



PREMIER'S DEPUTY AMIR DESIGNATION STANDS UNTIL CROWN PRINCE NAMED

PM assumes Deputy Amir role during Amir absence

Exit or amend status

Kuwait rolls out procedure for residency law offenders

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Public Relations and Security Media General Department at the Ministry of Interior has announced the schedule for expatriates, who violated the Residency Law, to complete procedures for leaving the country or amending their status, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The department disclosed that starting Sunday, these expatriates should visit the Residency Affairs Departments in the governorates where they are residing during official working hours in the morning period to amend their status.

Continued on Page 5

Opinion

Amend the Constitution, as our MPs have become shadow rulers

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

ACKNOWLEDGING the paralysis of the political system and its inability to develop is not a bad thing. It is actually a fact that must be in the mind of every official and citizen. We need to realize that development will not come by chance, but by action based on a sound vision for the better.

What is happening here is contrary to that. If the MP does not like the appearance of the minister, or if the minister does not agree to send the MP's supporters abroad for touristic purposes under the pretext of medical treatment, or does not appoint his relatives to positions of responsibility, the MP grills the minister!

There is no doubt that correcting the defect begins with amending the Constitution. This is a necessary task especially after 62 years of its approval in order to straighten the relationship between the two authorities, especially with regard to the interrogations that are often carried out in other countries.

Likewise, the deadline granted to the Prime Minister-designate must be reconsidered, as it is not possible for him to form a ministry within 14 days, unless with "whoever is present."

What is required now is for ministers to be competent, as the ministry is not only a political position, but also a technical task. Therefore, the Prime Minister must be given enough time, perhaps up to a month or two.

In this regard, although the Constitution granted the ruler great powers, and he, by political custom, is the "father of authorities", as per the Kuwaiti situation, he is restricted by a number of obstacles that are not consistent with the correct political practice necessary for him to perform governance in a manner that suits logic.

Therefore, what Tony Blair said about the "paralysis of the political system" necessitates amending the Constitution, which is an urgent task that should not be further delayed.

Restaurants and hotels climbed on a yearly basis by 2.37 percent, with services and miscellaneous goods rising by 3.96 percent, it said.

The consumer price index (inflation), excluding food and beverages, recorded a hike of 2.53 percent in November on an annual basis, it added.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measurement that examines prices on a monthly or annual basis. Generally, it constitutes a basic index for growth and economic recession, where decision-makers examine to take decisions at the economic level and work out financial and monetary policies.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

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May departure from Turkey set

Kuwait Relief Society signs deal to dispatch 3rd Gaza relief ship

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (Agencies): Kuwait Relief Society on Sunday signed a third executive contract with the Turkish humanitarian relief authority and human rights and freedoms (IHH), worth USD four million, to dispatch the third "Gaza ship" to the strip to relieve the war-beleaguered population.

The chairperson of the Kuwaiti society, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Saleh, said in a statement to KUNA, during the signing ceremony, that the contract is part of the "Gaza ship" donations sent by the association to relieve the Gazans.

He has indicated that in addition to the Kuwaiti society, more than 30 Kuwaiti associations, private and government establishments have contributed to the assistance since start of the aggression on the enclave.

Al-Saleh said 1.650 tons of the dispatched supplies, including food, blankets and clothes, would be dispatched by the Kuwaiti Relief Society.

The third relief ship is scheduled to set sail from a Turkish port and reach Egypt by May, he said, indicating that the cargo would be unloaded and loaded in trucks that would continue the trip to Gaza by land.

Continued on Page 5



Left: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives PM-designate Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Right: PM-designate Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah takes the oath as the Deputy Amir.



Amiri Diwan photos

Healthcare costs rise

Kuwait inflation hits 3.02% in March, food prices surge

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): Kuwait's consumer price index (inflation), on an annual basis, grew by 3.02 percent last March, according to the Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau (KCSB).

In a statement to KUNA, the bureau said the inflation rate in Kuwait rose 0.38 percent the same month -- on a monthly basis.

Benchmark of the first group (food and beverages) went up by 5.71 percent last March, compared to the same month in 2023, while the price index of the second group (cigarettes and tobacco) inched up by 0.15 percent on an annual basis, it added.

The consumer price index (CPI) for the clothing group increased by 6.37 percent, housing services by 1.41 percent and furnishings by 3.90 percent.

The health index went up by 3.41 percent, while rates of transport moved up by 3.41 percent in March compared to the same month in 2022, according to the KCSB.

Communications moved up by 2.46 percent on an annual basis, culture and entertainment rose by 2.27 percent and education by 0.80 percent.

Restaurants and hotels climbed on a yearly basis by 2.37 percent, with services and miscellaneous goods rising by 3.96 percent, it said.

The consumer price index (inflation), excluding food and beverages, recorded a hike of 2.53 percent in November on an annual basis, it added.

When citizens perceive their contributions as valued and recognize that success is the fruit of labor, they are motivated to innovate. Necessity drives creativity, while security safeguards rights and fosters the pursuit of aspirations. With leadership committed to revitalizing a nation neglected for years, the journey toward the path of glory begins.

PROSPERITY embodies both security and stability. As individuals engage in constructive endeavors such as trade and construction, security is established, becoming the cornerstone upon which leaders and communities rely. It is within this realm that stability and prosperity take root.

When citizens perceive their contributions as valued and recognize that success is the fruit of labor, they are motivated to innovate. Necessity drives creativity, while security safeguards rights and fosters the pursuit of aspirations. With leadership committed to revitalizing a nation neglected for years, the journey toward the path of glory begins.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



MPs-elect seen at the National Assembly floor on Sunday.

Constitutional questions arise

Legislative session adjourned due to government's absence

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: MP-elect Saleh Ashour adjourned until May 14 the legislative session scheduled for Sunday due to the absence of the government.

Ashour explained the adjourned session was aimed at preventing the filing of appeals on the constitutionality of the 2024 National Assembly. He affirmed that holding such session is in line with Article 87 of the Constitution, which stipulates the need for the Assembly to hold its first session within two weeks after the election.

Meanwhile, in a press statement immediately after the adjournment of the session, MP-elect Obaid Al-Wasmi criticized the decision to adjourn the session due to the absence of the government. He was quick to clarify that he agrees with the opinion that the two-week period is short for the formation of the government, but the presence of the government should not be a condition for holding legislative sessions. He said the caretaker Prime Minister, HH Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, should have gone to the Assembly and explained the situation to the MPs-elect who would not have mind extending the grace period even for one month; instead of ignoring the legislature and controlling its sessions.

He then asked the concerned institutions including the Constitutional Court and the Amiri Diwan when the four-year parliamentary term starts -- April 21 or May 14. He asked the Assembly, caretaker government and HH

the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah what would be the constitutional position if an urgent issue surfaces and requires the issuance of decrees of necessity; considering the current regional circumstances and the fact that the Assembly members have been elected. He stressed the need to respect the legislative authority through the implementation of the Constitution. He pointed out that previously the government, represented by the committee tasked to amend the Constitution, suggested revising Article 87 as the two-week grace period is not enough to form the new government.

He urged his colleagues to adopt a clear position on the unconstitutional move to adjourn legislative sessions just because of the absence of the government. He went on to say that no democracy in the world accepts such move, indicating a prime minister might come and sit in any of the rooms at the Assembly building without attending the session unless the lawmakers change the agenda to be in line with his vision.

Continued on Page 5

Officials attend ceremony

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Sunday the Prime Minister tasked with the government formation Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to take the oath as the Deputy Amir.

The Amiri Diwan top officials attended the ceremony. Earlier His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah signed an Order Sunday appointing Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as Deputy Amir while His Highness is abroad.

The Amiri Order states that this designation would remain valid until the naming of a Crown Prince, and that the Prime Minister should comply with this Order and inform the National Assembly.

The Amiri Order takes effect once published in the official gazette.

Also:

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Sunday the President of the Supreme Judicial Council and the Court of Cassation, Judge Dr. Adel Majed Bourseli.

His Highness the Amir also hosted at Bayan Palace the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and the Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah.

Mideast tensions drive gold prices to new peak

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): Gold prices logged new highs at USD 2,390 per ounce on Friday stimulated by geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

A report issued by Dar Al-Sabaek on Sunday indicated that investors perceive gold as a safe refuge in times of uncertainty, and lack of visibility.

Gold futures remained steady at USD 2,431 an ounce, a testament to strength of demand as investors and central banks all around the globe look into increasing gold purchases up until next June.

Last week, the US dollar index persisted at 106.1 points, as gold futures reached USD 2,433 per ounce.

The US economy's positive outcomes should have sent gold prices hurtling, explained the report, but to current geopolitical climate gold prices endured.

Indices of retail sales and purchasing managers' performed well, prompting the US Federal Reserve (the central bank) to keep interest rate between 5.25 and 5.5

Continued on Page 5

Newswatch

RIYADH: The European Union (EU) and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) high-level forum on regional security and cooperation taking place Monday in Luxembourg is an opportunity to underscore bilateral relations, announced GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi on Sunday.

In a press statement, Al-Budaiwi said the forum is chaired by Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, the chair of the current session of the GCC Ministerial Council, with High Representative Josep Borrell. (KUNA)

JERUSALEM: Iran's supreme leader on Sunday dismissed any discussion of whether Tehran's unprecedented drone-and-missile attack on Israel hit anything there, a tacit acknowledgment that despite launching a massive assault, few projectiles actually made through to their targets.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's comments before senior military leaders didn't touch on the apparent Israeli retaliatory strike Friday on the central city of Isfahan, even though air defenses opened fire and Iran grounded commercial flights across much of the country. (AP)

KABUL: A sticky bomb exploded in a mostly Shiite neighborhood of the Afghan capital Kabul on Saturday, killing one person and wounding three others, a police official said.

The bomb was attached to a car and the blast killed the driver. (AP)



MP-elect Saleh Ashour adjourns until May 14 the legislative session scheduled for Sunday.



Photo during the signing ceremony between Kuwait Relief Society and IHH.

Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:53 Asr 15:22
 Sunrise .. 05:16 Maghrib .. 18:18
 Zohr 11:47 Isha 19:39

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Rather hot with light to moderate southeasterly wind to northeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-38 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.
By Night: Mild and relatively

Weather

humid over coastal areas with light variable wind to light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 08-30 km/h.	Kuwait Airport	36	24
	Abdaly	36	21
	Jahra	36	24
	Salmiyah	32	25
	Nuwaisib	36	22
	Wafra	35	23

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



Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah received the Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait in his office. Xu Zizhou and Yin Ke accompanied the Ambassador. Also present were Meshal Al-Jarallah and Ayman Al-Buloushi.

Editor-in-Chief receives Chinese envoy

Ahmed Al-Jarallah, the Dean of Kuwait Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers, received in his office the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China Zhang Ji-

anwei, who was accompanied by the Diplomatic Attache of the Embassy of China Xu Zizhou, and Chief Correspondent of the embassy Yin Ke.



The Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei presents a memento to the Arab Times Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah. Photos by Rizk Taufiq

During the meeting, they discussed various issues of mutual concern, after which the two sides exchanged mementos. Present in the meeting were Meshal Al-Jarallah and Ayman Al-Buloushi.



Dean of Kuwait Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah received the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Kuwait Emil Karimov, who was accompanied by the embassy's advisor Mirdavud Sultanov. Meshal Al-Jarallah and Saud Al-Farhan attended the meeting.

Editor-in-Chief receives Azerbaijan envoy

Ahmed Al-Jarallah, the Dean of Kuwait Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers, received in his office the Amba-

sador of Azerbaijan to Kuwait Emil Karimov, who was accompanied by the embassy's advisor Mirdavud Sultanov. Present in the meeting were Meshal



Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Kuwait Emil Karimov presents a prayer mat from Azerbaijan to the Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah. Photos by Rizk Taufiq

Al-Jarallah and Saud Al-Farhan. During the meeting, they discussed several matters of mutual concern, after which the two sides exchanged mementos.

Some companies shortlisted

Prior certificate 'required' for solid waste transfer business

By Mohammad Al-Musleh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Kuwait Municipality announced that it will not allow any business related to solid waste transportation without obtaining a qualification certificate from the concerned committee.

In a circular, the municipality stated that the extension period for allowing the practice of transporting solid, construction and asbestos waste without obtaining a qualification certificate from the concerned committee ended on March 31, 2023.

In this regard, a source explained that the municipality, through the concerned committee, is undertaking the process of qualifying companies and institutions to carry out waste transportation work in accordance with the requirements and standards set for this purpose.

It is also responsible for classifying these companies according to the type of waste to be transported and the nature of its composition, in coordination with the relevant authorities in the country.

The concerned committee is authorized to issue the required licenses and set the conditions and controls that must be met

when classifying waste transportation contractors, withdrawing the license, or temporarily suspending them.

On the other hand, Kuwait Municipality's teams continued to intensify their field inspection tours to ensure the extent of compliance with regulations, and monitor encroachments on state properties in investment and commercial areas.

Head of the Violations Removal Department at the Farwaniya Municipality Fahad Al-Muwaizri explained that the field tours carried out by the department were held under the direct supervision and follow-up by the branch director Mubarak Al-Ajmi from the beginning of April until last Saturday.

The inspection tours resulted in the issuance of 210 warnings against encroachments on state properties used to rent parking lots and umbrellas within the Farwaniya Governorate. Necessary measures were taken against the violators. The municipal teams will continue to carry out field tours.

Al-Muwaizri called on violators of municipal rules and regulations to respond and expedite the removal of the violations so that they are not subject to the law.

'Excellent job performance'

MoH allocates KD12 mln for staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Ministry of Health has allocated KD12 million for the excellent job performance bonus of eligible employees, reports Al-Anba daily.

Following are the conditions for disbursement of the bonus:

■ The length of service of the employee nominated for the excellent job performance bonus should not be less than one calendar year -- from Jan 1 to Dec 31, 2023 in the ministry.

■ The employee must be appointed under the general salary scale or salaries.

■ The actual work during the calendar year must be more than 70 percent of the number of shift days for employees under this system and 180 actual working days for the rest of the categories.

■ The actual period of work is calculated after excluding the period of interruption (suspension from work, secondment, full-time of all kinds, missions and leaves of any kind or duration, official holidays, combinations and rest days, except for sick leave

during the period of hospitalization only).

■ The bonus is paid to eligible employees according to the Civil Service Commission's schedule for awarding excellent work. The bonus could be granted to those in lower categories.

Meanwhile, the health minister is expected to authorize the undersecretary to disburse the bonus to eligible employees and sources hinted that the disbursement will start in mid-May.

Sources revealed the amount of bonus per category as follows:

■ Doctors, consultants and department directors: KD1,500

■ Pharmacists, technicians and supervisors: KD1,300

■ Department heads and nursing staff: KD1,000

■ Administrative staff: KD800

■ Assistant and technical assistant positions: KD400

PADA discovers 62 new cases of forging med reports for benefits

Almost 10,000 lawsuits filed this year so far: official

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Acting Director of the Legal Affairs Department and Deputy Director General for Educational and Rehabilitation Services at the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs (PADA) Mubarak Al-Badah has confirmed the discovery of 62 cases of forging medical reports to claim disability benefits and all of them were referred to the Public Prosecution, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Al-Badah told the daily that the number of lawsuits filed by or against PADA since the beginning of this year totaled 9,612. He said 4,757 of these cases were filed against the authority and are still in the courts.

He added the total number of final rulings on cases against the authority reached 4,529 -- 3,209 in favor of the authority and 1,320 against it. "This means the percentage of winning cases is more than 70 percent and the most prominent of which is the cancellation of an administrative decision issued by the authority, that is, by rejecting the decision of the medical committees to reduce the degree of disability or to exclude someone from the disability category," he revealed.

He went on to say that the number of lawsuits filed by the authority to recover unlawfully spent money reached 337 and the total amount involved is estimated at hundreds of thousands of Kuwaiti dinars. He affirmed the authority continues to attain success in recovering such money, stressing that public funds are inviolable.

He pointed out that the Legal Affairs Department reviews the expenditures in coordination with its financial counterpart, and then they contact the concerned persons -- the disabled or those taking care of them or the heirs if the beneficiary is deceased -- to ask them to return the illegally obtained amounts, because these are public funds and are not subject to the statute of limitations.

On the measures taken if the person in charge of taking care of the disabled neglects his duties, Al-Badah said "the authority formed a team consisting of the friends of the disabled to monitor such violations or any move against people with disabilities, find ways to protect the disabled and educate the community about the rights of people with disabilities. The team members have the right to investigate violators of the law; thereby, enabling them to issue violation citations and to report crimes related to violating the rights of persons with disabilities, and refer perpetrators to the competent authorities to implement the deterrent penalties stipulated by the law."

He revealed the total number of people with disabilities registered in PADA reached 65,592 according to the latest statistics -- 11,267 of them have physical disabilities; 5,106 have visual disabilities; 17,302 have mental conditions; 14,786 have motor disabilities; 7,384 have learning disabilities; 2,047 have developmental disabilities; 5,181 have hearing disabilities; 2,008 have psychological problems and 511 have other disabilities.

New auditing system intensifies check on in, out money transfers

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: As part of its ongoing efforts to combat money laundering, the Central Bank of Kuwait has implemented a new auditing system requiring intensified inspections of money transfers to and from Kuwait. This move aligns with the standards set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), reports Al-Rai daily.

The Central Bank has mandated that exchange companies under its supervision hire an impartial global auditing firm to assess compliance with Law 106/2013, which addresses money laundering and terrorist financing. The audit focuses on transactions and activities that appear unusual or lack clear, legitimate economic purposes. The auditing process must be carried out twice a year, on June 30 and December 31.

The newly introduced auditing system

ensures that transactions are not conducted with individuals or entities listed on international or local blacklists. It also involves scrutinizing public benefit organizations and charitable institutions by examining a selected sample of their transactions. In addition, the audit verifies that customer information and details about the actual beneficiaries of transfers are properly collected and updated.

Records of customers and their transactions must be retained for a minimum of five years. Importantly, the appointed auditor cannot be an internal auditor or affiliated with the company's internal control team.

These enhanced measures demonstrate Kuwait's commitment to ensuring financial transparency and curbing illicit activities within its financial sector.

'Need for competent leadership'

KU grapples with admin turmoil

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Over the past two years, Kuwait University has grappled with an administrative void that has significantly impacted its operations, from the top leadership position of university director to academic roles such as deans of colleges, heads of scientific departments, and various administrative positions within the university's general secretariat, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This vacuum has persisted despite the approaching key annual event of new student admissions, exacerbating the situation with a lack of stability in position assignments.

Alarming reports reveal a concerning pattern of turnover, with five professors appointed to the position of university director within a span of just 15 months, translating to a rate of one manager every

three months.

This rapid succession has not only led to administrative chaos but has also disrupted academic continuity, as each new director brings forth their own visions and plans, often diverging from those of their predecessors. Consequently, just as one director initiates their strategies, they are swiftly replaced by another, perpetuating the cycle of instability.

Sources emphasize that the university is currently facing an unprecedented level of turmoil, underscoring the urgent need for a stable and authentic university director.

This instability has raised concerns about a looming admission crisis, particularly as the Kuwait University Council approved an admission plan offering only 8,646 seats, with the colleges of medicine and dentistry allocated a mere 2% share.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Kuwait invasion precursor to political chaos in Arab world

"THE invasion of Kuwait in 1990 represented a vital stage in the history of the region, the consequences of which reflected in the conflicts, the nature and form of wars, and the form and causes of conflicts," columnist **Suad Fahd Al-Moejil** wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"With the invasion, the civil war guns fell silent in Lebanon, after the 'enemies' allied at that time due to the new circumstances caused by the invasion of Kuwait. After the invasion, the false 'peace' agreements with the Zionist entity continued, from Oslo to the Madrid Conference, Wadi Araba, and others.

"Years after the invasion, Saddam Hussein's regime was overthrown, and with it the green light was given to Iran to impose its hegemony on another Arab capital after Lebanon, so Baghdad began to speak Persian. Then the opportunity came with the Arab Spring uprising for a third Arab country to fall under Iranian influence, which is Syria, and to join it after Yemen.



Suad Al-Moejil

"In order to understand wars, we must look at their margins, not at their direct battlefields. This would be a limited and short-term view, and this is what Arabs in general, politicians and thinkers, unfortunately, have always practiced, to the point that the results were disastrous for the Arab nation according to the events that the region is experiencing.

"With the invasion of Kuwait, the Arab world was fragmented and divided in a way that served and serves all the political and military events and agendas that followed, including the events that Gaza is experiencing today, and a quick return in history to the difference between the role of the Arab homeland during the 'Stone Intifada' in the 1980s, and the silence of the Arab arenas today and in the face of what is happening in Gaza confirms to us the depth of the rift that occurred and divided the Arab world and its arenas into discordant camps after the invasion of Kuwait.

"It is always said that the Arab person is overly emotional, and that this always interferes with his whims and orientation, and even in his political decisions and positions. Perhaps this was a tempting entrance for world powers, which have long seen the conflicts and wars of the countries of the region as an abundant source of livelihood, so they came up with the game of 'balances' and sectarianism, and provoked with it the dangers that each party poses against the other, and the issue of Sunni-Shiite division has returned to dominate conflicts and wars in the region.

"History has repeated it in more than one era, that sorting sectarianism does not lead to any station, but we carried such a burden even in our dealings with the first Arab issue -- the Palestinian issue -- which was disputed in a way that trapped us all, and with it the Sunni began to see the Shiite, in many cases, as a greater threat in degree than the existential and real danger posed by the Israelis.

"The emotional political sentiment of many Arabs has trumped political prudence, and this is clearly reflected in our positions and decisions, and even in the strategies of most of our political systems. The majority of Arabs have not practiced a real policy in their regional conflicts, other than warning of the Shiite tide and the necessity of confronting it, while the other party uses pure political savvy, which enabled it to achieve many of its goals in the region.

"Emotion is the enemy of reason, especially when it comes to crucial political decisions, and it -- that is, emotion -- today envelops not only official positions, but also controls the mood, identity and vision of Arabs everywhere, which has turned the region with its people, wealth and future into firewood to fuel wars raging in the entire Middle East region.

"Since the invasion of Kuwait, the entire region has entered a new era of wars of attrition, with the Arab peoples and countries exhausting themselves, and then searching for who lit the fires in their outskirts; a bitter reality that the Arab region is experiencing, as it awaits salvation from a savior of the slimy existence.

"Egypt, the big mother, is besieged by its economic crises. Iraq is a prisoner of sectarian conflict, Syria is subject to division between international companies, Yemen is bleeding from its wound, Libya is torn apart by its own problems, Sudan is wounded, and Palestine is waiting for the Arabs to start using their minds, not their emotions, to help it, and in light of political sentiment that has become dominant over decision, thought, and authority, doubt prevails among all in the possibility of arriving at a discreet and safe exit from such a situation."

Also:

"This is the first of its kind in the long history of hostility between Tehran and Tel Aviv since the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Tehran launches a direct attack on Israel using missiles and drones estimated at more than 300," columnist **Dr Noura Saleh Al-Majim** wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"The reasons for the attack are known to everyone, and it is a response to Israel's attack on the Iranian consulate in Syria, which led to the killing of eight Iranian officials, including two military commanders. Although Israel's harassment of Iran is not the first, the attack

on the Iranian consulate is considered, according to international law, a direct attack on Iranian sovereignty.

"Therefore, Iran's vow to respond after the attack on the consulate had to be taken seriously, because it had greatly embarrassed it internally, before externally. This is in contrast to Iran's previous promises to respond to Israeli attacks against its scholars and leaders, which were not implemented.

"Observers have developed multiple scenarios about the Iranian response, most of which favor Iran's normal behavior, which is to respond through its agents, especially Hezbollah. Likewise, a strong direct response is tantamount to a declaration of open war.

"Iran surprised everyone with a direct response, but it was limited and, more correctly, it could be described as 'symbolic.' The attack did not result in anything significant. The attack targeted non-strategic areas in the Negev Desert, and no Israeli personnel were killed. Moreover, Israeli defense systems shot down most of those strikes.

"Indeed, Tehran announced, hours after the attacks were launched, that the response had ended. Perhaps what is worse than that are the statements issued by the Iranian officials, which were to inform the United States and neighboring countries of the date and extent of the attack.

"So, in addition to the fact that these strikes are symbolic in nature, we also have no doubt that they were agreed upon in advance between Tehran, Washington, and Tel Aviv. Most reputable research centers agree on this as well.

"Hence, the question that must be raised now, and which most analysts are seeking to decipher and explore: What are the reasons and implications of the limited or symbolic Iranian response to Israel? Does this reflect weakness and fear on the part of Iran, or a tactical maneuver for long-term goals, or merely to save Iran's face, or indeed there is strong secret cooperation and coordination between Tehran and Tel Aviv, as many argue ... or anything else?"

