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'PROACTIVE SECURITY MEASURES, DIGITAL TRANSITION IN INTERIOR MINISTRY'



Amiri Diwan photo

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visits the Ministry of Interior accompanied by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Amir urges vigilance against threats

Opinion

Your Highness the PM, decide and go for it ... hesitation disappoints

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

FOR nearly three decades, Kuwait has been experiencing one crisis after another. As soon as a crisis comes to light and occupies the public opinion, another one emerges and makes people forget the first crisis.

Through it all, the solutions remain suspended on the rope of escalation, especially when they have a political, electoral, or administrative need for a larger problem. This means that the state is living in a vicious circle.

From diversifying the sources of income, the housing issue, salaries, and the systematic plundering of public funds in most departments, bodies and funds, all the way to the Bedouin issue, the national identity card, the forgers of nationalities and certificates, and the dual citizenship, all of these problems indicate a defect in the joints of administration and executive decision.

This is especially after the matter was left to the parliamentarians, some ministers, undersecretaries, and even department directors. No firm decisions were issued to resolve these crises, and it reached the extent where Kuwait seemed to be living on the crater of volcanoes, and not a single volcano.

Today, Kuwaitis are preoccupied with scandals related to national IDs, forgeries, and dual citizenship. There are doubts being raised about 300,000 to 400,000 nationality files, which means a third of Kuwaitis are under suspicion.

Here we beg to ask - If a person acquired his Kuwaiti nationality fraudulently, was it by adding his name to a Kuwaiti family registry, or through suspicious data forty or thirty years ago, and now this person died, but left behind offsprings, some of whom have become ministers, deputies, ambassadors or undersecretaries, doctors, engineers, and officers in the army, police, and National Guard? In this case, who is at fault here? The one who committed the fraud or those who acquired nationality through dependency and have been living as Kuwaitis all along?

Continued on Page 5

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Mixed verdict on disqualifications

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: The Administrative Court has approved the appeal filed by former MPs and candidates for the 2024 parliamentary election Ahmed Mutei Al-Azmi (Fifth Constituency) and Marzouq Al-Khalifa (Fourth Constituency) against the decision of the Ministry of Interior to disqualify them due to their participation in tribal elections prior to the previous legislative election.

On the other hand, the court rejected similar appeals of former MPs and Fifth Constituency candidates Marzouq Al-Hebeini and Jaber Al-Mehailbi; thereby, upholding the disqualification decision of the ministry. Both of them intend to file another appeal, because they are sure about their legal position; adding that their electoral campaigns will continue.

Previously, the ministry issued a decision to disqualify Ahmed Mutei Al-Azmi, Marzouq Al-Hebeini, Marzouq Al-Khalifa, Jaber Al-Mehailbi, Sheikh Mishal Al-Malik Al-Sabah, Mohammad Al-Juwaihel, Waid Al-Nasser, Mohammad Al-Azmi, Hani Husain and Adel Al-Saeedi; in addition to three other candidates who did not complete the procedures.

Furthermore, the Constitutional Court rejected the appeal to declare the unconstitutionality of the decree of necessity on the amendment of the Election Law and to cancel the 2024 parliamentary election.

In addition, former MPs and candidates Saud Shuwaier and Saud Al-Herajji have withdrawn their candidacy. Candidate Beraikan Mejjaid Al-Sulaimani revealed Bani Ghanim Tribe chose him as their candidate for the upcoming election. He expressed his gratitude to Shuwaier and Herajji for withdrawing from the electoral race in his favor.

Report calls for financial reform

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: The Global Financial Centers Index report for 2023, issued by the National Observatory for Sustainable Development and Future Foresight of the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, called for the necessity of easing restrictions imposed on foreign ownership of companies in order to strengthen Kuwait's financial position, reports Al-Anba daily.

The report monitored 10 recommendations in order to strengthen and develop Kuwait's financial position, which included reducing licensing procedures to ensure the improvement of the business environment and providing an integrated electronic portal to serve the financial sector and investment in the country.

Continued on Page 5

- Combat rumors
- Eradicate drug scourge
- Implement new traffic law

KUWAIT CITY, March 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on Tuesday, visited the Ministry of Interior accompanied by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mo-

hammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir was received by Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah, and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



Amiri Diwan photo

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visits the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) headquarters.

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday two letters from Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

The letters touched on the bilateral ties between the two countries and issues of common interest.

The letters were handed to Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah by Iranian Ambassador to the country Mohammad Totunjy. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Wednesday to the President of Tunisia Kais Saied on his country's national day.

His Highness the Amir wished the Tunisian President long-term health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity to Tunisia and its people.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah also sent a cable of congratulations on Wednesday to the President of Tunisia Kais Saied on his country's national day. (KUNA)

ANKARA: Turkey carried out a new round of airstrikes targeting Kurdish militants in neighboring Iraq on Tuesday, Turkey's defense ministry said, hours after a Turkish soldier was killed and four others were wounded in an attack in the region.

Turkey often launches strikes against targets in Syria and Iraq it believes to be affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, a banned Kurdish separatist group that has waged an insurgency against Turkey since the 1980s. (AP)

Ramadan Timings

Iftar Thursday 18:01
Imsak Friday 04:27

Amir lauds KFF efforts

KUWAIT CITY, March 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, visited Tuesday Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) headquarters.

Accompanied by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, His Highness the Amir was received by Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, and head of KFF Lieut. Gen. Khaled Al-Mekrad.

In his speech, His Highness the Amir congratulated all KFF staff on the holy month of Ramadan, expressing his appreciation to them for their strenuous efforts and sacrifices for the sake of the dear homeland.

"We evaluate keenness of the KFF on achieving its missions in line with a five-year strategic document based on a scientific approach which studies reality and benefits from resources and potential seeking to achieve lead-

erships and excellence," His Highness the Amir said.

His Highness the Amir further expressed appreciation to the KFF for its approach in boosting cooperation between military and security bodies on one hand, and their counterparts in the sisterly and friendly countries on the other.

His Highness the Amir called on the KFF to keep vigilant and cautious as well as ready to face the risks of fire and accidents.

He also instructed the KFF personnel to make sure of the presence of facilities' safety and prevention to avoid fire.

His Highness the Amir asked the KFF to keep pace with the developments and changes in civil protection, and enhance preventive strategies as well as the plans of crises management and disasters to reach the highest level of society security.

Meanwhile, Al-Mekrad affirmed that the KFF is following up the directives of the wise political leadership by implementing laws and rules to all, referring to cooperation with the State's regulatory bodies.

In his speech, Al-Mekrad confirmed to His Highness the Amir the KFF personnel vowed that they would continue

Continued on Page 5



Amiri Diwan photos

Left: His Highness the Amir receives a memento from KFF. Right: His Highness the Amir presented a commemorative shield in recognition of his visit to the Ministry of Interior.

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:33 Asr 15:23
 Sunrise .. 05:53 Maghrib .. 17:59
 Zohr 11:56 Isha 19:16

Local

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

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Warm and clouds will increase gradually with light variable wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 08-26 km/h with a chance for scattered rain later on.

By Night: Rather cold and

Weather

partly cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 08-26 km/h with a chance for scattered rain later on.

Station Max Exp Min Rec
 Kuwait City 25 18

Kuwait Airport	26	17
Abdaly	25	14
Jahra	26	16
Salmiyah	22	19
Nuwaisib	24	17
Wafra	25	16

Many issues discussed in weekly session

Cabinet briefed on HH Amir's Defense Ministry, KNG visits

KUWAIT CITY, March 20, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet held its weekly session on Tuesday at Bayan Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Following the meeting, Foreign Minister and Acting Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya said that the cabinet was briefed on the visits of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Saha to the Ministry of Defense and the National Guard, where he affirmed confidence in the country's security sectors, which defend and sacrifice the dear homeland.

Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Child Affairs Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Sabah informed the cabinet on the launch of an award in the name of His Highness the Amir for

creativity for people with disabilities.

The Cabinet touched on the recommendation of the Ministerial Economic Affairs Committee regarding the concepts submitted by the Ministry of Finance on ways to enhance and maximize state revenues through optimal exploitation of state lands belonging to the Ministry of Finance.

Further, the Cabinet was briefed on an explanation presented by the Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and the Minister of State for Communications Affairs, Dawoud Marafi, on the proposal to postpone the installments due to owners of small and medium enterprises financed by the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development and Care, for six months.



Cabinet meets under the chairmanship of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Al-Sabah.

PM Diwan photo



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah meets chairmen of the state regulatory bodies.

PM urges protecting public funds & sovereignty of law

KUWAIT CITY, March 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah met on Wednesday with chiefs of state's regulatory authorities, and called on them to heed to His Highness the Amir's Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah directives of protecting public funds, and sovereignty of law.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister hailed the role of such agencies in combating financial and administrative corruption, and underlined necessity of reviewing legislations organizing workflow, to meet demands adequately and facilitate execution of developmental projects.

In an effort to promote workflow of regula-

tory agencies, the Prime Minister asked them to provide periodic reports clarifying obstacles hindering their performance, as well as present recommendations and suggestions.

He also urged them to involve public opinion, through media outlets or designated reports, for them to recognize efforts of agencies.

The Premier tasked the authorities with amplifying cooperation and coordination through holding regular meetings to identify recurring issues and discuss mechanisms of addressing such issues.

Representatives of authorities extended their appreciation for the Prime Minister and for his valuable remarks, and affirmed their intent on heeding to directives.

Other Voices

A rare personal memory

By Ahmad alsarraf

He obtained a Bachelor's degree in economics from the American University in Cairo in 1961, and a diploma in economics from Oxford in Britain in 1963. He held many administrative positions and moved to several high-ranking positions, before deciding in 1967 to enter the world of politics and run for the National Assembly elections, but he did not succeed.

He returned and ran for office in the next elections, and won a seat in his constituency, and his political career continued in the National Assembly until 2006, when he found that many powerful movements were against him, so he chose to step down.

This, in brief, is the rich political career of the late, great friend Abdullah Muhammad al-Naibari, whose death marks the second anniversary today, March 20.

Abdullah Al-Naibari was not an ordinary political figure. Rather, he was a "noble" and strong opponent for everyone who opposed him. He maintained his good manners and the cleanliness of his hand throughout his long political career.

He refused to bow to various pressures or accept temptations. He remained faithful, along with his companions, to his principles, as he stood with unwavering strength. It is normal for those who plundered state funds, during the period of the invasion and after it, and he succeeded, often alone, in bringing them to justice and convicting the majority of them, so that they would receive their punishment.

"These positions and opinions subsequently paved the way for exposing his life and the life of his partner to 'political' assassination.

"On his way back, along with his



alsarraf

wife, Faryal Al-Fraih, in the car, in June 1997, to the house from the chalet, they were exposed to heavy gunfire, in which he was seriously wounded in the left shoulder and lower jaw, while his wife was injured by a gunshot below the shoulder.

The perpetrators of the assassination were in two cars when they set up an ambush. He was on a deserted road before they shot him and his wife. His assassination attempt was the most famous political incident in modern history, and received global coverage, given Al-Naibari's stature and good reputation in many regional and international forums.

The perpetrators were subsequently identified and arrested, and brought to trial, and after less than two years, the Court of Cassation upheld the rulings of the Court of First Instance and the Court of Appeal to imprison the accused (S. Sh.) for life imprisonment, and to imprison the two Iranians, who participated in the operation, for life imprisonment, and to imprison the fourth defendant, the Kuwaiti (A.M.) to ten years. But after a few years, the citizens accused of attempting to assassinate him were pardoned, and the deceased Al-Naibari played a well-known role in that.

Abdullah Al-Naibari died on the evening of Sunday, March 20, 2022, at the age of 85. He was buried in a solemn funeral procession in the presence of a large crowd of Kuwaitis, given his great stature and honorable personal and political history that was flawless!

He passed away, and no party, in appreciation of his national services, his great deeds, his huge role in nationalizing Kuwait's oil, and the effective contributions he made in issuing dozens of dangerous and important legislation, other than his national positions, did not think of naming any street after him, either in the Abdullah Al-Salem suburb where he lived, or in any other area, at a time when the widest and longest streets in Kuwait, to the right and left of his residential area, were given 'unknown' names.

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Kuwait calls for radical reforms of UN Security Council; 'Unite'

Keen to combat drugs as per '62 constitution: official

BRUSSELS, March 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai, called for radical reforms in the United Nations Security Council.

This came in Al-Bannai's speech in the meeting of the Subcommittee on Human Rights of the European Parliament Tuesday.

Al-Bannai said, "I come from Kuwait. Kuwait was invaded in 1990, it took a multilateral approach, and it took the Security Council exercising all its prerogatives, from diplomacy to sanctions to authorization of the use of force to after that compensation and border demarcation and many, many other issues that were part of the process of freeing my country from occupation."

"So we have seen it work. We have seen it perform at the best possible level. Therefore, it can work, but it does require unity amongst the permanent members, for sure, because if that is not there, nothing really that requires Chapter 7 processes can work if there is divergent or opposing views," he added.

The Kuwaiti ambassador noted that the Future Summit organized by the UN next December would be an opportunity to discuss all possibilities for reforming the Council of Representatives and the way its mechanisms work in order to achieve the desired goals and create effectiveness and feasibility.

He also touched on specific points, such as veto power, regional representation, the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly, working methods, and the future size of the Council.

"We hope that this year's discussion further enhances the convergences between member states, and that we can somehow be able to put those convergences in a package that allows member states at the highest level, the level of heads of state and government, to commit to reinvigorating not only this process, but also the ideas and the purposes and the principles of the charter itself, which the security council is an important aspect of," said Al-Bannai.

Combating narcotics

Meanwhile, the State of Kuwait affirmed Wednesday its keenness to combat the scourge of drugs, as per the Kuwaiti 1962 Constitution and the legislation issued to combat narcotics and psychotropic substances and regulate their use.

This came in a speech delivered by the Director of the Department of Legal Affairs and Investigations at the Ministry of Health, Dr. Ali Hussein Al-Khudhair, at the 67th session of the United Nations Committee on Drug Control.

Dr. Al-Khudhair pointed out that Kuwait established the Addiction Treatment Center, a specialized medical center that provides medical services to addicted persons.

He also stressed that Kuwait focused on the awareness and religious guidance aspect to eradicate the scourge of drugs and psychotropic substance abuse, whether through preparing campaigns and bulletins across all concerned agencies.

Check job evaluation on site, workers told

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Director of the Evaluation and Measurement Department at the Ministry of Health Ilham Akbar has confirmed approval of the results of the 2023 annual job performance evaluation by Undersecretary of the ministry Dr Abdul Rahman Al-Mutairi, reports Al-Anba daily.

Akbar urged the ministry's employees to inquire about the result of their annual job performance evaluation by logging on the website of the ministry.

She also announced the launching of the 'Annual Evaluation Grievances' online service, stressing that any employee who obtains a rating below 'excellent' has the right to appeal after the official announcement of the evaluation results.

She added her department has been working on the online announcement of job performance evaluation results for two years, as part of its plan to implement the principle of corporate governance to keep pace with digital and technological developments.

Keen to upgrade trade ties: Sharif

Pakistan PM eyes early work on agreements with Kuwait

ISLAMABAD, March 20, (KUNA): Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday emphasized concerted efforts by Pakistan and Kuwait to ensure early implementation of their bilateral agreements in different fields, said a press release by PM House.

While talking to the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Pakistan, Nassar Abdulrahman J. Almutairi who paid a courtesy call on him in Islamabad on Tuesday, PM Sharif said that seven agreements worth USD 10 billion were signed between the two countries in November last for collaboration in food security, water supply, hydel power, mangrove rehabilitation, technology and mines and minerals sectors.



Almutairi

He emphasized the role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) that provides a robust and efficient mechanism to attract foreign investment into Pakistan.

The newly elected PM, who assumed the office this month, said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its historic and deep-rooted ties with Kuwait and is desirous of further strengthening the same with a focus on trade and investment. Thanking the Kuwaiti leadership for the warm wishes and felicitations on his re-election, the Prime Minister extended an invitation to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to visit Pakistan.

The Kuwaiti Ambassador thanked Pakistan for its support to Kuwait in difficult times and reaffirmed his country's strong commitment to build closer ties with Pakistan. On the occasion, the Prime Minister appreciated the ambassador's contribution in fostering stronger ties between the two countries, the release added.



The Holy Quran Recitation contest in progress.

Contest pulls many competitors

KFH organizes its annual Holy Quran Recitation Competition

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has organized the 11th edition of the annual competition for reciting the Holy Quran for KFH customers under the age of 18. The competition includes valuable prizes and is taking place during the period 19th to 21st of March during the holy month of Ramadan.

The competition witnessed an astounding participation of reciters of the Holy Quran. In addition, the fact that KFH was the first to organize such competition has enhanced the trust it enjoys among customers, in addition to the availability of many valuable elements that enhance the competition environment and motivate the contestants. The most important of these elements is the judges panel, good organization and appropriate arrangement of the contestants' capabilities who are from various segments, with different abilities and levels.

The competition, which is organized for male and female, encourages the discovery of talented contestants in Quran recitation and contributes to motivating the young generation to read the Holy Quran while

clarifying some of the provisions of reciting the Holy Book. The competition events were broadcasted on KFH social media channels as well as media coverage by local visual and audio sources.

The competition, which is the largest in prizes value, and was organized in collaboration with GUST, is part of KFH's "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" campaign, which includes iftar meals campaign. The program also includes providing hospitality service in mosques, sports and youth activities, daily interaction with the public, Gergan events, awareness videos in cooperation with nutritionists and doctors, as well as videos on traffic awareness, promoting a culture of not speeding during Iftar in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior.

In addition, the program comprises sharing Iftar with many entities that perform their duty during Iftar time, as well as distributing, in cooperation with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, the food basket "Ramadan Basket" and Eid clothing to families in need in a new affirmation of KFH's leadership in social responsibility.

'Setting up institute for public administration becomes vital'

"NO TWO people disagreed on the importance of management, and when one of the wise men was asked whether the capitalist or communist system would prevail, the wise man said: The system with the most efficient management would prevail in both of them," columnist **Muhammad Al-Duwaihees** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"Extract from the sublime speech of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, may God protect and preserve him, during the swearing-in session on Wednesday, December 20, 2023: "The government and the Council agreed to harm the country's interests, and what happened in the appointments of positions is evidence of unfairness..."

and "... What increases the pain is the silence of the two authorities over this absurdity, as if it was an exchange of interests between them!!

"Today, I would like to emphasize that the executive authority is still suffering from a lack of clarity in the strategic vision, poor government management, weak administrative leaders, poor selection process, weak administrative and financial oversight, haste in taking decisions.

"Middle management in the state's executive apparatus suffers from many administrative, organizational, technological, legal and legislative problems in the areas of appointment, training, follow-up, evaluation, development and administrative development.

"I tried with many distinguished colleagues when I was Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative Development at the Civil Service Commission immediately after liberation to establish an institute for public administration, but due to many political, administrative, organizational and legal obstacles and the overlap in specializations between the CSC, the Kuwait University and the Public Authority for Applied Education, the goal was not achieved, and we were satisfied.

"At that time, we established the "Center of Excellence" at the Faculty of Administrative Sciences at the Kuwait University as a preliminary stage instead of eliminating the idea as a whole.

"Now, in the reform and development phase, establishing an institute for public administration has become a basic and strategic national requirement for the advancement of Kuwaiti administration.

"I believe that the Institute of Public Administration should be affiliated with the Presidency of the Council of Ministers or the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs to support it politically, administratively, legally and organizationally.

"I hope that among the achievements of the reform and development phase will be the establishment of an institute for public administration based on the latest scientific and administrative foundations, technological and digital methods to advance administrative performance and the quality of government services, raise the efficiency and effectiveness of ministries, agencies, institutions and government agencies and achieve sustainable development."

Also:

"We are accustomed to reading about the interest and commitment of our Gulf countries, and Kuwait specifically to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, to provide the necessary financial aid to UNRWA and to continuously advocate within the official discourse and the efforts of civil society organizations to support refugees and protect them from the scourges of war in the region," columnist **Dr Nada Suleiman Al-Mutawa** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"It is worth noting that UNRWA provides aid to nearly six million Palestinian refugees, and our Gulf countries constantly call for attention to strengthening and continuing the educational process and building camps.

"So where are the international efforts in what is happening to the agency today? Where is the international community when it comes to targeting the agency and its location within the bombing areas?

"The European continent will witness the largest elections this year, and the map of Europe will change in terms of majorities within legislative institutions, amid fears that the extreme right in some European Union countries will come to power.

"It is worth noting that this year is called an election year because approximately 3 billion voters in 77 countries in addition to European countries will be called to the ballot boxes. Other countries include the United States, Russia, Taiwan, Pa-

kistan, South Africa, and of course Kuwait as well.

"Everyone is awaiting the results and the reason is the presence of countries. A major nuclear weapon that will affect our world, in addition to the ongoing wars in Ukraine and Gaza, and the impact of Trump's arrival at the hot spots of war in terms of shaping the position of the United States and its support for Ukraine and the two-state solution for the two peoples to coexist in peace, and to reach a solution to the oldest conflict in modern history.

"Recently there has been a lot of complaints from talented people because they face many difficulties represented by the bureaucratic pitfalls that await them as soon as they enter the labor market. Here I wonder: Will we take measures towards this deficiency in embracing young human energies? How long will our institutions cause the flight of talent?

"How long will individuals claiming to belong to charitable associations and committees continue to collect money and demand that a link be sent for payment outside the framework of the charity organization, and away from the eyes Nazaha?

"Why is there no cooperation between the ministries of Social Affairs and Interior to develop a list of conditions to ensure transparency and prevent the leakage of money into political channels."

"The naturalization file is far from tampering and politics... The nationality and national identity files are connected. Due to great importance of these files, they were mentioned in the Supreme Speech at the oath-taking session of the dissolved National Assembly. It was not just a passing reference, as it was rather an affirmation from the political leadership of the necessity of dealing with them in a serious and fair manner, putting an end to an issue that was and still is. Recently, we, the citizens, demanded that the government play its role in addressing the issue in accordance with what the leadership emphasized, as well as the requirements of national security and national identity," columnist **M. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The citizenship file, as it is being circulated, is a dangerous file that should be opened, since it includes fraud, those who do not deserve it, and those to whom the law does not apply. Without a doubt, all these are behind the interest and initiative of the acting Minister of Interior through the withdrawal of the citizenship of the undeserving as per the law.

"However, despite the importance of this initiative and although it is on the right path, we fear that it will not continue and will enter the corridors of political settlements in the next legislature. Then, it will be 'neither our medicine nor tomorrow's evil.'

"In fact, the population of Kuwait does not exceed that of a small city in a big country, which makes reviewing citizenship files easy from both the practical and technical standpoints. They are within reach. They can be scrutinized, as well as the decisions in this regard. Whoever has the right can take it and whoever transgresses the law must be held accountable.

"The basis for all of these is the need for the government to take a serious stance in dealing with files and issues that have become chronic and without solutions, including the naturalization file. We are facing a government deficit. As for complacency, the only goal is to keep this issue pending. In both cases, there are huge risks that the government must realize.

"Whatever the reason, I believe that the government is primarily responsible for not addressing the naturalization file and the accompanying impurities and problems, which require bold and decisive measures. This is not a difficult move, but it necessitates bold decision-making. It is possible to form a national committee of experts and support it with the political decision to review and scrutinize citizenship files. These files should be scrutinized for everyone, similar to what was done in the file of the Central System for Remediating the Status of Illegal Residents, which recorded remarkable progress in its tasks despite the difficulties it faced. Opening and investigating the naturalization file is a national issue that is agreed upon by majority of the segments of Kuwaiti society. It should not remain unresolved.

"We believe that not opening this file is a governmental negligence. I am afraid to say that it is intended to be tampered with behind the scenes of politics. Nevertheless, it appears that Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah took the first step and it must continue. The government also communicated with him, so this file does not become a major burden that bothers us."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Municipality workers removing a tent.

40 tents uprooted, 195 warnings issued

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Kuwait Municipality's supervisory teams, operating under the public hygiene departments in Jahra and Al-Ahmedi governorates, have initiated the removal of spring camps that exceed the official camping period, which concluded last Friday, report **Al-Rai** daily.

