



Report reveals 50.6% of suicides linked to marriage

Indians top Kuwait's suicide cases in 2022: Public Prosecution

Opinion

Most laws were based on ignorance or profiteering

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THERE is a fundamental question being asked among Kuwaitis in their diwanias - "What would happen to us if the oil prices fell to the lowest levels, stocks and foreign investments declined, and the borrowing countries asked Kuwait to extend repayment?"

This simple question reflects a case of OCD in the hearts of citizens.

The developments the world witnessed in the last three decades necessitated changing the strategy for investing sovereign money, and not relying on what has prevailed since 1953 when the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development was established.

This is especially with the severe financial crises that the world witnessed, the most recent of which was caused by the Ukrainian-Russian war, and before that the global financial crisis, the developments in the Arab region, and the consequences that cast a shadow over the Gulf states, including Kuwait.

To answer this question, there are some who say "We live in bliss and all will be well", while there are some others who smuggled their wealth abroad and do not care.

As for the vast majority of citizens, they cast the dice, because the minimum level of luxury in which they live will not exist in that situation. Indeed, it is not far-fetched that these people will become migrant workers in the countries that export workers to us today.

There is a popular saying - You reap what you sow. This could serve as an example in seeking to transfer sovereign money internally. The concerned authorities are working to revive the sectors of industry, strategic services, agriculture, infrastructure, entertainment, and hospitality, just like the other Gulf countries, some of which today receive more than 45 million visitors and tourists annually and have reduced their dependence on oil to about two-thirds of the national product.

In the UAE, for example, reports last year revealed that the contributions of non-oil sectors had risen to 73.5 percent, thanks to the diversification of the economic base and the strengthening of sectors with high added value. The same is the case with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman.

On the other hand, Kuwait is still dependent on oil by about 93 percent. This means a major flaw in the concept of the state's function, especially with the decisions and laws that serve a backward class that considers openness as chaos, or a change in Kuwaiti culture, or another that will benefit from this through human trafficking. This has led to the country being put under the microscope of international organizations.

When the executive decision-maker takes his data from bureaus and not from scientific studies, he makes a mistake. This is the greatest calamity, because most of the laws issued in recent years were built on ignorance or profiteering.

Therefore, we say - "When the desert turns into resorts, factories, and modern infrastructure, as it happened in Dubai and Saudi Arabia, this serves the national economy."

In one of the Gulf countries, its leadership discovered that its people spend billions of dollars annually on tourism abroad. It therefore worked on opening up the country. Thus its tourism income from visitors increased by about 225 percent. After that, people began turning to domestic tourism, because everything became available in the country.

There is an anecdote in Kuwait, which is - When a visitor arrived at the airport, he took a taxi and asked the driver to take him to the most beautiful areas and resorts. After about an hour in the car, he took him back to the airport and said to him, "This is the most beautiful place in Kuwait."

We will not talk again about the roads and waste accumulated in all regions, or about the complexities in all works. However, it must be said that sovereign money was created to build the country.

The distribution of wealth can only take place through projects that benefit citizens, and not through gifts and salary increments that are eaten up by inflation, or spending abroad, while there are many people living in poverty.

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Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Wednesday a cable from President of Azerbaijan Jigme Aliyev, congratulating him on assuming power.

In the cable, President Aliyev lauded the strength of relations between Kuwait and Azerbaijan, expressing hopes to build upon them in all possible domains.

Replying to President Aliyev in a cable, His Highness the Amir expressed appreciation to the Azerbaijan leader, reflecting similar wishes to boost ties with the friendly country.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal also wished President Aliyev and his people evermore progress and development. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Wednesday a cable from the King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck who congratulated His Highness on assuming power.

In the cable, the King of Bhutan affirmed that his country would

continue to seek all avenues to bolster relations with the State of Kuwait.

His Highness the Amir, in a reply cable, thanked Bhutan's King on his sincere sentiments towards him and the State of Kuwait, commending on the occasion, the unique ties linking the two friendly nations. His Highness wished the King good health and welfare to his country and people. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Wednesday a cable of congratulations from President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko on His Highness's assuming power.

President Lukashenko commended the strength of relations between Kuwait and his country, affirming that all avenues to boost ties would be sought diligently.

In a reply cable, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal thanked President Lukashenko for his sincere sentiments, wishing him and the people of Belarus more progress and development. (KUNA)

By Jaber Al-Humoud
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: According to a report released by the Kuwait Public Prosecution, there were a total of 136 cases of suicide and attempted suicides in the past year.

According to the statistics, 61.7 percent of those who committed suicide and those who tried to take their

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Kuwait praises Egypt efforts in locating missing student

CAIRO, Dec 27, (KUNA): Kuwait's cultural office in Egypt commended the efforts of local authorities in tracking the whereabouts of a Kuwaiti student who had disappeared in the Egyptian capital, citing the timely manner in which they were able to locate him.

The student had experienced a "health scare" and is now in stable condition after receiving medical attention, according to an office statement, quoting Kuwaiti cultural attaché Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Rajaan as denying the veracity of reports alleging he was physically harmed.

He went on to underline that all Kuwaiti students currently in Egypt are "safe and sound," added the statement.

Last night, Kuwait Embassy said a Kuwaiti student went missing in Egypt two days ago has been found at a Cairo hospital.

Al-Saadoun submits bill on constituency revamp

Assembly Speaker seeks fair representation

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: National Assembly Speaker Ahmed Al-Saadoun has submitted a bill on amending National Assembly Law No. 42/2006 in order to restructure the constituencies.

The bill is aimed at ensuring fair representation of the existing five constituencies and accurate application of Article 108 of the Constitution, which states a lawmaker represents the entire nation.

The bill stipulates replacing Article Two of the current law with the following:

"Citizens wishing to run for elections must file their candidacies within 10 days from the day after the publication of the decree on the call for elections and none of the candidates are allowed to cancel their application under any circumstances." The last clause aims to foil attempts to manipulate the election results.

The bill also stipulates adding Article Two (bis) stating that every candidate in one constituency is given a number to participate in the lottery conducted by the Higher Elections Commission immediately after the deadline for filing candidacies. The commission shall announce the names and numbers given to each candidate the day after the closure of the door for filing candidacies.

The commission shall prepare the ballots, which will be in the form of a table divided into five columns, each column consisting of the numbers given to the candidates in each constituency. No names will be mentioned in the ballot.

Article Two (bis A) is also added stating: "Each voter has the right to choose four candidates in any constituency provided he votes for at least one of the candidates in his own constituency. His vote is valid as well if he decides to choose four candidates in his own constituency. However, the ballot will be nullified in case the voter chooses all four candidates from other constituencies.

Article Two (bis B) states that the Higher Elections Commission shall announce the top 50 candidates.

On the by-elections, the same procedures are adopted, which means the top required number of candidates are the winners.

In case the top 50 consists of a higher number of candidates because some of them obtained the same number of votes, the Higher Election Commission will conduct a public lottery to choose the winner among them.

Any candidate has the right to complain against the election results and request for recounting of votes to prove his claim or make sure the announced results are correct.

Meanwhile, constitutional expert Professor Ibrahim Al-Humoud commented on recent calls for suspending the Constitution and freezing the Assembly. He stressed the importance of remaining committed to the Constitution; in addition to having an efficient government subject to legislative oversight, and the implementation of effective legislative programs to maintain national stability and unity, and guarantee the sustainability of democracy and freedom and enjoyment of rights.

He asserted it is true that Kuwait is suffering from the deterioration of its roads and many problems related to public services and infrastructure; but all these should not lead to abandoning democracy. He affirmed that goals concerning construction and material services are easy to achieve, unlike democracy and freedom which require utmost dedication.

He believes the path can be rectified only through a distinguished government, and if the people are given a chance to elect responsible and capable lawmakers. He said the best aspect of democracy is its capability for self correction and gaining more rights and freedom. He added the people of Kuwait must be proud

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People attend the funeral of a high-ranking Iranian general, Seyed Razi Mousavi, in Najaf, Iraq, on Wednesday, Dec. 27, 2023. Mousavi was killed in an Israeli airstrike Monday in Damascus, Syria. (AP)

MP affirms decades-long rejection of normalization

'Kuwait's solidarity with Gaza unshakeable'

CAIRO, Dec 27, (Agencies): On Wednesday, a Kuwaiti lawmaker emphasized the State of Kuwait's unwavering commitment to stand in solidarity with the Gaza Strip in the face of what he described as "heinous Israeli aggression." Speaking to KUNA during the Palestinian committee preparatory meeting of the Arab parliament, Ahmad Lari, a member of Kuwait's National Assembly and the Arab parliament, underscored that his country's leadership has consistently rejected any attempts to normalize relations with Israel over the decades.

MP Lari highlighted that the Palestine committee meeting is part of the Arab parliament's ongoing efforts to support Palestinians, particularly in response to the Israeli military campaign targeting Gaza and beyond. He emphasized that the meeting aims to explore international avenues to garner support and halt the ongoing genocide against the people of Gaza and Palestine.

Expressing concern over recent vetoes preventing a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip at the UN Security Council, Lari called for the global community's sympathy and support for the Palestinian cause to manifest in tangible political actions. The Arab Parliament is set to convene a public session titled "Supporting Palestine and Gaza" on Thursday, featuring the participation of prominent Arab and international figures.

Meanwhile, as regional and international calls persist for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli military campaign, now in its 83rd day, has resulted in a devastating toll. Over 21,000 casualties, primarily innocent women and children, have lost their lives, with an additional 54,000 reported injuries.

The Gaza Strip's infrastructure has suffered extensive damage due to the relentless Israeli attacks. Elsewhere, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh welcomed Arab and international efforts to stop the Israeli occupation's continuous aggression on the Palestinian people and the "amended" Egyptian initiative.

In his speech Wednesday, at the beginning of his government meeting in Ramallah Shtayyeh said that "Egypt is definitely keen on the unity of Palestinian representation and that any regional or international arrangement passes only through Palestinian legitimacy represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization."

He called on the United Nations to work to bring in aid through five Gaza Strip crossings.

He also called on the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to immediately take all legal measures against those responsible for committing crimes against the Palestinian people everywhere.

"Israel today stands condemned before the world as a criminal outlaw state that kills with the aim of killing, hungers with the aim of killing, thirsts with the aim of killing, and displaced with the aim of killing," Shtayyeh said.

The occupation has tried for 75 years to thwart the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people, destroy identity, and the right to self-determination, and destroy infrastructure through displacement, occupation, military rule, settler colonialism, and the destruction of villages and towns, he added.

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Kuwait envoy lays foundation for educational hub in Jordan

AMMAN, Dec 27, (KUNA): Kuwait Ambassador to Jordan Hamad Al-Merri laid the foundation stone of an educational complex donated by Kuwait in Sahab area east of the Jordanian capital on Wednesday.

The project, financed by Kuwaiti Abdullah Yosif Bodai, is part of a charity project affiliated with the Educational Evacuation Academy, and it is the academy's sixth project in Jordan.

It is held with a Kuwaiti donation and under the supervision of Jasim Al-Yaseen.

Ambassador Al-Marri said, in a statement to KUNA, after the ceremony, "This project comes



Kuwait Ambassador to Jordan Hamad Al-Merri lays the foundation stone of an educational complex donated by Kuwait in Sahab area east of the Jordanian capital on Wednesday. (KUNA photo)

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Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:16 Asr 14:39
Sunrise .. 06:41 Maghrib .. 16:57
Zohr 11:49 Isha 18:19

Local

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

Environment-friendly: Dr Al-Ragom

'Kuwait keen to capitalize on low-carbon hydrogen energy resources'

By Khaled Al-Mutairi

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27, (KUNA): Low-carbon hydrogen is shaping up to become one of the most promising energy resources that would lead to a better environment and help achieve the goal of carbon neutrality set by countries around the world.

Hydrogen, as an element, is a safe and clean source of energy that does not produce pollutants while burned and has several applications including a source of heat for housing or a raw material in the industrial sector, and recently has attracted attention as a future clean energy resource.

There are around 17 methods to produce low-carbon hydrogen, which emits less than 2.4 kilograms of carbon dioxide for every one kilogram of hydrogen.

The most important kinds of low-carbon hydrogen are the ones produced by wind and solar-powered devices known as "green hydrogen" and the other, known as "blue hydrogen", is extracted from natural gas as a byproduct.

On this issue, several experts spoke to KUNA on the validity of the new promising energy resource.

The usage of low-carbon hydrogen is a new venture and Kuwait is keen on capitalizing on such an opportunity, Manager of the Energy Efficiency

Technologies Program at Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) Dr. Fotouh Al-Ragom told KUNA.



Dr Al-Ragom

Dr. Al-Ragom affirmed that Kuwait had an abundance of renewable natural resources, noting that it could use solar and wind energies to produce green hydrogen not only for national consumption, but also as a material to export to other countries.

She indicated that there were many countries beginning to show increasing interest in such viable energy resource, adding that Kuwait had taken some serious steps to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 in the oil and gas sectors, a step necessary for an ambitious plan for total carbon neutrality for all sectors of the state by 2060.

It is very important to focus on decreasing direct and indirect carbon emissions to achieve the aforementioned goal, she affirmed, saying that it could be achieved by decreasing the burning of gas in extraction and production operations as well as bolstering circular economy, a model of production that focuses on sharing, leasing, and reusing

energy to lessen carbon emission.

Dr. Al-Ragom also indicated that utilizing solar energy to produce electricity would also contribute to lessening carbon emissions.

She asserted that Kuwait's efforts in this regard were in line with the global pledge for renewable energy sources and efficiency, which increases such energy resources by threefold, a measure that would decrease temperature by 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2030.

She also mentioned Kuwait's vision to save 15 percent of its need for renewable energy resources by 2030 in line with the global pledge.

Dr. Al-Ragom also revealed that there were various state entities cooperating on this matter.

Also speaking on the matter of low-carbon hydrogen usage, natural gas industries expert at the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) Wael Abdulmotai said that hydrogen use was not a novelty; the resource was used in the past as a raw material in various industries to create products.

The increasing interest in hydrogen nowadays was due to its practical usage in future clean energy production, indicated Abdulmotai, affirming that there were obstacles that needed to be addressed before embarking on a wide-scale usage of hydrogen.

Weather

forming at night.

By Night: Rather cold to cold and partly cloudy to cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speed of 08-26 km/h with chance for scattered rain and a chance for light fog

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	24	16
Kuwait Airport	24	14
Abdaly	25	10
Jahra	24	14
Salmiyah	22	17
Nuwaib	23	14
Wafra	23	14

Colorectal ailments common

Fistula, hemorrhoids prevalent in men: Dr Al-Bassam



Leg lengthening surgery (Inset): Dr Michael Oglu.

Al-Qabas photo

Bones lengthened, straightened

New techniques can now help cure bone deformities: expert

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: Professor Dr. Michael Oglu -- a specialist in bone restoration and treatment and lengthening of limbs at the Bali Middle East Clinic, in Burjeel Medical City, Dubai, says there are many reasons why a child may need leg straightening surgery due congenital deformity, an accident, or a developing disease which may be accompanied by shortening of one or both limbs, which requires the appointment of a specialized surgeon with experience in the field of bone lengthening and straightening, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Dr. Oglu explained that recent developments in operating techniques and available devices have contributed to increasing the chance of success of therapeutic and reconstructive operations for children and adults.

He added, "Children are affected by genetic conditions that are widespread in the Gulf, including cases that cause pelvic dislocation, abnormal growth of the limbs, and excessive thinning of the bones, all of which previously required the child to perform large and complex operations that may be accompanied by many complications and psychological, financial, and health problems.

"However, the development of medical technologies, the increase in doctors' experience has made it possible to treat these cases through less invasive laparoscopic operations and the use of lighter external devices and anti-inflammatory screws."

Dr. Oglu said that bone lengthening operations are among the real operations that are performed for medical reasons, such as treating dwarfism, problems with abnormal growth of limbs, and short stature.

He explained, through a surgery, any deformity in the alignment of the bones (such as curved bones) can be corrected while increasing the length of the leg bones.

Dr. Oglu explained that, in general, the youngest age at which it is suggested to undergo surgical height increase operations is 7 years, and it can be repeated over three surgical stages until the bones reach the stage of maturity (adulthood).

The operations can achieve a lengthening of up to 30 cm in length over 3 procedures or treatment stages. He pointed out that an adult can undergo limb lengthening operations, but one surgical stage is often recommended, as each surgical stage can achieve a lengthening of 13 cm (8 cm in the thigh bones and 5 cm in the leg).

Dr. Oglu explained that a week after the surgical operation and ensuring that the wounds and tissues have recovered, the doctor begins to change the settings of the external device to begin the stage of increasing the length of the limbs, and according to the safe and internationally recommended

Scholarship plan

Registration opened

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research, and Chairman of the Council of Private Universities Dr Adel Al-Mana has confirmed the opening of registration for internal scholarships in the second semester of the year 2023/2024 through the website of the Secretariat General of the Council of Private Universities from Jan 11-17, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, the ministry announced that the application conditions are the same as the internal scholarship plan for the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year and the same minimum acceptance rates for each major at every private university or college.

Meanwhile, Secretary General of the Council of Private Universities Adel Al-Badr revealed the internal scholarship plan for the second semester of the year 2023/2024 will be announced through the official website and social media accounts of the secretariat before the application window opens. He pointed out that this will include details like the minimum percentages for admission to each specialization, indicating the results of admission will be announced a few days after the application period ends.

rate, the operation aims to increase the length of the bones by an amount ranging between 0.75 and 1 millimeter per day. Therefore, the patient's length is expected to increase at a rate of 1 cm approximately every two weeks.

Important information:

- Adults are recommended to take one treatment stage to gain 13 cm in height
- The duration of treatment may last from 5-6 months, with a commitment to medical follow-up
- After the treatment is completed, the bones will become normal like any bone in the body
- The treated bone is distinguished by its ability to rebuild and repair any weakness
- Some cases can be treated with drugs and physical therapy
- It is recommended not to delay seeing a doctor if you notice a bow or limp

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: Head of the surgery department at Farwaniya Hospital Dr. Khaled Al-Bassam revealed that more than 200 patients suffering from anal and rectal disorders visit the hospital's outpatient clinics every month. This prompted the hospital administrators to expand the health services provided to these patients by launching a specialized clinic to review these cases on Tuesday every week.

In a press statement, Dr. Al-Bassam explained that the clinic specializes in treating patients suffering from anal and rectal disorders. It conducts the necessary tests for diagnosis and treatment, and performs the latest type of surgery known as limited surgical intervention, which results in small wounds that help the patient recover quickly after the operation.

Patients suffering from anal and rectal diseases occupy a large proportion of hospital outpatient clinic visitors. Men are more affected by anal and coccygeal fistula diseases and hemorrhoids, while women are more affected by rectal prolapse, weakness in the pelvic muscles, and chronic constipation.

Dr. Al-Bassam highlighted the efforts being exerted by the Ministry of Health to improve the health services provided in the country. This includes hosting the best international experts and consultants to discuss some complex cases, train the local medical personnel, and other important and necessary contributions to improve the quality of health services.

Announced

He announced that the hospital will soon host Dr. Philip Tozer who specializes in colorectal surgeries and works in St Mark's The National Bowel Hospital in London, which is known for its long history of complex fistula surgeries.

Dr. Al-Bassam stressed that the visit of Dr. Philip will be part of the activities of the colorectal surgeries workshop which will be held from February 4 to February 6, adding that Dr. Philip Tozer will participate in discussions about some complex cases and operations on anal fistulas, hemorrhoids, pilonidal fistulas, anal surgeries for patients with Crohn's disease, and other anal and rectal surgeries.

Meanwhile, the general surgery specialist at Farwaniya Hospital Dr. Mahmoud Farghaly said the upcoming workshop will address the latest techniques in anal and rectal surgeries, such as the use of lasers and laparoscopes, in addition to discussing complex cases.

In a press statement, he highlighted the intensification of the activities and workshops of the Surgery Department at Farwaniya Hospital on anal and rectal surgeries.

Dr. Farghaly explained that about 50 advanced pilonidal and anal fistula operations were performed during the three workshops held in the year 2023. The department hosted the Italian colorectal surgeon Dr. Piercarlo Meinero during these workshops. He was the one who came up with the idea of using laparoscopic surgical devices to perform complex fistula operations. He had trained and followed up on the doctors in the surgery department during his visits throughout the year on carrying out the surgeries successfully.

Dr. Al-Bassam also highlighted the suitability of the laparoscopic technique for cases of complex anal fistula and pilonidal fistula, and its success in achieving high recovery rates and significantly reducing the length of the patient's stay in the hospital, with rapid recovery and return to normal life. This is due to the absence of a large wound like traditional surgery, which forces the patient to undergo daily changes and stay at home for two to three weeks until the wound heals.

MEW puts in more efforts to tackle 'power shortfall'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: The Power Stations Sector within the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy is actively advancing its endeavors to finalize tender projects for the operation and maintenance of electricity production units across various power stations, reports Al-Rai daily.

These efforts aim to enhance operational efficiency in readiness for the upcoming summer season and subsequent periods.

An official source from the Ministry told the daily that a priority is placed on completing tender projects related to the maintenance of electricity production and water distillation units.

The goal is to elevate the effectiveness of operational units and uphold their strength without any decline. The Ministry emphasizes the significance of cooperation from relevant authorities in facilitating the tender processes, given their critical role in meeting the country's electrical energy needs.

The source disclosed that in the upcoming week, the Ministry is set to announce the recommendation for Tender No. 76, involving the provision of high-efficiency and continuous engineering services for open-cycle gas turbines and their auxiliary equipment at the Subbiya station.



The French envoy to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher with Dr. Souad Al-Abdulwahab.

Promotion of French culture lauded

French govt honors ex-KU dean

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: The former Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Professor of Modern Literature in the Department of Arabic Language at Kuwait University, Dr. Souad Al-Abdulwahab, was honored by the French government with the "Academic Palme Medal" at the rank of Knight, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This recognition was bestowed in acknowledgment of her significant contributions to promoting French literature and culture within Kuwaiti society. The award ceremony, hosted by the French Ambassador to Kuwait, Claire Le Flecher, saw the presence of various French diplomats, academics, and Kuwaiti leaders.

The Palme d'Academic Medal, a prestigious French national decoration, is conferred upon distinguished academics and notable figures internationally in the realms of culture and education. During her speech at the ceremony, Al-Abdulwahab expressed her pride in receiving this esteemed medal, emphasizing its importance due to the noble academic objectives it has served over the years.

Al-Abdulwahab extended her gratitude to the French government, Ambassador Le Flecher, and the director of the French Institute, Benoit Catala. She highlighted the significance of the medal in the context of its positive impact on generations of students.

Additionally, she acknowledged the efforts of individuals such as former director Cedric Davey and cultural cooperation attaché Benjamin Tonay, who played key roles in establishing a memorandum of cooperation between the college and the institute.

Expressing hope for the renewal of this memorandum, Al-Abdulwahab emphasized joint readiness for continued collaboration in the academic realm related to the French language and literature.

In her speech, Ambassador Le Flecher commended Al-Abdulwahab's cultural role and contributions, praising her efforts in enhancing the portrayal of French literature and culture in Kuwaiti society, especially during her tenure as Dean of the College of Arts. Leflecher highlighted Al-Abdulwahab's support for the development of the French Language and Culture Department and her encouragement of Francophonie in Kuwait.

Recognizing Al-Abdulwahab's commitment to education and her role in strengthening relations with the French Research Center for the Arabian Peninsula in Kuwait, Le Flecher expressed appreciation for her constructive cooperation. She concluded by acknowledging Al-Abdulwahab's well-deserved recognition, emphasizing her dedication to education and the promotion of the French language and culture.

Ahli United Bank (AUB) congrats Al-Hassad weekly draw winners

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: Ahli United Bank (AUB) congratulates the winners of Al-Hassad weekly draw of Al-Hassad Islamic account, which was held on 27 December, 2023 at the bank's head office in the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as well as a representative from Deloitte as the external auditor to oversee the draws as per the instructions of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in this regard.

The bank announced 10 winners of KD 1,000 as follows: Hadeel Nayef Saeed Al-Azmi, Yousef Fadel Hasan Bosakhar, Deepak Anantrao Rawtal, Khuzema Ali Husain Khanwala, Mohammad Jawad Hasan Yaseen Al-Amir, Faleh Hassan Ahmed Al-Jenahi, Sh Fada Jaber Al-Ahamad Al-Sabah, Khaled Ibrahim Mezel Al-Sallal, Fayeza Saad Faleh Al-Wasmi and Abdalmehsen Khaled Mohammad Al-Kanderi.

In its new package, Al-Hassad Islamic Saving Account presents a broader variety of rewards. Customers could now participate in the draw to win a monthly KD 100,000 prize, in addition to 10 weekly prizes of KD 1,000 each. The grand quarterly prize of KD 250,000 in cash for the winner remains the most important aspiration of customers.

It is a real chance for them to realize their life dreams. In addition to this attractive package, there will be the annual expected profits on the basis of a Wakala contract that increases the attractiveness of the Al-Hassad Islamic Saving Account to customers.

