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Amiri Diwan appreciates Ramadan greetings to Amir, Al-Sabah family



Amiri Diwan photos
His Highness the Amir, Al-Sabah family receive Ramadan well-wishers.

Reception reflects unity

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): Amiri Diwan expressed gratitude to citizens and residents for congratulating His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Al-Sabah family on the occasion of Ramadan. The Diwan expressed utmost congratulations for all citizens and residents for this holy month, wishing unity and blessings for Kuwait.

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Opinion

Your Highness the Prime Minister, protect our sovereign wealth by investing it at home

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

ONCE upon a time, there was a governor who hosted a singer whose songs and style of singing he enjoyed. When the singer saw that the governor was enjoying himself, he began to ask him for some favors. Without hesitation, the governor said to him, "You deserve more than what you ask for." The next morning, the singer came to the palace to obtain what the governor agreed upon, but the governor said, "You delighted us with your songs, and we delighted you with our words."



Al-Jarallah

This story crossed my mind when I heard the delightful talk about the decisions that the Council of Ministers will take. It seemed like the beginning of some good measures, but these measures are yet to be implemented on the ground.

This is due to the fact that this as usual depends on the upcoming National Assembly and the extent of the Council of Ministers' cooperation with it.

It is true that the people have finally felt the prestige of the state through some of its decisions, but it must be emphasized that they are not as ambitious as the citizens who yearn for action in reality.

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NewsWatch

CAPE TOWN: Three monks belonging to Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church were killed in an attack at a monastery in South Africa on Tuesday, the church said. They were killed at the Saint Mark the Apostle and Saint Samuel the Confessor Monastery. The Coptic Orthodox Church, which is based in Egypt, named the monks as Monk Hegumen Takla el-Samuely, Monk Yostos ava Markos and Monk Mina ava Markos. All three were Egyptian nationals. (AP)

BEIRUT: Lebanon has lodged a complaint with the UN Security Council in the aftermath of Israeli occupation's attacks on civilians in the country. The foreign ministry said in a statement on Wednesday that it filed the protest in retaliation for the Israeli attacks on March 11-12, targeting civilians in the northeastern town of Baalbeck. (KUNA)

WASHINGTON: A ballistic missile unleashed by the Houthi militias has targeted a US destroyer in the Red Sea. The US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement that the US and coalition forces downed two Houthi-launched drones. (KUNA)

Ramadan Timings

Iftar Thursday 17:57
Imsak Friday 04:36

Kuwait urges vigilance in war against drugs, 'zero tolerance'

Sheikh Fahad applauds security efforts

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah stressed that the combat against illicit drugs must continue unabated.

During a field tour of the General Dept. of Anti-Drug Trafficking on Tuesday, Sheikh Fahad urged the security personnel to remain vigilant and double the effort to uncover and dismantle the drug smuggling gangs.



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior during a field tour of the General Dept. of Anti-Drug Trafficking.

He appreciated the efforts of the dedicated security personnel to serve the national interests and protect the security of the homeland, according to a statement from the General Directorate of Security Relations and Media.

Sheikh Fahad urged the security services to pursue the policy of zero tolerance in combatting all forms of crimes, particularly the narcotic trade.

During the tour, he was apprised of the statistics of seizures and arrests made by the General Dept. of Anti-Drug Trafficking, the statement noted.

Sheikh Fahad was accompanied by Director General of the Dept. Brig. Mohammad Qabazard and a number of senior officials of the Interior Ministry.

Final day sees 37 candidates, including 7 women, join race

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Thirty-seven candidates, including seven women, registered on the 10th and last day of the registration period for candidates in the upcoming parliamentary election.

The total number of candidates reached 255 — 241 men and 14 women. Three candidates have so far withdrawn from the electoral race.

Following are the candidates who registered on Wednesday:

First Constituency: eight men and one woman (Ahmed Al-Saffar, Abdullah Mudhafar, Abdullah Al-Mutairi, Ali Kazem, Fatima Karam, Fakhri Rajab, Mubarak Al-Tarrad, Mustafa Behbahani and Nasser Al-Nasrallah)

Second Constituency: five men and two women (Bader Al-Bazzali, Jaber Al-Bazzali, Sarah Al-Dabi, Shaima Al-Hajri, Abdulaziz Al-Bazzali, Abdullah Abdulaziz and Ali Ghuloum Husain)

Third Constituency: three men and two women (Mohammad Al-Jouan, Suhaila Abdulaziz Al-Salim, Zahra Al-Sherazi, Khalid Meshari and Thamer Al-Mutairi)

Fourth Constituency: nine men and one woman

(Ahmed Al-Shuraian, Jarrah Al-Mutairi, Zaid Saeed, Saud Al-Shuwaier, Sultan Al-Shemmari, Abdulghani Al-Anzi, Ali Al-Rehaili, Dahd Al-Bazzali, Fahima Al-Rashedi and Mohammad Al-Selaili)

Fifth Constituency: five men and one woman (Talal Al-Azmi, Abeer Al-Otaibi, Ghanim Al-Hejailan, Fawzi Al-Saqr, Naif Al-Azmi and Yaqoub Al-Refaie)

First Constituency candidate Naser Al-Nasrallah stated that he represents a group committed to protecting national identity. He thanked HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah for discovering those who obtained Kuwaiti citizenship through forgery. He called on all the eligible voters to participate in the election in order to cut the way for forgers and dual citizenship holders, and prevent them from entering the National Assembly.

Second Constituency candidate Bader Al-Bazzali intends to focus on improving the citizens' standard of living and improving the quality of services provided to citizens.

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Day by Day

WHY is sponsorship necessary for those planning to visit Kuwait? It's time to open up the country and eliminate these hesitations and requirements.

Everyone eager to explore Kuwait, and holds a round-trip ticket and hotel reservation, or friends who can vouch for well-being while their stay in Kuwait, should be warmly welcomed.

While there are certain nationalities we may prefer not to host due to security concerns, we must also recognize the importance of tourism.

Rigorous oversight can be applied to those visitors, while maintaining caution with countries with strained relations or poor security conditions.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



KUNA photo
Kuwait's 49th Gaza relief aid plane lands in Jordan. - See Page 3

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Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:41 Asr 15:22
 Sunrise .. 06:00 Maghrib .. 17:55
 Zohr 11:58 Isha 19:11

Local

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

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Warm and partly to cloudy with light moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 10-45 km/h with a chance for scattered rain.
By Night: Rather cold and

partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times and a chance for fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	25	16
Kuwait Airport	26	09
Abdaly	26	09
Jahra	27	13
Salmiyah	25	16
Nuwaisib	27	12
Wafra	26	10

Political conflicts cause of instability: poll-runners

Registration for Assembly poll 2024 ends

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: The Election Affairs Department (EAD) has wrapped up the registration process for candidates vying in the 2024 National Assembly elections after a 10-day period that commenced on the March 4, 2024, reports Al-Jarida daily.

With yesterday seeing the addition of 17 new candidates, the total count reached 221 applicants, including 7 women.

Following the withdrawal of two candidates, the tally stood at 219, with 47 members from the dissolved 2023 Council among



Al-Shaheen



Daoud Marafi



Hassan Johar

them, while Dr. Hassan Johar, Osama Al-Shaheen, and Daoud Marafi opted not to run.

The candidates highlighted political conflicts as a primary cause of instability in the country, emphasizing the urgent need for reforms across various sectors to enhance citizen services.

They urged authorities to develop programs and laws to establish a welfare state and enhance citizens' quality of life.

Reflecting on past councils, candidates expressed dissatisfaction with the invalidated 2022 council and questioned the effectiveness of the 2023 council, stressing the importance of delivering tangible benefits to citizens. Candidates from various districts articulated their commitment to addressing societal concerns and urged active participation in the upcoming elections.

Meanwhile, the presence of female candidates, including Nawal Aba Al Khalil in the fourth district, underscores a growing trend towards gender diversity in electoral representation. With two candidates withdrawing their candidacy yesterday, the focus now shifts to the forthcoming electoral process as Kuwait prepares for the 2024 National Assembly elections.



KUNA photo
 Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr. Fatma Al-Salem receives the US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Sasahara in her office.

KUNA chief, US envoy discuss cooperation

Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr. Fatma Al-Salem held talks on Wednesday with the US Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Karen Sasahara, on boosting media cooperation.

The KUNA director general held the discussions with the ambassador during a meeting at her office,

where they also exchanged views on various media issues of common concern.

Dr. Al-Salem affirmed keenness on seeking to enhance media cooperation with sisterly and friendly states for serving the state's external message. For her part, the American ambassador lauded freedoms in

Kuwait, its open society namely the distinguished social gathering halls, the diwanis, where citizens hold substantial dialogue and conversations on public issues. KUNA plays a significant daily role in broadcasting news, she said, noting journalism plays a crucial role in cementing ties among states. (KUNA)

Other Voices

Saleh ... man with three names

By Ahmad alsarraf

I am a few years older than Saleh, and of course everyone who was born before him is older than him. However, we do not hesitate, almost all of us, to call him Uncle Saleh, or Abu Fadala, or Abu Youssef, as he is from the generation that adored Kuwait with sincerity and love, and did a lot for the nation. The more some people criticized him and hated his positions, the more those loyal to him respected him, following the line of Abu al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi (915-965): If my blame comes to you from someone who is imperfect, it is my testimony that I am perfect.



alsarraf

This is the former representative and national figure, Saleh Al-Fadala, head of the Illegal Residents Agency. By virtue of his position, he is a controversial figure, and as much as he has fans who respect his work and what he has accomplished, there are also those who hate him and do not wish him well, and are waiting for the day when he leaves his work in the agency.

He stands, and behind him is the leadership that appointed him, and which reaffirmed its confidence in him and his abilities, by renewing his tenure, standing in "the cannon position," defending Kuwait's true national identity, and against all those who have been seeking for years to sabotage it, and many have succeeded in doing so, with deep regret, and it is very possible that the "destruction of national identity" would have been more comprehensive, more general, and more dangerous had it not been for him and the team he works with.

Saleh Al-Fadala is considered a veteran politician. He participated in the parliamentary elections for the first time 43 years ago, and won with a healthy lead, becoming Chairman of the Parliament's Legislative Committee.

Then he entered the 1985 elections and won first place, assuming the position of Vice President, then continuing his parliamentary career, and winning the election 1992 elections, after the liberation, and he chaired the fact-finding committee about the brutal and unjust Iraqi invasion.

He also won the 1999 elections and assumed the presidency of the Prisoners and Hostages Committee. Finally, he won the 2006 elections and assumed the presidency of the Human Rights Committee.

This became his last participation in his parliamentary career, and he was then chosen, well deservedly, in November 2010 to be head of the Central Agency for Redressing the Conditions of those with unspecified nationality, or what is known as the "Bedoun" apparatus, and he was a successful choice, as he was famous for his knowledge of the genealogies of the people of Kuwait and its families, and even some of its tribes, and the gates of hell would open in his face, as the more attacks on him increased, the more the patriots' confidence in him increased.

Only an ignorant person would deny that there are cases among the bedoun that deserve to be granted state citizenship, and there are those who have been wronged, for one reason or another, but this is not the work of the central apparatus, and is not among the responsibilities of the head of the apparatus, whose work is limited to being an impenetrable barrier against anyone who wants to sabotage the system -- the social fabric of the state, in addition to the sabotage and corruption it has been exposed to over half a century.

Uncle Saleh Al-Fadhala is not loved by a well-known group, nor is he voracious towards them, but in the eyes of the overwhelming and right majority of the Kuwaiti people, he is considered the barrier who deserves support and praise for what he does, and this is what we have done in this article, and he deserves much more than that.

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Smokers at risk of lung cancer, heart disease, stroke & others

'Non-smokers equally affected in closed spaces'

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Within the framework of cooperation between health zones for the declaration of Faiha area as a healthy area in Kuwait, the Cancer Aware Nation (CAN) campaign affiliated with the Kuwait Society for Combating Smoking and Cancer launched a diwaniya competition titled "Health Without Smoking" in Faiha under the sponsorship of the mayor of the area Mohammad Al-Hawwas.

Chairman of the Board of Directors of CAN Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh revealed that eight diwaniyas agreed to participate in this competition, but ten others excused themselves.

He stressed that the competition aims to create healthy diwaniyas far from the harmful effects of the scourge of smoking on both smokers and non-smokers.

Dr. Al-Saleh warned of the dangers of smoking in its various forms, explaining that the World Health Organization stated that the smoking epidemic is one of the biggest public health threats around the world, as it kills more than eight million people annually. About seven million of these deaths are the result of direct smoking, compared to 1.3 million deaths resulting from exposure to second-hand smoke. This places everyone responsible for preventing smoking in closed gathering places, especially diwaniyas.

He stressed that such initiatives serve as a support for the implementation of the law that prohibits smoking in closed places, and are an incentive to highlight the importance of raising the culture of societal awareness regarding the impacts of smoking in all its forms and manifestations, as there are more than 30 components in tobacco that cause cancer.

Dr. Al-Saleh added that smokers are 22 times more likely than non-smokers to develop cancer, with lung cancer perhaps being the most closely related to smoking, in addition to heart disease, bronchitis, atherosclerosis, stroke, and others.

Plan to clean beaches at all areas around chalets

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: The Director General of Kuwait Municipality Saud Al-Dabbous approved the executive body's response to the proposal of the Municipal Council member Sharifa Al-Shalfan regarding maintaining the cleanliness of beaches.

In the letter sent in response to the proposal, the plan to activate Al-Shalfan's proposal and its steps was mentioned, which began with the municipality addressing the Ministry of Finance to coordinate with it to identify areas for public beach cleaning mechanisms. The Ministry of Finance responded by submitting a letter containing plans for all chalet areas under the supervision of the ministry's State Property Department, as well as all the public paths leading to the beaches.

Accordingly, the municipality assigned the directors of the cleanliness and road works departments in the Ahmadi, Jahra and Capital municipalities to determine the entrances for the municipality's cleaning mechanisms to clean the beaches in the areas located in those governorates, which are the chalets of Zour, Nuwaiseeb, Mina Abdullah and Bneider, and the chalets of the northern region.

The municipality explained in its letter that the process of cleaning the beaches will include removing all concrete and rock barriers separating the sea from the land. It will also place a number of containers that commensurate with the need on all public beaches, and identify sites for collecting waste after it is removed from the beach in preparation for transporting it to places for treatment or backfilling by the municipality through monitoring and following up on the work of cleaning companies contracting with the municipality.

This follow up begins from the start of the work for executing these contracts on a daily basis to ensure their commitment to performing their work in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contracts concluded with them. In the event that they violate their commitment, necessary measures are taken by applying the list of violations and penalties contained in the contracts. Also, the number of advisory signs will be increased on all public beaches to clarify the penalties resulting from throwing waste in places other than those designated for it.

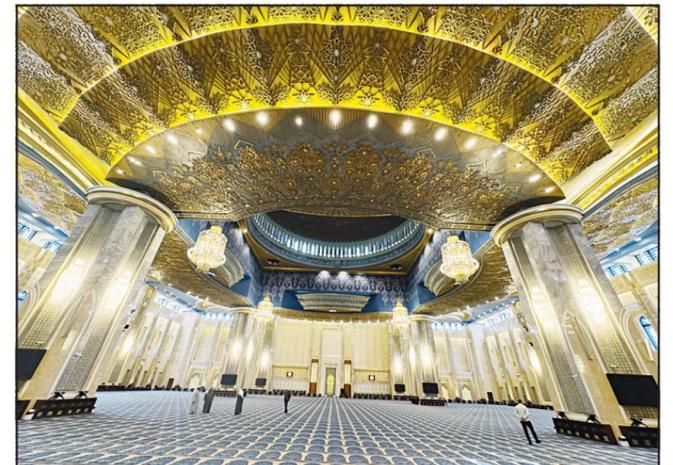


Photo by Mohammad Morsi
 Inside view of the Grand Mosque in Kuwait City.

Capacity for 100,000 worshippers

Grand Mosque ready for faithful

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Director of the Grand State Mosque Administration Ali Shaddad Al-Mutairi has confirmed the completion of preparations to welcome the crowd of worshippers and pilgrims during the holy month of Ramadan, indicating that the mosque is ready to receive more than 100,000 worshippers on the 27th night of Ramadan this year, as well as the provision of more than 45,000 Iftar meals; 15,000 Suhoor meals and 'Naqsa' (Ramadan gift); in cooperation with Zain and Boubyan Bank, reports Al-Anba daily.

In an interview with the daily, Al-Mutairi disclosed that the Grand State Mosque is distinguished by a group of famous reciters in Kuwait and the Islamic world; including Mishary Al-Afasy, Ahmed Al-Nafis, Fahad Wasel and others who lead the worshippers during Ramadan, in addition to 20 male and female preachers in the last 10 nights of the holy month.

He disclosed: "We began the prepara-

tions, in coordination with everyone, praise Allah, especially with the distinguished reciters of the Grand State Mosque, as well as the hospitality services for Iftar and Suhoor meals. Last year, we had two types of Iftar -- Iftar on the tables in the Great Tent and distribution of Iftar meals on the main street. Zain is one of our sponsors this year for the provision of Iftar meals to people from different communities. We welcome all guests during the holy month of Ramadan 1445 AH."

He stated: "This year, we will perform Tarawih prayers during the entire month of Ramadan for the second year in a row. We have two of the six new reciters for the Qiyam prayers, in addition to our well-known reciters for Tarawih prayers, including Mishary Al-Afasy, Majid Al-Anzi, Badr Al-Ali, Ahmed Al-Nafis, Fahd Wasel and many others. There are 15 reciters for Tarawih prayers this year. They are among the distinguished reciters in the Islamic world."

Positive response from EU seen

'Exempt Gulf citizens from 'Schengen'

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Jassem Al-Budaiwi, the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), disclosed plans to negotiate with the European Union in Brussels during the second week of Ramadan to exempt Gulf citizens from the Schengen visa requirement, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Al-Budaiwi highlighted the strong case the Gulf countries have for this exemption and expressed confidence in achieving it soon.

He pointed out the approval of the unified Gulf visa during the 44th Doha Summit, enabling visitors to access all six GCC countries.

European ambassadors to Kuwait voiced their governments' support for exempting Kuwaitis from Schengen visas, foreseeing enhanced trade, cultural exchange, and investment opportunities between the GCC and Europe.

Al-Budaiwi emphasized the positive impact of Gulf citizens' presence in Europe across various sectors and reiterated the necessity of visa exemption given their contri-

MoE forms panel

'Merge AI, computer'

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Adel Al-Adwani issued a decision on the formation of a committee tasked to integrate Artificial Intelligence into the Computer curriculum, reports Al-Anba daily.

Dr. Abdullah Al-Muttawa, a faculty member at the Computer Engineering Department in the College of Engineering and Petroleum in Kuwait University will head the committee; while the members include the assistant undersecretaries for public education, research, curricula and general computer guidance.

contributions and stable relationships. European ambassadors affirmed their countries' readiness to support efforts toward visa exemption, recognizing its potential to bolster bilateral ties and stimulate diverse exchanges between Europe and the GCC.

Prices monitored at markets, shops

Teams check on hoarding of goods

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: A team of inspectors from Ahmadi Emergency Department in the Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Sector at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry recently inspected a number of central markets and shops in Ahmadi Governorate to monitor the prices of basic commodities, especially those that are in high demand during the holy month of Ramadan, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a statement to the daily, Ahmadi Emergency Team Leader Khaled Al-Muhailbi revealed that the inspection resulted in the discovery of 12 price control violations. He said the inspection of local markets is based on the plan of the ministry to intensify such campaigns, especially during Ramadan.

He affirmed that the team monitored the markets to control commercial fraud, check the expiration dates of food commodities and ensure that spe-

cial offers are not tampered with. He added the team also inspected a number of warehouses to ensure that goods are not being stored with the aim of increasing the prices without justification.

He added: "If there are violations during the tours that we conduct, we prepare arrest reports and refer the violations to the competent authorities in the ministry to implement the law against the violators." He then stressed the need to confront violators in order to protect the consumers.

He advised the consumers that if they are exposed to commercial fraud or violations, they should visit the nearest center affiliated with the Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Sector or by calling hotline number 135, or sending the complaint through WhatsApp 55135135 or the electronic application 'Easy'.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Kuwait prosperity lies in unity; ethical politics in holy month

"AS the month of Ramadan dawns in Kuwait, social gatherings surge, marking a period where politics intersects with religious observance. This year, Ramadan coincides with significant political events, notably the upcoming parliamentary elections slated for Thursday, April 4, 2024, falling within this holy month," columnist **Dr Ghadeer Muhammad Asiri** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"The atmosphere is charged with political rhetoric and moral pledges as candidates strive to present themselves in the most idealistic light, outlining their electoral platforms and visions.



Dr. Ghadeer Asiri

"Central to this juncture is the perennial debate on the ethical underpinnings of politics. Is politics inherently devoid of ethics, driven solely by self-interest and fluctuating values? Or is ethical conduct a requisite for effective political leadership?

"This conundrum embodies a dialectical relationship: ethics providing the broader framework within which politics operates. True statesmanship lies in the politician's unwavering commitment to moral principles, even at the cost of relinquishing power. In essence, a leader who prioritizes the betterment and progress of their nation embodies the essence of ethical governance.

"In Kuwait, a nation historically rooted in civil coexistence, the moral character of political figures holds immense significance. The societal fabric is woven from the threads of integrity and virtuous conduct, with authentic national values serving as the bedrock for social, political, and humanitarian endeavors.

"For Kuwaiti society to thrive, ethics and politics must converge. Candidates vying for office must exercise prudence in their declarations, eschewing falsehoods and political machinations. Transparency, credibility, and a commitment to moral rectitude should underscore their actions, fostering a culture of accountability and reform within the political landscape.

"As we navigate these critical junctures, let us uphold the sanctity of our nation and its principles, steering clear of personal agendas and partisan interests. Kuwait's prosperity lies in unity, transcending internal strife and external pressures, thereby reaffirming its status as a homeland for all. In this blessed month, may our collective adherence to moral virtues guide us towards a brighter future."

Also:

"Social networking sites represent a modern form of media characterized by rapid dissemination of information and interactive engagement between users. This evolution has reshaped the traditional roles of media, including news dissemination, opinion shaping, advertising, and marketing," columnist **Shaima Nabil Al-Mulla** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"One notable impact of social networking sites is their ability to accelerate the spread of news, surpassing the constraints of traditional media channels.

"During events like the ongoing conflict in Gaza, individuals equipped with mobile devices can instantly capture and share real-time updates, significantly broadening the reach of information.

"While traditional media outlets rely on reporters for news coverage, social media enables immediate reporting by anyone, albeit with varying levels of reliability compared to established journalistic standards.

"Moreover, social networking platforms play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and driving trends. Historically, media outlets have influenced public perception by expressing viewpoints and agendas.

"However, with the advent of interactive media, individuals can directly voice their opinions, amplifying their impact through social networking sites. The accessibility and simplicity of these platforms, often employing local dialects, resonate with diverse segments of society, including the general populace, thereby enhancing their influence on public attitudes and behaviors.

"This direct and influential role in shaping societal discourse is particularly evident in political events worldwide, where social media platforms serve as catalysts for mobilization and activism, ultimately impacting broader trends and attitudes.

"In essence, social networking sites represent a transformative force within the media landscape, redefining the dynamics of information dissemination and public engagement while exerting significant influence on societal narratives and perceptions."

"The global outcry against the ongoing catastrophe in Gaza has sparked widespread demonstrations worldwide, including within the corridors of power among Israel's allies. Some governments, irrespective of their Arab or Islamic affiliations, have taken swift action, expelling Israeli ambassadors and severing diplomatic ties. Calls for Palestine's recognition as a full member state of the United Nations, coupled with demands for justice through the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, echo across international platforms," columnist counselor **Shafiq Imam** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"Yet, amidst this awakening of con-

science, Arab and Muslim nations remain largely dormant, indifferent to the relentless suffering endured by the Palestinian people. Gaza, the epicenter of this humanitarian crisis, has borne the brunt of repeated assaults, met with a deafening silence from Arab, Islamic, and international quarters.

"The toll of casualties continues to mount, with men, women, children, and the elderly falling victim to indiscriminate violence. In the face of this appalling silence, Palestinian resistance emerges as a beacon of defiance, challenging the entrenched status quo upheld by Arab and Muslim leaders.

"The recent summit held in Riyadh on November 11, 2023, typifies the recurring cycle of rhetoric and equivocation that characterizes such gatherings. Despite moments of discord and consensus, the resulting decisions invariably lack the substance needed to address the root causes of the Palestinian plight.

"These tepid resolutions fail to reclaim lost homelands or advance the cause of liberation. Instead, they perpetuate the status quo, betraying the aspirations of millions languishing under occupation. The inertia of Arab and Islamic nations contrasts starkly with the decisive actions taken by non-Arab, non-Islamic states, such as Colombia, Uruguay, and Spain, which have exhibited moral courage by advocating for Palestinian rights on the global stage.

"It is incumbent upon Arab and Islamic countries to shoulder their historical responsibilities, confronting the legacy of tyranny and complacency that has plagued their governance. From the era of the Umayyads to the Ottomans, oppressive regimes have subjugated their subjects, betraying the principles of justice and equality enshrined in Islam. Intellectual enablers, complicit in legitimizing authoritarian rule, have distorted religious texts to justify oppression, perpetuating a cycle of tyranny and servitude.

"Furthermore, the collective failure of Arab nations to unite in defense of Palestine, as exemplified by the League of Arab States, underscores a deeper malaise within the region.

"Despite unanimous rejection of the UN's partition plan for Palestine in 1947, Arab armies failed to coordinate effectively, allowing colonial powers to dictate the course of events. The annexation of Palestinian territories by neighboring states, notably Jordan, further compounded the fragmentation of the Palestinian cause, thwarting aspirations for statehood.

"While the international community increasingly rallies behind Palestine's quest for recognition, Arab and Islamic nations must seize this moment to rectify historical injustices. The demand for Palestinian statehood within the United Nations is long overdue, necessitating a concerted effort to mobilize diplomatic support and redress past failures.

