



Amir receives PM

KUWAIT CITY, March 17, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Sunday His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Opinion

Upcoming parliament before a different leader

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

UNDOUBTEDLY, the current scenario is different from the previous one. According to indicators, the Council of Ministers will not differ much in its composition than what it is currently. Perhaps the change will be in certain portfolios held by individuals in which they did not perform up to par.

On the other hand, the new National Assembly will have a new leader and a different prime minister than before, especially in the last three decades.



Al-Jarallah

Therefore, the vision is different.

According to the speeches of His Highness the Amir, the measures that he ordered and were implemented by the government, and the broad outlines of what His Highness the Prime Minister

laid down, confirm one thing - It is the urgent necessity to get out of the impasse that the country inherited from previous governments when the National Assembly was the ruler and encroached on the powers of other authorities.

Therefore, the National Assembly should not focus solely on the principle of looking only at one side of the penny, particularly since His Highness the Amir, in his esteemed address during the oath-taking session and in his subsequent public speeches, outlined a roadmap essential for the nation. This includes fostering openness to enhance economic and social stability, conducting workshops on projects at different levels, and bolstering national identity.

Based on this perspective, we anticipate that the upcoming Cabinet will refrain from provoking the public with proposals for stringent laws, like the banning of co-education and the pursuit of negative phenomena. Such measures are not in line with the country's needs or the vision outlined by His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Prime Minister.

On this basis, the newly elected parliamentarians should be responsible and avoid acting solely on their whims or personal agendas, despite our realization that idealism may be challenging in a blind democracy like ours.

While achieving this concept may pose challenges, accomplishing 60 percent of what Kuwaitis demand and the leader's vision for nation's benefit and state's fortification constitutes a significant achievement. Such progress can serve as a foundation for future endeavors.

It is also necessary to acknowledge that all Kuwaitis have legitimate and achievable aspirations. Recent months have proven that the head of state seeks to fulfill these aspirations, but according to the Constitution, he requires support from the National Assembly, and not be a pharaoh over the executive authority.

The statements from the candidates indicate their intention to work for the nation's benefit, but their true commitment will be evident only through their actions. As the saying goes, "A burnt child dreads the fire."

In this regard, Kuwaitis have been burnt by many successive parliaments and Cabinets, which were characterized by weakness and hesitation. The result was this miserable situation that Kuwait is experiencing at all levels,

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs urges global awareness for peaceful coexistence

Kuwait welcomes UNGA resolution to combat Islamophobia

KUWAIT CITY, March 17, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait has welcomed the UN General Assembly adoption on Friday of a resolution on measures to combat Islamophobia and appointment of a special UN envoy for combating the phenomenon.

A statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated call for spreading awareness on a global scale when it comes

to peaceful coexistence among people, based on the values of equality, tolerance and respect of human rights, and not exploit the principle of freedoms as an alibi to vilify Islam, or any other faith for that matter.

The Arab Parliament welcomed Saturday the UN General Assembly adoption on Friday of a resolution on measures to combat Islamophobia and appointment of a special UN envoy for combating this phenomenon.

In a press statement, the Cairo-based legislature expressed support to all efforts aiming to deal with Islamophobia and countering extremism and terrorism worldwide.

Meanwhile, the Arab Parliament confirmed readiness to cooperate with all regional and international actors to promote peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among followers of different faiths.

It reiterated unequivocal rejection of all forms of violence and extremism.

Qatar also welcomed the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adoption of a resolution on fighting Islamophobia and appointing a UN envoy on the matter.

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Residency violators begin to avail Kuwait's amnesty

Moderate turnout on first day

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Residency Affairs Departments in the six governorates opened their doors Sunday morning to receive applications from expatriates who are in violation of the residency and labor laws and wish to benefit from the amnesty to

amend their status based on the conditions set by the Ministry of Interior.

Al-Seyassah visited a number of residency affairs departments, where it was noticed that the numbers of visitors who arrived on the first day, especially in Jahra, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, and Ahmadi departments, were significantly less as compared to the numbers in Hawally and Farwaniya departments.

According to security sources, the number of expatriates who applied to amend their status on the first day did not exceed 500.

However, it is normal for less people to turn up on the first day because some violators under article 18 visa require obtaining a new work permit and a sponsor for a new company. It takes time to renew the work permits and then adjust their status.

There is coordination between the Directorate General of Residence Affairs, the airport, and the border crossings regarding the departure of violators without paying the fines. Those in violation can pay their fines, leave the country, and return without a block being placed on their file.

The amnesty launched by the ministry is an opportunity for an estimated 120,000 residency law violators of various nationalities to amend their legal status. They can benefit from the amnesty after paying the fines they owe, and avoid security prosecution.

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NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Sunday a cable of condolences to Saudi Arabian King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on the death of Saudi Arabian Princess Al-Fahda bint Abdullah Al-Saud, praying that her soul rests in peace and for the royal family's strength during this time of loss.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah also sent on Sunday a cable extending his sincere condolences to the Saudi Arabian King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on the passing of Saudi Arabian Princess Al-Fahda bint Abdullah Al-Saud, praying for her soul to rest in peace. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The Iraqi Minister of Electricity, Ziyad Fadel, has announced plans to finalize the connection with the Kuwaiti electricity network by the end of 2024, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This move aims to diversify Iraq's energy sources, reducing its heavy reliance on Iran, with an initial target of acquiring 500 megawatts of electricity.

MANAMA: Bahraini Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa met US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken in Manama on Saturday to discuss regional issues and the strategic partnership.

During the meeting, the Crown Prince highlighted the strength of the longstanding Bahrain-US strategic partnership, reaffirming the Kingdom's commitment to furthering the cooperation in line with MoUs and agreements between the two nations. (KUNA)

RAMALLAH: Some 92 Palestinians fell martyred and 130 others suffered injuries in nine Israeli massacres in the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours, Palestinian health authorities announced on Sunday.

The death toll of the Israeli occupation's aggression on the enclave; since October 7 of last year, has thus soared to 31,645 and the number of injuries has hit 73,676, it added. (KUNA)



Visitors seizing the opportunity of the grace period for residency violators to rectify their status were observed at the Hawalli Residency Affairs Department on Sunday, March 17.

Kuwait expands Al-Bahar Eye Center

Minister issues decisions to restructure MoH

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi has issued new ministerial decisions for restructuring the Ministry of Health and the primary health care system. These decisions are expected to be implemented in the coming days.

In a press statement issued during the inauguration of the extension of the Al-Bahar Eye Center in the Al-Sabah Specialized Health Zone, Dr. Al-Awadhi highlighted the concern for the quality of the health services provided to the public and the need for raising their level, as well as the importance of moving forward towards achieving the goals and projects included in the government's work program within the 100-day plan.

He said the program's most important pillars include the expansion of health facilities through the opening and operation of new projects, the completion of expansion work for some of them, and the ease of people's access to integrated health ser-

VICES of necessary quality.

Regarding the expansion of Al-Bahar Eye Center, Dr. Al-Awadhi explained that the new building consists of three floors. The ground floor contains a small operating room, and a number of clinics to treat emergency cases. The first floor contains three main operating rooms equipped with the latest types of surgical microscopes and advanced eye surgery devices. The second floor is designated for sterilizing surgical instruments.

He revealed that the number of eye operating theaters in the ministry's hospitals, after the completion of the Bahar Eye Center expansion project, reached 17, which are equipped with the latest surgical equipment.

Dr. Al-Awadhi expressed appreciation for all the efforts exerted by those responsible for completing the project in its various stages.

Meanwhile, Hamad Al-Bahar, in a press statement, expressed his happiness at the inauguration of the extension of the Al-Bahar eye center.

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Several 'disqualified' candidates file appeal

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Administrative Court has received the appeals of several National Assembly election candidates who were disqualified by the Ministry of Interior.

The petitioners requested the court to cancel the decision of Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah to disqualify them on grounds that they did not meet the conditions and due to their participation in tribal elections.

The disqualified candidates are Ahmed Mutei Al-Azmi, Jaber Al-Mehailbi, Marzouq Al-Hebeini, Marzouq Al-Khalifa, Sheikh Mishal Al-Malik, Mohammad Al-Juwaihel, Walid Al-Nasser, Mohammad Al-Azmi, Hani Husain, Adel Al-Saeedi and Mubarak Tarad, in addition

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Ramadan Timings

Iftar Monday 17:59
Imsak Tuesday 04:31

Government steps up verification of employees' educational credentials

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: In accordance with directives from the Council of Ministers, government agencies across Kuwait are ramping up efforts to verify the educational certificates of state employees. Reliable sources informed Al-Qabas daily that agencies yet to address this issue will begin informing their employees this week about the mandatory requirement to upload their educational credentials to automated systems.

"These sources disclosed heightened directives urging thorough scrutiny of certificates issued by Kuwaiti cultural offices abroad, emphasizing the need to

collaborate with universities to verify their authenticity.

A significant portion of certificates from abroad, particularly those from Egypt, will undergo scrutiny, with cultural offices in Cairo and Alexandria facing considerable pressure to assist in the process. Many government employees acquired degrees from Egyptian universities, either through scholarships or private study.

Given the Council of Ministers' directives dating back to 2000, agencies are

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Photos during the inauguration of the extension of the Al-Bahar Eye Center in the Al-Sabah specialized health zone.



Photos by Iehab Qurtal

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:37 Asr 15:22
 Sunrise .. 05:57 Maghrib .. 17:57
 Zohr 11:57 Isha 19:14

Local

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

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather hot and cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind, with speeds of 15-45 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery later on.

Weather

By Night: Rather cold and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind to southwesterly wind, with speeds of 15-45 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	30	20
Kuwait Airport	30	20
Abdaly	31	17
Jahra	29	20
Salmiyah	24	20
Nuwaib	32	20
Wafra	33	20

'Diraya' campaign raises awareness

Gulf Bank warns against fraudulent donation links during Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Gulf Bank is committed to its social responsibilities, prioritizing the protection and education of customers and the community. Through active involvement in the "Diraya" campaign, it continuously raises awareness among customers and banking users about the dangers of electronic crimes targeting their personal information and bank accounts.

Abdulmohsen Al-Nassar, Corporate Communications Officer at Gulf Bank, emphasized the importance of bank customers verifying the legitimacy of links requesting donations to charitable organizations. He warned about the increase in fake links, especially noticeable during the holy month of Ramadan, taking advantage of individuals' intentions to engage in charitable activities and support those in need.

He pointed out that scammers replicate electronic payment websites that closely resemble those used by customers when making online payments, emphasizing the importance for customers to verify the authenticity of the payment site and ensure that payment links are from a known and legitimate source.

Customers were advised to exercise caution when dealing with emails, text messages, and phone calls from unfamiliar sources, which could impersonate bank employees. Al-Nassar emphasized the importance of refraining from interacting with such messages or calls and ensuring the security of their account information and data to prevent falling victim to theft without their knowledge.

He highlighted that banks never request personal information via email, text messages, or phone calls. Therefore, customers should refrain from responding to such messages as they are fraudulent attempts to obtain their banking details and commit theft or data breaches. He cautioned that simply clicking on the link could potentially expose their confidential banking information to theft.

Al-Nassar advised bank customers to do the following:

- To avoid saving confidential informa-

tion such as debit card, credit card or PIN numbers on the mobile phone.

- To avoid writing the PIN on the credit card, and to avoid sharing the one-time password (OTP) number with anyone.

- To ensure logging out of the Bank's mobile application or website immediately upon completion of transactions.

- To ensure that the antivirus software and associated files are updated.

- To type the URL into the browser instead of directly clicking or opening links in emails.

- To be careful when opening attachments and links within emails.

- To download software from known and legitimate sources only.

- To keep all systems such as security systems, applications, and operating systems updated with the latest security updates.

Al-Nassar further indicated that customer awareness is vital in preserving banking data, especially with the significant increase and usage of electronic services lately. He advises customers to always deal with the verified, authentic websites and licensed institutions when making donations.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti bank of the future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.



Illegal expatriates start rectifying their residential status in the country as of March 17, 2024. Kuwait government announced an amnesty period of three months for illegal expats to either leave the country without paying fines or rectify their status after paying all the dues. Inset: Some of the applicants seen inside the immigration office in Hawally.

Plan to upgrade Net connectivity

Work underway to increase number of cables

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Communications Sector Director at the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) Amer Hayat has confirmed that Kuwait is connected to the Internet through five international cables; which constitute a system of technical transmission media for Internet and data movement internationally and locally, while work is underway to increase the number to eight international cables by landing three new cables in the country, reports Al-Anba daily.

Hayat pointed out that two types of cables connect Kuwait to the international Internet network – one is marine, through which the country is connected with two cables; and the other is land, through which the country is connected with three cables.

In terms of submarine cables, Kuwait is connected to the Internet through the international submarine cables 'Falcon' and 'GBI', Hayat added.

He revealed the three land cables are connected to operator companies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as follows: cable of Saudi Etihad Mobily Company that passes through Nuwaiseeb and Salmi ports, cable of Saudi Telecom Company (STC) that passes through Nuwaiseeb and Salmi port, and cable of the Gulf Electricity Interconnection Authority that passes through Nuwaiseeb port.

Meanwhile, Director of the International Connections Department at the authority Eng Jamal Sadiq explained these cables connect Kuwait to the international network and do not use Kuwaiti land as a means of traffic only; thereby, maximizing Kuwait's benefit from its location, as increasing the number of cables connected to the country ensures the continuation of Internet services with high efficiency.

Sadiq cited the latest reports of the authority stating that the total capacity of the five cables is about 8,580 gigabits per second. The capacity of the three land cables is about 3,830 gigabits per second, including the total capacity of Saudi Mobily Etihad (400 gigabits).

The capacity of the STC cable reached 3,030 gigabits, while that of Gulf Electricity Interconnection Authority cable reached 400 gigabits. The total capacity of two international submarine cables is about 4,750 gigabits -- 2,050 gigabits for Falcon and 2,700 gigabits for GBI, he concluded.

MoH and MoE require over 3,000 specialists

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Data from the automated recruitment system of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) revealed that there are 3,028 immediate employment needs in 29 specializations; most of which are for the ministries of Health and Education, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources said the competent authorities and the parents should encourage the concerned students to obtain a bachelor's degree or a diploma for any of these specializations to guarantee employment immediately after graduation.

Following are the specializations and the corresponding manpower needs submitted by government agencies:

* Medical sciences: 156 * Dentistry and surgery: 125 * Pharmacy: 97 * Physical Therapy: 21 * Medical laboratories: 46 * Radiology Technology: 8 * Nursing: 22 * Chemistry: 147 * Physics: 110 * Physical Education: 210 * Art Education: 293 * Arabic Language: 227 * French Language: 27 * Mathematics: 635 * Psychology: 115 * Libraries: 513 * Philosophy: 31 * Special Education sciences: 21 * Music Education: 36 * Educational Technology: 16 * Geology: 13 * Hearing and Speech: 25 * Graphic Design: 30 * Electricity: 30 * Nutrition: 45 * Physiology: 2 * Agricultural Engineering: 20 * Television directing: 14 * Acting and directing: 3

'Submit papers till April 13'

KU College of Graduate Studies takes applications for semester

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The College of Graduate Studies at Kuwait University is receiving applications for enrollment in diploma, Master's, and doctoral programs for the first semester of the academic year 2024/2025, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Interested candidates are called upon to submit their applications through the official website of the college until April 13, 2024.

According to a press release from the college, admission tests and personal interviews required for the programs will be conducted from April 16 to April 25. The application conditions include specific criteria for each program as outlined on the website.

For doctoral programs, applicants are required to have a general GPA in their master's degree not less than "3.00" on a four-point scale. However, some programs may stipulate a higher GPA, as indicated in their respective program conditions. For Master's programs, the general average in the first university degree should not be less than

"2.67" on the four-point scale.

Exceptions may be made for applicants with special needs or those holding degrees in medicine, surgery, or dentistry, provided their GPA meets the specified requirements for certain programs.

For higher diploma programs, the average in the first university degree should be at least "2.33" on the four-point scale. Applications from graduates of academic institutions compatible with Kuwait University's system will be considered, while those from other study systems, such as distance learning or open universities, will not be accepted unless they meet specific language requirements.

Applicants are required to fulfill the language requirement, with the results of the TOEFL ITP or IELTS tests accepted, conducted under the auspices of graduate studies only. These language proficiency tests are essential for admission to the programs offered by the College of Graduate Studies.

Surprise raids in Shuwaikh market

Eight butcher shops to face probe

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry took action against 8 butcher shops located in the Shuwaikh Industrial Area, with legal procedures underway. This move follows a surprise inspection campaign aimed at ensuring compliance with regulations governing meat suppliers, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Ministry clarified that the impromptu inspections targeted several meat shops to assess their adherence to regulatory standards set by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. This initiative underscores the Ministry's commitment to monitoring market activities, particularly during periods of high demand like the upcoming holy month of Ramadan, to safeguard consumer rights and ensure the availability of goods.

As a result of the inspection campaign, 8

violations were identified. These included instances of commercial fraud related to the country of origin, reports of artificially inflated prices, and non-cooperation with Ministry inspectors by certain commercial establishments. The Ministry of Interior was notified of these violations, highlighting the seriousness of obstructing regulatory efforts.

Emphasizing its dedication to enforcing consumer protection laws, the Ministry pledged to intensify inspection efforts to combat such practices. Violators will be referred to the appropriate authorities for necessary action to uphold consumer rights.

The Ministry urged consumers to report any violations or concerns through designated communication channels to facilitate prompt action and ensure market integrity.

'Submit applications'

70 member medical team for Hajj

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Supreme Committee for Hajj and Umrah in the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs has approved the proposed number of medical team members for the Kuwaiti Hajj delegation this year – 70 members, reports Al-Anba daily.

The delegation will travel to the Holy Land on June 1-21, 2024.

The Ministry of Health opened the door for interested employees to submit applications to join the medical team for Hajj on Sunday and this will continue until March 21. The applications should be submitted online through an electronic link provided by the ministry.

The ministry stated that in order to join the medical team for Hajj, the applicant must be of Kuwaiti nationality; while other nationalities are allowed to apply for the Hajj caravans.

Regarding the conditions for joining the medical team of the Kuwaiti Hajj delegation, the ministry said the doctors wishing to join must have specializations in internal medicine or one of its branches: family medicine,

general practitioner, emergency medicine and internal surgery; must have a valid license to practice the profession in Kuwait; and must have a registered job title or above.

Also, the pharmacists, nurses, health inspectors and medical emergency technicians must have a diploma in the specialization or above; work in the ministry and have a valid license to practice the profession.

For administrators, they must be ministry employees with not less than five years experience.

The required documents are a copy of the civil identification card, a copy of the license to practice the profession, two photographs with white background and a copy of the passport.

In a related development, sources confirmed to the daily that the selection of the medical team leader and his assistant and the issuance of a decision regarding the team members will take place within weeks; that is, after listing the names and selecting those who meet the conditions.

Other Voices

Beautiful six years of charity

By Ahmad alsarraf

In a few weeks, the sixth anniversary of the founding of the first civil charity society in Kuwait – the Kuwait Humanitarian Friendship Society – will be celebrated, which does not belong to any "political-religious" party, and is almost unique in various features unlike others, and it performs its work with complete honesty and transparency, without discrimination or otherwise.

The society's first board of directors consisted of me as president, and gentlemen and ladies, with titles preserved, Imad Al-Saif, Farida Al-Habib, Anwar Al-Sultan, Saud Al-Arfaj, Haifa Al-Saqr, and Hamza Bahrawa. Only a few changes have occurred in the society's board of directors over the past six years, except in the last elections, I was chosen as President, Dr. Sabah Al-Hadidi as Vice President, Faisal Yousef Thunayan Al-Mishari as Secretary, Hamad Muhammad Ali Al-Abdul Mohsen as Treasurer, and Haifa Abdel Mohsen Al-Saqr, Imad Suleiman Al-Mousa Al-Saif, and Abdullah Yousef Al-Ridwan, as members, with Khalid bin Sabt continuing as General Manager.

I extend my sincere thanks, on behalf of the Board of Directors, to the lawyer Professor Imad Al-Saif for the years in which the professor worked as treasurer, where he was the best helper. We extend our thanks to big brother Anwar Al-Sultan, who chose not to run for the Board of Directors this year, and who was and still is a creditor to the association, with his valuable time and money, and is among its largest donors.

Brother Saud Al-Arfaj, one of the founders of the society and a former member of its board of directors, also deserves thanks for his efforts and generosity represented by his donations, wishing him a speedy recovery. Thanks also go to the rest of the previous board members for their time, dedication and great efforts.

During the past six years, the Friendship Society was able to collect donations from charitable people and from

various segments of society, and it disposed of them with honesty as witnessed by the records of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Ministry is aware of the distinction of the Kuwaiti Humanitarian Friendship Society, as it is the only one whose founders were the first to donate to it, and they were the most generous with it, and they still do.

It also does not deduct any percentages from the donations to those in charge of the association. Rather, the association's expenses are paid from what donors allocate for this purpose, noting that its expenses are very modest, and the number of its employees is only four, including its director general.

The association's aid focused on projects approved by the Ministry of Social Affairs, such as supporting the education of needy students and paying their fees; supporting indigent patients with treatment and medicine, especially providing hundreds of dialysis sessions for patients with kidney failure, and providing treatment and medicine for cancer patients.

The association's assistance was not limited to individuals only, but extended it to government agencies, including the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, and furnishing classrooms for people with special needs, including sleeping beds and accessories. In addition to the association's purchase of travel tickets for deportees, based on the orders of the Ministry of Interior, or because of judgments against them, before the Ministry decides to take care of the matter on its part.

The association has also been assisting the shelter center for domestic workers, providing health and living supplies for girls, and providing travel tickets for those who have been deported.

The association also cooperates with more than one charity organization, companies, and individuals, and is particularly proud of its effective partnership with the late Abdulaziz Hamad Al-Saqr Foundation, and the wonderful support of those in charge of the association's many activities.

The Human Friendship Society is unique in every way and truly deserves your generous support in the month of goodness and generosity, and every month.

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Nationality withdrawal concerns KDF

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Kuwaiti Democratic Forum has voiced deep concerns regarding recent decisions made by the Council of Ministers regarding Kuwaiti citizenship, which have resulted in the revocation of citizenship for some

Kuwaiti citizens or have led to reporting of various violations in the citizenship process, including some instances of forgery or dual citizenship, purportedly to safeguard national identity, reports Al-Jarida daily.

'Stop clinging to the past, let's move forward as life goes on'

"IT IS nice to remember, but it does not make sense to remain in the circle of the beautiful past. There is a vision for the future, creativity and art through which we aspire to move forward and achieve what is more beautiful in all fields and at all levels," columnist **Dr Nujoud Abdul Karim Al-Momen**, wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"What is happening recently in the field of media, advertising, and social media brought back to my memory one of the famous Hollywood films of the eighties, a film entitled 'Back to the Future.' I felt that we were living the events of a similar film, but I can call it a return to the past with a time machine that stopped us in a specific era.

"It's been more than 40 years. Concerts, television advertisements, and connections between television programs and segments have recently been overshadowed by a phenomenon that has begun to make me feel bored.

"I have grown tired of the phenomenon of attachment to the past and remaining at one point, or what is called nostalgia. It is nice to remember the moments in the past of our beloved country, and there is no doubt that it is important for generations to remain informed and knowledgeable about the prominent artistic, media and sporting achievements in their beautiful country, but there is an important aspect, which is that our main concern should not be only to sing praises of the beautiful past and have mercy on it without having interest and aspiration for what is to come.

"Recently, my attention was drawn to the repetition and insistence on the theme of returning to the past in more than one field, especially in the media and artistic aspect, including commercial advertisements that sing praises of the past and replays of some scenes from some old series, and re-filming similar to them, but I do not find any significance in that from a personal point of view.

"The same applies to the concerts that are held in national theatres. Some operettas are held that bring back memories of the past. Although they carry a beautiful idea, employment and implementation require more creativity and more rethinking of what we present, especially since the ticket prices for these huge concerts are somewhat exaggerated.

"It costs hundreds of dinars to watch a re-enactment of a scene from a series or program that has been broadcast for nearly half a century without any creative addition. I do not find that there is any goal, new thought, or real value for re-engaging a scene or for using some modern techniques to try to simulate sound of a singer who became famous during a certain period.

"The original remains the most beautiful, and if there is an overwhelming nostalgia for the past in this way, then we should adhere to what it was in its initial form and re-present it with the original copies and with the voices of real singers.