"Let us agree at the beginning that there is intense hostility and conflict between Iran and Israel, and it is characterized by extreme complexity that cannot be resolved, because multiple considerations intersect in it: religious or ideological, a struggle over regional influence, military and geostrategic superiority, the calculations of agents and allies of both parties... and others.

"Hence, a direct comprehensive war between them is a scenario that is only postponed for several reasons, the most important of which will guide us to the reason for the limited Iranian response, is the style of Iran's strategic thinking, which is characterized by extreme patience, future dimension, deliberation and lack of urgency, calculating the amounts of the balance of power very precisely, and opportunism. The opportunity is when it is certain that the balance of power is in its favor. Finally, it is the indirect method of waging conflicts, the most important of which is relying on agents.

"In light of these facts, it was logical for the Iranian response to be symbolic, or in other words, not to rush into a direct war with Israel which is backed by its Western allies. Rushing the confrontation would cause Iran to lose all of its strategic gains, which it gained through a policy of strategic patience and playing its trump cards perfectly, most notably the development in uranium enrichment, as it has given Iran the capability of making a nuclear bomb within a month, according to the most important international and US reports.

"In addition, direct confrontation at that time would have weakened the front of its agents, which is systematically exhausting Israel. Perhaps it will also reveal a deficiency in Tehran's military power, such that the aura surrounding it as a powerful force would have been removed. In addition, Tehran is suffering from a major economic crisis and an internal legitimacy crisis, which greatly weakens its position in the war."

"With audio and video... When all the Kuwaiti people demand for preserving the State's prestige, it means the torrent has reached the peak and the situation is no longer tolerable. It was said in the past: 'Injustice to the common people is justice to the subjects!'" columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"We must have the iron fist that we miss, wish and long for! Otherwise, what could be the government's opinion if, like us, it hears and sees the video of that reckless expatriate driver who deliberately collided with another car and obstructed traffic movement? The video has been widely circulated among people.

"Oh government, we are sitting on a powder keg that could explode any time. If, God forbid, it explodes, the issue will turn into a real confrontation between citizens and expatriates, unless you strike with an iron hand. The issue has reached the point of expatriates robbing a store in Salmiya. The video is rolling, so what are you waiting for? All of this is broadcasted with audio and video, while the government is content with word 'arrested!'"

"We look forward to preventing a crime before it happens. We look forward to preserving the prestige of the State that makes someone stand tall before committing his crime. We look forward to cleaning the country of crimes that come with some expatriates, so all that remains is for them to expel us from our homes!"

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

Police break up 12 fights in one week

49 kids driving cars?

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: During the past week, rescue patrol officers dealt with 12 fights that broke out in a number of areas. They also arrested 16 people who were in possession of suspected narcotic substances and referred them to the Drugs Control General Department.

According to the weekly statistics of the rescue patrols, 64 wanted persons were arrested in connection with absconding and arrest cases, and 44 people were arrested for not holding any identification proof. Also, 85,625 traffic citations were issued, and ten vehicles were seized for making annoying noises.

Kids driving cars?: As part of the efforts exerted by the General Traffic Department and based on instructions from the Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic and Operations Affairs Major General Yousef Al-Khadda, the department's officers issued 26,778 citations for various traffic violations and impounded 95 vehicles and 93 motorcycles in one week.

According to the weekly statistics of the General Traffic Department, 32 people who committed serious violations were detained in traffic custody, and 63 wanted vehicles were seized.

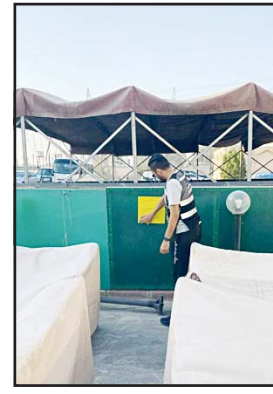
Also, 49 juveniles were referred to the Juvenile Prosecution for driving vehicles without a driver's license, and five violators of the residency law were arrested.

Two people who were in an abnormal condition and four people in possession of suspected narcotic substances were referred to the concerned authority.

Illegal structures razed: The Encroachments Removal Team at the Kuwait Municipality branch in Ahmadi Governorate, in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, removed illegal structures in open areas in the desert recently, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press statement, Team Leader Eng Ahmad Al-Azmi confirmed that the campaign is in compliance with the directive of Director General of the Municipality Eng Saud Al-Dabbous who ordered the removal of encroachments on State properties.

Asked about the violations uncovered during the campaign, Al-Azmi revealed these violations included putting a net in the desert and operating a facility (Kirby) without a license, while the penalties include a fine of KDS500. He said warnings were issued before conducting the campaign.



State land occupied.

Raids in Farwaniya

210 warnings issued for usurping state property

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Municipal teams in Farwaniya Governorate have issued 210 warnings to individuals and businesses for encroachments on state property. The head of the Violations Removal Department at the Farwaniya Governorate Municipality Branch, Fahd Al-Muwaizri, announced that these warnings were a result of field inspections conducted by the department from early April until last Saturday. The inspections, supervised by Branch Director Engineer Mubarak Al-Ajmi, targeted unauthorized use of state property for renting parking spaces and installing umbrellas in the Farwaniya Governorate, reports Al-Rai daily.

The Public Relations Department emphasized that field inspections will continue under the guidance of the Director General of Kuwait Municipality, Engineer Saud Al-Dabbous. The department urged those found in violation of municipal rules and regulations to comply with the warnings and remove the encroachments promptly to avoid legal penalties.

Doors shut on petitions; neighbor's cars wrecked

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Constitutional Court yesterday closed the door to the submission of petitions against the 2024 National Assembly elections. As of yesterday, the court received only 13 petitions. It has set the session of April 24 for considering the petitions, including two petitions requesting the invalidity of the electoral process due to the invalidity of the necessity decree in accordance with which it was conducted, and the invalidity of the vote of children of naturalized citizens in accordance with the amendment issued to the nationality law in 1994.

According to sources, the court will rule either to reject the petitions, or to invalidate the elections due to the invalidity of the decree calling for them due to lack of necessity, or the invalidity of the results by declaring the victory of some candidates if errors are proven in the summation process.

Neighbor's cars wrecked: Search has been launched to find a Kuwaiti citizen who destroyed ten vehicles of his neighbor without any reason, causing serious material losses.

According to security sources, two citizens went to the Jahra police station and informed securitymen that their neighbor smashed the windows of ten of their family's vehicles.

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Schools maintenance priority

MoE to bolster security with cams

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Ministry of Education (MoE) is taking steps to bolster school monitoring and ensure a safe environment for students and staff. Al-Jarida has learned from its sources that the Ministry has initiated the process for a special tender to rent, supply, operate, and maintain surveillance cameras for schools under its jurisdiction.

This tender aims to cover schools that were not included in previous camera contracts. The contract is set to be implemented as part of the procedures for the 2024/2025 academic year.

Additionally, the Ministry is actively working on activating maintenance contracts for school surveillance cameras. These contracts will undergo review, and necessary maintenance will be conducted to ensure the cameras remain in a functional state, providing continuous surveillance and monitoring in schools.

Each school is expected to have around 10 surveillance cameras installed, with the Ministry aiming to complete installation across all its schools, totaling approximately 1,000 institutions spanning various stages and educational systems.

These surveillance camera contracts are integral to the Ministry's security protocols for schools, contributing to the safety of students, teachers, and facilities, as well as aiding in property preservation and facilitating swift responses to any emergencies, issues, or incidents of theft.

Customs procedures: The General Administration of Customs has announced a significant development regarding the direct transfer of customs tax for new and used cars within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, reports Al-Anba daily.

The following are the key features: -- Individuals importing new and used cars will now be able to transfer the customs tax clearance for a period of up to two years from the date of payment of the customs duties in the first customs declaration.

Bedoun students

'Renew passports'

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The National Union of Kuwaiti Students, Egypt Branch, has reached out to Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef, highlighting the urgent need to reopen the window for renewal of passports of bedoun studying abroad, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The Union emphasized that some students are currently unable to return to Kuwait during vacations because their passports have expired and are unable to renew them following the decision to stop renewal and issuance.

In a press statement, the Union appealed to the Minister to issue an immediate decision allowing students to renew their passports while at the same time underscoring the importance of this action in encouraging male and female students to continue serving their beloved country, Kuwait, diligently.

The Union's plea reflects the pressing situation faced by these students and emphasizes the need for swift action to address their concerns and facilitate their return home.

-- This measure aims to prevent the repeated payment of customs tax when transporting vehicles between GCC countries, eliminating the need to engage local agents or the first importer for each transaction.

The decision, effective from April 23, 2024, was issued by the Director General of the General Administration of Customs, Abdullah Al-Sharhan, in line with Customs Instructions No. 21 of 2024.

Sports authority DG sacked

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and the Minister of State for Communications Affairs, Dawoud Marafi, have jointly announced the suspension of Yousef Al-Baidan, the Director General of the Public Authority for Sports, pending investigation, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This action comes in response to Al-Baidan's failure to fulfill various responsibilities, notably his negligence in preparing Kuwait to host the Gulf Cup Championship.

Such lapses underscore a perceived incapacity on the part of the state to effectively host such events, a situation deemed unacceptable.

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PAHW error delays applicants in S. Saad Al-Abdullah Project B-17

Applicants told to wait for the reserve payment

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The names of a number of applicants in batch 17 of sector N4 in the South Saad Al-Abdullah project were dropped from the list due to an error committed by an employee of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW).

When these applicants checked with PAHW, they discovered that they had to wait a longer time.

According to an activist in the housing file Muhammad Al-Murtajji, the error that occurred to some of the applicants in batch 17 caused the postponement for no less than a month, which was considered strange as these people have the right to enter according to historical priority. He said, "This error occurred previously in some payments, but the PAHW officials responded in the same tone, saying, "It is an employee error." When those concerned demanded a solution, the answer of PAHW's officials was, "Wait for the reserve payment," even though it is not guaranteed ac-

ording to the historical priority!

Unfortunately, the applicant bears the responsibility for the employee's error, which results in a longer wait. The reason is simply not working professionally with the laws and electronic platforms. Even listening to the opinions of citizens who liked the applications was not heeded by the officials in PAHW.

This makes us resort to social media to ask questions and inquiries. Despite this, there is no life for whom you call.

According to PAHW's laws, a citizen can request a postponement of the draw and determine the sector and batch he wants. This is done according to priority.

It is always for several convincing reasons according to the desire of the applicant, either for the advantages of the batch or for social motives such as entering with a brother, relatives, or friends. These are his most basic rights.

In the past, the request for postponement was made by visiting PAHW. However, the request can currently be made through a program. But if the list of names is revealed, it is considered final and cannot be modified. We were experienc-

ing it today in batch 14 of sector N4 in the South Saad Al-Abdullah project. The list was withdrawn and amended. The reason is that some of the applicants who requested postponement in official letters were not added to the list, knowing their eligibility according to the historical priority of the request, but the director responded to them and the list was amended.

This mistake was repeated more than once, and intervention was made to correct it. The response was always that the postponement revelation reached the Privatization Department late because the period between the postponement and the announcement process was short, and it was in fact an office session that was unfortunately unconvincing."

In a parallel matter regarding the South Saad Al-Abdullah residential project, sources explained that the 6.5 Ring Road, which cuts through it and connects the east of the country to its west, contains 29 bridges. It includes nine on the road and four lanes in each direction without signals. It also contains ten bridges on the western road and the same number of bridges on the eastern road. The number of pedestrian bridges within the project is nine. It also includes a tunnel extending 210 meters in length and consisting of four traffic lanes and two safety lanes in each direction with a width of 20.2 meters. The project is scheduled to be completed after two years, i.e., 2026.



Al-Murtajji

Around 11 million dinars said collected

'Your Help is their Joy 2' donation campaign ends

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The 'Your Help is their Joy 2' donation campaign for the payment of the debts of citizens who can no longer afford to settle their debts ended with a total collection of around KD11 million, reports Al-Anba daily quoting a source from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The source disclosed that the Campaign Committee, whose members are from the

ministries of Social Affairs, Justice and Endowments, as well as the Union of Cooperative Societies and Union of Charitable Societies and Foundations, will meet next week to lay down the rules and regulations for paying debts and to determine the ceiling of amounts that will be paid.

The source said the beneficiaries are citizens who are unable to pay their debts and an enforceable civil court ruling was issued

against them; based on which executive measures were taken like withholding salaries, seizing vehicles and imposing travel ban.

The source confirmed that the debtors' files are ready in the Sentences Enforcement Department and there is no need for the debtors to visit any entity, indicating that payment will be made automatically for everyone who meets the conditions.

Algerian, Peruvian envoys send congratulations to HH Premier

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: A number of ambassadors accredited to Kuwait have extended their congratulations to the Prime Minister-designate,

Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah, on his appointment to his new position. They expressed their well wishes for his success in forming the new government, highlighting their belief that his leadership will contribute to advancing Kuwait's construction and development, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Algerian Ambassador Nouredine Meriem conveyed his congratulations, stating, "We congratulate the Prime Minister on the confidence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ah-

mad in him, and we wish him success in his lofty duties in a way that serves the progress and prosperity of Kuwait and its brotherly people."

Peruvian Ambassador Carlos Mendiola also offered congratulations, expressing, "In my name and on behalf of my government, we congratulate Sheikh Al-Abdullah for gaining the Amiri confidence and his appointment as Prime Minister."

"We wish him every success in his mission for the benefit of Kuwait and its people, and for the continued progress in bilateral relations between the two friendly countries."



Meriem



Mendiola



Delegation members pose for a photo.

Al-Qabas photo

Jazan Chamber team visits Kuwait

Beyout Investment Group eyes Saudi expansion with 50m riyals investment

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Beyout Investment Holding Group recently welcomed a distinguished delegation from the Jazan Chamber in Saudi Arabia, led by Dr. Majeed Al-Jawhari, the Chamber's Secretary General, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The visit, part of the "Between Individuals and the Stock Exchange" initiative launched by the Chamber in alignment with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, aimed to explore successful Kuwaiti family enterprises and foster exchange of experiences.

Eng. Abdul Rahman Al-Khanna, CEO of Beyout Investment Group, noted the strategic timing of the delegation's visit coinciding with the group's plans to expand its business footprint in Saudi Arabia.

The delegation closely examined Beyout Investment Holding Group's operational model, hailing it as an exemplary and successful experience reflecting the group's commitment to institutional standards.

The delegation appreciated the insights gained, especially regarding the group's transformational journey before and after organizational restructuring processes.

Al-Khanna highlighted the qualitative leap witnessed by Beyout Investment Holding Group, emphasizing its transition

to an institutional organizational approach and adherence to governance standards. The group's succession planning and power distribution among family members were particularly noteworthy, ensuring continuity and growth.

The "Between Individuals and the Stock Exchange" initiative facilitates the exchange of experiences between Kuwaiti and Saudi family enterprises. Al-Khanna emphasized Saudi Arabia's status as a promising market, aligning with the goals of Vision 2030.

Beyout Investment Holding Group, with investments totaling 50 million riyals, intends to expand its operational presence in Saudi Arabia, offering comprehensive support services to government and private sector clients.

Looking ahead, Al-Khanna affirmed the group's commitment to expansion within the Kingdom, fostering collaboration with entities to achieve mutual goals.

Beyout Investment Holding Group, as a major Kuwaiti investor in the Saudi market, prioritizes innovation, diversity, customer satisfaction, and sustainable growth. The group's strength lies in its professional human capital, dedicated to efficient work mechanisms and adept at overcoming obstacles hindering progress or expansion.

Call to open more courses

PAAET students face course closures tied to summer semester registration

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: With the commencement of early registration for summer semester courses, many students at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training found a significant number of courses closed, reports Al-Jarida daily.

They emphasized the necessity of opening more courses, expressing concern as they were unable to complete their registration. They noted that registration priority seemed to be given to graduates and those anticipated to graduate.

Sources within PAAET disclosed a majority of closed classes were within the College of Basic Education due to high demand and student density. Meanwhile, registration in other colleges, such as commercial and technological studies, experienced some degree of flow.

Abdullah Al-Bous, Vice Chairman of the Newcomers Committee and Vice Chairman of the Student Committee in the General Union of Students and Trainees of the Authority, urged the authority's management, represented by Dr. Fawzi Al-Dokhi, the Dean of Registration and Admission, to take necessary measures to increase the number of courses available for students expected to graduate in the summer semester.

He emphasized the importance of prioritizing this segment to prevent delays in graduation or potential expulsion due to registration challenges.

Furthermore, the Practical Education Office at the College of Basic Education announced the initiation of early registration for the practical education course "492" for college students for the first semester of 2024-2025. This registration period lasts until Tuesday, April 23, on the authority's website.

'60 lists of names'

Minister approves 635 employees promotion

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadi has approved the promotion of 635 employees from their current grades to the first salary of the grade to which they were promoted, in addition to their regular bonuses.

The decision, which covered 60 lists of names of all those included in the promotion, came into effect from March 31, 2024.

Students are given the liberty to select the nearest available school for distribution.

The office clarified that registration prerequisites include being enrolled in the College of Basic Education, having completed 102 units, and passing all prerequisites for the "492" practical education course.

Additionally, students majoring in libraries and educational technology are directed to register in their respective scientific departments.

Students have been advised to fill out the "E-FORM" for resolving issues related to postponing courses for graduate students and those expected to graduate. This form submission continues until Sunday, allowing authorities to address requests and accommodate required courses without conflicting with ongoing registration processes.

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Terms & conditions apply*

Applications must be submitted to embassy by hand

Japanese gov't scholarship program submission for Kuwaitis on May 1

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): Kuwaitis eager to study at Japanese universities as part of the MEXT 2025 government Scholarship Program could apply on May 1, 2024, with the process ending on June 13 at 03:00 p.m. local-time, Japan's embassy announced on Sunday.

In a statement, obtained by

KUNA, the embassy indicated that all Kuwaiti citizens who meet the qualifications were eligible to apply, adding that applications must be submitted to the embassy by hand.

The application process consists of document screening, written examination, and personal interview. Undergraduate students must

have completed a 12-year school curriculum and have good academic standing, it said in regards to the requirement.

The applicants' date of birth must be on or after April 2, 2000, revealed the statement. It added that the program would last for five years from April 2025 to March 2030 with one year dedicated to the

study of the Japanese language.

It revealed that the fields of study would be natural sciences as well as social sciences and humanities.

As for research students, the embassy said that they must have completed 16 years of school education and are born on or after April 2, 1990, pointing out that the duration of study would be from April

or September 2025 to March 2027.

Any field of study majored in university, or related to it, affirmed the statement, adding that years of study might extend depending on the major category.

It noted that application forms, detailed information, and other conditions could be downloaded from the embassy's website: (https://www.kw.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr-top_en/index.html).

ps://www.kw.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr-top_en/index.html).

The Japanese government scholarship program, established in 1954, aimed at increasing mutual understanding between the people of Japan and other countries as well as to make an international contribution to the intellectual field.

FM receives phone call from Serb counterpart

Kuwait and Serbia seek ways to promote bilateral relations

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya on Sunday received a telephone contact from the Serb Foreign Minister Ivica

Dacic, discussing the solid bilateral relations bonding the two friendly countries and means of promoting them in various sectors.

Kuwait rolls

Continued from Page 1

For those wishing to leave the country, they should visit the departments in the evening -- from 3:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Those who have new passports or travel documents should register such documents in the computer systems at the Residency Affairs Departments in Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Farwaniya Governorates. Those who wish to leave the country and have valid passports registered in the Ministry of Interior's systems are not required to visit the aforementioned departments.

Mideast tensions

Continued from Page 1

percent to counter continuous inflation.

Analysts are awaiting personal consumption expenditure data next Friday, which will give incite on inflation rate in upcoming period.

The appeal of gold is as a safe investment is speculated to remain steady during short and medium-length terms in this state of uncertainty.

In local markets, 24-karat gold reached KD 23.89 per gram (approx. USD 73), 22-karat gold KD 21.09 (approx. USD 67), while price of silver closed at KD 355 per kilogram (approx. USD 1,008).

Legislative session

Continued from Page 1

He wondered what kind of democracy allows one minister to disrupt the work of the Assembly that represents the nation's will. He emphasized the need to end this unconstitutional tradition; stating that when the late Assembly Speaker Ahmed Zaid Al-Sarhan first adjourned the session, it was due the absence of a minister subjected for investigation, not the absence of the government.

He called on those who will stand for the election for leadership posts in the Assembly like the speaker, deputy speaker, secretary and observer to be committed to holding legislative sessions once quorum is achieved whether the government is present or absent.

He also stressed the need for the next government to lay down a work program which considers popular demands in light of the rising inflation rate, adopt a strategy for addressing the unemployment issue and improve public services, foremost of which is the roads network. He intends to forward queries on the road maintenance contracts that the Public Works Ministry signed in recent years to determine how the budget allocated for this purpose is being spent.

In another development, the Constitutional Court stopped accepting appeals about the recent parliamentary election as the specified period has ended. It received a total of 13 appeals on the election results in some constituencies and the constitutionality of relevant decrees.

Former MP and Fourth Constituency candidate Abdullah Fehad Al-Anzi was the last to file an appeal on the election results. He ranked 12th in his constituency with 5,958 votes.

The Constitutional Court, chaired by Judge Fouad Al-Zuwid, set April 24 for deliberations on these appeals.

Kuwait Relief

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Civil Defense announced on Sunday that its crew were able to recover the bodies of 150 martyrs in Khan Yunis City in Gaza during the past 24 hours.

The Palestinian Civil Defense stated in a press release that the bodies of 150 martyrs were recovered from mass graves and lots were decomposing bodies, while about 500 Palestinians are still missing after the Israeli occupation forces retreated from the city.

The Palestinian Civil Defense added that many people in Gaza disappeared and their places of detention or burial is unknown, while dozens of bodies evaporated into ashes, they called on the international institutions to know the type of weapons.

The statement pointed out that the Israeli occupation used enforced disappearance against the people in Gaza in a systematic and deliberate manner, and killed many people before withdrawing from the city.

They added that the occupation forces gave safety to Palestinians and then killed those minutes later and carried out mass executions, most of the martyrs were women and children.

The statement stressed that what is happening in Gaza is ethnic cleansing carried out by the Israeli occupation army and that what is happening in Gaza has never happened before in history with never used before weapons.

KAC reports surge in operational activities, unveils summer plans

DGCA, ICAO discuss cooperation in aviation field

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Kuwait Airways Company (KAC) announced an uptick in its operational activities concerning aircraft and passenger movement for the months of November and December 2023, as well as January and February 2024, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In a press release, the company stated that aircraft traffic rose by 7% in November compared to the same period in 2022, with passenger traffic also experiencing a 10% increase. Similarly, December saw a 12% increase in aircraft traffic and a 9% rise in passenger traffic compared to December 2022.

January witnessed a significant surge, with a 25% increase in aircraft movement and a 21% rise in passenger movement compared to January 2023. February also saw notable increases, with aircraft and passenger movement rising by 23% and 13% respectively, compared to February 2023.

Kuwait Airways attributed this growth to a new policy focusing on expanding direct operations on routes experiencing substantial passenger growth. Additionally, the company has introduced flights to new airports and chosen economically viable destinations aligning with its strategic interests.

Satisfaction

The introduction of diverse and exceptional services has been instrumental in enhancing passenger satisfaction and bolstering confidence in Kuwait Airways. The company emphasized that these positive results reflect its commitment to achieving the goals outlined in its comprehensive development policy, with a steadfast dedication to improving customer services.

Furthermore, Kuwait Airways expressed its commitment to strengthening cooperation with relevant authorities, particularly the General Administration of Civil Aviation.

This collaboration has played a pivotal role in enhancing operational efficiency and achieving mutual prosperity and progress for all stakeholders and the State of Kuwait.

The company also unveiled its summer operating plan, including the launch of new destinations such as Antalya, Trabzon, and Bodrum in Turkey, Sharm El-Sheikh in Egypt, and Malaga in Spain.

Additionally, the number of flights to various destinations, including London, Amsterdam, Munich, Vienna, and Geneva, has been increased to cater to rising demand, especially for European destinations, as well as other popular summer destinations like Dubai, Riyadh, and Manchester.

Meanwhile, Head of Kuwait Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Humoud Al-Sabah discussed on Sunday cooperation in aviation security and air navigation, with the Regional Director of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for the Middle East Mohammad Abu Baker.

During the meeting, they discussed topics related to safety, aviation security, and air navigation, as well as the positive levels that Kuwait has reached by achieving safety standards in all sectors in accordance with ICAO requirements, according to a press statement by DGCA.

