



AMIR EMPHASIZES NEED TO SAFEGUARD KUWAIT'S NATIONAL IDENTITY



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivers a speech on the occasion of the last 10 days of Ramadan.

'Don't betray your vote'

'Be united... protect Kuwait and its people'

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah called Monday on voters to select candidates who would be their best representatives, and hoped future MPs would benefit from past experiences and live up to their national responsibilities.

"I talk to you ... hoping as we approach the National Assembly elections 2024 (on April 4) to better select your representatives, not to select whose objective is personal gain or inciting crises, or harming constitutional principles, your sound selection is your path for the building of a future for your nation and the generations," His Highness the Amir said in an address to the nation on the occasion of the last 10 days of Ramadan.

"Don't betray your vote, and the candidate should speak in what satisfies the Almighty, has well-spoken dialogue which avoids harming of others, inciting sentiments and emotions of voters at the expense of the nation and citizens," he said.

His Highness the Amir hoped the next parliament would be "distinguished with faces with enlightened thinking .. National Assembly members who benefit from previous parliamentary lessons and experiences, and live up to their national responsibilities."

He said: "We are looking forward to participation of citizens of our beloved nation in election, and who boycott it will relinquish his constitutional right, does not perform his duty to select, and has no right after that to blame anyone for the poor outcome nor poor performance and achievement.

"Everyone should neglect those inciting division and sedition, be united, protect Kuwait and its people," he said.

His Highness the Amir, meanwhile, said it was evident the severe damage that happened to the national identity through tampering with Kuwait's nationality.

"Because the national identity represents existence, an issue of rule and a destiny of a nation, so an assault on it is an assault on the structure of the state and its major components, and cannot be ignored, therefore we commend and support all efforts and measures aimed at preserving the national identity," he asserted.

His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah the Almighty to bestow his blessings upon the State of Kuwait to enjoy security, progress, and prosperity, urging for the love and loyalty of the Kuwait in a selfless and united manner.

His Highness the Amir also prayed to the Almighty to support "our brothers in Gaza, have mercy on their martyrs and ours," heal the sick, and have mercy on "our former rulers."

Opinion

Indeed, Allah is not unjust to His slaves

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

WE remember the story of Prophet Musa (PBUH) and the knight, the old man and the boy. This story teaches us that divine punishment must come to pass regardless.

Such stories come in handy whenever we look back at the previous years, and how some people facilitated bribery, looting of the public money, and oppressed people, in full view of everyone, under the impression that they are the knights of public work and are above the law.

The story begins when Prophet Musa (Moses) went out one day to speak to his Lord, and asked him, "O Lord, how does the weak get their rights from the strong?"

Almighty Allah said to him, "Go in the afternoon to such-and-such place, on such-and-such day to see and learn how the weak get their rights from the strong."

Prophet Musa went to the place told by Almighty Allah, and saw a waterfall emanating from a mountain. As he sat there in contemplation, a knight came on the back of a camel, as he wanted water. He dismounted, took off his belt, which was hindering his movement, put it aside, drank, washed, then left but had forgotten to take his belt.

Then a young boy came riding a donkey to the waterfall, washed and drank as well. As he was about to leave, his eyes fell on the belt. He took it and opened it to realize it was full of gold, money, and jewelry. He took the belt with him and left.

Shortly after he left, an old man came to drink and wash himself. While he was there, the knight came there and was looking for his belt. When he did not find it, he asked the old man, "Where's the belt I left here?"

The old man replied, "I don't know. I didn't see any belt here". The knight got angry, drew his sword, and cut off the old man's head.

Prophet Musa (PBUH) was watching this scene and thinking. He said, "O Lord, this knight has wronged your old slave, the old man".

The Almighty answered him, "O Musa, the old man had killed the knight's father a long time ago. As for the boy, his father had worked for the murderer's father for twenty years, and he did not give him his due. Thus, the latter took his father's right from the old man, and the boy took his father's right from the knight."

This story shows how Almighty Allah gives respite but never neglects, and that divine retribution is certain even if it takes long to come to pass.

Therefore, there are those who believe that they are above the law and retribution, and that they are untouchables, either because of their position, immunity, tribe, sect, or any other matter. Such a

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Ramadan Timings

Iftar Tuesday 18:08
Imsak Wednesday 04:12

123 schools designated as polling stations on April 4

'Electoral silence' begins Wednesday noon: Info Ministry

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Electoral silence for the 2024 National Assembly elections begins April 3, Wednesday, at 12:00 pm and ends on April 4, election day, said the Ministry of Information Monday.

In a statement to KUNA, acting undersecretary for press and publications Lafi Al-Subaie said that according to Article 22 of the Election Law No. 4, 2024, the electoral silence would begin for a period of 24 hours, meaning that programs, interviews, reports, polls and other materials pertain-

ing to the election would not be broadcasted.

The media message would be dedicated to only encouraging citizens to cast their vote during election, providing information in regards to where to vote, he added.

He pointed out that the reason behind the electoral silence was to provide voters with a breather and chance to choose their candidates for the National, affirming that the Ministry of Information was keen on the success of the democratic process.

Meanwhile, Director of the Election Affairs General Department in the Ministry of Interior Brigadier Ahmed Al-Hajri has confirmed the completion of preparations for the National Assembly Election on Thursday.

He said 123 schools were allocated for the election: 118 will be used as polling precincts and five for counting the votes. This is in addition to the provision of 759 ballot boxes and 168 patrols to carry the ballot boxes.

He affirmed coordination with the Information Technology General Department for the printing of ballots. He also revealed there has been an agreement with the Ministry of Education to allocate Khawla School for Girls in Shuwaikh residential area for keeping the ballot boxes before distributing them to the schools allocated for voting on Thursday morning.

He added 1,518 podiums (two in each polling center) have been prepared for the voters to cast their votes. He said the identification

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NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) said 200 volunteers are providing first aid and other services to worshippers performing prayers of the last 10 days of Ramadan at the Grand Mosque.

In a statement to KUNA on Monday, the head of the youth and volunteers' unit at KRCS Ahmad Al-Fagaan said the male and female volunteers were given a training course in first aid to enable them to deal with any health issues or emergencies that may encounter worshippers as they perform late-night prayers. (KUNA)

NEW DELHI: A court in India on Monday placed a top opposition leader in two weeks of judicial detention after his 10 days in the custody of a federal agency expired, in a case that opposition parties say is part of a crackdown by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government on rivals ahead of a national election later this month.

Arvind Kejriwal, the leader of the Aam Aadmi Party, or Common Man's Party, is the top elected official in the city of New Delhi and one of the country's most consequential politicians of the past decade. (AP)



The congregation grows for Tahajjud, 'qiyam' prayers at the Bilal bin Rabbah mosque in Al-Siddique area, Kuwait, as the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan come to a close. Members of the Kuwaiti royal family opt to pray in this mosque. The mosque is named after Hazrat Bilal (RA), the first muezzin (who calls public to prayer) in Islam and a close companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Kuwait's FM appoints new KFAED board members

'Destruction'

Two-week Israeli raid in Shifa Hospital ends

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip, April 1, (AP): Israel's military withdrew from Gaza's largest hospital early Monday after a two-week raid, in which it said it killed some 200 militants and detained hundreds more. Palestinian residents said the troops left behind several bodies and a vast swath of destruction.

The military has described the raid on Shifa Hospital as one of the most successful of the nearly six-month war. But it came at a time of mounting frustration in Israel, with tens of thousands protesting against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday and demanding he do more to bring home dozens of hostages held in Gaza. It was the largest anti-government demonstration since the start of the war.

The fighting showed that Hamas can still put up resistance even in one of the hardest-hit areas. Israel said it had largely dismantled Hamas in northern Gaza and withdrew thousands of troops late last year, leaving a security vacuum that has made it difficult to deliver desperately needed humanitarian aid.

The military said that among those killed were senior Hamas operatives and other militants who had regrouped there after an earlier raid in November, and that it seized weapons and valuable intelligence.

The U.N. health agency said more than 20 patients died and dozens were put at risk during the raid, which brought even further destruction to a hospital that had

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya issued on Monday Resolution 1/2024, appointing new board members.

The newly appointed board members are:
■ Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

■ Undersecretary of Ministry of Finance, Aseel Suliman Al-Munaifi.

■ KFAED Director-General Hisham Ibrahim Al-Wugayan.

■ Dr. Fatima Saud Al-Salem.

■ Dr. Bader Saad Al-Hashel.

■ Dr. Saad Ahmad Al-Nahedh.

■ Dr. Dhari Suliman Al-Rushaid.

■ Dr. Sarah Eissa Al-Khalaf.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs congratulated the new members wishing them success during their three-year tenure in fulfilling KFAED's goals in Kuwait and abroad.

Day by Day

THE metaphor of tying the colt to what its owner wants reflects a common sentiment when offering advice falls on deaf ears.

However, when the folly of the colt's owner becomes apparent, the situation becomes dire. The proverbial expression, "For lack of horses they tightened the saddle on the dogs," encapsulates the frustration of attempting to solve problems with inadequate resources or misguided approaches, leading to further complexity.

It is often said that solutions come too late, after the moment for decisive action has passed. This realization prompts sober reflection, but by then, the damage may have been already done.

Such is the unpredictable nature of the world, where fortunes can swiftly change from one day to the next.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Kuwait-Saudi rail link by 2028

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: The first phase of the study on the railway link between Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will be completed within the next three months, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources from the Ministry of Public Works.

Sources revealed this phase includes determining the route that will start from Kuwait (Al-Shaddadiya area), passing through the city of Riyadh in Saudi Arabia.

Sources said the necessary procedures and approvals for the first phase are currently being finalized; indicating the second phase is the design phase that requires a period of approximately one year, while the third phase includes the implementa-

tion and construction within a period of three years. It is expected that the project will be completed in 2028.

Sources explained the project aims to achieve safe and efficient railway transportation and facilitate the transportation mechanism between the two countries; which will promote increased trade exchange and economic growth, and ensure the safety of passengers and properties.

The distance between Kuwait and Riyadh is estimated at 650 kilometers. Studies showed that travel time will be reduced to two hours through the railway link project. The fees for consulting services for conducting the financial, economic and technical

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Prayer Timings

Fajr	04:18	Asr	15:23
Sunrise ..	05:38	Maghrib ..	18:06
Zohr	11:52	Isha	19:24

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Rather hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-28 km/h.
By Night: Mild and partly cloudy

Weather

to cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 08-26 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	33	22

Kuwait Airport	33	19
Abdaly	34	17
Jahra	34	20
Salmiyah	29	24
Nuwaisib	30	19
Wafra	34	18

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

From cultural sport to electoral advertising

Poll-runners take to podcasts for promotion campaigns

Election or selection of MPs plays major role: Dr Al-Azmi

'Kuwaiti women make their presence felt in politics'

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): Kuwaiti women have proven their presence on the political scene since they were granted their political rights on May 16, 2005 to run for election and to vote and that will remain a historic day in the lives of Kuwaiti women in particular and the Kuwaiti people in general.

Women's political rights opened the door for them to participate for the first time in decision-making and contributing to deepening the democratic process in the country.

After the National Assembly unanimously voted to grant Kuwaiti women their full political rights, Kuwaiti women have proven their responsibility and capability in the political field.

In interviews to KUNA with several Kuwait female academics and those interested in political and woman affairs, they stressed that Kuwaiti women have political awareness and their participation in the parliamentary elections made a clear difference in delivering their issues and demands.

Acting Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs Dr. Maryam Al-Azmi said that the participation of Kuwaiti women in the elections has many positives, including activating citizenship rights on an equal basis with men to build a just, free and equal society according to with Articles seven and eight of the Kuwait Constitution, and to facilitate and approve the right to participate in the political decision-making.

She emphasized that women are able to make their voices heard under the dome of Abdullah Al-Salem Hall, either through their candidacy and the chance to win a seat in the National Assembly or through the election of members of parliament who adopt their issues and demands in their electoral program.

She continued that although four women won parliamentary seats in 2009 and major efforts by women to win political rights that lasted 20 years, women may face some challenges that hinder expanding the scope of their participation.

She added that the challenges may be due to the cultural system that does not motivate women to participate politically and assume leadership roles and decision-making positions, or the challenge may be the women themselves as there are some groups not convinced in activating womens political participation and voting for them.

She pointed out to the inability of some media outlets to play a developmental or changeable role regarding the values that affect the participation of women and highlighting their successes.

Awareness

Dr. Al-Azmi said that awareness among citizens should increase on women's political rights and citizenship rights through implementing political empowerment programs aiming at building women's political capabilities and enhancing the culture of women's political participation to advance their vital role, and activate their contributions to building and developing society.

She stressed the need to enhance women's participation in decision-making and support female candidates in launching a media campaign to shed light on the experiences of the former women parliamentarians and discuss the challenges they faced.

For her part, the Chairperson of Association for Family Security (Rawasi) and political and social activist in women and family rights, Dr. Khadeeja Al-Mahmeed told KUNA that the ratio of Kuwaiti female citizens who have the right to vote is greater than the male citizens, as the number of female voters exceeds by 50 percent, stressing the need for Kuwaiti women to vote based on issues at stake and the credibility of former and new candidates to address the concerns of the citizens.

As for the necessity of the presence of female candidates in the National Assembly, she said the State should adopt the "quota" system, noting that there are several Kuwaiti female citizens qualified for parliamentary representation.

She continued that the political process does not only depend on election and nomination to the National Assembly but also through developing the political awareness and sincere and continuous field activity in serving the nation through words and action.

Furthermore, Chairperson of Womens Cultural and Social Society Lulwa Al-Mulla told KUNA that even before women gained their political rights, they were an essential factor in the political and electoral process.

She stressed that the implementation of Article 29 of the Kuwait Constitution has enabled women to practice politics in voting and running for elections, which has had a significant and positive impact on the political life, expressing hope that women will have a greater share in the political success.

She added that the participation of women is as important as men in the electoral process and what is required choosing the right national candidate whose priority is the interest of the country, noting the importance of abiding by the articles of the Kuwait Constitution and preserving it.

Kuwait is keen to develop and empower womens capabilities, taking promising steps so that they have a positive and important role in all domains and be an effective factor socially, economically and politically, and contribute to boosting growth in all domains.

The empowerment of women is considered a major pillar of (Kuwait Vision 2035) and the development plan for their involvement in the labor market that would achieve the fifth goal of the sustainable development goals.



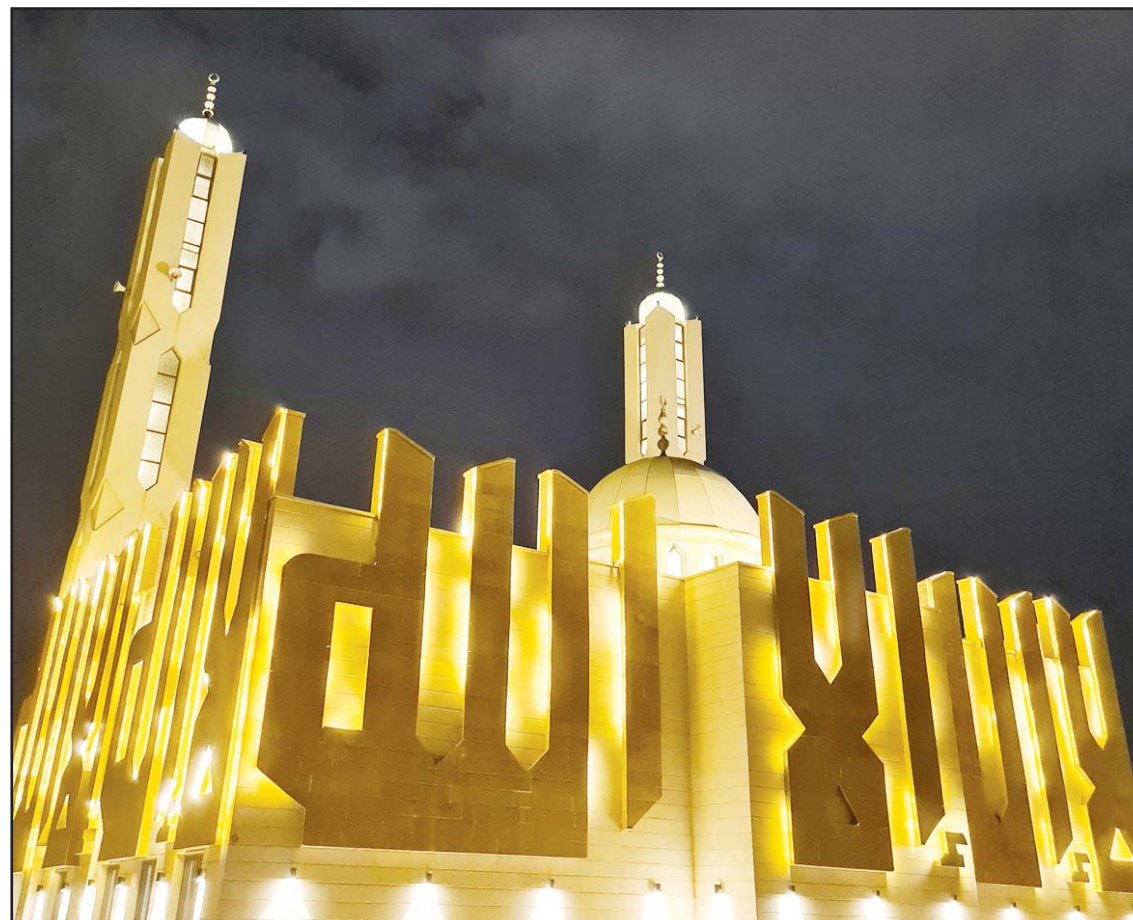
Dr Khadeeja Al-Mahmeed



Lulwa Al-Mulla

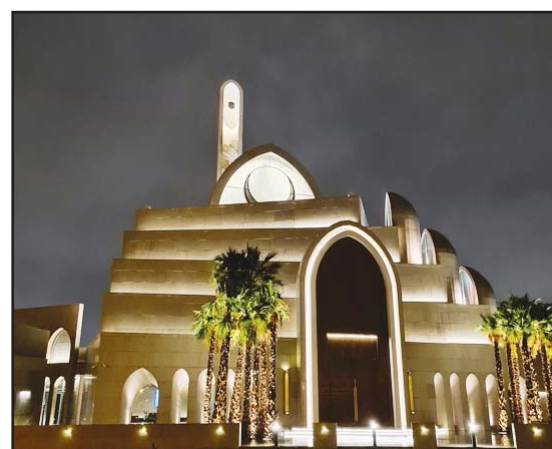


Dr Maryam Al-Azmi



Esa Al-Othman mosque

KUNA photos



Adla Al-Bahar mosque



Saad bin Abi Waqqas mosque

Kuwait mosques 'sparkle' in Ramadan

Photo feature by Wajid Al-Mutairi

Kuwait mosques in Ramadan seems like stars sparkling in the sky. With variants of architectural designs

inspired by different eras and schools, along with the modern and artfully-lit, Kuwait mosques are welcoming worshippers in the most reverent manner and ambience in the last 10 days of the holy month. (KUNA)

German envoy optimistic amid challenges

Complexities of 'Schengen' visa exemption

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: The German ambassador to Kuwait, Hans Christian Freiherr von Reibnitz, discussed the complexities involved in Kuwaiti citizens being exempted from the Schengen visa requirement to enter European Union while at the same time expressing optimism about the possibility of exemption, reports Al-Jarida daily. Highlighting the intricate process it entails, he explained that achieving visa exemption requires a concept by the European Parliament, which will be elected in June. However, he noted that the new Parliament would have other pressing matters to address initially, delaying the study of the Schengen visa exemption issue. Additionally, negotiation with Kuwait on reciprocity and necessary legislative changes on both sides would be required. Von Reibnitz emphasized that such negotiations and legislative changes across member states would take considerable time, potentially years, citing the example of the UAE, which took about three years to obtain visa exemption. Despite the challenges, von Reibnitz remained optimistic, stressing the importance of consistent efforts and a joint approach among EU countries. He acknowledged the need for an integrated package negotiated with the diversity of countries in mind. Regarding concerns about immigration, von Reibnitz expressed confidence that Kuwaitis would not pose significant immigration challenges to EU countries. However, he emphasized the importance of convincing political parties and incorporating visa exemption efforts into their programs. Referring to recent statements by a Gulf Cooperation Council official about obtaining exemption, von Reibnitz cautioned against premature announcements, emphasizing the need for long-term efforts and determination.



Von Reibnitz

KIC distributes Iftar meals to Muslims fasting in Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Kuwait Insurance Company (KIC), in cooperation with the Kuwait Food and Relief Bank, continued for the second year in a row its charitable campaign "Iftar for the Fasting Person" by distributing Iftar meals to fasting workers and people with limited income in the Mubarakiya Heritage Market during the holy month of Ramadan. This event reflected the Company's keenness to have the populace participate in all community events. Employees of the Kuwait Insurance Company and the Kuwait Food and Relief Bank also participated in this campaign. Commenting on the campaign, Fajr Al-Sayegh, Manager of Corporate Communications at Kuwait Insurance Company, said: "This campaign comes within the framework of the Company's enthusiasm to continue social and volunteer work in a way that serves the community in its various segments. This initiative is also considered one of the pillars of the Company's Ramadan program this year. The Company provides breakfast meals in the areas most crowded with workers".

She stated that Kuwait Insurance Company continues its commitment to supporting needy groups in society throughout the year, especially in the holy month of Ramadan. She also stressed the Company's keenness to establish



Officials and volunteers.

a culture of cooperation and volunteer work among its employees as it is an integral part of its social responsibility.

Finally, Al-Sayegh thanked the Kuwait Food and Relief Bank for contributing in providing Iftar meals for fasting people and praised the Bank's tireless efforts in cooperating with this campaign, stressing the importance of the Bank's pioneering role in the charitable field.

For their part, Kuwait Food Bank officials expressed their thanks for the support of the Kuwait Insurance Company, appreciating their prominent role in social responsibility and helping all segments of society, which reflects the bright image of Kuwait and its institutions

with illegal offices or individuals offering visa assistance. He clarified that visa applications should be made only through approved visa offices, not travel agencies.

ing with illegal offices or individuals offering visa assistance. He clarified that visa applications should be made only through approved visa offices, not travel agencies.

By Ali Al-Rasheedi

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): The tremendous developments the current media scene is witnessing have contributed to rapid changes in creating the media content, especially following the publication on March 3 by Kuwait's official gazette of a decree inviting eligible voters to elect National Assembly members.

This resulted in the appearance of the majority of candidates running for the National Assembly on podcast platforms to promote their electoral campaigns and secure a "green seat" in Abdullah Al-Salem Hall.

In this regard, several academics and podcast platform creators told KUNA that the concept of dialogue in podcasts took the lead in the world of content creation and contributed to influencing public opinion during the election period.

This also helped candidates to attract the largest possible number of voters due to the many advantages podcasts had over traditional means, mainly having more freedom to express, more time when recording dialogue sessions, lower financial costs and easier access to all age groups and different segments of society.

Mass Communications Professor in Kuwait University (KU) Dr. Fawaz Al-Ajmi told KUNA that one of main reasons candidates are relying on podcasts is that there is no need to commit to a specific time to talk about their resumes, their electoral programs and avoid some restrictions imposed by some traditional media outlets and the policies of media corporations.

He added, therefore most of the candidates turned to electronic broadcasting due to the diversity of the receiving audience and the speed of access to their reaction, as well as the possibility of archiving all speeches, media messages and segmenting the interview and have some snapshots that can be used on social media platforms to widely spread it to targeted groups.

When asked if podcasts contributed to the spread of candidates within society, Dr. Al-Ajmi responded that choosing the suitable podcast for the relevant targeted group will undoubtedly lead to achieving the objectives of the candidates election campaign and will help in getting to know the programs of the candidates campaigns.

He added that the traditional media outlets are commonly to specific times when hosting candidates, unlike podcasts that can be accessed at any time and any place and give the candidates an opportunity to answer all questions of the episode and provide time to clarify the comprehensive vision of events and issues to the audience.

Associate Professor in the Department of Mass Communication at KU, Dr. Hussain Murad told KUNA that the most important factors that contributed to the interest of candidates in podcast platforms are their low financial cost, their rapid spread and the ease of reaching the required targeted groups.

Candidates

He added that the National Assembly candidates can reach the largest number of listeners at a low cost by broadcasting podcast interviews on social media programs.

He continued that the traditional media outlets responded to this change and some of them adapted to it through merging podcasts into their programs to attract more audience and adapt to the changing media scene.

He noted that the main reason for the popularity of podcasts is their flexibility in reaching the largest number of audience, as the number of views of podcast programs during the Covid-19 pandemic reached about 383 million in the world, compared to 504 million views this year.

As for the reasons for candidates to use podcasts, he said that largest audience of these programs are the youth, whom make up over 70 percent of Kuwaiti society. The other reason is freedom from the restrictions of the traditional media.

Creator of "Jawla Podcast" platform, Bader Al-Askar told KUNA that the flexibility of viewers to follow episodes of podcasts and access them anytime is what caused the reluctance of candidates to be on traditional media means that abide by a broadcast schedule throughout the day and adhere to specific times to show the interviews on their channels.

He added that podcasts have a spontaneous and calm nature and do not adhere to the strict media protocols applied by the media corporations.

He continued the programs of the podcasts are divided into various fields and topics in the episodes are divided into cultural, entertainment, political and science ones.

He affirmed that while hosting candidates, his platform seeks to deliver the opinions of candidates on the most important social issues, and to openly and transparently ask the voters' questions, refusing to lose the primary identity of the podcast and turn it into a propaganda platform for candidates.

He noted that the spread of podcasts is much faster than traditional media, as they access all segments of society more easily, transcend geographical borders, and influence the public opinion.

For his part, "Albesat Ahmadi" podcast creator, Fahd Al-Subaei, told KUNA that one of the reasons why candidates turn to podcast platforms is the diversity of the age groups that these programs target and the ease of listening to them when practicing daily life activities.

He said that many candidates turned to podcast programs instead of electoral seminars and advertisements as they have become a form of promoting their campaigns due to their easy access to the targeted audience to present their proposals.

He pointed out that the credibility of the podcasts in the National Assembly elections in 2022 and 2023 differs from this year as some platform creators are exploiting the transformation of media content into commercial content, as well as the candidates choosing the questions and topics.

He stressed that these factors reduce the impact and popularity of these programs, and their credibility in presenting important ideas and issues.



Dr Fawaz Al-Ajmi



Dr Hussain Murad



Bader Al-Askar



Fahd Al-Subaei

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Magic of 'poetry collections' and the surplus of teachers

"THE revered month of Ramadan in Kuwait holds unique cultural significance, reflecting a collective dedication to observing its sanctity. Throughout the day, there's a sense of decorum and modesty in behavior, while evenings are marked by lively gatherings and bustling activity. This flurry of movement is driven by a shared commitment to embrace the blessings of Ramadan, often manifested in visits to various community hubs scattered across neighborhoods," columnist **Abdullah Bishara** wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"During this time, Kuwait experiences a flurry of activity, with congested streets and a cacophony of sounds as people search for parking spaces and make their way to Diwaniya gatherings. These Diwanias, a hallmark of Kuwaiti culture, continue to thrive despite the changing times.

