countries that run up huge deficits or that recklessly print money and stoke inflation. Black markets emerge when a government fixes the value of its currency above what the market thinks it's worth, which is what happened in Egypt.

The Egyptian economy has been hit hard by years of government austerity, the coronavirus pandemic, the fallout from Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and most recently, the Houthi attacks on shipping routes in the Red Sea have slashed Suez Canal revenues, which is a major source for foreign currency. The attacks forced traffic away from the canal and around the tip of Africa.

The war in Ukraine, which rattled the global economy, hit cash-strapped Egypt where it is financially vulner-

able - the most populous Arab country is the world's biggest importer of wheat and needs to buy a majority of its food from other countries to help feed its population of more than 104 million people.

The CBE said that its measures Wednesday would help end the black market in currencies and slow inflation, which reached unprecedented levels in recent months. The annual inflation rate was more than 31% in January, according to official figures.

"The CBE will continue to target inflation as its nominal anchor, allowing the exchange rate to be determined by market forces," the central bank said.

The authorities also said the CBE has managed to "secure funds" for market needs - an indication they expected the exchange rate to stabilize.

"We have sufficient foreign currency to cover our obligations, particularly after the unification of the exchange rate," central bank Gov. Hassan Abdalla told a news conference. He said the CBE will focus on slowing down two-digit inflation.

"We will not hesitate to take any measures to fight inflation," he said.

Analysts believe the source of the funds was a multibillion dollar deal last week with an Emirati consortium to jointly develop the Mediterranean city of Ras el-Hekma, 350 kilometers (about 220 miles) northwest of Cairo. Egypt will get \$35 billion from that deal.

The rising cost of basic goods has deepened the hardships faced by middle-class and poor Egyptians. They have suffered from price hikes since the government embarked on an ambitious reform program in 2016 to overhaul the battered economy. Nearly 30% of Egyptians live in poverty, according to official figures.

The new devaluation and interest rate hike will inflict further pain on Egyptians already struggling with soaring prices, said Hamish Kinnear, senior analyst at risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft.

The central bank measures paved the way for an agreement with the IMF to increase a bailout loan to \$8 billion, up from \$3 billion after marathon negotiations. The agreement, announced late Wednesday afternoon, still needs the approval of the IMF executive board, which is expected to meet this month.

Boursa Kuwait sees decline amid profit-taking and selling pressure

Mixed performance: Technology rises, banking falls

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The Boursa Kuwait experienced a decline on Wednesday due to profit-taking operations and substantial selling pressure on major stocks. The general index closed down by 28.1 points, reaching 7,400 points. Trading involved 160.6 million shares through 10,779 transactions, totaling 47.1 million dinars (approximately 143 million dollars), leading to a decrease in market value from 43.732 billion dinars to 43.567 billion dinars compared to the previous session.

The main market index saw a slight increase of 13.8 points, reaching 6,076 points, up by 0.22 percent. Trading involved 72.1 million shares in 4,671 transactions, valued at 13.5 million dinars (about 41.1 million dollars). On the other hand, the Premier Market Index decreased by 40.4 points, reaching 8,108 points, a 0.50 percent decline. Trading included 88.5 million shares through 6,108 transactions, totaling 33.6 million dinars (about 102.4 million dollars).

The Main 50 index increased by 5.9 points, reaching 5,925 points, up by 0.1 percent. Trading involved 41 million shares through 2,718 transactions, with a value of 10.7 million dinars (approximately 32.6 million dollars). Overall, the Boursa Kuwait recorded trades worth 47.15 million dinars, distributed among 160.67 million shares through 10,779 thousand transactions.

In sector performance, technology led with a 1.11% increase, while banking stocks experienced a 0.56% decline, and the healthcare sector remained stable.

45 Kuwaiti firms sign the platform

Private sector joins forces for women's economic empowerment

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: In a groundbreaking event held on March 6th at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre, the private sector of Kuwait showcased an unprecedented level of unity in support of the Kuwait Women's Economic Empowerment Platform (KWEEN). This event marked a historic moment, being the first-ever initiative of its kind in Kuwait and the broader region, where the private sector collaboratively focuses on advancing women's economic empowerment in the country.

Spearheaded and supported by Kuwait's private sector, KWEEN aims to facilitate collaborative, gender-focused initiatives in the workplace that target female career development and visibility among signatory companies. The platform is steered by its founding partners, who include eight of Kuwait's leading private sector companies—Alghanim Industries, Equate Petrochemical, Gulf Bank, Heavy Engineering Industries & Shipbuilding Company (HEISCO), Kuwait Finance House, Limak Insaat Kuwait S.P.C., the National Bank of Kuwait, and Zain Kuwait. The platform has seen remarkable growth since its inauguration on June 5, 2022.

This growth was underscored at the event, where 45 signatories were honored, and 11 companies immediately pledged their support, demonstrating a collective commitment to advancing women's economic empowerment in the country. Additionally, the event marked the inauguration of KWEEN's official website, kween.org, which will act as a key resource, increasing awareness of the platform's goals and the impact of its signatories while centralizing all data.

The website, designed for seamless navigation, serves as a dynamic resource for companies and women. It actively showcases key community initiatives undertaken by KWEEN Signatories and offers a mentorship program, enabling individuals to either become mentors or receive mentorship. The site currently includes sections dedicated to current and upcoming events, as well as a news area with regular updates on the impactful contributions of the signatories. Plans are in place to continually enhance and expand the website's features, ensuring it evolves to include more resources and information that support the platform's growing scope and the evolving needs of its users.

Today's event, titled 'Shape the Future for Women in Kuwait!' was emceed by Ms. Nagwa Assran, the Regional Director & Kuwait & Cairo Bureau Chief at CNBC Arabia. Opening remarks were delivered by Mr. Abdullah Abdulatif Al-Saif, Executive Manager - PR Center at Kuwait Finance House, followed by insight on the KWEEN's journey and future direction

from Ms. Ebru Özdemir, Chair of Limak Holding and Limak Foundation. Ms. Salma Alhajaj, General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, provided an overview of navigating KWEEN online, and Dr. Lubna Alkazi, Director at the Women's Research and Studies Center at Kuwait University, delivered a compelling call to action to non-signatory attendees. The event concluded with closing remarks by Ms. Ebru Özdemir, Chair of Limak Holding and Limak Foundation, giving honorable mention to the Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the State of Kuwait, H.E. Ms. Tuba Nur Sönmez, followed by the introduction of the new signatories on-stage, uniting under a shared vision.

Kuwait Finance House Group Executive Manager - PR Center, Mr. Abdullah Abdulatif Al-Saif, said:

"Today marks a significant step forward in our collaborative journey as Kuwait's private sector. When we welcome new signatories to KWEEN, we are not just adding names to a list. We are expanding our horizons, strengthening our resolve, and reiterating our commitment to women's economic empowerment in line with Kuwait's Vision 2035 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Our involvement in KWEEN is a reflection of our values at KFH, where we are committed to pioneering initiatives and business practices that empower women in the workplace."

Limak Holding and Limak Foundation Chair, Ms. Ebru Özdemir, said:

"KWEEN signifies a collective commitment to shaping the future of women in Kuwait's workforce, going beyond individual interests, and fostering unity among companies in the country. The platform echoes Limak's global ethos of empowerment and social investments, demonstrating how unity can forge sustainable policies for women's economic empowerment. KWEEN is a reflection of our commitment to these ideals. The platform is a true testament to the power of unity to promote the adoption of real and sustainable policies. Together, we are setting a precedent for what can be achieved when companies unite for a cause greater than their own."

Gulf Bank General Manager of Human Resources, Ms. Salma Al-Hajaj, said:

"KWEEN's online presence is a gateway to economic empowerment for every woman in the professional world. This platform is a beacon of progress, offering resources, mentorship, and a community where ambition meets opportunity. As a proud signatory and Founding Partner, Gulf Bank is committed to this vision, upholding the belief that our collective efforts

through KWEEN will lead to a thriving ecosystem where women are not only participating but leading and innovating in Kuwait's economic landscape."

Kuwait University Women's Research and Studies Center Founder, Dr. Lubna Alkazi, said:

"As we gather to amplify our collective impact, I extend my gratitude to the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, the Women's Center at Kuwait University, UN Women, and the UN Development Programme for their unwavering support. Their endorsement is a testament to the strength of KWEEN's mission. Every step we take towards economically empowering women is a stride towards a more equitable and prosperous society. Let this be a call to action for all of us to commit to decisive, enduring efforts that will not only reshape the landscape of our present but will also define the legacy of our future."

Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the State of Kuwait, H.E. Ms. Tuba Nur Sönmez, said:

"Today we are reminded of the power of unity and the impact of collective action towards women's economic empowerment. I encourage every stakeholder within our reach and beyond to look towards KWEEN as a model of inspiration. Let this initiative be a testament to the world on the transformative power of strategic partnerships and a shared commitment to economically empowering women. Together, let us continue to build on this foundation, encouraging more entities to join this noble cause. Let's set a global standard, showcasing to the world the significant strides we can achieve when we unite for the economic empowerment of women in the workforce."

KWEEN signatories represent a diverse cross-section of industries, from banking and financial services to retail and consumer goods. They include: Wara Hospital, Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) KIPCO, Edvantage, Adlouni & Partners Law Firm, Commercial Bank of Kuwait (Al-Tijari), Safira CSR, Shore Consultancy, Education Consortium, United Projects for Aviation Services Company (UPAC), Al Nasser & Al Nashie United Company, Soroptomist Kuwait, Bee Creative & Oneuse Store, SEEDS Co., Burgan Bank, United Real Estate Company (URC), Al Ahli Bank, Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait, Omnia Plastic Collection Co., Boubyan Bank, Boursa Kuwait, National Real Estate Company of Kuwait (NREC), Al-hamma Real Estate, Kamco Invest, Dar DAMEC, Al Passion, Kuwait Technical College (KTECH), Xent, Al Arbash International Center, Lulu Group International, Khayal Consultants, Box Hill College, Lei Wa Lakom, KPMG Advisory W.L.L., DHL Express, and American Business Council - AmCham Kuwait.



Founding Partners



Signatory companies in a group photo



Dr. Lubna Alkazi, Director at the Women's Research and Studies Center at Kuwait University



Ms. Salma Alhajaj, General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank

During an interview with Global Finance

Al Rushood: KFH witnesses surge in digital banking solutions

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: In an interview with Global Finance magazine, Kuwait Finance House (KFH)'s Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, Abdulwahab Iesa Al Rushood said that KFH's indicators reflected solid financial soundness in terms of assets, capital adequacy and liquidity ratios. He added that KFH achieved KWD 584 million (USD 1.9 billion) in net profit, a remarkable 63% more than in 2022 and the highest-ever profit in the history of Kuwait's banking sector. Total assets reached KWD 38 billion (USD 123.2 billion), representing an increase of KD 1.04 billion compared to last year.

During the interview, Al Rushood discussed the latest developments of Ahli United Bank (AUB)'s acquisition, saying that Ahli United Bank-Bahrain completed its conversion into Sharia-compliant bank. "The bank has officially received the approval from the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) as a licensed Islamic Bank. This means the bank will offer an integrated range of sharia-complaint products and services, including retail and corporate services, saving and investment products, in addition to trade finance and wealth management solutions. KFH has recently announced the successful completion of its merger with Ahli United Bank - Kuwait (AUB-Kuwait), including the stock swap of KFH capital's increase with the shareholders of AUBK. This historic merger officially establishes KFH as the continuing entity and AUB-Kuwait as the merged entity."