"Likewise, in theatre, I also noticed that there are several attempts to re-present plays produced 40 years ago or more, either by presenting the play itself with new people or by compiling to present passages for which some old theatrical works became famous.

"Television advertisements during the holy month of Ramadan during this year also noticed an emphasis on reenacting some scenes from episodes for which the television sector was famous in the seventies and eighties, and it became as if we were obsessed with revolving in the same episode, an episode of the past that we do not want to get out of.

"We did not stop at this point until some commercial advertisements for some national nutrition, beverage and product companies also focused on the past and a return to meals that were produced 40 years ago or more. It is nice to remember, but it does not make sense to remain in the circle of the beautiful past.

"There is a vision for the future, creativity, and art through which we aspire to move forward and achieve what is more beautiful in all fields and at all levels. There is no objection to remembering the beauty of the past, but it should not be the focus. Our conversation: Stop clinging to the past and let's move forward, as life goes on and what comes next must be more beautiful."

Also:

"The religious motive remains the main and distinctive feature of Kuwaiti society, past and present, and praise be to God Almighty, and the main driver in the dealings of the good people of Kuwait has always been that motive derived primarily from belonging to this noble religion," columnist **Dr Abdul Mohsen Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"In numerous instances, the noble citizens of Kuwait have demonstrated their unwavering commitment to Sharia law and the fundamental principles of Islam.

"Their dedication to these values has not only earned them divine favor but has also garnered admiration and support from around the world. One notable testament to Kuwait's righteousness was articulated by Professor Al-Hassan Ali Abkar on social media, particularly on the "X" platform, under the poignant title: 'Kuwait is a blessed country and will remain so'.

"Professor Abkar's sentiment echoes the sentiments shared by Egyptian radio broadcaster Professor Ibrahim Khalaf, who recounted a remarkable experience from 35 years ago.

"During a job interview at the Kuwaiti embassy in Cairo, Khalaf and other applicants were witness to a profound display of devotion to prayer. As the call to noon prayer echoed through the hall, the head of the committee interrupted proceedings to lead the congregation in prayer.

"This act of piety was not merely a religious gesture but a decisive criterion for selection. Those who chose not to participate were respectfully asked to leave, while those who joined in were swiftly processed for employment.

"This episode, recounted by Professor Khalaf, highlights the profound influence of faith on Kuwait's societal norms and institutions. It also sheds light on the exemplary leadership of individuals like Uncle Ahmed Saad Al-Jasser, whose distinguished career in Kuwait's ministries of Education, Awqaf, and Islamic Affairs reflects his steadfast commitment to serving his country and upholding its Islamic values.

Uncle Al-Jasser's legacy extends beyond his ministerial roles; he has been an active participant in numerous charitable organizations, embodying the spirit of benevolence and generosity. His collaborative efforts with esteemed colleagues, such as Uncle Hamoud Hamad Al Roumi, have further enriched Kuwaiti society with their philanthropic endeavors.

In recognition of his contributions, Uncle Al-Jasser continues to be revered as a paragon of righteousness and devotion to both religion and country. As we reflect on his exemplary life, we entrust his legacy to the hands of the divine, knowing that his deeds will be judged with mercy and compassion. We pray to God to continue to bless him and guide the righteous along their noble path."

"Replenish... the Ministry of Interior said there is a shortage of manpower in the police force. In order to fill this shortage, the ministry opened the way for non-Kuwaitis to join the police force, knowing that the Police Law is clear and explicit in stating that one of the conditions for joining the force is for the applicant to have Kuwaiti parents!" columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"This condition applies only to Kuwaitis who wish to join the police force. As for exceptions, there is nothing wrong with it, especially new ones! We say: The shortage will not be filled through the method devised by the 'corrupt minister' who left and went to where Umm Amer threw her stick without feeling sorry!

"The shortage cannot be filled by allowing the entry of the children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis or those who hold the Kuwaiti nationality based on Article Eight. They are those who married a Kuwaiti woman and have children, then acquired Kuwaiti nationality by extension, so their children became the children of Kuwaiti women!

"This unsuccessful step increased the shortage further, and caused the police work to deviate from its correct path. The evidence is the frequent dismissal from service, and there is no room here to discuss the causes and reasons. Nevertheless, everyone with a conscience will notice that the current minister is trying every way to patch what can be patched, and correct the mistakes of those who preceded him and agreed with some members of the National Assembly to harm public interest. This is according to the supreme speech of HH the Amir during the oath-taking session.

"The real shortage will be filled through serious studies conducted by specialized bodies. These bodies study the causes and reasons for the reluctance of Kuwaiti youths to join the police force. The reasons are studied and solutions are developed based on scientific foundations. It is done through scientific studies and laying down applicable plans, after which serious work is carried out to encourage Kuwaiti youths to join the police force.

"At present, all the solutions being proposed are mere patchwork solutions that do not serve the security institution in the long run. Any country in the world remains safe if its security is in the hands of its people. There are a thousand and one ways in which the shortage can be filled like asking for the help of Kuwaiti retirees, reviving the guards for the elderly, and promoting the principle of every citizen being a guard.

"Leave other people's children behind you, and work hard on your own."

— Compiled by **PFX Fernandes**



Municipality teams removing candidate advertisements put up illegally.

Municipality teams uproot illegal 'Poll '24' advertisements

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Kuwait Municipality has announced its proactive measures for the upcoming 2024 National Assembly elections. During this crucial period, municipal branches across the governorates will embark on field trips aimed at the removal of any advertisements found to be in violation of regulations, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

The municipality has emphasized the continuity of field visits conducted by inspectors from the audit and follow-up departments of municipal services throughout the electoral process.

Recently, inspectors from the Audit and Follow-up Services Department in the Farwaniya Municipality Governorate undertook an inspection tour as part of their duty to enforce the law. Their focus was on removing advertisements that infringed upon regulations, particularly those associated with electoral candidates. These advertisements were identified on roads outside the electoral headquarters or within residential areas, as well as unauthorized advertisements scattered across streets and squares.

The outcome of these diligent inspections was

the removal of 42 offending election advertisements. These included 36 advertisements lacking the necessary licensing and 6 others positioned outside designated electoral headquarters for the 2024 National Assembly elections.

The municipality has underscored its commitment to sustaining these field tours to promptly identify and remove any advertisements found to be in violation of regulations. Compliance with legal provisions is imperative to avoid penalties and ensure a fair electoral process.

MPW awaits tenders panel board formation for road repairs pacts

Maintenance eyed for major highways, roads

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Ministry of Public Works (MPW) is eagerly anticipating the formation of the new Board of Directors for the Central Agency for Public Tenders. With the expiry of the previous board's term in January, the ministry is poised to announce 18 road repair projects. These projects, recently unveiled in the Official Gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm," encompass various road treatment initiatives, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

Once the new board is in place and operational, the Ministry plans to engage them to facilitate the announcement of these projects to qualified companies. These companies, pre-screened and classified by the agency, will then undergo the standard bidding process. This process entails submission, evaluation, and selection based on both financial and technical criteria, ultimately leading to project implementation.

Outlined within the Ministry's plan for

the current fiscal year are initiatives aimed at repairing highways, internal roads, and major thoroughfares. These efforts, overseen by the Maintenance Engineering Sector and the General Authority for Roads and Land Transport, cover a broad spectrum of road maintenance activities.

Of the 18 planned practices, six are earmarked for the Roads Authority, targeting the treatment and repair of highways across different regions. The remaining 12 practices fall under the purview of the Ministry's Maintenance Engineering Sector, focusing on internal and main road repairs within residential areas.

The Ministry's maintenance engineering sector initiatives aim to undertake comprehensive maintenance work across Kuwait's six governorates, with two projects allocated to each. These encompass various tasks such as emergency construction, miscellaneous works, asphalt repairs, sewer reconstruction, and maintenance of road surfaces and signage.

Specifically, the practices related to the Roads Authority aim to conduct general maintenance on key roads including Al-Salmi, Al-Sabiya, King Fahd, Al-Fahaheel, Al-Jahra, Al-Abdali, and the First, Sixth, and Seventh Ring Roads.

Nod to bank donation for 'Derwaza'

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Kuwait Municipality has approved the initiative submitted by Commercial Bank of Kuwait to donate KD650,000 for the repair of the lower part of Abdul Razzaq (Derwaza) Gate, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

Director General of the Municipality Eng Saud Al-Dabbous said in his circular, which the Municipal Council will discuss

on Monday, that the bank's donation has been approved to contribute to the restoration of the tunnel and Darwazat Al-Abdul-Razzaq Street below the tunnel, due to the structural damage that occurred. The bank will shoulder all costs related to the initiative; such as the design, implementation, supervision and obtaining licenses.

'Save electricity'

Power usage climbs as mercury soars steadily

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: As temperatures soar to 30 degrees Celsius, the electrical load index in the country has begun to climb steadily, reaching 8,380 megawatts at one o'clock Saturday afternoon, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

However, meteorology department Engineer Maha Al-Asousi, the acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, has assured the public that there is no energy crisis despite the surge in electricity demands during the holy month of Ramadan, while at the same time calling on citizens and residents to exercise energy conservation, particularly during peak consumption hours.

The Ministry's reports attribute the increase in electricity loads during the summer season to the widespread use of air conditioning units.

Despite the current stability, sources within the electricity sector anticipate potential crises in the coming years due to increased loads resulting from urban expansions and past disruptions in energy projects. These shortages are expected to fluctuate annually.

Last year, the electrical load index nearly reached 17 thousand megawatts, leading to localized power outages across the country due to malfunctions in some stations. Efforts to manage energy consumption and address infrastructure challenges remain critical to ensure a stable electricity supply amid rising demand.

Minister's nod: The Minister of Commerce and Industry, Abdullah Al-Jouan, has given his approval to the regulations governing the Kuwaiti Quality Mark system, reports **Al-Jarida** daily. In Resolution No. 1 of 2024, the Minister officially adopted the regulation, superseding all previous decisions that conflict with the new system. The resolution, issued after a comprehensive review of relevant laws and regulations including the Standardization Law, the Import Law, and the Industry Law, aims to streamline quality control measures in Kuwait. It also nullifies Decision No. 39 of 1989 pertaining to the Kuwaiti Quality Mark System.

'Clean, remove campsite for return of cash deposit'

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Kuwait Municipality announced the camping season officially ended on Friday and will not be extended until the end of Ramadan.

It affirmed that from Sunday, it will start removing the spring camps that have not yet been removed.

According to an informed source, the total number of camps licensed by the municipality for this year amounted to 1,300.

The current camping season witnessed an increase in the number of licenses by 31 percent compared to the last season, which reached 900 in total. A comprehensive report will be submitted to the municipality's executive branch on the most prominent negatives in the current season, including the phenomenon of fireworks, renting campgrounds, and bulldozing the soil.

Meanwhile, the municipality confirmed that its monitoring teams will begin the work of removing camps that are not committed to removal from Sunday.

It explained that the camping period will not be extended after the Camps Committee received an official letter from the Environment Public Authority (EPA) regarding its rejection of the extension.

Affirming that camps will not be allowed after Friday, the authority called on camp owners to ensure the campsite is cleaned after removal in order to obtain a cleanliness certificate from EPA as a basic condition for recovering the deposit amount of KD 100. It will be deposited in the account of the license holder after submitting a request for its refund to the municipality.

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Move aims to establish direct channels of communication

KU students union okays formation of Teachers' Club

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Abdulaziz Al-Dhafiri, Vice-President for Student Affairs of the National Union of Kuwait University Students, has announced the formation of the Teachers' Club at the College of Education for the union year 2023/2024, headed by Hamad Al-Fadhli, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In a press statement, Al-Dhafiri emphasized that the primary objective of establishing the club

is to establish direct channels of communication between the union and students of the college.

This initiative aims to foster a deeper understanding of students' opinions, proposals, and educational-related demands, facilitating discussions on effective implementation strategies to enhance the educational environment.

Al-Dhafiri further explained that the union is committed to broadening the scope of clubs and

associations across various colleges to maintain consistent engagement with students.

This expansion allows the union to provide necessary support and promptly address students' concerns and suggestions, including academic challenges.

Additionally, the union collaborates closely with the university administration to ensure the smooth facilitation of student learning experiences.

National Day

HH Amir congratulates Ireland

KUWAIT CITY, March 17, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Sunday to the President of the Republic of Ireland Michael Daniel Higgins on his country's National Day.

His Highness the Amir wished the

Irish president long-term health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity to Ireland and its people.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to President Michael Daniel Higgins on his country's National Day.

Move to support Kuwaiti fresh graduates

NBK participates in AIU Career Fair

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continued its consistent support of young national talent by participating in career fairs that aim to open direct communication channels between private sector companies and fresh graduates. In this context, the bank participated in the Career Fair organized by American International University (AIU) at its headquarters in Saad Al-Abdullah, Jahra area.

Kuwaiti youth. Our participation in this fair comes as part of its endeavors to support Kuwaiti fresh graduates and to spread the culture of joining the private sector among Kuwaiti youth and attract qualified individuals to the vital banking and financial sector," he added.



Aikhabbaz

The fair was held on March 5 with the participation of many reputable companies and institutions in Kuwait. A large number of participants visited NBK's booth, as Group Human Resources staff provided answers to all inquiries raised by the participants who filled out the job applications for available vacancies. This comes within the bank's endeavors to encourage fresh graduates to join the banking sector, which plays an instrumental role in the development of the Kuwaiti economy.

"NBK also enjoys a unique robust work environment and culture promoting continuous development thanks to the exceptional career development opportunities to its employees on continuous basis. This includes professional training programs aligned with the highest international standards to help develop their skills and expertise for a thriving and sustainable career," he noted.

NBK's recruitment strategy is based on attracting, training and developing the young national cadres through the best-in-class programs to help them build a successful career and rise to leadership positions in the bank in the future. This makes NBK the private sector employer of choice for Kuwaiti fresh graduates, while also having the highest national employee retention rate.

Commenting on this, Abdullah Aikhabbaz, Senior Talent Acquisition at National Bank of Kuwait said, "NBK is always keen to sponsor career fairs as they represent key platforms for selecting and attracting national talent, while, at the same time, offering fresh graduates a great opportunity to explore the job and training opportunities available at the bank."

"NBK is a key supporter of all initiatives and events aiming to stimulate the ambitious

NBK's efforts in attracting national talent go in line with its development and training plans targeting investing in national cadres and preparing a promising banking generation. It is also keen to offer a series of training courses and professional academic programs, being one of the leading banking institutions in Kuwait in organizing training programs for the youth.

It is worth mentioning that NBK annually sponsors many career fairs for the Kuwaiti youth to introduce to them suitable job opportunities that meet their aspirations, being one of the major private sector employers of national workforce.

Platform set to launch next May 12

Info's '51' to revolutionize Kuwaiti media

KUWAIT CITY, March 17, (KUNA): Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information for the Media Services Sector and New Media at the Ministry of Information, Chairman of the Coordination Committee for the Ministry of Information Digital Platform, Saad Al-Azmi, confirmed today, (Sunday), that the '51' platform is a broadcast service for visual and audio content that goes beyond the limits of the traditional model through broadcasting and transmission via radio waves to provide content via smart and digital devices over the Internet anywhere in the world. Al-Azmi said in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the platform that the ministry is preparing to launch next May 12 and bears the name '51' platform comes in line with modern technologies in the field of media and to create a suitable option for the Kuwaiti family in accordance with the controls followed by the ministry by participating in it and this is done simply by using the login credentials from their preferred subscription-based service.

Special workshop to promote health during 'Ramadan'

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: With the cooperation of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences opened a specialized workshop to promote health during the month of Ramadan.

In a press statement, Head of the organization Dr. Muhammad Al-Jarallah highlighted the importance of constructive cooperation between doctors and jurists, and between religious and medical institutions in promoting health awareness and culture in societies, especially during the month of Ramadan, taking advantage of the high position held by clerics.

He expressed appreciation to the Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Faisal Al-Ghareeb for his unlimited support and constructive cooperation, which resulted in great successes for the workshop.

Dr. Al-Jarallah explained that the workshop aimed to mobilize the effective capabilities of the imams and their position in consolidating the true meaning of fasting and the month of Ramadan, as it is a month of health, strength and achievements. The workshop also aimed to enhance the imams' abilities to respond to the medical and health questions of worshippers during Ramadan, especially the concerns of the fasting person, irrespective of whether they are healthy or sick, about the health benefits of fasting, healthy diet, ways to improve health in a practical way, and to enhance the patient's ability to fast and prevent any complications.

The most important complications such as diabetes, heart disease, stomach ulcers, and liver issues were explained, with the aim of strengthening the capabilities of imams and preachers in communicating effectively with the public, and answering all their inquiries related to these diseases.

Meanwhile, President of the Egyptian and Arab Society for Therapeutic Nutrition Dr. Safaa Tawfiq and a professor at the Institute of Nutritional Studies and a consultant to many international organizations in the field of nutrition Dr. Nebal Abdul Rahman participated in giving lectures in the workshop.

Also present were several members of the organization's Board of Trustees including Dr. Ahmad Al-Shatti and Dr. Ajeel Al-Nashmi, several doctors, and about 30 imams and preachers nominated by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

It is worth highlighting that this workshop is the fourth held by the organization in coordination with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, the first of which was to combat sexually transmitted diseases and homosexuality from a medical standpoint, bioprinting of organs, the artificial womb, and artificial intelligence.

Information. He explained that the platform will be diverse and compatible with the needs of all family members, as smart nominations will be displayed from the artificial intelligence system, including the cultural, religious, and social nature, according to the viewer's inclinations and the nature of his historical views, which the system will analyze, as we will use artificial intelligence to better understand the viewer's behavior by studying his behavior and creating statistics and analyze them by linking them to gender, age, interests, and geographical presence.

He stated that the subscriptions to the platform will be free and paid, and these divisions will be studied with the company (Fast Communications), as the bid stipulates that the company will be given the opportunity to bring sports periodicals, films, and series from its account in accordance with the standards and controls of the Ministry of

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Bader Al-Mutairi announced the ministry's desire to renew the contracts of 29 Bedoun residents who hold religious positions of preacher, imam and muezzin in a number of state mosques.

He sent a letter in this regard to the Civil Service Commission (CSC) for the completion of their procedures, after receiving the approval of the Central System for Remedy-

ing Status of Illegal Residents.

Meanwhile, Al-Mutairi visited the Ramadan Center at Saud Al-Rashed Mosque in Adailiya where he expressed his satisfaction with the center's Ramadan program preparation and equipment, and praised the efforts exerted by those in charge of it.



Al-Mutairi

Furthermore, the Director of the Capital Governorate Mosques Department Abdul Hamid Al-Mutairi explained that the Ramadan centers affiliated with the Capital Governorate mosques are witnessing a good turnout. This indicates the Muslims' conviction that these nights are an opportunity to renew the covenant with Allah and draw closer to Him

through obedience.

The teams working in all Ramadan centers in the Capital Governorate were directed to hold intensive meetings to discuss procedures and efforts to avoid some of the problems that may occur as a result of crowding on these nights.

Also, the renowned Quran reciter Mishary Al-Afasy led the worshippers to perform the evening and Tarawih prayers on the fourth and fifth nights of Ramadan at the Al-Rashed Ramadan Center in Adailiya.

In addition, as part of the efforts and partnerships undertaken by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to enhance its mission towards spreading religious and cultural awareness and caring for mosques, the Mosque Sector participated in the "Injaz Insan" (Human achievement) forum, during which the Director of the ministry's Technical Affairs Department Dr. Bader Al-Dhafiri was honored.

Ministry to soon fill up some vacant supervisory posits

'Social Affairs' receives over 500 retirement applications

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The concerned department at the Ministry of Social Affairs has received more than 500 retirement applications since the adoption of the law on increasing the minimum pension of retirees to KD1,010,

reports Al-Anba daily quoting a reliable source.

The source said the Social Development Sector has so far recorded the highest number of retirement applications, particularly the employees in family care

units and community development centers.

The source also disclosed that the ministry will fill up some vacant supervisory positions soon, in addition to the rotation of employees in some sectors.



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'Smart cities and effective urban governance vital for development'

ATO stresses urgent need for smart cities' digital transformation

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Abdul Rahman Al-Asfour, the Secretary-General of the Arab Towns Organization, underscored the critical importance of concerted efforts and diligent work to prioritize digital transformation initiatives in smart cities, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Speaking on the occasion of the organization's founding anniversary celebrated under the theme "Digital

Transformation of Smart Cities," Al-Asfour emphasized that smart cities and effective urban governance are pivotal for city development and enhancing residents' quality of life.

Al-Asfour highlighted that smart cities leverage advanced technology and data to enhance services, infrastructure, and government-resident interaction. Urban governance, he noted, plays a crucial role in ensuring

effective and transparent city management processes.

By utilizing smart digital solutions, he said, cities can promote urban inclusion, facilitate good governance, enhance citizen participation, and improve public service efficiency, thereby enhancing city resilience and sustainability.

With over half of the world's population residing in cities and

projections indicating a further increase by 2050, Al-Asfour stressed the significance of embracing digital transformation. He noted the substantial carbon emissions and energy consumption associated with urban areas, underscoring the need for sustainable practices.

Al-Asfour acknowledged the notable technological advancements witnessed in Arab cities in recent years,

including the widespread adoption of artificial intelligence, rapid communication networks, and sustainable energy systems. However, he emphasized the need to address the widening technology gap among Arab countries, attributing it to political, economic, and social factors.

Highlighting the accelerated global technological development catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic,

Al-Asfour emphasized the increasing reliance on digital government services, particularly in finance, education, and healthcare sectors. He emphasized the importance of leveraging experiences from these sectors to promote digital development and urged swift action towards digital transformation, which has become an urgent necessity in the wake of the pandemic.

PAHW completes 7 projects in Mutla city

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: According to informed sources, the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) has completed 100-percent implementation of seven projects related to roads and main services in Mutla city at a total value of about KD 65 million.

PAHW received the seven projects initially and is coordinating with other government agencies in preparation for their operation.

These projects include a project for the supply, extension and maintenance of medium-pressure and low-pressure cable networks for the N9, N10 and N11 suburbs in the city project at a total value of KD 4 million and 480 thousand, and a project for supply, extension and maintenance of 132 kV ground cables for feeding 3 main 11/132 kV transformer stations in the N7 suburb for approximately KD 23 million. There is also a project for the

supply, extension and maintenance of 132 kV ground cables for feeding main 11/132 kV transformer stations in the N3 and N4 suburbs at a value of KD 7 million and 154 thousand, and another for the supply, extension and maintenance of 132 kV ground cables for feeding the main 11/132 kV substations in N1 and N2 suburbs at a value of KD 8 million and 490 thousand.

The project for the supply, extension and maintenance of 132 kV ground cables for feeding three main 11/132 kV transformer stations in district 6 has also been completed at a total cost of KD 7 million and 592 thousand.

Also, the project for the supply, extension and maintenance of 132 kV ground cables for feeding two main transformer stations at a cost of KD 7 million and 91 thousand, and the project for building the main transformer stations at a voltage of 11/132 kV in district 9 at a cost of KD 6 million and 757 thousand had also been completed.

Upcoming parliament

Continued from Page 1

starting with the deterioration of services and streets and ending with the closure of the country, as well as the blow to the national economy through decisions and practices - parliamentary and governmental - that were not subject to any authority.

Therefore, the new parliamentarians' awareness of the simple equation outlined by His Highness the Amir and the vision of His Highness the Prime Minister signifies the constitutionally-required cooperation between the two executive and the legislative authorities.

However, if they follow the parliamentary approach that has been followed for three decades, the next parliament will have a short lifespan, and will be closer to departure than staying.

Kuwait welcomes

Continued from Page 1

Qatar also welcomed the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adoption of a resolution on fighting Islamophobia and appointing a UN envoy on the matter.

In a statement on Saturday, Qatari Foreign Ministry called for adopting a plan to resolve the main reasons behind the spread of Islamophobia. It also called for international cooperation to end Islam hatred and all kinds of extremism.

The ministry affirmed Qatar's support for spreading values of tolerance, as well as achieving peace and stability through dialogue.

Yesterday, 115 countries voted for the draft resolution presented by Pakistan, representing the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), 44 countries refrained from voting, while none has voted against it.

Residency violators

Continued from Page 1

It is expected that the number of violators visiting the departments will increase in the coming days to take advantage of the amnesty.

Meanwhile, an expatriate, who requested anonymity and whom Al-Seyassah met during its tour, revealed that some violators do not have enough money to pay the fines, which is a maximum of KD 600, and they are unable to transfer their sponsorship to a new company, due to which they are forced to remain in their current situation.