"Only through genuine solidarity and collective action can the aspirations of the Palestinian people be realized, and the legacy of occupation and oppression be consigned to history."

□ □ □

"Entering Ramadan... We repeat the same words we utter every year with the entry of Ramadan or the advent of Eid. It is truly unfortunate that our voice does not reach, and if it reaches, it is not taken into account, even though we believe that it translates the point of view of the Kuwaiti street with all honesty!" columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The Sharia Vision Board knows better than others that it is not possible for us to see the crescent moon of Ramadan in the State of Kuwait, and that we always depend on the moon sighting in the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, we announce the beginning of Ramadan with Saudi Arabia from the days of the recorded tape that the esteemed committee listens to, then it announces the beginning of Ramadan or its end.

"This year, as is the custom, sisterly Saudi Arabia announced immediately after the Maghrib prayer on Sunday that the sighting of the crescent moon was confirmed at the Sudair Observatory. People in Kuwait circulated the news early, while the official announcement in our country was delayed until close to the evening prayer. What is the justification for the delay?

"It is true that there is regret in haste, and one must be careful, but does the vision committee imagine that someone will come forward to it from inside Kuwait to confirm its sighting of the Ramadan crescent, while it knows with certainty that this is almost impossible in Kuwait, and that the crescent has not been sighted here for some time? This is due to the small area of Kuwait, air pollution, and the lack of observatories and experts to see the crescent with the naked eye, as the case in Saudi's observatories that compete to see and record a victory for seeing the crescent, a confirmed sighting based on which people fast.

"We say to the vision authority: There is no justification for delaying the announcement of the confirmation of the sighting after it was proven in Saudi Arabia so that people can act before the evening call to prayer. It is known that the night of the announcement is considered one of the nights of Ramadan. It is desirable to perform Tarawih prayers on this night. Preparing for Ramadan requires time that is provided by early announcement, instead of leaving people waiting for the official announcement of the State for a long time, while they are deliberating on the confirmation of the vision in Saudi Arabia. What is the opinion of the members of the esteemed committee?"

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



KUNA photo

The 49th relief plane from the Kuwaiti air bridge heading to Gaza, supporting the Palestinian brothers.

Kuwait sends Gaza 49th aid plane

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): Kuwait's 49th plane loaded with relief supplies for Palestinians, arrived at Jordan's Maraka International Airport, carrying 45 tons of food to be distributed in Gaza. Kuwait's Counsellor in Jordan Nasser Al-Mutairi, Assistant Military Attache at Kuwait's Embassy in Jordan Brigadier General Mutlaq Al-Jufaidan and other top officials welcomed the plane at the airport.

Deputy Director General of the Kuwait Society for Relief (KSR), Omar Al-Thuwaini, said in a state-

ment to KUNA after the plane's arrival that this food aid comes within a campaign launched by KSR in cooperation with various humanitarian charities.

Various Kuwaiti organizations are participating in this campaign, under the supervision of the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Health, Social Affairs, Kuwaiti Air Force, in cooperation with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, the Kuwait Society for Relief, the Al-Salam Society for Humanitarian and Charitable Works and other humanitarian institutions.



KUNA photo

Kuwaiti Ambassador Hamad Al-Marri, with Prince Rashid bin Al-Hassan.

Kuwait seeks access to Gaza for delivery of aid

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Ambassador to Jordan, Hamad Al-Marri, discussed with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Jordanian Hashemite Charitable Organization (JHCO), Prince Rashid bin Al-Hassan, on Tuesday, the mechanism for delivering Kuwaiti humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

In remarks to KUNA, the ambassador said that the two sides discussed the delivery of Kuwaiti humanitarian and relief aid into Gaza and ensuring its full and comprehensive access to the Strip.

He stressed that the Jordanian Hashemite Charitable Organization is responsible for implementing the process of delivering humanitarian and relief aid to the Gaza Strip from the Jordanian side and is concerned with coordination and cooperation in this regard.

Call to scrutinize education certs of both Kuwaiti & expat workers

Plans, activities for Ramadan unveiled

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Bader Hajar Al-Mutairi issued an administrative circular requiring the scrutinization of the educational certificates of both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti employees.

In the same context, the Assistant Undersecretary for the Planning and Development Affairs at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Munif Al-Hajri announced that the ministry has launched a special platform to check the academic qualifications of both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti employees, in accordance with the special office manual for examining the educational certificates of Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti employees.

Meanwhile, Director of the Technical Affairs Department at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and the rapporteur of the committee tasked with supervising the implementation of the Ramadan plan in the ministry Dr. Bader Abu Dhara' Al-Dhafari said the Ramadan plan has included in all sectors and departments many faith programs for the month of Ramadan amidst high preparations by qualified and experienced people, while harnessing all the capabilities of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

He said, "All sectors and departments of the ministry cooperate closely with external companies to make this annual season of faith a success. Therefore, one of the most important things that we have become accustomed to doing with the leadership of the ministry is to develop future plans to conduct activities and programs for the month of Ramadan.

There are awareness-raising and educational activities, programs, and events aimed at attracting worshippers during the holy month, as well as providing all means to achieve the desired goals.

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, represented by the mosque sector, has prepared a number of Ramadan centers in which the schedule for Taraweeh prayer and night prayers has been arranged in all governorates. Also, reading, memorizing, and Quranic competitions will be held by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs' mosque sector.

For the Quran recitation project, some mosques were designated and had some memorizers and reciters to recite the Quran and teach it to those who wanted to learn, from the time after the afternoon prayer until before the sunset prayer and after the dawn prayer for an hour for whoever wanted to read the Qur'an correctly.

There are sessions for memorizing the Qur'an with the narration of Hafs or other narrations. The mosque sector is fulfilling its mission with nine departments working in full swing to prepare and maintain mosques on a regular basis in the various governorates of the country.

3 acquitted in funds scam

Top Mol officer, 2 staff get jail in vehicle fraud

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: The Criminal Court ordered the referral of an officer of rank Lieutenant Colonel in Hawally Traffic Department and two other employees to the Central Prison after convicting them of transferring the ownership of a vehicle without the actual owner's permission.

According to the case file, a person went to the Hawally Traffic Department based on instructions from some individuals who were trusted by the head of the department. He submitted a request to transfer a vehicle from a particular individual's name to his name under the illusion that the vehicle owner's approval was obtained to carry out the transaction without his presence.

Since this person was trusted by the Lieutenant Colonel officer, the latter signed a "no objection" transaction and referred it to the other employees, who then carried out the procedures for transferring the vehicle's ownership.

□ □ □

Three acquitted: The Criminal Court presided over by Judge Dr. Khaled Al-Omairi acquitted an employee, a trader, and an Egyptian expatriate of facilitating the seizure of KD 6 million from the public funds and forging approvals for some works that were not executed.

According to the case file, the three suspects had facilitated the seizure of KD 6 million from the public funds for a tender for air conditioning and heating systems at the Amiri Diwan, and forged approvals for the unimplemented works.

They were referred to the Public Prosecution in accordance with article 10 of law No. 1/1993 regarding the protection of public funds.

Drug addicts assault police, escape

By Mansour Al-Sultan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: The Al-Ahmedi investigation officers have been tasked with apprehending two men and referring them, along with others already in custody, to the relevant authorities.

They face charges including assaulting a security officer, damaging a police patrol, aiding an accused person in escaping, and possessing and using drugs.

According to a security source, the incident occurred during a routine patrol in the Al-Dhahr. A vehicle was observed moving erratically, prompting the security officers to signal the driver to stop.

However, the driver attempted to flee before being compelled to stop.

Upon inspection, it was discovered that the vehicle contained four individuals, two of whom were wanted for criminal offenses and had been sentenced to 12 years in prison.

During the attempt to arrest them, the suspects assaulted the security personnel, resulting in injuries to one soldier. Two of the suspects managed to escape and flee between the near-by houses, while the other two were apprehended. Subsequent search of the vehicle led to the discovery of narcotic substances and related paraphernalia.

As a result, a case has been registered against the suspects for assaulting a security officer, damaging a police patrol, aiding the escape of wanted individuals, and failing to comply with security personnel.

'Sound boosters installed, look changed'

Illegal garages raided in Shuwaikh

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: In coordination with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the relevant authorities, the officers from the General Traffic Department, led by Brigadier General Muhammad Al-Adwani and Brigadier General Ashraf Al-Amir, carried out traffic campaigns against illegal garages that install 'sound boosters' which cause public annoyance, in vehicles and change their appearance.

The campaign, which was carried out

in Shuwaikh, resulted in the closure of an illegal garage and the issuance of about 100 traffic citations.

According to security sources, the officers of the General Traffic Department and the concerned authorities in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and others will continue their campaigns against the violating garages that change the appearance of vehicles or install annoying sounds.

They affirmed the existence of strict instructions to reduce the phenomenon of 'annoying sounds' in vehicles.

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Team's victory attributed to collaborative teamwork, exceptional skills

KCST team wins prestigious award in robotics competition

Sewage woes in Sabah Al-Ahmad City resolved after 12 yrs: official

MPW links pumping station to Umm Al-Hayman purification unit

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: The Assistant Undersecretary for Sanitary Engineering Affairs at the Ministry of Public Works Eng. Abdul Rahman Al-Enezi announced the end of

sewage problems in the residential city of Sabah Al-Ahmad after linking the entire city's pumping station to the Umm Al-Hayman purification station, which was recently completed and operated, with a capacity of 500 thousand cubic meters per day.

In a press statement issued Monday, he explained that the sewage

problems, which had lasted more than 12 years and had been worrying the people of the area, had completely ended by connecting the pumping station to the purification station. This is because of the elimination of the sources of environmental pollution, such as unpleasant odors, insects, swamps, and other problems, which were the causes for several complaints from residents to all parties.

Al-Enezi stressed the sector's keenness in the previous stage to accelerate procedures and redouble the effort to connect the city to Umm Al-Hayman station, in implementation of the directives of the Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan to overcome all obstacles to the connection process and to expedite the solution to the problem that has been troubling citizens in the area for years. Accordingly, the eastern and southern parts of the area were connected.

He stated that the quantities of sewage pumped from the pumping station in the area to the Umm Al-Hayman station currently amount to 30,000 to 36,000 cubic meters per day. Its total capacity is 140,000 cubic meters per day, in order to absorb all the quantities of sewage once the area is completely inhabited.

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: The Kuwait College of Science and Technology (KCST) team has clinched the coveted Homeland of Innovation Award, the top honor in the Kuwait National Robotics Competition, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Organized by Kuwait University, the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, and Zain Company, the competition aims to foster creativity and innovation in robot design and manufacturing, aligning with the nation's vision for innovation.

The Homeland of Innovation Award recognizes exceptional capabilities in innovation and excellence within the robotics industry and design.

The KCST team's victory was attributed to their collaborative teamwork and exceptional skills, which showcased innovative manufacturing and design techniques. Their robot models impressed the jury with their high performance and intricate design, demonstrating

a keen understanding of technology and intelligent strategies to secure top scores.

Led by Dr. Muhammad Faisal Naji and guided by engineer Hajar Al-Sulaili, the team comprised seven talented students: Abdullah Shamout, Salem Abdulnabi, Ahmed Maher Khairallah, Rushdi Adebeki, Omar Deeb, Othman Al-Dhafiri, and Jaafar Mahdi. Professor Khaled Al-Baq'a'in, President of KCST, expressed pride in the students' achievement, emphasizing its significance as a symbol of excellence and creativity in robotics and design.

He commended the faculty members, particularly Dr. Muhammad Naji and the Center for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, for their support in equipping students with modern skills essential for the job market and national service. Al-Baq'a'in concluded by encouraging all innovators to strive for excellence and contribute to building a future driven by technology and creativity.



Participants at the 18th annual conference.

Al-Jarida photo



The award winning team.

Al-Jarida photo

KU college holds annual confab on 'Diabetes and Oral Health'

The College of Dentistry at Kuwait University's Medical Sciences Center recently organized its eighteenth annual conference, focusing on the theme "Diabetes and Oral Health," reports Al-Jarida daily. The event was held under the patronage of Dr. Mishari Al-Harbi, the university's acting director, and was attended by Dr. Osama Al-Saeed, the Acting Vice Chancellor for Medical Sciences, and Dr. Ahmed Asad, Acting Assistant Undersecretary for the Dentistry Sector at the Ministry of Health.

Dr. Al-Harbi emphasized that diabetes has become a prevalent local and global epidemic, affecting individuals regardless of their backgrounds. He noted that it presents significant challenges, particularly in terms of its impact on various aspects of health, including oral health.

Acting Dean of the College of Dentistry, Dr. Rashid Al-Azmi, highlighted that the conference provides a valuable scientific platform for dentists who regularly treat patients with diabetes.

Other Voices

Recovering stolen wealth: Why Kuwait must pursue int'l cases

Abdulaziz Abdullah Alhusainan
Lawyer



Lawyer Alhusainan

In the realm of global finance, the issue of stolen wealth is a persistent challenge, with billions of dollars illicitly acquired and hidden away in offshore accounts each year. Kuwait, like many nations, has not been immune to this phenomenon. However, the Kuwaiti government has the opportunity to take decisive action on the international stage to recover stolen funds. By pursuing legal avenues and cooperation with other nations, Kuwait can reclaim its assets and demonstrate its commitment to combating financial corruption.

Stolen wealth poses a significant threat to the economic stability and integrity of nations worldwide. Whether through embezzlement, bribery, or other forms of corruption, illicitly acquired funds not only undermine the rule of law but also deprive citizens of resources that could be used for public welfare and development projects.

Kuwait, with its vast oil reserves and strategic geopolitical position, has been a target for those seeking to siphon off wealth through illicit means. Over the years, numerous cases of financial misconduct and corruption have come to light, leading to the loss of significant sums of money that rightfully belong to the Kuwaiti people.

Recovering stolen wealth is a complex and challenging endeavor, particularly when those responsible have stashed their ill-gotten gains in foreign jurisdictions with lax regulations or opaque banking systems. In such cases, unilateral efforts by the Kuwaiti government may prove insufficient. Instead, international cooperation and legal mechanisms become essential tools in the fight against financial corruption.

Kuwait must leverage its diplomatic relationships and engage with international organizations to pursue legal avenues for the recovery of stolen assets. This may involve working closely with authorities in other countries, submitting evidence to relevant courts, and advocating for the enforcement of international anti-corruption laws.

Taking proactive steps to recover stolen wealth offers numerous benefits for Kuwait and its citizens. Firstly, it sends a strong message that financial corruption will not be tolerated, thereby deterring future illicit activities and promoting a culture of transparency and accountability.

Secondly, the successful recovery of stolen assets can inject much-needed resources into the Kuwaiti economy, enabling the government to invest in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and other essential services. By putting recovered funds to productive use, Kuwait can accelerate its development goals and improve the quality of life for

its citizens.

Moreover, pursuing international cases enhances Kuwait's reputation on the global stage, signaling its commitment to upholding the rule of law and combating financial crime. This, in turn, can attract foreign investment, foster economic growth, and strengthen diplomatic ties with other nations.

While the pursuit of international cases is undoubtedly a step in the right direction, it is not without its challenges. Legal proceedings can be lengthy and complex, requiring substantial resources and expertise to navigate effectively. Additionally, resistance from individuals or entities implicated in financial wrongdoing may pose significant obstacles to the recovery process.

Furthermore, Kuwait must ensure that its efforts to recover stolen wealth are conducted in accordance with international legal norms and principles of due process. Collaboration with foreign authorities must be based on mutual respect and adherence to the rule of law, avoiding any perception of overreach or disregard for sovereignty.

The recovery of stolen wealth is a critical endeavor for Kuwait, with far-reaching implications for its economic prosperity, governance, and reputation on the world stage. By pursuing international cases and cooperating with other nations, Kuwait can reclaim its assets, hold perpetrators of financial corruption accountable, and foster a climate of transparency and integrity.

Moreover, the successful recovery of stolen funds will not only benefit Kuwaiti citizens but also contribute to global efforts to combat financial crime and promote sustainable development. In the pursuit of justice and accountability, Kuwait has the opportunity to lead by example and reaffirm its commitment to the principles of good governance and responsible stewardship of public resources.

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Council's Jahra committee refers PART's rainwater collection proposal for study

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: The Jahra Committee of the Municipal Council, during its meeting recently headed by Abdullah Al-Enezi, referred to the executive branch the request of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) to allocate sites for open basins to collect rainwater, an open water canal, an underground water connection, and rainwater drainage paths around Nawaf Al-Ahmad housing area. The request was referred in order to be discussed and for a study to be prepared on it.

The committee retained on its agenda the proposal submitted by members Abdullatif Al-Daei, Abdullah Enezi, Alia Al-Farsi, and Sharifa Al-Shalfan regarding establish-

ing a camping area in northern Kuwait.

The committee reserved the proposal submitted by the Vice President of the Municipal Council Khaled Al-Mutairi regarding allocating the Haraj yard for selling used cars, and the proposal submitted by member Abdullah Al-Enezi regarding the development of a service road opposite the Sulaibikhat area, block 2, Jama Abdel Nasser Street.

The committee also reserved the question of the Vice President of the Municipal Council, Khaled Al-Mutairi regarding the Kabd Road extending from the Sulaibiya Bridge to Jawakhir Kabd, and the question of member Abdullah Al-Enezi regarding the wastewater purification station in the Al-Mutlaa Housing Project and the work complementary to it, including construction, operation, and maintenance.

Project's completion to coincide with transformation of Bubiyan Island into tourist hub

Gov't allocates KD186 mln to expedite Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: In a move signaling the government's commitment to completing the long-awaited Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, the Council of Ministers has approved an allocation of 186 million dinars to the Ministry of Public Works for fiscal 2024-2025, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This decision underscores the administration's determination to finalize this crucial development initiative, which has faced delays in its completion.

The Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project, estimated to cost 990 million dinars, is slated to cover an expansive area of approximately 1,161 hectares. With the capacity to accommodate around 24 berths and handle 8.1 million containers, the port is envisioned as a pivotal hub for transit trade and regional transportation. Its completion is expected to position Kuwait as a prominent commercial center in the region.

Moreover, the project aims to stimulate local investments by Kuwaiti private enterprises and attract foreign companies and investors, thereby bolstering the maritime transport sector and unlocking lucrative investment opportunities.

This initiative is projected to enhance infrastructure efficiency, particularly in the northern part of the country, leading to the creation of numerous employment opportunities for Kuwaiti youth.

In addition to the port's development, plans are underway to establish a sizable industrial zone adjacent to the facility, catering to both small and medium-sized enterprises as well as large-scale industrial operations.

This initiative is poised to invigorate Kuwait's industrial landscape and contribute to its economic diversification efforts.

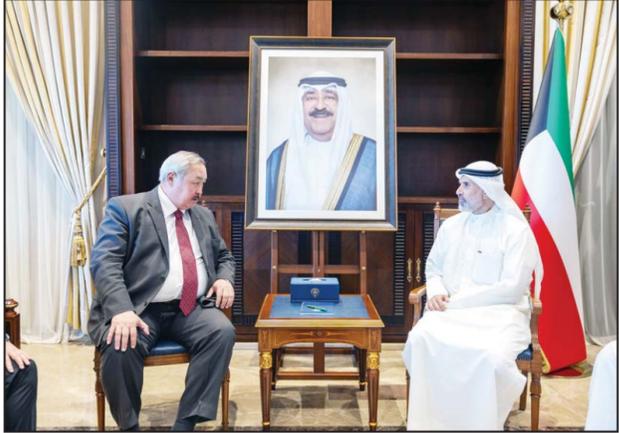
Furthermore, the completion of the port's components will coincide with the transformation of Bubiyan Island into a tourist destination, while also facilitating residential expansion in the northern region of Kuwait.

Efforts to accelerate the project's implementation are ongoing, with government agencies actively engaging in consultations with relevant stakeholders and consulting firms to streamline the process and ensure its timely execution. These initiatives aim to position Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port as a hallmark among

the region's ports, fostering economic growth and prosperity for Kuwait.

The executive position of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project includes:

- Implementing the road linking from the Subiya area to the east of Bubiyan Island.
- Completion of the port dock and reclamation of the land on which it is located, with a 100 percent completion rate of implementation work.
- Work is underway to implement a 7-kilometre-long link road on Bubiyan Island, reaching the port area, with a completion rate exceeding 90 percent.
- The design process for the project to construct, complete and maintain the infrastructure, the container yard area, the main buildings and facilities is nearing completion.
- Completion of the design of handling equipment.
- Completion of the quay deepening design.
- The design of developing the joint waterway with Iraq has been completed by 100 percent.



Sheikh Jarrah Jaber with the outgoing Kyrgyzstani Ambassador Karagulov. KUNA photo

Deputy FM meets outgoing Kyrgyzstani envoy

Kuwaiti Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met on Wednesday with Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Kuwait

Azamat Karagulov, on the occasion of the end of his tenure as representative of his country to the state of Kuwait. (KUNA)

Your Highness

Continued from Page 1

It takes them out of the vicious circle that they were in as a result of the absurd conflict between the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers over the past years.

They lacked the simplest elements of joy and entertainment, and saw their country static and closed, floating in a space other than planet Earth.

Here it is necessary to remember, which perhaps will benefit the believers. We have suggested in previous articles about investing Kuwait's sovereign money locally, including the USD 200 billion that the government extracts from the sovereign fund, which, according to reports, is approaching one trillion dollars.

This money should be injected into local urban projects either on the deserted islands or infrastructure and roads, as well as the establishment of housing cities with integrated specifications, and entertainment cities that will be a haven for both citizens and residents instead of migrating during each vacation to neighboring countries. Once upon a time those countries were just desert lands but today they are the destination for every visitor to reside and spend their income there.

Unfortunately, when extremist mentalities interfere in the decisions, the result is what we are currently seeing in Kuwait, while in other countries there is determination and resolve.

The decision maker does not listen to a parliamentarian or influential person, and does not close the country or cause the cost of projects to be artificially inflated.

There are several proposals to get rid of this corruption by seeking the help of foreign companies that have a long history in urban projects, technology, etc., without the need for a local agent.

In fact, the previous government did well by abolishing this type of fraud on public money through the local agent who doubled the cost by entrusting the project to a foreign company and obtained large profits.

What we need in Kuwait is a decisive executive decision that will bring the country into a major reconstruction revolution with all facilities, instead of just concrete slums, buildings and houses. It has been proven by experience that their owners do not live in many of them, and simply rent them out. In fact, some of them are empty.

Also, entertainment projects have been prevented, because some people affiliated with some parliamentarians hate seeing people enjoying and having fun.

Your Highness the Prime Minister, Kuwait needs a reconstruction revolution at all levels. At least one fifth of its sovereign wealth must be invested at home, because its risks are close to zero. It can be used to benefit the country. However, if we wait for the approval of any MP, it will be like we have done nothing, and the effort that we have been applying will be equal to zero.

Amiri Diwan

Continued from Page 1

On Tuesday, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Al-Sabah family received heads of diplomatic missions and senior leaders in the Army, Interior Ministry, National Guard and Fire Department as well as citizens and residents on the occasion of Ramadan.

The reception reflected unity of the Kuwaiti people during these occasions.

Iran warns

Continued from Page 1

Shukry commended South Korea for having voted in favor of a recent Arab draft resolution at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on the situation in

Gaza, and for having kept financing the UN refugee agency (UNRWA).

He added that Egypt hinges much hope on South Korea to play a role in pushing forward ongoing moves to ensure a ceasefire in the enclave and to deliver immediate humanitarian aid to Gazans, according to the statement.

For his part, the South Korean foreign minister spoke highly of Egypt's fervent endeavors to put an end to the war and to deliver relief aid to the population of the territory.

He reiterated his country's support for efforts to restore peace and stability in the Middle East region and to fend off the conflict spiraling out of control.

On bilateral ties, both sides underlined the existing comprehensive cooperative partnership between Egypt and South Korea, which has contributed to promoting cooperation in many prioritized sectors, added the statement.

Meanwhile, King Mohammed VI, the Chairman of the Al Quds Committee, instructed deployment of 40 tons of food-stuffs to the Palestinian people in Gaza Strip and the holy city of Jerusalem.

The humanitarian aid, which coincides with the advent of the holy month of Ramadan, aims to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian populations, notably the most vulnerable sections in the occupied territories, the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates said in a statement on Tuesday.

The assistance will be delivered through the Mohammed V Foundation for Solidarity.

Besides, the Moroccan monarch pledged to cover, from his personal funds, a large part of the costs of the assistance, particularly the aid geared to Palestinian babies and children, the statement noted.

In New York, UN Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza Sigrid Kaag and the Executive Director of the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) Jorge Moreira da Silva welcomed Tuesday the opening of a maritime corridor to deliver much-needed additional humanitarian assistance by sea to Gaza.

In a joint press statement, they commended the leadership of Cyprus and the support extended by the European Commission, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States and others.

They added that for aid delivery at scale, there is no meaningful substitute to the many land routes and entry points from Israel into Gaza.

"The land routes from Egypt, Rafah in particular, and Jordan also remain essential to the overall humanitarian effort," they argued.

"The maritime corridor brings, however, much needed additionality and is part of a sustained humanitarian response to provide aid as effectively as possible through all possible routes," the two officials said.

Final day

Continued from Page 1

Asked about his being the fifth candidate of Bani Ghanim Tribe which could negatively affect the results of his co-tribe members, he clarified that he represents the Second Constituency and the entire Kuwait. He added nobody can prevent anyone from running for the election.

Third Constituency candidate Thamer Al-Otaibi stressed that the governments before that of Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nawaf helped the citizens obtain their rights. He wondered why the citizens need to ask for the help of a lawmaker to finish his transaction or obtain his rights. He was quick to add that he is optimistic, considering the position of Kuwait in the Corruption Perception Index improved from 66th in 2019 to 22nd in 2023.

Third Constituency candidate Suhaila Abdulaziz Al-Salim said she is concerned about preserving the national entity and combating corruption.

