



Fitch affirms Kuwait's AA- rating with stable outlook

Fiscal, balance sheets strong

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, (KUNA): The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said on Friday that Fitch Rating Agency affirmed on Kuwait's outlook, which remains stable along with a rating of AA- which is "supported by its exceptionally strong fiscal and external balance sheets."

A statement by (CBK) said the "rating is constrained by Kuwait's heavy dependence on oil, its generous welfare system, and large public sector that could be challenging to sustain in the long term, and a political context that hampers efforts to tackle consistent fiscal and economic rigidities and approve legislation to allow debt issuance and clarify government financing sources."

Kuwait's fiscal and external balance sheets remain among the strongest of Fitch-rated sovereigns.

"We forecast Kuwait's sovereign net foreign asset position will average 529 percent of GDP in 2024-25, remaining one of the highest among Fitch-rated sovereigns and more than 10x the 'AA' median."

Continued on Page 5

Decree appoints new DGCA chief

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, (KUNA): A decree was issued on Thursday, appointing Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Humoud Al-Sabah as head of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

The first article of Decree No. 44 of 2024 stipulates that "Eng. Humoud Mubarak Humoud Al-Sabah is appointed head of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation."

Kuwaiti expert identifies causes

Water security concerns grow amid salinity spike

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, (KUNA): The countries in the GCC region are situated in the most desertified environments in the world, which makes resources and drinkable water crucial necessities.

While there are 157 desalination plants in the region, including eight in Kuwait, the past two decades saw an increase in salinity, which would pose as a threat if levels exceeded 55 percent.

The percentage posed a threat to countries in the region with the average drinkable water consumption exceeding 295 liters per person, which a high global consumption rate, according to GCC Statistical Center in one of its previous reports.

In addition, climate change is another factor that must

push countries in the region to address the situation to safeguard this vital resource.

In this regard, KUNA spoke to vice dean for scientific, research, and higher education affairs at Kuwait University's (KU) college of life sciences Dr. Badr Al-Enezi who said that there were several factors leading to the increase in salinity in regional waters.

The academic revealed that the traditional desalination process in of itself caused the rise in salinity, he claimed, noting that it was important to find alternatives to older technologies due to the current process producing more salt and pollutants.

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Opinion

Build with the roar of cannons

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

I THINK it was the former US Secretary of Defense George Marshall who said, "When you hear the roar of the cannons, you have to set plans for building. And when you hear the birds chirping, you start making profits."

On this basis, the late Marshall proposed a project to reconstruct Europe after World War II, from which the United States reaped, and still continues to reap to this day, many benefits economically, financially, and politically.

For several decades, the world has been hearing the roar of cannons. There are several countries that started to invest in infrastructure and giant projects a long time ago, and establish factories. They invested part of their sovereign money in their land because they realized that it was more beneficial than investing it outside, which could turn into great loss at any moment, thus leading to the loss of their power, and the well-being of their people.

We put what the late George Marshall said before His Highness the Prime Minister as a reminder, because there is no doubt that he is described as an economic expert and a seasoned politician who realizes the extent of the benefits that would accrue to the country if part of the sovereign money was invested in Kuwait. This is especially since there is financial abundance, and this abundance is concentrated in foreign investments.

There is a common proverb - "A penny saved is a penny earned" and we in Kuwait live something similar to that; in fact, we live in poverty despite the country's wealth.

The country is dysfunctional and closed at the same time, the infrastructure is dilapidated, and our services do not help achieve any benefits.

Therefore, when the government invests part of its sovereign wealth in developing Failaka Island and making it a recreational haven for the people of Kuwait, residents and visitors, as well as abandon the unreasonable conditions regarding visas, it will also be working to revive the northern economic region, and even working to build another in the south. This will undoubtedly bring many benefits to the state and the people.

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Kuwait revokes citizenship of 26

Hotline for passport and nationality offenses launched

By Muhammad Al-Musleh and Munaif Nayef
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Decrees No. 41/2024 and 42/2024 have been issued to withdraw Kuwaiti citizenship from six people.

One of the decrees mandated the revocation of Kuwaiti citizenship from individuals who obtained it through dependency. This decision was made following a proposal by the Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Minister of Interior, and subsequent approval by the Council of Ministers.

His Highness the Prime Minister Dr. Mohammad Al-Sabah also issued two decisions to withdraw the Kuwaiti citizenship certificate from 20 other individuals including those who had acquired citizenship from the holders of that certificate through dependency.

According to a government source, there are several reasons for the withdrawal of Kuwaiti citizenship from 26 people, the most prominent of which was that it was granted through fraud or based on false statements. In this case, Kuwaiti citizenship may also be withdrawn from those who may have acquired it through dependency. The withdrawal also occurred because some individuals who

were granted Kuwaiti citizenship were sentenced to fifteen years for a crime against honor or trust.

If it is discovered that Kuwaiti citizenship was obtained unlawfully through fraud, false statements, or incorrect certificates, it shall be revoked. The Council of Ministers, upon the recommendation of the Minister of Interior, has the authority to revoke Kuwaiti nationality in such cases. Additionally, citizenship acquired through dependency on the holder of the certificate will also be revoked.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior revealed in a statement issued yesterday that a hotline number has been designated to report crimes related to nationality and Kuwaiti passports.

It stressed that every person who is aware of the existence of a crime is obligated to report it in accordance with the law No. 17/1960.

The ministry explained that the decision is based on that law that aims to fight crime and corruption and preserves nationality identity and public interest. Article 14 of law No. 17/1960 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and Trials stipulates that "Every person who witnesses a crime or knows of its occurrence must immediately report it to the nearest police station or investigation authority. Anyone who refrains from reporting shall be punished."

The ministry affirmed that all decisions taken are fully committed to the Constitution, laws and security considerations to protect the public interest.



KUNA photo

More than 80,000 Palestinians performed Friday Prayers at Al-Aqsa Mosque on the first Friday of the holy month of Ramadan.

NewsWatch

CAIRO: Stalled talks aimed at securing a cease-fire in the war between Israel and Hamas are expected to restart in earnest in Qatar as soon as Sunday, according to Egyptian officials.

The talks would mark the first time both Israeli officials and Hamas leaders joined the indirect negotiations since the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. International mediators had hoped to secure a six-week truce before Ramadan started earlier this week, but Hamas refused any deal that wouldn't lead to a permanent cease-fire in Gaza, a demand Israel rejected.

In recent days, however, both sides have made moves aimed at getting the talks, which never fully broke off, back on track. (AP)

DUBAI: An attack by Yemen's Houthis rebels targeted a tanker in the Red Sea early Friday but the ship's crew was unharmed, authorities said. It was the latest in the rebels' campaign against shipping over Israel's ongoing war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center initially reported the ship had been "struck by a missile" off the port city of Hodeida but later Friday said that further inspection of the vessel in daylight found no damage.

It described the crew as being "safe" and said the ship was continuing on its way. (AP)

Kuwait calls for global commitment to combat drugs

VIENNA, March 16, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait has reiterated that the international community efforts to combat drugs should be directed to the implementation of all international drug policy commitments.

This came in Kuwait's speech delivered Friday by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to international organizations in Vienna Ambassador Talal Al-Fassam before the high-level meetings of the 67th session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

He called for enhancing legislations and national strategies aims to eradicate narcotics abuse.

He affirmed Kuwait's support to the ministerial document and a plan of action approved in this meeting.

Al-Fassam stressed the need of full abidance by the gist of the three international agreements on combating drugs.

He emphasized that Kuwait is committed to the political announcement and the 2009 plan, the 2014 ministerial statement and the final document of the UN General Assembly extraordinary session in 2016.

All these pacts constitute tools that ensure addressing the problem of narcotics and their negative impacts, he said.

Kuwait pays much attention to the principles of UN Charter and not to interfere into domestic affairs of other countries, he said, taking into account varied religious, social, legal and judicial systems of member states as an addition to the principles of human rights.

In 2022, Kuwait formed a high committee for combating drugs and established facilities for treating and rehabilitating addicts, he stated.

The committee aims to educate people about the risks of drugs and their impacts, and combat them, he noted.

Furthermore, Al-Fassam said his country is keen on offering healthcare to addicts, and a comprehensive treatment plan to persons who want to stop taking drugs and re-integrate into the society.

Kuwait believes in the importance of awareness

and prevention from childhood through the family and school, he made clear.

Based on this approach, Kuwait was keen to organize activities at schools and universities to raise awareness on the risks of narcotics, he revealed.

Al-Fassam highlighted also the brutal Israeli aggression on the brotherly Palestinian people that killed and wounded thousands of Palestinians.

He referred that the Israeli aggression has been destroying infrastructure, healthcare centers and hospitals in Palestine.

He stressed that Palestinian people have been facing tough conditions due to the long-standing barbaric Israeli occupation.

Palestinians have been suffering the lack of medicines, food and health equipment, in flagrant violation of the UN Charter, Human Rights and international humanitarian law, Al-Fassam said.

He called on the international community to honor its pledges towards the brotherly Palestinian people, calling for a ceasefire and opening humanitarian corridors to ensure the delivery of food and medical equipment into the Gaza Strip.



KUNA photo

A group of Kuwaiti medical students at the Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain has launched an eye protection initiative called 'Save Your Sight.' — See Page 2

Kuwait gears up for April 4th poll

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The final list of candidates for the upcoming parliamentary election includes 70 former MPs -- 47 of whom were members of the 2023 National Assembly.

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GCC lauds resolution against Islamophobia

RIYADH, March 16, (KUNA): The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) welcomed the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adoption of a resolution on measures to face Islamophobia.

In a press statement on Saturday, GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi said the GCC supports all UN resolutions that condemn extremism and hatred towards religions.

He called on all countries to adopt national laws and policies to prevent and fight religious hatred and bring those involved in such acts to accountability.

The UNGA resolution, which was submitted by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), includes condemning spreading hatred, promoting violence against Muslims and appointing an envoy to the UN tasked with fighting Islamophobia.

Meanwhile, the General Secretariat of the Muslim World League has applauded the adoption of a resolution to combat Islamophobia and the appointment of a special UN envoy concerned with the issue.

Ramadan Timings

Iftar Sunday 17:58
Imsak Monday 04:32

Ramadan Kareem

Diwan Al-Naki

The family Diwaniya Will be receiving guests
Sunday, March 17th 2024 Starting from 7 pm
Mansouriya, Block 1, Jassim AlWazzan St,
Across AlOthman Mosque

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:38 Asr 15:22
 Sunrise .. 05:57 Maghrib .. 17:57
 Zohr 11:57 Isha 19:13

Local

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

Govt urged to tighten control over price of Arabic sheep

'Vegetables, fruits available in abundance, at reasonable prices in 'Shabra'

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The vegetable and fruits market in Sulaibiya (Shabra) was not affected by the holy month of Ramadan as it witnessed stability of prices as confirmed by both the buyers and sellers, reports Al-Rai daily.

The daily monitored the market in the first days of Ramadan with one of the customers affirming that the prices are very reasonable; especially zucchini, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, cauliflower, cabbage, carrots, eggplant, okra, cauliflower, lemon, pears, grapes, figs, peaches and strawberries. All of these items are available in a small box whose price does not exceed half a dinar, and a large box whose price is only one dinar, in contrast to the price hikes in other markets.

One of the citizens said: "I came to the market to buy household needs one day before Ramadan. I found everything is available, including vegetables and fruits of all kinds, --imported and local -- and at very reasonable prices, to the point that I bought 18 boxes of various items for only KD 24."

Another citizen corroborated this, pointing out that he goes to 'Shabra' when he wants to buy large quantities, pointing out that the prices are appropriate, and even if there is a slight increase in Shabra prices, it may be acceptable due to increase in demand in the holy month of Ramadan.

Regarding the prices on the first day of the blessed month, one of the citizens said that he bought several types of vegetables and noticed an increase in the prices as a box of tomatoes rose from 750 fils to KD1.250, a wooden box of lemons from 750 fils to KD1, lettuce from 500 to 750 fils, and potatoes from 900 fils for a 10-kilogram bag to KD1.500.

Monitored

Meanwhile, the price of a head of local Al-Nuaimi sheep reached KD180. This came after the daily monitored the increase in prices in sheep farms in Jahra, and surveyed the opinions of sellers and buyers, who confirmed that the increase has continued since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war, and the cessation of imports from some countries, in addition to the fact that the month of Ramadan this year coincided with the National Assembly election.

Consumers called on the government to tighten control over prices and not

Weather

ly cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind to light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

Station Max Exp Min Rec

| | | |
|----------------|----|----|
| Kuwait City | 27 | 21 |
| Kuwait Airport | 30 | 20 |
| Abdaly | 31 | 19 |
| Jahra | 30 | 20 |
| Salmiyah | 25 | 20 |
| Nuwaisib | 30 | 20 |
| Wafra | 29 | 19 |



Kuwaiti ambassador in Manama and Kuwaiti medical students at the Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain.

KUNA photo

Ambassador lauds volunteer work in Bahrain

Embassy stresses support for student initiatives

By Kholoud Al-Enezi

MANAMA, March 16, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said Friday that the Kuwaiti embassy is keen on backing Kuwaiti students' activities and initiatives in Bahrain as reflecting the country's civilized image.

The ambassador made the remark to KUNA while commenting on an eye protection initiative launched by a group of Kuwaiti medical students at the Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain, under the patronage of the Kuwaiti Cultural Office in Manama.

Sheikh Thamer said that the medical campaign reflects high-level thinking and human culture and the Kuwaiti people's benevolence and altruism.

He also spoke highly of the Kuwaiti medical students' initiative and eagerness to invest their time in voluntary work, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, which, he said, would develop their skills and promote their values of dedication and earnest work.

He commended the students' dedication to volunteer work, particularly during the auspicious month, emphasizing its role in enhancing their skills and fostering a sense of social responsibility, adds Al-Jarida daily. Ambassador Al-Sabah underscored the students' role as exemplary ambassadors for Kuwait, embodying the nation's values and representing its bright future.

Acknowledging the efforts of Dr. Saad Al Fuhaid, President of the Arabian Gulf University, Dr. Mohammad Al-Daghim, Head of the Kuwaiti Cultural Office in Bahrain, and Sheikh Dr. Saad Al Khalifa, ophthalmology consultant, in organizing and supporting the event, Ambassador Al-Sabah expressed gratitude for their contributions.

In a similar statement to KUNA, Dr. Mohammad Al-Daghim reaffirmed the Cultural Office's unwavering support for student initiatives that showcase Kuwaiti talent and expertise. He praised the students' outstanding performance and thanked Ambassador Sheikh Thamer Al-Jaber for his continuous support and interest in Kuwaiti student activities.

Life in jail upheld for man in kidnap, assault of Filipina

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The Court of Appeal has affirmed the life imprisonment sentence of an individual who abducted a Filipina woman employed at a renowned café in the Salmiya district, subjected her to assault, and impersonated a police officer. According to the court's thorough review of all pertinent documents, investigations, and testimonies presented during the hearings, it was established beyond doubt that the victim had arrived in the country to work at the café and was on her way home when the perpetrator intercepted her in his vehicle.

Pretending to be a detective, he forcibly took her to what she believed was a police station but

diverted to a secluded area, a remote spot with a trailer, where he confined her, intimidated her, and withheld information about her whereabouts and condition. The defendant's legal counsel acknowledged the overwhelming evidence against their client, including witness statements and a site inspection report confirming signs of violence. Consequently, the court reaffirmed the aforementioned verdict.

Man dies in accident: A tragic incident occurred on the Fahaheel Expressway, across from the Ali Sabah Al-Salem suburb heading towards Kuwait City. The incident, which took place shortly before iftar time, resulted in the unfortunate demise of an individual in their fifties. Forensic authorities have been tasked with the respon-

sibility of conveying the deceased to the Forensic Medicine Department for further examination, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Kuwaitization sought: The Ministry of Health recently revealed its need to assign "national cadres" to work in a number of specializations in a way that contributes to improving and developing work performance, reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to administrative circular No. 26 of 2024, the available secondment opportunities include the specializations of "legal research, accounting, information systems, media, secretarial, computer science and its specializations." The circular said, those wishing to be made available and who meet the conditions must apply through the Ministry of Health website, between March 17 and 20.

6 months for two teachers

Two exam cheat facilitators jailed

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: In one of the high school exam questions leakage cases, the Court of Appeals has sentenced two citizens -- male and female -- to two years in prison with hard labor for managing an exams cheating group, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The court also sentenced two teachers to six months imprisonment for filming exam questions and involvement in cheating groups. The court pointed out that "these teachers violated the honor of the lofty profession and their being role models for generations, and that they committed a criminal act."

The court acquitted four defendants and others of laundering money obtained from the students.

Previously, the Criminal Court stated in the merits of its conviction ruling that the defendants created groups via WhatsApp to sell exam questions and made significant profits from selling questions to those looking for an easy way to succeed academically.

The court stressed that the test questions are shrouded in secrecy to measure the real academic level of students, and that the leakage of questions by unscrupulous people is a crime deserving punishment.

The court discussed the investigations and documents proving that one of the defendants transferred KD177,000 to a company account within one day to camouflage his and that of his partners' activities in relation to selling high school exam questions.

The exchanged messages and conversations via WhatsApp proved that the defendants disdain education, facilitate cheating and sell questions to those seeking imaginary superiority.

The Public Prosecution referred three

Hotline allocated

'Report fraud cases'

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The Ministry of Interior has announced that out of national duty, and in a bid to preserve national identity and interests, the Nationality Investigation Unit in the Citizenship and Passports Affairs General Department has allocated a hotline for citizens to provide serious information regarding citizenship forgers and those holding dual nationalities, hence, the embodiment of the saying: "Every citizen is a sentinel," reports Al-Qabas daily.

The department confirmed the continuation of its campaign to arrest those who obtained the Kuwaiti nationality through forgery and those with dual nationalities, calling on anyone who has information about such individuals to immediately call hotline number 97287676, so it can take the necessary legal measures. It also emphasized that all information sent will be strictly confidential.

cases to trial, charging dozens of people with leaking test questions, forgery and money laundering, and there are still other cases pending in the judiciary.

In addition, the Ministry of Education's strict measures succeeded in reducing exam cheating rates in the first semester of the current academic year.

'Add 'Municipal Services Inspector' to work titles'

Job requirement: Al-Masha'an

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr. Noura Al-Masha'an has called for adding the job title 'Municipal Services Inspector' to inspection positions in Kuwait Municipality, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a letter to the director of the Civil Service Commission (CSC), Al-Masha'an pointed out that the above mentioned request is "based on what the work requires and for the Municipality to perform its role in accordance with Municipal Law No. 33/2016 and the services it provides to all regions, especially with the population growth and urban expansion we are witnessing and the subsequent coverage of the supervisory role to raise the efficiency of field work in implementing municipal regulations, and in view of the recent progress of many municipal inspectors who carry out the supervisory role in all activities in joining the ministries of Defense and Interior, as well as the retirement of those who reached the legal retirement age.

She added the graduates of training courses conducted by the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) in comprehensive inspection services and those currently working in the Municipality who completed the two-year period of study at PAAET studied the following:

- Cleanliness list
- List of advertisements
- Cleaning contracts
- List of markets
- Pollution.

Accordingly, the Municipality submits a request to add the job title, 'Municipal Services Inspector' to the

schedule of technically graded support inspection positions pursuant to CSC Resolution No. 37/2012, as this title is included in the job description for job titles for the following main types of inspection: commercial, industrial, cooperation, weights and measures, environmental protection, hotel services, artistic works, food (includes inspection of foodstuffs, meat and bakeries), cleaning (includes cleaning of streets, road works, waste backfilling and livestock corrals and inspection of salons and advertisements. These types of municipal inspection works were studied by graduates of the municipal services inspection course -- a two-year diploma or post-intermediate course at PAAET.

Through this, the job title, 'Municipal Services Inspector' can be added to the table attached CSC Resolution No. 17/2012 regarding the entities and positions for which incentives are allocated in exchange for concerned employees' use of their own means of transportation while performing their job duties as follows:

- Food transferred to the Public Food Authority
- Cleanliness
- Environmental protection
- Advertisements and judicial transactions

Whereas, the graduates of municipal services inspection courses were appointed as an advertising inspector or a cleaning inspector based with the approval of the CSC due to the absence of 'Municipal Services Inspector' job title, and they receive the transportation allowance, and it has been noted that the study program for graduates of these courses included subjects specialized in municipal regulations.



Al-Masha'an

Other Voices

Irony of America's TikTok ban

By Abdulaziz Al-Anjari

Founder and CEO
Reconnaissance Research

In a profound twist, the United States, a herald of free-market capitalism, has taken a step that seems to contradict its core values by banning TikTok. This move, framed as a safeguard against national security threats, actually uncovers a deeper discomfort: America's struggle to maintain dominance in the digital sphere -- a domain it invented and once ruled uncontested.

An illustrative example of this broader competition between the US and China is found not only in tech and cyberspace, but also in the physical realm of naval capacities. At a National Press Club event I attended in Washington, DC, in February 2023, US Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro highlighted a sobering reality. The Chinese shipyards' capacity dwarfs that of the United States, signaling not just a challenge in maritime strength but emblematic of a wider contest across various fronts of national capability.

This direct comparison between naval strength and digital influence may seem disparate at first glance. Yet, it underscores a crucial point: the competition between the U.S. and China spans beyond mere apps -- it's a holistic challenge that encompasses

military, technological, and cultural dominions. America's response to this challenge, particularly in the realm of digital innovation, has been to enact bans rather than foster competition or innovation.

Moreover, the focus on TikTok as a mere tool for misinformation misses the broader picture. Misinformation is a constant problem in the US and across all platforms, not unique to TikTok, as a single app. This realization is crucial.

The ban on TikTok, then, becomes a microcosm of a larger dilemma facing the United States today: how to navigate a world where its technological, military, and cultural hegemony is increasingly challenged. By choosing to ban rather than compete, innovate, or educate, America risks betraying the very principles of freedom and open markets it champions.

In confronting these challenges, America's approach appears to be reactionary rather than principled. The decision to veto UN resolutions when outvoted, ban when outcompeted, and censor when outargued not only contradicts the nation's foundational values but also mirrors the tactics of the authoritarian regimes it seeks to differentiate itself from. This paradoxical strategy reveals a significant gap between the ideals America stands for and the actions it takes, underscoring a need for a reassessment of how it engages with global competition and the digital age.

In short, America's reaction to TikTok isn't just a policy failure, it's a betrayal of what America claims to stand for.



Al-Anjari

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Cast vote with caution, don't be swayed by hopefuls vows'

"AS WE embark upon the blessed month of Ramadan, we extend to you our heartfelt wishes: 'May this month bring blessings to all, and may you reap its rewards,'" columnist **Sheikha Abdul Rahman Al-Houti** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"Sadly, what many anticipated has come to pass with the dissolution of the National Assembly. The underlying cause lies in the eroded trust between representatives and citizens, leaving the electorate disillusioned and hesitant to entrust their vote to any candidate."

"Numerous successful assemblies have been dissolved, leaving a sense of disappointment akin to the feeling of defeat. Every representative is expected to work for the betterment of those who elect them, but who truly serves the nation's interests?"

"Citizens are urged to exercise caution before casting their votes, recognizing that each vote is a sacred trust. They should not be swayed by promises made by representatives, for these often prove to be ephemeral, vanishing like soap bubbles upon assuming office."

