



# Gov't keen on cooperating with judicial authority: PM

'Essential pillar'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA): The government is keen on cooperating with judicial authority in line with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's directives and Article 50 of the Constitution, said His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah A-Salem Al-Sabah on Monday.

This affirmation came after His Highness Sheikh Dr. Mohammad's meeting with President of the Supreme Judicial Council and the head of the Court of Cassation, Justice Dr. Adel Majed Bourseli.

His Highness the Prime Minister also expressed pride in the professionalism and competence of the judicial authority, which serve to protect the rights of individuals and state as stipulated by the constitution and law.

He affirmed that the judicial authority was an essential pillar to achieve justice in the land.

Minister of Justice, Minister of Awqaf (endowment) and Islamic Affairs Faisal Al-Ghareeb attended the meeting between the two top officials, held at the Supreme Judicial Council's headquarters.

Article 50 of the Constitution states that the system of government is based on the principle of separation of powers functioning in cooperation with each other in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

None of these powers may relinquish all or part of its competence specified in the Constitution, the Article stipulates.



PM Diwan photo His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (center) alongside Justice Dr. Adel Majed Bourseli, President of the Supreme Judicial Council, and Faisal Al-Ghareeb, Minister of Justice and Awqaf, during their meeting at the Supreme Judicial Council's headquarters.

## Food prices and clothing propel Kuwait's 3.37% annual inflation

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: In December 2023, the general consumer price index in the State of Kuwait showed 3.37% annual increase, attributed to a 0.30% monthly rise across all twelve index groups, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to a statement from the Central Administration of Statistics, the inflation rate reached 131.9 points last month, compared to 127.6 points in December 2022.

The inflationary impact was notable across all twelve groups, with the clothing and footwear category experiencing the highest increase at 6.72%.

Additionally, the prices in the food and beverage group rose by 4.74%. Conversely,

the cigarette and tobacco group registered the lowest annual increase at 0.22%.

On a monthly basis, Kuwait's inflation rate grew by 0.30%, with the health group witnessing a 0.92% increase, followed by a 0.91% rise in the restaurants and hotels group. The communications group prices remained stable during the same period.

When excluding the food and beverage group, the calculated inflation rate in Kuwait rose by 2.95% annually and increased by 0.31% monthly. Furthermore, after excluding the housing group, the inflation rate recorded an annual growth of 3.80%, with a monthly increase of 0.44%.

## Committee reviews bill for 'AI Authority'

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: MP Muhammad Hayef has submitted a proposal separate the Islamic Studies subject from the Holy Quran subject in all educational stages. He clarified that the proposal aims to give the students a chance to study and memorize the Holy Quran thoroughly and learn how to recite its verses properly. He pointed out that studying the Holy Quran develops the students' capabilities, especially in terms of training their brains to recall the information in a systematic way.

On the other hand, the bill on amending the First Instance Court Law has been referred to the parliamentary Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee for deliberation. The bill stipulates reducing the number of accumulated cases at the First Instance Court by increasing the fee for requesting the suspension of the implementation of verdicts from KD10 to KD30, preventing the appeal of verdicts at the Court of Cassation if the amount involved in the case is lower than KD30,000. The bill also prevents filing cases regarding administrative disputes if the money involved is lower than KD5,000.

Moreover, the Digitalization and Cybersecurity Committee recently discussed the bill on the establishment of the Public Authority for Artificial Intelligence. The committee stressed the need to ensure this bill is flexible in order to guarantee the continuous progress of artificial intelligence and to meet the growing demands in this field, including the full digitalization of the government.

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### NewsWatch

**KUWAIT CITY:** Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) issued a circular on Monday stating that all local banks will close on Thursday, February 8th, as an official holiday on the occasion of Al-Israa and Miraaj, said Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

KBA said in a press release that all banks will resume their work on Sunday, February 11th, congratulating His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on this Islamic occasion. (KUNA)

**KUWAIT CITY:** Saudi Minister of State and Member of the Cabinet Prince Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, arrived in Kuwait Monday on an official visit.

The Saudi Minister was received by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Mubarak Al-Sabah. (KUNA)

**WASHINGTON:** The U.S. on Monday hit Iraqi airline Fly Baghdad and its CEO with sanctions, alleging assistance to Iran's military wing - and in addition, imposed a fifth round of sanctions on the militant group Hamas for abuse of cryptocurrency since the October 7 terrorist attack on Israel.

The sanctions come as Israel's bombing campaign on the Gaza Strip continues - killing 25,000 Palestinians so far, according to the Gaza Strip Health Ministry - and Iranian-backed militias in Iraq launch regular strikes against bases housing U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria.

In the new sanctions announced Monday, Treasury said Fly Baghdad and its CEO Basheer Abdulkadhim Alwan al-Shabbani have provided assistance to Iran's military wing and its proxy groups in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. A representative from the firm was not immediately available. (AP)

**RIYADH:** The kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomed on Sunday the agreement to de-escalate tension and restore diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Iran.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a press release that "the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomed the agreement to de-escalate tension and restore diplomatic relations between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran."

The ministry noted that the kingdom was eager for a peaceful resolution to all differences through dialogue, in alignment with the fundamental principles of international law, including the United Nations Charter, and the principles of good neighborliness. (KUNA)

# Kuwait firm on Palestinian rights

'2-state solution'

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22:** Arab Parliament Member MP Khalid Al-Otaibi has stressed the need to unify Arab efforts to foil attempts to dissolve the Palestinian issue, displace Palestinians and commit ethnic cleansing against them in favor of the occupying entity - Israel.

Al-Otaibi made the statement in the second session of the third year of the fourth term of the Arab Parliament held in the Secretariat General of the Arab League in Cairo, Egypt.

He pointed out that the people of Gaza have been the subject of attacks over the last 100 days, calling on Arab countries to "take off the dress of weakness that some parties want the Arabs to wear." He said the global abuse of the resisting Palestinian people is part of the abovementioned plot. He wondered how the silence of the international community and failure to declare ceasefire could be justified.

He stated that the incessant Israeli attacks have transformed Gaza into a mass grave, leaving no option for the people there but to get killed or be displaced. He asserted the whole world is experiencing a historic turning point, which will leave traces on the peoples and regimes in the region.

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Kuwait's iconic skyline showcases a harmonious blend of modern architectural marvels and traditional structures, reflecting the nation's rich heritage and dynamic progress. KUNA photo

### Other Voices

## ICJ ruling could be catalyst for progress

By Tareq Yousef AlShumaimry

### Sahel app adds debt 'checks' for travelers

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22:** The Ministry of Interior has introduced two additional services through the unified government electronic services application, "Sahel," as part of its ongoing efforts towards digital transformation, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

These services aim to enhance convenience for citizens and residents in carrying out their transactions seamlessly. The Public Relations and Security Media Department of the ministry said the first service involves the issuance of a report detailing entry and exit movements within the port security sector.

This certificate is particularly useful for citizens requiring such documentation when engaging in certain government services.

The statement added that if specific dates for entry and exit movements are needed, users should refer to the central administration for entry and exit procedures.

The second service allows individuals to inquire about debts owed by residents, providing information about the required amounts before heading to the airport for travel.

The Ministry emphasized its commitment to continually roll out electronic services through the government's "Sahel" application. This initiative is geared towards keeping pace with the ongoing technological advancements in the security establishment sectors, ultimately saving time and effort for those accessing these services.

Last week, Yousef Kazem, the official spokesperson for the unified government application for electronic services "Sahel" announced the launch of a new electronic service by the Public Authority for Manpower, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This service facilitates the direct availability of "a certificate to whom it may concern for the Ministry of Higher Education - Chapter Five" through the "Sahel" application.

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Abuse of power ranging from environmentally dangerous initiatives to crimes against humanity is increasingly the norm as states seek justice from institutions such as the United Nations, the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

However, these international institutions constantly face obstacles to implementing the rulings of the International Court of Justice. Although they are considered the most prominent organizations in the world, their perceived authority is threatened by states that choose to reject their suggestions and directives or withdraw from international jurisdiction, as evidenced by Australia's actions in 2002 to evade mandatory provisions in large maritime disputes.

Since their inception, these institutions have served as essential references for states to consult with, and in theory abide by. However, an inherent weakness lies in their non-binding nature. The United Nations, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice operate on the basis of mere rulings, suggestions, advisory opinions or investigations, and their reliance on flexible language lacks the concrete enforcement power needed to significantly change state behavior.

The long-awaited ruling of the International Court of Justice in the coming weeks on the landmark case for us as Arabs and Muslims of South Africa's lawsuit against Israel will have little impact on the ongoing genocide committed by Israel and any ruling issued by the International Court of Justice lacks legal enforceability.

International bodies lack the ability to intervene directly in international conflicts, even in the face of increasing

levels of violence. This limitation is particularly troubling in long-term conflicts that do not show great prospects for resolution through the efforts of the two countries concerned alone, necessitating international assistance.