MEW assures energy supply for Ramadan, calls for conservation

Challenges may arise during summer months: Eng Al-Asousi

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Eng. Maha Al-Asousi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, affirmed the ministry's readiness to meet energy demands during the entire holy month of Ramadan, emphasizing that there are no anticipated issues during March, April, and May, reports Al-Jarida daily.

However, she cautioned that challenges may arise during the summer months, urging citizens and residents to adopt energy-saving practices.

During the inauguration of the Al-Surra and Al-Ardhiya customer service offices, Al-Asousi encouraged individuals to practice energy conservation by switching off lighting in unused areas and reducing air conditioning levels in unoccupied rooms. She stressed that such behaviors should become ingrained as part of a broader cultural ethos to preserve the nation's resources.

The ministry recently opened the Surra and Al-Ardhiya offices for customer service, with the Ardhiya office standing out for its utilization of solar energy. Al-Asousi noted that 60% of the Ardhiya office's energy needs are met by solar panels installed on the building's roof, marking a significant step towards self-sufficiency and reducing emissions. This initiative will be expanded to other customer service offices to promote electricity savings.

Eng. Falah Al-Mutairi, Undersecretary of the Customer Service Sector, highlighted the Ardhiya office's significance as the first of its kind to operate partially on solar energy. He stated that this approach will be applied to all newly renovated offices in the future, with ongoing efforts to retrofit older offices with solar panels.

Regarding financial matters, Al-Mutairi disclosed that the ministry has collected 435 million dinars since the beginning of the fiscal year, representing over 50% of its debt. He underscored the ministry's role as a significant revenue generator for the country, thanks to its high collection rates.

Al-Mutairi also encouraged citizens to enroll in the incentive program, emphasizing its benefits for both the state and individuals. Currently, approximately 4,600 customers are benefiting from the program, with a total distribution of 121 thousand dinars to eligible recipients last week.

Meanwhile, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr Salem Al-Hajraf has suspended the disconnection of water supply for citizens in private housing, who defaulted on their payments, through out the holy month of Ramadan, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources clarified that those whose water supply was cut off before Ramadan must contact the ministry to settle their situation in preparation for restoring the water service.

Sources pointed out that cutting off water supply for those who defaulted on payment is part of the strategy of the ministry to collect debts from citizens, disclosing that KD435 million were collected during the current fiscal year.

Sources said the ministry asked the government agencies to quickly respond to its request to pay their electricity and water bills before the end of the fiscal year in order to avoid accumulating debt, to protect public money and to increase the collection rate.

Event marks 125 years of strong Kuwait-UK bilateral ties

Markaz sponsors Kuwait Investment Outreach event

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" was the Gold Sponsor of the Kuwait Investment Outreach event held in London, UK, on March 5th. Organized by the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and The Business Year, the event celebrated 125 years of strong bilateral relations between Kuwait and the United Kingdom. It also highlighted the significant economic ties between the two countries, as evidenced by trade nearly doubling in volume in 2023. The inaugural speech was provided by H.E. Dr. Anwar Ali Al-Muthaf, Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investments.

Notably, Abdulrazzaq T. Razoqi, SVP and Head of Advisory and M&A, Investment Banking at Markaz, participated as a guest speaker, addressing an audience of elite investors, diplomatic delegates, and key decision-makers from both countries.

During his address, Mr. Razoqi provided a comprehensive overview of the Kuwaiti investment landscape, emphasizing its business-friendly environment and highlighting the benefits for foreign investors. He hailed the privatization of Boursa Kuwait as a pivotal step in modernizing the Kuwaiti capital market, leading to a technology-driven and internationally compliant stock exchange.

Elaborating on the thriving trade relationship between Kuwait and the UK, he spoke about the successful partnerships in sectors, such as Oil & Gas. He further highlighted Kuwaiti investments in the UK, and the continued success of joint ventures between both nations. Moreover, he also stressed the importance of exploring future collaboration in promising sectors that will drive sustain-



Razoqi speaking at the Kuwait Investment Outreach event in London.

able growth and prosperity for both nations.

"The remarkable growth of Kuwait's financial sector, characterized by its adept adaptation to global practices, technological advancements, and evolving consumer preferences, presents vast business opportunities for international investors. Furthermore, by placing a robust governance system at the heart of its operation, family businesses are now focusing on sustainability and growth, reflecting a forward-looking approach," said Mr. Razoqi.

"Similarly, the healthcare sector and the private educational sector both offer unparalleled opportunities for private investors. Furthermore, and in light of the rise in technology led operations, Kuwait and the United Kingdom are poised to capitalize on emerging trends such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and IoT. Collaborative ventures in these domains hold the promise of driving innovation, enhancing productivity, and fostering economic growth in both nations," he added.

The Kuwait Investment Outreach Event serves as a key platform to attract global investors across diverse sectors. Markaz's participation in this initiative aligns perfectly with its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy and its firm belief in the collaborative role of public and private sectors in fostering an attractive investment environment. This year's event marks another valuable contribution made by Markaz throughout its 50-year journey of building relationships for impactful economic outreach.

Markaz's strategic presence at such impactful events solidifies its position as a thought leader. By sharing valuable insights on the Kuwaiti market and its investment potential across different industry sectors, Markaz helps develop avenues for international expansion. These engagements unlock doors to further partnerships and collaborations, ultimately contributing to the ambitious economic diversification goals outlined in Kuwait's National Development Plan.

PAHW completes 49,288 transactions in February

CSC issues circular on requesting data from work centers

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Director of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Dr Issam Al-Rubaian issued a circular on requesting data or information from work centers in the CSC, reports Al-Anba daily.

The circular stated that officials, supervisors, and employees should not request for any data or information verbally; stressing this should be done through official memorandums approved by the concerned official or supervisor.

Al-Rubaian explained that the work centers in the CSC might need to exchange information among themselves to complete transactions and studies according to their jurisdiction, and this should be done through official memorandums.

He added: "The official memorandums must include the type of data or information required so these memorandums can be used as reference in the future -- when needed to determine the reasons and justifications for requesting the data, and the employees who have the data

and related documents."

Meanwhile, the latest statistics from the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) revealed that the Citizens Service Department completed 49,288 transactions in February, including 246 new housing grant applications and 707 allocation transactions, reports Al-Anba daily.

The daily obtained a copy of the statistics, indicating that the abovementioned department opened 91 new files related to rented housing, while the Reception Department submitted 193 rental allowance transactions and issued 126 "To Whom It May Concern" certificates.

The Customer Service Telephone Unit at the Communications Department received 2,219 direct calls from citizens and responded to 22,244 inquiries through the chatbot service. The Statistics Unit at the Follow-up Department received 48 petitions that were forwarded to the Requests, Allocation, Distribution and Documentation sectors.

'CSC exception needed'

Move to transfer employees

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Civil Service Commission (CSC) Director Dr Issam Al-Rubaian recently met with officials at the Supreme Council for Provincial Affairs to lay down the procedures for implementing the Council of Ministers' decision to transfer the employees of the Supreme Council to various government agencies, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources revealed the decision covers 2,500 employees with different job grades; clarifying that the transfer process requires exception from the CSC because transfer between government agencies is still suspended; in addition to the need to provide financial grades suitable for those who will be transferred, including the first, second, third, fourth and fifth classes.

Sources said the transfer decision stipulates that the job grades, job designations, financial benefits and statuses will be retained; so the concerned employees will not be transferred according to the newly established financial grades, such as those for which the new graduates are appointed.

Sources added the issue will be presented to the CSC to take the appropriate decision; such that the transfer process does not affect the supervisory positions and promotion grades by choosing the entities to which they will be transferred.

Sources confirmed that the salaries of the 2,500 employees will be the same as they will be given the same financial and job grades in their new workplaces.

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World News Roundup

Europe

Navalny strategist attacked

'Russia ready to use N-arms if threatened'

MOSCOW, March 13, (AP): President Vladimir Putin said that Russia is ready to use nuclear weapons if there is a threat to its statehood, sovereignty or independence, voicing hope that the U.S. would refrain from actions that could trigger a nuclear conflict.

Putin's statement was another blunt warning to the West ahead of a presidential vote this week in which he's all but certain to win another six-year term.

In an interview with Russian state television released early Wednesday, Putin described U.S. President Joe Biden as a veteran politician who fully understands possible dangers of escalation, and said that he doesn't think that the world is heading to a nuclear war.

At the same time, he emphasized that Russia's nuclear forces are in full readiness and "from the military-technical viewpoint, we're prepared."

Putin said that in line with the country's security doctrine, Moscow is ready to use nuclear weapons in case of a threat to "the existence of the Russian state, our sovereignty and independence."

The Russian leader has repeatedly talked about his readiness to use nuclear weapons since launching the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The

most recent such threat came in his state-of-the-nation address last month, when he warned the West that deepening its involvement in the fighting in Ukraine would risk a nuclear war.

Asked in the interview if he has ever considered using battlefield nuclear weapons in Ukraine, Putin responded that there has been no need for that.

He also voiced confidence that Moscow will achieve its goals in Ukraine and held the door open for talks, emphasizing that Russia will hold onto its gains and would seek firm guarantees from the West.

Russia kills 234 fighters: Ukrainian long-range drones smashed into two oil facilities deep inside Russia on Tuesday, officials said, while an armed incursion claimed by Ukraine-based Russian opponents of the Kremlin unnerved a border region just days before Russia's presidential election.

The attack by waves of drones across eight regions of Russia displayed Kyiv's expanding technological capacity as the war extends into its third year. The cross-border ground assault also weakened President Vladimir Putin's argument that life in Russia has been unaffected by the war, though he remains all but certain to win another six-year term after eliminating all opposition.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that Moscow's military and security forces killed 234 fighters while thwarting the incursion. In a statement, the ministry blamed the attack on the "Kyiv regime" and "Ukraine's terrorist formations," insisting that the Russian military and border forces were able to stop the attackers and avert a cross-border raid.

Top strategist of Navalny attacked: Associates of late opposition leader Alexei Navalny said Tuesday that the politician's close ally and top strategist was attacked near his home in Lithuania's capital.

Kira Yarmysh, who had been Navalny's spokesperson, said the assailant smashed a window of Leonid Volkov's car, sprayed tear gas into his eyes and started hitting him with a hammer. Volkov was later taken to a hospital, according to Navalny's ally Ivan Zhdanov.

The attack took place in Vilnius nearly a month after Navalny's unexplained death in a remote Arctic penal colony.

Conservatives major donor blasted for remarks: A major donor to Britain's ruling Conservative Party came under fire Tuesday because he said a Black member of Parliament made him "want to hate all Black women" and that she "should be shot" - comments the prime minister denounced as "racist and wrong."

The remarks by Frank Hester, chief executive of healthcare software firm The Phoenix Partnership, about Diane Abbott, the first Black woman elected to Parliament, were also blasted by opposition parties who said the Tories should return the 10 million pounds (\$12.8 million) he donated last year.

"The comments about Diane Abbott are just abhorrent," Labour leader Keir Starmer told ITV. "This apology this morning that is pretending that what was said wasn't racist or anything to do with the fact she's a woman. I don't buy that I'm afraid, and I think that it's time the Tory Party called it out and returned the money."

Kate at the center of a media backlash: She's one of the most photographed women in the world. But attention on Kate, the Princess of Wales, hasn't reached this level since she married Prince William in a fairy-tale wedding in 2011.

An announcement from palace officials that Kate, 42, had unspecified abdominal surgery and would be out of sight for weeks triggered huge speculation and gossip about her health. But an admission from Kate that she altered an official family photo - one that's supposed to reassure the public that she is doing well - made things even worse.

Senior US official travels to Kosovo: A senior US official on Tuesday said he would be visiting Kosovo in the next days to put "back on track" talks on normalizing ties between Kosovo and Serbia, after tensions escalated over Kosovo's decision to ban the use of the Serbian dinar.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Gabriel Escobar said he would discuss with Kosovo authorities a possible resolution of the "uncoordinated decision" to ban Serbia's dinar and transfers from Serbia to citizens of Kosovo who depend on social services and payments.

Romania's president to enter race: Romania's president said Tuesday that he will enter the race to become the next leader of the 32-nation NATO military alliance, emphasizing his country's proximity to Ukraine and the threat from Russia.

President Klaus Iohannis wants to succeed Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, who has been NATO's top civilian official since 2014 and has made clear he will not be staying.

Romania, a NATO member since 2004, borders Ukraine and has played an increasingly prominent role in the alliance throughout Russia's full-scale invasion, including hosting a NATO meeting of foreign ministers in November 2022.



Putin



US President Joe Biden meets with Polish President Andrzej Duda and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk in the East Room of the White House on March 12 in Washington. (AP)

In WH visit, Polish president pushes NATO to ramp up spending

Polish President Andrzej Duda used a joint White House visit with his political rival, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, on Tuesday to call on NATO allies to significantly increase defense spending and press a divided Washington to break its impasse over replenishing funds for Ukraine at a critical moment in the war in Europe.

Duda wants members of the NATO alliance to raise their spending on defense to 3% of their GDP as Russia puts its own economy on a war footing and pushes forward with its plans to conquer

Ukraine. Poland already spends 4% of its own economic output on defense, double the current target of 2% for NATO nations.

The Polish leader made the call as he and Tusk visited Washington to mark their country's 25th anniversary of joining the now 32-member transatlantic military alliance. It was a historic step into the West after breaking free from Moscow's sphere of influence after decades of communist rule.

Also:

WASHINGTON: The US Department of Defense announced additional military aid for Ukraine worth USD 300 million. In a press statement late Tuesday, US Secretary of State **Antony Blinken** said that the aid includes ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, howitzers, artillery, tank ammunition, anti-tank weapons, rockets, trucks to transport heavy equipment, spare parts and other equipment to strengthen Ukraine's defense on the battlefield. (Agencies)



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service on March 13 emergency services personnel work at an apartment building destroyed by a Russian attack in Sumy, Ukraine. (AP)



Rodriguez



Everett

America

Uvalde police chief resigns: The Uvalde police chief who was on vacation during the Robb Elementary School shooting submitted his resignation Tuesday, less than a week after a report ordered by the city defended the department's response to the attack but outraged some family members of the 19 children and two teachers who were killed.

Uvalde Police Chief **Daniel Rodriguez** was in Arizona when a teen entered a fourth-grade classroom in Uvalde with an AR-style rifle on May 24, 2022. In his resignation letter, which did not mention one of the deadliest school shootings in US history, Rodriguez said it was time for a new chapter in his career.

"Together we achieved significant progress and milestones, and I take pride in the positive impact we've made during my tenure," Rodriguez wrote. He also thanked colleagues and said Uvalde will "always hold a special place in my heart."

The resignation is effective April 6. (AP)

Ex-US Rep Everett dies: Former Alabama Republican US Rep **Robert Terry Everett**, who represented the state's 2nd District from 1993 to 2009, died Tuesday, the governor's office confirmed. He was 87.

Everett died peacefully in his sleep at his home in Rehobeth, a suburb of Dothan, Gov Kay Ivey's office said.

"Terry tirelessly served the people of southeast Alabama and his native Wiregrass with distinction for eight terms in Congress," Ivey said in a written statement. "During his time on Capitol Hill, he was one of the strongest voices for Alabama's military bases, active duty personnel, and veterans. He was also a stalwart advocate for Alabama farmers and small businesses. Alabama greatly benefited from his leadership and his devotion to public service." Ivey directed flags to be lowered to half-staff on the grounds of the Alabama State

Politics

Ohio GOP primaries for House promise crowded ballots

Biden and Trump clinch nominations

WASHINGTON, March 13, (AP): US President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump clinched their parties' presidential nominations Tuesday with decisive victories in a slate of low-profile primaries, setting up a general election rematch that many voters do not want.

The outcome of contests across Georgia, Mississippi and Washington state was never in doubt. Neither Biden, a Democrat, nor Trump, a Republican, faced major opposition. But the magnitude of their wins gave each man the delegate majority he needed to claim his party's nomination at the summertime national conventions.

Choices

Not even halfway through the presidential primary calendar, Tuesday marked a crystallizing moment for a nation uneasy with its choices in 2024.

There is no longer any doubt that the fall election will feature a rematch between two flawed and unpopular presidents. At 81, Biden is already the oldest president in US history, while the 77-year-old Trump is facing decades in prison as a defendant in four criminal cases. Their rematch - the first featuring two US presidents since 1912 - will almost certainly deepen the nation's searing political and cultural divides over the eight-month grind that lies ahead.

In a statement, Biden celebrated the nomination while casting Trump as a serious threat to democracy.

Trump, Biden said, "is running a campaign of resentment, revenge, and retribution that threatens the very idea of America."

He continued, "I am honored that the

broad coalition of voters representing the rich diversity of the Democratic Party across the country have put their faith in me once again to lead our party - and our country - in a moment when the threat Trump poses is greater than ever."

Trump, in a video posted on social media, celebrated what he called "a great day of victory."

"But now we have to get back to work because we have the worst president in the history of our country," Trump said of Biden. "So, we're not going to take time to celebrate. We'll celebrate in eight months when the election is over."

Both candidates dominated Tuesday's primaries in swing-state Georgia, deep-red Mississippi and Democratic-leaning Washington. Voting was taking place later in Hawaii's Republican caucus.

Classified

Despite their tough talk, the road ahead will not be easy for either presumptive nominee.

Trump is facing 91 felony counts in four criminal cases involving his handling of classified documents and his attempt to overturn the 2020 election, among other alleged crimes. He's also facing increasingly pointed questions about his policy plans and relationships with some of the world's most dangerous dictators. Trump met privately on Friday with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who has rolled back democracy in his country.

Biden, who would be 86 years old at the end of his next term, is working to assure a skeptical electorate that he's still physically and mentally able to thrive in the world's most important job. Voters

in both parties are unhappy with his handling of immigration and inflation.

And he's dealing with additional dissension within his party's progressive base, furious that he hasn't done more to stop Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza. Activists and religious leaders in Washington encouraged Democrats to vote "uncommitted" to signal their outrage.

Also:

COLUMBUS, Ohio: A slew of Republican candidates on Ohio's primary ballot are running in solidly red congressional seats, but next week's elections still promise plenty of drama - especially as the GOP seeks a champion to flip the district of Democratic Rep. **Marcy Kaptur**, the longest-serving woman in Congress.

Democrats also have their own primary challenges in the more urban and solidly-left districts this month, although those battles aren't as closely watched as the diverse GOP matchups.

Secure doesn't mean boring. This year's GOP primaries include a jam-packed race in **southern Ohio**, the future representation of **East Palestine** a year after the toxic train derailment, and a contentious primary that could unseat Kaptur, who is one of the GOP's biggest targets in the fierce fight over control of the US House.

The fight for the Republican nomination to take on Kaptur this fall has been anything but dull.

But after a chaotic start, national Republicans are feeling more optimistic about their chances in Ohio's 9th Congressional District, which stretches along the **Lake Erie** coast in northwest Ohio.

Capitol Complex and in the district until his interment. (AP)

Home explosion kills two: A massive explosion killed two people and destroyed

a house in the Pittsburgh area near the Ohio River, authorities said Tuesday.

Aerial images from the scene in Crescent Township in the northwest Pittsburgh suburbs showed smoking ruins with the structure reduced to rubble and some large pieces

lodged in trees above. Allegheny County emergency dispatchers said the blast was reported shortly before 9 a.m. Tuesday.

The blast was "severe, absolutely extreme," and "You could feel it in your chest," said Chief Andrew Tomer of the Crescent Township fire department. It was heard and felt throughout Crescent and nearby townships and even across the river. Tomer and others at the fire department immediately saw "a column of white smoke up in the air followed by a thick column of black smoke," he said. (AP)

Judge OKs Trump's \$92m bond: A federal judge on Tuesday approved the \$92 million bond put up by former President Donald Trump to ensure that writer E. Jean Carroll will receive a jury award for his verbal attacks against her if it survives appeals.

Judge Lewis A. Kaplan formally approved the bond on Tuesday, a day after lawyers agreed there was no argument over it.

The bond offered by the Republican 2024 presidential front-runner comes after Trump's lawyers announced they were appealing the verdict to the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan.

Over the weekend at a campaign rally, Trump resumed his attacks on the credibility of the longtime advice columnist, saying she had falsely accused him of raping her in spring 1996 in the dressing room of a luxury department store across the street from Trump Tower. (AP)



Britain's Queen Camilla, President of Women of the World (WOW), left, speaks with Melanie Brown, (third right), at a reception to celebrate International Women's Day and mark the end of the WOW Girls Festival Bus tour, at Buckingham Palace, London on March 12. (AP)

Lat/Am

17 hostages released

Honduras former first lady seeks presidency

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras, March 13, (AP): Former Honduras first lady **Ana García de Hernández** said Tuesday, just days after her husband's U.S. drug trafficking conviction, that she plans to seek the country's presidency next year.

Ex-President Juan Orlando Hernández was convicted of conspiring with drug traffickers moving tons of cocaine to the United States in a federal court in Manhattan Friday.



García

On Tuesday, his wife said in a news conference: "I want to tell you that from this moment I will start an active and proactive fight for the world to know the injustice that was committed." She said she would do so by seeking the nomination of Hernández's National party.

Hernández, who maintained his innocence throughout his trial, could be sentenced to life in prison.

"I know what has to be done, I know the job, I know the dedication and the fight my husband has had every day and I know Honduras' great needs, and one of the greatest is the injustice we've just seen," García de Hernández said.

Marco Eliud Girón, a lawmaker from the ruling LI-BRE party, said that García de Hernández could run, but asserted that she surely knew of her husband's ties to drug traffickers. He suggested her entry into politics had more to do with reducing her own legal exposure.

Haiti's future is being planned on 2 tracks: Haiti's future is being planned on two tracks - one involving traditional political power, the other focused on the power of gangs.

After an intense session of international diplomacy in Jamaica, a group of Caribbean nations and the United States announced Tuesday that Haiti's best hope for calming violence rests with a council of influential figures who would elect an interim leader and could steer the country toward fresh presidential elections.

As they spoke to the media, a heavily armed gang leader held an impromptu news conference in Port-au-Prince and rejected any solution led and supported by the international community.

"Haitian people will choose who will govern them," Jimmy "Barbecue" Chérizier said Monday.

'4m face acute food insecurity in Haiti': Four million people face "acute food insecurity" and one million of them are one step away from famine, the U.N. food agency's director in the conflict-racked Caribbean nation said Tuesday.

Jean-Martin Bauer told a virtual press conference that he's "ringing the alarm bell" because the recent increase in gang violence has made a very bad situation even worse and displaced an additional 15,000 people - just over the first weekend in March in the capital, Port-au-Prince.

That brings the total number of displaced people in Haiti to over 360,000, he said, and the U.N. says half of them are children. The country has more than 11 million inhabitants.

Bauer said, there were 4 million food insecure and hungry Haitians during the COVID pandemic in 2020 and that number hasn't gone down, but the number on the brink of famine has escalated to one million.

Port-au-Prince has been turned into "a bubble" where gangs control the roads, the port and airport are closed, and no one can get in or get out, Bauer said.

Prosecutor with political ties selected as AG:

Colombia's Supreme Court on Tuesday selected the nation's new attorney general following a month of deliberations that were interrupted by protests outside the court and complaints from President Gustavo Petro's supporters, who argued the judges were stonewalling his nominees.

Ultimately the court selected Luz Adriana Camargo, a seasoned prosecutor with few political ties, as the country's lead prosecutor, with 18 of the 23 judges voting in favor. The attorney general in Colombia must be ratified by a two-thirds majority of the court, whose members are elected by the judicial branch.

Camargo will lead the Attorney General's Office, a branch of the Colombian state that has long been criticized for favoring its political allies and pursuing criminal investigations for political ends.

Though she is known to have worked closely with Colombia's defense minister, observers are hoping that Camargo can make the Attorney General's Office more independent and impartial.

2 detectives found safe in Mexico:

Two federal detectives have been found unharmed after they went missing in Mexico's Pacific coast state of Guerrero while investigating the disappearances of 43 students almost 10 years ago.

Officials did not say Tuesday how the man and woman were found or whether they had been freed from captivity.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador mentioned their disappearances over the weekend at his daily news briefing, noting, "I hope this is not related to those who do not want us to find the youths."

The disappearances were the latest sign of what appeared to be a generalized breakdown in law and order in Guerrero state, home to the resort of Acapulco. The state has been dogged for a decade by the disappearances of 43 students from a rural teachers' college in Guerrero in 2014 who are believed to have been abducted by local officials and turned over to a drug gang to be killed.