"Some representatives deceive their constituents by pledging to combat rising prices, as if high prices were the sole issue plaguing our country. They fail to address deeper systemic issues that continue to afflict us."

"While we do not oppose wage increases, we wouldn't demand them if basic necessities were affordable to all. Similarly, if our education systems were functioning properly, there would be no need for costly private tutoring or extensive note-printing services."

"Government hospitals, despite boasting skilled doctors and nurses, still fall short of the standard we aspire to. While some excel, others languish, and the healthcare system suffers from inadequate funding."

"Exorbitant house rents burden families, delaying their dreams of owning a home. Offering cheaper alternatives isn't a viable solution when families seek comfortable accommodation commensurate with their needs."

"The issue of naturalization exacerbates existing tensions, with promises made to underserving candidates only to dash their hopes later on. It is imperative for the government, the National Assembly, and citizens to prioritize Kuwait's interests above all else, fostering cooperation for the nation's advancement. We are weary of the incessant discord between governmental branches, which hinders progress."

"We pray to God that Kuwait, its rulers, and its people be shielded from harm. Let this council be blessed, steadfast, and productive during these auspicious days. We pray to God to guide us towards unity and prosperity."

Also:

"Undoubtedly, education and schools are pivotal in imparting the values and virtues of the sacred month of Ramadan. The educational institution serves as a crucible for refining morals and behaviors. As our children dedicate the initial hours of this holy month to school, the significance of the role played by educators cannot be overstated," **Nada Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"This influence on youth is profound, underscoring the critical role of schools and teachers in shaping character and values. Signed, a columnist, educational consultant, and certified trainer specializing in childhood and adolescence."

"What is the Ramadan curriculum followed in schools, which is considered a basic basis for the stability of these students, and the promotion of Ramadan values and wages that are mixed with foreign cultures and advertising defects, which may mislead the basic purpose and basic requirement of Ramadan?"

"One of the most important values that must be trained and practiced in school is teaching male and female students the value of patience and endurance, as the time of speed and the abundance of influences has become a value that opposes the value of patience and endurance such as:

"Empathy and generosity: Explaining how the month of Ramadan helps students develop empathy and good morals that oppose bullying. Ramadan is an opportunity to develop and refine behaviors, and it is possible for students to participate through school activities through volunteer work, which refines the soul."

"Teamwork and social communication: Explain how group breakfast and Tarawih prayers can strengthen social bonds between students and teach them the importance of teamwork."

"Focus and self-discipline: Discuss how fasting can help students improve their focus and self-discipline, which will benefit their academic achievement."

It can also be discussed how schools can integrate these lessons into their curricula, or through special activities during the month of Ramadan, in a way that suits the educational and cultural framework of the community."

"Finally, we ask God Almighty to bless us and all other Muslim countries in this holy month and accept our fasting, prayers."

"The wisdom of the Creator in creating birds, animals and insects... In Kuwait, we call it 'Zarzoor-startling' -- a bird known in throughout the world. The name is an eloquent Arabic word," columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"In 1958, the leader of China ordered his people to kill starlings because they ate crops. Indeed, peasants began killing tens of thousands of these birds. They received awards and rewards, and were treated like national heroes."

"This bird ate locusts that were harmful to agriculture, but when the starlings died, the numbers of locusts increased, and later spread, eliminating the country's crops. This was one of the main causes of the Great China Famine in 1961, which caused the death of 15 people from hunger."

"The source of the news says: 'Do not think that by cutting off a creature's livelihood or restricting it, your livelihood will expand and your life will be pleasant as you wish. Allah divided the livelihood wisely and is sufficient for everyone. Perhaps, whoever's livelihood and strength was cut off would protect you from many great evils and you do not know it. Glory be to Him who created this universe with balance. Mind blowing!' (End of quote)."

"It was stated in an article published by the British magazine, 'The Economist' on July 28, 2021: 'Dogs can smell things at concentrations of one part in a trillion, which is equivalent to one drop from a pond the size of Olympic swimming pools.'"

"Another source stated: 'Many western studies have proven that animals have feelings, and that they talk to each other. A horse talks to another horse by moving its ear, a horse understands human feelings, and animals have compassion among themselves. A kangaroo offers a dove some grains. Some experts use a certain kind of rat loaded with a device to detect mines with the utmost accuracy, which saves people's lives.'"

"A pigeon spied for the Pakistani intelligence unit. The Indian authorities arrested and imprisoned it on May 28, 2015. The birds take bits of cigarette tobacco thrown on the ground to fumigate their nest. There is a bird that issues a warning to humans to inform them of the danger of mercury emission. Birds warn us of bad weather, so they hear storms shortly before they approach."

"An article published by the British newspaper, 'The Guardian', stated that 'about two billion people eat insects as part of their regular diet, because they contain proteins, vitamins and minerals.'"

"The American magazine, 'Jestor' published an article on August 1, 2021, by writer Sera Garcia about a fly that eats the leaves of drug plants in farms. Without a doubt, this is good."

"Bees are beneficial for humans, birds and the environment, as they pollinate plants and trees that later produce fruits and vegetables. Human crops need bees and other insects in order to pollinate and produce fruits, vegetables and grains. Some of these grains turn into fodder for cows that produce milk in addition to their meat."

"In a study by the University of London published in March 2010, it was found that bees see in color, which makes them fly between plants easily in search of food. They see at a speed five times faster than human sight, which makes them flee. A person cannot catch a flying bee, but every bee can catch another bee, because of the bees have very fast eyesight. The speed of your vision depends on how quickly the light cells in our eyes enter the brain. Most bees see faster than human eyesight and avoid their strike."

"Man destroyed the environment with the abundance of factories and airplanes that spew gases into the atmosphere. The world's temperature rose, part of the ice at the poles melted, sea levels increased, and hurricanes and floods struck countries around the world, so they are affected by disasters of their own making."

"Sports day and the remains of Jaber Bridge... The participation of His Highness the Prime Minister and the ministers in the Sports Day, as well as a large number of people from all groups including the students, was a beautiful scenario as it included various activities, all of which had an impact on the people in Kuwait. For this reason, we hope that it will continue every year with its development in a way that the negative aspects are prevented and the positive aspects are enhanced," columnist **Major General Faisal Al-Jazzaf** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"However, it was surprising that after the event, a huge amount of waste was left along the bridge. Without a doubt, it was a disgusting and uncivilized sight. There might not have been places for dumping waste and this may have been overlooked by the organizing committee."

"Regardless, it confirms the behavior of throwing everything without a sense of responsibility and preserving State facilities, especially since most public facilities, including streets and others, are full of this irresponsible behavior. This is a societal and educational responsibility, in which the family, school and media share. Civilization is demonstrated by the extent to which the public facility is maintained and cleaned. The street is an early image of the home. If you are clean in your home, you will be clean in the street and the public facility. Therefore, these values must be instilled in our children."

"Here, it must be emphasized that love of the country and loyalty to it is an action, not a word. It is an action from the smallest things to the largest, not just a slogan."

"Make Kuwait clean. Feelings are measured by sophistication, respect for the law, and the preservation of the environment and public property."

"Oh Allah, protect Kuwait from all harm, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir, may Allah protect him. May Allah have mercy on our righteous martyrs."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef with senior traffic officers in the control room.

Ministry of Interior photo

Call for widespread deployment of traffic patrols for motorists safety

Interior minister visits traffic, operations control room

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef, paid a field visit to the central control and operations room of the General Traffic Department in the South Sabahiya region, reports Al-Anba daily.

He was received by the Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Traffic and Operations Affairs, Major General Yousef Hamdan Al-Khadda, and a number of senior officials from the traffic department.

He listened to a briefing on the central control system and monitoring of traffic lights through the central control room, the traffic monitoring system through surveillance cameras, and the traffic counting system for the volume of traffic on roads and intersections.

Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef also reviewed the mechanism for receiving traffic complaints via the complaints phone and the mechanism for dealing with them, and the spread of traffic patrols on various roads and their handling of reports.

He directed the implementation of comprehensive traffic preparations with all care and precision in order to preserve the safety of road users, and the widespread deployment of traffic patrols in all main and secondary roads and intersections to arrest anyone who tries to violate traffic rules and laws and reduce traffic congestion.

This is in addition to evaluating the traffic situation at various times and deal with traffic congestion promptly. To direct traffic and deal with any obstacles or traffic jams.

Sheep-sellers tampering with origin docus caught

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Three sheep sellers at the Safat Al-Rai livestock market have been found in violation by Ministry of Trade and Industry inspectors for tampering with certificates of origin. Legal actions are underway against them, reports Al-Rai daily.

The Ministry of Commerce has emphasized the ongoing and rigorous daily inspections conducted by its teams. These efforts are part of the Ministry's commitment to overseeing livestock and sheep markets, ensuring the availability of meat to all consumers.



Municipality workers removing an abandoned tent in the desert.

'Lift tents, clean space'

Camping time extension rejected by EPA: report

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The Kuwait Municipality is urging spring camp owners to promptly remove their camps following the conclusion of the official camping period on Friday, March 15, 2024. The municipality emphasized the necessity of compliance, stating that its monitoring teams will commence the removal of non-compliant camps starting this Sunday, reports Al-Rai daily.

The decision comes after the Camps Committee received an official letter from the Public Authority for Environmental Affairs, indicating that the camping period will not be extended until the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Consequently, camps are prohibited from being established on land beyond this deadline.

Camp owners are urged to ensure the cleanliness of the campsite upon removal. This is crucial for obtaining a cleanliness certificate issued by the Environment Agency, which is a prerequisite for recovering the deposit amount of 100 dinars. Upon submission of a refund request to the municipality, the deposit will be refunded to the license holder's account.

'Cheating threat to education system'

'Don't go for overnight success'

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The Kuwaiti judiciary has issued a stern warning against the pursuit of quick success and illusory superiority, emphasizing that "cheating poses the greatest threat to the education system," reports Al-Qabas daily.

The court, during recent verdicts, has underscored that these actions tarnished the dignity of the teaching profession and betrayed their responsibility as role models for future generations. Despite these convictions, the court acquitted the defendants of charges related to money laundering obtained from students.

The Criminal Court, in its judgment, highlighted how the defendants orchestrated WhatsApp groups to sell exam questions, profiting significantly from individuals seeking shortcuts to success. It emphasized that the confidentiality of exams is crucial for accurately assessing students' abilities, and leaking them undermines the integrity of the education system.

Evidence presented during the trial revealed that one defendant transferred a substantial amount of money to a company account in an attempt to conceal the proceeds from selling exam questions.

Conversations and messages exchanged via WhatsApp demonstrated the defendants' disregard for education, their facilitation of cheating, and their exploitation of students' desires for unwarranted academic achievement.

The Public Prosecution has brought charges against numerous individuals accused of involvement in test leaks, forgery, and money laundering. The Ministry of Education's rigorous measures have led to a decrease in cheating incidents during the current academic year, with efforts resulting in the arrest of suspects in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior.

Driver injured

UK citizen, two sons die in Mutla'a crash

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: A tragic accident on Al-Mutla'a Road, at Kilo 5, claimed the lives of a British citizen and his two sons, reports Al-Rai daily. The collision also resulted in injuries to the driver of the other vehicle involved. Prompt response from police patrols, accompanied by an ambulance and an investigator, swiftly reached the accident site. Following a thorough examination, the investigator directed the removal of the bodies. A case was registered, and the bodies were subsequently referred to forensic medicine for further examination.

The charges against the defendants encompass various crimes, including money laundering and disclosure of confidential information related to secondary school exams. These actions not only undermine the integrity of the education system but also harm the interests of students and the Ministry of Education.

The leaking of exam questions through social media platforms has become a prevalent issue, with individuals offering access to exam solutions for a fee. Authorities have been actively investigating and tracking down those involved in these illicit activities, aiming to preserve the integrity of the education system and ensure fair assessment practices.

The case serves as a reminder of the importance of upholding academic integrity and the severe consequences of compromising it for personal gain.

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Minister presents Kuwait's women empowerment efforts at UN meet

Sheikh Firas discusses women, family affairs with Iran's official

NEW YORK, March 16, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah presented Kuwait's efforts to enable and support women at different levels, at a UN meeting in New York.

The presentation was part of a GCC event on enabling women in

the Gulf late Thursday, as part of the 68th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which kicked off last Monday and lasts until March 22.

In his speech at the event, Minister Sheikh Firas underlined Kuwaiti women's role in the development of the state's institutions, as well as their prominent work in both the public and the private sectors.



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Child Affairs Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah with the participants at the event Empowering Women in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries at the UN.

Land & Housing playing role of consultant: MEED

'PAHW awards S. Korean firm city dev project contract'

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The MEED magazine reported that the Public Authority for Housing Welfare has awarded the South Korean company Hanmi Global the contract to manage consulting services within the South Sa'ad Al-Abdullah City development project, reports Al-Anba daily.

The South Sa'ad Al-Abdullah suburb residential project extends over an area of 64 square kilometers and consists of five residential areas containing 24,508 residential units.

The magazine said that Hanmi Global is coordinating with the Kuwaiti Technical Consulting

Office and another South Korean company, Dong Myung Engineering, to implement the project.

Meanwhile, the magazine said that the South Korean company Land & Housing is playing the role of a consultant for the project, which is expected to be completed in the last quarter of 2027.

Kuwaiti women are also an important part of the commerce field, said the minister, adding that women have acquired senior positions in big companies headquartered in Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Minister Sheikh Firas Al-Malik Al-Sabah, engaged in discussions Thursday with Iran's Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs, Ensiyeh Khazali, regarding cooperation on family and women's affairs between the two countries.

This came during a meeting between the minister and Khazali at the premises of Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York.

Sheikh Firas expressed his wishes to further enhance mutual cooperation aimed at benefiting women in Kuwait and Iran in the future.

He emphasized the importance of ongoing efforts to empower women, noting Kuwaiti women's success across all sectors.

Minister Khazali conveyed her vision to broaden cooperation towards institutional initiatives in the future.

In the meantime, Sheikh Firas Saud said that Kuwait and the UAE are pioneers in women's empowerment on different levels.

The remarks were made during the minister's meeting with Vice President of the UAE's Gender Balance Council (GBC) Mona Al-Marri in new York late Thursday, on the sidelines of the 68th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which kicked off last Monday and lasts until March 22.

The minister hailed the strong Kuwaiti-Emirati relations, underlining the need to enhance GCC cooperation in enabling and supporting women.

Expresses gratitude to leadership

Vatican ambassador commends Kuwait's 'religious co-existence'

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Eugene Nugent, the Vatican's Ambassador to Kuwait, lauded the spirit of co-existence in the country, highlighting the harmonious atmosphere where Muslims, Christians, and followers of other faiths worship peacefully, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Speaking at a Mass commemorating the 11th anniversary of Pope Francis's papal election at the Holy Family Cathedral, Nugent expressed gratitude to Kuwait's leadership and people for their hospitality.

Due to Ramadan, formal celebrations were postponed, but Nugent expressed hope for future gatherings.

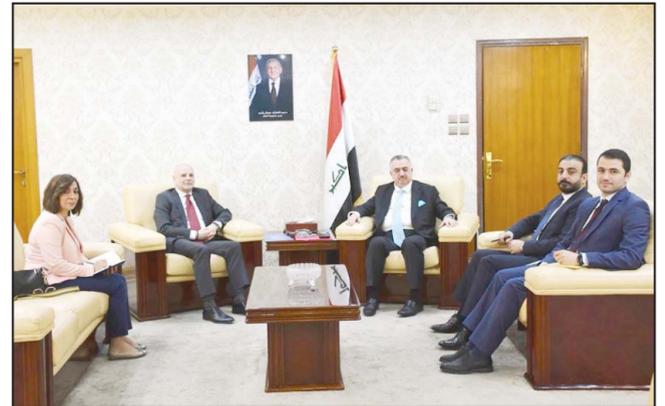
Emphasizing solidarity between Christians observing Lent and Muslims observing Ramadan, Nugent stressed the importance of mutual respect and brotherhood. Referring to Pope Francis's recent calls for peace in Gaza and Ukraine, Nugent urged



Al-Jarida photo
Eugene Nugent

global humanitarian action.

Reflecting on his experiences in impoverished nations, Nugent underscored the urgent need to address poverty's harsh realities, urging tangible efforts to alleviate suffering.



KUNA photo
UN official discusses with the undersecretary of Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs the file of missing Kuwaitis.

Cordone meets with Iraqi officials

UN official discusses ways to advance file of missing Kuwaitis and property

BAGHDAD, March 16, (KUNA): Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance Claudio Cordone discussed with Undersecretary of Iraq's Foreign Minister Omar Al-Barzanji ways to advance the file of missing Kuwaiti persons and property.

"The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) encourages intensified efforts to make swift progress and is ready to continue to assist in the process," Cordone wrote in his X account after the meeting.

Two days ago, Cordone met head of

the legal department at Iraq's Ministry of Defense Maj. Gen. Khalid Ismail Al-Lami and Director of Human Rights Directorate at the Ministry of Defense Dr. Thaeer Abdullah.

Discussion focused on the importance of making progress on Kuwaiti missing persons and property file and the UN Iraq's commitment to this humanitarian file.

Iraq's foreign and defense ministries regularly urge the public to provide any information about the Kuwaiti missing persons, national archive and property.



Al-Jarida photo
A photo from the signing of the agreement.

Initiative aims to boost Arab cultural identity

Arab Parliament, Al-Babtain center ink deal for annual Award for Arabic Language Creativity

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The Arab Parliament (AP) and the Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation inked a collaboration agreement to establish the "Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Award for Creativity in the Service of the Arabic Language," reports Al-Jarida daily.

This initiative aims to strengthen the Arab cultural identity and elevate the status of the Arabic language. Speaker of the Arab Parliament, Adel Al-Asoumi, and Chairman of the Foundation's Board of Trustees, Saud Al-Babtain, sealed the agreement at Al-Babtain's Diwan, witnessed by dignitaries from various fields.

Al-Asoumi emphasized the paramount importance of preserving and reviving the Arabic language, seeing it as pivotal for societal progress and inter-generational empowerment.

He hailed the partnership with Al-Babtain Foundation, recognizing its historical commitment to Arabic language advocacy and cultural enrichment. Al-Babtain reiterated the foundation's dedication to nurturing the Arabic language, underscoring its role in national identity and global discourse.

The agreement, inspired by the legacy of Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, aims to celebrate the Arabic language's vitality and promote its relevance worldwide.

The collaboration will focus on various initiatives to safeguard and enhance Arabic's standing, including the establishment of the prestigious annual award spanning nine categories. The Award's Board of Trustees, comprising representatives from both entities and renowned experts, will oversee the selection process, ensuring the award's significance and impact.

News in Brief

Boosting partnership: Kuwaiti Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Al-Malik Al-Sabah discussed with Secretary General of the Saudi Family Affairs Council Maimoonah Al-Khalil ways to enhance bilateral cooperation to protect the family institution.

This came during a meeting between Al-Sabah and Al-Khalil on Thursday at the premises of Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York.

The officials engaged in discussions on

mutual interests, particularly concerning women, such as achieving work and family balance for both genders and shoring up collaboration to improve the status of women in the Gulf region. (KUNA)

1st phase of beach opens: Kuwait Municipality announced that the first phase of the newly renovated Anjafa Beach, which is located along Al-Taawun Street opposite Salwa, opened for visitors recently, reports Al-Anba daily.



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MoH promotes 107 employees in various fields

Civil Service Commission's nomination mechanism sees radical change

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The nomination mechanism for the central recruitment system of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) has changed radically, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources disclosed that approval of the manpower needs of government agencies is now the responsibility of the CSC as per its Circular No. 4/2024 and the decision taken in its meeting No. 1/2024. Sources said all State agencies must submit their manpower needs to the CSC for approval in accordance with the regulations. Accordingly, CSC Director Dr Issam Al-Rubaian urged ministers to submit the manpower needs of their subsidiaries to the commission.

Sources affirmed this move ensures equality and transparency in the recruitment of citizens applying for jobs in the government sector, in addition to preventing con-

flicts and discrimination.

Sources added the current mechanism mandates government agencies to upload their manpower needs in the integrated systems of the CSC.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health has promoted 107 employees in the legal, financial, accounting, media, social and psychological services, inspection, information systems and technology fields with bonuses ranging from KD60 to KD380, reports Al-Anba daily.

The decision, which was published by the daily, covers 22 employees in the specialized legal field, 20 in specialized accounting, 32 in the financial and legal fields, nine in the social and psychological services, six in the inspection field, 16 in the information systems and technology fields and two in the media.

Upcoming Council meet to focus on development, public welfare

Municipality presents study on public school parking proposal

By Inass Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: During its upcoming 15th regular session of the second term to be presided over by Abdullah Al-Mahri on Monday (March 18), the Municipal Council will discuss the letter submitted by the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs dated January 8, 2024 regarding the ratification of the minutes of the Municipal Council's meeting held on February 5, 2024 that have many items.

These items include the following :-

1. The Municipal Council's adherence to its approval of its decision taken on July 26, 2021 for the addition to plot No. 17 in Qibla Block 15

2. The request submitted by the people of the Adaliya residential area for stopping the commercial exploitation of the Kuwait Football Association's property in Adaliya and finding investment alternatives outside the residential areas.

3. The Municipal Council's adherence to its approval of the draft ministerial decision regarding regulations regulating the cultivation of state-owned squares adjacent to private and model residential homes. Article 1 of the regulations stipulates that it is not permissible to carry out any cosmetic planting of the squares and yards adjacent to existing buildings in private and model housing areas exploited as private housing and in which services and roads have been completed, except after obtaining a temporary license from the municipality in accordance with the conditions and controls contained in the regulations.

4. The municipality's commitment to approving the proposal submitted by member Munira Al-Amir for establishing a mechanism to resolve disputes between citizens and contracting and construction companies through the formation of a dispute resolution committee.

Complaint

The Municipal Council will also discuss the letter of the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers dated February 22, 2024 on resolution No. 156 taken during its meeting, which relates to the Municipal Council's approval of the complaint submitted by the people of Abu Al-Hasani for the naming of Abu Al-Hasani area, and keeping the names of plots 1 and 2 after Abu Al-Hasaniya.

The State Minister for Municipal Affairs objected to the decision of the Municipal Council, and the Council of Ministers decided to support the objection submitted by the Municipal Minister to the decision of the Municipal Council and keep the naming of plots 1 and 2 block in Abu Al-Hasaniya.

The Municipal Council is also studying the observations contained in the minutes of the fourth meeting of the Environmental Affairs Committee regarding the two proposals submitted by member Sharifa Al-Shalfan, which are related to maintaining the cleanliness of the marine environment and recycling plastic bottles and their covers.

They will also discuss the guidelines of the Ministry of Health's Public Health Department regarding health control of waste landfills.

The Municipal Council will also review the notes of the minutes of the joint committee from the technical, legal and financial committees related to amending the regulations organizing construction works and the attached schedules, and the final version of the proposal to amend schedule No. 1 concerning the requirements



Dr Noura Al-Mishaan



Part of the ceremony to award the rank of Major General to a number of officers. (Inset): Minister Sheikh Fahd Yousef awarding one of the officers in the army the rank of Major General.