He added: "Following the acquisition, KFH has become the largest bank in Kuwait and the second largest Islamic bank in the world. Today, KFH has activities in strategic global markets including Kuwait, Bahrain, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Germany, Egypt and the United Kingdom, as well as other re-



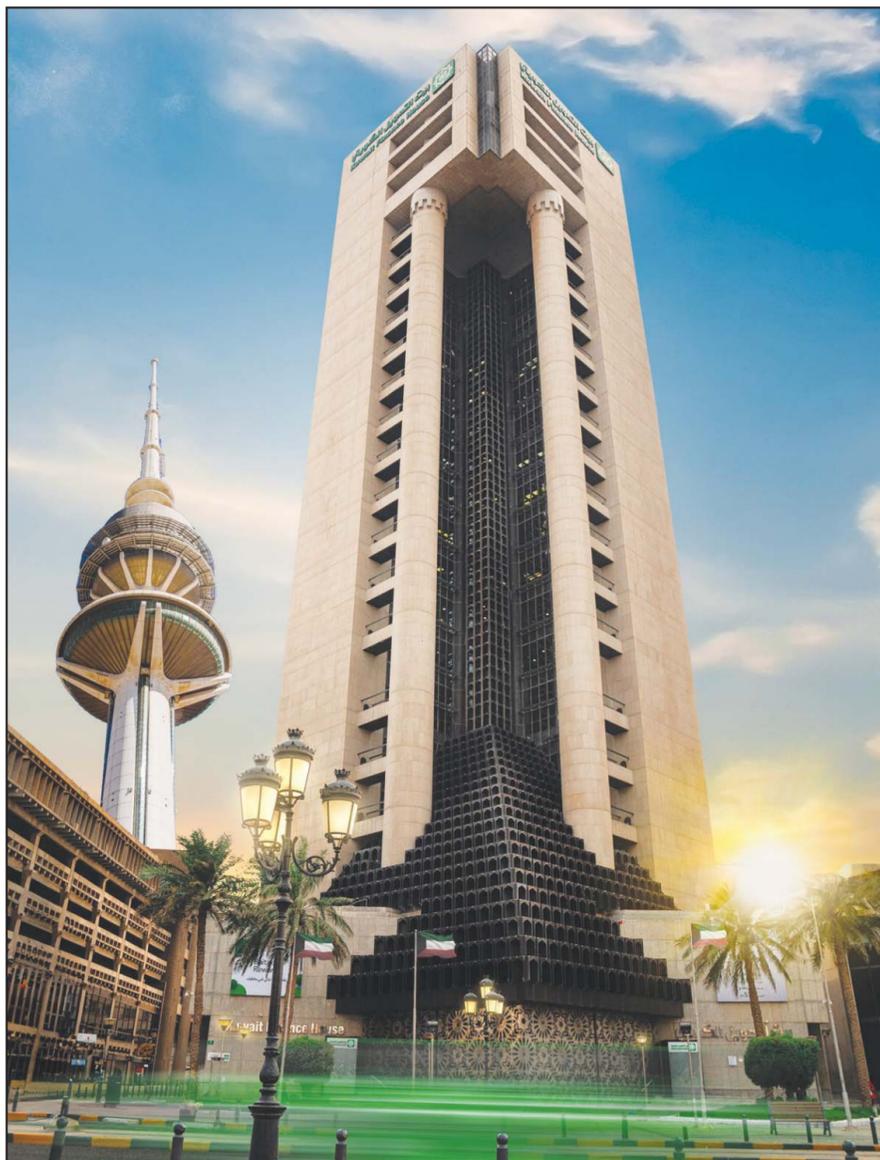
Acting CEO, Abdulwahab Iesa Al Rushood

gions."

Al Rushood confirmed that KFH is always on the lookout for any opportunity that can add value to its shareholders and customers.

Speaking about the banking sector outlook in 2024, Al Rushood expects the Kuwaiti operating environment to remain stable, adding that Kuwait's banking market is experiencing a surge in digital banking solutions, as customers increasingly opt for convenient online banking solutions, thus the investment in digital solutions will continue to grow at a fast pace. In addition, there will be further focus on green finance products and sustainability initiatives.

He noted: "The future of banking in Kuwait and the region is poised for significant advancements driven by the integration of robust data analytics and AI applications. Banks are likely to leverage data-driven insights to enhance personalized services and streamline operations. Continuous improvement of customer experience through digital channels will be a key focus, fos-



KFH Headquarters

tering a more efficient and user-friendly banking landscape."

Al Rushood also expects more reliance on

AI and robotics as adopting generative AI promises improvements in decision-making, profitability, fraud detection and prevention, and better risk management.

A sign labor mkt remains strong

US job openings stay steady at nearly 8.9 mln in January

WASHINGTON, March 7, (AP): U.S. job openings barely changed in January but remained elevated, suggesting that the American job market remains healthy.

The Labor Department reported Wednesday that U.S. employers posted 8.86 million job vacancies in January, down slightly from 8.89 million in December and about in line with economists' expectations.

Layoffs fell modestly, but so did the number of Americans quitting their jobs - a sign of confidence they can find higher pay or better working conditions elsewhere.

Job openings have declined since peaking at a record 12 million in March 2022 as the economy roared back from COVID-19 lockdowns. But they remain at historically high levels: Before 2021, monthly openings had never topped 8 million.

The U.S. economy has proven surprisingly resilient despite sharply higher interest rates. To combat resurgent inflation, the Federal Reserve raised its benchmark interest rate 11 times between March 2022 and July 2023, bringing it to the highest level in more

than two decades.

Higher borrowing costs have helped bring inflation down. Consumer prices rose 3.1% in January from a year earlier, down from a year-over-year peak of 9.1% in June 2022 but still above the Fed's 2% target.

The job market has remained durable throughout.

Employers have added a robust average of 244,000 jobs a month over the past year, including 333,000 in December and 353,000 in January.

The Labor Department's February jobs numbers, out Friday, are expected to show that employers added another 200,000 jobs last month, according to a survey of forecasters by data firm FactSet. The unemployment rate likely stayed at 3.7%, which would mark the 25th straight month it's come in below 4% - longest such streak since the 1960s.

The job market is cooling from the red-hot days of 2022 and 2023 in a mostly painless way - through fewer openings. Despite a wave of high-profile layoffs, the number of job cuts across the economy remains relatively low.

UK Conservatives announce tax cuts

LONDON, March 7, (AP): British Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt sought Wednesday to bolster spirits within his Conservative Party with another tax cut for 27 million working people, hoping it can turn the political tide ahead of a general election this year.

But with the tax cut trailed in advance and no major surprises in Hunt's economic statement to Parliament, speculation that the government planned to use the budget as a springboard for a May election appeared to have diminished.

Even though the British economy has hit one definition of recession and public finances will remain stretched over coming years, Hunt had come under pressure from his Conservative peers to cut taxes.

And he did, with a reduction in national insurance, which workers pay to qualify for a state pension, by 2 percentage points, to 8%. He also hinted at its eventual abolition.

Hunt cut this tax on wages by the same amount in November, meaning that in combination, workers with average earnings will benefit to the tune of around 1,000 pounds (\$1,270) a year.

"We will continue to cut national insurance contributions as we have done today so we truly make work pay," Hunt said in a packed and often rowdy House of Commons chamber.

To the likely disappointment of

many of his Conservative peers nervous about losing their seats in the upcoming election, Hunt made no mention of reducing the basic rate of income tax, which would have benefited retirees and savers, too.

Poll after poll suggests the Conservatives, in power since 2010, are on course to lose to the main opposition Labour Party.

Labour leader Keir Starmer challenged Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to call an election for May 2, while describing the budget statement as the "last desperate act of a party that has failed."

There had been speculation that Sunak, who has the power to name the election date, might call it for May alongside local and mayoral elections. The general election must be held by January 2025.

Sunak has previously said the vote is likely to take place in the second half of the year, potentially coinciding with the U.S. presidential election, but has kept his options open. He may be hoping the economic backdrop becomes more benign, with a "feelgood" factor emerging alongside higher economic growth, lower inflation and dropping interest rates and mortgage costs.

Hunt told Sky News after his statement that a fall election remains the "working assumption" but that "in the end, it's a choice the prime minister makes."

Europe's Digital Markets Act forcing tech companies to make 'changes'

Here's what that will look like

LONDON, March 7, (AP): Europeans scrolling their phones and computers this week will get new choices for default browsers and search engines, where to download iPhone apps and how their personal online data is used.

They're part of changes required under the Digital Markets Act, a set of European Union regulations that six tech companies classed as "gatekeepers" - Amazon, Apple, Google parent Alphabet, Meta, Microsoft and TikTok owner ByteDance - will have to start following by midnight Wednesday.

The DMA is the latest in a series of regulations that Europe has passed as a global leader in reining in the dominance of large tech companies. Tech giants have responded - sometimes reluctantly - by changing some of their long-held ways of doing business, such as Apple allowing people to install smartphone apps outside of its App Store.

The new rules have broad but vague goals of making digital markets "fairer" and "more contestable." They are kicking in as efforts around the world to crack down on the tech industry are picking up pace.

Here's a look at how the Digital Markets Act will work:

Some 22 services, from operating systems to messenger apps and social media platforms, will be in the DMA's crosshairs.

They include Google services like Maps, YouTube, the Chrome browser and Android operating system, plus Amazon's Marketplace and Apple's Safari Browser and iOS.

Meta's Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp are included as well as Microsoft's Windows and LinkedIn.

The companies face the threat of hefty fines worth up to 20% of their annual global revenue for repeated violations - which could amount to billions of dollars - or even a breakup of their businesses for "systematic infringements."

The Digital Markets Act is a fresh milestone for the 27-nation European Union in its longstanding role as a worldwide trendsetter in clamping down on the tech industry.

The bloc has previously hit Google with whopping fines in antitrust cases, rolled out tough rules to clean up social media and is bringing in world-first artificial intelligence regulations.



Mubader Center and Paydo partnership



Mohammad Al-Huwaidi, Head of Mubader

Bid to boost support for SMEs

KIB announces strategic partnership between Mubader Center and Paydo

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the signing of a strategic partnership agreement between KIB Mubader Center, which specializes in incubation services, business acceleration, and entrepreneurship training for owners of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and Paydo, a leading company in the field of technical and logistical services for e-commerce.

Commenting on the new agreement, Mohammad Al-Huwaidi, Head of Mubader, said: "This strategic partnership aligns with the visions of both companies to support sustainable economic development and to achieve Kuwait's goal of becoming a leading financial and commercial hub. Furthermore, this collaboration is expected to have a significant positive impact on the region, representing an important step towards empowering small and

medium-sized enterprise owners by offering them opportunities to develop their projects and enhance their managerial and technical skills."

With the main goal of presenting SMEs with a comprehensive ecosystem of services, KIB Mubader Center will leverage its expertise in incubation and business acceleration. It will offer consultations specialized in entrepreneurship and training, in addition to utilizing the advanced logistical solutions available through the Paydo platform in the e-commerce sector.

Through this significant initiative, KIB Mubader Center will create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators, encompassing incubation and business acceleration opportunities supported by Paydo's e-commerce, technical, and logistical services. These include efficient order execution and delivery, as well as

after-sales services. This collaboration will facilitate sales and logistical operations for SMEs, bolstering growth and innovation in this crucial sector.

It is worth noting that KIB established KIB Mubader Center as a supportive and trustworthy partner for Kuwaiti entrepreneurs. In its pursuit to refine the skills of entrepreneurs and their projects in Kuwait, the Bank offers a premium selection of integrated educational and training tools. These tools are enriched with comprehensive knowledge content, specially prepared by KIB in collaboration with international partners in relevant fields. Moreover, the center provides essential support throughout the entrepreneurs' financial and business journey, addressing all stages of their projects, in addition to offering all the banking services needed to meet their requirements.

Now, places like Japan, Britain, Mexico, South Korea, Australia, Brazil and India are drawing up their own versions of DMA-like rules aimed at preventing tech companies from dominating digital markets.

"We're seeing copycats around the world already," said Bill Echikson, senior fellow at the Center for European

Policy Analysis, a Washington-based think tank. The DMA "will become the defacto standard" for digital regulation in the democratic world, he said.

Officials will be looking to Brussels for guidance, said Zach Meyers, assistant director at the Center for European Reform, a think tank in London.

"If it works, many Western coun-

tries will probably try to follow the DMA to avoid fragmentation and the risk of taking a different approach that fails," he said.

In one of the biggest changes, Apple has said it will let European iPhone users download apps outside its App Store, which comes installed on its mobile devices.

Honoring high achievers is instrumental in our strategy: Al-Othman

NBK honors outstanding employees of 2023 in Annual Elite Awards Ceremony

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) honored the outstanding employees of Consumer Banking Group in its Annual Elite Awards Ceremony, which was held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre (JACC) and attended by the executive management. This annual recognition aims to recognize employees' performance throughout the year and to promote them to maintain excellence and accomplishment in a way that helps bolster NBK's leading position.

There ceremony was attended by the bank's executive leaders headed by Mr. Isam Al-Sager, NBK Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Mrs. Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO of NBK, Mr. Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of NBK - Kuwait, Mr. Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO of NBK- Kuwait, Mr. Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO-Consumer and Digital Banking, and Mr. Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources.

During the ceremony, the executive management distributed certificates of appreciation to the CBG outstanding employees, who showed exceptional performance during the year 2023, in recognition of their efforts in providing top-notch products and services that achieved a high level of customer satisfaction.

Through this recognition held every year, NBK aims to show appreciation to employees who demonstrated outstanding performance throughout the year and to motivate them to exert more effort to strengthen the bank's leading position, locally and regionally.