During Sunday and Monday, these municipal teams issued 195 warnings and dismantled 40 camps across both the northern and southern regions of the country.

The Public Relations Department of Kuwait Municipality commended the cooperation of licensed camp owners who voluntarily dismantled their camps after the official camping period ended. They emphasized that municipal teams will continue monitoring all camp sites to ensure compliance with the camping season regulations. Necessary measures will be taken to enforce Kuwait Municipality's decisions and regulations.

'Nationality pulled only after proper checking'

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah has confirmed the careful handling of reports received through the hotline designated for calls regarding forged citizenship and dual nationalities, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

In a statement to the daily, Sheikh Fahad Yusuf stressed: "There is no need to be afraid, as no nationality will be withdrawn unless it is checked a million times. The identification documents are verified before taking any action."

He revealed: "We received reports after opening the designated hotline, but no action will be taken unless the information is verified."

He said the Supreme Committee for Nationality is performing its role to the fullest, impartially and in accordance with the law. "It is unreasonable for those holding dual nationalities and citizenship forgers to enjoy benefits they do not deserve. The law will be applied to them without any tolerance," he asserted.

Asked about other payments, the minister clarified: "Payments for withdrawing citizenship remain in effect. The committee is carefully examining the files and the corresponding payments will be announced as soon as decisions are taken and submitted to the Council of Ministers."

On dealing with those who hold foreign, Arab or Gulf nationality; he pointed out "this is part of the work of the committee. Whoever holds dual nationalities can either give up the Kuwaiti nationality or maintain it and then give up the other nationality."



Sheikh Fahad

Countless Kuwaiti WhatsApp accounts hacked in new, innovative technique

'Contact authorities immediately'

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Cybersecurity expert and head of the Cybersecurity Committee at the Kuwaiti Electronic Media Union, **Muhammad Al-Rashidi**, said a number of Kuwaiti WhatsApp accounts were hacked in a new, innovative way that takes place in several steps, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Al-Rashidi added, "This hack begins with a message via the WhatsApp application from an unknown number claiming to have received a message from the number to be hacked.

"The target then responds that he did not send any message, and not long after that, this matter is repeated a second, third, and perhaps fourth time," using different numbers with the same content and in the same way, so that the owner of the account to be targeted suspects that a malfunction has occurred in his account," he explained, explaining that "about an hour after these messages, an account claiming to be from technical support for the WhatsApp application contacts him, and there is a complaint that your account sends messages to users, and then the owner may fall. The account is in the trap and believes what is happening."

Al-Rashidi explained, "The account that claims to represent technical support for the application will tell the target that a (code) will be sent from WhatsApp, so that the account will not be sus-

pending. When this impersonator is given the sent code, the account will be hacked immediately, and therefore this (code) should not be given" to anyone.

Al-Rashidi stressed the need to communicate with the relevant official authorities to inform them of what happened so that the account is not exploited for things that violate the law, as well as informing family and friends, so that sums of money are not requested from them, stressing at the same time the necessity of activating the (two-step verification) method and linking the account to e-mail to make it easier to recover.

Ex-wife wins case: The Civil Commercial Court recently ruled that a female citizen has the right to obtain a document affirming ownership of the marital home without the need to obtain her ex-husband's signature, reports **Al-**

Anba daily.

Attorney Alaa Al-Saedi, lawyer for the female citizen, filed a case against the ex-husband and the concerned government authorities; stating that her client constructed the marital home in 2012, but her husband divorced her in 2016 and refused to give her the house.

Al-Saedi presented to the court the electricity receipts that her client paid, in addition to documents proving she spent money on building the house and this was attested by the experts' management report.

The lawyer then called for amending the Housing Law, so the citizens are treated fairly and the court procedures are simplified for them. She argued the State provides housing care for the family, the basis of which is the custodial right of the wife after the divorce.

Diploma course taken successfully

336 customs auditors get calls for job

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Abdullah Al-Sharhan, Acting Director General of the General Administration of Customs, has issued appointment decisions to 336 customs auditors who successfully completed the customs auditing diploma program offered by the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training. These graduates are now qualified to work within the administration, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

In a statement, the Customs Administration expressed pride in appointing this distinguished group of customs auditors, highlighting the sig-

nificance of their achievement for the customs sector. The newly appointed auditors will be deployed to documentation departments and customs ports based on an organizational plan tailored to the operational needs of these centers.

The administration emphasized that these auditors underwent rigorous training and were equipped with the necessary knowledge of administrative and field work regulations, under the guidance of expert specialists in customs operations and applications.

Drug-pusher held: Patrol men from the Ahmedi Security Directorate have arrested a person in the Al-Aqaila area for promoting narcotic drugs, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The person was arrested on suspicion after the driver tried to escape as soon as he saw the police patrol. A bag containing narcotics was found in his possession, and he was referred to the specialist.

Hand stuck in meat grinder: A successful operation by personnel from Directorate-General of Fire Department (DGFD) resulted in freeing the hand of a domestic worker which got entangled in a meat grinder, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The DGFD said two technicians were dispatched to a hospital after the hospital could not cope with the situation and sought the help of the firemen.

Panel probes misuse of stables in 'Salmi' region

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: The tripartite committee at the Council of Ministers has started dealing with reports and complaints regarding Salmi stables, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

One of these reports is about the closure of a stable where violations were uncovered, since it was being utilized as a plastic factory and a carpentry shop. This led to the opening of the violations file and those who committed the violations were added to the punishment list, including the withdrawal of license.

The daily's staff accompanied representatives of the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department at the Kuwait Municipality branch in Jahra Governorate, when the Emergency Team, in cooperation with the Tripartite Committee, carried out the first inspection campaign after receiving a number of complaints regarding the stables in Salmi.

After research and investigation, the committee, along with Director of the Municipality's Audit Department Mohammad Al-Mutairi, Emergency Team leader Eng Al-Thuwaini Al-Mutairi, a number of immigration investigation officers, and representatives of the Ministry of Electricity and Water, Environment Public Authority (EPA), and Public Authority for Sports (PAS) visited the location and they found explicit violations, particularly using the stable as a plastic factory and carpentry shop.

The Municipality team issued a warning until the legal procedures against the owner of the stable were completed. The Ministry of Electricity and Water disconnected power supply from the stable and individuals who violated the Residency Law were referred to the police for deportation, while EPA and PAS filed reports on the violations.

Representative of the Municipality in the committee and leader of the Emergency Team at the Municipality branch in the Capital Governorate Zaid Al-Anazi has stressed the need for PAS to strictly implement the relevant laws, particularly on withdrawing ownership in the event of non-compliance with the regulations.

He affirmed the thorough and direct follow-up of this file by the senior management of the Municipality with strict directives from Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipality Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mishaan, as well as Director General of the Municipality Eng Saud Al-Dabbous. Both officials have emphasized the need to take action regarding the reports and complaints.

He explained the owner of the stable violated Ministerial Resolution No. 206/2009 regarding the building system, Article One on building violations and Article 25, Paragraph Four on using the stable for purposes other than the licensed activities.

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Normal rate of cases at ministry hospitals despite rains: official

MoH completes employee evaluation, introduces online access



Photo from PM's Diwan
His Excellency the Ambassador of UAE to Kuwait Dr. Matar Al Neyadi handing over the invitation to HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

HH PM receives invitation to attend UAE's Arab Media Forum next May

KUWAIT CITY, March 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received on Wednesday UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi at Bayan Palace.

Ambassador Al-Neyadi delivered a letter from UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Dubai Governor Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashed Al-Maktoum that included an invitation to participate in the Arab Media Forum to be held in the UAE in May.

Questionnaire on teacher licensing

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: The Ministry of Education is set to distribute a questionnaire across the education sector to gather feedback on teacher licensing standards, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Both the Ministry of Education and the National Center for Educational Development aim to gauge teachers' opinions regarding the proposed licensing criteria.

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: The official spokesman for the Ministry of Health Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad affirmed that the ministry's follow-up of health services in the facilities affiliated with the Ministry of Health are proceeding normally without being affected by the rainy situation in the country, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, he explained that the number of cases received at the emergency departments in public hospitals so far is the normal daily rate.

The engineering affairs departments have increased their level of preparedness to deal with any water accumulations in the vicinity of health facilities.

The reports received by the operation rooms of the Medical Emergency Department have so far reached about 137, and they have been dealt with successfully, some of which are related to road accidents, but they are within the expected rates.

Dr. Al-Sanad renewed the advice on the need to be careful, stay home as much as possible, and avoid direct exposure to rain, especially those suffering from chronic respiratory diseases such as asthma, as the rainy weather condition in its current form may be one of the irritants of respiratory asthma.

He also called for the need to exercise caution on the roads, and ensure the availability of the necessary treatments to deal with diseases associated with weather change, such as bronchodilators, and that they be accompanied by the asthma patient during his movements.

Dr. Al-Sanad stressed the need to go to the nearest health center in the event of failure to respond to treatment, or to call the emergency No. 112 to request for assistance.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health has concluded its annual evaluation of employees and workers for the year 2023, reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to sources within the health sector, employees will now have access to their job files through the ministry's website and the "Sahel" application to view their performance evaluations.

These evaluations, which are based on criteria such as excellent work and potential for promotion, aim to provide feedback and recognition to employees.

It's important to note that every employee has the right to appeal their evaluation if they received a rating below "excellence." Grievances can be submitted electronically following the announcement of results.



Photo from PM's Diwan
Chairman and members of the Board of Directors of the Islamic Heritage Revival Society.

HH PM receives IHRs' chairman, members

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received, Wednesday, chairman and members of Kuwait's Islamic Heritage Revival Society (IHRs) at Bayan

Palace. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sharida Al-Maousherji was present in the meeting. (KUNA)



Photo from PM's Diwan
HH the PM receiving the president and members of the Federation of Private Universities.

HH PM receives Union of Private Universities' president, members

KUWAIT CITY, March 20, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Sharida Maousherji, at received at Bayan Palace, Wednesday, the president and members of the Union of Private Universities.

Other Voices

Navigating Kuwait's new future vision: legal insights, considerations for 2035

By Abdulaziz Abdullah Alhusainan
Lawyer

Kuwait's ambitious new future vision, aimed at transforming the nation's economy and society, extends its horizon to the year 2035. This comprehensive roadmap outlines strategic objectives spanning economic diversification, social development, and environmental sustainability. In this blog post, we explore the legal implications and considerations associated with Kuwait's Vision 2035, highlighting key legal aspects crucial for its successful implementation.

Vision 2035 builds upon Kuwait's commitment to sustainable development, resilience, and inclusive growth. It envisions a dynamic and diversified economy, driven by innovation, entrepreneurship, and global partnerships. At its core, Vision 2035 seeks to harness Kuwait's resources and capabilities to create a prosperous and sustainable future for its citizens.

As Kuwait embarks on the journey towards Vision 2035, several legal dimensions come into play. Economic Transformation under Vision 2035 aims to transition Kuwait's economy from reliance on oil revenues to a knowledge-based, diversified economy. Legal frameworks must support this transition by facilitating investment, fostering competition, and protecting intellectual property rights. Legislation promoting economic diversification, such as tax incentives for innovation and entrepreneurship, as well as regulatory reforms to enhance the ease

of doing business, will be crucial for attracting investment and fostering economic growth.

Social Empowerment is a critical component of Vision 2035, which places a strong emphasis on human capital development, healthcare, education, and social welfare. Legal measures may include enacting laws to ensure access to quality healthcare and education, as well as safeguarding the rights of vulnerable populations. Legal frameworks promoting equal opportunity, non-discrimination, and social inclusion will be essential for realizing the vision's objectives of enhancing human development and social cohesion.

Environmental Sustainability is a cornerstone of Vision 2035, with initiatives aimed at promoting renewable energy, enhancing water conservation, and preserving natural resources. Legal mechanisms, such as environmental regulations and conservation laws, will be critical for mitigating environmental risks and promoting sustainable practices. Legislative frameworks supporting renewable energy deployment, waste management, and pollution control will be essential for achieving Kuwait's environmental sustainability goals while addressing emerging environmental challenges.

Kuwait's Vision 2035 represents a bold and transformative agenda for the nation's future, grounded in principles of sustainability, resilience, and inclusivity. As legal practitioners, it is imperative to engage proactively in shaping the legal landscape to support the vision's implementation. By addressing legal considerations effectively and collaborating with stakeholders, Kuwait can realize its aspirations for a prosperous, resilient, and sustainable future by 2035.

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MoSA hands over wedding halls to donors; 1st batch of 5 handed over

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: According to sources from Al-Jarida, the Ministry of Social Affairs, represented by the Community Development Department in the Social Development Sector, has initiated the process of returning wedding halls to their donors.

The first batch of five halls, located across different regions of the country, has been handed over. These halls include Al-Baghili, Al-Owaihian, Al-Harbash, Al-Jaan, and the hall of the Sulaibikhat and Doha Association, returned to the cooperative's board of directors.

This action follows Ministerial Resolution No. 2024/1, which set guidelines for

the return of these halls to their original donors. The ministry has formed a team comprising departments of public services, community development, and warehouses to oversee the process. The second batch, consisting of five more halls, is expected to be delivered to donors soon.

The donors are required to sign a declaration pledging to conduct periodic maintenance, adhere to contractual agreements for utilities, install surveillance cameras, and refrain from unauthorized leasing or exploitation of the halls. Failure to comply may result in withdrawal of management rights.

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Kuwait's ambassador to Belgium participates in diplomatic movement

Arab-EU co-op needed to halt Israeli aggression in Gaza: Kuwait

BRUSSELS, March 20, (KUNA): Kuwait participated in an Arab diplomatic movement in Brussels to pressure towards stopping the Israeli occupation aggression on Gaza as well as halting the ongoing violations against Palestinians in the West Bank.

Kuwait's Ambassador to Belgium Nawaf Al-Enezi told KUNA that this came during a meeting held on Tuesday by the Arab Contact Group on the Israeli occupation aggression on Gaza with the European Commissioner for Neighborhood Affairs and Enlargement, Oliver Varhelyi.

The ambassador added that they conveyed the Arab position on the need to stop the aggression on Gaza and ensure aid delivery, in addition to the importance of the continued support provided by the European Union to the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

Ambassador Al-Enezi explained that the European Union is an important partner for the region and due to the geographical proximity between the European Union and the Arab region, there are common challenges and interests.

He noted that the contact group stressed the need to pressure the Israeli occupation to stop the aggression and violations in the West Bank and the importance of lifting restrictions of access to Islamic and Christian holy places and stopping attacks on worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Ambassador Al-Enezi pointed out that the humanitarian aid provided by Kuwait to Gaza through the air bridge amounted to more than 1,500 tons, the assistance provided by the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to UNRWA exceeded 1.3 billion dollars, making the Gulf countries one of the largest donors to the UN agency.



The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Belgium in a group photo during his meeting with the European Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement Affairs, Oliver Varhelyi. KUNA photo

MoC approves excellent job performance bonus: official

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Communication Dr Ahmed Al-Majren has confirmed the approval of the excellent job performance bonus for eligible employees, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, Al-Majren revealed the Financial and Administrative Affairs Sector has completed the evaluation of all employees in various sectors of the ministry and uploaded the results on the integrated system in preparation for granting the bonus to deserving employees.

He confirmed that the bonus will be deposited in the bank accounts of eligible employees in the coming days. He said the bonus amount is based on the grade, job title and

conditions of the Civil Service Commission (CSC); provided the employee obtained an excellent rating for the year 2023.

He added the bonus will be KD1,500 for the directors of departments and offices; KD1,250 for controllers; KD1,000 for heads of departments and offices; KD850 for division heads; KD800 for Kuwaiti employees occupying public jobs from the first to the fourth grade; KD600 for Kuwaiti employees occupying public jobs from the fifth to eighth grade; KD300 for Kuwaiti employees holding assistant and assistant technical positions, KD300 for non-Kuwaiti employees receiving lump sum salary and KD200 for non-Kuwaiti is working on the basis of hiring services.

Your Highness

Continued from Page 1

If their nationalities are withdrawn, they will be considered as Bedoun residents, which means an increase in a problem that has remained unresolved for about 60 years. If the law is applied to dual citizens, will they be told to give up one of the two nationalities?

As for the Bedoun issue, which is worsening day after day in Kuwait, there are many countries that have resolved it easily. Although we do not want to enumerate them, it is clearly visible, and many of us have referred to it in previous articles, except that it increases the number of stateless people.

This is not right. In fact, it is creating a new crisis. Therefore, dealing with this issue must be characterized by wisdom and deliberation. Otherwise, it is nothing more than an increase in crises. Does Kuwait need more of these crises?

It seems there are no priorities. Should we prioritize diversifying income sources, rather than solely relying on oil revenue, which leaves us vulnerable to fluctuations in its prices? Or should we revive the nation by launching development projects and opening up opportunities, akin to other Gulf nations?

All indicators highlight that salaries will be a major burden on the state budget, which today constitute a large deficit. Will the government consider improving the life of the citizen who has not had an increase in his salary for 16 years, or solve the housing or education problem?

Every day we wake up to a new crisis and sleep on another. It is clear that there is no national priority program that would save the country from this confusion. Is this how countries are managed?

In countries where governments are rational and wise, there is a huge team of national advisors and others who do not have any personal ambitions, and make plans for everything, which are implemented by the governments.

The matter is not left to a minister, representative, or agent, like the way it happens in Kuwait. Here, as soon as we crawl out of a hole, we fall into a bigger one.

Amir urges

Continued from Page 1

are fully confident of His Highness the Amir's keenness to achieve the highest goals for the nation and its citizens.

They are aware of the magnitude of the responsibilities placed on their shoulders to achieve those goals.

"Therefore, we assure Your Highness that all sectors of the Ministry of Interior are at the highest levels of readiness, and vigilance, for the protection of the country and that the country's security will not be compromised.

Sheikh Salem added that the Ministry of Interior has taken great strides towards digital transformation in all its sectors, not only in terms of services, but also in all security fields to keep pace with the tremendous technological development in the field of database systems and their uses.

The Undersecretary said the number of users engaged with the Ministry of Interior's electronic services has reached more than eight million users, all have benefited from these services.

Within the path of development and future directions of the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry has set major goals during the current and future period, in addition to its strategic vision in combating crime in all its forms to achieve security and stability in the country.

Sheikh Salem added among these goals are: addressing those who spread rumors and fake accounts and taking legal measures against them.

Second, firmness in enforcing the law and eliminating prejudice.

Third, determination to eradicate the plague of drugs and psychotropic substances by taking advanced measures to deal with and eliminate this scourge.

Fourth, firmly implement the new traffic law immediately after its approval by the National Assembly.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Salem said within the framework of developing and modernizing the security system with the latest international systems in order to preserve the safety of the nation, the Ministry of Interior, represented by the General Administration of Information Systems, the General Administration of Forensic Evidence, and the Port Security Sector, in mid-May 2023, implemented the biometric fingerprint system in all ports of the country.

The data of one million and 694,000 people, including citizens and Gulf nationals (residents, visitors), and people of unknown nationality, has been created and updated, and work is underway to take fingerprints for the target groups through fingerprint centers.

Sheikh Salem added that out of our belief in preserving the integrity of the elections and the appearance of the democratic process in an honorable and transparent manner, the sectors of the Ministry of the Interior prepared early for the upcoming parliamentary election, organizationally and security-wise, and to confront election crimes of all kinds and forms.

Other senior officials from the Interior ministry delivered similar speeches and the ceremony was concluded with a memorabilia shield in honor of His Highness the Amir's visit.

Amir lauds

Continued from Page 1

protecting souls and property in the dear homeland through getting ready to face crises, accidents and disasters.

He expressed high appreciation, sincerity, loyalty and obedience to His Highness the Amir, congratulated him on Ramadan.

A documentary themed "regional leadership in civil protection" was displayed. His Highness the Amir was accompanied by senior State's officials.

Report calls

Continued from Page 1

The recommendations are as follows:

- Taking reform measures that support governance and the business environment to enhance competition and encourage investment. These include easing restrictions on foreign ownership of companies and improving mechanisms for allocating public lands for longer lease periods for commercial development purposes.

- Reducing licensing procedures to ensure improving the business environment and increasing opportunities to attract various investments to the state.

- Providing advisory support in all different areas of digital transformation to serve the achievement of the desired strategic goals and improve performance.

- Pushing towards the importance of the digital economy and improve the quality of data, to save citizens time and increase their productivity.

- Building national capabilities and competencies, developing skills to provide the best services at the highest levels, and developing relevant performance indicators to ensure the quality and efficiency of government services.

- Establishing an advanced and sustainable infrastructure that keeps pace with global ambitions and developments and consolidates the country's position globally by enhancing cooperation with leading countries and international organizations in this field.

- Providing an integrated electronic portal to serve the financial and investment sector in the country, which contributes to supporting the wheel of economic growth and facilitating the operations of the import and export system in the country.

- Achieving economic sustainability by developing the country's investment sectors and diversifying the production base and sources of income.

- Building an automated system to link local financial centers to all global financial centers and creating an integrated communication network between them.

- Developing training and professional development methods to raise the level of performance of workers in all financial and banking sectors in the country.

'Awqaf Ministry' implements new assignment committee structure

Dr Bader Al-Mutairi issues four transfer decisions

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Bader Al-Mutairi issued a decision to restructure the assignments committee in the ministry. He also issued some decisions for transferring and rotating the committee members in the interest of the work, for ensuring the proper functioning of the routine therein, and for organizing the work of the task system, its controls, provisions, and amendments.

In the decision to reconstitute the assignment committee, Dr. Al-Mutairi demanded, as required by the work interest, to reconstitute the assignment committee in the ministry, headed by the Assistant Undersecretary for the Qur'anic Affairs and Islamic Studies Sector, and with the assistant undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs acting on his behalf as chairperson.

The committee's members include the director of the Human Resources and Administrative Development Department, the director of the Minister's Office Department, the directors of the Islamic Studies and Qur'anic Sciences Department in all six governorates, the head of the Budget Department in the ministry as an observer, and the head of the Personnel Affairs, Human Resources and Administrative Development Department as a member and rapporteur of the committee.

According to the decision, the committee shall be responsible for the following:-

1. Counting the current numbers of taxpayers allocated to each sector and organizational unit in order to approve or amend them and redistribute them according to the interest of the work.

2. Studying assignment requests, replacement requests, and amending and renewing assignment titles in light of the provisions of ministerial resolution No. 123/2021 for regulating the work of the assignment system, its controls, provisions, and amendments.

3. Monitoring the work of new assignments and matching the data and qualifications of new assignees in accordance with the provisions in the aforementioned ministerial decision.

4. Tightening control over the granting of bonuses to taxpayers, reviewing disbursement data and conforming them to the controls and conditions stipulated in this regard, and designing, programming, operating and maintaining a program that is specific to the committee and closely linked to the ministry's employee database

5. Reviewing and auditing taxpayer lists and monthly disbursement statements.

Meanwhile, Dr. Bader Al-Mutairi issued four transfer decisions, the first of which was the transfer of the Director of the Coordination and Technical Support Office (management



FM Al-Yahya meeting with the Libyan official. KUNA photo

Kuwait's FM receives Libyan official

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya met on Wednesday with acting Minister of Planning and Libyan representative on the Board of Trustees of the Arab Planning Institute (API), Mohammad Yousef Al-

Zaidani.

The two officials reviewed the close bilateral relations between the two countries and discussed various areas of possible cooperation. (KUNA)

Kuwait & Australia: 50 years of shared prosperity

By Nasser Al-Hajeri

Since establishing diplomatic ties half a century ago, Kuwait and Australia have forged a robust and enduring relationship, marked by mutual respect, cooperation, and shared interests. Over the years, this partnership has flourished across various sectors, contributing to economic growth, cultural exchange, and strategic collaboration.

One significant aspect of Kuwaiti-Australian relations is the substantial investment Kuwait has made in Australia. With investments totaling approximately A\$13 billion, Kuwait has demonstrated its confidence in Australia's economy and its potential for growth. These investments span diverse sectors such as real estate, airports, hotels, banking, green energy generation, and the oil and gas industry, contributing to job creation and infrastructure development.

In return, Australia has emerged as a vital trading partner for Kuwait, particularly in the agricultural

sector. Australia serves as the primary supplier of wheat to Kuwait, meeting a significant portion of its grain needs.