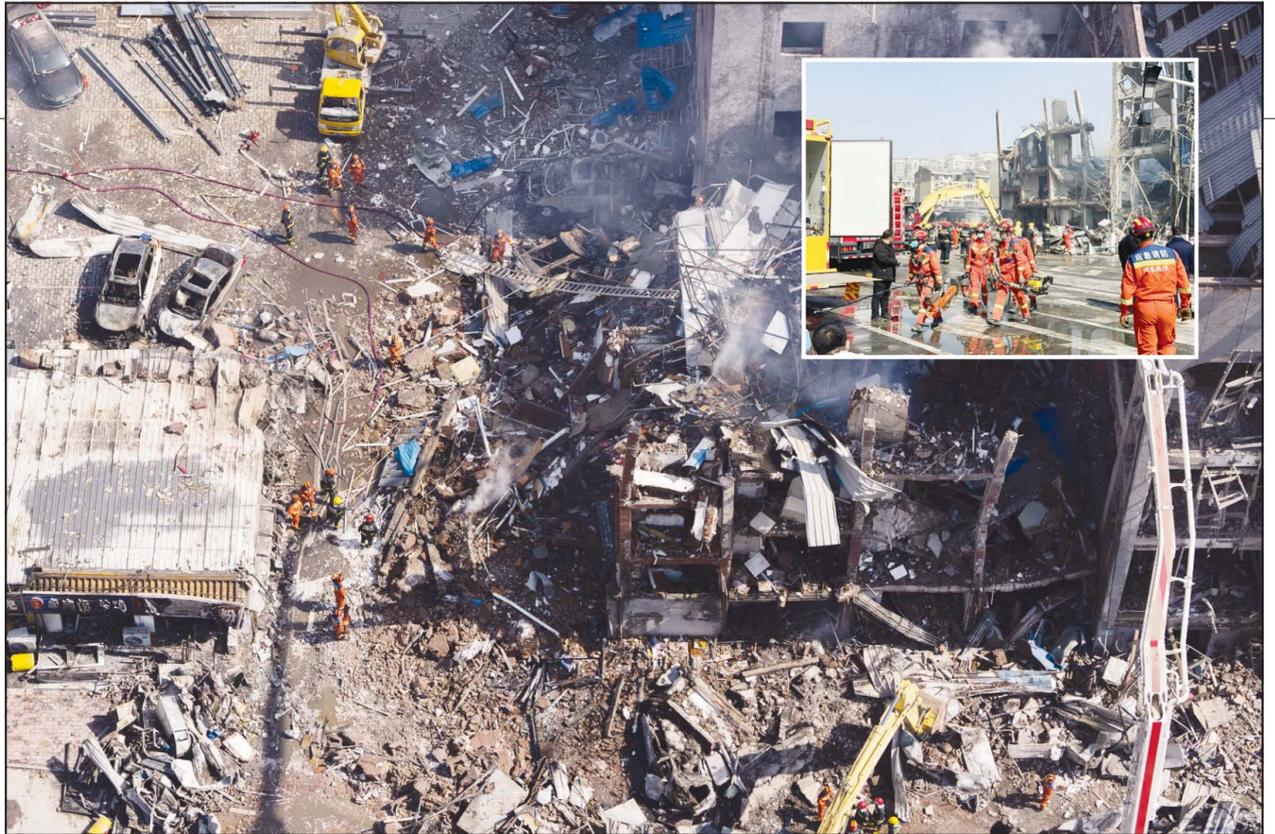
Rio police release 17 hostages:

Brazilian police said Tuesday they released 17 hostages from a gunman that took over a crowded bus for three hours in Rio de Janeiro and wounded at least two people.

Rio police spokesman Col. Marcos Andrade told journalists all hostages aboard a bus parked at one of the city's main terminals had been freed after negotiations with the gunman, who allegedly wanted to leave Rio after receiving threats from a gang.

Andrade said the gunman claimed to have shot one of hostage near the bus, while thousands of passengers were stranded waiting for information on scheduled travel.

People interviewed on TV said they heard several gunshots, causing panic inside the crowded terminal.



Firefighters work the scene of an explosion in Sanhe city in northern China's Hebei province on March 13. Rescuers were responding to a suspected gas leak explosion Wednesday in a building in northern China, authorities said. Inset: Firefighters work the scene of an explosion in Sanhe city in northern China's Hebei province on Wednesday. (AP)

2 dead, dozens injured in suspected gas explosion outside Beijing

An explosion caused by a suspected gas leak ripped through a building in northern China on Wednesday, killing at least two people and injuring 26 others, authorities said.

The blast occurred early in the morning at a fried chicken shop in the city of Sanhe, authorities said in a short statement. The city is around 63 kilometers

(39 miles) east of Beijing. Police cordoned off streets 1 kilometer (over half a mile) around the explosion, Associated Press reporters saw, and were directing people away.

Fire engines were dispatched to the scene and a truck could be seen hauling away a burnt-out car with its windows gone. Most of the original building is gone,

with only part of its frame remaining above piles of rubble. State broadcaster CCTV said 14 people were hospitalized, including two in serious condition.

Relatives of a person who had died told local news outlet Hongxing News that she was the owner of a guesthouse inside the building and that her husband was still missing. (AP)

Asia

Two dead, 24 missing after boat capsized off Sulawesi

'Wastewater discharge at Fukushima safe'

TOMIOKA, Japan, March 13, (AP): The head of the UN atomic agency told local Japanese representatives at a meeting in Fukushima on Wednesday that the ongoing discharge of treated radioactive wastewater at the ruined nuclear power plant has met safety standards and that any restrictions on products from the region are "not scientific."

International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Rafael Grossi joined local officials and representatives from fishing and business groups and reassured them that the discharges are being carried out "with no impact to the environment, water, fish and sediment."

Grossi, who arrived in Japan on Tuesday, visited Fukushima for the first time since the release of the treated water began in August.

Grossi examined the discharge and sampling facility on Wednesday, escorted by Tomoaki Kobayakawa, president of the plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings. He last visited the plant in July after issuing an IAEA review predicting only negligible impact from the discharges. An IAEA comprehensive report later concluded that the discharges meet international safety standards.

Damaged

The 2011 disaster damaged the Fukushima plant's power supply and reactor cooling functions, triggering meltdowns of three reactors and causing large amounts of radioactive wastewater to accumulate. After more than a decade of cleanup work, the plant began discharging the water after treating it and diluting it with large amounts of seawater on Aug. 24, starting a process that's expected to take decades.

The discharges have been opposed by fishing groups and neighboring countries including China, which banned all imports of Japanese seafood immediately after the release began.

"There is no scientific reason to impose any restriction on products coming from us," Grossi said at the meet-

ing in Iwaki, south of the Fukushima Daiichi plant.

"This is very important in particular to be said in this forum here in Fukushima," he said. He noted a "political dimension to this activity since ... some neighboring countries are also manifesting concerns."

Despite earlier fears that the water discharge would further hurt Fukushima's hard-hit fishing industry, it has not damaged its reputation domestically. China's ban on Japanese seafood mostly hit scallop exporters in Hokkaido. Tokyo has earmarked a fund of more than 100 billion yen (\$680 million) that includes compensation and other support, including measures to help find other export destinations.

Accuracy

The discharges are at the beginning of a long process, Grossi said, stressing the importance of "transparency, technical accuracy and wide open, honest dialogue and consultation." He stressed that the IAEA has its own office and lab at the Fukushima plant to independently monitor the process.

Grossi said he met with residents not only to highlight the main points about the discharges but "to learn from you." He said he would keep coming back to Fukushima and that he is open to hearing residents' concerns and needs.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government has reversed earlier plans for a nuclear phaseout and is accelerating the use of nuclear power in response to rising fuel costs related to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and pressure to meet decarbonization goals. On Tuesday, Grossi expressed support for increasing Japan's nuclear capacity as the country looks to it as a stable, clean source of power.

Grossi, at a meeting with Economy and Industry Minister Ken Saito, offered Japan technical assistance to improve the idled Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant in Japan's north-central region of Niigata, run by the

Fukushima Daiichi operator, to address concerns about its past problems with safeguarding measures. It and the government are keen to restart it soon.

Also:

BEIJING: This year, China's national legislature resumed its annual in-person meetings without many of the restrictions that had been imposed since the pandemic. No more bubbles, multiple COVID-19 tests or social distancing. Officials say China is back to business, but in practice, the meetings have become even more tightly scripted to convey Chinese leader Xi Jinping's message, leaving little room for the spontaneity and open engagement the sessions once offered before COVID-19.

The Two Sessions, as the meetings are called, lasted just one week - half their length before the pandemic. Delegates no longer mingle with journalists in open-door sessions as they used to just a few years ago. Reporters were in some instances physically barred from approaching officials.

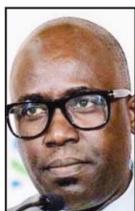
JAKARTA, Indonesia: A fishing boat carrying 37 people capsized in rough seas off Indonesia's Sulawesi island, killing at least two people and leaving 24 others missing, rescuers said Wednesday.

The Dewi Jaya 2 was on its way from a port in Lombok Island near Bali carrying tons of fish when it was overwhelmed by high waves during stormy weather after midnight on Saturday, the National Search and Rescue Agency said in a statement.

The vessel capsized in the Gulf of Bone about 52 nautical miles from the port of Benteng in the Selayar island chain off South Sulawesi province, the statement said. After local fishers reported the accident on Sunday, rescuers found 11 survivors including the captain stranded in various places in the Selayars. They also found two bodies there.



An injured National Guard soldier walks away for treatment amid clashes with students from a rural teachers' college protesting the previous week's shooting of one of their colleagues during a confrontation with police, outside the state's Attorney General's Office in Chilpancingo, Mexico on March 12. Two federal detectives have been found unharmed after they went missing in Mexico's Pacific coast state of Guerrero while investigating the disappearances of 43 students almost 10 years ago. (AP)



Sing'oei



Ruto

Africa

'Piracy attack off coast of Somalia':

Several people boarded and took control of a vessel in a suspected pirate attack in the Indian Ocean nearly 700 miles (1,100 kilometers) east of Somalia's coastal capital Mogadishu, the British military reported Tuesday.

The vessel was boarded by several people from two craft, "one large and one small," said a statement from the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operation. "Unauthorised persons now have control of the vessel," the statement said. It gave no other details.

British maritime security company Ambrey reported that 20 armed assailants took control of the vessel while it was going from the Mozambique capital Maputo to Hamriya in the United Arab Emirates.

Once-rampant piracy off the Somali coast diminished after a peak in 2011, but concerns about new attacks have grown in recent months. (AP)

Sudan army regains TV control:

Sudan's military has said it regained control of the country's national radio and television headquarters on Tuesday from a rival paramilitary group it has been battling for about a year.

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces seized the headquarters of Sudan's Radio and Television in the first weeks of Sudan's conflict which broke out in April last year after long-simmering tensions between its commander and the head of the military.

In a statement midday Tuesday, the military said it took over the headquarters buildings in the city of Omdurman from RSF fighters who fled the area. It also posted footage online showing its soldiers inside the headquarters. (AP)

Police deployment on hold:

Kenya is

halting plans to deploy at least 1,000 police officers to Haiti following the unprecedented violence that erupted in the Caribbean nation and the announcement by its Prime Minister Ariel Henry that he would resign once a presidential council is created, a Kenyan official said Tuesday.

Kenya had agreed last October to lead a

UN-authorized international police force to Haiti, but the country's top court in January ruled this was unconstitutional, in part because of a lack of reciprocal agreements on such deployments between the two countries.

Kenya's President William Ruto said that he and Henry had witnessed the signing of the reciprocal agreements between Kenya and Haiti on March 1, clearing the path for the deployment.

Under the plan, the UN-backed multinational police led by Kenyan officers was to help quell gang violence that has long plagued Haiti. But violence escalated sharply since Feb. 29, with gunmen burning police stations, closing the main international airports and raiding the country's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates.

Scores have been killed, and more than 15,000 are homeless after fleeing neighborhoods raided by gangs. Food and water are dwindling and the main port in the capital of Port-au-Prince remains closed, stranding dozens of containers with critical supplies.

After returning from a trip to Kenya where he had gone to salvage plans for the African country's deployment, Henry has been locked out of his own country and has remained in Puerto Rico since last week.

"It is true the planned deployment of police officers has been put on hold," Kenya's Foreign Affairs Principal Secretary Koriri Sing'oei said Tuesday.

"There has been a fundamental change in circumstances in Haiti as a result of the complete breakdown of law and order," Sing'oei added. (AP)



International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi, (second left), is guided at a facility for sampling treated and diluted radioactive water at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, operated by Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings (TEPCO), in Futaba town, northeastern Japan on March 13. The head of the UN atomic agency told local Japanese representatives at a meeting in Fukushima on Wednesday that the ongoing discharge of treated radioactive wastewater at the ruined nuclear power plant has met safety standards and that any restrictions on products from the region are 'not scientific.' (AP)

dollar rises

The US dollar rose vis a vis the Kuwaiti Dinar on Wednesday trading at KD 0.307 and the Euro firmed at KD 0.335 compared to Tuesday's exchange rates.

The Central Bank of Kuwait said the sterling pound dropped by 0.17 percent trading at KD 0.392, the Swiss franc steadied at KD 0.349 and the Japanese yen remained stable at KD 0.002.

Exchange rates declared by the CBK reflect average prices and not rates of actual transactions. (KUNA)

oil surges

Kuwait oil price rose by 75 cents to reach USD 83.13 per barrel on Tuesday vis a vis USD 82.38 pb on Monday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said on Wednesday.

In international markets, forwards of the Brent crude edged down by 29 cents to settle at USD 81.92 pb, while those of the Intermediate West Texas crude moved down by 37 cents settling at USD 77.56 a barrel. (KUNA)

OPEC expects global demand on crude to reach 28.8 mln barrels daily in '25

Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) estimate that demand for its crude in 2025 is to reach about 28.8 million barrels daily, a 300,000 barrels increase from 2024.

These estimates were reported in OPEC's monthly report issued on Tuesday. The organization expected demand during this current year to reach 28.5 million barrel daily marking a 1.1 million barrel increase compared to 2023.

The report indicated that expectations of global demand growth for the year 2024 remain unchanged at 2.2 million barrel per day. Oil demand growth in OECD Asia Pacific has been revised down slightly due to expected lower performance in manufacturing and petrochemical sectors of Japan and South Korea. However, this is met by upward adjustments for India and other

Asian nations, prompted by anticipated improvements during the same period. With this, the OECD is forecast to expand by around 200,000 barrel daily, and non-OECD by 2 million barrel daily this year. The report also mentioned that world supply of non-OPEC oil production in 2024 is expected to grow by 1.1 million barrel daily, slightly revised down from the previous month's assessment.

The revision, it explained, takes into account the recently announced additional voluntary production adjustments by some countries in the Declaration of Cooperation (DoC).

In 2024, the main drivers for liquids supply growth are expected to be the US, Canada, Brazil and Norway, while the largest declines are anticipated in Russia and Mexico, reported the Organization. (KUNA)

Market Movements

13-03-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts				
SAUDI	-	Tadawul	+109.21	12,723.15	JAPAN	-	Nikkei 225	-101.54	38,695.97
UAE	-	DFM	+6.47	4,259.24	PAKISTAN	-	KSE 100	-671.75	64,209.72
PHILIPPINES	-	PSEI	+85.92	6,965.51					

Business

Market capital value hits 44 bln dinars

Boursa Kuwait witnesses collective rise

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: In yesterday's trading session, the Kuwait Stock Exchange witnessed a collective rise in its indices following several sessions of varied performance, reports Al-Anba daily.

This upward trend boosted the market's capital value to 44 billion dinars, with circulating liquidity reaching approximately 40.05 million dinars.

The surge in indices was fueled by purchasing activities and the establishment of positions across a broad spectrum of selected stocks, particularly in the first market, which comprises the leading stocks on the exchange.

The Premier Market index climbed by approximately 35.33 points, marking a 0.43% increase to reach 8,195.32 points, setting a new peak for the market.

Meanwhile, the main market index saw a rise of 30.42 points, representing a 0.5% increase to reach 6,112.39 points.

Similarly, the general market index experienced a 0.44% increase, rising by about 33.05 points to reach 7,473.55 points.

Milestone for real estate investment fund

KFH Capital's REIT Fund joins FTSE Russell's index

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Abdulaziz Al-Marzouq, the CEO of KFH Capital, the investment arm of the Kuwait Finance House Group, has expressed satisfaction with the inclusion of the KFH Capital REIT Fund in FTSE Russell's index for small and micro companies, reports Al-Anba daily.

He stated that this recognition underscores the excellence of KFH Capital's investment products and opens the door for the fund to attract foreign liquidity from global investors who rely on these indices for investment decisions.

The KFH Capital REIT Fund, listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange since September 2020, became the first income-generating real estate fund traded on the REIT system to be licensed. Its inclusion in FTSE Russell's index for small and micro companies alongside three other Kuwaiti firms, effective from March 14, 2024, marks a significant milestone.

Al-Marzouq highlighted the potential for increased flexibility and liquidity for

the fund's units following its listing in the index. The fund aims to generate cash returns through investments in rental and income-generating properties across various real estate sectors, ensuring limited risks and consistent financial flows from leasing activities. With a capital of 54 million dinars, the fund provides shareholders with monthly cash distributions in Kuwaiti dinars, comprising at least 90% of net revenues.

He emphasized that the listing represents a significant development for the fund, coming three years after its initial trading on the Kuwait Stock Exchange.

The fund has achieved favorable results, providing annual distributions of up to 5%, distributed monthly. Backed by experienced professional management, the fund leverages KFH Capital's expertise in the local real estate market and invests in diverse commercial, investment, and other real estate properties, maximizing returns across various sectors.

Geopolitical concerns support crude oil market

Oil prices steady above \$80 amid mixed data

By KAMCO Invest

Crude oil prices remained elevated and traded in a tight range over the last few weeks on mixed economic data, geopolitical concerns as well as controlled oil supply. The speculations relating to the timing of a rate cut in the US and by other central banks globally also kept crude oil and other asset classes on tenterhooks. The crude oil market got support from the ongoing geopolitical situations in the Middle East and the escalation of war between Russia and Ukraine as these could result in supply disruption for oil and other commodities. Temporary support also came after data from China showed higher y-o-y import of crude oil in China during January-2024 and February-2024, although total imports were smaller than previous months, indicating a declining trend in purchase by China. This comes as concerns continue to remain on extended economic weakness in China despite several measures and sops offered by the government over the last few months.

A sneak into softer demand trend was also seen when Russia decided to lower production during Q2-2024 based on expectation for global oil demand growth. The country has kept its production target for the year at 9.5 mb/d and slashed production during Q2-2024 by 471 tb/d. A report from Bloomberg showed that Russia plans to cut output by 350 tb/d in April-2024 but increase exports from planned cuts of 500 tb/d to 121 tb/d. Cuts in May-2024 is planned at 400 tb/d and export curbs of 71 tb/ds while the entire 471 tb/d of cuts in June-2024 will come from output reduction.

On the other hand, prices of refined products could come under pressure in the coming weeks after several incidents of disruptions at a number of global refineries. This includes the fire at ExxonMobil's Port Jerome refinery in France, TotalEnergies halt of a refining unit section in France, hiccups at BP's refinery in Whiting, the drone attacks on Russian oil refineries over the last week and a pipeline leak and subsequent unit shutdown of TotalEnergies refinery in Texas. In addition, late last month, Russia announced a six-month ban on gasoline exports starting March-2024 aimed at keeping prices stable in the domestic market. The aforementioned was reflected in the prices of gasoline in the US that is up more than 20% this year while diesel prices in Europe are up by 10%. The shortages of refined products are somewhat offset by exports from Nigeria's Dangote refinery, although the refinery is yet to reach peak capacity. Moreover, China is also seeing an increase in exports of refined products due to weakness in the domestic market.

In terms of production, data from the US showed a small decline of 100 tb/d in crude oil output that reached 13.2 mb/d during the week ended 1-March-2024 after staying elevated at 13.3 mb/d for the previous five weeks. Oil output from the OPEC group increased slightly mainly led by resumption of production in Libya that more than offset decline in bigger producers in the group.

Oil Prices

Crude oil futures traded in a very tight range over the last few weeks above the USD 80/b level. Prices reached around USD 83/b on 12-March-2024 mainly reflecting geopolitical issues in the Red Sea as well as disruption in Russia. The options on crude oil indicate bullish bets at prices of over USD 90/b in the months ahead, according to data from Bloomberg, betting on curtailed supplies from OPEC and increase in demand. The extension to OPEC+ cuts until the end of Q2-2024 had only a minimal impact on prices as speculations on lower-than-expected demand in China offset the impact. Expectations of weak economic growth in China capped further gains although exports during the first two months of the year showed y-o-y growth. These trends were also seen in the demand for jet fuel in China. The latest Bloomberg weekly report showed a marginal dip in global passenger jet fuel demand after growth in Eastern Europe, North America and Sub-Saharan Africa offset by decline in other regions, mainly China. Oil prices were also affected by the lack of clarity on the future course of rate cuts in the US with data largely pointing to a delay in cuts that was expected at the start of the year as well as speculation over the number of cuts this year. Meanwhile, the latest data on US job market showed that job growth accelerated in February-2024; however, an increase in unemployment rate and moderation in wage gains indicates that a rate cut is still possible in June-2024.

Prices of almost all crude grades reported gains for the second consecutive month during February-2024. Average spot Brent crude oil price was up by 4.5% to reach USD 83.9/b during February-2024 as compared to USD 80.3/b during January-2024. The gain in average OPEC reference basket price was much smaller at 1.5% to reach USD 81.2/b while Kuwait export grade crude witnessed a marginal monthly gain of 0.3% to average at USD 81.1/b during February-2024. Meanwhile, the consensus estimate for Brent crude underwent minimal changes from last month's forecast with prices expected to average at USD 82.3/b in Q1-2024 and show gradual growth until Q4-2024 to reach USD 84/b. Price forecasts from the US EIA showed a steep upgrade for Brent which is forecasted to reach USD 87.0/b in 2024 vs. USD 82.42/b in the previous forecast.

World Oil Demand

Global oil demand growth forecast for 2024 was kept unchanged by the OPEC in its latest monthly report at 2.2 mb/d with demand expected to average at 104.5 mb/d during the year. However, adjustments were made to demand growth data for OECD Asia for Q1-2024 with a downgrade due to expected lower performance in the manufacturing and petrochemical sectors in Japan and South Korea. However, an

upward revision to demand data for India and Other Asia regions reflecting higher demand during the quarter fully offset the downward revision. For 2025, demand growth forecast was also kept unchanged at a growth of 1.8 mb/d with demand expected to average at 106.3 mb/d during the year.

Oil demand in the US is expected to be supported mainly by transportation fuels and light distillates. According to OPEC, US oil demand is expected to increase by 168 tb/d during 1H-2024 mainly backed by demand for jet/kerosene, gasoline and LPG that would be partially offset by subdued demand for diesel as the industrial/manufacturing sector remains showed contraction. For OECD Europe, recent forecasts shows slight economic improvement towards the close of the year. Once again, demand is expected to be supported by transportation and air travel activity.

Oil demand in China showed growth with total imported crude oil increasing by 5.1% y-o-y during January-2024 and February-2024 to reach an average of 10.74 mb/d led by higher buying by refiners to meet rising demand during lunar new year holiday. Demand for aviation fuel and gasoline was high during January-2024 that flowed through February-2024 that resulted in higher refinery runs from state refiners. Private independent refiners, however, lowered run rate in February-2024 due to thinning margins. Demand in India also increased during February-2024, according to oil ministry data. Fuel consumption in the country increased by 5.7% y-o-y during February-2024 to reach 4.98 mb/d led by strong factory activity during the month. The m-o-m increase came in at 5.1% as compared to total consumption of 4.74 mb/d in January-2024. Demand for all refined products saw growth during the month including gasoline, diesel, fuel oil and LPG.

World Oil Supply

Non-OPEC oil supply (liquids production) growth forecast for 2024 was once again lowered by 120 tb/d by the OPEC in its latest report. Supply is now expected to grow by 1.1 mb/d and average at 70.5 mb/d, including 50 tb/d of processing gains. The downward revision reflected the recently announced extension of additional voluntary production cuts by OPEC+ countries until the end of Q2-2024. The revisions included downward revisions to supplies from Russia (-95 tb/d), Kazakhstan (-13 tb/d) and Oman (-10 tb/d). The latest monthly short term outlook report from the US EIA suggested even higher output from the US this year. As per the report, crude oil output is expected to increase by 13.19 mb/d in 2024 vs. previous forecast of 13.1 mb/d followed by 13.65 mb/d in 2025.

Crude oil exports from Russia witnessed a spike recently, despite the announcement of further cuts as per the OPEC+ agreement. A Bloomberg report showed that seaborne crude exports increased to the highest level this year from the Pacific port of Kozmino during the week of 10-March-2024 following disruptions in loading due to a storm during the previous week. In addition, crude oil shipments that were previous meant for Indian consumers and were shunned due to implementation of US sanctions is said to be getting buyers especially from private refiners in China.

For 2025, non-OPEC liquids supply growth forecast stood at 1.4 mb/d and total supply is expected to reach 71.9 mb/d during the year. The forecast for 2025 was largely unchanged and reflected the change in base for 2024.

OPEC Oil Production & Spare Capacity

After seeing a steep decline in output during January-2024 led by the implementation of new production cuts, OPEC oil output remained subdued at one of the lowest in the last few months but witnessed a marginal growth during February-2024. Total crude oil production averaged at 26.7 mb/d with a m-o-m increase of 110 tb/d during February-2024, according to data from Bloomberg. Data from OPEC secondary sources showed a much bigger production growth of 203 tb/d during the month to reach an average rate of 26.57 mb/d backed by a similar trend. The increase was mainly led by higher production in Libya further supported by growth in Venezuela and Nigeria. However, a decline in production mainly in Iran and Iraq partially offset the overall growth. Crude oil output from Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait were almost flat m-o-m aimed at compliance to the OPEC+ quotas.

During the month, in a move to maintain the stability in oil prices, OPEC+ producers extended the voluntary oil output cuts of 2.2 mb/d until the end of June-2024 highlighting concerns over global economic growth as well as higher output outside the OPEC+ group. As per the announcement, Saudi Arabia would extend its voluntary cut of 1.0 mb/d until June-2024 and produce at the current rate of around 9.0 mb/d. Russia said it would slash total production and export by an additional 471 tb/d during Q2-2024.

The biggest monthly growth in production in February-2024 was seen in Libya with average production reaching around 1.1 mb/d after seeing a growth of more than 100 tb/d during the month. The growth came after the country restarted production from its biggest oil field after a two week shutdown. Libya's NOC also announced the resumption of exploration in the Ghadames basin next April by a polish oil company.

Oil production in Iraq witnessed a marginal drop during the month and averaged at 4.2 mb/d. However, the output remained above the quota by around 0.2 mb/d. A recent news also showed that the country is in talks with oil companies to resume crude oil exports via Turkey and make amendments to its budget to pay recovery and transit fees. However, oil companies in the semi autonomous region of Kurdistan have denied any such proposals for the resumption of exports.

Kuwaiti depositors shift 3.34 billion dinars in Jan

Private sector sees surge in high-interest deposits

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: According to data released by the Central Bank of Kuwait, depositors shifted deposits totaling 3.34 billion dinars in January, resulting in a total deposit amount of 37.6 billion dinars for residents and non-residents in the banking system, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In terms of private sector deposits denominated in Kuwaiti dinars, there was a notable increase in deposits with interest rates ranging from greater than 3.5% to 5%, attracting approximately 3.3 billion dinars. Conversely, deposits with interest rates up to 2% saw the largest decline, totaling 2.7 billion dinars.