It also shows NBK's commitment towards its human resources and keenness to provide them with all support, which translates in better performance and contributes to improving the quality of products and services provided to customers.

The ceremony featured various engaging activities, surprises, competitions, and distributing valuable prizes to employees.

Commenting on this, Mr. Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO-Consumer and Digital Banking at National Bank of Kuwait said, "The Elite Awards Ceremony is one of the key events organized by NBK annually to recognize employees for their exceptional efforts and performance during the year. This goes in line with our appreciation of employees' vital contributions in the bank's ongoing achievements at all levels."

"Improving service quality and introducing new products that gain customer satisfaction are the results of the dedicated efforts of our employees. Therefore, we are keen to appreciate their efforts, high performance, and adherence to quality standards and high-



Isam Al-Sager in his speech during the annual Elite ceremony.



Isam Al-Sager honoring employees.



Mohammed Al-Othman delivers a speech during the annual Elite ceremony.



Honoring employees



Shaikha Al-Bahar honoring employees.



Salah Al-Fulaij honoring employees

level and advanced customer service, which gives NBK the edge over its competitors," he added.

"Consumer Banking Group team strives to provide top-notch services, in order to maintain the bank's leadership, and to sustain its excellence in providing market-leading digital banking services in Kuwait," he noted.

"At NBK, we believe that our employees are our most valuable resource, so we are always keen to invest in human capital by developing and improving the skills of our employees at all

levels, which reflects positively on the quality of our products and services," he emphasized.

Al-Othman stressed that the bank will continue its initiatives seeking to stimulate employees, in line with its belief that sustaining long-term excellence is conditioned by retaining highly qualified and professional employees.

"NBK enjoys a unique work culture and environment that promotes innovation, achieves job satisfaction and development and encourages employees to go the extra mile. It also offers them

continuous career development through world-class training programs, in cooperation with globally renowned educational institutions," he mentioned.

"The achievements seen today are the fruits of successful strategies that fostered our excellence in cutting-edge digital banking services and payment solutions, as well as our tireless efforts to understand customers' needs and expectations and accordingly tailor innovative banking products and services to meet their needs and even exceed their expectations," he explained.

At the end of the ceremony, Al-Othman extended thanks and appreciation to all CBG employees praising their efforts and expressing his pride with this highly efficient and dedicated team resembling NBK's leadership, locally and regionally.

NBK is keen on organizing regular events to honor its employees, within its endeavors to support and encourage their career and professional growth. It also seeks to strengthen the principle of long-term relationships with employees, which stimulates positive behav-

ior and teamwork spirit, and promotes ideal work atmosphere and employee satisfaction.

Over the past year, NBK's Consumer Banking Group succeeded in developing many top-notch banking products and services that are tailored to customers' needs. This included revamping NBK Mobile Banking App by introducing more than 30 enhancements to improve both user interface and user experience, for a more customized and personalized experience.

Reinforcing cultural and historical heritage

AUK commemorates Kuwait's Nat'l and Liberation Days with activities

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The American University of Kuwait (AUK) hosted a week-long series of events to honor Kuwait's National and Liberation Days, reinforcing Kuwait's national identity and promoting an appreciation of the country's cultural and historical heritage.

The festivities commenced with the grand opening of "The Pearl Museum," a collaborative effort between AUK and The Kuwaiti Old Crafts Society. This captivating exhibition transported attendees on a journey through Kuwait's rich history, showcasing an impressive array of antiques and artifacts. Concurrently, the International Relations Club collaborated with renowned singer Abdulaziz Al Dhuwaih to present an enthralling musical event.

Throughout the week, the campus community enjoyed various activities, including performances by the Al-Qurain band, displays of vintage cars, and a traditional café experience. Sports enthusiasts also participated in a football tournament organized by the Football Club, with different groups named after iconic Kuwaiti football teams. Students had the opportunity to partake in old traditional games, offering a nostalgic glimpse into Kuwait's rich cultural heritage.

Reflecting on the success of the events, Omar Mehdi, director of Student Life, expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "The National and Liberation Day events were a resounding success and truly showcased the vibrant spirit of Kuwait. It was heartwarming to witness our community come together to celebrate the nation's heritage."

AUK ensures students deepen their understanding of Kuwait's culture and traditions whilst also celebrating the achievements of Kuwait and its people.



Photos during AUK's commemoration of Kuwait's National and Liberation Days.



With the campus-wide celebrations and decorations in place, AUK continues to foster a sense of national pride and identity among students, faculty and staff.

level and advanced customer service, which gives NBK the edge over its competitors," he added.

"Consumer Banking Group team strives to provide top-notch services, in order to maintain the bank's leadership, and to sustain its excellence in providing market-leading digital banking services in Kuwait," he noted.

"At NBK, we believe that our employees are our most valuable resource, so we are always keen to invest in human capital by developing and improving the skills of our employees at all

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"NBK enjoys a unique work culture and environment that promotes innovation, achieves job satisfaction and development and encourages employees to go the extra mile. It also offers them

ABK announces Awatef Yousef Al Sabah as the winner of Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw prize

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced Awatef Yousef Al Sabah as the KD 10,000 Alfouz weekly draw winner on Monday, 3rd March, 2024, whereby the draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Since its launch, the Alfouz account continues to offer an impressive weekly draw of KD10,000. The Bank has recently expanded its offering by adding a new alluring monthly draw of KD20,000, and an exceptional quarterly draw of KD100,000.

The account also retains its hallmark mega annual draw of a KD5,000 monthly salary for ten years. Furthermore, the Bank now offers customers an increased opportunity to win for every KD10 as opposed to KD100 previously.

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account and/or increase their balances to have more



Alfouz flyer

chances in winning in the upcoming weekly draw winner announcement, which will take place on Monday, 11th March 2024. The higher the deposits, the higher the chances to win.

For more information about ABK,

please follow the Bank's Instagram account @abk_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

Warba announces winners of 'Al Sunbula' weekly draw

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: Warba Bank - the best bank in corporate and investment banking services in Kuwait - announced the winners of the weekly Al Sunbula draws. Warba Bank will continue to hold weekly draws for ten winners of Al Sunbula account, in the presence of a representative of Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Warba Bank employees.

Each of the 10 lucky winners of the Sunbula weekly draw of Warba Bank received KD 1,000, and the winners are: Wasif Amin Al-Nairat, Fawaz Yousef Bahloul Al-Shemmari, Awatif Hadi Al-Dhafiri, Waleed Khaled Al-Khalefi, Mubarak Khaled Matar Al-Anezi, Ohood Dhafer Hamad Al-Ajmi, Khaled Mohieddin Mohammed Ahmed, Buthaina Salem Mohammed Al-Shemmari, Essa Mohammed Najaf



Ahmed Al-Mutawa

Ramadan Shah, and Ali Abdul Aziz Ali Al-Dosari.

As for the Sunbula account, it is the ideal choice for all those wishing to save money and achieve appropriate financial returns on their accounts at the same time, in addition to the opportunity to

win cash prizes throughout the year.

Regarding the conditions, Mr. Ahmed M. Al-Mutawa, Area Manager Retail Banking Group said: "KD 100 is now required to enter the weekly Sunbula draws and major draws, and the client still gets one chance for every KD 10 in the account, and the chances are counted according to the lowest balance in the account during the month. Therefore, a full month must have passed in the account to qualify for the weekly draw, and two full months for the major draws to count the chances. There are no restrictions or limits for withdrawal and deposit, the higher the deposited amount, the greater the client's chances to win".

Notably Warba Bank launched its latest banking solutions service, "Customer Onboarding", in accordance with the

terms of its ambitious five-year strategy, which enables non-Warba Bank clients to apply for opening a Sunbula account in an easy digital way via the Bank's website without the need to visit any of the Bank's branches, and within only five minutes - through the new and unique automated system used to enable this service - new clients will be able to complete the request to open an account at any time and any place.

Warba Bank is one of the banks that has achieved great successes in a short period, as it occupied a leading position in the field of Islamic digital banking services for individuals, and it is one of the largest local banks in the number of shareholders, and these are among the most prominent components that make the Bank close to all members of society.

ABK announces official working hrs during the holy month of Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) extends its greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as the government, people, and residents of Kuwait on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, hoping it bestows an abundance of blessings.

During this time, all ABK branches will be functional from 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Furthermore, the Al Khiran Mall digital branch will be functional to service customers in two shifts from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and from 8:00 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.



ABK logo

The Bank has also confirmed its full operational readiness to serve customers 24/7 via its various digital platforms. This includes Online Banking via eahli.com, Mobile Banking through the ABK app, as well as the Bank's call center Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899.

AUK appoints Dr. Mohamed El-Abd as Dean of CEAS

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The American University of Kuwait (AUK) professor of computer engineering, Dr. Mohamed El-Abd, has been appointed as the new dean of the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences (CEAS). Dr. El-Abd, who joined AUK in 2010, has distinguished himself through his commitment to excellence, innovation, and leadership.

Dr. El-Abd has made significant contributions to AUK's curriculum, teaching a wide array of courses that have enriched the University's computer engineering program, among others. His dedication to fostering an engaging and inclusive learning environment, alongside his adaptive teach-

ing philosophy, has impacted our students' educational journey, especially in navigating the challenges of the current times.

In his previous role as associate dean, Dr. El-Abd showcased leadership and dedication to advancing CEAS's mission. His efforts in streamlining assessment plans, chairing crucial committees, and enhancing our academic standards have played an important role in the College's strategic development.

Beyond his administrative service, Dr. El-Abd has been a vanguard in the engineering field, founding the IEEE Symposium on Cooperative Metaheuristics and co-chairing the 2023

IEEE Global Engineering Education Conference, among other notable contributions.



Dr. Mohamed El-Abd

Dr. El-Abd's research work, particularly in nature-inspired algorithms and engineering education, is recognized globally, with a prolific publication record and acknowledgments such as being named among the top 2% of researchers in Artificial Intelligence. His leadership in securing grants and awards, including the AUK-Dartmouth Fellowship, underscores his dedication to academic excellence and innovation.

His extensive experience, coupled with his passion for education and research, promises to advance AUK's College forward in preparing future leaders and innovators.

Beloved author shares a story that celebrates the power of genuine affection

Kate DiCamillo's 34th book 'Ferris' radiates love and light

NEW YORK, March 7, (AP) — Children's writer Kate DiCamillo is known for beloved stories like "The Tale of Despereaux" and "Because of Winn-Dixie," about kids and animals trying to navigate the world and make emotional connections. Her trademarks include a strong voice, humor, and a tinge of sadness.

But her latest book, "Ferris" is a departure, and a surprise even for DiCamillo — the story of a happy family.

"People have opened their hearts to me. It's been this long, beautiful kind of thing, where I have been able to let myself be loved because of the stories. So now I can write a story that is all love," DiCamillo recently told The Associated Press.

"Ferris," out this week, still has many hallmarks of a DiCamillo story — small town simplicity, the slow pace of a hot summer, a trusted best friend, and an adorable dog with a freakishly high emotional I.Q. Most of DiCamillo's books teach life lessons through humor and common experience, but characters also deal with loss, grief and loneliness. DiCamillo says she didn't recognize those themes until fans pointed them out.

"I would hear 'the books are dark,' and it would always surprise me because I would think the books are funny. Or the books are just telling the truth about what



This combination of photos shows author Kate DiCamillo posing for a portrait in New York on Jan. 18, 2024, left, and cover art for her latest book 'Ferris.' (AP)

it's like to be here, which is, it's really hard to be here. And it's also beautiful here," DiCamillo, 59, said.

The Newbery Medal winner has 44 million books in print worldwide, translated into 41 languages, and many have been adapted for the stage and screen. Yet self-deprecating to a fault, DiCamillo claims she often thinks her first drafts are "terrible" but has

faith they'll improve.

DiCamillo's human characters are usually 8- to 10-years-old and when fans wonder how she gets inside the mind of a child so authentically she says her 8-year-old self is still very present in her heart. Her newest character, Ferris Wilkey (nicknamed after her mother gave birth to her next to the Ferris wheel at the state fairgrounds) is heading into fifth grade and adores Grandma Charisse, but senses she's not well.

Cynicism

"You're aware of everything and you haven't gone over into cynicism yet," DiCamillo said of that age. "She's seen the world, and is so open to all the magic of it and also seeing ... people that you love can get sick."

Ferris has her own room, two parents, and an extended family who demonstrate their love, creating a safe and happy home. DiCamillo says she got the idea for the story after a close family friend gave birth to a daughter and was surrounded by love when she brought the baby home. "I just had this thing of like, what if I wrote a book about a kid who was absolutely, positively loved from the second that she came into the world?" DiCamillo said.