The statement quoted Sheikh Humoud Al-Mubarak as he emphasized on the rewarding cooperation between Kuwait and ICAO, noting to the inspection carried out by ICAO regarding safety, security and navigation, which extends for four days, will have a positive impact on Kuwait to be among the ranks of developed countries, whether in the region or the world.



The Tech Academy

Kuwait has talented, promising generation: Al-Ablani

NBK celebrates graduation of the first wave of 'NBK Tech Academy'

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) celebrated the Graduation of the first wave of "NBK Tech Academy", the first of its kind Academy in Kuwait focusing on digital and data technologies.

The graduation ceremony was attended by Ms. Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO of NBK, Mohamed Al-Othman, CEO - Consumer and Digital Banking Group, Mohammad Al-Kharafi, COO - Head of Group Operations and Information Technology, and Emad Al-Ablani, GM - head of Group Human Resources.

The Academy's program lasted for 7 months during which 10 participants received intensive training covering technical skills for advancing their careers including, but not limited to: FinTech, Data Analytics, Ethics in Technology, Cyber Security, Fundamentals of Digital Payments, Digital Innovation, Artificial Intelligence, Scripting and Programming, Fundamentals of Codifications, and Finance for Non-Finance Professionals.

In addition to technical skills, the program also focuses on developing soft skills including, but not limited to: Teamwork and Team Building, Business Planning and Business Analysis, Writing Skills, Delivering Results, Meeting Customer Expectation and Customer Centricity, Presentation Skills, Productivity in the Workplace, Business Ethics, Principles and Values, Learning and Researching, Project and Change Management, and Customer Experience.

The participants were split into

teams, each assigned an expert coach from NBK, and were challenged to come up with a new idea or enhanced process that would serve the bank, and the winner was selected at the end of the program.

On this occasion, Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We are glad to graduate the first wave of NBK Tech Academy, which aims to foster digital talent and

enhance expertise in technologies, as we realize the importance of developing the digital community within the bank, being instrumental to strengthen active digital capabilities and promote interaction with content and events aiming to drive continuous innovation."

"NBK upholds an unwavering commitment to investing in national talent, as we always focus on providing the Kuwaiti youth with the best-in-class and most advanced training programs as per the highest international standards, with the aim of preparing a generation of highly skilled bankers across all fields, especially digital technologies that have become imperative in view of the advancement in banking using cutting-edge technologies and AI," he added.

"NBK Tech Academy embod-

ies NBK's vision and keenness to keep up with the accelerating needs of the digital era, and its understanding of the importance of nurturing and developing high-caliber talent in areas like MIS, Information Security, Data Science, and Computer Science," he noted.

Al-Ablani continued: "Kuwait has a talented and promising generation who possess professional skills and capabilities in technologies and digitization, and NBK is firmly committed to training and qualifying them for the labor market, in preparation for transformations dominated by AI, robotics and data science."

"NBK seeks to be an active contributor to the development journey of this generation of the Kuwaiti youth and to provide optimal guidance for their capabilities," he explained.

NBK continues to solidify its leadership in the private sector in terms of attracting, training, upskilling national talent and qualifying them to join the banking sector. The bank also stands out as the employer of choice for national professionals, with the highest Kuwaitization and employee retention ratios across the private sector.

NBK Tech Academy is part of the NBK Academy running for 15 years now, as it was established in 2008, and graduated 28 successful waves who have become active members of the bank's professional team, having been qualified through the Academy to join the banking sector.

Arab League and UN Women sign 2024 cooperation deal

CAIRO, April 21, (KUNA): The Arab League, represented by its Social Affairs Sector and Women's Administration, signed a cooperation agreement on Sunday with the regional office of UN Women. This agreement outlines the action plan for 2024, focusing on implementing joint cooperation programs.

The agreement was signed by Ambassador Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, Assistant Secretary-General of the League and Head of the Social Affairs Sector, and Dr. Susan Mikhail, Regional Director of UN Women in the Arab Region. Abu Ghazaleh commended the long-standing cooperation between the Arab League and the United Nations, highlighting that this agreement builds upon a memorandum of understanding signed in 2016.

The collaboration between the two entities spans various programs, with a particular emphasis on the Women, Security, and Peace Program. This program has been instrumental in developing the Arab Women's Strategy for Security and Peace.

Abu Ghazaleh underscored ongoing cooperation with UN Women, including efforts to combat violence against women and cooperation in political and economic matters. She expressed delight at Dr. Sima Bahouth's appointment as the first Arab woman to lead UN Women.

Highlighting the League's fo-



The Arab League signs a cooperation agreement with the regional office of UN Women.

cus on Palestinian women, Abu Ghazaleh announced upcoming meetings to address the impact of the Gaza conflict on Arab women. She noted the League's commitment to supporting women in conflict zones, collaborating with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees on strategies to combat violence against women in asylum areas.

Dr. Mikhail expressed pride in the deepened cooperation with the Arab League since 2016. She raised concerns about the plight of women in conflict zones, par-

ticularly in Gaza, where Israeli aggression has claimed thousands of women's lives. Dr. Mikhail thanked Ambassador Abu Ghazaleh for her advocacy on women's issues in the Arab region, highlighting achievements such as the establishment of networks of women peace mediators and expanded cooperation in women's economic empowerment.

Despite the challenges, Dr. Mikhail emphasized the opportunities for collaboration with the Arab League in advancing women's issues in the region.

World News Roundup

Europe

EU official visits border

Polish voters choose mayors in runoff poll

WARSAW, Poland, April 21, (AP): Polish voters are casting ballots Sunday to choose mayors in hundreds of cities and towns where no candidate won outright in the first round of the country's local elections two weeks ago.

Mayors will be chosen in a total of 748 places, including in the cities of Kraków, Pozna, Rzeszów and Wrocław. Those are places where no single candidate won at least 50% of the vote during the first round of elections on April 7.



Tusk

The local and regional elections are being viewed as a test for the pro-European Union government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk four months after it took power at the national level.

Tusk's party did well in big cities including Warsaw, where his party's candidate, Rafal Trzaskowski, easily won re-election as mayor two weeks ago.

However, Tusk failed to win a decisive victory overall. The main opposition party, Law and Justice, which held power at the national level from 2015-23, won a greater percentage of votes in the provincial assemblies.

Tusk's socially liberal Civic Coalition has strong support in cities while Law and Justice has a stronger base in conservative rural areas, particularly in eastern Poland.



Serb-majority N.Kosovo towns vote: Residents of four Serb-majority municipalities are casting their votes Sunday on removing their ethnic Albanian mayors from office following last year's mayoral elections, overwhelmingly boycotted by the Serb minority.

The referendum - supported by the West - is an attempt to diffuse tensions between Kosovo and its neighboring Serbia as both countries vie to join the European Union. However, Kosovo's main ethnic Serb party, Srpska List which has close ties with Belgrade, has called to boycott Sunday's poll.

Some 46,500 residents are expected to vote in 47 polling stations, and for the mayors to step down, a majority vote is needed.

In June, Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti offered to hold new elections in North Mitrovica, Zvecan, Leposavic and Zubin Potok if 20% of the electorate in the municipalities supported a petition for the polls. Residents voted in favor of the petition in January.

When Albanian mayors took up the offices last May, Kosovo Serbs clashed with security forces, including NATO-led KFOR peacekeepers, injuring 93 troops, while protesting the results.

Serbia has backed calls for the mayors to step down.



'UK soldiers won't face charges': Fifteen British soldiers who allegedly lied to an inquiry into Bloody Sunday, one of the deadliest days of the decades-long Northern Ireland conflict, will not face perjury charges, prosecutors said Friday.

There was insufficient evidence to convict the soldiers or a former alleged member of the Irish Republican Army about their testimony before an inquiry into the 1972 killings of 13 civilians by Britain's Parachute Regiment in Derry, also known as Londonderry, the Public Prosecution Service said.

An initial investigation into the slayings on Jan. 30, 1972 concluded the soldiers were defending themselves from a mob of IRA bombers and gunmen. But a 12-year-long inquiry concluded in 2010 that soldiers unjustifiably opened fire on unarmed and fleeing civilians and then lied about it for decades.

Families of the victims were outraged by the decision. John Kelly, whose brother Michael was killed by paratroopers, spoke for the group and called it an "affront to the rule of law."

"Why is it that the people of Derry cannot forget the events of Bloody Sunday, yet the Parachute Regiment, who caused all of the deaths and injury on that day, apparently cannot recall it?" Kelly said. "The answer to this question is quite simple but painfully obvious: The British Army lied its way through the conflict in the north."



Von der Leyen visits border: The head of the European Union's executive branch said Friday that Finland's decision to close its border crossings with Russia over a surge in migrants is a security matter for the whole 27-member bloc to consider.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen made the remarks during a trip to the frontier, visiting a part of the border located in southeastern Finland.

"We all know how (Russian President Vladimir) Putin and his allies instrumentalize migrants to test our defenses and to try to destabilize us," von der Leyen told officials. "Now Putin is focusing on Finland, and this is no doubt in response to your firm support of Ukraine and your accession to NATO."

On April 4, Finland decided to extend the closure of its border crossing points with Russia "until further notice" because of what the government says is a high risk of organized migration being orchestrated by Moscow. Finland's government has closed eight of its nine checkpoints with Russia. The only one that remains open is dedicated to rail travel only, and cargo trains mainly run through it.



Belarus fertilizer plant infiltrated: A Belarusian hacker activist group claims to have infiltrated computers at the country's largest fertilizer plant to pressure the government to release political prisoners.

The state-run Grodno Azot plant has made no comment on the claim by the Belarusian Cyber-Partisans group to have done damage including destroying backup systems and encrypted internal mail, document flow and hundreds of PCs. However, the company's website has been unavailable since last Wednesday, the day the group claimed the attack.

Group coordinator Yulianna Shametavets told The Associated Press from New York on Friday that because the plant works with dangerous substances including ammonia the attack was designed to affect only documentation.

The group posted photos on social media that it claimed showed screens of compromised plant computers. Grodno Azot, with about 7,500 employees, is a key producer in the country, whose economy relies heavily on chemical industries.

A harsh crackdown on the opposition in Belarus began after protests swept the country in August 2020 in the wake of presidential elections whose disputed results gave authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko a sixth term in office.



This photo taken on April 19, 2024, shows a view of the State Hall of the Austrian National Library in Vienna, Austria. The Austrian National Library is situated at the Hofburg Palace in the centre of Vienna. It was previously known as the Imperial Library ('Hofbibliothek') founded by the Hapsburg Royal Family, and renamed as the ANL in 1920. (Xinhua)

Politics

Ukrainian, Western leaders laud US package

House passes billions in aid for Ukraine

WASHINGTON, April 21, (AP): The House swiftly approved \$95 billion in foreign aid for Ukraine, Israel and other US allies in a rare Saturday session as Democrats and Republicans banded together after months of hard-right resistance over renewed American support for repelling Russia's invasion.

With an overwhelming vote, the \$61 billion in aid for Ukraine passed in a matter of minutes, a strong showing as American lawmakers race to deliver a fresh round of US support to the war-torn ally. Many Democrats cheered on the House floor and waved blue-and-yellow flags of Ukraine.

Aid to Israel and the other allies also won approval by healthy margins, as did a measure to clamp down on the popular platform TikTok, with unique coalitions forming to push the separate bills forward. The whole package will go to the Senate, which could pass it as soon as Tuesday. President Joe Biden has promised to sign it immediately.

Risked

"We did our work here, and I think history will judge it well," said a weary Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., who risked his own job to marshal the package to passage.

Biden spoke separately with Johnson and Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries to thank them for "putting our national security first" by advancing the legislation, the White House said.

"I urge the Senate to quickly send this package to my desk so that I can sign it into law and we can quickly send weapons and equipment to Ukraine to meet their urgent battlefield needs," the president said.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine said he was "grateful" to both parties in the House and "personally Speaker Mike Johnson for the decision that keeps history on the right track," he said on X, formerly Twitter.

"Thank you, America!" he said. Meanwhile, Ukrainian and Western leaders welcomed a desperately needed aid package passed by the US House of Representatives, as the Kremlin warned the passage of the bill would "further ruin" Ukraine and cause more deaths.

Zelenskyy, who had warned that his

country would lose the war without US funding, said that he was grateful for the decision of US lawmakers.

"Ukraine is using the weapons provided by NATO Allies to destroy Russian combat capabilities. This makes us all safer, in Europe & North America," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg wrote on X.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that "Ukraine deserves all the support it can get against Russia."

Her statement was echoed by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who called it "a strong signal in these times."

In Russia, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the approval of aid to Ukraine "expected and predictable."

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova also took to social media to speak against the aid

package. cal battleground of North Carolina was to cap a week in which Trump spent four days in a Manhattan courtroom sitting silent during jury selection while Biden was able to hold multiple campaign events in Pennsylvania, another key state in the November election.

The cancellation denied Trump a fresh chance to amplify claims that his multiple pending indictments are an establishment conspiracy to take him down - and, by extension, squelch the voters who first elected him eight years ago.

Now, instead of commanding attention on his own terms at one of his signature mass rallies, his next public appearance is almost certainly going to be Monday, back at the defendant's table for opening arguments in the first felony trial ever for an American president. And his campaign is left to decide when he next can be Trump the candidate instead of Trump the defendant.

Also:

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden on Saturday signed legislation reauthorizing a key US surveillance law after divisions over whether the FBI should be restricted from using the program to search for Americans' data nearly forced the statute to lapse.

Barely missing its midnight deadline, the Senate had approved the bill by a 60-34 vote hours earlier with bipartisan support, extending for two years the program known as Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. Biden thanked congressional leaders for their work.

"In the nick of time, we are reauthorizing FISA right before it expires at midnight," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said when voting on final passage began 15 minutes before the deadline.

He was a great role model for politicians, but just for everyone in how we should treat each other and how we can make Arkansas better," Mark Pryor, a former two-term Democratic US senator, said. (AP)

Councilwoman chosen as mayor: A Fort Wayne city councilwoman was chosen Saturday as the new mayor of Indiana's second most populous city, and its first Black leader, during a caucus to replace its late mayor, who died in March.

Councilwoman Sharon Tucker, a Democrat, will also become the second woman to serve as mayor of the northeastern Indiana city. She was elected in the second round of voting during a Democratic caucus when she met the requirement of 50% of the votes plus one, The Journal Gazette reported.

Derek Camp, chairman of the Allen County Democratic Party, said Tucker would be sworn in as mayor early next week. He said he would not reveal how many votes Tucker received in the caucus so that the party can unite behind Fort Wayne's new mayor.

The local Democratic party said in a statement that it was excited to have "Mayor Tucker at the helm leading Fort Wayne into the future." (AP)



US Rep Gregory Meeks, D-NY, the ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, (left), walks with Rep Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif, the speaker emerita, as lawmakers arrive to vote on approval of \$95 billion in foreign aid for Ukraine, Israel and other US allies. (AP)



Pryor



Tucker

America

Memphis shooting kills 2, 6 hurt:

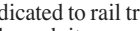
Eight people were shot including two men who were killed at an unsanctioned public party in a Memphis city park Saturday night, police said.

Officers responded at 7:19 pm to a reported shooting. Memphis Police Department Chief Cerelyn Davis said during a news conference at the scene.

Two men were pronounced dead at the scene, Davis said.

The six surviving victims were transported to area hospitals and one was in critical condition at Regional One Health in Memphis, police said.

The shooting occurred at a block party in Orange Mound Park, which Davis said included an estimated 200 to 300 attendees but did not appear to have been issued a city permit. (AP)

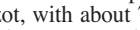


3 hospitalized in knife attack: A knife attack on a crowded party boat at a New York City pier Saturday resulted in the hospitalization of three people, police said.

A 911 call came in around 5 p.m. reporting the assault along the Brooklyn waterfront near 58th Street and the Brooklyn Army Terminal warehouse, NYPD Detective Sophia Mason said.

The victims were said to be a 32-year-old man with a stab wound to the torso, a 40-year-old man with stab wounds to the chest and abdomen and a 28-year-old man who was hit in the head with a bottle. They were taken to the NYU Langone Hospital and were in stable condition, Mason said.

Two more people were treated for injuries at the scene, but they declined further medical treatment, according to the fire department. (AP)



Ex-gov, senator Pryor dies: Former Arkansas governor and US Sen David Pryor, a Democrat who was one of the state's most beloved political figures and remained active in public service in the state long after he left office, has died. He was 89.

Pryor, who went undercover to investi-

gate nursing homes while a congressman, died Saturday of natural causes in Little Rock surrounded by family, his son Mark Pryor, said. David Pryor was a heart at-

tack and stroke survivor who was also hospitalized in 2020 after testing positive for COVID-19.

"I think he was a great model for pub-



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, centre, speaks to Britain's work and Pensions Secretary Mel Stride, (right), next to branch manager Jack Randall, (left), during a visit to a branch of Timpson, in central London, on April 19. (AP)

Lat/Am

Ecuadorians vote

Haitians scramble to survive & seek safety

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, April 21, (AP) — As the sun sets, a burly man bellows into a megaphone while a curious crowd gathers around him. Next to him is a small cardboard box with several banknotes worth 10 Haitian gourdes — about 7 US cents.

"Everyone give whatever they have!" the man shouts as he grabs the arms and hands of people entering a neighborhood in the capital of Port-au-Prince that has been targeted by violent gangs.

The community recently voted to buy a metal barricade and install it themselves to try to protect residents from the unrelenting violence that killed or injured more than 2,500 people in Haiti from January to March.

"Every day I wake up and find a dead body," said Noune-Carme Manoune, an immigration officer.

Life in Port-au-Prince has become a game of survival, pushing Haitians to new limits as they scramble to stay safe and alive while gangs overwhelm the police and the government remains largely absent. Some are installing metal barricades. Others press hard on the gas while driving near gang-controlled areas. The few who can afford it stockpile water, food, money and medication, supplies of which have dwindled since the main international airport closed in early March. The country's biggest seaport is largely paralyzed by marauding gangs.

"People living in the capital are locked in, they have nowhere to go," Philippe Branchat, International Organization for Migration chief in Haiti, said in a recent statement. "The capital is surrounded by armed groups and danger. It is a city under siege."

Phones ping often with alerts reporting gunfire, kidnappings and fatal shootings, and some supermarkets have so many armed guards that they resemble small police stations.

Gang attacks used to occur only in certain areas, but now they can happen anywhere, any time. Staying home does not guarantee safety: One man playing with his daughter at home was shot in the back by a stray bullet. Others have been killed.

Prohibited

Schools and gas stations are shuttered, with fuel on the black market selling for \$9 a gallon, roughly three times the official price. Banks have prohibited customers from withdrawing more than \$100 a day, and checks that used to take three days to clear now take a month or more. Police officers have to wait weeks to be paid.

"Everyone is under stress," said Isidore Gédéon, a 38-year-old musician. "After the prison break, people don't trust anyone. The state doesn't have control."

Gangs that control an estimated 80% of Port-au-Prince launched coordinated attacks on Feb. 29, targeting critical state infrastructure. They set fire to police stations, shot up the airport and stormed into Haiti's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates.

At the time, Prime Minister Ariel Henry was visiting Kenya to push for the UN-backed deployment of a police force. Henry remains locked out of Haiti, and a transitional presidential council tasked with selecting the country's next prime minister and Cabinet could be sworn in as early as this week. Henry has pledged to resign once a new leader is installed.

Few believe this will end the crisis. It's not only the gangs unleashing violence; Haitians have embraced a vigilante movement known as "bwa kale," that has killed several hundred suspected gang members or their associates.

"There are certain communities I can't go to because everyone is scared of everyone," Gédéon said. "You could be innocent, and you end up dead."

More than 95,000 people have fled Port-au-Prince in one month alone as gangs raid communities, torching homes and killing people in territories controlled by their rivals.

Also:

QUITO, Ecuador: Ecuadorians head to the polls Sunday in a referendum touted by the country's fledgling leader as a way to crack down on criminal gangs behind a spiraling wave of violence.

The majority of 11 questions posed to voters focus on tightening security measures. Proposals include deploying the army in the fight against the gangs, loosening obstacles to extradition of accused criminals and lengthening prison sentences for convicted drug traffickers.

Ecuador, traditionally one of South America's most peaceful countries, has been rocked in recent years by a wave of violence, much of it spilling over from neighboring Colombia, the world's largest producer of cocaine. Last year, the country's homicide rate shot up to 40 deaths per 100,000, one of the highest in the region.

President Daniel Noboa has rallied popular support by confronting the gangs head on. That task became more urgent in January when masked gunmen, some on orders from imprisoned drug traffickers, terrorized residents and took control of a TV station while it was live on the air in an unprecedented show of force.

Following the rampage, the 36-year-old leader decreed an "internal armed conflict," enabling him to use emergency powers to deploy the army in pursuit of some 20 gangs now classified as "terrorists."

MIAMI: Venezuela's opposition is rallying behind an unknown former diplomat to challenge Nicolas Maduro in this summer's presidential election, the latest gambit to unseat the self-declared socialist, whose lock on power seems all but assured.

On Friday night, all 10 parties in the chief opposition coalition announced they would back Edmundo González to be their candidate on the July ballot. Within hours, a catchy campaign jingle set to salsa music started circulating on social media declaring "Todo el mundo con Edmundo" — "The entire world with Edmundo."

The surprise show of unity adds to mounting international pressure on Maduro and his allies to allow Venezuelans a free and fair vote to decide who they want to lead the oil-rich South American nation for the next six years. Polls show that if given half a chance, Venezuelans would overwhelmingly vote to boot Maduro from office.

However, numerous obstacles remain to González' candidacy. Chief among them is a legal challenge, now with the Maduro-stacked Supreme Court, seeking to strike his party's ticket from the ballot altogether.



A Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force vessel sails near the site of a crash in the Pacific Ocean on April 21. Inset: This undated photo released by and taken from the official website of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, shows a SH-60K chopper. Two Japanese navy helicopters of the same type crashed in the Pacific Ocean south of Tokyo during a nighttime training flight after possibly colliding with each other, the country's defense minister said Sunday. (AP)

2 Japanese navy copters crash in Pacific Ocean; 1 dead, 7 missing

Two Japanese navy helicopters carrying eight crew members crashed in the Pacific Ocean south of Tokyo during a nighttime training flight after possibly colliding with each other, the country's defense minister said Sunday. One crew member who had been recovered from the waters was later pronounced dead, while rescuers searched for seven others who were still missing.

The two SH-60K choppers from the Maritime Self-Defense Force were carrying four crew each and lost contact late Saturday near Torishima island about 600 kilometers (370 miles) south of Tokyo, Defense Minister Minoru Kihara told reporters.

The cause of the crash was not immediately known, but officials believe the two helicopters

"highly likely" collided with each other before crashing into the water, Kihara said.

He added his ministry will suspend training flights for all SH-60s for now.

The navy chief of staff, Adm. Ryo Sakai, said the trainings will be suspended until the accident's cause is determined and preventive measures are adopted. (AP)

Asia

Maldivians vote in parliamentary elections

Blinken to visit China to bolster relations

WASHINGTON, April 21, (AP) — US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to China this coming week as Washington and Beijing try to keep ties on an even keel despite major differences on issues from the path to peace in the Middle East to the supply of synthetic opioids that have heightened fears over global stability.

The rivals are at odds on numerous fronts, including Russia's war in Ukraine, Taiwan and the South China Sea, North Korea, Hong Kong, human rights and the detention of American citizens. The United States and China also are battling over trade and commerce issues, with President Joe Biden announcing new tariffs on imports of Chinese steel this past week.

The State Department said Saturday that Blinken, on his second visit to China in less than a year, will travel to Shanghai and Beijing starting Wednesday for three days of meetings with senior Chinese officials, including Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Talks between Blinken and Chinese President Xi Jinping are expected, although neither side will confirm such a meeting is happening until shortly before it takes place.

Issues

The department said in a statement that Blinken would "discuss a range of bilateral, regional, and global issues," including the Middle East, the war in Ukraine, the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait.

He will also talk about progress made in "resuming counternarcotics cooperation, military-to-military communication, artificial intelligence, and strengthening people-to-people ties" and will reaffirm how important it is for the US and China to be "responsibly managing competition, even in areas where our two countries disagree," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.

The trip follows a phone call this month between Biden and Xi in which they pledged to keep high-level

contacts open, something they had agreed to last year at a face-to-face summit in California. Since that call, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has visited China and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has spoken by phone with his Chinese counterpart. Meetings at lower levels also have taken place.

Despite those encounters, relations are rocky. The US has recently become more vocal in its calls for China to stop supporting Russia's military-industrial sector, which Washington says has allowed Moscow to boost weapons production to support the war against Ukraine.