Among the deposits that experienced an increase, those with interest rates greater than 4 to 4.5% showed a significant rise of 33.6%, reaching 7.25 billion dinars by the end of January; following closely were deposits with in-

terest rates greater than 4.5 to 5%, which increased by 23.7%, totaling 6.17 billion dinars.

Deposits with interest rates greater than 3.5% to 4% rose by 6.5%, while deposits with interest rates greater than 3% to 3.5% increased by 8.6%. Deposits with interest rates greater than 2% to 2.5% also saw a rise of 5.14%.

On the other hand, deposits with interest rates up to 2% witnessed a significant decrease of 28%, totaling 6.9 billion dinars.

Similarly, deposits with interest rates greater than 5 to 5.5% decreased by 16.6%, and deposits with interest rates greater than 5.5 to 6% declined by 36.9%.

Demand deposits experienced a withdrawal of approximately 130.6 million dinars, while deposits with interest rates greater than 2.5% to 3% decreased by 50.89%. Deposits with interest rates greater than 6% also saw a decline of 16.7%.

These shifts in deposit values reflect changing trends and preferences among depositors in the Kuwaiti banking system.

Solar focus in Kuwait's renewable energy agenda

Kuwait unveils ambitious renewable energy strategy with 22.1 GW capacity by year 2030

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: During a recent event in Kuwait, Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Salem Al-Hajraf outlined the nation's new renewable energy strategy spanning from 2030 to 2050, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The plan aims to achieve an installed renewable energy capacity of 22.1 GW by 2030, with a focus on solar energy farms.

The strategy emphasizes citizen participation in energy production while aligning with environmental objectives to achieve carbon neutrality, in accordance with the Emir's directives.

Additionally, the Ministry of Electricity and Water, through the Public-Private Partnership Projects Authority, has initiated the procurement process for the 1,100 MW Independent Solar Power Production Program. Despite some delays, Kuwait remains committed to advancing its renewable energy agenda, with ongoing projects and future plans set to transform its energy landscape.

Kuwait aims to have an installed renewable energy capacity of 22.1 GW by 2030, as part of a new 20-year strategy ending in 2050.

Al-Hajraf said that the strategy includes installing solar energy farms, where the state purchases energy production from solar photovoltaic farms.

This step aims to allow citizens to participate in energy production while "taking into account environmental aspects in implementing the Emir's directives regarding carbon neutrality."

MEED reported in October last year that Kuwait was expected to begin issuing requests for quotations for the next 4,500 MW phases of the Shaqaya renewable energy project by the end of the year.

The second phase will include a 200 MW concentrated solar power plant with a storage capacity of about five hours.

The third phase will include an independent solar energy project with a capacity of 1,500 MW, and the final phase will be an independent solar energy project with a capacity of 1,700 MW.

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, in partnership with the Ministry of Electricity, has developed the first phase of the renewable energy development project. This consists of a 50 MW concentrated solar power plant and a wind and solar PV plant, each with a capacity of 10 MW.

Further delays are expected in the \$16 billion project to deliver alternative feeding systems for the hydrogen production unit at the Al-Zour refinery.

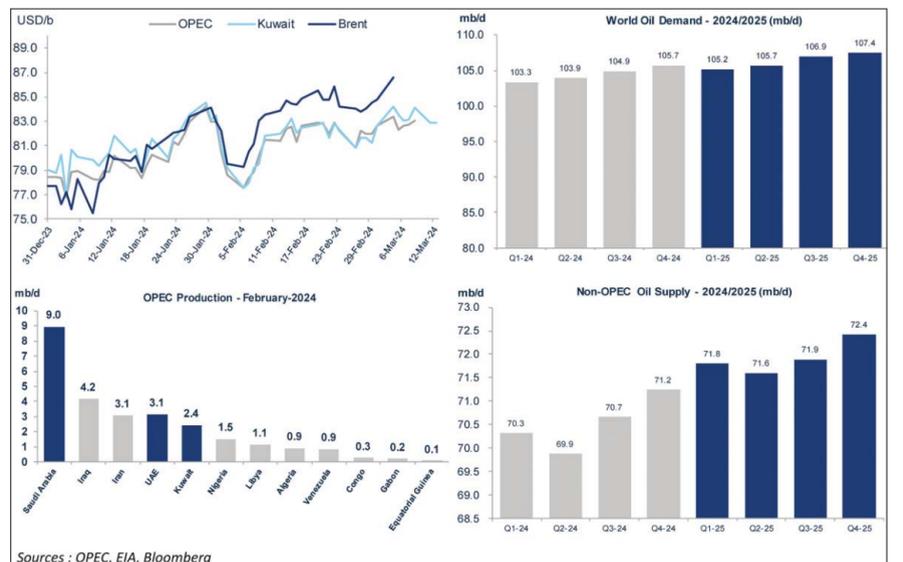
MEED reported that uncertainty over details regarding the scope of the project led to a study being conducted to determine how the refinery would process heavy oil and the exact specifications of several different units.

One source told the magazine: "There have already been a lot of delays in the tender process, and it seems likely that there will be more to come. Contractors will need to see the results of the ongoing study before they can submit their bids."

The project is being proposed by the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC), which recently announced that it extended the deadline for submitting bids to April 14 from the previous date of March 12.

The deadline for submitting bids have been extended several times since the project was first proposed last year, with the deadline for submitting bids set for June 20, 2023.

The scope of the contract includes engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) works, in addition to works covering pre-commissioning, commissioning and quality testing.



Strategic merger with AUBK marks milestone in KFH's growth

KFH holds annual townhall for employees, welcomes formerly AUBK staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) hosted its annual town hall meeting for employees and staff from the formerly Ahli United Bank-Kuwait (AUBK). The meeting, held at the Arraya Hall of the Courtyard Hotel, focused on KFH's major achievements, current challenges, and future goals.

KFH Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen Al Marzouq, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, Abdulwahab Iesa Al Rushood, Chief Executive Officer - KFH Kuwait, Khaled Yousef AlShamlan, and other executives were all in attendance.

KFH Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen Al Marzouq, during his speech at the townhall, emphasized the bank's strategic goal for the next decade to be among the top 100 banks globally. He highlighted the recent acquisition and merger with AUBK as a significant milestone, solidifying KFH's position as both the largest bank in Kuwait and the world's second-largest Islamic bank by assets. This strategic move marks a new chapter in KFH's growth trajectory and is a key historic achievement.

"KFH has a strong blend of young talent and experienced professionals. This combination, coupled with increased cooperation and effort, will be instrumental in achieving its goals," Al Marzouq emphasized. He expressed confidence that merging the abilities and skills of the formerly AUBK employees with those of KFH would be a welcome and valuable collaboration. This, he said, would help KFH achieve its future goals, including becoming the top Islamic bank globally.

Al Marzouq unveiled an ambitious plan by KFH's Board of Directors, targeting a place among the top 100 global banks within the next decade. He stressed that recent progress has paved the way for this goal and underscored how merger and acquisition of AUBK support Kuwait's Vision 2035 to establish itself as a leading financial center regionally and internationally.

Al Marzouq said: "This meeting represents the culmination of a vision set in motion several years ago. It also symbolizes the collaborative efforts from both sides."

He expressed his pleasure in welcoming the new employees to the KFH family, emphasizing the importance of their contributions as key members of KFH, the largest bank in Kuwait and the second largest globally in terms of assets.

Al Marzouq stressed the importance of working together as a team to lead the global Islamic finance industry. He further reassured that the process of placing AUBK staff did not affect any of their rights, and the employees now enjoy all the benefits and rights provided by KFH without derogation or discrimination.

Furthermore, he emphasized that both the acquisition and the merger were conducted using scientific and methodological approaches. These approaches were driven by a clear economic vision to create a large economic and financial entity in a world that increasingly values powerful entities.

Following this vision, KFH underwent significant operational and impact changes in 2014. This transformation aimed to position KFH as a leader in the global expansion of Islamic financial services. The success of this transformation was demonstrably supported by positive indicators such as profitability, asset quality, and overall performance.

Al Marzouq further emphasized the importance of strategic expansion, through acquisitions or mergers, as a means of creating a powerful entity within the global market.

He outlined the stages of the acquisition and merger, mentioning that AUBK was one of the three institutions considered. He explained that after consulting with international experts, AUBK emerged as the best option to achieve the vision of KFH. In 2020, KFH secured approval from shareholders and the Central Banks of Kuwait and Bahrain to proceed with KFH's acquisition of Ahli United Bank. On October 2, 2022, the acquisition of Ahli United Bank Group - Bahrain and its subsidiaries was officially completed, followed by a successful merger on February 22, 2024. This marked a significant milestone in the history of the Kuwaiti banking sector, setting the stage for a new era led by KFH and its employees.

The acquisition and merger, according to Al Marzouq, successfully achieved their intended objectives. The most critical objective is the advancement of the Islamic banking sector, spearheaded by KFH. This advancement positions Kuwait as the home of the world's largest and most prestigious Islamic bank. This marks a significant milestone in KFH's strategy, paving the way for its global growth and evolution. With the implementation of expansionary policies, KFH is now better positioned to achieve substantial future growth. The presence of a large, Sharia-compliant banking institution was deemed essential, especially considering the relative youth of Islamic banking, existing for only six decades compared to the centuries-long history of conventional banks.

He elaborated on the numerous advantages of the acquisition, highlighting its positive financial impact. The acquisition boosted the size of KFH's assets, business, and capital base, leading to expected synergies in the average cost of funds and enhancing the financing capacity for mega projects globally. Additionally, the acquisition helped rationalize expenses, strengthen solvency, and expand into new markets. Furthermore, it diversified revenue streams from the Group's various units, which had expanded and established a presence in key international markets.

Al Marzouq expressed delight in the KFH family's continued growth and warmly welcomed colleagues from Ahli United Bank Kuwait. He highlighted the resulting expanded talent pool, boasting an impressive 84% Kuwaitization rate.



Hamad Abdulmohsen Al Marzouq



Abdulwahab Iesa Al Rushood

Al Marzouq: KFH Aims to Be Ranked Among Top 100 Banks within a Decade

■ Successful integration of former AUBK employees, no prejudice or bias in benefits and rights and we trust their exceptional capabilities

Al Rushood: A historic merger and we welcome all colleagues from the formerly AUBK

■ Our achievements this past year validate the effectiveness of our integrated and balanced approach



KFH Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen Al Marzouq, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, Abdulwahab Iesa Al Rushood, Chief Executive Officer -KFH Kuwait, Khaled Yousef AlShamlan, and other executives were all in attendance.



KFH football team dedicates their triumph to Chairman of the Board of Directors and the Executive Management of the bank.



The attendance of the annual meeting

He emphasized the bank's commitment to fostering global leadership, aiming to benefit employees, customers, and shareholders alike. Al Marzouq further stressed the ambitious goal of becoming the world's leading Islamic bank, acknowledging the bank's significant growth and rapid international expansion in both business and activities.

He added that KFH currently operates in 12 countries, boasting a large international network of 640 branches. Notably, KFH holds the distinction of being the first Islamic bank in Germany and the first licensed under Malaysia's Banking Act. Furthermore, KFH is the second largest Islamic financier in Türkiye. With a presence spanning across Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, KFH demonstrates a strong global footprint.

Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, Abdulwahab Iesa Al Rushood

Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, Abdulwahab Iesa Al Rushood, welcomed KFH employees, including those who recently joined from the formerly AUBK. He described the day as a historical moment in KFH's successful journey, highlighting the Bank's commitment to excellence, opportunities, leadership, and success.

Al Rushood praised KFH's accomplishments in the past year, particularly its strong financial performance. Notably, KFH's net financing income increased by 20.7% to KD 965.9 million, total operating income increased by 30.7% to KD 945.4 million, and net profit to shareholders surged by 63.4% to KD 584.5 million.

"Our commitment extends beyond words. We prioritize not only business growth and development but also the well-being of our employees and society. A prime example is Tam Bank, Kuwait's first Islamic Sharia-compliant digital bank, which demonstrates our commitment to digital innovation," Al Rushood said.

"Demonstrating our commitment to digital innovation, over 35 projects were successfully completed in 2023 to enhance our services, products, and technical systems. KFH also maintained its position as the top Primary Dealer in the ILM Primary and Secondary Sukuk Markets in 2023, for the third consecutive year. These recognitions, along with 26 other prestigious awards received at both local and international levels, demonstrate our excellence and leadership in Kuwait. Some of the notable awards include «Best Islamic Financial Institution in the World» by Global Finance and «Bank of the Year - Kuwait» by The Banker. Additionally, Euromoney recognized KFH as a Market Leader in five categories, including digital solutions, corporate banking, social responsibility, investment banking, and Islamic finance. Also, KFH was honored with three special awards from Brandon Hall Group for our employee recognition, engagement, and talent management programs, highlighting our dedication to our staff," he added.

Al Rushood emphasized that KFH boasts the largest pool of talent in Islamic banking within Kuwait, offering employees exceptional career advancement opportunities through training and education programs. Committed to developing its leaders, KFH saw 117 promotions to supervisory roles in the past year. Furthermore, KFH proudly became the first Islamic bank in Kuwait to sign the United Nations Development Program's Agreement on the Principles for the Empowerment of Women. Currently, KFH has 84 women in supervisory positions, demonstrating its commitment to promoting gender diversity in its workforce and creating a supportive environment for women to thrive and succeed in leadership roles.

KFH considers its banking competencies and talent to be its most valuable asset. The bank boasts the largest talent pool in the Kuwaiti Islamic banking sector, making it a top choice for banking careers. KFH is committed to employee success by providing training opportunities. In 2023 alone, KFH delivered over 83,000 hours of training to more than 3,000 employees, with an additional 34 employees participating in overseas conferences. KFH also offers internship opportunities with prestigious international universities like Harvard Business School and INSEAD. In 2023, 130 employees participated in these programs.

"Leveraging KFH's global network, we offer an annual program allowing KFH employees in Kuwait to work at our Turkish branches during the summer break. Last year, we partnered with Headspring, IE Business School, and the Financial Times to deliver the KFH Leaders Training Program to 50 KFH managers. Alongside them, 40 high-achieving graduates from Kuwaiti universities participated in the program through Foorsah. Our aim is to equip these graduates with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the banking industry and achieve their career goals," Al Rushood said.

Al Rushood highlighted KFH's significant contributions to social responsibility. "These include the reconstruction of around 17 buildings and the development of surrounding area in Al Mubarakija. The total cost of the Mubarakija reconstruction project is estimated at KD 8 million. Additionally, KFH donated KD 7 million to the National Campaign for Debtors and KD 6 million for earthquake relief efforts, with KD 3 million each directed towards Türkiye and Syria," he added.

Al Rushood said that KFH's top priorities include leveraging data and analytics to increase customer loyalty, collaborating with leading international FinTech companies on innovative solutions, and fostering a culture of innovation at both strategic and leadership levels within KFH to create additional value. KFH also aims to strengthen data security and enhance cloud digital solutions.

Prices surge to record high of \$2,195 per ounce

Gold shines bright as smartest investment choice

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: There has been a persistent rise in gold prices over the past weeks, reaching a record high of USD 2,195 per ounce last week. While fluctuations in gold prices are a common occurrence in the market, a historic study of gold prices over the last few years showcases an upward trend. This signals Gold's unrivalled position as the smartest investment choice. Gold has been used as a reliable store of value for several centuries now. While investment options such as stocks, real estate & crypto currencies have gained relevance over the years, the consistent trend of long-term growth shown by gold, which is substantiated by historical data, makes it a reliable and tangible choice for investment.

Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds commented, "The sudden surge in gold prices is further testament to value



Shamlal Ahamed

avenues where the capital requirement is high, one can buy gold even with modest amounts. Malabar Gold & Diamonds have begun the 'Pay 10% Advance' campaign, allowing customers to get a head start on their jewellery purchase plans before prices go up even further. Customers can block the gold

appreciating nature of the asset. With ease of access being one of gold's most attractive features, anyone searching for a reliable store of value, be it a beginner or an experienced investor, need not think twice about investing in gold. Gold's appeal is increased manifold by the fact that unlike other investment

rate by paying just 10% of their planned purchase value as an advance, allowing them to secure the best gold rate for their purchase regardless of any further price fluctuations. If the price increases, the customer pays only the blocked rate and if the price reduces on the day of purchase, they pay the lower rate. Furthermore, there are also 'Jewellery Purchase Plans' enabling customers to buy their gold jewellery in easy payments."

Beyond its monetary value, gold's dual usage as an adornment has also added to its enduring allure amongst the masses. The indispensable role of gold jewellery in many cultures across the globe, which continues to this day, speaks volumes about the trust that people place in the precious metal. Beyond its ornamental charm, gold embodies stability, reliability and long-term growth potentials, making it the smartest & simplest asset one can own.

Sovereign Wealth Funds drive Mideast M&A amid challenges

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Despite a 3% dip in the total value of mergers and acquisitions (M&A) deals in the Middle East last year, compared to a 15% decline globally, experts anticipate a rebound in 2024, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Bain & Company's annual report highlights global M&A values dropping to \$3.2 trillion in 2023, a ten-year low from the record high of \$6 trillion in 2021.

The challenges such as rising interest rates and regulatory scrutiny prompted a more discerning approach among deal makers, exacerbated by valuation disparities. However, amidst

this backdrop, Middle Eastern markets maintained deal volume and value, buoyed by sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) driving energy transition efforts towards net-zero emissions goals.

Major players like the Kuwait Investment Authority Fund and Mubadala are spearheading clean energy investments and technology ventures to diversify economies beyond oil.

Moreover, SWFs are increasingly turning towards Asia, with investments aimed at fostering manufacturing and innovation partnerships, signaling a strategic pivot towards sustainable growth and prosperity in the region.



Thuwaini Khalid Al-Thuwaini – Chief, Investment Banking Group at Warba Bank

Warba Bank succeeds in arranging \$500 mln Sukuk issuance for Cenomi Centers

Warba Bank acted as Joint Lead Manager and Joint Bookrunner on the successfully placed Sukuk issuance for Cenomi Centers (Arabian Centres Company- "ACC"), rated Ba3/BB+ by Moody's and Fitch. The five-year 500 million Dollar was issued with a fixed coupon rate of 9.5 %. Warba Bank was appointed alongside other regional and international financial institutions to manage the issuance which was listed on the international stock exchange.

Thuwaini Khalid Al-Thuwaini – Chief, Investment Banking Group at Warba Bank said that the Sukuk issuance was successful in generating an order book reaching over US\$ 1.5 billion. "We are pleased

to play such a lead role on this sukuk issuance for Cenomi Centers."

Al-Thuwaini pointed out that the transaction was successfully led by Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank, ANB Capital, Dubai Islamic Bank, Emirates NBD, GFH, Goldman Sachs International, HSBC, JP Morgan, Kamco Investment Company, Mashreq Bank, Sharjah Islamic Bank, and Warba Bank as Joint Lead Managers and Bookrunners.

Al-Thuwaini added that Warba Bank also recently successfully placed Sukuk issuance for Emirates Strategic Investments Company via a 700 million Dollar 5-year Sukuk on 14 February 2024 with a

fixed coupon rate of 5.831%. Transaction was successfully led by Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank, Dubai Islamic Bank, Emirates NBD Capital, First Abu Dhabi Bank, Mashreq, Standard Chartered Bank and Warba Bank as Joint Lead Managers and Bookrunners generating an order book reaching US\$ 1.7 Billion.

Al-Thuwaini also added that Warba Bank continues to support the business sector in emerging markets by providing them with bespoke financing and investment solutions that are flexible and efficient. This is based on the Bank's strategy to establish Warba Bank as a leader in the corporate and investment sector both in Kuwait and international markets.

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait-Egypt achieves breakthrough results for financial year 2023 with net profit recording EGP 2.803 billion

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait-Egypt (ABK-Egypt) recently announced strong financial results for the fiscal year 2023, reporting a record increase in the Bank's Net Profit by 67%, which stood at EGP 2.803 billion compared to EGP 1.682 billion in 2022. Net Operating Profit reached EGP 3.924 billion, representing an 82% year-on-year increase compared to EGP 2.162 billion in 2022. As for ABK-Egypt's financial position, Total Assets stood at EGP 97.606 billion, recording a 29% growth compared to EGP 75.603 billion in December 2022.

According to the Bank's announced results, Net Interest Income reached EGP 4.088 billion, an increase of 49% compared to EGP 2.749 billion in 2022. This remarkable increase in profitability is attributed to the significant growth in the Bank's Total Gross Loans Portfolio, which increased by 39% to record EGP 49.480 billion compared to EGP 35.610 billion, while Customer Deposits increased by 26% to reach EGP 83.064 billion compared to EGP 66.153 billion in December 2022.

Commenting on the results, Ali Marafi, Chairman of ABK-Egypt, stated, "The outstanding performance achieved last year demonstrates our unwavering commitment to our progressive strategy and long-term vision that focuses on sustainable growth in the Egyptian market, which holds promising investment opportunities."

Furthermore, Marafi affirmed that ABK-Egypt has taken steady steps towards adapting to the changes in the economic landscape, reflecting its resilience in facing the consequential challenges on local, regional, and global levels. He also commended the professional performance of the Executive Management team, which ensured profitability whilst maintaining a vigilant focus on the quality of the Bank's credit portfolio. Finally, he expressed his gratitude to the Bank's Board of Directors, shareholders and clients for their constant trust and commitment to ABK-Egypt.

Digital Transformation

Marafi emphasized that ABK-Egypt is dedicated to intensifying its digital transformation strategy in order to consistently meet customer needs. This involves offering top-notch digital services that prioritize speed, comfort, and accuracy to expand the Bank's customer base. Additionally, ABK-Egypt is committed to delivering a high standard of service through a seamless and flexible experience to maintain ongoing customer satisfaction.

45 Branches

Marafi disclosed that in 2023, ABK-Egypt continues to work on its ambitious expansion plan. With its 45 branches in different governorates across Egypt, this demonstrates the Bank's commitment to reaching diverse customer segments and expanding its customer base.



Mr. Ali Marafi, Chairman of ABK-Egypt

Ali Marafi:
The outstanding performance achieved last year demonstrates our unwavering commitment to our progressive strategy and long-term vision that focuses on sustainable growth



Mr. Khaled El Salawy Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director ABK-Egypt

Khaled El Salawy:
The Bank succeeded in achieving breakthrough performance in terms of growth and profitability

He further stated that ABK-Egypt strives to consistently meet and surpass customer expectations. This initiative is among several efforts that reinforce its standing as a preferred partner in the local marketing, continuously offering new products and services.

Growth Indicators

Reaffirming the strength of the Bank's financial position, Khaled El Salawy, CEO & Managing Director of ABK-Egypt said, "The Bank succeeded in achieving breakthrough performance in terms of growth and profitability during a very exceptional year. With Profit Before Tax recording a 72% year-on-year increase to reach EGP 3.8 billion, I am proud to say that 2023 did not slow us down. We have managed to progress at a steady pace in an extraordinary year, demonstrating the agility of our business model and pro-

vidence of our decisions that allowed us to best navigate the unprecedented changes and seize business opportunities that strengthened our position in the face of competition."

El Salawy praised the efforts of the robust, prudent, and committed team, who are the Bank's primary catalyst of success. He also commended the leading role played by the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) in supporting the entire banking sector to navigate the turbulent economic conditions.

Finally, El Salawy affirmed that ABK-Egypt maintains a positive outlook regarding the stabilization of economic conditions thanks to the efforts and measures taken by the government in overcoming challenges and leading the economic recovery.

The Bank's strategy continues to focus on achieving robust growth rates on all financial performance indicators through en-

hancing its competitive advantages across all business sectors, investing in the development of its human capital, taking further steps towards strengthening its relationship with customers, and delivering innovative banking services that provide ease and convenience to various customer segments. This is all to ensure that ABK-Egypt continues to achieve its ambitious goals and maintains its strong position in the Egyptian market.

El Salawy emphasized ABK-Egypt's commitment to supporting the small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) sector by streamlining procedures and eliminating obstacles for young entrepreneurs. He underlined the pivotal role of the banking sector in fostering the growth and development of these projects.

He also mentioned that the Bank is dedicated to adhering to advanced standards that ensure the delivery of efficient, fast, and valuable banking services to customers. This is applicable to all customer segments, including the youth who seek digital banking solutions, as well as the elite customer segment, whose needs will be met through Wealth Management that offers a range of banking and non-banking services, along with exclusive benefits.

Fastest Growing Bank

ABK-Egypt has recently been honored with the 'Fastest Growing Bank - Egypt 2023' award by International Business Magazine. This accolade recognizes the Bank's accomplishments and the substantial growth it has experienced since ABK Group's acquisition of Piraeus Bank - Egypt in 2015.

This award represents a significant accomplishment, reflecting the Bank's strategic vision and unwavering commitment to excellence. It showcases the Bank's capacity to adapt to the ever-evolving needs of its customers, while also demonstrating its ongoing ability to achieve sustainable growth and offer unique banking solutions for individuals and businesses in Egypt.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Over the course of 2023, ABK-Egypt continued its CSR efforts through launching initiatives and activities that focus on supporting underprivileged segments of society and empowering Egypt's future generations.

The Bank continued to affirm its dedication to the wider communities through extending full support to those in need and with an array of social initiatives ranging from the provision of financial relief, outreach to the underprivileged with shelter, healthcare, and food supplies, and exploring opportunities to help children, youth, women, and individuals with disabilities.

In addition, the Bank has taken an active part in all financial inclusion initiatives launched by CBE to raise awareness among all segments on financial literacy and banking services.

Europe's world-first AI rules set for final okay

Here's what happens next

LONDON, March 13, (AP): European Union lawmakers are set to give final approval to the 27-nation bloc's artificial intelligence law Wednesday, putting the world-leading rules on track to take effect later this year.