DiCamillo suffered trauma as a child, and has only recently shared that her father was verbally

abusive, manipulative, and threatening, creating a "terrifying" environment at home. She says therapy and some closure around her father's death in 2019 have helped her heal.

Connecting with kids and adults through her books has also led to this more secure place. DiCamillo says writing has helped her work through her emotions and "Ferris" is evidence of that.

Bestselling novelist Ann Patchett calls DiCamillo a "beautiful writer" and says once she discovered her books, she couldn't put them down. "It's her willingness to engage and her willingness always to talk about what kids need," Patchett told the AP.

DiCamillo had long admired Patchett and now the two are close friends who read each other's work in progress.

Patchett — who owns a bookstore in Nashville — says just because DiCamillo's books are aimed at children, doesn't mean adults should miss out. She often recommended DiCamillo's books during the pandemic when people were having trouble concentrating. "I was like ... read these books because you can have the whole experience of a giant, very important piece of American literature, but you can finish it in two hours. And people were incredibly comforted by that fact and by the books themselves."

Variety



This image released by Carnegie Hall shows conductor Franz Welser-Möst, center, and Albena Danailova, background right, during a performance by the Vienna Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall in New York on March 3, 2024. Vienna Philharmonic has 24 female players among 145 members with three vacancies as it tours the United States this week. (AP)

Music

'We want the best members, so it was the right decision'

Vienna Philharmonic now has 24 females

NEW YORK, March 7, (AP) — Andrea Götsch was surprised when she won her audition in 2019 that led to membership in the Vienna Philharmonic.

"When I went home, I was just laughing because I couldn't realize that they had really taken me," the 29-year-old clarinetist told The Associated Press. "It was always kind of a dream. As a young child already, I watched the New Year's concert, but it was never a goal. I thought that was too far away."

A male bastion from its founding in 1842 until 1997, the Vienna Philharmonic now has 24 female players among 145 members with three vacancies as it tours the United States this week.

"It's very positive to me. It's a completely normal way of us living with each other. And we all have one main goal, to give the best possible concert — and that unifies us," said Daniel Froschauer, chairman of the self-governing ensemble. "Look at music schools: There are many more women than men. And we want the best members, so it was the right decision."

Based since 1870 at Vienna's Musikverein, the Vienna Philharmonic elects leadership, engages conductors, chooses programs and schedules tours and recording sessions. It selects members from the Vienna State Opera Orchestra and has had a summer residency at the Salzburg Festival since 1922.

Harpist Anna Lelkes played with the Philharmonic for 26 years as a nonmember before she became the first woman admitted. Albena Danailova became an acting concertmaster in 2008 and was granted membership in 2010. The 48-year-old had the high-profile position leading the strings in Sunday's performance of Mahler's Ninth Symphony with conductor Franz Welser-Möst at Carnegie Hall.

VPO women include 14 violins, two violas, two cellos, one double bass, two harps, one flute, one clarinet and one bassoon.

The Berlin Philharmonic, widely considered Europe's other great orchestra, admitted Swiss violinist Madeleine Carruzzo as its first female in 1982 and currently has 26 women, 99 men and five vacancies.

The New York Philharmonic's first female musician was harpist Stephanie "Steffy" Goldner in 1922 and it now has 49 men and 45 women with 12 vacancies. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra made principal horn Helen Kotas its first rostered female in 1941 and started this season with 59 men, 34 women and 15 openings.

Auditions

Froschauer, a first violinist who has been a VPO member since 1998, was elected chairman in 2017. He said about 100 people apply for each open position in the State Opera Orchestra and a quarter are given auditions behind screens for a jury of roughly two dozen. They play pieces chosen by the jury head and are graded, with 20 points the most. Those with 11 points or more advance, and after the second round the field is cut to five, then culled further for the final round.

"A jury member has to say, 'I'd like to ask to remove the screen,'" Froschauer said. "All the points are cumulative and usually there is one person who has a certain amount. There's no more screen and sometimes there's three ladies and sometimes there's three guys. Sometimes it's a mix. But the most important thing is what are the points?"

Winners get a one-to-two year trial with the State Opera Orchestra, and then a person will be considered for admission. After two more years, they can apply for membership to the Philharmonic.

Harpist Anneleen Lenaerts, 36, applied for an opening at the suggestion of a friend, Xavier de Maistre, who left the Philharmonic for a solo cello

career. She took a flight from Brussels just before Christmas for a pre-audition and then the main audition the next day in the Mahler Hall of the State Opera. She was among two finalists who waited in an adjacent room while the jury deliberated, and they were both called in for the announcement by Michael Bladerer, the double bass who chaired the jury and is now the orchestra's general manager, its No. 2 official.

She debuted at State Opera in Strauss' "Arabella" with Welser-Möst in 2011 and was admitted to the Philharmonic in 2014, just its eighth woman.

"I was a freelancer, playing solo and chamber music, which I loved. And I never expected to end up in an orchestra like this," Lenaerts said. "It is a different country with a different history, different mentality, different language. All of that was new for me. (...) You just have to prepare as best as you can and then hope that in the pit it will go well. And on top of that, you have the schedule of the Vienna Philharmonic."

Götsch, the clarinetist from Bolzano, Italy, was called into the orchestra as a substitute at the suggestion of VPO member Johann Hindler. She began at the opera with Verdi's "La Traviata" in 2016 and played with VPO for the first time a year later in Mahler's Sixth Symphony with Daniel Harding. She won her audition in 2019.

A year later, she was confirmed for the Opera Orchestra and in 2022 she became a VPO member. Götsch sits on the orchestra's management committee with the title Ordnungswahrerin (Order Keeper), where she keeps track of attendance at rehearsals and performances and deals with quick personnel changes.

"Sometimes they get sick an hour before the concert and so they call me and say 'I cannot play. Can you help?'" she said. "I have to make sure that there are enough people."

LOS ANGELES: When director Peter Farrelly set out to make what became the genre-defining rom-com "There's Something About Mary" more than 25 years ago with his brother, Bobby, he knew it might take some convincing for a studio to open the purse strings for a boundary-pushing comedy.

"People are scared to do comedy," the Oscar winner recalled. "We were lucky because there hadn't been a lot of R-rated comedies in quite a few years. Most of them were PG-13."

And while its box office debut was rocky, it ultimately became the third highest-grossing film in the year it was released.

Now, Farrelly is banking on that same thirst for vulgarity and depraved humor for "Ricky Stanicky," his latest buddy comedy starring Zac Efron and John Cena that hits Prime Video on Thursday.

The film's script sat in limbo for more than a decade with a host of big names, including James Franco and Jim Carrey, attached to it at various points.

And while the powers that be in Hollywood expressed reservations about making something that skewers certain stereotypes — like millennial parents and method actors — and is saturated with sex and drug humor, Farrelly is confident he is satiating an appetite.

"People were afraid to make it for a long time. But audiences are dying for that kind of comedy," he said. "Part of those anxieties stemmed from an uncertainty about what is too far and what is off limits, a tension some comedians have voiced frustration about in recent years."

"All of the things that have happened in the last five, seven years that have scared people off of comedy are for good reason. These are good changes," Farrelly said. "I think about it all the time. But I believe that if your heart's in the right place and the characters' hearts are in the right place, then you can get away with murder."

"Ricky Stanicky" follows four childhood friends — well three and one imaginary one. For 20 years, the trio has been relying on a made-up friend named Ricky Stanicky whom the boys use to get out of trouble, obligations and even romantic relationships that

aren't going well.

But as the responsibilities of adulthood risk exposing them being caught in their lie, Dean (Efron) has the idea to hire an actor (Cena) to play their imaginary friend and assuage any doubts their loved ones have of his existence.

Efron grew up loving Farrelly's films. Although "Dumb and



Efron



Cena

Dumber" has always been the actor's favorite, he said "There's Something About Mary" is a "really close" second.

More than just a fan though, Efron had already worked with and developed an appreciation for the director when he starred alongside Russell Crowe in Farrelly's 2002 film, "The Greatest Beer Run

Ever."

"He cuts through all the pipes and he's just a great partner to work with. He always tells you honestly how he's feeling and keeps you on track. I think that's what I value," Efron said. "There's a lot of hilarious circumstances that the characters encounter over the course of the film, but it stays

rooted in heart and love. And I think that's just Pete."

Efron, who had just finished making his physically and emotionally draining indie drama "The Iron Claw," said filming for this project came at the perfect time. "It was exactly what I needed. I needed to just laugh and have fun," he said. (AP)

Features

ARABO TIMES

FRIDAY-SATURDAY, MARCH 8-9, 2024



This image released by Universal Pictures shows characters Shifu, voiced by Dustin Hoffman, left, and Po, voiced by Jack Black in a scene from DreamWorks Animation's 'Kung Fu Panda 4.' (AP)

Oscars

96th Academy Awards

Producers promise cameos, surprises for Sunday's show

LOS ANGELES, March 7, (AP) — With just a few days to go until the 96th Academy Awards on Sunday, the show's producers are feeling good about what they've put together.

The nominees are some of the best the Oscars have seen, including some true blockbusters like "Oppenheimer" and "Barbie." Ryan Gosling is singing "I'm Just Ken" during the show. There will be a live orchestra in the theater. And the ever-reliable **Jimmy Kimmel** is back to host the proceedings for the fourth time.



Kimmel

"We're really excited about this year," said Molly McNearney, who is executive producing the show for the fourth time. "It's a phenomenal year of movies. And we have great movies that the home audience is familiar with, which makes our jobs easier."

The producers were hired earlier than usual, meaning they've had more time to plan and study past Oscars broadcasts to try to home in on what works and what doesn't. One thing they've learned is that if the room is laughing, the audience at home is usually laughing too.

Focusing

McNearney, who is married to Kimmel, said that they're focusing on jokes over big, highly produced comedy bits. Kimmel will do his 10-minute monologue to kick off the show and will be sprinkled throughout.

"I think an evening that just makes people feel good is a win," McNearney said. "Our job as producers is to keep that feeling good moving quickly because it is a long show and we want to make sure people are staying throughout."

Another thing that works: When the speeches are good and people feel invested in the winners. Last year there were a lot of great comeback and underdog stories, from Brendan Fraser to Ke Huy Quan, which helped. This is not something the producers have any control over, but they are optimistic about the nominees and setting up scenarios with presenters who have a genuine connection either with each other or people in the audience.

"We want everybody to feel included, that they are part of our story," said executive producer and showrunner Raj Kapoor. "I hope that we have put another kind of modern take on it that really focuses on storytelling and connection and that the audience in the theater and at home will just feel immersed in the experience all throughout the evening."

Nominated

Kapoor noted that the live performances of the Oscar-nominated original songs should be a real highlight of the show too, from the Osage singers to Gosling. They've also re-designed the stage so that an orchestra of 42 musicians can be in the Dolby Theatre and seen on camera. And Kapoor teased that the In Memoriam sequence is something they've put a lot of time and thought into and that it is poised to tug at audience heartstrings.

"There's going to be entertainment and lots of surprises and a few cameos and things that haven't been announced yet. We're just really excited for everybody to come watch with us," Katy Mullan said. "The Oscars is one of those last giant tent-pole pop culture moments that everybody looks forward to and gathers around that TV set. It's co-viewing at its best. And we're in this moment where there's more interest around these big live moments than there has been in years."

Their main concern at the moment is that the global audience remembers that the broadcast begins an hour earlier than normal, at 7 p.m. EDT. It's also the first day of daylight saving time.

"I think people are going to bed earlier and people are very excited, hopefully, that it's starting at 7," Mullan said. "It won't be so late for everyone hanging on for the best picture announcement."

The 96th Oscars will be broadcast live on ABC from the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles on March 10 with the pre-show beginning at 6:30 p.m. EDT.

Film

Animation visually stunning

'Kung Fu Panda 4' fun and well executed

LOS ANGELES, March 7, (AP) — "Kung Fu Panda 4" finds our trusty, rotund hero Po at a career crossroads and he's nervous. "Change doesn't have to be a bad thing," he is told. "Kung Fu Panda 4" also finds the franchise at an inflection point, but there's no reason for us to be nervous. DreamWorks knows what it's doing.

The series' first new installment in eight years is a reliably funny, sweet and wonderfully realized passing of the torch, with a paw in the past and another into the future — an elegant goodbye and a hello. Many other filmmakers — ahem, Marvel and DC — might learn a thing.