Investiture begins with reading of relevant Amiri decree

'Defense' promotes officers to Major General rank

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah conferred Saturday the rank of Maj. Gen. upon several army officers under the direction of His Highness the Amir, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The investiture began with the reading of a relevant Amiri decree, followed by Sheikh Fahad bestowing new military ranks upon the officers, conveying the greetings and congratulations of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the Defense Ministry

said in a press statement.

The statement conveyed Sheikh Fahad's congratulations, expressed in his speech to the military commanders, for earning the cherished Amiri trust, recognizing their sincere and diligent efforts in various assigned roles.

Following the ceremony, Sheikh Fahad urged the promoted officers to consistently earn and uphold the trust of the political leadership, keeping in mind the fear of Allah Almighty, prioritize the country's interests, and fulfill their responsibilities with seriousness and determination.

He urged them to work diligently to enhance Kuwait Army's capabilities, raise efficiency through training, support excellence, ensure fairness,

hold the negligent accountable, maintain military discipline, and overcome obstacles for the development of various military sectors within the armed forces.

The promoted officers expressed their sincere gratitude to His Highness the Amir for the trust placed in them, emphasizing their commitment to Kuwait's security, stability, and territorial integrity, and pledging allegiance and loyalty to their country, leadership, and people.

Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwait Army, Lieutenant General Pilot Bandar Al-Muzain, Undersecretary of the Defense Ministry Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Al-Sabah, along with several senior army commanders, attended the ceremony.



Ambassador of Kuwait to Jordan, Hamad Al-Marri, during the launch of the Iftar project for fasting people in Jordan.

Kuwait charity hands out Ramadan meals in Jordan

Ramadan Iftar (fast-breaking) meals campaign titled "Kuwait is by Your Side", was launched by the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) on Wednesday in multiple governorates in Jordan.

The launching was patronized and attended by Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan Hamad Al-Marri.

Speaking to KUNA, the ambassador said that Kuwait aims to extend help to those in need, with the desire to do good, and to serve Islam and others with pride as Muslims.

The efforts that are being put forward are direc-

tives of the political leadership, to show solidarity with the humanitarian conditions of refugees and those in need worldwide.

The IICO drive, which was planned in cooperation with Jordanian authorities, included 700 food baskets, which would benefit around 4,000 Syrian refugees and those in need in Jordan.

This project is one of many humanitarian and relief projects that Kuwait has done for Syrian refugees, and those in need in Jordan throughout the year. (KUNA)



Abdul Wahab Al-Obaid during the event.

Al-Jarida photo

KU student excels in AI research competition

Abdul Wahab Al-Obaid, a student in the Computer Science Department at the Kuwait University's College of Science, achieved a remarkable feat by securing third place in the prestigious research competition on artificial intelligence, reports Al-Jarida daily.

His achievement came during the ninth cultural and scientific week for universities and higher education institutions in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, hosted by Qatar University.

Expressing his elation at representing Kuwait and Kuwait University in the forum, Al-Obaid underscored his

immense pride in clinching the competition. He described the experience as both enjoyable and enriching, highlighting the significance of the opportunity.

Al-Obaid presented a project in the scientific domain of computer science to the jury and visitors at the Kuwait University pavilion, showcasing his expertise and dedication to advancing knowledge in artificial intelligence. His success underscores Kuwait University's commitment to fostering academic excellence and innovation among its students.

In another development, a number of candidates including former National Assembly Speaker Mohammad Al-Mutairi and former MPs Al-Saifi Mubarak Al-Saifi, Hamad Al-Elyan and Saleh Al-Mullah criticized the Citizenship Investigations General Department in the Ministry of Interior for urging citizens to report citizenship forgery cases.

Al-Mullah wonders why the department issued this directive, stressing that public institutions are supposed to have all the information and the task of the concerned departments is to uncover such cases. He stressed the need to reconsider this directive and for the department to stop turning the people of Kuwait into spies.

Fitch affirms

Continued from Page 1

The bulk of the assets are held in the Future Generations Fund managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), which also manages the assets of the General Reserve Fund (GRF), the government's treasury account," the statement said.

"The incumbent government appointed in January 2024 before the dissolution of parliament by the new Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, included a new prime minister and a largely technocratic cabinet.

The government's published four-year programme (2024-2027) focused on initiatives to enhance non-oil revenue, restructure subsidies and encourage private sector participation to create jobs for Kuwaitis and reduce the fiscal burden," the statement added.

"The plan also included passing a new liquidity law that would allow the government to relaunch debt issuance following expiry of the previous authorization in 2017.

However, these plans are similar to objectives of previous governments that failed to be implemented due to gridlock with parliament and we remain skeptical that this will change," the statement said.

"Liquidity Law Assumed but Uncertain: After the election, the government will aim to pass a liquidity law (as previous governments have), but parliamentary approval remains highly uncertain.

However, our forecasts, notably for government debt, are based on the assumption that a liquidity law is passed in the fiscal year ending March 2026 (FY25)," the statement added.

"The assumption illustrates that Fitch considers the rating to be resilient to a moderate rise in government debt.

In the absence of a liquidity law, Fitch believes the government would still be able to meet its limited debt service obligations in the coming years, given the assets at its disposal.

Low Debt, Likely to Rise: Gross government debt/GDP remains low, estimated at 3.1 percent of GDP in FY23," the statement said.

"Assuming the passage of a liquidity law in FY25, limited fiscal consolidation and lower oil prices, we forecast government debt will rise to 11 percent of GDP in FY25 and further in subsequent years.

Kuwait has an ESG Relevance Score of '5[+]' for Political Stability and Rights as World Bank Governance Indicators have the highest weight in Fitch's SRM and are, therefore, highly relevant to the rating and a key rating driver with a high weight," the statement added.

"As Kuwait has a percentile rank above 50 for the respective Governance Indicator, this has a positive impact on the credit profile," the statement said.

"Kuwait has an ESG Relevance Score of '5[+]' for Rule of Law, Institutional & Regulatory Quality and Control of Corruption as World Bank Governance."

Build with

Continued from Page 1

It goes without saying that investments in Europe and the West have reached the point of satiety. Returns are no longer what they were two or three decades ago.

It is an observation worth studying, as it was said in the past - "When the moon is full, it begins to decrease". That is what several Gulf countries did when they invested their sovereign money in their land, because its value is in projects instead of leaving it as an empty desert full of dust.

Therefore, the state that plans for the future and realizes the extent of the benefits coming from investing in its lands must not be attached to the nominal profits of international stocks that are always subject to loss at the first hint of a crisis.

Moreover, reality also necessitates investment in projects in countries similar to our environment, such as Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, the Sultanate of Oman, Qatar and Bahrain. However, this does not mean that the state should abandon investments in the world.

Instead, it must study them very carefully, work to get rid of those that pose significant risks, and dedicate a part of its sovereign wealth at home, because it opens up the country, which had suffered a lot from the tight closure, and made it lose the most important elements in its international relations, which is the initiative that it had enjoyed at one stage.

Water security

Continued from Page 1

He added that the water sanitation system was also a culprit, pointing out that byproducts of such stations on the coast increased the chances for algae and seaweed growth, which boosted oxygen levels in seawater.

On the salinity-level on the coastline of Kuwait, which stretched to around 200 kilometers, he said that it ranged around 45 to 50 percent, but warned of approaching 60, which would be a hazardous percentage.

Al-Enezi indicated that he worked with several entities in Kuwait and abroad, including Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), and through research he managed to produce three solution projects approved by the Environment Public Authority (EPA).

The projects included two new desalination technologies aimed decreasing salinity and protecting the environment at the same time.

Kuwait gears

Continued from Page 1

The concerned institutions have started taking the necessary steps for holding the election on April 4, 2024; specifically the allocation of 759 polling centers in 123 schools, and main centers in every constituency to count the votes and announce the results.

Women's participation in this election is the third lowest since 2006. A total of 14 women filed their candidacy and majority of whom (eight women) are contesting the election in the Third Constituency. Two women filed their candidacy in the Second Constituency, two in the Fourth Constituency, and one each in the First and Fifth constituencies.

No by-election was held in view of the issuance of a number of court verdicts like the imprisonment of some individuals for participating and organizing by-elections prior to the previous legislative elections.

World News Roundup

Europe

'Diana Legacy Award'

Voters cast ballots in Russia's election

MOSCOW, March 16, (Agencies): Voters across Russia cast ballots Saturday on the second day of an election set to formalize six more years of power for President Vladimir Putin, who faces no serious challengers after crushing political dissent over his nearly 25 years of rule.

The election comes against the backdrop of a ruthless crackdown that has stifled independent media and prominent rights groups. Putin's fiercest foe, Alexei Navalny, died in an Arctic prison in February, and other critics are either in jail or in exile.

The 71-year-old Putin faces three token rivals from Kremlin-friendly parties, who have refrained from any criticism of him or his invasion of Ukraine. Putin has cast his war in Ukraine, now in its third year, as an existential battle against the US and other Western powers bent on destroying Russia.

That war was visible on Russia's streets Saturday as Ukrainian drone and missile attacks once again hit the country.

Two people were killed in Ukrainian shelling of Belgorod, close to the Ukrainian border, regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Telegram. Dozens of people have been killed there since the war began.

Elsewhere, a Ukrainian drone attack caused a fire at an oil refinery belonging to Russian oil giant Rosneft in the Samara region, 1,065 kilometers (662 miles) southeast of Moscow, the regional governor said.

In spite of the attacks, analysts say the Kremlin is looking for a high turnout in the elections as a sign that Russians approve of the war to legitimize Putin for another term.



Putin

Ukrainian shelling kills 2 in Belgorod: Ukrainian shelling of the Russian city of Belgorod, close to the border with Ukraine, killed two people, Russian officials said Saturday.

A man and a woman died in the attack and three other people were wounded, regional Gov Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Telegram. It was the latest in exchanges of long-range missile and rocket fire in Russia's war on Ukraine.

Five people were also wounded when a Ukrainian drone hit a car in the village of Glotovo, some 2 kilometers (1.25 miles) from the Ukrainian border, Gladkov said.

Russian missiles kill 16 in Odesa: A Russian ballistic missile attack blasted homes in the southern Ukrainian city of Odesa on Friday, followed by a second missile that targeted first responders who arrived at the scene, officials said. At least 16 people were killed.

The attack occurred as Russians began voting in a presidential election that is all but certain to extend Vladimir Putin's rule by another six years after he crushed dissent, and as the war in Ukraine stretches into its third year.

The dead included a paramedic and an emergency service worker. At least 53 other people were wounded by the Iskander-M missiles, officials said.

US, EU affirm joint commitment: The United States and the European Union have emphasized their mutual commitment to maintain solid support for Ukraine in the face of Russia's schemes.

This came in a joint statement released after a meeting of the US-EU Energy Council, held in Washington late on Friday. It was chaired by US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy David M. Turk, European Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson, and EEAS Acting Deputy Secretary General Belen Martinez Carbonell. The Deputy Head of Mission of the Kingdom of Belgium to the United States of America, Sophie Karlshausen, represented the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The Council reaffirmed its enduring commitment to Ukraine and its people. "We strongly condemn Russia's illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine, including attacks on the nation's energy and civil infrastructure. We stress the need to continue military support, notably air defense, to protect such infrastructure, and are increasing our efforts to provide humanitarian aid and critical energy sector assistance."

Three nations vow to procure more arms: Germany, France and Poland vowed Friday to procure more weapons for Kyiv and step up production of military equipment along with partners in Ukraine, promising that Ukraine can rely on the trio of European powers as it tries to overcome a shortage of military resources.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz welcomed French President Emmanuel Macron and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk for a hastily arranged summit of the so-called "Weimar Triangle" of the three countries. The meeting came as Russia votes in an election that is all but certain to extend President Vladimir Putin's rule.

Scholz said he discussed what support is needed now with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday.

William, Harry salute Princess Diana legacy: Prince William and Prince Harry both took part in an awards ceremony in honor of their late mother Princess Diana - but the estranged brothers were many miles apart at the time.

William gave a speech at the Diana Legacy Award, which recognizes young people around the world who are working to improve their communities. California-based Harry addressed the event Thursday by video link, after his brother had left the ceremony at London's Science Museum.

William said many of the recipients "have overcome adversity and prejudice, but they are driven by courage, compassion and commitment - qualities shared by my mother."

Ex-Czech prez in serious but stable condition: Former Czech President Milos Zeman was in serious but stable condition on Friday, a day after undergoing surgery for a blood clot in his leg, hospital officials said.

Motol University Hospital in Prague said Zeman had an insufficient blood supply in one of his legs because of the blood clot.

The supply of blood was restored during the operation, it said. It wasn't clear how long Zeman would be hospitalized.



Ireland's Prime Minister Leo Varadkar, (from left), US President Joe Biden and House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., depart after attending a Friends of Ireland luncheon on Capitol Hill on March 15 in Washington. (AP)

Hosting Ireland's prime minister, Biden celebrates his Irish roots

With St. Patrick's Day this weekend, President Joe Biden got to dwell Friday on one of his favorite subjects: Ireland.

Biden played host to Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar at the White House and then the two attended a luncheon at the US Capitol as the two countries celebrate a century of diplomatic relations. The president wore a green necktie for Ireland and the

Oval Office was decorated with a bowl of shamrocks placed in front of the fireplace.

"May the hinge of our friendship never grow rusty," Biden said to the Irish prime minister.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., hosted the president and Varadkar for the annual "Friends of Ireland Luncheon" at the Capitol. Johnson introduced the president as "America's most famous

Irishman."

Varadkar used his remarks at the luncheon to thank the United States for its work to bring peace between Ireland and Northern Ireland - part of the United Kingdom - with the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. But he turned to the war in Ukraine, as the House has been unable to pass military aid for the country, much to Biden's frustration. (AP)

Politics

'Move on from Biden impeachment effort'

Pence says he's not endorsing Trump

NEW YORK, March 16, (AP): Former US vice president Mike Pence says he will not be backing Donald Trump in the 2024 election.

"It should come as no surprise that I will not be endorsing Donald Trump this year," Pence said in an interview with Fox News Channel Friday, weighing in for the first time since the former president became the presumptive GOP nominee. Pence ran against Trump for their party's nomination but dropped his bid before voting began last year.

The decision makes Pence the latest in a series of senior Trump administration officials who have declined to endorse their former boss's bid to return to the Oval Office. While Republican members of Congress and other GOP officials have largely rallied behind Trump, a vocal minority has continued to oppose his bid.

Scheme

It also marks the end of a metamorphosis for Pence, who had long been seen as one of Trump's most loyal defenders but broke with his two-time running mate by refusing to go along with Trump's unconstitutional scheme to try to remain in power after losing the 2020 election. When Trump's supporters stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, trying to disrupt the certification of Joe Biden's win, Pence was forced to flee to a Senate loading dock as rioters chanted, "Hang Mike Pence!" outside.

In order to participate in the Republican primary debates, Pence was required to sign a pledge saying that he would support the party's eventual nominee. And during the first debate in Milwaukee, Pence was among the candidates who raised their hands when asked whether they would sup-

port Trump even if he were convicted in one of his four criminal indictments.

But Pence had made clear he had come to harbor serious reservations about Trump's actions and his policy stances.

"I believe anyone that puts themselves over the Constitution should never be president of the United States and anyone who asks someone else to put them over the Constitution should never be president of the United States again," he said during his campaign launch speech.

Alarms

As the campaign progressed, he raised alarms about the party's resistance to sending aid to Ukraine and called on his fellow Republicans to reject what he called the "siren song of populism" espoused by Trump and his followers.

In the interview on Fox's "The Story with Martha MacCallum," Pence said he was "incredibly proud" of his and Trump's record in office, but said, "During my presidential campaign I made it clear that there were profound differences between me and President Trump on a range of issues, and not just our difference on my Constitutional duties that I exercised on January the 6th."

"I mean, as I have watched his candidacy unfold, I've seen him walking away from our commitment to confronting the national debt. I've seen him starting to shy away from a commitment to the sanctity of human life," he went on, also referencing what he called Trump's "reversal on getting tough on China and supporting our administration's effort to force" the sale of the popular TikTok app.

"In each of these cases, Donald

Trump is pursuing and articulating an agenda that is at odds with the conservative agenda that we governed on during our four years. And that's why I cannot in conscience endorse Donald Trump in this campaign," he said.

Pence declined to say whom he would be voting for - "I'm going to keep my vote to myself," he said - but made clear it wouldn't be Biden.

"I would never vote for Joe Biden," he said. "I'm a Republican."

Also:

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's top White House lawyer is encouraging House Speaker Mike Johnson to end his chamber's efforts to impeach the president over unproven claims that he benefited from the business dealings of his son and brother.

White House counsel Ed Siskel wrote in a Friday letter to Johnson, R-La., that testimony and records turned over to the House Oversight and Judiciary committees have failed to establish any wrongdoing and that even Republican witnesses have poured cold water on the impeachment effort. It comes a month after federal prosecutors charged an ex-FBI informant who was the source of some of the most explosive allegations with lying about the Bidens and undisclosed Russian intelligence contacts.

"It is obviously time to move on, Mr. Speaker," Siskel wrote. "This impeachment is over. There is too much important work to be done for the American people to continue wasting time on this charade."

The rare communique from the White House counsel's office comes as Republicans, their House majority shrinking ever further with early departures, have hit a near-standstill in

term he faced. The Denver Post reported.

Seymour and two other teenagers - Kevin Bui and Dillon Siebert - were charged with setting the fire in the middle of the night, killing family members Djibril Diol, 29; Adja Diol, 23; Khadija Diol, 1; Hassan Diol, 25; and 6-month-old Hawa Baye. Three other people escaped by jumping from the second floor of the home. (AP)

Connecticut trooper acquitted: A white Connecticut state trooper was acquitted of all charges Friday in the death of Mubarak Soulemene, a Black 19-year-old community college student who was shot as he sat behind the wheel of a stopped stolen car holding a kitchen knife and apparently in the throes of a mental health crisis.

Trooper Brian North, 33, could have faced up to 40 years in prison if he had been convicted of first-degree manslaughter in the Jan 15, 2020, shooting. The state's inspector general said the shooting shouldn't have happened because North and other officers were not in imminent danger. But the six-person jury in Milford acquitted him on that charge and two lesser counts: second-degree manslaughter and negligent homicide.

North showed little emotion as the verdicts were read. Afterward, he shook hands with his lawyers and hugged the head of the state police union. North didn't comment while leaving court, but his lead attorney, Frank Riccio II, said the trooper is still shaken by the shooting. (AP)



Britain's Prince William presents an award to Uday Bhatia from India, during the Diana Legacy Award, at the Science Museum in London, on March 14. Prince William and Prince Harry both took part in an awards ceremony in honor of their late mother Princess Diana - but the estranged brothers were many miles apart at the time. (AP)



Seymour



North

America

Indianapolis shooting kills one: One person is dead and five others suffered injuries in a shooting at an Indianapolis bar early Saturday morning, according to a news report.

Indianapolis Metro Police Department Commander Matthew Thomas confirmed the death and the injuries to the other victims resulting from the shooting shortly before 1:30 am, WXIN-TV reported.

Thomas said five victims were transported by emergency responders to area hospitals and the sixth went to a hospital on their own after the shooting at Landsharks on Broad Ripple Avenue, WXIN reported.

The police did not immediately share the circumstances of the shooting or a description of any suspects and there were no immediate arrests, WXIN reported. (AP)

Tornadoes kill 3 in central US: Blaine Schmidt sifted through the broken glass and splintered wood throughout his Ohio home Friday, salvaging a guitar and a bundle of diapers.

His couch and a crib had been ripped apart by one of many tornadoes that tore through the central US, killing three people and injuring dozens more. The storm peeled open his living room wall, but at least the house was standing. The one next door was flattened.

"I'm lucky to be alive," Schmidt said hours after he and his roommate took shelter in a bathtub, using the shower curtain to protect them from flying window glass.

Thursday night's storms left trails of destruction across parts of Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana and Arkansas. About 40 people were injured and dozens of homes were damaged in one Indiana community. Tornadoes were also reported in Illinois and Missouri. (AP)



Police officer explains a woman how to cast a ballot during the presidential election in Moscow, Russia on March 16. Voters in Russia are heading to the polls for a presidential election that is all but certain to extend President Vladimir Putin's rule after he clamped down on dissent. (AP)

Africa

5 attackers killed

Senegal oppn leader vows to help win poll

DAKAR, Senegal, March 16, (AP) — Top opposition leader **Ousmane Sonko** vowed Friday to help his team win Senegal's March 24 presidential election even though he is barred from the ballot, jumping into the campaign in his first public address since being freed from prison a day earlier.

Ousmane Sonko's release late Thursday after months behind bars triggered a mix of jubilation and political uncertainty on the streets of the capital, Dakar. Thousands took to the streets in celebration, reinvigorating enthusiasm for the election that will decide whether the West African country can remain a stable democracy in a region that has experienced a wave of coups and attempted coups.

A charismatic former tax collector and mayor of the southern city of Ziguinchor, Sonko is seen as the main challenger to President Macky Sall's governing party.

His key ally, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who was also freed from prison late Thursday, has been named the opposition's presidential candidate. Their release follows Sall's decree to exonerate political prisoners, including hundreds arrested in the violent protests last year.

"The message will be short. The important thing is our candidate. We have an election to win. Every hour counts. We have lost a lot of time. We will be on the ground for the victory of our candidate," Sonko said at a news conference.



Sonko

Protect

In his brief message, Sonko restated some of the key tenets of his campaign: the need to fight corruption in the government and to protect Senegal's economy from the influence of foreign powers.

The protests have once again rocked Senegal's image as a pillar of stability in West Africa. Since gaining independence from France in 1960, it has held regular elections and never experienced a coup, unlike many other nations in the Sahel region.

Following Sonko's release Thursday night, Dakar was thronged with thousands of people singing and dancing as convoys of supporters drove around tooting horns and young people piled onto motorbikes and trucks.

Fresh graffiti on Dakar streets Friday morning rallied in support of Sonko. On their way to work, Senegalese speculated about how the turn of events might affect the vote later this month.

Presidential spokesman Yoro Dia said a court decision barring Sonko from the election could not be appealed.

Ordered

The country's Constitutional Council subsequently rejected Sall's postponement and ordered the government to set a new date as soon as possible. Political analysts said Sonko's return to the playing field would boost his ally's campaign.

This "is clearly a political, democratic and electoral turning point that could bring a new generation to power," Alioune Tine, the founder of the Senegalese think tank Afrikajom Center, told The Associated Press.

Tochi Eni-Kalu, Africa analyst at the Eurasia Group, said Sonko's release likely won't change expectations that the vote is probably headed for a runoff, with no candidate winning more than 50% of the vote. Neither will Sonko be allowed into the race at this late stage, he said.

"For Sonko specifically, there remains some uncertainty over the terms of his amnesty and whether he will immediately regain his political rights," the analyst said. "But he won't be on the ballot on the 24th."

In a separate decision Friday, the Supreme Court rejected an appeal from Karim Wade, an opposition leader and son of former Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, against the decision to rule him off the ballot because he holds dual citizenship. Wade said he has renounced his French citizenship.

Also:

MOGADISHU, Somalia: Security forces in Somalia say they have killed all five attackers who laid siege to a hotel in a normally secure area of the capital.