This weakness becomes particularly disturbing in the context of ongoing global conflicts that include human rights violations, crimes against humanity, acts of terrorism, and disturbances of international peace, and these events are in direct conflict with the basic principles and objectives of justice.

United Nations bodies have been entrusted with the task of implementing international judicial rulings issued by the International Court of Justice in accordance with Article 94 of its Charter in Paragraph 2, through the Security Council, which is considered a competent body at the United Nations level to implement these rulings and decisions of the International Court of Justice in favor of one of the parties or based on a decision by it.

If it deems it necessary to intervene. In light of the international criticism directed at the UN Security Council, I believe that among the reasons for failure is the restriction of the United Nations bodies in the implementation process as a result of assigning veto power to the five permanent members, in addition to the lack of a central international authority, which leads to the lack of authority to issue executive measures immediately. Issuance of a ruling or decision in favor of the right holder.

International precedent has made clear that the International Court of Justice is not empowered to impose provisional measures, as demonstrated by the Anglo-Iranian case on jurisdiction.

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## Kuwait residential property market faces limited trades

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA):** Trades in the sector of residential properties are expected to remain limited in 2024 maintaining the bearish trend of 2023 that recorded a 30 percent fall compared to the previous year's transactions.

Experts, interviewed by KUNA, revealed that statistics of the real estate and documentation division at the Ministry of Justice showed that there were 3,039 housing deals in 2023, in contrast to 4,362 transactions in 2022.

Total value of the dealings dropped from KD 1.927 billion to (USD 5.9 billion) in 2022 to KD 1.287 billion (USD 3.9 billion) in 2023, down by 33 percent.

Number of deals in the investment segment (apartment buildings) dropped by 16 percent last year compared to

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**Required**  
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## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 05:19 Asr ..... 14:57  
 Sunrise .. 06:42 Maghrib .. 17:17  
 Zohr ..... 12:00 Isha ..... 18:38

# Local

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

## Weather

## Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

**By Day:** Rather hot and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind to southwesterly wind, with speeds of 15-50 km/h causing rising dust with a light chance for scattered rain.

**By Night:** Rather cold and cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times southeasterly wind changing to northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-42 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	27	14
Kuwait Airport	26	08
Abdaly	26	09
Jahra	27	11
Salmiyah	24	16
Nuwaisib	26	11
Wafra	25	08

## Kuwait, Arab, Gulf countries lauded for their stance on Gaza

# Iran has no intention to expand war in Mideast: ambassador

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Totonji said his country has no intention to expand the war in the Middle East, as it is rather keen on achieving security and peace in the region, as well as to provide navigational security, reports Al-Qabas daily.

In an interview with the daily, Totonji stressed that Iran does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. He attributed the current situation in the Red Sea to what is happening in Palestine; hence, it is not a separate issue.

He clarified that his country's support for Yemen is purely political, while warning about the continuation of the Zionist attack on the innocent people in Gaza.

On the American accusation that Iran supplies weapons to the Houthis, he pointed out this accusation has been circulating and being repeated for more than 40 years. He believes it will not end easily, because it is the result of American policies. "These ongoing crises throughout the world are due to the wrong policies of the Americans and whoever revolves around them. They always strive to divide the ranks," he added.

He stated that the Red Sea issue is the result of aggression and an unjust war supported by America and those who have been trying to understand the oppressed and defenseless people in Gaza for the past three months.

He asserted: "These charges are like a broken cylinder through which they implement their policies, through which America and Britain are preparing the ground for their military campaigns against Yemen by trying to show that the Yemeni Army is disrupting and damaging navigation in the Red Sea.

"They claim that 2,000 ships were forced to change their course to avoid the situation in the region and the costs of sending containers have doubled due to these claims. Despite their efforts to provide the basis for waging war, they are concerned about expanding the dimensions of this war at the regional level, yet they announce in their media networks that neither America nor Britain is requesting the expansion of the war. Iran does not want to expand the scope of the war as well. Most of these initiatives are the results of the atmosphere that the media creates."

Asked if the Houthis are undergoing naval training in Iran, Totonji replied: "Regrettably, the perpetrators of the worst humanitarian tragedy in Yemen are still continuing their false claims, instead of answering for their acts of sabotage. Iran does not interfere at all in the internal affairs of any country, and such flimsy charges are part of their efforts to get out of the predicament they made for themselves. Iran supports the navigational security in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean."

He said: "This trend of continuing to ignore and crush the Yemeni reality and the will of the Yemeni people and not correcting past mistakes will yield the same results. The Iranian authorities have repeatedly announced and confirmed their official position -- that the Islamic Republic of Iran does not interfere and has no role in the decisions and initiatives of the 'government' in Sanaa."



Totonji

Regarding the message that the United States conveyed to Iran after the Yemen strikes, Totonji stated: "Since the beginning of the crisis in Gaza, we have warned the Americans and the rest of the Western countries, that support the Zionist entity, that failure to stop the barbaric Zionist crimes will perpetuate the course of the war in the region and deepen this trend, and that it is the direct responsibility of America. They cannot focus on supporting the peoples and resistance organizations in Palestine. They assume this is a violation of the stability and security of the region, while continuing their unconditional support for the Zionist entity."

He thinks the current situation in the Red Sea is due to what is happening in the occupied Palestine. He pointed out that the double standards used by Western countries at the current stage is unacceptable; especially since the Zionist entity continues to violate international laws by killing more than 23,000 Palestinians, including women and children.

Commenting on the statement of United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken that the rapprochement of Arab countries and Israel is the best way to isolate Iran from the region, Totonji stated: "The Zionist entity is the primary problem in the region. Through its acquisition of the latest advanced military equipment and financial support, it has transformed into the sole owner of weapons of destruction and atomic weapons. In the Middle East, it is incapable of maintaining security and providing regional security."

### Peace

He believes the only way to establish peace and security throughout the region and to guarantee the prosperity and interests of the peoples of neighboring countries is for matters to be in the hands of the regional countries themselves, as foreign players such as the Zionist entity claiming to protect others are rather turning to America to obtain weapons and equipment.

He added: "The Al-Aqsa Flood operations demonstrated that the racist regime is incapable of maintaining its security by itself, and that those who count on it to provide their security are delusional. The stability of the American fleets next to the occupied territories and the amplification of threats and military operations support this issue by stating that the military bases in the region have no goal other than protecting the interests of the Zionist entity and America. Without a doubt, the goal is to create military alliances in the Gulf."

He then stressed the need for countries to be smart, exercise caution, not fall under this failed policy, and to look into the past to find that the American alliances in the region led to nothing but destruction.

He praised the positions of the Arab and Gulf countries on the issues and developments in the region. "After the Al-Aqsa Flood operations, we witnessed firm political support from the government, parliament and people of Kuwait. This was manifested in the establishment of an air bridge for relief aid to the Palestinians in Gaza, sending more than 40 planes loaded with humanitarian aid. This clearly indicates the status of the Palestinian cause in the hearts of the people of this good country, as well as the wise position of the Islamic countries in supporting the Palestinians."



A Kuwaiti family is seen camping under a tree in the desert in the Sulaibiya area. Citizens put all kinds of tents at various places in the desert in spring season every year and spend days there with their families. Motorbikes, dune-buggies are a source of enjoyment during their stay. The camping season ends at the onset of early summer.

Photo by Mohammad Morsi

# Staff dodge work for months

No action taken against MoE truants

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The latest report of the Employment Affairs Section at the Civil Service Commission (CSC) turned out to be a huge surprise, as it revealed that a number of employees and supervisors in the Ministry of Education (MoE) did not register their attendance through the fingerprint system, which means they did not work for months, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The daily obtained a copy of the report, which criticized the ministry's failure to take the necessary measures in such cases; indicating that the ministry did not take legal or administrative measures regarding the failure of some employees to adhere to the official working hours like imposing the salary deduction rule for the periods of unjustified tardiness or absence at the end of each month.

The report pointed out the ministry did not implement the law on the non-payment of salary or allowances for the periods of absence from work for employees with more than 15 consecutive days absence or 30 non-consecutive days within 12 months. In such cases, the rule on arbitrary resignation must be applied as per Article 35 of the CSC decision, the report added.

The report also mentioned the names of the concerned employees, including directors, department heads and observers in various sections at the ministry.

It added that the ministry did not adhere to the provisions of CSC Resolution No. 41/2006 regarding the rules and regulations on the official work and its amendments, and circular number 42/2007 regarding the use of the fingerprint system as the sole proof of attendance at work.

### Decision

Article 10 of the decision stipulates that employees must be committed to the specified working hours and this is proven through the fingerprint system or any other method that the administration deems appropriate if the fingerprint system is not possible in some cases. Other methods stipulated in the decision include the magnetic card, clock, attendance sheet and other tools, without prejudice to the provisions of Article Seven of this decision.