The Kuwait Flour Mills Company, a key player in the region's food industry, relies heavily on Australian wheat to meet the demand for flour and related products, highlighting the interdependence between the two nations and the importance of food security.

Furthermore, Australia's robust livestock industry significantly contributes to enhancing food security for both nations. Through the exportation of sheep to Kuwait, Australia not only meets Kuwait's demand for meat products but also strengthens the resilience of food

supply chains between the two countries.

In addition to economic collaboration, education has emerged as a cornerstone of Kuwaiti-Australian relations. Approximately 400 Kuwaiti students are currently enrolled in Australian universities, drawn by the high-quality education system, diverse academic offerings, and vibrant multicultural environment. These students not only contribute to the cultural diversity of Australian campuses but also serve as ambassadors, fostering greater understanding and friendship between the two nations.

As Kuwait and Australia celebrate five decades of partnership, the future looks promising with opportunities for further collaboration and mutual benefit. With a shared commitment to prosperity, stability, and innovation, Kuwait and Australia are poised to continue strengthening their ties and shaping a brighter future together.



Al-Hajeri

MEW receives over 1,000 malfunction reports

MoE discusses activation of e-learning, training plans

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: The Ministry of Education convened a meeting to discuss the activation of e-learning, facilitated through Office 365 accounts and the Teams program, available to all students and educational staff. The session also addressed the training program for staff members, mentors, and school principals, with a focus on the timeline and curriculum, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Attendees provided feedback and suggestions on the plan, which was subsequently submitted to the acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, Anwar Al-Hamdan, for further action.

Chaired by Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education Hessa Al-Mutawa, the meeting included directors from educational regions, the Coordination Department, educational affairs, the Information Systems Center, the Development and Training Department, and Technosoft Academy's e-learning team

level) in the ministry Muhammad Al-Tayyar to the position of the Director of the Legal Affairs Department.

The second decision stated the transfer of the Director of the Legal Affairs Department Yahya Al-Rashidi to the position of the Director of the Citizen Service Office (at the management level).

lead by Al-Jazi Al-Otaibi.

Despite rainy weather, students demonstrated a strong commitment to attending classes in Ministry of Education schools, with normal attendance rates reported and minimal absences. Teachers also exhibited high attendance rates.

While students attended university sites at Kuwait University, absences remained within normal levels. However, both parents and teachers urged the Ministry of Education to develop flexible and expedited plans for transitioning to distance learning during adverse weather conditions or emergencies.

Meanwhile, the unified call center (152) at the Ministry of Electricity and Water received 1,617 electricity and water malfunction reports from the start of the rain wave at dawn until 7:00 pm on Tuesday, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a statement to the daily, Director of the center Mohammad Al-Azmi disclosed that they received reports

The third decision stated the transfer of the Director of the Department of Islamic Studies and Qur'anic Sciences in the Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorates Mishal Al-Mutairi to the position of the Director of the Department of Islamic Studies and Qur'anic Sciences in the Jahra and Farwaniya governorates.

from different areas throughout the country. He then explained that power outages are frequent under such circumstances.

Al-Azmi disclosed the center, which is located in the National Control Tower, sorts reports and sends them to the emergency centers which, in turn, dispatch teams to the breakdown sites to do the necessary work. He added the center follows up the reports until completion of the repair works.

He went on to say: "We hope the citizens and expatriates will be careful under such circumstances. They should neither touch anything in isolated places where there might be electrical current nor take the initiative to repair any malfunction without knowledge of the dangers that may ensue.

The percentage of reports increased as the daylight hours progressed and the highest number of reports was recorded at 5:00 pm — around 240 reports.

The fourth decision stated the transfer of the Director of the Department of Islamic Studies and Qur'anic Sciences in Jahra and Farwaniya governorates Bandar Al-Nasafi to the position of the Director of the Department of Islamic Studies and Qur'anic Sciences in the Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorates.

World News Roundup

Europe

Did hospital staff try to snoop on Kate's records?: British privacy watchdog said Wednesday it is looking into a report that staff at a private London hospital tried to snoop on the Princess of Wales' medical records while she was a patient for abdominal surgery.

The Information Commissioner's Office said: "We can confirm that we have received a breach report and are assessing the information provided."



Kate

The Daily Mirror newspaper reported that at least one staff member at the London Clinic tried to look at Kate's notes during her stay there in January.

Kate had surgery at the clinic in central London on Jan. 16 and was discharged almost two weeks later.

Kensington Palace, the office of Kate and Prince William, said the report was "a matter for the London Clinic." The London Clinic did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Kensington Palace gave little detail about Kate's condition beyond saying that it wasn't cancer-related, the surgery was successful and recuperation will keep the princess away from public duties until April.

Even though that time has not elapsed, the princess' absence from public view has fueled a tide of speculation, rumor and conspiracy theories. (AP)

UK to host a summit of European leaders: Britain will hold the next meeting of the European Political Community on July 18, the government announced Tuesday.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will host leaders from about 50 countries at Blenheim Palace, an 18th-century country mansion northwest of London that was the birthplace of wartime leader Winston Churchill.

Sunak said that the gathering was "an important forum for cooperation across the whole of Europe on the issues that are affecting us all, threatening our security and prosperity." He said the agenda would include support for Ukraine and "stopping the scourge of people smuggling and illegal migration."

The meeting will be the fourth for the European Political Community, brainchild of French President Emmanuel Macron. It was established in 2022 after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine shattered Europe's sense of security. Previous summits have been in Czech capital Prague; Chisinau, Moldova; and Granada, Spain.

The forum gives Britain the chance to join a Europe-wide political gathering despite its departure from the European Union in 2020.

Sunak's delay in naming a date for the gathering had fueled speculation that he planned to call a spring or summer election. He has to call a national vote in 2024, but has said it's likely to be in the second half of the year. (AP)

Russia to evacuate 9,000 kids from Belgorod: Russia plans to evacuate about 9,000 children from a border region because it is being shelled continuously by Ukraine, an official said Tuesday, reflecting Kyiv's increasing focus on striking targets behind a front line that has barely shifted in recent months.

The children will be moved from the Belgorod region farther east, away from the Ukraine border, said the region's governor, Vyacheslav Gladkov.

The announcement came a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin said the Kremlin wants to create a buffer zone to help protect border regions from long-range Ukrainian strikes and cross-border raids more than two years into the war.

Ukraine has increasingly used its long-range firepower to hit oil refineries and depots deep inside Russia and has sought to unsettle the Russian border regions, putting political pressure on Putin.

In addition, Ukraine-based Russian opponents of Putin and the Kremlin have launched cross-border raids. Putin discussed the cross-border incursions during a meeting Tuesday with top officials of the Federal Security Service, the FSB.

Civilian areas of Belgorod have been battered in the fighting. According to Gladkov, 16 people died and 98 were injured over the last week alone. (AP)

Austin vows continued aid to Ukraine: US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin vowed Tuesday that the US will continue to support Ukraine's war effort against Russia, even as the US Congress remains stalled over funding to send additional weapons to the front.

"The United States will not let Ukraine fail," said Austin, addressing more than 50 defense leaders from Europe and around the world who are meeting at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany. "This coalition will not let Ukraine fail. And the free world will not let Ukraine fail."

The meeting comes a week after US defense officials found and used \$300 million in contract savings to fund a new package of military aid for Ukraine, pulling weapons from Pentagon stocks.

During the session, leaders from other nations promised new aid for Ukraine. German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius told reporters that Germany will provide ammunition and armored and transport vehicles worth about \$542 million (500 million euros).

"We are helping Ukraine with what it needs most in its defense against Russian aggression," Pistorius said. (AP)

'EU enlargement is geopolitical necessity': Members of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) discussed with foreign ministers, vice-ministers and secretaries of state of EU member states the future of EU enlargement.

The EU should begin the accession negotiation process with Ukraine and Moldova in June at the latest, stated several representatives of the EU member states at the meeting, according to a statement released by the AFET following the meeting on Tuesday.

"It is imperative that the EU sets a date to begin negotiations at the European Council this week," stressed Foreign Affairs Minister of Lithuania Gabrielius Landsbergis.

"Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has given EU enlargement new momentum, and the EU should not miss this historic opportunity to incorporate Ukraine and Moldova, as well as Georgia, which became a candidate country in December 2023," Landsbergis noted.

The representatives of the member states commended Bosnia and Herzegovina for its good work in the last twelve months in adopting European reforms. (KUNA)

Germany issues entry ban on far-right figure: German authorities have issued an entry ban on a prominent Austrian European far-right figure known for his talk about "remigration" at a recent meeting of nationalist populists that triggered large protests against populism in the country.

Martin Sellner of the Identitarian Movement said in a video posted Tuesday on social media platform X that German authorities sent his lawyer a letter saying he wasn't allowed to enter Germany for the next three years and if he happened to be on German soil, he had to leave within a month.

Local media outlets, including Sueddeutsche Zeitung and Spiegel, cited German officials confirming Sellner's entry ban.

Lately, Germany has seen large protests against the far right following a report that extremists met in Potsdam near Berlin in November to discuss the deportation of millions of immigrants, including some with German citizenship. Sellner presented his "remigration" vision for the deportation of immigrants there. (AP)

Journalist goes on trial in Belarus: A prominent independent journalist went on trial in Belarus on Tuesday on extremism charges widely seen as politically motivated.

Ihar Karnei, who used to write for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and other independent news outlets, is accused of participating in an extremist group, which is punishable by up to six years in prison. RFE/RL, a US government-funded broadcaster, has been designated extremist in Belarus, a common label for anyone who criticizes the government in the country where harsh crackdown on dissent continues unabated and working for it or spreading its content is a criminal offense.

Journalists and activists in Belarus have faced large-scale repression since the August 2020 vote that handed a sixth term to President Alexander Lukashenko. Following the election, which was rejected as fraudulent by the opposition and the West, Belarus was swept by massive protests, some of which drew more than 100,000 people.

Authorities responded with a brutal crackdown. More than 35,000 people were arrested, thousands were beaten by police while in custody, and dozens of nongovernmental organizations and independent media outlets were shut down. (AP)



Republican presidential candidate former US President Donald Trump and former first lady Melania Trump leave after voting in the Florida primary election in Palm Beach, Fla., on March 19. (AP)

Politics

Voters urge candidates to keep up the fight

Biden, Trump notch wins in primaries

TEMPE, Arizona, March 20. (AP) — As Joe Biden and Donald Trump moved closer to a November rematch, primary voters around the country on Tuesday urged their favored candidate to keep up the fight and worried about what might happen if their side loses this fall.

There was little suspense about Tuesday's results as both candidates are already their parties' presumptive nominees. Trump easily won Republican primaries in Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Kansas and Ohio. Biden did the same except in Florida, where Democrats had canceled their primary and opted to award all 224 of their delegates to Biden.

Races

Instead, the primaries and key down ballot races became a reflection of the national political mood. With many Americans unenthusiastic about 2024's choice for the White House, both Biden and Trump's campaigns are working to fire up their bases by tearing into each other and warning of the perils of the opponent.

Those who did turn out to vote Tuesday seemed to hear that.

Pat Shackleford, an 84-year-old caregiver in Mesa, Arizona, said she voted for Trump in Arizona's primary to send the former president a message.

"I wanted to encourage him that the fight has been worthwhile, that more of us are behind him than maybe the media tells you," Shackleford said.

Jamie and Cassandra Neal, sisters who both live in Phoenix, said they were unenthusiastic Biden supporters until they saw the vigor the president brought to his State of the Union speech. It fired them up for the coming election.

"Beforehand it was like, 'Well, he's the only decent one there,'" said Cassandra Neal, 42. "After his address it was like, 'OK, let's do it!'"

Jamie Neal, 45, said Biden had been "way too nice" before and needed to match Trump, whom she described as "vicious."

"I hate to say it, sometimes you need to equal the lowness to get the person out," she said. "Sometimes you have to fight fire with fire."

In Ohio's Republican Senate pri-

Biden and congressional leaders announce a deal on govt funding

WASHINGTON, March 20. (AP) — US President Joe Biden and congressional leaders announced Tuesday that they have reached an agreement on this fiscal year's final set of spending bills. Now, the question is how fast lawmakers can get the bills passed to avoid a partial government shutdown.

While Biden said he'll sign the bill package as soon as he receives it, time is running short. Legislative staff needs time to finish the bill text, an arduous task. The House has a rule that lawmakers get 72 hours to review a bill before voting. And the Senate has never been known for its ability to sprint. Meanwhile, funding for several key agencies expires at midnight Friday.

"We have come to an agreement with Congressional leaders on a path forward for the remaining full-year funding bills," Biden, a Democrat, said in a statement Tuesday morning. "The House and Senate are now working to finalize a package that can quickly be brought to the floor, and I will sign it immediately."

Work on the final spending bills hit a late snag around funding for the Department of Homeland Security, but the contours of that bill were resolved late Monday. Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said the relevant committees are now drafting bill text to be con-

sidered by the full House and Senate "as soon as possible." Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries, of New York, issued a similar statement, saying "in the next few days, upon completion of the drafting process," Congress would consider the package.

The action comes nearly six months into the fiscal year, with Congress still only halfway home in passing spending measures expected to total about \$1.65 trillion. Lawmakers passed the first portion of spending bills in early March, representing about 30% of discretionary spending for the year. Now lawmakers are focused on the larger package and, in what has become routine, are brushing up against a shutdown deadline.

Emerging from a meeting with GOP colleagues, House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-La., said he expected legislative text to be unveiled Wednesday and a vote in the House to occur by Friday.

"We want to get it done before the government funding expires Friday," Scalise said.

On holding the vote before lawmakers had 72 hours to read the bill, Scalise said no final decisions had been made, "but obviously we've got a deadline of the 22nd that's coming up that we want to make sure we're focused on as well."

Trump-backed businessman Bernie Moreno defeated two challengers, Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose and Matt Dolan, whose family owns the Cleveland Guardians baseball team.

Moreno and Trump appeared together Saturday at a rally where Trump praised his endorsed candidate as a "warrior" and ramped up his dark rhetoric, saying that were he not to be elected, "it's going to be a bloodbath for the country." His campaign insists he was referring to the auto industry

and not the country as a whole.

In the final days of the campaign, 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.

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."



This photo released by Belgorod region governor Vyacheslav Gladkov's telegram channel on, March 18 shows emergency ministry employees working at the destroyed building after shelling from the Ukrainian side, in Nikolskoye village, Belgorod region, Russia. Russia plans to evacuate about 9,000 children from a border region because it is being shelled continuously by Ukraine, an official said on March 19. (AP)



Abbott



Coe

America

Texas arrest law back on hold: Texas plans to arrest migrants suspected of entering the US illegally were again on hold Wednesday after setting off uncertainty along the border and anger from Mexico flared during a brief few hours that the law was allowed to take effect.

A late-night order Tuesday from a 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals panel temporarily put on hold - again - Texas' dramatic state expansion into border enforcement. Earlier in the day, the U.S. Supreme Court had cleared the way for the strict immigration law, dealing a victory to Republican Gov. Greg Abbott and encouraging GOP lawmakers in other states that are pushing for similar measures.

But later in a 2-1 order, an appeals court panel continued the legal seesaw surrounding the Texas law, again putting it on pause ahead of oral arguments that were scheduled for Wednesday. It was not clear how quickly the next decision might come.

During the short time the law was in effect Tuesday, Texas authorities did not announce that any arrests had been made or say whether it was being actively enforced. Along the border in Kinney County, Sheriff Brad Coe embraced the arrest powers but said deputies would need probable cause. (AP)

Teen faces felony charge: A 16-year-old boy is facing a new felony charge over the mass shooting at the Kansas City Chiefs' Super Bowl celebration that killed one person and wounded almost two dozen others, local juvenile authorities said Tuesday.

Authorities said the teenager was arraigned Tuesday on a charge of unlawful use of a weapon in shooting at a person. He was being held since the Feb 14 mass shooting on a lesser felony charge of resisting arrest. For an adult offender, the new charge would be punishable by between five and 15 years in prison.

Authorities said that a Jackson County Family Court judge will hold a hearing to determine whether the teenager will be tried as an adult. (AP)

Two men die in river: The bodies of two people recovered over the weekend after they fell into the water at a dangerous swimming area in Washington state made popu-

lar by TikTok have been identified as men from Japan.

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office identified the men Tuesday as



Britain's Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, (left) and Sophie, the Duchess of Edinburgh, (second left) meet with Major General Eldon Millar, (background), Korean Ambassador to the UK His Excellency Yeocheol Yoon and Director of Remembrance Philippa Rawlinson, during a reception for Korean War veterans, to mark the 70th Anniversary of the Korean War, at Buckingham Palace, London, on March 19. (AP)

Hiroya Konosu, 21, and Takayuki Suzuki, 34, the Daily Herald reported.

Search and rescue personnel responded to the Eagle Falls area along the Skykomish River east of Index on Saturday after reports that two men had gone underwater and hadn't resurfaced. The two men were reportedly part of a four-person group.

Their bodies were recovered on Sunday. The beautiful but dangerous swimming hole along US Route 2 has soared in popularity because of social media, Sky Valley Fire Chief Eric Andrews said. (AP)

SC to remove waste from carrier: More toxic waste will be extracted from a World War II aircraft carrier in Charleston Harbor to prevent leakage that would imperil the commercial shipping industry and coastal ecosystems central to the South Carolina port city's identity.

The removal of over 1.2 million gallons (4.5 million liters) of petroleum and other hazards is part of an \$18 million remediation effort for the USS Yorktown, which powered through tours in the Pacific Ocean and off Vietnam before the US Navy donated the decommissioned ship in 1975. The waterfront attraction at Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum has since become one of South Carolina's most popular tourist stops, but the increased potential for leaky tanks poses a threat to the surrounding waters. (AP)

Lat/Am

Obrador praises Villa

Brazil's former prez Bolsonaro indicted

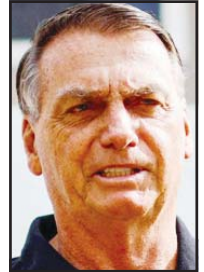
SAO PAULO, March 20, (AP) — Former Brazilian president **Jair Bolsonaro** was formally accused Tuesday of falsifying his COVID-19 vaccination status, marking the first indictment for the embattled far-right leader, with more allegations potentially in store.

The federal police indictment released by the Supreme Court alleged that Bolsonaro and 16 others inserted false information into a public health database to make it appear as though the then-president, his 12-year-old daughter and several others in his circle had received the COVID-19 vaccine.

Police detective Fábio Alvarez Shor, who signed the indictment, said in his report that Bolsonaro and his aides changed their vaccination records in order to "issue their respective (vaccination) certificates and use them to cheat current health restrictions."

"The investigation found several false insertions between November 2021 and December 2022, and also many actions of using fraudulent documents," Shor added.

The detective said in the indictment that Bolsonaro's aide-de-camp, Mauro Cid, told investigators the former president asked him to insert the false data into the system for both himself and his daughter. Cid also said he delivered the vaccination certificates to Bolsonaro personally.



Bolsonaro

Restrictions

During the pandemic, Bolsonaro was one of the few world leaders who railed against the vaccine. He openly flouted health restrictions and encouraged other Brazilians to follow his example. His administration ignored several offers from pharmaceutical company Pfizer to sell Brazil tens of millions of shots in 2020, and he openly criticized a move by Sao Paulo state's governor to buy vaccines from Chinese company Sinovac when no other doses were available.

Brazil's prosecutor-general's office will have the final say on whether to use the indictment to file charges against Bolsonaro at the Supreme Court. The case stems from one of several investigations targeting Bolsonaro, who governed from 2019 to 2022.

Bolsonaro's lawyer, Fábio Wajngarten, called his client's indictment "absurd" and said he did not have access to it.

"When he was president, he was completely exempted from showing any kind of certificate on his trips. This is political persecution and an attempt to void the enormous political capital that has only grown," Wajngarten said.

The former president denied any wrongdoing during questioning in May 2023.

Gleisi Hoffmann, chairwoman of the Workers' Party, whose candidate defeated Bolsonaro, celebrated his indictment on social media. She said she hopes the former president stands trial in many other cases, including for his alleged attempt to sneak \$3 million in diamond jewelry into the country and the sale of two luxury watches he received as gifts from Saudi Arabia while in office.



Mexican prez praises Villa: Mexico's president on Tuesday praised Mexican revolutionary Francisco "Pancho" Villa for his 1916 attack on Columbus, New Mexico, a raid that killed 18 Americans, mostly civilians.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador called the attack "daring" and said "we should thank" Villa for it.

"We should thank Villa for, among other things, the daring feat of having attacked Columbus, New Mexico, to prevent what he considered acts of treason," López Obrador said.

Mexico has long honored Villa in government textbooks and monuments, but that was for his domestic role in the 1910-17 Revolution that ousted dictator Porfirio Díaz. The Columbus attack was mostly related to Villa's personal disputes, not the Revolution, and previous Mexican administrations had remained mostly silent about it.

López Obrador quoted his favorite historian, Pedro Salmerón, as saying the attack was "a symbol of resistance against imperialism." It would not be the first time the president's fondness for Salmerón has caused problems.



Petro invites criminal group to peace talks: Colombia's largest criminal group said Tuesday it has accepted President Gustavo Petro's offer to start peace negotiations, but the next steps in any talks were not immediately clear.

The Gaitanista Self Defense Forces of Colombia - called the Gulf Clan by Colombia's government - has been described by analysts as a threat to Petro's ongoing efforts to broker peace deals with the nation's remaining rebel groups.

Petro on Monday night said he was willing to start peace negotiations with the group if it "dares" to leave drug trafficking, stops taxing local businesses and stops profiting from the transit of migrants heading to the United States.

The group responded on Tuesday with a statement on X saying it accepted the president's invitation to start negotiations. It denied being involved in the smuggling of migrants. The Gulf Clan was founded by former members of right-wing paramilitary groups that demobilized in the early 2000s. It has been described as an apolitical group that increasingly controls communities where it administers justice, taxes local businesses and employs youth.



DomRep urged to stop deporting people: Human rights activists are calling on the Dominican Republic's government for a temporary reprieve in deportations as neighboring Haiti's crisis spirals and people attempt to flee over the closed border from a surge in deadly gang violence.

Small trucks with customized cages are ferrying dozens of Haitians every day from a detention center in San Cristóbal to the border on the island of Hispaniola as the gang attacks paralyze parts of Haiti's capital. "If the government could postpone or diminish the push for deportations, it would be an achievement... an important contribution to the Haitian population," said William Charpentier, coordinator for the Dominican-based National Coalition for Migrations and Refugees.

Charpentier said his organization has received complaints about Dominican authorities allegedly bursting into homes to arrest people believed to be Haitians, breaking belongings and extorting them at times.



A South Korean tanker is seen capsized off Mutsure Island, Yamaguchi prefecture, southwestern Japan on March 20. The coast guard said it received a distress call from the Keoyoung Sun chemical tanker, saying that it was tilting and was taking refuge near the Island. (AP)

7 dead after South Korean tanker capsizes off Japan, 2 still missing

A South Korean tanker capsized off an island in southwestern Japan on Wednesday, authorities said, killing seven people on board. One crew member survived, and the fate of three others was unknown.

The Japan Coast Guard said it received a distress call from the chemical tanker Keoyoung Sun, saying that it was tilting while seeking refuge from the weather near Japan's Mutsure Island, about 1,000 kilometers

(620 miles) from Tokyo in southwestern Japan. The ship was completely capsized by the time rescuers arrived at the scene. The ship was carrying 11 crew, of whom nine have been found, authorities said. (AP)



People who were detained for deportation to Haiti stand inside a police truck on the border bridge that connects Dajabon, Dominican Republic with Haiti on March 18. Human rights activists are calling on the Dominican Republic's government for a temporary reprieve in deportations as neighboring Haiti's crisis spirals and people attempt to flee over the closed border from a surge in deadly gang violence. (AP)



Zuma



Nqakula

Africa

Ngom inspires hope in Senegal: Senegal's only female presidential candidate may stand little to no chance of winning in Sunday's election, but activists say her presence alone is helping to advance a decades-long campaign to achieve gender equality in the West African nation.

Anta Babacar Ngom, a 40-year-old business executive, is a voice for both women and young people — groups hit hard by the country's economic troubles, widespread unemployment and rising prices. She has promised to create millions of jobs and a bank for women to support their economic independence.