Rebuild

"We see China sharing machine tools, semiconductors, other dual-use items that have helped Russia rebuild the defense industrial base that sanctions and export controls had done so much to degrade," Blinken said Friday. "Now, if China purports on the one hand to want good relations with Europe and other countries, it can't on the other hand be fueling what is the biggest threat to European security since the end of the Cold War."

Blinken also has pushed for China to take a more active stance in pressing Iran not to escalate tensions in the Middle East. He has spoken to his Chinese counterpart several times since the Israel-Hamas war began six months ago as he has sought China's help in getting Iran to restrain proxy groups it has supported, armed and funded in the region.

That topic has taken on new urgency since direct back-and-forth attacks by Iran and Israel on each other's soil in the past week.

Also high on the agenda for Blinken will be Taiwan and the South China Sea.

The US has strongly condemned Chinese military exercises threatening Taiwan, which Beijing regards as a renegade province and vowed to reunify with the mainland by force if necessary. Successive U.S. administra-

tions have steadily ramped up military support and sales for Taipei, much to the anger of Chinese officials.

In the South China Sea, the US and others have become increasingly concerned by provocative Chinese actions in and around disputed areas. In particular, the U.S. has voiced objections to what it says are Chinese attempts to thwart legitimate activities by others in the waterway, notably the Philippines and Vietnam.

That was a major topic of concern earlier this month when Biden held a three-way summit with the prime minister of Japan and the president of the Philippines.

Also:

MALE, Maldives: Maldivians voted in parliamentary elections Sunday, in a ballot crucial for President Mohamed Muizzu, whose policies are keenly watched by India and China as they vie for influence in the archipelago nation.

Both countries are seeking a foothold in the Maldives, which has a strategic location in the Indian Ocean.

Muizzu's election as president last year sharpened the rivalry between India and China, with the new leader taking a pro-China stand and acting to remove Indian troops stationed on one of the country's islets.

Securing a majority in Parliament will be tough for Muizzu because some of his allies have fallen out and more parties entered the race.

Six political parties and independent groups are fielding 368 candidates for 93 seats in Parliament.

That is six more seats than the previous Parliament following adjustments for population growth.

About 284,000 people were eligible to vote and tentative results were expected to be announced late Sunday.

Muizzu's election campaign theme for president was "India out," accusing his predecessor of compromising national sovereignty by giving India too much influence.



Ecuador President Daniel Noboa attends a ceremony to deliver equipment to police, at the Gral. Alberto Enriquez Gallo police school in Quito, Ecuador, Jan 22. Ecuadorians head to the polls on April 21, in a referendum touted by Noboa as a way to crack down on criminal gangs behind a spiraling wave of violence. (AP)



Zeine



Campbell

Africa

Ferry sinks in CAR; 20 dead: At least 20 people have drowned in Central African Republic after a ferry sank while carrying passengers on a river, witnesses said Saturday.

The wooden ferry was carrying more than 300 people to a funeral over the Mpoko River in the capital, Bangui, on Friday when it started to collapse, witnesses told The Associated Press on Saturday. Local boat pilots and fishermen were the first to react and rescued victims and collected bodies from the river before the emergency services arrived.

One fisherman who involved in the rescue, Adrien Mossamo, said that at least 20 bodies were found while waiting for the military to arrive.

"It's a horrible day," he said. The death toll is rising as the military takes over the search, officials at Bangui University Hospital Center said. The exact number of deaths is currently unknown and the government didn't comment.

Civil society groups and local political parties sent their condolences in social media posts and called for an inquest into the sinking. (AP)

Somalia restates commitment:

The Somali government said on Saturday it commits itself to strengthening regional peace and security and promoting cooperation with Group 7 countries and international partners to ensure permanent peace and prosperity in the Horn of Africa.

In a press statement, the government commended the G7 efforts to tackle the shortage of foodstuff, poverty, armed conflicts, climate change, displacement and humanitarian aid, as well as reinforcing international response to such challenges.

It also welcomed the statement of the G7 foreign ministers following their three-day meeting in Italy, but expressed concern over a memo of understanding between Ethiopia and Somaliland that was announced last January.

It, further, voiced gratitude to the group

for having spoken highly of the progress in good governance, economy and security in Somalia, vowing to double military operations to wipe out terrorism.

The G7 foreign ministers had commended the important progress in the in-

stitutional, macroeconomic and security sector in Somalia, and encouraged the Somali Authorities to continue to make meaningful progress in the fight against Al Shabaab and in the consolidation of the institutional framework, including

the completion of a transparent and inclusive constitutional reform process. (KUNA)

US to withdraw troops from Niger:

The United States will begin plans to withdraw troops from Niger, US officials said Saturday, in what experts say is a blow to Washington and its allies in the region in terms of staging security operations in the Sahel. The planned departure comes as US officials said they were trying to find a new military agreement.

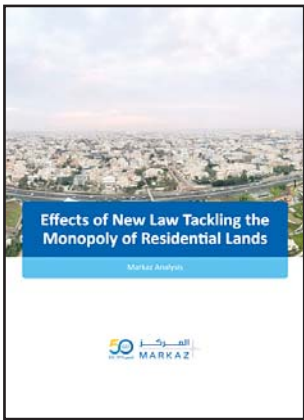
The prime minister of Niger, appointed by the ruling military junta, Ali Lamine Zeine, and US deputy secretary of state Kurt Campbell, agreed on Friday that the two nations would begin to plan the withdrawal of American troops, the US State Department told The Associated Press in an email Saturday.

A US official said there was no timeline for withdrawal besides talks set to start in the coming days about next steps. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to detail the private diplomatic discussions. An American delegation to coordinate the details of the withdrawal process will be dispatched soon.

Niger plays a central role in the US military's operations in Africa's Sahel region, an area on the edge of the Sahara Desert. (AP)



People participate in an event in celebration of the Earth Day in Quezon City, Philippines, on April 21. (Xinhua)



Study by Markaz

Markaz releases study on implications of new anti-monopoly legislation

In keeping with its commitment to empowering investors with vital perspectives and market insights for informed decision-making, Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" released a research paper on the implications of the new Kuwaiti law to tackle the monopolization of residential land. Prepared by the Markaz MENA Real Estate team, the paper details the terms and conditions, as well as the consequences and possible responses related to the recently introduced legislation that restricts undevel-

oped residential land held by individuals. The report outlines the actions of landholders in response to the new restrictions and the details of the fees imposed by the new law. It also sheds light on the possible price fluctuations in the residential land sector and its overall consequence on the Kuwaiti real estate sector. The report notes that the 'Anti-Monopoly Law on Land' is designed to curb feudal practices employed by traders. These practices involve controlling the supply and pricing of residential land by

acquiring extensive plots and keeping them unused for extended durations, intending to sell them at inflated prices during periods of scarcity in the residential land market. Effective January 2026, the law imposes an annual fee of KD10 per square meter exceeding the individual limit of 1,500 square meters of vacant residential land, with an increase of KD 30 per square meter every year until it reaches KD 100 per square meter per annum. According to Markaz's report, land-

holders are likely to evade the fee by transferring their surplus land to their children. Since the law prohibits Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) from possessing private land, the report suggests that SPV-owned lands may be offloaded to circumvent the fee. Additionally, the report examines various alternatives, such as selling the land, choosing to retain ownership and paying the fee, and developing a minimum area as strategies for landowners to adapt to the new legislation.

Market Movements

21-04-2024

	Change	Closing pts
SAUDI	- Tadawul	+15.87 12,518.22
EGYPT	- EGX 30	+290.74 28,623.39

Change Closing pts

Business

Kuwait banking sector sees increase in coverage of non-performing loans

Regulatory liquidity ratio rises, reflects sector stability

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The banking sector's coverage of non-performing loans increased last year, despite the decline in these loans to their lowest levels in approximately 16 years, dating back to the global financial crisis in late 2008, reports Al-Jarida daily.

During that crisis, non-performing loans amounted to about 0.9 percent, which remains one of the lowest levels globally. However, last year, the coverage of non-performing loans reached 312 percent, marking a 10 percent increase from the end of 2022 when it stood at 301.9 percent.

This increase in coverage is attributed to the hedging policy, particularly within the framework of increasing general allocations.

This policy may be justified by a conservative reading of the geopolitical situation. Despite this, the ratio is considered normal given the prosperity of profits and the overall good financial condition of the banks. The coverage ratio represents the ratio of total provisions available (from general and specific) to the total non-performing loans.

Additionally, the sector saw an increase in the regulatory liquidity ratio from 21.4 percent at the end of 2022 to 22.7 percent at the end of 2023. This ratio reflects the percentage of balances with the Central Bank of Kuwait and government treasury bills and bonds compared to customer deposits in dinars, meeting the minimum requirement of 18 percent.

Furthermore, the banking sector maintained a strong indicator of capital adequacy, with the ratio of capital base to Basel III risk-weighted assets reaching 19.9 percent at the end of last year, compared to 19.2 percent in 2022. The sector also saw improvements in net profitability margin, return on average shareholders' equity, and operating expenses ratio.

Despite the positive indicators, the banking sector operates within a diverse, competitive, and fluctuating operational environment. Major projects are delayed, and the private sector's role in the economy is less than expected. However, there are hopes for the liberalization of projects that could lead to an unprecedented development boom, complementing the operational deficiencies of the modern economy and fostering additional economic activity.

ABK receives J.P. Morgan Elite Quality Recognition award

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: J.P. Morgan recently honored Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) with the esteemed Elite Quality Recognition award for its exceptional performance in processing customer and financial institution transfers in US Dollars (USD) throughout 2023.

Straight-Through Processing (STP) is a bank method for accelerating transactions without manual intervention. This achievement therefore underscores ABK's continuous pursuit of service and operational enhancement.

This award highlights ABK's excellent operational efficiency in financial transfers. ABK has achieved an outstanding 98.56% USD Clearing MT103 STP rate, placing it among the few top-performing banks in the Middle East to achieve, as recognized in J.P. Morgan's evaluation.

Introduced in 1997, J.P. Morgan's MT103 award category focuses on debit transactions over USD 10,000. The quality recognition is granted to banks with an outstanding rate between 90 to 98.9%, acknowledging their excellence in USD clearing operations and successful STP achievement through SWIFT



Mohammad Al Bloushi – GM of Operations at ABK

transaction measurements.

The Bank's impressive percentage reflects its ongoing enhancement of services aligning with international standards, driven by the continuous progress in its digital transformation plan implementation.

A J.P. Morgan delegate visited ABK's headquarters to present the award in the presence of Mohammed Al Bloushi, General Manager of Operations at the Bank, and to explore future collaboration enhancing advanced customer ser-



J.P. Morgan Elite Quality Recognition award

vices.

On this occasion, Al Bloushi emphasized that winning J.P. Morgan's award signifies the substantial global trust in ABK. He highlighted, "Achieving top rates in the region for USD clearing customer transactions showcases the Bank's excellence in customer service, reflecting efforts to enhance customer experience with smooth transactions."

He credited this success to the Bank's ongoing investment in advanced banking technologies

USD rises to KD 0.308

The exchange rate of the US dollar on Sunday dropped 0.03 percent against the Kuwaiti dinar trading at KD 0.308 and the euro edged down 0.19 percent to the level of KD 0.328 compared to Thursday's rates, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said.

The CBK reported, in its daily

bulletin, that the sterling pound fell 0.76 percent to KD 0.381, the Swiss Franc, down 0.01 percent, trading at KD 0.338 and the Japanese yen remained steady at KD 0.002.

Exchange prices, declared by the CBK, reflect average rates and not the transactions' actual ones. (KUNA)

Bank achieves top USD clearing rate in region

Contract trades reach 270.5 mln dinars

Kuwait's real estate market sees surge in liquidity in March 2024

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: According to Al-Shall's weekly report, the liquidity of Kuwait's real estate market witnessed a significant surge in March 2024 compared to February 2024. The total value of contract trades for March amounted to approximately 270.5 million dinars, marking a notable increase of 57.1% over February's liquidity of about 172.2 million dinars. Additionally, March 2024 liquidity was 5.2% higher than March 2023, which stood at around 257.2 million dinars, reports Al-Qabas daily.

All transactions in March 2024 were contracts, with a total of

348 real estate deals recorded. The Al-Ahmadi Governorate had the highest number of deals at 96, representing approximately 27.6% of the total, followed by Hawalli Governorate with 74 deals (21.3%), while Al-Jahra Governorate had the lowest number of deals at 29 (8.3%).

Private housing activity transactions amounted to about 114.7 million dinars, reflecting an 18.3% increase compared to February. However, its contribution to the total value of real estate transactions decreased to about 42.4% from 56.3% in February.

The number of deals for this activity increased to 252, with the average value per deal reaching about 455 thousand dinars, up by approximately 4.7% from February.

Investment housing activity transactions totaled about 91.9 million dinars, showing a substantial 45.8% increase from February. Its contribution to total liquidity decreased to about 34.0% compared to 36.6% in February. The average value per deal for investment housing activity rose to about 1.1 million dinars, up by approximately 39.1% from February.

Kuwait's Bursa reports Y-o-Y decline in Q4-2023 net profits

GCC-listed companies see decline in net profits, led by energy sector

By KAMCO Invest Research

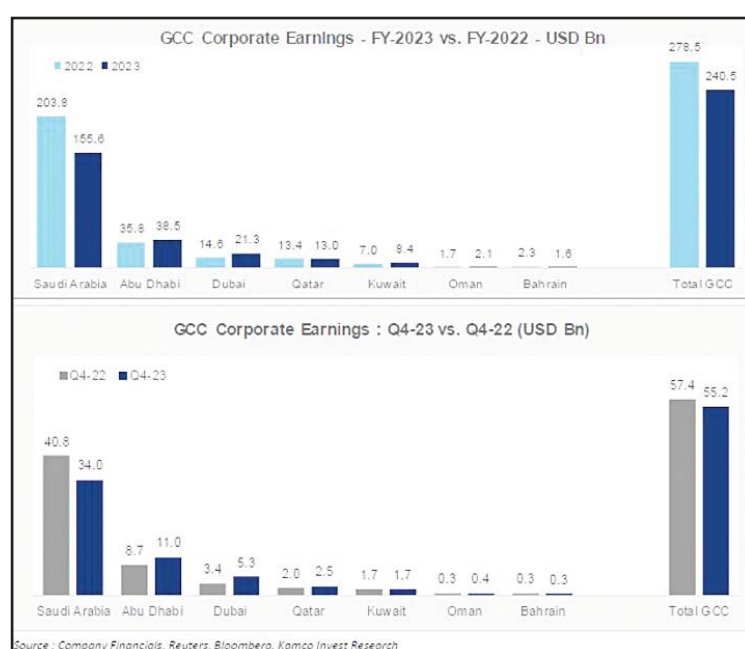
After registering record profits during 2022, net profits reported by listed companies in the GCC declined by 13.7% or USD 38.0 Bn to reach USD 240.5 Bn in 2023 mainly led by fall in profits for some of the key large-cap sectors. The biggest decline was reported by companies in the Energy sector with aggregate profits down by almost a quarter or USD 39.1 Bn to reach USD 127.1 Bn in 2023. The Materials sector was next with a profit decline of 78.3% or USD 12.85 Bn to reach USD 3.6 Bn followed by Capital Goods and Diversified Financials sectors with profit declines of USD 5.1 Bn (-48.0%) and USD 1.9 Bn (-55.2%), respectively. These declines were partially offset by higher full year profits reported by companies mainly in the Banking, Real Estate and F&B sectors.

The decline in profits reflected a general decline in global commodity prices during the year that can be gauged using the Bloomberg Commodity index that tracks commodities futures price movements. The index was down by 12.6% during the year mainly due to fall in prices of crude oil, natural gas, nickel and other commodities. Price of crude oil was down by 10.3% while natural gas prices were down more than 40%. In addition, there was a significant drop in volume of sales, especially for petrochemical and crude oil companies that affected the topline performance of these companies. That said, economic growth in the region remained positive with healthy manufacturing activity. The PMI figures for the Saudi Arabia and UAE showed healthy trends averaging above the 56 mark while for Qatar, it was slightly lower but still well above the growth mark.

In terms of quarterly trends, aggregate net profits declined by 11.3% q-o-q and 3.7% y-o-y to reach USD 55.2 Bn during Q4-2023. The y-o-y decline was once again led by fall in profits for Energy, Capital Goods and Materials companies, while in terms of q-o-q performance, the decline reflected fall in profits for companies in the Energy, Utilities, Banks and Telecom sectors. These declines were partially offset by higher profits mainly for the F&B sector.

At the country level, the biggest absolute decline in profits during 2023 was seen in Saudi Arabia with a fall of 23.7% or USD 48.2 Bn during the year, followed by Bahrain and Qatar with profit declines of 30.8% and 2.5%, respectively. On the other hand, companies listed on Dubai recorded the biggest y-o-y growth in net profits with an increase of USD 6.7 Bn or 24.7% followed by Abu Dhabi and Kuwait with profit growth of USD 2.7 Bn (+7.5%) and USD 1.5 Bn (+21.0%). In terms of quarterly performance, Saudi Arabia once again reported the biggest decline in profits during Q4-2023, both in terms of q-o-q and y-o-y change, while Abu Dhabi reported the biggest growth during Q4-2023 and was the only market that recorded a growth as compared to Q3-2023 whereas the rest of the GCC aggregates declined.

The Energy sector reported the biggest absolute quarterly profits in the GCC that reached USD 29.6 Bn, down 15.8% y-o-y and 15.1% q-o-q. The q-o-q decline came after average crude oil prices declined by almost 20% q-o-q during Q4-2023 to close the year at USD 77.7/b (Brent crude spot prices). Net profits for 11 out of the 26 companies in the sector declined q-o-q during Q4-2023 with Saudi Ar-



amco's profit declining by 16.7% to reach USD 27.4 Bn. On the other hand, profits for ADNOC Gas was up by 20.6% q-o-q to reach USD 1.3 Bn.

Profitability for the GCC banking sector breached the pre-pandemic levels and reached another record level during 2023. Aggregate profits during 2023 increased by 16.8% to reach USD 53.8 Bn. The y-o-y increase in 2023 was broad-based across the GCC with double-digit growth in profits for most markets in the GCC. Saudi-listed banks reported the biggest absolute increase in profits during the year by USD 2.0 Bn or 11.7% to reach USD 18.7 Bn, the highest in the GCC. The growth in profits during the year was led by an increase in total bank revenue that was partially offset by a small increase in loan loss provisions. Total bank revenue increased by a strong 16.3% to reach USD 122.2 Bn during 2023, the highest on record mainly led by an increase in both net interest income and a steep increase in non-interest income.

Kuwait

Bursa Kuwait-listed companies reported a y-o-y net profit decline of 2.6% during Q4-2023 that reached USD 1.69 Bn compared to USD 1.73 Bn during Q4-2022. The major sectors i.e., Banks, Telecommunication, Insurance and Transportation contributed to the y-o-y decline in aggregate profitability that was partially offset by higher profits reported by sectors like Diversified Fi-

nancials, Retailing and Media & Entertainment. In terms of FY-2023 profits, Kuwait-listed companies posted a gain of 21.0% during the year with profits reaching USD 8.4 Bn for the full year as compared to USD 7.0 Bn in 2022. Net profits for the Kuwaiti Banking sector surged 29.6% to USD 5.1 Bn in FY-2023 against USD 4.0 Bn in FY-2022, while the Q4-2023 earnings declined by 7.1% to USD 1.15 Bn in FY-2023 against USD 1.24 Bn in FY-2022.

Among the banks, NBK reported a net profit of USD 1.8 Bn for FY-2023 up by 10.1% vs. USD 1.7 Bn in FY-2022 mainly led by higher net operating income which was up 15.6% to USD 3.8 Bn led by significant rise in net interest income and net income from Islamic financing. KFH reported a net profit of USD 1.9 Bn for FY-2023 up by 63.4% vs. USD 1.2 Bn in FY-2022 due to the strong growth in net finance income as well as a decline in provisions booked during the quarter. The increase was also due to inclusion of earnings from AUB after the acquisition was completed in 2022. However, net profit for Q4-2023 declined by 19.5% to USD 399.7 Mn compared to USD 496.4 Mn in Q4-2022. Meanwhile, Burgan Bank reported a net profit of USD 141.7 Mn during FY-2023 as compared to a profit of USD 170.2 Mn during the FY-2022 down by 16.5%. The decrease was primarily attributed to the increase in net monetary loss on account of hyperinflation.

Net Profits for the Telecom sector increased by 19.1% y-o-y to reach USD 1.04 Bn for FY-2023 compared to USD 876.9 Mn for FY-2022. Sequentially, Q4-2023 earnings declined by 28.0% to USD 140.4 Mn vs. USD 195.0 Mn in Q4-2022. Zain recorded a net profit of USD 701.0 Mn in FY-2023 compared to USD 639.7 Mn in FY-2022 an increase of 9.6%. The telco reported revenues of USD 6.2 Bn, up by 10% y-o-y and an EBITDA margin of 37%. EBITDA for the quarter reached USD 565 Mn, up 8% y-o-y, resulting in an EBITDA margin of 35%. OOREDOO recorded a net profit of USD 236.9 Mn in FY-2023 vs USD 128.5 Mn in FY-2022, up by 83.9% mainly led by higher topline. Meanwhile, STC posted a decline of 1.9% in net profit that reached USD 106.3 Mn for FY-2023 compared to USD 108.4 Mn during the FY-2022.

Net Profits for the Capital Goods sector reached USD 195.1 Mn in FY-2023 compared to a net loss of USD 33.7 Mn in FY-2022. In terms of quarterly performance, Q4-2023 profits for the sector reached 54.7 Mn compared to a loss of USD 66.1 Mn in Q4-2022 mainly led by a relatively higher loss of USD 30.0 Mn reported by Arabi Holding vs. a loss of USD 24.6 Mn during FY-2022. Higher profits for the Gulf Cable & Electrical Ind. that reached USD 68.4 Mn in FY-2023 vs. USD 42.3 Mn in FY-2022 also added to the sector's profits. The increase in profits was driven by the increase in the dividend income.

Profits for the Insurance sector declined by 32.5% y-o-y to USD 244.7 Mn in FY-2023 compared to USD 362.4 Mn in FY-2022.

Kuwait Insurance reported the biggest decrease in profits in the sector that reached USD 39.4 Mn in FY-2023 compared to USD 144.0 Mn in FY-2022 mainly due to the application of IFRS 9. Meanwhile, Al Ahleiah Insurance posted a net profit of USD 65.1 Mn for FY-2023 against USD 56.4 Mn up by 15.4% supported by the increase in investment income.

Thailand & NZ vow to strengthen economic ties

Thailand and New Zealand on Wednesday vowed to boost economic cooperation with an aim to triple two-way trade by 2045, as the New Zealand leader visited Thailand for the first time in 11 years.

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon arrived in Bangkok on Tuesday and met with his Thai counterpart Srettha Thavasin at the government house on Wednesday. They discussed trade, education, investment, visa arrangements, tourism, transnational crime and cybersecurity.

"We have agreed to elevate Thailand-New Zealand relations to a strategic partnership in 2026 or sooner, which will mark the 70th anniversary of our diplomatic relations. This will create the momentum for us to further expand and deepen cooperation in all dimensions," Srettha said during a joint news conference after the meeting.

Luxon said that trade between the countries has tripled since a free trade agreement was signed 20 years ago. "But today we have committed to look

for further opportunities to expand our economic cooperation and for new opportunities. Today we announced an ambitious goal to triple our two-way trade by 2045," he said.

Business delegations from both countries also held a meeting helmed by the two prime ministers at the government house, seeking to rapidly expand the bilateral economic relationship. The two leaders said they looked forward to tariff-free entry for all Thai and New Zealand imports due to take effect Jan. 1. (AP)

China's manufacturing hub sees growth

Jiangsu Province, a manufacturing hub in east China, reported a foreign trade volume of 1.3 trillion yuan (about 179.5 billion U.S. dollars) in the first quarter of 2024, up 9.1 percent year on year, local customs said Saturday.

Exports soared to 829.12 billion yuan, registering a 7.5 percent increase over the same period last year, while imports totaled 467.99 billion yuan, up 12 percent.

Private businesses continued to be a big contributor to Jiangsu's for-

ign trade, registering an import and export volume of 598.82 billion yuan in the first three months, up 20.7 percent year on year and accounting for 46.2 percent of the province's total foreign trade.