Al-Hassad Account provides a suite of unique features, including the simplest and easiest savings program and a unique ac-



AUB congratulates winners.

count-opening feature online with all ease with an instant deposit option.

To be eligible to participate in the draw, the customer should have a minimum balance of KD 100, whereby the customer has two chances to participate, with up to 30,000 chances per draw, in addition to rewarding annual profits.

Every KD 50 invested entitles the customer to one chance in the draws, provided that to maintain his balance for at least fifteen days before the draw date. The longer the customer keeps his balance the bigger the chances of participation in the draw with every KD 50 in the account. Draws are held every Wednesday based on the draw scheme. On religious and national holidays, the draw is postponed to the next business day.

For more information on Ahli United Bank's products and services, customers are invited to visit any of the Bank's branches, dial the customer services "Hayakom" on 181 2000, or log on to the Bank's website at www.ahliunited.com.kw

PAMA joins 'Max Tech' exhibition

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: The Public Authority for Minors Affairs (PAMA) participated in the recently concluded 'Max Tech' Exhibition, which witnessed the participation of a large number of government and private agencies to showcase their experience in the field of digital transformation, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, PAMA Director Eng Hamad Al-Barjas affirmed that the authority will fully benefit from its participation in the exhibition; considering its commitment to introduce its plans, programs and projects in the field of digital transformation and follow up the latest developments in the fields of security, information exchange, and information and communications technology.

He confirmed that the authority reviewed all aspects of its plan for digital transformation, which includes the electronic services provided through its website -- a total of 50 services, as well as the Sahl application -- 36 services. He said the authority is considered one of the first entities to participate

in the initial launch of the application, indicating the plan includes the use of an interconnected system for electronic correspondence between all departments for speedy completion.

He added paper and manual transactions were eliminated 100 percent, coupled with linking government agencies' correspondence through the G2G system in order to preserve the integrity and security of data.

He revealed the authority has developed a special application to record attendance of its employees since the beginning of the Corona pandemic for security and safety reasons, as every employee can download the application on his device and register his attendance through it.

He confirmed the authority's success in activating electronic connectivity with 10 government agencies, a number of companies and banks in order to facilitate the services provided to those under its care. He stated that the authority is working with the National Cybersecurity Executive in terms of taking precautionary measures.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Al-Aqsa Flood' dents Netanyahu, right wing hold on Israeli politics

"THE defeat inflicted by the 'Al-Aqsa Flood' has significantly impacted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, marking a turning point for Israel's longest-serving leader and a prominent symbol of extremism. The aftermath of this event has led to widespread speculation about the broader political and societal influence of the right in Israel," columnist **Dr. Dana Al-Enezi** wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

"The right wing has maintained control in Israel since the 1990s, largely fueled by conflicts with internal and external resistance movements.

"The dominance of the right was sustained by the internal right-wing tendency, public prioritization of security issues, and the successful persuasion of the public that strict policies toward the Arab-Israeli conflict were crucial for Israel's existence, security, and well-being.

"The 'Al-Aqsa Flood' has shaken the foundation of the right's influence, particularly by undermining its credibility in ensuring Israel's stability and existence.

Unlike previous conflicts that supported the right, the catastrophic defeat revealed the vulnerabilities in security and intelligence plans. The defeat, inflicted by a resistance movement with limited military capabilities in a besieged sector, highlighted the fallacy of right-wing myths regarding the invincibility of Israel.

"The impact of the 'Al-Aqsa Flood' has severed the relational fuel that sustains the right, characterized by extremist policies exchanged for the security and existence of Israel.

"Consequently, the right is expected to fade from the internal political scene for a significant period, possibly lasting at least a decade.

"However, the waning influence of the right within society does not imply its complete disappearance. It is likely to persist under center or left-wing governments, exerting influence in a more rational manner on specific aspects and issues, particularly concerning the Palestinian problem.

"Looking ahead, upcoming Israeli governments are expected to adopt less radical or more balanced right-wing policies, particularly regarding the Palestinian issue. Two main factors support this expectation: a major shift in the social and political structure at home, influenced by waves of immigration, and increased involvement of the United States to prevent the continued dominance of the right.

"The social composition in Israel has transformed over the past two decades, with a diverse youth group favoring less strict religious tendencies and secular views. Additionally, the United States is expected to intervene more assertively to prevent the right's dominance, considering the implications of the 'Al-Aqsa Flood' on Israeli-American relations.



Dr Al-Enezi

"The essay concludes that while the 'Al-Aqsa Flood' has significantly impacted the short-term future of the Israeli right, the right-wing tendency in society will persist, albeit at a slower pace due to internal changes.

"The overall estimation is a return to Israel's previous policies under American pressure, emphasizing stability in addressing the conflict rather than its resolution. This strategy involves betting on time and maneuvering with other diplomatic files, such as normalization, to navigate the challenges posed by extremist right-wing ideas and policies, which are seen as a reflection of Israel's identity and existence."

Also:

"We extend our heartfelt congratulations to His Highness Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, may God protect and preserve him, on the auspicious occasion of assuming the leadership of our beloved country, Kuwait. This momentous event follows His Highness taking the constitutional oath, signifying a sublime commitment to loyalty and dedicated service to the nation and its citizens. We earnestly pray to God to grant him the strength to fulfill the entrusted responsibilities with excellence," **Wasmiya Al-Muslim** wrote for **Anba** daily.

"His Highness the Amir stands as the worthy successor to an illustrious predecessor, his biography marked by fragrance and a legacy of remarkable achievements and contributions. With the constitutional oath, a historic royal pronouncement emerged, underscoring a roadmap for reform, hard work, and fidelity to the nation's interests, emphasizing the preservation of the country's well-being and national unity in a region marked by security challenges.

"The High Speech highlighted the commitment to national and constitutional principles, particularly concerning democracy, the constitutional system, and the fight against corruption. The emphasis on bolstering security aspects through regional and global partnerships is vital for a country like Kuwait, considering its geographic size and the importance of stability and security as foundational pillars for progress and state-building.

"Recognizing Kuwait's need for a deterrent to secure its independence and protect its autonomy, cooperation between legislative and executive authorities is paramount. This collaboration should prioritize the nation's welfare, correct paths in security, economy, and livelihoods, align with regional and global economic realities, elevate citizens' standards of living, activate development programs, and address challenges while preparing for the future.

"In the post-oil era, Kuwait must diversify its income sources and embrace a modern economic vision aligned with the Kuwait Vision 2035. This transformation aims to position Kuwait as a regional and global financial hub, attracting investments and grounded in the well-being of Kuwaiti citizens, national progress, technological advancements, and seizing investment opportunities.

"May God protect Kuwait and its people under the wise and rational leader-

ship, guiding His Highness on the path of construction, growth, benevolence, and towards a promising and prosperous future marked by sophistication and progress."

□ □ □

"To the Interior Ministry: Save the country and do not open the doors to visitors. We say in an easy and short way: If you buy or sell something in the market, if there is a factory to produce a commodity, if you have money in your wallet and the market has various types of consumer goods, if the country is agricultural or industrial with the presence of craftsmen and professionals, then everything we mentioned is valid, that it is an economic issue," columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawaas** wrote **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The word 'economy' means production, consumption, money, agriculture, industry, buying and selling, working class, merchants and the country's natural resources. Then, there is no doubt that expatriates are important to the country and we should not underestimate their right. Some sell goods in the market, others deliver the goods to your home, some repair your car, others contribute to building your house or teach your son or transport people on a bus. Currently, the ministry is considering opening the country's doors to individuals for visit and residence. Definitely, huge human waves will rush towards Kuwait, not for the purpose of visiting, but to try to obtain work and residence permits.

"If the ministry cannot control the groups of expatriates in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh committing violations and various crimes, including drugs, how will it control the influx of expatriates once the door for visits is opened? The expatriate who intends to visit Kuwait to join his family, such as a young son, will not stay inside the home of his family or relatives, rather he will search for work.

"The economic truth is that these people will go to the markets to buy. Do not tell me that they will revive the markets, because once demand increases, prices will rise, and everyone will be harmed.

"The merchant class or building owners is the only class that hopes for an influx of expatriates into the country to rent their empty apartments. They have put pressure on the government. They have constructed buildings. Over the past years, they have been demanding that the country's gates be opened. They hope that people will live there so that they will not lose their money.

"Maybe they are right, but would it not have been better for Kuwaiti building owners to reduce rent for newly married Kuwaiti youths -- between KD150 and KD250, for example, instead of insisting that the rent should be KD400? If they reduced the rent, they would have gained, they would not have suffered losses, and the new expatriates would not have brought with them social and security problems."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

Other Voices

'Arabic' is Taqsha ... & the language of Shakespeare

By **Ahmad alsarraf**

Before Shakespeare, written English lacked uniformity in grammar and spelling. His works played a pivotal role in standardizing these aspects and enriching the language with a multitude of words and phrases.

Shakespeare introduced approximately 1,700 new words, along with enduring expressions like "break the ice" and "heart of gold." His influence extended to poetry, where he introduced a new standard known as "Blank," shaping the trajectory of English writers and poets.

Despite Shakespeare's profound impact on the English language, a considerable number of English speakers, totaling hundreds of millions, remain unfamiliar with his works without detriment to their linguistic competence. Shakespeare's greatness has endured, undiminished by the fact that not everyone is acquainted with his literary contributions.

In a separate context, Ahmad Taksha, former editor-in-chief of **Al-Qabas**, raised concerns about the vitality of Arabic in his article titled "Is Arabic Dying?" He questioned whether Arabic is gradually losing its prominence in various domains.

Taksha pondered the ability of individuals to name everyday items and concepts in Arabic, expressing

apprehension about Arabic's diminishing role in discourse, education, technology, and various professional fields.

These questions echo the concerns articulated by Ibrahim Al-Yaziji over a century ago, highlighting the widening gap between Arabic and contemporary existence.

Taksha emphasized the decline of Arabic in educational, professional, and technological spheres, observing that subjects like medicine, engineering, and pharmacy are often taught in foreign languages. He underscored the shrinking role of Arabic, especially when it comes to generating knowledge and technologies, rendering societies mere consumers rather than contributors to progress.

Taksha's inquiry extended to the rules of writing Arabic, pointing out distortions even among its writers. He questioned whether Arabic, with its limited competence, is retreating further from its historical role. Taksha challenged the notion that Arabic is dying by suggesting that it might become weak and flabby, settling for demographic spread, religious obligations, and literary familiarity.

These thought-provoking questions prompt reflection on the balance between preserving linguistic heritage and adapting to contemporary needs. The reluctance to evolve languages, driven by fear of compromising sacred texts, may hinder progress and contribute to stagnation. The article calls for a reassessment of the approach to language development and advocates for a more dynamic linguistic landscape.

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alsarraf

'Kuwait imports 80% foodstuff'

Next 5 years to see rise in commodities rates: study

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: A government report expects the world's economies to witness further increases in commodity prices in the coming period, especially in the food prices, which will put more pressure on countries that depend on food imports, or countries where climate or conflict shocks could lead to disrupt local food production, in addition to countries that suffer from macroeconomic fragility, pointing out the need to take urgent decisions to reduce the impact of global food price increases on the local market, especially since its cost will be high on the national economy, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The report indicated that food prices will continue to rise during the next five years, despite their stability, but at higher levels than they were before the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.

The same applies to the prices of agricultural commodities and grain prices, which are expected to witness stability in price increases, but in Levels exceed those before the Corona crisis.

Inflation

Data from the Central Administration of Statistics showed that consumer price indexes (inflation) in Kuwait rose by 3.79% during last November on an annual basis, and that the rise in inflation on an annual basis came from an increase in the prices of all the main groups affecting the movement of index numbers, especially foodstuffs.

Government data indicate that merchandise imports to Kuwait are concentrated in appliances, machinery, equipment, and industrial inputs, and that the country imports approximately 80% of food. They indicate that the steady growth in merchandise imports over the past ten years is reflected in the nature of the Kuwaiti economy, represented by the high per capita income and the limited industrial base.

Data also showed that cooperative societies are the most important outlet for selling food commodities and account for about 80% to 85% of the total food commodities in the local market. Therefore, any treatments to neutralize price increases in the local market must be centered on cooperative societies.

The sources added, the method of importing by ship is the most important channel for transporting merchandise imports to Kuwait, exceeding about 85% of total imports, while the method of shipping by land does not exceed 10%. This is evidence of the extent of the exposure of Kuwaiti imports to shipping methods via the sea and the associated disruption in the ports and shortage of containers.

Two drug addicts arrested

Fees imposed for vehicle shades

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: The Fatwa and Legislation Department has given the green light for the Kuwait Municipality to collect fees for car shades, reports Al-Anba daily.

This came at the request of the Municipality which said it has the right to impose fees after the issuance of a decision by the Municipal Council last May approving the list of awnings, which includes collecting a fee of half a dinar for every meter for erecting awnings, which is collected once in private housing areas, government agencies, private agencies, and public areas, investment, industrial and agricultural housing, and a 5 dinars fee per square meter annually outside the boundaries of the property for commercial use.

The "Fatwa" opinion also clarified the prohibition contained in Law 79/1995 that it is not permissible to increase fees except by a law that does not apply to new fees that are imposed for the first time, according to which the municipal council may, in accordance with Municipal Law 33/2016, impose fees according to the regulations regulating car parking shades as an amendment for previous fees.

Two drug addicts held: Capital security patrolmen have referred two young men to the General Administration for Drug Control after they were caught in the Sulaybiyah area in a state of drug abuse and in possession of narcotic substances and abuse tools.

The men were arrested on suspicion after they were caught for reckless driving. After the driver was told to pull over, the officer discovered both men – the driver and the person in the passenger seat were under the influence of drugs.

Police have seized from them a quantity of drugs and drug paraphernalia.

'Did it in fit of anger': The Hawalli police have arrested an unidentified expatriate

Deceased 'bedoun'

Identity case probed

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: The General Administration of Investigations and the General Administration of Criminal Investigations, in cooperation with the Central Committee for Illegal Residents, opened an extensive investigation into the case of a deceased bedoun who turned out to be of Egyptian nationality.

Al-Rai learned that the investigation came after a letter was received from the Ministry of Interior to the concerned authorities about the woman's papers before her death being classified as 'bedoun' and that she had children from a Kuwaiti husband and it was recorded in her children's birth certificates that the mother belonged to the bedoun category.

A security source explained that "the deceased had a reference and a civil number at the Ministry of Interior, and her residency was revoked six months after she left the country in 2000, in addition to having a record in the Central Committee for Illegal Residents," noting that witnesses to the marriage contract and the husband's relative are being summoned for interrogation.

The source added that the incident requires time and caution to collect information to find out the truth.

woman and referred her to the judiciary for threatening and insulting a Kuwaiti citizen, reports Al-Anba daily.

During interrogation the woman denied the allegation during the initial investigations, but after the detectives played the audio recording she admitted to the charge and added what she said was in a fit of anger.

This happened after the case was referred to the Maidan Hawalli police station.

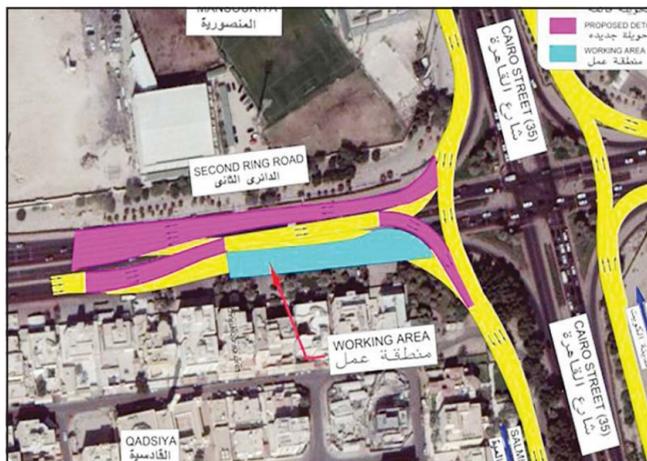
Lowest bidder to get rain drain repair deal

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: The Ministry of Public Works has asked the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to award the contract for the construction and maintenance of a rainwater drainage in West Abdullah Al-Mubarak to a contracting company that offered the lowest price -- KD5.6 million, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources explained that the contract will be awarded to the abovementioned company provided the budget is worked out, including the re-pricing of the item for making traffic diversions. Sources said the goal is to create a concrete rainwater drainage that connects from the collection tank of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare at the exit of the rainwater network in West Abdullah Al-Mubarak, particularly at the intersection of the Seventh Ring Road with Kabd Road and the main rain network at the intersection of the Seventh Ring Road with Jahra Road.

Illegal tents removed: The supervisory team at the Public Sanitation and Road Works Department in Ahmedi Governorate removed 17 illegal camping sites in Ahmedi in response to a complaint circulated on social media, reports Al-Anba daily.

The Municipality called on citizens wishing to camp this year to set up their tents only in the designated places; warning that its inspection teams will not hesitate in removing such tents. It advised the public to strictly comply with the rules and regulations for setting up camping sites to avoid legal problems.



Map shows place of road closure.

Temporary road closure

The Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport, in collaboration with the General Traffic Department, has declared the initiation of a detour on the Second Ring Road, specifically in the vicinity of the Mansouriya and Al-Qadisiya regions, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This diversion aims to facilitate the establishment of final roads and servic-

es in the area, as per the outlined plan.

The diversion is scheduled to commence at dawn on Friday, Dec 29. Additionally, PART has issued a notice regarding the temporary closure of Al-Ghazali Street in both directions for four hours each day (from one in the morning until five in the morning) Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.



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Pope Tawadros of Alexandria among top leaders to send greetings

Congratulations continue to pour in over Amir assuming top office

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a congratulatory cable from Jordanian Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah II, expressing his congratulations to His Highness the Amir on assuming the top office.

In the cable, the Jordanian Crown Prince wished His Highness the Amir good health and further success in leading the State of Kuwait to a much prosperous and promising future.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply cable to the Crown Prince, expressing utmost appreciation for the heartfelt

sentiments.

Kazakhstan

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad received a cable of congratulations from President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, on occasion of assumption of office, wishing him success in his endeavors.

The president further wished His Highness the Amir good health and wellbeing.

His Highness the Amir sent a cable in response to the president's kind sentiments.

Tatarstan

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal received a cable of congratulations from President of the Republic of Tatarstan Rustam Minnikhanov, expressing his congratulations to His Highness on assuming the top office.

In the cable, he wished him good health and further success in leading Kuwait into a much prosperous and promising future.

In turn, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to Tatarstan's president expressing his utmost appreciation for the kind words and heartfelt sentiments.

Alexandria

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal received congratulatory cable from Pope Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, expressing his congratulations to His Highness on assuming the top office.

In the cable, Pope of Alexandria wished His Highness the Amir good health and further success in leading the State of Kuwait to a much prosperous and promising future.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply cable, expressing utmost appreciation

for the heartfelt sentiments.

Iraq

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal on Tuesday was congratulated for assuming power by Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Al-Sudani, wishing him success as he seeks to place the nation firmly on the path towards prosperity and development.

The Iraqi prime minister expressed his warm sentiments in a cable he sent to His Highness the Amir, who reciprocated the kind gesture in his reply thanking the Iraqi prime minister for his well wishes.

Italy

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal received a congratulatory cable from Italy's President Sergio Mattarella, expressing his congratulations to His Highness on assuming the top office.

In the cable, the Italian leader wished His Highness the Amir good health and further success in leading the State of Kuwait to a much prosperous and promising future.

His Highness the Amir sent a reply cable to the Italian president, expressing utmost appreciation for the heartfelt sentiments.

PAFN and KISR sign five-year contract for food lab services

Bid to ensure sustainability of food safety

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) has signed a five-year contract with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) to provide advisory and operational services to the authority's food laboratories.

The contract was signed by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors and the Director General of PAFN Dr. Reem Al-Fulaij on behalf of PAFN, and the Acting Director General of KISR Dr. Mishaan Al-Otaibi on behalf of KISR, in the presence of some officials and specialists from both sides.

In this regard, Dr. Reem Al-Fulaij explained that the signing of the contract reflects the keenness of PAFN to operate its laboratories in accordance with the latest systems, practices and international standards and to keep pace with the developments in the field of laboratory testing.

PAFN considers KISR as an ideal national partner because it is an important scientific and research reference in its fields of specialization.

The contract, which was signed on Tuesday, December 26, is valid for a period of five years. It is concerned with providing advisory and operational services to food laboratories affiliated with PAFN. It includes many provisions based on which the work in the laboratories can be developed, such as the provision of global expertise, training of local technicians, establishment of an information base for collecting food samples and conducting analyses

based on the principle of risk assessment, and develop analytical systems and procedures in line with the latest international standards to keep pace with the developments in the field of laboratories.

Dr. Al-Fulaij praised the efforts exerted by PAFN to ensure food security in the country.

In addition, the Acting Director General of KISR Dr. Mishaan Al-Otaibi explained that signing the contract with PAFN comes within the framework of supporting the authority's efforts to ensure the sustainability of food safety and enhance community nutrition. KISR's efforts in this regard began about ten years ago, when KISR cooperated with the Kuwait Municipality in many research projects including KISR providing technical assistance to establish a central food control laboratory, determining device specifications and analysis protocols, and establishing a risk-

based system for food samples and their analysis. It also designed the central food control laboratory to conduct food analyzes and ensure their compliance with GCC and international standards.

After the transfer of the central laboratory from the Kuwait Municipality to PAFN, which was established in 2013 and began its work in 2015, KISR was keen to provide its services to enhance the laboratory's capabilities and equipment. The signing of this contract comes as a result of the efforts made by both sides to develop cooperation. KISR provides scientific and technical consultations related to laboratory equipment and operation, as well as the necessary monitoring policies to judge the extent to which food items - imported and local - conform to standard specifications and are fit for human consumption before authorizing their circulation.



A flyer of the event

'From 28 Dec to 1 Jan 2024'

LuLu Hypermarket holds Year-End Crazy Sale

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retail-chain in the region is gearing up to hold its 'Year-End Crazy Sale', to ring out the old year and ring in the new year, from 28 December to 1 January 2024 at all the hypermarket's outlets in the country.

The Year-End Crazy Sale features amazing discounts on groceries, including fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, and fish, as well as significant price drops on essential household items, and exceptional prices on a wide range of products across various departments.

LuLu Hypermarket apparently pulls out all stops for its Year-End Crazy Sale and offers captivating discounts and incredible prizes through a variety of exciting events. For instance, for five days from 28 December to 1 January, 600 lucky winners could take away their trolley load of items absolutely free. Moreover, during the same five-day period anyone purchasing 20 items would receive 20 vouchers that could be redeemed on purchase of items from fashion, footwear, or ladies' bags.

Additionally, during the 'crazy sale' period, discounts of up to 70 percent is being offered on items from select categories that allow customers to make substantial savings on their favorite products. Special offers are also available on carpets, making it the perfect time to upgrade home décor for the new year. Shoppers could also purchase gifts for their loved ones during the year-end gifting season as there are

amazing discounts being offered on a wide range of toys and gifts.

Special promotions are also held on popular hot food items at the hypermarket, providing customers with the perfect chance to enjoy their favorite dishes at discounted prices. In addition, the year-end sale period is being made crazily irresistible by never-before prices on digital devices and accessories, including on mobile phones, TVs, laptops, electronic gadgets, wearables, IT accessories, and more, ensuring customers could find fantastic deals on the latest technology.

To further enhance the shopping experience, a special Midnight Sale will be held on 30 and 31 December enabling customers to shop-till-they-drop, as there will be exclusive offers on a wide range of items only during the extended hours.

Additionally on 31 December, and on 1 January, customers have the chance to win surprise gifts with their purchases, enhancing the excitement and satisfaction of shopping at LuLu Hypermarket.

The 'Year-end Crazy Sale' is LuLu Hypermarket's gesture of thank you to all its valued customers for their patronage in 2023. It is also a promise to shoppers that in the year 2024 the hypermarket would continue to offer an amazing shopping experience, with exciting promotional events, tantalizing offers and discounts, as well as making available the widest range of finest quality products at highly competitive prices.

Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
NOW	NOW
BHD 57.173/-net	BHD 128.000/-net
Weekends (Thursday & Friday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
NOW	NOW
BHD 61.000/-net	BHD 136.198/-net

Promo period from 19th - 31st December 2023

Terms & conditions apply*



KUNA photo
KRCS inaugurates the establishment of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Complex in Taiz.

'Kuwait committed to supporting Yemenis'

KRCS lays foundation stone for comprehensive complex in Taiz

ADEN, Dec 27, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society delegation visiting Yemen marked a significant milestone as they laid the foundation stone for the comprehensive complex named after the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah in the Al-Shamaytain District in the Taiz Governorate. This initiative is part of the ongoing "Kuwait by Your Side" campaign, now in its ninth year.

Anwar Al-Hasawi, the Vice President of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, who heads the visiting delegation to Yemen, emphasized the importance of this vital project in the context of the longstanding cooperation between Kuwait and Yemen, especially in the realms of relief and development. The project, funded by the Kuwaiti Giving Initiative and under the supervision of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and Dr. Suad Muhammad Al-Sabah, aims to establish a comprehensive facility featuring a medical center, a school, an orphanage, and a mosque in an area known for its high population density and lack of services.