Another expatriate violator praised the Ministry of Interior for issuing this amnesty to violators of the residency law in order for the latter to either amend their legal status or leave the country without paying the fines.

He said, "Kuwait is a country of humanity and generosity. It is not strange for Kuwait to issue such a humanitarian amnesty that takes into account the circumstances of the violators. There are hundreds of violators waiting for this moment to amend their status and that of their families, and pay the fines owed by them."

He described the amnesty as a "precious opportunity" as there are violators who have been with their families for more than five years but can now amend their legal status without facing any prosecution or deportation from the country.

It is worth highlighting that the duration of the amnesty announced by the Ministry of Interior is three months, which began yesterday and will end on June 17. After the expiry of the amnesty, the Ministry of Interior will continue its security campaigns to arrest violators of the residency law, and deport the violators who will not be allowed to return to the country again.

The amnesty launched by the ministry gives the violator of the residency law the ability to leave the country through any border crossing without paying any of the fines, and return to the country whenever he wants through fresh procedures and without a block placed on his file.

According to a security source, violating expatriates wanted in financial cases against whom final judicial rulings were issued cannot benefit from the amnesty, and can amend their legal status until these debts and financial claims are settled.

Documents required to benefit from the amnesty:

- A passport copy
- A copy of the civil ID
- New work permit

- A copy of the new sponsor's card
- Signature authorization
- Application Form

Government steps

Continued from Page 1

providing employees with ample notice to submit their academic certificates. Some may need to obtain new certificates from their respective educational institutions, a process that could take time, particularly for certificates issued overseas.

While concerns linger about the accreditation status of certificates from universities whose recognition has been revoked, sources reassure employees that accreditation decisions are not retroactive. Therefore, if a university was accredited at the time of enrollment, the certificate remains valid, even if the university loses its local accreditation subsequently.

To ensure the integrity of the verification process, directives have been issued to rigorously investigate cases of tampering or forgery. Those found guilty will face legal consequences, including referral to the Public Prosecution in accordance with the law.

Several 'disqualified'

Continued from Page 1

to three other candidates who did not complete the necessary procedures.

According to Al-Hebeini, he filed his appeal to the court and the latter will announce its verdict on Monday. He is sure that the fair judiciary will put him back to the electoral race.

In a relevant development, Kuwait Municipality disclosed that the concerned teams removed 42 advertisements of parliamentary election candidates due to various violations. Thirty-six of the removed advertisements were installed outside the space allocated for a candidate to hold meetings and six were installed without obtaining a license.

The Municipality stressed that its campaign to uncover such violations will continue, calling on the candidates to adhere to the regulations in order to avoid the removal of their advertisements and payment of fines.

Moreover, former MP and 2024 parliamentary election candidate Mohammad Hayef urged the Ministry of Interior to specify the employees or officials responsible for the withdrawal of forged citizenship. He also emphasized the need to identify and punish the forgers. He added he will use constitutional channels to address this issue if he wins in the upcoming election.

Minister issues

Continued from Page 1

He affirmed that the eye center and the operating rooms along with the advanced equipment it contains as well as the doctors and those in charge of the center are a source of pride for Kuwait and the health system in the country.

Al-Bahar said he hopes the coming period will witness further development in the center to serve patients and clients.

Furthermore, the Chairman of the Council of Ophthalmology Departments in the Ministry of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Foudari said the surgical rooms in the center have reached seven in total currently, following the opening of the new surgical rooms and the launch of work in them, indicating that this will contribute to reducing the waiting list for surgical operations.

He clarified that the expansion of the center contributes to reducing the waiting list for surgical operations for non-emergency cases from 30 days to only 14, adding that the coming period will also witness a reduction in the period to less than that by continuing the expansion work in the eye departments of public hospitals.

Dr. Al-Foudari explained that the Al-Bahar Eye Center and various eye departments in public hospitals provide comprehensive specialized services. Specialized surgeries are performed, including cataract removal, lens implantation, retinal and vitreous surgery, corneal transplantation, intraocular pressure valves, corrective surgeries around children, and eyelid and tear duct surgeries.

The Ministry of Health spares no effort in providing all aspects of support to the various eye departments.

MPW to float 18 tenders after formation of CAPT new board

Bid to repair and maintain roads announced by ministry

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: According to informed sources at the Ministry of Public Works, the ministry is awaiting the formation of the Board of Directors of the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) following the expiry of membership terms in January, in order to float the 18 tenders related to repairing and maintaining roads that the ministry recently announced in the official gazette 'Kuwait Al-Youm'.

The sources explained that CAPT, which is responsible for floating government agencies' practices and tenders, will be contacted by the ministry, following its new formation and the resumption of its work, to announce these practices to companies classified by CAPT, and then proceed with the rest of the procedures.

These procedures include setting a date for submitting and receiving bids, studying them, and making the decision to award to the companies with the best bids financially and technically, followed by starting implementation.

The ministry had recently announced its plan, which includes the aforementioned practices during the current fiscal year. These practices included in the ministry's plan aim to repair the highways, internal roads and main roads for which it is responsible. This will be done by the Maintenance Engineering Sector and the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART).

The 18 practices are distributed as follows: - six for PART to maintain and repair highways in the northern, central, and southern regions, and 12 practices for the ministry's Maintenance Engineering Sector to maintain and repair internal and main roads within residential areas as per the ministry's annual plan.

The practices related to the ministry's Maintenance Engineering Sector aim to carry out radical maintenance of road works in the six governorates of Kuwait, with two practices in each governorate.

It also includes emergency and urgent construction works, miscellaneous works, small complementary asphalt works, and maintenance and replacement works.

It also includes reconstructing sewers, cleaning inside the sewers and their outlets, creating rain sewer lines, internal filming of the contents of the rainwater network, maintenance and planning of the paving surface of roads and parking lots, and placing prominent, reflective ground traffic signs on the asphalt of all types and shapes.

Regarding the six practices related to PART, they are aimed to carry out general maintenance on the roads of Salmi, Subbiya, King Fahad, Fahaheel, Jahra, and Abdali, and the First, Sixth and Seventh ring roads.



Minister of Health Dr Ahmed Al-Awadhi in a group photo during the inauguration of the expansion of the 'Al-Bahar Eye Center' in the Al-Sabah Specialized Medical District.



Minister of Health Dr Al-Awadhi taking a tour of the facility.

Photos by Iehab Qurtal

'Dermatology clinics affiliated with Ministry of Health receiving about 50,000 cases annually'

KUWAIT CITY, March 17, (KUNA): Head of the Dermatology Departments Council of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health, Dr. Atfal Al-Lafi, said on Saturday that the specialized clinics affiliated with the ministry receive about 50,000 cases annually. Al-Lafi, who is the head of the Kuwaiti Dermatologists Association, explained in a statement to reporters after the Ramadan Ghabga organized by the association on Saturday, that the most common skin diseases in the State of Kuwait are dry skin, allergies and eczema, pointing to the ministry's policy and strategy aimed at improving the services provided to keep pace with those in the developed world.

She pointed out the effectiveness of fasting in treating many skin diseases, especially those related to allergies, such as (urticaria), as it contributes to temporarily reducing the percentage of water in the blood and thus the skin, and then increasing its immunity and resistance to microbes, infectious and bacterial diseases, as well as reducing the severity of psoriasis and allergies, which increase with frequent consumption of rich foods. With salts, as well as (acne), which increases with frequent consumption of fats and sweets.

She added that despite the great benefits of fasting on human health and body, those suffering from some skin diseases, such as severe lupus, severe psoriasis, skin cancer, and others, are prohibited from fasting, as some diseases require nutritional elements that may decrease by abstaining from eating food or water. She stated that fasting and the subsequent change in eating habits are related to the skin and hair, which in turn is affected by the change in the level of certain nutritional elements, such as vitamins A and D, which must be provided at the breakfast and suhoor tables through green salad and lean protein.

Al-Lafi stressed the importance of consuming a sufficient amount of fresh vegetables and water to compensate for what the body loses during the fasting period, while reducing foods rich in salts and spices.

Bid to procure Oracle licenses

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Ministry of Public Works (MPW) has signed a contract with a specialized company for the procurement of Oracle licenses, maintenance of the necessary server equipment, and provision of technical support at a value of KD140,000, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

مشرق
MUSHRIF

Mushrif Trading & Contracting
Company KSC (Closed)

Announcement

Creditors' Meeting in connection with the Preventive Settlement Matter No.2/2023

Mushrif Trading & Contracting Company KSC (Company) is pleased to invite the valuable creditors to attend the Company creditors' meeting in connection with the preventive settlement No.2/2023, scheduled to be held on Thursday, 28 March 2024 at 1:00 p.m., at Yaccout Ballroom, 3rd floor, Millennium Hotel, located at the 4th Ring Road, Samiya, Abu Taher Al Jaafari Street, in order to consider the agenda in the following manner:

1- Approval of the preventive settlement proposal dated 10/3/2024.

Therefore, the valuable creditors or their representatives should refer to the Company headquarters situated in Rai Area, block 1, street 7, plot 1666, phone: 94401924, during the official working hours to receive a copy of the preventive settlement proposal and the attendance cards or authorization forms.

World News Roundup

Europe

Iceland volcano erupts

Putin poised to 'rule' Russia for 6 more yrs

MOSCOW, March 17, (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin is poised to extend nearly a quarter century of rule for six more years on Sunday after wrapping up an election that gave voters no real alternatives to an autocrat who has ruthlessly cracked down on dissent.

The three-day election that began Friday has taken place in a tightly controlled environment where no public criticism of Putin or his war in Ukraine is allowed. Putin's fiercest political foe, Alexei Navalny, died in an Arctic prison last month, and other critics are either in jail or in exile.

The 71-year-old Russian leader faces three token rivals from Kremlin-friendly parties who have refrained from any criticism of his 24-year rule or his full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago. Putin has boasted of Russian battlefield successes in the run-up to the vote, but a massive Ukrainian drone attack across Russia early Sunday sent a reminder of challenges faced by Moscow.

The Russian Defense Ministry reported downing 35 Ukrainian drones overnight, including four near the Russian capital. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said there were no casualties or damage.

Russia's wartime economy has proven resilient, expanding despite bruising Western sanctions. The Russian defense industry has served as a key growth engine, working around the clock to churn out missiles, tanks and ammunition.

Russia's scattered opposition has urged those unhappy with Putin or the war to express their protest by coming to the polls at noon on Sunday. The action was endorsed by Navalny not long before his death.

Navalny's associates described their strategy as a success, releasing pictures and videos of people crowding near polling stations in various cities across Russia. It wasn't immediately clear if the voters lining up at polling stations heeded the call from Navalny's allies or the queues reflected strong turnout that usually peaks around midday.

Voting is taking place at polling stations across the vast country's 11 time zones, in illegally annexed regions of Ukraine, and online. More than 60% of eligible voters had cast ballots as of early Sunday.

Despite tight controls, multiple cases of vandalism at polling stations were reported.

Ukraine launches drone attacks: Ukraine launched a new massive wave of drone attacks Sunday as Russians cast ballots on the final day of a presidential vote.

The Russian Defense Ministry reported downing 35 Ukrainian drones overnight, including four in the Moscow region.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said a fifth drone, close to the capital's Domodedovo airport, was later downed on Sunday morning. No casualties or damage were reported.

According to the Defense Ministry, another two drones were shot over the Kaluga region just south of the Russian capital and the Yaroslavl region northeast of Moscow.

The attacks on the Yaroslavl region, which is located about 800 kilometers (500 miles) from the Ukrainian border, were some of the farthest launched by Ukraine so far.

More Ukrainian drones were downed over the Belgorod, Kursk and Rostov regions that border Ukraine and the southern Krasnodar region, the Defense Ministry said.

Thousands rally in Slovakia: Thousands Slovaks rallied in the capital on Friday to condemn a plan by the new government of populist Prime Minister Robert Fico to overhaul the country's public broadcasting during a wave of anti-government protests.

The protesters in Freedom Square at downtown Bratislava joined President Zuzana Caputova, local journalists, the opposition, international media organizations, the European Commission and others who warned that the changes would result in the government's full control of the Slovak public television and radio.

"We must not allow that to happen," she told the crowd.

According to the plan drafted by Culture Minister Martina Simkovicova, the current public radio and television known as RTVS would be replaced by a new organization. A new seven-member council with members nominated by the government and parliament would select its director, although the current one has a parliamentary mandate until 2027. The council would have a right to dismiss the director without giving any reason.

Orbán rails against EU: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán sought to mobilize support for his brand of right-wing populism in a holiday speech on Friday, urging his spectators to help him "occupy Brussels" in European Union elections this summer.

Orbán's address, coinciding with a national holiday commemorating Hungary's failed 1848 revolution against Habsburg rule, railed against the EU and compared it to imperial occupiers that have dominated Hungary throughout history.

The nationalist leader, speaking from the steps of the National Museum in central Budapest, drew a sharp contrast between his country and the "Western world," accusing the latter of being a source of rootlessness and destruction.

"They start wars, destroy worlds, redraw countries' borders and graze on everything like locusts," he told the crowd, many of whom were bused into Budapest for the occasion. "We Hungarians live differently and want to live differently."

Volcano in Iceland erupts: A volcano in Iceland erupted Saturday evening for the fourth time in three months, sending orange jets of lava into the night sky.

Iceland's Meteorological Office said the eruption opened a fissure in the earth about 3 kilometers (almost 2 miles) long between Stóra-Skógfell and Hagafell mountains on the Reykjanes Peninsula.

The Met Office had warned for weeks that magma - semi-molten rock - was accumulating under the ground, making an eruption likely.

Hundreds of people were evacuated from the Blue Lagoon thermal spa, one of Iceland's top tourist attractions, when the eruption began, national broadcaster RUV said.

No flight disruptions were reported at nearby Keflavik, Iceland's main airport.



Putin



Republican presidential candidate former US president Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally on March 16 in Vandalia, Ohio. Trump claimed that he - not President Joe Biden - will protect Social Security and warned of a 'bloodbath' if he loses in November as he campaigned for Senate candidate Bernie Moreno in Ohio. (AP)

Politics

Biden campaign amasses \$155m in cash on hand

Trump campaigns for Moreno in Ohio

VANDALIA, Ohio, March 17, (AP) — Former US president Donald Trump claimed that he - not President Joe Biden - will protect Social Security and warned of a "bloodbath" if he loses in November as he campaigned for Senate candidate Bernie Moreno in Ohio.

Trump, speaking on a wind-whipped airfield outside of Dayton Saturday, praised his chosen candidate in the race as an "America first champion" and "political outsider who has spent his entire life building up Ohio communities."

"He's going to be a warrior in Washington," Trump said, days after securing enough delegates to clinch the 2024 Republican nomination.

Moreno faces Secretary of State Frank LaRose and state Sen. Matt Dolan in Tuesday's GOP primary. LaRose and Moreno have aligned themselves with the pro-Trump faction of the party, while Dolan is backed by more establishment Republicans, including Gov. Mike DeWine and former Sen. Rob Portman.

Saturday's rally was hosted by Buckeye Values PAC, a group backing Moreno's candidacy. But Trump used the stage to deliver a profanity-filled version of his usual rally speech that again painted an apocalyptic picture of the country if Biden wins a second term.

"If I don't get elected, it's going to be a bloodbath for the whole - that's going to be the least of it. It's going to be a bloodbath for the country," he warned, while talking about the impact of offshoring on the country's auto industry and his plans to increase tariffs on foreign-made cars.

Threats

Biden campaign spokesperson James Singer accused Trump of doubling "down on his threats of political violence."

"He wants another January 6, but the American people are going to give him another electoral defeat this November because they continue to reject his extremism, his affection for violence, and his thirst for revenge," Singer charged in a statement.

Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung said that Trump had clearly

been talking about the impact of a second Biden term on the auto industry and broader economy.

"Crooked Joe Biden and his campaign are engaging in deceptively, out-of-context editing," he said.

Trump repeatedly noted his difficulty reading from his teleprompters, which could be seen visibly whipping in 35-mile-per-hour wind gusts.

A one-time Trump critic, Moreno, a wealthy Cleveland businessman, supported Marco Rubio for president in the 2016 Republican primary, and once tweeted that listening to Trump was "like watching a car accident that makes you sick, but you can stop looking." In 2021, NBC News reported on an email exchange around the time of Trump's first presidential run in which Moreno referred to Trump as a "lunatic" and a "maniac."

On Saturday, however, Moreno praised Trump as a "great American" and railed against those in his party who have been critical of the former president, who this week became his party's presumptive nominee for a third straight election. "I am so sick and tired of Republicans that say, 'I support President Trump's policies but I don't like the man,'" he said as he joined Trump on stage.

Comparing

Trump also dismissed recent allegations against Moreno, comparing them to attacks he has faced through the years, including his criminal indictments. Trump has been charged in four separate cases that span his handling of classified documents to his efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

"He's getting some very tough Democrat fake treatment right now," Trump said. "And we're not going to stand for it because I know this man. We all know this man. He's a hero, he's a winner. And we're not going to let these people - these people are sick."

The Associated Press reported on Thursday that in 2008, someone with access to Moreno's work email account created a profile on an adult website seeking "Men for 1-on-1 sex." The AP could not definitively confirm

that it was created by Moreno himself. Moreno's lawyer said a former intern created the account and provided a statement from the intern, Dan Ricci, who said he created the account as "part of a juvenile prank."

Questions about the profile have circulated in GOP circles for the past month, sparking frustration among senior Republican operatives about Moreno's potential vulnerability in a general election, according to seven people who are directly familiar with conversations about how to address the matter. They requested anonymity to avoid running afoul of Trump and his allies.

Also:

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's campaign has amassed \$155 million in cash on hand for the 2024 election, far exceeding the in-hand total for his Republican opponent, Donald Trump.

The president raised \$53 million alone last month, which was the strongest grassroots fundraising month since the campaign launched, according to campaign officials. Among those efforts was a contest for supporters to attend a fundraiser on March 28 in New York with Biden, Barack Obama and Bill Clinton that raised \$4 million last month.

"The enthusiasm we're picking up as we go around the country is real," Biden said in a radio interview with WNOV 860 in Wisconsin last week. "We've raised a whole lot of money. We have 1.5 million donors, including 500,000 are brand new, they're small donors; 97% of the donations under \$200."

Both Biden and Trump clinched their party nominations last week, setting up a 2024 rematch.

Trump's February figures have not been released. By the end of January, his two major committees had just \$36.6 million in cash on hand, and those committees collectively spent more than they took in that month. A major driver of those costs was millions of dollars in legal fees from Trump's myriad court cases. The figures are only a partial snapshot of the Trump operation's finances because other branches won't have to disclose their numbers until April.



Spectators watch plumes of smoke from volcanic activity between Hagafell and Stóri-Skógfell, Iceland, on March 16. A volcano in Iceland erupted Saturday evening for the fourth time in three months, sending orange jets of lava into the night sky. (AP)



Shapiro



Hochul

America

'Suspect barricaded self': A suspect has barricaded himself in a home in New Jersey and was holding hostages after shooting three people to death in suburban Philadelphia.

The Saturday morning shooting in Falls Township in eastern Pennsylvania forced the cancellation of a St. Patrick's Day parade and shut down a children's theme park. Authorities in Bucks County issued a shelter-in-place order for the area for several hours, but it was canceled by early afternoon. Police said the suspect, a 26-year-old man who was currently homeless, knew the shooting victims.

Falls Township police said in a statement that the shootings occurred at two locations in the township. The suspect then carjacked a vehicle and drove to Trenton, New Jersey, where he barricaded himself in a home with hostages.

Gov. Josh Shapiro said in social media posts that he has asked the Pennsylvania State Police to assist local law enforcement agencies. (AP)

NTSB to probe fatal crash: The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating a fatal crash in San Antonio, Texas, involving a Ford electric vehicle that may have been using a partially automated driving system.

The agency said in a statement Friday that a team of investigators from its Office of Highway Safety will travel to Texas and work with police on the Feb. 24 crash on Interstate 10.

The NTSB said that preliminary information shows a Ford Mustang Mach-E SUV equipped with the company's partially automated driving system collided with the rear of a Honda CR-V that was stopped in one of the highway lanes.

"NTSB is investigating this fatal crash due to its continued interest in advanced driver assistance systems and how vehicle operators interact with these technologies," the agency statement said.

Ford's Blue Cruise system allows drivers to take their hands off the steering wheel while it handles steering, braking and acceleration on highways. (AP)

Man, woman arrested: A woman believed to be the mother of an infant found dead in a trash bin earlier this year has been arrested, along with a man who police said helped her dispose of the body

outside a South Florida apartment complex.

They are both charged with failure to report a death, and the man is also charged with illegal disposal of a body,



Law enforcement officers enter an empty apartment home, in Trenton, NJ, on March 16. A man suspected of killing several people in their Philadelphia-area homes was arrested in New Jersey's capital city following a major police response, authorities said. The Saturday morning shooting in Falls Township in eastern Pennsylvania forced the cancellation of a St. Patrick's Day parade and shut down a children's theme park. (AP)

Hollywood police said Friday night.

The full-term baby boy, with an umbilical cord still attached, was found on Jan. 7 by a roofing company worker who had noticed a foul odor. He found the baby in a reusable shopping bag inside the trash bin, and notified authorities, according to a police affidavit. An autopsy found the baby had no signs of trauma or injury, according to the affidavit. (AP)

'Man acted in self defense': A man who shot and critically wounded another passenger on a New York City subway train may have acted in self-defense and will not immediately be charged with any crime, prosecutors said Friday.

"Yesterday's shooting inside a crowded subway car was shocking and deeply upsetting. The investigation into this tragic incident is ongoing but, at this stage, evidence of self-defense precludes us from filing any criminal charges against the shooter," said Oren Yaniv, a spokesperson for Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez.

The shooting during Thursday's rush hour came a week after Gov. Kathy Hochul sent the National Guard into the subway system to help police search people for weapons, citing a need to make people feel safer after a series of headline-making crimes in recent months. (AP)

Africa

7 militia chiefs eliminated

'US army presence no longer justified'

NIAMEY, Niger, March 17. (Agencies): Niger's junta said Saturday the US military presence in the country is no longer justified, making the announcement on state television after holding high-level talks with US diplomatic and military officials this week.

Niger plays a central role in the US military's operations in Africa's Sahel region and is home to a major airbase. The US is concerned about the spread of jihadist violence in the region, where local groups have pledged allegiance to al-Qaida and the Islamic State extremist groups.

In reading the statement, the junta's spokesman, Col Maj Amadou Abdramane, stopped short of saying US forces should leave. He said Niger was suspending military cooperation with Washington and added that US flights over the country's territory in recent weeks were illegal.



Bazoum

The US military in recent years began operating a major airbase in the Niger city of Agadez, some 920 kilometers (550 miles) from the capital of Niamey, using it for manned and unmanned surveillance flights and other operations.

The US has also invested years and hundreds of millions of dollars in training Niger's military. Some of those forces were involved in the July overthrow of Niger's democratically elected president, Mohammed Bazoum. On July 26, 2023, soldiers of the Presidential Guard commanded by General Abdourahmane Tchiani blockaded the presidential palace to depose Bazoum.

Coup

The coup was condemned by the African Union and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). ECOWAS told the plotters to free Bazoum immediately.

Bazoum was later deposed at the end of the day, with Abdramane going on state television to claim that the President had been removed from power and was being replaced by a military junta calling itself the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland whose leadership was claimed by General Tchiani on 28 July. Sources close to Bazoum said that he had decided on Tchiani's dismissal at a cabinet meeting prior to the coup, on July 24 as their relations had reportedly become strained. In his address to the nation, Tchiani accused Bazoum of trying to cover up for the country's political, socioeconomic and security problems.

In October, Washington officially designated the military takeover as a coup, which triggered US laws restricting the military support and aid that it can provide to Niger. But in December, the top US envoy for Africa, Molly Phee, said the US was willing to restore aid and security ties if Niger met certain conditions.

The Niger junta spokesman said the US tone was condescending and threatened Niger's sovereignty. Since the July coup, the country has ended its security partnership with the European Union and France has withdrawn its troops from the country.

Phee and Marine Gen. Michael Langley, head of the US military's African Command, were in Niamey this week to meet with senior Niger government officials. Phee did not respond to emailed requests for comment.

The US military had some 650 personnel working in Niger in December, according to a White House report to Congress.

16 soldiers killed in southern Nigeria: At least 16 soldiers, including four officers, were killed in southern Nigeria while responding to a distress call during fighting between two communities, defense officials said Saturday.