"When asked about the enduring popularity of Diwanias, particularly by European visitors curious about this unique Kuwaiti phenomenon, I explained that these gatherings serve as vital meeting points for diverse groups, particularly seafarers who flock to them, especially during the summer months. Here, they don't just socialize but also settle financial matters related to their travels.

"It's a place where sailors interact with ship captains, ensuring fair compensation and confirming their future intentions regarding maritime endeavors.

"I recall witnessing these gatherings firsthand, observing my brother, Al-Nukhadha, Issa Bishara, diligently ensuring that every sailor received their due rights. Trust is paramount in the maritime profession, and such gatherings reinforce the integrity of these transactions.

"Though the era of maritime dealings may have passed, the essence of Diwanias persists, evolving into forums for political and cultural discourse. Here, individuals engage in lively debates, share news, dissect government decisions, and analyze the ever-changing landscape of the Arab world.

"Additionally, these gatherings provide a platform for leisure activities, offering respite for those with leisure time to indulge in hobbies and pastimes.

"In addition to the maritime-related offices, there were establishments serving as reception spaces for various visitors, notably including the country's Amir, where visits flowed freely without constraints. The tradition of "ghabqa," or late-night gatherings for food during Ramadan, added to the social fabric, emphasizing camaraderie and connection, closely intertwined with the fasting experience and its significance.

"Within the Diwaniya setting, cultural and literary dialogues thrived, encompassing local, regional, and global news, with active engagement and interpretation of their implications on Kuwaiti society. The Diwaniya symbolizes the heart of Kuwaiti social life, serving as a hub for convergence, diligent analysis, and discourse from both domestic and international perspectives. Furthermore, it offers avenues for entertainment, including traditional practices such as reciting religious poems and storytelling, enriching the social fabric.

"A key aspect of the Diwaniya culture is its role as a secure gathering place, where both utility and pleasure coexist, ensuring comfort for families and attendees, free from anxieties or disturbances. While Diwanias exist in other Gulf countries, often centered around specific professions, they lack the expansive scope and significance seen in Kuwaiti Diwanias.

"During Ramadan, the influence of Kuwait's Diwaniya culture extends beyond its borders, as Gulf embassies in Kuwait organize ghabqa events, adapting positively to the Ramadan atmosphere and its traditions, including ghabqa requirements.

"The geographical distribution of Diwanias reflects Kuwait's diverse landscape with many historically situated along the coast, such as Al-Mullah, Al-Rawdan, Al-Nisf, Al-Asousi, and Al-Shamlan, while others like Al-Badr and Diwan Al-Othman are located elsewhere.

"Families who traditionally had Diwanias in old Kuwait have transitioned to newer residential areas, contributing to the emergence of Diwanias in suburbs and neighboring regions, including the southern areas characterized by a moderate desert climate.

"The Kuwaiti Diwaniya remains a bastion of intellectual and cultural enlightenment, a venue for socializing and mutual understanding, and above all, a pillar of comfort and stability -- a unifying force for Kuwaiti society, embracing its diverse sects and temperaments.

"Originating from the imperative need to unite maritime communities and foster communication among desert tribes, the Diwaniya has evolved into a cherished institution deeply rooted in Kuwaiti history. Over time, it has become a fixture in every neighborhood, serving as a vital part of both old and modern Kuwait. Its essence and significance are ingrained in the collective consciousness of all sects within Kuwait, symbolizing unity and solidarity across the nation.

"Can you believe it, the surplus of teachers in Kuwait? Al-Jarida news-

paper, in its latest issue on Monday, March 25, dropped a bombshell with its headline: "Kuwaiti teachers reach 73,000, with a surplus of 23,000." It seems the Ministry is grappling with how to handle this excess of educators, a dilemma reminiscent of my early days at Shuwaikh High School. Back then, I was brimming with idealism, believing in the profound impact teachers could make, akin to clergy serving society with unwavering dedication.

"In those days, we found solace in the praise and reverence bestowed upon teachers in Arabic literature, almost elevating them to the status of messengers in societal renaissance, revered across Arab, European, and international heritage.

"I can attest, having trodden this path myself, that there's no need for diagnosis of the condition of teachers. Society expects them to embody exemplary behavior, transcending temptations, and remaining steadfast in their commitment to noble ideals. Yet, despite their sacrifices, teachers are undervalued, underpaid, and overlooked in societal discourse, a plight shared by educators worldwide.

"It's disheartening that teachers endure meager salaries and diminished societal regard, their voices drowned out in public discourse. This is a universal reality for educators.

"As for the fate of surplus teachers in Kuwait, it's a shameful reflection of inadequate planning and foresight. They won't migrate or easily find alternative employment due to the unique nature of their vocation. Many of these surplus educators, driven by patriotism and idealism, responded to the nation's call, embracing the challenges of their profession. Now, they await the Ministry of Education's decision on their future."

Also:

"Tainted mind ... The obsession with achieving membership in the National Assembly made some candidates lose their temper. They lost control of their tongues when they were struck by a turmoil of mind, God forbid, which made them agitated, intimidated and threatened by the government and those behind it. This is due to the Ministry of Interior's implementation of the law against forgers of Kuwaiti citizenship. It happened until they lost their sight and insight, so each of these candidates started to flounder and utter words that are outside literature, morals and political work," **Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"They also uttered words beyond the subject of forgery, such as attacks on family members and describing citizens as informants whenever they report to their government. They called this legal procedure 'sedition', an attack on national unity, and other vocabulary and sentences that only the aggrieved new Kuwaitis could utter.

"We regret the former representatives and some of the candidates whose voices we did not hear and whose tongues are longer than them on other issues. They swore to defend people's freedoms, interests and money -- an oath that made them chase the thieves of public money, yet they stand helpless in the midst of robbing the country, which they value. Its importance is not equal to the money of the world and those in it.

"Indeed, we see and hear something strange this time. For someone who acquired citizenship in a certain way and has become a candidate for legislative membership, we will not rely on him once he defends the forgers. We do not blame him because his relatives and loved ones are waiting for relief from him. Kuwait, as we say, 'Aumah', is eaten up and its people are reprehensible.

"Therefore, the Ministry of Interior must urgently activate biometric fingerprinting for everyone. Rather, it must consider changing the color of the nationality.

"Do not take anything from candidates with resonant speeches except their dinner, if you want, so that you will be safe, for the future of your children and for you to control your minds, which are greater than comprehending their ravings and their temporary cinematic acting these days.

"Be careful before you will regret giving your vote to someone who does not deserve it. Be responsible towards your homeland, which is of you and you are of it, by choosing those of your kind... May Allah grant you success and protect all of you.

"The torrent has reached a fever pitch. What we hear in the seminars of some candidates is neither considered freedom of opinion nor a presentation of the electoral program or a democratic wedding, as it is called. It is rather an absurdity and arrogance. It is an attack on all Kuwaitis, the first of whom are family members from parties that believe this method is their path towards success.

"Whoever supports and applauds them is one of them. The government must stop this unjustified attack and highlight its prestige like the governments of neighboring and non-adjacent countries. Your silence and leniency in front of this type of people and their moral decline will not be beneficial for you. This is the inevitable result that previous governments brought upon us, because of their chronic leniency and subservience in recent years.

"May Allah protect Kuwait and its people from all forms of evil and harm."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



Major-General Khaled Fahad tours the Fire Department headquarters.

9 Kuwaitis, 2 Egyptians jailed in docus forgery

54 in disability certs scam

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: In a stern ruling aimed at deterring those who exploit and defraud individuals with disabilities for unjustified gains, the Criminal Court, led by Counselor Miteb Al-Ardhi, has convicted 54 defendants involved in a scheme to forge disability certificates, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The court sentenced two Egyptians and nine Kuwaitis to seven years in prison for their involvement in the forgery of disability certificates. Additionally, 13 other defendants received a two-year prison term with hard labor, with the execution of the sentence suspended for three years, along with a bail requirement of 1,000 dinars.

Abstain

Furthermore, the court decided to abstain from pronouncing a verdict on 30 citizens involved in the case, instead obliging them to pay 500 dinars in bail and pledge good behavior.

The court emphasized in its ruling that the defendants had engaged in a criminal enterprise to unlawfully obtain benefits intended for disabled individuals through forged documents, thus defrauding public funds. The scheme involved the alteration of official documents, including application forms, reports, and medical examinations, with the intention of falsifying disability claims.

Revealed

The investigation revealed that the initial defendants, two expatriates, had manipulated and forged official documents, prompting further inquiries by the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs. Subsequent examinations exposed the involvement of the remaining defendants in the fabrication of disability certificates.

The accused were found to have illegally accessed the Authority's electronic information system using the usernames and passwords of unsuspecting employees. This illicit access allowed them to modify electronic documents containing data related to disability claims, facilitating the issuance of fraudulent disability certificates.

The prosecution confirmed that the defendants utilized the forged documents to obtain disability cards and access benefits allocated to disabled individuals and their families.

Violations detected in Ahmadi co-op

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Ministry of Social Affairs has sent a letter to the Board of Directors of the Al-Ahmadi Cooperative Society, urging the members to take urgent measures to rectify violations highlighted by an investigation committee, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Among these violations, the Ministry requested clarification on investment contracts that were either unauthorized or concluded without prior approval. Legal action against employees involved in such violations, leading to their termination, was also demanded.

Furthermore, the Ministry required the cooperative to address the lack of accreditation for its staff, as well as provide records of the Administrative and Financial Committee's decisions regarding staff accreditation. Non-compliance with the attendance and departure monitoring system via fingerprint verification was also noted as a violation. The Ministry sought details of disciplinary and judicial actions taken

against employees failing to comply with attendance procedures, leading to undeserved salary disbursements.

Additionally, terminating employees' services while investigation and review committees are active was deemed a violation. The Ministry requested a list of terminated employees' names along with copies of termination decisions. This initiative reflects a new policy aimed at resolving cooperative violations promptly, provided they do not severely impact cooperative operations or shareholders' interests.

In another development, the ministry has finalized lists of approximately 2,500 employees eligible for excellent work bonuses. These employees, who received annual "excellent" evaluations, will receive bonuses ranging from 300 to 2,000 dinars, depending on their job grade and title.

The Ministry of Finance has allocated approximately 1.5 million dinars for disbursing these bonuses, aiming to deposit them into eligible employees' accounts soon.

Ramadan last 10 days

KFF readiness to tackle emergencies inspected

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Acting Director of Kuwait Firefighting Force (KFF) Major General Khaled Fahad has instructed the concerned officials at KFF to implement the directives of His Highness the Amir and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the need to be vigilant and fully prepared for emergencies, reports Al-Nahar daily.

Fahad conducted an inspection of the fire force's positions responsible for securing mosques. The purpose of this inspection was to assess the preparations and readiness of the fire force both inside and outside the places of worship, with the aim of ensuring the safety and protection of worshippers during the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan.

This visit forms a part of the fire force's strategic plans, which involve close cooperation and coordination with various governmental sectors. The overarching goal is to ensure that all buildings, facilities, mosques, and places of worship comply with safety and fire prevention regulations. By doing so, the fire force aims to safeguard lives and property and maintain community security.

In a press statement, KFF disclosed that Fahad met with the officials, during which he conveyed to them the greetings of Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah who emphasized the need to implement the royal directives on the continuation of vigilance and preparations to deal with and prevent risks, accidents and fires, intensify inspection campaigns, and ensure strict compliance with safety and fire prevention regulations.

He also stressed the need to continue inspection campaigns in commercial and investment buildings, industrial plots and others; keep pace with developments and changes in the field of prevention and civil protection; strengthen preventive strategies and crisis and disaster management plans; follow-up and communicate with all departments and centers to inspect the progress of work; and consider everyone's needs to raise the career level of all KFF staff.

Drug addict jailed for 5 years; teenager killed

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: The Criminal Court sentenced to five year imprisonment an unidentified individual who consumed liquor and drugs, drove his vehicle recklessly on the Seventh Ring Road, and collided with a family car driven by their driver, and caused the death of a 19-year old Kuwaiti woman, and injuries to five other individuals.

According to the case file, the collision occurred on the Seventh Ring Road after the gas station to the right of the race track. After the accident, the accused fled the scene but was later arrested by the concerned authorities. It was found that at the time of the accident he was under the influence of drugs and liquor.

The accident also caused injuries and fractures to five individuals who were referred to the nearest hospital by the paramedics.

Terror hearing begins

10 years jail, KD6m fine for expat in funds scam

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: In the case of embezzlement of the overseas medical treatment fund, the Court of Appeals sentenced the first accused - a fugitive Egyptian expatriate who was the director of a travel office - to ten-year imprisonment and imposed a fine of KD six million. It sentenced the second accused - a Kuwaiti official of the Ministry of Health - to seven-year imprisonment. He is currently imprisoned pending the case. The court also fined him KD 300,000 for profiting from facilitating the embezzlement.

The Public Prosecution conducted an investigation into the embezzlement case involving KD 15 million from funds designated for overseas medical treatment. One suspect, an Egyptian expatriate currently residing outside the country, and another, a citizen who has been apprehended, were implicated in the crime. The Ministry of Health, through its representatives who participated in the Public Prosecution's investigations, affirmed that the Egyptian suspect who works as the director of a travel office created fake invoices related to treating citizens overseas and booking hotels for them, by exploiting the absence of a health office in a European country, and was able to embezzle more than KD 15 million.

Terror hearing begins: The Criminal Court will today (Tuesday) hear the first session of the trial of three Tunisian expatriates who are accused of belonging to a terrorist organization.

During investigations with the Public Prosecution, the defendants had confessed to belonging to the terrorist organization ISIS and planning to commit terrorist operations in mosques and Husseiniyats. They confirmed that they had drawn up a plan to implement their criminal plan, but their arrest prevented them from carrying out their crimes.

The defendants revealed that after their recruitment, they had been communicating for a long time with ISIS leaders abroad via the Telegram application so that their affairs would not be revealed, and that they were receiving instructions on a daily basis from ISIS leaders.



Hamad Al Musaibeeh and Ali Shadad with the winners of Holy Quran Recitation competition.

MEW completes 'annual' employee evaluation, bonus disbursement set

S. Abdullah Mubarak project completion on track: report

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: According to sources from the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, the Administrative Affairs Sector is currently finalizing the annual evaluations of the ministry's more than 30,000 employees across technical and administrative sectors, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The evaluation process, conducted in accordance with regulations and laws set by the Civil Service Commission, includes factors such as the number of absences throughout the year, among others. It is expected that the evaluation process will be completed in April, with bonuses

disbursed in May following approval by the Undersecretary and Minister.

After bonus disbursement, the Ministry will establish a grievance committee to address complaints from employees who were not included in the bonus for various reasons. The committee will thoroughly review complaints and reward deserving individuals accordingly.

Additionally, the ministry is currently seeking approvals from regulatory authorities for a tender aimed at delivering electricity to the eastern region of Sabah Al-Ahmad City. Efforts are being made to expedite electricity delivery through coordination with the General Corporation for Housing Welfare, responsible for the city's construction.

Furthermore, the Ministry is prioritizing modernization, operation,

comprehensive maintenance, and replacement of air conditioning units and accessories in electrical substations, particularly in anticipation of rising temperatures during the summer season. A tender has been launched for air conditioning maintenance in main electrical substations across the Jahra, Capital, and Farwaniya governorates. The deadline for submitting bids for this tender has been postponed to May 14.

Completion of project: Around 10.9 percent of the construction of public buildings in plots One, Four, Five and Six in South Abdullah Mubarak has been completed as at the end of February, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources from the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW).

Sources disclosed that the completion rate of the entire project

has reached 42.6 percent; indicating the target completion date is on April 16, 2025.

Sources pointed out that the completion rate of school building works exceeded 40 percent, since the contractor has completed 100 percent of the foundations.

Sources said the completion rate of the concrete structure of the buildings exceeded 97.5 percent, while the wall finishing works reached the percentage stipulated in the contract; in addition to the sanitary works, roofs, external cladding, site works and spaces.

On the contract for the construction of public buildings in plots Two and Three, sources affirmed that the works are progressing as per schedule or around 4.25 percent as at the end of last month and the total completion rate has reached 36.1 percent.

Holy Quran Recitation Competition

In strategic partnership with Grand Mosque

Zain hosts its 1st contest

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Zain hosted its first Holy Quran Recitation Competition in strategic partnership with the Grand Mosque of Kuwait. The contest, which aimed to encourage the community to pursue recitation of the Holy Quran and embody its values, offered prizes for the first three winners in each of the six categories.

The winners were awarded during the ceremony held at Zain's headquarters in Shuwaikh, attended by Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al Musaibeeh, Grand Mosque Administration Director Ali Shadad, Head of the competition's judges panel and Imam of the Grand Mosque Omar Al Damkhi, along with Zain and Grand Mosque officials, and the winners and their families.

The Zain Holy Quran Recitation Competition ran for two consecutive days at the Grand Mosque's Western Hall and featured three age groups each for males and females: 7-12, 13-18, and 19-25 years. The contest was supervised by a certified judges panel from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in collaboration with the Grand Mosque, and Zain presented incentive cash prizes to the first three winners in each category.

In a step to engage its employees in its community programs and initiatives, Zain also held the fourth Holy Quran

Recitation Competition for employees and their children. The competition was also held at the Grand Mosque, and the first three winners in each of the six categories were awarded with cash prizes as well.

This initiative came as part of the strategic partnership between Zain and the Grand Mosque of Kuwait under the Zain Alshuhoor Ramadan community campaign. The partnership features several key initiatives, including daily Iftar meals at the mosque to serve fasting individuals and hospitality services for worshippers during the last ten days of the Holy Month.

This year, six of Zain's strategic community partners, including the Grand Mosque, have joined its annual Ramadan social campaign, Zain Alshuhoor. The campaign features a wide range of humanitarian, charitable, social, religious, health, and sports programs that have continued throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Zain Alshuhoor is one of Kuwait's biggest and most successful community programs during the Holy Month. Every year, the company introduces a bigger, renewed version of the campaign that expands upon the previous year in its initiatives and programs. The campaign strives to share the blessings of this much-cherished month with the entire Kuwaiti people.

Kuwait medical relief team heads to Gaza

KRCS distributes 2,400 food baskets in Tunisia – official

TUNIS, April 1, (KUNA): Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) handed out 2,400 food baskets in Tunisia on Sunday as part of a joint project with the Tunisian Red Crescent on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan.

The head of the KRCS delegation, Farouq Khazal, said in a press statement that the food baskets distribution project was launched under the slogan "Kuwait is by Your Side" in cooperation with the Tunisian Red Crescent.

He added that this project includes distributing 2,400 food baskets to the families in need in all the 24 Tunisian governorates over the course of a week during the Muslim fasting month.

He stressed that this project reflects the roots of humanitarian work in Kuwait, which is keen to extend a hand of solidarity to those in need, especially during Ramadan.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Society for Relief (KSR) announced, Sunday, the departure of a medical relief team consisting of 11 physicians and consultants from different medical and surgical fields to Cairo Airport

heading towards Gaza's hospitals.

The medical relief team plans to assist the Kuwait Specialized Hospital and the Gaza European Hospital starting April 7.

The Deputy General Director of KSR and team leader Omar Al-Thuwaini said to KUNA that the medical team consists of highly specialized medical and surgical professionals including a nurse and humanitarian directors.

Al-Thuwaini affirmed that medical relief headed to Gaza since October 10, 2023 included more than 30 Kuwaiti humanitarian and charity organizations donations.

On his part, Ophthalmology surgical consultant and volunteer Dr. Mansour Al-Shammari, in a similar statement to KUNA, said the medical relief of over three tons of equipment would also be received in the two hospitals in Gaza for treating Palestinians.

Meanwhile, senior specialist in Nephrology, Urology, infertility and robotic surgery, Dr. Omar Al-Hunaidi said that the medical equipment and relief aims to provide assistance physicians during surgical operations in Gaza.




EID AL FITR

Special Promotion

Room Promotion

1st day of Eid – until 19th of April 2024

Book for One-night
(Inclusive of breakfast)

Queen Cabana (2 persons).
2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons).

BHD 76.230 net
BHD 170.247 net

Book for Two nights and get 15% discount
(Inclusive of breakfast)
(Non-refundable/Non-Cancellable)

Queen Cabana (2 persons) per night.
2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons) per night.

BHD 64.800 net
BHD 144.800 net

Book for Three nights and get 25% discount
(Inclusive of breakfast)
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Queen Cabana (2 persons) per night.
2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons) per night.

BHD 57.200 net
BHD 127.700 net

In house guests can get a **15% discount** on all food and beverage consumption

Food & Beverage Promotion

1st day of Eid till 14th April 2024

Lunch Buffet will be served at **Café Marisol Restaurant** with price of **BD5.500/net per person**. Starts from 12:30 Noon to 16:00 hrs.

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KUNA photo
Minister Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf, meets with the ambassador of the Republic of Germany to the country.

Seek ways to bolster bilateral ties

Finmin tackles issues of common concern with German ambassador

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf, tackled on Sunday with German Ambassador to Kuwait Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reibnitz, issues of common interest and underlined the importance of bolstering relations between the two countries.

In a statement, the Ministry of Finance said that the two also delved into the latest developments regarding implementation and expansion of the sewage station

project in Umm Al-Haiman area.

The two officials highlighted complementary works to the project, and joint efforts and endeavors were made to confront challenges and obstacles related to the project.

The statement added the two sides delved into the pace and acceleration of other local projects with German companies under implementation, in addition to the common desire to sign a protocol amending the agreement to avoid double taxation between the two countries in the near future.

Ambassador Dr Swaika 'inaugurates' new Indian Consular Application Centre, Jahra

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Ambassador of India to Kuwait, H.E. Dr. Adarsh Swaika inaugurated a new Indian Consular Application Centre (ICAC) at Jahra, Kuwait on 1 April 2024, says a press release issued by the embassy. The new ICAC will also be managed by embassy's outsourcing partner M/s BLS International. The Jahra ICAC will be the 4th such ICAC in Kuwait. The other three are in Kuwait City, Fahaheel and Jleeb.

2. Starting from 1 April 2024, the Consular, Passport and Visa services will operate as per the details indicated below:-

S. No	Address	Timings
1.	Building No. 27, Al Khalifa building, 2 nd floor, Office 3 & 14, Block No. 93, Jahra, Kuwait	Saturday to Thursday (9 AM to 2 PM)

3. The Jahra ICAC is another step towards facilitating Indian visas for Kuwaitis as well as various consular services for Indian nationals (including Amnesty-related

travel documents) residing in areas of Jahra and its neighbouring areas upto Abdali. The new facility is expected to further streamline the application process, reduce waiting time, and ensure a seamless experience for all applicants. It is part of Government of India's steadfast commitment to make public services more accessible, hassle-free and technology-driven.

4. It may be noted that the number of Kuwaiti visitors to India have been increasing over the years. The Embassy issues multiple-entry Indian tourist visas generally within a day to Kuwaiti and third country nationals. In the year 2023, around 10000 visas were issued by the Embassy.

5. For more information and updates on the services offered at the new Consular Application Centre, please visit Embassy's official website (www.indembkwt.gov.in) or website of M/s BLS (www.blsinternational.com/india/kuwait/)



KUNA photo

Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber receives the outgoing Vietnamese Ambassador, Ngo Toan Thang.

Deputy FM hosts departing envoy

Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received on

Monday the outgoing Vietnamese Ambassador, Ngo Toan Thang. (KUNA)

Indeed, Allah

Continued from Page 1

person wreaks corruption, whether it is in public funds, institutions, or other things for which he is responsible. In fact, he builds a gang around him, under the belief that by spreading corruption he has become immune to accountability, but all of this becomes a mirage when the hour of reckoning approaches.

In Kuwait, we have witnessed a lot of corruption over the past years, to the point where an honorable person who performs his work honestly is called a "fool" while the thief is referred to as the smart one who knows which side of bread is buttered.

Therefore, the corruption that we have witnessed in the past years cannot be tolerated. The late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad was on point when describing one of the institutions. He said: "Two camels are not enough to carry the corruption found in that institution". Here he was talking about just one institution, so imagine what the situation would be if it became widespread and even became a feature that stuck to Kuwait globally?

Today, the courts are full of lawsuits against corrupt people, as are the prisons. We are still far from achieving complete justice by punishing those who spread corruption in all state facilities, because they are like contagious viruses.

However, Almighty Allah says in the Holy Quran, "This is only the result of your deeds. Allah is not unjust to His slaves."

Therefore, those who still believe that they are beyond accountability should look at those the hand of law has caught and thrown in prison, the retribution that was imposed on them, and how they have been completely forgotten.

Kuwait-Saudi

Continued from Page 1

feasibility studies for the project will be shouldered equally by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as per the stages and scope of services. The consulting fees will not be collected until after the outputs for each stage are approved by both parties, sources added.

'Electrol silence'

Continued from Page 1

cards of volunteers among the civilian employees at the Ministry of Interior have been issued – a total of 4,871 employees (2,638 women and 2,232 men).

He stated that the Election Affairs General Department is coordinating with Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) to assign volunteer medical teams for the election. He added the department also asked the Consulting Committee at the Ministry of Justice to issue permits for civil society and public benefit societies willing to participate in monitoring the election.

He disclosed the decision on specifying the polling stations has been published by Kuwait Gazette, so the Ministry of Justice can assign the judges who will supervise and manage the polling stations.

The total number of candidates for the parliamentary election reached 200 (188 men and 12 women) distributed to the five constituencies as follows: 41 including one woman in the First Constituency, 39 including one woman in the Second Constituency, 32 including seven women in the Third Constituency, 48 including two women in the Fourth Constituency and 40 including one woman in the Fifth Constituency.

The number candidates went down to 200 after the withdrawal of 44 candidates – four in the First Constituency, 14 including one woman in the Second Constituency, three in the Third Constituency, 16 in the Fourth Constituency and seven in the Fifth Constituency.

Moreover, the Interior Ministry disqualified 11 candidates and the Court of Cassation has rejected the appeals filed by these candidates.

In related news, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information has launched an electoral media campaign prevailing upon eligible voters to cast their ballots in the country's forthcoming parliamentary election due on Thursday.

Speaking to KUNA on the initiative, the ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for the Media Service Sector Saad Al-Azmi said that the campaign entitled: "Your Vote...Nation's Future" is intended to persuade voters to live up to their due responsibilities by hand-picking the right candidate.

By doing this endeavor, co-organized by Kuwait Municipality, state bodies and civil society organizations, the ministry seeks to coax people into flowing to polling stations in order to choose the rival whom they seek able to rightfully represent them at parli-

ment, he said.

The campaign, which embraces street advertisements, mass media and social media, mainly urges Kuwaiti citizens to exercise their electoral rights enshrined in the Kuwaiti Constitution, the official pointed out.

Two-week

Continued from Page 1

already largely ceased to function.