When we meet him, Po — voiced as always by a lively Jack Black — is being asked to give up his dream role as Dragon Warrior and pick a successor. He's being kicked upstairs to be Spiritual Leader of the Valley of Peace. (This is basically the Peter Principle illustrated in animation.)

Except Po doesn't want to go into management. He loves smashing skulls and still has that lovable impostor syndrome he's had since the franchise began. He tries to short-circuit any succession plans, change being too frightening.

A new enemy threatening an existential crisis offers a reprieve — The Chameleon — a wicked, powerful sorceress voiced by Viola Davis — looks like the lizard from the GEICO commercials who spent too much time at Graceland.

Po teams up with a new character — a Corsac fox named Zhen voiced by Awkwafina — who is an orphan-turned-thief and teaches the too-

trusting panda to trust no one. The movie then becomes a buddy road movie as these two hunt The Chameleon and a chance to bundle their home and auto insurance.

Wait a minute, you might be asking: Where are The Furious Five — Tigress, Viper, Monkey, Crane and Mantis — who have been in each "Kung Fu Panda" iteration so far? They're not really in "Kung Fu Panda 4," but the film reaches back to the first installment to bring back the snow leopard, Tai Lung, voiced by the sonorous Ian McShane.

Eye-rolling

Bryan Cranston is also back to voice Po's goofy biological father and James Hong returns as his spirited adoptive goose dad, while Dustin Hoffman reprises his role as eye-rolling master Shifu.

It's a good balance of new and old characters but a masterstroke is coming: The Chameleon finds a way of accessing the spirit realm and bringing back every villain Po has ever faced. That results in a greatest hits-like fight scene that may be hard to top if there's a "Kung Fu Panda 5."

The third installment's writers, Jonathan Aibel and Glenn Berger, are also back this time, joined by Darren Lemke. The film is helmed by "The Lego Movie 2" director Mike Mitchell and co-directed by Stephanie Ma Stine, who worked on "Raya and the Last Dragon."

The last three movies have largely stuck to the rural Valley of Peace, so the filmmakers change it up this time and take Po and Zhen to an urban environment, Juniper City, packed

with busy animals, rickshaws, and bulls as police officers (watch for a hilarious bull-in-a-jade-shop joke).

As always, it's the animators who are the real heroes here. From the thick fur on the pandas, to clay tiles smashing on roofs to rain splashing on stones, barroom brawls and petals wafting from cherry trees, this is a visual delight.

Creating The Chameleon — and her scary Komodo dragon guards — gives the animators a chance to show a tiny lizard metamorphose into an elephant in a few seconds and they relish it. They also sometimes dip into different animation styles, giving a viewer a visual break.

There are some missteps, like a pelican character controlled by a fish in its mouth and three cute bunnies who appear adorable and yet are deeply psychotic. ("Violence makes my tummy tingle," one says.) Plus, the teaming up again of Po's dads, while welcome, is also sort of pointless here.

But, as Po would say, "Skadoosh!" The filmmakers have managed a very tricky assignment: Pave the way for a new franchise direction, find new ways to entertain us, remind us of lessons like "It's never too late to do the right thing" and end the whole thing with the Black-led cover by Tenacious D of "...Baby One More Time" by Britney Spears. Embrace the change.

"Kung Fu Panda 4," a DreamWorks Animation release that hits theaters Friday, is rated PG for "for mild violence, martial arts action, scary images and some mild rude humor." Running time: 94 minutes. Three stars out of four.



This image released by MUBI shows Alma Pöysti in a scene from 'Fallen Leaves.' (AP)



Henley



Inciardi

Music

NEW YORK: From the start, the case was highly unusual: a criminal prosecution centered on the disputed ownership of a cache of hand-drafted lyrics to "Hotel California" and other Eagles hits.

Its end was even more unexpected. In the middle of trial, New York prosecutors abruptly dropped their case Wednesday against three collectible experts who had been accused of scheming to hang onto and peddle the pages, which Eagles co-founder **Don Henley** maintained were stolen, private artifacts of the band's creative process.

In explaining the stunning turnaround, prosecutors agreed that defense lawyers had essentially been blindsided by 6,000 pages of communications involving Henley and his attorneys and associates. Prosecutors and the defense got the material only in the past few days, after Henley and his lawyers apparently made a late-in-the-game decision to waive their attorney-client privilege shielding legal discussions.

"These delayed disclosures revealed relevant information that the defense should have had the opportunity to explore" when Henley and other prosecution witnesses testified late last month, **Manhattan Assistant District Attorney Aaron Ginzand** told the court. With that, rare books dealer **Glenn Horowitz**, former Rock & Roll Hall of Fame curator **Craig Inciardi** and rock memorabilia seller **Edward Kosinski** were cleared of all the charges. They had included conspiracy to criminally possess stolen property.

The case centered on roughly 100 pages of legal-pad pages, many from the creation of a classic rock colossus. The 1976 album "Hotel California" ranks as the third-biggest seller of all time in the U.S., in no small part on the strength of its evocative, smoothly unsettling title track about a place where "you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave."

Prosecutors had said the defendants knew the pages' chain of possession was shaky but sought to keep and sell them anyway, contriving to fabricate a provenance that would pass muster with auction houses and stave off Henley's demands for the return of the handwritten sheets.

Through their lawyers, the defendants contended they were rightful owners of pages that weren't stolen by anyone.

"The next step is building back our reputations," Inciardi said in a written statement after the dismissal. Kosinski, leaving court, said only that he felt "very good" about the case's end. Horowitz hugged tearful family members, then left court without commenting.

Henley lawyer **Dan Petrocelli**, meanwhile, said the musician plans to turn to civil courts.

"As the victim in this case, Mr. Henley

has once again been victimized by this unjust outcome," Petrocelli said in a statement.

One of Kosinski's lawyers, **Scott Edelman**, said they also were going to "evaluate next steps."

The communications that led to the case dismissal weren't released publicly. But in court earlier this week, defense lawyers said the trove had identified additional potential witnesses and raised questions about some testimony from Henley and others.

Judge **Curtis Farber** said Wednesday that witnesses and their lawyers used attorney-client privilege "to obfuscate and hide information that they believed would be damaging" and that prosecutors "were apparently manipulated."

As Edelman saw it, prosecutors "got blinded by the fame and fortune of a celebrity."

The defense maintained that Henley gave the lyrics pages decades ago to a writer who worked on a never-published Eagles biography and later sold the handwritten sheets to Horowitz. He, in turn, sold them to Inciardi and Kosinski, who started putting some of the pages up for auction in 2012.

"These are three factually innocent men," said Inciardi's lawyer, **Stacey Richman**.

Henley, who realized the pages were missing only when they showed up for sale, reported them stolen. He testified at the trial that he let the writer pore through the pages for research but "never gifted them or gave them to anybody to keep or sell."

The writer, **Ed Sanders**, wasn't charged with any crime and wasn't called to testify. He hasn't responded to messages about the trial.

Defense lawyers said in court Monday that newly produced emails showed that Henley initially suspected someone else before being reminded of the decades-old book project.

The defense said emails also indicated that some Henley lawyers and a private investigator initially characterized the pages' disappearance as a burglary — and didn't mention Sanders' 1979 book contract — because they believed that referring to a burglary would help their cause. The contract, often mentioned during the trial, said the Eagles would furnish Sanders with material, which would remain the band's "sole property."

Messages seeking comment were sent to the Henley attorneys involved in the initial 2012 discussions about the lyrics sheets. Another firm that represented Henley in later dealings with the matter, **Loeb & Loeb**, said in a statement Wednesday that it respects the attorney-client privilege decisions and is "confident that its attorneys acted in accordance with their professional and ethical responsibilities."

Prosecutors said Wednesday that they repeatedly asked various witnesses to waive their attorney-client privilege, but they chose not to until the past few days.

But Horowitz lawyer **Jonathan Bach** said that while the defendants were accused of not asking enough questions about the pages' ownership, "it appears that the failure to do a full investigation lies with the other side."

Before the case collapsed, the nonjury trial provided sometimes gossipy peeks into the height of the Eagles' career and the music business.

The court heard the band's longtime manager lament on a decades-old tape about dealing with "a pampered rock star." Henley held in his hands aging pages with lyrics-in-the-making for such Eagles songs as "After the Thrill is Gone," "One of These Nights" and "The Long Run."

During testimony that stretched across three days, the Grammy-winning singer and drummer recounted highlights from the band's heyday, such as the writing of "Hotel California." (AP)



This image released by Paramount Network shows Luke Grimes in a scene from 'Yellowstone.' Grimes, best-known for his portrayal of the complex cowboy character Kayce Dutton on the hit show 'Yellowstone,' will release his self-titled debut album on Friday. (AP)

Fewer fish and more algae?

Scientists seek to understand impacts of historic lack of Great Lakes ice

RACINE, Wis., March 7, (AP): Michigan Tech University biologists have been observing a remote Lake Superior island's fragile wolf population every winter since 1958, but they had to cut this season's planned seven-week survey short after just two weeks.

The ski plane they study the wolves from uses the frozen lake as a landing strip because there's nowhere to touch down on the island. But this weirdly warm winter left the Great Lakes nearly devoid of ice.

As climate change accelerates, scientists are scrambling to understand how iceless winters could affect the world's largest freshwater system. Most of the effects are still theoretical since the lakes are generally too treacherous for data-gathering expeditions during the coldest months and biologists have long thought that little ecological activity takes place under the ice anyway. But they say the changes

could have serious environmental, economic and cultural impacts, including by harming certain fish species, eroding beaches, fueling algae blooms and clogging shipping channels.

"This year really drives home the point that we need to collect more data," said Trista Vick-Majors, an assistant biology professor who studies aquatic ecosystems at Michigan Tech. "There's just no way you can predict how an ecosystem is going to respond to the large-scale changes we're looking at."

No exception

The planet experienced record heat for an eighth-straight month in January, according to the European climate agency. The upper Midwest has been no exception, with Chicago enjoying temperatures of around 70 degrees (21 degrees Celsius) late last month and Wisconsin getting its first February tornadoes.



A layer of ice covers Lake Michigan, Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023, in Chicago. (AP)

Ice coverage on the lakes, which have a combined surface area roughly the size of the U.K., has generally

peaked in mid-February over the last 50 years, with as much as 91% of the lakes covered at times, according to

the Great Lakes Ice Tracker website. As of mid-February this year, only 3% of the lakes was covered, which was the lowest figure since at least 1973, when the site's records begin.

Researchers don't have much data about how years of iceless winters could change the lakes, but they have plenty of theories. Iceless lakes could absorb sunlight faster and warm up sooner in the spring. Some biologists speculate that this could lead to earlier and larger blue-green algae blooms, which can be toxic to humans and put a damper on summer tourism.

Without ice, the lakes' upper levels will likely warm even more quickly than usual, contributing to thermal stratification, in which layers of colder and warmer water form. Less oxygen would make it into the lower, colder and denser levels, which could cause plankton and other organisms to die,

some scientists believe. Whitefish and lake trout typically hatch in the spring and feed on plankton, so less plankton would likely cause fish populations to shrink, potentially leading to tighter fishing quotas and higher prices at grocery stores and restaurants.

Less ice could translate to longer fishing seasons, but winter storms could wreck nets and traps and destroy whitefish eggs that rely on the ice for protection, said Titus Seilheimer, a University of Wisconsin-Madison fisheries specialist.

Charlie Henrikson runs a small commercial fishing operation off Wisconsin's Door County peninsula. He said his boats have been setting nets in February when they typically don't start the season until late March. He said he's most concerned about the lack of ice leading to more evaporation, which would cause lake levels to drop and make it harder to get his boats into port.

Global hot streak continues

February, winter, world's oceans all break high temperature marks

WASHINGTON, March 7, (AP): For the ninth straight month, Earth has obliterated global heat records - with February, the winter as a whole and the world's oceans setting new high-temperature marks, according to the European Union climate agency Copernicus.

The latest record-breaking in this climate change-fueled global hot streak includes sea surface temperatures that weren't just the hottest for February, but eclipsed any month on record, soaring past August 2023's mark and still rising at the end of the month. And February, as well as the previous two winter months, soared well past the internationally set threshold for long-term warming, Copernicus reported Wednesday.

The last month that didn't set a record for hottest month was in May 2023 and that was a close third to 2020 and 2016. Copernicus records have fallen regularly from June on.

February 2024 averaged 13.54 degrees Celsius (56.37 degrees Fahrenheit), breaking the old record from 2016 by about an eighth of a degree. February was 1.77 degrees Celsius (3.19 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than the late 19th century, Copernicus calculated. Only last December was more above pre-industrial levels for the month than February was.