Mechanical and electrical products are the main export items of Jiangsu. In the first quarter, the exports of mechanical and electrical goods registered 569.93 billion yuan, an increase of 8.9 percent year on year. (Xinhua)

Bailey: UK might lower interest rates sooner than US

The Fed's fight against inflation is lacking progress

By National Bank of Kuwait

United States Retail Sales

Retail sales in the United States topped estimates, rising 0.7% on the month doubling expectations of a 0.3% increase. The greater than expected print suggests resilience within US consumers and upwards pressure on inflation persists. The latest retail sales numbers come amid a time where CPI was up 0.4% on the month and 3.5% annually, while recent non-farm payrolls show 303,000 jobs added to the economy, indicating that US consumers are willing to spend despite inflation reaccelerating backed by a historically tight labor market that continues to fuel demand in the economy. Following the release of the retail sales data, markets pushed back expectations of a first rate cut from July to September.

Empire State Manufacturing Index

The Empire State Manufacturing Survey for April 2024 shows continued decline in manufacturing activity in New York. Despite a small increase, the general business conditions index remained negative. New orders, shipments, and employment all contracted. Inventories edged higher for the first time in months, and delivery times shortened. Prices paid for inputs rose slightly, but selling prices held steady. While firms expect some improvement in the next six months, optimism is subdued, with a significant decline in the outlook for employment growth.

Words From Jerome Powell

Stocks closed mixed, treasury yields rose, while the greenback was slightly up after Fed Chair Jerome Powell lamented about the "lack of further progress" on inflation this year. Commenting on the recent economic data, Powell stated that it "shows solid growth and continued strength in the labor market, but also a lack of further progress so far this year on returning to our 2% inflation goal." He added that "The recent data have clearly not

given us greater confidence, and instead indicate that it's likely to take longer than expected to achieve that confidence." Furthermore, Powell said that "We can maintain the current level of restriction for as long as needed" indicating that he is walking back from his statements weeks ago where he signaled that he is happy with the progress of inflation falling to 2%, and that the Fed are on track to cut rates sooner rather than later. As markets digested the comments made by Powell, they significantly reduced expectations of a cut in June and July, instead favoring a first rate cut to occur in September's meeting.

The US Dollar index closed the week at 106.118

United Kingdom

Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey Speaks

The Bank of England Governor, Andrew Bailey, suggested the UK might lower interest rates sooner than the US. He believes inflation in the US is driven by high demand, while the UK is still recovering from supply chain issues and the war. This contrasts with the Federal Reserve Chair who sees US inflation lasting longer. As a result, some speculate the Bank of England or European Central Bank could cut rates before the US Federal Reserve. However, investors are cautious, pushing back expectations for a UK rate cut from August to September and reducing their forecasts for the total number of cuts this year. Despite Bailey's comments, the value of the pound remained relatively unchanged.

UK CPI

The Consumer Price Index in the UK was unchanged in March 2024 compared to February, while the Consumer Prices index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) increased by 0.6%. On an annual basis, CPI decreased to 3.2% from 3.4% in February, and CPIH remained unchanged at 3.8%. Compared to annual changes, prices increases were larger for both CPI and CPIH in March 2024. Food prices rose at a slower pace in March

Rates - 21st April 2024

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0635	1.0599	1.0689	1.0654	1.0600	1.0720	1.0696
GBP	1.2450	1.2363	1.2498	1.2371	1.2300	1.2500	1.2381
JPY	153.07	152.98	154.78	154.63	153.6	153.3	152.537
CHF	0.9122	0.9010	0.9151	0.9100	0.9010	0.8960	0.90865

2024 compared to a year ago, while motor fuel prices increased this year but decreased compared to March 2023. Both core CPI and core CPIH decreased slightly on a year-to-year basis. Price increases for core goods slowed down for both CPI and CPIH. Overall, inflation slowed slightly in March 2024 compared to February. However, prices are still higher than they were a year ago.

Retail Sales

Retail Sales in March 2024 showed no change compared to the previous month. This follows a small increase in February that was later revised to flat growth. There were mixed results across sectors, with fuel and non-food stores experiencing a slight rise, while food stores and online retailers saw a decrease in sales volume. However, looking at the bigger picture, retail sales for the past quarter have grown slightly compared to the previous quarter, likely due to the low sales figures during the December holidays.

The GBP/USD currency pair closed the week at 1.2371

China

Industrial Production

China's economy grew faster than expected in the first quarter, at 5.3%. However, this growth may not be sustainable. The strong performance was driven by public investment, while private consumption and production remained weak. This uneven growth raises concerns about a potential housing market crisis and excess capacity in some industries. Despite these challenges, economists still believe China's 5% growth target for the year is achievable. The question remains whether the government will take further action to boost domestic demand and stabilize the property market.

The USD/CNY currency pair closed the week at 7.2403

Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30790.

Confuses some FB users

Meta's newest AI model beats some of its peers

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., April 21, (AP) Facebook parent Meta Platforms unveiled a new set of artificial intelligence systems Thursday that are powering what CEO Mark Zuckerberg calls "the most intelligent AI assistant that you can freely use."

But as Zuckerberg's crew of amped-up Meta AI agents started venturing into social media this week to engage with real people, their bizarre exchanges exposed the ongoing limitations of even the best generative AI technology.

One joined a Facebook moms' group to talk about its gifted child. Another tried to give away nonexistent items to confused members of a Buy Nothing forum.

Meta, along with leading AI developers Google and OpenAI, and startups such as Anthropic, Cohere and France's Mistral, have been churning out new AI language models and hoping to persuade customers they've got the smartest, handiest or most efficient chatbots.

While Meta is saving the most powerful of its AI models, called Llama 3, for later, on Thursday it publicly released two smaller versions of the same Llama 3 system and said it's now baked into the Meta AI assistant feature in Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

AI language models are trained on vast pools of data that help them predict the most plausible next word in a sentence, with newer versions typically smarter and more capable than their predecessors. Meta's newest models were built with 8 billion and 70 billion parameters - a measurement of how much data the system is trained on. A bigger, roughly 400 billion-parameter model is still in training.

"The vast majority of consumers don't candidly know or care too much about the underlying base model, but the way they will experience it is just as a much more useful, fun and versatile AI assistant," said Nick Clegg, Meta's president of global affairs, in an interview.

He added that Meta's AI agent is loosening up. Some people found the earlier Llama 2 model - released less than a year ago - to be "a little stiff and sanctimonious sometimes in not responding to what were often perfectly innocuous or innocent prompts and questions," he said.

But in letting down their guard, Meta's AI agents also were spotted this week posing as humans with made-up

life experiences. An official Meta AI chatbot inserted itself into a conversation in a private Facebook group for Manhattan moms, claiming that it, too, had a child in the New York City school district. Confronted by group members, it later apologized before the comments disappeared, according to a series of screenshots shown to The Associated Press.

"Apologies for the mistake! I'm just a large language model, I don't have experiences or children," the chatbot told the group.

One group member who also happens to study AI said it was clear that the agent didn't know how to differentiate a helpful response from one that would be seen as insensitive, disrespectful or meaningless when generated by AI rather than a human.

"An AI assistant that is not reliably helpful and can be actively harmful puts a lot of the burden on the individuals using it," said Aleksandra Korolova, an assistant professor of computer science at Princeton University.

Clegg said Wednesday he wasn't aware of the exchange. Facebook's online help page says the Meta AI agent will join a group conversation if invited, or if someone "asks a question in a post and no one responds within an hour." The group's administrators have the ability to turn it off.

In another example shown to the AP on Thursday, the agent caused confusion in a forum for swapping unwanted items near Boston. Exactly one hour after a Facebook user posted about looking for certain items, an AI agent offered a "gently used" Canon camera and an "almost-new portable air conditioning unit that I never ended up using."

Meta said in a written statement Thursday that "this is new technology and it may not always return the response we intend, which is the same for all generative AI systems." The company said it is constantly working to improve the features.

In the year after ChatGPT sparked a frenzy for AI technology that generates human-like writing, images, code and sound, the tech industry and academia introduced some 149 large AI systems trained on massive datasets, more than double the year before, according to a Stanford University survey.

They may eventually hit a limit - at least when it comes to data, said Nestor Maslej, a research manager for Stanford's Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence.

the day-to-day operations of the asset's miners themselves. But, as with everything in the volatile cryptocurrency, the future is hard to predict.

Here's what you need to know. Bitcoin "halving," a preprogrammed event that occurs roughly every four years, impacts the production of bitcoin. Miners use farms of noisy, specialized computers to solve convoluted math puzzles; and when they complete one, they get a fixed number of bitcoins as a reward.

Halving does exactly what it sounds like - it cuts that fixed income in half.

Sluggish kick off for spring 'homebuying' season in US

Home sales fall in March

LOS ANGELES, April 21, (AP) The spring homebuying season is off to a sluggish start as home shoppers contend with elevated mortgage rates and rising prices.

Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes fell 4.3% in March from the previous month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.19 million, the National Association of Realtors said Thursday. That's the first monthly decline in sales since December and follows a nearly 10% monthly sales jump in February.

Existing home sales also fell 3.7% compared with March last year. The latest sales still came in slightly higher than the 4.16 million pace economists were expecting, according to FactSet.

A modest pullback in mortgage rates early this year helped lift home sales in January and February, but rates mostly ticked up in February and March, when many of the home sales that were finalized last month would have taken place.

Mortgage rates have risen the past three weeks, with the average rate on a 30-year mortgage moving this week above 7% to its highest level since late November, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday.

The trend is a setback for home shoppers this spring homebuying season, traditionally the housing market's busiest time of the year.

"Home sales essentially remain stuck because (the) mortgage rate has been stable and inventory is not really rising," said Lawrence Yun, the NAR's chief economist.

Despite the pullback in sales, the national median home sales price climbed 4.8% from a year earlier to \$393,500. That's the highest median sales price for any March on records going back to 1999 and marks the ninth month in a row that prices have risen compared to a year earlier.

The latest surge in prices reflects the

Average long-term US mortgage rate climbs above 7 percent to highest level since Nov

LOS ANGELES, April 21 (AP) Prospective homebuyers are facing higher costs to finance a home with the average long-term U.S. mortgage rate moving above 7% this week to its highest level in nearly five months.

The average rate on a 30-year mortgage rose to 7.1% from 6.88% last week, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday. A year ago, the rate averaged 6.39%.

When mortgage rates rise, they can add hundreds of dollars a month in costs for borrowers, limiting how much they can afford at a time when the U.S. housing market remains constrained by relatively few homes for sale and rising home prices.

"As rates trend higher, potential homebuyers are deciding whether to buy before rates rise even more or hold off in hopes of decreases later in the year," said Sam Khater, Freddie Mac's chief economist. "Last week, purchase applications rose modestly, but it remains unclear how many homebuyers can withstand increasing rates in the future."

heightened competition many home shoppers are facing. Consider, 60% of homes purchased in March sold within less than a month of hitting the market. And 29% of homes sold above their initial list price, up from 28% in March last year, Yun said. "Inventory is simply not there," he said.

While the supply of homes on the market remains below the historical average, the typical increase in homes for sale that happens ahead of the spring homebuying season gave home shoppers a wider selection of properties to choose from.

At the end of last month, there were 1.11 million unsold homes on the market, a 4.7% increase from February and up 14.4% from a year earlier, the NAR said. That's still well short of the 1.7

million homes on the market in March 2019, before the pandemic.

The available inventory at the end of last month amounted to a 3.2-month supply, going by the current sales pace. That's up from a 2.9-month supply in February and a 2.7-month supply in March last year. In a more balanced market between buyers and sellers, there is a 4- to 5-month supply.

That shortage of homes on the market means home sellers generally having an edge on buyers, especially those vying for the most affordable homes, which often fetch multiple offers.

The U.S. housing market is coming off a deep, 2-year sales slump triggered by a sharp rise in mortgage rates and a dearth of homes on the market. Sales

may hold its main interest steady for a while. The Fed wants to get more confidence that inflation is sustainably heading toward its target of 2%.

The yield was at 4.64% at midday Thursday after new data on applications for unemployment benefits and a report showing manufacturing growth in the mid-Atlantic region pointed to a stronger-than-expected U.S. economy.

"With no cuts to the federal funds rate imminent and with the economy still strong, there is no reason to see downward pressure on mortgage rates right now," said Lisa Sturtevant, chief economist at Bright MLS. "It seems increasingly likely that mortgage rates are not going to come down any time soon."

Sturtevant said it's likely the average rate on a 30-year mortgage will hold close to 7% throughout the spring before easing to the mid-to-high 6% range into the summer. Other economists also expect that mortgage rates will ease moderately later this year, with forecasts generally calling for the average rate to remain above 6%.

Bitcoin's latest 'halving' has arrived. Here's what you need to know

NEW YORK, April 21, (AP) The "miners" who chisel bitcoins out of complex mathematics are taking a 50% pay cut - effectively reducing new production of the world's largest cryptocurrency, again. Bitcoin's latest "halving" occurred Friday night. Soon after the highly anticipated event, the price of bitcoin held steady at about \$63,907.

Now, all eyes are on what will happen down the road. Beyond bitcoin's long-term price behavior, which relies heavily on other market conditions, experts point to potential impacts on

counteract inflation - still, experts stress that future gains are never guaranteed. Per bitcoin's code, halving occurs after the creation of every 210,000 "blocks" - where transactions are recorded - during the mining process.

No calendar dates are set in stone, but that divvies out to roughly once every four years.

Only time will tell. Following each of the three previous halvings, the price of bitcoin was mixed in the first few months and wound up significantly higher one year later. But as investors

well know, past performance is not an indicator of future results.

"I don't know how significant we can say halving is just yet," said Adam Morgan McCarthy, a research analyst at Kaiko. "The sample size of three (previous halvings) isn't big enough to say 'it's going to go up 500% again,' or something."

At the time of the last halving in May 2020, for example, bitcoin's price stood at around \$8,602, according to CoinMarketCap - and climbed almost seven-fold to nearly \$56,705 by May 2021. Bitcoin

prices nearly quadrupled a year after July 2016's halving and shot up by almost 80 times one year out from bitcoin's first halving in November 2012.

Experts like McCarthy stress that other bullish market conditions contributed to those returns.

Friday's halving also arrives after a year of steep increases for bitcoin. As of Friday night, bitcoin's price stood at \$63,907 per CoinMarketCap. That's down from the all-time-high of about \$73,750 hit last month, but still double the asset's price from a year ago.

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Company supports Australian University's innovation & entrepreneurship forum

Zain showcases efforts to foster thriving local entrepreneurship ecosystem

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Zain announced its support to the Australian University's Innovation & Entrepreneurship Forum, entitled "Lead Your Future". The event offered a unique space for the university's students to present their creative ideas and innovative business projects, empowering them to enter the local entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Zain joined the forum's opening ceremony, attended by President of the Australian University Professor Isam Zabalawi, Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, Manager of the Australian University's Innovation & Entrepreneurship Center Dr. Bashayer Al Khalifah, along with university officials and Zain Kuwait's Innovation & Entrepreneurship team.

Zain's support to this forum springs from its strong belief in the crucial role such platforms play in empowering young aspiring minds, guiding them towards shaping their own future. By encouraging young people to pursue their business aspirations, they become confident to enter the thriving local entrepreneurship ecosystem and bring their ideas to life, eventually leading to profitable, sustainable



Al Khashti showcased Zain's contributions to support innovation and entrepreneurship.

startups.

During the forum, Zain showcased its journey to support entrepreneurship, which began 14 years ago with its award-winning Zain Great Idea startup accelerator program. Since then, the program helped accelerate hundreds of startups, many of them now own thriving businesses, not just in the Kuwaiti market, but across the region. In the past 24 months alone, startups that joined ZGI raised over \$17.6 million of investments.

Last year, ZGI was recognized with the E-Business Award from the prestigious Entrepreneur Middle



Al Khashti with Zain and AU officials during the forum's opening ceremony.

East magazine. Zain's program was awarded 'Ecosystem Enabler of the Year' to acknowledge the company's ever-growing endeavors in accelerating the regional tech startups ecosystem and empowering entrepreneurs in Kuwait and the region.

Zain also strongly believes that innovation is at the heart of any startup's success, and without nurturing it, businesses cannot truly grow. For this, the company launched its Innovation Nation initiative, which encompasses all

of Zain's innovation and entrepreneurship programs, with a focus on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) areas.

The initiative targets young people and entrepreneurs and aims to foster a digitally capable genera-

tion with the skill sets required by modern markets. Through Zain's many fruitful collaborations with local, regional, and international partners, Innovation Nation presented tens of programs to upskill youth and prepare them for STEM careers and entrepreneurship paths. So far, almost 6000 young people benefited from this initiative.

Under this initiative, Zain signed partnerships with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and Sabah Al Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) - a KFAS vcenter, to elevate the digital literacy of the youth, empower creativity and innovation, and enhance the local startup ecosystem. The partnerships also aim to accelerate capacity building, upskill national talents in the private sector, grow research & development in innovation, enable social enterprises, and empower local entrepreneurs.

In addition, Zain and SACGC became the official Kuwait Country Partners of Beban, the regional entrepreneur reality TV show, joining forces to include and enable Kuwaiti entrepreneurs' participation in the third season of the show, which aired in January 2024.

Competition set to launch on May 11

Gulf Bank opens registration for the 3rd edition of Datathon competition

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Building on the tremendous success of its first two editions, Gulf Bank has announced the third annual Datathon competition, scheduled for May 11, 2024. This event will be held at Kuwait University's Cultural Center in Shadadiya, and will offer substantial prizes across various categories such as "Data Modeling," "Data Visualization," and "Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)."

On this occasion, Ms. Mai Al-Owaish, Chief Data and Innovation Officer at Gulf Bank, said: "Following the successful launch of Kuwait's first Datathon competition in 2022,

and the impressive turnout at the second edition, we are excited to extend opportunities to younger participants in this year's event by reducing the minimum age requirement from 18 to 16. This allows them to compete in all categories, including the newly introduced Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) category."

Al-Owaish further stated: "The bank offers participation opportunities for university students and recent graduates who are looking for high-level training in data analysis and programming, along with high school students aged 16 and older. Additionally, experienced data analysts and even members of the general public with an interest in data science are welcome to participate."

She continued: "In alignment with Kuwait's 2035 vision to cultivate creative human capital, and following the bank's commitment to positioning itself as a bank of the future, Gulf Bank is dedicated to leveraging all its resources to foster a data-driven culture in society. We aim to encourage young individuals to enhance their data science capabilities, thus meeting Kuwait's future requirements."

Al-Owaish pointed out that Gulf Bank, a leader in data and digital services in Kuwait, is committed to creating ideal opportunities that strengthen the local technology community. This is achieved by organizing high-quality competitions and preceding them with educational workshops led by a distinguished group of data experts.

She emphasized that the educational workshops, beginning three days prior to the competition, cover topics such as "Data Visualization" with Tableau, "Data Modeling" with Python, and Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI). The goal is to equip content creators with the essential data and analytical skills needed for innovation and



AIDanah Winner

Anticipation builds for draw in July

Mona Nour Al-Hadad takes home KD 100,000 prize from Gulf Bank

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: As part of its commitment to rewarding its customers and encouraging them to continue saving, Gulf Bank announced Mona Seid Nour Ali Al-Hadad as the first lucky winner of the quarterly Al-Danah Millionaire account prize worth KD 100,000. The draw took place last Thursday, 18 April 2024, in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young.

Anticipation is high among customers for the announcement of the winner of the KD 1 million prize in the forthcoming draw scheduled for July 18, 2024.

The Al-Danah Millionaire account is one of the most rewarding and prestigious savings accounts in Kuwait, with periodic draws that have been creating millionaires since its launch in 1998. Gulf Bank is proud to add two new winners to the country's list of millionaires annually.

For the seventeenth consecutive year, Al-Danah Millionaire account has been offering monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to two quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semi-annual draw prize of KD 1 million, and

success. During these sessions, participants will come together to tackle real-world data challenges using various data science tools and techniques.

Those interested in participating can register through the following link: e-gulfbank.com/datathon

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.

One of the many advantages of the AIDanah account, is being the only account in Kuwait that transfers the customers' chances of winning from the previous year to the next, as part of a program that rewards customers for their loyalty to Gulf Bank.

In order to increase one's chances of winning, customers must maintain a minimum of KD 200 in their accounts, or deposit continuously to increase their chances of winning. Al-Danah account holders are eligible to win Gulf Bank's monthly, quarterly, and annual AIDanah draws.

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Activities at the previous competition.

Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait conducts Blood Donation Camp at Adan

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: In response to Kuwait Central Blood Bank's urgent call of facing a critical shortage of blood, Indian Muslim Association (IMA) Kuwait took swift action, organizing a Blood Donation Camp on Friday, April 12, 2024 at Adan Blood Donation Center. Despite the short notice, Camp garnered a remarkable turnout as donors generously contributed to the cause.

Mr. Abdul Mohsin Al Lahu, Manager of the Community Section at the Social Reform Society Kuwait, graced the event as a special guest and expressed gratitude towards IMA for their proactive initiative.

Donors were recognized and appreciated with Certificates for their invaluable contributions. Adan Blood Bank Staff were also acknowledged for their exceptional dedication to the community with Certificates of Appreciation.

Dr Asmaa Raafat, Head of Mobile Blood Donation Unit at Central Blood Bank extended congratulations and heartfelt thanks to IMA for their swift response and unwavering support, which ensured the successful execution of the event.

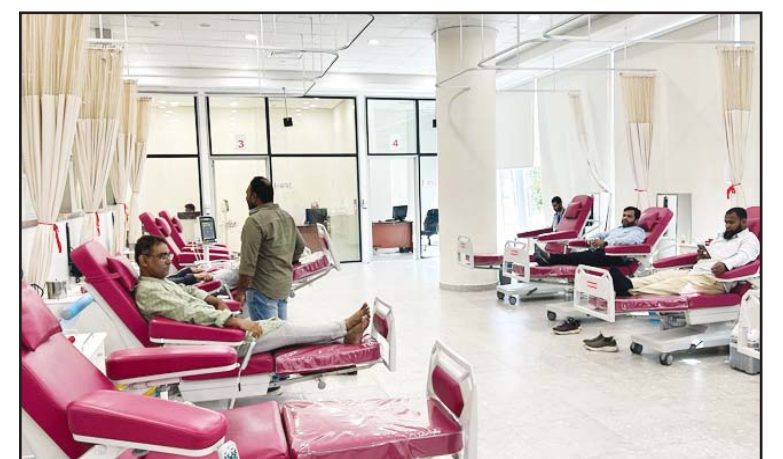
IMA expressed heartfelt appreciation to all volunteers who selflessly dedicated their time and efforts to organize the event, foregoing their Eid celebrations and activities in the spirit of service to humanity.

Event stands as a testament to the Community's Unity & Commitment to supporting critical causes.

IMA Kuwait, an Indian socio-religious organization, serves the community residing in Kuwait under the patronage of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Kuwait. It focuses on providing a platform for the spiritual and social enhancement of expatriates living in Kuwait through various programs and social gatherings. It looks forward to organizing more beneficial programs in the future, catering to the needs of the expatriate community, especially the Indian diaspora.

For further information, guidance related to the event

Contact: 60001424 / 69901154
www.imakuwait.org



Warba partakes in activities of Marketing Club at GUST

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Warba Bank announced its sponsorship and participation in the activities of the Student Marketing Club at the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST). On this occasion, Warba Bank participated in the activities of the "Student Marketing Club Week" held at the university campus through its pavilion. The students were introduced to the benefits of the 'Game Edition card' and the 'Bloom' category. The employees received the students through the Bank's booth to answer their inquiries about the benefits of the Game Edition card and the events organized by the Bank for this cardholders.

During the opening, the various services and products provided by the Bank were presented, especially those targeting the youth group and the various benefits granted to them by the Bank out of its social responsibility towards all segments of society.

Ayman Salem Al-Mutairi, Director Marketing and Corporate Communications at Warba Bank, said: "Warba Bank's sponsorship of the Marketing Club at GUST again proves Warba's eagerness to direct students' energies to develop their creativity through its numerous activities and programs specialized in Islamic economic applications and the activity of Islamic banks, especially marketing, in addition to the role of social activities throughout the year, which Warba Bank will provide during the year 2024 in cooperation with the Marketing Club, and will be announced within the monthly plans in cooperation with the two parties."

Al-Mutairi added that Warba Bank will sponsor all activities organized by the Marketing Club at the university campus. Warba's team will also be present to support youth events and ac-



Warba team

activities at all levels, stimulate their creativity and abilities, and develop their scientific and practical skills within its pioneering social responsibility program, through which it approaches all different segments of society, especially the category of students who need all forms of support before starting their professional life.

In turn, Abdul Aziz Ahmed Malallah - Head of the Marketing Club at GUST said: "We extend our sincere thanks to Warba Bank for its constant presence and support of youth. Warba always communicates and seeks to support useful youth activities, especially at Gulf University of Science and Technology."

The Marketing Club of the Gulf University of Science and Technology

is considered one of the vital student groups that cares for the learner in his administrative field in general and his marketing field in particular. The Club provides a comprehensive set of accredited training courses, in addition to seminars, conferences, and field visits, that aims to make the student knowledgeable in his academic and practical specialization in the field of marketing.