Al-Hasawi underlined Kuwait's commitment to supporting the Yemeni people through government efforts, civil society, and relief organizations. He expressed hope that the complex would become a fully integrated urban center, addressing the needs of the local population and contributing to social development.

The Director General of the Al-Shamaytain Directorate, Abdulaziz Al-Shaibani, expressed deep gratitude to Kuwait for its generous support, highlighting the positive

impact of Kuwait's humanitarian and development assistance to Yemen since the 1960s. He emphasized the significance of the project in providing essential services to the local community, fostering development, stability, and alleviating the citizens' suffering.

Shawqi Baazeem, the head of the Istijabah Foundation implementing the project, detailed the extensive complex, covering an area of 6,000 square meters. The complex includes a school with modern specifications, a health center, a mosque, a home for orphan care, and a Women's Development and Development Center. This comprehensive facility is expected to benefit 16,000 Yemeni citizens, contributing to improving living conditions and providing educational and healthcare opportunities.

The Kuwait Red Crescent delegation, comprising Anwar Al-Hasawi, Abdul Rahman Al-Aoun, Shehab AlKharaz, and Fawaz Al-Mazrouei, has been actively inaugurating various projects during their visit to Taiz Governorate. This includes the "Youssef and Noura" Medical Center in the "Al-Misrah" District and the "Khaled Al-Saqr" Hospital Model in the Jabal Habashi District. Additionally, they launched a medical-surgical camp to perform 150 free surgeries in the hospital. The delegation plans to continue its visit to other Yemeni governorates, opening and inaugurating additional development projects while monitoring the progress of ongoing initiatives in the governorates of Shabwa, Hadhramaut, and Ma'rib in the coming days.

LOCAL

Number of substations in residential project is 36

MEW receives request for electricity connection in South Khaitan project

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy announced the start of receiving requests to connect electricity to 43 houses in South Khaitan Residential Project, Block 2.

The ministry indicated that it has started receiving requests from citizens for the connection of electricity to their houses within the project.

Power will be delivered to plots starting from 184 to 189, then plots from 377 to 380, then plots starting from 411 to 414, plots starting from 446 to 452, plots from 460 to 480, and then voucher No. 191.

Meanwhile, sources from the electricity field indicated that the number of substations in the Khaitan residential project is 36, with four electrical transformers with a capacity of 1,250 kilovolts for each station. The ministry has completed the work of these

substations, and the last two substations are scheduled to be launched soon.

It is worth mentioning that the contract for the establishment of the 36 substations was signed on January 24, 2023. It is related to the construction, manufacture, supply and installation of secondary transformers, and the installation and welding of medium and low pressure cables in the South Khaitan residential project.

Major events in Kuwait for 2023

KUNA starts issuing its year-end reports on local, Arab, regional, and world major events for 2023



KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27, (KUNA): Kuwait witnessed many local events in 2023 that covered many domains. Following are major events throughout the year:

Kuwait Amir:

Jan 26: Amiri order accepting the resignation of the government and assigning His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his cabinet to act as caretaker government.

Feb 6: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, issued directives to dispatch aid and medical equipment through airplanes to Turkey after a devastating earthquake that hit the southern part of the country.

Feb 9: As per the directions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti cabinet pledged USD 30 million in aid of the quake-struck people in Turkey and Syria.

March 4: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah left for Italy on private visit.

March 5: An Amiri order appointed His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as Prime Minister and tasked him with forming government.

March 19: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah returned home after private visit to Italy.

May 9: His Highness the Amir sponsored the Amir Football Cup's final game between Kazma SC and Kuwait SC. He was represented by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Sabah.

May 24: His Highness the Amir sponsored award ceremony of the Informatics Prize 2022 at Bayan Palace, and was represented by His Highness the Crown Prince.

June 7: An Amiri Order was published accepting resignation of His Highness the Prime Minister and his government, assigning them to act as caretakers.

June 13: An Amiri Order published naming His Highness

Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Sabah as Prime Minister and assigning him to form a government.

June 14: His Highness the Amir headed to Italy on a private visit.

June 24: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah returned home from Italy's trip.

Sept 2: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah headed to Italy on a private visit.

Sept 9: His Highness the Amir ordered concerned bodies to send relief to Morocco following serious of quakes shaking the southern part of the country.

Sept 12: His Highness the Amir returned home from Italy trip.

Nov 29: His Highness the Amir was admitted to the hospital due to an emergency health problem to receive the necessary treatment and undergo medical examinations.

Dec 16: The Amiri Diwan announced demise of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and government announced closure of public and private institutions for three days and a 40-day mourning period.

Dec 18: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah took oath at a special National Assembly session becoming the 17th Amir of the State of Kuwait.

Dec. 20: His Highness the Amir accepted government's resignation.

Kuwait Crown Prince:

Jan 16: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Chairman of the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences (IOMS) and the accompanying delegation participating in the 13th conference of the (IOMS), held under the auspices of His Highness the Crown Prince from 15 to 17 January.

Jan 16: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace visiting King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and the accompanying delegation.

To be continued

Indians top

Continued from Page 1

own lives are males and 38.3 percent are females; while married people were most likely to commit suicide at 50.6 percent; compared to 39.9 percent among single people, 8.2 percent among divorcees and 1.3 percent among widows.

On the nationalities of those who committed and attempted to commit suicide; Indians topped the list with 33.9 percent, followed by Kuwaitis at 20 percent, Nepalese at 8.8 percent, Bangladeshis at 5.9 percent, Egyptians at 5.9 percent, Sri Lankans at 4.4 percent and Syrians at 2.2 percent.

On the age group, the highest was among those aged 26 to 36 years at 40.5 percent; while the lowest are those aged 60 and above at 2.2 percent.

On the nature of jobs, the highest was domestic workers with 32.1 percent, followed by those engaged in craft professions with 14.2 percent.

Meanwhile, a reliable source told the daily that the statistical study was conducted under the supervision of Public Prosecutor Saad Al-Safran. The source added that the prosecution carried out the statistics for the first time in order to determine the causes of suicide and address the issue, instead of just limiting themselves to investigations.

Al-Saadoun submits

Continued from Page 1

of the existence of laws that protect their freedom, and guarantee the correct and fair implementation of such laws.

On the other hand, Sociology Professor Ali Al-Tarrah called for suspending the Constitution and revising positions in light of the regional and international circumstances. He thinks Kuwait is not in tune with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) strategies and he is afraid that the country hinders the implementation of these strategies. He underscored the need to adhere to the GCC body, especially since the international treaties are no longer effective. He argued that dependence on foreign powers is not guaranteed; citing as an example the case of Ukraine, which did not receive protection in its war against Russia.

In another development, the parliamentary Education, Culture and Guidance Affairs Committee on Wednesday discussed the factors that led to deterioration of education with the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

Rapporteur of the committee MP Fahd Al-Masoud confirmed that a number of decisions were taken during the meeting; such as asking the National Center for Developing Education to provide the committee with the recent study on the position of education in Kuwait, copy of the draft prepared by the Higher Council of Education to review and discuss it, and for the senior officials to present their analysis of problems in the educational sector and their recommendations to address these problems. He disclosed the committee will meet again on Jan 11, 2024 to continue the discussions.

The Real Estate and Housing Affairs Committee on Wednesday deliberated on the proposed amendment of the law on the establishment of Kuwait

Credit Bank. Representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Kuwait, Kuwait Investment Authority and Kuwait Banks Union attended the meeting.

'Kuwait's solidarity

Continued from Page 1

Israel launched heavy strikes across central and southern Gaza overnight and into Wednesday after broadening its offensive against Hamas to more areas where the military had told Palestinians to seek shelter earlier in the war.

Residents reported heavy bombing in the built-up Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza, in the southern city of Khan Younis and in the southern town of Rafah, areas where tens of thousands have sought refuge as much of northern Gaza was pounded to rubble.

"It was a night of hell. We haven't seen such bombing since the start of the war," said Rami Abu Mosab, speaking from the Bureij camp, where he has been sheltering since fleeing his home in northern Gaza.

He said warplanes flew overhead and gunfire and explosions echoed from the eastern edge of the camp - which, like others in Gaza, houses refugees from the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation and their descendants and now resembles other densely populated neighborhoods.

A home near Abu Mosab's shelter was hit, but no one was able to reach the area, he said. Mobile phone and internet service was down for several hours before being gradually restored on Wednesday, the latest of several such outages that have complicated rescue efforts.

With much of northern Gaza leveled, Palestinians fear a similar fate awaits other areas, including Khan Younis, where Israeli forces launched ground operations in early December, and a cluster of built-up refugee camps in central Gaza where the focus has shifted this week.

The military's latest evacuation orders cover an area of central Gaza that was home to nearly 90,000 people before the war and now shelters more than 61,000 displaced people, mostly from the north, according to the U.N. humanitarian office.

Israel has said the bombing campaign and ground offensive are necessary to dismantle Hamas and prevent a repeat of its Oct. 7 attack, in which militants broke through Israel's formidable defenses and killed some 1,200 people - mostly civilians - and abducted around 240. An estimated 129 remain in captivity after dozens were freed.

Achieving its goals, Israel has said, will take "many months."

Its offensive is already one of the most devastating military campaigns in recent history. More than 21,100 Palestinians, most of them women and children, have been killed, including nearly 200 people in the last 24 hours, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza. The count doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants.

In Khan Younis, the Palestinian Red Crescent said Israel struck a residential building next to the Al-Amal Hospital, which is run by the rescue service. Health Ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra said at least 20 people were killed and dozens more wounded, with

the death toll likely to rise.

Some 85% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million Palestinians have fled their homes, crowding into smaller and smaller areas in recent weeks as the ground offensive has expanded. For many Palestinians, the exodus has echoes of the mass displacement in 1948 that they refer to as the Nakba, or catastrophe.

U.N. officials say a quarter of the territory's population is starving under Israel's siege, which allows in a trickle of food, water, fuel, medicine and other supplies. Last week, the U.N. Security Council called for immediately speeding up aid deliveries, but there has been little sign of change.

U.S. calls for Israel to curb civilian casualties, and international pressure for a cease-fire, have also had little effect.

Israel blames Hamas for the high civilian death toll in Gaza because the militants operate in dense, residential areas. The military says it has killed thousands of militants, without presenting evidence, and that 164 of its soldiers have been killed since the ground offensive began.

The war has ignited other fronts across the Middle East.

Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group have repeatedly traded fire along the border. An Israeli strike on a family home overnight killed a Hezbollah fighter, his brother and his sister-in-law, local officials and state media said Wednesday. Another family member was wounded.

In the occupied West Bank, Israeli forces killed at least six Palestinians during an overnight raid in the built-up refugee camp of Nur Shams, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. More than 300 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since the start of the war, mostly in confrontations with Israeli forces during raids and protests.

As fears of a wider conflict mount, the U.S., Qatar and Egypt have been working on a new agreement to release more hostages. U.S. President Joe Biden spoke with the ruling emir of Qatar on Tuesday.

Hamas says no more hostages will be released until Israel ends the war, and that it will trade the remaining captives for large numbers of Palestinian prisoners, including high-profile militants. Israel has rejected both demands.

Egypt has floated a proposal to end the war that would include the release of all hostages held in Gaza and all Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, as well as the establishment of a government of Palestinian technocrats to administer Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

It has received a cool reception from both sides, but neither rejected it outright.

Kuwait envoy

Continued from Page 1

within the framework of a series of Kuwaiti charitable works in Jordan, due to the strong relations that bind the two countries."

He added, "Kuwaiti charitable work continues in Jordan wherever needed, and its features appear in the Arab world and globally."

Ambassador Al-Marri stressed the importance of the project in serving the educational process in Jordan, noting that the project constitutes a gesture of gratitude to Jordan and its people.

Council panel refers 4 items out of 12 on its agenda to top body

2 members' proposal on bicycle track returns

By Inass Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: At its meeting recently headed by member Dr. Hassan Kamal, the Technical Committee of the Municipal Council referred four items out of 12 on its agenda to the executive body. These include a letter from the Director General of the Environment Public Authority regarding the invitation to the sixth meeting of the second session of the 13th legislative term of the Municipal Council, the request of the Ministry of Interior to allocate a site for establishment of the new headquarters of the Nuwaiseeb border checkpoint, the request to change the location of the National Private School, as well as the request of Kuwait Commute regarding the Municipal Council's initiative for setting building regulations for new buildings to facilitate access for people with disabilities.

The committee returned to the executive branch the proposal of members Sharifa Al-Shalfan and Ismail Behbehani for amending the Municipal Council's decision regarding the bicycle track in order to update their response in light of the pedestrian crossing methods approved by it.

Support

The committee also referred to the executive branch the proposal to support small and medium enterprises during the camping period in coordination with the National Fund for SME Development, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition and Environment Public Authority.

Website in both Arabic and English

Panel tied to preventing trafficking in persons launches its own website

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice and Vice Chairman of the Permanent National Committee concerned with implementing the National Strategy to Prevent Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, Hashem Al-Qallaf announced that the committee has launched its own website in Arabic and English within the ministry's website system, reports Al-Anba daily.

Al-Qallaf stressed that launching the website in Arabic and English is within the framework of the commitment to develop work mechanisms, and provide data and information related to combating trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.

He said the website includes a comprehensive definition of the committee's work, powers, purpose and vision, and legislation and agreements in the field of combating trafficking in persons, as well as the role played by shelters in protecting

victims, receiving them and providing accommodation for victims and other people who have taken refuge in them, and special reporting methods in this regard.

He also emphasized the importance of this website in community awareness, which is the most prominent aspect of the national strategy, as the website includes the brochures that the committee prepared and issued, as well as the activities that the committee implemented like conferences, seminars or workshops -- whether at the national or regional level -- in accordance with the committee's terms of reference.

He stated that special accounts for the committee have been launched on social media sites X and Instagram, with the aim of publishing educational and awareness-raising materials for the committee and announcing all of its activities with the aim of raising social awareness.

It also referred to the executive branch the letter submitted by the Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters regarding adding the activity of a training institute in preserved historical buildings in coordination with it.

The committee kept five items on its agenda, which include the request of Environment Public Authority to deduct an area of 15,000 square meters from the space allocated to the warehouse of the Ministry of Communications in Shuwaikh and allocate it for expanding the Environment Public Authority's site in Shuwaikh Industrial Zone, and the request of Public Authority for Industry to allocate an area to establish a plant for recycling liquid industrial waste in Sabhan Industrial Area, Block 1. An invitation was sent to the Environment Public Authority, the Public Authority for Industry, the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources, the Ministry of Public Works, and the General Traffic Department to discuss

the request.

The committee discussed the request of National Real Estate Company to add some businesses to the buildings it runs on the coastal area. The request will be discussed in the presence of representatives of Kuwait Municipality.

The committee discussed the request of establishing a causeway to link Al-Mutlaa Residential City to Kuwait City. This request will be discussed after inviting the relevant institutions including the General Traffic Department, Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of State for Housing Affairs, the Public Authority for Road and Transportation (PART) and the concerned department at Kuwait Municipality.

The committee discussed the request submitted by the Ministry of Justice to allocate a plot to establish a Family Court in Granada Block 3. The discussion will be held in the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Justice and the relevant department at Kuwait Municipality.

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From 28 to 31.12.2023 \$3.190	From 28 to 01.01.2024 \$2.690	From 28 to 31.12.2023 \$4.250	From 28 to 31.12.2023 \$4.890	
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World News Roundup

Obituary

Germany mourns

German elder statesman Schaeuble passes away

BERLIN, Dec 27, (AP): **Wolfgang Schaeuble**, who helped negotiate German reunification in 1990 and as finance minister was a central figure in the austerity-heavy effort to drag Europe out of its debt crisis two decades later, has died. He was 81.

Schaeuble died at home on Tuesday evening, his family told German news agency dpa on Wednesday.

Schaeuble became Chancellor Angela Merkel's finance minister in October 2009, just before revelations about Greece's ballooning budget deficit set off the crisis that engulfed the continent and threatened to destabilize world's financial order.

A longtime supporter of greater European unity, he helped lead a yearslong effort that aimed for deeper integration and a stricter rulebook. But Germany drew criticism for its emphasis on austerity and a perceived lack of generosity.

After eight years as finance minister, the conservative Schaeuble cemented his status as an elder statesman by becoming the German parliament's speaker - the last step in a long front-line political career that saw him overcome daunting setbacks. He died as the country's longest-serving lawmaker.



Schaeuble

A mentally disturbed man shot Schaeuble at an election rally in 1990, just after reunification. He was paralyzed from the waist down and used a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

He returned to work weeks later and, the following year, was credited with helping sway Germany's parliament to move the reunited nation's capital from Bonn to Berlin.

Schaeuble "shaped our country for more than half a century: as a lawmaker, minister and parliament speaker," Chancellor Olaf Scholz wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "With him, Germany is losing a sharp thinker, a passionate politician and a combative democrat."

Admired

Merkel said Schaeuble was a "political teacher" when she was a young minister in the 1990s and "one of the anchors" of her Cabinets. She said she "admired his discipline, including toward himself."

European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde, who worked with Schaeuble as French finance minister and head of the International Monetary Fund, said "he was one of the most influential European leaders of his generation."

From the early days of Europe's debt crisis, Schaeuble pushed for tougher rules to keep government deficits under control. Berlin initially held out against bailing out Greece and other debt-laden countries, and critics charged that Germany's reluctance to move increased the price tag.

Germany stamped its mark on the rescue effort, insisting on tough conditions such as budget cuts in exchange for helping struggling countries and keeping them under pressure to comply. In 2012, Schaeuble insisted that European countries "are on the right track - in reducing their deficits, in improving their productivity and so their competitiveness."

"That is the decisive thing, and we cannot spare any country this through supposed generosity or solidarity," he said. "That is not obstinacy - it is understanding that democratic majorities only make unpleasant decisions when there is no easier alternative."

When a left-wing Greek government under Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras was elected in 2015 on pledges to scrap the painful spending cuts and tax hikes demanded by creditors, Schaeuble took a tough line. Later that year, he suggested that Greece could take a five-year "timeout" from the euro, but fell in line with Merkel's insistence that a so-called "Grexit" was off the table. Yanis Varoufakis, who sparred with Schaeuble as Tsipras' first finance minister, wrote that "history will judge him harshly, but no more harshly than those who succumbed to his disastrous project and policies."

Seeking wider financial reform, Schaeuble pushed with mixed results for a levy on banks to ensure that they pay the costs of future crises, and for an international tax on transactions. He drew criticism for an abrupt and unilateral German ban on some speculative trading practices, which unsettled markets.

In Germany, Schaeuble took pride in balancing the budget for the first time in decades. Critics largely outside Germany contended that fiscal restraint held back the recovery of the currency union as a whole.

Schaeuble was born Sept. 18, 1942, in Freiburg. He worked as a tax official in his native southwestern state of Baden-Wuerttemberg before winning election to the West German parliament in 1972.

He first joined West Germany's Cabinet in 1984, serving as Chancellor Helmut Kohl's chief of staff for five years before becoming interior minister.

In that job, Schaeuble was a key West German negotiator as the country headed toward reunification with the communist east after the Nov. 9, 1989, fall of the Berlin Wall.

Unification

He helped ready the treaty that created the legal framework for unification on Oct. 3, 1990.

Nine days after reunification, Schaeuble was shot while campaigning for the united country's first election in Oppenau, in southwestern Germany.

An assailant with a history of mental problems fired a shot into Schaeuble's spine that left him paralyzed. Another bullet hit his face.

Schaeuble quickly returned to politics. In 1991, he delivered an impassioned plea to parliament for post-reunification Germany to return to its traditional capital, Berlin.

"Deciding for Berlin is a decision to overcome the division of Europe," he said. Lawmakers narrowly backed the move.

From 1991 to 2000, Schaeuble led the parliamentary group of the conservative Union bloc, dominated by Kohl's Christian Democratic Union. He finally became CDU party leader after Kohl's 16-year stint as chancellor ended in a 1998 election defeat.

However, he resigned in February 2000 after becoming implicated in a party financing scandal surrounding Kohl. Merkel became the CDU leader.

Schaeuble was later touted as a candidate for Germany's largely ceremonial presidency, but was passed over as Merkel chose former International Monetary Fund chief Horst Koehler.

He returned to the Cabinet when Merkel became chancellor in 2005 for his second stint as interior minister. Schaeuble is survived by his wife, Ingeborg, and four children.



Tourists make a selfie in front of the Eiffel Tower, Wednesday, Dec. 27, 2023 in Paris. The Eiffel Tower was shut down to visitors Wednesday because of a strike over contract negotiations, the day the Paris monument marks 100 years since the death of its creator, Gustave Eiffel. Tourists can still access the glass-enclosed esplanade beneath the tower, but access to the 300-meter (984-foot) landmark itself is closed until further notice. (AP)

Eiffel Tower closed on founder's death centennial while workers strike

The Eiffel Tower was shut down to visitors Wednesday because of a strike over contract negotiations, the day the Paris monument marks 100 years since the death of its creator, Gustave Eiffel.

Tourists can still access the glass-enclosed esplanade beneath the tower, but access to the 300-meter (984-foot) landmark itself is closed until further notice, according to an Eiffel Tower spokesperson.

The strike was declared ahead of contract ne-

gotiations with the city of Paris, which owns the 134-year-old monument, the spokesperson said. Union representatives did not immediately respond for comment, and it was unclear how long the strike would last.

One of the world's most-visited sites, the Eiffel Tower is typically open 365 days a year - though it sees occasional strikes - and is expected to play a central role in the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The attraction normally sees about 20,000 visitors per day this time of year, said the spokesperson, who was not authorized to be publicly named according to tower management policy.

A special music show marking the death of Gustave Eiffel on Dec. 27, 1923, was still scheduled to air on social networks and French television Wednesday night because it was prerecorded, the spokesperson said. (AP)

America

Democrats more assured

GOP skeptical over vote integrity

WASHINGTON, Dec 27, (AP): With the GOP presidential primaries just about to start, many Republicans aren't certain that votes will be counted correctly in their contest, as pessimism spreads about the future of both the Democratic and Republican parties, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

About one-third of Republicans say they have a "great deal" or "quite a bit" of confidence that votes in the Republican primary elections and caucuses will be counted correctly. About three in 10 Republicans report a "moderate" amount of confidence, and 32% say they have "only a little" or "none at all." In contrast, 72% of Democrats have high confidence their party will count votes accurately in its primary contests. Democrats are also slightly more likely than Republicans to have a high level of confidence in the Republican Party's vote count being accurate.

Republicans continue to be broadly doubtful about votes being counted accurately - in the early contests or beyond them. About one-quarter of Republicans say they have at least "quite a bit" of confidence that the votes in the 2024 presidential election will be counted accurately, significantly lower than Democrats. Slightly fewer than half of U.S. adults overall (46%) believe the same, which is in line with an AP-NORC poll conducted in June.

The skepticism among Republicans comes after years of former President Donald Trump falsely blaming his 2020 loss on election fraud. Federal and state election officials and Trump's own attorney general have said there is no credible evidence the

election was tainted. The former president's allegations of fraud were also roundly rejected by courts, including by judges Trump appointed.

"Nothing will be fair because the last election was rigged," said Julie Duggan, 32, of Chicago, a Trump voter, referring to 2020. "I don't trust any of them at this point."

The AP-NORC poll found a widespread lack of trust in both major political parties among U.S. adults overall.

About one-quarter of U.S. adults say they have "only a little" confidence or "none at all" that both the Democratic Party and Republican Party have a fair process for selecting a presidential nominee. About half of independents have that low level of confidence in both party's processes, compared with one-quarter of Republicans and 19% of Democrats.

Pessimistic

Slightly fewer than half of U.S. adults - 46% - say they are pessimistic about the way the country's leaders are chosen.

About half of U.S. adults are pessimistic about the future of the Republican Party, including one-third of Republicans and 45% of independents. The poll found 45% of U.S. adults are pessimistic about the future of the Democratic Party, including about one-quarter of Democrats and 41% of independents.

"The way they're spending our money, sending it all over the world and not protecting our people here in the United States of America," said Gary Jackson, a 65-year-old retired trucker and Republican in Boise, Idaho. "Right now, I'm not impressed

with either party."

Christine Allen, a political independent in Gambrills, Maryland, sees her state's last governor, Larry Hogan, a moderate Republican, as a model for the country. But Hogan refused to run in the GOP presidential primary, which she sees as emblematic of how the two-party system prevents talented leaders from holding office.

"Everybody right now is a bunch of children, stomping their feet until they get their way," Allen, 44, said. "Everybody's at fault here. There's no winners."

Nonetheless, Allen thinks the primaries will be fair. "They're fairer than the Electoral College," she said.

Even those who identify with the two political parties are uneasy about whom their organizations will nominate. A recent AP-NORC poll found that Democrats and Republicans are also not especially confident that their party's primary contests will result in a candidate who can win the general election in November. Additionally, there are some doubts on both sides that the emerging candidates will represent their party's views or Americans overall.