Israel has accused Hamas of using hospitals for military purposes and has raided several medical facilities. Health officials in Gaza deny those allegations. Critics accuse the army of recklessly endangering civilians and of decimating a health sector already overwhelmed with war-wounded. Palestinians say Israeli troops forcibly evacuated homes near Shifa in downtown Gaza City and forced hundreds of residents to march south.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the top military spokesman, said Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad group had established their main northern headquarters inside the hospital. He described days of close-quarters fighting and blamed Hamas for the destruction, saying some fighters had barricaded themselves inside hospital wards while others launched mortar rounds at the compound.

He said the troops had arrested some 900 suspected militants during the raid, including more than 500 Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters, and seized over \$3 million in different currencies, as well as weapons.

He denied that any civilians had been harmed by Israeli forces, saying the army had evacuated more than 200 of the estimated 300 to 350 patients and delivered food, water and medical supplies to the rest. Two Israeli soldiers were killed in the raid along with some 200 militants, the military said.

Mohammed Mahdi, who was among hundreds of Palestinians who returned to the area, described a scene of "total destruction." He said several buildings had been burned down and that he had counted six bodies in the area, including two in the hospital courtyard.

Video footage circulating online showed heavily damaged and charred buildings, mounds of dirt that had been churned up by bulldozers and patients on stretchers in darkened corridors.

Another resident, Yahia Abu Auf, said army bulldozers had even plowed up a makeshift cemetery in Shifa's courtyard.

"The situation is indescribable," he said. "The occupation destroyed all sense of life here."

At least 21 patients have died since the raid began, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus posted late Sunday on X, formerly Twitter.

He said over a hundred patients were still inside the compound, including four children and 28 critical patients. He also said there were no diapers, urine bags or water to clean wounds, and that many patients suffered from infected wounds and dehydration.

The military had previously raided Shifa in November, after saying Hamas maintained an elaborate command and control center inside and beneath the compound. It revealed a tunnel running beneath the hospital that led to a few rooms, as well as weapons it said it had confiscated from inside medical buildings, but nothing on the scale of what it had alleged prior to that raid.

The war began on Oct. 7, when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 people hostage.

Israel responded with an air, land and sea offensive that has killed at least 32,782 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says women and children have made up around two-thirds of those killed.

The Israeli military says it has killed over 13,000 Hamas fighters, without providing evidence, and blames the civilian death toll on Palestinian militants because they fight in dense residential areas.

The war has displaced most of the territory's population and driven a third of its residents to the brink of famine. Northern Gaza, where Shifa is located, has suffered vast destruction and has been largely isolated since October, leading to widespread hunger.

Even as Israel has turned its focus to other parts of Gaza this year, its troops have battled militants in the north on a number of occasions, and the two weeks of heavy fighting around Shifa highlighted the staying power of the armed groups.

Netanyahu has vowed to keep up the offensive until Hamas is destroyed and all of the hostages are freed. He says Israel will soon expand ground operations to the southern city of Rafah, where some 1.4 million people - more than half of Gaza's population - have sought refuge.

Ambassador Al-Majali hails Kuwaiti-Jordanian relations

Jordanian Engineers Association organizes Ghabga

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: The Ambassador of Jordan to Kuwait Sinan Al-Majali praised the distinguished and historic relations between Kuwait and Jordan, and the close connection between the people of the two brotherly countries.

He said this in his speech during a Ramadan Ghabga organized by the Jordanian Engineers Association - Kuwait Branch recently, in the presence of the Head of the Kuwait Society of Engineers Faisal Al-Atel and the Head of the Jordanian Engineers Association Ahmed Al-Zoubi.

Ambassador Al-Majali praised the Ramadan customs and traditions in Kuwait that strengthen the relations between members of society.

He said, "We, in turn, indulge with our Kuwaiti brothers in these customs, represented by Ghabga, which will strengthen relations between Kuwaitis and Jordanians."

Ambassador Al-Majali highlighted that the two nations of Kuwait and Jordan are linked by one customs, traditions, history and origin, adding that his embassy is an open house for all Jordanians.

He wished Kuwait continued progress and prosperity, and called on the public to recite the first chapter of the Quran (Al-Fatiha) for the souls of the martyrs of Gaza who were killed by the Israeli occupation forces.

Cooperation

Meanwhile, Faisal Al-Atel praised the cooperation between Kuwait Society of Engineers and Jordanian Engineers Association in providing aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip.

He highlighted the depth of Kuwaiti-Jordanian relations, and expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the Jordanian Engineers Association for its cooperation as well as for inviting him to attend the Ghabga.

In addition, Ahmed Al-Zoubi highlighted the efforts of the Jordanian Engineers Association in the Gaza Strip.

He explained that seven water desalination plants were built in the Gaza Strip through cooperation among Jordanian Engineers Association, Kuwait Society of Engineers, the Federation of Arab Engineers, and the International Federation of Engineers. Al-Najat Hospital in the Gaza Strip has been provided with solar energy, which led to the continuation of its work. A total of 17,000 meals were provided to the Palestinians in Gaza.

Al-Zoubi affirmed cooperation of the association with the unions of Arab and international engineers to rebuild the infrastructure in the sector that was destroyed by the occupation forces, with the aim of returning Palestinians to their homes and preventing the displacement process.

He praised the relationship between the two countries both officially and popularly, as well as the level of fruitful cooperation between the society and the association.

Furthermore, Head of the Jordanian Engineers Liaison Committee in Kuwait Omar Al-Hamoud said that the committee carried out its duties to the fullest extent, and in accordance with the directives of the association, represented by the president and the union council.

He said, "The Engineers Committee in Kuwait has taken a pledge upon itself to be the jewel of external liaison committees in terms of working to serve engineers, providing correct information, and holding all scientific, practical, sporting and social activities, and to be a link between colleagues in Kuwait and their mother association in Jordan, as well as between fellow engineers and the Kuwaiti Society of Engineers."

The committee seeks to move forward by achieving a qualitative leap through its interaction and communication with fellow engineers. This is what we noticed from the first moment, as about 400 male and female engineers were added to the committee this year through various applications. The Jordanian Women Engineers Committee was also established."

Al-Hamoud highlighted the close relationship with the Jordanian House and the Jordanian Embassy, which is an umbrella and a roof for all Jordanians.

He said, "We aim to connect all Jordanian engineers in Kuwait, create an employment platform, and count the number of unemployed people, irrespective of whether they are new graduates or experienced ones. We also seek to create a platform for those with experience and competence, so that engineers looking for work or employers looking for competence can access this platform and easily search for what they want."

Al-Hamoud affirmed that the committee seeks permanent communication with its colleagues in the Kuwait Society of Engineers.

He expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the head of the society and its board of directors for granting a headquarters to the association within the society's campus, which "will fulfill hopes of being a nucleus for joint Arab engineering work."

Al-Hamoud said, "From the first moment, we sensed the warmth of the relationship, sincere love, and generous hospitality, which are the origins of the brotherly Kuwaiti people, the first to defend the issues of their nation, and the custodian of all their Arab brothers."



Dr Noura Al Meshan and Bader Al Kharafi with officials from the Ministry of Public Affairs and Zain.

Zain carries out road inspection project for MPW

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Zain has presented a project for the inspection of major roads in Kuwait to the Ministry of Public Works. The company has contributed to executing and delivering this project, which represents the first phase of the full inspection and evaluation of the nation's entire road network.

H.E. Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr. Noura Al Meshan welcomed Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al Kharafi at her office, joined by officials from the Ministry of Public Works and the Zain executive management team. During the visit, Zain delivered the project and introduced the ministry to the key role

that can be played by AI-powered drone systems to implement strategic developmental projects.

The first phase of the project included the inspection and evaluation of 1000 kilometers of major roads and bridges across Kuwait, as well as providing high resolution aerial data, images, and videos. Zain is also currently preparing to execute the second phase of the project, which includes the sub-road network.

Using drones for road inspection enhances the quality and safety of road maintenance, reduces time and effort, and helps with higher accuracy by automating the scanning process. Using drones also results in more accurate mapping of the road network and provides detailed

3D models for roads and bridges.

In addition, drones can highly contribute to reducing operational costs, offering measurable, high quality visual data, reducing human error, and accelerate progress, supervision, and monitoring. This initiative will contribute to support the ministry in presenting public tenders to suppliers for executing better road maintenance projects.

Leveraging on its fleet of drones, Zain offers many innovative applications and solutions to serve the needs of governments and enterprises. With drone-powered solutions, the company offers limitless opportunities for all industries to make the most out of technologies like internet of things and artificial intelligence.



Join Our Team

Kuwait Airways Job Vacancies Announcement

Kuwait Airways announces the opening of applications for the jobs listed below in accordance with the following specific requirements and specifications:

Required Job	Qualifications	Required Experience
Engineer I, Standards & Procedures	B.Sc. in Aeronautical Engineer or Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineer. (Double License)	6 years' experience in civil aircraft maintenance work inclusive of 2 years' experience in Quality Control
Specialist (A) Flight Safety & Research	Applicant shall hold/held an ATPL Or an accredited Engineering degree/ license with a good aviation Operational/Engineering experience.	10 years aviation experience in an Operational Department.
Sr. Coordinator Records	Diploma in Administration with prior completion of Secondary (12 years) education certificate .	8 years' administrative experience, including 1 year training.

General Terms:

- Priority in appointment shall be for eligible Kuwaitis who meet the requirements.
- The applicant is required to be proficient in English (Reading & Writing & Speaking) and proficient in computer applications
- A minimum of 70% is required to pass the English language test.
- The applicant must successfully pass a set of tests with specified success rates in order to qualify for a personal interview.
- The applicant must have performed the mandatory military service or be postponed, excluded or exempted from it in accordance with Law No. 20/2015 and submit a Completion Certificate of the mandatory military service.
- Applicants shall be subject to the necessary conditions for appointment in accordance with the rules and regulations at Kuwait Airways.
- University degrees that are not recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education in Kuwait will not be considered.
- Applicants will be subject to personal interviews and the necessary tests, and in the event of equal ratings, comparison between them will be made according to the following standards of Civil Service Commission Resolution No. (4) of 2001 and in their order:
 - Holding a grade of (90%) or higher for the qualification.
 - Whomever graduated first.
 - Age seniority.
 - Married applicants are preferred over single status applicants.
- Submission and receipt of the application do not imply acceptance. Any application that fails to meet the specified conditions will not be considered, and the company reserves the right to decline or not respond to the applicant.

How to apply:

·Applications shall be submitted on the website: careers.kuwaitairways.com. This shall be within 15 days from the date of publishing this announcement.

·Documents to be attached to the website:

- Updated CV.
 - Educational Qualification and professional certificates approved and equivalency approved by the official authorities in the State of Kuwait.
 - Copy of Civil ID, Passport, Nationality and Birth Certificate.
 - A certificate from The Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) and Career Progression.
 - Experience certificates
 - To whom it may concern certificate from military service for service completion, or postponed, excluded or exempted (If applicable).
- Applications that do not meet the requirements or incomplete applications shall be excluded, and this exclusion in itself is considered an official apology without the need to notify the applicant.

Kuwait Airways Company
02 April 2024

World News Roundup

Europe

'Military aid'

France to provide Kyiv with vehicles

PARIS, April 1, (AP): French Defense Minister **Sébastien Lecornu** said France is to deliver "hundreds" of armored vehicles by the beginning of next year to Ukraine as part of a new package of military aid for the country that just entered its third year of war since the full-scale Russian invasion.

In an interview with the French newspaper *La Tribune's* Sunday edition, Lecornu said that "to hold such an extensive front line, the Ukrainian army needs, for example, our armored personnel carriers. It's absolutely key for troop mobility."

The French military is currently replacing its old VAB armored personnel carriers, that came into service in 1979, with a new generation of armored vehicles. "This old equipment, still operational, is going directly to Ukraine in large quantities. We're talking about hundreds (of vehicles) in 2024 and early 2025," Lecornu said.

Lecornu also said France will provide Ukraine with more anti-aircraft missiles.

The move comes as the French government is pushing its military industry to boost production to meet Kyiv's urgent need for ammunition.

On Tuesday, Lecornu said France will soon be able to deliver 78 Caesar howitzers to Ukraine and will increase its supply of shells.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin scoffed at the possibility of his country launching an attack on a NATO member, calling it "sheer nonsense," but warned that any Western air base hosting US-made F-16 fighter jets that are slated for deployment in Ukraine would be a "legitimate target" for the Kremlin's forces.



Lecornu

Warnings

"Their statements about our alleged intention to attack Europe after Ukraine is sheer nonsense," Putin said, referring to warnings in the US and Western Europe that Russia could turn its sights on other countries unless it's stopped.

He noted that the US defense budget is more than 10 times higher than Russia's.

"In view of that, are we going to wage a war against NATO? It's ravings," he told military pilots during a visit to an air base.

Ukraine is awaiting the delivery of F-16s, which will increase military pressure on Russia, from its Western partners. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said last year that 42 F-16s had been promised. Ukrainian pilots have been training in the West for months on how to fly the warplanes.

The F-16s require a high standard of runways and reinforced hangars to protect them from bombing attacks when they are on the ground. It's not clear how many Ukrainian air bases can meet those requirements, and Russia would be certain to quickly target a few that could accommodate them once the jets arrive.

Putin warned Ukraine's Western allies against providing air bases in their countries from where the F-16s could launch sorties against the Kremlin's forces. Those bases would become a "legitimate target," he said.

"F-16s are capable of carrying nuclear weapons, and we will also need to take that into account while organizing our combat operations," Putin added.

Military analysts have said the arrival of F-16s won't be a game-changer in view of Russia's massive air force and sophisticated air defense systems, though Ukrainian officials have welcomed them as an opportunity to hit back at Russia's air dominance.

Insisted

Putin insisted the F-16s "won't change the situation on the battlefield."

"We will destroy their warplanes just as we destroy their tanks, armored vehicles and other equipment, including multiple rocket launchers," he said.

F-16s can be used to bolster Ukraine's capability to target Russian facilities with long-range missile strikes. Ukraine's counteroffensive last year came up short in part because it took place without air cover, placing its troops at the mercy of Russian aviation and artillery.

Russia has maintained air dominance in the war with Ukraine, though the provision of sophisticated Western air defense systems has forced Russian warplanes to avoid Ukrainian skies and launch attacks while remaining over Russia-controlled territory.

One of Russia's goals is to "deplete Ukraine's inventory of ground-based air defense," according to a recent military assessment published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

That would erode some of Ukraine's combat ability as it waits on pledged but delayed military support from the West, including ammunition for its artillery and air defenses.

"Kyiv is confronted by the threat that an attritional war in the air domain will increasingly favor Russia without adequate support from the U.S. and its allies," the IIS said. "Ukraine's ability to continue to counter Russian air threats and impose costs on the Russian Aerospace Forces remains important to the outcome of the war."

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and Defense Minister Rustan Umerov both pleaded with foreign allies on Thursday to send more air defense systems and missiles.

The Ukrainian Mission to NATO said that it convened an extraordinary ambassador-level meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Council at the alliance's headquarters on Thursday in response to Russia's missile attacks on critical infrastructure.

Also:

VILNIUS, Lithuania: Several central and Eastern European countries marked the 20th anniversary of the largest expansion of the NATO military alliance when formerly socialist countries became members of the bloc.

Military aircraft roared over the Lithuanian capital Vilnius. At the main airbase hosting Spanish and Portuguese fighter jets tasked with NATO air policing missions in the Baltic region, officials gathered to commemorate the event.

"Russia's new bloody terror in Europe is contributing to the growth of instability and threats around the world. However, we in Lithuania are calm because we know that we will never be alone again," said President **Gitanas Nausėda**, standing near the runway where the first NATO jets landed back in 2004. "We will always have a strong, supportive Alliance family by our side, and we will face any challenges together."



US First Lady Jill Biden and President Joe Biden hold hands with grandson Beau Biden, holding a small egg for Easter, followed by son Hunter Biden, and his wife Melissa, as they are saluted after exiting the Marine One helicopter on landing at Fort McNair, on March 31 in Washington, upon return from Camp David. (AP)



This photo provided by Caltrans shows a damaged section of Highway 1, on March 31, south of Rocky Creek Bridge in Big Sur, Calif. Authorities urged motorists to avoid the scenic highway after a section of the coastal route collapsed during an Easter weekend storm, forcing closures and stranding motorists near Big Sur, authorities said. (AP)



Aaron



Terry

America

Nashville shooting kills 1: A man was killed and five other people were injured during a shooting inside a Nashville, Tennessee, restaurant on Sunday afternoon, police said.

The shooting around 3 pm in Nashville's Salemtown neighborhood began within minutes of the male suspect's arrival at the restaurant with a woman, police said.

The suspect and the man who died got into an argument that "significantly escalated within moments," Metropolitan Nashville Police Department spokesman **Don Aaron** said during a news conference at the scene.

Police later identified the deceased man as 33-year-old Allen Beachem. The conditions of the other victims were not immediately released.

Police identified a 46-year-old suspect and the car used to flee the scene with images from security video provided by the restaurant. As a search continued Sunday for the suspect, police posted photos of the shooting scene on social media, including an image of a man pointing a handgun.

"The gunman was the only one who brandished a pistol. This was not a shootout, if you will, this was one person who decided to pull a gun based on an altercation occurring with another man and then he fired multiple shots," Aaron said.

There was a panic inside the restaurant as customers tried to escape, Police Commander Anthony McClain said. (AP)

7 hurt in Indianapolis shooting: Seven young people between the ages of 12 and 17 were wounded in a shooting outside a shopping mall in downtown Indianapolis late Saturday night, police said.

Police officers patrolling the area heard shots fired near the Circle Centre Mall shortly after 11:30 pm, Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department Deputy Chief **Tanya Terry** said.

The officers found "a large group of juveniles" at the scene, including six who had gunshot wounds and were transported to area hospitals, Terry said during a news briefing at the scene early Sunday morning.

One of the victims was upgraded from critical to stable condition. The other victims all were listed in stable condition, said Terry, who was not able to immediately provide the genders of the victims.

Politics

Trump immigration rhetoric makes inroads with Dems

We will secure our borders, says ex-president

WASHINGTON, April 1, (AP): The video shared by Donald Trump features horror movie music and footage of migrants purportedly entering the US from countries including Cameroon, Afghanistan and China. Shots of men with tattoos and videos of violent crime are set against close-ups of people waving and wrapping themselves in American flags.

"They're coming by the thousands," Trump says in the video, posted on his social media site. "We will secure our borders. And we will restore sovereignty."

In his speeches and online posts, Trump has ramped up anti-immigrant rhetoric, casting migrants as dangerous criminals "poisoning the blood" of America. His messaging often relies on falsehoods about migration, but it has proved attractive to many core supporters going back a decade, to when "build the wall" rang out at his campaign rallies.

President Joe Biden and his allies portray the situation as a policy dispute that Congress can fix and hits Republicans in Washington for backing away from a border security deal after facing criticism from Trump.

But in a potentially worrying sign for the Democrats, Trump's message appears to be resonating with key elements of the coalition that Biden will need to win over in November.

Handling

Roughly two-thirds of Americans now disapprove of how Biden is handling border security, including about 4 in 10 Democrats, 55% of Black adults and 73% of Hispanic adults, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll conducted in March.

A recent Pew Research Center poll found that 45% of Americans described the situation as a crisis, while another 32% said it was a major problem.

Vetress Boyce, a Chicago-based racial justice activist, was among those who expressed frustration with Biden's immigration policies and the city's approach as it tries to shelter newly arriving migrants. She argued

that Democrats should focus on economic investment in Black communities, not newcomers.

"They're sending us people who are starving, the same way Blacks are starving in this country. They're sending us people who want to escape the conditions and come here for a better lifestyle when the ones here are suffering and have been suffering for over 100 years," Boyce said. "That recipe is a mixture for disaster. It's a disaster just waiting to happen."

Gracie Martinez is a 52-year-old Hispanic small business owner from Eagle Pass, Texas, the border town that Trump visited in February when he and Biden made same-day trips to the state. Martinez said she once voted for former President Barack Obama and is still a Democrat, but now backs Trump - mainly because of the border.

"It's horrible," she said. "It's tons and tons of people and they're giving them medical and money, phones," she said, complaining those who went through the legal immigration system are treated worse.

Situation

Priscilla Hesles, 55, a teacher who lives in Eagle Pass, described the current situation as "almost an overtaking" that had changed the town.

"We don't know where they're hiding. We don't know where they've infiltrated into and where they're going to come out of," said Hesles, who said she used to take an evening walk to a local church, but stopped after she was shaken by an encounter with a group of men she alleged were migrants.

The president's reelection campaign recently launched a \$30 million ad campaign targeting Latino audiences in key swing states that includes a digital ad in English and Spanish highlighting Trump's past description of Mexican immigrants as "criminals".

The White House has mullied a series of executive actions that could drastically tighten immigration restrictions, effectively going around Congress after it failed to pass the bipartisan deal Biden endorsed.

Trump will campaign Tuesday in

Wisconsin and Michigan this week, where he is expected to criticize Biden on immigration.

The former president calls recent record-high arrests for southwest border crossings an "invasion" orchestrated by Democrats to transform America. Trump accuses Biden of allowing criminals and potential terrorists to enter the country unchecked.

Trump says migrants - many of them women and children escaping poverty and violence - are "poisoning the blood" of America with drugs and disease and claims some migrants are "not people." Experts who study extremism warn against using dehumanizing language in describing migrants.

Also:

MADISON, Wis: Wisconsin's presidential primary Tuesday clears the way for a general election campaign that Democrats see as an opportunity unlike any in recent state history.

New legislative districts adopted last month erase Republican advantages that gave the GOP dominance of the Wisconsin Assembly even as Democrats won 14 of the past 17 statewide elections. Democrats think they can now compete for a majority, but also that invigorated legislative campaigns can help turn out votes for President **Joe Biden** and Vice President **Kamala Harris** in November.

Ben Wikler, the state Democratic Party chairman, describes the idea as "reverse coattails," a play on the traditional idea that down-ballot candidates are carried by the top of the ticket.

"It drives up turnout among people who had been unlikely to vote in a way that can directly affect the number of votes we get for Biden-Harris," he said. "It's why, I think, there are consequences far beyond the state Legislature of having the new state legislative maps drawn."

It's too early to test Wikler's idea. But both parties believe the fall rematch between Biden and former Republican President Donald Trump will be fought at the margins in several of the most contested states, including Wisconsin, which flipped narrowly from Trump to Biden four years ago.

A seventh juvenile with a gunshot wound arrived separately at a hospital and was in stable condition, she said.

"Once again, we have a situation in which young people are resolving conflict with firearms, and it has to stop," Terry said, later adding, "Conflict should not lead to somebody

pulling out a gun and trying to resolve it. The consequences are eternal." (AP)

□ □ □

Crews escorting cars: Authorities urged motorists to avoid California's Highway 1 along the central coast after a section of

the scenic route collapsed during an Easter weekend storm, forcing closures and stranding motorists near Big Sur, authorities said.

The collapse occurred amid heavy rain Saturday afternoon near Rocky Creek Bridge about 17 miles (27 kilometers) south of Monterey, sending chunks of asphalt tumbling into the ocean from the south-bound side of the two-lane road.

The highway was closed in both directions in the mountainous area of California's central coast as engineers assessed the damage, said the state Department of Transportation, or Caltrans.

"We are working on a plan to get motorists evacuated from the area," the California Highway Patrol said Saturday. (AP)

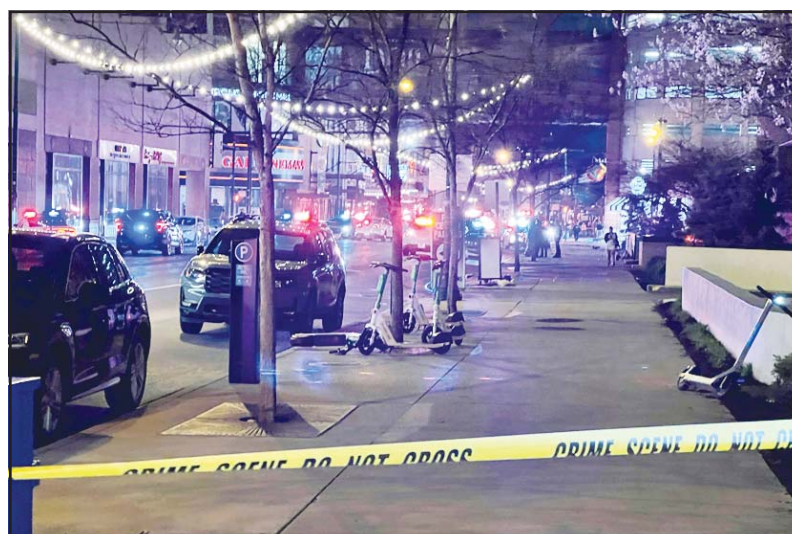
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No injuries after train derailment: Authorities and work crews on Sunday continued to clean up after a train derailment in central Oklahoma overturned 22 rail cars carrying gravel but didn't result in any injuries.

The derailment occurred Saturday afternoon just east of Davenport, which is located about 50 miles (80 km) northeast of Oklahoma City.

The Lincoln County Sheriff's Office said 22 of the train's 90 cars rolled over during the derailment, spilling gravel. The train was operated by Stillwater Central Railroad.

"There weren't any chemicals or anything like that or hazmat," sheriff's office Sgt. Aaron Bennett told KOCO-TV. (AP)



Police patrol the area in downtown Indianapolis on March 30, after a shooting near a shopping mall. Seven young people between the ages of 12 and 17 were wounded on Saturday, police said. (AP)

Lat/Am

'Case emblematic'

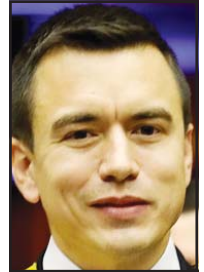
Gunmen in Ecuador kill 9 people; 10 hurt

QUITO, Ecuador, April 1, (AP) — Gunmen attacked a group of people in Ecuador's coastal city of Guayaquil killing nine and injuring 10 others, police said Sunday, the latest in a string of violent incidents in the South American country.

The attack took place around 7 pm local time Saturday in the southern neighborhood of Guasmo. According to police, the armed group entered a pedestrian street in a grey Chevrolet Spark, where a group of people were practicing sports. The gunmen got out of the vehicle and proceeded to shoot people.

"So far, the result is nine people dead and 10 injured," police Col. Ramiro Arequipa told journalists around midday on Sunday.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.



Noboa

It was the second mass killing in as many days. On Friday, five people who had been kidnapped were killed execution style in the coastal province of Manabi by an armed gang. Police said there were signs the victims were tourists mistakenly caught up in a local drug-trafficking dispute. They didn't elaborate.

In that incident, an armed group had kidnapped a total of 11 people. Police said the other six, including five minors, were rescued and handed over to their families. Two suspects were arrested on Saturday morning, according to police.

Remind

The killings in Manabi "remind us that the battle continues," said Ecuador's President **Daniel Noboa** on the social media network X, formerly Twitter, on Saturday.