The report pointed out that Article 11 of the same decision states that the responsibility to ensure the presence of employees in the workplace throughout the working hours falls on the shoulders of the direct superior, and that he is subject to disciplinary action if he does not take appropriate measures immediately after the violation is committed, and the next superior must monitor this.

Article 17 of the same decision stipulates that employees are allowed to sign when arriving within 30 minutes after the start of the specified work time, and whoever does not sign is considered late.

Article 30 of the decision stipulates that "if an employee stops working without permission, he will be deprived of salary, allowances and job benefits for the duration of the break, without prejudice to disciplinary accountability."

If the break reaches one of the two limits stipulated in Article 34 states that if the absence exceeds one day, the employee must notify the department to which he belongs by any means, whether personally or by someone acting on his behalf, of the reasons that led to his interruption, so that the department is aware of his condition.

Article 81, the employee is considered to have submitted his resignation effective from the day following the reaching of one of these two limits in accordance with the provisions of CSC Resolution No. 3/1981. Appropriate action will be taken in light of the excuses the employee presents, either by accepting his resignation or accepting his excuse.



Minister (Municipality): Going to the field and identifying citizens' problems and solving them in implementation of the royal directives.

KUNA photo

## Minister tours Municipal Council

# 'Hear public complaints directly'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA): Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan said on Monday that there are directions by the supreme leadership to inspect conditions in the field and directly listen to citizens' complaints.

The minister, speaking in a press release after a meeting with the chairperson and members of the Municipal Council, said she and her colleagues looked into a host of issues, set priorities and addressed obstacles facing speedy solutions to the problems in the sector.

She expressed hope that aspired rules and laws be drafted for sake of further progress at the national level, affirming keenness on upgrading personnel's performance and doing everything possible to attain Kuwait Vision 2035 for further development in utilities and other public services.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Al-Mehri, the chairperson of the council, said that the meeting addressed the enacted rules and those under consideration, namely the construction regulations.

Others topics on the table were cleaning contracts, in addition to other unresolved issues, he said.

Munira Al-Amir, the council member, said the council officials would spare no effort for attaining the development goals. Her peer, Alia Al-Farsi, said the minister expressed readiness to enhance cooperation with the council, noting that the discussed topics included matters related to public

### Schedule set

## Wafra waste lifted

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Kuwait Municipality recently launched a large-scale cleaning campaign at Wafra Residential Area, where the equipment and machines from Ahmadi Governorate Sanitation Department were utilized to remove large quantities of waste, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In a press statement, the Public Relations Department at the Municipality revealed that the campaign aims to raise public awareness by distributing awareness posters in various languages -- Indian, Filipino and English -- to inform the public about the schedule for collecting garbage; while stressing the need to tightly close the waste bags and then put them inside the containers.

On the other hand, the Municipality confirmed that the field cleaning team in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate carried out a massive cleanup drive along the coastal strip.

cleaning, waste management, recycling and the society's role in executing the public tasks.

## Other Voices

# Idea of co-ops is outdated

By Ahmad alsarraf

Robert Owen (1771-1858), a prominent British textile manufacturer, was a social reformer. His attitudes toward his workers led him to open the first cooperative store to sell high-quality products at discounted prices to them. It was considered the first experience in history to manage a worker-owned cooperative.

In Kuwait, the first attempts at cooperation began in 1941 at Al-Mubarakiya School, through a cooperative association to manage the school canteen, and after that the experience spread to other schools, and in the fifties I was a contributor to the Al-Sabah and Al-Siddiq school associations.

As for the first official cooperative society owned by the people of the region, it was the Kaifan Society, which was founded in 1962, with the purpose of serving the region and providing consumer goods and foodstuffs to the region's residents and patrons.

The experience of the societies was successful in its beginnings, and today its annual sales have reached more than 4 billion dollars, but with 'The Un-blessed Awakening'.

The religiously ideological parties succeeded in controlling the boards of directors of many of them, and perhaps that was the beginning of corruption eating into the body of their majority, and their transformation into a political tool and illicit enrichment, and the subsequent referral of some of their members, or their entire boards of directors, elected or appointed by the Ministry of Social Affairs to the prosecution to investigate them for serious financial violations.

Corruption included almost most of the cooperatives, and over time it became one of their characteristics, the cause of everyone's complaints, the cause of headaches for the Ministry of Social Affairs, and a blackmail tool for

those dealing with it, including tenants and suppliers, with its social services being modest, other than financing 'Umrah' trips for some of them.

Over time, sharp criticism of cooperative societies increased, and demands to cancel the entire idea increased, and others suggested reforming it. A third group demanded that the right to manage the central markets be stripped from its board of directors and handed over to professional marketing companies.

A fourth group demanded that the societies be transformed into public joint-stock companies, the people of the region owning all of their shares for a few years, and at a later stage they may sell it on the stock exchange, and in this way its accounts and business become under the supervision of several parties, instead of one party. Representatives and stakeholders also opposed amending its status, and the need for it to remain as it is, because that would be of benefit to them.

The Mishref Cooperative Society was, in the eyes of some, an icon and far from corruption, and had been making lucrative profits over the years, which prompted some to suggest that it be handed over to the management to the district instead of the government.

Then it was recently revealed, through a report by the successful journalist Ali Khaja, that it was no better than others, as it was subjected to violations, and the best evidence of its failure is that a well-known supermarket company stormed its home, and now has a large branch inside the Mishref Co-op Society. This means that the latter is reassured that it can provide a service to the people of the region that exceeds the level of what their "cooperative" provides to them!

The idea of cooperative societies in Kuwait is outdated, and their failure is clear to anyone with insight, and the strongest evidence of their failure is the success of their competitors, even though their lands and buildings are not free, and therefore everyone who calls for cooperative societies to remain in their current state is either ignorant of their conditions, or is benefiting from them!

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## LOCAL

'Eye on picnic sites'

## Mol enforces security plan for spring break

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The Ministry of Interior started implementing its security plan for the spring break last week -- when the semi-annual exams for all educational levels in public schools ended, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In a press statement, Director of the Public Relations and Security Media Department at the Interior Ministry Colonel Othman Al-Gharib revealed that the security plan for the spring break consists of two main axes: first is raising public awareness and the second is field-based. He said acting Undersecretary of the ministry Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf reviewed and approved the plan.

He pointed out that his department is implementing the awareness aspect of the plan by conducting lectures and field visits in camping sites, chalets, desert areas and picnic sites to raise public awareness on the regulations and dangers they might face, such as the risk of leaving burning charcoal.

This is in addition to reminding the public to refrain from tampering with any foreign object or remnants of the brutal Iraqi invasion, while urging parents to closely monitor their children and do not allow them to drive, as this remains a major cause of traffic and accidents. The public must also comply with environment regulations, as serious violations warrant severe punishment.

Environment police are assigned in camping sites, picnic areas, beaches and islands to guarantee strict compliance with the regulations, Al-Gharib explained.

He stated that the field aspect of the security plan was entrusted to the Public Security, Traffic, Operations and Criminal Security sectors. He explained this is done through heavy security presence in land, sea, commercial and residential areas round the clock; such that the officers can quickly deal with infringement on security, violation of public morals or serious traffic violations.

He added the security plan includes the public security patrols, rescue police and criminal investigation officers who are assigned in residential areas in a bid to prevent unscrupulous individuals from taking advantage of the spring break when most citizens and expatriates travel or spend some time outside their homes. He advised the public to fully secure their homes whenever they go outside, especially when they are traveling.

## Hearing in Amiri Diwan 'book forgery' case set

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The Court of Cassation set a session on Jan 25, 2024 to deliberate on the Amiri Diwan book forgery case that is part of the Army Fund case, as per the complaint submitted by Sheikh Hamad Sabah Al-Ahmad, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Earlier, the Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of the Criminal Court, which acquitted Mubarak Al-Faisal, Ali Al-Jarrah, and Salah Al-Massad of forging the Amiri Diwan book.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendants with forgery, stating that from March 31, 2021 to June 23, 2021, they forged an official document, which is the subject of the first letter, dated March 31, 2021, sent to the Court of Ministers. One of the defendants sent the letter in his capacity as Director of the Legal Advice and Legislation Department at the time.

He attributed statements to His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah -- may Allah have mercy on him. He claimed HH the late Amir was aware of and approved the proceedings stated in criminal report number 1/2020 regarding the Army Fund case.

Another defendant, in his capacity as Amiri Diwan minister at the time, signed the letter under the name of the Amiri Diwan and sent it to the Permanent Committee at the Court of Ministers.