"Our country has enormous potential. The natural resources are there, and they can be developed," she told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "The young girls I meet ask for my support. They do so because they know that when a woman comes to power, she will put an end to their suffering. I'm not going to forget them."

Few expect Ngom to emerge among the leading candidates for the presidency, but activists say the fact that a woman has made it to the presidential race for the first time in years reflects how women are inching ahead in the struggle for equality. (AP)



ANC takes party to court: South Africa's ruling African National Congress is taking the independent electoral body and a rival political party fronted by a former president to court, underscoring a fractious buildup to what could be the country's most pivotal election in 30 years.

The ANC says the new uMkhonto weSizwe (Spear of the Nation) party did not meet criteria when it was registered in September. The case at the Electoral Court in the central city of Bloemfontein opened on Tuesday.

It could see the new party, also known as MK and led by South African ex-president and former ANC leader President **Jacob Zuma**, deregistered and barred from standing in the May 29 national election. MK officials have said they would not accept being disqualified, with one threatening "civil war."

MK has roiled the ANC by using the name of its now disbanded military wing that was founded by Nelson Mandela. The

Asia

Vietnam's President Thuong resigns

Australia hosts China's foreign minister

SYDNEY, March 20, (AP) — Australia received its most senior Chinese leadership visit in nearly seven years Wednesday with stability a key theme of the discussions between the countries' foreign ministers.

China's Wang Yi met with his counterpart Penny Wong in Canberra on his tour of Australia and New Zealand.

It was the highest level meeting in Australia between the nations since 2017 and comes as relations continue to thaw after a tumultuous period under Australia's former government in which trade measures were imposed on a raft of Australian products and security tensions were escalating around the region.

"A stable relationship between Australia and China doesn't just happen, it needs ongoing work," Wong said at a news conference after the meeting. "And this was the latest meeting in that process."

Wong acknowledged important differences remained between the countries, but work to uphold their common interests would continue. "Australia will always be Australia and China will always be China."

However, we will cooperate where we can but disagree where we must and to manage these differences wisely," she said.

Among the differences raised Wednesday was the case of detained Australian Yang Hengjun, who was found guilty of espionage in a closed trial and sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve in February.

Also:

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia: Cambodian Prime Minister **Hun Manet** has ordered a ban on musical horns, after videos posted on social media showed people dancing on roads and roadsides as passing trucks blasted rhythmic little tunes.

Hun Manet, who last year took over the wheel of government from his father, Hun Sen - who led **Cambodia** for 38 years - called on the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation and police across the country to immediately take action against any vehicle whose normal horn has been replaced by a tune-playing one by ripping it out

North Korea claims progress in developing a hypersonic missile

SEOUL, South Korea, March 20, (AP) — North Korea successfully tested a solid-fuel engine for its new-type intermediate-range hypersonic missile, state media reported Wednesday, claiming a progress in efforts to develop a more powerful, agile missile designed to strike faraway U.S. targets in the region.

A hypersonic missile is among an array of high-tech weapons systems that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un publicly vowed to introduce in 2021 to cope with what he called deepening US hostility. Outside experts say Kim wants a modernized weapons arsenal to wrest U.S. concessions like sanctions relief when diplomacy resumes.

On Tuesday, Kim guided the ground jet test of multi-stage solid-fuel engine for the hypersonic missile at the North's northwestern rocket launch facility, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.



and restoring the standard honking type. He said the measure has already been implemented by provincial authorities, but he wanted to announce it publicly to make sure it was enforced nationwide.



BANGKOK: Military airstrikes in western Myanmar killed at least 25 members of the country's Muslim Rohingya minority, including children, local media reported, prompting the U.N. chief to express concerns over the escalating violence.

According to the reports, the airstrikes took place early on Monday morning and targeted the village of Thada, north of Minbya township in Rakhine state. The strikes also left another 25 people wounded. The military government had no immediate comment on the reports.

UN Secretary-General **António Guterres** expressed deep concern over "the deteriorating situation and escalation

Bus crash kills 14 in China: A bus crashed into a tunnel wall on an expressway in northern China killing 14 people, state media said Wednesday.

Thirty-seven other people were injured in the Tuesday afternoon crash, state broadcaster CCTV said. The bus was carrying 51 passengers when it hit the wall on the Hohhot-Beihai Expressway in the city of Linfen in Shanxi province.



Rohingyas rescued in Aceh: A wooden boat carrying dozens of Rohingya Muslims capsized about 16 miles from the coastline of Kuala Bubon beach in Indonesia's northernmost province of Aceh on Wednesday.

Local fishermen from Kuala Bubon rescued six of the refugees and evacuated them to a temporary shelter. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

tion of conflict in Myanmar," according to a spokesperson.



HANOI, Vietnam: Vietnamese President **Vo Van Thuong** resigned after a little over a year in the job, according to a statement released Wednesday by the Communist Party.

His resignation takes place amid an intense anti-corruption campaign that has hit the highest echelons of the party.

The party's Central Committee approved his resignation, writing in a statement that "violations by Vo Van Thuong have left a bad mark on the reputation of the Communist party."

Thuong, 54, became president in March 2023, two months after his predecessor Nguyen Xuan Phuc resigned to take "political responsibility" for corruption scandals during the pandemic. He was the youngest president since modern day Vietnam emerged from war in the mid-1970s.

39 al-Shabaab members dead: Somalia announced on Tuesday eliminating more than 39 members of the al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Shabab militia in an operation in Lower Shabelle, southern Somalia.

According to the Somali News Agency

(SONNA), the operation was carried out after the army received information about militia groups in the two regions preparing terrorist schemes to target innocent civilians.

SONNA reported that the army in cooperation with the resistance managed to liberate several areas located between the Lido beach and the city of Merca of Lower Shabelle from the militia holed up there. (KUNA)



Speaker's home searched: A special investigations unit in South Africa searched the home of the Speaker of Parliament for more than five hours Tuesday and seized evidence as part of a probe into accusations that she accepted bribes in her previous role as defense minister.

The search and seizure operation at the Johannesburg home of **Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula**, who is a veteran lawmaker with the ruling African National Congress party, was confirmed in a statement from Parliament. The Speaker denied any wrongdoing and "reaffirms she has nothing to hide," the statement said. She cooperated with the investigators, Parliament said.

The investigation of Mapisa-Nqakula, 67, was made public this month by a newspaper, which said she was suspected of receiving at least \$120,000 in bribes from a defense contractor between 2016 and 2019. The money was delivered to her in cash in gift bags, according to The Sunday Times newspaper. (AP)



Presidential candidate Anta Babacar Ngom greets supporters during her electoral campaign caravan in Dakar, Senegal on March 11. Senegal's only female presidential candidate may stand no chance of winning but activists say her presence alone is helping to advance a decades long campaign to achieve equality in the West African nation. (AP)

oil surges

Kuwait oil price rose by 75 cents to reach USD 86.68 per barrel on Tuesday via a vis USD 85.93 pb Monday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said on Wednesday.

In international markets, the Brent crude futures rose by 49 cents to settle at USD 87.38 pb and those of the West Texas Intermediate crude climbed by 75 cents, settling at USD 83.47 a barrel. (KUNA)

Oil prices have experienced a significant rebound in recent days, buoyed by positive outlooks regarding both demand and supply dynamics. Analysts anticipate further upward momentum in oil prices in the near term, although potential risks loom that could derail the current recovery, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Brent crude prices broke out of a stagnant range, surpassing \$85 per barrel last week for the first time since November.

Brent crude for May delivery recorded gains of about 4% last week, ending at

\$85.34 per barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate crude rose to \$81.04 per barrel. Since the beginning of the year, Brent crude oil prices have risen by over 10%.

Optimistic expectations for global demand prospects have contributed to oil's recent gains, with the International Energy Agency raising its forecast for global oil demand.

On the supply side, forecasts indicate a decline in global oil supplies, attributed to supply restrictions by the OPEC Plus alliance and adverse weather affecting

production platforms.

Increased demand from American refineries has led to a decline in crude oil inventories, contrary to expectations.

Ukrainian strikes on Russian oil refineries have disrupted seaborne fuel exports, further tightening global supplies.

While the International Energy Agency raised its forecast for global oil demand, concerns linger about the pace of demand growth compared to last year.

Non-OPEC oil production is expected to rise this year, potentially offsetting the

decline in OPEC Plus production.

Monetary policy concerns, including the possibility of the US Federal Reserve maintaining higher interest rates due to persistent inflation, pose risks to economic activity and oil demand.

Disagreements between OPEC and the International Energy Agency over global oil demand expectations highlight uncertainties in the market. Optimism among analysts is tempered by concerns about the potential impact of geopolitical tensions and supply disruptions on oil prices.

oil prices rebound on positive demand and supply outlooks

Market Movements 20-03-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts
UAE - DFM	+18.61	4,291.37	SAUDI - Tadawul	-64.67	12,739.33
PHILIPPINES - PSEI	+8.34	6,856.77			
PAKISTAN - KSE 100	+261.31	65,717.00			

Business

Need for incentives & procedural adjustments to encourage listings

Family companies reluctant to list on Boursa Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Despite years of efforts to persuade family companies to list on the stock exchange, significant progress remains elusive, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Large family groups have shown reluctance to engage in discussions about listing, leading to a stagnant environment for operational companies on the stock exchange. The file of listing family and distinguished companies is hindered by inactivity, requiring incentives, procedural adjustments, and legislative steps before companies can be invited to list.

Several critical questions arise regarding the current environment of the Kuwait Stock Exchange and the potential benefits for companies considering listing:

Encouraging Environment -- Is the current state of the stock exchange conducive to attracting new listings? What added value will companies gain from listing, beyond filling out schedules and collecting commissions?

Market Liquidity -- Addressing the problem of fluctuating liquidity is crucial. Mechanisms must be implemented to ensure fair valuation of shares and enhance market liquidity.

Market Maker Role -- Reconsideration of the market maker role is essential to provide stability. Contracts with service providers for this role often face cancellations, leading to instability in the market.

Establishment of Investment Fund -- Consideration should be given to establishing a joint billion-dollar

fund, managed by professionals, to invest based on pure investment principles for the long term.

Attracting International Companies -- Efforts to attract regional or international companies as a guide and marketing model for the stock exchange should be explored.

Incentives for Listing -- Providing incentives such as free subscription fees for two years and exemptions from other fees can encourage companies to list while benefiting the stock exchange in the long run.

Financial Instruments -- The introduction of financial instruments and derivatives can create value for listed stocks and maintain their performance, thus attracting more companies to list.

Addressing Small Investors' Concerns -- Ensuring the protection of small investors' rights and addressing their concerns is crucial to expanding the shareholder base.

Development of OTC Market -- The over-the-counter (OTC) market should be developed further to serve as a successful substitute for the official market and preserve the rights of small investors.

Impact of Fees -- The imposition and increase of fees, especially the issue of selling data, must be carefully considered to avoid discouraging small investors and traders.

Addressing these challenges and considerations is essential to create an environment conducive to attracting family companies to list on the stock exchange, thereby promoting economic growth and development.

AAW receives Swiss Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Dr. Tiziano Balmelli

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Chairman and CEO of Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co. (AAW), Mr. Faisal Ali Al Mutawa, received the Swiss Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Dr. Tiziano Balmelli, on Sunday March 17, 2024 at the company's headquarters.

The meeting was also attended by the Trade and Diplomatic Officer, Mrs. Nada Haddad Ghafari. The two parties discussed ways to strengthen and expand business relations between AAW and Swiss companies.

AAW Chairman and CEO Mr. Faisal Al Mutawa said: "We are honored to host the Ambassador of Switzerland to the State of Kuwait, H.E. Dr. Tiziano Balmelli. We are keen to enhance our partnerships with Swiss private companies to enrich the Kuwaiti market with renowned global brands that cater to the needs of the consumers in Kuwait."

Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Company is one of the largest retail and distribution companies in Kuwait's private sector, with world-class operations across various industries. The company is the distributor for numerous global brands in Kuwait's surging wholesale and retail market, and is one of the main representatives for several Swiss brands in Kuwait.

General market index drops by 0.44%

Stock market registers fourth consecutive session of decline

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: The red trend persisted in the main indices of the Kuwait Stock Exchange for the fourth consecutive session. The general market index experienced a loss of 0.44 percent, equivalent to 32.74 points, closing at 7375.30 points, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The liquidity surged to 37.4 million dinars, with 131.3 million shares traded through 9814 transactions. Out of the shares traded, 40 gained, 59 lost, and 18 remained unchanged.

Meanwhile, the Premier Market Index dropped by 0.53 percent, or 43.42 points, closing at 8,074.10 points, with liquidity reaching 30.6 million dinars. A total of 83.4 million shares were traded through 6,716 transactions, with 33 shares traded, of which only 10 gained, 17 lost, and 6 remained unchanged.

Conversely, the main market index saw a slight increase of 0.02 percent, or 1.49 points, closing at 6,082.74 points, with liquidity amounting to 6.7 million dinars. A total of 47.9 million shares were traded through 3,098 transactions, with 84 shares traded, 30 gaining, 42 losing, and 12 remaining unchanged.

The beginning of trading witnessed a significant decline in li-

quidity, reaching the lowest level of opening liquidity at less than 400 thousand dinars. Although leading stocks like "NBK", KFH, and Agility initially showed stability, selling pressure caused a clear decline, particularly in KFH. However, the National Bank recorded an increase throughout most of the session.

Trading in speculative stocks was sluggish, with most recording losses except for "GFH" stock and some projects and ship stocks. The auction period saw 600 thousand shares offered at the minimum amount for Agility and a quarter of a million shares at the building level, contributing to increased liquidity and losses at the general and primary market indices.

Across the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, market index performances varied. Oman's market index witnessed clear gains of over 1.2 percent, while Saudi and Bahrain market indexes also gained, albeit to a lesser extent.

However, the UAE index experienced clear losses, alongside the Kuwaiti and Qatari markets.

Oil prices remained stable in the red, with marginal losses, trading at \$86.6 per barrel of Brent standard.

Company targets 3,650 mln barrels per day

KOC initiates projects to boost production capacity

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: The Kuwait Oil Company has outlined an ambitious strategy to achieve a production goal of 3,650 million barrels per day by the year 2040, as detailed in its annual report, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The company has initiated the implementation of this plan, which includes executing its five-year projects on schedule and undertaking additional projects to enhance production capacity.

As part of its contribution to the development of the 2040 strategy, KOC, in collaboration with exploration and production sector partners, has reviewed the 2030 strategy and created scenarios for each company's production capacity until 2040. The company has also focused on maximizing actual production by employing effective well maintenance and rehabilitation techniques.

Moreover, the KOC has entered into strategic partnerships, such as the contract with Shell International for technical services related to Jurassic gas in northern Kuwait, along with agreements signed with Shell

and British Petroleum for conventional oil fields in northern Kuwait and heavy oil fields in southern and eastern Kuwait.

In operational areas, particularly in northern Kuwait, the company has achieved significant milestones, attaining a production capacity of 801 thousand barrels per day, with actual production reaching 732 thousand barrels per day. Factors contributing to this achievement include increased drilling and maintenance activities and enhanced water pumping rates in reservoirs.

Regarding heavy oil activities, the company surpassed its annual target, reaching 7,201 barrels per day in actual production. Additionally, progress was made in drilling with approval for 161 wells and completion of 25% of the heavy oil project.

To fulfill strategic objectives and boost production capacity, the KOC exceeded its annual target for drilling and maintenance wells by 70% during the fiscal year 2016-2017. This accomplishment was facilitated by the early operation of new drilling and maintenance towers.

Contract award set for re-liquefaction project

Kuwait's Al-Zour LNG terminal to enhance gas import capacity

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: The Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) is gearing up to award a contract for the construction of a re-liquefaction facility at the liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal in Al-Zour, as outlined in the company's annual plan, reports Al-Qabas daily.

According to reports from MEED magazine, the project scope encompasses engineering, procurement, construction, pre-commissioning, commissioning, start-up, and performance testing.

The facility will be tasked with re-liquefying all boiling gas (BOG) from the station, thereby reducing gas flaring and enabling more imported gas to reach end users. Additionally, the package will include associated works at the LNG import terminal.

The project, expected to take 20 months to complete, is slated to be tendered in December of this year.

The \$2.9 billion Al-Zour LNG import terminal, which received its inaugural gas shipment from Qatar in July 2021, is operated by Quebec and located approximately 16 kilometers from Kuwait's border with Saudi Arabia.

Designed to handle up to 22 million tons of supercooled gas annually, it stands as the largest facility of its kind in the Middle East.

As Kuwait relies heavily on imported liquefied natural gas due to its limited domestic gas production, the country has a 15-year contract with Qatar Petroleum for the supply of three million tons of LNG per year to the Al-Zour facility.

The main contract for the LNG terminal, awarded in 2016, was granted to a consortium comprising South Korea's Hyundai Engineering Corporation, Hyundai Engineering and Construction Corporation, and Korea Gas Corporation for \$2.93 billion.

BlackRock invests 700 mln dinars

KIA holds talks with BlackRock CEO

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Recent reports reveal that Lawrence (Larry) Fink, the CEO of BlackRock International Asset Management, made a significant visit to Kuwait, specifically to the Kuwait Investment Authority, reports Al-Anba daily.

During his visit, Larry Fink met with Ghanem Al-Ghunaiman, the Managing Director of the Authority, along with his regional team. Discussions focused on exploring potential areas for cooperation between the Investment Authority and BlackRock, the world's largest asset management company with investments under management totaling around \$10 trillion.

BlackRock has been actively involved in the Kuwaiti market, holding substantial stakes in companies listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange. At the end of 2022, the company acquired shares worth approximately 700 million dinars, further solidifying its presence in the local market.

While no specific agreements

were announced following the meeting, such engagements pave the way for enhanced collaboration between major international firms like BlackRock and the Investment Authority. These partnerships contribute to Kuwait's goal of becoming a global financial and commercial hub, showcasing the country's promising investment opportunities to foreign entities.

The visit underscores broader efforts by BlackRock to engage with leading investment institutions and sovereign wealth funds worldwide. By fostering relationships with organizations like the Investment Authority, BlackRock aims to strengthen existing partnerships and identify new avenues for investment in the region.

Overall, the visit of BlackRock officials to Kuwait signals a potential influx of similar engagements from other financial institutions and international figures, offering opportunities to explore global cooperation and promote Kuwait's economic prospects on the international stage.

Telecom markets face limited growth, seek diversification

Gulf telcos pursue acquisitions to boost revenue streams, says S&P

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Standard & Poor's Credit Ratings Agency (S&P) said that Gulf telecommunications companies have resorted to making small to medium-sized acquisitions, worth \$1.24 billion, over the past two years, with the aim of increasing their revenues, reports Al-Anba daily.

S&P believes that mergers and acquisitions

in the region will continue due to the healthy balance sheets of telecom companies in the GCC countries and growth ambitions, as well as the fragmentation of the IT market in the GCC region.

A recent report issued by the agency indicated that high growth rates, wide business diversification, and low capital intensity are all factors that push

Gulf telecommunications companies to invest in the field of technology.

The agency explained that the mature telecommunications markets in the Gulf region, where mobile phone usage rates range between 130% and 210%, provide limited organic growth prospects for telecommunications companies, and that these companies are looking for new

ways to expand their business and diversify their revenue sources.

Tatjana Leskova, a credit analyst at the agency, said: "We do not expect the increasing contribution of revenues from operations not related to telecommunications activities to have an impact on the credit ratings of rated Gulf telecom companies during the next two

or three years, and we expect a continuing decline in indebtedness among rated Gulf telecom companies."

Leskova added, "But, in the long term, we will consider the potential impact of the changing business mix of Gulf telecom companies, competitive threats, and the ability to balance growth and debt on the credit ratings of these companies."

The report revealed that the telecommunications markets in the Gulf countries are "mature," which limits the growth of telecommunications companies' revenues in the GCC countries to 1 to 3% annually.

This is in stark contrast to the revenues of technology companies, which the agency expects to increase by double digits.

BUSINESS

gold loses its luster as dollar gains ahead of Fed meeting

Gold prices dipped today amidst a strengthening dollar, with investors eagerly awaiting signals from the Federal Reserve regarding potential interest rate cuts later this year. Spot gold prices fell by 0.2 percent to \$2,156.67 per ounce, while US gold futures contracts dropped by 0.2 percent to \$2,159.80, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The dollar saw a 0.2 percent rise to its highest level in nearly

two weeks, rendering gold more expensive for holders of other currencies. Anticipation is high for the Federal Reserve's two-day monetary policy meeting set to conclude on Wednesday, with markets seeking updated insights into economic projections and interest rate decisions from policymakers.

Last week, gold prices experienced a 1 percent decline following reports of a notable uptick in consumer prices in the United

States during February, alongside producer prices exceeding expectations. This data dampened hopes for an imminent interest rate cut.

In addition to gold, other precious metals also saw declines in spot transactions: silver dropped by 0.5 percent to \$24.92 per ounce, platinum fell by 0.8 percent to \$905.18, and palladium experienced a notable 2.8 percent decrease to \$1,003.75.

Ethiopian bank seeks to recover millions

Ethiopia's biggest bank is reportedly attempting to recover more than \$40 million after a technical glitch allowed customers to withdraw more than they had in their accounts.

Long lines formed at cash machines across Ethiopia after the problem was discovered at the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, local media reported.

News of the glitch Saturday was spread on social media by

university students, who withdrew much of the money, said the bank's CEO, Abe Sano.

The bank has not said how much was withdrawn, but Abe told reporters that half a million transactions were made during the glitch. A local newspaper reported that 2.4 billion Ethiopian birr (\$42 million) was lost.

The problem was caused by a "routine system update and inspection" rather than a cyberat-

tack, Ethiopia's central bank said in a statement.

Ethiopia's banking system was shut down for several hours while the problem was fixed, with customers unable to withdraw cash.

Established in 1963, the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia is the country's largest bank with 40 million customers.

Abe said the bank is working with the police to recoup the lost money. (AP)

Lifetime ban slapped on its chairman

China's stock watchdog fines property developer Evergrande

BANGKOK, March 20, (AP): Troubled property developer China Evergrande Group says Beijing's stock watchdog has fined it 4.2 billion yuan (\$333.4 million) for allegedly falsifying its revenue, among other violations, as it conducts a deep clean of the troubled financial sector.

The company said in a release to mainland Chinese stock exchanges late Monday that its chairman, Hui Ka Yan, was fined 47 million yuan (\$6.5 million) and banned from China's markets for life. Hui, also known as Xu Jiayin, was detained by authorities in September for suspected "illegal crimes."

The notice cited a preliminary ruling by the China Securities Regulatory Commission, which recently got a new chief, Wu Qing, an industry veteran with a reputation for being tough on market misbehavior.

Evergrande is the world's most indebted property developer, with more than \$300 billion in debts. It is among dozens of Chinese companies that have collapsed since 2020 under official pressure to rein in excessive borrowing that the ruling Communist Party views as a threat to the economy.

Regulators are striving to reassure investors after Chinese markets slumped in the past year, in tandem with the downturn in the property market. Even after regulators announced a raft of new policies to support

the markets, pledging to root out insider trading and other abuses, the Shanghai Composite index is still 5.8% below its level a year earlier, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng has fallen 15.3%.

The fallout from the property crisis has also affected China's shadow banking industry - institutions that provide financial services similar to banks but operate outside of banking regulations.

A Chinese media report said police in Beijing had detained suspects, including senior executives, in a case related to asset management company Zhongzhi Enterprise Group. Caixing Global, a financial news outlet, said the investigation aims to recover investor losses.

Zhongzhi, a conglomerate that lent heavily to developers and operates trusts, insurance, leasing and other fund management businesses, declared it was insolvent and filed for liquidation in November.

A Hong Kong court ordered Evergrande into liquidation in late January after efforts to restructure its foreign debt failed.

Real estate helped fuel China's economic boom as families bought into one of the few potentially high-yielding assets available for investment. But developers borrowed heavily as they turned cities into forests of apartment and office towers, pushing total corporate, government and

household debt to more than 300% of the country's annual economic output, unusually high for a middle-income country.