Police spokesperson **Kasim Roble** said Friday that three soldiers were killed and 27 people injured in the Thursday night attack on the SYL Hotel in Mogadishu.

The Somali extremist group al-Shabab said on Telegram on Thursday that its fighters managed to penetrate the hotel, which is not far from the presidential palace and is patronized by government officials.

"The situation is now calm, the hotel is secure now, and lawmakers and other hotel residents started returning, and the security situation returned to normal," Roble said.

Journalists were barred from accessing the hotel after the siege ended.

Attacks in the seaside capital had declined in recent weeks as security was beefed up. Al-Shabab, which opposes Somalia's central government, has been responsible for many deadly attacks on hotels and other places in the past.

Somalia's government is conducting a high-profile offensive against the extremist group, which the United States has described as one of al-Qaida's deadliest organizations. Somali President **Hassan Sheikh Mohamud** has declared "total war" against the extremists, who control large parts of central and southern Somalia and have been the target of scores of U.S. airstrikes in recent years.



DAKAR, Senegal: Congo has lifted a more than two-decade-old moratorium on the death penalty as authorities struggle to curb violence and militant attacks in the country, according to a justice ministry statement released on Friday.

The statement, dated earlier this week, said the ban from 2003 allowed offenders accused of treason and espionage to get away without proper punishment.

Eastern Congo has been riddled by conflict for decades, linked to more than 120 armed groups fighting for land and power and in some cases, protecting their communities.

The government said the violence in the east has plagued the country with recurrent conflict and resulted in a surge of attacks that have spread terror among the communities.

In recent years, the M23 rebel group - the most dominant in the region with alleged links to neighboring Rwanda - has continued to attack villages, forcing many to flee to Goma, the region's largest city. M23 has laid siege to several communities with about half of North Kivu province under its control.



A view of the expanse of trees around Tokyo's Jingu Gaien area that are slated to be cut in order to build three skyscrapers in one of the city's most beloved park areas on Jan. 13. (AP)

Japan lawyers' group urges Tokyo to halt park development

The Japanese bar association is urging Tokyo's metropolitan government to suspend a disputed redevelopment of the city's beloved park area, saying that its environmental assessment by developers lacked objective and scientific grounds.

The metropolitan government approved the Jingu Gaien redevelopment project in February of 2023 based on the environmental assessment submitted

by the developers, allowing the start of construction.

The plan involves razing a famous baseball stadium and rebuilding it, as part of a vast construction project that critics say would threaten thousands of trees in a city of meager green space. Hundreds of outside experts, including architects, environmentalists and academics, have demanded the suspension of the project in open letters and petition campaigns.

The developers are the real estate company Mitsui Fudosan, Meiji Jingu shrine, Itochu Corp. and the government-affiliated Japan Sports Council.

In the latest opposition to the project, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations issued a statement Thursday in which the lawyers group said the environmental assessment lacks sufficient data and used erroneous research methods. (AP)

Asia

HK jails 12 over storming of legislature

Kim enjoys limousine gifted by Putin

SEOUL, South Korea, March 16, (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un used a Russian luxury limousine gifted by President Vladimir Putin, Kim's sister said Saturday, praising the car's "special function" and the two countries' deepening bilateral ties.

In February, Putin sent Kim a high-end Aurus Senat limousine, which he had shown to the North Korean leader when they met for a summit in Russia in September. Observers said the shipment violated a United Nations resolution aimed at pressuring the North to give up its nuclear weapons program by banning the supply of luxury items to North Korea.

In a statement carried by state media, Kim's sister and senior official, Kim Yo Jong, said that her brother used that limousine for the first time during an open event Friday.

"The special function of the private car is perfect and can be thoroughly trusted," Kim Yo Jong said, without specifying. "Kim Jong Un's using of the private car sent by the president of the Russian Federation as a gift is a clear proof of (North Korea)-Russia friendship, which is developing in a comprehensive way on a new high stage."

Inauguration

According to Russian state media, Aurus was the first Russian luxury car brand, and it's been used in motorcades of top officials since Putin first used an Aurus limousine during his inauguration ceremony in 2018.

Kim Jong Un, 40, possess a collection of foreign-made luxury cars believed to have been smuggled into his country. During his Russia visit, he traveled between meeting sites in a Maybach limousine that was brought with him on one of his special train

carriages. Other limousines he's reportedly used include a Mercedes-Maybach S600 Pullman Guard and a Maybach S62.

Over the past year, North Korea and Russia have sharply boosted their military and other cooperation as they face separate confrontations with the West - North Korea for its advancing nuclear program and Russia for its invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Drawing the biggest outside concerns was North Korea's purported shipments of conventional weapons to support Russia's war with Ukraine to receive high-tech Russian weapons technologies and other support.

Sanctions

Russia, together with China, have repeatedly blocked the United States and its partners' attempts to impose fresh U.N. sanctions on North Korea over its barrage of banned ballistic missile tests.

North Korea's state media separately reported Saturday that Kim Jong Un guided his troops conducting parachuting training the previous day. It's unclear if Friday's training was the same event in which Kim rode in the Russian limousine.

The parachuting training was the latest in a series of military drills that Kim has supervised in recent days, likely in response to the annual 11-day South Korean-U.S. military exercises that ended Thursday. Kim views his rivals' exercises as an invasion rehearsal.

After watching Friday's training, Kim ordered his military to conduct future training more intensively and make full preparation for a war, according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency. Kim made similar demands after he guided other re-

cent drills involving tanks, long-range artillery guns and combat soldiers.

Also:

HONG KONG: A Hong Kong court sentenced 12 people Saturday to prison over the storming of the city's legislative council building at the height of the anti-government protests in 2019.

Hundreds of protesters swarmed into the legislature the night of July 1, 2019 - the 22nd anniversary of the former British colony's return to China - defacing pictures and smashing furniture. Some spray-painted slogans in the chamber and painted over the territory's emblem on a wall before vacating the site as riot police cleared surrounding streets with tear gas before moving inside.

The 12 defendants, including former student leader **Althea Suen**, actor **Gregory Wong**, and activists **Ventus Lau** and **Owen Chow**, were previously convicted for rioting. Some of them were also found guilty of other related charges.

Judge **Li Chi-ho** handed down jail terms ranging between 4 1/2 years and 6 years and 10 months, depending on the degree of their involvement and mitigating factors. Li said the legislature holds a unique constitutional status and the nature of the event was serious, with a far-reaching impact. The acts of the protesters was "targeting the city's government," he said.

The case also involved two reporters who were previously acquitted of the rioting charge but were convicted for unlawful entry into the legislature. One was fined 1,500 Hong Kong dollars (\$192) and the other 1,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$128), Li said.

After the sentences were handed down, some supporters of the defendants cried in the courtroom and many others waved at the accused. Some chanted, "Hang in there!"



Bassirou Diomaye Faye, (center), white cap, and Ousmane Sonko, behind Faye in white shirt, greet supporters during their electoral campaign caravan in Dakar, Senegal, on March 15. Senegal's top opposition leader, Sonko, and his key ally, Faye, have been released from prison ahead of the country's presidential election later in the month. (AP)



Bolsonaro



Machado

Lat/Am

Machado faces deadline: It's her choice - but one on which the hopes of millions of Venezuelans fighting to restore their democracy depends.

Barred from running for office, opposition leader **María Corina Machado** is facing pressure from foreign leaders and fellow government opponents to abandon her dead-end presidential candidacy ahead of a March 25 candidate registration deadline and make space for a substitute to take on the entrenched incumbent, Nicolás Maduro.

It's an impossible choice that underlines Venezuela's increasingly authoritarian tilt. The last election widely recognized as meeting international standards took place almost a decade ago, when the opposition swept control of the National Assembly in 2015. But the opposition's boycotting of subsequent races has only strengthened Maduro's grip on power.

Machado, a former lawmaker, rose to the top of the opposition leadership in 2023, filling a void left when other leaders went into exile. Her courage and principled attack on government corruption and Maduro's mismanagement of the oil-dependent economy rallied millions of Venezuelans to overwhelmingly vote for her in an October opposition primary that the government tried to outlaw. Success made her a target though. In January, in defiance of an electoral agreement Maduro signed with an opposition coalition, which earned him relief from U.S. economic sanctions, Venezuela's rubber-stamping high court affirmed Machado's ban on holding office.

Maduro's government has since also accused Washington of conspiring to assassinate him, arrested more political opponents and expelled the staff of the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Taken together, the actions indicate Maduro has no interest in a competitive race

and is looking only to extend his decade-long rule, said Michael McKinley, who served as U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, Brazil, Colombia and Peru.

"We're no longer dealing with an imperfect electoral process," McKinley said. "It's a complete shutdown of all meaningful

challenges to Maduro. In that context, it's hard to argue that the opposition participating in elections without Machado and with a token candidate somehow advances a democratic opening." (AP)



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, (center left), and his daughter inspect a training of the Korean People's Army airborne units in North Korea on March 15. (AP)

'Ex-prez plotted to remain in power': Two top Brazilian military leaders declared to police that former President **Jair Bolsonaro** presented them a plan for him to remain in power after the 2022 election he lost, but both refused and warned him they would arrest him if he tried it, according to judicial documents released Friday.

The testimonies of Bolsonaro's former Army and Air Force commanders to police, and released by the Supreme Court, include the first direct mentions of the right-wing leader as actively participating in a conspiracy to ignore the results of the October 2022 election won by his rival, current President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

The statements by military commanders during Bolsonaro's term add to his legal woes as prosecutors seek to find links between the far-right leader and the Jan. 8, 2023 riots that trashed government buildings in the capital Brasília one week after Lula's inauguration. Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, a frequent target of Bolsonaro and the chairman of the investigation, authorized the release of the documents.

A federal police report said former army commander Marco Antônio Freire Gomes testified that he and other top military leaders attended several last-minute and unscheduled meetings at the presidential palace after the second round of the elections "in which then-President Jair Bolsonaro offered possibilities of using legal tools... regarding the electoral process." (AP)

Change Closing pts

Change Closing pts

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|---------|-----------|
| UAE | - DFM | -27.86 | 4,262.48 |
| JAPAN | - Nikkei | -99.74 | 38,707.64 |
| PAKISTAN | - KSE 100 | -351.33 | 64,854.49 |
| PHILIPPINES | - PSEI | -145.64 | 6,822.32 |
| EUROPE | - Euro Stoxx 50 | -7.10 | 4,986.02 |
| UK | - FTSE 100 | -15.73 | 7,727.42 |

Business

Company secures \$250 mln credit facility with syndicate of banks for 3 years

Daewoo Engineering & Construction inks milestone credit facility with Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait, Commercial Bank of Kuwait and Burgan Bank

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), Commercial Bank of Kuwait (Al-Tijari) and Burgan Bank today announced the signing of a milestone credit facility with Daewoo Engineering & Construction (E&C) for US\$250 million with a tenure of three years.

The facility has been arranged through a syndicate structure with ABK and Al-Tijari acting as Joint Mandated Lead Arrangers and Book Runners for the syndicated credit facility. In addition, Burgan Bank has joined the deal as an original lender. Furthermore, Al-Tijari would be acting as the Facility Agent.

The credit facility is to be used for Daewoo E&C's general corporate purposes and for working capital requirements of its regional projects.

A signing ceremony was held attended by Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at ABK; Loai Muqames, CEO-Kuwait at ABK; Yasmine Salamah, General Manager of Multinational Corporates and Structured Finance at ABK; Elham Mahfouz, Chief Executive Officer at Al-Tijari; Kunal Singh, General Manager of International Banking at Al-Tijari; Fadel M. Abdulla, Chief Executive Officer - Kuwait at Burgan Bank; Yong Hee Lee, Head of Finance Division, Executive Vice President at Daewoo E&C; SeungKeunBae, Head of Finance Team, General Manager at Daewoo E&C; and Seungjin Oh, Head of Corporate and Contracting Finance Units, Deputy General Manager at Daewoo E&C.

Ms. Yasmine Salamah, General Manager of Multinational Corporates and Structured Finance at ABK, said "We are delighted to announce the successful closure of our transaction, partnering with Daewoo the renowned and leading South Korean conglomerate. At the core of this transaction lies our steadfast commitment to collaboration and excellence. It exemplifies ABK's unwavering dedication to our client's success, reinforcing our position as trusted partners in their financial journey. Our partnerships whether with mul-



Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), Commercial Bank of Kuwait (Al-Tijari) and Burgan Bank signing of a milestone credit facility with Daewoo Engineering & Construction (E&C) for US\$250 million with a tenure of three years.

tinational corporations or local enterprises are of the utmost importance to us. They highlight our belief in fostering strong mutually beneficial relationships that drive property and growth for all".

Mr. Kunal Singh, General Manager – International Banking Division at Al-Tijari commented, "The joint cooperation of local Kuwaiti banks in this syndication highlights the appetite of the local banks in continuing to support foreign participants in the Kuwaiti and regional project market. Al-Tijari has been one of the most active banks in leading syndications for clients based in Asia, the Middle East and other regions. Al-Tijari has a strong and very long relationship with Daewoo Engineering & Construction across various business activities related to loans, bonds, treasury activities, etc. We are pleased to be here for yet another ceremony concluding another successful milestone".

Mr. Mohammad Najeeb Al-Zanki, General Manager – Corporate Banking at Burgan Bank, said, "Our participation in this syndicated facility for a renowned client, such as Daewoo E&C, endorses our commitment towards supporting multinational enterprises. It also illustrates the robust nature of our financing base and the strength of our capabilities. Looking ahead, we seek to continue building on the momentum to further expand our growing portfolio, solidify our global partnerships, and diversify our facilities and solutions for our local and international clients."

Mr. Yong Hee Lee, Head of Finance Division of Daewoo E&C, stated, "Kuwait has long been a cornerstone of Daewoo's financing portfolio, and we are delighted to solidify this significant transaction with our esteemed partners in Kuwait. We are deeply grateful for the unwavering confidence our partners have shown in Daewoo, underscoring our company's robust global operations. We remain steadfast in our commitment to further strengthening our strategic partnership."

Kuwaiti banks report strong financial performance in '23

Operating revenues surge, assets grow for local banks

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The data released by Kuwaiti banks on the Boursa Kuwait website showcases robust financial performance for the year 2023, marked by significant cash distributions, soaring profits, and increased operational revenues, reports Al-Anba daily.

The Kuwaiti banks disbursed approximately 1.03 billion dinars in cash and bonus distributions in 2023.

The Kuwait Finance House (KFH) led Islamic banks in distributions, with 433.36 million dinars, followed by the National Bank of Kuwait with 317.19 million dinars.

The Commercial Bank, Gulf Bank, and Boubyan Bank also contributed substantially to the distributions. The Kuwaiti banks saw a remarkable 30% growth in net profits in 2023, totaling 1.57 billion dinars.

The KFH emerged as the top earner with profits reaching 584.51 million dinars, followed closely by the National Bank of Kuwait with 560.62 million dinars.

The Commercial Bank and Boubyan Bank experienced notable growth rates in profits, reflecting a strong performance across the sector.

The operating revenues surged by 18.53% to reach 3.836 billion dinars in 2023. The KFH secured the highest operational revenues at 1.46 billion dinars, highlighting its dominant position in the market.

The National Bank of Kuwait and Burgan Bank also posted significant revenues, contributing to the sector's overall growth.

The total assets of Kuwaiti banks amounted to 122.09 billion dinars by the end of December 2023, registering a 3.1% increase from the previous year.

The KFH retained its position as the leader in total assets, followed closely by the National Bank of Kuwait and Boubyan Bank.

Overall, Kuwaiti banks demonstrated resilience and strength in 2023, driven by credit growth, decreased loss provisions, and a favorable operating environment. The sector's commitment to sustainability and customer-centric initiatives further solidifies its position as a key player in the global financial landscape.

Net profits of KD 4.1 mln achieved in '23

NIC reports positive growth amid economic challenges

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The Board of Directors of the National Investments Company has given nod for the company's consolidated financial statements for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2023, showcasing continued positive growth amid challenging economic conditions, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Despite facing headwinds in both local and global markets, the company reported net financial profits of 4.1 million Kuwaiti dinars, at 5 fils per share, thanks to its resilient strategic vision and diversification efforts aimed at delivering sustainable returns and maximizing shareholder value.

Badr Nasser Al-Kharafi, Chairman of the Board of Directors, emphasized the company's ability to navigate economic challenges while maintaining profitability. Despite adverse market conditions, National Investments demonstrated resilience, maintaining the solidity of its financial position and achieving growth rates throughout 2023.

Al-Kharafi noted the company's proactive approach in adapting to global changes, including the implementation of mergers, acquisitions, and restructuring operations, which accompanied positive results despite market fluctuations.

Discussing the performance of the stock market,

Al-Kharafi highlighted a collective decline in indicators for the Kuwait Stock Exchange in 2023, driven by various factors such as rising interest rates and geopolitical tensions. However, he pointed out a period of recovery in November and December, attributed to a sense of optimism following decisions by global central banks to fix interest rates.

Reviewing financial indicators, Al-Kharafi noted the company's total assets amounted to 249.3 million Kuwaiti dinars by the end of 2023, with managed trust assets reaching approximately 1.05 billion Kuwaiti dinars. Despite challenges in GCC markets, National Investments achieved positive profitability indicators and maintained good rates of cost and revenue.

In terms of distributions, the Board of Directors recommended distributing cash dividends at a rate of 15% of the nominal value of the share, reflecting the company's solid financial position. Al-Kharafi emphasized the company's prudence in risk reduction and its commitment to enhancing operational efficiency to confront economic crises effectively.

Looking ahead, National Investments remains focused on creating a sustainable impact and expanding its services across various sectors and markets through innovation. The company prioritizes excellence in serving customers and shareholders, valuing their trust and continued support.

In recognition of its continued efforts and commitment to excellence, the National Investments Company was honored with the award for the best wealth management company in Kuwait for the year 2023 by EuroMoney International. This prestigious accolade, received during the Private Banking Services Awards in

London, underscores the company's leadership and quality of services in Kuwait's financial sector.

Al-Kharafi reiterated the company's dedication to enhancing its performance and quality of work. He emphasized the support of the Board of Directors for the company's sectors and praised the high professionalism of the executive management and all employees.

Furthermore, National Investments Company showcased its commitment to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) sustainability efforts. The company's sustainability report, to be launched this year, will underscore its proactive approach to sustainability and social responsibility, contributing to positive perceptions in society.

The company's corporate social responsibility initiatives encompass various fields, including support for newly graduated Kuwaiti women through programs like "Shift" and sponsorship of sports events like the Open Padel Championship. Additionally, National Investments actively participates in humanitarian and charitable endeavors, such as providing Eid Al-Fitr clothing for needy families in collaboration with the Kuwait Food and Relief Bank.

Fahd Abdul Rahman Al-Mukhaizeem, Member of the Board of Directors and CEO, highlighted the company's financial achievements in 2023, attributing its success to a commitment to innovation, sustainability, and operational excellence. The company's strategy of attracting investments and providing advisory services yielded significant results, including successful mergers, acquisitions, and capital increases in various companies.

Al-Mukhaizeem emphasized the importance of the company's relationships and strategic vision in attracting investments, culminating in deals totaling approximately 400 million US dollars. These deals, including acquisitions in the education and food sectors, underscore National Investments' role as a trusted financial advisor in Kuwait.

Moreover, the company's local and Gulf sector funds achieved positive returns, demonstrating the effectiveness of its strategic approach in reducing market risks. Al-Mukhaizeem also highlighted the company's role as a market maker for shares on the Kuwait Stock Exchange, further solidifying its position in the investment market.

National Investments remains committed to technological excellence, enhancing its information technology infrastructure and cybersecurity measures to protect data and customer information. The company is focused on providing innovative investment products to meet the diverse financial needs of its clients, including margin trading and exchange-traded funds (ETFs).

Al-Mukhaizeem concluded by affirming the company's commitment to sustainable growth, expanding digital capabilities, and contributing to economic development. He expressed gratitude to the Board of Directors, employees, clients, and shareholders for their continued support and cooperation, looking forward to further successes in 2024.

Other Voices

'Al-Zour Refinery promises relief'

Oil refining margin on the rise!

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

FOLLOWING the recent attacks on three Russian refineries by Ukraine last week, crude oil prices surged amid concerns of a potential shortage of petroleum products in Europe. The European market is already strained, particularly in terms of diesel and jet kerosene, as many refineries have shut down over the years.

Since 1993, Q8 - the retail arm of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) - shut down approximately three refineries across Europe. This move mirrored the actions taken by other international oil companies such as Esso, BP, Shell, and ENI. This closure was in response to Europe's surplus of refineries, occurring at a time when national oil companies have been constructing their own facilities, including Aramco, KPC, Adnoc, Iraq, and Iran.

The current situation escalated further with the boycott of Russian products and the recent attacks on Russian refineries. This has intensified the urgency for Arabian Gulf products, presenting a favorable opportunity for Kuwait's new Al-Zour refinery, which recently began operations. Alongside Aramco's refineries, Kuwait's refinery could help alleviate supply shortages in the region.

This development can certainly be considered as good news for refineries and their profitability. Their margins, which have typically been around \$16 per barrel above net crude oil prices over the past decade, are now expected to increase to approximately \$35 per barrel. This marks a significant improvement and promises positive returns for refiners.

In light of this, Kuwait has doubled its diesel exports to Europe from 55,000 barrels per day in February to 114,000 barrels per day. Similarly, Saudi Arabia also saw an increase in exports from 160,000 barrels in January to 192,000 barrels per day. Overall, refining products from the Middle East are expected to surpass nine million barrels in the first quarter of this year, compared to 8.5 million barrels in 2023.

Investments in refining are starting to pay off, and it is time for Kuwait to capitalize on this by maximizing production of petroleum products. With Europe facing a prolonged absence of Russian products, there is an opportunity for Kuwait to consider expanding refining capacity and operations. Some European oil companies, like BP and Shell, may now regret reducing their capacity and investments in the refining sector.

The current profit margins exceeding \$30 per barrel for refining companies are indeed lucrative. As an oil-producing country, it is imperative for us to capitalize on these margins and strive to maximize our returns in refining operations.

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Saudi & Kuwait lead diesel exports to EU

Middle East diesel exports surge to Europe amidst rising demand

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Standard & Poor's global commodity trading agency analysts anticipate a rise in diesel exports from the Middle East to Europe in March, following their recovery in February. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are expected to lead diesel exports to Europe, as refineries in the Gulf region increase production to meet high European demand for oil raw materials, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The European Union's ban on Russian oil products, imposed on February 5, 2023, is expected to contribute to the increased demand for diesel shipments from the Middle East to Europe.

The average diesel shipments from the Middle East to Europe reached 374 thousand barrels per day in February, the highest level in two months. Notably, shipments from Kuwait more than doubled in February compared to January.

Saudi Arabia was the largest exporter of diesel to Europe in February, followed by Kuwait. Egypt also resumed diesel shipments to Europe for the first

time since August 2023.

Refinery production in the Middle East is expected to rise to 9 million barrels per day in the first quarter of 2024, compared to 8.8 million barrels per day in the last quarter of 2023. This increase marks the first time that Middle East refineries are projected to consume over 9 million barrels per day of crude oil in the first quarter.