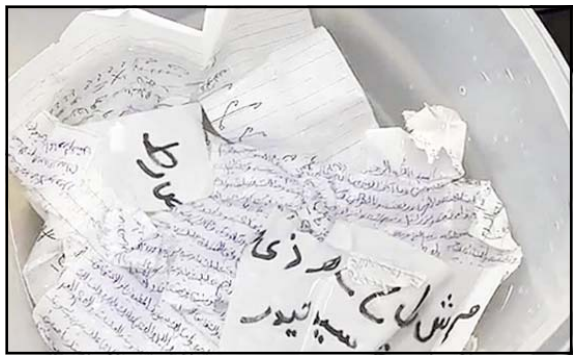
The other defendant, in his capacity as director of the Amiri Diwan at the time, prevented the sending of the second letter dated June 23, 2021 to the Court of Ministers, which stated the first book does not exist.

After analyzing all the pieces of evidence, the Criminal Court acquitted all three defendants due to the absence of criminal intent.

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**Behavioral cases:** The Ministry of Education (MoE) has formed a team tasked to follow up behavioral cases headed by Director of the Psychological and Social Services Department Dr Maryam Al-Farhan, with representatives of the Social Affairs, Labor, Interior and Health ministries as members, reports Al-Anba daily.

The team's tasks include identifying students accused in behavioral cases and those in care homes to develop treatment plans for them, facilitating the transfer of suspended students to schools affiliated with the care homes and their return to their previous schools at the end of their stay in care homes, contacting various authorities to study the cases to the fullest extent and provide the capabilities and means they need, identifying cases that suffer from family or social problems in schools in order to follow them up and develop appropriate solutions to protect them, and following up family nursery children enrolled in public schools.



Talismans, tools of magic seized.

1 dead in mishap

## Suspect nabbed with tools of 'black magic'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Abdali port security personnel have arrested an unidentified person and referred him to the Criminal Investigation Department after he was caught in possession of talismans, tools purportedly used in magic and incomprehensible words written on pieces of papers, reports Al-Anba daily.

A security source said the man, whose nationality is not given, arrived in a vehicle, and appeared confused, and a search of his luggage found tools likely to be used in acts of sorcery.

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**Accident kills one:** One person died in a traffic accident on the Mina Abdullah Scrap Road, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The Public Relations and Media Department of the Directorate-General of Fire Department (DGFD) said the accident was dealt with by the Mina Abdullah Center Fire Brigade.

A fire source said the man died after his vehicle overturned following a collision with another vehicle.

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**Sponge factory fire:** Acting on information, the Sabhan and Al-Bairaq fire brigades controlled a fire in a sponge factory in the Sabhan area, reports Al-Anba daily.

As a precautionary measure, the workers were evacuated from the factory and the fire was fought, controlled and extinguished. The incident did not result in any significant injuries.



Al-Rai photo

The fire-fighters pulling out two people buried in sand and rock.

## One dead in work site cave-in

Firefighting crews responded to a construction project incident on Al-Zour Road where two workers were trapped inside following a cave-in.

The Search and Rescue team from the Al-Zour Centers conducted high-level rescue operation using advanced equipment and tools that are being

used in such emergencies.

The workers were pulled out from beneath the rubble, but one lost his life and the other escaped with minor injuries.

The injured man was rushed to a hospital by paramedics.



Mol photo

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef talking to the senior military commanders.

## 'Negligent, lazy personnel have no place in ministry'

'Stick to laws, shun corruption'

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef has emphasized that those who are negligent in their duty and unable to contribute to the development of the nation or those who show disregard in their performance will find no place in his ministry, reports Al-Seyassah daily.**

This statement came during his meeting at the Ministry of Defense headquarters which he chaired and was attended by senior army commanders.

Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef took this opportunity to thank extend his profound gratitude to His Highness the Amir, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, and to His Highness Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister, for the valuable trust they have bestowed upon him.

He acknowledged that this trust represents a significant assignment, a demonstration of trustworthiness, and a substantial responsibility. Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef prayed for divine assistance in shouldering these burdens and fulfilling his duties in a manner that pleases the Almighty.

He underscored the considerable support and attention the Ministry of Defense employees receive from the political leadership. This underscores the need for everyone to align with the supreme directives of His Highness the Amir.

These directives, as outlined in His Highness's speech after taking the constitutional oath, call for unified efforts and the mobilization of diverse capabilities to achieve national entitlements for the benefit of the nation and its citizens. It also encourages the correction of the course, the cultivation

of an atmosphere of optimism, and the promotion of hope to attain desired goals and aspirations, he said.

Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef affirmed that the Ministry of Defense will adopt His Highness's directives as a working methodology and a roadmap for advancing the ongoing process of reform and development within the armed forces. This includes enhancing the capability and efficiency of all its members.

Emphasizing that the success of any endeavor hinges on cooperation and coordination, Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef went on to talk about the importance of competency among the citizens. He reiterated that there is no room for leniency toward a negligent individual unable to contribute, and no neglect of a diligent person who has demonstrated superiority and performance.

He called upon everyone to create conducive work environment for Ministry employees, supporting and encouraging the creative and distinguished among them.

Furthermore, he urged a commitment to the application of the law and a firm stand against any transgressions or financial and administrative violations. Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef highlighted the importance of considering feedback from various regulatory authorities in the country.

In conclusion, Sheikh Fahd Al-Yousef expressed confidence in the Ministry of Defense employees, anticipating further achievements and gains for the military institution.

He prayed for success for all in contributing to the well-being, elevation, and prosperity of the beloved country, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The meeting was attended by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Al-Mishaal and Acting Chief of the General Staff, Major General Engineer Dr. Ghazi Al-Shammari.

## 97pc of cases dealt with: statistics

## Court of Appeals achieves record

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The Court of Appeals has achieved a record in rulings as the rate of adjudication of cases reached 97 percent last year according to the official statistics, reports Al-Qabas daily.

President of the Court of Appeals and member of the Supreme Judicial Council Judge Muhammad Abu Salib said in a speech addressed to the representatives and advisors of the court: "Exerting tremendous efforts and dedication to work resulted in the adjudication of 61,667 appeals in 2023, that is, out of 63,998 appeals.

"The remaining appeals constitute three percent of the total and are being decided on."

The daily obtained a copy of the statistics, showing that the percentage of cases decided at the Family Court of Appeals reached 99.9 percent, 104 percent of commercial cases in the Capital Court of Ap-

peals, 89.4 percent of the commercial and civil cases, 104 percent of the labor cases, 93.7 percent of the rent cases, 95.7 percent for administrative and individual cases and 93.7 percent of the contracts cases.

The statistics also indicated that the dismissal rate in the administrative employee appeals reached 90.6 percent, while the completion rate of the criminal cases increased to 99.6 percent and the dismissal rate in the financial markets and company structure cases reached 86.8 percent.

On the other hand, with regard to the accumulation of appeals at the Court of Cassation, President of the Supreme Judicial Council Judge Adel Bouresli issued a decision assigning the director of the Court Clerks Department to inventory the cassation appeals registered from the beginning of 2015 and to prepare a list stating each type of appeal and the concerned courts.

## diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## 'Foreign investment vital for a progressive Kuwait'

"THE foreign investor has always been a source of income that drives any country, as the investor comes and pumps money into the country and opens new horizons, many jobs, and brings in technology that did not exist," columnist Abdulaziz Mubarak Al-Maousherji wrote for Al-Rai daily.

"The direct investment law in Kuwait began in 2013, in the Direct Investment Office, which was affiliated with the Ministry of Commerce at the time. Dr. Sheikh Mishal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah was distinguished by his leadership



Al-Maousherji

of this file and the establishment of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, attracting billions of investments into the state budget despite the obstacles that the authority has faced since its establishment.

"KDIPA was distinguished by promoting Kuwait as an economic and financial source in the region without a budget appropriate to the work of a body with this specialization. Among its most important files was the opening of an official branch in Kuwait by the Chinese company Huawei and General Electric Company, which generates a third of Kuwait's electricity today, in addition to many distinguished companies as well.

"Sheikh Mishal Al-Jaber was distinguished by his great economic experience, and he used to receive investors himself, which generated great confidence in the Authority, as its leader was wise and capable of providing what was required for investment in Kuwait.

"Now, with the new investment law (who are optimistic about its arrival), we need leaders like Dr. Sheikh Mishal Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The foreign investor must see political stability in the country. He must see an infrastructure suitable for investment, in addition to a people's culture that welcomes the coming change.

"Accordingly, I see the necessity of devoting a special council for direct investment, or increasing the specialization of KDIPA and empowering the authority with new powers. Including a giant budget to create new content that promotes Kuwaiti projects, culture, and Kuwaiti history in the region. In addition to combating false news about Kuwaiti politics in international newspapers.

"An external media must be devoted to creating a new stereotypical image of the Kuwait of tomorrow, and presenting it as an investment treasure compared to neighboring countries. Note that these investments will raise Kuwait's technology and standard of living by degrees.

"We are encouraged by the leadership of Dr. Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem, and we hope to see competent ministers who will advance the country."