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.

Phish uses Sphere tech to give fans something unique

LAS VEGAS, April 21, (AP): Phish opened its four-night stay at the Sphere Thursday with a four-hour show that used the advanced technology in the \$2.3 billion arena to deliver a show that even the band's most ardent fans have never experienced before.

"We came in really wanting to do a show that was a great Phish show," said Abigail Rosen Holmes, who is running the visual show. She said the band and its creative team wanted to mix the Sphere's technical capabilities and consider "what can we do for Phish that we maybe couldn't do for any other artist?"

Here's how Phish is creating a set of shows that even fans who've seen the band perform hundreds of times won't have experienced before.

While Phish shows usually get their visual punch from lighting guru Chris Kuroda's massive lighting rig, these shows are completely different as the band uses custom visuals on the 160,000-square foot 16K-by-16K LED screen.

Three-dimensional blue bars moving and spinning in time and growing to meet beams of light falling from the ceiling. Live video of the band playing, cut into pieces. A wall of psychedelic-colored cars blinking their lights with a long improvisational jam. Easter eggs from Phish's history - like the vacuum cleaner drum-

mer Jon Fishman sometimes plays - falling from the ceiling. A natuescape that then morphs into a fantasy world.

Holmes sits in the center of the arena controlling the visuals in real-time, mixing the elements created with Montreal-based entertainment studio Moment Factory to match the band's performance.

Kuroda sits beside her, using six light towers behind the stage plus spotlights to find the right moments to bring people back to the band on stage.

Toward the end of Thursday night's show, Kuroda started to spotlight individual members of the band, sending a simple black silhouette onto the wall. The silhouette then burst into a reddened field of 20 silhouettes throughout the arena.

Speakers

There are 1,600 permanent speakers, along with 300 mobile speaker modules, that use a 3D audio beamforming and wave field synthesis technology to spread sound throughout the venue. The system allows for individual instruments to be heard from different parts of the arena. "It's like pinpoints of sound and thousands and thousands of them," says Phish's Trey Anastasio.

There are 17,500 seats inside the Sphere, every one of which will be filled with a Phish fan this week, along with about 2,500 standing on the floor. The seats use haptic technology, so every bass line and drum kick from the band can be felt from your chair - for those actually sitting and not standing up and dancing.

U2 performed 40 shows to open the Sphere. Phish sold out its four shows this week within minutes and considered doing more, but decided they wanted to create four unique visual and music experiences to match the band's history of never repeating the same show twice.

"I don't know that we could have done it any other way," said Page McConnell, Phish's piano/organ/keyboard player. "We do it for us. We do it for the audience. It keeps it interesting for us and it keeps it interesting for them. And it's what people like about us."

There are 1.2 million LED "pucks" that make up the 580,000-square feet exosphere, each of which can display more than 1 billion colors. The display has become an instant tourist attraction in Las Vegas, seen from hotel rooms around the Strip and from planes above. It cycles through various funky visuals, including a giant yellow blinking smiley face and a furry creature. This week it includes a digital billboard for Phish.

Music

Variety



This image released by A24 shows Kirsten Dunst in a scene from 'Civil War.' (AP)

Film

Garland's latest year's most explosive movie

'Civil War,' a dark reflection of today

NEW YORK, April 21, (AP): Alex Garland's films have vividly conjured a virus-caused pandemic (2002's "28 Days Later"), an uncontrollable artificial intelligence (2014's "Ex Machina") and, in his latest, "Civil War," a near-future America in the throes of all-out warfare.

Most filmmakers with such a record might claim some knack for tapping into the zeitgeist. But Garland doesn't see it that way. He's dealing, he says, with omnipresent realities that demand no great leaps of vision. He wrote "Civil War" in 2020, when societies around the world were unraveling over COVID-19 and the prospect of societal breakdown was on everyone's minds.

"That was pretty deafening back then," Garland says. "So in a way, it's slightly past zeitgeist. It's actually oppressive."

"Civil War" is an ominous attempt to turn widely held American anxieties into a violent, unsettling big-screen reality. Garland's film opened recently - the anniversary, to the day, of when the Civil War began in 1861. And it's landing in movie theaters just months ahead of a momentous presidential election, making it potentially Hollywood's most explosive movie of the year.

For months, the arrival of "Civil War" has been closely tracked as numerous trailers have drummed up intrigue. Texas and California aligned? "Science fiction," wrote one commentator. Another said: "This single movie had the best 8 year marketing campaign of all time."

Yet "Civil War" is something far more oblique than its matter-of-fact title. The film, which Garland wrote and directed, isn't mapped directly against today's polarization. In a war that's already ravaged the country, California and Texas have joined forces against a fascist president (Nick Offerman) who's seized a third term and disbanded the FBI.

A band of journalists (Kirsten Dunst, Cailee Spaeny, Wagner Moura) makes its way toward Washington, D.C. Much of the film's disquiet comes from seeing visceral encounters of war - bombings, fire fights and executions - on contemporary American soil. ("Civil War," to take advantage of tax breaks, was mostly shot in Georgia.) For everyone who has in recent years wondered "How bad can it get?" - here is a sobering answer. "When things collapse, the speed at which they col-

lapse tends to surprise people - including people like intelligence officers whose job is to watch and predict when these things will happen," Garland said in a recent interview. "Things are always in a slightly more dangerous state than they might appear."

The rapidity with which society can disintegrate has long fascinated Garland, the 53-year-old British born filmmaker who emerged with the screenplay to the zombie apocalypse thriller "28 Days Later." Western democracies, he says, can lean too much on their sense of exceptionalism. To him, "Civil War" isn't an act of cynicism. It's a warning shot.

"The consequences of it are so serious that to not take the threat seriously would, itself, be another kind of insanity," says Garland. "It would just be complacent."

Political

In past election seasons, Hollywood has sometimes looked to channel, reflect or capitalize on political discord. Ahead of the 2020 election, Universal Pictures and Blumhouse Productions released "The Hunt," a "Most Dangerous Game" riff in which liberals kidnap "rednecks" and "deplorables" to hunt on a private preserve. After the film became engulfed in right-wing criticism (then-President Trump said it was "made in order to inflame and cause chaos"), it was postponed. When "The Hunt" eventually hit theaters in March 2020, it revealed a more balanced satire of left and right than some feared.

While there have been online murmurings questioning the appropriateness of the timing for "Civil War," controversy hasn't yet clung to it. That might be owed to Garland's approach. There are few direct allusions to the deepest fissures of American politics today in the film. Joining Texas and California together removes any "blue state" vs. "red state" dichotomy. Neither race nor income inequality appear as issues of division. The president's political party is unspecified. "I had never read a script like this," said Dunst at the film's SXSW premiere. "And I had never seen a film like this."

"Civil War," set in a near-future, instead plays out with more subtle connections to today's fractured politics and cultural splits. Jesse Plemons plays a heinous militant who interrogates the main characters, asking them: "What kind of American are you?" Though it's

never seen, Charlottesville, Virginia - site of the 2017 white supremacist rally - is referred to as a battle front. Asked about that choice, Garland replies: "The film is just reporting."

But the director acknowledges finding the right balance was a challenge.

"Yes, it was a (expletive) delicate balance," Garland says. "We thought about it, we discussed it, we talked about what was appropriate. Look, the plan is to make a compelling and engaging film, and the product of the compelling and engaging film is a conversation. So the questions are: How do you make sure that you're not dismantling a conversation in the first part of that equation?"

That led to Garland foregrounding "Civil War" with journalists. As much as anything, Garland's film is about the central role reporters play in capturing critical events in lethal conditions. Unbiased reporting, Garland says, has been eroded. In "Civil War," it's literally under attack.

"What I wanted to do was present journalists as reporters," Garland says. "They may be conflicted, they may be compromised as individuals, but they're holding on to an idea of journalism."

"Civil War," which cost \$50 million to make, is the largest budgeted film yet from A24. The indie studio is pushing to expand its reach beyond arthouses ("Civil War" will play on IMAX screens) and expand the reach of its critical acclaimed films. "Civil War" is, ironically, a bid to draw wider audiences.

"A lot of the boldness is not actually mine," says Garland. "I think it belongs to A24. You would find there are always people attempting to make these films. The question is whether they've been given the support to make them."

"Civil War" is just a possibility, the director stresses, not a prediction. Still, months after he finished writing it, Garland watched an insurrection play out on live television when a mob storm the Capitol on January 6, 2021. At the time, his thoughts weren't on his script.

"What I had was this incredibly intense feeling that this is a disgrace," says Garland. "Later, as time went by, some of that anger fed into the project. Not so much in terms of rewriting scenes or dialogue or anything. But more to do with an internal sense of motivation. Something that felt more distant felt less distant."

NASHVILLE, Tenn.: Country music star **Morgan Wallen**, who faces charges stemming in part from accusations that he threw a chair off the rooftop of a six-story bar, says he's "not proud" of his behavior and accepts responsibility.

The "One Thing at a Time" singer responded publicly Friday night on social media to his arrest in Nashville two weeks ago. He faces a May 3 court date after being charged with three felony counts of reckless endangerment and one misdemeanor count of disorderly conduct, court records show.

An arrest affidavit said the chair at Chief's bar landed about 3 feet (1 meter) from officers, who talked to witnesses and reviewed security footage. Witnesses told officers that they watched Wallen pick up a chair, throw it over the roof and laugh about it. Wallen was booked early April 8 and released.

"I didn't feel right publicly checking in until I made amends with some folks. I've touched base with Nashville law enforcement, my family, and the good people at Chief's. I'm not proud of my behavior, and I accept responsibility," Wallen wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Wallen, one of the biggest names in contemporary country, is currently on a stadium tour, including a concert scheduled for Saturday at Vaught-Hemingway Stadium in **Oxford, Mississippi**.

"I have the utmost respect for the officers working every day to keep us all safe. Regarding my tour, there will be no change," his message said, signed "-MW." (AP)

BELGIUM: **Romeo Castellucci** dropped out of his production of Wagner's Ring Cycle at **Belgium's La Monnaie** theater halfway through because of what the company said Saturday was a lack of money and time.

The four-part "Der Ring des Nibelungen (The Ring of the Nibelung)" is considered opera's most ambitious work. Castellucci, a noted Italian director, began with "Das Rheingold" that opened in **Brussels** last Nov. 24 and "Die Walkure" on Jan. 21, directing and designing the sets, costumes and lighting. He had intended to use a full-length film during "Siegfried" and what the Monnaie called a "double opera and theatre project" for "Götterdämmerung (The Twilight of the Gods)." "After many months of preparation, investigation and study, we

have had to come jointly to the conclusion that we could not arrive at a way to realize these concepts within the available timing and budgetary frame," the Monnaie said Saturday in announcing its 2024-25 season. "We all hope that it will be possible to see the completion of this ambitious project at some stage in the future."



Wallen



Castellucci

Pierre Audi, general director of the Aix-en-Provence Festival and artistic director of **New York's Park Avenue Armory**, will take over with a new production team for "Siegfried" opening Sept. 11 and "Götterdämmerung" starting Feb. 4. Audi directed the Ring at **De Nederlandse Opera** in 1999. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: A tram accident at **Universal Studios Hollywood** in Los Angeles injured 15 people Saturday night, authorities and the company said.

Los Angeles County Fire Department units were dispatched to the theme park on **Lankershim Boulevard** shortly after 9 p.m., the department said in a social

media post.

The victims taken to area hospitals had minor injuries, the department said.

A Universal Studios Hollywood spokesperson emailed a statement to The Associated Press confirming there were "multiple minor injuries" from an accident involving a tram at the theme park. (AP)

People & Places

Theater

Kuwaiti director makes history with first English Shakespeare play

Al Jenaie's Macbeth: A theatrical marvel in Kuwait

By Chaitali B. Roy

Special to the Arab Times

'Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair' announce the witches in the bard's shortest play, which was first staged in 1606 and which still resonates after four hundred years at Dar Al Athar Al Islamiyyah's Yarmouk Cultural Centre.

On the 19th and 20th of April, Alison Shan Price MBE presented Macbeth, directed by the gifted Hamad Al Jenaie, as part of the 28th Cultural Season of the Dar Al Athar Al Islamiyyah and the Kuwait National Council for Culture Arts and Letters at the DAI Yarmouk Cultural Centre (YCC).

I have covered lectures, concerts, and events for Dar Al Athar Al Islamiyyah on and off for over two decades, but I can say with conviction that I have never seen such an overwhelming response to theatre as I saw at the show's premiere. The audience spilled over the seating area of YCC, with people huddling on the floor vying for a good angle of the stage. And the audience was not disappointed. Hamad Al Jenaie and his stellar cast delivered on all fronts. "It has been a pleasure to be a producer of Hamad Al Jenaie's productions, and 'Macbeth' is no exception," said Alison Shan Price MBE, noted theatre personality and the show's producer. "It is the first English production of this Shakespearean classic to be created by a Kuwaiti artistic director in the world, and the first production in Kuwait to be performed 'in the round'.

Multicultural

His choice of an exceptional multicultural cast headed by Kuwaiti actor Nader Abdullah in the lead role and theme of Scottish folklore raised the over brimming audience to its feet."

Hamad Al Jenaie's retelling of Shakespeare is imaginative and expressive. The talented cast did justice to Shakespeare's challenges and produced a focused and self-assured presentation. The eerie and potent Lady Macbeth (Louise Durnin), paired with a powerful performance by the lead titular character (Nader Abdullah), creates an ambitious retelling of the play that continues to resonate with people despite the passage of time.

Al Jenaie's journey with Shakespeare began in 2019 with Hamlet. He followed it up with The Tempest in 2022, and Macbeth in 2024. When asked how he tried to reimagine Macbeth, Al Jenaie said, "Shakespeare is one of the most famous playwrights of all time, and Macbeth is considered one of his greatest tragedies.

To reimagine Macbeth, you need to find the absolute core of the story. As a story, it has every element of what a theatre should be. It is just getting the right team, getting the right cast, and having the right production on its feet. I'm thrilled that we were able to achieve that." There are many challenges to staging Shakespeare right, from the length of the soliloquies to finding the right cast. Talking about what makes Shakespeare unique, Al Jenaie says, "Shakespeare is universal. Shakespeare is challenging, but the audience's participation and love of Shakespeare keep it relevant. And they grew with Shakespeare. That's why I believe Shakespeare is the starting point of getting the audience interested in the classics.

Attention

In 2019, we set Hamlet in a modern-day mental asylum, yet it grabbed attention. The Tempest was set in a classroom, and then the classroom became an island, adding relevance. Macbeth is set in a much darker time of its era, yet it engages the audience. I think Shakespeare is universal. And it grabs people's attention. I believe it's very commercial and very popular as well." Nader Abdullah, the lead actor of Macbeth, agrees that Shakespeare is challenging. "One challenge is finding people willing and able to engage with Shakespeare and translate it to stage," he shares. "I am fortunate to have studied how to interpret



Hamad Al Jenaie and his stellar cast bask in the applause of the audience. Photos by Rizalde Cayanan, courtesy of Dar Al Athar Al Islamiyyah



Laila Al Qadhi plays one of the three weird sisters.

the text for actors and help them find their characters and present them in an understandable way to the audience."

Nader Abdullah is compelling as Macbeth. Abdullah's interpretation of Aristotle's tragic hero, which Shakespeare's Macbeth captures so well, goes beyond the role's traditional physicality and concentrates on the psychology and moral dimension. Abdullah shares how he prepared for the show: "One scene at a time. The characters' motivations are embedded in the text, so the more we work on the scenes, the more we can draw the characters off the page and onto the stage."

The irrepressible Laila Al Qadhi, who plays one of the three weird sisters, eloquently verbalises the relevance of Shakespeare in contemporary times in these words: "Some human qualities remain timeless. Desire and ambition have existed for a long time and will continue till the end of time without change. The conflicts Macbeth faces are as relevant today as they were in Shakespeare's time. People identify with Macbeth's ambition and the conflict he faces between good and evil,

between right and wrong. Most today continue to feel the pressure of greed, jealousy, envy, and a desire to usurp a position if it leads to power.

These aspects of the human psyche and nature make this play timeless," Nader Abdullah agrees. He says, "Shakespeare's works are timeless and enduring because at the core they are about the human experience, and that transcends time and place. Our Macbeth is a man struggling with great personal tragedy and the consequences of unchecked ambition, resulting in an even greater tragedy." Laila Al Qadhi, along with Sarah Khabbaz and Mariam Al Shimmari, plays agents of chaos in the play. "An agent of chaos assist in bringing balance," explains Al Qadhi. "The universe needs a balance, a kind of delicate dance of creation and destruction and the cycle goes on. An agent of chaos can often bring a much-needed balance by provoking traits lurking in the background," she says. "Personally, playing an agent of chaos (a witch) in the play Macbeth helped me understand the darker power within myself.

At my age, I have had many

with the 'just'. Regardless of how long it takes and how many may be victims of those more powerful at a given time, justice will prevail."

Louise Durnin plays the iconic Lady Macbeth with aplomb. Her interpretation of one of Shakespeare's most lethally charismatic characters is praiseworthy. According to Durnin, Lady Macbeth is not as sinister or bloodthirsty as people perceive her; instead, she acts out of love for her husband and seeks completion in his ambition for himself.

Lady Macbeth is perhaps the most powerful character in the play, challenging the traditional gender roles of her time. Louise Durnin agrees. "I agree that Lady Macbeth challenges traditional gender roles within the context of the play. Her strong desire for power and influence over Macbeth, especially in persuading him to commit regicide, demonstrates how she challenges traditional gender roles.

Character

Lady Macbeth's ambition and willingness to use violence go against the societal expectations of a woman during her time. Her character exhibits masculine traits such as assertiveness, ruthlessness, and a commanding presence, which were not commonly associated with women then.

Overall, Lady Macbeth is a complex character who defies the boundaries of what was expected from a woman in her society." It is challenging to reprise a role as tricky as Lady Macbeth, but Louise Durnin navigated the challenges comfortably. The woman who begins the play by praying for hardness and cruelty is destroyed by the return of the conscience she thought she had banished. "I had to try and navigate her intense ambition, moral conflict, and descent into madness," says Durnin. "She undergoes a significant transformation throughout the play, so conveying that journey requires a deep understanding of her motivations and inner turmoil. I have tried to capture her commanding presence and manipulative nature while maintaining a humanising touch that reveals her vulnerability and fear."

With his arresting presence, Brian McLaughlin played Banquo, Macbeth's friend, who also tasted his betrayal. After he is killed, Banquo adopts his ghostly form, becoming one of the most famous ghosts in English literature. Speaking of Hamlet's timelessness, McLaughlin says, "Of all of Shakespeare's plays, Macbeth is my favourite, and it has been since I was introduced to it in high school.

It was the Game of Thrones of the Seventeen Hundred with its characters and themes of betrayal, guilt, envy, manipulation, ambition, paranoia, revenge, honour, and love. Human nature has not changed since Shakespeare's time, and these themes can be seen reflected not only in today's pop culture but in the real world itself. Just as for Macbeth, power and the pursuit of power can corrupt us all."

Hamad Al Jenaie's interpretation of Macbeth does not disappoint. The music, costume, cast, and atmosphere is spot on. It is an ambitious retelling. A few months ago, while staging Macbeth in the United Kingdom, Simon Godwin, the director, chose to use headphones for the audience to channel the sound of the play and create an immersive experience. In the future, productions in Kuwait may consider that option. Imagine every creak and whimper of the Shakespearean stage being magnified, adding to the already sinister and eerie.

itself as the "kite capital of the world," on Saturday. Locals say there is nothing that can't sail the skies of Weifang.

From dragons to pandas, modern cars to mythical characters from a canonical Chinese novel, kite craftsmen and aficionados showcased their latest art at the Weifang International Kite Festival.

Kite-makers say the craftsmanship has evolved over the years, with nylon fabrics becoming more common at the expense of traditional materials such as paper and silk. (AP)

Variety

GOVERNMENT CAMP, Ore.: Oregon's historic Timberline Lodge, which featured in Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film "The Shining," will reopen to guests Sunday after a fire that prompted evacuations but caused only minimal damage. The lodge said Saturday in a Facebook post that it will support guests while repairs are being done, as well as work to ensure water quality. Historic preservation efforts are also underway. "There are challenges ahead but we

are through the worst of it," the hotel said. "First responder and Timberline staff efforts have been nothing short of remarkable during a very difficult time. This successful recovery is because of their dedication."

Embers from the lodge's large stone fireplace apparently ignited the roof Thursday night, the lodge said. Guests and staff were evacuated as firefighters doused the flames, and no injuries were reported.

Damage from the fire and the water used to extinguish it is "benign" and

contained to certain areas, the lodge said. Its ski area reopened Saturday.

Timberline Lodge was built in 1937, some 6,000 feet (1,828 meters) up the 11,249-foot (3,429-meter) Mount Hood, by the Works Progress Administration, a U.S. government program created to provide jobs during the Great Depression. (AP)

WEIFANG, China: More than 1,000 kites filled the skies of Weifang, an eastern Chinese coastal city that touts



Nader Abdullah, lead actor of Macbeth

The Conversation

Experts share warning signs

New study presents tool to combat fake research

By Lisa Bero

University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus

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

If you are suffering with chronic pain, diabetes, heart problems or any other condition, you want to be confident that your doctor will offer you an effective treatment. You certainly don't want to waste time or money on something that won't work, or take something that could do you harm.

The best source of information to guide treatment is medical research. But how do you know when that information is reliable and evidence-based? And how can you tell the difference between shoddy research findings and those that have merit?

There's a long journey to the publication of research findings. Scientists design experiments and studies to investigate questions about treatment or prevention, and follow certain scientific principles and standards. Then the finding is submitted for publication in a research journal. Editors and other people in the researchers' field, called peer-reviewers, make suggestions to improve the research. When the study is deemed acceptable, it is published as a research journal article.



Bero

But a lot can go wrong on this long journey that could make a research journal article unreliable. And peer review is not designed to catch fake or misleading data. Unreliable scientific studies can be hard to spot - whether by reviewers or the general public - but by asking the right questions, it can be done.

While most research has been conducted according to rigorous standards, studies with fake or fatally flawed findings are sometimes published in the scientific literature. It is hard to get an exact estimate of the number of fraudulent studies because the scientific publication process catches some of them before they are published. One study of 526 patient trials in anesthesiology found that 8% had fake data and 26% were critically flawed.

As a professor in medicine and public health, I have been studying bias in the design, conduct and publication of scientific research for 30 years. I've been developing ways to prevent and detect research integrity problems so the best possible evidence can be synthesized and used for decisions about health. Sleuthing out data that cannot be trusted, whether this is due to intentional fraud or just bad research practices, is key to using the most reliable evidence for decisions.

Evidence

The most reliable evidence of all comes when researchers pull the results of several studies together in what is known as a systematic review. Researchers who conduct systematic reviews identify, evaluate and summarize all studies on a particular topic. They not only sift through and combine results on perhaps tens of thousands of patients, but can use an extra filter to catch potentially fraudulent studies and ensure they do not feed into recommendations. This means that the more rigorous studies have the most weight in a systematic review and bad studies are excluded based on strict inclusion and exclusion criteria that are applied by the reviewers.