The government has stepped up support for the real estate industry, listing thousands of projects eligible for loans from state banks that stepping up to help contain the damage. Party leaders have emphasized that they want to ensure that families are able to obtain housing they have paid for.

The notice by Evergrande said regulators found it had overstated its revenue in 2019 by 214 billion yuan (nearly \$30 billion), or about half. In 2020, they allege its revenue was overstated by nearly 80%, or 350 billion yuan (\$48.6 billion).

The CSRC also suspects problems with bonds Evergrande issued, it said.

Hui, as chairman, was "the person in charge who is directly responsible and at the same time serves as the actual controller of the organization and guidance," it said. "The means were particularly bad and the circumstances were particularly serious."

It also named and fined other Evergrande executives that it said were responsible for the falsified reports and had "behaved badly."

USA Wealth Report 2024

US remains world's top wealth hub but faces uncertain future

LONDON, March 20, (PRNewswire): Despite serious concerns over the state of the union with a Biden-Trump presidential election rematch now underway, the USA remains the world's undisputed leader in private wealth creation and accumulation. America accounts for 32% of global liquid investable wealth - a colossal USD 67 trillion, according to the 2024 USA Wealth Report published by global wealth advisory firm Henley & Partners. The USA is currently home to 37% of the world's millionaires: some 5.5 million high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) who hold over USD 1 million in liquid investable assets. This number has risen by an impressive 62% over the past decade, well ahead of the worldwide growth rate of 38%.

Although the USA's GDP is similar to that of rival superpower China, America ranks way ahead when it comes to liquid wealth (which for the purposes of this report only includes listed company holdings, cash and debt-free residential property holdings). Likewise, wealth per capita and the number of super rich is also substantially higher stateside. The USA boasts 9,850 centi-millionaires versus China's 2,352, and 788 billionaires versus China's 305. While just over 862,000 millionaires live in China, its wealth per capita is only USD 18,800 compared to USD 201,500 in America, which ranks 6th globally after Monaco, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Australia, and Singapore.

Yet despite the USA's affluence, Mehdi Kadiri, Head of North America at Henley & Partners, says record numbers of wealthy US-Americans are currently securing additional citizenships or alternative residence rights abroad. "US nationals are our single biggest cohort of applicants right now and they also outnumbered every other nationality last year. With political divisions and societal tensions at an all-time high, American investors, entrepreneurs, and wealthy families are increasingly hedging their bets and pursuing backup citizenship or residence abroad, signaling declining faith in the domestic outlook."

Commenting in the 2024 USA

Wealth Report, award-winning journalist and author Misha Glenny says although just under 2% of the world's population have the right to decide who will be the next US president, their choice will have far-reaching consequences for the remaining 8 billion around the globe. "The USA remains the decisive economic power in the world but politically it has rarely appeared so unsure of itself. Despite its economic performance, the perception of ordinary voters ahead of November's high-stakes election is one of stagnating living standards, rising debt levels, and a dangerously polarized society."

America's wealthiest and priciest cities

New York City continues to wear the crown as the wealthiest city in the USA (and the world) with 349,500 millionaires calling the Big Apple home (of which 744 are centi-millionaires and 60 are billionaires), followed by the Bay Area (305,700), Los Angeles (212,100), Chicago (120,500), and Houston (90,900), Dallas (68,600), Seattle (54,200), Boston (42,900), Miami (35,300), and Austin (32,700) all make it into this year's Top 10, with Washington, D.C. in 11th place with 28,300 resident millionaires.

Looking at wealth growth over the past decade, Texas's capital Austin has enjoyed the biggest leap, with a 110% increase in its millionaire population between 2013 and 2023. The Arizona desert city of Scottsdale and Florida's Palm Beach and West Palm Beach have also proved to be millionaire magnets with increases of 102% and 93%, respectively. Greenwich and Darien on Connecticut's affluent Gold Coast, and Northern California's Bay Area, have sported wealth growth of over 80%, and Miami, Dallas, D.C., Seattle, and Houston have all seen their resident millionaires surge by over 70%. Andrew Amoils, Head of Research at New World Wealth says "future wealth hotspots to watch are Salt Lake City, Tampa, and Naples. Over the next decade, we can expect these cities to attract rising numbers of high-net-worth residents."

When it comes to the most expen-

Pak and IMF reach preliminary deal to release \$1.1b from bailout fund

ISLAMABAD, March 20, (AP): Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund reached a preliminary agreement for the release of \$1.1 billion from a \$3 billion bailout following days long talks in Islamabad, the IMF said Wednesday.

Under the deal, Pakistan will receive the final tranche from the bailout that was approved by the IMF in July to save the nation from defaulting on its debt repayments.

An IMF statement said it "has reached a staff-level agreement with the Pakistani authorities" and noted that approval by the IMF's executive board "is considered a formality."

The announcement came after talks between the IMF and the new govern-

ment of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif concluded in Islamabad. Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and the IMF's mission chief to Pakistan, Nathan Porter, led their teams during the talks, which began on Thursday last week.

Pakistan signed the latest short-term agreement last year to overcome one of the worst economic crises in its history that had raised fears the South Asian Islamic nation could default on the payment of foreign debts. The \$3 billion bailout was signed by Sharif, who replaced former Premier Inran Khan after a no-confidence vote in parliament.

Sharif was again elected the country's premier this month following Feb. 8 parliamentary elections.

UK inflation falls by more than expected

LONDON, March 20, (AP): Price rises in the U.K. eased more than anticipated in February, official figures showed Wednesday, raising expectations that with the cost-of-living crisis abating, the Bank of England may start cutting interest rates in the next few months.

The Office for National Statistics said inflation, as measured by the consumer price index, fell to 3.4%, its lowest level since September 2021, from 4% in January. The agency said easing food price increases were largely behind the fall.

The decrease was bigger than anticipated. Analysts had expected a decline to 3.6%.

Inflation is still running higher than

the Bank of England's target of 2% but the direction of the move appears clear. Inflation hit a high above 11% at the end of 2022 in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which led to sharp increases in energy costs.

The bigger-than-anticipated decline comes a day before the nine rate-setters at the bank announce their latest interest rate decision. The view in financial markets is that they will keep the main interest rate at a 16-year high of 5.25%.

The meeting minutes will be assessed to see how much thought policymakers are giving to cutting interest rates, which should feed through to lower mortgage rates.

Powell may give hints of whether Fed is 'inching close' to rate cuts

Consumer inflation has tumbled from a peak of 9.1% to 3.2% y-on-y

WASHINGTON, March 20, (AP): Two weeks ago, Chair Jerome Powell suggested that the Federal Reserve was "not far" from gaining the confidence it needed that inflation was headed sustainably toward its 2% target level, which would allow it to start cutting its benchmark interest rate.

Since then, though, the latest inflation measures have turned out to be hotter than expected: A government report showed that consumer prices jumped from January to February by much more than is consistent with the Fed's target. A second report showed that wholesale inflation also came in surprisingly high - a possible sign of inflation pressures in the pipeline that could cause consumer price increases to stay elevated in the coming months.

A key question for Powell and the 18 other officials on the Fed's interest-rate-setting committee is how - or whether - those figures have altered their timetable for cutting rates. Powell will surely be pressed on the topic at a news conference Wednesday after the Fed ends its latest two-day meeting. The central bank's policymakers will also issue their updated quarterly projections for how they foresee the economy and interest rates changing in the months and years ahead.

Their previous such projections in December showed that the officials expected to cut their benchmark rate three times this year, up from a previous forecast of two cuts. Most economists think the latest quarterly projections will again show that the policymakers expect to cut rates three times in 2024, though there's a possibility they could reduce the expected number to two. Economists generally envision the first rate cut coming in June.

On Wednesday, the Fed was considered sure to keep its short-term rate, now at a 23-year high of nearly 5.4%, unchanged for a fifth straight time. And it may not yet be entirely clear to Fed officials whether they have kept rates high enough for long enough to fully tame inflation.

Consumer inflation, measured year over year, has tumbled from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022 to 3.2%. Yet it's remained stuck above 3%. And in the first two months of 2024, the costs of services such as rents, hotels and hospital stayed high, suggesting that high borrowing rates aren't sufficiently slowing inflation in the economy's vast service sector.

While the Fed's rate hikes typically make borrowing more expensive for homes, cars, appliances and other costly goods, they have much less effect on services spending, which doesn't usually involve loans. With the economy



Federal Reserve Board Chair Jerome Powell speaks during his appearance before the House Financial Services Committee on Capitol Hill, March 6, 2024, in Washington. The Federal Reserve is set this week to leave interest rates unchanged for a fifth straight time. (AP)

Cryptocurrency market witnesses sharp decline as Bitcoin drops over 5 percent

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Cryptocurrency prices experienced a significant downturn in yesterday's trading session, particularly Bitcoin, which suffered a loss of more than 5% in its market value amidst intense fluctuations in the crypto-assets market, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This decline occurred against the backdrop of evaluations regarding the prospective monetary policy in the United States.

According to data from CoinMarketCap, Bitcoin plummeted by 5.24% to \$63,647.16, while its market value dropped by 5.86% to \$1.25 trillion. Ethereum also saw a decline of 6.27% to \$3,273.27, while Ripple experienced a decrease of 3.77% to \$8.49 cents.

Bitcoin's current price marks a decrease of approximately 12% compared to its recent peak reached last week, with analysts suggesting the possibility of a cor-

rective movement in the market following the currency's record highs.

Investors in risky assets, including cryptocurrency, are closely monitoring the commencement of the US Federal Reserve's two-day meeting today.

Expectations are set for interest rates to be maintained at historically high levels ranging between 5.25% and 5.50%.

Investors are eagerly awaiting Jerome Powell's post-meeting speech for further insights into the prospects of the monetary tightening cycle.

Analysts at Standard Chartered Bank have raised their year-end Bitcoin price expectations by 50% to \$150,000.

They base this analysis on the performance of gold after the launch of gold-traded funds on the American stock exchange. The bank anticipates Bitcoin to reach

its peak within the current cycle at \$250,000 in 2025 before stabilizing around \$200,000 by year-end.

In other news, Japan's Government Pension Investment Fund (GBIF) is exploring potential new investments, including Bitcoin. The world's largest pension fund is seeking information on assets such as Bitcoin as part of its research into possible new investment opportunities.

Cryptocurrency exchange BitMEX is currently investigating unusual trading activity that led to a sudden collapse in Bitcoin on its platform.

The price of Bitcoin against Tether stablecoin USDT dropped to a low of \$8,900 on the BitMEX platform late Monday, while it traded at over \$66,000 on rival exchanges. BitMEX assured users that its systems were operating normally, and all user funds were secure despite the incident.

still healthy, there is no compelling reason for the Fed to cut rates until it feels inflation is sustainably under control.

At the same time, the central bank faces a competing concern: If it waits too long to cut rates, a long period of high borrowing costs could seriously weaken the economy and even tip it into a recession.

Powell warned of such an outcome when he testified to the Senate Banking Committee this month. He said the Fed was becoming more confident that inflation is continuing to slow, even if not in a straight line.

"When we do get that confidence, and we're not far from it," he said, "it'll be appropriate to begin" rate reductions "so that we

don't drive the economy into recession."

Despite widespread evidence of a sturdy economy, there are signs that it could weaken in the coming months. Americans slowed their spending at retailers in January and February, for example. The unemployment rate has reached 3.9% - still a healthy level, but up from a half-century low last year of 3.4%. And much of the hiring in recent months has occurred in government, health care and private education, with many other industries barely adding any jobs.

Like the Fed, other major central banks are keeping rates high to ensure they have a firm handle on consumer price spikes. In Europe, pressure is building to lower bor-

rowing costs as inflation drops and economic growth stalls. The European Central Bank's leader hinted this month that a possible rate cut wouldn't come until June, while the Bank of England isn't expected to open the door to any imminent cut when it meets Thursday.

Japan's central bank, by contrast, is moving in the opposite direction: On Tuesday, it raised its benchmark rate for the first time in 17 years, in response to rising wages and inflation finally nearing its 2% target.

The Bank of Japan was the last major central bank to lift its key rate out of negative territory, ending an unusual period that had led to negative rates in many European countries as well as in Japan.

For third year running in collaboration with CODED Academy

Zain continues strategic partnership with Kuwait Codes program

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Zain announced the continuation of its strategic partnership with the community's top coding program, Kuwait Codes, in its fourth season in collaboration with CODED Academy. The initiative, supported by Zain for the third year running, continues its mission to empower the next generation of aspiring, young Kuwaiti programmers.

The announcement was made during the press conference held at Kuwait University's Cultural Center in Shadadiya, joined by Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, CODED Academy CEO Ahmad Marafi, Zain and CODED officials, and representatives from the program's sponsors and supporters.

Waleed Al Khashti said: "Delighted today to renew our support to the community's top programming initiative - Kuwait Codes, which comes this year in its fourth season. We're proud to have supported the past two seasons of the program, which has achieved so many successes since its inception by upskilling over 2500 aspiring young, Kuwaiti programmers, whom we look to as the leaders of our nation's digital future."

He added: "Many of our corporate sustainability initiatives center around youth and education development, and as digital skills are gaining accelerating importance in the future of education and the economy, we have put the development of programming and other digital competencies at the forefront of our priorities. Zain will always be keen to contribute to upskilling the next generation of local talents with the skills required by today's markets, like cybersecurity and AI, both of which are



Waleed Al Khashti and Ahmad Marafi at the press conference.

being introduced in the fourth season of Kuwait Codes."

Al Khashti added: "At Zain, we're proud to be a part of CODED Academy's success story by supporting many of their best programs, including last year's Kuwait Hackathon, the nation's biggest cybersecurity competition. CODED launched this competition in response to a parliamentary initiative proposed by several members of the National Assembly, which was adopted by the Minister of Interior back then. It aimed at increasing awareness of cybersecurity and the protection of data, test the efficiency of sensitive govern-

ment systems, and upskill national talents in cybersecurity."

He concluded by saying: "We look forward to a new season filled with success and achievement, and we can't wait to see even more aspiring young programmers join the program to bolster their skills. We wish our colleagues at CODED all the best in their ongoing journey to empower digital innovation and creativity, not only in our own community, but across the region as well."

Ahmad Marafi said: "We take pride at CODED Academy in announcing our strategic partnership with Zain in

the 'Kuwait Codes' initiative for the fourth year, following the remarkable success achieved in the previous year. Zain is undoubtedly one of the leading and advanced companies in the world of technology and telecommunications, and its partnership in the 'Kuwait Codes' initiative has a significant impact on our students interested in the field of technology."

Marafi continued: "Today, we are offering a free educational initiative to high school students and ninth graders with the aim of teaching them the fundamentals of programming in various fields. Our goal is to develop their critical and creative thinking in diverse areas. This year, we aspire to educate 1000 male and female students through a specialized educational curriculum provided by the best teachers in the field. Additionally, we provide training opportunities for students to share and apply their skills."

"Our partnership with Zain reflects our joint commitment to providing exceptional educational opportunities and fostering innovation and creative thinking in the field of technology. We thank Zain for their trust in CODED." He concluded.

Kuwait Codes is the top initiative of its kind in Kuwait, and it continues its mission to create a technically advanced generation by offering the opportunity for high school students from private and public schools to learn and develop programming skills in several main streams like website design, Python programming, video game development, and smartphone app development using Flutter. This year, AI and cybersecurity are also added as main streams.

As part of strategic collaboration within educational 'upgrade' initiative

stc main sponsor of KTECH's coding competition for 30 high school students



Group photos of participants and winners of the programming competition.

Ongoing efforts to provide exclusive offers and exceptional benefits

NBK offers customers 20% exclusive discount at X-cite online on the occasion of Mother's Day

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: NBK strives to deliver top-notch banking experience to customers and share with them festive occasions.

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always seeks to be closer to customers, share with them their celebrations of various occasions, by providing exclusive offers and exceptional rewards. In this context, the bank announced an exclusive discount of 20% on X-cite electronics products for its customers via website or mobile app, on the occasion of Mother's Day.

According to the offer, eligible NBK Customers will get a 20% discount at X-cite capped at KD 30 for one-time use per customer on Mother's Day corresponding to March 21.

The offer will be available online and in-app only, with minimum spends of KD 20 made using the following eligible NBK Cards:

- NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Signature Credit Card
- NBK-KPC Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK Visa Infinite Credit Card
- NBK Visa Signature Credit Card
- NBK Avios Visa Signature Prepaid Card



Xcite Mother's Day event flyer.

Speaking on this offer, Anwar Al Ballam Cards Products Manager, at Consumer Banking Group, at National Bank of Kuwait said: "We are keen to be closer to customers and share with them festive occasions by providing top-notch exclusive offers tailored to the needs of their different segments and ages, as we tirelessly working to keep pace with their changing needs and live up to their evolving expectations."

"We are glad to collaborate with X-cite once again, seeking to leverage this partnership to enhance customer banking experience by delivering premium offers, discounts and benefits," he added.

"Delivering atop-notch customer experience is embedded in NBK's culture. We maintain close communication with customers to identify their needs and expectations, and work to fulfill these needs by delivering top-notch services and exclusive offers that even go beyond their expectations for an unmatched banking experience," he noted.

In light of the strategic partnership between Xcite and the National Bank of Kuwait, Saleem Hammad, the Senior General Manager for E-Commerce at Xcite, shared his insights on the importance of this collaboration and its positive impact on their customers. Hammad underscored the company's dedication to enhancing the customer experience through offerings that are both unique and tailored specifically to their needs. He stated:

"At Xcite, we deeply value our relationship with every customer, recognizing that the cornerstone of an outstanding experience lies in thoroughly understanding their preferences and requirements. Our partnership with the National Bank of Kuwait is a testament to our shared goal of presenting our customers with exclusive offers that genuinely enrich their lives.

This approach not only improves their overall shopping experience but also underlines our commitment to innovation and achieving excellence in customer service. NBK Credit Cards gives customers the opportunity to benefit from the various offers introduced by the bank all year round, in addition to offering cardholders a unique lifestyle thanks to the superior benefits.

NBK Credit Cards offer the best payment method for the numerous benefits they provide to customers, including NBK KWT Program, Oasis Club Miles, NBK Miles Program, NBK Rewards Program as well as Purchase Protection and Extended Warranty.

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, was a main sponsor of the Kuwait Technical College (KTECH) coding competition for public high school students. stc's sponsorship of the competition aligns with the Company's objectives behind its educational 'upgrade' initiative which aims to enhance the quality of education in the community, as well as the recently formed strategic collaboration with KTECH.

The coding competition included training sessions that were held from March 5th to the 6th, as well as the final competition that took place on March 9th, where the winners were announced. Over 30 public high schools participated in the competition, providing students with a chance to utilize the specially designed initiative to boost their problem solving and coding skills through the programming language Python. As a main sponsor of this competition, and in line with the recent MoU signed with KTECH, stc presented awards to the students that placed in the top positions of the competition. The Company's participation reflects its commitment to supporting the local educational initiatives, and providing platforms to students that



Ahmed Al-Nuwaibit from stc honors the first place winners



Interaction of participants in the programming competition.

can empower their skills and showcase their abilities to excel across various fields.

Danah AlJasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "Our role as a main sponsor in this ini-

tiative comes as a reflection of the level of empowerment we aspire for the future generation, especially within the digital world. We are thrilled to have witnessed students showcase their best coding abilities throughout this competition and are proud to see the level of sophistication they possess within this programming language. Such competitions serve as the core of our educational 'upgrade' initiative, providing students with an opportunity to learn and implement their knowledge in a competitive environment."

AlJasem added, "On behalf of stc, I would like to congratulate the winners of the competition and thank all the students who participated in the coding competition for their effort. Additionally, I would like to extend a special thanks to KTECH for organizing the competition which comes as one of the initiatives under our strategic collaboration for the year 2024. stc highly values the importance of being an active contributor to the community, as it is through initiatives like these that we provide additional educational platforms that students can participate in to discover their skills and areas of interest. We look forward to participating in similar initiatives that will support the community in various ways and strengthen the initiatives organized under the educational pillar of our extensive corporate social responsibility program."

Strategy aimed at rewarding customers throughout year

KIB announces winners of February promotion draw for Visa Credit and Prepaid cardholders

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the names of the winners in the exclusive February promotion draw, recently launched by the Bank for all its customers holding Visa Credit and Prepaid Cards, including Visa Classic, Gold, Platinum, Signature, Infinite, and Prepaid Cards. The promotion was launched on the occasion of celebrating Kuwait's National and Liberation Day, offering customers opportunities to win prizes for transactions made using the eligible cards, both within Kuwait and abroad. The total value of cash prizes stood at KD 8,000.

The draw recently took place at KIB's Head Office, under the supervision of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Reja Homoud AlHajeri and Hakimud-dinKaiyum Saifee won KD 1,000 each, while KD 250 was awarded to each of Hamdi Mohammad AlREZ, Talal Hussain AlShammeri, Abdulrahman Rashed AlKharafi, Dawod Botabtan, Muhammad Abdullah, Eissa Sameer Almutairi, Saleh Ali AlRamadhan, Ahmed Farouk Awad Rezk, Ali Khaleel Taq, Yousef Duhaiman AlShammari, Mahmoud Fawzi Imdukh, Meshari Alattar, Abdulaziz Mater AlMajidi, Abeer AlSuwaidi, Abdullah Noh Borelli, Adel Abdulraheem AlHamdani, Faisal HameediAlSan-



Laila Naserallah, Products Manager of the Digital Innovation and Data Intelligence Department at KIB.



Ali Hinnawi, Visa's Business Development Leader for Kuwait.

ad, Ali Mohamed AlAjmi, Fatemah Hashem Mousawi, Aziz MeflehAlEnezi, Mustafa Alsalamin, Nasser AyidhAlAzmi, Bader Yousef AlFadhli, and Ali Nasser AIDhahi.

Commenting on the occasion, Laila Naserallah, Products Manager of the Digital Innovation and Data Intelligence Department at KIB, stated: "We are

proud to continue launching innovative campaigns and special offers designed to reward our customers, and we are pleased to extend congratulations to all the winners in the February promotion draw. KIB is committed to enhancing customers' banking experience by providing exceptional offers, benefits, and prizes that meet their needs and exceed their expectations."

Ali Hinnawi, Visa's Business Development Leader for Kuwait, said: "This exciting campaign has once again affirmed KIB's ability to provide unique offers to their Visa cardholders as well as distinguished products and services for all their customer segments.

This helps enhance KIB customer's digital payment experience in line with Kuwait's digital transformation strategy, and we at Visa are committed to supporting KIB's efforts to expand digital payments and financial services to more consumers and businesses in Kuwait."

It is worth mentioning that KIB spares no effort in launching campaigns and offers that align with customers' lifestyles and meet all their needs in all seasons and social occasions. This stems from its main slogan, "Bank for Life," embodying its strategic vision aimed at continuing to reward its customers and expanding with innovative banking products and services.

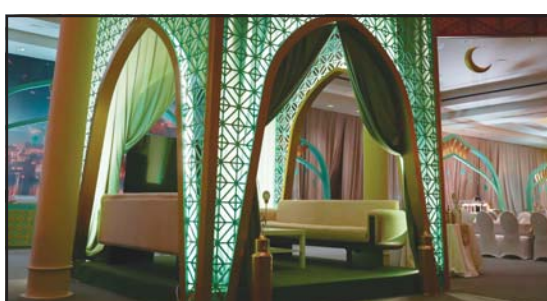
Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa lines up exciting Ramadan experiences

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa has announced the launch of its Ramadan Season, with an exciting line-up of experiences that are sure to captivate the hearts of guests seeking to immerse themselves in the spirit of the Holy Month. From an exclusive Ramadan tent, Asateer, to group Iftar gatherings in the fascinating outdoor Garden Café, along with the variety of choices offered by an enticing à la carte menu at Mint Café, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa aims to provide guests and their loved ones with unique Ramadan memories.

The Asateer Tent stands at the heart of Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel's exclusive Ramadan offerings. With its enchanting interiors featuring the theme of 1001 Arabian Nights and adorned in the timeless hues of Robin Blue and Gold, the tent provides a culture-rich, authentic Ramadan feel along with various entertainment programs. Open for Iftar from sunset until 8:30 PM and Ghabka from 9:30 PM to 1:00 AM, the tent promises an unforgettable atmosphere.