"Narcoterrorism and its allies are looking for spaces to scare us, but they will not succeed," Noboa said. His post contained a video of a man handcuffed and bent over, being led away forcefully by an armed police officer.

Ecuador was once considered a bastion of peace in Latin America, but in recent years has seen a surge in violent attacks.

Noboa declared a state of emergency in January, which provides for permanent operations by a security force made up of police and military. In addition, a five-hour curfew is in force in high-incidence areas such as Guayaquil.

On March 24, the 27-year-old mayor of a small town - also in the province of Manabi - was killed along with her collaborator. Brigitte Garcia and Jairo Looz were found inside a vehicle with gunshot wounds.

On Thursday, a riot in a Guayaquil prison under military and police control left three inmates dead and four injured. Ecuador surpassed a rate of 40 violent deaths per 100,000 inhabitants at the end of 2023, one of the highest in the region, according to police.

Also:

RIO DE JANEIRO: Two days after Rio de Janeiro city councilwoman **Marielle Franco's** 2018 assassination, her widow sat down with the chief of the state's civil police, **Rivaldo Barbosa**, who pledged to do everything in his power to hold the guilty parties to account.

In fact, the man *Veja* magazine once exalted as "Rio's Sherlock" had the exact opposite intent, according to newly revealed allegations. Federal Police arrested Barbosa on March 24 - over six years later - for allegedly helping orchestrate Franco's killing and taking money to obstruct the very investigation he would oversee.

"Hours after the murder, I was in front of a man who knew exactly what had happened and, more than that, who was part of ordering it," **Mônica Benício** said through tears in an interview with TV Brasil after his arrest.

The explosive revelations in the nearly 500-page Federal Police report offer an unprecedented glimpse into how organized crime has undermined Rio's institutions and reveal the extent of corruption in a city where militias allegedly pay police to look away. The death of Franco, a rising political star who resisted militias' expansion and fought ardently for the poor, has driven home the consequences of allowing organized crime to run roughshod over Rio's sprawling landscape.

"The Marielle case is quite emblematic," said **Jacqueline Muniz**, a professor of public security at the Federal Fluminense University and ex-director of Rio's public security secretariat that oversees police. "In Rio, we govern with crime - not against it."

Barbosa's arrest came only after federal authorities started investigating once leftist President **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva** took office in 2023. Federal Police made a plea deal with former police officer Ronnie Lessa, who told them that two politician brothers hired him to kill Franco and informed him Barbosa had signed off beforehand. Police say they ordered her dead because she was an obstacle to militias' interests.

Barbosa's attorneys told The Associated Press that he categorically denies any wrongdoing or having ever met the accused politicians, and said the allegations are conjecture based on a criminal's words.

Upon his promotion to police chief, Barbosa delivered a defiant speech to a packed auditorium, demanding the "fight against one of the greatest evils that destroy the state: corruption!"

MEXICO CITY: The US-based missionary group Mountain Gateway said Friday it will file appeals against the convictions of 11 members of the group who were jailed by Nicaragua in December on money laundering charges.

The 11 are Nicaraguans who worked with the Texas-based group.

The government of President **Daniel Ortega** has often used charges of money laundering to expel or outlaw hundreds of faith groups and non-governmental organizations in Nicaragua.

The group's leader, **Jon Britton Hancock**, said the 11 faced between 12 and 15 years in prison. Hancock and two other Americans also faced charges, but were not in Nicaragua at the time the others were arrested. The group said it complied with all government rules to operate in Nicaragua.

In December, Mountain Gateway said it was "saddened to hear that our registration as a ministry in Nicaragua has been canceled. In response to the allegations of money laundering, Mountain Gateway possesses documentation demonstrating that all funding has been managed appropriately."

In 2023, Nicaragua's government declared the Jesuit religious order illegal and ordered the confiscation of all its property. It confiscated the Jesuit-run University of Central America in Nicaragua, arguing it was a "center of terrorism."



Volunteers of Fake News Cleaner guide students through the LINE app to identify fake news during a class in Kaohsiung City, southern Taiwan, on March 16, 2023. An anti-misinformation group in Taiwan called Fake News Cleaner has hosted more than 500 events, connecting with college students, elementary-school children and the seniors that, some say, are the most vulnerable to such efforts. (AP)

Asia

Japan confirms experts met in China

Taiwan fights fake news with focus on seniors

TAIPEI, Taiwan, April 1, (AP) — Their days often began at the crack of dawn.

They'd head out to a church, a temple, a park and set up a stall. They'd seek out seniors in particular, those who are perhaps the most vulnerable citizens of the information-saturated society that has enveloped them. To get people to stop and listen, they'd offer free bars of soap - a metaphor for the scrubbing that they were undertaking.

They'd talk to people, ask them about their lives and their media consumption habits. They'd ask: How has fake news hurt you? They'd teach techniques to punch through the static, to see the illogic in conspiracy theories, to find the facts behind the false narratives that can sometimes shape our lives.

Nearly six years later, with just one formal employee and a team of volunteers, Fake News Cleaner has hosted more than 500 events, connecting with college students, elementary-school children - and the seniors that, some say, are the most vulnerable to such efforts.

Its people are filling up lecture halls and becoming a key voice in an effort as pressing here as anywhere: scrubbing Taiwan of disinformation and the problems it causes, one case at a time.

Like any democratic society, Taiwan is flooded with assorted types of disinformation. It touches every aspect of a person's life, from conspiracy theories on vaccines to health claims aimed at promoting supplements to rumors about major Taiwanese companies leaving the island.

Thrives

Despite its very public nature, disinformation has a deeply personal impact - particularly among Taiwan's older people. It thrives in the natural gaps between people that come from generational differences and a constantly updating tech landscape, then enlarges those gaps to cause rifts.

"They have no way to communicate," says Melody Hsieh, who co-founded the group with Shu-huai Chang in 2018. "This entire society is being torn apart, and this is a terrible thing."

Taiwan is already home to several established fact-checking organizations. There's Co-Facts, a well known AI-driven fact-checking bot founded by a group of civic hackers. There are the Taiwan Fact Check Center and

MyGoPen. But such organizations presume that you're at least somewhat tech-savvy - that you can find a fact-check organization's website or add a fact-checking bot.

Yet many of the people most affected are the least tech-savvy. Fake News Cleaner believes addressing this gap requires an old-school approach: going offline. At the heart of the group's work is approaching people with patience and respect while educating them about the algorithms and norms that drive the platforms they use.

At a community center hosted by Bangkah Church in Taipei's Wanhua neighborhood, a crowd of seniors listen to 28-year old Tseng Yu-huan speak on behalf of Fake News Cleaner.

The attendees, many of whom come daily to the church's college for seniors, are learning why fake news is so compelling. Tseng shows them some sensational headlines. One: A smoothie mix of sweet potato leaves and milk was said to be a detox drink. Another: rumors that COVID-19 was being spread from India because of dead bodies in rivers. He used mostly examples from Line, a Korean messaging app popular in Taiwan.

With just one formal employee and a team of volunteers, Fake News Cleaner has combed Taiwan's churches, temples, small fishing villages and parks, spreading awareness. While they started with a focus on seniors, the group has also lectured at colleges and even elementary schools. Early on, to catch their target audience, Hsieh and her co-founders would get to the hiking trails near her home by 5 am to set up a stall while offering free bars of soap to entice people to stop and listen.

Now the group has a semester-long course at a community college in Kaohsiung, in addition to their lectures all across Taiwan, from fishing villages to community centers.

Fake News Cleaner avoids politics and takes no funding from the government or political parties. This is because of Taiwan's highly polarized political environment, where media outlets are often referred to by the color of the political party they back. Instead, the group focuses lectures on everyday topics like health and diet or economic scams.

Also:

TOKYO: Japan said Sunday its experts have held talks with their Chinese counterparts to try to assuage Bei-

jing's concerns over the discharge of treated radioactive wastewater from the wrecked **Fukushima Daiichi** nuclear power plant into the sea.

The discharges have been opposed by fishing groups and neighboring countries especially **China**, which banned all imports of Japanese seafood. China's move has largely affected Japanese scallop growers and exporters to China.

During the talks held Saturday in the northeastern Chinese city of **Dalian**, Japanese officials provided "science-based" explanation of how the discharges have been safely carried out as planned, according to the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

Japanese Prime Minister **Fumio Kishida** and Chinese President **Xi Jinping** at their summit meeting in November agreed to hold scientific talks by experts, and the countries have since held a number of informal meetings.

ISLAMABAD: The bodies of five Chinese nationals who were killed last week in a suicide bombing in northwestern Pakistan were flown to Beijing on a special plane, Pakistani officials and state media said Monday.

The bodies were sent to Beijing overnight from a military air base in the garrison city of Rawalpindi.

The development came a week after the Chinese, along with their Pakistani driver, were killed when the suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden car into their vehicle in the volatile northwest as they were heading to Pakistan's biggest hydro-power project, **Dasu Dam**, where they worked.

On Monday, Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** was also visiting Dasu Dam to meet with Chinese engineers and workers. Pakistani officials will brief Sharif on the project's progress.

Chinese and Pakistani investigators are conducting separate probes into the attack, which drew nationwide condemnation. China has also asked Pakistan to ensure the protection of its nationals working in various parts of Pakistan on projects in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Authorities say the Chinese bombing victims were heading to the project site amid tight security.

Other Chinese working on CPEC-related projects have faced similar attacks in recent years.



Japan's Princess Aiko, the daughter of Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, walks out of the gate of the Japanese Red Cross Society as she begins to work on April 1. (AP)



Allegrozzi



Prigozhin

Africa

Constitution completion OK'd: The majority of the Somali Federal Parliament Saturday approved the finalization of the country's constitution after several discussions.

Speaker of the Lower House of the Federal Parliament of Somalia Sheikh Adan Mohammad Nur announced 254 deputies voted in favor of ratifying the constitution, out of today's attendees, Somali National News Agency (SONNA) reported.

Among the most important amendments made to the constitution are those stating that the president is elected by the people, and has the authority to appoint and dismiss the prime minister, SONNA added.

According to the amended interim Somali constitution, the Electoral Committee will now consist of 18 members. (KUNA)

Wagner helps army in Mali: The Russian mercenary group known as Wagner is helping government forces in central and northern Mali carry out raids and drone strikes that have killed scores of civilians, including many children, rights groups said in reports published this week that span the period from December to March.

Mali, along with its neighbors Burkina Faso and Niger, has for over a decade battled an insurgency fought by jihadi groups, including some allied with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group. Following military coups in all three nations in recent years, the ruling juntas have expelled French forces and turned to Russia's mercenary units for security assistance instead.

Violence has escalated in Mali since Russian mercenaries arrived there following a coup in 2021. Its ruling junta has ramped up operations, carrying out deadly drone strikes that have hit gatherings of civilians, and raids accompanied by Russian mercenaries that have killed civilians.

Residents of the Sahel region that includes Mali say Russia's presence doesn't appear to have changed since Wagner's leader, **Yevgeny Prigozhin**, died in a suspicious plane crash last year.

"Mali's Russia-backed transitional military government is not only committing horrific abuses, but it is working to eliminate scrutiny into its human rights situation," **Haria Allegrozzi**, senior Sahel researcher at Human Rights Watch, in a statement Thursday.

In an example of a raid carried out by Russian-backed government forces in January, Human Rights Watch said the army entered a village near a military base in central Mali and arrested 25 people, including four children. Their bodies were found later that day blindfolded and with bullet wounds to the head, the report said.

Amnesty International said in separate re-

port earlier this week that two drone strikes in northern Mali killed at least 13 civilians, including seven children aged 2 to 17. A pregnant woman who was injured in the bombing miscarried days after the attack, it said.

Human Rights Watch has said the Turk-

ish-supplied drones in Mali are capable of delivering precise laser-guided bombs. The group has also documented how drone strikes have killed civilians. In one example, a drone strike in central Mali's Segou region killed at least seven people at a wedding, including two boys, it said. The fol-



Police ride in the scoop of a bulldozer as they work to clear street barricades during a security operation against organized crime in the Mare favela, where slain councilwoman Marielle Franco grew up, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Oct 9, 2023. (AP)

lowing day, a second drone strike targeted a funeral held for those killed in the previous day's strike.

The juntas ruling Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso earlier this month announced a joint security force to fight the worsening extremist violence in their Sahel region. This follows steps taken by the juntas to step away from their regional and Western nations that don't agree with their approach and rely on Russia for security support instead.

Although the militaries had promised to end the insurgencies in their territories after depositing their respective elected governments, conflict analysts say the violence has instead worsened under their regimes. They share borders and their security forces fighting jihadi violence are overstretched.

Mali was once part of three extremely powerful and wealthy West African empires that controlled trans-Saharan trade: the Ghana Empire (for which Ghana is named), the Mali Empire (for which Mali is named), and the Songhai Empire. At its peak in 1300, the Mali Empire was the wealthiest country in Africa and one of the wealthiest on earth, with its 14th-century emperor Mansa Musa believed to be one of the wealthiest individuals in history. Besides being an economic powerhouse, medieval Mali was a center of Islam, culture and knowledge, with Timbuktu becoming a renowned place of learning with its university, one of the oldest in the world still active. The expanding Songhai Empire absorbed the empire in 1468, [not verified in body] followed by a Saadian army which defeated the Songhai in 1591. (Agencies)

Country	Index	Change	Closing pts
UAE	DFM	+17.02	4,263.29
PHILIPPINES	PSEI	+76.28	6,979.81
SAUDI	Tadawul	+21.45	12,423.01
JAPAN	Nikkei	-566.35	39,803.09
PAKISTAN	KSE 100	-305.50	66,789.13

Business

Print shops see decline as candidates embrace digital campaigning

'Election season is a gold mine for advertising companies'

Gulf offers golden visas

European population in Gulf countries rises by over 30%

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: According to a report by the Media Line website, Gulf countries are currently experiencing a significant influx of European immigrants of Arab descent relocating to live there. Official statistics indicate a notable increase in the European population in some Gulf countries by over 30%, beginning from 2023 and continuing into 2024, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The report highlights various factors prompting this migration, notably the comparatively high tax rates in Europe juxtaposed with the lower tax rates in the Gulf. Additionally, social and cultural challenges faced by European countries have also contributed to this trend. Some individuals have chosen to relocate to the Gulf in pursuit of the luxurious lifestyle opportunities available in the region.

Gulf countries are proving attractive destinations for European immigrants due to favorable business environments and the presence of large-scale economic projects. Many Gulf nations offer golden visas, granting residency to investors, businessmen, and highly skilled workers.

Immigration laws in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Qatar offer golden residency to individuals with advanced academic qualifications, property owners, talented professionals, or those with a monthly income exceeding \$10,000. Holders of such residency statuses enjoy permanent

CBK bonds

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK Bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KWD (240) million for (3) months with Rate of Return (4.375%).

residency, renewable every 10 years. Official population statistics in Gulf countries reflect a 3% to 5% increase in the foreign resident population, while immigration from several Asian countries, such as India and Bangladesh, has decreased.

Saudi economist Mohammed Al-Sabban underscores the welcoming immigration policies of Gulf countries, noting that a significant proportion of their populations comprise foreigners.

These policies have attracted skilled professionals, with many foreign companies operating in the region actively seeking such expertise. Al-Sabban points out that while African and Asian residents in the Gulf often remit a large portion of their earnings to their home countries, European residents tend to spend a significant portion of their income locally.

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): Parliamentary elections throughout the world depend on conveying candidates' programs and messages to the masses to garner the much-coveted approval and votes.

On April 4, 2024, Kuwaiti voters will be flocking to election polls to cast their ballot, but the question is how would candidates gain the trust of their constituents. The answer is, of course, through advertisement.

The advertising sector naturally thrives during such periods with candidates trying to find the best medium to lure voters.

Elections season is a gold mine for advertising companies due their necessary impacts on voters, head of department of economics and finance at the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) Dr. Osama Al-Falah told KUNA.

He indicated that demand for the service sector increased during grand events such as elections, which boost

financial movement and provide advertisement firms with business left and right.

However, the volume of economic activity would be understandably lower due to the frequency of elections in the past three years, he pointed out, noting that business might be affected due to the advent of the holy month of Ramadan during the current election.

Speaking on the same issue, chairman of Kuwait Economic Society Mishari Al-Abduljaleel said that the services sector -- which includes advertisement, catering, and logistics -- plays a pivotal role in elections.

Through advertisement candidates can relay their messages to the masses,

he affirmed, noting that from billboards to social media platforms, those eager for a seat at the National Assembly would use all tools to make sure they inform eligible voters about their campaign.

Not all services gain from election season, revealed Al-Abduljaleel, noting that print shops saw a decline in demand in favor of more modern approaches for advertisement.

Providing a similar input, Mohammad Al-Qattan, Secretary General of Kuwait society for small and medium-size enterprises, affirmed that election season was always positive for the services sector, especially for advertisements and media.

Despite a buzz in business this current season, numbers are no way close to the ones felt in 2020, he said, and attributed such factors to the short preparation time and lack of finances on part of some candidates.

Those who do not take advantage of the services provided by media and advertisements might send a signal that candidates feel they did not have a chance to win, he said.

Al-Qattan also took note that candidates did not heavily invest in inviting people to their campaign headquarters for speeches and rallies, attributing that to the timing which is Ramadan with people mostly focusing on the spirituality of the holy month.



Al-Abduljaleel



Al-Qattan



Al-Falah

Kuwait leads GCC markets with 7.5% gain in Q1-2024

Heavyweight sectors drag down GCC index into the red

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: GCC equity markets underperformed a sustained rally in global markets during March-2024 with most markets in the region seeing low single-digit declines. As a result, the MSCI GCC index dropped by 3.0% during the month. The decline was mainly led by seasonal selling pressure during the month of Ramadan as investors booked profits after last month's healthy gains. Bahrain was the best performing market during the month with a gain of 1.9% closely followed by Oman that was up by 1.8%.

On the decliner's side, Qatar was the biggest decliner with a fall of 6.0%. Saudi Arabia was next with a decline of 1.8% while Kuwait and Dubai indices declined by 1.5%. All these top decliners were the best performing markets last month.

In terms of YTD-2024 performance, the MSCI GCC index was up marginally by 0.2% during Q1-2024 after gains during February-2024 were almost fully offset by declines during the remaining two months. Kuwait continued to lead in the GCC with a Q1-2024 gain of 7.5% followed by Dubai and Saudi Arabia with gains of 4.6% and 3.6%, respectively. On the decliner's side, Qatar's DSM index topped with a steep decline of 9.1% followed by Abu Dhabi General Index that declined by 3.7% during Q1-2024.

The decline also reflected a fall in large-cap sectors during the month. This included Telecom, Banks and Energy with low single-digit declines. The sectoral decliner's chart was topped by Pharma & Biotech sector with a fall of 9.6% followed by Hotels & Leisure that slid 8.1%. Telecom and Banks showed declines of 3.5% and 3.3%, respectively. On the gainer's side, Utilities topped with a healthy gain of 7.1% closely followed by Insurance and Diversified Financials with gains of 6.8% and 6.3%, respectively.

Boursa Kuwait
Kuwaiti benchmarks receded during March-2024 following a broad-based decline that affected most sectors on the exchange. In terms of market segments, the Main Market Index witnessed the biggest monthly decline of 1.7% as the performance of constituent stocks in the index were skewed downwards. The Premier Market Index and the All-Share Market Index reported a monthly decline of 1.5%, respectively, while the Main 50 Index receded 1.4% during the month. The performance in Q1-2024 also reflected relatively better performance of Premier market stocks with a gain of 7.5% while the Main Market and Main 50 index showed smaller gains of 7.5% and 7.1%, respectively. The broader All Share index witnessed a gain of 7.5% during Q1-2024, the biggest in the GCC.

The sector performance chart remained mixed during the month. The gainer's side was topped by the Consumer Staples index with a gain of 8.0% followed by Consumer Discretionary and Industrials indices with gains of 5.1% and 3.0%, respectively. On the other hand, the Health Care Index witnessed the steepest decline of 29.3%, followed by the Technology and Telecommunications indices with declines of 6.1% and 4.7%, respectively. Gains in the Consumer Discretionary index was led by a sector-wide gains with only a few small cap stocks seeing declines. Within the Consumer Discretionary sector, shares of Kuwait National Cinema Co. and IFA Hotels & Resorts Co. were up 20.0% and 18.1%, respectively. IFA Hotels & Resorts Co.

GCC Equity Markets	Index Closing	MTD Chg%	YTD Chg%	M-Cap (USD Bn)	Monthly Val Traded (USD Bn)	P/E (x) TTM	P/B (x) TTM	Div. Yield
Kuwait - Premier Market Index	8,036.7	(1.5%)	7.5%	142.3	2.9	13.9	0.9	2.8%
Kuwait - Main 50 Index	5,875.9	(1.4%)	7.1%					
Kuwait - Main Market Index	5,985.6	(1.7%)	7.5%					
Kuwait - All Share Index	7,327.2	(1.5%)	7.5%					
Saudi Arabia	12,401.6	(1.8%)	3.6%	2,916.9	52.5	22.3	2.7	2.9%
Abu Dhabi	9,228.1	(0.3%)	(3.7%)	711.0	8.2	19.9	2.8	2.1%
Dubai	4,246.3	(1.5%)	4.6%	197.7	2.4	8.3	1.3	5.3%
Qatar	9,847.1	(6.0%)	(9.1%)	156.7	2.6	11.5	1.3	4.8%
Bahrain	2,042.7	1.9%	3.6%	94.3	0.06	7.9	0.8	7.7%
Oman	4,635.7	1.8%	2.7%	23.4	0.2	12.9	0.9	5.3%
Total GCC				4,242.5	68.9	18.7	2.3	3.1%

announced a record net profit of KWD 13.9 Mn for FY-2023 vs. KWD 2.9 Mn in FY-2022 supported by net income from the sale of properties which increased by KWD 3.6 Mn. Large-cap indices like Banking sector index was down during the month after shares of most of the Kuwaiti banks declined despite posting strong quarterly earnings indicating seasonal weakness and profit booking on elevated prices. Meanwhile, both the constituents in Health care sector, Al-Maidan Clinic for Oral Health Services Co. and Advanced Technology Co. declined by 42.4% and 0.2%, respectively. In the Telecom sector, all the 5 constituent stocks declined with shares of Ooredoo Kuwait leading with a fall of 15.6%.

In terms of monthly stock performance, National Real Estate Co. topped with a gain of 27.0% followed Tamdeen Investment Co. and Kuwait National Cinema Co. with gains of 26.1% and 20.0%, respectively. On the decliner's side, Al-Maidan Clinic for Oral Health Serv. Co. topped with a decline of 42.4% followed by The Energy House Co. and Al-Argan International Real Estate Co. with declines of 37.8% and 32.1%, respectively. In terms of trading activity, volume traded declined by 26.4% to reach 3.4 Bn shares in March-2024 as compared to 4.7 Bn shares in February-2024 due to the month of Ramadan. The aggregate value of shares traded during the month also declined by 23.1% to reach KWD 897.8 Mn.

Saudi Arabia (Tadawul)
Saudi Arabia's headline equity index TASI reported monthly decline during March-2024. The benchmark hit a 21-month high closing level on 21-March-2024 at 12,835.65 points but consistent declines towards the end of the month pulled the index down below the 12,500 mark to close at 12,401.6 points, witnessing a monthly decline of 1.8%. Despite the decline, Saudi Arabia YTD-2024 performance recorded a gain of 3.6%. In terms of primary market activity, the month saw the third listing during this year with the Modern Mills for Food Products Co. listed in the Food & Beverages sector.

The Utilities index reported the biggest monthly gain of 14.6% following a gain of 23.9% in shares of ACWA Power. The Insurance index was next with a gain of 8.4% followed by Financial Services index with a gain of 8.3%. Gains for the Insurance sector was mainly led by double-digit gains of 38.5% in shares of Gulf Union Cooperative Insurance Co. further supported by gains of 35.1% and 27.5% in shares of The Mediterranean and Gulf Insurance and Reinsurance Co. and Al Rajhi Co for Co-operative Insurance, respectively, whereas shares of Malath Cooperative Insurance Co. declined by 7.9%. In terms of sectoral decliners, the Consumer Services index topped with a fall of -11.3% followed by Pharma, Biotech & Life Science and Telecommunication Services indices with declines of 9.9% and 6.7%, respectively. Large-cap sectors like Banking and Energy sectors reported decline during the month at 4.9% and 2.7%, respectively. Shares of six out of ten banks reported declines during March-2024. Large-cap banks like Al Rajhi Bank dropped by 7.5% while shares of Riyad Bank and SNB dropped by 5.5% and 5.1%, respectively. On the other hand, shares of The Arab National Bank gained

4.8% during the month. The monthly stock performance chart was topped by Saudi Cable Co. with a gain of 46.5% followed by Saudi Steel Pipe Co. with a gain of 39.0% and Gulf Union Cooperative Insurance Co. with a gain of 38.5%. On the monthly decliner's chart, Al-Ahsa Development Co. topped a decline of 29.3% followed by Alkhaleej Training and Education Co. and National Company for Learning and Education with declines of 25.0% and 22.3%, respectively. Trading activity on the exchange improved during the month. Total volume traded during the month increased by 12.8% to reach 8.4 Bn traded shares in March-2024 as compared to 7.4 Bn traded shares during February-2024. Value traded during the month reached SAR 197.0 Bn during March-2024 as compared to SAR 186.4 Bn during the previous month, resulting in a m-o-m growth of 5.7%.

Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange
The FTSE ADX index recorded a marginal 0.3% decline during March-2024 continuing its declining trend in 2024 to close the month at 9,228.09 points. The decline also steepened the fall in terms of YTD-2024 performance that reached -3.7%, the second-biggest in the GCC and the only other declining market along with Qatar. The performance of the ten sector indices on the ADX was even-ly balanced as five indices recorded declines during the month while the remaining five witnessed gains. The Consumer Discretionary index posted the largest fall among the indices during March-2024 with a decline of 3.0% to close the month at 6,645.6 points. The decline was led by the fall in prices of Abu Dhabi National Hotels Company, which witnessed a 3.3% fall in its share prices during the month. The Industrials index recorded the second-largest monthly fall during March-2024 with a 1.9% drop to close the month at 2,911.7 points. On the other hand, the Consumer Staples index witnessed a 10.8% gain during the month, the largest gain among the indices in the exchange, followed by the Basic Materials Index which recorded a 6.5% increase during the similar period. Aghia Group's 12.2% share jump was the main driver of the Consumer Staples Index growth during the month.

In terms of monthly stock performance, Fujairah Building Industries topped the monthly gainers chart for March-2024 with its share price increasing by 32.0% followed by Abu Dhabi National Takaful and Gulf Medical Projects which recorded gains of 23.3% and 16.4%, respectively. Abu Dhabi National Takaful disclosed a net profit of AED 103.0 Mn for FY-2023 as compared to AED 66.7 Mn. On the decliner's side, Ras Al-Khaimah National Insurance lead the way registering a 10.0% fall in its share price during March-2024 followed by Oman & Emirates Investment Holding and United Arab Bank which saw share price declines of 9.8% and 8.5%, respectively.