Only three in 10 Democrats say they are confident the Democratic Party's process will result in a candidate whose views represent most Americans. About one-quarter of Democrats believe the process will produce a candidate whose views represent their own. Similarly, about three in 10 Republicans say the GOP process will produce a candidate who represents a majority of Americans. About one-third of Republicans expect they'll get a nominee whose views represent their own.



Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley speaks during a town hall, Dec. 18, 2023, in Nevada, Iowa. Haley is betting her 2024 candidacy on winning South Carolina. But the politics of Haley's home state have shifted far to the right since she was governor. That threatens her ability to tap into her local roots to notch the victory she has promised. (AP)



Duntsova



Klymenko

Europe

Presidential hopeful loses appeal:

A Russian politician calling for peace in Ukraine on Wednesday lost her appeal against election officials' refusal to accept her nomination for the country's presidential race that President Vladimir Putin is all but certain to win.

Former regional legislator **Yekaterina Duntsova** has promoted her vision of a "humane" Russia "that's peaceful, friendly and ready to cooperate with everyone on the principle of respect."

The tight control that Putin has established during 24 years in power makes his reelection in March's presidential vote all but assured. Prominent critics who could challenge him are either in prison or living abroad, and most independent media have been banned. Over the weekend, Russia's Central Election Commission refused to accept Duntsova's initial nomination by a group of supporters, citing errors in the paperwork, including spelling.

On Wednesday, Russia's Supreme Court rejected Duntsova's appeal against the commission's decision.

After losing appeal, Duntsova said she would start working on the creation of her own political party that would stand for "peace, freedom and democracy." "We will win the right to live without fear, speak freely and feel confident about the future," she declared on her messaging app channel.

Duntsova has asked the leaders of the liberal Yabloko political party to nominate her as a candidate, but its founder Grigory Yavlinsky has cold shouldered the idea.

A number of Russian parties have named their candidates. (AP)

Russian attack kills 5: Russia fired almost 50 Shahed drones at targets in Ukraine and shelled a train station where more than 100 civilians were gathered to catch a train to Kyiv, Ukrainian officials said Wednesday.

day. The barrages killed at least five people and knocked out power in most of the southern city of Kherson.

The aerial barrage came a day after Ukrainian warplanes damaged a Russian ship moored in the Black Sea off Crimea

as both sides' soldiers struggle to make much progress along the front line of the 22-month war.

Overnight, the Kremlin's forces launched an artillery and drone bombardment of the Kherson region just as some 140 civilians

were waiting for a train at the region's capital city of the same name, according to Ukrainian Interior Minister **Ihor Klymenko**. The shelling killed one policeman and injured two other police officers, as well as two civilians.

More than 100 people who were waiting for the train at the time of the attack arrived in Kyiv on Wednesday morning, national rail operator Ukrzaliznytsia said.

The attack on the Kherson region and its capital hit residential areas and a mall as well as striking the power grid, leaving around 70% of households in Kherson city without electricity during the winter cold, regional Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said.

It was not immediately possible to estimate when power might be restored, he said. (AP)

Training jet crashes: A Greek air force pilot was killed Wednesday when his training jet crashed in the countryside outside an air base near the southern town of Kalamata, state-run ERT television said.

The two-seater T-2 aircraft was carrying only one crew member, ERT said, and crashed as it was coming in to land.

Rescue teams cordoned off the area of the crash, where there were no buildings. The U.S.-made T-2 Buckeye first flew in the late 1950s and has served as the Greek air force's main training plane for decades. It had been scheduled to be withdrawn from service in the coming months. (AP)



In this photo released by the Romanian Emergency Services Prahova (ISU Prahova), a guesthouse is in flames, in Tohani, Romania, Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2023. The death toll from a massive fire at a guesthouse in Romania rose to seven people Wednesday morning, including at least two children, authorities said. (AP)

Asia

New policy goals set

North Korea leader Kim boasts of achievements

SEOUL, South Korea, Dec 27, (Agencies): North Korean leader **Kim Jong Un** praised what he called achievements and victories that strengthened national power and boosted the country's prestige this year, as he opened a key political meeting to set new policy goals for 2024, state media reported Wednesday.

Experts said that during this week's year-end plenary meeting of the ruling Workers' Party, North Korea would likely hype its progress in arms development because the country lacks economic achievements amid persistent international sanctions and pandemic-related economic hardships.



Kim

In his opening-day speech at the meeting that began Tuesday, Kim defined 2023 "as a year of great turn and great change both in name and reality, in which (North Korea) left a great trace in the glorious course of development in the efforts to improve the national power and enhance the prestige of the country," according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

KCNA said North Korea achieved a rapid advancement in its defense capabilities this year in the wake of the launch of its first military spy satellite in November and the introduction of other sophisticated weapons.

KCNA said North Korea also reported a rare good harvest this year as the country finished building new irrigation systems ahead of schedule and met major agricultural state objectives. It said that modern streets, new houses and other buildings were built in Pyongyang and elsewhere across the country.

According to a recent assessment by South Korea's state-run Rural Development Administration, North Korea's grain production this year was estimated at 4.8 million tons, a 6.9% increase from last year's 4.5 million tons, thanks to favorable weather conditions. But the 4.8 million tons are still short by about 0.7 million tons of sufficient annual levels, as experts say North Korea needs about 5.5 million tons of grain to feed its 25 million people each year.

Hong Min, an analyst at Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification, said that during the first day of the Workers' Party meeting, North Korea avoided publicly detailing this year's economic projects but used rhetoric to boast of its advancing military programs.

The party meeting, expected to last several days, will review state projects from this year and establish new objectives for next year. In recent years, North Korea has published the results of its meeting, including Kim's closing speech, in state media on Jan. 1, allowing him to skip his New Year's Day address.

Solidify

Hong said that attention outside North Korea will focus what it will say about relations with the United States, China and Russia, and steps it would take to solidify Kim's leadership as he turns 40 next month.

Last week, North Korea test-fired its most advanced intercontinental ballistic missile, the solid-fueled Hwasong-18, which is designed to strike the mainland U.S. North Korea said the Hwasong-18 launch, the third of its kind this year, was meant to warn the U.S. and South Korea over their confrontational moves against North Korea.

On Nov. 21, North Korea put its first military spy satellite into orbit, though outside experts question whether it can send militarily useful high-resolution imagery.

The launches of the Hwasong-18 missile and the spy satellite were part of an ongoing run of weapons tests by North Korea since last year. Kim has maintained he was forced to expand his nuclear arsenal to cope with increasing hostilities from the U.S. and its allies toward the North, but foreign experts say he eventually hopes to use an enlarged arsenal to win greater outside concessions when diplomacy resumes.

Last Thursday, South Korean Defense Minister Shin Wonsik told lawmakers that North Korea appeared to be speeding up its weapons testing activities because it lacked major progress in the economy and public livelihoods.

In recent years, North Korea's fragile economy was severely battered by pandemic-related curbs, U.S.-led sanctions and the North's own mismanagement. But monitoring groups say there are no signs of a humanitarian crisis or social chaos that could threaten Kim's absolute rule at home.

In August, South Korea's National Intelligence Service told lawmakers that North Korea's economy shrank each year from 2020 to 2022 and that its gross domestic product last year was 12% less than in 2016.

Also:

TOKYO: South Korea imposed independent sanctions Wednesday on eight North Korean individuals, including the chief of the North's spy agency, for their involvement in arms trade and cyberactivities banned under international sanctions, Yonhap News Agency reported, citing the Foreign Ministry.

The latest imposition of sanctions came in response to the North's test-firing of a Hwasong-18 intercontinental ballistic missile on December 18 in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, the Foreign Ministry said.

"All of the entities to which the eight people belong have already been sanctioned by the UN Security Council and the South Korean government," the ministry added.

"We have made it clear that North Korea's provocations will come with a price. We will continue to work closely with the international community, including the US and Japan, to help North Korea realize this, stop provocations and reengage in the denuclearization talks," it added.

Under the curbs, anyone seeking to have financial deals with those on the sanctions list is required to get approval from the chief of the Bank of Korea or the country's financial authorities.



Protesters burn tires during a protest rejecting Rohingya refugees in Banda Aceh, Aceh province, Indonesia, Wednesday, Dec. 27, 2023. (AP)

Indonesian students protest growing numbers of Rohingya refugees

Students in Indonesia's Aceh province rallied on Wednesday demanding the government drive away Rohingya refugees arriving by boat in growing numbers as police named more suspects of human trafficking.

Over 1,500 Rohingya, who fled violent attacks in Myanmar and now are leaving camps in neighboring Bangladesh in search of better lives, have arrived in Aceh off the tip of Sumatra since November. They have faced some hostility from fellow Muslims in Aceh.

About 200 students protested in front of the provincial parliament in Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh province, to call on lawmakers to reject Rohingya

refugees, saying their presence would bring social and economic upheaval in the community.

The protesters chanted "Get out Rohingya!" and criticized the government and the U.N. refugee agency for failing to manage the refugee arrivals. Some protesters burned tires on the street.

"We urged the parliament speaker to immediately take a firm action to remove all Rohingya refugees from Aceh," said Teuku Wariza, a protest organizer.

The protesters marched to a local community hall in Banda Aceh, where about 135 Rohingya were taking shelter. The demonstrators threw out clothes and household items belonging to the refugees, forcing authorities to relocate them to another shelter.

Indonesia had once tolerated the refugees while Thailand and Malaysia pushed them away. But the growing hostility of some Indonesians toward the Rohingya has put pressure on President Joko Widodo's government to take action.

Widodo earlier this month said the government suspected a surge in human trafficking for the increase in Rohingya arrivals.

Police in Banda Aceh on Wednesday named two more suspected human smugglers from Bangladesh and Myanmar following the arrival of one boat of refugees on Dec. 10. One of them, the captain, himself a refugee, was charged with trafficking. (AP)

Politics

US research company and analysts targeted

China clamps down on critics

BEIJING, Dec 27, (AP): China says it is banning a United States research company and two analysts who have reported extensively on claims of human rights abuses committed against Uyghurs and other Muslim minority groups native to the country's far northwestern region of Xinjiang.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning was quoted as announcing late Tuesday night that Los Angeles-based research and data analytics firm Kharon, its director of investigations, Edmund Xu, and Nicole Morgret, a human rights analyst affiliated with the Center for Advanced Defense Studies, would be barred from traveling to China. Also, any assets or property they have in China will be frozen and organizations and individuals in China are prohibited from making transactions or otherwise cooperating with them.

In a statement on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, Mao said the sanctions against the company, Xu and Morgret were retaliation for a yearly U.S. government report on human rights in Xinjiang. Uyghurs and other natives of the region share religious, linguistic and cultural links with the scattered peoples of Central Asia and have long resented the Chinese Communist Party's heavy-handed control and attempts to assimilate them with the majority Han ethnic group.

In a paper published in June 2022, Morgret wrote, "The Chinese government is undertaking a concerted drive

to industrialize the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), which has led an increasing number of corporations to establish manufacturing operations there. This centrally-controlled industrial policy is a key tool in the government's efforts to forcibly assimilate Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples through the institution of a coerced labor regime."

Such reports draw from a wide range of sources, including independent media, non-governmental organizations and groups that may receive commercial and governmental grants or other outside funding.

Allegations

China has long denied such allegations, saying the large-scale network of prison-like facilities through which passed hundreds of thousands of Muslim citizens were intended only to rid them of violent, extremist tendencies and teach them job skills. Former inmates describe harsh conditions imposed without legal process and demands that they denounce their culture and sing the praises of President Xi Jinping and the Communist Party daily.

China says the camps are all now closed, but many of their former inmates have reportedly been given lengthy prison sentences elsewhere. Access to the region by journalists, diplomats and others is tightly controlled, as is movement outside the region by Uyghurs, Kazaks and oth-

er Muslim minorities.

"By issuing the report, the United States once again spread false stories on Xinjiang and illegally sanctioned Chinese officials and companies citing so-called human rights issues," Mao was quoted as saying.

"If the United States refuses to change course, China will not flinch and will respond in kind," Mao was quoted as telling reporters at an earlier news briefing.

The U.S. has slapped visa bans and a wide range of other sanctions on dozens of officials from China and the semi-autonomous city of Hong Kong, including the country's former defense minister, who disappeared under circumstances China has yet to explain. China's foreign minister also was replaced this year with no word on his fate, fueling speculation that party leader and head of state for life Xi is carrying out a purge of officials suspected of collaborating with foreign governments or simply showing insufficient loyalty to China's most authoritarian leader since Mao Zedong.

Hong Kong's government has cracked down heavily on freedom of speech and democracy since China imposed a sweeping national security law in response to massive anti-government protests in 2019.

Neither Xu or Morgret could immediately be reached for comment, and it wasn't clear what degree of connection, if any, they had with the U.S. government.



A relative reacts as people view the bodies of people killed following an attack by a rebel group based in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo on Friday, at the St François Xavier parish church, in Gatumba, Burundi, Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2023. RED-Tabara, a Burundian armed rebel group based in South Kivu, eastern Congo, claimed responsibility for the attack in a post on X, formerly Twitter. (AP)



Sharif



Singh

Subcontinent

Ex-Pakistani PM to seek 4th term: Former Pakistani Prime Minister **Nawaz Sharif** will seek a fourth term in office, his party said Wednesday, noting he would be its consensus candidate in the upcoming parliamentary elections and the office of the prime minister.

Sharif, who has served as prime minister three times, returned to Pakistan in October after four years of self-exile in London to avoid serving prison sentences on corruption charges.

However, his conviction and sentences were overturned on appeal after his return, making him eligible to run for a seat in the parliament, which will elect the new prime minister after the Feb. 8 vote.

"There is no doubt about it. Nawaz Sharif is our candidate for the office of the prime minister," said Rana Sanaullah Khan, a senior leader in Sharif's party.

Sharif stepped down as prime minister in 2017 over the corruption charges. In July 2018, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison over purchases of luxury apartments in London. In December that year, he was sentenced to a further seven years for failing to disclose how his family set up steel mills in 1999.

Sharif's main rival, Imran Khan, is currently serving a prison term, but he too has announced plans to contest the elections. Khan was ousted in a no-confidence vote in April 2022, but he remains a leading figure and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party has a large following.

Also Wednesday, police arrested one of Khan's deputies, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, in Rawalpindi under a law that allows authorities to detain anyone to maintain law and order in the country. (AP)

India warns ship attackers: Indian Defense Minister **Rajnath Singh** on Tuesday warned that those attacking the

ships in the Arabian Sea and Red Sea would be brought to justice and strict action will be taken against them.

A statement from the Indian Ministry of Defense quoted Singh saying while commissioning stealth guided missile destroyer INS Imphal in Mumbai that the government of India has taken the attacks on Merchant Vessels Chem Pluto in the Arabian Sea and Sai Baba in the Red Sea very seriously.

He said that the growing economic and

strategic power of India has filled some forces with jealousy and hatred and the Indian Navy has increased its surveillance in the region.

He also stressed that the perpetrators of these attacks on Chem Pluto carrying a Liberian flag and Indian flag carrier Sai Baba will soon be brought to justice and strict action will be taken against them.

"India plays the role of a net security provider in the entire Indian Ocean Re-



A fallen tree lays across a camping trailer near the Gold Coast, Australia, Dec. 26, 2023. At least nine people have died in wild weather in the Australian eastern states of Queensland and Victoria, officials said on Wednesday. (AP)

gion. We will ensure that maritime trade in this region touches greater heights. For this, together with our friendly countries, we will keep the sea lanes secure. We have full confidence in the ability and strength of our Navy," Singh said. (KUNA)

Over 28K candidates to run in poll:

A total of 28,626 candidates have submitted their nomination papers for contesting elections for national and provincial assemblies across Pakistan for the polls to be held on February 8th.

According to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), as many as 28,626 candidates have submitted their nomination papers for 1,085 general and reserved seats of the national and provincial assemblies.

At least 7,713 candidates, including 471 women, submitted their nominations to contest the upcoming elections on 266 general seats of the National Assembly.

In Punjab province, 3,871 candidates filed nomination papers, 1,681 candidates filed nomination from southern Sindh province, 1,322 candidates from northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 631 nominees filed papers from southwestern Balochistan province for the National Assembly seats.

The ECP has initiated a phase involving the scrutiny of nomination papers to screen out candidates ineligible to contest the polls.

The electoral symbols to the candidates will be allotted on the 13th of January, and polling for the general elections will be held on February 8. (KUNA)

KFH continues to serve customers during holiday

Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues to provide its banking services around the clock through a group of various technological and digital tools during the holiday.

Most of the banking services are available in several channels around the clock, whether through the bank's website, KFH.com, or via the KFHonline mobile application, or through the KFH Go electronic branches that are spread in

many important locations, in addition to the KFH accounts on social media and many E-service channels and KFH branch at Kuwait international airport.

KFH Go branch is considered a new electronic channel that helps transfer normal customer transactions to an innovative automated branch, that provides capabilities that allow customers to benefit from highly efficient banking services. It includes more than 80%

of the services and business provided by the branches in their traditional sense, which makes KFH Go branches the preferred choice to many segments of customers, especially the youth.

KFH GO branches include the XTM device that allows direct video call with service personnel, as well as automatic teller machines and cash deposit machines. The cash deposit machines receive 300 notes per transaction.

dollar stable

US Dollar exchange rate was stable Wednesday at KD 0.307, whereas the Euro increased to reach KD 0.339, compared to yesterday's prices.

Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said in its daily statement that the British pound was stable at KD 0.390, Swiss Franc at KD 0.359, and Japanese Yen at KD 0.002, as shown on the CBK website. (KUNA)

KFH round the clock services



Market Movements

27-12-2023

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts	
SAUDI	- Tadawul	+0.14	11,889.35	PHILIPPINES - PSEI	-0.59	6,462.80
UAE	- DFM	+0.23	4,038.32			
JAPAN	- Nikkei	+1.13	33,681.24			
PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	+3.10	60,989.54			
EGYPT	- EGX 30	+1.49	24,351.12			

Business

Minister inaugurates Aqari Data Bank

Bahrain kicks off real estate E platform to attract investors

Boursa Kuwait records 6.92 billion dinar 'drop' in 2023

Main market witnesses 10.2% dip

By Ahmad Fathi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: In the tumultuous year of 2023, the Boursa Kuwait navigated a complex landscape rife with challenges that significantly impacted its overall performance. A confluence of factors, including economic and geopolitical considerations, cast a shadow over the market, with the repercussions felt keenly in its indices. Among the pivotal elements influencing this market turmoil were the persistent interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, and, notably, the Israeli offensive on Gaza. These multifaceted challenges collectively led to a substantial decline in the total value of listed companies by 14.8%, reflecting the resilience of the market amid a sea of uncertainties.

The market's journey throughout the year unveiled a narrative of struggle, with companies listed on the stock exchange witnessing a staggering loss of 6.92 billion dinars. This translated to a decrease in the total value of listed companies from 46.721 billion dinars at the end of December 2022 to 39.794 billion dinars. The year's performance was emblematic of

KIPCO sells stake in Gulf Insurance Group

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27, (KUNA): Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) announced that it has completed the sale of its 46.32% stake in Gulf Insurance Group (GIG) to a Fairfax Financial Holdings Limiteds group entity.

The deals net value came to KD 256.5 million (USD 832 million), with KIPCOs net profit at KD 73 million (USD 237 million).

The price per share was set at KD 2 minus 54 fils distributed as dividend for 2022. The deal generated a double-

the influence of global economic uncertainties, underscored by a significant 7.6% drop in the general index.

Delving into specific market segments, the first market experienced a profound decline, with its value plummeting by 16% to 5.978 billion dinars from 37.389 billion dinars in December 2022. Similarly, the main market witnessed a 10.2% decrease, with its value decreasing from 9.332 billion dinars to 8.383 billion dinars. The stark contrast between the market's highest point at the end of January 2023, reaching 46.608 billion dinars, and its lowest point in December encapsulates the turbulent trajectory it endured throughout the year.

Examining the performance indices, the general index faced a 7.6% decline, shedding approximately 559.2 points from 7292.12 points in December 2022 to 6732.88 points. The Premier Market Index encountered a 9.1% decrease, losing 742.6 points from 8115.6 points to 7372.99 points. Similarly, the main market index registered a 1.1% dip, losing approximately 63.8 points from 5596.7 points to 5532.9 points. The main market index 50 mirrored this contraction, losing 5.1% of its value as it fell by 296.1 points from 5719 points to 5422.91 points.

The last quarter of 2023 further re-

digit internal rate of return (IRR) during the investment holding period.

Sheikha Dana Naser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, KIPCOs Group Chief Executive Officer, said: "KIPCOs transformative merger grew our portfolio, and we have since been looking at opportunities for exits and investments with the ultimate goal of growth and greater value-creation for our shareholders.

"The sale of GIG to our partners, Fairfax, is yet another example of the

success of our long-term strategy of acquiring businesses, scaling them and then exiting when both the timing and the financial rewards are opportune."

Proceeds of the sale of KIPCOs stake in GIG will provide liquidity to further strengthen KIPCOs capital structure and reduce its leverage. It will also allow KIPCO to seek growth opportunities, both in sectors it already operates in, as well as new sectors and business opportunities that are aligned with the company's vision and strategy.

and the uncertainties surrounding the Israeli-Gaza conflict have collectively contributed to the cautious and hesitant atmosphere observed in trading during the last quarter. The outbreak of the Israeli war on Gaza, in particular, cast its shadow on multiple sectors, leading to ripple effects such as the rise in oil prices, shipping costs, and disruptions in supply chains.

Looking ahead, investors are poised for a new chapter in the market's trajectory, eagerly anticipating annual financial statements, proposed profit distributions, and the launch of new investment tools. Despite the challenges of 2023, there is a growing sense of optimism for the coming year, driven by expectations of economic stimulation, the implementation of development plans and projects, and a concerted effort to diversify income away from oil dependence. Additionally, the potential reduction in interest rates by the US Federal Reserve emerges as a positive factor that could potentially benefit financial markets.

While the Boursa Kuwait has weathered the storms of 2023, the resilience of its investors remains palpable. As the market prepares to embrace the uncertainties of the global economic landscape, it remains watchful for any geopolitical developments that may impact its dynamics in the times to come.

Future Minerals Forum advances global discussion on 'clean energy' transition

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, Dec. 27, (GLOBE NEWSWIRE): The Future Minerals Forum (FMF), scheduled to take place 9-11 January in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, today announced three new strategic partnerships to inform the global discourse on minerals and their critical role in sustainable global development and the need to transition to new energy sources. The new partnerships with CRU Group, Global AI and Wood Mackenzie will deliver business intelligence and insights in a series of studies to be published ahead of FMF. They complement existing partnerships with McKinsey & Company, Payne Institute for Public Policy, Clareo-DPI and Baker Institute.

Wood Mackenzie is embarking on a pivotal study to define the super region's potential. The white paper will identify key drivers for the creation of sustainable value chains as well as highlight the current challenges facing the global minerals and how they affect the minerals industry across this resource-rich area. This report will serve as a crucial guide for stakeholders by establishing the foundations for what can be achieved from governmental and market collaboration as the region looks to unlock its resource potential to better enable the energy transition.

Global AI is set to conduct a comprehensive global sentiment

Egypt signs MoU with Chinese co for solar project

CAIRO, Dec 27, (KUNA): Egypt on Wednesday signed a memorandum of understanding with a Chinese company to initiate preliminary studies and measurements to develop a ten gigawatt solar energy project.

The Egyptian government mentioned in a report that the signing of the memorandum was attended by Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly, and was conducted between a number of government agencies from both Egypt and China, the New and Renewable Energy Authority (NREA), the Egyptian Electricity Holding Company (EEHC), and the China Electric Power Equipment and Technology Company (CEPETC), all of which were based on the "Green Corridor initiative" in Egypt.

The report explained that the solar energy project, when completed, would save one billion US Dollars approximately in natural gas costs producing 29,784 gigawatts per hour of clean energy annually that would contribute to decreasing the 14 million tons of Carbon dioxide

emissions produced.

The signing of the memorandum came as part of Egypt's strategy implementation framework to increase capacity of renewable energy and limit fossil fuel use to achieve the sustainable target plan by the state, the Egyptian government added.

Mohamed Shaker, the Egyptian Minister of Electricity and Renewable Energy, said during the signing of the memorandum that his country has adopted an ambitious program to advance the electricity sector in various fields, most notably to maximize the exploitation of new and renewable energy resources and encourage the foreign and local private sector to invest in this field, which would contribute to reducing dependence on fossil fuels with continuance in reducing carbon emissions.

Shaker affirmed that these objectives were in line with Egypt's goals in reaching a percentage of sustainable energy sources to 42 per cent by 2030, in addition to the integration with

the National Climate Strategy 2050 to ensure the confrontation climate change challenges of challenges and to achieve sustainable economic growth.

Also:

CAIRO: Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly witnessed on Wednesday the signing ceremony of a contract deal worth USD 300 million to construct a food manufacturing compound in Al-Sadat City, North of Egypt.