During Iftar, the venue will entertain guests with Ramadan ambient music, while Ghabka will come alive with the vibrant melodies of a live Arabic band. Guests can enjoy shisha during the Ghabka session. One of the key highlights of the Asateer Tent is the Gerge'a'n Event - a celebration of Kuwaiti culture and tradition - scheduled for the 14th and 15th of Ramadan during Iftar.

Besides its extraordinary ambiance, the Asateer Tent will feature an exquisite buffet setup featuring a stylish décor with five private cabanas, including a Royal Cabana, each accommodating up to ten guests. The buffet, with its distinctive environment and tempting gastronomic selections, will serve individual guests as well as groups. With a separate, captivating entrance and a delightful dates display, in addition to hot and cold stations, live culinary displays, and dessert choices, guests



can truly savour the essence of the season. The event can host up to 700 guests at a time.

Corporate guests and families can enhance their shared values and embrace the spirit of togetherness inspired by Ramadan in the delightful outdoor ambience of the Garden Café. With its tranquil outdoor setting, themed décor, lavish buffet with live cooking stations, and welcoming atmosphere, the res-



taurant fosters a sense of community and camaraderie, turning Ramadan into a time for reaffirming bonds and anticipating shared achievements.

The Garden Café offers indoor and outdoor Iftar seating options, with a total seating capacity of 315 - including 115 indoor and 200 outdoor seats. The café is accessible from the hotel's main entrance, serving as a serene haven for reflection

and connection, ensuring a memorable Ramadan experience.

Guests at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa can also explore the Ghabka-only à la carte menu at the Mint Café. A picturesque open-air spot adorned with charming Ramadan decorations and overlooking the Infinity Pool and the Arabian Gulf, the café offers shisha hosts live Arabic band performances during Ghabka. The café's exclusive beachfront dining experience - Kashta on the Beach - will be available as well throughout the holy month for both Iftar and Ghabka.

Nader Neishabouri, General Manager at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa, comments on the hotel's exclusive Ramadan attractions: "We are thrilled to unveil our Ramadan offerings blending culture, traditions, luxury, and remarkable culinary delights. At Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa, our aim is always to craft special moments and memories for our guests while providing them with the finest of the season. With the diverse options we have curated at the Asateer Tent, Garden Café, and Mint Café, we hope to create unforgettable moments for our guests that they will treasure forever."

Gregorio Corrias, Director of Food & Beverage at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa, comments on the gastronomic adventure awaiting guests during the holy month: "This Ramadan, we aim to provide our esteemed guests with a thoughtfully crafted blend of culinary excellence and cultural traditions. Our Ramadan selections are designed to elevate our guests' sensory journeys and create lasting memories during the revered month."

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa's Ramadan exclusives will be available from March 10 to April 9. To make a reservation or for more information, call +965 22269666 or email jumeirahrestaurant@jumeirah.com.

Instagram
@JumeirahMessilahBeach
#TimeExceptionallyWellSpent

From cascatelli creations to fusion feasts

Dan Pashman unveils revolutionary pasta shape in new cookbook

NEW YORK, March 20, (AP) — Food writer and podcaster Dan Pashman made the unusual step a few years ago of creating an entirely new shape of pasta. The obvious next step? Writing a cookbook to highlight it.

Pashman's "Anything's Pastable" features dishes using 34 different pasta shapes, but especially features his cascatelli, a graceful, ruffled-edged curved shape that resembles a quotation mark. Time magazine declared cascatelli one of 2021's best inventions.

Pashman came up with the idea of writing a pasta cookbook after he noticed that many of cascatelli's fans were sending him images of them eating it in very traditional ways. Maybe even boring ways.

"A huge percentage of the photos I was getting were just tomato sauce, meat sauce, mac 'n' cheese. Maybe a few party animals made pesto," he says. "It just made me a little bit sad. Those are all delicious, but there's just so much more."

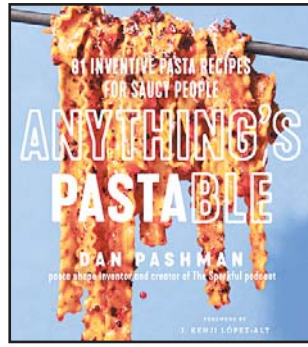
So Pashman - a James Beard Award winner and Webby Award-winning podcaster behind The Sporkful - got to work creating mind-bending pasta dishes, from Tortellini in Kimchi Parmesan Brodo to Gnocchi with Bacon and Sauerkraut.

This is not a traditional pasta sauce book by any means and Pashman even avoids making any classic marinara. Instead, there are flavors from places like India, Thailand, the Middle East, North African, Mexico, Japan and Peru.

He even makes a pizza out of fettuccine - a pasta pizza.

"When I go to make a cookbook or make pasta, it's not my instinct to limit myself to only the classic Italian dishes that I grew up eating. It's also all the other things that I love to eat," he says.

Pashman dreamed up many of the dishes - the pasta pizza came to him while he was driving - and leaned on a half dozen recipe developers to offer their takes, sug-



This cover image released by William Morrow shows "Anything's Pastable" by Dan Pashman. (AP)

gestions and refinement.

The book is a clever mix of possibilities, like Mac 'N' Dal, which combines lentils and pigeon peas with cumin, coriander, turmeric, yogurt and lumache pasta. Or Linguini with Miso Clam Sauce, a saucy take on a classic. Or Tangy Labne Noodle Kugel with Persimmon Relish -

your grandmother may have to look away.

"On the surface, I understand that this cookbook will look to a lot of people like somewhat radical," he says. "But it's a natural extension of the coming together of different cuisines in America."

Italian food doesn't stay the same either, he notes.

Despite the "stereotype of Italians as being sort of closed to any kind of change in tradition, the fact is that Italian pasta culture has been changing and evolving all the while," he says. "As long as there are humans cooking in kitchens, then there will be new ideas and things will change and evolve."

Pashman - a deliberate and even obsessive home chef who has long analyzed everything from various salts to different cheese-grating methods - attacked the book in the same way.

"I approach food very analytically. I come from a long line of lawyers, and it's always kind of my instinct to break a dish

of food down to its component parts," he says. "When you start to do that, you see there are a lot of similarities across cuisines."

For one dish, he started with bolognese, Italy's great meat sauce. Then he thought about other ground meat dishes. He remembered larb, a Laos meat salad. He reached out to recipe developer James Park and the two kept refining until they came up with a ground meat sauce for his cascatelli with mint, lemon juice, chili and fish sauce.

Park, the author of the cookbook "Chili Crisp," contributed to five recipes in Pashman's book, and said the process "allowed me to push the boundaries of what pasta can be."

"Food is a really safe and exciting playground where you can be free and combine so many different inspirations into one amazing dish. Dan really allowed me to go full force with my wild, exciting ideas," he says.

Pashman organized "Anything's Pastable" in an intriguing

way - by mood. "Adventures in Texture," "Flavor Bombs Not Belly Bombs" and "Thick and Hearty, Warm and Toasty" are some of the sections. He made one for pasta salads and another for baked dishes.

"If you open up this book, I want you to be thinking, I'm in the mood for this type of pasta dish, and you should be able to find the chapter that's going to give you that," Pashman says.

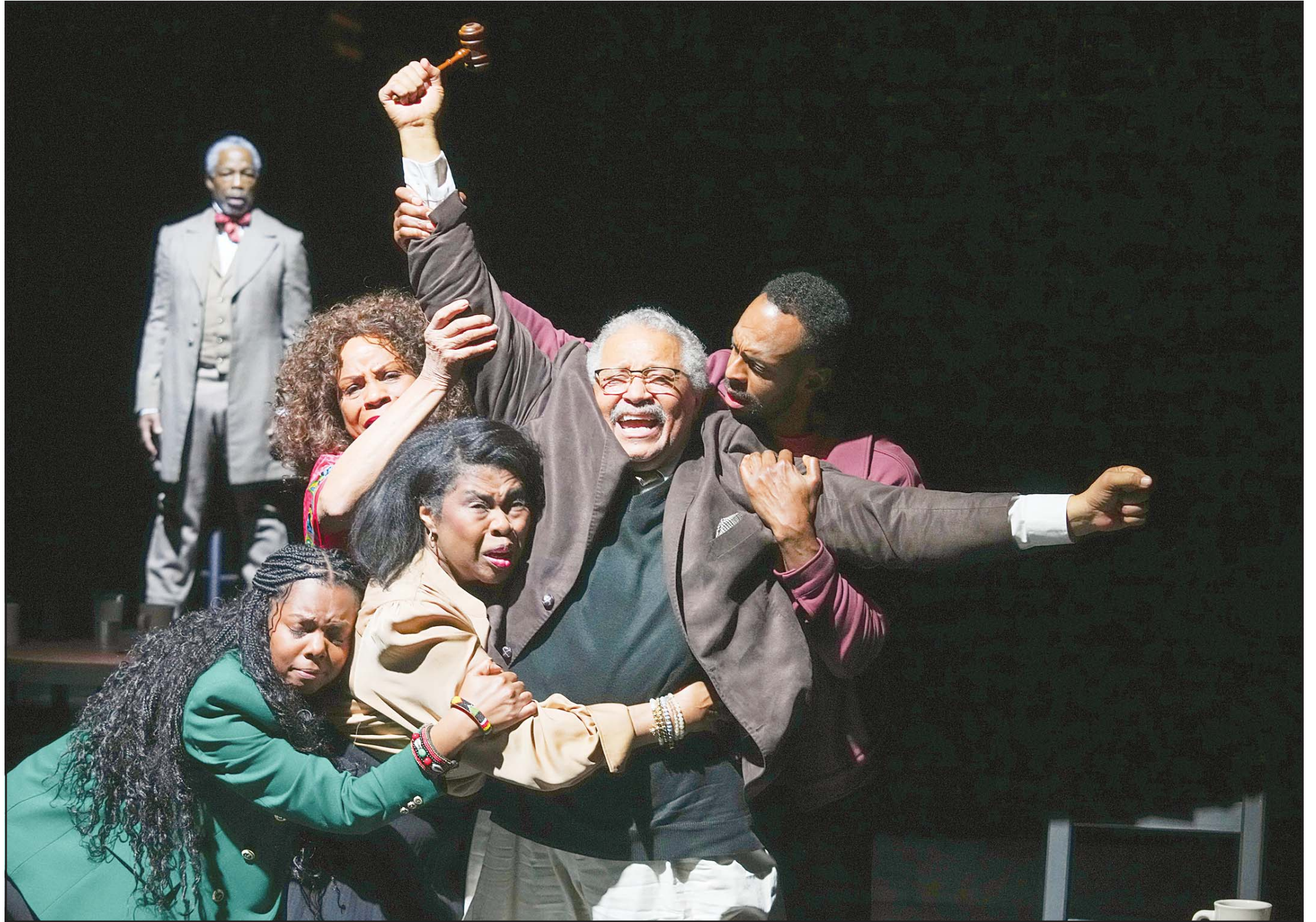
Many of the dishes are designed to showcase cascatelli, which he designed with three goals: To have a shape with forkability, toothsinkability and sauceability - all terms he invented.

His signature paste endures as a favorite in the Pashman home. He says the family initially ate so much cascatelli that they burned out on it, but a few weeks ago returned after Dan made it with arugula pesto.

"Both my kids were like, 'Wow, we missed cascatelli,'" he says.

"So that made me feel good."

Variety



This image shows Count Sovall, center, with the cast during a performance of "American Rot," playing through March 31 at the Ellen Stewart Theatre in New York. (AP)

Theater

Billingsley's play sparks vital discourse on ancestral guilt

'American Rot': Confronting racial legacy

NEW YORK, March 20, (AP) — Writer and actor Kate Taneq Billingsley has been thinking a lot about America's racial history and her family's part in it. One of her ancestors had an outsized role.

Billingsley's great-great-great uncle was Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney, who made arguably the worst decision in U.S. Supreme Court history in 1857.

It was Taney who ruled that African Americans could not be citizens as part of the infamous Dred Scott decision, named after an enslaved man who unsuccessfully sought his freedom. The ruling helped set the nation on a path toward war.

"I inherited this generational trauma in the family," Billingsley says. The decision was overturned by the 14th amendment to the Constitution after the Civil War, granting citizenship to all those born in the United States, regardless of race.

Right about the time of Black Lives Matter protests, Billingsley decided to confront that trauma the only way she knew how - turning it into theater.

"I sat down to write this dramatic question that had been in my family for many, many years, which was, 'Should we apologize to the Scott family for what our ancestor did?'"

What emerged is the thrilling play "American Rot," about the modern-day fictional meeting of descendants on both sides of the Dred Scott decision in a diner off the New Jersey Turnpike. It makes its world premiere this month off-Broadway at La MaMa's Ellen Stewart Theatre.

It is raw, riotous and bursting, a kaleidoscopic work, with dueling white and Black choruses and surreal touches. The diner waitress is a white su-

premacist and Dred Scott himself appears at one point. "This play should move like a freight train," the playwright advises in her preface.

"I did not set out to solve anything when I wrote this play," says Billingsley. "My goal was not to say, 'OK, let's solve America's racist history and present moment.' It was more to let us just take a really honest look at it."

The play begins with the tentative meeting of Jim Taney and Walter Scott, both 70, one the descendant of Roger Brooke Taney and the other of Dred Scott. As the two men talk, the conversation grows more tense as each articulates their grievances and the legacy of hatred.

"We've got to believe in the arc of the moral universe, right?" asks Jim, apologizing for his family. "You know they killed King, right? Walter shoots back.

Scandal

There are references to Clarence Thomas' wife, Ginni, climate change, the killing of 12-year-old Tamir Rice by police and the college admission scandal, with the white chorus singing: "White! White! And full of spite!/Breaking every rule to get our kids in good schools!"

"American Rot" is an expansion of Billingsley's one-act "A Man of His Time," and has gone through various iterations, all directed by "Roseanne" and Broadway star Estelle Parsons. The latest version has 14 characters, music and choreography. Billingsley was urged to expand her initial short work by John Douglas Thompson, who appeared in a podcast version by The Actors Studio.

The expanded version is the result of years traveling around the country and seeking out an array of

voices, including descendants of the enslaved people held by her family and others. "I felt I needed to kind of shut up and listen," she says.

Billingsley populated her play with wives and children of both men, the original rivals Roger Brooke Taney and Dred Scott, and the character Chief Standing Bear. She also includes an aria by a struggling relative of Taney with economic grievances who thinks Jim's idea to apologize is ridiculous. Jim is partly based on the playwright's father.

Parsons helped suggest the concept of dueling choirs and realized that she didn't want to give it up to another director who would cut parts she adored. "I thought this is a musical without the music," she says.

Billingsley hopes the play can have a life everywhere, and despite a professional soundscape and lighting this time, it can be produced in schools and small theaters, too. "I would love this play to be done with it just in an empty black box with not a lot of money," she says.

It's structured without an intermission purposely: Billingsley doesn't want to give the audience the chance to leave early. "They're really being confronted with stuff that maybe they don't want to look at," she says.

While the playwright insists that she's not out to solve America's racial divide, there are some steps suggested - letting go of simmering hate, beginning the process of forgiveness and really doing the work to amputate white supremacy.

"A lot of feelings are going to come up," says Billingsley. "It's been very hard to confront this stuff that's in my genetic makeup and in my unconscious that presents itself every single day."

verdict, Marvel Studios and the Walt Disney Co. dropped him.

The new lawsuit says Jabbari and Majors first met in August 2021, immediately started dating and she fell in love with him.

The lawsuit alleges a series of incidents where Majors showed controlling and abusive behavior, including demands in June 2022 that she "never go



Majors



Jabbari

anywhere again where she was not available for him to reach her at all times."

The next month, the suit claims, Majors became angry and threw her into a shower wall in Los Angeles, causing her to hit her head against the wall.

In September 2022, after they had moved into a London flat together while he was filming

the Marvel series "Loki," Majors became angry at Jabbari for inviting her friend over to their new home, the suit says.

"Majors picked Grace up in the air and threw her against the hood of her car," the suit alleges. "Grace began shouting for help. Majors then forcefully grabbed Grace, placing her in a headlock and put his hand over her mouth

to prevent someone from hearing her cries for help."

Majors then brought Jabbari into their flat and put his hands around her neck, saying he wanted to kill her, the suit alleges. He then started hitting her head against the marble floor "while strangling her until she felt she could no longer breathe," the suit says. (AP)



This image released by Prime Video shows Jake Gyllenhaal in a scene from "Road House." (AP)

Music

The Boss is back

Bruce Springsteen rocks Phoenix in 'tour reboot'

PHOENIX, March 20, (AP): Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band returned to the stage at the Footprint Center in Phoenix in a triumphant reboot of the Boss' postponed 2023 world tour.

In September Springsteen, 74, announced his tour would be delayed until 2024, citing doctor's advice as he recovered from peptic ulcer disease.

"The Boss" arrived on stage to an audience chorus of "Bruuuuce!" Wearing dark jeans and a rolled up red plaid flannel shirt, he had the energy of a man half his age. His signature "One, two, three, four" was the only thing that separated most songs, showing no signs of his illness from the previous year. Once he shouted, "Good evening, Arizona" the show was off and running.

Springsteen spoke to the crowd briefly about his illness prior to playing his final song "I'll See You In My Dreams" solo on stage. "Phoenix, first I want to apologize if there was any discomfort because we had to move the show last time. . . . I hope we didn't inconvenience you too much."

Harmonica

The 29-song show came in just under three hours, but "The Boss" hardly broke a sweat while showing off a strong voice, all the while dancing, tearing into guitar solos, playing the harmonica and even ripping his shirt open near the end of the show.

On stage with Springsteen was the legendary E Street Band which features drummer Max Weinberg, bassist Garry Tallent, keyboardists Roy Bittan and Charlie Giordano, guitarists Stevie Van Zandt and Nils Lofgren, saxophonist Jake Clemons - nephew of original and still missed sax man Clarence Clemons who died in 2011 - guitarist and violin player Soozie Tyrell, a full horn and brass section and four backup vocalists. The only missing member of the band was Springsteen's wife, singer and guitarist Patti Scialfa.

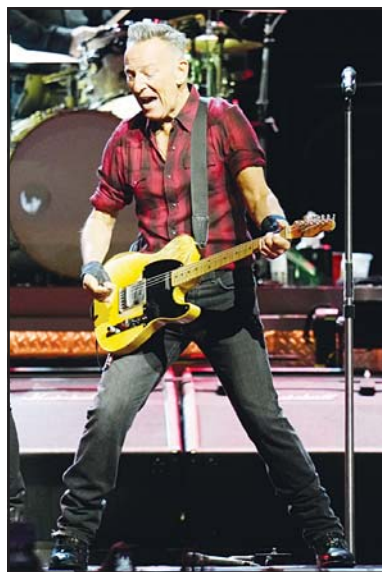
Springsteen performed most of the hits in his vast collection, minus "Born In The U.S.A.," but he added covers "Nightshift" by the Commodores, "Because The Night" by Patti Smith Group, and a surprise: "Twist and Shout" by The Beatles. Fans went wild for "No Surrender," "Born To Run," "Rosalita," "Dancing In The Dark," "Glory Days" and "Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out" that left the rocker grinning from ear-to-ear as he conducted fans singing along like his own chorus.

Challenging

This year has been particularly challenging for Springsteen. In addition to his health issues, in January his mother, Adele Ann Springsteen, a fan favorite who could frequently be seen dancing at his shows, died. She was 98.

Two days after her death, Springsteen performed at the 2024 MusiCares Person of the Year event, which honored Jon Bon Jovi for his musical achievements and philanthropic efforts.

The 2024 edition of the tour kicked off in Phoenix and ends Nov. 22 in Vancouver, Canada. It hits 17 countries across 52 dates, including a special performance on Sept. 15 where Springsteen will headline the Sea.Hear.Now Festival in his hometown of Asbury Park, New Jersey.



Bruce Springsteen sings on stage during his concert of Bruce Springsteen and The E Street Band World Tour 2024 performance Tuesday, March 19, 2024, in Phoenix. (AP)



Van Noten



Thomas

Variety

BRUSSELS: Belgian designer **Dries Van Noten**, who for almost four decades dazzled the fashion world with his luscious use of colors and fabrics, said Tuesday that he will step down as creative director of his namesake brand at the end of June.

Van Noten, 65, a master of blending the old with the new, said in a statement that the 2025 men's spring-summer collection will be the last in his current role. He added that the women's collection will be designed by his studio.

Van Noten's successor will be announced at a later stage, he said. "I have been preparing for this moment for a while, and I feel it's time to leave room for a new generation of talents to bring their vision to the brand," Van Noten said.

Although he will relinquish his role as creative director, Van Noten will still be involved in the fashion house.

Fashion firm Puig acquired a majority share in Van Noten in 2018, with the designer remaining creative director of the brand, which has expanded into beauty and fragrance. Van Noten said Puig's takeover has helped the brand to keep "blooming."

"Like in a garden, you decide what to plant; and at some point, it continues to flourish," he said.

Van Noten graduated from the fashion design course at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Belgium in 1981 and debuted his first collection five years later. His first flagship store opened in 1989 in Antwerp, the Belgian port city where he was born into a family of tailors.

As Antwerp developed a reputation of Europe's capital of cool, Van Noten emerged as a major creative force as part of "The Antwerp Six," a collective that also included **Walter Van Beirendonck**, **Ann Demeulemeester**, **Dirk Van Saene**, **Dirk Bikkembergs** and **Marina Yee**.

"In the early '80s, as a young guy from Antwerp, my dream was to have a voice in fashion," he said. "Through a journey that brought me to London, Paris and beyond, and with the help of countless supportive people, that dream came true."

Van Noten made his debut at the Paris Fashion Week in 1991 with a menswear

Film

Remake turns into muscular, Florida romp

Gyllenhaal reinvents 'Road House'

NEW YORK, March 20, (AP): Elwood P. Dalton is a classy sort of bouncer. While five tough guys circle him outside a bar looking to bash his skull in, he has a question for them: "Before we start, do you have insurance?" And after savagely beating each up, he kindly drives them to the hospital.

Dalton - played by a muscular and languid Jake Gyllenhaal - is a former UFC fighter with a dark past in "Road House," a reworking of the pulpy 1989 action film starring Patrick Swayze.

"You sure you thought this all the way through?" Dalton at one point asks an assailant who has the nerve to plunge a knife into his abdomen. The same question can be asked of the filmmakers: Is it really wise to retreat this old flick? The answer is as shocking as a sucker punch: Yes, indeed.

Gyllenhaal is a sort of Spider-Man-meets-Jack Reacher-meets Jason Bourne, an oddball loner with ferocious fighting abilities who makes a living in illegal fights and lives in his car, haunted by what he did to a friend in the octagon. He douses booze on his open wounds and uses electrical tape instead of a bandage, yet he also oddly uses wheelee luggage. (You expected a big old black duffel, right?) What's in the baggage? A death wish, of course.

He is lured to the Florida Keys by a roadhouse bar owner (the always brilliantly tart Jessica Williams), who needs an excellent bouncer to protect her from nightly violence. He's offered \$5,000 a week to stop thugs in sleeveless jean jackets from throwing

bottles, flipping tables and breaking pool cues. (The Florida tourist board will love this movie).

"I'm hoping you're different," a bar employee says and he is. Dalton settles in the fictional Glass Key, dates a cutie, makes friends with the good folk and lives in what all damaged loners gravitate to, a houseboat. He soon teaches the other bouncers the tricks of the trade, Zen-like, and finds excellent reasons to take off his shirt.

"I'm just some guy," he says. "You don't want to know me."

Then he uncovers a conspiracy right out of "Scooby-Doo." The land under the bar is crucial to the creation of a luxury resort dreamed up by the local rich guy and crooked cops. Basically, organized crime is trying to drive the bar owner out of business. "Zoinks!"

Acting debut

At this point, "Road House" gets an instant jolt of electricity from former UFC fighter Conor McGregor, who makes his acting debut as a psychotic gun-for-hire Knox. He may have one of the best intros in film history, casually walking down a European town buck naked except for a pair of boots.

Dalton and Knox are destined to go mano-a-mano and there's a grudging respect between them. They're both deeply cut and they're both messed up. "There's something wrong with you. Me too," the Irish mountain of muscles says. He's the sort of chaos agent who picks up a golf club and says he wants to go "clubbing."