In the 2015 Paris Agreement, the world set a goal of trying to keep warming at or below 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit). Copernicus' figures are monthly and not quite the same measurement system for the Paris threshold, which is averaged over two or three decades. But Copernicus data shows the last eight months, from July 2023 on, have exceeded 1.5 degrees of warming.

Climate scientists say most of the record heat is from human-caused climate change of carbon dioxide and methane emissions from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas. Additional heat comes from a natural El Nino, a warming of the central Pacific that changes global weather patterns.

"Given the strong El Nino since mid-2023, it's not surprising to see above-normal global temperatures, as El Ninos pump heat from the ocean into the atmosphere, driving up air temperatures. But the amount by which records have been smashed is alarming," said Woodwell Climate Research Center climate scientist Jennifer Francis, who wasn't part of the calculations.

"And we also see the ongoing 'hot spot' over the Arctic, where rates of warming are much faster than the

globe as a whole, triggering a cascade of impacts on fisheries, ecosystems, ice melt, and altered ocean current patterns that have long-lasting and far-reaching effects," Francis added.

Record high ocean temperatures outside the Pacific, where El Nino is focused, show this is more than the natural effect, said Francesca Guglielmi, a Copernicus senior climate scientist.

The North Atlantic sea surface temperature has been at record level - compared to the specific date - every day for a solid year since March 5, 2023, "often by seemingly-impossible margins," according to University of Miami tropical scientist Brian McNoldy.

Those other ocean areas "are a symptom of greenhouse-gas trapped heat accumulating over decades," Francis said in an email. "That heat is now emerging and pushing air temperatures into uncharted territory."

"These anomalously high temperatures are very worrisome," said Cornell University climate scientist Natalie Mahowald. "To avoid even higher temperatures, we need to act quickly to reduce CO2 emissions."

This was the warmest winter - December, January and February - by nearly a quarter of a degree, beating 2016, which was also an El Nino year. The three-month period was the most any season has been above pre-industrial levels in Copernicus record keeping, which goes back to 1940.

Francis said on a 1-to-10 scale of how bad the situation is, she gives what's happening now "a 10, but soon we'll need a new scale because what's a 10 today will be a five in the future unless society can stop the buildup of heat-trapping gases."



A man buys a cool drink from a roadside vendor on a sunny day in Mahawewa, a village north of Colombo, Sri Lanka, Feb. 29, 2024. (AP)

Study raises queries about plastic pollution's effect on heart health

Debate ignites as researchers urge caution

BOSTON, Massachusetts, March 7, (AP): We breathe, eat and drink tiny particles of plastic. But are these minuscule specks in the body harmless, dangerous or somewhere in between?

A small study published Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine raises more questions than it answers about how these bits - microplastics and the smaller nanoplastics - might affect the heart. The Italian study has weaknesses, but is likely to draw attention to the debate over the problem of plastic pollution. Most plastic waste is never recycled and breaks down into these particles.

Substantial limitations

"The study is intriguing. However, there are really substantial limitations," said Dr. Steve Nissen, a heart expert at the Cleveland Clinic. "It's a wake-up call that perhaps we need to take the problem of microplastics more seriously. As a cause for heart disease? Not proven. As a potential cause? Yes, maybe."

The study involved 257 people who had surgery to clear blocked blood vessels in their necks. Italian researchers analyzed the fatty buildup that the surgeons removed from the carotid arteries,



Plastic bottles and other garbage are seen next to a beach at Fiumicino, Italy, near Rome, Saturday, Aug. 15, 2020. We breathe, eat and drink tiny particles of plastic. But are these minuscule specks in the body harmless, dangerous or somewhere in between? (AP)

which supply blood and oxygen to the brain.

Using two methods, they found evidence of plastics - mostly invisible nanoplastics - in the artery plaque of 150 patients and no evidence of plastics in 107 patients.

They followed these people for three years. During that time, 30 or 20% of those with plastics had a heart attack, stroke or died from any cause, compared to eight or about 8% of those with no evidence of plastics.

The researchers also found more evidence of inflammation in the people with the plastic bits in their blood vessels. Inflammation is the body's response to injury and is thought to raise the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

"I hope that the alarming message from our study will raise the consciousness of citizens, especially governments, to finally become aware of the importance of the health of our planet," said Dr. Raffaele Marfella of the University of Campania in Italy, who led the study, in an email.

It's very small and looked only at people with narrowed arteries, who were already at risk for heart attack and stroke. The patients with the plastics had more heart disease, diabetes and high cholesterol than the patients without plastics. They were more likely to be men and more likely to be smokers.

Risk factors

The researchers tried to adjust for these risk factors during their statistical analysis, but they may have missed important differences between the groups that could account for the results. This kind of study cannot prove that the plastics caused their problems.

The researchers had no information on what the people consumed or breathed that might account for the plastics.

The specimens could have been contaminated in the lab. The researchers acknowledge as much in their paper and suggest that future studies be done in clean rooms where air is fil-

tered for pollutants.

The researchers suggest the risk of heart attack, stroke or death was four times greater in the people with the plastics. That seems high, Nissen said.

"It would mean that these microplastics are the most important cause of coronary heart disease yet discovered. And I just don't think that's likely to be right," he said.

More research is needed, said Dr. Philip Landrigan of Boston College. Landrigan, who wrote an accompanying editorial in the journal, said it is the first report suggesting a connection between microplastics and nanoplastics with disease in humans. Other scientists have found plastic bits in the lungs, liver, blood, placenta and breast milk.

"It does not prove cause and effect, but it suggests cause and effect," he said. "And it needs urgently to be either replicated or disproven by other studies done by other investigators in other populations."

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Nadal is out

Murray wins his opening match at the Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS, Calif., March 7, (AP): Andy Murray began what is expected to be his final appearance at the BNP Paribas Open with a smooth performance and a straight-forward victory, beating David Goffin 6-3, 6-2 on Day 1 in the desert Wednesday.

The biggest news happened away from the court: 22-time major champion Rafael Nadal withdrew a day before he was scheduled to play his first-round match. Indian Wells was supposed to mark his return to action



Andy Murray, of Britain, hits a forehand to David Goffin, of Belgium, at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. (AP)



Venus Williams, of the United States, serves to Nao Hibino, of Japan, at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. (AP)

after being sidelined since January because of a torn muscle near his surgically repaired hip.

Murray, a three-time Grand Slam champion and former No. 1-ranked player now at No. 61, never faced a break point while grabbing a trio of Goffin's service games. From 3-all at the start, Murray surged ahead by winning the last three games and 10 points of the opening set on a cloudy afternoon with winds topping 10 mph (15 kph).

That later gave way to heavy rain that caused a lengthy delay in the evening. Eventually all matches were suspended for the day, including 43-year-old Venus Williams' first contest in about six months. The seven-time major champion, who hadn't played since a first-round loss at the U.S. Open in late August, played just two games against Nao Hibino before they stopped at 1-all.

TENNIS

Murray is a 36-year-old from Scotland with an artificial hip. He improved to 8-0 against Goffin, taking all 17 sets they've played against each other.

Murray, the 2009 runner-up at Indian Wells, told reporters last month that he is likely to retire before this season is over, saying: "I don't plan on playing much past this summer."

He entered Wednesday with a 2-6 mark this year. He moved into a second-round meeting with No. 5 Andrey Rublev, who was defaulted from a match last week for screaming in the face of a line judge.

Elsewhere on the hard courts in California, wild-card entry Brandon Nakashima won the first four-level match he's played this season, defeating 2023 Wimbledon quarterfinalist Chris Eubanks 6-3, 7-6 (3), while other men advancing included Thanasi Kokkinakis and Christopher O'Connell.

Winners in the women's draw included three-time major champion Angelique Kerber, who is back on tour after becoming a mother, along with Tatjana Maria and Marie Bouzkova.

Paula Badosa, the 2021 champion at Indian Wells who received a wild card into this year's field, pulled out because of a long-term back injury - a day after participating with boyfriend Stefanos Tsitsipas in an exhibition doubles match.

Wizards tie their 'franchise' mark with 16th straight loss



Milwaukee Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo dunks against Golden State Warriors' Trayce Jackson-Davis in the third quarter of an NBA game at Chase Center in San Francisco on Wednesday, March 6, 2024. (AP)

Warriors demolish Bucks

WASHINGTON, March 7, (AP): Franz Wagner scored 28 points, Paolo Banchero added 25 and the Orlando Magic rallied from a 21-point second-quarter deficit to beat Washington 119-109 on Wednesday night, handing the Wizards their 16th consecutive loss.

Washington (9-53) tied a team

record for longest losing streak, matching a skid from the 2009-10 season. The Wizards looked on their way to ending this slide, but were done in by a 44-point second half against one of the league's best defensive teams.

Orlando (37-26) has won eight of nine. It was the largest comeback of the season for the Magic, who last rallied from a 21-point deficit on Jan. 30, 2023, at Philadelphia. The last time Orlando had a bigger comeback was Nov. 21, 2014, at Charlotte, when the team overcame a 23-point deficit to win.

Jordan Poole scored 26 points for Washington, which hasn't won since a victory at San Antonio on Jan. 29. Kyle Kuzma added 25 points for the Wizards, who haven't won at home since Dec. 29 against Brooklyn.

Warriors 125, Bucks 90

In San Francisco, Stephen Curry had 29 points, Jonathan Kuminga scored 20 and Golden State handed Milwaukee its first defeat since the All-Star break.

After trailing by 20 at halftime, Giannis Antetokounmpo and Damian Lillard led a 19-5 run to start the third and get the Bucks back in it - but Curry, who also had eight rebounds and five assists, went to work again.

Rookie Trayce Jackson-Davis had 15 points along with four of Golden State's season-high 13 blocked shots to match his own career high. Kuminga swatted another three.

Antetokounmpo, who missed Monday night's win at home against the Clippers because of left Achilles tendinitis, had 23 points and seven rebounds after he was questionable coming into the game. Lillard finished with 20 points and six assists in his first game back at Chase Center since being traded by the rival Trail Blazers to the Bucks last October.

Kings 130, Lakers 120

In Los Angeles, De'Aaron Fox tied his career high with 44 points, Malik Monk added 26 and Sacramento bounced back with a victory over Los Angeles.

It was Fox's seventh game this season with at least 40 points, fourth-most in the NBA.

Domantas Sabonis recorded his fourth triple-double in seven games with 16 points, 20 rebounds and 12 assists. He's the sixth player in NBA history with at least 22 triple-doubles in a season.

Sacramento came in having dropped three of its last four, including a 113-109 defeat against Chicago on Monday after it had a 22-point

lead late in the third quarter.

LeBron James led the Lakers with 31 points and 13 assists, while Rui Hachimura scored 29.

Hawks 112, Cavaliers 101

In Atlanta, Saddiq Bey scored 23 points and Atlanta recovered after losing a 21-point lead to beat Cleveland.

Bogdan Bogdanovic also scored 23 points for the Hawks, who prevented the Cavaliers from sweeping the four-game season series. Jalen Johnson sprained his right ankle early in the third period and was helped off the court.

One night after erasing a fourth-quarter deficit of 22 points in a 105-104 home win over Boston, the Cavaliers rallied to take the lead after trailing the Hawks by 21 points in the third. This time Cleveland couldn't make the comeback stand.

BASKETBALL

Jarrett Allen led Cleveland with 18 points and 19 rebounds. Isaac Okoro added 17 points.

Grizzlies 115, 76ers 109

In Philadelphia, Jaren Jackson Jr. had 30 points, 11 rebounds and six blocks, Jake LaRavia had 19 points and 13 rebounds and Memphis used an 11-0 run late in the fourth quarter to rally past Philadelphia.

The Grizzlies trailed by 12 entering the fourth before getting hot in the final minutes much like they did in a win Monday night at Brooklyn. One of the worst teams in the NBA, Memphis has won two in a row following a five-game losing streak. The Grizzlies outscored the 76ers 34-16 in the fourth.



Milwaukee Bucks center Brook Lopez, middle, reaches for the ball between Golden State Warriors guard Brandin Podziemski, left, and forward Draymond Green during the second half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco, Wednesday, March 6, 2024. (AP)

Defending champion Lahore gets first win

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan, March 7, (AP): Two-time defending champion Lahore Qalandars finally recorded their first win this season the Pakistan Super League as they beat Islamabad United by 17 runs.

Lahore had lost six straight games before getting one point from a rain-abandoned match against Peshawar Zalmi last Saturday.

Data-driven Islamabad, which prefers to chase, was bowled out for 145 with fast bowler Zaman Khan claiming 4-37 and Lahore fielders making some smart catches in the outfield.