The Egyptian cabinet said in a statement that the compound will be built on an area of 154,000 square meters and will produce more than 100,000 tons of agricultural food products annually in the first phase using the latest international technologies in cooperation with major international companies working in the field. It noted that this project provides more than 7,000 direct and indirect job opportunities, and aims to export more than 80 percent of its production abroad to support the Egyptian economy by achieving balance between imports and exports.

communities and minimize impact on the environment.

Meanwhile, CRU's report will highlight the urgency of addressing critical mineral bottlenecks to meet climate goals, with a focus on the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia as key future suppliers.

Together, these insights all align with FMF's mission to enable the development of sustainable min-

eral industries, place the Super Region at the forefront of the global minerals conversation, and shape responsible mining practices. FMF, as a government-led, multi-stakeholder platform, aims to catalyze dialogue among industry leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders to drive progress toward a more sustainable and prosperous future in mineral development.

MANAMA, Dec 27, (KUNA): The Kingdom of Bahrain inaugurated on Tuesday the real estate data bank platform (Aqari Data Bank), which is among the e-services launched by the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA).

Bahrain Crown Prince Sheikh Salman bin Abdulla Al-Khalifa, Survey and Land Registration Bureau (SLRB) President, and Sheikh Salman bin Khalifa Al-Khalifa, Minister of Finance and National Economy, in addition to several ministers, officials and heads of real estate development companies, attended the launch ceremony of the Aqari Data Bank platform.

Bahrain's Deputy Premier Sheikh Khaled bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa said that the launch of the Aqari Data Bank, which is an integrated platform that provides real estate dealers with all necessary information about the sector, embodies the Kingdom's interest in developing systems, as well as adopting modern technologies and artificial intelligence, commensurate with the goals of the comprehensive development process, led by King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, and backed by Bahrain's Crown Prince and Prime Minister, contributing to harnessing digital development to improving the quality and efficiency of government services.

Sheikh Khaled bin Abdullah in-

dicated that the "Aqari" platform is as an innovative service that reflects the foundations of good governance on which the government work is based, as it aims to strengthen integration among government agencies and enhance strategic planning, noting that the platform is part of the RERA's digital transformation efforts, carried out in parallel with its endeavors to achieve the objectives of the National Real Estate Sector Plan (2021-2024) towards a sustainable real estate sector that contributes positively to other economic sectors.

The Deputy Premier stressed the need to continue developing the real estate sector to ensure that it always meets the standards of the best international practices, given the sector's major role in supporting the national economy and contributing to the kingdom's non-oil GDP.

He also underlined the importance of integrating advanced technologies and availing of their advantages and characteristics to serve customers, and facilitate their experience in accordance with the principles of disclosure, clarity and transparency that enhance their confidence, enable them to make sound decisions based on realistic and accurate facts, and provide a sustainable environment that encourages local and foreign investment with all flexibility.

Gaza war creates uncertainties

World's biggest investors are hungry for the region

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: This year, the Gulf states played a significant role on the global stage, engaging in prominent deal-making worldwide and contributing to discussions on the energy transition at the UN Climate Change Conference COP28, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Fueled by sovereign wealth funds capitalized by the oil price boom in 2022, the region's economic diversification efforts have been robust, giving rise to massive green hydrogen projects and substantial investments, such as Saudi Arabia's billion-dollar football spending spree.

A recent Al-Monitor report highlighted a temporary decline in regional stocks following the outbreak of conflict in the Gaza Strip, but subsequent recovery suggests resilience.

However, the Gaza war has created regional uncertainties that could deter some investors, though deal-making in the Gulf remains robust.

The report emphasized the dynamism of deal-making in the Gulf, exemplified by the success of the investment forum "Davos in the Desert" in Saudi Arabia. Despite concerns expressed by Wall Street figures about the conflict's potential impact on the global economy, the summit garnered strong interest, with notable deals, including a UK-based asset manager announcing plans for a billion-dollar fund to attract foreign investments to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi deal-making continued amid geopolitical tensions, exemplified by ACWA Power's agreement to develop a \$4 billion green hydrogen project in Egypt. Additionally, regional airlines strengthened their fleets, with

Emirates signing a \$52 billion deal to purchase Boeing aircraft in November.

The report highlighted that the threat of war did not diminish investors' appetite for initial public offerings (IPOs) in the Gulf.

The Dubai Taxi Company's late-November IPO received over \$41 billion in investor requests, setting a record for IPO demand in Dubai. Despite potential risks, the report anticipates IPO activity in the Gulf to persist until 2024.

However, the report acknowledged that the conflict may pose risks to the Gulf states and complicate economic reforms, impacting regional economic integration, foreign direct investment, tourism, and trade.

The Gulf region faces a reality check, and while the specter of conflict looms, regional capitals aim to rebound in 2024.

Despite challenges, the report affirmed the Gulf as one of the most active deal-making markets globally, with global financial players expressing continued interest in the region.

The first half of 2023 witnessed 318 deals in the Middle East and North Africa, totaling \$43.8 billion, with Gulf countries accounting for approximately 98% of the value. IPO activity remained strong, making the Gulf a standout in the global IPO market.

Looking ahead, the World Bank expects the Gulf countries to grow by 3.7% in 2023, with non-oil growth offsetting declines in the oil sector. While challenges persist, the Gulf remains a key player in global finance, with efforts to deepen regional ties and attract foreign investment continuing in 2023.

Kuwait oil price down 53 cents to \$81.45 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil dropped 53 cents to reach USD 81.45 per barrel (pb) on Tuesday compared to USD 81.98 pb on Friday, reported Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on

Wednesday.

In international markets, Brent crude forwards went up by USD 2.00 to 81.07 pb, while West Texas Intermediate crude rose USD 2.01 to stand at USD 75.57 pb.

Zulily to go into liquidation

The U.S. online retailer Zulily is closing down, surprising customers and laying off hundreds of workers after efforts to salvage the business failed.

The Seattle-based company said in a notice on its website that it had tried to fill all pending orders and expected to manage that within the coming two weeks. Zulily said it was trying to ensure that orders that could not be filled were cancelled and refunded and of-

ferred a contact for customers who did not get their orders or refunds. "This decision was not easy nor was it entered into lightly. However, given the challenging business environment in which Zulily operated, and the corresponding financial instability, Zulily decided to take immediate and swift action," said the notice, signed by Ryan C. Baker, vice president at management consultant Douglas Wilson Companies, which is handling the receivership for the company. (AP)

Apple seeks to resume sales of watches

Apple filed an emergency motion seeking court permission to begin selling two of its most popular watches again until a final decision on its broader appeal in a bitter patent dispute is decided.

The company cut off sales right before the Christmas holiday and in a motion filed Tuesday, Apple said it would suffer "irreparable harm" if previous court orders remain for the two weeks that it said the U.S. International Trade Commission will take to respond to its appeal.

The disruption will likely cost Apple about \$300-400 million in holiday-season sales, estimated Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives. That's a relative drop in the bucket for Apple, given that industry analysts are expecting the company to generate nearly \$120 billion in sales this quarter, which includes the holiday shopping season.

On Oct. 26, the ITC determined that Apple infringed on two patents owned by Masimo Corp. and Cercacor Laboratories, both U.S. companies. (AP)



The Apple logo is illuminated at a store in the city center of Munich, Germany, Dec. 16, 2020. Apple plans to suspend sales of the Series 9 and Ultra 2 versions of its popular Apple Watch for online U.S. customers beginning Thursday afternoon, Dec. 21, 2023, and in its stores on Sunday, Dec. 24. (AP)

Japanese government shifts energy strategy

TEPCO's operational ban lifted, paving way for reactor restart

TOKYO, Dec 27, (AP): Japanese nuclear safety regulators lifted an operational ban Wednesday imposed on Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, the operator behind the Fukushima plant that ended in disaster, allowing the company to resume preparations for restarting a separate plant after more than 10 years.

At its weekly meeting, the Nuclear Regulation Authority formally lifted the more than two-year ban imposed on the TEPCO over its lax safety measures, saying a series of inspections and meetings with company officials has shown sufficient improvement. The decision removes an order that prohibited TEPCO from transporting new fuel into the plant or placing it into reactors, a necessary step for restarting Kashiwazaki-Kariwa's reactors.

The plant on Japan's northern coast of Niigata is TEPCO's only workable nuclear power plant since the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami put its Fukushima Daiichi plant out of operation. Now the company is burdened with the growing cost of decommissioning the Fukushima plant and compensating disaster-hit residents.



Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority Chairman Shin-ya Yamanaka attends a meeting in Tokyo, Wednesday, Dec. 27, 2023. (AP)

The NRA slapped an unprecedented ban on the operator in April 2021 after revelations of a series of sloppy anti-terrorism measures at TEPCO's Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant, the world's largest nuclear power complex housing seven reactors.

Stoppages

The Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant was partially damaged in a 2007 earthquake, causing distrust among local municipalities. The March 2011 disaster caused stoppages of all 54 reactors Japan used to have before the Fukushima disaster, and prompted utility operators to decommission many of them due to additional safety costs, bringing the number of usable reactors to 33 today. Twelve reactors have been restarted under tougher safety standards, and the government wants to bring more than 20 others back online.

TEPCO was making final preparations to restart the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant's No. 6 and No. 7 reactors after regulators granted safety approvals for them in 2017. But in 2018, regulators gave the plant's nuclear security a "red" rating, the lowest given to any operator, resulting

in the operational ban.

The case raised questions about whether TEPCO learned any lessons from the 2011 Fukushima crisis, which was largely attributed to the utility's lack of concern about safety.

NRA Chair Shinsuke Yamanaka told Wednesday's meeting that the lifting of the restrictions is just the beginning, and TEPCO is still required to keep improving its safety precautions.

Before TEPCO can restart the reactors, it needs the consent of nearby residents. Prior to the NRA decision Wednesday, Niigata Gov. Hideyo Hanazumi told reporters that the will of the voters he represents must be taken into consideration.

The Japanese government recently began a push to restart as many reactors as possible to maximize nuclear energy and meet decarbonization targets. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government has reversed Japan's nuclear energy phaseout plan, instead looking to use atomic power as key energy supply accounting to more than one-fifth of the country's energy supply.

Maiden flight faces challenges

Mexico's army-run airline takes to skies, with 1st flight to Tulum

MEXICO CITY, Dec 27, (AP): Mexico launched its army-run airline Tuesday, when the first Mexicana airlines flight took off from Mexico City bound for the Caribbean resort of Tulum.

It was another sign of the outsized role that President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has given to Mexico's armed forces. The airline's military-run holding company now also operates about a dozen airports, hotels, trains, the country's customs service and tourist parks.

Gen. Luis Crescencio Sandoval, Mexico's defense secretary, said that having all those diverse businesses run by the military was "common in developed countries."

In fact, only a few countries like Cuba, Sri Lanka, Argentina and Colombia have military-run airlines. They are mostly small carriers with a handful of prop planes that operate mostly on under-served or remote domestic routes.

But the Mexicana airline plans to carry tourists from Mexican cities to resorts like Cancun, Puerto Vallarta, Los Cabos, Zihuatanejo, Acapulco and Mazatlan. Flights appear to be scheduled every three or four days, largely on weekends.

Cheaper

The carrier hopes to compete mainly on price: the first 425 tickets sold offered prices of about \$92 for the flight from Mexico City to Tulum, which the government claimed was about one-third cheaper than commercial airlines.

However, Mexicana's first flight didn't go according to plan. The company said Flight MXA 1788 had to be re-routed to the colonial city of Merida because of poor weather conditions in Tulum. After a wait, it finally took off again and arrived in Tulum about five hours after it took off from Mexico City, about double the usual travel time.

Mexicana also hopes to fly to 16 small regional airports that currently have no flights or very few. For those worried about being told to "Fasten your seatbelt, and that's an order," the cabin crew on the Mexicana flight appeared to be civilians. In Mexico, the air force is a wing of the army.

Sandoval said the airline began operations with three Boeing jets and two smaller leased Embraer planes, and hopes to lease or acquire five more jets in early 2024.

López Obrador called the takeoff of the first Boeing 737-800 jet "a historic event" and a "new stage," marking the return of the formerly government-run airline Mexicana, which had been privatized, then went bankrupt and finally closed in 2010.

The airline combines Lopez Obrador's reliance on the military - which he claims is the most incorruptible and patriotic arm of the government - and his nostalgia for the state-run companies that dominated Mexico's economy until widespread privatizations were carried out in the 1980s.

López Obrador recalled fondly the days when government-run firms operated everything from oil, gas, electricity and mining, to airlines and telephone service. He bashed the privatizations, which were carried out because Mexico's indebted government could no longer afford to operate the inefficient, state-owned companies.

"They carried out a big fraud," the president said at his daily morning news briefing. "They deceived a lot of people, saying these state-run companies didn't work."

In fact, the state-run companies in Mexico accumulated a well-deserved reputation for inefficiency, poor service, corruption and political control. For example, Mexico's state-run paper distribution company often refused to sell newsprint to opposition newspapers.

When the national telephone company was owned by the government, customers routinely had to wait years to get a phone line installed, and were required to buy shares in the company in order to eventually get service, problems that rapidly disappeared after it was privatized in 1990.

While unable to restore the government-run companies to their former glory, the administration depicts its efforts to recreate them on a smaller scale as part of a historic battle to return Mexico's economy to a more collectivist past.

"This will be the great legacy of your administration, and will echo throughout eternity," the air traffic controller at Mexico City's Felipe Angeles airport intoned as the first Mexicana flight took off.

López Obrador has also put the military in charge of many of the country's infrastructure building projects, and given it the lead role in domestic law enforcement.

For example, the army built both the Felipe Angeles airport and the one in Tulum.

Apart from boosting traffic at the underused Felipe Angeles airport, the army-run Mexicana apparently will provide flights to feed passengers into the president's Maya Train tourism project. The army is also building that train line, which will connect beach resorts and archaeological sites on the Yucatan Peninsula.

The army, which has no experience running commercial flights, has created a subsidiary to be in charge of Mexicana.



Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, center, Defense Secretary Luis Crescencio Sandoval, left, and Naval Commander Jose Rafael Ojeda ride in a military vehicle during a parade introducing the new army commander, in Mexico City, Aug. 13, 2021. (AP)

Global markets advance, tracking Wall St gains in final week of 2023

S&P 500 inches up, Dow Jones slips

NEW YORK, Dec 27, (AP): World shares advanced on Wednesday, tracking Wall Street gains as markets there reopened for what's expected to be a quiet, holiday-shortened week of trading.

The future contract for the S&P 500 added less than 0.1% while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average edged 0.1% lower.

European shares opened steady in the first trading day after the holiday. Germany's DAX added 0.3% to 16,754.87. In Paris, the CAC 40 gained 0.4% to 7,597.52. Britain's FTSE 100 was up 0.7% to 7,749.36.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index added 1.2% to 33,681.24 as details of a policy meeting by the Bank of Japan showed officials divided about the timing and need to shift away from the central bank's longstanding lax monetary policy.

Guidelines

Hong Kong's Hang Seng index rose 1.8% to 16,627.00 and the Shanghai Composite gained 0.5% to 2,914.61 with Chinese video gaming companies, including Tencent and NetEase, recouping losses in the first Hong Kong trading session after the government attempted to alleviate market fears about draft guidelines to impose controls over how companies earn money from games. However, the gains were dwarfed by the losses from a broad sell-off on Friday.

NetEase's Hong Kong-traded shares gained 11.9%, after its Nasdaq-listed stock added 5.2% on Tuesday. Tencent's were up 4.0% in Hong Kong and Bilibili added 6.7%.

The Kospi in Seoul was up 0.4% to 2,613.50. In Sydney, the S&P/ASX 200 was 0.8% higher at 7,561.20.

Bangkok's SET dropped less than 0.1% and the Sensex in Mumbai climbed 0.5%.

Tuesday on Wall Street, the S&P 500 rose 0.4% to 4,774.75, finishing less than 0.5% below its all-time high set nearly two years ago. The benchmark index is coming off eight straight weekly gains, its longest winning streak since 2017.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.4% to 37,545.33, while the Nasdaq composite ended 0.5% higher to 15,074.57.

Trading was relatively light as U.S. markets reopened following the Christmas Day holiday. Still, the latest gains were widespread, with advancers outnumbering decliners by nearly 3 to 1 on the New York Stock Exchange.

With less than a week to go in 2024, the S&P 500 is now up more than 24% for the year, while the Nasdaq is up 44%.

Investors have been encouraged by reports showing inflation is on the decline even as the economy appears stronger than expected.



Shoppers visit the Christmas Village in Philadelphia, on Dec. 13, 2023. (AP)

Economic backdrop remains favorable

Americans ramp up holiday spending

NEW YORK, Dec 27, (AP): Holiday sales rose this year and spending remained resilient during the shopping season even with Americans wrestling with higher prices in some areas and other financial worries, according to the latest measure.

Holiday sales from the beginning of November through Christmas Eve climbed 3.1%, a slower pace than the 7.6% increase from a year earlier, according to Mastercard SpendingPulse, which tracks all kinds of payments including cash and debit cards.

This year's sales are more in line with what is typical during the holiday season, however, after a surge in spending last year during the same period.

"This holiday season, the consumer showed up, spending in a deliberate manner" said Michelle Meyer, Chief Economist, Mastercard Economics Institute. "The economic backdrop remains favorable with healthy job creation and easing inflation pressures, empowering consumers to seek the goods and experiences they value most."

The number of people seeking unemployment benefits has remained very low by historical standards and employers are still having a hard time finding enough workers.

Still, sales growth was a bit lower than the 3.7% increase Mastercard SpendingPulse had projected in September. The data released Tuesday excludes the automotive industry and is not adjusted for inflation.

Clothing sales rose 2.4%, though jewelry sales fell 2% and electronics dipped roughly 0.4%. Online sales jumped 6.3% from a year ago and in-person spending rose a modest 2.2%.

Consumer spending accounts for nearly 70% of U.S. economic activity and economists carefully monitor how Americans spend, particularly during the holidays, to gauge how they're feeling financially.

There had been rising concern leading up to the holiday about the willingness of Americans to spend because of elevated prices for daily necessities at a time that savings have

fallen and credit card delinquencies have ticked higher. In response, retailers pushed discounts on holiday merchandise earlier in October compared with a year ago. They also took a cautious approach on how much inventory to order after getting stung with overstocked warehouses last year.

The latest report on the Federal Reserve's favored inflation gauge, issued Friday, shows prices are easing. But costs remain still higher at restaurants, car shops, or for things like rent. Americans, however, unexpectedly picked up their spending from October to November as the holiday season kicked off, underscoring their spending power in the face of higher costs.

Statistics

A broader picture of how Americans spent their money arrives next month when the National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, releases its combined two-month statistics based on November-December sales figures from the Commerce Department.

The trade group expects holiday expects U.S. holiday sales will rise 3% to 4%. That's lower than last year's 5.4% growth but again, more consistent with typical holiday spending, which rose 3.6% between 2010 and 2019 before the pandemic skewed numbers.

Industry analysts will dissect the fourth-quarter financial performance from major retailers when they release that data in February.

The big concern: whether shoppers will pull back sharply after they get their bills in January. Nikki Baird, vice president of Aptos, a retail technology firm, noted customers, already weighed down by still high inflation and high interest rates, might pull back more because of the resumption of student loan payments that kicked in Oct. 1.

"I am worried about January," she said. "I can see a bit of a last hurrah."

Adani Promoters to invest USD 1,125 million equity in Adani Green

AHMEDABAD, India, Dec 27, (BUSINESS WIRE): Adani Green Energy Ltd ("AGEL"), India's largest and the world's leading renewable energy developer, announced that the Board of Directors of AGEL have approved a preferential issuance of warrants to the Promoters of AGEL for a quantum of INR 9,350 crore (equivalent to USD 1,125 million) at a per share price of INR 1,480.75/share calculated basis SEBI ICDR regulations. The issuance is subject to the approval of regulatory and statutory authorities as well as the shareholders of the company at the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) scheduled on 18 January 2024. The funds shall be utilized for deleveraging and accelerated capital expenditure.

AGEL is now fully equipped to achieve its stated target of 45 GW by 2030, with 20.6 GW locked in capacity, secured land of over 2,00,000 acres (equivalent to over 40 GW of additional capacity) in resource rich areas of India and additional equity infusion of INR 9,350 crore which fully funds this stated target.

"India is on the cusp of becoming a global leader in renewable energy and Adani Green Energy is in the vanguard of this revolution," said . "This investment by the Adani family underscores our commitment not only to making our nation's clean energy dream a reality but also to an equitable energy transition where we phase down traditional power sources

while simultaneously phasing up green, affordable alternatives to fuel our accelerating growth and development plans. With the funds infusion, AGEL remains favorably positioned to achieve its accelerated growth trajectory."

Earlier, AGEL announced USD 1.36 billion construction facility (by 8 leading international banks) for construction of 2,167 MW solar power projects in Khavda, Gujarat, the largest solar park in India. In addition, AGEL has announced USD 1.425 billion of equity capital (USD 1.125 billion from preferential issuance by promoters and USD 300 million from TotalEnergies JV), which translates to a capital raise of ~USD 3 billion.

FINANCE

Business Plus



Payment history biggest factor influencing credit scores

Four things that could impact your credit in 2024



A sign aimed at last minute holiday shoppers is displayed at a retail store in Schaumburg, Ill., Monday, Dec. 18, 2023. (AP)

By Lauren Schwahn

You want to keep your credit balance under 30% of what your credit limit is to get a good score

Credit is top of mind for many folks going into 2024. Nearly 4 in 5 Americans (79%) say they are trying to improve their credit, according to a recent survey from NerdWallet.

Getting ahead of surprises will go a long way in protecting your credit. Here are four things to look out for that could impact your credit in the new year.

1. Holiday debt

Holiday purchases could follow you for months. NerdWallet's 2023 Holiday Shopping Report found that about half of Americans (52%) incurred credit card debt when shopping last holiday season, and of them, 31% still have not paid off their balances.

Payment history is the biggest

factor influencing your credit scores. If you're carrying debt, make at least the minimum payments on your cards to keep your payment history intact and shield your scores. But paying a higher amount, if you're able to, is better for your credit utilization - another major factor in score calculations. Using too much of available credit can make you appear risky to lenders.

"You want to keep your credit balance under 30% of what your credit limit is to get a good score," says Marianne Nolte, a certified financial planner in Lake Havasu City, Arizona.

Paying balances in full will keep your credit usage low and spare you interest charges.

To prevent bookending the year with debt, start planning 2024 holiday spending now, says Heath

Carelock, a financial counselor in Prince George's County, Maryland.

Setting spending limits for gifts, making lists and being honest with loved ones about your situation are strategies Carelock recommends. "Just say, 'Hey, this is what I'm going to be able to do this year' and be fine with that, and not worry about the judgment or potentially the embarrassment or guilt over not being able to spend freely," he says.

2. Credit card delinquencies

Debt is surging outside of holiday spending, too. Debt balances of all types grew by \$228 billion in the third quarter of 2023, according to a report from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. The New York Fed also found that credit card delinquencies have risen above pre-pandemic levels, particularly among millennials.

Many experts expect this trend to continue in 2024. "We're likely to see people start running out of room with their available credit and encountering more difficulty affordably repaying the debt that they owe," says Bruce McClary, senior vice president of membership and communications at the National Foundation for Credit Counseling. "We're dealing with shrinking savings and increasing debt. And that's never a good recipe."

If your credit card account becomes delinquent, usually when it's 30 days or more past due, pay the bill as soon as possible. The later a payment gets, the more damage it does.

Negative marks may hinder your ability to open new lines of credit or secure desirable interest rates.

Try calling your card issuer or

writing a goodwill letter to ask if it will remove the missed payment from your reports.

3. Student loans

Federal student loans started accruing interest again in September 2023, and payments resumed in October. Making payments after a three-and-a-half-year-long pause has put pressure on borrowers' finances.

The Education Department established a 12-month "on-ramp" period to help those who might be struggling with student loan bills protect their credit. During this period - which lasts through Sept. 30, 2024 - missed payments won't be considered delinquent, go into default or be reported to credit bureaus and debt collection agencies.

Still, skipping payments is risky. Interest will keep accruing and your balance will rise. Having a swollen balance after the grace period along with other financial obligations could become too much to manage.

"Student loans don't live in a vacuum," McClary says. "So it's important that you look at the bigger picture while you're working on solutions that might make your student debt more affordable to repay within your existing budget."

If you're able to make loan payments during the on-ramp period, it's best to do so. But if you can't, McClary suggests working with your loan servicer or exploring the department's repayment options.

4. Applying for new credit

Thinking about applying for a credit card or loan in 2024? Opening an account raises your overall credit limit and potentially adds to your mix of credit types, aiding your score. However, it can also drag down your average credit age or tempt you to spend more of your available credit, causing your score to slip. Hard inquiries, when lenders check your credit file, also stay on your credit reports for two years.

Borrow only if necessary, and Carelock recommends comparing annual fees and interest rates. If you're carrying debt, look for a balance transfer card with a 0% annual percentage rate introductory period.

Before you apply, check your credit score and reports to see what lenders will see, McClary says. "If there's a little mess to clean up in terms of inaccurate information, you should build in at least a little bit of time to address those things."