Like a night of heavy drinking, things gets a little bizarre toward the

end of the movie as it starts straying far from the roadhouse. Speed boats go flying, explosions go bang and someone uses arson to send a message. A deadly crocodile that plays an outsized role is sadly abandoned.

Screenwriters Anthony Bagarozzi and Charles Mondry have leaned into cliches - dead mothers, double-crosses and quirky kids that pull out the paternal part of our heroes. But a menacing, unstable McGregor is a gift. So is Billy Magnussen, who plays the rich boy bully deliciously preppy. He's so evil, he throws his cellphone into the ocean out of frustration, then asks an underling to retrieve it.

"The Bourne Identity" director Doug Liman seems to be having fun, his camera lingering on the chiseled beefsteak and mixing in honky tonk songs by the deliciously named Rockin' Dopsie Jr. & The Zydeco Twisters. The action scenes are dynamic, layering POV camera work with great, thundering, bottle smashing stunts. It knows it's silly, but it's still a good time.

That's reason enough that Liman is upset the movie is avoiding cineplexes and going straight to streaming. But he could rectify that. He could hire, like, an unstable, but gracious, former fighter who lives in his car. For a few thousand, that guy can make things right.

"Road House," an Amazon MGM Studios release streaming on Prime Video from March 21, is rated R for "nudity, violence, alcohol use and foul language." Running time: 114 minutes. Three stars out of four.

collection. His first womenswear show on the French capital city's catwalks was staged two years later. Ever since, Van Noten has staged two womenswear and two menswear shows each year.

His Paris Fashion Week's fall show last month was a visual feast of illusions and contrasts. The sleeves were cut to make them almost two-dimensional, an innovative play on perspective that challenges the viewer's gaze. Sweaters seemed to ani-

mate, embracing their wearers in a dance of fabric and form.

This interplay of textures and colors created a dynamic energy and poetry that has become a Van Noten hallmark. (AP)



NEW YORK: **Michael Tilson Thomas** is to conduct the opening subscription program of the New York Philharmonic season, three years after the conductor

announced he was being treated for a brain tumor.

The 79-year-old is to lead the orchestra in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 14 with Emanuel Ax and Mahler's Fifth Symphony on Sept. 12, 13 and 15, the orchestra said Tuesday.

Tilson Thomas said in August 2021 that he had had undergone surgery for a brain tumor. He has continued to lead an active schedule but with fewer performances: Tilson Thomas led four concerts with the New York Philharmonic in March 2023. He was founder of the New World Symphony in Miami Beach, Florida, and music director of the San Francisco Symphony from 1995-2020.

The philharmonic will be without a music director for two seasons. **Jaap van Zweden** leaves this summer after six years, and **Gustavo Dudamel** starts in 2026-27, after he leaves the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Dudamel leads three weeks of subscription programs, one in March 2025 and two in May 2025 that include the world premiere of a work written and sung by **Kate Soper**, **Philip Glass**'s Symphony No. 11 and Mahler's Seventh. He will conduct the philharmonic's parks concerts for the first time in June 2025.

Dudamel becomes music director designate in 2025-26. He has conducted the orchestra 29 times starting with his 2007 debut.

Ken-David Masur, a son of former music director **Kurt Masur**, conducts a new work by **August Read Thomas** on Sept. 19 and 21.

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra music director **Manfred Honeck** will lead an opening gala on Sept. 24 that includes Tony Award winner **Cynthia Erivo**. (AP)



Indian filmmaker Karan Johar poses with Bollywood actors Javed Jaffry, left, Tamannaah Bhatia, right, and Diana Penty during the launch of 'Daring Partners' and other shows on Amazon Prime Video in Mumbai, India, Tuesday, March 19, 2024. (AP)

Vast amounts of data revolutionized decision-making processes

Building fairness into AI crucial and hard to get right

How much stress is too much?

Psychiatrist explains links between toxic stress, poor health, and how to get help

By Lawson R. Wulsin
University of Cincinnati

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.



COVID-19 taught most people that the line between tolerable and toxic stress - defined as persistent demands that lead to disease - varies widely. But some people will age faster and die younger from toxic stressors than others.

So how much stress is too much, and what can you do about it?

I'm a psychiatrist specializing in psychosomatic medicine, which is the study and treatment of people who have physical and mental illnesses. My research is focused on people who have psychological conditions and medical illnesses as well as those whose stress exacerbates their health issues.

I've spent my career studying mind-body questions and training physicians to treat mental illness in primary care settings. My forthcoming book is titled "Toxic Stress: How Stress is Killing Us and What We Can Do About It."

A 2023 study of stress and aging over the life span - one of the first studies to confirm this piece of common wisdom - found that four measures of stress all speed up the pace of biological aging in midlife. It also found that persistent high stress ages people in a comparable way to the effects of smoking and low socioeconomic status, two well-established risk factors for accelerated aging.

Good stress - a demand or challenge you readily cope with - is good for your health. In fact, the rhythm of these daily challenges, including feeding yourself, cleaning up messes, communicating with one another and carrying out your job, helps to regulate your stress response system and keep you fit.

Toxic stress, on the other hand, wears down your stress response system in ways that have lasting effects, as psychiatrist and trauma expert Bessel van der Kolk explains in his bestselling book "The Body Keeps the Score."

The earliest effects of toxic stress are often persistent symptoms such as headache, fatigue or abdominal pain that interfere with overall functioning. After months of initial symptoms, a full-blown illness with a life of its own - such as migraine headaches, asthma, diabetes or ulcerative colitis - may surface.

When we are healthy, our stress response systems are like an orchestra of organs that miraculously tune themselves and play in unison without our conscious effort - a process called self-regulation. But when we are sick, some parts of this orchestra struggle to regulate themselves, which causes a cascade of stress-related dysregulation that contributes to other conditions.

For instance, in the case of diabetes, the hormonal system struggles to regulate sugar. With obesity, the metabolic system has a difficult time regulating energy intake and consumption. With depression, the central nervous system develops an imbalance in its circuits and neurotransmitters that makes it difficult to regulate mood, thoughts and behaviors.

Though stress neuroscience in recent years has given researchers like me new ways to measure and understand stress, you may have noticed that in your doctor's office, the management of stress isn't typically part of your treat-

ment plan.

Most doctors don't assess the contribution of stress to a patient's common chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity, partly because stress is complicated to measure and partly because it is difficult to treat. In general, doctors don't treat what they can't measure.

Stress neuroscience and epidemiology have also taught researchers recently that the chances of developing serious mental and physical illnesses in midlife rise dramatically when people are exposed to trauma or adverse events, especially during vulnerable periods such as childhood.

Over the past 40 years in the U.S., the alarming rise in rates of diabetes, obesity, depression, PTSD, suicide and addictions points to one contributing factor that these different illnesses share: toxic stress.

Toxic stress increases the risk for the onset, progression, complications or early death from these illnesses.

Because the definition of toxic stress varies from one person to another, it's hard to know how many people struggle with it. One starting point is the fact that about 16% of adults report having been exposed to four or more adverse events in childhood. This is the threshold for higher risk for illnesses in adulthood.

Research dating back to before the COVID-19 pandemic also shows that about 19% of adults in the U.S. have four or more chronic illnesses. If you have even one chronic illness, you can imagine how stressful four must be.

And about 12% of the U.S. population lives in poverty, the epitome of a life in which demands exceed resources every day. For instance, if a person doesn't know how they will get to work each day, or doesn't have a way to fix a leaking water pipe or resolve a conflict with their partner, their stress response system can never rest. One or any combination of threats may keep them on high alert or shut them down in a way that prevents them from trying to cope at all.

Add to these overlapping groups all those who struggle with harassing relationships, homelessness, captivity, severe loneliness, living in high-crime neighborhoods or working in or around noise or air pollution. It seems conservative to estimate that about 20% of people in the U.S. live with the effects of toxic stress.

The first step to managing stress is to recognize it and talk to your primary care clinician about it. The clinician may do an assessment involving a self-reported measure of stress.

The next step is treatment. Research shows that it is possible to retrain a dysregulated stress response system. This approach, called "lifestyle medicine," focuses on improving health outcomes through changing high-risk health behaviors and adopting daily habits that help the stress response system self-regulate.

Adopting these lifestyle changes is not quick or easy, but it works.

The National Diabetes Prevention Program, the Ornish "UnDo" heart disease program and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs PTSD program, for example, all achieve a slowing or reversal of stress-related chronic conditions through weekly support groups and guided daily practice over six to nine months. These programs help teach people how to practice personal regimens of stress management, diet and exercise in ways that build and sustain their new habits.

There is now strong evidence that it is possible to treat toxic stress in ways that improve health outcomes for people with stress-related conditions. The next steps include finding ways to expand the recognition of toxic stress and, for those affected, to expand access to these new and effective approaches to treatment. (AP)



Wulsin

By Ferdinando Fioretto
University of Virginia

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Artificial intelligence's capacity to process and analyze vast amounts of data has revolutionized decision-making processes, making operations in health care, finance, criminal justice and other sectors of society more efficient and, in many instances, more effective.

With this transformative power, however, comes a significant responsibility: the need to ensure that these technologies are developed and deployed in a manner that is equitable and just. In short, AI needs to be fair.

The pursuit of fairness in AI is not merely an ethical imperative but a requirement in order to foster trust, inclusivity and the responsible advancement of technology. However, ensuring that AI is fair is a major challenge.

And on top of that, my research as a computer scientist who studies AI shows that attempts to ensure fairness in AI can have unintended consequences.

Fairness in AI has emerged as a critical area of focus for researchers, developers and policymakers. It transcends technical achievement, touching on ethical, social and legal dimensions of the technology.

Ethically, fairness is a cornerstone of building trust and acceptance of AI systems. People need to trust that AI decisions that affect their lives - for example, hiring algorithms - are made equitably. Socially, AI systems that embody fairness can help address and mitigate historical biases - for example, those against women and minorities - fostering inclusivity. Legally, embedding fairness in AI systems helps bring those systems into alignment with anti-discrimination laws and regulations around the world.

Unfairness can stem from two primary sources: the input data and the algorithms. Research has shown that input data can perpetuate bias in various sectors of society. For example, in hiring, algorithms processing data that reflects societal prejudices or lacks diversity can perpetuate "like me" biases. These biases favor candidates who are similar to the decision-makers or those already in an organization. When biased data is then used to train a machine learning algorithm to aid a decision-maker, the algorithm can propagate and even amplify these biases.

Fairness is inherently subjective, influenced by cultural, social and personal perspectives. In the context of AI, researchers, developers and policymakers often translate fairness to the idea that algorithms should not perpetuate or exacerbate existing biases or inequalities.

However, measuring fairness and building it into AI systems is fraught with subjective decisions and technical difficulties. Researchers and policymakers have proposed various definitions of fairness, such as demographic parity, equality of opportunity and individual fairness.

These definitions involve different mathematical formulations and underlying philosophies. They also often conflict, highlighting the difficulty of satisfying all fairness criteria simultaneously in practice.

In addition, fairness cannot be distilled into a single metric or guideline. It encompasses a spectrum of considerations including, but not limited to, equality of opportunity, treatment and impact. The multifaceted nature of fairness

means that AI systems must be scrutinized at every level of their development cycle, from the initial design and data collection phases to their final deployment and ongoing evaluation. This scrutiny reveals another layer of complexity. AI systems are seldom deployed in isolation. They are used as part of often complex and important decision-making processes, such as making recommendations about hiring or allocating funds and resources, and are subject to many constraints, including security and privacy.

Research my colleagues and I conducted shows that constraints such as computational resources, hardware types and privacy can significantly influence the fairness of AI systems. For instance, the need for computational efficiency can lead to simplifications that inadvertently overlook or misrepresent marginalized groups.

In our study on network pruning - a method to make complex machine learning models smaller and faster - we found that this process can unfairly affect certain groups. This happens because the pruning might not consider how different groups are represented in the data and by the model, leading to biased outcomes.

Similarly, privacy-preserving techniques, while crucial, can obscure the data necessary to identify and mitigate biases or disproportionately affect the outcomes for minorities. For example,



A patient prepares to take the first of two combination pills, mifepristone, for a medication abortion during a visit to a clinic in Kansas City, Kan., on Oct. 12, 2022. More than six in 10 of the abortions in the United States last year were done through medication, up from 53% in 2020, according to research released Tuesday, March 19, 2024. (AP)

More than six in 10 US abortions in 2023 were done by medication

WASHINGTON, March 20, (AP) - More than six in 10 of the abortions in the United States last year were done through medication, up from 53% in 2020, new research shows.

The Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights, said about 642,700 medication abortions took place in the first full calendar year after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade. Medication abortion accounted for 63% of abortions in the formal health care system.

The data was released Tuesday, a week before the high court will hear arguments in a case that could impact how women get access to mifepristone, which is usually used with another pill in medication abortions.

Guttmacher researcher Rachel Jones said the increase wasn't a surprise.

"For example, it is now possible in some states, at least for health care providers, to mail mifepristone to people in their homes," Jones said, "so that saves patients travel costs and taking time off work."

Guttmacher's data, which is collected by contacting abortion providers, doesn't count self-managed medication abortions that take place outside the health care system or abortion

medication mailed to people in states with abortion bans.

Dr. Grace Ferguson, an OB-GYN and abortion provider in Pittsburgh who isn't involved with the research, said the COVID-19 pandemic and the overturning of Roe v. Wade "really opened the doors" for medication abortions done through telehealth.

Ferguson said "telehealth was a really good way of accommodating that increased volume" in states where abortion remained legal and saw an increase in people who traveled from more restrictive states.

Guttmacher data shows that medication abortions have risen steadily since mifepristone was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 2000. The drug, which blocks the hormone progesterone, also primes the uterus to respond to the contraction-causing effect of another drug, misoprostol. The two-drug regimen is used to end a pregnancy through 10 weeks gestation.

The case in front of the Supreme Court could cut off access to mifepristone by mail and impose other restrictions, even in states where abortion remains legal.

when statistical agencies add noise to data to protect privacy, this can lead to unfair resource allocation because the added noise affects some groups more than others. This disproportionality can also skew decision-making processes that rely on this data, such as resource allocation for public services.

These constraints do not operate in isolation but intersect in ways that compound their impact on fairness. For instance, when privacy measures exacerbate biases in data, it can further amplify existing inequalities. This makes it important to have a comprehensive understanding and approach to both privacy and fairness for AI development.

Making AI fair is not straightforward, and there are no one-size-fits-all solutions. It requires a process of continuous learning, adaptation and collaboration. Given that bias is pervasive in society, I believe that people working in the AI field should recognize that it's not possible to achieve perfect fairness and instead strive for continuous improvement.

This challenge requires a commitment to rigorous research, thoughtful policymaking and ethical practice. To make it work, researchers, developers and users of AI will need to ensure that considerations of fairness are woven into all aspects of the AI pipeline, from its conception through data collection and algorithm design to deployment and beyond. (AP)

Bid to prevent minors from taking up habit

New Zealand will ban disposable e-cigarettes

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, March 20, (AP) - New Zealand said Wednesday it will ban disposable e-cigarettes, or vapes, and raise financial penalties for those who sell such products to minors.

The move comes less than a month after the government repealed a unique law enacted by the previous left-leaning government to phase out tobacco smoking by imposing a lifetime ban on

young people buying cigarettes.

New Zealand's Associate Health Minister Casey Costello said Wednesday that e-cigarettes remain "a key smoking cessation device" and the new regulations will help prevent minors from taking up the habit.

"While vaping has contributed to a significant fall in our smoking rates, the rapid rise in youth vaping has been a real concern for parents, teachers and

health professionals," Costello said.

Under the new laws, retailers that sell vapes to children under 18 years of age will face fines of up to 100,000 New Zealand dollars (\$60,000), while individuals will be fined 1,000 New Zealand dollars (\$600).

Other regulations introduced will prevent e-cigarettes from being sold with images that might appeal to young people or with enticing names.

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Kroos not thinking beyond Euro 2024 with country

Germany international yet to extend Real contract

BERLIN, March 20, (AP): Toni Kroos isn't thinking beyond this summer's European Championship.

The 34-year-old Real Madrid star was coaxed out of international retirement to help Germany in its home tournament, but he still doesn't know what will happen next season.

Kroos is yet to extend his contract with the Spanish league leader, and the prospect of ending his career on a high at Euro 2024 is one which has its appeal for a player who has already won the World Cup with Germany in 2014 and every possible domestic title with Real Madrid and Bayern Munich.

"Many things are uncertain after the European Championship," Kroos said when asked about playing for Germany after the tournament.

"I don't even have a contract for next season. So, it's difficult. I need

to clear that up before ... I think it would be difficult to get me back from full retirement."

Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann said last week he had many conversations with Kroos to convince the midfielder to return. Kroos hadn't played for the national team since Germany's loss to England in the second round of the last European Championship.

SOCCER

Kroos joked he needed to clear the decision to return with his grandfather.

"I had to convince him because without his OK nothing would have happened," Kroos said. "No, he knew how I was thinking, and he said if it was up to him, then preferably another year with Real, and

then holiday. But I told him in the meantime I'd decided play the Euro in any case and he's fine, he's ordered his Germany jersey."

Kroos' return should benefit the players around him with his oversight and cool-headed play.

Germany's recent form points to a team in disarray. It lost its last games against Austria and Turkey and has only two victories against the United States and France from its last 10 matches. Six of those ended in defeat.

Nagelsmann was appointed successor to the fired Hansi Flick to instigate a revival before hosting Euro 2024 but, as yet, he has been unable to restore confidence.

Germany next plays France in Lyon on Saturday, then the Netherlands in Frankfurt on Tuesday. It will play Ukraine and Greece in its final warmup games.

Kroos acknowledged Germany's poor results but appeared confident he can help the team recover in time for the tournament by adding to his 106 international appearances so far.

"It's a bit presumptuous now to say it will only be a success if we win the title," Kroos said. "We're coming from a time where that's difficult to formulate, but still, and you can't get that out of me. You basically buy into that, this understanding of being able to be successful like that."

Getting out of the group stage is a start.

"For sure, I'd like to be participating in one or two rounds in the knockout stage of the tournament," Kroos said.

Germany opens Euro 2024 against Scotland in Munich on June 14, followed by Hungary in Stuttgart on June 19 and Switzerland in Frankfurt on June 23.



Talal Al-Sarhan, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Diving.

Al-Sarhan attends International Diving Congress

Eng. Talal Al-Sarhan, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Club and the Kuwait Diving and Rescue Federation, is currently in the Principality of Monaco to attend the International Diving Congress meeting. This significant event coincides with the sixty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Federation. The meeting will gather numerous heads of

international diving federations to deliberate on challenges confronting the sport and devise strategies and initiatives for its global advancement. Additionally, distinguished individuals who have made substantial contributions to the success of sports over the past 65 years will be honored during the congress.

Lyon & Chelsea win first-leg matches in Women's Champions League quarters



Lyon's Selma Bacha (left), jumps for the ball with Benfica's Lucia Alves during the women's Champions League quarterfinals, first leg, soccer match between SL Benfica and Olympique Lyonnais at the Luz Stadium, in Lisbon. (AP)

French club comes from behind to beat Benfica 2-1

LONDON, March 20, (AP): Lyon and Chelsea underlined their status as two of the favorites for the Women's Champions League title by earning first-leg wins on the road in the quarterfinals.

Lyon, the record eight-time champion, came from behind to beat Benfica 2-1, while Chelsea ultimately eased to a 3-0 victory at Ajax to close in on a second straight appearance in the last four of Europe's top competition.

SOCCER

The second legs are on March 27.

Lyon still hasn't lost in either the French league or the Champions League this season, but it needed a second-half comeback to maintain that record.

France forward Delphine Cas-

carino equalized in the 63rd and Germany midfielder Sara Dabritz headed home a cross from United States captain Lindsay Horan for the winner in the 79th in Lisbon.

Benfica was making its debut in the quarterfinals, and Andreia



Chelsea's Johanna Rytting Kaneryd (right), runs with the ball past Ajax's Milica Keijzer during the Women's Champions League quarterfinal soccer match between Ajax and Chelsea at the Johan Cruyff Arena, in Amsterdam, Netherlands. (AP)

Faria gave the hosts the lead in the 43rd after intercepting a stray pass on the halfway line and running through unchallenged.

Ajax is also competing in the knockout stage of the Champions League for the first time and

caused plenty of problems for Chelsea early on at Johan Cruyff Arena in Amsterdam, only to concede goals from the visitors' only two shots of the first half.

England forward Lauren James rounded the goalkeeper and slotted home in the 19th minute for a goal that stood after a VAR check for offside, before Sjoekje Nuisken slid in to convert the second in the 44th.

Nuisken headed in the third goal in the 83rd to leave Chelsea in total control ahead of the return match at Stamford Bridge, where the club's men's team plays.

Chelsea is bidding to win the Champions League for the first time and also is chasing a quadruple of major trophies in coach Emma Hayes' final season in charge before she takes the helm of the United States' women's national team.

Hayes' team leads the Women's Super League, is into the final of the English League Cup and has reached the quarterfinals of the FA Cup.

Main task will be to find Klopp's successor

Liverpool hire Richard Hughes as sporting director

LIVERPOOL, England, March 20, (AP): Liverpool's restructuring of its technical staff continued Wednesday when the club hired Richard Hughes as sporting director starting June 1.

Hughes is leaving his role as technical director at Bournemouth to take up the post at Liverpool after previously working with Michael Edwards, who was hired last week as chief executive of football at Fenway Sports Group - the U.S.-based conglomerate whose

portfolio of sports teams includes Liverpool.

Hughes' main task will be identifying a replacement for Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp, who said in January that he will be stepping down after nearly nine years as manager.

"It is clear to everyone that Jurgen will leave a legacy to build upon," Edwards said, "and in Richard we have the right person to make the key decisions and offer the leadership to take us forward

into a bright future.

"As one very successful chapter will come to a close for Liverpool in the summer, the objective of everyone here is for another one to begin - and with Richard I am confident we have the right person in position for us to achieve this aim."

The 44-year-old Hughes is a former Scotland midfielder who played his club soccer for Bournemouth and Portsmouth, where Edwards worked as an an-

alyst. He has led Bournemouth's soccer operations for the past decade.

Hughes described Liverpool as a "unique club" and said his role would be to make "good decisions which enhance the prospects of having a team that wins and excites the supporters."

Among those linked with replacing Klopp is Xabi Alonso, who currently coaches German league leader Bayer Leverkusen and used to play for Liverpool.

Best of the Rest

Fiorentina general manager dies:

Fiorentina general manager Joe Barone has died following a cardiac arrest, the club said Tuesday. He was 57.

Barone fell ill on Sunday at the team hotel, shortly before Fiorentina's match at Atalanta, and was rushed to a hospital in Milan. The Serie A match was subsequently postponed. Barone died at San Raffaele Hospital.

"It is with deep sorrow and immense sadness that Fiorentina confirms the loss of one of its figureheads, a person who has marked the recent history of the club and who will never be forgotten," the club said in a statement.

"Everyone associated with Fiorentina are utterly devastated by the terrible loss of a man who showed great professionalism and gave his heart and soul for these colors. He was a treasured friend who always stayed strong in the happiest and, above all, the most difficult moments. The entire Viola world sends its heartfelt condolences to Giuseppe's wife Camilla, his children and the entire Barone family during this time of immense sorrow."

Barone was born in Italy but raised in New York. His wife, Camilla, rushed up from Florence on Sunday and his four children arrived from the United States on Monday morning.

Two weeks ago, Fiorentina marked the six-year anniversary of the death of captain Davide Astori, who was found dead in his hotel room after a cardiac arrest before a match at Udinese.

Fiorentina's next match is on March 30 at home against AC Milan. (AP)

Mushfiqur out injured: Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batter Mushfiqur Rahim was ruled out of the test series against Sri Lanka by a broken thumb sustained in their one-day international.

Mushfiqur was busy on Monday making four catches and figuring in a run out, and finishing 37 not out as Bangladesh beat Sri Lanka by four wickets to seal the ODI series 2-1.

He made 135 runs in the series but most

importantly gave the batting lineup stability in the absence of Shakib Al Hasan.

A test player since 2005, Mushfiqur is Bangladesh's leading run-scorer with 5,676 runs and 10 centuries in 88 matches.