Average exports of refined petroleum products from the Middle East to Europe reached 185,000 barrels per day in February, the highest level since April 2023. Additionally, exports of gasoline products to France and aviation fuel to the Netherlands saw significant increases, reaching their highest levels in recent years.

Overall, the report highlights the shifting dynamics in global diesel trade, with Europe increasingly relying on imports from the Middle East and America following the ban on Russian oil products. Middle East refineries are expected to ramp up production to meet this demand, leading to increased diesel exports to Europe.

Overview of Kuwait's trade statistics for '23

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Recent statistics released by the Central Administration of Statistics provide insights into Kuwait's trade performance in 2023, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to the daily, the total Kuwait's total exports in 2023 amounted to approximately 25.9 billion dinars. The majority of exports were attributed to oil and its basic derivatives, totaling 23.9 billion dinars. Non-oil exports, mainly re-exported products, amounted to about 1.1 billion dinars, with re-exported products valued at around 350 million dinars.

Total Imports — Total imports during the same period reached about 11 billion dinars, showing a slight increase compared to 2022 when imports were around 11,005 billion dinars.

Trade Surplus — Kuwait main-

tained a trade surplus of approximately 14.8 billion dinars in 2023, despite a decrease from the 19.5 billion dinars recorded in 2022. The decline in export value was attributed to lower oil prices and voluntary production reduction decisions.

Trade Exchange — The total trade exchange between Kuwait and other countries reached approximately 37 billion dinars in 2023.

The most prominent goods imported into Kuwait in 2023 include cars designed for transporting people, with imports totaling about 1,442 billion dinars, showing a significant increase from the previous year.

Telephone devices, with imports valued at around 428 million dinars; jewelry imports amounted to 363 million dinars, while gold imports reached 275 million dinars.

China pledges to boost quality of listed firms

China's markets regulator on Friday renewed its efforts to pep up the stock market, pledging to raise the quality of companies listed on domestic markets. The China Securities Regulatory Commission issued draft guidelines to more strictly vet applications for share listings and to more closely oversee listed companies by measures such as on-site inspections. Regulators reiterated pledges to prevent and punish fraud and other illegal activities, saying there would be "zero

tolerance" for illegal practices like falsifying information, insider trading and market manipulation. Chinese markets have fallen to multi-year lows as the economy has slowed, and the property sector has languished after authorities cracked down on excessive borrowing by developers. Chinese companies have lost billions of dollars worth of market value as investors shifted away from the markets in Hong Kong and the mainland in search of better returns elsewhere. (AP)

German greenhouse gas emissions dropped sharply last year

Germany's greenhouse gas emissions dropped by one-tenth last year as renewable energy grew in importance, the use of coal and gas diminished and economic pressures weighed on businesses and consumers, official data showed Friday. Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck, who is also the economy and climate minister, said Europe's biggest economy is on course to meet its target for 2030 of cutting emissions by 65%, compared with 1990. Germany aims to cut its emissions to

net zero by 2045 and is working to ramp up the use of solar and wind power and other renewable sources. The country's environmental protection agency said that Germany emitted about 673 million tons of greenhouse gases in 2023, a decline of 76 million tons or 10.1%, compared with the previous year. It was the strongest decline since 1990. The agency pointed to Germany's "very successful expansion of renewable energies" but cautioned that progress

in cutting emissions is not satisfactory across the board. It said more needs to be done in the transport sector in particular, for example by expanding electric mobility and cutting some subsidies. Habeck's ministry said projections for the coming years point to a decline in emissions by 2030 of nearly 64%, compared with 1990. "Germany is on course, for the first time," Habeck said in a statement. "If we stick to our course, we will reach our 2030 climate targets." (AP)

'The industrial logic of this merger is very strong'

Vodafone confirms sale of Italian arm to Swisscom for \$8.7b

LONDON, March 16, (AP): British cellphone company Vodafone confirmed Friday that it is selling its Italian business to Switzerland's Swisscom for 8 billion euros (\$8.7 billion) and will hand back half of the proceeds to its shareholders through the buyback of company shares.

two firms agreed that Vodafone will continue to provide "certain services" to Swisscom over the next five years. Swisscom will pay annual initial charges of 350 million euros, which is expected to decrease over time.

Vodafone said the move, with talks first announced Feb. 28, represented an "attractive valuation" and marked the final step of its strategy to sell off parts of its European portfolio.

Vodafone added that the two companies also are "exploring a closer commercial relationship to enable collaboration across a broad range of areas, beyond Italy."

Swisscom, a telecoms operator, will pay in cash that it will finance through new debt. It is aiming to merge its acquisition with Fastweb, the company's subsidiary in Italy. It said the deal will help it unlock 600 million euros in savings and will enable the combined entity to sustain investments and offer improved services.

Vodafone Chief Executive Margherita Della Valle said the sale "creates significant value for Vodafone and ensures the business maintains its leading position in Italy."

"The industrial logic of this merger is very strong," Swisscom CEO Christoph Aeschlimann said. "Fastweb and Vodafone Italia are an ideal fit to create high added value for all stakeholders."

Vodafone has been looking to free up cash and improve its financial performance by selling off parts of the business, including its Spanish arm, having previously struck deals to sell its divisions in Hungary and Ghana.

As part of the deal, which is expected to be completed by the end of the first quarter of 2025, the

The markets appeared to welcome the deal, with Vodafone's shares closing 5.7% higher in London and Swisscom's ending 4.9% up in Zurich.

TikTok creators warn of economic impact if app sees ban

BEIJING, March 16, (AP): Alex Pearlman shut the door on dreams of a standup comedy career almost a decade ago, pivoting from the stage to an office cubicle where he worked a customer service job.

that rely on TikTok for a significant portion of their income, while also arguing TikTok has become an unrivaled platform for dialogue and community.

Then he started posting random jokes and commentary about pop culture and politics on TikTok. Just over 2.5 million followers later, he quit his nine-to-five and recently booked his first nationwide tour.

Pearlman, who lives outside Philadelphia, said TikTok has transformed his life, allowing him to live a dream, provide for his family and spend the first three months of his newborn son's life at home. His customer service job only offered paternity leave equivalent to three weeks off, with two weeks paid.

Pearlman is among the many TikTok creators across the U.S. outraged over a bipartisan bill passed by the House of Representatives on Wednesday that would lead to a nationwide ban of the popular video app if its China-based owner, ByteDance, doesn't sell its stake. The bill still needs to go through the Senate, where its prospects are unclear.

"I don't take a day for granted on this app, because it's been so shocking," said Pearlman, 39. "In reality, TikTok has been the driver of American social media for the last four years. Something will step into that place if TikTok vanishes tomorrow. Whether or not that will be better or worse, Congress has no way of knowing."

Content creators say a ban would hurt countless people and businesses

TikTok, which launched in 2016, has skyrocketed in popularity, grow-

ing faster than Instagram, YouTube or Facebook. The push to remove the app from Chinese authority follows concerns from lawmakers, law enforcement and intelligence officials about the insecurity of user data, potential suppression of content unfavorable to the Chinese government and the possibility that the platform could boost pro-Beijing propaganda, all of which TikTok denies.

To date, the U.S. government hasn't provided any evidence showing TikTok shared U.S. user data with Chinese authorities.

The move comes as the pandemic saw huge growth in digital marketing as people were stuck at home consuming - and creating - content at levels not seen before.

Jensen Savannah, a 29-year-old from Charlotte, began making TikToks of her travels around the Carolinas during the pandemic. Now a full-time

influencer, she has tripled her income since leaving her telecommunications sales job.

"Social media Influencer" is almost to be looked at as the new print and TV advertising," she said. "It's going to bring your dollar much farther than it is in traditional marketing."

Some creators describe it as a digital equalizer of sorts, providing a platform for people of color and other marginalized groups to get opportunities and exposure.

"I've always had Twitter, I've had Facebook, I've had Instagram. But TikTok was the first one where, if you want to find somebody who looks like yourself and represents you in any type of way, you can find it," said Joshua Dairen, a Black, 30-year-old content creator in Auburn, Alabama. Dairen makes videos about his state's ghost stories, urban legends and history.

Apple to pay \$490m to settle allegations

Apple has agreed to pay \$490 million to settle a class-action lawsuit alleging CEO Tim Cook misled investors about a steep downturn in iPhone's sales in China that culminated in a jarring revision to the company's revenue forecast.

Europe asks social media platforms how they are reducing 'risks' of generative AI

Google, Facebook, Tik Tok and others in focus

The preliminary settlement filed Friday in Oakland, California, federal court stems from a shareholder lawsuit focused on the way Apple relayed information about how iPhone models released in September 2018 were performing in China, one of the company's biggest markets.

LONDON, March 16, (AP): European Union regulators on Thursday ratcheted up scrutiny of big tech companies including Google, Facebook and TikTok with requests for information on how they're dealing with risks from generative artificial intelligence, such as the viral spread of deepfakes.

Cook signaled that the new iPhones were off to a good start during an investor conference call in early November 2018, according to the complaint.

The European Commission, the EU's executive branch, has sent questionnaires about the ways that eight platforms and search engines - including Microsoft's Bing, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and X, formerly Twitter - are curbing the risks of generative AI.

That reassurance dissolved into a huge letdown on Jan. 2, 2019 when the Cook issued a warning that Apple's revenue for the just-completed quarter would fall \$9 billion below management's forecast for the period. What's more, virtually all of the sales drop was traced to weak demand in China.

The 27-nation bloc is flexing new regulatory powers acquired under the Digital Services Act, a sweeping set of regulations that took effect last year with the aim of cleaning up big online platforms and keeping users safe, under threat of hefty fines.

It marked the first time Apple had cut its revenue guidance since the iPhone's release in 2007 and triggered its stock price to plunge 10% in the next day of frenetic trading, wiping out more than \$70 billion in shareholder wealth.

The EU is wielding the DSA and other existing regulations to govern AI until its groundbreaking rulebook for the technology takes effect. Lawmakers approved the AI Act, the world's first comprehensive AI rules, but the provisions covering generative AI won't kick in until next year.

Apple vehemently denied Cook deceived investors about the iPhone's sales in China between early November and early January. The Cupertino, California, company maintained that stance in the settlement documents, but said it decided to make the payment after more than four years of legal wrangling to avoid an "overly burdensome, expensive, and distracting" hassle.

Other AI-related risks that the commission is worried about include systems coming up with false information - known as "hallucinations" - and the automated manipulation of services to mislead voters.

The settlement was reached through a mediator after U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers rejected Apple's request to dismiss the case and set a Sept. 9 trial date.

The commission said its requests for information are about both the creation and spread of generative AI content. For example, it's seeking internal documents on how companies have reviewed the risks and worked to mitigate them as they deal with generative AI's impact on everything from electoral processes and the spread of illegal content to gender-based violence and the protection of minors.

Gonzalez Rogers is now being asked to approve the settlement in a hearing scheduled for April 30.

European authorities are probing tech platforms' readiness for AI-fueled misinformation and disinformation as they prepare for EU-wide elections set for early June. Commission officials said they want to know whether big online platforms are ready in case a "high-impact" deepfake appears at the last minute and spreads widely.

Thousands of shareholders who bought Apple stock in late 2018 could be eligible for a piece of the settlement, which will be distributed from of a pool that will be less than \$490 million after lawyers involved in the case are paid. The attorneys plan to seek up to one-fourth, or about \$122 million, of the settlement.

The EU wants answers from companies on their election protec-

Call for new law on guaranteed minimum crop prices

Indian farmers protest in New Delhi

NEW DELHI, March 16, (AP): Thousands of farmers crowding buses and trains traveled to the Indian capital on Thursday to press their demand for new legislation to guarantee minimum profitable crop prices, after weeks of being blocked from the city.



Indian farmers who have been protesting to demand guaranteed crop prices gather at Ramlila ground in New Delhi, India, Thursday, March 14, 2024. (AP)

They avoided using their tractors after authorities barricaded highways into New Delhi with cement blocks and barbed wire. A condition of allowing their rally in the capital were that the farmers not use their farm vehicles. They were also barred from carrying sticks or swords to avoid clashes with police.

talks so far have failed to break the deadlock.

Haryana police said 12 officers were injured after protesters attacked them with sticks and pelted them with stones.

farmers leading the march, said they did not want any violence, but condemned the federal government over the massive security measures.

The protesters carried placards demanding free electricity for farming. They contended that without guarantees for their crop prices, they would be at the mercy of the markets and that would spell disaster, especially for the more than two-thirds of them who own less than 1 hectare (2 1/2 acres) of land.

Thousands of farmers have been protesting separately in Shambhu, a town some 200 kilometers (120 miles) from the capital, since Feb. 13.

The farmers paused their protest and hunkered down near the town of Shambhu, close to the border between Punjab and Haryana states, as their unions engaged in discussions with government ministers.

The protest organizers say the farmers are seeking new legislation that would guarantee minimum prices for 23 crops. The farmers believe this would help stabilize their income.

The rally, organized by the United Farmers Front, was held at Ramlila Ground, which is used for religious festivals, major political meetings and entertainment events.

Authorities have barricaded highways leading to New Delhi with cement blocks, metal containers, barbed wire and iron spikes to prevent the farmers from entering. The farmers have brought in bulldozers and excavators to try and push through.

They rejected a proposal offering them five-year contracts of guaranteed prices on a set of certain crops, including maize, grain legumes and cotton.

The government protects agricultural producers against sharp falls in farm prices by setting a minimum purchase price for certain essential crops, a system that was introduced in the 1960s to help shore up food reserves and prevent shortages.

The police permitted the rally also on the condition that the farmers wouldn't bring in more than 5,000 people, the Press Trust of India news agency said. The protests come at a crucial time for India, which has a national election in April-May, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party widely expected to secure a third successive term. Farmers are a particularly influential voting bloc in India with their sheer numbers. More than 60% of India's 1.4 billion people depend on farming for their livelihoods.

On Feb 21, clashes between farmers and police left one protester dead as the farmers tried to resume their march to the Indian capital after talks with the government failed to end an impasse over their demands for guaranteed crop prices.

Two years ago, tens of thousands of farmers camped out on the outskirts of New Delhi forcing Modi to repeal new agriculture laws in a major reversal for his government. Jagjit Singh Dallewal, one of the

The system can apply up to 23 crops, but the government usually offers the minimum price only for rice and wheat.

tions by April 5 and on the other topics by April 26. The commission could follow up with a more in-depth investigation, but it's not guaranteed.

whether the company failed to protect consumers by allowing the sale of risky products such as fake medicine and children in particular by allowing access to porn. A lack of measures to stop influencers peddling illegal or harmful products also is being examined, it said. AliExpress said in a statement

that it respects all rules and regulations in the markets where it operates.

able to meet the requirements of the DSA."

The company said it has been "working with, and will continue to work with, the relevant authorities on making sure we comply with applicable standards and will continue to ensure that we will be

Separately, the commission asked LinkedIn for information on whether it's complying with the DSA's ban on targeting ads to people based on sensitive types of personal data such as sexual orientation, race and political opinions.

INVESTMENT

Business Plus



Evolving landscape of retirement

Part-time work boosts retiree's mental health



U.S. \$100 bills are seen, Thursday, July 14, 2022, in Marple Township, Pa. Now that retirement spans more years than ever, you might need to rethink how you're envisioning that stage of your life. It's not a blip on the life radar - it's a significant chunk of time. (AP)

By Kate Ashford
NerdWallet

While bond yields are much better than they were a few years ago, I don't necessarily think I can get clients 20 to 30 years of sustainable withdrawals if I'm that bond heavy.

Now that retirement spans more years than ever, you might need to rethink how you're envisioning that stage of your life. Although Americans are retiring a little later than they did 30 years ago, they're also living longer. Retirement isn't a blip on the life radar - it's a significant chunk of time.

While your parents may have retired and never worked another day in their lives, you may find that part-time work when you get older fulfills your mental needs and helps your retirement savings last. You may have to be more aggressive with your investments

than you expected. And staying healthy is crucial.

"The questions I'm being asked are different, and the conversations clients are bringing to me are different," says John McGlothlin III, a certified financial planner in Austin, Texas.

Here are the ways retirement might be shaping up for you.

You'll keep more money in stocks

People used to enter retirement with a conservative-leaning portfolio that held a solid chunk in bonds and cash alternatives. Although advisers aren't suggesting clients throw caution to the wind, they're tweaking the investing plan at this life stage.

"We may just stay a little more

aggressive, because the day you retire, you don't need all this money," says Jonathan Swanburg, a CFP in Houston. "Some of this money is for 30 years from now, some of it is for your kids and grandkids because you're never going to touch it."

McGlothlin encourages his clients to exit target date funds at retirement because he thinks they get too conservative. "The moment you hit that retirement date, they all of a sudden go to 50% bonds, and within a few years you're at 60% and 70% bonds," he says. "While bond yields are much better than they were a few years ago, I don't necessarily think I can get clients 20 to 30 years of sustainable withdrawals if

I'm that bond heavy."

You may choose to keep working

The number of adults age 65 and older who are working is almost twice the number who were working 35 years ago, according to a 2023 Pew Research report. Consulting or part-time work in retirement allows you to withdraw less from your savings and potentially delay taking Social Security, and your investments have more time to grow.

"It gives us flexibility in our asset spend-down picture," says Catherine Valega, a CFP in Winchester, Massachusetts. "The thought of moving to no more income coming in - that's really stress provoking."

Valega also encourages clients to pursue work and other activities so they don't go stir-crazy. "You're going to have 10 hours in the day that you didn't have before," she says. "You can exercise, and that's great and you should, but beyond that you need some amount of mental stimulation."

You may want to save for in-home care

Most adults age 55 and older want to age in place, according to a 2023 survey from the McKinsey Health Institute. Eighty percent wish to live in their own home, and 71% of older adults who aren't living in their own home wish they could.

With home health aides having a national median cost of \$27 an hour, according to Genworth's 2021 Cost of Care data, planning for in-home care may require working longer to build the nest egg to pay for it, or even relocating to a city where home services are cheaper. Renovations to make a home more accessible or single-story livable are also helpful.

"I think the generation that's retiring right now, they've seen their parents or their family members go into nursing facilities or assisted living facilities and are pretty much unanimously like, 'I really don't want that,'" McGlothlin says.

You'll (really) want to stay healthy

The average 35-year-old woman today can expect to live to about age 81 - which means many will live even longer. David Foster, a CFP in St. Louis, now includes articles related to physical fitness and health alongside financial tidbits in his email newsletters to clients.

"That probably just wouldn't have been on top of people's minds 30 or 40 years ago because they weren't likely to live until they were 90," Foster says. "Exercise is good for avoiding cognitive decline and helping with your heart."

Although it may feel a long way off, safeguarding your health now can lower medical costs later, plus help ensure you can work (and play) as long as you're able. That means exercising regularly, eating reasonably healthy foods and getting enough sleep, among other things.

"You can't do anything else if you don't have your health," Foster says. (AP)

Model portfolios can be helpful, but they aren't perfect

Millennials rethink finances as adulthood approaches

By Alana Benson
NerdWallet

The types of accounts an individual has when they retire, along with their cash needs, should determine their withdrawal strategy in retirement.

The passage of time feels like it creeps, then pounces: Suddenly, party conversation focuses on real estate, how we're going to bed earlier and our realization that we have no idea what type of jeans to wear. For years, millennials have been the butt of financial jokes: "They spend all their money on lattes and avocado toast!" and "Why don't they get a minimum wage job to pay for college like I did?" But the clichés got old quickly.

And now, as millennials move deeper into their 30s and 40s, there are some things to consider changing up. Most notably, our investments.

Your portfolio might need to chill

For those lucky enough to invest early on, the advice was pretty standard: Invest often, and invest in aggressive assets to take advantage of long-term growth. The target-date funds (those that automatically rebalance your portfolio as you get older) held in 401(k)s were typically calibrated to higher-risk investments. Maybe the most

aggressive of us dipped our toes in crypto and meme stocks at some point. After all, you've got all the time in the world to ride out the highs and lows of the market when you're 24.

But now, we're more mature. And with that wisdom comes new responsibilities, like adjusting our asset allocation. Asset allocation is just a fancy phrase for what percentage of your portfolio is in each investment. For example, a 20-year-old's investment portfolio of \$100 (for easy math), might be 90% in stocks and 10% in bonds, or \$90 and \$10, respectively. As you get closer to retirement, it's a good rule of thumb to shift that allocation to a less risky position, such as 60% stocks and 40% bonds, though the exact percentages will depend on your personal financial situation.

"In general, as we get older we tend to take fewer risks," says Aaron Hatch, a certified financial planner and founder of Woven Capital in Redding, California. "In your early 20s, when you have nothing to lose and time on your side, you can afford to take all kinds of risks. However, as

we millennials accumulate assets in our 401(k)s and elsewhere, and we inch toward retirement, it might be worth considering taking a little risk off the table by slightly decreasing exposure to stocks or other risky investments."

Shifting strategies

One easy way to figure out if it's time to shift your asset allocation is to look at model portfolios. Some brokerages will show examples of what their target-date funds look like for different timelines to retirement. You can consider these illustrations and adjust yours accordingly.

For example, if you're 30 and you're planning to retire when you are 65, you could check out portfolios that show what a target-date fund looks like for those retiring in 2060. You may see a majority of stock-based funds with about 10% in bonds. If you're in your 40s, that recommended portfolio may be closer to 15% in bonds.

Model portfolios can be helpful, but they aren't perfect. Maybe you own a chunk of crypto or some real estate. These kinds of

investments should be considered when shifting your assets, and it can help to get a second opinion. Some financial advisors will meet with you as needed to give your portfolio a checkup.

"When developing a tax-efficient withdrawal strategy and systematic withdrawals from your accounts, this is truly where working with a financial planner can save you thousands," says Marigny deMauriac, a CFP and founder of deMAURICAC, a financial planning firm in New Orleans. "We understand the tax implications of withdrawals and can help you coordinate withdrawals with Social Security benefits and other sources of income to optimize your retirement."

What happens now matters in retirement

When you're shifting your asset allocation now, it pays to think strategically about your future.

"The types of accounts an individual has when they retire, along with their cash needs, should determine their withdrawal strategy in retirement. Because 401(k)s and Rollover IRA withdrawals

are taxed as income, it is important to keep taxes in mind when deciding from which account types to pull money for living expenses in retirement," Hatch says.

Think ahead to retirement. When you sell your investments so you can have spending money in retirement, you'll likely have to pay capital gains tax on those earnings - unless you invested within a Roth 401(k) or IRA account and the taxes were already paid. But if you know you'll need to pay taxes on that money, it's worth calculating what you'll owe and setting it aside.

And according to deMauriac, you may still need to be invested throughout retirement.

"Since you might live to be in your 90s, chances are, you can't just shift everything to cash and call it a day," deMauriac says. "Most people need to plan for growth in their accounts to outpace inflation, even in retirement."

Asset allocation, like many of the chores of millennial middle age, may not feel glamorous, but it may help us pay for all that avocado toast we'll enjoy in retirement. (AP)

editor's choice



'Partnership with Ministry of Interior renewed'

Talabat concludes 'main sponsor' support for GCC Traffic Week 2024

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: As part of its ongoing and strategic collaboration with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior (MOI), «talabat», a trailblazer in technology and innovation, recently concluded its main sponsorship of the season's edition of GCC Traffic Week – Kuwait. Seamlessly aligning both public and private sector visions, this partnership aims to foster a safer and more sustainable environment for drivers in Kuwait and cultivate a more traffic-conscious society.