Credit reports from the major credit bureaus are free to check weekly at AnnualCreditReport.com. (AP)

Critical 30% of annual funding clinched in December

Nonprofits gear up for year-end giving rush

They're thinking about the organization in their community that's having an impact and digging deep and giving

Christmas is over, but giving season for nonprofits is just starting to peak.

The end of the calendar year is when nonprofits make appeals far and wide to attract donors - in part because of holiday traditions or, for some, tax advantages. Nonprofits get about 30% of their annual donations in December - including 10% in the final three days of the year - according to marketing agency Nonprofits Source.

"This is one of the busiest times of the year for us as we assist donors with their year-end giving," said Erin Musgrave, a spokesperson for the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

Many potential donors don't realize how much nonprofits value even small gifts, especially local organizations that meet community needs. And nonprofits and industry groups warn that donations are down this year, so gifts right now could help them a lot.

Only 11% of Americans itemize their taxes, which allows them to claim significant tax deductions for charitable donations. That means most Americans don't give in December for tax reasons.

"They're thinking about the organization in their community

that's having an impact and digging deep and giving," said Chuck Collins, director of the Program on Inequality and the Common Good at the Institute for Policy Studies.

As you watch commercial appeals and sort through donation requests, here are some things to consider:

Experienced donors often have a short list of criteria they use to help select nonprofits to support. It could be organizations that serve the area where they live or specific causes or issues with which they have a personal connection.

A question to ask yourself is: "What are the issues or communities that are important to me and where do I want to make a difference?"

A great way to find out about organizations in your area is to ask your friends, coworkers and neighbors. They may have interacted directly with a nonprofit that supports after-school programs, sends companions to elderly residents, advocates around traffic safety or supports local artists. For any topic that is important to you, an organization in your area is likely working on it.

Another potential consideration is check if your employer will

match donations to the nonprofit you want to support. If so, your donation could go even further.

If you feel burdened by all the urgent appeals everywhere from the checkout line to the mail or online, one tactic is to make a budget and set aside time to give to organizations important to you. Be realistic, make a plan and then, set aside the guilt.

No, simply put.

First, there's no obligation to give to nonprofits. Many people make a difference in their communities - donating blood, volunteering with their fire department, caring for neighbors and myriad other ways.

Second, many nonprofits actually prefer for donors to set up automatic monthly donations, even in very small amounts, rather than giving a lump sum at the end of the year. The automatic donation from your bank account or credit card means they can plan for how to spend those funds in advance, which often helps them save money and resources.

Some donors say they want their dollars to go directly to the nonprofit's work and not to pay for rent or salaries. This perennial view of wasteful "overhead" spending

has some draw backs, though to be clear, donors have good reason to assess the organizations they support carefully.

But a useful data point comes from the nonprofit ratings agencies themselves. Starting ten years ago, the agencies like BBB Wise Giving Alliance and GuideStar, now part of Candid, teamed up to challenge the idea that the best way to measure the value of a nonprofit was the portion of its funds spent on administrative costs and fundraising.

Michael Thatcher, the president and CEO of Charity Navigator, which overhauled its rating methodology in September, advises that donors consider the organization's impact and whether it's achieving its mission.

"What does the money do? Not where was the money spent?," he told The Associated Press earlier this year.

People who study philanthropy and advise donors like Vanessa Lee, a program officer who coordinates giving circles at the Chicago Foundation for Women, emphasize that giving back is not the purview of the ultra-wealthy.

"It's not like you have to have millions of dollars to be a philan-

editor's choice



'Parasite' actor Lee Sun-Kyun found dead in Seoul car

SEOUL, South Korea, Dec 27. (AP) Lee Sun-kyun, a popular South Korean actor best known for his role in the Oscar-winning movie "Parasite," was found dead in a car in Seoul on Wednesday, authorities said, after weeks of an intense police investigation into his alleged drug use.

Police and emergency officers initially found Lee in what they believed was an unconscious state in the car parked on a street in northern Seoul. Emergency officers later confirmed he was dead, according to Seoul's Seongbuk police station.

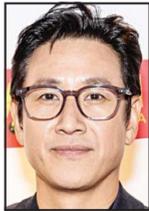
Police had been searching for Lee, 48, after receiving a report that he was missing.

They refused to provide further details including whether they had determined Lee killed himself. But South Korean media outlets including Yonhap news agency said that Lee's family earlier Wednesday reported to police that he left home after leaving a message similar to a suicide note.

Lee appeared in "Parasite," which won Oscars for best picture and three other categories in 2020. The class satire was the first non-English-language film to win best picture in the then-92-year history of the Academy Awards, and was the first South Korean movie to win an Oscar. In the film, Lee played the head of a wealthy family. The film's cast, including Lee, also won a Screen Actors Guild

award for the best motion picture ensemble cast in 2020. He was nominated for best actor at the International Emmy Awards for his performance in the sci-fi thriller "Dr. Brain" last year, as well.

Even before "Parasite," Lee had been a popular actor in South Korea for a long time. He rose to stardom for his role in a hit TV drama series, "Coffee Prince (2007)," and gained mainstream popularity with the medical drama "Behind The White Tower (2007)," "Pasta (2010)" and "My Mister (2018)."



Lee

Investigation

Lee had been under a police investigation into allegations that he used illegal drugs at the residence of a bar hostess. Lee insisted he was tricked into taking the drugs and that he did not know what he was taking, according to Yonhap. But the investigation prompted extensive tabloid coverage and unconfirmed online rumors about not only his alleged drug use but also his private life. Lee filed a suit against two people including the hostess, alleging they blackmailed him.

When he was first summoned for questioning at a police station

in Incheon, a city near Seoul, in late October, he deeply bowed several times and apologized to his fans and family. "I feel sorry to my family members who are enduring too difficult pains at this moment. I again sincerely apologize to everyone," he said.

Incheon police said Wednesday they would end their investigation of Lee but would continue to investigate the two people Lee had sued.

South Korea has strict anti-drug laws but has seen soaring drug-related offenses in recent years. Last week, the National Police Agency said it had detained about 17,150 people over alleged illegal drug manufacturing, smuggling, sales and uses this year - a record number for a single year.

South Korea has long had the highest suicide rate among developed countries. It has also experienced a string of celebrity suicides involving K-pop stars, prominent politicians and business executives. Experts say malicious and abusive online comments and severe cyberbullying were blamed for many of the celebrity suicides.

"Lee faced some allegations but they haven't been formally verified. But the media has been assertively reporting about Lee's private life ... and I think that's something wrong," said Kang Youn-gon, a media communication professor at Seoul's Chung-Ang University. Lee is survived by his actress wife Jeon Hye-jin and two sons.

Obituary

Variety



This image released by Netflix shows Carey Mulligan as Felicia Montealegre in a scene from 'Maestro.' (AP)

Film

'Oscar winner in the making?'

Mulligan breaks the mold for 'Maestro'

LOS ANGELES, Dec 27. (AP) Carey Mulligan recently realized that she's spent much of her professional career holding back.

That might be surprising to hear for an actor with two Oscar nominations, a Tony nod and a laundry list of extraordinary films and enviable roles. She just didn't get precious about it and preferred the old Laurence Olivier adage "why don't you just try acting?"

But that changed in the past several years, in no small part because of Bradley Cooper and "Maestro," an all-encompassing project that would push her out of that comfort zone to play Felicia Montealegre, the elegant actor and wife of Leonard Bernstein.

As with "Promising Young Woman," "Maestro," now streaming on Netflix, would prove to be a transformative experience for her understanding of herself as an actor and what she's capable of. And it's likely to earn her another Oscar nomination and possibly her first win.

Mulligan spoke to The Associated Press about the journey to becoming Montealegre, and the people who helped her get there.

Mulligan had become used to only ever getting a few months of prep for most of her roles. Suddenly she had years, which was both wonderful and daunting after Cooper approached her about the role in the summer of 2018. In addition to learning everything she could about Montealegre and even giving herself over to "dream work" with Cooper, she immediately got to work studying her character's unique dialect. Montealegre was born in Costa Rica, raised in Chile in a multilingual household and educated at British school in Santiago.

Luckily, there were long recorded interviews which Mulligan listened to over and over. She also worked closely with famed dialect coach Tim Monich, who had actually met Montealegre once.

"She was just as you see her in the Murrow Person-to-Person interview. I was a rube-ish 26-year-old and I had never met anyone as easy, relaxed, and elegant as she," Monich wrote in an email. "In a room with her, what a voice. And Carey has that, too... Carey's voice is one of her glories, and over quite a few roles we have

played and altered it for different characters."

His process, Monich wrote, includes something he calls Language Lab, "in which we listen to the real voices and then imitate them, riff on them, and play with them until they are the actors' 'real' voices, too."

Mulligan and Cooper would often meet and just talk as the characters so that by the time they got onto set they wouldn't have to think about it which proved especially helpful for their epic Thanksgiving argument.

Felicia was a painter and Mulligan was not. An earlier script included scenes of her painting on camera, and Mulligan promptly signed up for a few months of classes. During a bout of COVID-19, in which she found herself quarantined in Santiago after having visited Montealegre's extended family there, she asked Netflix to send her an easel, paints and canvas and would spend the next 10 days copying her paintings.

Background

Though the scene didn't end up in the movie, her paintings did. Kind of. Mulligan laughed that production designer Kevin Thompson put them in the "deep, deep background."

"They were dotted around the set. I don't know if you can see any of them though. To be honest, they're not very good," Mulligan said. "And the one that is in the hallway is NOT me. That was original Felicia."

"Maestro" spans decades and would require Mulligan to play her from age 24, in 1946 when she met Bernstein at a party, to her death in 1978 at age 56. Hair and makeup would thus have to make Mulligan, 38, look both younger and older as well as depicting her evolving, and famous, clothing and hair styles through the '50s, '60s and '70s.

In the early scenes, shot in black and white and on film, she learned that costumes that pop in that format might not actually look great in real life - but Oscar winning costume designer Mark Bridges ("The Arist") was proficient in both. Her favorite of the many looks, though, was probably the dramatic blue dress she wore for the performance of "MASS."

"It was the best dress for walking away," Mulligan

said. "I was like, this is amazing because she just can't bear to be there to watch him receive the accolades."

It was an interesting experience seeing herself age, through makeup and prosthetics, too.

"I absolutely loved being in my late 50s. I don't know why, I just thought, This is probably my sweet spot. Like, I think this is where I feel in my soul," she said. "The makeup was so unbelievably real, but it sort of presents this slightly odd mortality crisis that you look at yourself go, well, this is exactly what I will look like if I ever got incredibly sick. It's a little trippy."

One time it even confused a doctor who had come to set to prescribe her some antibiotics and didn't believe that she was 12-weeks pregnant asking her "are you sure" and "how do you know?"

"I was like why is this doctor being so weird? Then I looked in the mirror and realized oh, it's because Sian (Grigg) and Duncan (Jarman) made me look 56 and it would have been a miracle baby," Mulligan said. "I went to makeup and said 'a doctor has just looked at me and thought I was in my late 50s. So kudos because that's pretty good makeup.'"

For Mulligan, a review that calls her "lovely" is just about the worst thing that a person can write. She was sad to learn that that's exactly how most critics described Montealegre's work.

"She got a lot of 'she's lovely' and this sort of patronizing, mediocre, middle of the road reviews," Mulligan said. "I just thought, oh, gosh, you know, to be married to Leonard Bernstein, who's like touched by God and then get a review that's like 'she's fine.'"

But something else resonated too. On one of the recordings, Mulligan said, "She was talking about the Actors Studio and she was saying she finds it just so embarrassing that these actors are throwing themselves around crying and telling all their secrets and pretending to be animals and how ridiculous."

She has a theory that like herself, Montealegre was just nervous to fully commit because she didn't want to fail. "Maestro" gave Mulligan the space to finally give herself over to it.

"She just never could quite do it. That really hit me."

LOS ANGELES: Mariah Carey and Bryan Tanaka have split after 7 years together, the dancer confirmed Tuesday.

In a statement shared with The Associated Press and published to Tanaka's Instagram, Carey's backup dancer-turned-creative director and partner detailed their breakup.

"With mixed emotions, I share this personal update regarding my amicable separation from Mariah Carey after seven extraordinary years together," he wrote. "Our decision to embark on different paths is mutual, and as we navigate these separate journeys, we do so with profound respect and an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the invaluable time we've shared. The memories we've created and the artistic collaborations are etched in my heart forever."

"I eagerly anticipate continuing my journey, knowing my passion for inspiration, dance, and the creative arts will resonate in the unfolding chapters," he continued.

Tanaka and Carey first met when Tanaka joined her 2006 The Adventures of Mimi tour as a backup dancer.

The "All I Want for Christmas is You" singer first confirmed their relationship to the AP in 2017.

"I'm just going to be like 'I really don't talk about my personal life.' Because that's what I used to do and it really worked for a minute, back, a while ago," she said at the time, smiling. "I just don't feel comfortable talking about my personal life. ... Me and my boyfriend don't want to do that."

Rumors of their split began popping up online last month, when fans noticed Tanaka did not join Carey on her Merry Christmas One and All! tour.

Carey has not released a public statement about the breakup. (AP)

PARIS: More than 50 French performers, writers and producers published an essay Tuesday defending film star and national icon Gerard Depardieu amid growing scrutiny of his behavior toward women during his five-decade career. Advocates for sexual abuse victims expressed dismay at the outpouring of support.

Depardieu was handed preliminary rape and sexual assault charges in 2020 following allegations from actor Charlotte

Arnould, and has been accused by more than a dozen other women of harassing, groping or sexually assaulting them. Depardieu denies wrongdoing, and called the essay "beautiful."

Published Tuesday in the conservative-leaning Le Figaro, it was signed by figures including former first lady and singer Carla



Carey



Depardieu

Bruni, Depardieu's former partner Carole Bouquet, and actors Pierre Richard, Charlotte Rampling and Victoria Abril. Two dozen of the 56 signatories were women. Many are from Depardieu's generation; he is 74.

A recent documentary outlined accusations of sexual misconduct by 16 women against Depardieu,

and showed the actor making obscene remarks and gestures during a 2018 trip to North Korea. The France-2 documentary prompted calls by some to stop airing Depardieu's films, which include classics of modern French cinema.

In response, Tuesday's essay says: "We cannot remain silent in the face of the lynching target-

ing him, the torrent of hate being dumped on his personality.

"When Gerard Depardieu is targeted this way, it is the art (of cinema) that is being attacked," it said. "France owes him so much. ... Depriving ourselves of this immense actor would be a drama, a defeat. The death of the art. Our art." (AP)

People & Places

Art

'Mud to miracles'

Will Burning Man last next 30 years?

RENO, Nev., Dec 27, (AP) — The blank canvass of desert wilderness in northern Nevada seemed the perfect place in 1992 for artistic anarchists to relocate their annual burning of a towering, anonymous effigy. It was goodbye to San Francisco's Baker Beach, hello to the Nevada playa, the long-ago floor of an inland sea.

The tiny gathering became Burning Man's surrealistic circus, fueled by acts of kindness and avant-garde theatrics, sometimes with a dose of hallucinogens. The spectacle flourished as the festival ballooned over the next three decades.

Some say it grew too much, too fast.

Things came to a head in 2011 when tickets sold out for the first time. Organizers responded with a short-lived lottery system that left people out of what was supposed to be a radically inclusive event. As Burning Man matured, luxurious accommodations proliferated, as did the population of billionaires and celebrities.



Chen

Katherine Chen, a sociology professor in New York City who wrote a 2009 book about the event's "creative chaos," was among those who wondered whether Burning Man "would be a victim of its own success."

Exponential growth led to increasing questions about whether organizers had veered too far from the core principles of radical inclusion, expression, participation and the pledge to "leave no trace."

That last hurdle was never harder to clear than this year as "Burners" tried to leave over Labor Day weekend after torching the 80-foot (24-meter) wooden sculpture that is "the Man."

A rare rainstorm turned the Black Rock Desert into a muddy quagmire 110 miles (177 kilometers) north of Reno, delaying the departure of 80,000 revelers. Once out, organizers had six weeks to clean up under terms of a federal permit.

By the smallest of margins, they passed the test last month, with a few adjustments recommended for the future. The verdict from the US Bureau of Land Management means Burning Man is in line to use federal land again next year.

Future

Debate over the event's future, however, is sure to continue as divisions grow between the aging hippy-types and wealthier, more technologically inclined newcomers. Veteran participants fear the newer set is losing touch with Burning Man's roots.

The event has made a quantum leap from a gathering of hundreds to one that temporarily becomes Nevada's third largest city after metropolitan Las Vegas and Reno. The festival drew 4,000 in 1995 and topped 50,000 in 2010.

It's no wonder seasoned Burners sound a bit like griping cribbage players on a rural town square when they mutter: "It ain't like it used to be."

"Back then, it was much more raw," said Mike "Festie" Malecki, 63, a retired Chicago mortician turned California sculptor who made his 13th trip this year to the land of colorful theme camps, towering sculptures, drum circles and art cars.

"There are more (people) who come out to party and don't participate. We call them spectators," he said.

Senior organizers long have wrestled with whether to become more civilized or remain what co-founder Larry Harvey described as a "repudiation of order and authority."

Ron Halbert, a 71-year-old from San Francisco, has worked support for Burning Man's 90-piece orchestra for 20 years and remains optimistic.

"It's still the gathering of the tribe," he said.

The event is permitted tentatively for the same 80,000 attendance cap next year. Organizers are considering some minor changes, though generally resist making new rules, Executive Director Marian Goodell said.

Critics on social media howled at the mayhem left behind this year, posting photos of garbage piles, abandoned vehicles and overflowing portable toilets while ridiculing the "hippies" and their leave-no-trace mantra. But that mayhem may have actually helped bring Burning Man back to its roots.

Katrina Cook of Toronto said it forced people to be true to the founding principles of participation and radical self-reliance.

"The rain weeded out the people who didn't want to be there for the right reason," Cook said.

Mark Fromson, 54, was staying in an RV, but the rains forced him to find shelter at another camp where fellow burners provided food and cover. Another principle of Burning Man, he said, centers on unconditional gift giving with no expectation of something in return.

After sunset, Fromson set off barefoot through the muck for a long trek back to his vehicle, slogging through thick clay that clung to his feet and legs. The challenge, he said, was the mark of a "good burn."

Nevertheless, Jeffery Longoria of San Francisco, who marked his fifth consecutive voyage to Burning Man last summer, said its core principles are going to evolve no matter what as a new generation takes over.

Community

"The people that created this community, a lot of them are getting older and retiring and there's a lot of new young people coming in, the kind that have, you know, a couple \$100,000 RVs and are kind of just careless about the environment."

Soren Michael, a Los Angeles technology worker who made his 11th trip this year, said the biggest change has been the ability to communicate with the outside world from the desert.

"It was almost part of the appeal to be disconnected," he said.

Twenty years ago, the psychedelic celebration like none other already was attracting academic scholars - anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, economists and communications professors - curious about how the makeshift civilization functioned without real-world rules.

Burning Man references started popping up in TV episodes and talk show punchlines. The rich and famous began venturing to Black Rock City, as the festival's temporary metropolis is called.

A full-blown exhibit about the phenomenon debuted in 2018 at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington. Even then, veteran Burners complained about the event becoming as much a curiosity to see as to do.

That's in part the problem veterans have with the advent of glamor camping, or glamping, in which private companies provide packaged trips to concierge camps with luxury RVs and lavish meals under chandeliers. Some believe the camps violate Burning Man principles.



Lucy Dacus of Boygenius performs at the Coachella Music & Arts Festival in Indio, Calif., on April 15, 2023. (AP)

Music

Mitski's No. 1 hit melds rock, pop and country

For indie rock acts, country is king

LOS ANGELES, Dec 27, (AP) — Singer-songwriter Mitski's "My Love Mine All Mine," plays out like a whispered dirge.

The song is gothic lounge music for a listener who only has about two minutes to have their heart broken - a silky soft slow burn stacked with a choir, organ, bass and most critically, pedal steel guitar, the kind favored by country and western purists.

In no way does that description scream "mainstream hit," and yet, for 12 weeks, it has been on the Billboard Hot 100, an unusual metric of success for a wholly independent artist. And for 10 weeks, her indie rock-meets-country pop-meets-country held the No. 1 position on Billboard's TikTok trending chart.

Mitski is not from the American South, though her discography has long considered small town U.S.A. and she relocated to Nashville a few years ago to mine the geography's humanity. ("Valentine, Texas" from last year's "Laurel Hell" album is an example, but there are many.)

She is, of course, not the first indie artist to explore weeping Americana sounds. Many of the leading acts in contemporary indie rock pull from the South - like Mitski - or hail from there, like soloists Angel Olsen and Waxahatchee, or groups like Plains, Wednesday and two-thirds of the Grammy-nominated band boygenius. Lucinda Williams' "too country for rock 'n' roll, too rock 'n' roll for country" style is a clear predecessor; and every few generations, it seems like a great new band pulls from alt-country's narrative specificity.

Interestingly, indie rock's current adoption of country comes at a time of increased global interest in country music. According to the Midyear Music Report for data and analytics platform Luminata, country music experienced its biggest streaming week ever this year, a whopping 2.26 billion.

The genre has historically been enjoyed by English-speaking Americans, but their reporting shows growth in non-Anglophonic territories such as Philippines, Indonesia, India, Brazil,

Mexico, Germany, and Vietnam.

In March 2023, Spotify launched a new playlist dedicated to the phenomenon of country-influence in indie rock titled "Indie Twang." It's curated by Carla Turi, Spotify's folk and acoustic music editor, who says the playlist was the result of conversations dating back to summer 2022, when they noticed growing "country influence in indie rock," as she calls it. It's a legacy that extends to the late 2010s when country iconography started cropping up in spaces not-traditionally considered country: everything from Lil Nas X's "Old Town Road" to Mitski's 2018 album "Be the Cowboy."

"I also think, through the lockdown we experienced in 2020, listeners sort of emerged craving more organic-sounding music as a way to connect with others," she continued. The indie twang playlist was born out of all of that, amplified by successful indie artists like Ethel Cain and Plains.

Trend

"I'm seeing this space as a kind of movement, rather than a trend," she adds. "The sound will always have its peaks and valleys. I do think that the fanbase, overall, continues to grow. I think that this sort of surge of Americana and singer-songwriter music here in the States has shifted listening habits across the entire country."

In 2023, these indie artists offer an alternative to the pop-country acts dominating mainstream charts like Morgan Wallen, Luke Combs, and Jason Aldean. The movement is led by female performers, for one, and artists who don't immediately fit into a traditional genre format.

They also offer an alternative to traditional images of indie rock: instead of shying away from their geographic identities - like moving to New York and smoothing out to "y'all's" and "ma'ams" from their speech and music - they're embracing them. Banjos and lap steel abound. Songs about God, rural roads, trucks, guns, humidity, and crickets do, too.

Like Turi, Jess Williamson of Plains sees the connection to country music

from a more traditional indie rock audience as a post-COVID-19 lockdown revelation. "We saw people leaving cities, moving to smaller towns and out to the country. We saw people in cities baking bread, starting herb gardens, craving something simple, nostalgic, and that feels good," she said.

"On tour, we covered 'Goodbye Earl' by the Chicks, everyone is singing along, and that's the least cool s--- I can imagine. People are through being cool and are embracing who we are and what we really like. And for a lot of people, that's country music."

She says she had to leave the South in order to return to it and fully appreciate her love for both it and country music, the way "Texans leave and then immediately get a tattoo of the state of Texas," she says, laughing.

Karly Hartzman, frontperson of the Asheville band Wednesday, has never left North Carolina. "I think where we live is inseparable from our music at this point. Of course, we are influenced by country music, but country music sounds and feels the way it does because of the environment it's made in. A great country song feels like where it's from," she says.

Wednesday's 2023 full-length "Rat Saw God" made AP's best albums of the year list for its alt-country rock sensibility, where pulling the listener into the quiet parts of a Carolinas hometown is as much a part of the sonic fabric as lap steel or guitar fuzz or a poetic line sung out of key.

Hartzmann adds that the complications of living in the South are "the stereotypes ... which are founded of course. The politics, the racism, and the inequality," she says. "I'm strongly against leaving this place 'cause I disagree with the politics of those in power, though. It's invigorating cause I feel empowered to fight against that (explicitly), especially for those who are unable to do that themselves here."

She says the South is her "favorite place on Earth" - beyond its influential music - but the appeal to stick around and create there is economic, too, which may have an impact on indie artists pulling from country sounds.

capabilities, Santa does not file a flight plan and may have some high-tech secrets up his red sleeve this year to help guide his travels - maybe even artificial intelligence.

"I don't know yet if he's using AI," said Mathias. "I'll be curious to see if our assessment of his flight this year shows us some advanced capabilities."

In 1955, Air Force Col. **Harry Shoup** - the commander on duty at the NORAD's predecessor, the Continental Air Defense Command - fielded a call from a child who dialed a misprinted telephone number in a newspaper department store ad, thinking she was calling Santa. (AP)

NEW YORK: It's beginning to look a lot like New Year's Eve in New York.

The numerals "2024" were delivered Wednesday to Times Square for its famous street party to ring in the New Year.