Also:

"The government, represented by the State Property Administration and the Public Authority for Industry, has stopped granting industrial lands to industrial entrepreneurs under the pretext of the lack of industrial lands, noting that the currently exploited lands in Kuwait are equivalent to only 9% of the area of

Kuwait," columnist Fawaz Ahmad Al-Hamad wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"Therefore, the main role of the Public Authority for Industry is currently limited to monitoring the production of old factories only. Most of the industrial plots that were distributed to industrialists were 20 and 30 years ago, and they are the factories that are currently operating. During subsequent years, some industrial plots were granted to a very limited number of industrialists.

"The business environment in Kuwait is considered repulsive to industrialists, and therefore many industrial entrepreneurs have established their factories outside the State of Kuwait due to the availability of lands, the appropriate cost, and due to the provision of financing sources in addition to the appropriate and easy business environment.

"Note that Kuwait needs many food industries to achieve food security. During the past few years and during the Corona pandemic, Kuwait was able to provide a stock of food products, but most of the food products that were provided were products imported from abroad, and few food products were produced in Kuwait.

"We also urgently need to provide medical and pharmaceutical security as well. There are no pharmaceutical firms in Kuwait. We need to establish factories to produce medicines and medical supplies, as all medicines are imported from abroad, and this explains the reason for the high prices of medicines, because there are no factories to produce medicines locally.

"Petrochemical industries of all kinds are considered among the most important industries in demand, because they contribute to the manufacture of various products that we consume in our daily lives, such as plastic products.

"Due to Kuwait's geographical location, we need some other specific industries, such as shipbuilding, railways and automobile assembly plants, similar to some Arab and Gulf countries that have established partnerships to establish automobile assembly factories.

"All industries related to construction are considered promising industries, such as the iron industry, the aluminum industry, the copper industry, the brick and cement factories, the air conditioning and elevator industries, to contribute to building housing cities from national products instead of using products imported from abroad.

"When we visit the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we find that they organize special exhibitions to promote and market their factories and national products. They even participate in international exhibitions to market their local products. Congratulations to them for this distinction and development.

"In Kuwait, we also need to focus on the industrial sector to consider it a source of income for the state, to achieve a sustainable economy, to provide job opportunities for Kuwaitis and to contribute to solving the unemployment problem.

"To develop the industrial sector in Kuwait, we need to grant industrial lands to industrialists, provide multiple financing bodies to finance industrial projects, and provide storage areas and free trade zones.

"Kuwait will only be able to contribute to the development of its economy through the development of industry."

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes

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**JANUARY REWARDS**  
**FOR LOYAL GUEST**



**DON'T FORGET**  
**TO SPIN THE WHEEL**  
**WHEN YOU DINE IN AT ANY BRANCH**

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## Kuwait's Prime Minister receives congratulations from Iraqi counterpart on assuming office

# HH Amir receives warm wishes from Pakistan and Swiss Presidents

## PAHW signs KD33 million deal for J6-B private school project

Authority changes closing dates for 4 tenders

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

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22:** The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) yesterday morning signed with the winning investor - Approved Project Management Company LLC - an agreement to design, build, finance, operate, maintain, and transfer the investment opportunity J6-B, a private school in the Jaber Al-Ahmad Residential City, in the presence of the Director General of PAHW Eng. Rashid Al-Enezi.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of the signing event, the Deputy Director General for Investment Affairs and Private Sector Projects at PAHW Eng. Anwar Al-Hulaila explained that the investment opportunity J6-B is located on an area of 8,891 square meters in the service axis of Jaber Al-Ahmad residential city. This space will be developed into a private bilingual school.

The total expected revenues of PAHW from this project are estimated at KD 33 million during the investment period of 35 years. Eng. Al-Hulaila stated that the investment opportunity is considered the first of its kind, and will work to complement and enhance the existing services in the city.

Meanwhile, the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) has changed the closing date for four tenders for 400 KV power stations in the South Sabah Al-Ahmad project from January 28, 2024 to February 11, 2024.

### Amending

In a press statement, PAHW clarified the date of receiving the tender addendum No. 1 and amending the closing date for tender No. M. A. fee/2023/2024 for the supply, installation, implementation and maintenance of a main station with a voltage of 11/132/400 kV, 1344 (z1), 1345 (z2), 1346 (z3) and 1347 (z4) in the South Sabah Al-Ahmad residential project, from January 28, 2024 to February 11, 2024.

PAHW stated that the companies invited to the aforementioned tender must visit the PAHW headquarters in South Surra on the third floor and head to the Documents and Contracts Department to receive the tender annex No. 1 as of the date mentioned above. They must bring with them the receipt

### Streamlining charitable ops

## Ministry of Social Affairs pushes for 'automation'

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22:** The Charitable Associations Department at the Ministry of Social Affairs has asked the concerned authorities to provide automated devices for the charitable work inspection teams in a bid to fully automate the inspection work, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources revealed the charities have been instructed to upload their quarterly reports in the electronic system for charitable work. Through the system, charitable projects are submitted automatically and approved directly if they are compatible with the objectives for which the charity was officially declared, sources explained.

Sources confirmed this will not limit charitable work; as it aims to regulate the work, prevent violations, and provide protection for charitable work from unknown associations and those who intrude in this humanitarian work that Kuwait has created.

This system also protects Kuwaiti charitable work from any suspicion of terrorism or money laundering, while maintaining Kuwait's distinguished position globally. It contributed to the provision of an integrated database and electronic archiving system, where all correspondence and communications are completed automatically; thereby, saving the effort and time of employees in this field, sources added.

for purchasing the tender documents. The recipient must also provide proof of his authorization about the company.

In addition, PAHW announced the opening of the allocation window for the plots of the South Saad Al-Abdullah City project from Sunday, January 21, 2024, adding that they can apply for the allocation request through the Sahel government application.

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA):** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Monday cable from President Arif Alvi, Pakistan's President, congratulating him on assuming post.

In the cable, President Alvi wished His Highness the Amir good health and more progress and prosperity for Kuwait and its people.

On his part, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a reply cable to President Alvi, thanking him for the kind sentiments and wishing him good health and wellbeing.

Additionally, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Monday a cable from President Viola Amherd, President of Switzerland, congratulating His Highness on assuming office.

In the cable, President Amherd expressed her best wishes to His Highness the Amir, wishing him good health and more prosperity and progress to Kuwait.

On his part, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a reply cable to President Amherd, thanking her for the kind sentiments and wishing her good health and wellbeing.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received, Monday, congratulations on assuming post and forming the government from Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammad Shia' Al-Sudani.

During a phone conversation, Al-Sudani expressed his well wishes of prosperity to Kuwait's Prime Minister and to the Kuwaiti people.

## Kuwaiti FM receives congratulations on assuming post from counterparts

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA):** The Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received a phone call on Monday from Bader bin Hamad Al-Busaidi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman, congratulating him on assuming post.

During the call, Al-Busaidi expressed his best wishes for Al-Yahya, saying he looks forward for cooperation that strengthens the bilateral relations, serves the interests of both nations and enhances

joint Gulf action.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya also received a phone call on Monday from Mauritanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohammad Salem Ould Merzoug, congratulating him on assuming the post.

Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya received on Sunday a phone call from Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Hussein Amir-Abdolahian congratulating him on assuming the new post.



One of the recipients of the award.

## Kuwaiti women top list of excellence in Gulf

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22:** In a notable accomplishment, Kuwaiti teacher Sanaa Al-Barrak from the Safiya Bint Thabet Primary School, has been honored with the Distinguished Teacher Award by the Hamdan Bin Rashid Foundation for Distinguished Gulf Educational Performance, reports Al-Qabas daily.

Simultaneously, student Jinan Al-Sharif from Toledo Girls Secondary

School secured the Distinguished Student Award.

Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, sent his heartfelt congratulations to both Al-Barrak and Al-Sharif for their exceptional achievements.

In a press release, Dr. Al-Adwani expressed immense pride in the announcement by the Hamdan Bin

Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation, acknowledging the Ministry of Education in Kuwait's triumph in the Outstanding Teacher and Outstanding Student categories at the Gulf level. He emphasized that this educational milestone underscores the innovative spirit and initiative of the winners in establishing benchmarks of quality and excellence in both scientific and literary domains.

## Union appeals for support under new leadership

### Al-Qadram congratulates new government

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22:** Abdullah Al-Qadram, Secretary of the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company Workers Union, sent congratulations to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Sabah and the government members on the formation of the new government, having gained the confidence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In his message, Al-Qadram urged the new government to prioritize the concerns of the Kuwaiti people and embark on a new phase of tangible achievements for the benefit of the nation and its citizens.

Additionally, Al-Qadram conveyed sincere congratulations to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr. Imad Al-Ateeqi for assuming his new role.