Trading activity on the exchange fell during March-2024. Total volume of shares traded declined by 12.6% in March-2024 to reach 4.4 Bn shares as compared to 5.0 Bn shares during the previous month. On the other hand, the total value of shares traded recorded a decline of 3.9% to reach AED 17.8 Bn during March-2024 as compared to

AED 18.6 Bn in February-2024. Eshraq Investments topped the list of the most active stocks table during the month with 543.3 Mn traded shares followed by Multiply Group and Dana Gas Company, which traded 455.5 Mn shares and 307.1 Mn shares, respectively. In terms of value traded, IHC topped the table with AED 4.6 Bn worth of shares changing hands during the month followed by Alpha Dhabi Holding and First Abu Dhabi Bank at AED 1.8 Bn and AED 1.2 Bn, respectively.

Dubai Financial Market
The DFM General Index recorded 1.5% fall during March-2024, its first decline after four straight months of gains, closing the month at 4,246.3 points. The monthly sector performance chart was evenly balanced with four out of eight sectors recording declines while the remaining four saw gains during the period. However, the decline in the Financial Sector (-5.2%), the largest weighted sector in the exchange, dragged the general index to the red. The decline in the index was mainly due to the double-digit share price declines of several of its constituent companies such as Mashreq Bank (-14.6%). The Consumer Staples Sector recorded the second largest decline among the sector indices (-1.4%) followed by the Communications Services Index (-1.2%). On the other hand, the Real Estate Index registered a 4.0% gain during March-2024, the biggest gain among the indices to close the month at 8,034.1 points. The indices' remarkable monthly growth was mainly driven by the double-digit growth of two of its key constituent companies, i.e., Deyaar Development (+11.5%) and Union Properties (+20.3%).

According to monthly stock performance from Bloomberg, Union Properties topped the monthly gainers table with 20.3% jump in share price followed by Ithmar Holding and GFH followed with gains of 19.2% and 13.7%, respectively. Union Properties recorded exceptional financial results for the 2023 fiscal year which reached AED 811 Mn recording 60% annual growth in operating profits reflecting real estate demand. On the decliner's side, Al Salam Bank Sudan topped the table with a decline of 15.1% followed by shares of Mashreq Bank and Dubai Islamic Bank which recorded declines of 14.6% and 9.5%, respectively, during March-2024.

Trading activity on the exchange witnessed strong growth during March-2024. Total volume traded increased by 36.9% to reach 4.8 Bn shares as compared to 3.5 Bn shares during February-2024. Similarly, the total value of shares traded during the month increased at a relatively lower pace of 11.1% to reach AED 8.8 Bn in March-2024 as compared to AED 7.9 Bn during February-2024. Union Properties topped the monthly volumes traded chart recording 1.1 Bn shares which changed hands during the month followed by Gulf Finance House and Deyaar Development which saw 617.9 Mn and 313.7 Mn of their shares change hands during the month, respectively. On the monthly value traded chart, Emaar Properties topped the list with AED 1.7 Bn worth of shares changing hands during the month, followed by Dubai Islamic Bank, and Emaar Development which saw AED 850.7 Mn and AED 776.7 Mn value of their shares traded, respectively.

Net profits surge by 133%

UPAC reports 2.6% revenue increase in 2023 fiscal year

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: United Projects for Aviation Services Company (UPAC), specializing in facility management and commercial real estate, has announced its financial performance for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2023, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The company achieved revenues of 10.14 million dinars, marking a 2.6% increase compared to 2022. Notably, net profits surged by 133%, reaching 1.61 million dinars, equivalent to earnings per share of 4.06 fils.

The Board of Directors has recommended against distributing dividends for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2023, pending approval from the company's General Assembly.

Nadia Aqeel, CEO of UPAC, expressed satisfaction with the 2023 results, attributing the improvements to the recovery of airport-related services and the uptick in daily flights and passengers at Kuwait International Airport. Aqeel reiterated the company's commitment to delivering value to shareholders while maintaining strong business performance for customers. She anticipates continued

growth throughout 2024.

In early 2024, UPAC concluded its contract for the development, operation, and maintenance of parking lots and related facilities at T4 in Kuwait International Airport. The company facilitated the seamless transfer of the project to Incheon International Airport Corporation IAC, the current manager of T4.

UPAC is a contributing investor in the \$1.3 billion Reem Mall situated on Reem Island in Abu Dhabi. The mall, which officially opened to the public in Feb 2023, boasts the region's first integrated, multi-channel retail system with 153 operational units, the mall has achieved an occupancy rate of approximately 72% of the total rental space. UPAC anticipates further tenant occupancy in the coming months.

In Kuwait, UPAC manages two key projects: the management and operation of the shopping center in the main terminal T1 at Kuwait International Airport, including parking lots and related facilities, and the management of real estate and parking facilities at Sheikh Saad Airport.

DGCA advances meetings for Air Cargo City project

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation is progressing with the development of the Air Cargo City project on 3-million-square-meter area within the Kuwait International Airport, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This ambitious endeavor seeks to elevate Kuwait International Airport's status to become one of the premier logistics hubs in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Reliable sources have disclosed that the DGCA has engaged in a series of meetings over recent weeks with various governmental bodies, including the government performance monitoring agency, representatives from the Ministry of Finance, and advisors from the Fatwa and Legislation Department.

These discussions are aimed at finalizing the necessary documents for the project's execution, including the selection process for a global operator. It is anticipated that the requisite approvals from pertinent authorities will be secured within the coming two months.

Insiders have indicated that several government entities responsible for technical oversight are leaning towards entrusting the completion and operation of the cargo city to Chinese firms, citing their extensive expertise in this domain. This inclination is reinforced by recent bilateral visits and agreements between Kuwait and the People's Republic of China.

In a related development, a document in this regard underscores the DGCA's insistence on structuring the cargo city project as a public auction, deeming it beneficial for public interest.

The administration has meticu-

lously prepared the necessary auction documents and is poised to proceed with the tendering process, having invested considerable time, effort, and resources.

The document highlights that the Fatwa and Legislation Department has rendered an opinion, deeming it permissible for the DGCA to offer the Air Cargo City project in accordance with Ministry of Finance Circular 4 of 1997 pertaining to government auctions, within the framework of its discretionary authority.

The document indicated that the components of the air cargo city project, which is scheduled to be built on an area of 3 million square meters in the Kuwait International Airport area, will include the construction of government buildings and facilities -- customer service center; multi-storey parking building; government agencies inspectors building; medical quarantine building, laboratories and examinations; buildings and security entry and exit gates and infrastructure services, including roads, parking lots, lighting, electricity, water, sewage, rain, and communications.

The document elaborates that the General Administration of Civil Aviation, under the mandate issued by the Council of Ministers and in coordination with relevant authorities including the Ministry of Finance, is empowered to surmount any obstacles hindering the implementation of the Air Cargo City project at Kuwait International Airport. In line with the opinion of the Fatwa and Legislation Department, it is tasked with expediting the project's progress and streamlining administrative procedures to expedite its timely completion.

China's manufacturing activity expands in March

Manufacturing in China expanded in March after contracting for five consecutive months, according to an official survey of factory managers released Sunday, suggesting a rebound in industrial activities following the Lunar New Year holiday.

The official purchasing managers index, or PMI, rose from 49.1 in February to 50.8 in March. The PMI is on a scale up to 100, where 50 marks the

cutoff between expansion and contraction.

The monthly manufacturing PMI has mostly been under 50 over the past 12 months: Other than this month, factory activities only recorded an expansion in September.

National Bureau of Statistics senior statistician Zhao Qinghe said the market became more active as companies resumed and sped up production after the Lu-

nar New Year holiday. Many factories stopped running during the holiday, with social media posts suggesting workers at some companies were off for as many as 140 days starting in late 2023 due to the lack of new orders.

Zhao said the survey also showed some problems for companies remained, including increasing competition in industries and a lack of market demand. (AP)

Algeria's govt pushes staples to subsidized mkts

Algeria's government has flooded newly opened markets selling subsidized goods with pantry staples to stave off shortages during Islam's holy month of Ramadan, when demand typically increases in Muslim-majority countries and prices tend to rise.

Authorities have moved to increase food and fuel imports and also limit exports, hoping to meet the demands of Algeri-

ans preparing nightly feasts as their families break the sunrise-to-sunset fasting during Ramadan.

The policies mark a reversal of the government's longstanding practice of limiting imports to buoy local producers in the oil-rich North African nation with a struggling economy.

At one state subsidized market in the country's capital, Algiers, shopper Sofiane Ameri

commended the government's strategy for reining in prices.

"Prices are lower here," he said. "It's about 20% (less)."

Prices of red meat fluctuated during the first week of Ramadan, which started earlier this month, but later stabilized. Others, including many fruits and vegetables, stayed steady through the first week and spiked in the second, raising concern among the public. (AP)

Worry over risks echoed

Many Americans say immigrants contribute to economy: poll

WASHINGTON, April 1, (AP) — Americans are more worried about legal immigrants committing crimes in the U.S. than they were a few years ago, a change driven largely by increased concern among Republicans, while Democrats continue to see a broad range of benefits from immigration, a new poll shows.

The poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that substantial shares of U.S. adults believe that immigrants contribute to the country's economic growth, and offer important contributions to American culture. But when it comes to legal immigrants, U.S. adults see fewer major benefits than they did in the past, and more major risks.

About 4 in 10 Americans say that when immigrants come to the U.S. legally, it's a major benefit for American companies to get the expertise of skilled workers in fields like science and technology. A similar share (38%) also say that legal immigrants contribute a major benefit by enriching American culture and values.

Both those figures were down compared with 2017, when 59% of Americans said skilled immigrant workers who enter the country legally were a major benefit, and half said legal immigrants contribute a major benefit by enriching American culture.

Meanwhile, the share of Americans who say that there's a major risk that legal immigrants will commit crimes in the U.S. has increased, going from 19% in 2017 to 32% in the new poll.

Republicans were more likely than Democrats to say that immigration is an important issue for them personally, and 41% now say it's a major risk that legal immigrants will commit crimes in the U.S., up from 20% in 2017. Overall, Republicans are more likely to see major risks - and fewer benefits - from immigrants who enter the country legally and illegally, although they tend to be most concerned about people who come to the country illegally.

Bob Saunders is a 64-year-old independent from Voorhees, New Jersey. He disapproves of President Joe Biden's performance when it comes to immigration and border security and is particularly worried about the number of immigrants coming to the southern border who are eventually released into the country. He stressed that there's a difference between legal and illegal immigration. Saunders said it's important to know the background of the immigrants coming to the U.S.

and said legal immigration contributes to the economy. He also noted the immigrants in his own family.

"It's not anti-immigration," Saunders said. "It's anti-illegal immigration."

Many Republicans, 71%, say there's a risk of people in the country illegally coming to the U.S. and committing crimes, although many studies have found immigrants are less drawn to violent crime than native-born citizens. Even more, 80%, think there's a major risk that people in the country without permission will burden public service programs, while about 6 in 10 Republicans are concerned that there's a major risk of them taking American jobs, that their population growth will weaken American identity or that they will vote illegally - although only a small number of noncitizen voters have been uncovered.

Amber Pierce, a 43-year-old Republican from Milam, Texas, says she understands that a lot of migrants are seeking a better life for their children, but she's also concerned migrants will become a drain on government services.

"I believe that a lot of them come over here and get free health care and take away from the people who have worked here and are citizens," Pierce said. "They get a free ride. I don't think that's fair."

Democrats, on the other hand, are more likely to see benefits from immigration, although the poll did find that only half of Democrats now think that legal immigrants are making important contributions to American companies, a decrease of more than 20 percentage points from 2017. But they're more likely than Republicans to say that the ability of people to come from other places in the world to escape violence or find economic opportunities is extremely or very important to the U.S.'s identity as a nation.

"People who are coming, are coming for good reason. It's how many of us got here," said Amy Wozniak, a Democrat from Greenwood, Indiana. Wozniak said previous waves of immigrants came from European countries. Now immigrants are coming from different countries but that doesn't mean they're not fleeing for justifiable reasons, she said: "They're not all drugs and thugs."

There's also a divide among partisans about the value of diversity, with 83% of Democrats saying that the country's diverse population makes it at least moderately stronger, compared with 43% of Republicans and Independents. Republicans

are more likely than Democrats to say that a shared American culture and set of values is extremely or very important to the United States' identity as a nation, although about half of Democrats also see this as important.

U.S. adults - and especially Republicans - are more likely to say that the country has been significantly changed by immigrants in the past five years than they are to say that immigrants have changed their own community or their state. About 3 in 10 U.S. adults say immigrants have had a major impact on their local community while about 6 in 10 say they've had a major impact on the country as a whole. The gap between perceptions of community impact and effects on the country as a whole is particularly wide among Republicans.

There is some bipartisan agreement about how immigration at the border between the U.S. and Mexico should be addressed. The most popular option asked about is hiring more Border Patrol agents, which is supported by about 8 in 10 Republicans and about half of Democrats. Hiring more immigration judges and court personnel is also favored among majorities of both parties.

About half of Americans support reducing the number of immigrants who are allowed to seek asylum in the U.S. when they arrive at the border, but there's a much bigger partisan divide there, with more Republicans than Democrats favoring this strategy. Building a wall - former President Donald Trump's signature policy goal - is the least popular and most polarizing option of the four asked about. About 4 in 10 favor building a wall, including 77% of Republicans but just 12% of Democrats.

Donna Lyon is a Democratic-leaning independent from Cortland, New York. She believes a border wall would do little to stop migrants. But she supports hiring more Border Patrol agents and more immigration court judges to deal with the growing backlog of immigration court cases: "That would stop all the backup that we have."

Congress just recently approved money to hire about 2,000 more Border Patrol agents but so far this year, there's been no significant boost for funding for more immigration judges. Many on both sides of the aisle have said it takes much too long to decide asylum cases, meaning migrants stay in the country for years waiting for a decision, but the parties have failed to find consensus on how to address the issue.

Service sector happy

Japan manufacturers are 'less optimistic'

TOKYO, April 1, (AP) — A key Japanese central bank report said Monday that sentiment among big manufacturers has sagged but that optimism is at a three-decade high among large business outside the manufacturing sector.

The Bank of Japan's "tankan" report said sentiment among large manufacturers, which include auto and electronics giants, declined in March for the first time in a year, standing at plus 11, down two points from December. The average market forecast by Japanese news service Kyodo was 9.

The index for large-scale non-manufacturers, including the service sector, hit a 33-year high at plus 34 points, up two points from the last report in December.

The tankan, carried out every three months, surveys about 9,000 Japanese companies and measures corporate sentiment by subtracting the number of companies saying business conditions are negative from those saying they are positive.

The optimism among the non-manufacturing businesses reflects the return of tourism, both overseas and domestic, which had been hurt by the pandemic. Incoming travelers have recently outpaced pre-pandemic levels.

The downturn in the views among manufacturers reflects production stoppages at Daihatsu Motor Co., a Toyota Motor Corp. subsidiary that specializes in small vehicles. Daihatsu has acknowledged it didn't carry out proper safety tests.

The Japanese economy has tended to stagnate in recent years, with slow wage increases as well as deflation, or the continuous sliding down of prices, rather than the inflation affecting some parts of the world.

Another negative has been soaring energy prices. Japan imports almost all its oil.

The weakening currency has also hurt some sectors. The U.S. dollar is recently trading at about 150 yen, up dramatically from about 130 yen a year ago.

A weak yen works as a plus for encouraging tourism. It also helps exporters, like Toyota and Nintendo, by boosting the value of their overseas earnings when converted into yen.

The Bank of Japan raised its benchmark interest rate last month for the first time in 17 years, ending a longstanding policy of negative rates meant to boost the economy.

The bank has an inflation target of 2% that it uses as a benchmark for whether Japan has finally escaped deflationary tendencies. It said monetary policy will remain easy for some time, while noting that wages and profits at companies were improving.

The tankan report's forecast for future sentiment among large manufacturers stood at 10, while the index for large non-manufacturers was 27, both lower than the levels reported Monday.

Debt, trade barriers and uncertainty will drag on Asian economies in 2024

World Bank issues report

The Conversation

How federal tax dollars meant to fight 'climate change' could end up boosting Louisiana's fossil fuel production

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

By Ned Randolph
Tulane University

Billions of federal tax dollars will soon be pouring into Louisiana to fight climate change, yet the projects they're supporting may actually boost fossil fuels - the very products warming the planet.

At issue are plans to build dozens of federally subsidized projects to capture and bury carbon dioxide from industries.

On the surface, these projects seem beneficial. Keeping carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere prevents the greenhouse gas from fueling climate change. In practice, however, this may lead to a net increase in fossil fuel production and more emissions.

That's because many of these carbon capture projects will be handling emissions from facilities that rely on oil and natural gas - in fact, many of the projects are tied to major oil and gas companies through subsidiaries. Under new federal rules, the projects can receive generous tax subsidies. The more carbon dioxide the factories produce and capture, the more federal money the projects can receive.

The coup de grace: Louisiana can authorize as many of these federally subsidized projects as it sees fit. The Environmental Protection Agency recently approved its quest to become only one of three states with regulatory "primacy" over such carbon storage wells.

Fossil fuel industry advocates are eager to get projects approved. "Louisiana has a chance with our geological structures to make a big splash in the pond for CO2 in the world," Mike Moncla, president of the Louisiana Oil and Gas Association, told a legislative task force in December 2023.

Louisiana has taken advantage of disasters to boost the fossil fuel industry before. After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated Louisiana's marshlands and disrupted oil and gas production in the Gulf of Mexico in 2005, Louisiana authorities pushed to expand drilling in federal waters in the name of hurricane recovery and coastal restoration.

In my book, "Muddy Thinking in the Mississippi River Delta: A Call for Reclamation," I show how efforts to reduce such environmental destruction end up greenwashing industries that created the problem.

Louisiana has been wrestling with environmental issues and coastal erosion since the early part of the 20th century, sped by a confluence of

federal flood control levees on the Lower Mississippi River and oil and gas drilling.

Over the years, the fossil fuel industry drilled thousands of leaky wells and dug over 10,000 miles of pipeline and navigation canals. Coastal erosion accelerated, which also left oil and gas infrastructure exposed.

In the late 1990s, state leaders joined with the oil and gas industry on a public relations campaign to convince Congress to help fund a \$14 billion coastal restoration plan. The effort stalled after Congress declined to approve the spending.

Then hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the state in 2005. Oil and gas production in the region went offline, and U.S. energy prices surged.

Within days of Hurricane Katrina, Republicans in Congress were calling for lifting a 25-year drilling moratorium on the Gulf of Mexico's Outer Continental Shelf.

Within the year, Congress had voted to lift the moratorium and to share 37.5% of the federal royalties from the wells with Louisiana and the other Gulf states. The money would help fund the state's coastal restoration plans, which were later bolstered by the huge disaster settlement from BP's Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

The arrangement made coastal restoration dependent on future revenue from an industry that continues to damage the coast.

Carbon capture has similarly turned the oil and gas industry into a critical component of mitigating climate change while the industry continues producing products that are heating the planet.

Congress first created a tax credit for carbon sequestration in 2008, but the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act opened the flood gates. It boosted the federal tax credit to \$85 per ton of carbon dioxide captured and stored from industrial facilities and \$180 per ton for carbon captured from the air and stored. Companies that reuse carbon dioxide for industrial products or enhanced oil recovery will receive \$60 per ton.

The tax credits by some estimates could cost the federal treasury well over \$100 billion, depending on the program's popularity, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

At least 24 carbon capture applications are now pending in Louisiana. Many more are in preliminary stages, according to a Louisiana Department of Natural Resources spokesman.

Environmental advocacy groups say the program is riddled with problems, including lacking third-party verification that the carbon is being stored as claimed. An earlier federal investigation by the U.S. Treasury found that 90% of the \$1 billion in tax credits awarded to companies for carbon storage between 2010 and 2019 was incorrectly documented.

about 5% is below its potential.

"To be happy that Vietnam is growing at 5% reflects the kind of underachievement we should not be happy about," Mattoo said in an on-

line briefing.

One key problem highlighted in the report is lagging improvements in productivity, the report said. Leading companies in Asia are far behind

the leaders in wealthier nations, especially in technology-related areas.

The report faults governments for imposing restrictions on investment that prevent foreign companies from

entering key parts of regional economies, a need to build skills and weak management. Opening to more competition and investing more in education would help, it said.

As part of its ongoing Ramadan initiatives

Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Red Crescent Society's 'Aid Palestine' campaign

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: As part of its various initiatives during the holy month of Ramadan, Gulf Bank announced its support for the charitable campaign organized by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society under the slogan "Aid Palestine", in response to the efforts of the state and civil society institutions aiming to alleviate the suffering of people affected by the war in Gaza.

This announcement was made during a visit by a team from Gulf Bank to the headquarters of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society. The team comprised Ms. Salma Al-Hajjaj, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources; Mr. Mohammed Al-Qattan, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Consumer Banking; and Ms. Najla Al-Eisa, Gulf Bank's Chief Marketing Officer. They were warmly received by the Director General of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, Mr. Abdulrahman Al-Aoun.

During this occasion, Ms. Najla Al-Eisa, Gulf Bank's Deputy General Manager-Chief Marketing Officer expressed: "At Gulf Bank, we are committed to lending a helping hand to our brothers and sisters in Gaza during these



A group photo of Gulf Bank officials with Red Crescent Society officials.

difficult times. Through our partnership with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, which serves as a representative of Kuwait and its people in global humanitarian concerns, we aim to make a meaningful difference."

She emphasized that Gulf Bank continues its strong commitment to sustainability programs, at societal, economic, and environmental levels, through numerous carefully selected initiatives that benefit both the bank and the

Najla Al-Eisa: Our support for the 'Aid Palestine' campaign is part of a series of charitable initiatives during the holy month of Ramadan

community; aligning with its 2025 strategy, and in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Kuwait Vision 2035.

Al-Eisa highlighted Gulf Bank's dedication as a financial institution to support impactful civil society organizations like the Kuwait Red Crescent, acknowledging their significant social and humanitarian contributions. The bank firmly believes in the pivotal role of the private sector in aiding civil society organizations' endeavors across all humanitarian fronts.

She further stated that the contribution to support the Kuwait Red Crescent Society's campaign is part of a series of charitable ini-

tiatives launched by Gulf Bank during the holy month of Ramadan, including the distribution of food baskets "Machlat Ramadan", "Nuqsat Al-Khaleej", and others.

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

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



Al-Tabtabaei, Al-Mukhaizeem, and the Baytak volunteer team with the honorees.



Al-Tabtabaei, Al-Mukhaizeem and Abdullah Al-Saif honoring one of the winners with her father.



Honoring one of the winners in the presence of her father.



Honoring one of the winners.



Honoring a winner.

Warba announces winners of Al Sunbula weekly draw

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Warba Bank - the best bank in corporate and investment banking services in Kuwait - announced the winners of the weekly Al Sunbula draws. Warba Bank will continue to hold weekly draws for ten winners of Al Sunbula account, in the presence of a representative of Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Warba Bank employees.

Each of the 10 lucky winners of the Sunbula weekly draw of Warba Bank received KD 1,000, and the winners are: Shouq Adel Jassim Al-Najjar, Mudhi Abdul Aziz Al-Qada', Abdullah Mohammed Al-Azmi, Fatma Abdul Aziz Al-Heid, Rashid Nasser Mohammed Al-Hajri, Abdalallah Nasser Saeed Al-Dosari, Shaha Bandar Nasser Al-Shuaib, Hilal Obaid Shehada Al-Anezi, Khaled Falah Rashed Al-Barbar, and Sarah Zaid Zayed Al-Mutairi.

As for the Sunbula account, it is the ideal choice for all those wishing to save money and achieve appropriate financial returns on their accounts at the same time, in addition to the opportunity to win cash prizes throughout the year.

Regarding the conditions, Mr. Ahmed M. Al-Mutawa, Area Manager Retail Banking Group said: "KD 100 is now required to enter the weekly Sunbula draws and major draws, and the client still gets one chance for every KD 10 in the account, and the chances are counted according to the lowest balance in the account during the month. Therefore, a full month must have passed in the account to qualify for the weekly draw, and two full months for the major draws to count the chances. There are no restrictions or limits for withdrawal and deposit, the higher the deposited amount, the greater the client's chances to win".

Warba Bank launched its latest banking solutions service, "Customer Onboarding", in accordance with the terms of its ambitious five-year strategy, which enables non-Warba Bank clients to apply for opening a Sunbula account in an easy digital way via the Bank's website without the need to visit any of the Bank's branches, and within only five minutes - through the new and unique automated system used to enable this service - new clients will be able to complete the request to open an account at any time and any place.

Warba Bank is one of the banks that has achieved great successes in a short period, as it occupied a leading position in the field of Islamic digital banking services for individuals, and it is one of the largest local banks in the number of shareholders, and these are among the most prominent components that make the Bank close to all members of society.

Bank encourages younger generation to embrace the Holy Quran

KFH honors winners of 11th annual Holy Quran recitation competition

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) honored the winners of its 11th annual Holy Quran recitation competition, Qurra'a Baitek. The competition drew a large number of participants from children and young adults.

The honoring ceremony was attended by Dr. Sayyid Mohammad Al-Sayyid Abdul Razzaq Al-Tabtabaei, Chairman of KFH Fatwa and Sharia'a Supervisory Board, and Eng. Fahad Khaled Al-Mukhaizeem, KFH Group Chief Strategy Officer.

In his speech at the ceremony, Dr. Al-Tabtabaei highlighted KFH's commitment to social responsibility, emphasizing its support for initiatives that bring young generation closer to the Holy Quran during Ramadan.

Al-Tabtabaei praised the efforts of the competition's organizers and judges, commending them on achieving successful results. He then congratulated the winners and their parents. Additionally, Al-Tabtabaei expressed his gratitude to KFH's Board of Directors and Executive Management for their support of such initiatives.

The competition saw over 50 winners recognized after their performance was



Prof. Dr. Sayed Muhammad Al-Tabtabaei

professionally assessed by expert judges. Contestants' abilities and skill levels were carefully evaluated throughout the competition. A specialized team of distinguished reciters in Kuwait prepared custom tests for the contestants, tailored to their skill levels.

Qurra'a Baitek, the first of its kind organized by KFH, has not only attracted a large number of participants but has also grown over the years, fostering confidence among contestants. Other valuable elements, such as a distinguished jury, meticulous organization, and careful grouping by skill level, all contribute to a competitive yet motivating atmosphere for participants.

The contest aims to identify skilled participants in intonation and recitation, inspiring the younger generation to engage with the Holy Quran by offering insights into the rules of intonation. The event was live streamed on KFH's social media channels and received extensive media coverage from various outlets.