Organizers said the lighted display arrived in the famous square following a coast-to-coast road trip covering more than 2,800 miles (4,500 kilometers).

After being tested out Wednesday, they'll remain on display through Friday for people to see and photograph up close.

"Like every good Broadway show, we have dress rehearsals, so we want to get them out," explained **Tom Harris**, president of the Times Square Alliance. "We want to test them out, make sure that they work." (AP)



Bradley Cooper, (left), and his daughter Lea De Seine Shayk Cooper arrive at a special screening of 'Maestro' on Tuesday, Dec. 12, at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles. (AP) — Details Page 11



Willis-Williams



Mathias

Variety

LAS VEGAS: For better or for worse, a wave of couples saying "I do" in Las Vegas on New Year's Eve could set a record for the city's busiest wedding day ever.

That's because 12/31/23 is known in the massive Las Vegas wedding industry as a "specialty date," thanks to the repeating 1-2-3 1-2-3 pattern, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported.

The icing on the cake? This specialty date falls on a holiday famous for blowout celebrations.

"It's a double whammy," said **Melody Willis-Williams**, president of Vegas Weddings, which operates multiple venues. "Anytime you get these specialty dates, they're always hugely popular. But tie that in with New Year's Eve and it's a showstopper."

The number to beat on New Year's Eve is 4,492 - the single-day record for marriages in Las Vegas set on July 7, 2007. The second-most popular specialty wedding date on record with the county's marriage bureau is Nov. 11, 2011, when 3,125 couples tied the knot.

Typically, New Year's Eve has drawn somewhere between 450 to 550 couples to wed in Las Vegas since 2018, the Review-Journal reported.

But not this year for Vegas Weddings. The company is fully booked on midnight at its multiple venues, including its brown-brick chapel in downtown Las Vegas with a white steeple and red awning.

Willis-Williams said her company alone expects to wed more than 120 couples on New Year's Eve. Five of those couples will tie the knot just as the clock is counting down to midnight. (AP)

WASHINGTON: As children around the world eagerly await Santa's arrival on Christmas, the military is closely tracking his every move.

Armed with radar, sensors, aircraft and Christmas spirit, the North American Aerospace Defense Command in **Colorado** is reporting on the movements of Santa's sleigh since his takeoff from the North Pole for parts of the globe where Christmas comes first. Once again it is sharing those details so kids can follow along.

NORAD is the joint military command that is responsible for protecting US and Canadian airspace, but it has a jolly side, too. It has launched its noradsanta.org website, social media sites and mobile app, loaded with games, movies, books and music.

By late Christmas Eve in **Thailand**, late morning Sunday in the eastern US, the tracker reported that Santa had departed **Bangkok** and moved on to **Burma, Tibet, China and Russia**, distributing nearly 2 billion gifts so far in his travels.

NORAD's findings could not be independently verified.

The military is tracking Santa with "the same technology we use every single day to keep **North America** safe," said US Air Force Col. **Elizabeth Mathias**, NORAD's chief spokesperson. "We're able to follow the light from Rudolph's red nose."

Mathias says that while NORAD has a good intelligence assessment of his sleigh's



Burning Man participants walk through dust at the annual Burning Man event on the Black Rock Desert of Gerlach, Nev., on Friday, Aug. 29, 2014. (AP)

Online health services reshape patient access

More than pills: Subscription services redefine care

NEW YORK, Dec 27, (AP) - Need help losing weight or handling depression? How about a pill that lowers cholesterol and treats erectile dysfunction?

Online subscription services for care have grown far beyond their roots dealing mainly with hair loss, acne or birth control. Companies including Hims & Hers, Ro and Lemonaid Health now provide quick access to specialists and regular prescription deliveries for a growing list of health issues.

Hims recently launched a weight-loss program starting at \$79 a month without insurance. Lemonaid began treating seasonal affective disorder last winter for \$95 a month. Ro still provides birth control, but it also connects patients trying to have children with regular deliveries of ovulation tests or prenatal vitamins.

This Netflix-like approach promises help for two common difficulties in the U.S.: access to health care and prescription refills. But it also stirs concern about care quality.

"This isn't medicine. This is selling drugs to consumers," said Dr. Adriane Fugh-Berman, who studies pharmaceutical marketing at Georgetown.

The online providers say they screen their patients carefully and send customers elsewhere if they can't help them. They also think they've tapped a care approach that patients crave.

Doctors

"The growth we've seen on our platform is a testament to how people are looking to get the care they need," Hims spokeswoman Khobi Brooklyn said.

The publicly traded Hims has topped 1.4 million subscribers this year. It expects to pull in at least \$1.2 billion in annual sales by 2025.

That pales compared to the \$300 billion-plus in annual revenue generated by health care giants like CVS Health. But Hims' 2025 projection is more than eight times what the company brought in at the start of the decade.

Subscription-based health care has been around for years, particularly in primary care, where patients can pay monthly fees to gain better access to doctors. The e-commerce giant Amazon recently entered that niche with a subscription plan that gives some customers access to virtual and in-person care.

Online versions of subscription-based care started growing after the COVID-19 pandemic made Americans more comfortable with telemedicine. That has led to a surge of investor money flowing to companies providing this care, said Dr. Ateev Mehrotra, a Harvard researcher who studies consumer health care.

Many condition-specific plans offer patients regular visits with a health care provider and then recurring prescriptions for a monthly fee.

That simplicity can be attractive, Mehrotra noted.

"You can just get the care you need and move on with life just as you pay for Netflix or whatever," he said.

Hims debuted weight loss earlier this month after starting a heart health program last summer that includes the combination pill treatments.

Its rival Ro added weight loss last year to a lineup that also includes treatment plans for eczema, excessive sweating and short eyelashes, among other issues.

Lemonaid offers treatment plans for insomnia and high blood pressure. It also touts cholesterol management for \$223 a year without insurance. That includes provider visits, lab work and prescriptions for

generic medicines.

These companies still push sexual health help, especially on social media. But broader growth remains a priority.

Hims says in a regulatory filing that it sees significant future opportunities in menopause, post-traumatic stress disorder and diabetes.

Ro CEO Zach Reitano noted in an interview earlier this year that his company's obesity treatments are "upstream" to other chronic diseases. He said patients who want help losing weight also care about improving their overall health.

Reitano told The Associated Press he thought one of the health care system's biggest problems was that "it is not built around what patients want."

Subscriptions, whether for medicine or meal kits, offer predictable costs and may seem like good deals at first. But customer enthusiasm can fade, and companies may feel pressure to find new business, said Jason Goldberg, chief commerce strategy officer at Publicis Groupe.

The approach also comes with reputational baggage.

RobRoy Chalmers turned to Hims for help with erectile dysfunction. But the Seattle artist decided to cancel his subscription and cut costs after a few months.

He kept receiving bills after he thought he stopped the subscription. He said he emailed and called customer service. He didn't get a response until he criticized Hims on social media.

"The amount of effort I needed to go through for them to make good was too much," he said. "This is every subscription-based company in my mind."

Fugh-Berman worries mainly about care quality. She noted that talk therapy can be as effective as prescriptions for some conditions.

Diagnosis

"Mental health care should never just be about drugs," she said.

She also noted that a diagnosis can change over time. Patients on regular medications must be monitored in case the drug causes problems like higher blood pressure.

Lemonaid Health does that, according to Dr. Matthew Walvick, the company's top medical official. He said Lemonaid routinely follows up with patients to monitor for side effects and update their medical history.

Brooklyn said Hims' program for mental health care includes psychiatry and talk therapy.

Representatives of both companies say they also encourage patients to get in-person help when needed.

Mehrotra worries more broadly. He noted that overall patient health may get overlooked when customers come to these companies with a specific condition or medicine in mind.

Someone visiting a primary care doctor for birth control may also get screened for depression, he noted.

"These companies are very solution-oriented," Mehrotra said. "They're not thinking about that comprehensive care."

Walvick said Lemonaid collects an extensive patient medical history that delves into issues like smoking or drug use to offer "the best possible comprehensive care."

Brooklyn said Hims & Hers provides access to safe care for many issues but shouldn't replace a primary care doctor. She added that every part of the health care system should be focused on improving access.

"The traditional health care system in the US has always been slow to adapt to our changing society's needs," she said.

The Conversation

Craft your workout order for maximum benefits

Fitness dilemma: Cardio or weights first?

By Randal Claytor
Miami University

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

When you enter the gym, which way should you head first? Toward the treadmills and spin studio to get your sweat on with a cardio session? Or toward the free weights and strength-training machines to do some resistance training?

The American College of Sports Medicine suggests doing both types of exercise to take advantage of their unique benefits for improving health and daily functioning and reducing chronic disease risk. But what is the optimal sequence to get the best results?

The answer to this question is ... it depends. I'm an exercise physiologist. Recently in my lab we have been studying the effects of combinations of aerobic and resistance training on improving health-related fitness, particularly aerobic capacity and muscular strength.

Research

Research suggests that when you're designing your exercise program, there are a few factors to take into account, including your age, fitness level and exercise history and goals. You'll also want to consider the volume of your exercise routine - that is, its duration and intensity - and how you'll schedule your training during the day.

First, just about any exercise at all is going to be better for you than doing nothing.

Aerobic exercise is rhythmic activity that gets your heart pumping. Examples are walking, running, swimming, cycling and using a cardio machine such as an elliptical trainer.

Aerobic exercise can improve cardiorespiratory function - over time, your heart and lungs get better at delivering oxygen to your muscles to make energy for continued muscle contractions. Aerobic exercise can also reduce several chronic disease risk factors, increase how much energy your body uses and how much fat it burns, and improve physical and cognitive function.

Resistance training involves strengthening your muscles by lifting, pushing or pulling against resistance. This type of exercise can be done using free-weight barbells, dumbbells, kettlebells, weight machines or even elastic bands.

Resistance exercise improves muscular strength, endurance and the power and the size of muscles - what exercise physiologists call muscle hypertrophy. Studies show resistance training has health-related benefits, as well, particularly for people who have or are at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. It can improve blood pressure, blood levels of glucose and the ability of muscles to use glucose for energy, and it helps maintain lean body mass and bone health.

With a limited amount of time to devote to working out, many people include both cardio and weights in the same exercise session. This concurrent training comes with plenty of benefits for your health, including lowering your cardiovascular and metabolic risks.

In fact, doing both forms of exercise

By Ariadne Letra and Seth M. Weinberg
University of Pittsburgh

Curious Kids is a series for children of all ages. If you have a question you'd like an expert to answer, send it to curiouskids@theconversation.com.

Why do people have wisdom teeth? - Jack J., age 17, Dedham, Massachusetts

Wisdom teeth are the third set of molars located at the very back of the mouth. They look just like the first and second molars, but can sometimes be a little smaller.

They are commonly called wisdom teeth because they are the last of the 32 permanent teeth to appear, emerging between 17 and 25 years of age, when you are older and wiser.

You might know that not everyone grows all four wisdom teeth. You might also know many people get them pulled. So it's fair to wonder - why do humans even have them?

We study teeth and can tell you the answer has a lot to do with the distant past - and a bit about the present day, too.

Just like you have many features in common with the people you're related to, humans share features with their extended family - the primates. Monkeys, gorillas and chimpanzees all have wisdom teeth.

A few million years ago, early human ancestors had larger jaws and teeth than humans do today. For example, a species called Australopithecus afarensis, nicknamed Lucy's species after a famous fossil specimen called Lucy, lived roughly 3 million to 4 million years ago.

together is better, especially for people with chronic disease risk factors, than exercising for the same amount of time but sticking with just aerobic or resistance exercise.

Studies of concurrent training suggest a generalized training effect - similar improvements in aerobic capacity and muscular strength, regardless of the order of aerobic and resistance exercises in a session. These benefits hold for a wide variety of people, including those who are initially inactive, recreationally active, young people and older women and men.

Resistance exercise done before aerobic exercise results in a small increase in lower-body muscular strength without compromising all the other improvements in health-related physical fitness.

So if your exercise goals are along the lines of staying generally healthy and enjoying the mental benefits of moving your body, resistance training first might provide a little boost. Research suggests that overall, though, you don't need to worry too much about which order to focus on - cardio versus weights.

On the other hand, you may want to be more thoughtful about the order of your workout if you're a performance-oriented athlete who is training to get better at a particular sport or prepare for a competition.

Research suggests that for these

The jaw and teeth of an Australopithecus afarensis individual were quite a bit larger and thicker than your own. They had three big molar teeth with thick enamel. The fossil skulls of some of these very early humans also show evidence of powerful chewing muscles.

Scientists think more robust jaws and teeth were needed because the foods early human ancestors ate, like raw meat and plants, were much more difficult to chew than food is today. Researchers look at things like marks and microscopic wear patterns on fossilized teeth to figure out what extinct ancestors may have eaten.

Extinct

Today's food is much softer than it was in the past due to many factors, including agriculture, cooking and food storage. Softer, easier-to-chew food means teeth have a less challenging job. As a result, modern human jaws have evolved to be smaller and faces to be flatter than our extinct ancestors' were, because our meals don't require the same big, sharp teeth that theirs did.

Given these changes, which took place very slowly over millions of years, the third molars - wisdom teeth - might not be as important now as they once were.

About 25% of people today are missing at least one wisdom tooth completely, meaning it never formed at all. While people occasionally don't grow other teeth, it's much more common for wisdom teeth. Scientists are not sure why this is the case, but it may have to do with the genes you inherit from

your parents. Some scientists have argued that the lack of wisdom teeth is an advantage for modern, smaller-jawed humans. It's certainly easier to fit fewer teeth into a smaller jaw.

Sometimes, due to lack of space, wisdom teeth can get stuck inside the jawbone and never fully come up - or they only partially emerge.

A so-called impacted wisdom tooth happens more often in the lower jaw than in the upper jaw. In cases where wisdom teeth are only partially up, people can sometimes experience pain, tooth decay or gum inflammation, which is why they have them pulled by a dentist.

But wisdom teeth don't usually need to be removed if they are fully erupted in the mouth, positioned correctly and healthy.

Dentists can examine your mouth to see if your wisdom teeth are present, or look at X-ray pictures of your jaw if these last molars haven't yet emerged and you suspect they may be impacted.

Dentists can also advise you if any treatment - or removal - is recommended for your wisdom teeth. In the meantime, brushing at least twice a day and flossing daily will help keep all your teeth healthy.

Hello, curious kids! Do you have a question you'd like an expert to answer? Ask an adult to send your question to CuriousKidsUS@theconversation.com. Please tell us your name, age and the city where you live.

And since curiosity has no age limit - adults, let us know what you're wondering, too. We won't be able to answer every question, but we will do our best. (AP)

exercisers, concurrent training may slightly inhibit improvement in aerobic capacity. More likely, it can hinder gains in muscular strength and power development, and to a lesser degree muscle growth. This phenomenon is called the "interference effect." It shows up most in well-trained athletes undertaking high volumes of both aerobic and resistance exercise.

Training

Researchers are still investigating what happens on a cellular level to cause the interference effect. Aerobic and resistance training unleash competing influences at the molecular level that affect genetic signaling and protein synthesis. At the start of an exercise program, the body's adaptations are more generalized. But with more training, the muscle changes become more and more specific to the kind of work being done, and the likelihood of the interference effect kicking in increases.

Of course, many sports require combinations of aerobic and muscular capabilities. Some elite-level athletes need to improve both. So the question remains: What is the optimal order of the two modes of exercise to get the best performance effects?

Given research findings about concurrent training for high-level athletes, it makes sense to do resistance exercise first or to train first in the type of ex-

ercise that is most important to your performance goals. Additionally, if possible, elite athletes should give their bodies a break of at least three hours between resistance and aerobic training sessions.

In my lab, we're studying what we call "microcycles" of aerobic and resistance exercise. Instead of needing to decide which to do first, you weave the two modalities together in much shorter bursts. For instance, one set of a resistance exercise is immediately followed by three minutes of walking or running; you repeat this cycle for as many times as necessary to include all of the resistance exercises in your routine.

Our preliminary findings suggest this method of concurrent training results in similar gains in aerobic fitness, muscular strength and lean muscle mass - while also feeling less challenging - when compared with the typical concurrent routine where all of the resistance exercise is followed by all of the aerobic exercise.

For most people, my current advice remains to choose the order of exercise based on your personal preferences and what will keep you coming back to the gym. High-level athletes can avoid any significant interference effect by doing their resistance routine before the aerobic routine or by separating their aerobic and resistance workouts within a particular day. (AP)

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Pakistan collapse to reach 194-6 at stumps

Cummins leads the way as Australia take the advantage in 2nd test

Minnesota overcomes Bowling Green in Quick Lane Bowl; Kansas outlasts UNLV



Kansas coach Lance Leipold holds up the trophy after the team's 49-36 win over UNLV in the Guaranteed Rate Bowl NCAA college football game Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2023, in Phoenix. (AP)

Texas State too strong for Rice

DETROIT, Dec 27, (AP): Freshman Darius Taylor returned from a leg injury to rush for a career-high 208 yards, and Minnesota beat Bowling Green 30-24 in the Quick Lane Bowl on Tuesday.

Minnesota (6-7), which was selected for the bowl because it had the best Academic Progress Rate among five-win teams, won its seventh con-

secutive bowl game overall and fifth in a row under coach P.J. Fleck.

Taylor, who had missed the Gophers' previous five games, had 35 carries, including a 17-yard touchdown run midway through the fourth quarter that gave Minnesota a 30-17 lead.

Taylor's return was crucial for Minnesota, which had senior Cole Kramer making his first career start at quarterback after Athan Kaliakmanis entered the transfer portal. Kramer went 8-of-16 passing for just 26

yards, but he came through in the red zone, throwing for two touchdowns and running for another.

Conor Bazelak threw for two scores and ran for one for Bowling Green (7-6), which lost the Quick Lane Bowl for the second year in a row.

Guaranteed Rate Bowl

Kansas 49, UNLV 36

In Phoenix, Jason Bean threw for 449 yards and all six of his touchdown passes to two receivers, and penalty-plagued Kansas outlasted UNLV in the Guaranteed Rate Bowl.

The Jayhawks (9-4), ranked 14th nationally for fewest penalties with 55 during the regular season, were flagged 18 times for 210 yards, including four personal fouls.

FOOTBALL

They made up for it with an explosive offense that produced 591 total yards at Chase Field, home of baseball's Arizona Diamondbacks.

Luke Grimm had four catches for 160 yards and three touchdowns. Lawrence Arnold added six catches for 132 yards and three more scores, giving Kansas two receivers with three touchdowns in a game for the first time in program history.

Bean finished 19 of 28 and overcame two interceptions in the third quarter to lead Kansas to its first postseason win since the 2008 Insight Bowl, also in Phoenix.

Jayden Maiava threw two touchdown passes in the third quarter to rally UNLV (9-5) nearly all the way back from a 21-point deficit early in the second, but the Rebels couldn't stop Kansas.

First Responder Bowl

Texas State 45, Rice 21

In Dallas, Linebacker Brian Holloway returned two interceptions for touchdowns, Jahmyl Jeter ran for three scores, and Texas State beat Rice in the Bobcats' first bowl appearance as an FBS program.

Holloway had a 36-yard pick-6 early in the second quarter and returned his second interception 48 yards for a TD in the third that made it 38-21. Both picks came against AJ Padgett, who was intercepted three times. Shawqi Itraish relieved Padgett in the fourth quarter and threw two more picks as Texas State forced seven turnovers.

Offensive tackle Nash Jones scored on a 3-yard run for the Bobcats (8-5), who are in their 12th FBS season. Dean Connors scored on runs of 3 and 28 yards for the Owls (6-7), who fell short of their first winning season and first bowl victory since 2014.

MELBOURNE, Australia, Dec 27, (AP): Australia's pace-bowling captain Pat Cummins struck twice in four balls to crush Pakistan's comeback attempt on the second day of the second cricket test on Wednesday.

Pakistan started strongly then collapsed to reach 194-6 at stumps in reply to Australia's first-innings total of 318 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

A total of 13 wickets fell in an eventful second day's play.

Cummins claimed 3-37 and off-spinner Nathan Lyon took 2-48 for Australia. Abdullah Shafique (62) and skipper Shan Masood (54) both made half-centuries, sharing a 90-run partnership for Pakistan's second wicket.

Pakistan's openers had survived the new ball before Lyon made the initial breakthrough in the 16th over, removing Imam-ul-Haq caught at second slip for 10 at 34-1.

CRICKET

Cummins changed the momentum of the day's play by claiming a diving return catch to dismiss Shafique at 124-2. Cummins leapt into the air in delight in his next over after bowling Babar Azam for one, finding a gap between bat and pad with a fabulous off-cutter as the crowd of 44,837 roared with delight.

Cummins said his catch to remove Shafique was a stroke of luck.

"Off the bat, they are pretty hard to pick up. They either stick or they don't," Cummins said. "Luckily that one stuck, I think in the other hand to what I thought it was going to go in. It was a satisfying wicket. He was playing well."

Skipper Shan aimed a mighty swipe down the ground, advancing down the pitch and edging a catch to point off Lyon's bowling as Pakistan slumped to 147-4.

Four runs later, pace bowler Josh Hazlewood clipped Saud Shakeel's off stump. When Cummins removed Salman Ali Agha caught behind at 170-6, Pakistan had endured a middle-order collapse of 5-46.

Mohammad Rizwan was unbeaten on 29 at stumps. Pakistan trails by 124 runs with four first-innings wickets in hand.

Shafique said he hoped the seventh-wicket partnership between Rizwan and Aamir Jamal, which stands at 24, would allow Pakistan to recover momentum.



Pakistan's Saud Shakeel bats against Australia during the second day of their cricket test match in Melbourne, Wednesday, Dec. 27, 2023. (AP)

The opening batter added that Pakistan's bowlers had done well to restrict Australia to 318.

"The thing that we are lacking with the batting is the partnerships," Shafique said. "We are pretty much in the game now. As a bowling unit, we have done a good job."

Australia had resumed Wednesday on 187-3, following a rain-interrupted first day of play in which only 66 of the scheduled 90 overs were bowled.

The home side was bowled out for 318 at lunch Wednesday, losing seven wickets for 131 in an extended morning session that lasted more than two-and-a-half hours.

Marnus Labuschagne top-scored with a patient 63 off 155 balls and Mitchell Marsh crunched 41 off 60 deliveries including six fours and one six.

David Warner, dropped on two, scored 38 in a 90-run opening stand with Usman Khawaja (42) Tuesday. Australia's second top-scorer was the 51 extras conceded by Pakistan, including 20 byes and 15 wides.

Wicketkeeper Rizwan's one-handed catch to remove Alex Carey for four was a fine example of Pakistan's improved efforts in the field Wednesday as pace quartet Shaheen Shah Afridi (2-85), Mir Hamza (2-51), Hasan Ali (2-61) and Aamir Jamal (3-64) maintained pressure on Australia.

Australia won the first test in Perth by 360 runs.

The third test in the three-match series is scheduled to begin Jan. 3 at the Sydney Cricket Ground, where Pakistan won its last test in Australia in 1995.

Thomas: New yr in golf brings opportunity to all concerned

WASHINGTON, Dec 27, (AP): The next season on the PGA Tour already has the perception of being two tours. The elite are in the \$20 million signature events with a big boost in FedEx Cup points. The rest are playing for less money (\$8.5 million on average) and having to play well to advance their stock.

But being in that top group still has to be earned.

Justin Thomas, who didn't have an elite year, wonders why some of the rank-and-file complain about advantages for the perennially top players instead of seeking inspiration from the likes of Eric Cole and Adam Schenk.

"I think it's the easy thing to do, honestly, to sit there and say: 'Why me? Why is this happening to me? Why are they getting this?'" Thomas said.

Cole spent a decade on the mini-tours, finally worked his way up to the PGA Tour and finished at No. 43 in the FedEx Cup in his rookie season to get into all the big-money tournaments next year. He went from No. 384 to No. 41 in the world ranking and he's headed to the Masters.

Thomas singled out Schenk. His average FedEx Cup position in his five years on tour was No. 103 (his best was No. 71 in 2019). He not only qualified for the Tour Championship, he was three shots off the lead going into the second round at East Lake and tied for ninth. He's in all the big events next year, including the four majors.

Cole and Schenk are the only two players who went from outside the top 150 in the world to the top 50 without having won a tournament. That's how consistently well they played.

Thomas, meanwhile, failed to qualify for the FedEx Cup postseason for the first time. He likely will get sponsor exemptions to signature events if he doesn't earn his way back. His argument was more geared toward opportunities for everyone.

"If you would have put us side by side at the beginning of the year and said, 'Who is going to do what?' ... you

know what I'm saying?" Thomas said, referring to Schenk.

What he meant was odds on who would have a better year would favor a two-time major champion, a past FedEx Cup champion previously ranked No. 1 in the world.

"But that's the way I think so many people look at it," he said. "It's like, 'Well, they are going to play in all these events.' Or you can look at it like Adam Schenk did and say, 'I'm going to play my way into those events.' Eric Cole, 'I'm going to play my way into those events.'"