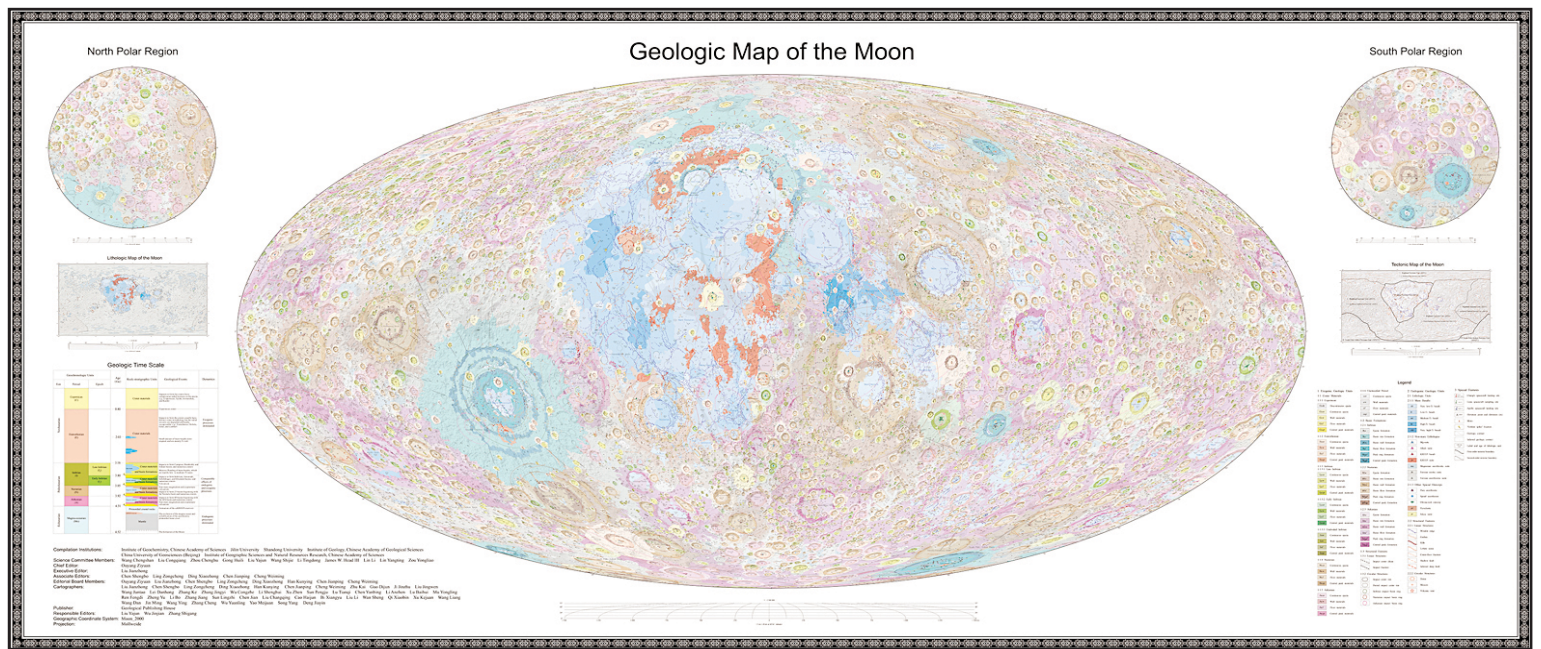
To better understand how systematic reviewers and other researchers can identify unreliable studies, my research team interviewed a group of 30 international experts from 12 countries. They explained to us that a shoddy study can be hard to detect because, as one expert explained, it is "designed to pass muster on first glance."

As our recently published study reports, some studies look like their data has been massaged, some studies are not as well designed as they claim to be, and some may even be completely fabricated.

Our study provides some important ideas about how to spot medical research that is deeply flawed or fake and should not be trusted.

The experts we interviewed suggested some key questions that reviewers should ask about a study: For instance, did it have ethics approval? Was the clinical trial registered? Do the results seem plausible? Was the study funded by an independent source and not the company whose product is being tested?

If the answers to any of these questions is no, then further investigation of the study is needed. (AP)



China Sunday released a set of geologic atlas of the global moon with a scale of 1:2.5 million, which is the first complete high-definition lunar geologic atlas in the world, providing basic map data for future lunar research and exploration. This page is the Geologic Map of the Moon. (Xinhua)

High-definition map to reveal the moon's mysteries

China unveils world's first lunar geologic atlas

BEIJING, April 21, (Xinhua): China on Sunday released a geologic atlas set of the global moon with a scale of 1:2.5 million, which is the first complete high-definition lunar geologic atlas in the world, providing basic map data for future lunar research and exploration.

This geologic atlas set, available in both Chinese and English, includes the Geologic Atlas of the Lunar Globe and the Map Quadrangles of the Geologic Atlas of the Moon, according to the Institute of Geochemistry of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

"The geologic atlas of the moon is of great significance for studying the evolution of the moon, selecting the site for a future lunar research station and utilizing lunar resources. It can also help us better understand the Earth and other planets in the solar system, such as Mars," said Ouyang Ziyuan, who is a CAS academician and a well-known lunar scientist.

"The world has witnessed significant progress in the field of lunar exploration and scientific research over the past decades, which have greatly improved our understanding of the

moon. However, the lunar geologic maps published during the Apollo era have not been changed for about half a century, and are still being used for lunar geological research. With the improvements of lunar geologic studies, those old maps can no longer meet the needs of future scientific research and lunar exploration," said Liu Jianzhong, a senior researcher from the Institute of Geochemistry of the CAS.

Exploration

Since 2012, Ouyang Ziyuan and Liu Jianzhong have led a team of scientists and cartographers from relevant research institutions in compiling this atlas.

With a comprehensive and systematic understanding of the origin and evolution of the moon, the team compiled the atlas based on scientific exploration data gained from China's Chang'e lunar exploration program and other research results from both Chinese and international missions, Liu said.

This atlas set not only provides basic data and scientific references for the formulation and implementation

of scientific goals in China's lunar exploration program, but also fills the blank in China's compilation of geologic maps of the moon and planets, contributing to the study of the origin and evolution of the moon and the solar system, Liu said.

Based on the perspective of lunar dynamic evolution, Chinese researchers creatively established an updated lunar geologic time scale, objectively depicting the geological evolution of the moon, and clearly showing the characteristics of lunar tectonic and magmatic evolution.

A total of 12,341 impact craters, 81 impact basins, 17 types of lithologies and 14 types of structures all over the moon are mapped in the atlas.

This atlas set has been integrated into the digital lunar cloud platform built by Chinese scientists, and will serve lunar scientific research, science education, as well as landing site selection, lunar resource exploration and path planning for China's future lunar exploration projects, Liu said.

He mentioned that China's upcoming Chang'e-6 mission is expected to collect samples in the Apollo

Basin within the South Pole-Aitken Basin on the far side of the moon, which means materials ejected from ancient terrain may be collected in the process. "Our map can provide a macroscopic geologic background to improve the purpose and efficiency of the sample research," Liu explained.

The compilation of this map was an immense task, which required the organization and cooperation of many well-informed researchers over many years to be able to achieve a consistent and complete result, commented Gregory Michael, a senior scientist from the Free University of Berlin in Germany.

"This map, in particular, is the first on a global scale to utilize all of the post-Apollo era data. It builds on the achievements of the international community over the last decades, as well as on China's own highly successful Chang'e program. It will be a starting point for every new question of lunar geology, and become a primary resource for researchers studying lunar processes of all kinds," Michael added.

Kuwait Cancer Center hosts workshop on breast reconstruction

Gastrointestinal cancer tops Kuwait's all cancer deaths

Faster, cheaper jab offers hope

UN approves updated cholera vaccine amid globe surge

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Health sources have revealed that gastrointestinal cancer accounted for the highest number of deaths among all types of cancer in Kuwait over the past year.

According to information obtained by Al-Jarida, the rate of these deaths among Kuwaiti nationals surpassed that of other nationalities, both for males and females.

Following closely behind were deaths from malignant tumors in the respiratory system, with Kuwaitis experiencing a rate 1.4 times higher than others. Additionally, there has been a significant decrease in patient visits to healthcare centers within the Ministry of Health over the past year.

In a separate development, the Oncology Surgery Department at the Kuwait Cancer Control Center is hosting a practical scientific workshop on breast reconstruction and plastic surgery following mastectomy.

Dr. Magda Al-Saleh, Consultant Surgical Oncologist and Head of the Breast Oncology and Reconstructive Surgery Unit at the center, announced that the workshop, taking place from today until next Thursday, will feature the presentation of 34 medical cases involving partial or total mastectomy to visiting experts from Britain and Brazil. The experts will then perform ap-

propriate reconstructive surgeries based on each case. Additionally, the visiting delegation will deliver scientific lectures on the topic during the workshop. Dr. Al-Saleh expressed her delight

at the participation of doctors and surgeons from various Arab Gulf states, Britain, and Egypt, highlighting the workshop's scientific and practical significance.

GENEVA, April 21, (AP): The World Health Organization has approved a version of a widely used cholera vaccine that could help address a surge in cases that has depleted the global vaccine stockpile and left poorer countries scrambling to contain epidemics.

WHO authorized the vaccine, made by EuBiologics, which also makes the formulation now used, last week. The new version, called Euvichol-S, is a simplified formula that uses fewer ingredients, is cheaper, and can be made more quickly than the old version.

The vaccine was shown to be helping prevent the diarrheal disease in late stage research conducted in Nepal.

WHO's approval means donor agencies like the vaccines alliance Gavi and UNICEF can now buy it for poorer

countries. Leila Pakkala, director of UNICEF's supply division, said in a statement that the agency will be able to boost supplies by more than 25%.

Gavi estimated there could be about 50 million doses for the global stockpile this year, compared with 38 million last year.

Dr. Derrick Sim of Gavi called WHO's authorization "a lifeline for vulnerable communities around the world."

More is still needed, however: Since January, 14 countries affected by cholera outbreaks have requested 79 million doses. In January, the U.N. agency said the global vaccine stockpile was "entirely depleted" until the beginning of March. As of this week, WHO said there were 2.3 million doses available.

Cholera is an acute diarrhea disease

caused by a bacteria typically spread via contaminated food or water. It is mostly seen in areas that have poor sanitation and lack access to clean water. While most people infected with cholera don't experience symptoms, those with severe cases need quick treatment with intravenous fluids and antibiotics. If left untreated, cholera kills about a quarter to half of people infected.

Since last January, WHO has reported more than 824,000 cholera infections, including 5,900 deaths worldwide, with the highest numbers of cases reported in the Middle East and Africa. The U.N. agency said warming temperatures that allow the cholera bacteria to live longer, have also worsened outbreaks and led to the highest death rates in a decade.

She also expressed her pleasure at the involvement of surgeons from both government and private hospitals in Kuwait who are interested in performing such operations.



A family enters a tent set aside for cholera patients at a clinic in Harare, Zimbabwe, on Nov. 18, 2023. The World Health Organization has approved a new version of a widely used cholera vaccine that could help address a surge in cases that has depleted the global vaccine stockpile. In a decision last week, WHO authorized a new vaccine by EuBiologics, the only maker of the oral cholera vaccine for a global stockpile managed by the UN health agency and partners. (AP)

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18 wrestlers make the US squad

Brooks beats gold medalist Taylor, who loses Oly roster spot

STATE COLLEGE, April 21, (AP): Aaron Brooks defeated reigning 86-kilogram gold medalist David Taylor in consecutive matches Saturday night at the U.S. Olympic wrestling trials, claiming a roster spot at the Paris Olympics.

Brooks beat Taylor 4-1 earlier in the day, his first loss to an American wrestler in seven years. It set up an opportunity for Brooks to sweep the Tokyo gold medalist and fellow former Penn State athlete.

WRESTLING

Brooks capitalized with a 3-1 victory in the pair's second match, as a stalemate was broken with a Brooks takedown in the first period.

After the match, the two shared a moment in the center of the mat. "I told him I love him," Brooks said. "He's one of the first guys to make (Penn State wrestling) what it is."

Brooks avenged his losses to Tay-

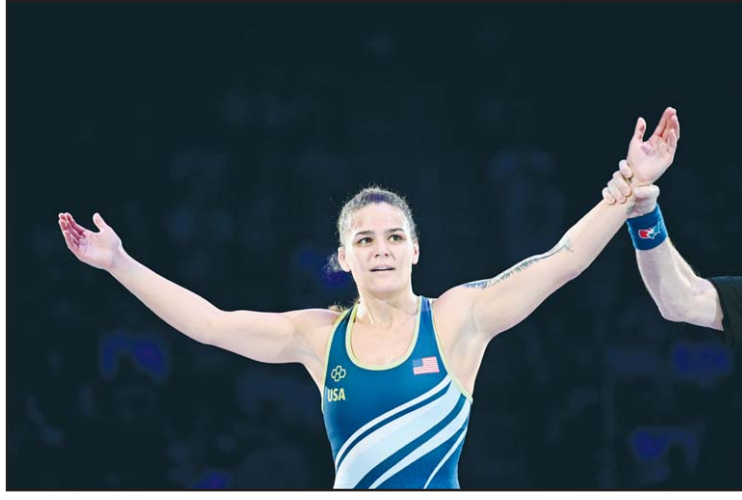
lor in last year's world championship qualifier, when Brooks dropped two straight matches to get swept. Since the beginning of March, Brooks has won a Big Ten title, his fourth NCAA title, the Hodge Trophy and a spot in the Olympics.

The trials were held at Penn State's basketball arena, the Bryce Jordan Center, where the Nittany Lions powerhouse wrestling team also holds occasional matches.

In total, 18 wrestlers made the U.S. wrestling squad on Saturday, with 13 of those wrestlers qualifying directly for the Olympic tournament in Paris. The champions in five classes, 57 kg and 65 kg in men's freestyle and 60 kg, 67 kg and 77 kg in Greco-Roman, will have to travel to Istanbul for a world qualification tournament for the Olympics in May.

Kyle Snyder didn't give up a point in his championship series against Isaac Trumble, cruising to 5-0 and 4-0 wins to reach his third Olympics.

The 2016 gold medalist received a



Kayla Miracle raises her arms after winning a 62-kilogram bout in the finals at the U.S. Olympic wrestling trials in State College, Pa. (AP)

bye to the best-of-three finals to face Trumble, who won the 97-kilogram challenger tournament.

"I mean, it's different," said the 28-year-old Snyder, who went to Ohio State and trains with the Nittany Lion

Wrestling Club. "Like, the first time you do it you're really happy, now it's almost an expectation of myself and then the real fun starts when you make the team and you're competing for Olympic gold medals."

Zain Retherford didn't even know if he would compete for an Olympic spot five months ago.

But on Saturday he defeated Nittany Lion Wrestling Club teammate Nick Lee 2-1 and 5-0 in back-to-back matches at 65 kg to earn a spot on the U.S. national team and advance to an international qualifying tournament.

"I had accepted a job in New York City. My family was going to move there in January, but I just had a pulling on my heart, I couldn't explain it, to compete," Retherford said after his second win over Lee.

Retherford accepted a position at the financial firm ABR Dynamic Funds but was given the flexibility he needed to compete. He will have to use a little more time off after his performance on Saturday.

Retherford's next step will be the Olympic qualifying tournament in Istanbul, starting May 9. He has to finish in the top two to earn a trip to Paris.

Spencer Lee pinned Tokyo bronze medalist Thomas Gilman in their second match at 57 kg to clinch a spot on the U.S. team and also move on to the world qualification in Istanbul.

Lee's journey has been far from easy. He's had multiple injuries.

The former Iowa Hawkeye tore his right ACL as a senior in high school in 2017, before tearing it again in 2019. Then, in 2021, Lee won a national title despite tearing his left ACL only a couple of weeks earlier at the Big Ten championships.

The knee problems seemed to have subsided in 2024, at least enough for Lee to keep his shoes on.

"If it wasn't for the Iowa Hawkeye program supporting me, I'd be planning to retire to be honest with you guys," Lee said. "I've had such a tough time staying healthy and trying to compete to the best of my ability."

Love claims 1st NASCAR Xfinity Series victory in another wild Talladega finish

Rookie holds off Poole

TALLADEGA, Ala., April 21, (AP): Nineteen-year-old rookie Jesse Love won the first NASCAR Xfinity Series race of his career in a crash-marred, double-overtime finish at Talladega Superspeedway.

Love held off Brennan Poole, who pulled alongside roaring into the trioval, and took the checkered flag 0.141 seconds ahead of Riley Herbst. Anthony Alfredo and Leland Honeyman claimed the next two spots, Poole faded to fifth, and one last crash sent Joey Gase spinning behind the frontrunners.

"Let's go playoff racing!" Love screamed over the radio.

Hailie Deegan went into the final restart with a shot at becoming the highest-finishing woman in Xfinity Series history, but she slipped all the way to 12th. Danica Patrick retains the distinction with a fourth-place showing at Las Vegas in 2011.

Pole-sitter Austin Hill - Love's

teammate at Richard Childress Racing - won the first stage, led a race-high 41 laps and was at the front of an 18-car train with two laps to go when the usual Talladega chaos erupted.

Parker Kligerman appeared to give Hill a couple of slight taps to the rear bumper, though Kligerman insisted over his radio that he never touched the leader's car. Nevertheless, Hill suddenly went into a spin that ended his hopes of his third victory of the season and sent the race to overtime.

Kligerman was out front when the green flag waved, but that didn't last long. Shane Van Gisbergen seemed to run out of gas and Love got into Kligerman going for lead, sending the No. 48 car smashing into the wall.

Several other contenders had to duck into the pits for fuel before the second overtime, which extended

the race from 113 to 124 laps. In the end, Love had enough fuel to get to the line, erasing memories of another strong run at Atlanta where he went dry at the end.

Chandler Smith came in as the points leader, but he finished 25th.

Early in the final stage, the first big crash of the day collected at least a dozen cars, knocking four of them out of the race.

CAR RACING

Kligerman and Ryan Sieg sparked the incident on lap 65, trading point when both went for an opening in the middle of the track during three-wide racing through the trioval. That slight bump set off a chain-reaction crash that left cars spinning, sliding and smashing into each other from the outer wall to the inside grass.

"You have to be aggressive," said Brandon Jones, whose car was too damaged to continue. "The only way to be aggressive is to get up front."

The day also ended for Sam Mayer, Jeremy Clements and Ryan Truex, while several cars returned to the track with significant damage.

A.J. Allmendinger kept going with his rear bumper cover barely hanging on.

Mayer has failed to finish four of the first nine races, but he's locked into the playoff after winning last week at Texas in a photo finish with Sieg.

Teenagers won both preliminary races at Talladega leading up to the NASCAR Cup race on Sunday.

Before Love took the checkered flag, 18-year-old Jake Finch led from start to finish in the ARCA Menards Series event.

Justin Allgaier, who arrived at Talladega ranked fourth in the point standings, was the first one out of the race.

His No. 7 Chevrolet got loose coming off of turn two while running in a big pack of cars, sliding sideways off the track and smashing hard into an inside wall.

Allgaier wasn't injured, but the 38th-place finish was by far his worst of the season.

"A disappointing day," he said. "The car was fast."

Allgaier remained tied with Kyle Busch for the most top-10 finishes in Xfinity Series history with 266. He equaled the mark last week with a third-place showing at Texas.



Love



Orlando City's David Brekalo, left, and CF Montreal's Nathan-Dylan Sailba (19) go up for the ball during second-half MLS soccer match action in Montreal. (AP)

Rigoni, Stuver propel Austin past Dynamo

Inter Miami top Nashville SC 3-1

FORT LAUDERDALE, April 21, (AP): Lionel Messi scored twice to increase his Major League Soccer-leading total to seven and also had an assist to lead Inter Miami over Nashville SC 3-1 on Saturday night.

Messi had his second two-goal game in MLS after scoring two against Orlando on March 2. He has a goal or assist in each of the six league matches he's played, missing four because of injury.

Sergio Busquets scored his first goal with Miami since joining former Barcelona teammate Messi last summer.

Miami (5-2-3, 21 points) is unbeaten in five matches against Nashville since Messi's arrival. Miami also remained in first place in the Eastern Conference.

For the second consecutive week, Miami allowed a goal in the opening minutes when an own goal by Miami defender Franco Neri put Nashville ahead. Neri deflected Daniel Lovitz's corner kick into the Miami net in the second minute.

That was the only goal for Nashville (1-6-1, 4).

Miami erased the early deficit with goals from Messi and Busquets in the 11th and 39th minutes.

Nashville goalkeeper Elliot Panico deflected Messi's 12-yard shot to an open Suárez, who immediately tapped it to Messi. With Panico out of position, Messi converted a sliding shot inside the 6-yard box for the equalizer.

Busquets scored the tiebreaker as he headed Messi's corner kick to the near post past Panico.

Goalkeeper Drake Callender kept Miami ahead when he made a diving deflection of Hany Mukhtar's 35-yard blast in the 55th minute.

Messi gave Miami with a two-goal cushion when he converted on a penalty kick in the 81st minute. Nashville's Josh Bauer fouled Leo Alfonso on the edge of the penalty then Messi beat reserve goalkeeper Joe Willis inside the left post.

Messi's former Barcelona teammate Jordi Alba didn't play because of a hamstring injury.

Miami will visit New England next Saturday, while Nashville hosts San Jose.

Emiliano Rigoni scored late in the second half and Brad Stuver finished with six saves to help Austin FC cool off the Houston Dynamo with a 1-0 victory on Saturday night.

SOCCER

Rigoni scored for the first time this season - in the 88th minute - off CJ Fodrey's first career assist. Fodrey, a 20-year-old forward, made his first start and appearance this season after playing 29 minutes in three appearances last season, his first in the league. Fodrey used his head to set up Rigoni's left-footed shot from the left side of the box to the bottom right corner of the net.

Stuver notched his first clean sheet of the season for Austin (3-3-3).

Steve Clark saved three shots for the Dynamo (4-3-1), who have allowed just eight goals through eight matches.

Houston, which just extended second-year coach Ben Olsen to a contract extension through 2026, entered play having won four of its last five matches to move into third place in the Western Conference.

The Dynamo saw the return of Héctor Herrera, who had yet to play this season because of an injury. Herrera subbed in for Latif Blessing in the 62nd minute and missed



Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi takes a corner kick against Nashville SC during the first half of an MLS soccer match in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (AP)

his only shot. His last time Houston won five of six matches came in 2019 when the Dynamo got off to a club-record 6-1-1 start.

Austin returns home to play the Los Angeles Galaxy on Saturday. Houston travels to win in-state rival FC Dallas on Saturday.

Prince Owusu scored midway through the second half and Sean Johnson made it stand up in Toronto FC's 1-0 victory over the New England Revolution on Saturday night.

Owusu, making his fifth start, found the net in the 66th minute to give Johnson the only goal he would need. Owusu's three previous goals this season came as a substitute.

Johnson stopped three shots in each half for Toronto (4-4-1), which snapped a three-match losing streak.

Henrich Ravas had seven saves for New England (1-6-1).

Toronto got off to a 3-1-1 start with four clean sheets, including a 1-0 victory over the Revolution in early March. Johnson was injured after that and had allowed seven goals in two starts since returning.

The Revolution's Tomás Chancalay is still looking for his first goal this season after scoring six times in 11 appearances last season. He entered play with 33 shots, the third highest total in the league, and added three more after subbing in for Nacho Gil in the 72nd minute.

New England has been shut out three times this season and has not scored multiple goals in any match under first-year coach Caleb Porter. The Revs posted a 2-0-1 mark in its last three visits to Toronto.

Toronto travels to play Orlando City on Saturday. New England returns home to play Inter Miami on Saturday.

Iván Angulo scored in the second minute of second-half stoppage time to rally Orlando City to a 2-2 draw with CF Montreal on Saturday night.

Angulo's first goal of the season came after Ariel Lassiter scored to give Montreal a 2-1 lead in the 88th minute.

Montreal (3-3-2) grabbed a 1-0 lead in the 16th minute when Mason Toye used an assist from Samuel Piette to score his first goal of the season in his first start and third appearance.

Amir grabs 2-13 in comeback international

Pakistan thrash N Zealand in 2nd T20

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan, April 21, (AP): Mohammad Amir got a wicket off his second ball in his first international in four years as Pakistan bowled out New Zealand for 90 runs and easily won their Twenty20.

Amir came out of retirement for the T20 World Cup in June and took 2-13. Fellow fast bowlers Shaheen Shah Afridi (3-13) and Naseem Shah (1-27) helped to sink depleted New Zealand for its second lowest T20 total against Pakistan.

Mohammad Rizwan led Pakistan to 92-3 in 12.1 overs with an unbeaten 45 off 34 balls.

Pakistan leads the five-match series 1-0 after two games. The first was a washout.

"It's crucial to set the tone in the first six overs in Rawalpindi," Pakistan captain Babar Azam said. "The way Naseem, Shaheen and Amir bowled, it was outstanding. We try to play according to the conditions and execute our plans accordingly. We want to do well in all departments and work on it on a daily basis."

Ben Lister made a spectacular two-handed diving catch off his follow through to dismiss Saim Ayub on 4 off the second ball of Pakistan's chase. Babar struck three boundaries in his 14 before New Zealand skipper

Michael Bracewell got him stumped off a quicker delivery inside the batting power play.

Usman Khan, who was banned by the Emirates Cricket Board for five years for switching his allegiance to his country of birth, got a big inside edge and was bowled by Ish Sodhi for 7 at 56-3. But Rizwan and Irfan Khan, 18 not out, guided Pakistan home to win by seven wickets.

In the absence of nine frontline players at the Indian Premier League, New Zealand struggled to cope with Pakistan's experienced bowling attack.

CRICKET

Mark Chapman top-scored with 19 as New Zealand was all out in 18.1 overs.

Amir took the pace off his second delivery to Tim Robinson, who got the toe end of the bat and was caught at short cover in the second over.

New Zealand slipped to 35-3 inside the power play.

Leg-spinners Abrar Ahmed and Shadab Khan finished with identical figures of 2-15 as they strangled the middle order with some sharp deliveries.