The competition, boasting the largest prize value, is part of KFH's "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" program, which also includes an iftar meals campaign. The program also includes providing hospitality service in mosques, sports and youth activities, daily interaction with the public, Gergean events, awareness videos in cooperation with nutritionists and doctors, as well as videos on traffic awareness, promoting a culture of not speeding during Iftar in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior. In addition, the program comprises sharing Iftar with many entities that perform their duty during Iftar time, as well as distributing, in cooperation with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, the food basket "Ramadan Basket" and Eid clothing to families in need in a new affirmation of KFH's leadership in social responsibility.

First of its kind in Kuwait

Weyay Bank unveils 'Direct Money Request' and 'Request Money Link' to its Jeel feature

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Weyay Bank by National Bank of Kuwait proudly announces the launch of two innovative additions to its acclaimed Jeel feature, aimed at revolutionizing digital banking for children aged 8 to 14 across Kuwait. With the introduction of "Direct Money Request" and "Request Money Link," Weyay Bank sets a new benchmark in digital banking tailored to the needs of young users and their families.

Direct Money Request empowers young users to seamlessly send money requests from their own app directly to the app of their parent, enabling swift replenishment of their Jeel card within minutes. This streamlined process ensures hassle-free transactions, fostering a sense of independence and financial responsibility among young users.

Alternatively, with the Request Money via Link service enabled by parents, young users gain the ability to generate and send money requests to friends and family members directly from their Weyay app. This feature not only enhances convenience but also fosters financial literacy and responsible spending habits from an early age. Parents can provide consent to switch on and off this feature in the app's settings, empowering the kids to manage their finances with guidance and super-



Sabeeka Al-Tarkait, Product Owner at Weyay Bank.

vision.

Jeel represents more than just a banking card; it signifies a comprehensive digital family banking solution. Young users benefit from a meticulously designed card and access to tailored financial services through their dedicated banking application. Meanwhile, parents enjoy full visibility and control over their child's Jeel card and banking activities, ensuring peace of

mind and fostering trust in their financial journey.

"This milestone marks a paradigm shift in the digital banking industry for children aged 8 to 14 across Kuwait, addressing longstanding gaps in digital banking experiences for young audiences," said Sabeeka Al-Tarkait, Product Owner at Weyay Bank. "By prioritizing transparency and parental oversight, Weyay Bank has redefined the standards of family banking, empowering children and parents alike to navigate the financial landscape with confidence. Additionally, this addition to the Jeel feature fosters financial inclusion for the youth, ensuring that they have access to digital banking services and resources."

The introduction of Direct Money Request and Request Money Link underscores Weyay Bank's commitment to offering curated access to banking services and promoting financial awareness from an early age. Through these features, young Jeel cardholders lay the foundation for responsible money management and informed decision-making, setting them on a path towards financial empowerment.

For more information about Weyay Bank and its innovative digital banking solutions, visit www.weyaybank.com.

Distributed over 2,000 meals in collaboration with Zajel volunteer team and Jahez-Kuwait

stc continues to distribute iftar meals throughout different locations in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, continues to distribute iftar meals in collaboration with the Zajel Volunteer Team and Jahez-Kuwait throughout Kuwait. The initiative comes under stc's 2024 Ramadan campaign, with the slogan, "With good, we go further", which aims to show the importance of giving back and doing good, whether in the community or amongst individuals.

Distributing iftar meals comes as an annual contribution from stc to the community in line with the holy month. The initiative that witnessed the distribution of over 2,000 iftar meals

throughout different locations in Kuwait, also aligns with stc's corporate social responsibility program, which strategically emphasizes both community giveback and strengthening communication channels between individuals in the community to build a more sustainable future. This reflects the spiritual and ethical values of Ramadan, urging community members of all ages to support those in need, in line with one of the strategic pillars of stc's CSR program.

Furthermore, this year's iftar meal distribution witnessed the participation of members from stc's team alongside representatives from Jahez-Kuwait and the Zajel Volunteer Team. The teams worked together to distribute the 2,000 meals to members of the community that are in need. In this regard,



A group photo of Zajil volunteer work teams, stc public relations, and stc ambassadors.

stc thanked Jahez-Kuwait and Zajel Volunteer Team for their active contribution and support

throughout the iftar meals distribution process. stc also highlighted the importance of building strong

relationships with partners to widen the impact of such campaigns, and implement initiatives that can bring more good and positivity to the community.

Moreover, stc highlighted that the distribution of iftar meals this year witnessed once again the active participation of employees enrolled in the Company's Sofara'a program, providing them with a humanitarian experience that promotes volunteer work. stc confirmed that it continuously supports activities aimed at enhancing teamwork, which is a fundamental characteristic of its institutional culture. Its pioneering and leadership role in the private sector is a responsibility that enables it to constantly search for innovative methods and concepts that can add value to the local community.

'Food, Inc 2' raises awareness on food system issues

LOS ANGELES, April 1, (AP) — The Oscar-nominated documentary "Food, Inc." helped change the way many consumers think about the systems behind the things we eat. But in the 16 years since it came out, new problems have arisen and old problems got worse, magnified in part by shortages during the pandemic. They're given a spotlight in a sequel, "Food, Inc. 2," arriving in theaters and on digital in April.

The filmmakers are going one step further too: The activist media company Participant, and producers River Road and Magnolia Pictures, are launching a multi-faceted campaign to raise awareness about farm workers rights, corporate consolidation and ultra-processed foods.

The campaign, announced Thursday, is in partnership with: The Open Markets Institute, a non-profit monopoly watchdog supported by Senators Cory Booker and John Tester; The Coalition of Immokalee Workers, supporting the rights of farmworkers; And FoodFight USA, the nonpartisan movement started by entrepreneurs Todd Wagner and Lori McCreary with a goal of "cleaning up" the American food supply which they estimate is 70% ultra-processed foods.

In October, California became the first state to ban four chemicals from processed food and drinks sold in California by 2027. The chemicals - red dye no. 3, potassium bromate, brominated vegetable oil and

propyl paraben - are still used in popular products like Peeps, the popular marshmallow chicks most associated with Easter. The chemical has been linked to cancer and has been banned from makeup for more than 30 years.

"The passing of the California Food Safety Act and the subsequent introduction of similar bills in five additional states illustrate the timeliness of (the) documentary," Wagner said in a statement. "People are beginning to recognize how tainted the US food supply is and that many of the chemicals in our food are banned in other countries."

All four chemicals are already banned in foods in the European Union.

David Linde the CEO of Participant noted that the company's campaign for the first "Food, Inc." "supported the first major piece of food safety legislation since the 1930s" referring to the Food Safety Modernization Act, which Barack Obama signed into law in 2011. Linde said the company is proud to "continue the critical work of galvanizing change in the food industry."

"Food, Inc. 2," directed by Robert Kenner and Melissa Robledo and produced by Michael Pollan and Eric Schlosser, will play in select theaters on April 9 before its digital release on April 12.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Jonathan Glazer's best-picture nominee "The Zone of

Interest" arrives on Max on Friday, April 5. The film, haunting and formalist, depicts the daily life of Rudolf Höss (Christian Friedel), and his wife, Hedwig (Sandra Hüller) while living in their home next door to Auschwitz. Since its premiere at last year's Cannes Film Festival, "The Zone of Interest" has been hailed as harrowing drama about human capacity for compartmentalizing atrocity. In her review, AP's Jocelyn Noveck wrote that "the horror assaults our senses in other, deeper ways." At the Oscars, where "The Zone of Interest" won best international film, Glazer spoke out against Israel's war in Gaza, sparking a backlash from some in Hollywood.

□ □ □

LOS ANGELES: A nonfiction highlight of the year, Jesse Moss and Amanda McBaine's "Girls State" premieres Friday, April 5, on Apple TV+. The film is a companion piece to their prize-winning 2020 documentary "Boys State." Like that film, "Girls State" follows a handful of teenagers over a week in a mock-government program. That this time it's high-school girls changes not only the tenor of discourse around political issues like abortion but finds added tension in the inequities between the girls and boys.

Film

Variety

Features

ARABIC TIMES

TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2024



Steve Martin poses for a portrait in New York to promote his new album 'So Familiar,' with Edie Brickell on Sept. 2, 2015. Martin is the subject of a new documentary 'Steve! (Martin) a Documentary in 2 Pieces.' (AP)

Film

From stand-up to sitcoms: Steve's journey

Irony of Martin's life isn't lost on him

By Jake Coyle

Steve Martin has long marveled at the many phases of his life. There's his youth as a Disneyland performer, surrounded by vaudeville performers and magicians. A decade as a stand-up before the sudden onset of stadium-sized popularity. An abrupt shift to movies. Later, a new chapter as a banjo player, a father and, a comedy act, once again, with Martin Short.

It's such a confounding string of chapters that Martin has typically only approached his life piecemeal or schizophrenically. He titled an audiobook "So Many Steves." His memoir, "Born Standing Up," covered only his stand-up years. In it, he wrote that it was really a biography "because I am writing about someone I used to know."

"My life has many octopus arms," Martin says, speaking from his New York apartment.

People participate in documentaries for all kinds of reasons. But Martin may be unique in making a film about his life with the instruction of: "See if you can make sense of all THAT." Morgan Neville, the documentary filmmaker of the Fred Rogers film "Won't You Be My Neighbor" and the posthumous Anthony Bourdain portrait "Roadrunner," took up the challenge.

Yet Neville, too, was hesitant about any holistic view of Martin. The resulting film is really two. "STEVE! (martin) a documentary in 2 pieces," premiering Friday on Apple TV+, splits Martin's story in two halves. One depicts Martin's stand-up as it unfolded, with copious contributions from journal entries and old photographs. The other captures Martin's life as it is today - riding electric bikes with Short, practicing the banjo - with reflections on the career that followed.

It's an attempt to synthesize all the Steve Martins, or at least line them up next to each other. The "King Tut" guy with the arrow through his head. The "wild and crazy guy." The "Jerk." The Grammy-winner. The novel writer. And the self-lacerating comic who says in the film: "I guarantee I had no talent. None."

"I'm going to say something very immodest: I have a modesty about my career," Martin says, chuckling. "Just because you do a lot of things doesn't mean they're good. I know that time evaluates things. So

there's nothing for me to stand on to evaluate my efforts. But an outsider can make sense of it."

Neville, who joined the video call from his home in Pasadena, California, didn't set out to make two films about Martin. But six months into the process, it crystallized for him as the right structure. Through lines emerged.

"When I look at the things Steve's done in his life - playing banjo, magic, stand-up - these are things that take great effort to master," Neville says. "But in a way, it's the constant working at it. Even seeing Steve pick up a banjo, it's never, 'I nailed it.' It's always: 'I could do that a little better.'"

Looking back hasn't come naturally to Martin. He's long resisted the kind of life-story treatment of a film like "STEVE!" But Martin, 78, grants he's now at that time of life where you can't help it. Even if reliving some things smarts.

"The first part, that's what I really have a hard time watching," Martin says. "When I'm on black-and-white homemade video being so not funny."

Martin grew up in Orange County in awe of Jerry Lewis, Laurel and Hardy and Nichols and May. His first job, as an 11-year-old, was selling guide books at Disneyland. He drifted toward the Main Street Magic Shop. Stage performers like Wally Boag became his idols.

Showmanship

When Martin, after studying philosophy in college and writing for "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour," began stand-up, he drew copiously from Boag and others, filtering the showmanship of vaudeville into an avantgarde act, just with balloon animals and an arrow through his head. Donning the persona of, as he says in the film, "a comedian who thinks he's funny but isn't," his routine moved away from punchlines and toward an absurd irony with "free-form laughter."

Martin's act was groundbreaking and, in the 1970s, when most comics were doing political material, it became wildly popular. "He's up there with the most idolized comedians ever," Jerry Seinfeld says in the film. Now, Martin doesn't see much from those years that makes him laugh.

"Then there are these moments that I think of as performance glory, but they last a minute or two minutes. It was all so new. It was exciting because it was new to the audience and to me."

Martin tends to be hard on himself. In one late scene in "STEVE!" he and Short are going over possible jokes, but most don't make the cut for Martin.

It's tempting to assign some of this nature to Martin's famously critical father, Glenn, a real-estate salesman who had his own unrealized ambitions in show business. At dinner after the premiere of "The Jerk," he pronounced his son "no Charlie Chaplin." But Martin disagrees.

"I don't think so," says Martin. "It's good to be hard on yourself. It's just the way I do it. I just want to go over it and go over it. I realize it's all in the details. It's all in the timing."

That makes Martin think of a joke that he and Short have considered for their act but thus far deemed too esoteric.

"I say, 'You know, Marty, some comedians say funny things. And some comedians say things funny. And you just say ... things,'" says Martin, laughing. "But there's a truth in saying funny things and saying things funny. You walk the line. Our lives now are saying funny things and it used to be saying things funny."

It's a line, typically exact in its wording, that perfectly represents the irony of Martin's own life. In 1981, Martin quit stand-up, he thought for good. The act had run its course and he was happy to transition to movies. It wasn't until decades later, when Martin prepared to tour as a banjo player, that a friend convinced him audiences were going to want a little banter in between songs.

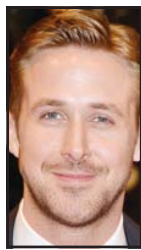
"So I had this terror and I started working on material," Martin says. "Eventually I became what I grew up with, which is a folk music act with a funny monologist, making funny intros to songs."

That's bled into Martin's unexpected return to stand-up. Martin and Short, friends since the 1986 comedy "Three Amigos!" have become the premier double act of today, starring on the acclaimed Hulu series "Only Murders in the Building" and performing on the road. They cuttlingly but affectionately volley quip after quip with the finesse of Grand Slam champions. (AP)

"Godzilla x Kong" comes just four months after the most recent Japanese rendition, the critical favorite and Oscar winner "Godzilla Minus One."

But there was clearly no Godzilla glut for audiences, many of whom were willing to pay extra for IMAX and other special formats.

"These are literally two of the



Gosling



Hall

biggest movie stars in the world, and you have to see them on the biggest screen possible with the biggest sound possible," said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for data firm Comscore. (AP)

□ □ □

LOS ANGELES: Ted Lasso" may be dunzo (although it's good to have a dream) but there are still

a number of feel-good shows on Apple TV+ worth checking out. "Loot," starring Maya Rudolph, falls under that category. Debuting its second season Wednesday, Rudolph plays Molly, the ex-wife of a billionaire (Adam Scott) who decides to donate a majority of her money to good causes. The show also stars Michaela Jaé Rodriguez, Joel Kim Booster, Ron Funches

and Nat Faxon.

We've seen him as a so-called hot priest, but if you watched Andrew Scott as Moriarty on "Sherlock," you know he's also great at playing bad. This time, Scott steps into the role of Tim Ripley, the fraudster-turned-killer created by author Patricia Highsmith, for a limited-series. "Ripley" premieres Thursday on Netflix. (AP)

People & Places

Music

Jazz Fest 2024 set

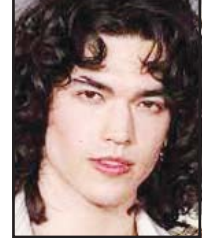
NCT Dream's latest EP offers sonic surprises

LOS ANGELES, April 1, (AP): When is a good dream not a great dream? When you don't remember it in the morning.

When is a good album not a great album? When it's bold, but not bold enough and commercial, but not commercial enough.

NCT Dream's fifth EP, "DREAM()SCAPE," (pronounced "dream escape") explores the beats of a cool, imaginary urban landscape. But it comes in and out of focus through a combination of tempo changes, innovative sounds (smoothie slurp anyone?) and catchy yet somehow forgettable hooks.

It's a mysterious quandary for the ages: one second you get into it with both feet, but the minute song's over, it's gone into musical ether.



Gray

Overall, the dynamic six-track record "DREAM()SCAPE" offers a variety of styles. "UNKNOWN," is a middling, smooth electronic pop tune. It wisely moves on to the kinetic "BOX," a catchy, swagger-heavy beast with an unusual scratchy industrial sound.

"Carat Cake" is a fun pun on the run from a specific genre - it's angling for a bit of a trap cred wrapped in a fast-paced electro sound with the silly yet endearing chorus "Wow, wow wow/That's a Carat Cake." Try dislodging that from the subconscious.

Opener "icantfeelanything" is the epic-sounding song of the EP with its deep bass interludes. But then "Smoothie" comes along with its chirpy tempo-changing lanes and fun production; while "Breathing" is a fast-paced yet relaxing ballad.

With plenty of certified bops under their belt, the South Korean septet make the best of the material, vocally. But only fans will stick around for this pleasant-enough offering.

He's a lonely dancer, so dance with him so he doesn't cry! Gen Z musician (and **Olivia Rodrigo** BFF) **Conan Gray**'s third studio album, "Found Heaven," deepens his penchant for synth-pop. Max Martin is a producer (known for his work with **Katy Perry**, **Taylor Swift**, **Ariana Grande**, **Britney Spears**, **The Backstreet Boys**, **Robyn**... the list goes on and on). And the lead single, the '80s revisionist "Lonely Dancers," is an earworm for the ages. "Your lover left, broke up tonight/My lover's busy, kissing other guys/We're both alone now, tears in our eyes," he sings. "We're lonely dancers, there's no need to hide/We're lonely dancers, baby/Dance with me so we don't cry." If it is ascendant depressive tunes with a musical theater sensibility you're after, well, you've found it!

The Fair Grounds Race Course, which plays host to the 2024 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, begins its annual transformation in earnest Tuesday as organizers prepare to take over the field this spring for two weekends of music, food and fun.

"Jazz Fest is back starting today!," exclaimed festival producer **Quint Davis** during its one-month-before news conference inside the Fair Grounds' clubhouse.

The festival's first weekend runs Thursday, April 25 through Sunday, April 28; the second weekend is Thursday, May 2 through Sunday, May 5.

"This will be the biggest Jazz Fest ever, with the most food ever, the most crafts ever and the most bands ever to come together in our 53-year history," Davis said.

One of those bands - the Rolling Stones - is getting a lot of attention, he noted, smiling. Their May 2 performance is sold out, he added, still smiling.

"When the Rolling Stones come... I've been trying to say that forever. I guess the third times the charm," Davis said amid laughter from the crowd.

In 2019, the band's lead singer, **Mick Jagger**, was forced to cancel their scheduled appearance because of heart surgery. The 2021 festival, at which the Stones were to perform, was first pushed back to October before ultimately being canceled because of surging numbers brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This time," Davis said, "they're coming to play!" Davis noted that the festival's 2024 performance schedule is filled with all types of gems, from country megastar **Chris Stapleton** to rap artist **Queen Latifah**, and a bevy of talent in between. The stages and performance times for participating artists - known as the "cubes" - were released Tuesday on the festival's website, nojazzfest.com

Jazz Fest, presented by the Shell energy company, celebrates the indigenous music and culture of New Orleans and Louisiana. The music encompasses nearly every style imaginable: blues, R&B, gospel, **Cajun Zydeco**, Afro-Caribbean, folk, Latin, rock, rap, contemporary and traditional jazz, country, bluegrass and everything in between.

"Fans might love a certain type of music, and we offer it all," Davis said "But with Jazz Fest, the sum is greater than its parts. People love the festival regardless of whose playing or taking the stage."

Columbia's rhythms, from music to dance to food, also will be highlighted this year as part of the festival's cultural exchange. Close to 200 Colombian artists are scheduled to participate, including New Orleans-based **Los Guiros**, which performed a traditional cumbia at the news conference, giving fans a taste of what's to come. Headlining the festival are **Bomba Estéreo** on April 27, Choiquitown's lead singer **Goyo** in a guest appearance with local band **IFÉ** on April 28, and salsa legends **Grupo Niche** closing the celebration on May 5.

And don't forget the food. One vendor highlighted Tuesday was Clesi's Seafood Restaurant and Catering, which is making its festival debut this year.

James Clesi and his brother, **Carlo**, said getting a booth at Jazz Fest is a dream come true. "We are so excited," James Clesi said as he dished out cajun crawfish dirty rice. "This is something I've been wanting to do forever. Being chosen is quite the honor. It's like we've been anointed and officially recognized. The dream is now a reality."

The Clesies said their menu will include the dirty rice as well as boiled crawfish, crawfish etouffee and something called a "messi clesi," which is a combination of the dirty rice and etouffee.

Carlo Clesi said they are preparing for every possible scenario.

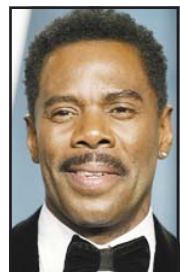
"We're expecting to be very busy, with big crowds and long lines all while getting to absorb all the great music," he said.



This cover image released by SM Entertainment shows 'DREAM()SCAPE' by NCT Dream. (AP)



Flo Milli poses for a portrait on Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023, in New York. (AP)



Domingo



Gossett Jr

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Famous fans and co-stars react to the death of **Louis Gossett Jr.**, who died at 87.

"He was open and generous. Kind beyond measure. Regal. We owe so much to him. What a monumental life he lived." - **Colman Domingo**, Gossett's co-star in "The Color Purple," on X.

"The role of Master Sergeant Foley in 'An Officer and a Gentleman' was written as a white man. When I visited the Navy Officers Flight Training Center in Pensacola, Florida, I discovered that many of the drill instructors there were men of color. At that moment I changed the casting profile for Sergeant Foley. Lou Gossett came to see me. He told me he'd served in the US Army as a Ranger, so in addition to being an accomplished actor, he knew military life - I hired him on the spot. Lou Gossett's Sergeant Foley may have been the first Black character in American cinema to have absolute authority over white characters. The Academy recognized his consummate performance by voting him an Oscar for best supporting actor. He definitely deserved it." - **Taylor Hackford**, who directed "An Officer and a Gentleman," in a statement.

"One of the great American actors of our generation. A personal hero." - Actor **Wendell Pierce** on X.

"Lou was set to play the role of my grandfather in the proposed feature film of my life. I will miss my friend." - Singer **Dionne Warwick** in a statement.

"From 'Roots' to 'An Officer and a Gentleman' to 'The Color Purple' and now beyond, Lou was always an amazing artist and giving human being to me." - Actor **Sheryl Lee Ralph** on X.

"I loved Lou. We did 'The Choirboys' in an ensemble, and then later starred together in 'Diggsdown.' That experience cemented a lifelong friendship. I had always admired his fabulous talent, but grew to admire his modest demeanor more. A true gentleman." - Actor **James Woods** on X.

"Louis was a groundbreaker, a brilliant, kind man, and an incendiary presence on screen. Each of us was lucky to have him." - Actor and director **Lee Grant** on X.

"Your incredible talent and unforgettable performances will forever inspire generations to come. Thank you for sharing your gifts with the world. You will be deeply missed." - NAACP on X.

Music

Singer's dreams of greatness coming true

Flo Milli's new album hits high notes

NEW YORK, April 1, (AP): Flo Milli always felt different from her peers growing up, believing she was destined for greatness. For her, the writing was always on the walls - and in the stalls.

"In high school, I used to have a lot of girls that used to hate on me. And as a child, I didn't really know how to deal with that. So, I would talk to my goddad about it. He would... speak life into me," said the "Never Lose Me" artist. "Before school started, early in the morning, I would go in the stalls and just write everything that I want to be, like 'I'm that girl,' or whatever I'm feeling about myself. And then, I would just say it in my head when I would walk through the halls... the more I said it, the more I like became it."

The Mobile, Alabama, native now has much of the rap world believing it too. Earlier this month, Flo Milli released "Fine Ho, Stay," her third - and arguably best - studio album. The rising rap star is steadily breaching her way into the conversation of hip-hop's top female emcees, but she knew it was only a matter of time.

"The power of the tongue, period; I've always been taught that is very powerful," said the 24-year-old, who was soft-spoken during the interview, juxtaposing her flamboyant music persona. "I would speak things into existence, even as a young kid. Everything I have now, I would just say it. And saying it over and over, writing it down just makes it more real because your mind just has to see it through."

What she's manifested presently is a 14-track project boasting production from hip-hop super producers such as **Juicy J**, **Bangladesh** and **ATL Jacob**. The "Fine Ho, Stay" ti-

tle was chosen from a comment on social media after a post of her two previous album title names, "Ho, why is you here?" and "You Still Here, Ho?," went viral. She thought the poster's suggestion was hilarious.

But what isn't a laughing matter is her music. While the previously released tracks "Fruit Loop" and the funky "BGC" don't appear on the album, she didn't leave her fans with a musical deficit. She jump-starts the EP with the swaggy, trap-beat led tracks "Understand," "New Me" featuring **Anycia** and "Neva" featuring **Monaleo**, reminiscent of early 2000s Southern rap with updated sonics, showing her boastful attitude and animated vocal presentation.

Chart

But when she's not threatening to "hit that ho with a two-piece," she stretches herself musically and thematically while showcasing her singing ability. The album's biggest record, the melodic "Never Lose Me," currently sits at No. 15 on the Billboard Hot 100 and No. 2 on the R&B/Hip-Hop Streaming Songs chart. Milli recently dropped a remix with superstars **SZA** and **Cardi B**, while previously released remixes with **Lil Yachty** and a separate one with R&B crooner **Bryson Tiller**, both landed in December.

While her aggressive, high-energy records serve their purpose, it's her vulnerability that gives the album its wings, showing a rarely seen softer side in tracks like "Toast," the sensual "Edible" with **Gunna** and "Can't Stay Mad," where she emotes, "When you love me like that / The best I ever had/You take me out my attitude/I cannot stay mad at you (Mad at you)."

"It's kind of hard for me to talk about love and all that, but you know, it's probably like a little tribute to somebody; I can be nice sometimes," she coyly joked about the song. "I wanted to show that more on this album, just versatility... I came on the scene as a rapper, but I've always sung in the church since a kid. So, it's really not nothing new to me, but (it is) to other people."

Inspired by artists like **Nicki Minaj** and **Lil Wayne**, Flo Milli, born **Tamia Monique Carter**, burst on the scene in 2019, while still a student at **Clark Atlanta University**, with "Beef (FloMix)" which went viral on **TikTok**. Her forward-thinking, self-marketing strategy - paying social media influencers to post snippets of her songs - helped her quickly gain exposure and earn a deal with **RCA**. Since then, she's created big records like "Conceited" and "In the Party," which has amassed more than 34 million YouTube views and was featured on **Lah Pat's** "Rodeo" remix which peaked at No. 9 on **Billboard's Mainstream R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay** chart.

While Flo's priority now is music, she's not limiting herself to recording studios. She hopes to resume modeling and begin acting. For a young woman who once felt an outsider, she's become "that girl" she always envisioned, and one that many want to emulate.

"I just feel like I can do anything in the world," said Flo. "Sometimes, I be in shock. I be like, 'Wait, I gotta own this moment and not try to move on and be like, 'Ok, I want this, I want that.' You gotta actually accept and appreciate what you already have and realize that, you know, you used to be praying for this."

"In our eyes, you were a leading man despite your many inspiring roles as supporting characters. Thank you for your undeniable talent. Rest In Power!" - Trial lawyer **Ben Crump** on X.