Held last week, the 2024 Gulf Traffic Week, was inaugurated to raise awareness about traffic and transport safety, with talabat supporting as the main sponsor of the event. The tech and delivery pioneer continues to collaborate closely with the MOI's General Department of Traffic (GDT) to bring something new and innovative with each upcoming edition of Traffic Week in Kuwait.

talabat's active participation in MOI's traffic awareness initiatives sets a commendable example of a private and public sector collaboration, significantly contributing to the State's overarching development plans outlined in the ambitious "New Kuwait 2035" vision. This is evident through talabat's sponsorship of Traffic Week, supporting various activities aimed at enhancing traffic awareness and safety.

A standout feature of talabat's latest community engagement in Traffic Week was the interactive booth launched in collaboration with MOI. The representative team embarked on an educational tour across the country, visiting one key site a day for the entire duration of the Traffic Week, with venues including the Avenues Mall, Al-Khairan Mall, Al-Razi Hospital, among others.

Inspired by the leading digital innovator and pioneer in facilitating customer reach, talabat - the interactive booth drew significant attendance from visitors looking to expand their knowledge on traffic, transport, and road safety. With an innovative approach to edutainment, supported by attractive visual aids and interactive models, the booth succeeded in driving higher engagement rates throughout the day, and provided valuable and comprehensive information on traffic and road safety, making it a focal point of the Gulf Traffic Week 2024.

In his statement, Vice President, and Managing Director of talabat Kuwait, Mr. Badder Alghanim, lauded the initiative, reaffirming talabat's fruitful and long-lasting partnership with MOI by saying: "With our main operations heavily reliant and widely observed on the local roads network, we as quality deliverers actively sought this partnership with MOI, adopting



Talabat concludes main sponsorship of GCC Traffic Week in collaboration with Ministry of Interior

'road safety' as one of the fundamental pillars of our multifaceted social responsibility program, with traffic awareness as a primary focus".

Within this vein, Alghanim reiterated talabat's unwavering commitment to fostering a widespread culture of safe driving and traffic morality within the local community, by leading and/or supporting awareness initiatives. "While, internally, we continue to reinforce our role in improving traffic efficiency, by making sure our delivery riders demonstrate the highest standards of road safety performance", he added.

To further explain, Alghanim pointed to talabat's socially responsible and ethical approach to managing delivery operations, as it strives to optimize rider and road safety, alongside speed and quality delivery. The delivery giant remains steadfast in prioritizing commitments to customers and delivery partners, just as equally to its riders and community, observing best corporate sustainability practices in the process.

"In recognition of their integral role in driving operational success, as company representatives on the road and during customer interactions, talabat remains keen on empowering its delivery riders, personally, physically and professionally", said Alghanim.

Efforts to ensure a continued state of well-being in a safe work/on-road environment for drivers include talabat's ongoing rider rest stops initiative - dedicating fully equipped and stocked stations along key roads and sites, for them to unwind, meet, entertain, and recharge between delivery trips, or keep safe during harsh weather conditions.

Improving their overall performance as safe and traffic-conscious drivers, however, mandates undergoing an intensive induction program by talabat, involving a series of workshops, lectures, and field training - organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior's General Traffic Department. It's worth mentioning hereby that talabat plans to coincide the launch of its next round of driver induction training with World Traffic Week.

Concluding his remarks, Alghanim expressed talabat's appreciation for making this year's edition of Traffic Week a success, with special thanks dedicated to all MOI team for an exceptional performance. Underscoring its commitment to sustainable development and social responsibility, it serves to note how talabat's leading role in Gulf Traffic Week contributes to the entire road and transportation system in Kuwait.



Mohammed Al-Musalam and officials from the Institute of Banking Studies.

'KFH invests heavily in its human capital'

Kuwait Finance House honors employees with professional accreditation certificates

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) honored a group of its employees at a special ceremony for successfully completing the Institute of Banking Studies (IBS) class of 2023 and receiving professional accreditation certificates.

KFH employees achieved accreditation in various programs, including Advanced Certified Credit Management (ACCM), Certified Credit Manager (CCM), Certified Assistant Bank Branch Manager (CABB), Certified Bank Branch Manager (CBBM), Certified Bank Branch Operations Manager (CB-BOM), and Certified Bank Wealth Manager (CBWM).

The accredited certificate programs consist of modules that contain a well-structured series of courses designed to address specific job requirements. Earning these specialized certificates has become a recognized mark of an employee's competency and excellence within the Kuwaiti banking industry.

On the sideline of the employee recognition ceremony, Mohammed Al-Musalam, KFH's Executive Manager Talent Management and HR Transformation, highlighted the excellence of KFH employees. This, he said, reflects the bank's strong commitment to developing its human resources using

the latest tools and methodologies aligned with the best practices in modern banking sciences.

He emphasized KFH's commitment to addressing the diverse training needs of its employees. This focus on skill development empowers them to apply their learnings directly to their work, ultimately contributing to improved performance efficiency, enhanced productivity, higher customer service levels, and sustained growth and success.

Al-Musalam added that KFH is one of the most prominent institutions that prioritizes investing in its human capital, recognizing them as a key asset and the foundation for achieving the bank's goals, vision, and growth.

He thanked the Institute of Banking Studies for its great support to both banking sector employees in general and, specifically, to KFH employees. He also praised the fruitful and long-standing cooperation between the two parties.

The honored employees expressed their deep appreciation for KFH's support. They emphasized their commitment to ongoing academic and professional development, ensuring they can continue to serve KFH and its customers to the highest standard.

Recognizing achievements, advocating equality & inspiring change globally

Gulf Bank's female leadership percentage increases from 10% to 30% over 10 years

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Ms. Salma Al-Hajjaj, the General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, stated that the number of Kuwaiti female leaders in institutions still does not correspond to the proportion of women in education. She highlighted that the ratio of university graduates is 3 to 1 between women and men, whereas the proportion of female leaders compared to men is significantly lower. This highlights the necessity of ongoing endeavors to empower women and bridge the gender gap, as it enhances institutional productivity, supports the national economy, and boosts the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

In light of International Women's Day, celebrated globally on March 8th each year, Al-Hajjaj outlined Gulf Bank's significant achievements in supporting and empowering women. She emphasized their active involvement in various events and conferences aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Al-Hajjaj highlighted that in the last decade, Gulf Bank has effectively raised the percentage of female leaders from 10% to 30%, with women constituting approximately 42% of the bank's total workforce.

She reaffirmed the bank's commitment to supporting and empowering women, as well as enhancing diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace. Al-Hajjaj stressed the importance of developing a well-planned strategy to achieve desired outcomes in supporting women as part of Kuwait Vision 2035. She also advocated for conducting yearly assessments to evaluate progress and promoting a workplace culture centered on gender equality and diversity in employment, based on transparent competency criteria.

Below are some of the contributions and initiatives by Gulf Bank in supporting and empowering women:

Participation in the Kuwait Women's Economic Empowerment Platform (KWEPP) Conference

Gulf Bank participated in the Kuwait Women's Economic Empowerment Platform (KWEPP) conference, held last week at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre with the involvement of 45 private sector companies. Ms. Salma Al-Hajjaj introduced the platform and emphasized the available resources to support women in the workforce and enhance their professional development. The conference witnessed the launch of the platform's official website, kwepp.org, which will serve as a primary resource to increase awareness of the platform's objectives and the impact of its initiatives, centralizing all data.

Al-Hajjaj highlighted that the widespread participation in the conference itself marks a significant and groundbreaking initiative in Kuwait and the region. She emphasized the importance of the private sector and its notable contribution to women's economic empowerment.

She stated that the Kuwait Women's Economic Empowerment Platform (KWEPP) serves as a gateway for every working woman to provide support, guidance, and create a community where ambition meets real opportunities. She added, "We at Gulf Bank take pride in being a founding partner of the Kuwait Women's Economic Empowerment Platform. We firmly believe that concerted efforts will create a thriving work environment that ensures women's empowerment and enhances diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace."

She stated that the Kuwait Women's Economic Empowerment Platform (KWEPP) acts as a channel for all work-



Group photo of female executives and employees of Gulf Bank with head of the International Banking Federation and Chair of the European Women on Boards and the Ambassador of the European Union Delegation to Kuwait.



Ms. Salma Al-Hajjaj speaks at the Kuwait Women's Economic Empowerment Platform conference



Ms. Dalal Aldosari leads one of the conference sessions 'Lead The Way'

ing women to offer support, guidance, and foster a community where ambition aligns with tangible opportunities. She added, "At Gulf Bank, we take great pride in being a founding partner of the Kuwait Women's Economic Empowerment Platform. We strongly believe that collaborative endeavors will cultivate a flourishing work environment that promotes women's empowerment and enhances diversity and inclusion policies within the workplace."

A Podcast titled "Own your Career"
As part of its continuous efforts towards women's empowerment and promoting diversity and inclusion policies, Gulf Bank organized a podcast as part of the "Lead the Way" program titled "Own Your Career" for female executives at the Bank.

The podcast guest speaker was Ms. Hedwige Nuyens, Head of the International Banking Federation and Chair of the European Women on Boards, a non-profit organization that supports women's empowerment and gender diversity in corporate boards.

The podcast was moderated by Ms. May Al-Owaish, Chief Data and Innovation Officer at Gulf Bank, and hosted by Ms. Dalal Aldosari, Deputy General Manager of Investor Relations at Gulf Bank. Her Excellency Anne Karien, the Ambassador of the European Union Delegation to Kuwait, also participated in the event, appreciating

Bahrain. The summit saw the involvement of top experts and professionals in the human resources field, representing notable companies and financial institutions across the region.

Ms. Salma Al-Hajjaj accepted the award on behalf of Gulf Bank, also receiving the prestigious "Best Training and Development" award.

Bayan School Celebrates International Women's Day

Najla Al-Eisa, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank's Marketing Department, served as a keynote speaker at Bayan School's International Women's Day celebration with the theme "Empowering High School Girls." During her presentation, she highlighted Gulf Bank's distinctive initiatives in women's empowerment.

Gulf Bank's Female Leaders Participate in Corporate Directors Training Program

Three women leaders from Gulf Bank took part in the Corporate Directors Training Program organized by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, in collaboration with the Tammayaz Foundation and Soroptimist International. Gulf Bank's involvement in this program reflects its commitment to advancing sustainability principles in society and supporting women's empowerment programs and initiatives.

ProudCast: Celebrating Women's Achievements

Ms. Salma Al-Hajjaj took part in the "ProudCast" event, hosted by KPMG Kuwait, which celebrated the numerous achievements and successes of women across various sectors. The event was attended by numerous representatives of leading companies in Kuwait, who share a keen interest in women's empowerment.

AmCham Kuwait Seminar

Gulf Bank took part in a seminar hosted by the American Business Council AmCham Kuwait, focusing on "Diversity, Inclusion, and Sustainable Practices." The seminar drew active participation from various representatives from both the public and private sectors. Gulf Bank's remarkable efforts in advancing sustainability principles, especially in women's empowerment, were thoroughly discussed during the event.

Gulf Bank Launches Annual Women's Health Campaign

Gulf Bank initiated its yearly campaign in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month and mental health, aiming to promote women's health and safety throughout October. The campaign includes offering complimentary screenings for female employees and hosting a workshop focused on women's empowerment.

Najla Al-Eisa Becomes First Female President of IAA Kuwait

Ms. Najla Al-Eisa, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank's Marketing Department, has been appointed as the President of the International Advertising Association (IAA) in Kuwait, marking her as the first woman in Kuwait to hold this position. This historic decision was made during the organization's recent annual meeting in Malaysia.

The International Advertising Association is globally recognized as the sole organization that comprehensively addresses all facets of the advertising and marketing sectors, encompassing client relationships and advertising agency affairs. Additionally, it stands out as the sole entity with a clear vision aimed at advancing the advertising system.

Gulf Bank's role in supporting and empowering women in leadership.

Lead the Way Conference

Gulf Bank organized the "Lead The Way" conference, gathering a diverse array of individuals and representatives from banks, the private sector, diplomatic and governmental entities, as well as non-profit organizations.

The conference addressed significant challenges in supporting and empowering women, highlighting their positive economic impact. This was facilitated through interactive workshops, inspirational speeches, and engaging panel discussions held throughout the conference.

Women of Wisdom (WOW) Discussion Sessions

In its continuous commitment to uphold sustainability principles, Gulf Bank hosted discussion sessions for women through the Women of Wisdom (WOW) platform. These sessions serve as a reliable space for communication, sharing experiences and ideas, and addressing proposals and solutions to the challenges encountered by women.

Gulf Bank Receives Excellence Award for Diversity and Inclusion

Gulf Bank was honored with the "Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion" award at the 2023 Middle East and North Africa Human Resources Management Summit held in

Timberlake returns on nostalgic 'Everything I Thought It Was'

By Maria Sherman

In its better tracks, Justin Timberlake's first new album in six years, "Everything I Thought It Was," is a return to form for the musician. In the moments when his immediately recognizable falsetto eases into a familiar kind of future funk, it works. In others, it feels like poorly timed nostalgia.

Once celebrated as one of the great performers of the 21st century for his clever R&B-pop, JT has had a remarkable career: from Disney's star-making "The Mickey Mouse Club" to fronting one of the most successful boy bands of all time, NSYNC, to finding a path towards individuation and embarking on a stellar solo stint. The latter might be the most impressive — from 2002's "Justified" to 2006's "Future.../ LoveSounds," and an acting career (lest anyone forget his performance in "The Social Network") to yet another triumphant return to his spot atop pop music's throne with 2013's "The 20/20 Experience" and "The 20/20 Experience — 2 of 2." If only it would've lasted.

Timberlake's public perception faltered in the years that followed. The album between that era and this one, 2018's "Man of the Woods" leaned into "return to roots" iconography (Timberlake is from Tennessee, after all) and Americana, folk sounds — a divisive detour. When, in the early 2020s, the "Free Britney Spears" movement picked up momentum, Timberlake was cast as a villain in her story, which was only amplified with the release of her 2023 memoir "The Woman in Me." Several chapters are devoted to her relationship with Justin Timberlake, including deeply personal details about a pregnancy, abortion and painful breakup.

Timberlake was also criticized for his role at the 2004 Super Bowl halftime show.

That's all necessary context to bring the larger-than-life Justin Timberlake into 2024. The 18-track "Everything I Thought It Was," does not erase the "Man of the Woods" period, but it is an enjoyable — if often derivative — reminder of Timberlake at the height of his powers: from the slow-swing heartbreak track "Drown" co-written and co-produced by Timberlake, Louis Bell, Cirkut, Kenyon Dixon and Amy Allen to other elevated moments. Like "No Angels," with its disco rhythms and idiosyncratic falsetto on "There ain't no angels here on the dance floor" or on the inverted gospel "Sanctified," which features rapper Tobe Nwigwe and stadium-sized rock instrumentation. The pop "Paradise" features all of NSYNC — if only a reunion was permanent.

Released

Then there's "Selfish," the first single released from the album, an R&B ballad that bears striking resemblance to Nick Jonas' "Jealous" (which is odd, because "Jealous" steals from JT's early work — and much of Jonas' solo career, it seems, was designed to mirror Timberlake's successful break from his boy band. Snake, meet tail.)

Any rectifying with his past self — and his current public perception — is limited to the opener "Memphis": "I pray for peace within myself/And no more regrets with it," he sings. "Cause when I looked at my soul in the Mississippi/It reflected it." The rest of the album, it seems, focuses on love and the strength of his relationship with wife Jessica Biel.

In the press leading up to the release of "Everything I Thought It Was," Timberlake has said the album took four years to make, and that he wrote 100 songs for it.

The reality is, for the nostalgic charms found on "Everything I Thought It Was," Timberlake's work is no doubt colored by an unfor-

tunately timed return to the music game.

Also:

SAN FRANCISCO: Esa-Pekka Salonen will leave the San Francisco Symphony following the 2024-25 season, just his fifth as music director, announcing his departure Thursday with a statement critical of the orchestra's leadership.

"I do not share the same goals for the future of the institution as the board of governors does," Salonen said in a statement.

Salonen was not discussing his decision beyond the statement, spokeswoman **Amanda Ameer** said.

"There are significant financial pressures on the organization that have just become impossible to ignore," Symphony CEO **Matthew Spivey** said later Thursday. "It's clear that the organization will have to evolve in various ways to respond to those pressures. The organization already has begun to make some of those difficult decisions."

Spivey cited the cancellation of some events at SoundBox, an alternate venue that was the site of late-night concerts.

"Further changes are probably necessary and some of them are even yet to be determined, but clearly these decisions are steering the organization in a different direction than what we could have anticipated in 2018 when Esa-Pekka was appointed," Spivey said. "So given this, it's understandable that Esa-Pekka would conclude his tenure as music director when his contract ends in June 2025."

The symphony board is chaired by **Priscilla B. Geeslin**, whose husband, **Keith Geeslin**, is president of San Francisco Opera.

Orchestra spokeswoman **Taryn Lott** said Priscilla B. Geeslin was not available to comment. (AP)

Variety



In this image provided by MUBI is fashion designer John Galliano in the documentary film, 'High & Low -- John Galliano,' directed by Kevin Macdonald. In the photograph by David Harriman John Galliano returns to the Dior archive for the first time since 2011. (AP)

Film

'Civil War' premieres at SXSW film festival

'Galliano' explores rise, fall of designer

NEW YORK, March 16, (AP)—The new documentary "High & Low - John Galliano" covers all the complexities of the famous British designer, one of the most celebrated and controversial figures in the fashion industry.

The film, directed by Kevin Macdonald, features candid interviews with Galliano and fashion icons Anna Wintour, Naomi Campbell, Penelope Cruz, Kate Moss and Charlize Theron.

Galliano's star shone brightly when Givenchy hired him as a young head designer in 1995, before Christian Dior brought him on as creative director in 1996. For nearly 15 years, he worked tirelessly on multiple seasonal collections at Dior and also started his own label. His over-the-top theatrical runway shows told stories with elaborate sets and makeup.

The film suggests that Galliano was overworked and abusing alcohol and drugs when he made a series of antisemitic and racist comments in 2010 and 2011. Dior dropped him, he was convicted in an antisemitism trial in France, and he disappeared from the fashion world for several years. During that time, he made public and private efforts to rehabilitate and get sober.

In 2014, Galliano was hired by Paris fashion house Maison Margiela and debuted his first show in years. His most recent show received rave reviews. The Associated Press talked to Macdonald about Galliano's rise and fall and why many friends and fans stayed loyal to him. Answers have been edited for clarity and brevity.

Macdonald: I went to Paris, I met (Galliano), we had lunch, and it was obvious that he wanted to make a film. It was in his mind I think for a number of reasons, maybe partly because he thought, "Alexander McQueen has a great film. I should have one about me." ... But I think also because he said to me, "Look, I don't expect people to forgive me. Those who are not going to forgive me are not going to forgive me, but I would like people to understand a bit more what happened." And I thought that was a good motivation for making a film.

Macdonald: I wanted to make a film that was a film for debate - that didn't close things down in a black and white way. Because there is no answer to a lot of the questions that are raised by this film. When has somebody paid their dues? When should they be forgiven?

How do we really know why someone said something? Why somebody did something wrong? He was blind drunk, blacked out. He doesn't even remember why he did it. So I want people to come away with a feeling of, gosh, it's complicated.

Macdonald: People can criticize and say, well, you know, you're putting your loyalty above integrity. But you can also see it, as you know, loyalty is a really great quality. And I think it's amazing to me, the number of celebrities who agreed to appear - at some reputational risk. I would say that because they felt loyalty to him, because they like him, and they wanted to put forward their experiences with him.

Macdonald: I don't think that he was in any way deliberately setting out to hurt people. As far as how sorry he feels, I think he feels very sorry about what happened, but I think there's also a side to him - he's a bit narcissistic, and he feels like, you know, "I've done enough." But of course, then he'll turn around and say, "Well, I know that I'm never going to be forgiven. And I know that there's certain people who would never buy my clothes."

Macdonald: This latest show has been greeted with this attention and people absolutely loved it. It's become a kind of internet phenomenon. And people are saying it's now no longer Margiela. It's back to being Galliano. I don't know whether the experience of making the documentary was somehow cathartic and it's kind of released him to do that, but I think there might be a little bit of that going on. ... It feels like, "OK, I've got that off my chest now, now I can ... do what I'm really, really good at and express myself more personally again."

Also:

AUSTIN, Texas: "Civil War," Alex Garland's election-year provocation, debuted Thursday at the SXSW Film and TV Festival, unveiling a violent vision of a near-future America at war with itself.

"Civil War," reportedly A24's biggest budget release yet, is a bold gamble to capitalize on some of the anxieties that have grown in highly partisan times and ahead of a potentially momentous November presidential election.

The film, written and directed by the British filmmaker Garland ("Ex Machina," "Annihilation"), imagines a

US in all-out warfare, with California and Texas joining to form the "Western Forces." That insurrection, along with the "Florida Alliance," is seeking to topple a government led by a three-term president, played by **Nick Offerman**.

In drawing battle lines across states blue and red, "Civil War" sidesteps much of the politics that might be expected in such a movie. And the story, too, largely omits surrounding context for the conflict, focusing on the day-to-day adventures of a group of journalists played by **Kirsten Dunst**, **Cailee Spaeny**, **Wagner Moura** and **Stephen McKinley Henderson**, who are attempting to document the fighting.

"The film is intended as a conversation. It is not asserting things - I mean I guess it's asserting some things," Garland told the crowd after the screening. "But it's a conversation, and that means it's not a lecture."

"A lot of the times," he added, "I was thinking about what can I avoid, what can I miss out and make it a sort of two-way exchange."

The movie year has showed signs of turning combustible as the nation girds for an election where some believe democracy is at stake. At the Academy Awards on Sunday, host **Jimmy Kimmel** largely avoided talking politics before reading a critical social media post from former President **Donald Trump**.

"Isn't it past your jail time?" prodded Kimmel.

There are more films on the way with potential to add talking points. "The Apprentice," in which **Sebastian Stan** plays Trump, was shot in the fall, though no release date has yet been announced. But nothing has had quite the anticipation of "Civil War." Some even debated whether its timing was inappropriate.

Yet "Civil War," which will open in US theaters on April 12, isn't as incendiary as some hoped, or feared. There are some chilling moments, including one where a gun-wielding militant played by **Jesse Plemons** asks the journalists, "What kind of American are you?" But much of the film's visceral power comes through its scenes of the US as a battleground populated by refugee camps and mass graves.

The idea for the film came to Garland almost exactly four years ago, he said.

Features

ARAB TIMES

ARAB TIMES, SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2024

Music

LOS ANGELES: The Los Angeles home of model and actor **Cara Delevingne** was destroyed in a fire Friday.

One firefighter was taken to a hospital in fair condition with unspecified injuries, and one unidentified person from the house suffered minor smoke inhalation, Los Angeles Fire Department spokesman **Nicholas Prange** said.

Delevingne shared several Instagram stories referring to the fire after TMZ reported that the house in the Studio City neighborhood that was engulfed in flames before dawn belonged to her. Delevingne is currently appearing in a production of "Cabaret" on London's West End and was apparently not at home.