He called on Dr. Al-Ateeqi to address various issues faced by workers in the oil sector, particularly those of the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company. Al-Qadram pointed out the financial constraints of the union, underscoring that its limited resources hinder its ability to fulfill its role effectively in serving its members by safeguarding their interests, defending their rights, and striving to enhance their financial and social well-being.

Al-Qadram emphasized that unions aim not to exacerbate issues but rather to contribute to the improvement of the national economy and oil production, all within the framework of international laws, agreements, and principles of equality and non-discrimination.

He highlighted the unfortunate trend where support for unions has become arbitrary and not subject to legal provisions. Some companies readily provide comprehensive support to their unions for their activities and events, while others cease support without clear reasons.

Moreover, Al-Qadram noted that the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company is yet to implement the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's decision to resume participation in

### Dr Al-Ateeqi praises efforts of oil officials

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22:** Dr. Imad Muhammad Al-Ateeqi, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, hosted a meeting in the Burgan Hall of the Oil Complex, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During the meeting, he welcomed Sheikh Nawaf Saud Nasser Al-Sabah, the Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors and CEO of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, along with the CEOs of the corporation's oil companies.

Discussions at the meeting centered on the essential ongoing projects in the oil sector and strategies to expedite their completion.

Minister Dr. Al-Ateeqi commended the efforts of the oil leaders and underscored the importance of continuous human development. He emphasized the application of global best practices in health, safety, security, and the environment to ensure the well-being of workers.

The Minister and the oil leaders also reviewed crucial projects and production plans within the sector. They delved into the challenges and obstacles hindering progress, exploring potential solutions to overcome these challenges and minimize their impact.

external training courses and enrollment programs with international and local entities. This move is crucial for developing the skills of the company's workers and employees.

Al-Qadram said he is optimistic about a new era of achievements under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad and the government of His Highness the Prime Minister.

### MoCI takes action against price manipulation

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22:** The Commercial Control Department in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has referred the owners of several cafés and restaurants in malls to the Commercial Prosecution because they increased prices of drinks and food, taking advantage of the mid-year holiday when families frequent

such establishments, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources revealed that the department fined 16 cooperative societies for raising the prices of a food commodity by 30 percent, and the ministry instructed these cooperatives to sell the product at the previous price.

### Total of 103 contracts transacted

## Kuwait real estate contracts surge

**KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22:** From January 7-11, 2024, the cumulative value of real estate contracts recorded with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Justice reached approximately 55.41 million dinars, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The data from the Ministry's Real Estate Registration and Authentication Department revealed that a total of 103 contracts were transacted during this period across the six governorates.

Specifically, the week saw the registration of 82 contracts for private real estate, worth 33.77 million dinars.

Additionally, 21 investment property contracts were initiated, worth 21.63 million Kuwaiti dinars. Notably, there was no activity in the commercial, craft, or industrial real estate sectors, as well as the coastal strip, exhibitions, or warehouses during this timeframe.

No agency contracts were registered in Kuwait during the mentioned week. In comparison, during the shorter period from January 2 to January 4, 2024 (3 days), the total value of real estate contracts registered with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Justice was approximately 31.12 million dinars.



# January

## Room Promotion






Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
<b>NOW</b>	<b>NOW</b>
<b>BHD 53.361/-net</b>	<b>BHD 119.173/-net</b>
Weekends (Thursday & Friday)	
Queen Cabana (2 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.	2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons inclusive of breakfast) per night.
<b>NOW</b>	<b>NOW</b>
<b>BHD 61.000/-net</b>	<b>BHD 136.198/-net</b>

Promo period from 1<sup>st</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024

Terms & conditions apply\*

## 'Gathering aims to ratchet up state-wide cooperation'

# Kuwait human rights penchant traces back to early statehood – diplomat

Company reinforces commitment to customer satisfaction

## KAICO hosts free service drive for Mazda customers

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Mazda owners in Kuwait have got their vehicles inspected for free as Kuwait Automotive Imports Company (Al-Shaya and AlSagar) hosted a service campaign at Shuwaikh service center branch on January 20, 21 and 22. Held at Shuwaikh service center, the 3-day drive invited customers with Mazda's bought to get their vehicles inspected.

Three Mazda experts from Japan — Kosuke Sakuma, Masahiro Osada and Narayana Moorthi — flew in specifically for the service drive. The drive helped Mazda owners gain deeper insights into their machines.

Ashish Tandon, General Manager, Kuwait Automotive Imports Company (AlShaya and AlSagar), said: "The service drive aimed to elevate the exceptional customer experience we offer Mazda owners in the Kuwait. The presence of Mazda experts at the event reinforced our commitment towards customers in delivering the outstanding experience we are known for in the market."

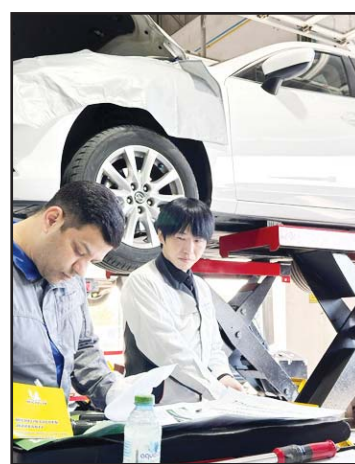
Mohammed Aboulaoun, Senior Executive Manager - Service, said the experts from Japan are famous for their precision and attention to detail. "With their presence at the service drive, the brand has reinforced its dedication to providing top-notch services to its customers," he said.

According to Zameer Ahmad, General Manager - Customer Service & Experience - Mazda Middle East & Africa, Customer service in Kuwait is clear and concise about maintenance processes, costs and timelines".

"This commitment to transparency builds trust and fosters long-term relationships between the brand and its customers," he added.

KAICO has ensured that the MAZDA brand is one of the best when it comes to after sales service and customer experience.

Drive service event Increase the trust further reinforces KAICO



Japanese Mazda experts elevate customer experience in Kuwait with specialized service drive.

Company's position as the industry's leading distributor. By consistently striving for excellence and leveraging its expertise in sales and marketing, KAICO Company continues to shape the automotive landscape in Kuwait. Their relentless efforts have propelled Mazda's market penetration and significantly enhanced its visibility in the region.

## Committee reviews

Continued from Page 1

In another development, MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri forwarded queries to Minister of Justice, Endowments and Islamic Affairs Faisal Saeed Al-Ghareeb about the delayed issuance of the executive regulations of Election Law number 120/2023, considering the law was published in the Official Gazette on Aug 28, 2023 – more than five months ago.

He also inquired about the delayed formation of the Higher Elections Commission and appointment of its secretary general, assistant secretary general and members. He warned about the unconstitutionality of the absence of the commission, as it could lead to the nullification of elections by the Constitutional Court.

## Kuwait residential

Continued from Page 1

2022; from 1,369 to 1,140 contracts, thus the recorded value fell from KD 1.98 billion (USD 3.34 billion) to KD 822 million (USD 2.5 billion), down by 25 percent.

As to the commercial sector (offices, stores, malls), number of the contracts dropped by 27 percent last year, where 116 bargains were recorded compared 161 in 2022. And the total value moved down by 29 percent from KD 605 million (USD 1.9 billion) to KD 425 million (USD 1.3 billion).

Sulaiman Al-Dulajjan, manager of Al-Dulajjan Real-Estate Office, said in an interview with KUNA that the trend in the residential segment would remain low in 2024, noting that the authorities had enacted fresh laws to limit speculations in this particular sector.

Al-Dulajjan said the year 2023 witnessed 5-15 percent drop in the residences' value, particularly in regions of noticeable activity, namely Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City, Abu Ftairah, Fnaitees, Al-Masayel, Salwa and Al-Rumaythya.

He clarified that the forecast downward trend would be in the regions eyed as far from the capital region, where activity would remain unchanged despite enactment of new laws on undeveloped plots' monopoly. In part, an owner of lands exceeding 1,500 square meters will be compelled to pay the state annual fees for each undeveloped plot.

Al-Dulajjan noted that there has been recession in the speculators' activity in the residential sector due to the banks' decision not to lend a citizen who has more than two houses, in addition to the shift of their funds to the investment and handicrafts' fields.

Elaborating, he noted that the investment segment has recently showed a decline after authorities abstained from granting residency to some expatriates, amid forecast instability.

Plots' prices in the regions between the first and fourth road rings have remained high as compared to the other residential areas; however, number of transactions has remained unchanged in these inner areas. Qais Al-Ghanem, a realty expert, told KUNA that some of the reasons for the downward trend in the realty sector is funds' shift to the safe haven; the banks that offer lucrative interests.

The recently issued land monopoly law is not expected to be effective in lowering prices in the near future, however it may be so in the coming years, Al-Ghanem said. He proposed establishing new residential areas with a main role for the private sector. He lauded the banks' decision not to fund nationals who own more than two houses, explaining that the move would stem speculations, nudge speculators to quit the sector, thus raising anticipations for bearish prices in the future.