"As a city, we are grateful for the privilege of having had **Louis Gossett Jr.** among us, and we join together in honoring his life and contributions." - Atlanta Mayor **Andre Dickens** in a statement. (AP)

SPRINGFIELD, Ill.: The Illinois Supreme Court will hear an appeal of actor **Jussie Smollett's** disorderly conduct conviction for staging a racist and homophobic attack against himself in 2019, then lying to **Chicago** police about it.

The court on Wednesday accepted the appeal from Smollett, formerly a cast member of the television drama "Empire." It will review a December state appellate court ruling that upheld his 2021 conviction by a **Cook County** jury.

The case kicked up an international uproar and produced an intensive manhunt

by Chicago police detectives. There is no date set for the high court to hear arguments in the matter.

A special prosecutor refiled charges against Smollett after **Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx** dropped the case and Smollett forfeited his \$10,000 bond and conducted community service, which Smollett argues ended the case.

In a 2-1 decision, the state's First District Appellate Court dismissed those claims, declaring that no one promised Smollett he wouldn't face a fresh prosecution after accepting the original deal. Justice **Freddrenna Lyle** dissented, calling the refiled charges "fundamentally unfair."

His attorneys have argued that Smollett, who is Black and gay, has been victimized by a racist and politicized justice system.

Smollett was found guilty of five counts of disorderly conduct for setting up the attack in which he claimed two men assaulted him on a Chicago street. He claimed they spat slurs and an oath about being in "MAGA country" - an apparent reference to former President **Donald Trump's** rallying credo - before tossing a noose around his neck.

Testimony at his trial indicated Smollett paid \$3,500 to two men whom he knew from "Empire," which was filmed in Chicago, to carry out the attack. But Smollett took the stand and told the jury, "There was no hoax."

He was sentenced to 150 days in jail - six of which he served before he was freed pending appeal - 30 months of probation and ordered to pay \$130,160 in restitution. (AP)



Iranian American musician Rana Farhan performs her fusion songs of Rumi poetry and Jazz at a lounge in Toronto, Canada, Thursday, March 28. (AP)

Experts laud Kuwait's initiatives in autism care

Kuwait joins global efforts for Autism Awareness Day on April 2

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Kuwait will join the global celebration of World Autism Awareness Day tomorrow, Tuesday, sharing informative messages about the challenges individuals with autism face, how to interact with them, understand their needs, and support their families.

The annual celebration, initiated by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007 and observed every April 2nd, aims to raise public awareness about autism, support education programs, and emphasize the rights of autistic individuals under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities confirming that individuals with autism are equal citizens with human rights.

Multiple academics and experts commended, in separate interviews to KUNA, Kuwait's dedicated efforts in caring for people with autism, underlining initiatives like centers, awareness events, and effective treatment programs aimed at integration.

Training

On her side, Dr. Fatima Ayad, psychology professor at Kuwait University (KU), stated that Kuwait is among the leading Arab countries in caring for individuals with special needs as well as autism, through specialized organizations and advanced centers.

She pointed out the huge number

of Kuwait experts focused on autism, urging for the improvement of personnel skills in relevant organizations and centers through exceptional training courses and participation in global events.

There are studies suggesting various potential causes of autism, including environmental factors, such as the "refrigerator mother," a phenomenon characterized by a mother's lack of emotional connection with the child, and the possibility of certain vaccinations like the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine being linked to autism, she noted.

She underscored the significance of early detection and accurate diagnosis of autism, mentioning its various categories: some with high intelligence, others with intellectual disabilities and communication struggles, leading to self-isolation.

In her perspective, Dr. Amthar Al-Huwailah, a faculty member at KU's psychology department, stated that Kuwait has 20-30 government and private centers for skill development, behavioral modification, and occupational therapy for autism, along with schools for them.

She clarified that autism is a prevalent developmental disorder involving social communication challenges, restricted behaviors, and varied, complex causes with no confirmed specific cause yet.

Since 2009, genetic syndromes, mu-

tations, and metabolic disorders have comprised up to 20 percent of autism cases, often featuring characteristic signs affecting various body parts associated with autism, she explained.

While common genetic variations may impact the development of autism spectrum disorder, not all individuals with these genetic differences are affected, Dr. Al-Huwailah stated.

She called for establishing a library housing various publications and research on autism, coordinating between centers, setting up a hotline for parents and caregivers of autistic people to provide continuous support, and issuing an "autistic child card" to facilitate procedures for autistic children in hospitals, airports, and public service institutions.

Society

She stressed the importance of supporting this group to help them integrate into society, adapt to life's circumstances, and effectively manage their unique characteristics.

Meanwhile, Dr. Nadia Al-Hamdan, a faculty member in the psychology department at KU, noted the presence of multiple accredited autism treatment centers in Kuwait and called for support and improvement of these centers with expertise from medical, technical, psychological, and social professionals.

She commended Kuwait Center for Autism, established by the

General Secretariat of Endowments in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Kuwaiti philanthropists, as the first regional educational and training center for autism in the Arab world, meeting the needs of many families with expert services based on scientific and educational principles to refine children's skills.

The center's impact has extended to many Gulf and Arab countries, becoming a global focal point for numerous research endeavors and events, she added, acclaiming the center's role in organizing activities that raise awareness about autism and highlight their struggles and needs, she added.

She acknowledged the Public Authority for Disability Affairs for supporting individuals with autism and disabilities by organizing scientific events to enhance experts' skills and providing support and awareness to families.

There are roughly 20,000 autistic people in Kuwait, she pointed out, citing statistics from the World Health Organization indicating that globally, one in every 160 children is diagnosed with autism, with higher rates in Arab countries.

Autism is a neurological disorder that affects all aspects of human development, manifesting in deficiencies in communication, behavior, learning, and interaction, without a specific known cause or definitive cure to date.

Family intervention probed

Telehealth 'empowers' parents in autism care

CLEVELAND, April 1: Innovative models of care that leverage telehealth and parent-mediated interventions can play a significant role in increasing access to care and improving the outcomes in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), says an expert from global health system Cleveland Clinic ahead of World Autism Awareness Day on 2 April.



Johnson

According to the World Health Organization, around 1 in 100 children globally has ASD.

"In recent years, there has been a focus on the role of parent-mediated interventions for children with ASD. Families can be a really powerful resource to help children learn develop mentally appropriate skills, enhance their independence, and harness their unique abilities," says Cynthia R. Johnson, PhD, Director of Cleveland Clinic Children's Center for Autism in Cleveland and Professor of Pediatrics.

"As parent training can be provided through the various telehealth platforms, development of these programs gained momentum during the pandemic. This delivery method is now being evaluated as a potential solution for families who have limited or no access to specialized autism centers. Research undertaken by our Cleveland Clinic Children's Team and others has shown the outcomes to be comparable with in-person delivery," Dr. Johnson adds.

Therapy

Leveraging telehealth to deliver parent training has many benefits including decreasing barriers to parental involvement, Dr. Johnson says, highlighting that easy scheduling of virtual visits encourages multiple family members to engage in the therapy plan.

Dr. Johnson and colleagues from Cleveland Clinic and Case Western Reserve University have been working on two large-scale research projects on telehealth and autism studies. Their sleep intervention study has already been published, while findings from the other will be released soon. The preliminary results have been encouraging, demonstrating that family involvement is beneficial and that many families prefer to be engaged in the child's therapy. In addition, the sleep study showed outcomes from telehealth programs for parent training were comparable to those delivered in person.

Parent training programs instruct parents in applied behavior analysis principles and provide targeted strat-

egies for - among others - behavioral, feeding and sleep problems. Dr. Johnson points out these interventions not only benefit the child but the overall family well-being. Parental involvement has also been shown to significantly reduce parental stress and improve parents' sense of competency.

Importance of early intervention
Whichever form the intervention takes, Dr. Johnson emphasizes that timing is key, as early interventions maximize optimal outcomes, so all parents need to be aware of the signs to watch.

Diagnosis

There are two key components to ASD, with diagnosis possible as early as in the first year of life, according to Dr. Johnson. First, there is a deficit in communication and/or a deficit in using communication socially, for example, not making conventional eye contact and not using non-verbal cues such as pointing and waving. Second, restrictive or repetitive behaviors are present.

"Parents with toddlers and preschool-aged children should be on the lookout for delayed speech and unusual communication development.

Possible symptoms can include lack of use of gestures, repetitive speech or phrases; limited imitation of other people's actions and emotions; atypical, repetitive and restricted play; engaging in repetitive motor movement such as hand flapping or finger flicking; or oversensitivity to sound," says Dr. Johnson. "The earlier that we can identify ASD, the faster we can address these children's differences and help to avoid a cascade of disruptions in early development."

Diagnosis comes after interviews with parents and teachers, along with specialized autism-specific tests. Depending on the specific circumstances, these assessments are another potential area that could be offered in part or fully through telemedicine.

Commenting on applying the learnings from the ongoing studies, Dr. Johnson concludes, "Our research and others are demonstrating that telehealth delivery of parent-mediated interventions has the potential to improve access to care for children with autism, while benefitting the family as a whole. Some families actively want to be more involved, so as healthcare providers, we can work towards offering them this choice. We could research different models to see what best meets the need of each specific child and family, for example, a hybrid model with in-person and telemedicine interventions could be an option."

The Conversation

Tips for parents to promote healthy habits

Encouraging parents to eat healthier boosts children's food choices: study

By Kelley Gullo Wight, Indiana University and Peggy Liu, University of Pittsburgh

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



Most parents, educators and policymakers agree that children should eat healthy foods. However, our peer-reviewed paper suggests the strategy adults often use to achieve that can sometimes backfire. Fortunately, there's an easy fix.

We, along with fellow marketing scholars Lingrui Zhou and Gavan Fitzsimons, conducted five experiments with over 3,800 parents as well as 10 in-depth interviews. We found that parents tend to choose unhealthy foods for themselves after choosing a healthy meal for their young children. This happens because parents said they are uncertain whether their child will

eat their healthy dishes, and so they use their own meal as backup to share to ensure that their child at least eats something.

This dynamic is not ideal. For one, it could result in parents eating unhealthier foods, and children may also end up eating unhealthily if they eat mostly from their parent's plate. Additionally, it does not set a good example of healthy eating.

How, then, to change this dynamic? After testing several interventions, one stood out as particularly simple and effective: nudging parents to think of their meals as their own, rather than backup options for their kids.

Intervention

We partnered with a nursery school that was interested in promoting healthier eating among children. Parents associated with the school were offered a free family dinner. Parents first chose a

meal for their child from a healthy kid's menu. They then chose a meal for themselves from a menu that had a mix of healthy and unhealthy options. Half of the parents - randomly assigned - saw a menu that prompted them to think of their own meal as "for you and only you!" The other half did not see this additional prompt to think of their own meal as only for them.

This intervention was successful: By encouraging parents to think of their meal as their own, it made about a third more likely to choose the healthy option for themselves.

Our findings suggest policymakers and schools may want to consider the role parents - and their food choices - play in efforts to encourage healthy eating among children. As for parents, we suggest nixing the backup plan and making sure both they and their children are eating nutritiously. (AP)

Yoon vows not to back down on medical school plan

Doctors' protests cause treatment delays in S. Korea, raise concerns

SEOUL, South Korea, April 1, (AP): South Korea's president vowed Monday not to back down in the face of vehement protests by doctors seeking to derail his plan to drastically increase medical school admissions, as he called their walkouts "an illegal collective action" that poses "a grave threat to our society."

About 12,000 medical interns and residents in South Korea have been on strike for six weeks, caus-

ing hundreds of cancelled surgeries and other treatments at university hospitals. In support of their action, many senior doctors at their teaching schools have also submitted resignations though they haven't stopped treating patients.

Officials say they want to raise the yearly medical school cap by 2,000 from the current 3,058 to create more doctors to deal with the country's rapidly aging population. Doctors coun-

ter that schools can't handle such an abrupt increase in students and that it would eventually hurt the country's medical services. But critics say doctors, one of the best-paid professions in South Korea, are simply worried that the supply of more doctors would result in lower future incomes.

Public surveys show that a majority of ordinary South Koreans support the government plan. But observers say many people are increasingly fed

up with the protracted confrontation between the government and doctors, threatening to deal a blow to governing party candidates ahead of next week's parliamentary elections.

In a nationally televised address, President Yoon Suk Yeol said adding 2,000 medical students is the minimum increase needed to address a shortage of physicians in rural areas, the military and essential but low-paying professions like pedi-

atrics and emergency departments. Yoon said South Korea's doctor-to-patient ratio - 2.1 physicians per 1,000 people - is far below the average of 3.7 in the developed world.

"Increasing the number of doctors is a state project that we can't further delay," Yoon said.

Yoon urged the striking doctors to return to work, saying they have a responsibility to protect people's lives in line with the local medical

law. He also said the government remains open to talks if doctors come up with a unified proposal that adequately explains their calls for a much smaller increase in the medical school enrollment quota.

"I can't tolerate an attempt to carry through their thoughts by force without due logic and grounds," Yoon said. "The illegal collective action by some doctors has become a grave threat to our society."

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First win for Delhi Capitals

Titans dispatch Sunrisers to move into IPL top four

AHMEDABAD, India, April 1, (AP): A clinical batting performance from the Gujarat Titans' middle order helped it register a seven-wicket win over Sunrisers Hyderabad on Sunday and move into the top four of the Indian Premier League.

In the evening game at Visakhapatnam, defending champion Chennai Super Kings had a first defeat of the season - losing by 20 runs - as Delhi Capitals finally registered its first win in three games.

Impact substitute Sai Sudharsan scored 45 off 36 balls while David Miller contributed 44 not out off 27, as Gujarat's successful chase finished on 168-3 in 19.1 overs.

The Sunrisers, who had scored the highest total in IPL history with 277-3 in their last outing against Mumbai Indians, had been restricted to 162-8 in 20 overs. Medium pacer Mohit Sharma took 3-25 in four overs.

Opting to bat first, Hyderabad made a comparatively brisk start with openers Mayank Agarwal (16) and Travis Head (19) putting on 34 off 26 balls for the first wicket.

Gujarat's pacers did much of the hard work in restricting Hyderabad's progress. Sharma sent back hard hitting youngster Abhishek Sharma for 29 off 20 balls.

Umesh Yadav dismissed Aiden Markram (17) as the Sunrisers failed to generate enough momen-

tum in their innings.

The big blow came when wrist spinner Rashid Khan bowled Heinrich Klaasen for 24 off 13 balls. He had already hit two sixes but Hyderabad was down to 108-4 in 13.4 overs.

Shahbaz Ahmed (22) and Abdul Samad (29) generated some momentum in the death overs, adding 45 off 28 balls for the sixth wicket, before the former was out caught off Sharma.

Impact sub Washington Sundar was then caught for a golden duck as Hyderabad limped to a below-par total.

CRICKET

In reply, the Titans made another quick start thanks to Wriddhiman Saha, who scored 25 off 13 including two sixes.

Skipper Shubman Gill contributed a 28-ball 36 as the duo pair on 36 off 25 balls before Saha holed out.

Gill added 38 runs with Sudharsan for the second wicket, before falling - caught at long on.

Gujarat was already in a good position at 74-2 in 9.1 overs when Sudharsan and Miller came together.

They added 64 off 42 balls and never relinquished control of the game, despite Pat Cummins' spell of 1-28 in four overs. The

Australia and Hyderabad skipper stretched the game into the final over after dismissing Sudharsan. But Miller stayed put along with Vijay Shankar (14 not out) to register the Titans' second win in three games.

Rishabh Pant scored his first half-century since returning to active cricket as he led Delhi to a 20-run win over Chennai.

Pant scored 51 off 32 balls as Delhi reached 191-5 in 20 overs after opting to bat on a friendly surface.

For Chennai, Ajinkya Rahane scored 45 off 30, while MS Dhoni rolled back time as he smashed a 16-ball 37 not out. But it wasn't enough with his team finishing short at 171-6.

Delhi got off to a brilliant start as Prithvi Shaw (43 off 27) and David Warner scored 93 in almost 10 overs for the first wicket. Warner scored 52 off 35 deliveries, as the duo hit five sixes and nine fours in all.

They were dismissed within a short gap of each other and Delhi then lost wickets at regular intervals. Pant though held one end together as he found form after a long time away from cricket owing to a life-threatening car crash.

The Delhi skipper hit four fours and three sixes to propel his side from 134-4 in 15 overs to a par-plous total.



Chennai Super Kings' MS Dhoni plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Delhi Capitals and Chennai Super Kings in Visakhapatnam, India, Sunday, March 31, 2024. (AP)

Chennai was 7-2 in 2.5 overs in reply, losing both openers Rituraj Gaikwad (1) and Rachin Ravindra (2) cheaply.

Rahane led the fightback, hitting five fours and two sixes. Daryl Mitchell contributed 34 off 26, putting on 68 runs with Rahane.

But Chennai lost its way once

the duo was dismissed, leaving a lot to be done for Dhoni and Ravindra Jadeja (21 not out) at 120-6 in 16.1 overs.

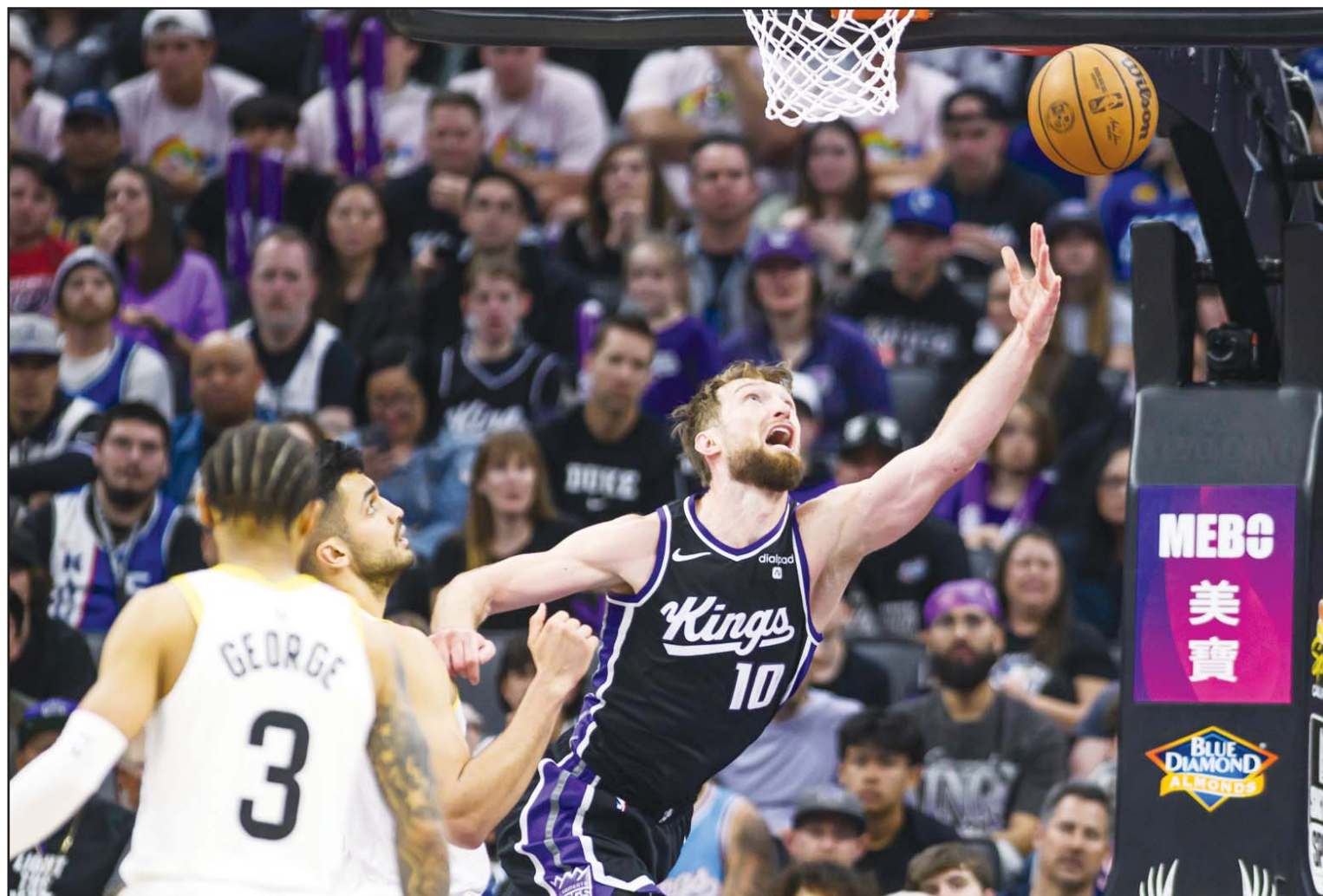
They did put on 51 off only 23 balls for the unbeaten seventh wicket, as Dhoni smacked four fours and three sixes to regale the packed Visakhapatnam crowd.

But Delhi had enough on the board for its first win of the season. Medium pacers Mukesh Kumar and Khaleel Ahmed shared five wickets for 42 runs in seven overs.

Chennai dropped to second in the points' table with Kolkata Knight Riders atop on net run-rate.

Mavericks end Rockets 11-game winning streak

Jaeger wins Houston Open for 'maiden' PGA Tour title



Sacramento Kings forward Domantas Sabonis (10) lays the ball up over Utah Jazz guard Keyonte George (3) and center Omer Yurtseven during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Sacramento, Calif., Sunday, March 31, 2024. The Kings won 127-106. (AP)

Thunder squeeze past Knicks

HOUSTON, April 1, (AP): Luka Doncic had 47 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists, Kyrie Irving added 24 points and seven assists, and the Dallas Mavericks won their seventh straight and snapped the Houston Rockets' 11-game winning streak with a 125-107 victory on Sunday night.

Doncic scored 32 points in the first half on 12-of-18 shooting, going 6 of 10 on 3-pointers, as the Mavericks led 66-45. Doncic had 22 in the first quarter alone and finished 18 of 30 from the field, including 9 of 16 on 3s.

BASKETBALL

Dante Exum had 13 points and P.J. Washington had 12 points and six rebounds for the Mavericks. Dallas shot 52% and was 24 of 47 on 3-pointers.

Dallas tied idle New Orleans for fifth in the Western Conference with eight games remaining for each team.

Thunder 113, Knicks 112

In New York, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander made the go-ahead jumper from the corner with 2.6 seconds left, sending Oklahoma City to the playoffs for the first time since 2020 with a victory over New York.

Josh Giddey had 16 points, 13 rebounds and 12 assists for Oklahoma

City, which moved back into sole possession of first place in the Western Conference at 52-22 with its second straight win.

Nuggets 130, Cavaliers 101

In Denver, Nikola Jokic had 26 points, 18 rebounds and 16 assists for his 22nd triple-double of the season, and Denver beat Cleveland to snap a two-game home losing streak.

Jokic got his 128th career triple-double despite dealing with a sore right wrist that nearly kept him out of Friday's loss to Minnesota.

Lakers 116, Nets 104

In New York, LeBron James had

one of the best shooting nights of his illustrious career, going 9 for 10 behind the arc to tie his career high for 3-pointers, and matched a season high with 40 points to lead the Los Angeles Lakers to a victory over Brooklyn.

James had the sellout crowd at Barclays Center standing on its feet as he put the finishing touches on his 3-point shooting display in the fourth quarter. He reached 40 points for the third time this season, most recently on March 16 in a home loss to Golden State.

Warriors 117, Spurs 113

In San Antonio, Stephen Curry had 33 points and Golden State held on to beat undermanned San Antonio for

their fourth straight victory.

Curry was 12 for 23 from the field, hitting 7 of 15 3-point attempts, as Golden State clings to the final play-in spot in the Western Conference - two games ahead of Houston after the Rockets' home loss to Dallas on Sunday.

76ers 135, Raptors 120

In Toronto, Kelly Oubre Jr. scored a season-high 32 points, Kyle Lowry had 11 points and 10 assists against his former team and Philadelphia snapped a three-game losing streak, beating Toronto.

Cam Payne scored 14 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter, Tobias Harris had 21 and Nicolas Batum 19 to help Philadelphia send Toronto to its 13th straight loss and seventh in a row against the 76ers.

Clippers 130, Hornets 118

In Charlotte, N.C., Paul George knocked down eight 3-pointers and finished with a season-high 41 points, and the Los Angeles Clippers defeated Charlotte for their fifth straight road win.

George finished 14 of 21 from the field and 8 of 12 from beyond the arc to beat the Hornets for the 12th consecutive time.

Heat 119, Wizards 107

In Washington, Terry Rozier III scored 27 points, Bam Adebayo had 22 and Miami Heat ground out a victory over Washington.

Jimmy Butler added 17 points for the Heat, who won their second straight. Miami, seventh in the Eastern Conference, went 25 for 29 from the free throw line to move within a half-game of Indiana in the race to avoid the NBA Play-In Tournament.



New York Knicks' Josh Hart (left), drives with the ball against Oklahoma City Thunder's Josh Giddey during the second half of an NBA basketball game in New York, Sunday, March 31, 2024. (AP)

HOUSTON, April 1, (AP): Stephan Jaeger couldn't have dreamed up a better scenario for his first PGA Tour victory. He played the final 36 holes with the best player in the world, and he won the Houston Open on Sunday to earn his first trip to the Masters.

"It feels amazing," Jaeger said. Scottie Scheffler couldn't imagine a tougher way for his March winning streak to end - a clutch shot to 5 feet on the final hole, and a birdie putt he thought was good until he looked up and realized it wasn't.

"I hit two or three really good shots into 18 to give myself a chance and I feel like I made the putt and I looked up and it was breaking off," Scheffler said. "So a bit disappointing, but Stephan played great this week and he's a deserving champion."

Jaeger closed with nine straight pars, and that was just enough for a 3-under 67 to finally win in his 135th attempt on the PGA Tour.

Jaeger was preparing for a play-off after narrowly missing a 20-foot birdie putt that would have assured the victory. But then Scheffler, who gave himself three good looks down the stretch, saw his putt burn the left edge of the cup.

GOLF

"I expected him to make it, and I'm not mad at him for missing it," Jaeger said.

Scheffler was trying to become the first player in seven years to win three straight starts on the PGA Tour, and he was right there with a chance. Two shots behind, he had a 20-foot eagle putt on the par-5 16th and settled for birdie. He missed from 12 feet for birdie on the 17th, and stayed alive when Jaeger missed from 7 feet on the reachable par-4 17th.

His last chance was from 5 feet. "It would be one thing if I pulled it or something like that," Scheffler said. "I just misread it. I don't know why I misread it, it's part of the game. Maybe I could have hit it with some more speed, I felt like I hit a nice putt kind of how I wanted to, just didn't go."

Jaeger, a 34-year-old German who came to high school in Tennessee when he was 16, earned his first trip to the Masters with the victory. He also is in the remaining four \$20 mil-

lion signature events this season.

Alejandro Tosti had a chance to become the fourth PGA Tour rookie to win this early in the year. He was tied for the lead until chipping too strong on the 18th and missing the 18-foot par putt for a 68.