Firefighters arrived at the two-story house to find heavy fire in the rear, which destroyed a room and spread to the attic, Prange said. Once fire crews made certain everyone was out of the house, they took a defensive position and the roof collapsed. It took them more than two hours to put out the flames.

Hours later, Delevingne, shared a video that showed a street full of fire trucks with lights flashing.

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart to all the firefighters and people that have showed up to help," another Instagram story read.

A third Instagram story showed a photo of two cats with the caption, "My heart is broken today I cannot believe it life can change in the blink of an eye cherish what you have." She later clarified with another post that her cats were not hurt in the fire.

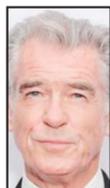
The home also matches one that was featured in a 2021 profile in Architectural Digest. The white brick house with two pools and two trampolines in the backyard was built in 1941 for the Von der Ahe family, founders of the Vons grocery chain.

Delevingne and her designer added playful elements, including a costume room for dress-up parties, a bathroom that's a memorial to **David Bowie**, poker and billiard rooms, and a ball pit. (AP)

MAMMOTH, Wyo: Actor **Pierce Brosnan**, who pleaded guilty Thursday to stepping off a trail in a thermal area during a November visit to Yellowstone National Park, was caught after posting pictures online, court records said.

Brosnan, who called in to the court hearing in **Mammoth, Wyoming**, was fined \$500 and ordered to make a \$1,000 donation by April 1 to Yellowstone Forever, a nonprofit organization that supports the park, court records said. Prosecutors had recommended a \$5,000 fine and a two-year probationary sentence.

A second petty offense, for



Brosnan



Delevingne

violating closures and use limits, was dismissed by US Magistrate Judge **Stephanie Hambrick**.

The actor issued an apology on his Instagram account Thursday, saying he "made an impulsive mistake" and calling himself an environmentalist with "the utmost respect for and love of our natural world."

"I deeply regret my transgression and offer my heartfelt apolo-

gies to all for trespassing in this sensitive area. Yellowstone and all our National Parks are to be cared for and preserved for all to enjoy," Brosnan wrote.

He did not see a "no trespassing" sign when entering the thermal area to take a photo and did not hike in the immediate area, he wrote.

Brosnan ended the message

with "#StayOnThePath."

Brosnan, 70, walked in an off-limits area at **Mammoth Terraces**, in the northern part of Yellowstone near the Wyoming-Montana line, on Nov. 1, according to citations issued by the park. He was in the park on a personal visit and not for film work, the US Attorney's Office for Wyoming has said. (AP)

Starship fails splashdown, lost at sea

SpaceX nears test flight completion despite spacecraft loss

NEW YORK, March 16, (AP): SpaceX came close to completing an hourlong test flight of its mega rocket on its third try Thursday, but the spacecraft was lost as it descended back to Earth.

The company said it lost contact with Starship as it neared its goal, a splashdown in the Indian Ocean. The first-stage booster also ended up in pieces, breaking apart much earlier in the flight over the Gulf of Mexico after launching from the southern tip of Texas near the Mexican border.

"The ship has been lost. So no splashdown today," said SpaceX's Dan Huot. "But again, it's incredible to see how much further we got this time around."

Two test flights last year both ended in explosions minutes after liftoff. By surviving for close to 50 minutes this time, Thursday's effort was considered a win by not only SpaceX's Elon Musk, but NASA as well as Starship soared higher and farther than ever before. The space agency is counting on Starship to land its astronauts on the moon in another few years.

The nearly 400-foot (121-meter) Starship, the biggest and most powerful rocket ever built, headed out over the Gulf of Mexico after liftoff Thursday morning, flying east. Spectators crowded the nearby beaches in South Padre Island and Mexico.

A few minutes later, the booster separated seamlessly from the spaceship, but broke apart 1,500 feet (462 meters) above the gulf, instead of plummeting into the water intact. By then, the spacecraft was well to the east and continuing upward, with no people or satellites on board.

Starship reached an altitude of about 145 miles (233 kilometers) as it coasted across the Atlantic and South Africa, before approaching the Indian Ocean. But 49 minutes into the flight



In this image from video provided by SpaceX, the company's Starship re-enters the Earth's atmosphere on Thursday, March 14, 2024. SpaceX came close to completing an hourlong test flight of its mega rocket on its third try Thursday, but the spacecraft was lost as it descended back to Earth. (AP)

- with just 15 minutes remaining - all contact was lost and the spacecraft presumably broke apart.

At that point, it was 40 miles (65 kilometers) high and traveling around 16,000 mph (25,700 kph).

SpaceX's Elon Musk had just congratulated

his team a little earlier. "SpaceX has come a long way," he said via X, formerly called Twitter. The rocket company was founded exactly 22 years ago Thursday.

NASA watched with keen interest: The space agency needs Starship to succeed in order to land astronauts on the moon in the next

two or so years. This new crop of moonwalkers - the first since last century's Apollo program - will descend to the lunar surface in a Starship after transferring from NASA's Orion capsule in lunar orbit.

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson quickly congratulated SpaceX on what he called a suc-

cessful test flight as part of the space agency's Artemis moon-landing program.

The stainless steel, bullet-shaped spacecraft launched atop a first-stage booster known as the Super Heavy. Both the booster and the spacecraft are designed to be reusable, although they were never meant to be salvaged Thursday.

On Starship's inaugural launch last April, several of the booster's 33 methane-fueled engines failed and the booster did not separate from the spacecraft, causing the entire vehicle to explode and crash into the gulf four minutes after liftoff.

SpaceX managed to double the length of the flight during November's trial run. While all 33 engines fired and the booster peeled away as planned, the flight ended in a pair of explosions, first the booster and then the spacecraft.

The Federal Aviation Administration reviewed all the corrections made to Starship, before signing off on Thursday's launch. The FAA said after the flight that it would again investigate what happened. As during the second flight, all 33 booster engines performed well during ascent, according to SpaceX.

Initially, SpaceX plans to use the mammoth rockets to launch the company's Starlink internet satellites, as well as other spacecraft. Test pilots would follow to orbit, before the company flies wealthy clients around the moon and back. Musk considers the moon a stepping stone to Mars, his ultimate quest.

NASA is insisting that an empty Starship land successfully on the moon, before future moonwalkers climb aboard. The space agency is targeting the end of 2026 for the first moon landing crew under the Artemis program, named after the mythological twin sister of Apollo.

Global inequality deepens

Post-pandemic recovery favors wealthy, says UN

UNITED NATIONS, March 16, (AP): Many countries are bouncing back from the COVID-19 pandemic, but the poorest are not and a significant number are seeing their conditions deteriorate, the U.N. Development Program said Wednesday.



Steiner

Achim Steiner, head of the agency, said that after two decades during which rich and poor countries were coming closer in terms of development, the finding is "a very strong warning signal" that nations are now drifting apart.

The Human Development Index that the agency has produced since 1990 is projected to reach record highs in 2023 after steep declines during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021.

But development in half of the world's poorest countries remains below 2019 pre-pandemic levels, the report said.

"It's a rich person's versus a poor person's world in which we are seeing development unfolding in very unequal, partially incomplete ways," Steiner said at a news conference. "Why does this matter? Not only because it creates more vulnerability, it creates also more misery and protracted poverty, growing inequality."

The growing inequalities are compounded by the concentration

of economic wealth, the report said.

It pointed to almost 40% of global trade in goods concentrated in three or fewer countries. And it said the stock market value of the three largest tech companies in 2021 - Amazon, Apple and Microsoft - surpassed the gross domestic product of more than 90% of the 193 U.N. member nations that year.

Steiner said the world's nations should be joining forces to focus on major threats in the 21st century, especially climate change, the next pandemic and the emergence of a digital economy and artificial intelligence. But instead, he warned, there is increasing division and growing frustration and polarization.

He said a significant response has been the emergence of populism, which is anti-elite and hostile to international cooperation. He said that "is increasingly dividing societies, radicalizing the political discourse, and essentially turning more and more people against each other."

The report says advancing global collective action to tackle the world's major challenges is hindered by an emerging "democracy paradox" - 90% of people worldwide endorse democracy but for the first time over half the respondents in a global survey expressed support for leaders that risk undermining the foundations of democracy.

Territorial conflicts will continue to crop up, but the threats to human security in the 21st century will more often require being able to collaborate, Steiner said.

Tool sees spike in use after Munn's revelation

Breast cancer risk calculator sees surge in visits

NEW YORK, March 16, (AP): When Olivia Munn revealed this week that she was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a double mastectomy, she urged people to ask their doctors to figure out their score on a breast cancer risk calculator.

Munn said her score prompted further tests and the discovery of an aggressive form of the disease.

"I'm lucky. We caught it with enough time that I had options," the 43-year-old actor posted on Instagram. "I want the same for any woman who might have to face this one day."

A look at the calculator, the Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool:

It's a questionnaire on the National Cancer Institute's website that is designed for health care providers to use with patients. The tool received a "dramatic increase in visits" since Munn's post, according to an NCI spokesperson.

First developed in 1989, it was originally based on data from only white women. Updates have made it more accurate for Black, Hispanic and Asian and Pacific Islander women.

It doesn't take everything into account and can't actually predict whether any one person will get breast cancer.

It asks about age, age at first menstrual period, age when the woman's first child was born or if the woman has not given birth, family history of breast cancer, past breast biopsies, results of past biopsies, race and ethnicity.

The result is a lifetime risk and a five-year risk based on factors that have been tied to a higher risk of breast cancer. For comparison, it also gives an average risk for U.S. women of the same age, race and ethnicity.

Dr. Elizabeth Comen, who treats breast cancer at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, said women should do the assessment with their doctors, not by themselves.

"It's very important to talk to your doctor about doing that together, and



A syringe is prepared at a clinic in Norristown, Pa., Dec. 7, 2021. The Environmental Protection Agency finalized a rule Thursday, March 14, 2024, imposing stricter limits on a chemical used to sterilize medical equipment after finding a higher-than-expected cancer risk at facilities that use ethylene oxide to clean billions of devices including catheters and syringes. (AP)

then making decisions about what imaging techniques are appropriate" based on the results, Comen said. Munn's high score prompted additional imaging tests that aren't recommended for women of average risk.

It's not the best risk calculator for some women. If you have a certain gene mutation or a previous history of breast cancer, it's not for you. It also doesn't take into account dense breast tissue, which can make cancer harder to spot.

The National Cancer Institute says the tool may underestimate risk in Black women with previous biopsies and Hispanic women born outside the U.S.

"The model needs further validation for Hispanic women and other subgroups," the institute's website says. "Researchers are conducting additional studies to gather more data to test and improve the model."

There are dozens of similar tools, said Ashley Johnson, a nurse practitioner at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, who has studied them. Many health groups recommend that women over age 25 have such an assessment, she said, but there's not enough evidence to say which tool is best.

A five-year risk score of 2%, for example, means a woman's estimated risk of developing breast cancer over

the next five years is 2%. A lifetime risk score of 7% means a woman's estimated risk of developing breast cancer through age 90 is 7%.

Mammogram guidelines are for women at average risk, said Dr. Arif Kamal, chief patient officer at the American Cancer Society. Guidelines vary but the society says women can choose to start annual mammograms at age 40.

"Knowing your risk starts even before the age of 40," Kamal said. That's where a risk calculator can help.

Everyone has some risk of cancer, Comen said, but some lifestyle changes can reduce the chances.

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Brumbies beat Highlanders

Australian teams continue a strong start in Super Rugby Pacific

Heat top Pistons to end four-game losing streak



Utah Jazz guard Collin Sexton (2) shoots against the Atlanta Hawks during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Friday, March 15, 2024, in Salt Lake City. (AP)

Suns burn Hornets

DETROIT, March 16, (AP): Bam Adebayo had 22 points and nine rebounds in 29 minutes, and the Miami Heat ended a four-game losing streak with a 108-95 victory over the Detroit Pistons Friday night.

Adebayo went 10 for 14 from the floor before sitting out the fourth quarter as Miami coasted to the win. Caleb Martin and Terry Rozier each had 18 points.

BASKETBALL

The Pistons were trying for their first three-game winning streak since the 2021-22 season, but committed 18 turnovers that led to 33 Miami points. Simone Fontecchio scored 24 points and Jalen Duren added 15 points and 17 rebounds.

Suns 107, Hornets 96

In Charlotte, N.C., Devin Booker led a balanced Phoenix attack with 21 points and 11 assists as the Suns beat the Charlotte Hornets for their fourth win in six games.

Grayson Allen and Bradley Beal each scored 15 points, and Jusuf Nurkic chipped in with 13 points and 21 rebounds for the Suns (39-28), who bounced back from a lopsided 127-112 loss to the NBA-best Boston Celtics on Thursday night.

Vasa Micic followed up a career-high 25-point effort on Wednesday night against the Memphis Grizzlies with 21 points to lead Charlotte. Miles Bridges added 17 points and 10 rebounds for the Hornets.

Magic 113, Raptors 103

In Toronto, Franz Wagner scored 19 points, Paolo Banchero had 17 and Orlando beat short-handed Toronto handing the Raptors their season-worst sixth straight loss.

Jalen Suggs scored 16 points, Wendell Carter Jr. added 15 and Cole Anthony had 12 for the Magic, who led by as many as 19 and have won seven of nine.

Banchero also had nine rebounds and eight assists.

Gary Trent Jr. scored a season-high 31 points for the Raptors and Immanuel Quickley had 10 points and 10 assists. Quickley has a career-high eight games with 10 or more assists this season, all of them coming since he was traded to Toronto last Dec. 30.

Pelicans 112, Clippers 104

In New Orleans, Zion William-

son scored 34 points and New Orleans beat Los Angeles, pulling within two games of the Clippers for the No. 4 seed in the Western Conference.

New Orleans also won the season series, 3-1. The fourth and fifth seeds meet in the first round of the NBA playoffs, and the Pelicans would own the regular-season, head-to-head tiebreaker over the Clippers, if it came to that in mid-April.

Spending most of the game as New Orleans' primary ball-handler, Williamson initiated the Pelicans' offense and ultimately took over the game, scoring time after time on explosive moves to the hoop that were both powerful and shifty.

Trey Murphy III scored 14 points and Brandon Ingram 13 for New Orleans, which made five 3-point-

ers in the fourth quarter to keep the Clippers at bay.

Paul George scored 26 points and Kawhi Leonard had 23 for Los Angeles, which played without James Harden (left shoulder strain) for a second straight game. Harden has averaged 17.4 points this season.

Nuggets 117, Spurs 106

In Austin, Nikola Jokic scored 31 points and Denver beat San Antonio in a game played in the Texas capital as the Spurs drew a record crowd in their bid to broaden their regional fan base.

Jamal Murray added 15 points and 10 assists for Denver, which won its fifth straight game and for the 11th time in 12 games to remain atop the Western Conference standings.

Jeremy Sochan scored 19 points and Devin Vassell and Victor Wembanyama each had 17 points for San Antonio, which lost its third straight.

Jazz 124, Hawks 122

In Salt Lake City, Keyonte George scored 25 points and Collin Sexton added 21 to lead Utah Jazz to a victory over Atlanta.

George and Sexton combined for 11 assists to help the Jazz snap a three-game losing streak. John Collins had 18 points and 11 rebounds, while Johnny Juzang made five 3-pointers and finished with a career-high 19 points off the bench. Utah finished with 56 points in the paint and 24 fast-break points.

Dejounte Murray led the Hawks with 33 points, nine assists and seven rebounds. De'Andre Hunter chipped in 27 points, Jalen Johnson added 26 and Clint Capela had 15 rebounds to go with 10 points.



Denver Nuggets guard Jamal Murray (left) looks past San Antonio Spurs guard Tre Jones, right, during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Austin, Texas. (AP)

Tourists chase down Bangladesh

Sri Lanka level one-day int'l series

CHATTOGRAM, Bangladesh, March 16, (AP): Opening batter Pathum Nissanka's century helped Sri Lanka chase down Bangladesh by three wickets and level their one-day international series.

Nissanka's 114 in a national record 185-run stand for the fourth wicket with Charith Asalanka saved Sri Lanka from 43-3. Asalanka made a 93-ball 91 and missed out on his fourth ton. But their partnership was key in overcoming Bangladesh's 286-7 with 287-7 in 47.1 overs.

CRICKET

"After the three wickets fell, Charith and me decided to bat normally and, looking at the score, to bat long and get close to the target," Nissanka said. "Initially, it was important we settle down, and then we decided one of us would go after the bowlers."

Bangladesh was led by Towhid Hridoy, who finished 96 not out.

Bangladesh pacer Shoriful Islam continued his habit of striking with the new ball when opener

Avishka Fernando edged the first ball he faced to first slip for a duck.

Taskin Ahmed bagged captain Kusal Mendis for 16 and Shoriful got the better of Sadeera Samarawickrama to reduce Sri Lanka to 43-3 in the seventh over.

Nissanka and Asalanka rebuilt the innings astutely, much to the despair of Bangladesh bowlers.

After bringing up his fifty off 58 balls, Nissanka paced the innings impeccably. He raised his sixth century off 100 balls when he pulled a short delivery off pacer Tanzim Hasan to deep midwicket for a single. He hit 13 fours and three sixes.

Asalanka was in an attacking mood. He slog-swept left-arm spinner Taijul Islam for a six over deep midwicket to raise his fifty off 50 balls.

Bangladesh came back into the game by dismissing both set batters in consecutive overs.

Off-spinner Mehidy Hasan claimed Nissanka for 114 off 113 balls, and Taskin reviewed successfully to dismiss Asalanka for a 93-ball 91 including six fours and four sixes.

DUNEDIN, New Zealand, March 16, (AP): The ACT Brumbies turned in an improved second-half performance to beat the Dunedin-based Highlanders 27-21 in Super Rugby Pacific on Saturday for the third win of the season by an Australian team over a New Zealand opponent.

The Brumbies trailed 11-7 after a frenetic first half but took the lead for the first time in the 42nd minute with a try to winger Corey Toole, his fifth of the season.

The Highlanders regained the lead in the 58th minute with a try to their Billy Harmon. But the Brumbies rallied to retake the lead with a penalty to Noah Lolesio, then a match-winning try to replacement Lachlan Loneragan.

Lolesio kicked five goals from five attempts for 12 points as the Brumbies posted their first win in Dunedin in 13 years.

Sam Gilbert kicked an injury time penalty to give the Highlanders a bonus point.

The Brumbies lost 46-12 to the Hamilton-based Chiefs in round two in the only previous match against a New Zealand team this season. They got their season back on track with a 22-19 win over the Western Force last weekend and reproduced the best aspects of the match in the second half Saturday.

"We had a good look at ourselves after the Force game," Brumbies captain Ryan Loneragan said. "We got a win last week but we still weren't happy with the physicality in our breakdown."

"I think in the first 20 minutes here we were still a bit lazy in that area. Then we started to muscle up and we started to play a bit of good footy."

The Brumbies were taken out of their comfort zone in a first half which was played at extreme pace and with little structure. The first scrum of the match didn't come until

the 37th minute and the Brumbies often found themselves under pressure at breakdowns.

The first try of the match came in the fifth minute when Loneragan was sacked behind a breakdown and the Highlanders toed the ball through to score through Nikita Broughton.

Tom Wright scored the Brumbies' first try as they began to assert themselves late in the half and Toole put them ahead with excellent work in a left flank overlap just after the break.

The Brumbies settled into a more structured game in the second half and made good use of contestable kicks and a strong scrum. They were hard-hit by injuries and had to use three captains, finishing the match with James Slipper in charge.

RUGBY

"We spoke at halftime about getting a bit of control," Loneragan said. "That first half was a guide. There was some massive passages and a lot of fatigue in the game."

"We felt we didn't really control it as well as we should have but come the second half we got a bit more ascendancy and were able to control the tempo a bit more through our set piece."

Flyhalf Damian McKenzie kicked 16 points for the Hamilton-based Chiefs who beat the Fijian Drua 46-29. McKenzie kicked seven consecutive goals before missing the conversion of the Chiefs' final try. He also had a hand in several of the Chiefs' six tries.

In the final match of the fourth round, the Auckland-based Blues beat the New South Wales Waratahs 12-10 in Sydney. The Blues, with three wins in their first four matches, extended their longest winning streak over any team in the competition to 10 matches to leave the Waratahs at 1-3.

\$11 bln budgeted for in four-year financial cycle

FIFA gives president Infantino 33% raise in a pay deal worth \$4.6 mln

GENEVA, March 16, (AP): FIFA raised president Gianni Infantino's base salary 33% last year to lift his total pay package to more than 4.13 million Swiss francs (\$4.67 million), soccer's governing body said in its financial report.

Infantino was re-elected unopposed in 2023 to extend his presidency to 11 years before FIFA staged the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand and picked preferred candidates to host two future men's World Cups, including the 2034 edition in Saudi Arabia.

Infantino's pre-tax base salary payment rose by more than 500,000 Swiss francs (\$565,000) last year to reach more than 2.46 million Swiss francs (\$2.78 million). His annual bonus was 1.65 million Swiss francs (\$1.87 million), the same as in 2022 when the men's World Cup was played in Qatar.

The previous FIFA president, Sepp Blatter, had a contracted bonus of \$12 million for the 2014 World Cup on top of a \$3 million basic salary and annual bonuses.

SOCCER

Infantino had a home in Qatar to oversee preparations for the 2022 tournament and now spends time in Florida, where FIFA has offices at Coral Gables, ahead of the United States co-hosting the next men's World Cup with Canada and Mexico. Florida does not have a state income tax.

FIFA has budgeted for total revenue of \$11 billion in the four-year financial cycle from 2023 through 2026 with Saudi sponsors including state oil firm Aramco expected to join longtime partners Coca-Cola, Adidas and Visa. The 2026 World Cup will be the first with 48 teams and include 104 games.

FIFA's typically conservative projection did not include income for the 32-team men's Club World Cup that launches next year in the U.S.

FIFA paid its CEO-like secretary general Fatma Samoura the same 1.9 million Swiss francs (\$2.15 million) package in her final year in the job as in 2022. She got a salary of 1.3 million Swiss francs (\$1.47 million) and 600,000 Swiss francs (\$670,000) bonus before leaving in December.

Infantino has operated as an executive leader despite recommendations by a reforms panel - of which he was a member - created after corruption scandals in 2015 that the FIFA president should have a more figurehead

Islamabad United 'eliminate' Quetta

KARACHI, Pakistan, March 16, (AP): Left-arm spinner Imad Wasim brilliantly claimed 3-12 in the power play as Islamabad United sunk Quetta Gladiators and advanced in the Pakistan Super League playoffs.

Two-time former champion Islamabad will meet Peshawar Zalmi in eliminator 2 on Saturday and the winner will progress to Monday's final against Multan Sultans.

After Islamabad posted 174-9, Quetta was all out for 135 in the 19th over of its first playoff game in four years. Islamabad won by 39 runs.

Umair Yousuf's fighting 50 wasn't enough to overcome the damage inflicted in the first six overs by Wasim, whose three wickets helped to reduce Quetta to 16-5.

Saud Shakeel gloved a leg-side catch to wicketkeeper Azam Khan in the first over; captain Rilee Rossouw was caught at deep square leg; and Khawaja Nafay offered a tame catch at mid-off.