The attack in the oil-rich, riverine Delta state happened in the Bomadi council area Thursday when the soldiers, deployed to keep the peace, "were surrounded by some community youths and killed," Defense Headquarters spokesman Brig. Gen. Tukur Gusau said in a statement.

The attack led to the death of the commanding officer, two majors, one captain and 12 soldiers, Gusau said, adding that a few arrests had been made related to the attack, which is now being investigated by the military.

Local media reported the conflict in Delta was related to a lingering land dispute between the Okuama and Okoloba communities, which resulted in the abduction of one man. The soldiers had unsuccessfully tried to negotiate his freedom.

Though mostly deployed on special security operations across the West African country, Nigerian soldiers are sometimes sent to resolve conflict in communities, especially areas with an inadequate security presence or where deadly clashes are common.

Somali Army troops eliminate 7 militia chiefs: Somali Army troops eliminated seven leaders and members of "al-khawarej" militia in a planned military operation.

The Somali National News Agency (SONNA) reported, on Saturday, that the military operation was carried out in coordination with the popular resistance in the town of Harar Tayari.

The raid, carried out according to intelligence information, targeted the militiamen on a main road, SONNA said, adding that the regulars seized and confiscated caches of arms in the operation.

The Somali Army has pursued, in coordination with the police and the paramilitary squads, military operations throughout the nation to eliminate "al-khawarej" militia.

Al-khawarej was previously called al-shabab, affiliated to the notorious organization Al-Qaeda.

Net outage hits several African countries: A dozen countries across Africa suffered a major internet outage on Thursday as multiple undersea telecommunication cables reported failures, network operators and internet watch groups said.

The MTN Group, one of Africa's largest network providers, said the ongoing disruptions were a result of failures in multiple major undersea cables. "Our operations are actively working to reroute traffic through alternative network paths," the South African company said in a statement.

Network disruptions caused by cable damage have occurred in Africa in recent years. However, "today's disruption points to something larger (and) this is amongst the most severe," said Isik Mater, director of research at NetBlocks, a group that documents internet disruptions around the world.



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro, accompanied by First Lady Cilia Flores, greets supporters during an event marking the anniversary of a 1958 coup ousting dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez, in Caracas, Venezuela, on Jan 23. After officials said election day would be July 28, the birthdate of the late President Hugo Chavez, the government announced it would send invitations to international electoral observers. (AP)

Lat/Am

Brazil's Bolsonaro 'not afraid of any trial'

Maduro to run for Venezuela re-election

CARACAS, Venezuela, March 17. (AP): Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on Saturday became his party's official nominee for July's highly anticipated presidential election, which would allow him to stroll into a third consecutive term with no real competition on the horizon.

Not unusual to Venezuela, the election has been plagued with controversy since Maduro's main opponent, María Corina Machado - who swept an opposition coalition's primary election with more than 90% of votes - was disqualified by Venezuelan authorities to hold public office for 15 years.

Maduro accepted the nomination as the ruling United Socialist Party's candidate for the July 28 presidential election during a party gathering in Caracas, saying he has "the support of the people." According to the party, its decision was backed by over 4 million members who chose their candidate last week.

"A man alone would not be here. I am here for the people," Maduro said. "Here, the candidate is not Maduro. Here, the candidate is the people."

Maduro, the hand-picked successor to President Hugo Chávez, rose to power in March 2013 following the death of Chávez, whose homespun charm earned him the affection and votes of millions. Winning another term would leave Maduro at the helm of Venezuela's government until 2031.

Sanctions

Under his rule, Venezuelan has descended into a deep economic crisis, only deepened by American sanctions. The crisis has pushed millions of people to migrate from the South American nation, with many now headed toward the United States.

The American government rolled back some sanctions on Venezuela's oil, gas and mining sectors last year after Maduro agreed with the opposition to work toward electoral conditions that would allow for a leveled playing field.

But the Biden administration ended some of the relief after Venezuela's high court upheld a ban on Machado. It has also threatened to pull back additional relief if the Maduro government continues to defy the agreement.

The deadline for the registration of candidates is March 25, but so far Machado has maintained that she will continue "until the end," although without making clear how she would circumvent the ban on holding office.

In recent days, the opposition coalition has questioned the electoral

process and called for "the law to be respected."

Other opposition figures have also been disqualified, such as Henrique Capriles, a two-time presidential candidate, who declined to participate before the primary election.

Capriles is among a growing number of voices of government opponents and foreign leaders to urge Machado to step aside to allow voters to rally behind an alternative. He urged her to "a sense of realism" this week as Machado has pushed forward.

"They believe this is just one more election, one more electoral fight where they can run us over, or cheat, that we're going to stay quiet and lower our heads. They haven't understood anything," Machado has told supporters at several rallies. 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 US economic sanctions, Venezuela's rubber-stamping high court affirmed Machado's ban on holding office. Machado has repeatedly rejected the idea of renouncing her candidacy, but she has not explained her strategy to overcome the ban. Gerardo Blyde, who negotiated the opposition's electoral agreement with Maduro's representatives, told a radio station Friday "that there is still time" for the government to rectify and "allow our candidacy without obstructions." Machado has repeatedly rejected the idea of renouncing her candidacy, but she has not explained her strategy to overcome the ban. Gerardo Blyde, who negotiated the opposition's electoral agreement with Maduro's representatives, told a radio station Friday "that there is still time" for the government to rectify and "allow our candidacy without obstructions."

Also:

GUATEMALA CITY: The government of Guatemala said Saturday that the offices of its honorary consul in Haiti was ransacked, the latest in the Caribbean nation's recent wave of violent chaos. Gangs have raged through Haiti in

recent weeks, attacking key institutions and shutting down the main international airport.

Guatemala's Foreign Ministry did not give any details of damage or thefts during Friday's attack on the consulate, nor did it say who was responsible.

The ministry said only "paperwork and documentation of the last four or five years had been previously transferred" to the Guatemala Embassy for Haiti, which is located in the neighboring Dominican Republic.

Chaos is nothing new to Haiti, but the recent upheaval has been particularly brutal and prompted Prime Minister Ariel Henry to pledge that he will resign, a key demand of the gangs.

The violence has pushed many Haitians to the brink of famine and left the country's government in a state of turmoil. It has also prompted the United States to fly in troops to beef up security at the American Embassy and seemingly quash speculation that senior government officials might be leaving.

RIO DE JANEIRO: Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro said Saturday he was "not afraid of any trial," a day after documents released by the Supreme Court revealed that two top military leaders said the populist plotted to remain in power after losing the 2022 election.

Bolsonaro avoided commenting on the content of any of several investigations targeting him, but claimed he was a victim of "persecution" for causing trouble for the country's political left. Authorities in February confiscated Bolsonaro's passport.

"I could very well be in another country, but I decided to come back here at all costs. I'm not afraid of any trial, as long as the judges are impartial," Bolsonaro said in Rio de Janeiro, speaking at a campaign event in the city's mayoral race.

The court documents released Saturday included testimony from Bolsonaro's former Army and Air Force commanders to police, who said they refused the former leader's demands and would arrest him if he tried to stay in power.

The testimonies 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.

7 soldiers killed in Pakistan: A suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden truck into a sprawling military post in northwest Pakistan on Saturday, the military and security officials said. At least seven soldiers were killed in the bombing and ensuing shootout.

Troops responding to the attack in North Waziristan, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province that borders Afghanistan, killed six more attackers, some of whom were wearing suicide vests, the military said.

A newly formed militant group, Jaish-e-Fursan-e-Muhammad, claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement.

The military said a portion of a military post collapsed. It said five soldiers died in the truck bombing and two officers in the shootout that followed.

A clearance operation is still underway in the area, it said, adding that the "security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve."

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the attack and paid tribute to the troops who were "martyred" in the attack.

North Waziristan long served as a base for the Pakistani Taliban and other militant groups until the army claimed a few years back that it had cleared the region of insurgents. (AP)



This photograph shared by Indian navy on the X platform shows the hijacked ship ex-MV Ruen, on March 16. The Indian navy said on Saturday that it had taken control of a bulk carrier hijacked by Somali pirates and evacuated the 17 crew members on the vessel. In a statement on X, the navy said all 35 pirates on board the Maltese-flagged MV Ruen had surrendered and the vessel was checked for illegal arms, ammunition and contraband. (AP)



Modi



Zardari

Subcontinent

Afghan traffic accident kills 21: A traffic accident in southern Afghanistan left at least 21 people dead and 38 others injured, according to a provincial traffic department.

The accident occurred on Sunday morning in Gerashk district of Helmand province on the main highway between southern Kandahar and western Herat provinces, a statement from the department in Helmand said.

A motorbike crashed into a passenger bus, which then hit a fuel tanker on the opposite side of the road, said Qadratullah, a traffic official in Helmand. An investigation into the accident was underway, he added.

Eleven of the 38 injured people were transferred to hospitals with serious injuries, said Hzatullah Haqqani, a spokesman for the Helmand police chief.

Traffic accidents are common in Afghanistan, mainly due to poor road conditions and driver carelessness. (AP)

India navy takes control of carrier:

The Indian navy said late Saturday that it had taken control of a bulk carrier hijacked by Somali pirates and evacuated the 17 crew members on the vessel.

In a statement on X, the navy said all 35 pirates on board the Maltese-flagged MV Ruen had surrendered and the vessel was checked for illegal arms, ammunition and contraband. The whole operation took about 40 hours and involved drones, navy vessels and marine commandos.

The development came after men on the bulk carrier fired at an Indian warship in international waters Friday, triggering the navy to intercept the vessel some 2,600 kilometers (1,615 miles) off the Indian coast.

The vessel was first boarded by pirates Dec. 14 near the Yemeni island of Socotra, around 240 kilometers (150 miles) off Somalia.

Activity from Somali pirates has dropped in recent years, but there has been growing concern it could resume amid the political uncertainty and wider chaos in the region that has included attacks on ships by Yemen's Houthi rebels. (AP)

India to hold poll on April 19: India on Saturday announced its general elections will start on April 19 and results are expected on June 4.

The voting will stretch over six weeks and seven phases, with different states voting at different times. Almost 1 billion voters - over 10% of the world's population -

will elect 543 members for the lower house of Parliament for a term of five years.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party seek a third consecutive term in a race

against a broad alliance of opposition parties, led by the Indian National Congress. (KUNA)



In this image taken from video provided by ORTN, Col. Maj. Amadou Abdramane, (front center), makes a statement on July 26, 2023, in Niamey, Niger, as a delegation of military officers appeared on Niger State TV to read out a series of communiqués announcing their coup d'état. Niger's junta said on March 16, the US military presence in the country is no longer justified, making the announcement on state television after holding high-level talks with US diplomatic and military officials during the week. (AP)

dollar stable

The exchange rate of US Dollar stabilized on Sunday against the Kuwaiti Dinar at KD 0.307 while the Euro went down by 0.41 percent to KD 0.334 compared to Thursday, said Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) on Sunday.

CBK indicated in its daily bulletin that the Pound Sterling went down to KD 0.391, the Swiss Franc to KD 0.347 while the Japanese Yen stabilized at KD 0.002. (KUNA)

Gulf region sees surge in foreign residents, driven by economic growth

A recent report from the Arabian Business website highlights the Gulf region's growing appeal to foreigners, who are increasingly choosing to reside in countries within the region, reports Al-Qabas daily.

With international travel barriers diminishing and global mobility at unprecedented levels, the report underscores the Gulf's allure as a destination for expatriates, primarily driven by rapid economic development and a soaring demand for skilled labor.

Citing data from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the report notes that the Gulf region now hosts over 281 million foreigners, constituting approximately 3.6% of the world's population.

Many expatriates migrate to the region in pursuit of job opportunities, entrepreneurial ventures, academic and professional growth, or to reunite with family. Additionally, the region's cultural exploration and favorable climate serve as additional draws for some foreigners.

The report emphasizes the pronounced trend of expatriate influx into the Gulf, particularly evident in countries like the UAE, where foreigners make up 90% of the population, and Qatar, boasting an 85% expatriate population.

Economic diversification initiatives across Gulf countries have created ample opportunities for both local and international companies to attract foreign talent. With a focus on modern sectors such as technology, renewable energy, healthcare, and education, these initiatives have lured skilled professionals from Asia, enticed by competitive salaries and career prospects in burgeoning economies.

The Gulf region also appeals to European expatriates, primarily due to the largely tax-free financial income coupled with competitive salaries, resulting in significantly higher disposable incomes compared to their home countries. This affords them and their families a higher standard of living and the ability to save and indulge in luxuries.

Market Movements

17-03-2024

SAUDI - Tadawul Change +33.90 Closing pts 12,762.43 EGYPT - EGX 30 Change -254.55 Closing pts 31,061.88



Business

UK employment rates show mixed trends

US producer price index surges, putting pressure on Federal Reserve

By National Bank of Kuwait

United States

Retail sales

February spending in the US recovered slightly (0.6%) after a January dip (revised -1.1%). It is likely that cold weather deterred January purchases, while the ever so resilient job market and wage growth support spending. By category, sales have increased in home improvement, cars, electronics and restaurants, while sales have decreased in furniture, groceries, clothing and online sales. Potential dampeners on the future outlook of the US economy are rising interest rates and dwindling savings, while low unemployment and improved consumer sentiment give a sense of positivity. All in all, Consumers still have some financial buffer, but inflation and job market changes might influence future spending.

CPI and PPI

The latest US inflation report showed prices rose 0.4% in February compared to last month, and 3.2% over the past year. This annual rate was slightly higher than predicted, though the monthly gain met expectations. Even after removing volatile food and energy prices, inflation remained above the Federal Reserve's target of 2%. Energy costs, particularly gasoline, were a major contributor to the increase. Rising shelter costs, including rent, also played a significant role. This remains well above the Federal Reserve's 2% target. Additionally, Producer price index (PPI) rose 1.6% year-over-year in February, exceeding forecasts (1.1%). This follows a slight January decrease. The unexpected rise puts pressure on the

Rates - 17th March, 2024

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	Forward
EUR	1.0943	1.0871	1.0963	1.0887	1.0700	1.1000	1.0930
GBP	1.2860	1.2722	1.2863	1.2739	1.2700	1.3000	1.2747
JPY	147.06	146.47	149.17	149.02	147.00	151.00	146.92
CHF	0.8775	0.8745	0.8852	0.8835	0.8700	0.9000	0.8749

central bank as it approaches a key policy meeting next week. While Fed officials have hinted at potential rate cuts later this year, they remain cautious about stopping inflation's momentum too early. Chairman Powell indicated the Fed is nearing the point where it can ease monetary policy, but wants more confidence that inflation is truly under control.

The US Dollar index closed the week at 103.432.

United Kingdom

Labor Market

The number of payrolled employees increased slightly in the last month (0.1%) but has grown steadily over the past year (1.3%). This growth rate, however, is slowing down. The overall employment level is higher than last year but lower than the previous quar-

ter. Additionally, the employment rate stands at 75%, which is lower than both the previous year and the previous quarter. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate remains at 3.9%, slightly higher than last year but unchanged in the past quarter. The number of job vacancies has decreased for the 20th consecutive quarter but remains above pre-pandemic levels. Wages (including bonuses) have increased by 5.6% year-on-year, while regular pay (excluding bonuses) has grown by 6.1%. However, adjusting for inflation, real wage growth is much lower, at around 1.4% to 1.8%.

Gross Domestic Product m/m

Official figures show that the British economy grew 0.2% in January, reversing a brief recession. The services sector, a major part of the UK economy, led the growth

with a 0.2% increase. Retail trade bounced back significantly, with a 3.4% jump. Construction also performed well, growing by 1.1%, driven by a strong month for housebuilders. However, manufacturing output dipped by 0.2%. Despite the positive signs, the past three months still saw a slight economic contraction. Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt acknowledged the progress the economy has seen while highlighting the need for further measures to boost long term economic expansion.

The GBP/USD currency pair ended the week at 1.2739.

Asia Pacific

Japan Final Gross Domestic Product q/q

Japan avoids going into a technical recession as seen in the latest revised final GDP figure published Tuesday. The figure, while still being lower than expectations of a 0.3% growth, was revised up from -0.4% initially to 0.1% growth for the fourth quarter of 2023. The growth was mainly thanks to companies' stronger than expected spending on plants and equipments. Capital expenditures increased by 0.2% quarter-over-quarter, significantly higher than the 0.1% decrease initially announced by the government. Meanwhile, private consumption, which makes up 60% of Japan's economy, decreased by 0.3% for the quarter. Markets are anticipating the next BOJ meeting in mid-March as recent data has signaled that Japan could put an end to negative interest rates in as early as this week's upcoming meeting.

The USD/JPY currency pair ended the week at 149.02.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30690.

Kuwait's economy faces structural imbalance, Al-Shall report reveals

Dominance of public sector threatens Kuwait's economic sustainability

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: In a recent report the Al-Shall has revealed that Kuwait's local economy grapples with a significant structural imbalance in production, primarily attributed to the overwhelming dominance of the public sector, particularly the oil sector, which accounts for approximately 70% of the economy. This imbalance poses grave risks to the sustainability of public finances and the national labor market, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The report underscores the challenges faced by the industrial sector, including exorbitant land costs compared to neighboring countries, inadequate market protection, and bureaucratic hurdles hindering efficiency. The lack of early intervention to address these issues escalates the cost of rectification and diminishes the likelihood of success.

Highlighting the government's acknowledgment of the poor business environment, the report discusses the need for real partnership with the private sector to mitigate the structural imbalance.

There is active dialogue regarding the establishment of a new organization to address industrial sector challenges, emphasizing the importance of aligning macroeconomic goals with industrial project objectives.

The overarching objectives for the general economy include creating an attractive environment for capital localization, sustainable job creation, and supporting projects capable of competing domestically and internationally while ensuring profitability to sustain public finances.

The report suggests granting long-term government-monopoly land and initial sponsorship for deserving projects to enhance their success rates. However, it emphasizes fair treatment in regional agreements to avoid disadvantages to local consumers.

Shifting focus to the real estate market, Al-Shall noted a decrease in liquidity in February 2024 compared to January 2024, with total contract trades valued at 172.2 mil-

Insider trading activities rise

Kuwait stock market witnesses surge in liquidity amid FTSE Russell index review

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The stock market liquidity jumped in Thursday's closing session of the first week of Ramadan by 58.7%, with a total of 79.7 million dinars, as a result of the first period review this year of the weights of Kuwaiti stocks within the FTSE Russell index, reports Al-Anba daily.

The Premier Market acquired 70.3 million dinars of the total liquidity compared to 9.4 million dinars for the Main Market, noting that the liquidity Wednesday amounted to 50.2 million dinars.

Foreign liquidity targeted the stocks included in the index components during the closing auction, as foreign liquidity is estimated at approximately 39.1 million dinars, constituting 49% of the total liquidity received by the stock exchange yesterday, as the total market before the closing auction was 40.6 million dinars, with 31.9 million dinars for the Premier Market and 8.7 million dinars for the Main Market.

Thursday, liquidity was concentrated around KFH shares, which came in first with 15.2 million dinars, followed by the National Bank with 14.5 million dinars, then Mabane Company shares with 4.8 million dinars, then Human Soft shares with 4.2 million dinars, and GFH shares with 3.6 million dinars.

At the level of weekly performance, the Stock Exchange ended the trading of the first week of the blessed month with a collective rise in indices due to selective purchases interspersed with disposal operations with the aim of reaping quick profits from stocks that witnessed price increases in the recent period.

The Premier Market index rose by 0.4%, adding 39 points to reach 8,149 points, compared to 8,110 points last week. The main market index also rose by 0.2%, adding 14 points to reach 6,135 points, up from 6,121 points last week, so the general market index rose by 0.4% with gains amounting to 33 points, reaching 7443 points, up from 7410 points.

The weekly total of liquidity amounted to 249 million dinars, with a daily average of 50 million dinars, an increase of 12% compared to last week's liquidity, which amounted to 222 million dinars, with a million daily average of 44.5 million dinars. Although the market received foreign liquidity yesterday, the liquidity rate in Ramadan is close to the liquidity that was received by the market in regular sessions.

The KSE ended the week's trading with a limited decline in trading volume, which decreased by 1.9% due to the trad-

ing of 892 million shares compared to 910 million shares last week and achieved gains of 0.4% at the end of the week's trading by adding 195 million dinars, bringing the total value to 43.823 billion dinars, up from 43.628 billion dinars last week, noting that the value exceeded the level of 44 billion dinars by the middle of the week, but the selling operations were aimed at reaping profits.

It led to the market value falling below this level with the weekly close.

Also:

KUWAIT CITY: Insider trading activities have seen significant movements in the shares of 13 listed companies since the beginning of the year, totaling a trading volume of 18.37 million shares, reports Al-Jarida daily.

These transactions, which encompass buying, selling, ownership transfers, and inheritance, have drawn attention to the Boursa Kuwait.

According to an inventory conducted by the daily, insider trades primarily involved buying and selling ordinary shares, employee option shares, and share transfers, representing the bulk of the traded shares by insiders.

The movement of insiders' dealings serves as a crucial indicator for predicting future stock positions, given their access to privileged information that can influence market direction.

Recognizing the potential for abuse, the Capital Markets Authority has established regulatory frameworks and standards to govern insider transactions, aiming to uphold market integrity and impartiality.

However, recent instances of violations and fines have surfaced, particularly concerning delays in updating insider lists and maintaining proper disclosure records.

The Authority has imposed stringent measures to prevent the exploitation of internal data for personal gain, emphasizing the importance of timely disclosure and transparency. To enhance oversight, the Boursa Kuwait has introduced a dedicated platform listing insiders, including members of the Board of Directors, executives, and affiliated institutions.

Recent investigations into suspicious trades underscore the ongoing efforts to enforce regulatory compliance and curb illicit activities in the market. As insider trading remains a focal point of regulatory scrutiny, robust measures are essential to safeguard market integrity and investor confidence.

KOTC aims to improve productivity and accuracy

Kuwait Oil Tanker Company launches 'Digital Employee' feature

KUWAIT CITY, March 17, (KUNA): In an effort to keep pace with the digital transformation in the country and rapidity of technological advancements, Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) launched Sunday its "Digital Employee" feature.

The feature aims to promote efficiency, productivity, guarantee accuracy and quality as well as lower expenses, Director of Information Technology and Communications at KOTC, Hani Behbehani, told KUNA.

Behbehani added that the feature had been tried and tested successfully, and it has proven to be time and cost efficient.

The digital technology, he explained, could be put to use in employee data analysis, simplifying work process and decreasing er-

ror margin.

Chief of Information Technology work team Bashar Al-Fenaini, described the project as pioneering and exceptional in the oil sector, adding that it greatly contributes to work development.

The project commenced back in 2021, Al-Fenaini mentioned, and was activated in 2023. The technology is meant mimic human behavior and perform complex tasks.

The Digital Employee can achieve simple duties including paid or sick leaves, and can also attend to more intricate matters related purchases, contracts, quotes and approvals, Al-Fenaini illustrated.

Credit growth drives profit increase

Kuwaiti banks report strong growth in net profits for '23

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The data of Kuwaiti banks posted on Boursa Kuwait website revealed that these banks' cash and bonus shares distributions to their shareholders in 2023 reached about KD1.03 billion -- KD761.27 million cash and KD269.25 million bonus shares, reports Al-Anba daily.

The data revealed that Kuwait Finance House (KFH), National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) and Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) granted semi-annual dividends to its shareholders in the first half of last year.

KFH recorded the highest cash and bonus shares distributions to its shareholders at KD433.36 million -- KD292.1 million cash dividends and KD141.26 million bonus shares, while it distributed about KD146.06 million to shareholders in the first half of last year.

NBK is in second place with a total of KD317.19 million -- KD277.54 million cash dividends and KD39.65 million dinars as bonus shares, while it

distributed KD79.29 million in the first half of last year.

CBK is in third place with KD66.89 million (all cash dividends) and it distributed KD22.07 million in the first half of last year. Gulf Bank is in fourth place with KD61.56 -- KD43.57 million cash dividends and KD18.1 million bonus shares. Boubyan Bank is in fifth place with KD55.47 million, Burgan Bank is in sixth place with KD37.94 million, National Bank is in seventh place with KD 33.1 million, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) is in eighth place with KD12.69 million and Warba Bank is in ninth place with KD12.36 million.

Kuwaiti banks achieved a strong growth in net profits in 2023 at 30 percent, recording total profits of KD1.57 billion compared to KD1.21 billion in the previous year. Most banks explained in their disclosures that the profits increase was mainly driven by credit growth and a decrease in credit loss provisions on an annual basis.