Hamza nets hat-trick

Al-Arabi prepare for league with decisive friendly win

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: In a recent friendly match, Al-

Arabi displayed dominance over Al-Tadamon, securing a resounding victory with seven unanswered goals. The match served as crucial preparation for Al-Arabi ahead

of their upcoming fixture against Al-Fahaheel in the fourth round of Zain Premier League matches scheduled for next Saturday.

SOCCER

The goals for Al-Arabi, known as Al-Akhdar, came from Hamza Khaba, who netted a hat-trick, alongside contributions from Anayo Iwala, Ayman Sfafi, Saif Al-Hashan, and Walid Sabar.

Under the guidance of coach Nasser Al-Shatti, the technical staff ensured the readiness of the players for the league's resumption. Players like Saif Al-Hashan, Iwala, and Sultan



Players battle for the ball during the friendly encounter.

Al-Anazi, who participated in the match, underwent intensive training programs to regain match fitness following their recovery from injuries.

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SPORTS

Jepchirchir completes a Kenyan double

Munyao gives Kenya another London Marathon win after tribute to Kiptum

LONDON, April 21, (AP) — Alexander Mutiso Munyao delivered another win for Kenya on a day the London Marathon remembered last year's champion Kelvin Kiptum.

A race that started with a period of applause for Kiptum, who was killed in a car crash in Kenya in February, ended with his countryman and friend running alone down the final straight in front of Buckingham Palace to earn an impressive victory in his first major marathon.

Mutiso Munyao said he spoke to Kiptum after his win in London last year and that the world-record holder is always on his mind when he's competing.

"He's in my thoughts every time, because he was my great friend," Mutiso Munyao said. "It was a good day for me."

It was a Kenyan double on the day, with Olympic champion Peres Jepchirchir pulling away late to win the women's race and cement her status as the favorite to defend her gold in Paris.

With around 400 meters (yards) to go to, Jepchirchir left world-record holder Tigst Assefa and two other rivals behind to sprint alone down the final stretch. She finished in 2 hours, 16 minutes, 16 seconds, with Assefa in second and Joyciline Jepkosgei in third.

Her time was more than 4 minutes slower than Assefa's world record set in Berlin last year, but it was the fastest time ever in a women-only marathon, beating the mark of 2:17:01 set by Mary Keitany in London in 2017. The elite women's field in London started about 30 minutes ahead of the elite men.

For Jepchirchir, though, the main goal was to show Kenya's selectors for the Olympic team that she should be on the team again in Paris.

"So I was trying to work extra hard to (be able to) defend my title in

grew as he ran toward the finish.

"At 40 kilometers, when my friend Bekele was left (behind), I had confidence that I can win this race," the 27-year-old Mutiso Munyao said.

He finished in 2 hours, 4 minutes, 1 second, with Bekele finishing 14 seconds behind. Emile Cairress of Britain was third, 2:45 back.

Bekele, the Ethiopian former Olympic 10,000 and 5,000-meter champion, was also the runner-up in London in 2017 but has never won the race.

Mutiso Munyao is relatively unknown in marathon circles and said he wasn't sure whether this win would be enough to make Kenya's Olympic team for Paris.

"I hope for the best," he said. "If they select me I will go and work for it."



Alexander Mutiso Munyao of Kenya and Peres Jepchirchir of Kenya pose for photographers with a trophy after winning their race at the London Marathon in London. (AP)

Jokic leads NBA champs Nuggets past LA Lakers in playoff opener

Timberwolves dominate Suns

DENVER, April 21, (AP) — Unlike their crowd that drowned out the Los Angeles Lakers' pregame introductions, the defending NBA champion Denver Nuggets were a little late to the playoff party Saturday night.

They turned up their offense and defense after a sputtering start, however, powering past the Lakers 114-103 behind Nikola Jokic's 32 points and 12 rebounds in the Western Conference playoff opener, their ninth consecutive triumph over the Lakers.

BASKETBALL

After watching LeBron James score 19 first-half points, capped by a pull-up 3 from 32 feet in the final second that put the Lakers up 60-57, the Nuggets limited the NBA's career scoring leader to nine points in the second half and didn't allow him to even take a shot in the fourth quarter until just 1:20 remained.

James finished with 27 points and Anthony Davis had 32.

That wasn't nearly enough to match the reigning champs' prowess.

Two other Nuggets matched Jokic's double-double - Jamal Murray (22 points, 10 assists) and Anthony Gordon (12 points, 11 rebounds) - and Michael Porter Jr. came close with 19 points and eight boards.

Denver handed James just his fourth loss in 17 first-round openers, but Malone said, "We've got to watch the film to see what we can do better. This is going to be a hell of a series."

The Lakers haven't beaten the Nuggets since Dec. 16, 2022. They'll try again Monday night in Game 2 at Ball Arena, where Denver is now 34-8 this season.

Lakers coach Darvin Ham concurred with Malone's sentiment about a competitive series, saying, "Everybody's going to lose their mind over one game, and give them their credit, they held serve at home. They're a tough home team, tough to beat in general, but they're really good at home. ... (But) we did a lot of good things out there tonight."

Denver just did more things better.

The Nuggets had 15 offensive rebounds for 18 second-chance points, 10 more than the Lakers, who grabbed just six offensive boards. And the Nuggets committed just four turnovers - just one by their starters - while the Lakers turned the ball over a dozen times, including a whopping seven by James.

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope, who scored all 12 of his points after half-time, made a trio of 3-pointers in a 13-0 run the Nuggets used to seize control in the third quarter at 89-74.

Porter excelled on the court, as coach Malone predicted he would, after a trying week for his family that saw one younger brother, Coban Porter, sentenced to six years in jail for a fatal drunken driving crash on Friday and another, former Toronto Raptors guard Jontay Porter, banned from the NBA for betting on basketball and disclosing confidential information to other bettors.

Timberwolves 120, Suns 95

In Minneapolis, Anthony Edwards scored 18 of his 33 points in the third quarter and had nine rebounds to carry Minnesota to a tone-setting victory over Phoenix to start the first round of the playoffs.

Karl-Anthony Towns added 19 points, Nickeil Alexander-Walker scored 18 points on 7-for-12 shooting and Rudy Gobert locked down the lane with 14 points, 16 rebounds and constant shot-altering defense to lead the Wolves to their first Game 1 home win in the playoffs in 20 years.

Kevin Durant scored 31 points on 11-for-17 shooting to lead the Suns, whose disadvantages in depth and size were exploited. Devin Booker had 18 points on 5-for-16 shooting and Bradley Beal added 15 points, but the Suns were out-rebounded 52-28 and outscored 52-34 in the paint by the Wolves.

Game 2 is in Minneapolis on Tuesday before the best-of-seven series



Denver Nuggets guard Jamal Murray (27) drives to the basket against the Los Angeles Lakers during the second half in Game 1 of an NBA basketball first-round playoff series in Denver. (AP)



The squash team poses for a family photo before departing.

Kuwait's futsal team battles Iran for quarters berth

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

BANGKOK, April 21: Aiming to secure a spot in the quarter-finals, Kuwait futsal team is poised for a crucial Group D encounter against Iran at 5:00 pm in the Asian Cup. Simultaneously, Bahrain and Afghanistan will also clash in the same group.

FUTSAL

Kuwait currently holds second place with 4 points, trailing behind Iran, the group leader with 6 points, who have already secured its spot in the next round. Afghanistan sits in third place with one point, while Bahrain languishes in fourth with a score of 0 points, effectively out of contention. The top two teams from each group advance to the quarter-finals.

Kuwait stands a chance of qualification regardless of the match outcome against Iran - a win, draw, or defeat - provided Afghanistan defeats Bahrain by a margin of no more than 3 goals.

Kuwait's coach emphasizes learning experience against Uzbekistan

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DOHA, April 21: Kuwait's under-23 football team coach, Emilio Peixe from Portugal, emphasized the importance of facing formidable opponents like Uzbekistan as a crucial learning experience for his players.

"In this tournament, Uzbekistan stands out as one of the strong contenders, providing invaluable challenges that contribute to our players' growth and development," Peixe remarked during a post-match press conference following Uzbekistan's commanding 5-0 win over Kuwait in the Asian Cup held in Doha.

With Kuwait's premature exit from the tournament after suffering two defeats, including a 1-3 loss to Vietnam in the group stage, Peixe acknowledged the necessity for his team to showcase a different performance against Malaysia in their upcoming match, aiming to glean maximum benefits from their participation.

He emphasized the tournament's role in player development, stressing the team's commitment to nurturing talent for the future.

Meanwhile, Uzbekistan's coach, Timur Kabadze, expressed satisfaction with his team's triumph over Kuwait. Kabadze highlighted the challenges posed by Kuwait's defensive tactics but praised his team's adaptability, which led to a resounding victory in the second half.



Kuwaiti players gear up for a showdown with Iran.

Facing Iran ranked sixth globally and boasting 12 Asian Cup titles, presents a formidable challenge for the 41st-ranked "Blue" team. Despite this, there's unwavering confidence among the players, who are prepared to enter the match with determination and showcase its best

performance to prolong its journey in the tournament.

This edition of the Asian Cup carries heightened significance for all teams, as those advancing to the "Golden Square" secure berths in the World Cup scheduled for Uzbekistan in September.

SOCCER

threat to their opponents' goal, reflecting the effectiveness of Uzbekistan's cohesive defensive strategy.

In another match of the same group at Khalifa International Stadium, Vietnam secured a 2-0 victory

over Malaysia.

As the tournament progresses, Uzbekistan tops Group Four with six points, followed closely by Vietnam also with six points. Malaysia sits third with no points, while Kuwait trails in fourth place, also with no points. The top two teams from each group advance to the quarter-finals.

Today's fixtures include the UAE facing China, Japan against South Korea, Thailand taking on Tajikistan, and Saudi Arabia meeting Iraq in anticipated matchups.



The Kuwaiti coach gives instructions on the touchline.

Excitement builds

Kuwaiti squash stars ready for Qatar Open 'challenge'

DOHA, April 21: The Qatar International Open Squash Championship kicks off today at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex in Doha, culminating on the 25th of this month. Seven players from the Kuwaiti national team

are set to compete in the tournament. The journey for the Blue players commences with Salman Al-Saleh facing off against Ayoub Zaman from Pakistan in the round of 32. In the U-13 category, Saleh Al-Kandari will take on Youssef Al-Naimi from Qatar in the same round. Meanwhile, Abdulrahman Al-Kandari will compete against Mohammed Al-Fayad from Qatar in the U-15 level round of 32. In the U-17 category, Khaled Al-Fawzan is scheduled to play against Chandra Molly from Singapore, and Abdullah Hani will meet the Iranian player Irfan Tagan in the round of 32. Moving to the U-19 category, Fahd Al-Ghais will square off against Muhammad Al-Batayneh

SQUASH

from Jordan in the round of 16, while Abdul Rahman Al-Maghribi has already secured a spot in the quarter-finals and will face Pakistani player Saad Saeed.

The delegation, led by Secretary General Hamed Al-Omran, along with technical staff members Ahmed Abdel-Al and Majid Khan, underwent a five-day training camp in Doha. The players engaged in rigorous training sessions held both in the morning and evening, supplemented by numerous friendly matches to fine-tune their skills ahead of the tournament.

Best of the Rest

Girona qualify: Girona ensured it will earn its first ever berth in a European competition next season after routing Cadiz 4-1 in the Spanish league.

Girona solidified its hold on third place and guaranteed it cannot finish lower than seventh, the spot that is rewarded with a trip to the Europa Conference League. A fifth- or sixth-place is good for the Europa League, and the top four get the biggest prize of the Champions League.

Girona opened up a 10-point gap over fifth-placed Athletic Bilbao with six more games remaining.

The club from northeastern Spain is one of the revelations of European soccer this season. In three previous seasons in the top flight, Girona's best finish was 10th. (AP)

Lens and Rennes on track: Lens scraped a 1-0 win against rock-bottom Clermont after Rennes coasted past Nantes 3-0 as both stayed on track for a European place in the French league.

The top six qualify for European competitions next season. Lens was sixth and Rennes seventh before Sunday's matches.

Florian Sotoca put Lens ahead from a penalty in the second minute.

Club-record signing Elye Wahi, who cost 35 million euros (\$38 million) from Montpellier last summer, missed three chances to score for Lens and the striker was jeered by home fans when he was taken off near the end.

Moments later, Sotoca hit the post with a low shot. (AP)

Napoli coach apologizes: Napoli's title defense is going from bad to worse.

The team's third coach this season apologized to fans following a disheartening 1-0 loss at relegation-threatened Empoli on Saturday that left Napoli at risk of failing to qualify for Europe.

Napoli remained in eighth place, a whopping 34 points behind leader Inter Milan with only five rounds remaining.

"We need to work on our pride - more than tactics at this point," Napoli coach Francesco Calzona said. "I want to apologize to Napoli's fans."

Alberto Cerri scored four minutes in with a header for Empoli, which moved four points clear of the drop zone. (AP)



Red Bull driver Max Verstappen of the Netherlands celebrates on the podium after winning the Chinese Formula One Grand Prix at the Shanghai International Circuit, Shanghai, China. (AP)

Sports

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Another race, another victory for Verstappen

McLaren, Perez round out top 3 at Chinese Grand Prix

SHANGHAI, April 21, (AP): Another Formula 1 race. Yet another victory for Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

The three-time defending champion won the Chinese Grand Prix on Sunday starting from pole, his fourth victory in five races this season and his 23rd in the last 27 extending through last season.

Only a brake failure last month at the Australian GP in Melbourne probably kept him from sweeping all five.

Verstappen trailed for only a few laps following a pit stop. Lando Norris of McLaren was about 14 seconds behind Verstappen in second - the eighth time he has been No. 2 in his career as he still seeks his first victory. Verstappen's Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez was third.

The Ferrari pair of Charles Leclerc, in fourth, and Carlos Sainz rounded out the top five, holding off Mercedes driver George Russell and Fernando Alonso of Aston Martin in sixth and seventh, respectively.

The rest of the points finishers following on were Oscar Piastri of McLaren, Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes and Haas driver Nico Hulkenberg in tenth.

Verstappen now has 110 points to lead the standings followed by Perez (85), Leclerc (76), Sainz (69) and Norris (58).

MOTOR RACING

"It felt amazing," Verstappen said. "All weekend we were incredibly quick and it was just enjoyable to drive. The car was basically on rails and I could do whatever I wanted to with it. Those kind of weekends are amazing to feel."

Verstappen was asked if this was the most dominant victory of his career.

"It was a good one, yeah," he said without getting specific.

The next GP is Miami on May 5. Will Verstappen power through that street race?

"Completely different track," he said. "Different tires. Different tarmac. So you never know."

The safety car came out twice in the middle of the race. Once after Sauber's Valtteri Bottas stalled at the edge of the track with a blown engine, and again with two nearly simultaneous incidents.

In one, Kevin Magnussen clipped Yuki Tsunoda, and in the other, Lance Stroll ran into the back of Daniel Ricciardo.

Verstappen's rule in F1 also extended to Saturday when he took the inaugural sprint race of the season.

Verstappen, after winning in Japan two weeks ago, was critical of running a sprint in China. He hasn't changed his mind very much - despite winning.

"The sprint format was better," Verstappen said. "But let's not overdo it as well. We are already doing 24 races, six of these sprint events as well. I get it. I guess it sells better and better numbers. But it's also more stress on the mechanics."

"We take it," Verstappen added. "We have to deal with it. But that's not a thing now where we need 12 because it will take its toll on people as well."

Norris echoed Verstappen. "The main point is the toll it has on mechanics and engineers," he said. "I don't think it's too bad for us as drivers, honestly."

I don't think we can be the ones to complain at all. The hundreds of mechanics and engineers here that have to travel so much. It's not healthy for them."

This was the first F1 race in China since 2019 when the COVID-19 pandemic and China's clampdown wiped out four races. Shanghai-born Zhou Guanyu finished 14th for Sauber, perhaps his last chance to race at home as teams next season will shuffle their driver lineups.

He squatted on the tarmac after the race and covered his face, the crowd thundering "Guanyu, Guanyu, Guanyu."

The real competition in F1 for the rest of the season appears to be for the half-dozen places behind Verstappen and Perez. Mercedes' George Russell called it "a fight" for places No. 3 through No. 8.

"Small differences can have a major impact," Russell said.

Domination is nothing new to F1. Michael Schumacher, Sebastian Vettel and Lewis Hamilton ruled before Verstappen came along - Schumacher and Hamilton winning seven season titles and Vettel four.

It's a good bet that Verstappen and Red Bull will rule next season. That might change in 2026 when new engine and chassis regulations take effect in F1.

Kuwait Club crowned U-14 Volleyball Federation Cup Champions



The Kuwait Club U-14 volleyball team celebrates on the podium.

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The U-14 Federation Cup Volleyball Championship concluded with Kuwait Club clinching the title by defeating Yarmouk in a thrilling final match at Al-Ittihad Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex. The intense showdown ended with Kuwait Club emerging victorious, 25-13, 19-25, 25-22, 21-25, 15-13.

Yarmouk showcased a formidable performance throughout the tournament. Meanwhile, Kazma secured third place after a decisive

victory over Al-Sahel.

Following the conclusion of the championship match, Nayef Al-Failakawi and Khaled Al-Failakawi, members of the

VOLLEYBALL

Federation's Board of Directors, alongside Musleh Al-Rashidi, Kuwait Club's director of volleyball, honored the top three teams with their well-deserved accolades.

Kuwait's Al-Kandari secures key role in Arab Triathlon Federation

HURGHADA, April 21: Rashid Al-Kandari, the president of the Kuwaiti Triathlon Federation, achieved a significant milestone by winning election to the Arab Triathlon Federation during its recent general assembly meeting held in Hurgada. Additionally, he secured membership in the Executive Office of the Arab Triathlon Federation.

The elections took place alongside the Arab and African Championships, pivotal events in qualifying for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Al-Kandari attributed this accomplishment to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal

TRIATHLON

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a staunch supporter of Kuwaiti sports. He expressed gratitude to all those who contributed to Kuwait securing a seat in the Arab Triathlon, including Major General Ahmed Nasser, the President of the Arab Federation for the sport, and the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee for their unwavering support.

Highlighting Kuwait's dedication to developing triathlon in the Gulf, Arab, and Asian regions, Al-Kandari emphasized that this achievement reflects Kuwaiti sports' commitment to growth.

He expressed hope for the success of himself and his colleagues in advancing the sport within the Arab Triathlon Federation.



Rashid Al-Kandari, the president of the club and the Kuwaiti Triathlon Federation.

The newly elected leadership of the Arab Triathlon Federation includes Major General Ahmed Nasser as President, Dr. Tariq Al-Khayyat as First Deputy, Major General Abdul Malik Jani as Second Deputy, Bakhtiar Rasoul as Third Deputy, and Field Marshal Yasser Othman as Fourth Deputy.

Membership in the federation comprises individuals from various Arab countries, including Rashid Al-Kandari and Ali Muqbil from Saudi Arabia, Muhammad Abu Tir from Palestine, Ali Mabrouk from Libya, Dana Shubat from Syria, and Dr. Ferial Shweiter representing women's membership from Algeria.

Everton boost survival hopes

Arsenal top EPL, City keep double hopes alive

LONDON, April 21, (AP): Manchester City's European rule is over - its domestic dominance is not.

Even on a day when Arsenal rose to the summit of the English Premier League with a 2-0 win against Wolves, City kept its pursuit of back-to-back domestic doubles alive by booking its place in the FA Cup final.

Bernardo Silva's late goal secured a 1-0 win against Chelsea in their semi-final, just days after City's Champions League defense was ended by Real Madrid.

Pep Guardiola's team had to dig deep at Wembley, with Chelsea creating the best of the chances before Bernardo struck an 84th-minute winner. A sweet moment for the Portuguese playmaker was even more special given he missed a penalty in the shootout loss to Madrid on Wednesday.

"(I'm) very happy after a very frustrating week for all of us, for me personally," Bernardo said. "The good thing is in football at Man City, you play every three days. Every three days you have the chance to put things right and now we have a chance to win another trophy."

City hoped to become the first team to win back-to-back trebles after winning the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup last season. Without the injured Erling Haaland, it had to show character to bounce back after the disappointment of defeat to Madrid.

Chelsea had chances to take the lead, but Nicolas Jackson wasted three golden opportunities before Bernardo's decisive moment - converting Kevin De Bruyne's cross from the left via a deflection from Marc Cucurella. "We conceded in a moment you should not concede," Chelsea manager Mauricio Pochettino said.

"We were not capable of being clinical in front of goal, we had many chances but we did not score. In the game we were a little bit better and deserved more, but it is not about deserving it, it is about being clinical and we were not."

City is aiming to win the Cup for an eighth time, while Guardiola can extend his trophy haul to 16 since joining the club if his team completes the double.

He may look back on this game as being pivotal if City goes on to win the league and Cup, given the physical and mental strain the week has had on his players after being taken to extra time and penalties by Madrid.

"I don't understand how we survived today. It's unacceptable to play today. Today is one of the greatest things I have seen from my players," Guardiola said. "I just want to pro-

tect my players. It's unacceptable, it's common sense. I'm not asking for something special or privilege."

Arsenal also had to show its resolve after a punishing week of its own.

Defeat to Aston Villa last weekend left Mikel Arteta's team trailing City by two points at the top of the standings and that was followed by Champions League elimination at the hands of Bayern Munich.

After last season's late title collapse, it looked like history was repeating itself.

But a 2-0 win at Wolves has gone some way to answering doubts about Arsenal's credentials. Leandro Trossard and Martin Odegaard scored late in each half.

SOCCER

"It was a tough week for us. A few tough results and (it was) hard emotionally but we had to keep going," Odegaard said.

Arsenal took over first place, a point clear of City, which has a game in hand.

Everton has boosted its Premier League survival hopes and left Nottingham Forest in trouble with a 2-0 win on Sunday in a match between teams that have received points deductions this season.

Precise shots that flew in off the post by Idrissa Gana Gueye in the 29th minute and Dwight McNeil in the 76th clinched a crucial victory for Everton, which is looking to preserve its 70-year stay in the top division.

Everton is in fifth-to-last place and

moved five points clear of the relegation zone with five games remaining. Forest is a place lower but is only a point from safety - though all of this could change.

Both teams have lodged appeals after being docked points in recent weeks for breaching the league's financial rules. Everton, which had already been hit with a six-point deduction, is appealing against being handed a further two-point hit while Forest has appealed against its four-point deduction.

Forest will leave Goodison Park unhappy the team wasn't awarded at least one penalty, with its biggest appeal coming in the 44th when Everton full back Ashley Young's right arm blocked a header back into the six-yard box.

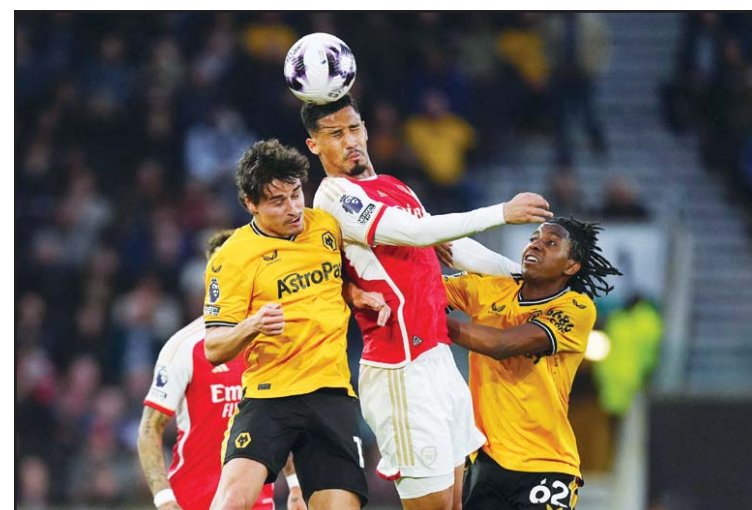
By then, Gana Gueye had given Everton the lead after collecting a clearing header and driving a low shot in off the post from outside the area.

McNeil's was a similar strike, though from slightly further out and hit more powerfully after a run from near halfway.

In stoppage time, Forest's Morgan Gibbs-White and Everton substitute Beto clashed heads. Beto came off worse and was carried off on a stretcher - though he raised his hand and gave a thumbs-up to the crowd after being tended to by medical staff.

Burnley's hopes of survival were boosted by routing last-placed Sheffield United 4-1.

Vincent Kompany's team is putting together a late-season bid to avoid the drop with only one loss in seven in the league. Burnley is within three points of safety.



Arsenal's William Saliba and Wolverhampton Wanderers' Hugo Bueno (left), battle for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Wolverhampton Wanderers and Arsenal at the Molineux Stadium in Wolverhampton, England. (AP)