Alaa Behbehani, General Manager of Abraj Behbahani Real-Estate company, dubbed as normal the fall in the field, amid the soaring prices in the aftermath of the coronavirus' outbreak and the lucrative investments in the banks.

He singled out Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City as the region with the steepest fall, due to an upsurge of

speculations.

The housing sector, since the third quarter of 2021, witnessed drastic decline with respect of the total trades' value while that of the investment segment witnessed slight rise. However, the commercial sector maintained balance.

The lackluster atmosphere in the sector is forecast to hold in the current year in the shadow of the geopolitical and economic conditions.

## Kuwait firm

Continued from Page 1

He stressed that the evil power is trying to dissolve the Palestinian issue through an unprecedented crime against humanity. He added the suspicious silence and failure of the international community are considered a shameful mark on the forehead of humanity.

He emphasized that attempts to end the issue in favor of Israel will not succeed, thanks to the heroic resistance of the Palestinians.

He then criticized the leaders of countries supporting Israel for killing the women and children, while praising the position of the peoples of the free world, as they showed solidarity with the Palestinians in their fight for a righteous cause.

He also lauded the action taken by South Africa, which filed a case at the International Court of Justice against the leaders of Israel; wondering why big countries failed to take a similar action. He explained that the case filed by South Africa is symbolic, because this is the first time that the Israeli leaders are charged by the international judiciary since the foundation of Israel.

He wondered about the position of countries, which claimed to have adopted the democratic course and defend human rights; yet they support Israel in committing crimes against the innocent people of Gaza. He said the bloody history of Israel rehashes the International Court of Justice to impose harsh penalties, citing the penalties imposed on the Nazi commanders involved in the holocaust, which included 12 death sentences and seven life imprisonments, in addition to punishing 90 leaders of Serbia including its former president in 2007.

Kuwait on Monday called on the international community to take a solemn stance against the Israeli occupation war crimes against the Palestinian people and the continuous violation of international laws.

This came during Kuwaiti ambassador to the Arab League Talal Al-Mutari speech at the Arab League emergency meeting on Gaza, held today in the league headquarters in Cairo under the chairmanship of Morocco, the current president of the Arab.

Al-Mutari added that the Palestinian people are going through difficult times due to the Israeli occupation army's constant violation of international laws which requires a unified stand by the international community.

Peace in the Middle East will not prevail until the Palestinian people are given their rights by forming an independent state according to the June 1967 borders, Al-Mutari added.

Until such rights are given, then violence and hatred will continue for generations and from war to war, the Kuwaiti ambassador noted.

Al-Mutari called again for the international community to stand in unity in stipulating the two-state solution and giving the Palestinian people their legitimate rights.

The Palestinian people have suffered for a very long time and were forced to abandon their homes leading to a life of despair and agony, the ambassador said.

He pointed out the escalation of Israeli crimes in the occupied West Bank, the systematic destruction of Palestinian refugee camp infrastructure, the daily raids on dozens of Palestinian cities, villages, and camps, and the Israeli blockade of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Al-Mutari reaffirmed Kuwait's supportive stance to the Palestinian people to gain their legitimate rights that are guaranteed by international laws.

He reiterated that Kuwait would exert all efforts possible to aid the Palestinian people with humanitarian aid and provide a decent living condition.

The ambassador welcomed South Africa's move in its case against Israeli occupation authority at the International Court of Justice.

The meeting comes after the Israeli military launched a devastating war on Gaza on October 7, 2023, and caused a humanitarian crisis. About 1.9 million people, or more than 85 percent of the population of Gaza, have been displaced, according to Palestinian authorities and the United Nations.

## Sahel app

Continued from Page 1

Kazem explained that the purpose of this new service is to empower individuals registered in "Chapter Five" to generate a "To Whom It May Concern" certificate addressed to the Ministry of Higher Education directly through the application.

This can be done when there is a need to complete studies or for any other purpose. The user of the "Sahel" application must have previously submitted a request for the processing of study applications in the labor support transactions system on the Public Authority for Manpower website.

Kazem commended the Public Authority for Manpower for its ongoing efforts in introducing new electronic services through the unified government application for electronic services "Sahel".

## ICJ ruling

Continued from Page 1

In submitting its complaints to the UN Security Council, Britain invoked Article 41 of the UN Charter, asserting the Security Council's authority to deal with orders relating to precautionary measures, this reliance on the provisions of the UN Charter was intended to highlight the practical limitations faced by the International Court of Justice in implementing such measures.

Likewise, in my follow-up to the case of Ukraine against Russia, the International Court of Justice has already indicated, within its interim procedures, that the Russian Federation must immediately suspend the military operations that it began on February 24, 2022 in the territory of Ukraine. Russia objected to the ruling as the war continues to date.

The President of the International Court of Justice, Judge Joan E. Donoghue, representing the United States, will retire in February 2024, and this may be her last ruling, her replacement Judge Sarah Selivland will take over as one of the fifteen judges on the committee.

In either case, even if the interim ruling that is expected to favor South Africa is pronounced, there will be little relief for the Palestinians in Gaza, but it will be a major moral victory over the aggressor and perhaps the beginning of an opportunity to reform the system. If the International Court of Justice finds Israel guilty of human rights violations or unlawful military rule, as has been the case in the past, there is hope that powerful states will feel pressure to modify their current positions.

At the very least, it adds to an important global discourse that can put pressure on society. In cases where other actors have failed to alleviate the plight of Palestinians, the International Court of Justice can serve as the catalyst needed to ignite the flame of progress.

Tareq Yousef Alshumaimry served as advisor and head of the Finance and Administrative Committee and head of the General Budget Committee at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague (PCA) and an observer in the Administrative Council of the International Court of Justice and at the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in the Netherlands during this period from 2013 to 2020.

Tareq@alshumaimry.com

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22, (KUNA): Kuwait's commitment to protect human rights dates back to the early days of independence, a diplomat said on Monday, recalling the time when national devotion to human rights first came to fore.

The first glimpse of Kuwait's dedication to the issue of human rights was seen during a speech given by the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, in which he spoke of a national fervor for peace and the principle of human rights, as embedded in the country's constitution, said Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Sheikh Jawaher Al-Sabah.

Kuwait is an active member of a slew of global bodies and organizations devoted to human rights, which also entails the rights of women and children, the diplomat underlined after talks involving a national human rights committee.

Echoing the diplomat's sentiments, Kuwaiti social affairs ministry assistant undersecretary for social development affairs Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi cited an equal concern on the ministry's part over the protection of human rights, thought a solid rapport it has forged



KUNA photo Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs, Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah, seen during a speech.

with public benefit organizations. On the purpose of the talks, Rehab Bourisly, a member of the UN's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, said the gathering aims to ratchet up state-wide cooperation on the pressing matter of human rights.

## DGCA nod for extension of Sheikh Sa'ad Al-Abdullah Airport project

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation has given its approval for the extension of the contract related to the Sheikh Sa'ad Al-Abdullah Airport project, overseen by Royal Aviation Kuwait -- a subsidiary of the United Projects for Aviation Services Company (UPAC), reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to a statement issued by UPAC, the decision to extend the contract until May 14, 2024, was reached following negotiations between the subsidiary com-

pany and the DGCA authorities. This extension was necessitated by the closure of the western road leading to the Sheikh Sa'ad Al-Abdullah Airport building in May.

UPAC emphasized that the financial implications of this significant development involve the continuation of the subsidiary company's operations in the project, with its outcomes being reflected in the accumulated data. In the first nine months of the previous year, UPAC reported a profit of 3.53 million dinars.

# Kuwait underscores cooperation and amplified efforts to overcome crises

Al-Bannai calls for adherence to int'l laws

CAIRO, Jan 22, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait underscored on Monday the importance of bolstering cooperation, and amplifying joint efforts, overcome and respond to current and foreseeable crises.

This came in Kuwait's speech at the G77 and China Third South in Uganda capital of Kampala, relayed by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's representative, Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai.

The Ambassador affirmed Kuwait's support to joint international cooperation in curbing the expansion of poverty, and fortifying the international food security organization.

## Burden of loans

He also highlighted Kuwait's role in alleviating the burden of loans, combating the ramifications of climate change, and natural disasters, as well as address humanitarian suffering caused by conflicts and instability.

Al-Bannai hailed the vital and active performance of the G77 and China affirmed necessity of furthering such efforts.

On the Palestinian issue, Ambassador Al-Bannai indicated that a great responsibility falls on them to abide by international laws and stipulations, commending mem-



KUNA photo The representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai.

ber states' involvement in the deteriorating situation.

He also urged member states to intensify efforts in support of Palestinian people rights and aspirations.