Rassie van der Dussen (64) had

earlier anchored Lahore to 162-7 with his fourth score of 50-plus this season before he was due to return back home and will miss Lahore's last two league games.

CRICKET

Jahandad Khan made a spectacular one-handed running catch at mid-off to dismiss Alex Hales for zero in the first over of Shaheen Shah Afridi (2-32) and the batting power-house of Islamabad collapsed to 73-7 against pace midway through their run-chase.

Clippers 122, Rockets 116

In Houston, Kawhi Leonard had 28 points, and Paul George and James Harden each scored 21 as Los Angeles rallied for a win over Houston.

The Clippers trailed by as many as 20 and didn't lead in the second half until there were less than three minutes remaining.

Los Angeles overcame another big night from Houston big man Alperen Sengun, who had 23 points, a season-high 19 rebounds and 14 assists for his fourth career triple-double. It came a night after he scored a career-best 45 points in a win over San Antonio.

Bulls 119, Jazz 117

In Salt Lake City, DeMar DeRozan scored 29 points, including the go-ahead basket with a minute left, to lead Chicago past Utah.

Coby White scored 25 points, including seven 3-pointers, and had six assists for the Bulls, who survived a late comeback to beat Utah for the fourth straight time. Nikola Vucevic had 23 points and 12 rebounds.

Thunder 128, Trail Blazers 120

In Portland, Ore., Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 37 points and Oklahoma City held off a late rally by Portland.

Jalen Williams added 31 points and Chet Holmgren finished with 21 points and a season-high 14 rebounds for Oklahoma City, which led by 18 points.

Anfernee Simons had 29 for the short-handed Blazers, who have been beset by injuries.

Portland closed the gap to 112-107 on Simons' layup before Matisse Thybulle's 3-pointer got the Blazers within two with 4:05 left. Williams ended the threat with a 3-pointer that made it 116-110.

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F1 dogged by unresolved tension and open conflict

Drama at Red Bull and the FIA dominates F1 ahead of Saudi Arabian GP

JEDDAH, March 7, (AP): All the action in Formula 1 is happening off the track.

World champion Max Verstappen's father wants to oust the boss of Red Bull, the team that took his son to three consecutive titles. The president of the governing body has reportedly been accused of interfering in one race and trying to stop the Las Vegas street course from being certified for racing. Half the grid is chasing the Mercedes seat that will be empty when Lewis Hamilton leaves at the end of the year.

With so much drama in the paddock, Verstappen's runaway victory at the season-opener in Bahrain last weekend was the least dramatic moment of the past month.

When asked after the opener if Verstappen will cruise to a fourth straight title, Mercedes boss Toto Wolff said, "Unfortunately, yes."

Practice in the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah began on Thursday with F1 dogged by unresolved tension and open conflict. After a years-long boom thanks to Netflix smash hit "Drive to Survive," F1 has never felt more like

a reality show than it does right now.

First, there's the turmoil at Red Bull despite Verstappen's win by more than 22 seconds over teammate Sergio Perez. Team principal Christian Horner remains in charge a week after the team's parent company dismissed a complaint that alleged misconduct by Horner toward a team employee. He has denied wrongdoing.

MOTOR RACING

A day after Horner was cleared, a file alleged to contain evidence against Horner was emailed to nearly 200 people in the F1 paddock, including Liberty Media, F1, the FIA, the other nine team principals and multiple media outlets.

The authenticity of the files has not been verified by The Associated Press, and the file came from a generic email account. Titled "Christian Horner investigation evidence," the file was sent in the middle of a practice session.

Shortly after Verstappen's win in Bahrain, Horner pledged to stand firm

"100%" at Red Bull, adding: "There was a full lengthy internal process that was completed by an independent KC (senior British lawyer) and the grievance that was raised was dismissed. End of. Move on."

But F1 hasn't moved on. Hours later, British and Dutch newspapers published comments from Verstappen's father Jos attacking Horner. The team "will explode" if Horner stays in charge, he told The Daily Mail.

But before Jos Verstappen's comments could launch another round of gossip, rumors and speculation, the spotlight was suddenly shifted from Horner to FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem.

The BBC reported Ben Sulayem was under an internal FIA investigation after two whistleblower reports accused the president of interfering in races. The whistleblower claimed the president intervened to have a penalty for Fernando Alonso overturned at last year's race in Saudi Arabia. A second BBC report said the whistleblower accused Ben Sulayem of trying to stop the certification of the circuit in Las

Title-chasing Scotland make 3 changes for trip to Italy in Six Nations

ROME, March 7, (AP): Title-chasing Scotland made three changes to the team to face Italy on Saturday in their penultimate Six Nations match.

Flanker Andy Christie and backs Cameron Redpath and George Horne will start in Rome after coming off the bench in the 30-21 win over England.

It will be a first start for Scotland for Saracens flanker Christie.

Bath's Redpath comes in at inside centre after Siome Tuipulotu was ruled out of the final two matches by a knee injury against England. Horne replaces Ben White at scrumhalf.

"We just feel that Ben has played a lot of rugby," coach Gregor Townsend said. "He's only missed one game since October. Going back and forth to Toulon during this period, something's got to give. We feel this week's the best week for him to recharge."

"Siome's a massive part of our squad off the field. He's one of our leaders. He's a wise man for someone

who isn't that old. He's one of our defense leaders. Yes, we miss him but Cam is in the defensive leadership group. He's been in great form."

Duhan van der Merwe is part of an unchanged back three after his hat trick of tries against England.

Scotland has won two of its three matches, the only loss coming against France after being controversially denied a late try. Italy is winless but drew against France in its last outing.

Scotland ends the tournament against leader Ireland, which plays England on Saturday.

Scotland: Blair Kinghorn, Kyle Steyn, Huw Jones, Cameron Redpath, Duhan van der Merwe, Finn Russell (co-captain), George Horne, Jack Dempsey, Rory Darge (co-captain), Andy Christie, Scott Cummings, Grant Gilchrist, Zander Fagerson, George Turner, Pierre Schoeman. Reserves: Ewan Ashman, Alec Hepburn, Elliot Millar-Mills, Sam Skinner, Jamie Ritchie, Matt Fagerson, Ali Price, Kyle Rowe.

Vegas, which was F1's lucrative showpiece event last year.

The FIA confirmed it received two complaints "detailing potential allega-

tions involving certain members of its governing body" but hasn't confirmed any details or named Ben Sulayem as the target.

Just like Bahrain, the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix is on Saturday to avoid a clash with the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which starts on Sunday.

India seize initiative after Poms collapse on day one in fifth Test

Hosts trail at stumps by only 83 runs

DHARAMSHALA, India, March 7, (AP): England was spun out for 218 and India piled on the visitor's misery with 135-1 in reply to slip back into the driver's seat after day one Thursday of the fifth Test.

Kuldeep Yadav took five wickets and Ravichandran Ashwin four in his 100th test to have England all out in 58 overs after being 175-3.

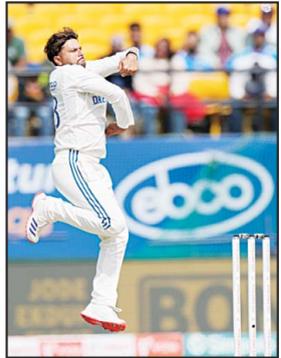
India opens Yashasvi Jaiswal and captain Rohit Sharma then shared a century stand to help them trail at stumps by only 83 runs.

India has already won the series at 3-1. England suffered a stunning seven-wicket collapse for 43 runs from the halfway point of the day.

The English seemed to be cruising to that point. They won the toss and opted to bat.

England reached lunch at 100-2 led

by Zac Crawley's fourth half-century of the series, Ben Duckett's 27 until a spectacular running catch by Shubman



India's Kuldeep Yadav bowls on the first day of the fifth and final test match between England and India in Dharamshala, India. (AP)

Gill and Ollie Pope's stumping.

After lunch, Crawley added 18 more runs to be out for 79 off 108 balls when Yadav found exaggerated turn and bowled him through the gate.

Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow, playing his 100th Test, made it to the middle session drinks, after which the day took a remarkable turn, literally.

Bairstow getting caught behind off Yadav for 29 triggered the collapse.

CRICKET

Four balls later, Root was out leg before on 26 to Ravindra Jadeja. Another eight balls later, Yadav trapped skipper Ben Stokes lbw for a six-ball duck with a wrong one. England went from 175-3 to 175-6 in the space of 12 deliveries. It scored 94-6 in the middle session.

Ben Foakes tried to marshal the lower order again while Ashwin went to work.

Tom Hartley was out caught at long on. Mark Wood was caught at slip. Foakes was bowled for 24 to end the resistance, and James Anderson fell for

a three-ball duck.

England lost its last seven wickets for 43 runs in 13.2 overs.

Yadav, 5-72, picked up his fourth five-wicket haul against England and Ashwin grabbed 4-51.

India seized the momentum thanks to a 104-run opening stand between Jaiswal and Sharma.

Left-hander Jaiswal scored 57 off 58 balls and crossed 1,000 test runs in his ninth test, the quickest for an India batter. Jaiswal hit five fours and three sixes, the latter all coming off Shoaib Bashir's first over. He was out stumped to the off-spinner late in the evening session.

Sharma notched his third half-century in the series and finished the day unbeaten at 52, including six fours and two sixes. Shubman Gill was 26 not out off 39 balls.

India made two changes from the fourth test with fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah coming in along with debutant Devdutt Padikkal. England made one change. Mark Wood replaced Ollie Robinson, who was sick and confined to his hotel room.



England's Ben Duckett plays a shot on the first day of the fifth and final test match between England and India in Dharamshala, India. (AP)

Al-Arabi seek revenge vs Kazma

Kuwait Club aim to maintain lead against Al-Nasr

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: Kuwait Club is determined to maintain its lead in the Zain Premier League as it faces Al-Nasr today at 5:00 pm at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium in the eighteenth round. The round concludes with Al-Arabi taking on Kazma at 7:40 pm at Friendship and Peace Stadium.

SOCCER

Following this round, the ten clubs will be divided into two groups. The top six will compete in the "Championship" League for the title, while the remaining four will play in the League to survive, aiming to avoid relegation to the First Division. Two clubs will be relegated, while the other two will continue in the Premier League next season.

In the pivotal clash, league leaders Al-Abyad (40 points) aim to continue its winning streak under Tunisian coach Nabil Maaloul. Al-Abyad is de-

termined to avoid a draw or defeat with second-placed Al-Arabi (39 points) lurking.

Meanwhile, Al-Nasr (24 points) is back in winning form after the last round and aims to secure a fourth-



Players challenge for the ball in this file photo.

place finish after this round.

In the other match, the encounter between Al-Arabi and Kazma (20 points) holds immense significance for both teams. "Green" seeks revenge after being eliminated from the Super Cup by Kazma and losing 4-2 on penalties. Al-Arabi also lost 4-0 to Kazma in the first section of the league. The three points are crucial for Al-Arabi to continue its title pursuit and redeem its position after losing to Kuwait in the previous round.

Criticism has been directed at Al-Arabi's Bosnian coach, Darko Nestorovic, following defeats to Kazma and Kuwait, leading to relinquishing the lead and exiting the Super Cup. The technical staff hopes to change this situation in today's match.

On the flip side, Kazma must secure a win to stay among the top six clubs, regardless of the Al-Fahheel vs. Al-Salmiya match outcome. "Orange" also aims to defeat Al-Arabi for the second time, compensating for a draw with Al-Fahheel (1-1) in the last round, a direct competitor for sixth place.



Mexico's Karen Luna (5) and Brazil's Rafaelle (4) battle for a header off a corner kick during the second half of a CONCACAF Gold Cup women's soccer tournament semifinal match in San Diego. (AP)

Brazil earn spot in women's Gold Cup final

Adriana Leal and Antonia both scored first-half goals and Brazil earned a spot in the CONCACAF Women's Gold Cup final with a 3-0 victory over Mexico.

Mexico was a player down after the 29th minute when Nicolette Hernandez was sent off with a red card.

Leal put Brazil up in the 21st minute. After Hernandez was carded, Antonio scored in the 32nd. Yasmin made it 3-0 early in the second half.

Mexico pulled off the biggest upset of the group stage, defeat-

ing the United States 2-0. It was just the second time the Americans had lost to their southern neighbors in 43 meetings.

Mexico went on to eliminate Paraguay 3-2 in the quarterfinals. Brazil routed Argentina 5-1.

The tournament was the first women's Gold Cup, designed to give teams in the region meaningful competition.