KIPIC plans urea plant development linked to Al-Zour refinery with CCT

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) is set to embark on studies to explore the potential development of a urea plant linked to the Al-Zour refinery, incorporating carbon capture technology (CCT), reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to MEED magazine, the contract for feasibility and pilot studies for the plant is slated to be tendered in April, with a projected duration of one year. The studies will be conducted through lump-sum contracting.

These studies will investigate the feasibility of utilizing carbon dioxide (CO₂) sources from the Al-Zour refinery complex, primarily the flue gas from the HPU and tail gas from the PSA, for urea production.

The proposed factory, under consideration for development, will also harness solar energy for hydrogen and nitrogen production, aligning with the company's annual plan.

KIPIC anticipates that this project will contribute to the decarboniza-

tion of both the Al-Zour refinery and the planned Al-Zour petrochemical complex, thereby enhancing the value through small-scale urea production.

Additionally, the feasibility study, expected to span two months, will be followed by a pilot study lasting between six to eight months. While the budget for the feasibility study is estimated at 100 thousand dinars (\$325 thousand), the budget for the pilot study remains undetermined pending the outcomes of the feasibility study.

Originally slated for the period 2023-2024, the commencement of studies has been rescheduled to the period 2024-2025.

Moreover, carbon dioxide from the Al-Zour facilities will be utilized in enhanced oil recovery efforts, aimed at increasing pressure and production in oil reserves. KIPIC also mentioned that Kuwait Petroleum Corporation is actively identifying additional fields in Kuwait suitable for enhanced oil recovery utilizing carbon dioxide from the planned Al-Zour petrochemical facility.

interest in TikTok, distressed NY bank has echoes of Mnuchin's pre-Trump investment playbook

It seems like a bizarre mishmash: A former Trump cabinet official is saying he wants to buy TikTok just days after leading a group that pumped \$1 billion into a beaten-down bank. But it all actually fits in with the complicated career of Steven Mnuchin.

The man who served as former President Donald Trump's Treasury secretary is well connected in the world of finance, after all. From 1985 to 2002, he worked at Goldman Sachs, one of the most storied - and criticized - investment banks on Wall

Street.

Mnuchin also has a history in media and entertainment. Among his Hollywood credits are "Mad Max: Fury Road" and "The Lego Movie," where he was one of the executive producers. Think of them as much bigger-budget versions of TikTok videos.

And Mnuchin certainly has experience taking risks with troubled institutions. He famously swooped in to turn around the struggling IndyMac bank after its failure in the financial crisis of 2008.

But for critics, Mnuchin's dealmaking also raises concerns about ethics. Robert Weissman, president of the watchdog group Public Citizen, points to TikTok in particular, where the U.S. government may force its Chinese owners to sell. Imagine something similar happening in another country, where its former finance minister ended up as the buyer, he said.

"When you're at the top of the financial policymaking hierarchy, you don't jump from that to figure out how you can help

yourself," Weissman said.

Other former Treasury secretaries have gone to Wall Street after their terms ended, including Robert Rubin, a Goldman Sachs executive who served under President Clinton. In all cases, the move carries the appearance of cashing in on their time in government, Weissman said.

Mnuchin, who couldn't be reached for comment through a request via his private-equity firm, has often generated controversy as he has generated cash.

After leaving the Treasury Department in January 2021, he launched his private-equity fund, Liberty Strategic Capital, which raised \$2.5 billion by that September, according to news reports.

Much of that money was from government-controlled investment funds in Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states, which Mnuchin had frequently visited as Treasury secretary. He was in the Middle East just weeks before leaving office, cutting the trip short after the Jan. 6 Capitol riot. (AP)

Spring buying season starts with higher mortgage rates

US home sellers are cutting list prices

LOS ANGELES, March 17, (AP): More homeowners eager to sell their home are lowering their initial asking price in a bid to entice prospective buyers as the spring homebuying season gets going.

Some 14.6% of U.S. homes listed for sale last month had their price lowered, according to Realtor.com. That's up from 13.2% a year earlier, the first annual increase since May. In January, the percentage of homes on the market with price reductions was 14.7%.

The share of home listings that have had their price lowered is running slightly higher than the monthly average on data going back to January 2017.

That trend bodes well for prospective homebuyers navigating a housing market that remains unaffordable for many Americans. A chronically low supply of homes for sale has kept pushing home prices higher overall even as U.S. home sales slumped the past two years.

"Sellers are cutting prices, but it just means we're seeing smaller price gains than we would otherwise have seen," said Danielle Hale, chief economist at Realtor.com.

The pickup in the share of home listings with price cuts is a sign the housing market is shifting back toward a more balanced dynamic between buyers and sellers. Rock-bottom mortgage rates in the first two years of the pandemic armed homebuyers with more purchasing power, which fueled bidding wars, driving the median sale price for previously occupied U.S. homes 42% higher between 2020 and 2022.

"Essentially, the price reductions suggest far more normalcy in the housing market than we've seen over the last couple of years," Hale said.

The share of properties that had their listing price lowered peaked in Oc-

tober 2018 at 21.7%. It got nearly as high as that - 21.5% - in October 2022.

Last year, the percentage of home listings that had their asking price lowered jumped to 18.9% in October, as the average rate on a 30-year mortgage surged to a 23-year high of 7.79%, according to Freddie Mac.

Mortgage rates eased in December amid expectations that inflation has cooled enough for the Federal Reserve to begin cutting its key short term rate as soon as this spring. Those expectations were dampened following stronger-than-expected reports on inflation and the economy this year, which led to a rise in mortgage rates through most of February.

That's put pressure on sellers to scale back their asking price in order to "meet buyers where they are," Hale said.

That pressure could ease if, as many economists expect, mortgage rates decline this year.

Could this benefit workers, cos?

Sanders wants the US to adopt 32-hour workweek

WASHINGTON, March 17, (AP): The 40-hour workweek has been standard in the U.S. for more than eight decades. Now some members of Congress want to give hourly workers an extra day off.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, the far-left independent from Vermont, this week introduced a bill that would shorten to 32 hours the amount of time many Americans can work each week before they're owed overtime.

Given advances in automation, robotics and artificial intelligence, Sanders says U.S. companies can afford to give employees more time off without cutting their pay and benefits.

Critics say a mandated shorter week would force many companies to hire additional workers or lose productivity.

Here's what to know about the issue:

The bill Sanders introduced Wednesday in the Senate would reduce the standard workweek from 40 hours to 32 hours. Employers would be prohibited from reducing their workers' pay and benefits to match their lost hours.

That means people who currently work Monday through Friday, eight hours per day, would get to add an extra day to their weekend. Workers eligible for overtime would get paid extra for exceeding 32 hours in a week.

Sanders says the worktime reductions would be phased in over four years. He held a hearing on the proposal Thursday in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, of which Sanders is the chairman.

One recent study of British companies that agreed to adopt a 32-hour workweek concluded that employees came to work less stressed and more focused while revenues remained steady or increased.

In 2022, a team of university researchers and the nonprofit 4 Day Week Global enlisted 61 companies to reduce working hours for six months without cutting wages. Afterward, 71% of the 2,900 workers said they were less burned out and nearly half reported being more satisfied with their jobs.

Meanwhile, 24 of the participating companies reported revenue growth of more than 34% over the prior six months. Nearly two dozen others saw a smaller increase.

"The majority of employees register an increase in their productivity over the trial. They are more energized, focused and capable," Juliet Shor, a Boston College sociology professor and a lead researcher on the UK study, told Sanders' Senate committee.

Critics say a 32-hour workweek might work for companies where employees spend most of their time at computers or in meetings, but could be disastrous for production at manufacturing plants that need hands-on workers to keep assembly lines running.

"These are concepts that have consequences," Roger King, of the HR Policy Association, which represents corporate human resource officers,

told the Senate committee. "It just doesn't work in many industries."

With considerable opposition from Republicans, and potentially some Democrats, don't expect Sanders' proposal to get very far in the Senate. A companion bill by Democratic Rep. Mark Takano of California is likely doomed in the GOP-controlled House.

GOP Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana said paying workers the same wages for fewer hours would force employers to pass the cost of hiring more workers along to consumers.

"It would threaten millions of small businesses operating on a razor-thin margin because they're unable to find enough workers," said Cassidy, the ranking Republican on the committee. "Now they've got the same workers, but only for three-quarters of the time. And they have to hire more."

Sanders has used his platform as the committee's chairman to showcase legislation aimed at holding big corporations more accountable to workers. He blamed greedy executives for pocketing extra profits as technology has boosted worker productivity.

"Do we continue the trend that technology only benefits the people on top, or do we demand that these transformational changes benefit working people?" Sanders said. "And one of the benefits must be a lower workweek, a 32-hour workweek."

The Fair Labor Standards Act, signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1938, restricted child labor and imposed other workplace protections that included limiting the workweek to 44 hours. The law was amended two years later to make it a 40-hour week.

The landmark law followed a century of labor-union efforts seeking protections for the many overworked people in the U.S., said Tejasvi Nagaraja, a labor historian at Cornell University's School of Industry and Labor Relations.

"The issue of time was always as important, or more important, than money for labor unions and labor advocates," Nagaraja said.

In the 1830s, coal miners and textile workers began pushing back against workdays of up to 14 hours. After the Civil War, the abolition of slavery caused those in the U.S. to take a fresh look at workers' rights. Unions rallied around the slogan: "Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what you will."

The federal government took tentative steps toward limiting working time. In 1869, President Ulysses S. Grant ordered an eight-hour workday for government employees. In 1916, Congress mandated the same for railroad workers.

Other reforms came from private industry. In 1926, Henry Ford adopted a 40-hour week for his automobile assembly workers more than a decade before Congress mandated it.

Ford wrote: "It is high time to rid ourselves of the notion that leisure for workmen is either lost time or a class privilege."

NEW YORK, March 17, (AP): Americans picked up their spending a bit in February after pulling back the previous month. But last month's gain was weaker than expected, and January's decline was revised even lower, suggesting that many are growing more cautious with their money.

Retail sales rose 0.6% last month after falling a revised 1.1% in January, dragged down in part by inclement weather, according to the Commerce Department's report on Thursday.

February's number was also lifted in part by higher gas prices as well as higher auto sales and a rebound in building materials, which were depressed by severe weather in January. Excluding sales from gas stations and auto dealers, sales rose 0.3%.

The national average gas price Thursday was \$3.41 per gallon, per AAA, up from \$3.39 a week ago, and \$3.26 last month.

Government retail data isn't adjusted for inflation, which ticked up 0.4% from January to February, higher than the previous month's figure of 0.3%, according to the latest government report. So retailers only eked out a slight increase accounting for inflation.

"February retail sales provide further proof that spending on discretionary goods in 2024 is likely to be soft following several years of strong growth and as consumer health - albeit still relatively strong - is somewhat weighed down by inflation and reduced savings," said David Silverman, senior director at Fitch Ratings.

As rumble of tractor protests grows, EU offers more environmental 'concessions' to farmers

BRUSSELS, March 17, (AP): The European Union's executive arm on Friday proposed weakening even more climate and environmental measures in the bloc's latest set of concessions to farmers apparently bent on continuing disruptive tractor protests until the June EU elections.

Angering environmentalists across the 27 EU member states, the Commission proposed to further loosen rules imposed on agriculture which it said, not so long ago, were instrumental to the bloc's strategy to become climate neutral by 2050. That iconic challenge put the EU in the global vanguard of fighting climate change.

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen insisted that the EU's overall climate goals remained intact, even though she stressed she would "continue to stand steadfastly by our farmers, who maintain EU food security and serve at the front-line of our climate and environment action."

Under the proposals, the conditions to move farming to become more climate friendly were weakened or cut in areas like crop rotation, soil cover protection and tillage methods. Small farmers, representing some two-thirds of the workforce and the most active within the continent-wide protest movement, will be exempt from some controls and penalties under the new rules.

Politically, the bloc has moved rightward over the past year. The plight of farmers has become a rallying cry for populists and conservatives who claim EU climate and

Fissures emerge in what has been a driving force for US economy

US consumer sentiment ticks down slightly, but most expect inflation to 'ease' further

WASHINGTON, March 17, (AP): Consumers became slightly less optimistic about the economy this month, though they continue to expect inflation to cool further, a potential sign that price increases will keep slowing.

The University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index, released Friday in a preliminary version, slipped to 76.5 in March, barely below February's figure of 76.9. Americans' outlook has essentially remained fixed since January, when it leapt higher. Sentiment is now about halfway between its all-time low, reached

The report also reflects an ongoing spending shift away from goods toward services. The snapshot offers only a partial look at consumer spending and doesn't include many services, including travel and hotel lodges. But the lone services category - restaurants - registered an uptick of 0.4%.

"Elevated interest rates, an uptick in energy costs, and persistent discomfort with price levels continue to push consumers to make trade-offs with budgeting, with goods categories increasingly overlooked in favor of services spending," said Kayla Bruun, senior economist at Morning Consult, a data intelligence firm.

Business at department stores fell 0.2%, while clothing and accessory stores posted a 0.5% drop. Furniture and home furnishings stores had a 1.1% decline. Online sales showed a rare decline of 0.1%. Electronics and appliance stores had a solid 1.5% increase.

in June 2022 when inflation peaked, and its pre-pandemic averages.

Americans' outlook on the economy will likely have a significant effect on the presidential race, which will likely focus heavily on perceptions of President Joe Biden's economic record.

Friday's consumer sentiment figure follows inflation reports this week that showed that for a second straight month, prices rose at a pace faster than is consistent with the Federal Reserve's 2% target. The consumer price index rose 3.2% in

A strong jobs market and rising wages have fueled household spending, which also has become choppy in the face of rising credit costs and higher prices.

America's employers continued to hire in February, adding a surprising 275,000 jobs, underscoring the U.S. economy's resilience despite efforts of the U.S. Federal Reserve to knock down inflation by slowing spending.

While costs for many goods appear to have plateaued, consumer prices in the United States picked up last month. That again revealed the complexity of the Fed's task in slowing the economy to keep prices in check, and also a potential headache for President Joe Biden in his bid for re-election.

The most recent quarterly financial reports from big retailers like Walmart,

Target and Macy's show that their customers are looking for deals and in many cases sticking to the necessi-

February compared with a year ago, up from 3.1% in January.

Yet the University of Michigan report showed that Americans' outlook for inflation hasn't changed this month compared with February. Consumers expect inflation over the next year to be 3%, the same as in the previous month. And over the next five to 10 years, they expect inflation to be 2.9%, also unchanged from February. While those figures exceed the Fed's inflation target, they're only slightly higher than the pre-pandemic averages.

ties when they shop.

"They continue to shop but they are more constrained," Target CEO Brian Cornell told The Associated Press in an interview last week. "People are using credit cards to get through the month. Rent costs across the country are up, and gas has been volatile."

Chris Riccobono, founder of New York clothing chain Untuckit, said his experience indicates that customers are waiting for items to go on sale before making purchases. Riccobono nonetheless hopes to cut back on the company's reliance on discounts to drive sales. Before the coronavirus pandemic, Untuckit only held sales three times a year.

"I want to start to train our customers to get back into the pre-COVID days," he said.

Yet even with some customers hesitant to spend, Untuckit, which began as an online retailer, plans to add 14 more stores this year, bringing its total to close to 100.

AfDB chief criticizes opaque loans tied to Africa

LAGOS, Nigeria, March 17, (AP): The head of the African Development Bank is calling for an end to loans given in exchange for the continent's rich supplies of oil or critical minerals used in smartphones and electric car batteries.

"They are just bad, first and foremost, because you can't price the assets properly," Akinwumi Adesina said in an interview with The Associated Press in Lagos, Nigeria, last week. "If you have minerals or oil under the ground, how do you come up with a price for a long-term contract? It's a challenge."

Linking future revenue from natural resource exports to loan pay downs is often touted as a way for recipients to get financing for infrastructure projects and for lenders to reduce the risk of not getting their money back. Such

deals that have helped China gain control over mineral mining in places like Congo and have left some African countries in financial crisis.

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

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

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

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

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

Adesina said loans secured with natural resources pose a challenge for development banks like his and the International Monetary Fund, which promote sustainable debt management.



Sen. Bernie Sanders, talks to the media as he walks to the House chamber before President Joe Biden's State of the Union address at the U.S. Capitol, March 7, 2024, in Washington. Sanders, the far-left independent from Vermont, introduced a bill Thursday, March 14, that would shorten to 32 hours the amount of time many Americans can work each week before they're owed overtime. (AP)

Scientists and environmentalists from around the globe, though, have insisted drastic measures are necessary just to prevent global warming from getting worse, and have pointed to Europe as one of the places with the bleakest prospects.

The Commission proposals must still be endorsed by the member states, but considering previous concessions, they stand a good chance of being accepted quickly, observers said.

Friday's plans were the EU's latest concessions in reaction to protests that have affected the daily lives of tens of millions of EU citizens and cost businesses tens of millions of

euros due to transportation delays. Others have included shelving legislation on tighter pesticide rules and requirements to let some land lie fallow.

On top of the EU itself, member states have also caved in to several demands as the tractor protests shot up the political agenda. Complaints have centered on excessive bureaucracy, intrusive environmental rules and unfair competition from third countries, including Ukraine.

The Commission said that even though more flexibility measures for farmers were now proposed, the overall EU climate goals remained valid.

In strategic partnership with Kuwait Food Bank

Zain's Iftar initiative continues at Souq Al Mubarakiya

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Zain's Iftar initiative to serve fasting individuals continues throughout the entirety of the Holy Month of Ramadan. The initiative comes back in its 17th year under the company's annual social campaign, Zain Alshuhoor, in collaboration with several of Zain's strategic partners, including the Kuwait Food Bank. This year, a total of 42,000 meals will be served throughout the entire month.

Zain recently held a special visit to Souq Al Mubarakiya, the traditional market located at the heart of Kuwait City, to share the blessings of the Holy Month with fasting individuals. The visit was joined by Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Algharabally, Kuwait Food Bank Vice-Chairman Meshal Al Ansari, Zain and Food Bank officials, and members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team.

This initiative is a main pillar of Zain's annual social program



Nawaf Algharabally and Meshal Al Ansari with Zain and Food Bank officials and volunteers.

during the Holy Month. The company serves Iftar meals every day in collaboration with its strategic partner, the Kuwait Food Bank, through trucks that visit densely populated areas across Kuwait to secure Iftar meals for underprivi-

leged communities.

Zain also serves daily meals at the Grand Mosque, another strategic partner, to reach a total of 42,000 meals throughout the entire month. The initiative is directly supervised and organized by Zain's

team and joined by members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team that consists of employees from across the company's divisions and departments.

This year, six of Zain's strategic community partners from both the



Zain Alshuhoor volunteers joined the initiative.

public and private sectors join its annual Ramadan social campaign, Zain Alshuhoor. The campaign features a wide range of humanitarian, charitable, social, religious, health, and sports programs that continue throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Zain Alshuhoor is one of Kuwait's biggest and most success-

ful community programs during the Holy Month. Every year, the company introduces a bigger, renewed version of the campaign that expands upon the previous year's initiatives and programs. The campaign strives to share the blessings of this much-cherished month with the entire Kuwaiti people.

Initiative ensures nourishment for needy during Maachlat Al Khair

Agility, Coop Societies support 1K families during Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Agility, a supply chain services, infrastructure and innovation company, delivered food baskets to 1,000 needy families in Kuwait, part of Maachlat Al Khair, its annual Ramadan initiative.

Maachlat Al Khair (Food for Good) was done in partnership with Kuwait's cooperative sector, represented by the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies and Al-Sha'ab Cooperative Society.

To identify the families, Agility worked with the Naemati, a Kuwaiti initiative that aims to minimize and stop food wastage and provide necessities to those in need through volunteerism. Agility affiliates United Projects for Aviation Services Company

(UPAC) and Shipa Delivery provided additional financial support and donated vehicles for delivering packages. Agility employees, including Chairperson Henadi Al-Saleh, helped pack and distribute the food packages. These packages, containing rice, cooking oil, flour, salt, sugar, and dates, are designed to meet the food requirements of a family throughout the month of Ramadan.

Al-Saleh said: "Supporting families in Kuwait who need it the most, especially during Ramadan, is a project close to my heart. Giving back to the communities where we work is a key part of our company values, and initiatives like Maachlat Al Khair are one of the ways we can give back. Thank you to the

partner organizations that helped us reach 1,000 families."

Nadia Akil, Chief Executive Officer of UPAC, said: "UPAC strives to have a positive impact on the lives of others. We are strongly committed to giving back to Kuwait because we believe in the importance of social responsibility and understand the role our company has in supporting its local communities."

Agility has a long tradition of support for sustainability initiatives, social causes and assistance to those in need. Agility and UPAC have run Ramadan programs since 2017, providing for hundreds of families in need in Kuwait.



Photo during the 'Maachlat Al Khair' annual Ramadan initiative.

Delivering outstanding services and commitment to excellence

MSRYB continuously bags Isuzu No.1 Best Dealer Award

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Mohammad Saleh & Reza Yousuf Behbehani Company (MSRYB) the authorized dealer of Isuzu Trucks and D-max Pick-ups, for the State of Kuwait, have again secured the No.1 best Isuzu Dealer Award in the Middle East and Africa Region

The prestigious award for the year 2023 was presented at the Isuzu Middle East Dealer Conference held at Seychelles in the presence of about 150 invited Executive Managers from the Mena and Africa Regions, and Senior Executives from Isuzu Japan, Dubai, and Germany.

The award was based on several criteria's and KPIs as highlighted below:

1. Increase in Market share.
2. Customer satisfaction
3. Commitment to Excellence
4. Exceptional performance in sales and After sales KPIs
5. Priority on Health, Safety and Environment.
6. Achieving Isuzu Dealer Standards on top level.
7. Training against all departments, Sales, Spare parts & Service.
8. Grand Prix competition results.
9. Continuous focus on fix it right at first time

MSRYB performed exceptionally well in all fields and won this most prestigious award.



Prestigious award for the year 2023 was presented at the Isuzu Middle East Dealer Conference.



The No.1 best Isuzu Dealer Award.



Mohammad Saleh & Reza Yousuf Behbehani Company group photo.

"We are really honored by receiving this accolade from our Great Partner Isuzu" said Abdul Ghani Behbehani, Director, MSRYB in his reply speech. "Infact, this is the third consecutive year that we are winning this highest Isuzu Award" he continued. "Our consistent efforts and

focus on delivering outstanding services and our commitment to excellence have truly made a difference. Thanks to the Great support of Isuzu & the IIF Sales and After sales team" he complimented.

Behbehani concluded his speech with a remark that "We will do our

best to maintain the No.1 position for the years ahead."

Over the last 51 years, MSRYB has been maintaining a healthy partnership with Isuzu, achieving several awards to its credit in terms of Sales, Spare parts, and Service.

They are on the move further and

further for customer Total Satisfaction through their Sales and After sales facility located at Al-Rai, Shuwaikh on the main Automotive Street and three service locations at Sharq, Jahra, Ahmadi, and the 4th one at Shuwaikh, preparation for the same is in progress.

20 customers win cash prizes worth KD1,500 each

KFH announces winners of Al-Rabeh draw

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced the winners of the AlRabeh draw with 20 customers winning cash prizes worth KD1,500 each for the 7th and 8th weeks of 2024.

The winners of KD 1,500 are: Ahmad Al-Azmi, Badria Musallam, Mahmoud Mutawaa, Ebraheem Al-Khashti, Moneera Al-Otaibi, Salim Al-Azmi, Ahmad Tulbiyah, Ali Al-Ajmi, Khaled Al-Ajeel, Abdullah Al-Dehaieem, Thamer Al-Measab, Abdulaziz Al-Shodoukhi, Naneeka Margrate, Neeran Al-Mutairi, Abdullah Al-Mousa, Mohammad Al-Dehna, Areej Hayat, Ebraheem Wajeeh, Mehse Al-Mutairi, Mohammad Al-Merri.

The AlRabeh campaign provides prizes and draws that offer customers several chances of winning "weekly, monthly and quarterly". The campaign crowns 536 winners throughout the year.

The draw took place under the supervision of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The campaign is part of KFH's ongoing efforts to offer exceptional products and services that meet customers' aspirations, enhance the Bank's leadership in the local and global markets, as well as reflect its excellence in offering innovative banking solutions as per the highest quality standards.

The Al-Rabeh account is a salary account available to customers wishing to transfer their salaries and manage their personal accounts. Customers can open Al-Rabeh account in any of KFH branches in Kuwait, or through the Bank's online channels. The account can be opened in the Kuwaiti Dinar and is targeted for customers wishing to transfer their salaries and manage their personal accounts. Salary transfer is a prerequisite for customers to enter the draw provided



The campaign visual

that the transfer of salary to Al-Rabeh account is constant.