"Golf is a funky game," Thomas said. "Doesn't matter how good of a player, any accomplishments you've had. You can have an off year and miss the playoffs just like I did. Everybody has got to work hard and you have to earn it."

GOLF

Everyone gets paid cash and FedEx Cup points at The Sentry next week at Kapalua, and at the other signature events that feature \$20 million purses.

Not everyone will be getting world ranking points.

The Official World Golf Ranking has updated its formula for 2024. One key change relates to fields with 80 players or fewer. A higher percentage of points will be distributed to the top finishers, meaning the winner would get roughly 21% of the points, up from about 17% to 18% previously.

Also, the bottom 15% of the final standings will not get points. That only relates to tournaments with no cut. So for the three player-hosted signature events - Riviera, Bay Hill and Memorial - everyone will get world ranking points.

The other change is to award a 60% bonus to a player who wins for the second time in a 52-week period (70% for players with three or more wins in a year). The bonus would be capped at 4 points if that multiple win comes at a major or other tournament with a strong field.



Justin Thomas, left, and Tiger Woods, right, talk during the first round of the PNC Championship golf tournament Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023, in Orlando, Fla. (AP)

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Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber lauds success of tournament

Curtain falls on the third Arab Elite Tennis Championship

DOHA, Dec 27: The curtain falls on the third Arab Elite Tennis Championship, with the final match taking place at 5:00 pm at the Khalifa International Tennis Complex in the Qatari capital, Doha.

Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Tennis Federation, revealed that the final match will be broadcast live on the beIN Sports channels. He commended the success of

this year's edition, highlighting the excellent cooperation and facilities provided by the Qatari Federation.

Expressing gratitude, Sheikh Ahmed extended thanks to Nasser Al-Khelaifi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Qatari Federation, Tariq Zainal, the Federation's Secretary, and all board members for their efforts in ensuring the success of the championship. He

emphasized that such dedication is not unfamiliar to the Qatari brothers.

Sheikh Ahmed also acknowledged

TENNIS

the beIN Sports channels for their collaboration in broadcasting the tournament's final live, enhancing its success and prominence. He noted that this step added a new dimension to the competition, making it the most robust Arab tennis competition to date with the participation of elite Arab players ranked internationally (ATP).

Expressing his joy in meeting with Arab stars for the third consecutive year, Sheikh Ahmed expressed pride

in all the players who have rightfully earned their places in the international classification list. He emphasized that the Elite Championship, born in Kuwait, is here to stay, evolve, and receive support and attention from all Arab countries in the years to come.

Sheikh Ahmed assured that the Arab Federation is committed to elevating the game and its members by providing

strong networking opportunities for the players. He highlighted the Elite Championship as an ideal platform for players to prepare for the Davis Cup qualifiers, emphasizing continued support for their advancement in world rankings. Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber praised the high level of competition throughout the tournament, anticipating an exciting and thrilling match as the championship concludes.



Sheikh Ahmed Al Jaber with players and guests of the tournament.

Pistons 'set' single-season record with 27th straight loss, fall to Nets

Grizzlies improve 4-0 since Morant return

DETROIT, Dec 27, (AP): The Detroit Pistons set an NBA single-season record with their 27th straight loss Tuesday night, as Cam Johnson scored 24 points and Mikal Bridges added 21 to lead the Brooklyn Nets to a 118-112 victory.

Cade Cunningham scored 41 points but the Pistons broke a tie with the 2010-11 Cleveland Cavaliers and 2013-14 Philadelphia 76ers. The 76ers hold the overall mark at 28, a skid that started in the 2014-15 season and carried over into 2015-16.

Cunningham scored 37 in the second half and shot 15 for 21 from the field, but Bojan Bogdanovic was the only other Pistons player with more than 15.

Thunder 129, Timberwolves 106

In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 34 points, Jalen Williams added 21 and Oklahoma City made 18 shots from 3-point range to beat Minnesota.

Chet Holmgren and Lu Dort each added 20 points for the Thunder, who went 18 for 39 (46.2%) on 3s and

BASKETBALL

forced 24 Minnesota turnovers that led to 23 points. Dort was 5 of 6 from beyond the arc.

Magic 127, Wizards 119

In Washington, Franz Wagner had 28 points, nine assists, and eight rebounds, rookie Anthony Black scored a career-high 23 points and Orlando defeated Washington.

Paolo Banchero overcame a slow start to finish with 24 points and eight assists and Jalen Suggs returned from a two-game absence due to a left wrist injury to score 11.

Trail Blazers 130, Kings 113

In Portland, Anfernee Simons scored 29 points to lead Portland Trail over Sacramento.

Duop Reath added a career-high 25 points and grabbed nine rebounds off the bench for the Blazers. Malcolm Brogdon scored 19 points, while Scoot Henderson and Jabari Walker each had 17 off the bench.

Henderson added 11 assists and had only one turnover in one of his strongest games of his pro career.

Grizzlies 116, Pelicans 115, OT

In New Orleans, Ja Morant scored 31 points and Memphis defeated New Orleans in overtime to improve to 4-0 since Morant made his season debut in New Orleans a week earlier.

Desmond Bane scored 27, including a 3 in the final minute of regulation that helped Memphis erase a 15-point, second-half deficit. Jaren Jackson Jr. added 19 points, redeeming his missed free throw at the end of regulation with a pair of baskets late in overtime that gave the Grizzlies the lead for good.

Pacers 123, Rockets 117

In Houston, Tyrese Haliburton had 33 points and 10 assists and hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with a minute left to lead Indiana over Houston, snapping a three-game losing streak.

Alperen Sengun led Houston with 30 points and 16 rebounds, and Fred VanVleet added 18 points and nine assists. There were 15 lead changes and six ties in the game.

Kazma 'part' ways with Chalo, appoint Dehelis as new coach

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: Kazma has relieved Francisco Chalo of his coaching duties for the Portuguese national team and has opted to appoint Mohamed Dehelis as the new head coach. The decision to part ways with Chalo follows the team's lackluster performance this season, highlighted by a significant defeat in the eleventh round of the Zain Premier League.

Currently in sixth place with 13 points, Kazma trails behind leaders Al-Kuwait and Al-Arabi by 13 points and is 12 points behind second-placed Al-Qadisiyah. Chalo, who was signed in September to replace Brazilian coach Sergio Farias, failed to make a convincing impact, with the team suffering notable losses to Al-Arabi and Al-



Kazma new coach Mohamed Dehelis.

Bulls 118, Hawks 113

In Chicago, Andre Drummond had season highs of 24 points and 25 rebounds in his first start of the season, DeMar DeRozan scored 25 points and Chicago cooled off Atlanta's Trae Young somewhat in beating the Hawks. Young finished with 21 points and 13 assists after tying Oscar Robertson's record of seven consecutive games with at least 30 points and 10 assists.

Jazz 130, Spurs 118

In San Antonio, Lauri Markkanen had 31 points and 12 rebounds, and Utah overcame a slow start to beat San Antonio, which has lost five straight since snapping a franchise-worst 18-game losing streak.



New Orleans Pelicans guard CJ McCollum and Memphis Grizzlies guard Marcus Smart (36) dive for a loose ball in the second half of an NBA basketball game in New Orleans. The Grizzlies won in overtime 116-115. (AP)

Nasr.

Youssef Bouskandar, the Secretary of the Kazma Club, revealed that the decision to dismiss Chalo was based on the recommendation of the administrative staff. The Portuguese coach and the club mutually agreed not to continue the collaboration, with Bouskandar expressing gratitude for Chalo's tenure with the team.

In Chalo's stead, Kazma has appointed Mohamed Dehelis, a national coach with previous experience leading Salmiya, Al-Sahel, and Burgan clubs. Dehelis is set to embark on his coaching role

SOCCER

with the team immediately, having agreed to a season-and-a-half commitment.

Bouskandar conveyed the Kazma Board of Directors' confidence in Dehelis's capabilities, expressing optimism that the national coach will elevate the team's performance and results. The board wishes him success in achieving this goal.

Meanwhile, Algerian defender Imad Eddine Ezzi, a professional player for Kazma, has requested to terminate his contract, which extends until the end of the current season. The club has accepted Ezzi's request, and negotiations are underway with another Algerian professional player to fill the same position on the team.

Jordan Clarkson added 24 points, Collin Sexton had 20 and Walker Kessler scored 11 for Utah.

Keldon Johnson led San Antonio with 26 points, Devin Vassell had 22, Jeremy Sochan added 19 and Victor Wembanyama had 15.

Clippers 113, Hornets 104

In Los Angeles, James Harden scored 20 of his 29 points in the first half and Los Angeles rallied for a victory over Charlotte to end a two-game losing streak.

Paul George scored 25 points and Ivica Zubac added 18 points with 14 rebounds as the Clippers won for the first time in three games since Kawhi Leonard was sidelined with a left hip contusion.

Arab Basketball Championship opens

Tunisia secure victory over Kuwait

CAIRO, Dec 27, (KUNA): Tunisia secured 85-69 victory over Kuwait in the opening match of the 25th edition of the Arab Basketball Championship at Cairo International Stadium's Indoor Halls Complex.

Despite a strong start, the Kuwaiti team, led by German head coach Peter Schumers, faced missed opportunities and formidable opposition from the physically robust Tunisian team. Schumers acknowledged the outstanding performance of his players during the match but highlighted areas of improvement, particularly the team's vulnerabilities that became

BASKETBALL

evident.

Expressing gratitude, Schumers commended the Kuwaiti national team players for their commitment to the agreed-upon plan on the court. He pledged to address the identified weaknesses to ensure better results in the upcoming matches of the championship.

Looking ahead, the Arab Championship, taking place from December 26 to January 3, features nine participating teams. Kuwait finds itself in the second group alongside Egypt, the Emirates, Tunisia, and Morocco. The first group comprises Algeria, Libya, Somalia, and Mauritania.

In subsequent matches, the Algerian national team is set to face Somali, while the Egypt national will host UAE. The quarter-final matches are scheduled for January 1, followed by the semi-finals on January 2, and the concluding final round on January 3.

The Egyptian national team, boasting a remarkable 12-time championship record, is the historical champion of the competition, with their last victory in 2017. No-



Kuwaiti player chats with an opponent at the end of proceedings.

tably, the Lebanese and Jordanian national teams will be absent from the tournament due to insufficient preparation time.

During the opening ceremony, Egypt's Minister of Youth and Sports, Ashraf Sobhy, extended a warm welcome to the participating teams, expressing gratitude for their engagement in the competition, which is slated to run until January 3.

Dhari Barjas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Basketball Federation, affirmed the tournament's inclusion of some of the top Arab teams. According to the International Basketball Federation's rankings, he highlighted Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia as among the best teams globally.

Barjas emphasized Kuwait's keenness to partake in the championship, citing the significant presence of formidable Arab teams. He underscored the event's role in fostering high-level competition, contributing to the overall development of Arab basketball.

Best of the Rest

Osaka hits practice court: Former No. 1 and new mom Naomi Osaka hit the practice court Wednesday ahead of the Brisbane International as she prepared for her much anticipated return to tennis.

Osaka will make her WTA comeback at the tournament which begins Sunday at Pat Rafter Arena. A two-time Australian and U.S. Open champion, Osaka pulled out of last year's Australian Open in Melbourne before later revealing she was pregnant. The U.S.-based Japanese player and her American rapper boyfriend Cordae became parents to daughter Shai in Los Angeles in July.

Osaka has only played one game since the 2021 U.S. Open in New York. She was leading Daria Gavrilova 1-0 at the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo in September 2021, before the Australian suffered a serious knee injury and had to retire in the match.

"She's really pumped, excited to be back in Brisbane," tournament director Cameron Pearson said Wednesday. "She arrived Christmas morning and was out practicing a few hours later. No Christmas pudding for her, she was straight into it." (AP)

Koca released on bail: Faruk Koca, the former president of a Turkish top division soccer team who was jailed for punching a referee, has been released on bail, the country's state-run news agency reported on Wednesday.

Koca, who resigned as president of MKE Ankaragucu after punching referee Halil Umur Meiler, will still be required to report regularly to authorities, the Anadolu Agency said.

Meiler was attacked on Dec. 11 after the final whistle of a 1-1 draw between Ankaragucu and Caykur Rizespor. The referee, who was also kicked by two other people while lying on the ground, was hospitalized with a minor fracture close to his eye.

Koca is scheduled to stand trial on Jan. 9 on charges of injuring a public official, threatening an official and violating a law relating to the prevention of violence in sports. Two other people have also been charged for kicking the referee.

The Turkish Football Federation suspended all league games for a week in response to the incident and imposed a permanent ban on Koca. (AP)

'There is noticeable improvement'

Al-Qadsia coach hospitalized after health scare

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: The head coach of Al-Qadsia, Muhammad Ibrahim, experienced an unexpected health issue that led to his hospitalization the day before yesterday.

Medical examinations conducted at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital confirmed a mild stroke in his head, prompting admission to intensive care. There were initial concerns for the health of this renowned figure in Kuwaiti and Al-Qadsia history, but signs of improvement have since emerged.

Muhammad Ibrahim's son, Khaled Ibrahim, who is also a player for Al-Qadsia, provided reassurance about his father's health, stating that he is showing signs of recovery and requires rest. Comprehensive examinations were conducted to ensure his well-being, and there is noticeable improvement in his overall health.

While calls for the coach's return to training and leadership are premature, Khaled emphasized that the current priority is monitoring his father's health. He expressed gratitude for the overwhelming support and love from the Kuwaiti people during this challenging time, acknowledging that such encouragement is the



The head coach of Al-Qadsia, Muhammad Ibrahim.

true reward in the realm of sports.

It's important to note that in the upcoming 12th round of the Zain Premier League, Al-Qadsia will face Al-Fahaheel, with Serbian assistant coach Arsov assuming coaching duties for the match.



President of the Triathlon Club, Rashid Al-Kandari addressing the media.

Sports

Latest sports scores at — <http://sports.arabtimesonline.com>

President of the Triathlon Club, describes the decision as a settling of scores

24 sports clubs appeal to HH Amir to reverse unjust advertising cancellation

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: The 24 sports clubs, whose advertising was abruptly canceled by a ministerial decision, have made a heartfelt appeal to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Their plea is to lift the perceived injustice against them and prevent the potential demolition of Kuwaiti sports. The clubs are also seeking compensation to avoid the looming specter of an international ban, aiming to pull themselves out of the sudden dark tunnel that threatens sports entities. These clubs, whose achievements have proudly raised Kuwait's name in international forums, delivered their appeal during a press conference at the Kuwaiti Lawyers Association.

At the conference, President of the Inspire Cars and Bicycles Club, Rector Falah Al-Mahwaish, condemned last Sunday as a black point in the history of the Minister of Youth and the Public Sports Authority. He highlighted the cancellation of the declaration of 24 specialized sports clubs without reasonable reasons, emphasizing the international achievements these clubs have brought to Kuwait. Al-Mahwaish expressed surprise at the Authority's decision, especially considering the successful hosting of international events such as a diving championship and various regional championships.

Salama Al-Rujaib, representative of the Kuwait Diving and Rescue Club, invoked the Olympic Charter, stating that any member state committed to the United Nations is also committed to the Charter, which discourages non-governmental interference in sports. He questioned whether the decision to cancel club declarations, including those under the Kuwait Olympic Committee, contradicted His Highness the Amir's mentioned concerns about programmed tampering.

Fayez Al-Mutairi, President of the Fakhr Al-Ajyal Equestrian Club, criticized the decision based on Articles 3 and 11 of the Publicity Law. He focused on the specific conditions related to the club's location and the nature of certain sports, emphasizing that some international championships require open, natural environments.

Rashid Al-Kandari, President of the Triathlon Club, described the decision as a settling of scores. He revealed a plan by Director General Yousef Al-Baidan to cancel club declarations, only to re-announce them with new boards of directors after two weeks.

Lawyer Ghanem Al-Dabbous, representing the clubs' defense authority, argued that the decision contradicted the law. He emphasized that the Sports Law, Article 10, allows the cancellation of a club's advertisement only if it does not engage in sports activity for six consecutive months. Al-Dabbous suggested that the decision may have relied on Article 3 of the Sports Law, creating uncertainty about its basis.

The clubs, determined to challenge the decision legally, warned of potential international consequences, including sanctions or a suspension of Kuwaiti sports, if the matter reaches international bodies or the International Olympic Committee.

Al-Mutairi urges 'sportsmanship'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 27: Hayef Al-Mutairi, Vice President of the Football Association for Technical Affairs, expressed sincere regret for the recent disruptions to the norm and fair play observed during the matches between Al-Arabi and Al-Shabab, as well as Al-Nasr and Al-Salmiya in the eleventh round of the Zain Premier League.

Al-Mutairi disclosed that the newly formed Disciplinary Committee, under its new president and vice-president, is closely monitoring all events within the stadiums. It is committed to addressing any actions that undermine Kuwaiti football with firmness, emphasizing the Board of Directors' confidence in the judicial committees' ability to enforce penalties that promote accountability and deter future violations.

Emphasizing the importance of upholding sportsmanship, Al-Mutairi urged the rejection of negative phenomena in Kuwaiti stadiums, particularly in the Zain Premier League, where this season has showcased high standards and intense competition for all positions.

In a related announcement, Al-Mutairi revealed that the Zain Premier League will pause after the completion of the fourteenth round on January 9, resuming on January 26. During this hiatus, the national team will embark on an external camp in Cairo from January 9 to 22, engaging in two friendly matches against the Libyan and Ugandan teams on January 12 and 19.



Officials of the clubs who took part in the press conference.

Man United stage 'rousing' second-half comeback to edge Villa; Liverpool go top

Luton boost survival chances

Das carries his bat for 42

MANCHESTER, England, Dec 27, (AP): Manchester United staged a rousing second-half comeback to beat Aston Villa 3-2 in the Premier League after conceding two goals inside 26 minutes at Old Trafford.

In the first game since British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe agreed to buy a stake of up to 25% of the 20-time league champions, Erik ten Hag's team made a dreadful start and was booed by their own fans in the first half.

But it completely changed the atmosphere with two goals from Alejandro Garnacho and a winner from Rasmus Hojlund.

United moved up to sixth place. In front of the watching Dave Brailsford, who will become a director of United and is expected to play a prominent role in the running of its soccer department, Villa went ahead through John McGinn and Leander Dendoncker in the 21st and 26th minutes.

SOCCER

United went into the game without a win or a goal in their previous four matches in all competitions, having lost three times during that run. Trailing 2-0 at halftime, the atmosphere was toxic and United's defending was shambolic.

McGinn's goal came direct from a free kick on the right as the midfielder's cross was allowed to bounce in the area and carried on into the back of the net without anyone getting a touch.

Five minutes later Villa doubled their lead after more bad defending from United when, from a corner, Dendoncker stuck a foot out to divert Clement Lenglet's header over the line.

Bruno Fernandes played in Marcus Rashford on the left and he crossed to the on-running Garnacho to convert at the far post in the 59th.

Garnacho scored his second in the 71st and Old Trafford erupted. Fernandes was involved again, with a deflected cross that fell to Garnacho in the box. The forward's shot then took another deflection as it beat Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez.

Hojlund completed the comeback in the 82nd with a left-footed volley from a corner for his first league goal since his \$82 million move from Atalanta in the offseason.

It sparked wild celebrations from the home fans and Ten Hag followed suit on the sideline.

Liverpool are back at the top of the league and Darwin Nunez is again among the goals.

Nunez ended a 12-game scoring drought to set up Jurgen Klopp's team for a 2-0 win against Burnley and over-



Manchester United's Rasmus Hojlund, center, celebrates scoring their side's third goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester United and Aston Villa at the Old Trafford stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

take Arsenal in the standings. Liverpool moved two points clear of second-place Arsenal, which have a game in hand against West Ham on Thursday.

Nunez curled a shot from distance beyond Burnley goalkeeper James Trafford in the sixth minute at Turf Moor, having failed to find the back of the net for his club since Nov. 1.

Having drawn back-to-back league games against Manchester United and Arsenal, Liverpool failed to make the most of its dominance as it saw two goals disallowed and Mohamed Salah hit the bar.

Substitute Diogo Jota eventually ended any concerns of a Burnley equalizer with a goal in the 90th.

Back-to-back wins for Luton have boosted the relegation-fighting club's chances of survival. But Rob Edwards' team had Sheffield United to thank for the 3-2 win at Bramall Lane after the bottom-place team scored two own-goals in the space of four minutes.

Jack Robinson and Anis Ben Slimane put through their own net in the

77th and 81st minutes to hand 18th-place Luton the win that moved it to within a point of Everton in 17th.

Alfie Doughty had given Luton a first-half lead in the 17th. Oliver McBurnie leveled in the 61st and Anel Ahmedhodzic put Sheffield United 2-1 up in the 69th. But the own-goals turned the game around as Luton followed up their 1-0 victory over Newcastle with another win.

After a tough start at Bournemouth, Andoni Iraola is on a roll with six wins in seven games.

Goals from Justin Kluivert, Dominic Solanke and Luis Sinisterra secured the latest - a 3-0 win against Fulham.

Iraola arrived from Rayo Vallecano in the offseason with a big reputation, but won only one of his first 11 league games in charge.

That run is a distant memory now as Bournemouth have risen up to 10th in the standings.

The form of Solanke has been a big factor in that turnaround with eight goals in his last seven games.



Burnley's Charlie Taylor, right, fights for the ball with Liverpool's Mohamed Salah during the English Premier League soccer match between Burnley and Liverpool at Turf Moor stadium in Burnley, England. (AP)

Bangladesh 'rout' New Zealand by 5 wickets in the opening T20

NAPIER, New Zealand, Dec 27 (AP): Litton Das carried his bat for 42 to steer Bangladesh to a five-wicket win in the opening Twenty20 on Wednesday as they rolled New Zealand out cheaply at McLean Park for the second time in four days.

On Saturday, Bangladesh bowled out New Zealand for 98 on the same pitch to set up a nine-wicket win in the third one-day international, their first limited-overs victory over the Black Caps on their home soil.

Four days later Bangladesh claimed three wickets with the first nine balls of the New Zealand innings and contained the home side to 134-9. The Black Caps were 1-3 after Shoriful Islam dismissed Finn Allen and Glenn Phillips with consecutive balls in the second over, and then 20-4 following the fall of Daryl Mitchell.

Jimmy Neesham made 48 and captain Mitchell Santner 23 as New Zealand staged a partial recovery.

Das led an unhurried run chase that saw Bangladesh reach its target with eight balls to spare. The opener was given out lbw to Tim Southee when he was 22 but had the decision reversed under review and stayed on to steady the innings later.

He needed medical treatment for a leg injury at the start of the 18th over when he was 29 and Bangladesh needed 24 from 18 balls. On 33, and with 20 needed from 16 balls, his lofted shot found Ish Sodhi at fine-leg but the fielder stepped over the boundary line in completing a simple catch, giving Das another reprieve.

CRICKET

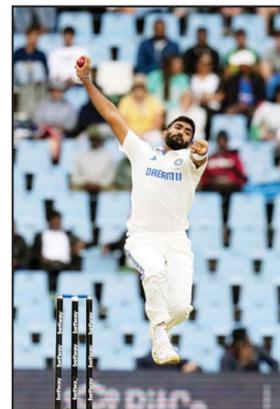
Clearly impeded while running between the wickets, Das was able to look on from the non-striker's end as Mahedi Hasan (19 not out) finished the chase with a six and a four off Adam Milne in the 19th over.

Earlier, Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto entrusted the first over to off-spinner Mahedi and the decision paid off when he bowled Tim Seifert with the fourth ball.

"In these conditions spin bowling is hard but I was able to get my execution right," said Mahedi who was Player of the Match for his all-round performance.

"I hit the right areas in the power play and was able to do a good job for my team. When I bowl well, then I am able to bat confidently and finish the job for my team."

Seifert went back to a delivery from Mahedi that he tried to dab wide of slip. But the ball kept



India's bowler Jasprit Bumrah bowls during the second day of the Test cricket match between South Africa and India, at Centurion Park, in Centurion, on the outskirts of Pretoria, South Africa. (AP)

low, skipped on and hit his middle stump.

Shoriful then followed up his effort in the third one-dayer, where he took three wickets, with a double strike in the second over. Allen threw his hands, without moving his feet, to a ball going across him and was caught at slip.

Next ball Phillips offered no shot to a delivery that struck him on the knee roll in front of middle. New Zealand called for a review but Phillips had begun to walk off the field before the decision was made.

When Mitchell was bowled by Mahedi, New Zealand was in desperate trouble. Neesham lifted the Black Caps with his 48 from 29 balls, which included four fours and three sixes. But he was out just when the innings seemed to be gaining momentum, at 110-7 in the 17th over.

Shanto (19), Soumya Sarkar (22) and Towhid Hridoy (19) made valuable contributions for Bangladesh but Das held the innings together when it seemed it might falter. Afif Hossain fell to Southee in the 15th over when the visitors were 97-5 and Das had his successful review later in the same over, a turning point in the match.

Had Das fallen, Bangladesh might have struggled but he survived to the finish. Southee took 1-16 from his four overs.

The second game in the three-match series is at Mount Maunganui on Friday.