There was a five-way tie for the lead at the start - the largest on tour since 2009 - and eight players had at least a share of the lead at some point during the round.

Jaeger was always in the mix, taking the lead with an 8-foot birdie putt on the par-3 ninth hole at Memorial Park. That was his last birdie of the day, and no one could beat him.

"I was just trying to stay within myself," Jaeger said. "Birdies eluded me on the back nine. But this golf course plays difficult, especially when you're around the lead. I'm just super happy."

Thomas Detry, David Skins and Taylor Moore all made mistakes down the stretch.

Scheffler was one shot behind when he missed the green on the par-3 15th and failed to save par on an 8-foot putt, falling two shots behind with three to play. He got one back with his birdie on the downwind 16th, where Jaeger had to lay up and settle for par.

Scheffler and Jaeger both missed good birdie chances on the 17th, and Scheffler had one last chance on the 18th.

Jaeger finished at 12-under 268 and cracks the top 50 in the world ranking for the first time.

"I couldn't have dreamed up a better week," Jaeger said. "Playing Scottie last couple days, he's been on a tear, so to kind of slay the dragon a little bit this week was amazing. He's such a good dude, such a good player, I was just happy to play with him a couple days."

Defending champion Tony Finau closed with two straight birdies for a 66 and joined Scheffler, Tosti, Detry and Moore in a tie for second.

This was the final week for players to move into the top 50 and earn a Masters invitation, and no one from outside the top 50 - Mackenzie Hughes and Tom Hoge had the best chances - did well enough to earn a spot.

Byeong Hun An is the only player from the top 50 added to the field for the Masters, which now includes Jaeger.

Sri Lanka on course for Test-series sweep over Bangladesh despite batting collapse

CHATTOGRAM, Bangladesh, April 1, (AP): Sri Lanka bolstered its chance to sweep the two-match series against Bangladesh despite suffering a batting collapse on Day 3 of the final test on Monday.

After gaining a huge lead on first innings, Sri Lanka reached 102-6 at stumps to extend its overall advantage to 455 runs.

The touring team bowled out Bangladesh earlier for a paltry total of 178 but chose not to enforce the follow-on.

Fast bowler Asitha Fernando claimed 4-34 as Bangladesh was dismissed for fewer than 200 for the third time in a row.

His fellow opener Vishwa Fernando picked up 2-38, including the wicket of Zakir Hasan, who top-scored with 54 after Bangladesh had resumed on 55-1.

It was a big blow for the home side when skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, on 1, clipped a ball straight to short mid-wicket off left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya (2-65).

Vishwa then dismissed night-watchman Taijul Islam for 22.

Sri Lanka's bowlers kept up a tight

length and received another reward when Asitha claimed two wickets in an over.

Playing his first test for a year, the dangerous Shakib Al Hasan was trapped lbw for 15 by a sharp inswinger.

Liton Das hit Asitha for a boundary off his second ball but the bowler exacted his revenge with a short of a length delivery that took the outside edge.

Shahadat Hossain was then caught by Kamindu Mendis off fast bowler Lahiru Kumara (2-19) for 8.

Mehidy Hasan was trapped lbw by Jayasuriya for 7 before Asitha wrapped up the Bangladesh innings by removing Mominul Haque (33) and Syed Khaled Ahmed for 1.

There was another clatter of wickets when Sri Lanka batted again, with Bangladesh fast bowlers Hasan Mahmud (4-51) and Khaled Ahmed (2-29) doing the damage.

At stumps, Angelo Mathews was 39 not out and Jayasuriya unbeaten on 3.

Sri Lanka won the first test by 328 runs.

'Lexus always puts customers first'

Lexus 'the pinnacle of luxury' wins Service Hero 2023

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Mohamed Naser AlSayer & Sons and Lexus Kuwait won two distinguished awards namely:

Lexus Top 10 Brands 2023 Award
Among highest rated brands in different sectors in Kuwait. Received this prestigious award for the first time.
Lexus First Car in Service 2023 Award

Received this high standard award for the second time from Service Hero, the only indicator in the region to measure customer satisfaction, in a framework for Service Hero's efforts to foster a culture of service excellence where brands and customers thrive. Mr. Abdullah Al-Shuwaie, Group Manager, Legal Representative Customer Relations, and Engineer Sherif Sabry, Deputy General Manager, Lexus Service, received the two awards.

According to Mahmoud Abou-Zahr Senior Business Director Lexus Kuwait: Lexus always puts customers first and we ensure to give customers always the best facilities in terms of hospitality in addition to highly experienced service staffs and technicians. The exceptional reputation of ALSAYER along with our good network of service facilities all together have helped Lexus become best in Kuwait for car service".

In her remarks at the awards ceremony, Faten Abu-Ghazaleh, President of Service Hero, said: "Based on our 14 years of 250,000 validated customer assessments, 2023 scored the highest in customer satisfaction in Kuwait all 20 categories. This proves that customer satisfaction has finally become a strategic tool for brands to continue to earn the loyalty of their customers and improve their performance. In the past, brands were less focused on service excellence and more absorbed with sales and operations, but today, we see that has shifted to customer satisfaction taking a more central role."

The CSI measures three key service factors: expectations, overall satisfaction, and likelihood to recommend, as well as a number of service dimensions such as staff, location, product quality, value for money, speed, reliability, location, fixing complaints, call center, digital and delivery services. The highest scoring among these is location and delivery services while the lowest is value for money and speed of services.

"Over the years Lexus has transformed from a premium automotive brand to the pinnacle of luxury, this means the attention is always to every single detail and our standards of op-



Lexus officials receiving one of the Service Hero awards.



(Left-Right): The two distinguished awards on display.

eration are of the highest standards. We continue to invest in the most advanced equipment and systems and always strive to develop our professional technicians on a consistent basis to take care of our customers' cars to the highest standards because our goal is to give customers an amazing experience with Lexus" added Mahmoud Abou Zahr

7 Star Model of Customer Service
All Lexus facilities in Kuwait embeds the philosophy of "Customer as No.1" that was nurtured over the half century history in all related elements around auto business being sales, service, parts and second hand car at a very high level and it conveys the sense of "Top of Hospitality" grounded on the values of 7 star customer service that penetrates throughout each corner of the facility.

Through the 7 star customer service model, Al Sayer Lexus commits to relentlessly pursue customer service perfection in every endeavor, and as a team aim to provide our customers with a rewarding personal ownership experience that continually exceeds their expecta-

tions.
Research Methodology
The Index is based on 24,978 validated assessments by consumers spanning both male and female genders and a broad range of age, nationality, and education levels. Kuwaitis accounted for 28% of respondents in the survey and other Arab nationalities at 36%, while non-Arabs constituted the remaining demographic.

Based in Kuwait, Service Hero manages is the only consumer powered customer satisfaction index in the Middle East. The company is a member of ESOMAR and adheres to the global organization's principles and guidelines for self-regulation and ethical practice. Service Hero is overseen by an Independent Advisory Council to assure results that are impartial, objective, and accurately reflect consumers' preference, making the company's findings a credible benchmark that offers transparent and relevant insight for companies.

ABK successfully concludes sponsorship of fourth Ramadan Carrom Tournament

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) proudly announced the successful conclusion of its sponsorship of the fourth Ramadan tournament for the beloved Kuwaiti traditional game, Carrom. The tournament, held at Bait Al-Othman under the supervision of the Public Authority for Sport, saw an impressive turnout with 240 teams and over 400 players enthusiastically participating.

Organized by Kuwait Voluntary Work Center and graced by the presence of Sheikh Amthah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the head of the center, the three-day event was a true celebration of sportsmanship and camaraderie. The deserving first-place winners were honored with valuable cash prizes, alongside a series of surprises and special activities that enriched the tournament experience for all attendees.

Sager Albenali, Chief Communications Officer at ABK, expressed the Bank's immense pride in supporting such a significant local event. He highlighted, "ABK's commitment to corporate social responsibility revolves around promoting cultural education, an aspect of paramount importance. Our involvement in this event provided a platform to focus on diverse areas like youth development and sports activities, aligning with our mission to contribute meaningfully to the community."

Albenali emphasized the pivotal role of traditional games and tournaments in preserving national identity, stating, "We firmly believe that fostering intel-



Some of the dignitaries pose for the camera.



Participants in action.

lectual talents among the youth through engaging social gatherings that reflect our rich culture and heritage is crucial in safeguarding Kuwait's authentic customs and traditions."

ABK's sponsorship of the Ramadan Carrom tournament underscores the Bank's dedication to nurturing local

talent, promoting cultural heritage, and supporting initiatives that enhance national cultural education. This initiative reaffirms ABK's commitment to empowering the community and recognizing the pivotal role of private sector institutions in fostering a vibrant cultural landscape.

Sager Albenali:

We firmly believe that fostering intellectual talents among the youth through engaging social gatherings that reflect our rich culture and heritage.

Brest move back into 2nd

10-man PSG win at Marseille, keep 12-point lead in league

PARIS, April 1, (AP) — Leader Paris Saint-Germain gave Marseille a lesson in clinical soccer and beat its bitter rival 2-0 in the French league's "Le Classique" despite playing with 10 men for more than half the match.

PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma made several big saves after the interval when Marseille forwards tried their best to make the most of Lucas Beraldo's red card in the 39th minute.

PSG, which kept its 12-point lead at the top of the standings, had just three shots on target but scored twice on the break with second-half goals from Vitinha and Gonçalo Ramos.

Looking for a first league win at home against PSG in more than 12 years, Marseille controlled early proceedings and bossed the midfield against a wasteful PSG. The hosts

players such as Rudi Voeller and George Weah ignited the rivalry. Marseille, the only French team to win the Champions League back in 1993, has fallen well behind since PSG was taken over by Qatari investors in 2011, but the game continues to stir up passion.

Forward Romain Del Castillo scored a late goal as Brest moved back into second place and stayed on course for a Champions League spot with a 1-0 win at Lorient.

Brest, the surprise package of the French season, was battered for long spells and relied on goalkeeper Marco Bizot to stay in the game.

Del Castillo bagged the winner with five minutes left with a left-footed shot into the bottom left corner from Kamory Doumbia's assist. It was his sixth goal of the season.

Bizot made a final decisive save in the 90th minute to deny Darlin Yongwa's header from close range.

Brest finished the match with 10 men following midfielder Billal Brahimi's straight red card in added time for a dangerous tackle from behind. The result moved Brest back into second place, one point above Monaco, which had leapfrogged the Brittany side with a 5-2 thrashing of Metz on Saturday.

Nantes coach Antoine Kombouaré saw his team win 2-1 at Nice in his first match back in charge.

SOCCER

came close to taking the lead when Jordan Veretout hit the post and had the best chances.

PSG had a couple of opportunities before the interval, with Fabian Ruiz and Ousmane Dembélé missing the target.

Tempers frayed after Beraldo, who had already been booked, got a red card for a last-man challenge close to the halfway line following a VAR review, which left PSG players fuming.

PSG struck on the break in the 52nd minute after Vitinha found Dembélé down the right. The former Barcelona player crossed the ball back for the Portugal midfielder, who beat goalkeeper Pau Lopez with a precise shot to the bottom left corner.

In heavy rain, Marseille camped in PSG's half looking for an equalizer. Veretout thought he had put the teams level in the 58th minute but his goal was disallowed for an offside position.

Marseille did not give up with forwards Faris Moumbagna and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang forcing saves from Donnarumma. However, Ramos sealed PSG's win with five minutes left, assisted by Marco Asensio following a fast counterattack.

The fixture between PSG and Marseille became popular during the 1990s when the arrival of prominent



Mr. Sager Albenali, Acting Chief Communications Officer.

Best of the Rest

Hamlin beats Truex Jr.:

Denny Hamlin won the race off pit road with Joe Gibbs Racing teammate Martin Truex Jr. after a caution with two laps to go and won in overtime at Richmond Raceway on Sunday night.

Truex dominated the second half of the NASCAR Cup Series race - he led 288 laps - and seemed poised to hold off challenges by Joey Logano and Hamlin for the final two laps when Kyle Larson got nudged from behind on the front straightaway and skidded into the infield, causing the caution.

"I needed that kind of situation at the end to happen to win it," Hamlin said.

Larson had been fading from contention before the spin.

On the restart, Hamlin got a good jump from the inside lane, withstood a challenge from the outside from Truex and held off Truex and two other challengers for the surprise victory. (AP)

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Everton announce losses: Premier League club Everton reported losses of 89.1 million pounds (\$112.5 million) in its latest accounts.

Its losses for the 2022-23 season went up from 44.7 million pounds in the previous campaign.

The Merseyside club was docked six points earlier this season for breaching the Premier League's financial rules and is waiting to learn if it will face more punishment for further breaches. Everton is 16th in the 20-team EPL, three points above the relegation zone.

In a statement Everton pointed to the "indefinite suspension of key commercial partnerships" as a factor in the accounts. (AP)

Al-Arabi and Al-Qadisiya set sights on derby glory



A file photo of Al-Arabi and Al-Qadisiya players battling for the ball.

Abdulaziz Wadi's fitness under scrutiny

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Al-Arabi and Al-Qadisiya have kick started their preparations ahead of the eagerly anticipated derby match set for next Saturday and Sunday. Both teams wasted no time and resumed training early yesterday to ensure they're in prime condition for the Kuwaiti football "Classico." The intensity of this rivalry is heightened as both

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teams vie for the Zain League title, captivating the attention of their passionate fan bases.

The stakes are high, with "Green" trailing just one point behind "Yellow," who currently holds third place in the league standings. Kuwait Club sits at the top with 47 points, while Salmiya follows in fourth place with 25 points, and Al-Fahaheel and Al-Nasr share fifth and sixth positions with 24 points each.

Previous encounters between the two teams resulted in draws, with scores tied at (1-1) and (2-2) in their

league matches.

Al-Arabi faces setbacks with the absence of Bandar Al-Salama due to a collarbone injury sustained against Al-Nasr Club, requiring treatment in Doha until mid-April. Issa Walid will also be unavailable due to a red card received in the last match against Salmiya.

Efforts are underway by Al-Arabi's medical staff and fitness coaches to prepare Suleiman Abdul-Ghafour, Sultan Al-Anazi, Saif Al-Hashan, and Anayo Iwala to bolster the team for the upcoming clash.

Mishal Al-Abakal, Al-Arabi's media coordinator, shared updates on the club's social media platform,

indicating that Abdul Ghafour, Sultan, Aywala, and Al-Hashan are in the qualification stage, aiming for a return to the team.

Meanwhile, Al-Qadisiya's Abdulaziz Wadi's participation remains uncertain as he undergoes examinations following a knee injury sustained in the previous match against Al-Fahaheel. He requires two days of rest before further assessment. In other news, Mubarak Al-Fani, Youssef Al-Haqan, Mishaal Khaled, and Abdullah Al-Enezi are undergoing rehabilitation training for their respective injuries, with hopes of rejoining group sessions soon.



Kazma player makes a goal attempt during the Zain Premier League match.

Al-Jahra in a precarious position

Resilient Kazma rise to the top in League of Four

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Kazma surged to the top of the "League of Four" relegation group standings after staging a remarkable comeback against Al-Jahra, clinching a 4-2 victory with two goals. Meanwhile, Khaitan secured a hard-fought win over Al-Shabab with a lone goal in the opening round of matches.

With this triumph, Kazma propelled their tally to 23 points, while Khaitan climbed to second place with 15 points. Al-Shabab slipped to third with 14 points, while Al-Jahra maintained their position with 8 points.

The clash between Kazma and Al-Jahra was characterized by second-half excitement. Despite initially leading 2-1, Al-Jahra, led by Coach Abdullah Al-Shalhi, struggled to maintain control, ultimately succumbing to a 4-2 defeat due to

lapses in concentration and organization.

For Kazma, this victory brought them closer to securing their place among the Premier teams, marking their first victories in the competition. However, Al-Jahra finds itself in a precarious position, desperately needing points in the

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remaining rounds to avoid relegation. Yet, this task is daunting as it relies not only on their performance but also on the faltering of Al-Shabab and Khaitan.

In the other match, Khaitan's victory was not merely a triumph on the scoreboard. It propelled them to second place, revitalizing their momentum for the upcoming clash against Kazma in the second round.



Arsenal's Beth Mead, left, and Kim Little, right, lift the trophy after winning the FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cup Final soccer match between Arsenal and Chelsea at Molineux Stadium, Wolverhampton, England. (AP)

Sports

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Liverpool gain advantage in 'three-way' title race as Man City and Arsenal draw

We are still there: Pep

MANCHESTER, England, April 1, (AP): Liverpool leads the way in the race for the Premier League title after Manchester City and Arsenal canceled each other out.

A 2-1 comeback win against Brighton left Jurgen Klopp's team looking down on its rivals - two points ahead of second-place Arsenal and three clear of City in third with nine games to go.

"It is a great situation where the boys brought us," said the Liverpool manager, who is aiming to sign off with a second league title before stepping down at the end of the season.

There is still some way to go in the three-way fight, but Mohamed Salah's second-half winner at Anfield could be crucial.

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Even City manager Pep Guardiola admitted it's in Liverpool's hands now. "Always who is first is favorites," Guardiola said. "Second is Arsenal and we are third."

Victory had moved Liverpool to the top of the standings before City and Arsenal played out a frustrating 0-0 draw at Etihad Stadium later in the day.

The clash between last season's top two had been highly anticipated but failed to live up to the pre-match hype, with few goal-scoring chances.

While the result suited Liverpool most of all, it was the latest evidence of Arsenal's growing title credentials after falling away at the end of last season.

The Londoners had lost on their previous eight visits to City - including a 4-1 defeat last year that proved costly in the title race.

This season, Mikel Arteta's team has taken four points off the defending champions, as well as winning the Community Shield against City in August. But the Arsenal manager said he was still looking for more from his players to prove they are ready to end Guardiola's dominance with City.



Arsenal's Bukayo Saka, (left), duels for the ball with Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Arsenal at the Etihad stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

"(It shows) that we are improving and that we are competing better and we are understanding how you have to play these games, but there are other steps to be made to win the championship. You have to come here and you have to win," Arteta said. "Today we were able to draw and we have to still improve a lot to be able to do that."

Arsenal has now had the better of both of its title rivals, having also won and drawn against Liverpool.

By contrast, City has no league wins

against any of the teams above it, having drawn against Liverpool home and away.

Sunday was a chance to improve that record - but City instead slipped further adrift of the top.

"Now we don't depend on ourselves, we depend on Liverpool and Arsenal now because we don't play against them again," City midfielder Bernardo Silva said. "So we need them to drop points as well as do our job and win our own games."

Guardiola is backing his team to do just that as it targets back-to-back trebles after winning the Premier League title, Champions League and FA Cup last season.

"My point of view is we are still there," Guardiola said. "I'm satisfied. I said to the team, 'Don't be sad.'"

With just three points separating the top three, it looks to set to be the most open title race in recent years.

And Brighton's performance at Anfield suggested there could still be

some surprises along the way, with Liverpool having to come back from a goal down after Danny Welbeck's strike in the second minute.

Luis Diaz evened the score before the break and Salah struck his 22nd goal of the season in the second half to secure all three points.

"So, we are there with two other teams fighting for the biggest prize in English football and we will see how it will end up," Klopp said. "But I decided I will really try hard to enjoy it."

Chelsea's quadruple bid ended by Arsenal

WOLVERHAMPTON, England, April 1, (AP): Emma Hayes, the incoming coach of the U.S. women's national team, appeared to push Arsenal coach Jonas Eidevall and later complained about "male aggression" after Chelsea's quadruple bid ended with defeat in the Women's English League Cup final.

Arsenal won 1-0 in extra time after Stina Blackstenius scored in the 116th minute at Molineux.

Hayes appeared to push Eidevall and say something to him as he went to shake her hand after the final whistle.

When questioned later, the Chelsea coach said "I'm not down for male aggression on the touchline."

Hayes was not happy with what she described as "fronting up with players."

"For me that's unacceptable and, yeah, I was disappointed and I told Jonas that. I don't think it's okay to behave like that."

There was an exchange between Eidevall and Chelsea player Erin Cuthbert in extra time as Arsenal closed in on victory.

SOCCER

"I don't see me as aggressive. She is irresponsible putting that label on it," Eidevall later said of Hayes' "male aggression" comments.

Hayes will take over as U.S. coach at the end of the season when she will lead the team at the Paris Olympics.

She was aiming to complete a quadruple of trophies in her final year at Chelsea, but Blackstenius' goal ensured Arsenal secured the League Cup. Chelsea is second in the Women's Super League - three points behind first-place Manchester City, having played a game fewer.

Hayes is also hoping to win the Champions League for the first time after guiding Chelsea to the semifinals, where it will face defending champion Barcelona.

Her team has also advanced to the semifinals of the FA Cup and will play Manchester United.

The League Cup final was paused after Arsenal's Frida Maanum collapsed off the ball and received medical treatment on the field. Arsenal said later that Maanum was conscious and in a stable condition.

"The first thing after the game, we don't care about winning, we care about how it is with Frida and we are so happy that she is doing well," Eidevall said.

Flawless display

Sinner dominates Dimitrov for Miami Open title

MIAMI GARDENS, April 1, (AP): Jannik Sinner's strong 2024 continued as he won the Miami Open with 6-3, 6-1 victory over 11th seed Grigor Dimitrov.

In a flawless display on a 79-degree afternoon, Sinner, the 2024 Australian Open champion, moved to 22-1 on the year in winning the Miami Open for the first time. Sinner had been runner-up twice in 2021 and 2023.

In his second straight Miami Open finals appearance (Sinner lost last year to Daniil Medvedev), the 22-year-old played with an abundance of confidence despite the crowd cheering on the underdog from Bulgaria. Sinner ended it in 1 hour, 13 minutes with a backhand winner.

Sinner dropped just seven games combined in the semifinals and finals.

Chants of "Gri-gor" resounded the entire match inside the home stadium of the NFL's Miami Dolphins. Dimitrov had created a buzz this week with upsets of top seed Carlos Alcaraz in the quarterfinals and No. 3 seed Alexander Zverev in the semifinals.

Dimitrov, 10 years older than Sinner at 32, will climb into the top 10 rankings for the first time since 2018.

Sinner also hit a milestone, moving from No. 3 to 2 - highest ranking of his young career and in Italian history.

Sinner, who was never broken and faced just one break

point, was undeterred by the pro-Dimitrov crowd and could be an early favorite for the upcoming French Open.

The men's tour swings in April to the clay-court season in Europe finished off by the French at Roland Garros which begins on May 20.

Sinner won his first major at the Australian Open, then captured the title Rotterdam, and was a finalist in Indian Wells. His only loss in 2024 was in the Indian Wells final to Alcaraz.

Dimitrov won the first eight points on his serve, holding at love in each game. Then the Bulgarian got broken at 2-2 when he tried to get too fancy.

TENNIS

Amidst a long rally, Dimitrov hit a drop shot into the net. Thereafter, he advanced to the net twice only to get beaten by two deft passing shots by Sinner. While Dimitrov has a decent net game, Sinner is perhaps the best passer in tennis.

His chances in the second set were wiped out when he got broken at 2-1. Sinner kept the ball deep on the final two rallies of the game and Dimitrov flubbed shots into the net. At 4-1, Dimitrov got broken again when he flubbed an easy volley long.



Jannik Sinner of Italy hits a return to Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria, during the men's singles final at the Miami Open tennis tournament in Miami Gardens, Fla. Inset: Sinner holds the Butch Buchholz trophy after winning the men's singles final. (AP)

Rodrygo scores twice in Vinicius' absence

Real keep eight-point lead over Barcelona

MADRID, April 1, (AP): Rodrygo thrived in the absence of Vinicius Junior as Real Madrid beat Athletic Bilbao 2-0 to keep an eight-point lead over Barcelona in the Spanish league.

Rodrygo scored both goals and Madrid maintained its comfortable lead at the top after Barcelona had won 1-0 at Las Palmas.

Vinicius didn't play because of a suspension over yellow cards, but Jude Bellingham was back in the squad after missing two straight league games because of a red-card suspension. The influential England international set up Rodrygo's second goal in Madrid's third straight league win.

Rodrygo's opener came with a beautiful shot into the top corner from just outside the area eight minutes into the match at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

The Brazil forward had scored for Brazil in a friendly against Spain at the Bernabeu last week, but he hadn't found the net for Madrid in seven consecutive games.

"He played very well, made the difference with some high-quality plays," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said about Rodrygo.

The Brazilian said after the match he is not feeling threatened by the possible arrival of Kylian Mbappé.

"I think he is close (to being signed), from what everybody has been saying," Rodrygo said. "I'm just focused on finishing the season well. It would be a nice problem for the coach to have next season. I'm not worried."

Fourth-place Athletic arrived with its focus on next weekend's Copa del Rey final against Mallorca. The Basque Country club will try to win the cup for the first time in four decades. Defender Yeray Alvarez left Sunday's game with an apparent muscle injury in the 25th and could be doubtful for the final



Real Madrid's Rodrygo celebrates after scoring his side's second goal during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Athletic Bilbao at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

in Seville.

Athletic, which had won two in a row in the league, will drop to fifth place if Athletic Madrid wins at midtable Villarreal on Monday.

Also back in Madrid's squad was central defender Eder Militao, who had been out for eight months because of a knee injury. He came off the bench in stoppage time to loud cheers from the Bernabeu crowd.

Brahim Diaz, who was in for Vinicius, nearly added to Madrid's lead in the 49th with a shot that hit the post.

Madrid wore its purple fourth uniform instead of its traditional white jersey.

Christian Stuani scored in stoppage time as Girona beat Real Betis 3-2 to move closer to securing a top-four finish.

The home win strengthened Gi-

rona's hold on third place. It's nine points ahead of fourth-place Athletic and 10 points in front of fifth-place Atletico Madrid, the first team outside the Champions League qualification places.

Girona visits Atletico next weekend in a key matchup with eight rounds remaining.

The Catalan club, which is part of the Abu Dhabi-backed City Football Group, is trying to make it to the Champions League for the first time.

SOCCER

Girona twice relinquished leads against seventh-place Betis, but earned the victory thanks to Stuani's goal from inside the area two minutes into second-half stoppage time in pouring rain at Montilivi Stadium.

Artem Dovbyk scored the other two goals for the hosts, while Wilian Jose got on the board twice for Betis, which saw its losing streak reach four straight league matches. Manuel Pellegrini's team has one win in its last eight games in all competitions.

Celta Vigo and Rayo Vallecano drew 0-0 in Vigo in a match between relegation-threatened clubs.

The result left Celta in 17th place, immediately behind Rayo.

Celta sits three points clear of the relegation zone, while Rayo is five points from danger. Rayo has one win in 12 matches.

Celta complained about two calls that went against the team - the first on a goal called off because of a foul, and then for a possible penalty kick late in the game.

Sixth-place Real Sociedad picked up its third straight victory by winning 1-0 at 13th-place Alaves.

Jon Pacheco scored the winner with a diving header in the 59th.

Alaves has one win in its last eight league matches.