Regarding the terms and conditions of the prizes and draws, a customer is able to deposit 3 salaries during the 3 months prior to the draw, and the minimum balance of the account should not be less than KD 50 at the end of each month during the 3 months prior to the draw. Ten draws take place on a weekly basis for amount of K.D 1,500 for 10 winners each, 1 KG of KFH gold will be drawn monthly for one winner and K.D 25,000 for one winner every quarter, reaching a total number of 536 winners during the year.

KFH is keen to further meet customers' requirements and aspirations and their increasing needs as well as offer innovative and modern services, therefore achieving customer satisfaction, which is one of the fundamentals at KFH. The Bank has achieved a qualitative shift in the level of financial services by utilizing technology.

ABK launches promotion with Alshaya Group on credit and prepaid cards

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is delighted to announce the launch of a promotion that gives its customers a chance to win a KD300 Alshaya gift card by simply using their ABK credit or prepaid card for purchases.

Starting from 10 March to 15 April 2024, all ABK credit and prepaid cardholders are eligible to participate in this promotion. With a minimum spend of KD150 per card, whether locally or internationally through POS or-commerce transactions, customers can enter the draw to be one of 50 lucky winners.

For every KD1 spent locally, customers will receive 5 draw points as compared to 8 draw points on international foreign currency



Marafi

ers for their loyalty, which is why we have introduced this promotion to add value to their overall banking experience. This is one

of many initiatives that demonstrate our appreciation to customers for choosing ABK as their banking partner."

"We are truly proud to be partnering with ABK in their loyalty initiative. As part of our strategy to collaborate with exceptional and innovative partners, we look forward to offering their customers more opportunities to convert their daily expenses into exciting rewards," said Francois Orhan - Director of Loyalty, Data, Payments and Analytics at Alshaya Group.

Alshaya Group is one of the world's leading brand franchise operators, offering an unparalleled choice of well-loved international brands to customers across various sectors.

Partnering with Alshaya provides ABK the unique advantage of offering its customers access to a vast array of successful brands, spanning categories such as fashion, food, health and beauty, home furnishings, and leisure.

Marafi continued, "This partnership offers a compelling opportunity to enhance customer satisfaction through the plethora of brands that fall under the esteemed Alshaya Group umbrella."

Marafi concluded with an invitation to follow the Bank's social media accounts to remain up to date with the latest marketing initiatives and to benefit from the current promotional campaigns and offers.



ABK - Al Shaya offer

Broadway's 'The Notebook' goes for guts, without guile

NEW YORK, March 17, (AP) — The romantic tearjerker "The Notebook" lands on Broadway in awkward musical theater form this spring having previously conquered books and movies. It is intent now on making a live audience openly weep by employing massive doses of schlocky sentimentality without the aid of Ryan Gosling.

The bombastic musical that opened Thursday at the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre is about a love for the ages but has understated songs by Ingrid Michaelson, who offers coffee house vibes instead of passion's thunder. The book by Bekah Brunstetter loses gas well before it's over and piles on the melodrama.

This adaptation from a Nicholas Sparks novel is the love story of poor boy Noah Calhoun and rich girl Allie Hamilton, told as the elderly narrator reads the story to his elderly wife with Alzheimer's, the two later revealed to be the young couple of the story, whose passion was interrupted by meddling parents.

For the stage, three sets of multicultural Noahs and Allies have been hired for different stages - there's inflation even on Broadway - so that at some points there are six people on stage representing our central couple, a somewhat diffusing effect. Luckily, the boys are dressed in brown and the girls in blue, like in kindergarten. It's a bad sign when your Broadway musical needs color cues to distinguish the cast.

Directors Michael Greif and Schele Williams as well as choreographer Katie Spelman seem to complicate the visuals by rushing everyone around in a breathless whirl, saying, in effect, that what love really

does is make you want to sprint.

The older couple (Maryann Plunkett and Dorian Harewood) rarely leave the stage, weirdly hanging around to watch their younger selves, with elderly Noah supposedly reading from his notebook to trigger his wife's memory. This effect is also used in the Neil Diamond musical and it's just creepy, pulling focus and complicating the scenes.

The film's chronological timeline has been shattered, which is a welcome idea, allowing time to be manipulated and scenes to dissolve and overlap, perfect for a musical about Alzheimer's. But that opportunity has been squandered and instead we have songs like "Iron in the Fridge" or the cringey lyrics "Is it time for dinner?/Is it time for forever?"

Desperation

Credit the writer for not aping the Gosling-Rachel McAdams film's most charming visual bits - hanging off a Ferris Wheel, lying down in a street or boating with geese. But adding another health crisis, creating a tiresome physical therapist for comic relief and a terrible metaphor about sea turtles - "they return to the same nesting spot where they were born" - shows some desperation.

You better believe the movie's lusty rain scene has made the leap to the stage - the couple even do that now-famous clinch several times. Unfortunately, there's plenty more musical to go after that - including some death, leaving many audience members sobbing at a recent preview. Maybe they were just upset at how hammy it all was.

Michaelson does nail some tunes - "Leave the Light On," "If This

Is Love" and the wonderfully comedic "Forever" - but there are some 20 pieces of music and most dissolve in your mind mid-song. A real belter - "My Days," for the excellent Joy Woods - is a welcome respite, but seems from another musical.

The multicultural cast has prompted the setting to change from the 1930s and '40s to the '60s and '70s (you can tell because of the Diane von Furstenberg-like wrap dresses) and away from South Carolina to "a coastal town in the mid-Atlantic," robbing it of specificity.

Perhaps that's why scenic work by David Zinn and Brett J. Banakis is so odd. It's the first hybrid hospital-boating dock design seen on Broadway in quite a while and hopefully the last. There's a pool of real water there, and every once in a while, a pylon or a boat hull, juxtaposed with a neon Exit sign and chilly hospital decor.

Such jarring touches overshadow a lovely attempt to show the evolution of Noah's renovated old house, his goal to winning Allie back. It is first referenced in abstract pieces - a window here, a porch there - until it comes together as real when she finally calls it home. Like a sea turtle.

Lighting designer Ben Stanton has hung neon tubes vertically, trying to bridge the difference between fluorescent office lights and stars, and failing. Adding to the show's way-too-muchness is the sound effect of a ticking clock. A messy Act 1 finale leads to the unwelcome sight of Act 2 beginning with a comatose patient, so don't rush back from the bar.

Theater

Variety



This image released by Apple TV+ shows Lily Taylor, left, and Hamish Linklater in a scene from "Manhunt." (AP)

Television

Series delves into hunt for John Wilkes Booth

'Manhunt' retells Lincoln's assassination story

NEW YORK, March 17, (AP) — A new series transforms the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln into a true crime thriller that goes deeper into the story than most textbooks.

Most who studied Lincoln in school learn he was assassinated by a man named John Wilkes Booth. Lincoln was watching a play with his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, at Ford's Theatre when Booth came from behind and shot him.

What isn't as widely remembered is that Booth killed the president just five days after the surrender of Confederate General Robert E. Lee effectively ended the Civil War. It was a pre-planned, coordinated attack on the president, Vice President Andrew Johnson and the Secretary of State. Only Booth was successful.

A Confederate sympathizer, Booth relied on a network of supporters to help him hide. Edwin Stanton, the Secretary of War, led the search by the Army to track Lincoln's killer down. He was found 12 days later hiding in a barn where he was shot and killed.

"Manhunt," debuting Friday on Apple TV+, dramatizes the hunt for Booth and the trial that followed. It's based on the book "Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer" by James L. Swanson. Tobias Menzies stars as Stanton, who also helped convict Booth's conspirators.

"Most no one knows the details of this story unless they've done a Ph.D or it's a special interest of theirs," said creator-showrunner Monica Beletsky in a recent interview.

Bringing Stanton to life is exciting, said Menzies, because he had a close, respected relationship with Lincoln.

"A big part of Stanton's journey is both a political loss and also a personal loss. He loses a friend. ... I studied very little American history, and I certainly didn't do this period of history," said Men-

zies. "As an actor, I've done quite a lot of period stuff and I find it enjoyable to get the chance to find out about a new part of these stories and this is a really good example of that."

"Truth is stranger than fiction."

Anthony Boyle plays Booth and his awareness of the man began with an episode of "The Simpsons" where Bart portrayed him in a school play. He knew his research needed to dig deeper to understand Booth's psyche and read letters he had written between the ages of 15 until his death at 26. Boyle describes them as a "descent into madness."

Beletsky hopes "Manhunt" underscores how Lincoln's killing was especially shocking at the time.

Storytelling

"That kind of murder was so uncommon," she said. "Lincoln famously left the White House door unlocked during the Civil War, even though he had piles of death threats. It wasn't even imagined that kind of crime could happen in our culture. My costume designer told me that Booth, wearing all black that night, is the origin of villains wearing all black in our storytelling."

There was a boldness and conceit to the way Booth decided to kill Lincoln so publicly in front of an audience that fit his desire for attention.

"The theater was absolutely jammed," said Menzies, a British actor who's starred in "The Crown" and "Outlander." "And then to run out and disappear into the night and then take 12 days to find this man, you couldn't make it up."

Booth was an actor in a family of actors, but lived in the shadow of his older brother Edwin, who was well-respected for his talent. "I'm gonna be the most famous man in the whole world," Booth says on the show, prior to the assassina-

tion. While on the run, he reads newspaper articles about himself and loves the attention.

"It was like, Leonardo DiCaprio's brother killed the president," said Hamish Linklater, who plays Lincoln. "I mean, (Edwin) was the biggest celebrity of his time," he said.

"This was before the internet and before television, this was word of mouth," added Boyle. "People were hearing about it (asking), 'John Wilkes Booth, the actor, killed the President? Was this some sort of farce?'"

Besides telling Stanton's story, Beletsky introduces viewers to Mary Simms, a slave belonging to a physician named Dr. Samuel Mudd, (played by Matt Walsh), who treated Booth while he was on the run. She was freed by the Emancipation Proclamation. The series depicts Simms - played by Lovie Simone - as interacting with Booth when he shows up at Mudd's house to hide, but in reality, she never met him.

Simms went on to testify in the trial of Booth's conspirators - which included Mudd - and confirmed his allegiance to the Confederacy. Because there is not a lot of information available on Simms, she was written as a composite of a number of people who helped to convict Booth's co-conspirators.

"It was a real opportunity to bring some of these heroes to light, like Stanton and Simms, and also to sort of set the record straight in some ways of what happened in our past and how that still continues to affect us," said Beletsky.

"It feels like a good time to be telling this story. You know, there is a big election coming up in November. Our story is partly a story about the fragility of democracy to some extent," Menzies said. "I think that's as true now as it was then. It has a relevance and a resonance which feels kind of rich to be telling now."

Features

ARABIC TIMES

MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2024

LOS ANGELES: Usher was named entertainer of the year at the 55th annual NAACP Awards on Saturday night, which highlighted works by entertainers and writers of color.

After Usher accepted his award at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, the superstar R&B singer spoke about being thankful about the journey of his successful career that has lasted three decades.

He reeled off several of his recent big moments including his sold-out residency in Las Vegas, getting married, releasing his ninth studio album "Coming Home" and his Super Bowl halftime performance, which became the most-watched in the game's history.

Usher beat out Colman Domingo, Fantasia Barrino, Halle Bailey and Keke Palmer.

"I don't know how many people do that much stuff in one setting," said the multi-Grammy winner, who was presented the award by Oprah Winfrey. After being surprised by Winfrey's presence, he thanked those who have supported him throughout the years.

"This is for you, you and my number one," the singer said as the audience repeated his words back to him. The final words of his speech were recited lyrics from his popular song "Superstar" from his 2024 album "Confessions," which has sold more than 10 million units in the U.S.

Earlier in the ceremony, Usher was honored with the President's Award for the singer's public service achievements through his New Look Foundation. He thanked the strong women in his life, including his mother and wife Jenn Goicoechea, whom he married after his Super Bowl halftime performance last month.

"The say behind or beside or with every strong man is a stronger woman," he said.

Queen Latifah hosted the awards ceremony aired live on BET. "The Color Purple" was awarded best motion picture. The musical film featured star-studded cast including Barrino, Taraji P. Henson, Domingo, H.E.R., Danielle Brooks, Corey Hawkins and Bailey.

Barrino, who starred as Celie in the film, won for best actress in a motion picture.

"I didn't prepare a speech, because I didn't think I was going to

win," the singer-actor said. "I was afraid to play Celie, but I'm glad I did. Because I kept saying 'If I don't win an award, the awards that I will win will come from the people who watched 'Color Purple' and the women who will relate to her and feel like Oscars when they walk out.'" New Edition was inducted into



Usher

Barrino

the NAACP Image Awards Hall of Fame. The induction is bestowed on individuals who are viewed as pioneers in their respective fields and whose influence shaped their profession.

"We stand here in brotherhood," said Michael Bivins while his group members behind him. The Grammy-nominated group

includes Bobby Brown, Johnny Gill, Ralph Tresvant, Ronnie DeVoe and Ricky Bell.

"You've seen our story. You know what we've been through," said Bivins, who spoke about the group overcoming conflict and tension in their earlier years to now holding a residency in Las Vegas. "But we call each other every

day," he continued. "We text each other every day. We check on our families. You watched us grow up. We're still growing."

Damson Idris won best actor in a drama television series for his role in "Snowfall." Henson and Domingo took home best supporting roles in "The Color Purple." (AP)

People & Places



This image released by Lionsgate shows Simu Liu, left, and Mark Wahlberg in a scene from "Arthur The King." (AP)

Film

Kahlo's essence

Frida documentary offers fresh insight

NEW YORK, March 17, (AP): Frida Kahlo used her own experiences to inform her art. In that spirit, Kahlo's personal writings are used to help tell the story of her life in a new documentary, "Frida."

Filmmaker **Carla Gutiérrez** blends first person narration with archival footage and interpretive animation of Kahlo's work in the film, which is now streaming on Prime Video.



Gutiérrez

Gutiérrez, who was born in Peru and moved to the United States when she was a teenager, remembers first really connecting with Kahlo's paintings in college. "I was a new immigrant and there was one specific painting that really introduced me to her voice as an artist of her in between the border of the United States and Mexico," Gutiérrez said in an interview with The Associated Press earlier this year. "I just saw my experience at the time really reflected in the painting. Then she just kind of became part of my life."

Gutiérrez was an editor by trade and content with that path in filmmaking. She was working on meaningful projects like "RBG" and "Julia," which allowed her to be intimately involved creatively. But when a director friend whispered Kahlo's name to her, she went back and re-read one of those books she'd read in college. Within hours she was making plans to direct.

"I feel like this story really just kind of told me that I needed to step up and direct this one," she said. "I realized she could tell a lot of her own story and I felt like that hadn't been made yet. Hopefully it's a new way of getting into her world and in her mind and her heart and really understanding the art in a more intimate, raw way."

Opinions

Kahlo did not do many interviews herself over the years, Gutiérrez said, but she did write very intimate and personal letters. She was surprised by her sense of humor, her sarcasm and her irony as well as and "how explicit she was about her opinions."

"It's kind of like messy confidence and messy feminism in a way," she said.

The filmmaking team had to search several different museums to find those letters that they would compile into a full picture, including the Frida Kahlo Museum in Mexico City, the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington D.C. (where her correspondence with her mother was housed) and the Philatelic Museum of Oaxaca, where they found her letters to her doctor about everything from her complex marriage to her miscarriage.

One of the biggest creative decisions was to animate Kahlo's art throughout, which has proved a bit divisive since the film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival earlier this year. Some love it. Some don't. But it was part of the vision for the film from the earliest stages. The hope, Gutiérrez said, was to transport audiences from the real world into her internal world.

"I always thought about her heart and her veins just kind of moving from her hands into the canvas," she said. "We wanted to be very respectful to the paintings but bring in lyrical animation to feel like we were immersing into her actual feelings and heart."

She is also especially proud that her collaborators are mostly Latinx and bilingual. The composer is Mexican. The animation team is all women from Mexico.



Composer Hans Zimmer poses for a portrait on July 10, 2019, at the Montage Hotel in Beverly Hills, Calif. Zimmer's film scores have soundtracked magic movie moments in 'The Lion King,' 'The Dark Knight' and both new 'Dune' movies, to name a few. This fall, the 'Hans Zimmer Live' tour will hit U.S. and Canada, marking the first time Zimmer has performed in North America in seven years. (AP)



Bennett



Breashears

Variety

SAN FRANCISCO: A cable car recently dedicated to the late **Tony Bennett** rolls past the landmark **Fairmont** hotel where the singer in 1961 first performed the song that would forever tie him to San Francisco.

San Francisco officials on Valentine's Day dedicated one of the city's iconic cable cars to Bennett, whose "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" included a line about "the city where little cable cars climb halfway to the stars." He died at age 96 last summer.

The song was an enormous hit and Bennett returned to the city often, even appearing with the late Sen. **Dianne Feinstein** when she was mayor to toast the rebuild of the cable system in 1984. His statue is on the front lawn of the Fairmont San Francisco, and a short street by the hotel is named for him.

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency has 42 cable cars, of which four are dedicated to individuals, including baseball's former center fielder **Willie Mays**, according to **Arne Hansen**, superintendent of cable car vehicle maintenance.

"Some people specifically wait for this car because they want to ride the Tony Bennett cable car just like they want to ride the Willie Mays car, which is Car 24," he said.

Car 53, built in 1907, was in the process of being restored after an accident when the idea came up to dedicate the car to Bennett. It is shiny red with blue and white trim and features plaques explaining the singer's connection to San Francisco.

Also unique to the car, the traditional "ribbons" on both ends say "Halfway to the Stars, Since 1873," referencing a lyric and the year the city's cable car system was born. Regular cable cars

Film

Epic adventure of man, dog and power of hope

'Arthur the King' brings true story to life

NEW YORK, March 17, (AP): The new Mark Wahlberg movie "Arthur the King" is the cinematic version of an inspirational classroom poster. It means well and has something worthwhile to say, but for the most part, it's also rather generic — an underdog story that hits the expected beats.

Wahlberg plays an adventure racer, Michael, who has yet to win a competition. We meet him one day into his "last shot" race, stuck in the mud with his team and unable to finish. It is, he says, weak of them. Cut to three years later and he's in his idea of suburban purgatory, working for his dad and living in an extraordinarily nice house with his beautiful, former adventure racer wife and their young daughter. She gave it all up to be a mom, but he can't get over the fact that he never won.

"Racers race," he explains. She caves almost immediately, likely tired of mopey Michael, and tells him to go find some sponsors. He's like the male Diana Nyad — madly obsessed with proving his own greatness in a very niche sport.

It's also based on a true story, that of racer Mikael Lindnord, and the book he wrote about the grueling endeavor "Arthur: The Dog Who Crossed the Jungle to Find a Home." Did I mention there was a dog involved? Well, there is, but the main novelty of "Arthur the King" doesn't even fully integrate into the story —

til almost 45 minutes in (the movie is only 90 minutes long). Director Simon Cellan Jones and his editor try to intersperse footage of the dog in his stray days on the streets of Santo Domingo, but the movie doesn't feel like it's even started until they get together.

And while I realize it's a race, it all feels a little rushed and surface-level, lacking personality and distinctiveness without much to hang onto besides the travelogue shots of the Dominican Republic and a by-the-books score. The female characters are deficient too. Michael's wife Helena (Juliet Rylance) is a "phone wife," waiting at home and always in a full face of makeup with her blond mermaid locks cascading down her shoulders whether she's post-workout or going to sleep. She's only ever on screen to be reading about Michael or talking to him.

Disappear

Their daughter is cute and gets to do exactly three cute things, also only as they relate to her dad, and then disappear into the background to...play quietly by herself, I guess. Nathalie Emmanuel at least gets to be part of the racing team, but her only distinguishing trait is being worried about her cancer-stricken father at home.

There is one rather extraordinary and tense sequence involving a broken zip line and our adventurers dangling with their bikes trying

to get to the other line, but I'm not sure the adventure aspect really ever takes hold. Not even the "brothers in arms" banter between the teammates (including Ali Suliman and Simu Liu) is especially memorable or fun. You're just going checkpoint to checkpoint on this 435-mile journey as Michael gets more and more attached to the dog and less and less invested in winning.

Somewhere along the way, Michael even starts caring about his teammates too. The IV line that he thought weak three years ago, he's suddenly insisting for Leo (Liu), an Instagram famous racer who he was basically forced to recruit.

When the race ends the dog becomes even more central, and here is where the heartstrings are pulled (though it's not exactly difficult to elicit emotions when the camera is pointed at a dog that might die). Michael says at some point that he's never been a dog person or even had a pet, but somehow comes back to life in the company of this one. The real Michael started a foundation for animal welfare because of the experience.

Maybe the movie will direct some eyes toward the existence of the Arthur Foundation, but while the movie goes down easy enough it is, on the whole, a bit unsatisfying.

"Arthur the King," a Lionsgate release in theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 the Motion Picture Association for "some strong language." Running time: 90 minutes.

have ribbons listing names of the streets on their routes.

The car also gives a nod to the song's writers, **George Cory** and **Brooklass Cross**, who had moved to **Brooklyn** and were nostalgic for San Francisco. The song received little attention until Bennett came along.

As Bennett's cable car pulled out of the barn - where cable cars sleep at night

- and into Chinatown on Thursday, a group of children on the sidewalk yelled, "Ring the bell."

The Bennett route is not just for tourists, but also takes people to work and to grocery markets, while treating them to a view of the Fairmont. (AP)

MARBLEHEAD, Mass.: David Breashears



Pattie Boyd poses next to the original artwork by E. Frandsen De Schomber, used for the cover of Derek and the Dominoes album 'Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs' as part of The Pattie Boyd Collection at Christie's, in London, Thursday, March 14, 2024. The artwork is estimated to sell £40,000-60,000. (AP)

hears, a mountaineer, author and filmmaker who co-directed and co-produced a 1998 IMAX documentary about climbing Mount Everest, has died, his business manager confirmed Saturday. He was 68.

Breashears was found unresponsive at his home in Marblehead, Massachusetts, on Thursday. **Ellen Golbranson** said. She said he died of natural causes but "the exact cause of death remains unknown at this time."

Breashears summited Mount Everest five times, including with the IMAX camera in 1996, his family said.

"He combined his passion for climbing and photography to become one of the world's most admired adventure filmmakers," the family said in a written statement.

In 2007, Breashears founded GlacierWorks, which describes itself on Facebook as a nonprofit organization that "highlights changes to Himalayan glaciers through art, science, and adventure."

"With GlacierWorks, he used his climbing and photography experience to create unique records revealing the dramatic effects of climate change on the historic mountain range," his family said.

In 1983, Breashears transmitted the first live television pictures from the summit of Everest, according to his website, which also says that in 1985 he became the first U.S. citizen to reach the summit twice.

Breashears and his team were filming the Everest documentary when the May 10, 1996, blizzard struck the mountain, killing eight climbers. He and his team stopped filming to help the climbers. (AP)

Climate change spurs unprecedented measures on Marion Island

Warming island's mice breeding out of control and eating seabirds

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, March 17, (AP) - Mice accidentally introduced to a remote island near Antarctica 200 years ago are breeding out of control because of climate change, and they are eating seabirds and causing major harm in a special nature reserve with "unique biodiversity."

Now conservationists are planning a mass extermination using helicopters and hundreds of tons of rodent poison, which needs to be dropped over every part of Marion Island's 115 square miles (297 square kilometers) to ensure success.

If even one pregnant mouse survives, their prolific breeding ability means it may have all been for nothing.

The Mouse-Free Marion project - pest control on a grand scale - is seen as critical for the ecology of the uninhabited Southern Ocean territory and the wider Southern Ocean. It would be the largest eradication of its kind if it succeeds.

The island is home to globally significant populations of nearly 30 bird species and a rare undisturbed habitat for wandering albatrosses - with their 10-foot wingspan - and many others.

Undisturbed, at least, until stowaway house mice arrived on seal hunter ships in the early 1800s, introducing the island's first mammal predators.

The past few decades have been the most significant for the damage the mice have caused, said Dr. Anton Wolfaardt, the Mouse-Free Marion project manager. He said their numbers have increased hugely, mainly due to rising temperatures from climate change, which has turned a cold, wind-swept island into a warmer, drier, more hospitable home.

"They are probably one of the most successful animals in the world. They've got to all sorts of places," Wolfaardt said. But now on Marion Island, "their breeding season has been extended, and this has resulted in a massive increase in the densities of mice."