Lawmakers in the European Parliament are poised to vote in favor of the Artificial Intelligence Act five years after they were first proposed. The AI Act is expected to act as a global signpost for other governments grappling with how to regulate the fast-developing technology.

"The AI Act has nudged the future of AI in a human-centric direction, in a direction where humans are in control of the technology and where it - the technology - helps us leverage new discoveries, economic growth, societal progress and unlock human potential," said Dragos Tudorache, a Romanian lawmaker who was a co-leader of the Parliament negotiations on the draft law.

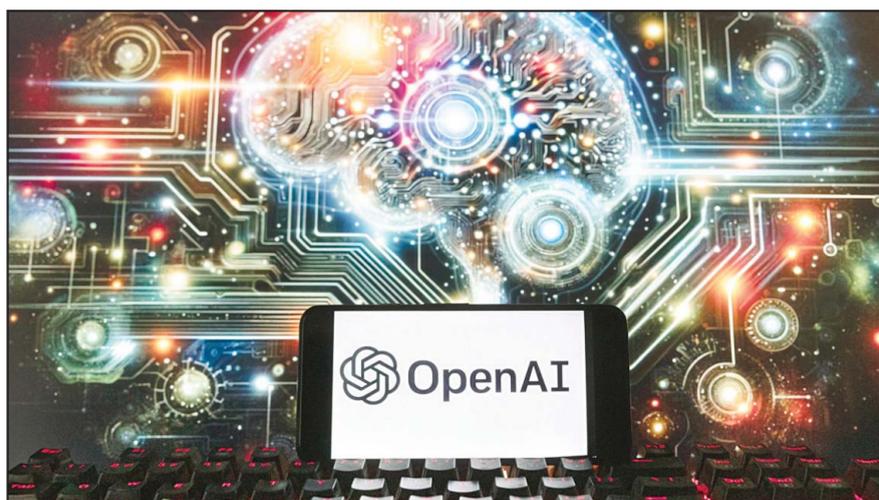
Big tech companies generally have supported the need to regulate AI while lobbying to ensure any rules work in their favor. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman caused a minor stir last year when he suggested the ChatGPT maker could pull out of Europe if it can't comply with the AI Act - before backtracking to say there were no plans to leave.

Here's a look at the world's first comprehensive set of AI rules:

Like many EU regulations, the AI Act was initially intended to act as consumer safety legislation, taking a "risk-based approach" to products or services that use artificial intelligence.

The riskier an AI application, the more scrutiny it faces. Low-risk systems, such as content recommendation systems or spam filters, will only face light rules such as revealing that they are powered by AI. The EU expects most AI systems to fall into this category.

High-risk uses of AI, such as in medical devices or critical infrastructure like water or electrical networks, face tougher requirements like using high-quality data and providing clear information to users.



The OpenAI logo is displayed on a cell phone with an image on a computer screen generated by ChatGPT's Dall-E text-to-image model, Dec. 8, 2023, in Boston. European Union lawmakers are set to give final approval to the 27-nation bloc's artificial intelligence law Wednesday, putting the world-leading set of rules for the fast-developing technology on track to take effect later this year. (AP)

AfDB chief criticizes opaque loans tied to Africa's natural 'resources'

LAGOS, Nigeria, March 13, (AP): The head of the African Development Bank is calling for an end to loans given in exchange for the continent's rich supplies of oil or critical minerals used in smartphones and electric car batteries, deals that have helped China gain control over mineral mining in places like Congo and have left some African countries in financial crisis.

"They are just bad, first and foremost, because you can't price the assets properly," Akinwumi Adesina said in an interview with The Associated Press in Lagos, Nigeria, last week. "If you have minerals or oil under the ground, how do you come up with a price for a long-term contract? It's a challenge." Linking future revenue from natural resource exports to loan paydowns is often touted as a way for recipients to get financing for infrastructure projects and for lenders

to reduce the risk of not getting their money back.

The shift to renewable energy and electric vehicles has caused a spike in the demand for critical minerals, driving these kind of loans. That includes a China-Congo deal that strengthens Beijing's position in the global supply chain for EVs and other products as it taps into the world's largest reserves of cobalt, a mineral used to make lithium-ion batteries, in the impoverished central African country.

Adesina, whose Abidjan, Ivory Coast-based institution helps finance development in African countries, said these arrangements come with a litany of problems.

He highlighted the uneven nature of the negotiations, with lenders typically holding the upper hand and dictating terms to cash-strapped African nations.

This power imbalance, coupled with a lack of transparency and the potential for corruption, creates fertile ground for exploitation, Adesina said.

"These are the reasons I say Africa should put an end to natural resource-backed loans," Adesina said. He pointed to a bank initiative that helps "countries renegotiate those loans that are asymmetric, not transparent and wrongly priced."

Adesina said loans secured with natural resources pose a challenge for development banks like his and the International Monetary Fund, which promote sustainable debt management. Countries may struggle to get or repay loans from these institutions because they have to use the income from their natural resources - typically crucial to their economies - to pay off resource-tied debts, he said.

Germany 'launches' bidding process for carbon contracts

BERLIN, March 13 (AP): Germany's vice chancellor on Tuesday launched a program initially worth up to 4 billion euros (\$4.4 billion) to help heavy industry shift to more climate-friendly production over a 15-year period.

Germany, which is home to many energy-intensive industries as Europe's biggest economy, aims to cut its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2045. The government, which says industry accounts for about one-fifth of the country's emissions, says Germany is the first in the European Union to launch the so-called "carbon contracts for difference."

Companies in areas such as paper, glass, steel and chemical production have four months to bid for support under the contracts, which are supposed to compensate for the extra costs of climate-friendly production processes where they otherwise would not be competitive. Support will be capped at 1 billion euros per bidder in an effort to accommodate medium-sized companies.

The government says that switching to new production methods is essential but currently comes with high costs and risks that put companies off investing in them - for example, uncertainty over future hydrogen prices.

Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck, who is also Germany's economy and climate minister, said the contract system compares with a cumbersome existing application process for support that can take three years to complete.

He said it is "super cost-efficient" because companies will be bidding to make carbon-neutral production as economically as possible.

"For the companies, there is the advantage of being able to plan and calculate with a fixed, green energy price over 15 years," he added.

Bidding for the first round of support is limited to firms that went through a preparatory procedure last summer. Companies must state how many euros it will take them to avoid a ton of CO2 emissions with new technology.

Habeck's Economy Ministry hopes that a second round of bidding for support totaling up to 19 billion euros will take place at the end of the year.

The Federation of German Industries welcomed the launch. It said that "extensive state support is necessary if the politically desired transformation to climate neutrality is to succeed in a short time."

The head of Greenpeace Germany, Martin Kaiser, said that the new contracts could only help modernize industry if they support companies that emit no CO2 by using modern technology and clean energy.

But if "designed wrong, carbon contracts for difference stand completely in the way of this transition" by chaining the country to old, climate-damaging technology, he argued in a statement.

The group has criticized plans Habeck, a member of the environmentalist Green party, announced last month to enable underground carbon storage at offshore sites.

Argentina inflation slows

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, March 13, (AP): Argentina's inflation slowed in February for a second consecutive month, as right-wing President Javier Milei continues to push austerity and deregulation measures in an effort to revive the country's struggling economy.

According to figures released Tuesday by the government's INDEC statistics agency, Argentina's monthly inflation slowed down to 13.2% in February, compared to 20.6% in January and 25.5% in December. On a yearly basis, however, inflation remains the highest in three decades, topping 276.2% in February.

Government officials and analysts foresee a surge in prices in March due to a combination of increases in the price of energy, fuel, private education and medical services, among others.

Milei's government said in a state-

ment that February's inflation rate was the result of a "strong fiscal discipline."

A self-described anarcho-capitalist, Milei assumed power in December and almost immediately announced a series of shock measures, including a 50% devaluation of the nation's currency in hopes of eventually bringing the country's roaring inflation under control.

As part of those measures, the government eliminated some state subsidies in energy and transport.

Milei has announced a painful adjustment plan aimed at staving off hyperinflation and warned that the measures would initially have a "negative impact on the level of activity, employment, real wages, and the number of poor and indigent people." It is estimated that around 40% of the population live in poverty.

Powerful dialogue on anti-money laundering takes center stage

KCICAI and ICAEW illuminate path to combat financial crimes in joint session

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: The Kuwait chapter of The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (KCICAI), in collaboration with the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), orchestrated a remarkable joint session on Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Economic Crime.

The CPE event was a significant initiative undertaken by KCICAI and ICAEW to raise awareness and enhance the expertise of professionals in the face of the growing challenges posed by money laundering and economic instability.

CA Rabin Gonsalves, the esteemed Chairperson of KCICAI, officially welcomed the audience, providing insights into the chapter's recent activities and upcoming initiatives. He underscored the pivotal role that professionals play in safeguarding financial systems and maintaining economic stability. CA Andaleeb Girkar, committee member, expertly conducted the event, ensuring its smooth flow and engaging atmosphere.

The session's highlights included a captivating screening of a short film addressing the intricacies of Financial Crime, an insightful overview of ICAEW's Pathways Program, and a thought-provoking panel discussion on AML and Financial Crime.

The distinguished panel of industry experts featured



Group photo during the event.

Mr. Senthil Kumar, Managing Director of Protiviti Member Firm Kuwait, CA Dheeraj Soneja, Head of Fraud Risk at Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait, CA Tuhin Chaturvedi, Tax Partner at RSM Kuwait, and ICAEW professionals,

including Mr. Doug Withington, Head of International Office, ICAEW. Together, they engaged in a stimulating exchange of ideas, shedding light on critical aspects of financial crime prevention.

The panel discussion delved into various dimensions of the evolving landscape of financial crime, exploring the impact of new technologies on AML compliance, emphasizing the importance of Professional Scepticism, addressing modern slavery concerns, and dissecting the regional, specifically Kuwaiti, landscape concerning AML regulations. The session drew a diverse and engaged audience, comprising members and guests, who actively participated in the discussions.

CA Venkata Ramana, expressed gratitude on behalf of the organizing committee and delivered a heartfelt vote of thanks to all the attendees, speakers, and sponsors who contributed to the success of the event. He acknowledged the collective commitment to combating money laundering and promoting financial integrity.

KCICAI and ICAEW continue to strengthen their commitment to providing a platform for professionals to stay informed, exchange knowledge, and collectively work towards building a resilient financial ecosystem. This joint session marked significant step in their ongoing efforts to empower professionals in the fight against financial crimes.

For more information about KCICAI and its initiatives, please visit www.icaikw.org.

'Nurturing distinguished generation of athletes and elevating sport of tennis'

NBK sponsors Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait junior program

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: As part of its commitment to its social responsibilities and its endeavors to achieve sustainable development, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is keen to promote public health and the practice of sports activities. In this context, the bank signed a sponsorship agreement with Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait (RNAK), the leading sports institution specializing in tennis and fitness, to sponsor 7 players from the junior program at the academy.

The signing ceremony was attended by Mr. Mohammed Mustafa Al Marzouq, CEO of Tamdeen Sports and Mrs. Manal Al Mattar, Head of Corporate Communications at National Bank of Kuwait.

On this occasion, Mr. Mohammed Mustafa Al Marzouq, CEO of Tamdeen Sports said: "We are always pleased to collaborate with a leading institution like National Bank of Kuwait, and as a continuation of this fruitful cooperation, NBK has provided support to the junior tennis team with the aim of nurturing a distinguished generation of athletes and elevating the sport of tennis."

"The Academy's vision is to lead the way for tennis in the Middle East, and develop a unique, high-end sports facility with the highest level of service and care. Our greatest asset in achieving this is our partners, and we are thrilled that NBK leadership is playing an important role in helping us become the leading tennis Academy in the Middle East and redefine sport, fitness, health and leisure across the region," he added.

On her part, Al Mattar said: "NBK seeks to establish partnerships with leading institutions in all fields, in a way that contributes to support its community needs and expectations".

"Our commitment to supporting youth reflects our dedication to empowering the next generation. By investing in sports and education, we aim to cultivate not just tennis skills but also resilience, discipline, and a healthier future for our youth", she pointed out.

Al Mattar emphasized that NBK encourages people to do sports and follow a healthy lifestyle in line with its leading strategy to achieve sustainability.

"At NBK, we believe in the transformative power of sports, especially for our youth. Partnering with the Rafa Nadal Tennis Academy in Kuwait is not just about tennis; it's about shaping character, fostering teamwork, and instilling lifelong values. Through this sponsorship, we aspire to build a legacy of excellence, where the energy of our youth translates into a brighter, more vibrant future for Kuwait," she added.

Members of the "Rafa Nadal" Academy have access to 15 tennis courts, including both outdoor and indoor courts equipped with the



Photos during NBK signing of sponsorship agreement with Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait.

latest international technologies. Additionally, the academy hosts courts for paddle tennis and squash, along with an indoor swimming pool and separate fitness facilities for both women and men.

NBK is deeply committed to social responsibility, recognizing its role in creating

a positive impact in society. Through its initiatives, NBK prioritizes youth development, education, health, women's empowerment, and environmental sustainability. NBK strives to be a catalyst for positive change, fostering a brighter future for generations to come.

Elevating banking experience

KIB offers 'Black segment customers' Eidiya requests delivery across Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: As part of efforts to enhance its banking experience and ensure maximum added value to customers, adding to its full suite of banking products and services, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) is offering its Eidiya requests home delivery service exclusively for its KIB Black segment customers. Deliveries are available all over Kuwait, 24 hours a day/seven days a week.

Accordingly, Black segment customers can apply for KIB's exclusive Eidiya home delivery service starting from Sunday, March 17, 2024. The service can be accessed through KIB's contact center, reachable on 1866866, or by the private customer relations manager.

In this regard, Faisal Alshuwairid, Assistant General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB, said: "At KIB, we constantly look forward to offering our customers across all segments an enriching experience that suits their modern lifestyle, aiming to meet their aspirations and exceed all their expectations."

Therefore, as a 'Bank for Life', we decided to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan and the joyous occasion of Eid Al-Fitr with our KIB Black segment customers, by offering this exclusive gesture that facilitates the delivery of their gifts to their loved ones."

Alshuwairid also referred to the range of other premium banking benefits and products offered to Black segment customers. Exclusive rewards include a private customer relations manager for priority banking and financial transactions, which can also be completed through the branches' dedicated banking service rooms.

He also noted that customers of this segment can obtain exclusive concierge services, in cooperation with the regional company Peacock, which is known for the level and luxury of its service.

Furthermore, Alshuwairid mentioned that KIB's Black account offers its customers fast-tracking financial requests, yearly free local and international transfers, and a permanent 50% discount on safe deposit boxes. According to Alshuwairid, it also grants members access to



Faisal Alshuwairid, Assistant General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB



KIB's Eidiya home delivery service flyer

the finest airport lounges internationally, with exclusive discounts on stores, hotels, and restaurants.

Company sponsors Kangaroo Mathematics Competition

Kuwait Insurance signs MoU with Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Kuwait Insurance Company signed a memorandum of understanding with the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, one of the centers of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), with the aim of sponsoring specialized and diverse programs in Science and Technology to hone young talent and aptitude in 2024.

The agreement was signed in the presence of the CEO of Kuwait Insurance Company, Mr. Sami Sharif, and the General Manager of Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, Mr. Neda AlDaihani, in addition to several members of the executive management from both parties. On the occasion, Kuwait Insurance Company announced its sponsorship of the Kangaroo Mathematics Competition for Kuwaiti resident students in third grade to twelfth grade, scheduled to be held during this month.

Commenting on this, the CEO of Kuwait Insurance Company, Mr. Sami Sharif, said that the memorandum of understanding signed is consistent with the Company's vision and programs for sustainability and social responsibility during the current year. This initiative reflects the Company's prioritization of education and developing the talents of new generations as they are the basic pillar and backbone in building and the renaissance of the nation.

Regarding the Company's sponsorship of the Kangaroo Mathematics Competition, Mr. Sharif expressed his thanks and appreciation to Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity for providing this opportunity to sponsor the 3rd annual Kangaroo Mathematics Competition, as it is considered one of the largest international competitions in mathematics. The competition was founded



Photo during the signing of agreement.

in France in 1991, and held in more than 70 countries with close to 6 million students having participated since its inception. He added that the event aims to enhance passion for mathematics, help apply mathematics to the laws of nature and life activities, develop students' ability to derive pleasure through thinking, and establish the importance of mathematics education in every part of the world.

In turn, the General Manager of Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, Mr. Neda AlDaihani, expressed his content with this step, and with Kuwait Insurance Company sharing the opportunity to empower children and youth towards success and prosperity. He also stressed the keenness of both parties to provide the highest levels of cooperation in discovering the latest findings of modern technology and exchanging experiences with Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity to serve the community.

Winner of KD 1mn prize to be announced on July 18

Gulf Bank announces deadline for Al-Danah semi-annual draw will be on March 31, 2024

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: By the end of this month, March 31 2024, the deposit and participation in the semi-annual draw for the Al-Danah Millionaire account, qualifying for the KD 1 million prize, will be open. The draw and announcement of the winner will take place on July 18 2024, with representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Ernst & Young in attendance.

Gulf Bank announced the grand prize winner of the annual draw for the Al Danah Millionaire account on February 1 2024, for the first time, following the increase in the prize's value to KD 2 million in 2023. This is part of the bank's continuous endeavors to reward its customers and foster a culture of savings within the community.

Renowned as one of the top savings accounts in Kuwait, the AIDanah account offers numerous benefits, including periodic draws with substantial prizes. Gulf Bank's AIDanah account offers monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to two quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semi-annual draw prize of KD 1 million and a grand draw prize of KD 2 million.

For the second time in its history, the grand prize of the AIDanah millionaire account has earned a place in the Guinness Book of Records. This recognition marks it as the largest cash prize linked to a bank account worldwide. Mr. Mohammad Al-Qattan, Consumer Banking General Manager at Gulf Bank, received the award from the Guinness representative during the ceremony for the grand prize winner.

Participation Conditions
The AIDanah Millionaire account is accessible to both Kuwaiti citizens and expatriates. To open the account, customers need to maintain a minimum balance of KD 200, ensuring they retain the same amount to qualify automatically for the upcoming AIDanah Millionaire draws. If the balance falls below KD 200 at any point, KD 2 will be deducted monthly until the minimum balance is reinstated. Customers who open a new AIDanah Millionaire account or add more funds, will be automatically entered into the AIDanah draws.

Gulf Bank encourages AIDanah customers to enhance their winning prospects by increasing their deposited amounts through the online payment service, accessible via the bank's website and mobile application. AIDanah Millionaire stands as one of Kuwait's oldest savings ac-



AIDanah 1M closing flyer

counts, crafted to instill a culture of saving within the community and reward regular savers for their commitment. We urge everyone to open an AIDanah account, save consistently, and enjoy the array of benefits it offers to customers.

Key Features
Among the many advantages provided to AIDanah Millionaire account holders, it distinguishes itself as Kuwait's exclusive account that carries over the winning chances from the previous year to the next, highlighting Gulf Bank's unwavering commitment to acknowledging and rewarding customer loyalty. All the winning chances of existing AIDanah customers in 2023 (from January 1 to December 31, 2023) have been extended to the 2024 draws, in strict adherence to the specified terms and conditions.

Additionally, the AIDanah Millionaire Account provides unique services, including the AIDanah Exclusive Deposit Card service, enabling customers to deposit cash at their convenience. The Calculator service, available on the Bank's website (e-gulfbank.com/AIDanah) and mobile app, allows customers to assess their winning probabilities in the AIDanah Millionaire monthly, quarterly, and annual draws.

Oscars international broadcast cuts '20 Days in Mariupol' win

KYIV, Ukraine, March 13. (AP) The shortened version of the international broadcast of the 96th Oscars faced harsh criticism in Ukraine for omitting the segment announcing the documentary feature award, which went to Mstyslav Chernov's "20 Days in Mariupol."

The documentary, a collaboration between The Associated Press and PBS' "Frontline," is a harrowing first-person account set in the Ukrainian port city during the early days of Russia's invasion in 2022.

Ukraine's public broadcaster Suspilne, the exclusive broadcaster of the Oscars in the country, published a statement of indignation on Monday.

"Our team was shocked and deeply disappointed when we did not see the category for Best Feature Documentary in the international version, where 20 Days in Mariupol was justly awarded," said Lukian Halkin, executive producer of the Suspilne Kultura TV channel.

According to Disney, the official international licensing agent for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, decisions were made weeks in advance of Sunday's telecast on which portions and categories to omit for the condensed version of the show.

International licensees receive two versions of the broadcast: the live version and a 90-minute version, produced by the film academy. The truncated version - which does include a recap of the cut winners, including "20 Days in Mariupol" - is often preferred by international broadcasters, Disney says. Suspilne said that instead of the shortened version, it is broadcasting Ukrainian viewers the unedited cut.

"Mstyslav Chernov's powerful speech emphasized the unity between Ukraine and the world, which makes it all the more disappointing to see this episode full of truth and power excluded from the version distributed to the Oscar's global licensees," Halkin said.

The film academy did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the decision to cut the documentary category.

The edited version also sparked criticism on various social media platforms in Ukraine, where the documentary's Academy Award was hailed as a bittersweet but welcome victory.

"The fact that Ukraine received its first Oscar, and that the world will see again the horrors that the Russian army committed in Mariupol, is certainly a victory of truth over falsehood," Oleksii Kurka, a Kyiv office worker, told the AP.

The AP team of Chernov, photographer Evgeniy Maloletka and producer Vasilisa Stepanenko arrived an hour before Russia began bombing the port city. Two weeks later, they were the last journalists working for an international outlet still in the city, sending crucial dispatches to the outside world showing civilian casualties of all ages, the digging of mass graves, the bombing of a maternity hospital and the sheer extent of the devastation.

The Oscar - and the nomination - was a first for both Chernov, an AP video journalist, and the 178-year-old news organization. The documentary was a joint production of the AP and PBS' "Frontline." It was the first win for "Frontline" after two previous nominations.

Statuettes were awarded to Chernov, producer and editor Michelle Mizner and producer Raney Aronson-Rath. Maloletka, Stepanenko and Derl McCrudden, an AP vice president and credited producer on the film, were among those onstage to accept the award.

"We can make sure that the history record is set straight and the truth will prevail, and that the people of Mariupol, and those who have given their lives, will never be forgotten," Chernov said from the Oscar stage. "Because cinema forms memories and memories form history."

Oscars

Variety



This image released by Max shows Christina Elmore, left, and Melissa Benoist in a scene from "The Girls on the Bus." (AP)

Film

Riveting blend of politics, journalism and mystery

'Girls on the Bus' takes you on soapy ride

NEW YORK, March 13. (AP) Just in time for election year, a new Max series called "The Girls on the Bus" follows female journalists who are part of a traveling press corps with presidential candidates on the campaign trail.

These candidates are fictional but may be a reminder to people more familiar. They include Felicity Walker - played by Hettienne Park - who came close to winning the presidency four years prior and is trying again, and Hayden Wells Garrett, an "aweshucks" widower war vet who is mayor of a Midwest town and considered a longshot. Scott Foley plays candidate Garrett. Mark Consuelos recurs as an action star seeking to add the role of president to his credits. The series premieres Thursday.

Julie Plec ("The Vampire Diaries") executive produces and co-created the show with Amy Choizick, who wrote "Chasing Hillary" in 2018, about following Clinton's presidential pursuits for the New York Times.

"You can literally equate this presidential election and the state of American politics over the last decade to the worst reality show you've ever had to sit through," said Plec in a recent interview. "To be able to embrace that idea and put it into this show does make it feel really of the moment and yet also timeless."

Melissa Benoist produces and stars as Sadie McCarthy, a newspaper reporter who romanticizes old school journalists by often wearing a short-brim fedora and imagining conversations with Hunter S. Thompson. When Sadie's not taking calls from her editor, played by Griffin Dunne, who demands "get me copy," she befriends three other female journalists on the road.

Grace, played by Carla Gugino, is a respected seasoned reporter who has a knack for getting exclusives but whose relationship with her daughter has suffered because she's rarely home. There's also Kimberlyn, a Black on-air reporter at a conservative cable news outlet, played by Christina Elmore. Lola,

portrayed by Natasha Behnam, is the newbie of the group who works in new media, often going live on TikTok and writing a Substack newsletter. She scoffs at the traditional journalism practices of the other women.

Benoist was first approached about the series after she had wrapped a six-season stint as "Supergirl." She was enjoying the break by taking her son to the park when she got a call about "The Girls on the Bus."

"I've always considered myself a really informed citizen," said Benoist. "I still get a hard copy of the New York Times every day. But I did not know anything about the field. And I have to say, I have such a newfound respect for journalism and political journalism, especially the people that are on the campaign trail. I look at my news so differently now, and I really loved learning about it."

Documentary

To prepare, Choizick gave Benoist a list of materials to check out, including Alexandra Pelosi's "Journeys with George," a documentary from her time as an embed covering then-Texas Gov. George W. Bush's run for president in 2000. Choizick also suggested the book "What It Takes: The Way to the White House" by Richard Ben Kramer. "I went through withdrawal when I was done with that book," said the actor.

"I see so much more than a byline now on an article, and I'm so glad to have that perspective. Now I digest news very differently."

Aside from media and politics, Benoist and Gugino's favorite thing about the series is that it underscores the relationship of the core four women.

"You have these complicated, interesting women who all come from different backgrounds, different ideologies, different generations, and they are theoretically competitors, yet ultimately end up valuing each other over any of that," said Gugino.

"Women supporting each other goes so much further than being pitted against each other," adds

Benoist.

Throughout the episodes, the characters debate journalism ethics and ideologies and whether text, video or digital is the best medium. Behnam's character Lola declares, "Print is dead. Cable is for old people." Lola argues that the others are too rigid in beliefs that are unrealistic because a bias is only natural on some topics.

"We wanted to create journalists from all different walks of life because we get to have those debates that are happening in every newsroom in America and every journalism school," explained Choizick. "Lola is arguing a point I've heard young journalists make or aspiring journalists make, that objectivity is sort of a myth. It's impossible not to bring your own perspectives into a story."