Bangladesh physio Bayjedul Islam Khan confirmed Mushfiqur incurred a contusion on his right thumb while keeping. X-rays revealed a fracture.

"He is undergoing conservative management for his injury and is expected to be sidelined for around three to four weeks, consequently ruling him out of participation in the test series against Sri Lanka," Khan said. The first of two tests starts on Friday in Sylhet. (AP)

'Remove Mazepin from list': The General Court of the European Union on Wednesday said ex-Formula One driver Nikita Mazepin should be removed from the EU list of persons subjected to restrictive measures for their role in Russia's war against Ukraine.

Mazepin was added to the list of people sanctioned by the 27-nation bloc two years ago, in the wake of Russia's invasion, because of his father's connections to the Kremlin. He subsequently lost his F1 seat with Haas.

The EU has imposed several rounds of sanctions on Russia since President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine. The measures have targeted the energy sector, banks, the world's biggest diamond mining company, businesses and markets, and made Russian officials subject to asset freezes and travel bans.

Among the individuals targeted are Mazepin and his father Dmitry, the owner and chief executive of the mineral fertilizer company Uralchem.

Nikita Mazepin claimed the EU made an error of assessment when he was sanctioned. The court ruled in his favor, saying in a statement "the family connection with his father, Russian businessman Dmitry Mazepin, is not sufficient for him to be regarded as being linked to his father by common interests and, therefore, for him to be maintained on those lists." (AP)

Player appealing rape conviction

Spanish court grants bail to soccer star Dani Alves

BARCELONA, Spain, March 20, (AP): A Spanish court has decided to release Brazilian soccer star Dani Alves if he pays a bail of one million euros (\$1.1 million) and hands over his passports while awaiting the appeal of his conviction for raping a woman in Barcelona.

The court issued the ruling on Wednesday.

Alves was convicted in February and sentenced to four years and six months in prison for having raped the woman in a nightclub in 2022.

He has been behind bars since being arrested in January 2023. His prior requests to be let free on bail were denied because the

court deemed him a flight risk.

Former Barcelona player Arda Turan has been found guilty of tax fraud in Spain and sentenced to a one-year prison sentence that was suspended, a Spanish court said on Tuesday.

The court said the former Turkey midfielder committed two counts of tax fraud in 2015 and 2016. He was fined 630,000 euros (\$684,000).

Turan joined Barcelona in 2015 from Atletico Madrid. He played for the Catalan club until he was loaned in January 2018 to Basaksehir. He later joined Galatasaray, where he played until retiring in 2022.

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Parmar declared Player of the Match for his scintillating batting skills

GAC-Cricket Park Academy clinches victory in KCC U16 tournament

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: GAC-Cricket Park Academy again turned in a truly professional, workman-like performance to win the coveted Kuwait Cricket Club organised 35 overs Under 16 tournament against a much fancied MG Warrior team. A combined team effort by the young lads with great determination and game sense to perform at the highest level was instrumental in GAC-Cricket Park's marvellous victory. Jainil Parmar was rightly declared Player of the Match for his scintillating batting skills.

The final KCC U 16 powered by the MEC group began under glorious sunshine at the TACK 5 ground and Cricket Park skipper Vihaan Jitesh won the toss and elected to bat first. Cricket Park boys faced their much-talented opponents with great determination and guts and despite losing their skipper early, Pradyot Giri and Jainil Parmar withstood the MG attack as seasoned campaigners. With solid defence and punishing loose deliveries, both Pradyot and Jainil launched a recovery by playing attractive cricket and added 140 runs for the 2nd wicket. The match-winning stand between these pair blossomed as the innings progressed and Pradyot after scoring a scintillating innings was caught at mid-off for a valuable 56 runs studded with 4 hits to the fence.

Meanwhile, little Master Jainil Parmar exhibited solid technique in facing the deadly spin attack of MG bowlers Rudhransh Panchal, Daksh Laxman, and Thewan & played some classic cover drives and danced down the wicket to clout the spinners to all parts of the ground. Jainil played one of his best innings and his potential match-winning knock of 98 runs impressed the large crowd. His



Jainil Parmar, Player of the Match.

masterly innings of 98 runs contained 11 hits to the fence. A late 8th wicket surge by seasoned campaigner Naga who scored 20 runs and Vidhucharan who made 12 runs helped Cricket Park to score 215 runs in their allotted 35 overs. Lanky spinner Hussain Mussaji was the pick of MG Warrior bowlers bagging 3 for 55. Ian Stanly, Rudransh, Dhaksh Laxman and Yewon bagged a wicket each for MG Warriors. Cricket Park scored 215 runs in 35 overs.

MG Warriors started confidently with Ryan Tibish & Thewan posting 40 runs for the first wicket when wily off-spinner Bishwanth Arun foxed Thewan (29 runs) to play a bit early and the edge was taken beautifully by rival skipper Vihaan at first slip. In came Vedant Utekar the inform batsman with a double hundred up his sleeves and showed his intention with two beautiful pull shots to the fence. Naga Nehar who was replaced at the north end deceived Vedant with a flighted delivery only to see the ball ballooning up to Vihaan who held it gleefully. On the other end, Ryan Tibish batting skilfully along with Yadharth Ranjan played sensible cricket but lost his patience and skied one which was taken smartly by Bishwanth at extra cover. Ryan scored a valuable 35 runs.

CRICKET

Meanwhile, Hussain Mussaji played an attractive inning with well-executed drives and cuts but wickets fell at regular intervals except Daksh Nair who steadied the ship and supported Hussain Mussaji to put on 30 runs for the 7th wicket.

A wise move by Vihaan who got Alfonso Anil from the pavilion end wrecked the apperact of MG Warriors. Husain, who was playing so well, played one too early and Alfonso plucked a one-handed acrobatic catch which turned the game in favour of Cricket Park. Rudransh fell to a similar one-handed catch by Alfonso, this time the bowler diving to his right to hold another single-handed one. The MG innings soon folded to 204 runs for 9 wickets in their allotted 35 overs, thus giving Cricket Park the coveted KCC trophy. Alfonso Anil (3-34) was the top wicket-taker for Cricket Park and Pradyot Giri an expert in death-end overs bowled extremely well to capture 2-29. Cricket Park spinners Naga Nehar (2-31), Jainil Parmar (1-27) & Bishwanth Arun (1-41) supported the team quite well. Ryan Aiden excelled in the field with his fielding skills and Karthik Rajeev behind the wicket stood up to the task with lightning reflexes.

Kuwait participates as Lebanon hosts table tennis tournament



The two Kuwaiti players participating in the tournament.

BEIRUT, March 20: The international table tennis tournament kicked off in Lebanon, under the auspices of the International Table Tennis Federation, drawing participation from 42 countries worldwide, including Kuwait.

George Copley, President of the Lebanese Table Tennis Federation, expressed, "This prestigious international tournament, running until March 21 and sanctioned by the International Table Tennis Federation, showcases top-tier global players. It holds significance within the ITTF tournament circuit, contributing to the international player rankings."

TABLE TENNIS

He highlighted Lebanon's past experience hosting age group championships, noting that this event offers Lebanese and Arab players a platform to compete against international counterparts, fostering technical and artistic growth and inspiring greater dedication to skill advancement.

Copley emphasized, "The caliber of international players is exceptionally high, with notable disparities in experience, training

methodologies, and tournament exposure compared to Arab players."

Meshal Al-Kandari, a player for the Kuwaiti national team, commented, "Participating in this tournament, overseen by the International Table Tennis Federation, provides invaluable experiences and insights into the playing styles and training regimens of international and Arab competitors."

He added, "This international tournament serves as ideal preparation for upcoming events such as the Arab Club Championship and the West Asian Championship, slated to be held in Saudi Arabia later this year."

Meanwhile, Khaled Al-Fadhli, representing Kuwait through the Kuwait Table Tennis Association and a member of Al-Fahaheel Club, noted the significant benefits of interaction with international players for both Arab and Kuwaiti athletes.

Arab nations, alongside Kuwait and host Lebanon, are represented in this international table tennis championship, with participation from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Tunisia, Syria, and Yemen.



The victorious GAC - Cricket Park Academy team.

Halep returns from overturned doping ban with loss to Badosa at Miami Open

Wozniacki eliminates Burel, Williams beaten

MIAMI GARDENS, March 20, (AP): Two-time Grand Slam champion Simona Halep returned to professional tennis after getting her doping suspension reduced on appeal, playing her first match in about 1 1/2 years - a 1-6, 6-4, 6-3 loss to Paula Badosa at the Miami Open.

Halep looked terrific in the first set, then encountered trouble later, including having a trainer massage her right shoulder during a changeover late in the second. She was broken at love in the final game, each point ending with an errant groundstroke: backhand wide, backhand into the net, backhand long, forehand wide.

TENNIS

The 32-year-old from Romania, who reached No. 1 in the WTA rankings in 2017, smiled briefly and waved to spectators as she walked off the court. The score might not have been what she wanted, but she was back competing.

"I would rate it as a special day, honestly, considering the period I had. Playing so well, feeling so well on court, feeling so well outside of the court with so many people that are very nice to me and giving me the love. I would say that this day is going to stay very special for me," Halep said.

"Of course, I had many results in the past, big results. But here it's something more than tennis, it's something personal. I really love to see that people are appreciating me beside tennis and beside everything that happened."

Halep had not played on tour since testing positive for the banned drug roxadustat at the 2022 U.S. Open, where she lost in the first round to Daria Snigur of Ukraine 6-2, 0-6, 6-4.

A four-year ban that was hand-



In this file photo, Simona Halep, of Romania, returns the ball to Beatriz Haddad Maia, of Brazil, during the final of the National Bank Open tennis tournament in Toronto. (AP)

Kuwait Airways Workers Union hosts Ramadan padel draw

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: The Kuwait Airways Workers Union and its subsidiaries hosted the draw for the inaugural Ramadan padel tournament, featuring the participation of 15 teams comprising employees, retirees, and government transferees.

PADEL

These teams, hailing from Kuwait Airways and its subsidiaries, were divided into 4 groups for the competition, which took place at the padel courts in Shuwaikh.

The organizing committee ensured a memorable experience for participants, with surprises alongside valuable prizes, trophies, and medals for the top-ranking teams.

Dr. Ahmed Al-Mahawish, Chair-



Dr. Ahmed Al-Mahawish, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Airways Workers Union.

man of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Airways Workers Union

and its subsidiaries, emphasized the tournament's role in fostering community cohesion among employees. He stated, "The launch of the first padel tournament during the blessed month of Ramadan aims to unite Kuwait Airways enthusiasts in a spirited sporting environment, fostering camaraderie and motivation among employees." Al-Mahawish highlighted the importance of sporting activities in promoting employee engagement and nurturing young talents for future success.

Acknowledging the dedication of the organizing committee, including Abdullah Al-Tawala, head of the union's sports committee, Al-Mahawish commended their efforts in overcoming obstacles to host the inaugural Ramadan padel tournament.

Palestine and Bangladesh prepare for crucial clash in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 20: The clash between the Palestine and Bangladesh is set to take place at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium for the third round of the ninth group matches in the Asian qualifiers for both the 2027 World Cup and the 2027 Asian Cup at 9:30 pm. Simultaneously, the Australia and Lebanon will also square off in the same group.

SOCCER

Currently, Australia leads the group with 6 points, followed by Lebanon with 2 points, while Palestine and Bangladesh each have one point.

The Palestinians conducted their preparations at Al-Qadisiya Club's Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium, while the Bangladesh national team trained at Al-Sahel Stadium.

It's worth noting that under the guidance of Tunisian coach Makram



Palestinians gear up for their qualifying match against Bangladesh in Kuwait.

Daboub, the Palestinian team showcased an admirable performance in their previous appearance at the Asian Nations Cup. They advanced

beyond the initial round only to face a challenging defeat against the defending champions and hosts, the Qatari team, in the round of 16.

ed down in 2023 was cut to nine months by the Court of Arbitration for Sport two weeks ago. Two days

later, the Miami Open gave Halep a wild-card invitation that allowed her to enter the tournament's field. Halep argued that she was exposed to a contaminated supplement that caused her failed test.

She won major championships at Wimbledon in 2019, beating Serena Williams in the final, and at the French Open in 2018, beating Sloane Stephens in the final.

Badosa, who has been ranked as high as No. 2 but dealt with back problems lately, advanced to a second-round matchup with two-time Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka, the current No. 2. That match is scheduled for Thursday.

The man Sabalenka has been dating, retired hockey player Konstantin Koltsov, 42, was found dead of an apparent suicide shortly after midnight Monday, Miami police said. They said foul play was not suspected.

A spokesperson for the Miami Open said Tuesday that Sabalenka was still entered in the tournament.

Other first-round women's results included a 6-3, 6-3 loss by seven-time Grand Slam title winner Venus Williams, 43, against Diana Shnaider, 19, and a 6-1, 6-4 victory for 2018 Australian Open champion Caroline Wozniacki over Clara Burel.

Wozniacki said she didn't think someone returning from a doping ban should get a wild-card entry into a tournament. Told of those remarks, Halep countered that her punishment was determined to have been a result of an inadvertent exposure to the banned substance.

"I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't cheat. I didn't dope," Halep said. "Only one person being negative about me is not that important because I have hundreds of people that are giving me love."



In this file photo, Afghanistan's Rashid Khan dives to field the ball during the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup match between Australia and Afghanistan in Mumbai, India. Cricket Australia has postponed a three-match men's Twenty20 international series against Afghanistan scheduled for August due to concerns over deteriorating human rights for women and girls in the Taliban-controlled country. (AP)

Sports

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Magic clinch 'play-in' spot

Rockets shoot down Wizards

ORLANDO, March 20, (AP): Cole Anthony scored 17 of his 21 points in the second quarter and the Orlando routed Charlotte to clinch at least a play-in berth in the Eastern Conference playoffs.

Jalen Suggs survived a couple of physical confrontations in the second period to finish the game with 16 points, six assists and three steals. Paolo Banchero added 13 points and five assists for the Magic, who led 67-32 at halftime.

Orlando (41-28) is fifth in the East and can't be caught by 11th-place Brooklyn with 13 games left in the season. The Magic have won 12 of 15 and secured only their second non-losing season since 2011-12. They went 42-40 in 2018-19.

Rockets 137, Wizards 114

In Washington, Jalen Green tied a career high with 42 points, and Houston closed the third quarter on a 25-6 run en route to their sixth straight victory, 137-114 over Washington.

Houston is now just 2 1/2 games behind Golden State for the final play-in spot in the Western Conference. Amen Thompson scored 25 points for the Rockets, and Fred VanVleet had seven points and 11 assists.

Corey Kispert scored 16 points for Washington, which was without Kyle Kuzma (left shoulder), Deni Avdija (right knee), Tyus Jones (back) and Bilal Coulibaly (right wrist).

Even with all those absences, the Wizards shot well enough from 3-point range to make a game of it for 2 1/2



Minnesota Timberwolves guard Anthony Edwards (5) shoots as Denver Nuggets forward Peyton Watson (8) and center Nikola Jokic (15) defend during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Minneapolis. (AP)

quarters. Then Green broke a 76-all tie with two straight 3s and a three-point play, making it 85-76. After a couple Washington free throws, the Rockets scored seven more points in a row and it was never close after that.

Pelicans 104, Nets 91

In Brooklyn, Zion Williamson scored 28 points and wowed the Barclays Center crowd with a high-flying alley-oop dunk, and New Orleans beat Brooklyn.

CJ McCollum added 16 points, Larry Nance Jr. had 13 points and 10 rebounds, and Brandon Ingram and Herb Jones each finished with 11 points for the Pelicans, who opened a four-game road swing with their third straight win and seventh in eight games. New Orleans is fifth in the Western Conference.

Cam Thomas had 25 points and Mikal Bridges added 15 for the Nets, who have lost four straight. The Pelicans shot 50.6% from the field while limiting Brooklyn to 36.9% shooting.

Mavericks 113, Spurs 107

In San Antonio, Kyrie Irving scored 28 points, Luka Doncic had 18 points

BASKETBALL

and 16 assists, and Dallas held off San Antonio.

Doncic shot 6 of 27 from the field but still finished with his eighth triple-double in 10 games, helping Dallas win a game critical to its playoff hopes. It was just the sixth time in his career he's shot worse than 25% while playing regular minutes.

Dallas (40-29) trails Sacramento (39-28) by percentage points for sixth place in the Western Conference and the final automatic playoff berth.

Tre Jones scored 22 points and Devin Vassell added 19 points for San Antonio. Victor Wembanyama had 12 points and 11 rebounds for his 37th double-double. The Mavs swept their four-game season series against the Spurs after winning the first three by an average of 18.3 points. Irving and Doncic were critical in the final minutes of the closely contested finale.

Nuggets 115, Timberwolves 112

In Minneapolis, Nikola Jokic had 35 points and 16 rebounds and Michael Porter Jr. scored 13 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter as Denver fended off undermanned and undersized Minnesota.

Jamal Murray added 18 points and 11 assists and Aaron Gordon had 14 points and 11 rebounds for the Nuggets, who blew an 18-point lead in less than 12 minutes before finishing a four-game road trip strong.

The Nuggets (48-21) moved within percentage points of idle Oklahoma City (47-20) for the Western Conference lead. The Timberwolves (47-22) dropped one game back into third place.

Courtois sustains another serious injury

MADRID, March 20, (AP): Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois has sustained another serious knee injury, just as he was close to returning from a torn ACL.

Madrid said Courtois ruptured the meniscus in his right knee during training session. The Belgian has not played since tearing the ACL in his left knee in August, two days before Madrid's first game of the season. He just recently returned to training after recovering from surgery.

Madrid did not give a timeline for how long Courtois will be out this time, saying only that "the injury will be monitored."

Courtois had said in December that he did not expect to be fit for this summer's European Championship in

SOCCER

Germany because of the ACL injury, but that he was hoping to start playing for Madrid again before the end of the season.

Manchester United teenager **Kobbie Mainoo's** swift rise to prominence could yet see the midfielder play for England in high-profile friendlies against Brazil and Belgium in the coming days.

The 18-year-old Mainoo received his first call-up by England, his latest step in a breakthrough season that could yet end with a place in his country's squad for the European Championship in Germany across

June and July.

Mainoo had been selected for England's Under-21s but was added to **Gareth Southgate's** senior group ahead of games against Brazil on Saturday and Belgium on Tuesday, both at Wembley Stadium.

Mainoo, who previously represented England Under-17s and Under-19s, has played with maturity and composure in racking up 20 appearances so far for United this season.

The midfielder joined United at age nine and made his debut in early 2023 in a League Cup game against Charlton.

Mainoo is also eligible for Ghana and its football association has previously expressed interest in calling him up.

England's stock of high-quality central midfielders is currently low, with **Kalvin Phillips** - a long-time favorite of Southgate's - dropped for the latest squad and **Jordan Henderson** a fading force. **Declan Rice** looks to be a certainty for England in that position but Mainoo could yet force his way into the team alongside him, and behind attacking midfielder **Jude Bellingham**, for Euro 2024.

Southgate announced his squad for the friendlies last week and all the players called up by the coach reported to the training camp on Tuesday.

Among them was Brentford striker **Ivan Toney**, who was recalled after serving an eight-month ban for breaching betting rules.

Also receiving their first summons were **Everton** defender **Jarrad Branthwaite** and **Newcastle** forward **Anthony Gordon**.



Dallas Mavericks forward P.J. Washington (25) has his shot blocked by San Antonio Spurs center Victor Wembanyama (1) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in San Antonio. (AP)

Afghanistan meet India

Kuwait set sights on toppling undefeated Qatar

By Khaled El Anzi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DOHA, March 20: Kuwait will face the Qatar as guests at 9:00 pm at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium, Al Sadd Club. This encounter marks the third round of the initial group stage of the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in the United States of America, Canada, and Mexico, as well as the Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia 2027. Concurrently, the Afghanistan to meet the India team in the same group at 10:00 at the Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Sports City Stadium (Al Mahalla) in Abha Governorate.

Currently, Al-Azraq holds the second spot in Group A with 3 points. They secured victory against Afghanistan with a score of 4-0 but suffered defeat against India with a narrow margin of 1-0, held in Kuwait. On the other hand, the Qatar leads the group standings with 6 points, having triumphed over India 3-0 and Afghanistan 8-1.

Preparations for tonight's match commenced last week for Al-Azraq, including a brief camp in Abu

SOCCER

Dhabi, followed by their arrival in Doha two days ago. The team is set to return to Kuwait tomorrow to gear up for their upcoming match against the Qatari team at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium on March 26.

Tonight's game marks the 44th encounter between the two teams across various tournaments and qualifiers. Kuwait has emerged victorious in 21 matches, while the Qatar has won 13, with 9 matches ending in a draw.

Under the guidance of Portuguese coach Rui Pinto and his assistant Ahmed Abdel Karim, rigorous training sessions were conducted morning and evening to ensure the readiness of each player. The selected squad of 24 players includes Ibrahim Kamil, Sami Al-Sanea, Muhammad Dahham, Ahmed Al-Dhafiri, Reda Hani, Mishari Ghannam, Mohsen Falah, Faisal Zayed, Saud Al-Hoshan, Youssef Nasser, Mubarak Al-Fanani, Khaled Ibrahim, Eid Al-Rashidi, Youssef Al-Haqqaq, Hassan Hamdan, Bandar Al-Salama, Suleiman Abdel Ghafour, Muhammad Al-Huwaidi, Mahdi Dashti, Athbi Shehab, Hamad Harbi, Abdullah Al-Fahd, Salman Buramia, and Abdul Rahman Al-Majdali.

Following necessary assessments, it was determined that Sami Al-Sanea, Mahdi Dashti, and Bandar Al-Salama had incurred injuries. Consequently, Rashid Al-Dosari, Abdul-Mohsen Al-Ajmi,

IOC excludes Russian and Belarusian athletes from taking part in the Paris Olympics opening ceremony

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, March 20, (AP): Russian and Belarusian athletes will not be allowed to take part in the traditional parade at the opening ceremony at the Paris Olympics, the IOC said.

The opening ceremony on July 26 will see thousands of athletes travel on boats down the River Seine for several miles (kilometers) toward the Eiffel Tower, instead of the normal parade of teams inside a stadium.

The International Olympic Committee said athletes from Russia and Belarus who are approved to compete at the Olympics as neutrals will have a chance only "to experience the event" - likely watching from near the river.

The IOC decision follows the International Paralympic Committee which two weeks ago announced a ban for its Paris opening ceremony on Aug. 28.

Russia and Belarus are barred from team sports at the Olympics because of the war in Ukraine and the IOC has laid out a two-step vetting procedure for individual athletes from those countries to be granted neutral status. Those athletes must first be approved by the governing body of their individual sport and then by an IOC-appointed review panel.

Neutral athletes must not have publicly supported the invasion of Ukraine, or be affiliated with military or state security agencies. It is unclear if membership of a Russian military sports club, such as CSKA, will be a reason for denying neutral status.

The IOC said Tuesday it expects about 36 neutral

athletes with Russian passports and 22 with Belarusian passports to qualify for the Paris Games.

A decision on whether those athletes will be allowed to take part in the Aug. 11 closing ceremony will be taken "at a later stage," the IOC said.

Any medals won by neutral athletes will not be counted as a collective group in the overall medals table.

The IOC also revealed details of the replacement flag in jade green that will be used for neutral athletes at medal ceremonies, where a specially written anthem without lyrics will be played.

In another source of tension between Olympic lead-

OLYMPICS

ers and Russian sport, the IOC decided Tuesday that the International Boxing Association led by Kremlin-backed Umar Kremlev will not be involved in organizing bouts for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

The IOC also threatened to remove boxing from the Los Angeles program in what seemed like a challenge to national federations worldwide to distance themselves from the IBA and Kremlev.

The IOC withdrew its recognition of the IBA last year and the body was not allowed to take part in organizing boxing at the previous Tokyo Olympics or in Paris. But Kremlev has further riled the IOC with confrontational comments and support for the rival Friendship Games scheduled in Russia in September.

"If we do not have a new boxing body to work in partnership with the IOC, we will not be in a position to have boxing at the program of (Los Angeles)," the Olympic body said.



Kuwaiti coach leads the training session on the eve of the Qatar clash.