Mice don't need encouragement. They can reproduce from about 60 days old and females can have four or five litters a year, each with seven or eight babies.

Rough estimates indicate there are more than a million mice on Marion Island. They are feeding on invertebrates and, more and more, on seabirds - both chicks in their nests and adults.

A single mouse will feed on a bird several times its size. Conservationists snapped a photo of one perched on the bloodied head of a wandering albatross chick.

The phenomenon of mice eating sea-



A house mouse on Marion Island, South Africa. (AP)

birds has been recorded on only a handful of the world's islands.

The scale and frequency of mice preying on seabirds on Marion has risen alarmingly, Wolfaardt said, after the first reports of it in 2003. He said the birds have not developed the defense mechanisms to protect themselves against these unfamiliar predators and often sit there while mice nibble away at them. Sometimes multiple mice

swarm over a bird.

Conservationists estimate that if nothing is done, 19 seabird species will disappear from the island in 50 to 100 years, he said.

"This incredibly important island as a haven for seabirds has a very tenuous future because of the impacts of mice," Wolfaardt said.

The eradication project is a single shot at success, with not even a whisker

of room for error. Burgeoning mice and rat populations have been problematic for other islands. South Georgia, in the southern Atlantic, was declared rodent-free in 2018 after an eradication, but that was a multi-year project; the one on Marion could be the biggest single intervention.

Wolfaardt said four to six helicopters will likely be used to drop up to 550 tons of rodenticide bait across the island. Pilots will be given exact flight lines and Wolfaardt's team will be able to track the drop using GPS mapping.

The bait has been designed to not affect the soil or the island's water sources. It shouldn't harm the seabirds, who feed out at sea, and won't have negative impacts for the environment, Wolfaardt said. Some animals will be affected at an individual level, but those species will recover.

"There's no perfect solution in these kinds of things," he said. "There is nothing that just zaps mice and nothing else."

The eradication project is a partnership between BirdLife South Africa and the national Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, which designated Marion Island as a special nature reserve with the highest level of environmental protection. It has a weather and research station but

is otherwise uninhabited and dedicated to conservation.

The department said the eradication of mice was "essential if the unique biodiversity of the island is to be preserved."

Wolfaardt said the amount of planning needed means a likely go-ahead date in 2027. The project also needs to raise around \$25 million - some of which has been funded by the South African government - and get final regulatory approvals from authorities.

Scientists have tried to control the mice of Marion in the past.

They were already a pest for researchers in the 1940s, so five domestic cats were introduced. By the 1970s, there were around 2,000 feral cats on the island, killing half a million seabirds per year. The cats were eliminated by introducing a feline flu virus and hunting down any survivors.

Islands are critical to conservation efforts, but fragile. The Island Conservation organization says they are "extinction epicenters" and 75% of all species that have gone extinct lived on islands. About 95% of those were bird species.

"This really is an ecological restoration project," Wolfaardt said. "It's one of those rare conservation opportunities where you solve once and for all a conservation threat."

World Sleep Day commemorated

Hundreds of people in downtown Mexico stretch out for 'mass nap'

MEXICO CITY, March 17, (AP) - Those walking through the milling streets of downtown Mexico City on Friday were greeted with a strange and sleepy sight.

Lolling with bright blue yoga mats, sleeping masks and travel pillows, hundreds of Mexicans laid sprawled out on the ground at the base of the city's iconic Monument to the Revolution to take a nap. Dubbed the "mass siesta," the event was in commemoration of World Sleep Day.

It was also meant to be a protest to push for sleep to be considered an essential part of health and wellness.

Some participants wrapped themselves in bright orange blankets, while others prepped their phones to play soothing music as they slept.

Among the nappers was 52-year-old mariachi musician Manuel Magaña, who was popping in earbuds next to his wife, and 9-year-old daughter, who fell asleep holding hands. Magaña heard about the event on the news while he was looking for something fun to do with his granddaughter.

He said the idea struck a chord with him because as a mariachi he would work long and irregular hours, often going to bed as the sun would come up. "As a musician I work at night, and I rarely sleep well during the day. Some-

times we forget to eat, sometimes all we get is a little nap," he said.

The event was organized by the Center for Sleep and Neurosciences and the Mexican Society for the Investigation of Medicine and Sleep (SOMIMS).

As participants began to drift to sleep, organizers on stage chanted and lead participants through the meditation. They also listed off tips for helping people fall asleep, like getting plenty of natural light during the day and turning their phone off at night.

Oscar Sánchez Escandón, a director of the event and president of SOMIMS, said the event was meant to highlight "sleep inequality" around the world.

"We live in a society that is full of economic, social and political commitments, where everything matters other than rest. That can have a strong impact on health," he said.

Nearly half of Mexicans are reported to have trouble sleeping, according to a study by the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

Mexico was listed as the most overworked country in the world by a 2019 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report, which compared working hours among dozens of countries across the planet.



Lolling with bright blue mats, sleeping masks and travel pillows, people lie sprawled out at the base of the iconic Monument to the Revolution to take a nap, in Mexico City, Friday, March 15, 2024. Dubbed the 'mass siesta,' the event was in commemoration of World Sleep Day. (AP)

New kind of hospital coming to rural America

HOLLY SPRINGS, Miss., March 17, (AP) - As rural hospitals continue to struggle financially, a new type of hospital is slowly taking root, especially in the Southeast.

Rural emergency hospitals receive more than \$3 million in federal funding a year and higher Medicare reimbursements in exchange for closing all inpatient beds and providing 24/7 emergency care. While that makes it easier for a hospital to keep its doors open, experts say it doesn't solve all of the challenges facing rural health care.

People might have to travel further for treatments for illnesses that require inpatient stays, like pneumonia or COVID-19. In some of the communities where hospitals have converted to the new designation, residents are confused about what kind of care they can receive. Plus, rural hospitals are hesitant to make the switch, because there's no margin of error.

Facilities

"It's ironic" that the facilities that might need the most help can't afford to take the risk, said Carrie Cochran-McClain, chief policy officer at the National Rural Health Association. She pointed to having to give up certain services and benefits, such as a federal discount program for prescription drugs.

The government, which classifies hospitals by type, rolled out the rural emergency option in January 2023. Only 19 hospitals across the U.S. received rural emergency hospital status last year, according to the University of North Carolina's Sheps Center for Health Services Research.

The majority are in the South, with some in the Midwest, and hospitals in Nebraska and Florida recently started to explore the option.

The designation is aimed at a very specific population, said George Pink, deputy director of the Sheps Center's Rural Health Research Program, and that's rural hospitals on the brink of closure with few people getting inpatient care already.

That was the case for Irwin County Hospital in Ocilla, Georgia, which was the second rural emergency hospital established in the U.S.

Weeks prior to converting, the hospital received at least \$1 million in credit from the county so it could make pay

To qualify, facilities must close their beds



Alliance Healthcare System hospital CEO Dr. Kenneth Williams, said Feb. 29, 2024, that after the Holly Springs, Miss., facility was approved as a rural emergency hospital in March 2023, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services later renewed on its decision saying the hospital is not rural because of its proximity to Memphis, which is less than an hour away. (AP)

employees - money that county board of supervisors chairman Scott Carver doubted he'd see returned.

"We operate on a \$6 million budget for the county, so to extend that kind of line of credit was dangerous on our part to some degree," he said. "But ... we felt like we had to try."

Irwin County Hospital became a rural emergency hospital on Feb. 1, 2023. Quentin Whitwell, the hospital's CEO, said it was an ideal candidate.

"We're still finding out what some of the impacts are, given that it's a new thing," said Whitwell, who through his company Progressive Health Systems owns and manages six hospitals in the Southeast, most of which are rural emergency hospitals or have applied for the designation. "But the change to a rural emergency hospital has transformed this hospital."

A combination of state programs and tax credits, plus the new designation, means the hospital has \$4 million in the bank, Carver said. Simply put, the work was worth it to him.

Traci Harper, a longtime Ocilla resident, isn't so sure. About a year ago, she rushed her son to the hospital for emergency care for spinal meningitis.

Because the new designation requires the hospital to transfer patients

to larger hospitals within 24 hours, Harper's son was sent to another in-state facility and three days later ended up getting the care he needed in a hospital in Jacksonville, Florida.

"That's two hours away," she said. "The whole time I could have taken him there myself, but nobody told me that."

Emergency hospital

Nebraska's first rural emergency hospital opened in February in a city called Friend.

Warren Memorial Hospital had reached a breaking point: Federal pandemic relief money had dried up. The city, which owns the hospital, had to start extending lines of credit so hospital employees could get paid. A major street repair project was even delayed, said Jared Chaffin, the hospital's chief financial officer and one of three co-CEOs.

"Back in the summer, we were barely surviving," said Amy Thimm, the hospital's vice president of clinical services and quality and co-CEO.

Though residents expressed concerns at a September town hall about closing inpatient services, the importance of having emergency care outweighed other worries.

"We have farmers and ranchers and people who don't have the time to drive an hour to get care, so they'll just go without," said Ron Te Brink, co-CEO and chief information officer. "Rural health care is so extremely important to a lot of Nebraska communities like ours."

The first federal payment, about \$270,000, arrived March 5. Chaffin projects the hospital's revenue will be \$6 million this year - more than it's ever made.

"That's just insane, especially for our little hospital here," he said. "We still have Mount Everest to climb, and we still have so much work ahead of us. The designation alone is not a savior for the hospital - it's a lifeline."

That lifeline has proven difficult to hold onto for Alliance Healthcare System in Holly Springs, Mississippi, another one of Whitwell's hospitals and the fourth facility in the country to convert.

Months after being approved as a rural emergency hospital in March 2023, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services renewed on its decision.

Hospital CEO Dr. Kenneth Williams told The Associated Press that the government said the hospital isn't rural because it is less than an hour away from Memphis. A CMS spokesperson said the facility was "inadvertently certified."

The hospital has until April to transition back to full service, but many in the community of largely retirees believe the hospital has closed, Williams said. Patient volume is at a record low. If the federal payments stop coming, Williams isn't sure the hospital will survive.

"We might have been closed if we hadn't (become a rural emergency hospital), so ... something had to be done," he said. "Do I regret all of the issues that for some reason we've incurred that the other (hospitals) have not? I don't know."

Though Alliance appears to be one of few facilities that have been negatively impacted by converting to a rural emergency hospital, Pink said it's too soon to know if the federal designation is a success. "If my intuition is correct, it will probably work well for some communities and it may not work well for others," he said.

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Gulf University wins Warba Bank Soccer League



Gulf University celebrates on the podium.

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: The Gulf University team clinched victory in the Warba Bank Soccer League, securing the title in the third edition of the Higher Education Sports Games organized by the Kuwait School Sports and Higher Education Federation. It sealed its triumph by defeating the Saad Al Abdullah College for Security Sciences 2-0 in the final match held at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium in Al-Arabi Club.

The final was fiercely contested, with both teams demonstrating strong determination. However, it was the Gulf University team that capitalized on their opportunities, converting them into goals to claim the championship. The Saad Al Abdullah College for Security Sciences settled for second place, while the Kuwait College of Science and Technology team secured third position.

SOCCER

Faisal Al-Maqseed, President of the School and Higher Education Union and Chairman of the Organizing Committee for the tournament, emphasized the success of the event, which was held under the patronage of Warba Bank, the strategic partner of the Union. He highlighted the participation of governmental and private higher education institutions, as well as military colleges, which contributed to the event's success. Al-Maqseed praised the partnership between the union and Warba Bank, citing it as an example of collaboration between civil society institutions and major national entities to benefit students and fulfill social responsibilities.

Best of the Rest

Huth retires: Germany midfielder Svenja Huth announced her retirement from international soccer Sunday ahead of the Paris Olympics.

With 88 games played for Germany since 2011, Huth was the third most-experienced member of the squad that booked its place at the Olympics with a third-place finish in the Nations League last month.

Huth won the 2013 European Championship with Germany and the gold medal at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. She scored 14 international goals. (AP)

Wolfsburg fire Kovac: Wolfsburg fired coach Niko Kovac on Sunday after a three-month winless run left the team 14th in the 18-team Bundesliga.

Kovac leaves after nearly two seasons in charge at Wolfsburg following a 3-1 loss at home to Augsburg on Saturday. It was the team's 11th game in a row without a win, a run stretching back to December.



Al-Habib, Al-Imran and Al-Adwani with other officials after crowning Yarmouk.

Al-Arabi U-19 volleyball team clinches league title

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Al-Arabi Club's U-19 volleyball team secured the league championship for the 2023-2024 season in a thrilling match held in the penultimate round. Their victory over "Al-Kuwait" the day before yesterday came after a gripping encounter, with scores of 9-25, 25-12, 25-22, 19-25, and 15-12.

Ali Ach, a member of the Board of Directors of Al-Arabi Club, commended the exceptional performance displayed by the "Green" players throughout the season,

culminating in their decisive victory. He emphasized that volleyball within the Green Castle has begun to reestablish its prominence, marked by intense competition for championship titles.

VOLLEYBALL

Meanwhile, the semi-final league matches of the Association Cup Championship will draw to a close today, featuring a clash between Al-Qadisiyah and Al-Shabab at 9:00 pm at the Al-Ittihad Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex.



U-19 volleyball champions Al-Arabi.

Al-Yarmouk crowned champs of squash league

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Al-Yarmouk clinched the championship title in the Men's Squash League with an impressive 43 points. Al-Nasr followed closely behind in second place with 41 points. Meanwhile, Al-Qurain secured third place after a playoff match with Kuwait Club, as both teams were tied with 40 points. Al-Qurain emerged victorious in the decisive match with a score of 2-1.

SQUASH

At the conclusion of the tournament, key figures including Vice President of the Kuwait Squash Association Khaled Al-Habib, Secretary-General Hamed Al-Omran, and Board of Directors member Ahmed Al-Adwani, awarded the winning teams in the top three positions.

Represented by Ammar Al-Tamimi, Ali Al-Ramzi, Shamlan Haji, Ammar Hussein, Jassim Al-Gharib, and Muhammad Al-Omran, the Yarmouk team showcased exceptional talent throughout the league, securing their victory.

In the 19-year-old squash

Kuwait padel team secures second at Nad Al Sheba Sports tournament

ABU DHABI, March 17, (KUNA): Kuwait's national padel team clinched the runner-up spot at the "Nad Al Sheba (NAS) Sports Tournament" in Dubai, falling short in the final match against their Dutch counterparts with a score of 0-2. Following the conclusion of the event, Ali Hayat, director of Kuwait Padel Club, commended the team's

performance during the championship in a conversation with KUNA after the awards ceremony. He credited the team's journey to the final to the dedication of both players and coaching staff during preparatory training camps. Hayat expressed confidence in the team's potential for even greater accomplishments in future competitions.

PADEL

league, Al-Qurain Club emerged as champions, followed by Khaitan in second place and Yarmouk in third. This trend continued in the 17-year-old and 15-year-old leagues. In the U-13 Cubs League, Khaitan claimed the title, with Al-Qurain securing second place and Al-Arabi coming in third. Furthermore, in the Al-Baraem League for Under-11, Al-Kuwait clinched the top spot, followed by Al-Qurain in second place and Khaitan in third.

The NAS, organized by the Dubai Sports Council (DSC), commenced on March 11th and will run until March 31st. This eleventh edition of the annual event showcases a diverse range of nine sports disciplines, including volleyball, padel, jiu-jitsu, fencing, wheelchair basketball, road race, cycling, tug-of-war, and an obstacle challenge. The padel championship, which began on March 12th, concluded on this day.



Kuwait padel team.

KUNA photo

Warriors inch 'ahead' of LA

Knicks top Kings

LOS ANGELES, March 17, (AP): Stephen Curry scored 31 points in his return to Golden State's lineup, Klay Thompson added 26 off the bench and the Warriors beat the Los Angeles Lakers 128-121 on Saturday night in a pivotal Western Conference matchup.

LeBron James had 40 points, nine assists and eight rebounds for the Lakers, who had to play without Anthony Davis for the final three quarters after he suffered an eye injury.

BASKETBALL

The Warriors inched ahead of the Lakers by a percentage point into ninth place in the West after winning a game that dragged to the finish because of a pair of replay reviews — one that overturned an apparent 3-pointer by James — then a malfunctioning clock.

Davis got poked in the left eye by Golden State's Trayce Jackson-Davis while driving to the basket for a layup with 2:47 remaining in the first quarter. Davis kept playing for the next few minutes, but his eye was swollen shut as he went to the locker room.

The Lakers described the injury as an eye contusion.

Golden State took advantage of Davis' injury as it dominated inside and regularly drove into the paint. The Warriors outrebounded the Lakers by six and had a 62-54 advantage in points in the paint.

Jonathan Kuminga added 23 points for the Warriors and Draymond Green had six points, 12 rebounds and 13 assists after he missed the last game due to back soreness.

D'Angelo Russell added 23 points and 13 assists for the Lakers, who have dropped their last two.

Knicks 98, Kings 91

In Sacramento, Jalen Brunson scored 42 points, becoming the fourth player in franchise history with 40 or more in consecutive games, and the New York beat Sacramento.

Brunson had 45 points in Thursday's win at Portland, his seventh 40-point game of the season. He's the first Knicks player to reach that total in back-to-back games since Carmelo Anthony on Feb. 19 and 21, 2014.

Hall of Famers Bernard King and Patrick Ewing are the other Knicks to do it.

Donte DiVincenzo scored 15 points and Josh Hart had nine points and 12 rebounds. Isaiah Hartenstein was a force on the defensive end, blocking five shots and grabbing 14 rebounds, along with seven points.

Domantas Sabonis led the Kings with 21 points and 14 rebounds for his 49th consecutive double-double.

De'Aaron Fox added 20 points, nine assists and seven rebounds, but was held to 5-for-19 shooting. Malik Monk scored 18 off the bench.

76ers 109, Hornets 98

In Philadelphia, Tyrese Maxey shook off a bloody nose caused by Brandon Miller's flagrant foul to score 30 points, Kelly Oubre Jr. chipped in 22 and Philadelphia withstood a fourth-quarter charge to beat Charlotte.

Buddy Hield had 14 points and Paul Reed added 11 for the 76ers, who have struggled with an 8-13 record since Joel Embiid's meniscus injury at the end of January to fall into eighth place in the Eastern Conference, putting them in danger of having to take part in the play-in tournament.

Travis Murrell had 21 points and Miles Bridges added 14 for Charlotte, which has lost six straight to Philadelphia and nine of its last 12 overall.

Thunder 118, Grizzlies 112

In Memphis, Chet Holmgren had 22



Chicago Bulls' Alex Caruso (6) blocks a shot by Washington Wizards' Richaun Holmes, front left, during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Chicago. (AP)

points and 11 rebounds. Jalen Williams added 23 points and six assists and Oklahoma City held off Memphis to claim a share of first place in the Western Conference.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 20 points and Josh Giddey finished with 13. Oklahoma City's fifth win in six games pulled the Thunder even with idle Denver atop the West at 47-20.

Desmond Bane, playing in his first game since Jan. 12 due to injury, led the Grizzlies with 22 points and seven assists. Jaren Jackson Jr. and GG Jackson finished with 19 points apiece for Memphis, which lost its second straight and fourth in five games.

Timberwolves 119, Jazz 100

In Salt Lake City, Anthony Edwards scored 31 points despite a twisted ankle. Mike Conley added a season-high 25 points in his return to Utah and Minnesota topped struggling Utah.

Edwards stepped on Taylor Hendricks' foot while driving and turned his right ankle just before halftime. He got up limping and went straight to the locker room.

Edwards jumped rope during the break and started the second half, but seemed a bit slower and less explosive.

Rockets 117, Cavaliers 103

In Houston, Jalen Green had 26 points and 11 rebounds, and Houston beat Cleveland for their fifth straight victory.

Jabari Smith Jr. added 20 points, Amen Thompson had 18 and Fred VanVleet finished with 13 points and 16 assists for the Rockets, who made 15 3-pointers and outscored Cleveland 56-46 in the paint.

Pelicans 126, Trail Blazers 107

New Orleans, CJ McCollum scored 30 points, Zion Williamson had 26 points and 10 rebounds, and New Orleans defeated Portland for their sixth victory in seven games.

Brandon Ingram scored 22 points and blocked four shots, and Trey Murphy III added 20 points for the Pelicans, who shot 53.6% (52 of 97) and broke open a competitive game in the fourth quarter. McCollum made six of the Pelicans' 13 3-pointers, and Murphy hit four.

Pacers 121, Nets 100

In Indianapolis, Pascal Siakam had 28 points and 11 rebounds, Aaron Nesmith scored 16 points and Indiana beat Brooklyn.

All-Star Tyrese Haliburton finished with 14 points and seven rebounds for the Pacers, overcoming a 6-for-18 shooting night, and his backup T.J. McConnell finished with 13 points. McConnell has scored in double figures 10 times in his past 17 games.

Bulls 127, Wizards 98

In Chicago, Ayo Dosunmu scored a career-high 34 points, Nikola Vucevic added 29 points and 13 rebounds, and Chicago pounded Washington.

The Bulls made it look easy against the team with the NBA's worst record with Dosunmu and Vucevic setting the tone. They led by 22 at halftime and never were threatened after the break.

Resignation rejected

Al-Jahra coach Al-Shalahi steps 'down' amidst league struggles

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 17: Abdullah Al-Shalahi, coach of Al-Jahra, has tendered his resignation, relinquishing all remaining dues accrued since his appointment last December.

In a statement on his personal social media platform, Al-Shalahi expressed his commitment to preserving team unity and trust amid challenging circumstances. He cited the formation of a committee by the General Sports Authority to address

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club issues as a catalyst for his decision to resign, stating, "I have completed my mission." Additionally, he announced his decision to waive all earnings accumulated during his tenure.

Contrarily, Al-Jahra Football Staff have rejected Al-Shalahi's resignation, asserting their need for his expertise in leading the technical team forward. They remain optimistic about a positive turnaround, particularly as the team navigates the



Abdullah Al-Shalahi

relegation group of the Zain League. Al-Jahra currently sits at the bottom of the Zain Premier League standings, with just 8 points. In the relegation group, they will vie against Kazma (20 points), Al-Shabab (14 points), and Khaitan (12 points) for retention in the Premier League next season, with only two spots available.

Stuttgart consolidate hold on third place with win at Hoffenheim

Kane sets scoring records as Bayern rout Darmstadt 5-2

BERLIN, March 17, (AP) — Harry Kane has never scored so many league goals. The England captain claimed his 31st Bundesliga goal on Saturday to help Bayern Munich to a 5-2 win at last-place Darmstadt.

Kane headed in Joshua Kimmich's cross before the break to set the record for goals in a debut Bundesliga season. Uwe Seeler scored 30 goals for Hamburg in the inaugural Bundesliga in 1963-64. Kane also eclipsed his previous best mark of 30 league goals in a season achieved with Tottenham in the Premier League in 2018 and again last season.

But Kane's afternoon ended in pain with an ankle injury sustained late in the game after he crashed into the post trying to reach the ball. It means his participation in England's upcoming friendlies against Brazil and Belgium is in doubt.

Including the Champions League, where Bayern next faces Kane's fa-

miliar foe Arsenal, the 30-year-old forward has 37 goals in 36 appearances for Bayern this season. There are still eight rounds of the Bundesliga remaining for him to chase Robert Lewandowski's record of 41 goals in a single season.

Bayern started in control Saturday but was stunned when Darmstadt's Mathias Honsak set up Tim Skarke to score in the 28th.

Kane inadvertently set up Jamal Musiala to equalize eight minutes later. The 19-year-old Aleksandar Pavlović made a great run past a host of defenders and cut the ball back for Kane, whose heavy touch set up Musiala to sweep the ball in.

Kane scored in first-half stoppage time, though there was still time before the break for Oscar Vilhelmsson to strike the crossbar at the other end.

Musiala grabbed his second goal and Serge Gnabry added Bayern's fourth in the second half before Kane went off

late after his collision with the post.

Pavlović, who got his first Germany call-up on Friday, had gone off earlier after a clash of heads. He watched the rest of the match with a swollen left eye.

Mathys Tel scored Bayern's fifth goal in stoppage time. It ensured Bay-

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ern scored 13 goals against Darmstadt in their two league matches this season. Bayern won their previous encounter 8-0.

Vilhelmsson replied for some Darmstadt consolation. But the promoted team remains last, now six points behind Mainz, which defeated Bochum 2-0 in their relegation fight. Mainz occupies the relegation playoff place, six points behind Bochum in safety.