Elmore says her role made her more aware of the potential hurdles a Black conservative journalist can encounter.

"I can't imagine what an othering experience that must be for her to be someone who does have conservative values and conservative political point of view but also believes in the innate value of who she is and her perspective."

"The Girls on the Bus" isn't all about scoops and deadlines, but there is a central mystery about a secret source that weaves throughout and intensifies deeper into the season. It also explores the characters' relationships and family drama and shows unvarnished moments with the candidates, which was particularly enjoyable for Foley.

"I like the duality of my character. I don't even know if they know what they're going to do next season, but I'm interested to find out where it goes," said Foley, who noted the dual sides of his characters in "Felicity" and then "Scandal."

"Playing Noel years ago allows me to play these characters because producers and audiences of a certain age now, they think of Noel and they don't think, 'Oh, there's going to be a turn,' you know," Foley said.

LOS ANGELES: Hollywood has been able to put on a show of happiness and something akin to normalcy as it struggles to shake off the effects of the dual strikes and one of the most tumultuous years in industry history.

Yet Sunday's Academy Awards didn't sidestep the labor strife that left its screenwriters and actors out of work for much of 2023. The acknowledgment - prominent amid muted acknowledgment of the strikes during other awards shows this season - comes as behind-the-scenes crews could be next to challenge studios, and video game actors may be weeks from their own strike.

In front of an enormous global audience, Oscars host Jimmy Kimmel devoted part of his opening monologue toward vowing to union members and those working behind the scenes that Hollywood's stars would stand with them - repayment for those workers supporting actors during the strike that brought much of the entertainment industry to a standstill last year.

"We fully support them, obviously, as they did us," said Fran Drescher, the president of the actors guild, told The Associated Press on the Oscars red carpet.

Kimmel took the opportunity to shine an even bigger light on the matter.

"For five months, this group of writers, actors, directors, the people who actually make the films said 'We will not accept a deal' ... well, not the directors, you guys folded immediately," Kimmel said during the show, mixing a bit of humor in. "But the rest of us said we will not accept a deal without protections against artificial intelligence."

That's when he thanked the workers in Hollywood now embroiled in a labor fight of their own, bringing dozens of truck drivers, lighting workers, gaffers, grips and more onto the stage as a thank-you. "Thank you for standing with us," Kimmel said. "And also, we want you to know that in your upcoming negotiations, we will stand with you too."

There was a time when the Academy Awards would have been the last place for an expression of solidarity like Kimmel's. The guilds in the current labor struggles formed in the 1930s in large part because of fears that

the newly founded Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences would become a cartel of studios used to keep pay low. Actors, directors, writers and other workers would eventually exert greater control over the film academy, with threats to boycott the Oscars among their tools.

The same fears of being



Kimmel



Drescher

replaced by artificial intelligence that fed the actors and writers strikes may lead to a strike of video game actors, who are also represented by SAG-AFTRA.

Speaking at a panel at SXSW Film & TV Festival the day before the Oscars, SAG-AFTRA executive director and chief negotiator Duncan Crabtree-Ireland said a

strike could be four to six weeks away.

"It is, at this point, at least 50/50, if not more likely, that we end up going on strike," Crabtree-Ireland said, "because of the inability to get past these basic AI issues."

Actors who work on video games range from voice performers to stunt performers. Their long-

term contract expired more than a year ago, and there has been little progress in months of talks. In September, the game actors overwhelmingly gave their leaders the authority to call a strike against the collective of gaming companies that hire them. They last walked off the job for six months in 2016 and 2017. (AP)

Features

ARABO TIMES

THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2024

Sora ... AI revolutionary text-to-video tool

Transforming text into high-quality clips at unprecedented speed

By Al-Haytham Saleh

KUWAIT CITY, March 13, (KUNA): OpenAI has finally unveiled Sora, an artificial intelligence tool that transform text instructions into video, another step in the AI realm.

The launch of Sora, which means sky in Japanese language, created an uproar amongst media industry and social media in the US, while the Washington Post commented this move would pave way for producing high-quality video clips from scratch.

Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) analyzed videos generated by OpenAI and showed high-definition (HD) minute-long clips, only produced by inserting texts.

OpenAI, backed by Microsoft, said Sora could generate videos from still photos in addition to adding visual contents.

It said Sora was in a testing phase to assess critical areas for harms or risks, but was granting access to a number of visual artists, designers and filmmakers to give feedback to help develop the model to the most helpful for creative professionals.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman urged users outside OpenAI to present proposals on how to produce videos and to give the public an idea on capabilities of AI.

OpenAI invented the ChatGPT, GPT-4 and Dall-E. It took a further step and offered Sora, giving the company another leap towards AI.

Although AI-generated videos were already produced by tech giants Meta and Google the past year, videos produced by Sora in terms of quality, accuracy and length were at another level and generated within a minute of the request.

Sora produced a clip on the following text: a girl walking in a Tokyo street filled with colorful and warm lights, and moving signs .. the girl wears a black leather jacket, covering a long red dress and wears black shoes .. the girl carries black purse, wears sunglasses, wears lipstick, and walks in a confident way on a wet street, reflecting lights from above .. many people walk in this street.



KUNA photo

Artificial intelligence is able to imagine those who use it.

One of the complicated description that Sora produced was a scene of the gold frenzy in the State of California, US, in 1848, as well as a clip of an old lady blowing candles, and archeologists discovering a plastic chair in the desert and taking extra care in cleaning it.

Another challenging text was: Beautiful, snowy Tokyo city is bustling. The camera moves through the bustling city street, following several people enjoying the beautiful snowy weather and shopping at nearby stalls. Gorgeous sakura petals are flying through the wind along with snowflakes.

The Tokyo scene showed how Sora believed that these scenes were real and depicted accurate camera movement.

Sora is another breakthrough in AI, revolving around algorithm processing huge quantities of data through net-

work engineering enabling machines to break AI barriers to go beyond self-learning to thinking, imagining, analyzing, visualizing and listening to voices and generate reactions.

Rehab Ismail, Multimedia professor at the American University in Cairo (AUC), predicted Sora to make quick steps to digital media and to replace existing programs used to produce videos, documentaries and videography.

"Journalists in newsrooms always look for new ways to produce videos and attract the public. And they already started producing AI photos and now we have videos ... the future is open to all possibilities," she told KUNA in an interview.

"We need lots of experiments to learn how to finesse the new skill and use it in newsrooms. In a short time this

technology will be the normal even for the regular user," she said.

"The world is changing remarkably fast which adds additional responsibilities on journalists to develop their skills in order to absorb this change," added Ismail.

Media organizations, she added, were worried about this expansion of technology particularly regarding "intellectual property," one of the pressing questions about the spread in using AI.

Ismail said there "are no real laws organizing intellectual property rights when we talk about content of AI products. "Training AI on using work of others withing compensating them is a big problem that needs intensive research by academic and media institutions," she added.

There are other challenges facing the public as well including misinformation and disinformation, facing a dilemma on what to believe.

Ahmad Esmat, a professor of information technology at AUC, voiced concern that Sora would contribute to spread of "deepfake," especially during elections and conflicts.

Speaking to KUNA, Esmat, a specialist in verifying digital information, warned media institutions because "flood of AI" lacked proper investments aimed at verifying the contents.

Experts said humanity has only seen a fraction of what AI could do.

"I did not expect to see this level of ongoing video production in two or three years from now," Ted Underwood, an Information Technology professor at University of Illinois, told Washington Post reacting to capabilities of Sora.

A new study, prepared by tens of researchers in workshops hosted by Chatham House, expected AI to dominate news production and digital content by 2026.

The study did not recommend a confrontation with AI but using it to make media more efficient, amidst regional and international conflicts affecting media jobs worldwide.

NBC news channel expected Sora to affect around 25 percent of video and movie industries in the US in 2026.

Observers said it was hard to predict AI influence on future of media but anticipate this year to be decisive in spread of AI applications which few years ago were only fantasies.

Routine screening a necessity for all adults

Managing high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity imperative to prevent kidney failure

CLEVELAND, March 13: While anybody can develop chronic kidney disease (CKD), individuals with diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and other chronic diseases are particularly at risk and need to ensure they are screened regularly and manage their health condition well, says an expert from global health system Cleveland Clinic, speaking ahead of World Kidney Day on March 14.

Globally, around one in 10 people have some form of CKD, according to the International Society of Nephrology and the International Federation of Kidney Foundations, which jointly organize World Kidney Day.

"With CKD, a person often doesn't experience symptoms until they have advanced disease, so screening tests are vital for early detection of disease or assurance that the kidneys are functioning normally," says Cleveland Clinic nephrologist Hanny Sawaf MD. "In the case of long-standing chronic kidney disease, the damage is often irreversible, but if kidney damage is caught early, we can take steps to reverse, prevent or delay any further damage. This is why simple non-invasive kidney tests are included in annual health check-ups for adults, and they are particularly

important for people with a family history of kidney disease or those with chronic health conditions."

Dr. Sawaf points out that, left unchecked, hypertension—or high blood pressure—and diabetes are the most common causes of kidney disease and end-stage renal disease.

Obesity raises the risk of both hypertension and diabetes but is also known to be an independent risk factor for chronic kidney disease. While the prevalence of diabetes, hypertension and obesity is increasing globally, the good news is that many new and highly effective therapies for managing these conditions have been developed.

"In clinical trials, some newer medications, such as SGLT2 inhibitors and GLP-1 receptor agonists, which are used to treat people with diabetes and obesity, appear to have benefits for the kidneys independent of weight loss and blood sugar control," he adds. "In fact, the recent FLOW trial to establish whether semaglutide had a posi-

tive effect on renal function ended prematurely as it had met its objective."

Tips for Good Kidney Health In addition to managing chronic conditions and undergoing recommended screening tests, Dr. Sawaf says there are lifestyle changes that individuals can implement to improve their kidney health. In general, the guidelines for maintaining heart health also apply to kidney health, and these steps can also contribute to better management of diabetes, obesity and hypertension, he says.

"Recommendations for kidney health include exercising regularly, getting enough sleep — aiming for seven to eight hours each night — not smoking, limiting alcohol intake and maintaining a healthy weight," says Dr. Sawaf. "In addition, follow a heart-healthy eating plan such as the Mediterranean diet, which is focused on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, lean meats and olive oil, or the low-sodium DASH diet. Restricting sodium is important, especially for those with high blood pressure or those who have kidney disease, and we recommend consuming a maximum of 2g of sodium per day for these patients," he adds.



Dr. Sawaf

Despite setback, Space One remains optimistic

Japan's first private-sector rocket launch attempt explodes moments after takeoff

TOKYO, March 13, (AP): A commercial rocket trying to put a satellite into orbit was intentionally exploded shortly after liftoff Wednesday morning in central Japan following a problem that's still under investigation.

Space One was aiming to be Japan's first private sector success at putting a satellite into orbit.

Online video showed the Kairos rocket blasting off in a mountainous area filled with trees then exploding five seconds later. A huge plume of smoke engulfed the area, and flames shot up in some spots. Spurts of water were shown trying to put out the blaze.

Live footage on public broadcaster NHK showed debris scattering from the sky and later charred pieces were shown strewn about on the ground.

No injuries were reported and the fire was brought under control, according to the fire department for Kushimoto city in Wakayama prefecture.

The launch was halted five seconds after liftoff but the problem that was detected by the rocket's automated system was unclear and still under investigation, according to Space One.

It occurred during step two of the launch, with the first step being liftoff, and all the pieces of the rocket landed on Space One's property, the



Space One's Kairos rocket explodes after liftoff from a launch pad in Kushimoto, Wakayama prefecture, western Japan, Wednesday, March 13, 2024. A rocket touted as Japan's first from the private sector to go into orbit exploded shortly after takeoff Wednesday, live-streamed video showed. (AP)

company said.

"We are taking what happened in a positive way and remain prepared to take up the next challenge," President Masakazu Toyoda told reporters.

The rocket was supposed to have sent a government-made satellite into orbit around Earth to gather

various information, including monitoring possible dangers from rocket launches from neighboring North Korea.

But one of its main purposes was for Japan to play catch-up as rocket launches here have fallen behind that of the U.S. and China. The launch has been delayed several times.

Toyoda and other officials stressed that space travel succeeds only after multiple failures. He even refused to call the aborted launch a failure, and declined to reveal the costs or when the investigation might be completed.

Tokyo-based Space One was set up in 2018, with investments from major Japanese companies, including Canon Electronics, IHI, Shimizu and major banks. It's hoping to eventually offer space services and travel.

Japan's main space exploration effort has been led by the government under JAXA, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, which has developed various rockets, sent a spacecraft to the moon and brought back asteroid samples for research.

Japan's companies are aiming to become a larger part of the growing global space business, as exemplified by ventures abroad like Elon Musk's Space X.

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Napoli elimination from CL helps Turin club

Juventus advance to the 2025 Club World Cup from Italy

GENEVA, March 13, (AP): Banned by UEFA from European competitions this season for breaking financial rules, Juventus still qualified for the 2025 Club World Cup on Tuesday when Napoli went out of the Champions League.

Barcelona beat Napoli 3-1 in the second leg of the round of 16 to seal a 4-2 win on aggregate score that ensured Juventus advanced through a European ranking system to the revamped FIFA event.

Juventus is the 21st team to qualify for the inaugural 32-team edition of the Club World Cup that will be played in the United States in June-July 2025 by the continental champions from 2021 through 2024 plus other high-ranked teams from those competitions.

Juventus advanced one day after its former player Cristiano Ronaldo's Saudi Arabian club Al Nassr fell out of contention on being eliminated in the Asian Champions

League quarterfinals.

Barcelona is still not sure to be among Europe's 12 entries because it trails Spanish rival Atletico Madrid in the European rankings.

SOCCER

Champions League winners in the four-year period - Chelsea, Real Madrid and Manchester City so far - will be joined by eight or nine teams finishing highest in a table counting all results in the competition. Countries also are limited to two entries unless they have more than two winners of the continental title.

Inter Milan, which reached the Champions League final last season, already secured its Club World Cup place by ranking and Napoli's exit Tuesday ensured Ju-

ventus cannot be overtaken as the second-best Italian team.

Juventus reached the Champions League round of 16 twice in the four-year span and also played in the group stage last season. It is currently No. 14 in the European ranking table though behind three teams from each of England, Germany and Spain which will reach their quota.

UEFA imposed a one-season ban on Juventus from its competitions in July in the fallout from a false accounting case that also saw the team deducted points in Serie A.

Juventus also was fined 10 million euros (\$11 million) by UEFA though should more than recoup that in Club World Cup prize money paid by FIFA next year. The June 15-July 13 tournament has the established World Cup format of eight four-team groups then a 16-team knockout bracket.

Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain, Porto, Borussia Dortmund and Benfica also have qualified, and will be joined by either Atletico or Barcelona. Other teams still in contention include Arsenal, PSV Eindhoven and Salzburg.

Three Brazilian teams - Flamengo, Palmeiras and Fluminense - have qualified, plus Seattle Sounders, and Mexican teams Leon and Monterrey. Another U.S. team will qualify as part of a Club World Cup tradition to include the host nation's champion.

In Asia, Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia and Japan's Urawa Red Diamonds of Japan are in. Al Ahly of Egypt and Wydad Casablanca of Morocco have qualified from Africa and Auckland City of New Zealand will represent Oceania.

The last of the continental finals in 2024 is South America's Copa Libertadores on Nov. 30.

Edwards leads big comeback, Leonard injured in T-wolves' win over Clippers



Minnesota Timberwolves guard Anthony Edwards (5) drives past Los Angeles Clippers guard Terance Mann during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Los Angeles. (AP)

Anunoby's return, Hart's triple-double help Knicks beat 76ers

NEW YORK, March 13, (AP): Josh Hart had 20 points, 19 rebounds and 10 assists in his fourth triple-double of the season, OG Anunoby scored 14 points in his return from an 18-game absence and the New York Knicks beat the Philadelphia 76ers 106-79 on Tuesday night.

Jalen Brunson added 20 points and nine assists for the Knicks, who finally got one of their injured starters back and looked nothing like the team that was held to an NBA season-low 73 points in a loss to the 76ers.

Anunoby hadn't played since Jan. 27 because of a right elbow injury that required surgery. New York is still playing without All-Star Julius Randle and Mitchell Robinson because of injuries, but has held its opponent below 80 points in three straight games for the first time since the 2000-01 season.

The Knicks improved to 13-2 in games that Anunoby has played in after acquiring him from Toronto in a Dec. 30 trade.

BASKETBALL

Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 19 points and Tyrese Maxey had 17 after missing the previous four games because of a concussion.

Timberwolves 118, Clippers 100

In Los Angeles, Anthony Edwards scored 37 points, Nickeil Alexander-Walker added a season-high 28 and Minnesota roared back from an early 22-point deficit for a victory over Los Angeles.

Kawhi Leonard left the game with back spasms between the first two quarters, the Clippers said. He played the entire first quarter, but he was seen leaving the Clippers' downtown arena during the second quarter.

Mike Conley scored 23 points with five 3-pointers for the Timberwolves, who avoided their first three-game losing streak of the season with a huge rally following Leonard's departure. Rudy Gobert had eight points and 11 rebounds before leaving the game late with an apparent chest injury.

After trailing 57-35 midway through the second quarter, Minnesota seized control in the second half and finished the team's largest comeback since November 2012.

Paul George scored 22 points and James Harden had 12 for the Clippers, who have lost two straight games for only the second time since

Al-Daihani highlights progress in handball teams

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Mubarak Al-Daihani, a member of Kuwait Handball Association, emphasized the significant strides made by our national handball teams in international competitions, leading to notable achievements such as the "Blue Hand" clinching the bronze at the "Masters" last summer and securing qualification for the 2025 World Cup finals through the Asian Championship held in January. Additionally, the team garnered a bronze medal in the Arab Junior Championship.

Al-Daihani credited the collaborative efforts between the Handball Federation, clubs, and official authorities for this devel-



Mubarak Al-Daihani, a member of the Handball Federation.

opment, emphasizing its positive impact on the sport both domestically and internationally.

He expressed aspirations to cultivate technically and mentally adept generations with a winning mentality, particularly in continental competitions.

Al-Daihani affirmed that the

HANDBALL

Handball Federation is diligently following its established plan, with everyone working together to achieve desired results and objectives.

Regarding player development in various age groups, Al-Daihani highlighted ongoing efforts to enhance players' skill levels during national team gatherings while closely monitoring their performances with their respective clubs.

Christmas.

Kings 129, Bucks 94

In Sacramento, De'Aaron Fox scored 29 points and Sacramento beat Milwaukee for the first time in more than eight years.

Sacramento had not defeated Milwaukee since Feb. 1, 2016, with the 15-game losing streak being the longest active streak for any team.

This game was never in doubt. The Kings never trailed and led by double digits since the midway point of the second quarter and built the lead to 30 points in the fourth quarter.

Domantas Sabonis had 22 points and 11 rebounds, setting a Kings single-season record with his 47th consecutive double-double. Jerry Lucas had set the mark in 1967-68. Malik Monk added 25 points off the bench.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 30 points and 13 rebounds for the Bucks, who went 1-3 on a four-game California swing.

Pacers 121, Thunder 111

In Oklahoma City, Myles Turner scored 24 points to help Indiana defeat Oklahoma City.

Tyrese Haliburton had 18 points and 12 assists and Pascal Siakam added 18 points and 11 rebounds for the Pacers, who shot 53.9% from the field and snapped Oklahoma City's three-game win streak.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 30 points and 10 rebounds, Lu Dort scored 18 points and Chet Holmgren added 15 points and 13 rebounds for the Thunder, who fell into a tie with the Denver Nuggets at the top of the Western Conference standings.

Gordon Hayward got his first

start in 11 games since being traded to Oklahoma City and scored nine points in 30 minutes. He started in place of Jalen Williams, who was out with a sprained right ankle. Williams is Oklahoma City's No. 2 scorer this season with 19 points per game.

Celtics 123, Jazz 107

In Salt Lake City, Jayson Tatum scored 38 points and Derrick White added 24 to lead Boston over struggling Utah.

The Celtics were missing rotation players Jaylen Brown (back), Kristaps Porzingis (hamstring) and Al Horford (toe) but shot so well it didn't matter much.

Jrue Holiday scored 16 points and Sam Hauser had 14 as the Celtics



Indiana Pacers forward Aaron Nesmith, (left), drives against Oklahoma City Thunder center Mike Muscala, right, during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City. (AP)

made 20 3-pointers and outscored the Jazz on second-chance points, 22-8.

Keyonte George scored 14 of his 26 points in the first quarter. Jordan Clarkson tallied 21 and Collin Sexton had 20 for Utah, which has dropped 11 of its last 13 games.

The Jazz played without leading scorer Lauri Markkanen (thigh) and Taylor Hendricks (toe).

Grizzlies 109, Wizards 97

In Memphis, Trey Jemison scored a career-high 24 points, GG Jackson added 19 and Memphis used a late rally to hold off Washington.

Jake LaRavia added 16 points for Memphis. Jemison was 11 of 13 from the field.

Kyle Kuzma had 24 points, seven rebounds and five assists for the Wizards, who were trying to win three straight games for the first time this season. Corey Kispert finished with 22 points and Deni Avdija had 16.

Rockets 103, Spurs 101

In San Antonio, Fred VanVleet scored 21 points and Houston held off San Antonio.

Houston won its fourth straight on the road and is five games behind Golden State for 10th in the Western Conference.

Tre Jones had 22 points and Jeremy Sochan added 21 as San Antonio lost for the fourth time in five games. Victor Wembanyama finished with 13 points, 10 rebounds and six assists after a sluggish start.

At 14-52, San Antonio must finish at least 7-9 to avoid matching the franchise's worst record of 20-62 set in 1997.

Rawalpindi and Lahore to host 5 T20s

Table-topper Multan routs Quetta for 106 in last league game of PSL

KARACHI, Pakistan, March 13, (AP): Leg-spinner Usama Mir and David Willey shared six wickets and routed Quetta Gladiators for 106 as table-topper Multan Sultans completed its regular season with a 79-run win in the Pakistan Super League.

Multan led the points table with seven wins and will take on No. 2 Peshawar Zalmi (12 points) in the qualifier on Thursday with the winner advancing to the final.

CRICKET

It was a wake-up call for revamped Quetta, which will be playing its first PSL playoffs after four years. It will meet Islamabad United in the eliminator on Thursday.

Half-centuries by captain Mohammad Rizwan (69) and Johnson Charles (53) of the West Indies propelled Multan to 185-4 after Quetta won the toss and elected to field.

Quetta's chase got derailed in the third over when Jason Roy's run of poor form continued as Willey (3-22) had him trapped leg before wicket and Saud Shakeel (14) got run-out.

Willey then knocked back captain Rilee Rossouw's leg stump with an impeccable yorker inside the power play and Laurie Evans spooned a dolly catch to mid-wicket.

Mir (3-22), the leading wicket-taker of the tournament, then removed Quetta's top-scorer Omair Yousuf (37) before he quickly ran through the tailenders to give Multan and emphatic victory with more than four overs to spare.

Earlier, Rizwan smashed his fourth half-century and second against Quetta this season and Charles upped the ante in the death overs with his 29-ball knock before Ifthikhar Ahmed provided an ideal finish with a quickfire 20 off eight balls.

Also

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will host New Zealand in a five-match Twenty20 series next month as part of its preparations for the T20 World Cup.



Karachi Kings' Tim Seifert bats during the Pakistan Super League T20 cricket match between Peshawar Zalmi and Karachi Kings, in Karachi, Pakistan. (AP)

The Pakistan Cricket Board on Wednesday said Rawalpindi will host three games on April 18, 20 and 21 and the remaining two will be played at Lahore on April 25 and 27.

New Zealand will likely be missing several frontline players including Daryl Mitchell, Mitchell Santner and Lockie Ferguson, who will be playing in the Indian Premier League.

New Zealand beat Pakistan 4-1 at home in Shaheen Shah Afridi's debut Twenty20 international series as skipper earlier this year.

"This tour symbolizes the deep-rooted ties and mutual respect that define the relationship between our two cricketing nations," Usman Wahla, the PCB's director of international cricket, said.

"Our avid cricket fans and the people of Pakistan will welcome the New Zealand team again. We hope to have yet another competitive series which is a key part of our buildup to this year's ICC T20 World Cup."

The June 2-30 T20 World Cup will be held in North America and the Caribbean.

Al-Qadisiya secure impressive win over Al-Salmiya in league

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: In a thrilling encounter at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium, Al-Qadisiya clinched a significant win against Al-Salmiya with a final score of 4-2. The match, as part of the inaugural round of the "League of Six" championship group in the Zain Premier League, witnessed intense action from both sides.

Al-Salmiya took the lead with a goal from Libyan player Senussi Al-Hadi just twenty minutes into the match. However, Al-Qadisiyah turned the tables with an impressive display, scoring four goals through Malian striker Ibrahim Tandia (43rd minute), Eid Al-Rashidi (51st minute), Badr Al-Mutawa (67th minute), and Mubarak Al-Fanini (88th minute). Al-Salmiya managed to pull one back with a late goal from Abdul Mohsen Al-Turkmani in injury time (90+1).

With this victory, Al-Qadisiya's points tally rises to 42, putting them level with the runner-up Al-Arabi. On the other hand, Al-Salmiya's

point accumulation halted at 24 after suffering their third consecutive defeat.

Reflecting on the match, Al-Qadisiya coach Dr. Muhammad Al-Mishaan praised his team's resilience in overcoming a tough opponent. He acknowledged the challenges posed by Al-Salmiya and

SOCCER

highlighted the importance of securing the three points in the face of fierce competition.

Midfielder Abdulaziz Wadi expressed the team's commitment to maintaining their performance throughout the remainder of the league. He described the victory as crucial and emphasized the implementation of training strategies in scoring goals, as demonstrated by Badr Al-Mutawa's successful execution during the match.