Four of the teams that participated - the United States, Canada, Brazil and Colombia - will also play in this summer's Olympics. (AP)

Leverkusen host Wolfsburg

Bayern seek consistency to make Lazio win 'start' of a turnaround

DUESSELDORF, Germany, March 7, (AP): Bayern Munich made a hard game look easy against Lazio. Now to win some of the easy games.

Overturning a 1-0 deficit to Lazio in the Champions League midweek was a tough assignment, but two goals from Harry Kane set Bayern on course for a 3-0 win in arguably its most complete performance since the new year.

"It was a perfect night for us," Kane said. "Obviously, it's a big moment in our season. It was a top performance."

Now the task for manager Thomas Tuchel - who is leaving at the end of the season - and his team is to transform that "big moment" against Lazio into the start of a consistent turnaround.

Bayern hasn't won back-to-back games since Feb. 3 and so far in 2024 has dropped points not only against Bundesliga leader Bayer Leverkusen but against the likes of Werder Bremen, Bochum and most recently Freiburg. That's helped Leverkusen build up a 10-point lead with 10 games remaining.

Next up for Bayern on Saturday at home is relegation-threatened Mainz, the club which gave Tuchel his first head coach job back in 2009.

Bayern fans will remember how their club's loss to Mainz in April 2023 opened the door for Borussia Dortmund to try to win the title - only for Mainz to deny Dortmund on the final day of the season.

Mainz has won only twice in the Bundesliga all season but new coach Bo Henriksen has overseen an uptick

in form with four points from his first three games.

Leverkusen, meanwhile, needs to cope with a tricky travel schedule as it plays a Europa League game against Qarabag in Azerbaijan on Thursday night before hosting Wolfsburg on Sunday.

SOCCER

Wolfsburg coach Niko Kovac is under pressure thanks to a nine-game winless run in the Bundesliga stretching back to December, but his team's best recent showings have come against trickier opponents, holding Dortmund and Eintracht Frankfurt to draws and fighting Stuttgart hard in a 3-2 loss last week.



Bayern's Thomas Mueller, celebrates after scoring his side's second goal during the Champions League round of 16 second leg soccer match between FC Bayern Munich and Lazio at the Allianz Arena stadium in Munich, Germany. (AP)

Al-Failakawi represents Kuwait in the W.Asia Volleyball Federation elections

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The President of the Kuwait Volleyball Association, Dr. Jaber Al-Marri, and the Association's Secretary General,

Federation scheduled for Saturday, March 9, to elect a new board of directors for the federation, which will serve for the upcoming session spanning from 2024 to 2028.

Notably, the Kuwaiti Volleyball Association has put forward Jassim Al-Failakawi, a member of its Board of Directors, as a nominee for membership in the Board of Directors of the West Asia Volleyball Federation.

VOLLEYBALL

Abdullah Al-Ghurair, are set to depart for Doha, Qatar tomorrow. They will attend the general assembly meeting of the West Asia Volleyball



Manchester City's Rico Lewis (left), tries a shot during a Champions League round of sixteen second leg soccer match between Manchester City and Copenhagen, at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

Sports

Latest sports scores at — <http://sports.arabtimesonline.com>

Real Madrid scrape through to CL quarters

Guardiola's City glide into last eight

MADRID, March 7, (AP): A tough day for Carlo Ancelotti ended on a good note as Real Madrid advanced to the quarterfinals of the Champions League for the fourth straight season despite a lackluster performance against Leipzig.

After being accused of tax fraud by Spanish tax authorities during the day, Ancelotti saw Madrid struggle in a 1-1 draw with Leipzig that was just enough to put the European powerhouse into the last eight thanks to the 1-0 win from the first leg in Germany three weeks ago.

Madrid was outplayed during parts of the match at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, drawing some jeers by the home crowd, but held on to advance 2-1 on aggregate.

SOCCER

Earlier, prosecutors in Madrid accused Ancelotti of defrauding Spanish tax authorities of 1 million euros in 2014 and 2015 during his first stint with the club. Prosecutors are seeking a prison sentence of four years and nine months for the Italian coach, claiming he used a shell company to hide parts of his income from image rights.

Ancelotti addressed the accusations after the match and denied wrongdoing.

"It's an old story that started eight years ago because of a tax declaration for 2015," Ancelotti said. "The tax authority says that I was a resident at the time and I don't think that I was a resident. I already paid the fine, the money is with them, and now the lawyers are talking to try to find a solution. I'm convinced that I'm innocent, that I was not a resident in 2015, and they think that I was a resident. Let's see what the judge says."

Ancelotti said the tax issue was not affecting him.

Vinicius Júnior put the hosts ahead after an assist by Jude Bellingham in the 65th and a gritty Leipzig side equalized with captain Willi Orbán in the 68th.

Leipzig had several chances to pull off the upset after a lackluster performance by Madrid, the record 14-time European champion. Dani Olmo's attempt hit the crossbar in stoppage time.



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham (left), jumps for the ball with Leipzig's Benjamin Henrichs during the Champions League round of 16 second leg soccer match between Real Madrid and Leipzig at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

Manchester City continued its pursuit of back-to-back Champions League titles by advancing to the quarterfinals of European club soccer's elite competition with a 3-1 win over Copenhagen.

Goals from Manuel Akanji, Julian Alvarez and Erling Haaland at Etihad Stadium saw City complete a 6-2 aggregate win.

It is the seventh straight season Pep Guardiola's team has advanced to the quarterfinals and this latest victory extended an unbeaten home run in the Champions League that stretches back 30 games to 2018.

Potential clashes with some of the giants of European soccer lie in wait with Real Madrid, Bayern Munich and Paris Saint-Germain all into the next stage.

But few teams would relish the prospect of meeting the defending champions, who remain in contention to become only the second team after Madrid to retain the trophy in its modern guise.

Even Guardiola's Lionel Messi-inspired Barcelona team could not achieve that feat. Should City lift the trophy again, Guardiola would equal Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti's record haul of four Champions League titles.

There is still a long way to go this season, but City's form is ominous after extending its unbeaten run in all competitions to 20 games.

A repeat of last season's treble is also still on, with City a point behind first-placed Liverpool in the Premier League and into the quarterfinals of the FA Cup.

Chelsea announce \$114.8m losses in 1st yr under owners

LONDON, March 7, (AP): Chelsea has announced pre-tax losses of 90.1 million pounds (\$114.8 million) in the English Premier League club's first year under U.S. owners Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital.

The financial results for the year ending June 30, 2023 represent a reduction on the previous year's losses of 121.4 million pounds. Chelsea said on Thursday that despite the losses it was still complying with UEFA and Premier League financial regulations.

There has been increased attention on the league profit and sustainability rules, which permit losses of up to 105 million pounds over a three-year period.

Everton was handed a 10-point deduction this season for breaching those financial regulations. That was reduced to six points on appeal but Everton could face further punishment for more breaches. The league said Nottingham Forest also sustained losses "above the permitted thresholds." Chelsea's parent company, Blueco 22 Ltd, which also

owns French team Racing Club Strasbourg, announced a net loss of 653 million pounds (\$833 million) for the year.

A consortium led by Boehly and Clearlake bought Chelsea after former owner Roman Abramovich was sanctioned by the U.K. government in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Since then, Chelsea has embarked on a spectacular spending spree of more than \$1 billion on transfers.

It has achieved little on-field success, with the two-time Champions League winner looking likely to miss out on qualification for the second year in a row. It is 11th in the Premier League.

"The club continues to balance success on the field together with the financial imperatives of complying with UEFA and Premier League financial regulations," Blueco said in its financial report. "The club has complied with these financial regulations since their inception in 2012 and expects to do so for the foreseeable future."

Kuwait ready to host 26th Arabian Gulf Cup, says Marafi

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: Daoud Marafi, the Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, and the Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Communications, met with Jassim Al-Rumaihi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Football Association and Chairman of the Facilities Inspection Committee. The discussion centered around the preparations for Kuwait's hosting of the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup in December.

Marafi emphasized Kuwait's preparedness to host the tourna-

ment and committed to utilizing all available resources to ensure the success of the event, which holds significant importance for Gulf soccer enthusiasts. The Minister as-

SOCCER

sured that any feedback provided by the Facilities Inspection Committee would be promptly addressed within the specified time frame before their final visit.



Daoud Marafi, the Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, and the Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Communications with Jassim Al-Rumaihi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Football Association and Chairman of the Facilities Inspection Committee.

Top teams battle for supremacy as handball Super Cup gets underway

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 7: The Kuwait Handball Super Cup Championship's fourth edition kicks off tomorrow, featuring Al-Kuwait, Al-Qadisiya, Burgan, and Kazma clubs.

Tomorrow will witness two matches: the first between Burgan and Al-Qadisiya at 5:30 p.m., followed by Kuwait Club against

HANDBALL

Kazma at 7:30 p.m. All matches will be held at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex.

In accordance with the tournament system, the Super Cup involves last season's Premier League champion and runner-up, along with the Federation Cup champion and runner-up. As Al-Kuwait holds both titles, it competes against Al-Qadisiya (league runner-up), Burgan (cup runner-up), and Kazma (third place).

The winner of tomorrow's matches will advance to the final, scheduled for the day after tomorrow at 7:30 pm, while the losing teams will compete for third and fourth place on the same day at 5:30 pm.

Al-Abyad secured the Super Championship title in the first two editions, defeating Al-Salmiya and Al-Qadisiya, respectively. However, Kazma claimed victory in the last season's Super Championship, triumphing over Kuwait Club.

The Burgan versus Al-Qadisiya matchup appears evenly matched, with both teams eyeing their first championship title.

The second crucial encounter sees Kuwait Club seeking redemption against Kazma, who defeated them in the last edition's final. Al-Kuwait, backed by their Gulf experience, aims to reclaim the title, while Sons of Al-Adiliyah aspire to replicate last season's success and equalize Sons of Kaifan's Super Cup titles.



A file photo of Kuwait Club player in action.

Most enduring rivalry

Premier League drama: Klopp and Guardiola face off for the last time

MANCHESTER, England, March 7, (AP): Enjoy it while it lasts.

The most enduring English Premier League rivalry in recent times will end this season when Jurgen Klopp steps down as Liverpool manager and, presumably, makes life a lot easier for Manchester City and Pep Guardiola.

Mikel Arteta may have something to say about that, but Klopp stands as the only man to break Guardiola's dominance of English soccer's top-flight over the past six years and looks to be the biggest obstacle to City winning a record fourth straight title.

Sunday at Anfield is potentially the last time Guardiola and Klopp face off as managers of City and Liverpool respectively. The stakes are as high as ever.

First-placed Liverpool leads City by one point.

Arsenal under Arteta has emerged as a credible title rival but Klopp is the only manager who has stared down a challenge from Guardiola and come out on top.

The German coach will walk away even though he has begun to rebuild a team that won a full set of trophies under him. Liverpool doesn't know yet how it will fill the void left by a man who transformed the club from a sleeping giant to a power again in European soccer.

Guardiola has repeatedly described Klopp's Liverpool as the biggest challenge of his coaching career, having edged them to the Premier League title by a single point on two occasions.

"I have this feeling that he's leaving part of us at Man City, too, as Liverpool have been our biggest rival in his years. He will be missed. Personally, I will miss him," Guardiola said at the announcement of Klopp's

departure in January. "But I am pleased because without him I will sleep a little bit better the night before we play against Liverpool."

Arsenal is two points off the top in third. The Gunners face Brentford on Saturday and could be in first place by the time Liverpool and City kick off.

Liverpool has already confounded expectations by moving back into title contention so soon after losing stars such as Sadio Mane, Jordan Henderson, Firmino and Fabinho. On top of that, Klopp has had to contend with an extensive list of injuries to the likes of Mohamed Salah, Darwin Nunez, Diogo Jota and Trent Alexander-Arnold.

SOCCER

Liverpool remains in contention for four trophies, having already won the League Cup with youth players.

Some of those injuries are clearing up, but City represents the biggest test of Liverpool's league title hopes.

Guardiola's team is defending the treble of trophies it won last year: Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup.

The midweek 3-1 win against Copenhagen in the Champions League extended its unbeaten run in all competitions to 20 games.

Even given the importance of Europe, Guardiola chose to rest some regular starters against Copenhagen with a view to Sunday's showdown. Kevin De Bruyne, Phil Foden, Bernardo Silva, John Stones and Kyle Walker were out of his starting lineup.

The majority, if not all, of those players will start at Anfield, where Guardiola's all-conquering team has struggled. Only once has his City come away from Anfield with a win - 4-1 in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic when fans were locked out.



Klopp