Bayern's win cut the gap behind Bayer Leverkusen to seven points. The

league leader visits Freiburg on Sunday as it aims to take another step to what would be its first Bundesliga title.

Serhou Guirassy scored again as Stuttgart consolidated its hold on third place with a comfortable 3-0 win at Hoffenheim.

Guirassy took his tally to 22 goals in 20 league appearances for Stuttgart. Since losing at Leverkusen, Stuttgart has won five of six games, dropping points only in a draw against Cologne.

The Sebastian Hoeneß-coached team has 56 points, seven more than fourth-place Leipzig, though Borussia Dortmund can restore the six-point gap with a win over Eintracht Frankfurt on Sunday.

Also Saturday, American midfielder Brenden Aaronson scored to help Union Berlin defeat Werder Bremen 2-1, Augsburg defeated 10-man Wolfsburg 3-1 away, and Borussia Mönchengladbach drew at Heidenheim 1-1.



Bayern's Harry Kane (left), scores his side's second goal during a German Bundesliga soccer match between SV Darmstadt 98 and Bayern Munich in Darmstadt, Germany. (AP)

Ireland win back-to-back Six Nations after edging stubborn Scotland 17-13

Messi's absence not felt

Suárez scores twice in 2nd half to 'lead' Miami past DC United



The Irish team celebrate as they pose for the cameras after lifting the Six Nations trophy after defeating Scotland in their rugby union international match at the Aviva stadium in Dublin, Ireland. Ireland are the Six Nations champions. (AP)

WASHINGTON, March 17, (AP) — Luis Suárez scored the go-ahead goal in the 72nd minute and added another in the 85th minute, lifting Inter-Miami to a 3-1 victory over DC United on Saturday, despite the absence of Lionel Messi.

Messi was held out of Sunday's 3-2 MLS loss to Montreal and was subbed off early in the second half of Wednesday's 3-1 victory over Nashville in the Concacaf Champions Cup second leg. Messi is reportedly resting a right leg injury.

Inter Miami coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said after the game that Messi's injury would be "dealt with week by week," and that the 36-year-old eight-time Ballon d'Or winner has a goal of playing in the upcoming CONCACAF quarterfinals.

Suárez did not start on Saturday but subbed in at the 62nd minute. It took him only 10 minutes to connect on the go-ahead goal, scoring with a left-footed shot from close range to the bottom left corner. The goal was assisted by Leonardo Campana following a fast break.

Suárez struck again in the 85th minute when he left-footed a shot from the center of the box to the high center of the goal.

With Messi sidelined and Suárez not in the starting lineup, United took an early advantage. Jared Stroud scored when he delivered a right-footed shot

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from the right side of the box to the top left corner in the 14th minute. The assist went to Mateusz Klich.

Inter Miami countered in the 24th minute on Leonardo Campana's left-footed shot from the center of the box to the bottom left corner. The assist went to Federico Redondo.

D.C. United's Pedro Santos drew a red card in the final minute of regular time. Drake Callender made six saves in goal for first-place Miami (3-1-1), and Alex Bono stopped four for United (1-0-3).

In Carson, Calif., Dejan Joveljic scored in the third minute and Maya Yoshida added a goal in stoppage time to help the LA Galaxy play St. Louis City to a 3-3 tie on Saturday night.

Yoshida flicked in a diving header, off a free kick by Gastón Brugman, from right in front of the goal to make it 3-3 in the fifth minute of stoppage time.

Joveljic finished a series of quick passes with a wide-open side-netter from the center of the area to give Galaxy (1-0-3) a 1-0 lead.

The 24-year-old striker, in his fourth MLS season, has scored in each game this season, becoming just the eighth player in league history with a goal in his team's first four games of a campaign. Brian McBride scored in each of the first five games of the 1998 season for the Columbus Crew, the only player to accomplish the feat.

Tomas Ostrak won the ball from Riqui Puig and scored his first goal of the season from just inside the area to make it 1-1 in the 27th minute. Joseph Paintsil answered to give LA a 2-1 lead in the 51st. The 24-year-old ran onto a long through ball played by Mark Delgado and beat goalkeeper Roman Bürki to score his second goal in the last three games.

Joakim Nilsson netted his first goal in MLS to make it 2-2 in the 60th and an own goal by the Galaxy goalkeeper John McCarthy in the 88th minute gave St. Louis (1-0-3) its first lead of the game at 3-2.

LA's Martín Cáceres, who was shown a yellow card in the 35th minute, was shown a red in the ninth minute of stoppage time for a foul that stopped what appeared to be a scoring opportunity for St. Louis.

Bürki finished with six saves for St. Louis.

In Kansas City, Mo. Vanessa DiBernardo scored the first goal for Kansas City in its new stadium and the current hold off the Portland Thorns 5-4 on Saturday in the regular-season opener for the National Women's Soccer League.

Debinha's rebound shot deflected off Thorns goalkeeper Shelby Hogan and fell to DiBernardo, who scored in the 22nd minute. Rookie Ellie Wheeler scored moments later and the Current built a 3-1 lead by halftime.

Bia Zaneratto, Kristen Hamilton and Alex Pfeiffer added goals for the Current. Sophia Smith and Janine Beckie each had a pair of goals for the Thorns.

The Current were hurt in the 32nd minute when Debinha, a finalist for last year's league MVP award, left the game with what appeared to be a hamstring injury.

France finish Six Nations on a high

DUBLIN, March 17, (AP) — Ireland won successive Six Nations by overcoming a bold Scotland, nerves and the late withdrawal of key man Hugo Keenan to prevail 17-13 at Lansdowne Road.

The Irish appeared to break Scotland's rugged resistance with 15 minutes to go after its second converted try for 17-6. The tension drained out of the packed stadium. Then a brilliant solo try by Scotland's Huw Jones suddenly brought them within four points with three minutes left.

But Ireland was too savvy to be rattled. It comfortably contained the Scots in their own half and expertly managed the last minutes even with 14 players after replacement flyhalf Harry Byrne was sin-binned.

It is Ireland's fifth Six Nations crown in 11 years. They won in 2014, 2015, 2019 and 2023. Captain Peter O'Mahony, Conor Murray and Cian Healy have been involved in all five titles.

RUGBY

Asked about his future, O'Mahony, playing for Ireland since 2012, was unsure. "If it was my last (test), it's not a bad one to go out on," he said.

The championship, almost inevitable for Ireland after crushing France in Marseille in the opening match, will go some way to soothing the hurt from falling in the Rugby World Cup quarterfinals last October in Paris.

Ireland was stung again last weekend when its hopes of rare back-to-back Grand Slams were ruined by England winning with a last-gasp drop goal in London. Ireland still had pole position for the title, though.

Scotland also was in a mood after losing to Italy in Rome and came to Dublin with a chance, albeit slim, of winning the title.

Even though the Scots hadn't beaten Ireland since 2017 or won at Lansdowne Road since 1998, they dominated early but without being clinical. It came back to bite them, as did having to make 239 energy-sapping tackles.

Keenan had to be replaced at the 11th hour because of a hip injury, bringing back Jordan Larmour. His brief appearance against Italy last month was his first cap in three years. Larmour was superb at fullback.

Ireland overcame nerves to grow into the game.

James Lowe was charged down by



Wales' Rio Dyer and Italy's Louis Lynagh (right), compete for the ball during the Six Nations rugby union international match between Wales and Italy, at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff, Wales. (AP)

Andy Christie then he conceded a penalty that Scotland co-captain Finn Russell slotted within eight minutes.

Hooker Dan Sheehan was bundled out from an Ireland lineup in the right corner and Scotland got the throw-in, but George Turner overthrew Grant Gilchrist, and Sheehan grabbed the gift and dived over for his co-leading fifth try of the tournament. Jack Crowley converted.

Crowley missed a penalty before halftime and the lead was kept to only one point, but he nailed his first penalty kick after the break, after Larmour, Bunde Aki and Lowe led an Irish charge.

Ireland started the half with venom, and should have had a couple of tries.

Prop Tadgh Furlong was about to place the ball when prop Zander Fagerson knocked it from his grasp. Then winger Calvin Nash wrong-footed four Scots but not Christie, who prevented another try. Center Robbie Henshaw was then held up over the line by Scotland's Cam Redpath.

The clinching try came from prop Andrew Porter. Ireland waived off a penalty kick in front of the posts to go for the kill. Ronan Kelleher quick-tapped and reverse flicked to Porter, who crashed over.

"They were a tough team to break down," Porter said. "You just got to keep backing yourself and that's what we did."

In a double blow for Scotland, replacement hooker Ewan Ashman was yellow-carded for repeated fouls.

Scotland offered one last scare. Byrne was sin-binned for a high tackle in the 76th, and Scotland's Jones slipped three tackles to score between the

Lecce have ideal debut under Gotti

Sub Castellanos scores 2 goals in Lazio win

MILAN, March 17, (AP) — Substitute Taty Castellanos scored twice in Lazio's 3-2 win at relegation-threatened Frosinone on Saturday in what is set to be interim coach Giovanni Martusciello's only match in charge of the capital club.

Pol Lirola gave Frosinone the lead before Mattia Zaccagni leveled shortly before halftime. Castellanos scored twice after the break but Walid Cheddira reduced the deficit to set up a nervy final 20 minutes and also had a goal ruled out.

Martusciello, Maurizio Sarri's long-time assistant, was named caretaker coach on Wednesday after Sarri resigned. But Italian media reports an agreement has already been reached with Igor Tudor to take over from Monday.

Tudor has previously coached Udinese and Hellas Verona in Serie A. The 45-year-old Croatian's last job was at Marseille, which he left in June

posts in the 77th.

But Ireland held out and got the party started on St. Patrick's weekend. For France, there is nothing tastier than a win over its English "best enemies" in the Six Nations.

Especially when it comes at the last minute of an enthralling contest.

The French managed to get one for the ages after Thomas Ramos landed a 47-meter penalty to give his team a 33-31 win in Lyon. The result over bitter rival England ensured France finished the championship runner-up to Ireland.

After a stuttering and insipid start to the tournament marred by a lopsided loss to Ireland and a lucky draw against Italy, France followed its swashbuckling win in Wales last weekend with another solid and disciplined display in Lyon.

The French scored three tries — one fewer than England — and managed to fight back after England came from behind early in the second half to take control of the match.

Italy earned another historic win in Cardiff and left Wales with the dreaded wooden spoon for finishing last in the Six Nations.

The Azzurri comfortably won 24-21 to complete their greatest Six Nations.

They have avoided defeat in three consecutive matches for the first time and racked up a record number of competition points, 11. They finished fifth in the end, hurt by gaining only one bonus point.

after leading it to third place in the French league.

Lazio had lost its last four matches — including a Champions League exit at Bayern Munich — and got off to the worst start at Frosinone as Lirola headed the home side into the lead in the 13th minute.

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Lazio was struggling and Frosinone had chances to extend its lead before Zaccagni volleyed in a cross from Matteo Guendouzi to level, seven minutes from the break.

Castellanos was brought on for Ciro Immobile in the 56th minute, with play stopped following a foul by Frosinone, and he had an immediate impact as he headed in Luis Alberto's free kick.

Castellanos called the whole team over to celebrate with him in a huddle, including the players on the bench.

And the Argentine forward doubled his tally just five minutes later. Nicolò Casale's effort came off the left post but Castellanos was quickest to react. With Frosinone goalkeeper Stefano Turati on the ground, he just had to tap the rebound into the empty net.

Cheddira pulled one back with an acrobatic, overhead kick in the 70th minute and thought he had leveled three minutes later, following a howler by Lazio stand-in goalkeeper Christos Mandas, but it was ruled out for off-side.

Ninth-place Lazio is 11 points be-

hind fourth-place Bologna, while Frosinone remained a point from safety.

Lecce had the ideal debut under new coach Luca Gotti as it won 1-0 at bottom club Salernitana to snap a five-match winless run and move four points clear of the relegation zone.

Gotti was appointed on Wednesday, two days after Roberto D'Aversa was fired for headbutting an opposing player.

Salernitana was the better team for much of the match and Lecce had goalkeeper Wladimiro Falcone to thank for a number of decisive saves.

Lecce took the lead in the 17th minute when, during a goalmouth scramble, Salernitana defender Norbert Gyömbér deflected the ball into his own net.

It was only the second goal Lecce had scored since Feb. 2. The previous one was also an own-goal.

Salernitana remained 11 points from safety and seemingly doomed for Serie B. CEO Maurizio Milan said it is "evaluating" whether to fire Fabio Liverani, the team's third coach of the season.

Daniel Maldini has emulated his father by scoring against a Cagliari side coached by Claudio Ranieri.

A stunning free kick, four minutes from halftime, was enough to secure a 1-0 win for Monza and left Cagliari two points above the drop zone.

The 22-year-old Maldini, who joined Monza on loan from AC Milan in January, has scored three goals in his last four matches.



Lazio's Taty Castellanos scores a goal during the Italian Serie A soccer match between Frosinone and Lazio at the Frosinone Benito Stirpe stadium, in Frosinone, Italy. (AP)



Islamabad United's Haider Ali bats during the Pakistan Super League T20 cricket eliminator match between Islamabad United and Peshawar Zalmi, in Karachi, Pakistan. (AP)

Sports

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City, second-tier Coventry reach FA Cup semis

Tottenham beaten heavily in Premier League

LONDON, March 17, (AP): Manchester City is banking on Wembley Stadium being a key staging post in its pursuit of a second straight treble of major trophies.

One of a possible three late-season trips to English soccer's national stadium was booked when City reached the semifinals of the FA Cup.

If that came as no real surprise, second-tier Coventry's progress to the last four certainly did.

Man City ousted Newcastle with a 2-0 victory secured by two deflected shots by Bernardo Silva in the first half. Pep Guardiola's team has now advanced to the FA Cup semifinals for six straight seasons, an unprecedented achievement in the 153-year history of the competition.

The day's drama came a few hours earlier at Molineux as Coventry scored two goals deep into stoppage time to beat Wolverhampton 3-2 and reach the semifinals for the first time since 1987 - the year the team won the cup.

United States striker Haji Wright completed the remarkable comeback in the 10th minute of added-on time, three minutes after Ellis Simms - with his second goal of the game - equalized for Coventry.

Sitting in eighth place in the

Championship, Coventry was the lowest-ranked team to get to the quarterfinals. The club from central England has endured a turbulent and financially rocky past couple of decades since relegation from the Premier League in 2001 but can look forward to another trip to Wembley, where it lost the Championship playoff final to Luton at the end of last season.

It also gives Mark Robins, Coventry's manager, another magical FA Cup moment. Robins likely saved Alex Ferguson from getting fired three years into his storied tenure as Manchester United manager by scoring the winner in an FA Cup third-round match against

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Nottingham Forest midway through the 1989-90 season, when Ferguson was under severe pressure.

That is widely heralded as a turning point in Ferguson's trophy-laden tenure that lasted nearly 27 years.

For many, Guardiola ranks just as high as Ferguson and back-to-back Premier League-Champions League-FA Cup trebles would surely put him in a class of his own.

To do that, City would have to return to Wembley, where the FA Cup semis are held, two more times this season. For the FA Cup final on May 25 and the title match in the Champions League, which is also being hosted by the famed London venue a week later.

Tottenham's bid for Champions League qualification was hurt by a 3-0 loss at Fulham in one of three Premier League games played Saturday.

Rodrigo Muniz scored either side of a goal by Saša Lukić as fifth-place Tottenham missed the chance to climb above Aston Villa into fourth for one night at least. Villa visits West Ham on Sunday.

Tottenham retained six points ahead of sixth-place Manchester United and both have 10 matches remaining.

The Premier League looks increasingly likely to have five berths in next season's expanded Champions League because of the strong showing of English teams in European competition this campaign.

Elsewhere in the Premier League, Burnley boosted its unlikely hopes of staying up with a first win in 2024 while relegation candidates Luton



Manchester City's Jeremy Doku, (left), challenges for the ball with Newcastle's Jacob Murphy during the FA Cup quarterfinal soccer match between Manchester City and Newcastle at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

and Nottingham Forest drew 1-1.

Next-to-last Burnley beat 10-man Brentford 2-1 to end an 11-game winless run in all competitions and move eight points adrift of safety in its bid to avoid an immediate return to the Championship.

Jacob Bruun Larsen converted a 10th-minute penalty awarded after a push by Brentford left back Sergio Reguilon, who was sent off for the offense because he was the last man. David Datro Fofana added a second before Kristoffer Ajer reduced the deficit in the 83rd to ensure a nervy finish at Turf Moor.

Forest stayed three points above Luton, which is third-to-last and occupying the final relegation spot, after seeing its 34th-minute volley opener by Chris Wood canceled out by substitute Luke Berry.

Forest will not be sitting too comfortably because it could be hit with a points deduction in the coming weeks for overspending.

SOCCER

Girona stumble again

Vinicius scores twice in win at Osasuna as Real take 'another' step toward title

BARCELONA, March 17, (AP): Days after being targeted by racist taunts before games not even involving his team, Vinicius Júnior scored twice to lead Spanish league leader Real Madrid to a dominant 4-2 win at Osasuna.

Vinicius, who is Black, has endured racist insults during away games especially over the last two seasons. This week he was subjected to racist chants by groups of fans gathered outside the stadiums of Atletico Madrid and Barcelona before Champions League games. Atletico played Inter Milan, and Barcelona played Napoli.

Vinicius asked on social media for the acts to not go unpunished, adding "It's a sad reality that happens even in games where I'm not present!"

defeat at Getafe.

Vinicius has scored six goals in a four-game scoring streak across all competitions. He is playing his best just as Madrid is preparing to face Manchester City in the Champions League quarterfinals next month.

"The entire team played a great game, not just me," said Vinicius, who had opportunities to make it a hat trick. "I don't think as much about the goals I scored as I do about the chances I missed."

Vinicius will miss next round's home game against Athletic Bilbao as he serves a one-game suspension for picking up a fifth yellow card for protesting a decision by the referee.

Madrid was without Jude Bellingham, who leads the league with 16 goals, as he completed a two-game suspension.

Osasuna striker Ante Budimir had an early equalizer to briefly make it 1-1. It was the Croat's 15th league goal of the season. Substitute Iker Muñoz added the hosts' second goal in stoppage time.

"Today is a very hard day for us. We were brave, but we were also fragile. And against a team like Real Madrid you pay for it," said Osasuna coach Jagoba Arrasate, whose team was 11th.

The first goal was partly caused by Osasuna center back Alejandro Cateña, who instead of passing when he saw Vinicius closing on him, tried to hang onto the ball and ended up losing it to the Madrid forward. Vinicius then coolly slid a shot past goalkeeper Sergio Herrera.

After Budimir leveled in the seventh, Carvajal finished off a team move in the area that included Díaz and Federico Valverde.

Madrid's last two goals both came

Wasim & Ali send Islamabad to final

KARACHI, Pakistan, March 17, (AP): Imad Wasim and Haider Ali sent batting powerhouse Islamabad United to its first Pakistan Super League final since 2018 with a five-wicket win over Peshawar Zalmi in the second eliminator.

Wasim smashed an unbeaten 59 and Ali bludgeoned five sixes in his 29-ball 52 not out as Islamabad reached 189-5 with an over to spare after choosing to chase.

Pakistan star Saim Ayub earlier made a robust 73 off 44 before Islamabad restricted Peshawar to 185-5. Captain Shadab Khan figured in all five dismissals, picking up four smart catches in the

CRICKET

outfield and also getting the key wicket of Ayub in the 15th over.

Islamabad, which won two titles in the first three PSL seasons, including in 2018, will play Multan Sultans in the final on Monday. Peshawar's three-spinner plan for the first time this season was working well when Ayub (2-34) claimed the key wickets of Alex Hales (1) and Salman Ali Agha (5). Left-arm spinner Mehran Mumtaz bowled Shadab for a duck and Martin Gupthill (34) offered a tame catch at mid-on as Islamabad slumped to 50-4 in the batting power play.

Azam Khan (22) was bowled by Luke Wood's slower delivery but Wasim and Ali then had their match-winning 98-run stand in eight overs.

when Díaz and Vinicius dribbled into space between the backline and Herrera. Vinicius got his second goal with a tap of his right boot to send the ball around the 'keeper from a tight angle.

Girona was unable to respond to a first-half goal by Getafe's Yellu Santiago. Artem Dovbyk, whose 14 league goals leads his team, wasted three good opportunities for Girona to pull even. The Ukraine striker has gone seven games without scoring.

Dovbyk's drought coincides with Girona's recent troubles. After losing just once in 23 league games this season, Girona has since lost four of its last six. Athletic Bilbao striker Gorka Guruzeta scored his 12th and 13th league goals of the campaign to lead a 2-0 win over Alaves.

The team that only fields players from the Basque Country region and neighboring areas rose past Atletico into fourth place in their fight for a Champions League berth.



Ancelotti

Players wore T-shirts promoting a Spanish league anti-racism campaign before kickoff for the day's games. Local media reports said some fans at El Sadar Stadium chanted "Die Vinicius" after he celebrated his second goal by holding a hand to his ear while facing the stands. The referee's report made no mention of any incidents involving fans.

Brazil forward Vinicius was unfazed on the field in Pamplona, scoring Madrid's fourth-minute opener and adding a fourth goal to complete the rout. Dani Carvajal and Brahim Díaz also scored for the visitors, which picked apart Osasuna's high defensive line.

"I congratulated Vini Jr. because he played an extraordinary game," Carlo Ancelotti said after the coach's 200th win with Madrid. "He is a very dangerous player and everyone knows it. Rival fans jeer him and opposing players give him kicks, although today everything was correct and by the rule book."

Madrid moved 10 points ahead of Girona with nine games left after the Catalan side stumbled again with a 1-0



Osasuna's Lucas Torro, (left), Osasuna's Jon Moncayola, right, and Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior, (center), challenge for the ball during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Osasuna and Real Madrid at the El Sadar stadium in Pamplona, Spain. (AP)

Indian Wells showdown with Medvedev looms

Alcaraz ends Jannik winning streak, advances to final

INDIAN WELLS, March 17, (AP): Carlos Alcaraz defeated Jannik Sinner 1-6, 6-3, 6-2 to end the Italian's 19-match winning streak and advance to the BNP Paribas Open final.

Alcaraz broke Sinner in the third and fifth games of the third. The players were blasting the ball from both sides and attacking the net, which made for several entertaining and sharply angled volley exchanges. Alcaraz led 40-love on his serve for his first match point when he netted a backhand. Sinner's smash dashed Alcaraz's second match point before the Spaniard closed it out with a forehand crosscourt winner.

Sinner had 38 unforced errors to 24 for Alcaraz and the Italian had 21 winners to 19 for Alcaraz.

"I was too predictable at some points," Sinner said. "I think that's the lesson for today. We will work on certain things, and hopefully I will get better."

In the second semifinal, Paul served-and-volleyed his way to tak-

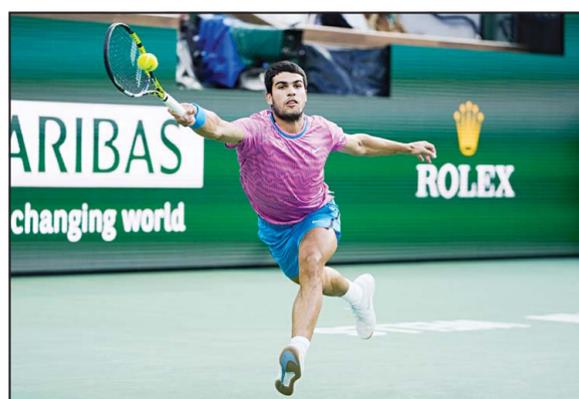
ing the first set 6-1 while breaking Medvedev three times.

Paul rallied from an 0-4 deficit to force the tiebreaker in the second set. He led 3-2 in the breaker before Medvedev won the final five points to take the set, 7-6 (3). Paul had his ankle taped before the third set.

Paul won 23 of 42 net points over the first two sets.

Medvedev broke to open the third set and again in the fifth game for a 4-1 lead. The Russian faced a pair of break points in the next game, but he held with a forehand volley winner to go up 5-1. Paul held to trail 5-2 and had two break points in the next game, but Medvedev closed out the match when Paul dumped a backhand into the net.

In the women's doubles final, top-seeded Hsieh Su-wei of Taiwan and Elise Mertens of Belgium defeated third-seeded Storm Hunter of Australia and Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic, 6-3, 6-4. The winners split \$447,300.



Carlos Alcaraz, of Spain, runs down a shot from Jannik Sinner, of Italy, during a semifinal at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. (AP)