Looking ahead, both the coach and players are determined to sustain their momentum and deliver strong performances in the upcoming league fixtures.



Al-Qadisiya coach Dr. Muhammad Al-Mishaan.

Company awarded winners of the exceptional competition at Arena Kuwait

Zain sponsors Fakhar Al Arab Arabian horse show

KUWAIT CITY, March 13: Zain has sponsored Fakhar Al Arab, the exceptional show and competition for Arabian horses. The event, held early March at the Arena Kuwait, 360 Mall, celebrated the beauty of purebred Arabian horses and the talent of their breeders and owners. The event came under supervision from ECAHO, the European Conference of Arab Horse Organizations.

During the closing ceremony, Zain awarded the owners of the winning horses in the gold category. In attendance were Chairman of Tamdeen Group Mohammed Jassim Al Marzouq, Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, Head of the Organizing Committee Dhari Al Mejhem, Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al MUSAIBEEH, and the competition's Managing Director Mohammed Al Khamees.

Zain is proud to extend its support to this competition that celebrated the beauty of the purebred Arabian horse, a cultural symbol deeply rooted in the Kuwaiti, Arab, and Islamic identities. Arabian horses are one of the oldest and finest breeds, distinctive for their beauty, elegance, and intelligence, with thousands of years of history. Zain was keen to join this event to reflect the private sector's support to cultural and sports programs in the community.

The Fakhar Al Arab competition featured several categories for straight Egyptian horses of all ages. An international team of referees supervised the competition and judged the participants, awarding points for criteria like Arab identity, head and neck, body, legs, and movement. Winners were selected for gold, silver, and bronze awards. The competition was organized under the S classification of the European Conference of Arab Horse Organizations (ECAHO).

Zain is always eager to support the biggest cultural and sports programs and competitions in Kuwait with the aim of elevating the Kuwaiti sports scene. The company strongly believes that the private sector has a vital role in progressing sports and cultural initiatives, and it makes this belief a reality by shouldering world-class competitions like Fakhar Al Arab.



Al Khashti awarding one of the winners.



Al Marzouq, Al Mejhem and Al Khamees honor Al MUSAIBEEH for Zain's support.

Officials have not been sanctioned

Skater's doping case leaves WADA uneasy, targeting new rules before next Winter Oly

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, March 13, (AP): The doping case of Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva left a "very unpleasant" taste with the World Anti-Doping Agency, which is unhappy that the teenager was the only one punished with a ban while her coaches and entourage have not been sanctioned.

WADA now wants anti-doping rules to be updated before the 2026 Winter Olympics in Italy to give more powers to investigate athlete entourage, officials said at the anti-doping body's annual conference Tuesday.



Valieva

"It is clear that the taste of this case is very unpleasant when you see that there was a choice made to sacrifice an athlete rather than indicating who actually helped her dope," WADA director general Olivier Niggli said.

Valieva was given a four-year ban by the Court of Arbitration for Sport in January following an appeal by WADA. She was 15 when her positive test for a banned heart medication was revealed at the 2022 Beijing Winter Games, and later blamed on a strawberry dessert prepared by her grandfather. She has been the only person punished despite the World Anti-Doping Code mandating that the people working with underage athletes implicated in doping cases should also be investigated.

The responsibility to conduct those investigations falls on national authorities and there is no sign that Valieva's renowned coach Eteri Tutberidze and medical support staff will be held to account in Russia.

Instead, Tutberidze was last year awarded one of Russia's highest honors authorized by President Vladimir Putin.

Niggli acknowledged that "the evi-

dence is not there" to link the coach directly with Valieva's doping case, suggesting that "maybe the physio, maybe the doctor" were involved.

Still, WADA confirmed that it feels the adults responsible for Valieva's case have eluded the anti-doping system.

"We think the athlete didn't take this substance alone, it was not her initiative," WADA President Witold Banka told The Associated Press in an interview. "She faced the consequences." "It is never nice when we see the athlete punished and we feel that someone who was really responsible for it from Russia is free of charge," Banka added, lamenting that "the current geopolitical situation" will not allow for a WADA-appointed investigation in Russia.

Valieva and Russian sports officials have filed an appeal against the CAS ruling at Switzerland's supreme court, which can intervene on limited grounds of abuse of legal process. The federal court typically takes at least several months to give a ruling.

The skater's ban is set to expire in December 2025 - just three weeks after the next global review of the anti-doping code hosted by WADA. That meeting is scheduled to be held in Busan, South Korea.

"Maybe this (Valieva) case shows how important it is that we have to improve in the anti-doping system. We are doing it now," Banka said.

Tutberidze is now coaching a new generation of teenage Russian skaters preparing for the 2026 Milan-Cortina d'Ampezzo Olympics.

Niggli was asked what the International Olympic Committee, International Skating Union and anti-doping officials can do to prevent a possible repeat of the Valieva case in Italy.

"The ISU would have to look at their testing program leading up to the games to make sure that all athletes maybe training still with the same coach - even so, we don't know if she has anything to do with that - are being properly tested," he said.

George retiring from test rugby

CARDIFF, Wales, March 13, (AP): Wales center George North will retire from international rugby after facing Italy in their Six Nations finale on Saturday at Principality Stadium.

North made the swansong announcement on Instagram on Wednesday after he was selected.

"After 14 years it feels like now is the right time to step away," he wrote. "I have loved and cherished every second in a Welsh shirt and been able to play alongside some fantastic teammates. I've been very lucky to have lived my dream."

RUGBY

In a career spanning 14 years, North will play his 121st Wales test. Only former teammates Alun Wyn Jones (158) and Gethin Jenkins (129) have played more. His 47 tries for Wales are second only to Shane Williams' 58.

Springboks lock Lood de Jager has spoken at length publicly for the first time about the heart ailment which caused him to miss last year's Rugby World Cup and might have been fatal if it had not been diagnosed in time.

De Jager was diagnosed with pericarditis the day before South Africa's 2023 World Cup squad was announced. Though it was a bitter blow to have to miss his second World Cup - South Africa successfully defended its title - de Jager is grateful the ailment was found when it was.

The 31-year-old forward played his first match since his diagnosis for Saitama Wild Knights against Mitsubishi Dynabords in Japan League One in January. That brought to an end a difficult rehabilitation which began with de Jager being cautioned against exercising in any way.

Alcaraz 'advances' to Indian Wells quarters

Sinner wins 18th straight match

INDIAN WELLS, March 13, (AP): Second-ranked Carlos Alcaraz avenged a previous loss to Fabian Marozsan, winning 6-3, 6-3 to reach the quarterfinals of the BNP Paribas Open as the top remaining seed in the men's draw.

TENNIS

A day after "lucky loser" Luca Nardi stunned No. 1 Novak Djokovic in the third round at Indian Wells, Alcaraz advanced easily over the Hungarian who ousted him from the Italian Open in May. Marozsan was a qualifier and the No. 135 player in the world when he upset Alcaraz - then on the verge of taking the top spot in the rankings - 6-3, 7-6 (4) in the third round in Rome.

"Honestly, I was nervous before the match. I'm not going to lie," Alcaraz said. "Playing against someone that beat you. ... Today I knew what I had to do."

Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner beat Ben Shelton 7-6 (4), 6-1 later Tuesday for his 18th consecutive victory. The third-ranked Italian has won 15 matches in a row to start 2024, claiming titles at Melbourne and Rotterdam. It was the 150th hard-court



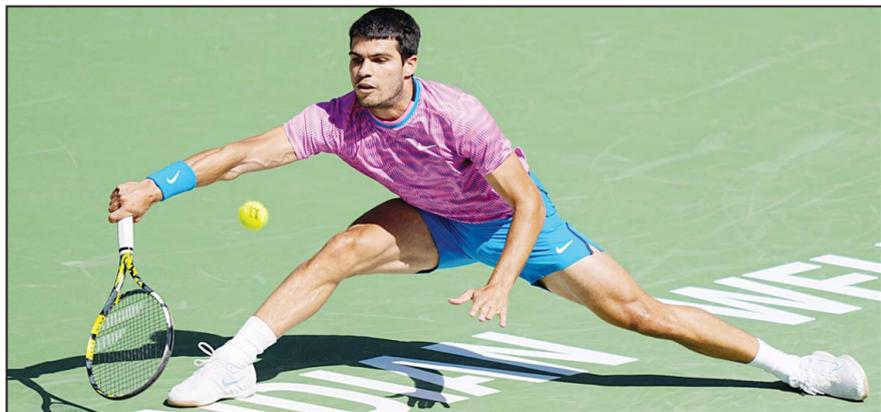
Alexander Zverev, of Germany, celebrates his victory over Alex de Minaur, of Australia, at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. Zverev won 5-7, 6-2, 6-3. (AP)

victory for the 22-year-old Sinner, who became first player born in the 2000s to reach that milestone.

Sinner had a set point, up 5-4 and 40-30 in the first, before Shelton was saved by a net cord. It then took Sinner another 15 minutes to close out the first set; in the second, he went up 3-0 and coasted to the victory.

Sinner advanced to the quarterfinals to play Jiri Lehecka, a 6-2, 6-4 winner over Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Alcaraz, the defending champion at



Carlos Alcaraz, of Spain, hits a return to Fabian Marozsan, of Hungary, during their match at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. (AP)

Brazil's Senate opens new inquiry on fixing

BRASILIA, Brazil, March 13, (AP): Brazil's Senate on Tuesday opened another inquiry into match-fixing in the country's top soccer divisions. The move comes a year after a sprawling investigation by prosecutors linked 26 people, including players, businesspeople and sports executives, to criminal betting schemes.

Sen. Romero de Souza Faria, a World Cup winner in 1994, made the request for the inquiry last week. A similar investigation in the country's lower house ended in frustration six months ago.

Faria said the Senate inquiry should use as a reference a recent report published by technology company SportRadar, which put 109 matches played in Brazil in 2023 under suspicion of match-fixing.

The original investigation by prosecutors in the state of Goias is still ongoing. It showed last year that players in Brazil's first and second divisions were allegedly offered up to \$20,000 by criminal syndicates to perform specific actions during games, such as receiving yellow cards and giving away penalty kicks.

Several players who were accused of involvement in the scheme have been suspended from the sport.

Indian Wells, dropped the first set in his opening match this year but has lost just 12 games in the other six sets. He will face Alexander Zverev, who rallied after losing the first set to Alex de Minaur and won 5-7, 6-2, 6-3.

On the women's side, top-seeded Iga Swiatek had a 6-1, 6-2 win over Yulia Putintseva, Caroline Wozniacki beat Angelique Kerber 6-4, 6-2 in a contest between two former No. 1-ranked players, Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk fended off Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia 6-4, 6-1, and Anastasia Potapova defeated Jasmine Paolini 7-5, 0-6, 6-3.

Meanwhile, Tennis fans hoping to get tickets for this year's French Open will only be able to buy them using an official application on their phones, the French tennis federation said.

All fans attending the May 26-June 9 clay-court tournament must be equipped with a Roland Garros-named app on their phones, where the tickets will be stored.

There will be no more paper tickets, the FFT said, adding that the initiative will reduce the time spent queuing.

The Court Suzanne Lenglen, the second-biggest court in the grounds, will also have a retractable roof this year to enable play during bad weather. The Court Philippe Chatrier - the main court - already has a retractable roof and will hold 11 evening sessions this year.

Another change for the 2024 tournament sees the qualifying rounds played on Suzanne Lenglen from May 20-24.

Gotti named Lecce's new coach after D'Aversa was fired for an apparent headbutt

Saarbrücken knock out yet another Bundesliga team to reach German Cup semifinals

SAARBRÜCKEN, Germany, March 13, (AP): Third-division Saarbrücken's German Cup fairytale continued Tuesday with a 2-1 win over Borussia Mönchengladbach in their rain-delayed quarterfinal.

Kai Brünker scored on a counterattack in stoppage time for Saarbrücken to knock out yet another Bundesliga team after a sensational second-round win over Bayern Munich and third-round victory over Eintracht Frankfurt. "Just crazy, I'm mega-happy," Brünker said as teammates and fans celebrated around him. "Mentality-monsters, I'm so ridiculously proud of every single one. Look at their faces!"

The third-tier team now goes onto the semifinals against second-division Kaiserslautern on April 3. Bayer Leverkusen, the only Bundesliga team remaining in this season's competition, plays Fortuna Düsseldorf in the other semifinal the next day.

Tuesday's match was originally scheduled for Feb. 7, when it was

rained off after the field became waterlogged and unplayable.

New grass had been laid in the intervening five weeks, but heavy rain poured down again before kickoff and the surface was far from ideal. The field gave way to clumps that stewards tried vainly to pat down before the match and during halftime. Players also tried patting down the wayward clumps during the match.

Gladbach struck first with Robin Hack finishing off a counterattack in the eighth-minute, only for Amine Naïti to reply three minutes later for the home team.

Gladbach pushed harder for the breakthrough in the second half as the rain continued to fall, then Saarbrücken defender Fabio Di Michele Sanchez set off on a run down the left and crossed for Brünker to fire the winner inside the left post in the third minute of stoppage time.

Former Chelsea assistant Luca Gotti was named Lecce's new coach

on Wednesday, two days after Roberto D'Aversa was fired for appearing to

headbutt an opposing player.

Gotti was Maurizio Sarri's assistant at Chelsea in 2018-19 and was more recently the head coach at Udinese and Spezia.

Lecce said Gotti was given a contract until the end of the season that will be extended if the southern club avoids relegation.

SOCCER

D'Aversa lost control at the end of Sunday's 1-0 home loss to fellow struggler Hellas Verona.

Verona striker Thomas Henry was arguing with Lecce defender Marin Pongracic after the final whistle when D'Aversa went over to intervene, but instead ended up knocking Henry over with an apparent headbutt directly in front of one of the match officials.

Besides being fired, D'Aversa was given a four-match ban that he will

have to serve if he is hired by another club.

Celta Vigo has fired coach Rafa Benítez after winning just five league games this season.

The Spanish club announced the decision on Tuesday, thanking the former Liverpool and Real Madrid manager for "eight months of absolute dedication and total commitment" but saying he fell short of obtaining "the results expected." His contract was to 2026.

Celta lost 4-0 to league leader Madrid on Sunday and is 17th in the Spanish league, one place above the relegation zone with 10 matches remaining.

The 63-year-old Spaniard was also fired by Premier League side Everton after 200 days in early 2022. Benítez's best spell was when he coached Liverpool and won the Champions League in 2005 and reached the final in 2007. He also won the FA Cup in 2006.



Saarbrücken's Kai Brünker (left), and Mönchengladbach's Ko Itakura battle for the ball during the German Cup quarterfinal soccer match between FC Saarbrücken and Borussia Mönchengladbach at Ludwigspark Stadium, Saarbrücken, Germany. (AP)



Iga Swiatek, of Poland, returns a shot to Yulia Putintseva, of Kazakhstan, at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. Swiatek won 6-1, 6-2. (AP)

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Sports

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Barcelona back in Champs League quarterfinals after win over Napoli

'Today we showed that we are prepared to compete in Europe'

BARCELONA, Spain, March 13, (AP): Four years later, Barcelona is again celebrating a triumph in the knockout stage of the Champions League.

The five-time European champions returned to the quarterfinals with a 3-1 win over Napoli.

Fermin López, João Cancelo and Robert Lewandowski scored for Barcelona as it advanced 4-2 on aggregate after a 1-1 draw in the first leg in Italy three weeks ago.

Amir Rrahmani scored for Napoli, which couldn't repeat its last-eight appearance from last season, when it won a knockout round for the first time.

Barcelona had been eliminated in the group stage the last two years and hadn't reached the quarterfinals since 2019-20, when it lost to Bayern Munich.

"It was an incredible night," Barcelona midfielder Sergi Roberto said. "It

had been four years since this club was where it deserves to be. We have to enjoy this moment."

In the other Champions League match on Tuesday, Arsenal eliminated Porto in a penalty shootout after a 1-1 aggregate draw.

SOCCER

The Champions League could be Barcelona's last realistic chance for a title this season. It was eliminated in the Copa del Rey and trails Spanish league leader Real Madrid by seven points. Coach Xavi Hernández already announced he will leave at the end of the season.

"It was a great match, very complete," Xavi said. "We have been criticized unfairly, and today we showed that this team is prepared to compete in Europe. We are among the best eight teams in Europe. We have to enjoy it."

The victory also means extra income for Barcelona, which has been struggling financially recently.

The Catalan club is unbeaten in six meetings with Napoli in all competitions.

It struggled to keep the Italian side from threatening after taking the early lead at Estadi Olímpic Lluís Companys. Goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen, making his 100th UEFA appearance, was tested often by Napoli's attack.

Barcelona had a few chances to increase its lead on counterattacks before Lewandowski sealed the win from close range in the 83rd after an assist by substitute Roberto. Lewandowski has scored 13 goals in his last 13 knockout stage games in the Champions League.

López put the hosts ahead with a shot from the middle of the area in the 15th minute after a low cross by Raphinha, who also set up Cancelo's goal two minutes later. The Brazil forward hit the post from inside the area and the ball bounced back for an easy strike by Cancelo.

Napoli got on the board in the 30th with Rrahmani finding the net with a

low left-footed shot for his first European goal.

"We gave them too much space, we lost possession often, we started with the wrong attitude and didn't defend well," Napoli coach Francesco Calzona said.

Barcelona teenager Lamine Yamal had a goal disallowed for offside in the 68th.

The last time Barcelona played in the quarterfinals it had also eliminated Napoli 4-2 on aggregate in the round of 16.

Xavi still couldn't count on several players because of injuries, including Pedri, Frenkie De Jong and Ferran Torres. He played with 17-year-old Pau Cubarsi as a central defender, and the teenager was named the man of the match as he helped contain Napoli's attack in his European debut.

The other teams that have advanced to the last eight include Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester City.



Arsenal players celebrate after winning the penalty shoot-out during the Champions League round of 16, second leg soccer match between Arsenal and Porto at the Emirates Stadium, London. (AP)

Raya stars in penalty shootout vs Porto

Arsenal end a 14-year wait for Champs League quarterfinals

LONDON, March 13, (AP): Arsenal's 14-year wait for a spot in the Champions League quarterfinals is over, thanks largely to David Raya's penalty saves.

Raya tipped one spot kick by Porto's Wendell against the post and then palmed away another from Galeno to secure a 4-2 win in a penalty shootout at the Emirates Stadium.

It ended a long streak of round-of-16 losses for Arsenal, which had been eliminated at this stage in its last seven appearances in the competition but won 1-0 to level the aggregate score at 1-1.

And it was a massive moment for Raya, who was brought in last summer to replace Aaron Ramsdale as Arsenal's No. 1 - a decision that has been frequently questioned by the club's supporters this season.

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"Obviously it's a great feeling for me personally, first time in the Champions League and for the club to get into the quarterfinals for the first time in so many years," Raya said. "We've worked a lot on penalties this year and all the hard work with the goalie coach and the team has paid off."

It was the first penalty shootout in the Champions League since the 2016 final won by Real Madrid against Atletico Madrid.

Barcelona also reached the quarterfinals with a 3-1 win over Napoli in Tuesday's other game to advance 4-2 on aggregate.

Arsenal trailed 1-0 from the first leg in Portugal - when Galeno scored the winner deep into stoppage time - but went level through Leandro Trossard's 41st-minute goal. Neither side could find another goal despite extra time as Porto's disciplined defensive tactics largely held Arsenal at bay.

Arsenal endured seven straight round-of-16 losses under Arsene Wenger from 2011-17, the last time the London club played in the competition. Porto last reached the quarterfinals in 2021 but hasn't been past that stage since winning the title in 2004 under Jose Mourinho.

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta now has a chance to do what Wenger never could - win Europe's biggest trophy.

"So happy. It has been 14 years, which is a long time for a club like Arsenal and it shows how difficult it

was," said Arteta, whose team is also top of the Premier League. "We really had to dig in to find the magic moment at the end. We're starting to create an unbelievable energy in the stadium, we were all pushing to get it done and together we have done it."

Porto had snatched the win with a last-minute long-range strike in the home leg and did its best to protect that advantage with a combination of stout defending and a variety of time-wasting techniques.

But the hosts did have a couple of chances in the first half, with striker Evanilson shooting narrowly wide from outside the area in the 16th after Arsenal gave the ball away and then drawing a good save from Raya from the center of the area in the 22nd.

Arsenal's sustained pressure finally paid off when Trossard scored with a low shot inside the far post after being teed up in the area by Martin Odegaard. The shot went through the legs of veteran defender Pepe, who at 41 is the oldest outfield player to play in a Champions League match and the same age as Arteta.

Arsenal had a second goal ruled out in the second half when Odegaard put the ball into an empty net but Kai Havertz was adjudged to have fouled goalkeeper Diogo Costa moments before.

Gabriel Jesus nearly scored straight after coming on in the 83rd minute with a shot that nearly snuck between Costa's legs but deflected out for a corner.



Porto goalkeeper Diogo Costa, (right), punches the ball clear during the Champions League round of 16, second leg soccer match between Arsenal and Porto at the Emirates Stadium, London. (AP)

Police search AC Milan's offices as part of probe into sale of club

MILAN, March 13, (AP): AC Milan's offices were raided by police on Tuesday as part of an investigation by Italian prosecutors into the sale of the Serie A giant.

RedBird Capital Partners purchased Milan from fellow American firm Elliott Management in August 2022, but Milan prosecutors claim Elliott still owns and controls the Italian club.

Italian financial police raided Milan's offices and also reportedly searched the homes of current CEO Giorgio Furlani and former chief executive Ivan Gazidis, who held the role from 2018 to 2022.

Furlani and Gazidis are being investigated for allegedly hiding information related to the sale from the Italian soccer federation.

"In regards to the search carried out today in its headquarters, AC Milan is a third party and extraneous to the ongoing legal action concerning the purchase of the club," Milan said in a statement it sent to journalists including The Associated Press.

"The investigation, which also involves the legal representatives with authority to sign, Giorgio Furlani and Ivan Gazidis, hypothesizes incorrect communications to the competent vigilance authority. The club is giving its full cooperation to the investigating

authority."

Milan could nevertheless be fined or docked points by the Italian soccer federation.

Lazio officially announced coach Maurizio Sarri's resignation on Wednesday and said his longtime assistant Giovanni Martusciello is taking over.

Italian media had reported on Tuesday that the 65-year-old Sarri had decided to step down after five losses in Lazio's last six matches.

SOCCER

Sarri was in his third season in charge of Lazio and had a contract until the end of next season.

"Lazio announces that Maurizio Sarri has resigned as coach," the team said. "The club thanks the coach for the achievements reached and for the work done, wishing him the best luck humely and professionally."

"At the same time, the club announces that the coaching duties have been given to Giovanni Martusciello."

Martusciello was Sarri's assistant at Empoli, Juventus and Lazio. He was Empoli's head coach in 2016-17, when the Tuscan club was relegated on the final day of the season.



Napoli's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, (left), challenges Barcelona's Andreas Christensen during the Champions League, round of 16, second leg soccer match between FC Barcelona and SSC Napoli at the Olympic Stadium in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)

Saudi giants reach Asian Champions League semifinals

Al-Hilal win 28th straight game to set record

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia, March 13, (AP): Saudi Arabian team Al-Hilal set a world record for a top-tier team by winning its 28th straight game with a 2-0 victory over Al-Ittihad to reach the Asian Champions League semifinals.

Al-Hilal had also won the quarterfinals first leg by the same score to advance 4-0 on aggregate over its domestic rival.

The 18-time Saudi champion broke the previous recognized record of 27

SOCCER

straight wins set by The New Saints in the 2016-17 season. The Welsh team took the mark from the great Ajax team inspired by Johan Cruyff in 1971-72.

"Everyone at Al Hilal is delighted to achieve world football history by winning 28 consecutive matches," Al-Hilal coach Jorge Jesus said. "This is truly an incredible achievement and I want to thank everyone at the club for their part in this momentous winning record."

Al Hilal's dominating season follows the club spending about 350 million euros (\$380 million) on player transfers after being effectively nationalized by the Saudi sovereign wealth operation, the Public Investment Fund. It is controlled by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The last time the team did not win was on Sept. 21 in a 1-1 draw against league rival Damac.

Al-Hilal, already champion of Asia four times, is 12 points clear atop the Saudi Pro League.

Kazma secure semis spot in West Asian Championship

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DOHA, March 13: Kazma secured its place in the semifinals of the West Asian Basketball Championship for the Gulf region with a hard-fought victory over host Al-Rayyan of Qatar. The intense match ended 78-77 after two additional periods, with regular time concluding at 60-60.

Meanwhile, Al-Muharraq of Bahrain emerged victorious in their play-off match against Shabab Al-Ahly of the Emirates, clinching a spot in the

semi-finals with a commanding 116-75 win last Monday.

The "Orange" team secured qualification after winning the first leg in Kuwait last week with a score of 69-61.

The semi-final qualification play-offs will follow a "play-off" system of three matches, with the two teams winning two out of the three matches qualifying. This will join Kuwait and Manama of Bahrain, who previously secured their spots as champions of the two Gulf region groups in the preliminary rounds.

The match between Kazma and Al Rayyan was characterized by strength and enthusiasm, with the result oscillating between the two sides until the last seconds of regular time. The tied score of 60-60 led to two extra periods, with Kazma ultimately securing victory with a single-basket difference of 78-77.

The game saw a strong start from the Orange team, leading the first quarter 14-11. However, Al Rayyan managed to regain control in the sec-

BASKETBALL

ond quarter, resulting in a tied score of 25-25 at halftime.

The match continued with both teams exchanging leads in the third quarter, with Al Rayyan holding a narrow 44-43 lead. The fourth quarter witnessed intense excitement and competition, ultimately ending in a 60-60 tie.

In the first overtime, neither team managed to secure victory, resulting in another tie at 68-68. However, in the second overtime, Kazma gained a slight advantage, propelled by the brilliance of their American professional, Chapman, who scored 32 points in the match. This led Kazma to a hard-earned victory of 78-77, securing their ticket to the semifinals.



A player goes solo to basket during Kazma and Al Rayyan game.