Jason Roy's woeful season with the bat ended without joy when he was caught at first slip on 1 off Naseem Shah, and Laurie Evans was run out in a mix-up with Akeal Hosen as Quetta lost half of its side in the power play.

role. That reform group also insisted on publishing details of management pay.

FIFA pay is set up by a compensation panel chaired by Mukul Mudgal, a retired judge from India who oversees governance and compliance at the soccer body, for which he was paid \$250,000 last year.

Payments to the 37-member FIFA Council stayed the same. The six vice presidents who lead continental soccer bodies got a net amount of \$300,000 plus expenses. Other members got \$250,000 plus expenses annually.

The president of European soccer body UEFA, Aleksander Ceferin, also was paid a gross salary without bonus of almost 2.9 million Swiss francs (\$3.26 million), according to its financial report published last month.



Wolverhampton Wanderers' Santiago Bueno (left) and Coventry City's Ellis Simms vie for the ball, during the English FA Cup quarter final match soccer match between Wolverhampton and Coventry City, at the Molineux, Wolverhampton, England. (AP)

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In line with its strategic partnership with Al Qabas to support the youth and sporting community in Kuwait

stc sponsors Al Qabas Ramadan Padel Tournament for 3rd year in a row

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of the 3rd Al Qabas Ramadan Padel Tournament. stc's sponsorship role in the tournament follows its strategic partnership with Al Qabas, which was initiated prior to the launch of the first tournament 3 years ago. The tournament comes as an additional under stc's 2024 Ramadan campaign called "With good, we go further" in line with the Company's extensive corporate social responsibility program.

The Al Qabas Padel tournament will begin on March 14th with the finals taking place on March 22nd at the Al Yousifi Football Courts in Dasman. The tournament will include different categories this year, allowing children and adults of all ages to participate in the exciting and widely followed tournament. There will be a total of 7 categories including males only, females only, mixed advance, mixed beginners, juniors, father & child, and 40+.

stc pointed out that the rapid closure of the registration for the Al Qabas Ramadan Padel Tournament reflects the high demand from athletes and the Kuwaiti youth to participate and compete in such competitions. Throughout the entire tournament, Al Qabas will be reporting on the action at the padel grounds through its social media platforms while engaging with players and fans.

Similar to its previous years in sponsoring the padel tournament, stc will be welcoming participants and attendees at the 'stc village'. The Company will also be distributing valuable prizes to the winning players, while showcasing its range of cutting-edge digital and telecom solutions. Additionally, through its strategic partnership with Flare Fitness, stc will host the "Your calories = internet" competition. Aside from that, the Company will be organizing

a Girgean activity for families where sweets will be distributed to children alongside an old folk dance and Ramadan themed music. Through this initiative, stc aims to engage with the attendees in an exciting atmosphere which has gained a wide following over the years, bringing excitement to the month of Ramadan.

Danah AlJasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "We are thrilled to once

again to sponsor Al Qabas's Padel Tournament for the third year in a row, which has become a tradition in Kuwait during the Holy Month of Ramadan. Our strategic partnership with Al Qabas aspires to nurture the upcoming athletes within this sport, providing them with a platform to truly showcase their athletic abilities amongst a live audience. Aside from our sponsorship role, we look forward to greeting athletes and attendees at our pavilion where we will be hosting a variety of exciting programs and activities. This initiative strongly aligns with one of the key pillars under our CSR strategy, with a focus on empowering the younger generation and Kuwait's sports community. It also aligns with our commitment to promote the importance of healthy habits that can bring value to our customers, employees, and the community we serve."

AlJasem added, "This year, the tournament includes a diverse range of categories for both advanced players and beginners. Based on our experience in sponsoring the previous tournaments, the lively atmosphere and competitive nature of the tournament will surely bring a cheerful crowd that will add to the vibrant environment on the courts. At stc, we are keen to participate in events that enrich the social fabric in Kuwait, presenting entertainment opportunities in family-oriented settings. Having said that, we take on a progressive approach by collaborating with various entities in Kuwait to create lasting memories for attendees



stc village.

• AlJasem: At stc, we are keen to participate in events that enrich the social fabric in Kuwait, presenting entertainment opportunities in family-oriented settings

3. Launching numerous interactive competitions with valuable prizes awarded to both winners and participants.

4. Organizing the stc "Your calories = internet" challenge in collaboration with Flare Fitness, which will be held during the tournament.

5. Celebrating Girgean with families, including old folk dances, traditional games, and Ramadan themed music to entertain children.

6. Showcasing its range of telecom and digital solutions.

To find out more about stc's events, promotions, and sponsorships, follow stc's official social media platforms, visit one of stc's branches, download mystc mobile application, visit www.stc.com.kw or contact the customer service center by dialing 102 for around the clock assistance.

and settings that foster the spirit of teamwork and community. We look forward to the exciting developments that will occur throughout this tournament and wish all participants the best of luck!"

stc village ...spreading joy and happiness

"stc village" is an initiative launched by stc to drive engagement during sports events and occasions that bring the community together by spreading joy and happiness to the community, with activities including:

1. Awarding valuable prizes to winning players.
2. Welcoming participants and attendees at "stc village"

Al-Baidan forms a committee to distribute dues to two clubs

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, Youssef Abdullah Al-Baidan, the Director General of the General Sports Authority, has established a financial committee tasked with distributing financial dues to the technical and administrative staff of Jahra Club and Al-Nasr Club. This committee is chaired by Faisal Al-Yateem, Deputy Director-General of the Authority for the Finance and Administrative Sector, alongside Bashar Abdullah, Deputy Director-General of the Competitive Sports Sector, and Khalifa Al-Tararwa, Director of the Follow-up and Inspection Department, along with several accountants.

Director General Al-Baidan affirmed that the committee will execute its responsibilities by visiting the headquarters of both clubs to inspect their financial records thoroughly, ensuring all dues related to technical staff and employees are accounted for.

He stated, "The committee will ensure the disbursement of financial dues to technical, medical, and administrative staff in accordance with their contracts or appointment decisions, adhering strictly to prevailing regulations and systems concerning matters such as residency procedures for coaches and



Youssef Al-Baidan, the Director General of the General Sports Authority

players, including renewal, transfer, entry visa, and visits."

Furthermore, Al-Baidan emphasized that the committee is authorized to conduct banking transactions with financial institutions to facilitate salary payments and issue special checks to all employees of both Al-Nasr and Al-Jahra clubs. The committee's mandate spans three months from its inception.



Hassan Al-Khawaja, the head of the Kuwaiti Committee for 'Mini Goal'.

Mini Goal Ramadan tourney set for March 20

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The Kuwaiti Committee for "Mini Goal" is actively gearing up for its upcoming second Ramadan tournament, in collaboration with the Coordination of the Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad. Scheduled for the 20th and 21st of March, the event will take place at the late Samir Saeed Stadium within the Social

its social importance, particularly following the successful organization of the recent "Children of Palestine" Cup tournament. Al-Khawaja stressed that the tournament's primary aim is to promote social engagement through sports, fostering a spirit of competition while encouraging physical activity among different age groups. Furthermore, he highlighted its role in providing a platform for young football enthusiasts to hone their skills and unearth new talents.

Al-Khawaja reiterated the committee's commitment to hosting such tournaments regularly, emphasizing their contribution to fostering a culture of physical fitness within society. By integrating sports into the daily routine of the community, these initiatives aim to positively impact both physical and psychological well-being.

SOCCER

Culture Society premises in Hawalli Square. Sixteen teams, comprising youngsters born in 2012, 2013, and 2014, representing football clubs and academies in Kuwait, are set to participate.

Hassan Al-Khawaja, the head of the Kuwaiti Committee for "Mini Goal," emphasized the significance of the tournament. He underscored

Meillard wins last GS of season as Odermatt misses 45-yr-old record

Verdu of Andorra earns second career podium

SAALBACH-HINTERGLEMM, Austria, March 16, (AP): Marco Odermatt failed to complete a perfect giant slalom season Saturday at the World Cup finals, where the Swiss star skied out in the second run while holding a commanding lead over eventual winner Loic Meillard.

Odermatt had won each of the previous 12 giant slaloms since February 2023, including nine this season. With another victory, he would have matched the record set by Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark, who won all 10 giant slaloms in the 1978-79 season.

"A little disappointed about this result, about this perfect season which isn't perfect now," Odermatt said.

After dominating the first run, he initially extended his lead over Meillard to 0.67 seconds but then lost balance on his inside ski after 20 seconds and failed to make the next gate.

SKIING

Showing his crystal globe - the traditional prize in Alpine skiing - to spectators in the finish area, Odermatt smiled and kissed the trophy, but looked disappointed.

"Of course, there are a lot of negative emotions now. We are all athletes who want to win. If you want to win, you have to take risks and then mistakes can happen," said Odermatt, who is the Olympic and world champion in giant slalom and locked up the GS season title and his third straight overall championship weeks ago.

Odermatt called it "a necessary mistake" which "can happen after 30 races."

"I felt the last two days that I got a bit nervous," he said after the first run.

The course was affected by overnight rain and organizers attempted to harden the surface by sprinkling salt on it just before the race.

"It was difficult conditions, also for the organizers," the Odermatt said.

Getting his second win of the season and fourth overall, Meillard finished 0.71 seconds ahead of Joan Verdu of Andorra, who earned his second career podium. Meillard's Swiss teammate Thomas Tumler was 0.79 behind in third for his first top-three result in more than four years.

The result also made Odermatt wait to become the first male skier with 14 wins across disciplines in a single season, with two chances left to do so at next week's super-G and downhill, where he is a strong favorite to add both disciplines titles.

The overall record for most wins in a season is held by Mikaela Shiffrin, who won 17 times in 2018-19.

The race was the first event of the traditional World Cup finals, which features one race in each discipline for both men and women. The first weekend is reserved for the tech races, with the men's slalom scheduled for Sunday.

Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef hosts ghabqa to honor Al-Mutawa

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef, the former president of the Kuwaiti Football Association, is hosting a Ramadan ghabqa to honor Badr Al-Mutawa, an international player and historic top scorer in the Kuwaiti League, for breaking the record by scoring 164 goals.

A prestigious ceremony, fitting for the occasion, will take place titled "Night of the Full Moon 164," on Thursday, the 18th of Ramadan, at 9 p.m. at the Diwan of Abdul Aziz Saud Al-Sabah and

SOCCER

Brothers in Salmiya.

This honor event will bring together Kuwaiti football icons, players, commentators, and notable figures who have made significant contributions to the sports arena, shining in various tournaments. The tribute is a gesture of ap-



A file photo of Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef and Badr Al-Mutawa

preciation for Al-Mutawa's remarkable sporting achievements and his active involvement in numerous tournaments representing both the national team and local clubs.

Best of the Rest

Galopin Des Champs retains crown: Galopin Des Champs successfully defended his Cheltenham Gold Cup crown in another victory for top Irish trainer Willie Mullins.

Under jockey Paul Townend, the 10-11 favorite Galopin Des Champs drew into the lead at the second-to-last fence and galloped powerfully up the hill in front of Gerri Colombe with Corach Rambler third.

Mullins and Townend combined for their fourth Gold Cup victory following Al Boum Photo's back-to-back triumphs in 2019 and 2020 and Galopin Des Champs' win over Bravemansgame a year ago at the prestigious horse racing jumps meeting.

L'Homme Presse and Gerri Colombe couldn't last with Galopin Des Champs approaching the last fence with a clear advantage before finishing three-and-a-half lengths clear of

Gordon Elliott-trained Gerri Colombe.

Galopin Des Champs' closest rival was the loose Fastorslow, who lost his rider at the seventh-to-last fence. (AP)

4-time Olympic cyclist positive for doping: Four-time Olympic cyclist Christos Volikakis tested positive for doping in retests of samples from the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games, the International Cycling Union said.

Volikakis won medals for Greece in track cycling at world and European championships but not the Olympics where he was selected at each edition from Beijing in 2008 through the Tokyo Games in 2021.

The UCI said Volikakis tested positive for the anabolic agent known as ligandrol in a sample taken on Aug. 16, 2016. In Rio he placed 12th in the keirin. (AP)



Switzerland's Loic Meillard skis towards at the finish area of an alpine ski, men's World Cup giant slalom race, in Saalbach, Austria. (AP)



Islamabad United' Azam Khan removes bails to run out Quetta Gladiators' Akeal Hosein during the Pakistan Super League T20 cricket eliminator match between Islamabad United and Quetta Gladiators, in Karachi, Pakistan. Islamabad won by 39 runs. (AP) — See Page 14

Sports

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Sakkari outlasts Gauff to reach final of Indian Wells

Top-ranked Swiatek routs Ukraine's Kostyuk

INDIAN WELLS, Calif., March 16, (AP): Maria Sakkari outlasted Coco Gauff 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-2 after blowing three match points in the second set of their rain-delayed semifinal to reach the BNP Paribas Open final.

Sakkari will play top-ranked Iga Swiatek in Sunday's final. Swiatek routed Marta Kostyuk 6-2, 6-1 to improve to 19-2 this year, with her match wins leading the WTA Tour.

Swiatek has beaten Sakkari in three of their five meetings.

There were delays of 20 minutes and two hours during the semifinal between third-seeded Gauff and ninth-seeded Sakkari.

Sakkari broke Gauff twice in taking a 5-2 lead in the second set. But Gauff won four straight games and fought off three match points in the 10th game to take a 6-5 lead.

Sakkari held to force the tiebreaker in which she fell behind 6-2 before Gauff won it, 7-5.



Maria Sakkari, of Greece, celebrates after beating Coco Gauff, of the United States, at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. (AP)

There were break points in each of the first six games of the third. After

dropping serve to open the set, Sakkari twice broke Gauff and then held for a 4-1 lead. She held again to go up 5-2 and then one hour and 10 minutes after her first three match points, Sakkari hit a forehand winner to set up her fourth. She closed out the match on Gauff's forehand error.

Swiatek won the 2022 tournament as part of a 37-match winning streak. She

TENNIS

had advanced to the semis when Caroline Wozniacki retired trailing 6-4, 1-0 in their quarterfinal. Swiatek has lost just 17 games through the semis.

Kostyuk hit 17 winners to 14 for Swiatek in the match. But Swiatek was better in nearly every other facet and didn't face a break point. Swiatek connected on 74% of her first serves, won 83% of her first-serve points and 50% of her second-serve points on a cool and windy evening in the Southern California desert.

"It was the cleanest match I played here," Swiatek said in an on-court interview. "I didn't really have any moment today in the match where I didn't feel confident."

In the men's doubles final, Nikola Mektic of Croatia and Wesley Koolhof of the Netherlands defeated fifth-seeded Marcel Granollers of Spain and Horacio Zeballos of Argentina, 7-6 (2), 7-6 (4). The winning pair split \$447,300.

Carlos Alcaraz survived a swarm of bees that caused a nearly two-hour delay and went on to a 6-3, 6-1 victory over Alexander Zverev to reach the semifinals.

Alcaraz swatted at the bees buzzing around him before running for cover and the match was suspended 19 minutes in with Alcaraz serving tied at 1-1.

Dozens of bees attached themselves to the overhead spider camera that traverses the court and a man without any protective covering used a vacuum to clean them off. The bee vacuumer was summoned to the court with a spray bottle that he used to douse seats and the walls around the court.

The match resumed after a delay of one hour, 48 minutes. The actual playing time was 1:29.

Jannik Sinner defeated Jiri Lehecka 6-3, 6-3 to extend his winning streak to 16 consecutive matches this year. He will play Alcaraz in the semis on Saturday.



Nikola Mektic, of Croatia, (right), and Wesley Koolhof, of the Netherlands, hold the trophy after defeating Marcel Granollers, of Spain, and Horacio Zeballos, of Argentina in the doubles final match at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. (AP)

'Meeting could happen by Monday'

PGA Tour player directors encouraged to meet with Saudi backers of LIV Golf

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla., March 16, (AP): Jordan Spieth and Adam Scott said the player directors on the PGA Tour board are being encouraged to meet with the Saudi Arabia wealth fund leader behind LIV Golf, a sign that could spark talks of an investment.

Golfweek reported Friday evening a meeting could happen as soon as Monday, the day after The Players Championship. It cited two

sources who said it was unclear if Yasir Al-Rumayyan, the governor of the Public Investment Fund, had committed to the meeting.

"I'm not sure that I can say much more other than we're being encouraged to potentially meet with them," Spieth said, adding that it was "probably a good thing that the entire board should if there's going to be any potential for a negotiation."

Scott said he would be as curious as he was to meet the U.S. private equity groups - from which Strategic Sports Group emerged as a minority investor with an initial \$1.5 billion into PGA Tour Enterprises - "just to put a face to a name."

"Ultimately the players are some of the vote going into whether a deal will happen or not, just like it was with SSG," Scott said. "With the seriousness of what we're voting on, I think it is important that we've all met no matter what anyone's feelings are."

Scott and Spieth are player directors along with Tiger Woods, Patrick Cantlay, Webb Simpson and Peter Malnati.

The PGA Tour originally announced a framework agreement with PIF on June 6, a decision that stunned players because only Commissioner Jay Monahan and board members Ed Herlihy and Jimmy Dunne were involved in the turnaround deal.

The agreement was to be finalized by Dec. 31, but then Congress got involved and U.S. investors expressed interest. The SSG deal announced Jan. 31 could be upward of \$3 billion.

Spieth had said then he didn't think a deal with PIF was needed, adding the upside would be unification in the game. PIF is the money behind LIV, which has lured away players like Dustin Johnson, Brooks Koepka, Bryson DeChambeau and most recently Jon Rahm.

That put Spieth at odds with Rory McIlroy - whom Spieth replaced on the board - because McIlroy felt it would complicate negotiations with PIF to suggest it was no longer needed. McIlroy also said he felt LIV players should not be punished, which was met with strong disagreement from top PGA Tour players.

Monahan, meanwhile, was vague on details on Tuesday because he felt he couldn't discuss publicly what was going on in the private dealings with PIF.

"Our negotiations are accelerating as we spend time together," said Monahan, who met with Al-Rumayyan in January. "While we have several key issues that we still need to work through, we have a shared vision to quiet the noise and unlock golf's worldwide potential."

"It's going to take time, but ... I see a positive outcome for the PGA Tour and the sport as a whole."

Woods and Cantlay are among directors who have said they had not met Al-Rumayyan or any of the Saudi golf leaders during the negotiations.

Scott said such a meeting was inevitable.

"If the PIF thinks it's beneficial that we meet ... as far as getting on with business, yeah, let's get on with it," Scott said. He said any meeting would be "part of the process," just as it was in negotiating with SSG.

"I would like to resolve this no matter what the outcome is," he said. "And we can all move on."

GOLF

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Jason Day, of Australia, reacts to his missed putt on the ninth hole during the second round of The Players Championship golf tournament in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. (AP)



Rory McIlroy, of Northern Ireland, chips onto the third green during the second round of The Players Championship golf tournament in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. (AP)



Cologne's Eric Martel, (left), and Leipzig's Amadou Haidara battle for the ball during the Bundesliga soccer match between FC Koln and RB Leipzig at Rhein Energie Stadion in Cologne, Germany. (AP)

Lacazette and O'Brien on target for Lyon in topsy-turvy win at Toulouse

Openda has second-half double as Leipzig hammer Cologne

BERLIN, March 16, (AP): Loïs Openda grabbed a brace as Leipzig turned on the style in the second half to crush Cologne 5-1 in the Bundesliga.

Leipzig rose to fourth place, two points above Borussia Dortmund, which plays Eintracht Frankfurt on Sunday.

Leipzig led after 15 minutes through Dutch forward Xavi but just three minutes later Sargis Adamyan scored his first Bundesliga goal in more than a year to equalize for Cologne.

Leipzig was dominant in the second half and put the result beyond doubt during a seven-minute burst.

Openda scored in the 63rd and 67th minutes and Amadou Haidara piled on to make it 4-1.

Yussuf Poulsen completed the rout eight minutes from time.

Belgian striker Openda has 19 goals this season, behind only Stuttgart's

11th and extended Lyon's recent fine run.

It has won nine of its last 12 games under Pierre Sage, the coach who took over in November when the seventh-time champion was on the bottom of the Ligue 1 table.

The latest triumph was always in doubt in a thrilling end-to-end encounter in Toulouse.

Lyon striker Alexandre Lacazette, back after injury, put the visitors 1-0 ahead after 32 minutes with his 10th goal in 10 league games.

However, Toulouse bounced back at the start of the second half with a quick double from Thijs Dallinga and Vincent Siervo.

Lyon equalized through Rayan Cherki and then nine minutes from time his corner was headed home to O'Brien for Lyon to take all three points.

In Italy, Giovanni Fabbian scored in the fourth minute of stoppage time for Bologna to squeeze past Empoli 1-0 in Serie A.

Visiting Bologna was on top

throughout but could not make its pressure count until the dying seconds when substitute Fabbian followed up to convert after Empoli goalkeeper Elia Caprile failed to hold a fierce shot from Riccardo Calafiori.

The result was a return to winning ways for Bologna, which lost to league leader Inter Milan last week after a run of six consecutive victories.

Bologna consolidated fourth place, four points behind Juventus and six ahead of Roma.

Empoli remained fourth from the bottom, just one point above the relegation zone. It next faces Inter.

In Spain, Real Sociedad got its first home win since November when Mike Merino and Arsen Zakharyan scored to beat Cadiz 2-0 in the Spanish league.

Merino claimed his third goal in three games after 28 minutes and Zakharyan scored three minutes after coming on as a substitute midway through the second period.

The win left Sociedad in sixth place in La Liga, four points ahead of Real Betis and seven behind Athletic Bilbao.

It had not won at home since Nov. 26 but its second win in a row after four consecutive defeats signalled a return to stability, midfielder Brais Mendez said.

"We'd gone eight games without winning at home, so we deserved this," said Mendez, one of the home side's outstanding performers on the night. "We've had a bad run but we are motivated."



Bologna players celebrate after the goal of 0-1 of Giovanni Fabbian during the Serie A soccer match between Empoli and Bologna at Castellani Stadium Empoli, Empoli, Italy. (AP)

SOCCER

Serhou Guirassy (21) and Bayern Munich's Harry Kane (30).

Cologne, which has won only once in its last 13 league games, remained third from bottom in the relegation playoff spot.

In France, Irish defender Jake O'Brien scored a late winner for Lyon in a topsy-turvy 3-2 win at Toulouse in the French league.

The victory opened a five-point gap between Lyon in 10th and Toulouse in

'Rashford future should be at Man U'

MANCHESTER, England, March 16, (AP): Despite being mentioned as a possible replacement for Kylian Mbappe at Paris Saint-Germain, Marcus Rashford's future is at Manchester United, manager Erik ten Hag said.

Mbappe will leave PSG at the end of the season when his contract expires and various reports claim the French champions have identified Rashford as a target when the transfer window opens.

But Ten Hag is in no mood to consider selling the England international,

who last year signed a contract until 2028.

"We didn't re-sign him last season for years with the intention to sell him, no," the Dutchman told a news conference ahead of United's FA Cup quarterfinal against Liverpool on Sunday. "He should be part of this project, so that is not a subject we talk about."

Rashford scored a career-best 30 goals last season, but has struggled to repeat that form this year, with just seven in all competitions.