Al-Bannai pointed out that the meeting is held amidst grueling conditions and complex hurdles undermining ability to achieve the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Ambassador relayed to the congregation the greetings of His Highness the Amir and extended his thanks to Uganda for hosting the summit and to Cuba for presiding over the last session.

## CONDOLENCES

The Owners,  
Management and Staff of

**Al-Rashed International Shipping Co ksc**

Extend our Heartfelt

condolences to

**Mr. Sudheesh Shankar**  
(Manager - Customer Service)

on the sad demise

of his Mother

who passed away in India

on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2024

May her soul Rest in Peace

## World News Roundup

## Europe

## Isha batters UK, Ireland

## Poland PM Donald Tusk visits Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine, Jan 22, (AP): Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk arrived in Ukraine's capital Monday for talks with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on how Poland can keep supporting the country's almost two-year war with Russia and resolve a dispute between the neighboring nations over grain shipments and trucking.

Tusk, who returned to power in Poland last month and is keen to show that a change in government won't bring a change in Ukraine policy, was also due to meet with Ukrainian Defense Minister Denys Shmyhal.

"There are some conflicts of interest, we know it well and we will talk about them, but not only in the spirit of friendship, which is obvious, but with the attitude to solve these problems as soon as possible, not to maintain or multiply them," Tusk said, according to comments posted on X, formerly Twitter, by his office.

"For me, it is very important to build the feeling that Poland is the most reliable, most stable ally of Ukraine in this deadly clash with evil," Tusk said.

His visit took place the day after Moscow-installed officials in eastern Ukraine reported that Ukrainian shelling killed at least 27 people on the outskirts of a Russian-occupied city. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the shelling outside Donetsk a "monstrous terrorist act," and the Russia-backed local authorities declared a day of mourning.



Tusk

**Putin's campaign presents scores of boxes:** Russian President Vladimir Putin's campaign staff on Monday presented scores of boxes filled with signed petitions supporting his run in the March presidential election, a vote in which he's almost certain to win another term in office.

Putin, although closely tied to the dominant United Russia party, is running as an independent, a path that would prolong his grip on Russia for at least another six years. The 71-year-old leader has twice used his leverage in the past to amend the constitution so he could theoretically stay in power until he's in his mid-80s. He is already the longest-serving Kremlin leader since Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, who died in 1953.

Russian election law requires independent candidates to present at least 300,000 signatures gathered from 40 regions of the country to get on the ballot.

**Storm Isha batters UK, Ireland:** Tens of thousands of people were without electricity and hundreds of trains were canceled on Monday after the latest in a wave of winter storms lashed Britain and Ireland with heavy rain and wind gusts of almost 100 miles (160 kilometers) an hour.

The UK's Met Office weather service had issued an unusual blanket wind warning for the whole country before Storm Isha, which reached its peak overnight. A 99-mile-an-hour gust was recorded at Brizlee Wood radar station in northeastern England.

Ireland and the UK have been hammered since fall by a series of gusty and wet storms that have toppled trees, knocked out power and led to flooding along river valleys.

**Sarah diagnosed with malignant melanoma:** Sarah, the Duchess of York, has been diagnosed with a malignant skin cancer that was discovered during her treatment for breast cancer, a spokesperson said.

The melanoma was found after several moles were removed while she was undergoing reconstructive surgery after a mastectomy. Doctors are analyzing it to see if it was caught early.

"Clearly, another diagnosis so soon after treatment for breast cancer has been distressing but the Duchess remains in good spirits," the spokesperson said.

**France gets ready to say 'merci' to vets:** France is getting ready to show its gratitude toward World War II veterans who will return, many for the last time, to Normandy beaches this year for 80th anniversary commemorations of D-Day to mark the defeat of the Nazis.

A ceremony at Omaha Beach, with many heads of state expected to be present, will be honoring the nearly 160,000 troops from Britain, the U.S., Canada and other nations who landed in Normandy on June 6, 1944.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Friday that D-Day celebrations, alongside the Paris Olympics, will be "France's rendezvous with the world."

It will be an occasion for the French to say "merci," or "thank you," to veterans, some of whom will make a long trans-Atlantic journey, despite advanced age, fatigue and physical difficulties.

**'Don't sign into law a new legislation':** Tens of thousands of people marched in the streets of cities across France on Sunday to call on President Emmanuel Macron not to sign into law tough new legislation on immigration that they say bears the footprint of the far right and betrays French values.

According to the Interior Ministry, 75,000 people took part across the country, with 16,000 protesters turning out in Paris. The hard-left CGT union put the number of protesters nationwide at 150,000.

The timing of the protests was critical, coming four days before the Constitutional Council decides on Thursday whether all articles in the law - passed in December - conform with the French Constitution.

The bill strengthens France's ability to deport foreigners considered undesirable and makes it tougher for foreigners to take advantage of social welfare, among other measures.

**Protest ends early due to safety concerns:** A protest against the far right in the German city of Munich Sunday afternoon ended early due to safety concerns after approximately 100,000 people showed up, police said. The demonstration was one of dozens around the country this weekend that drew hundreds of thousands of people in total.

The demonstrations came in the wake of a report that right-wing extremists recently met to discuss the deportation of millions of immigrants, including some with German citizenship. Some members of the far-right Alternative for Germany party, or AfD, were present at the meeting.

In the western city of Cologne, police confirmed "tens of thousands" of people showed up to protest on Sunday, and organizers spoke of around 70,000 people.

A protest Sunday afternoon in Berlin drew at least 60,000 people and potentially up to 100,000, police said, according to the German news agency dpa.



From left: Denmark's King Frederik X, Queen Mary, Prince Vincent, Crown Prince Christian, Princess Isabella and Princess Josephine greet the crowd after a service on the occasion of the change of throne in Aarhus Cathedral, Aarhus, Denmark on Jan 21. It's the first public appearance in Jutland by Denmark's new King and Queen since the change of throne last Sunday. (AP)

## Politics

## Trump, Haley to face off in New Hampshire

## DeSantis ends struggling presidential bid

MANCHESTER, N.H., Jan 22, (AP): Florida Gov Ron DeSantis suspended his Republican presidential campaign on Sunday, ending his 2024 White House bid just before the New Hampshire primary while endorsing his bitter rival Donald Trump.

The decision leaves Trump and former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley as the last major candidates remaining in the race ahead of Tuesday's New Hampshire primary. This is the scenario Trump's foes in the GOP have long sought, raising the stakes for this week's contest as the party's last chance to stop the former president who has so far dominated the race.

But as some Trump critics cheered, DeSantis nodded toward Trump's primary dominance - and attacked Haley - in an exit video he posted on social media.

"It's clear to me that a majority of Republican primary voters want to give Donald Trump another chance," DeSantis said in the straight-to-camera video, delivered in a cheerful tone.

He continued: "I signed a pledge to support the Republican nominee and I will honor that pledge. He has my endorsement because we can't go back to the old Republican guard of yesterday, a repackaged form of warmed-over corporatism that Nikki Haley represents."

## Decision

Haley spoke at a campaigning stop in Seabrook, New Hampshire, just as DeSantis announced his decision.

"He ran a great race, he's been a good governor, and we wish him well," she told a room packed with supporters and media. "Having said that, it's now one fella and one lady left."

DeSantis' decision, while perhaps not surprising given his 30-point blow-out loss last week in Iowa, marks the end of an extraordinary decline for a high-profile governor once thought to be a legitimate threat to Trump's supremacy in the Republican Party. After months of contentious exchanges, Trump struck a more conciliatory tone late Sunday during a rally in Rochester, New Hampshire, calling DeSantis a "really terrific person."

"I also look forward to working with Ron" to win the general election, Trump said.

DeSantis entered the 2024 presiden-

tial contest with major advantages in his quest to take on Trump, and early primary polls suggested DeSantis was in a strong position to do just that. He and his allies amassed a political fortune well in excess of \$130 million, and he boasted a significant legislative record on issues important to many conservatives, like abortion and the teaching of race and gender issues in schools.

Such advantages did not survive the reality of presidential politics in 2024. From a high-profile announcement that was plagued by technical glitches to constant upheavals to his staff and campaign strategy, DeSantis struggled to find his footing in the primary. He lost the Iowa caucuses - which he had vowed to win - by 30 percentage points to Trump.

DeSantis' allies said that private discussions began shortly after Iowa to decide how to bow out of the race gracefully.

## Private

The Florida governor notified top donors and supporters of his decision through a series of phone conversations and text messages between senior campaign officials to top donors and supporters on Sunday afternoon, according to two people who received such communications. They spoke on the condition of anonymity to disclose the private conversations.

DeSantis had returned to Florida by then after a roller-coaster weekend that included stops in South Carolina ahead of an event in New Hampshire Sunday evening that was ultimately canceled. The campaign also canceled a series of national television appearances earlier in the day, blaming the cancellation on a miscommunication with DeSantis' super PAC.

DeSantis was physically worn after spending weeks on the campaign with little, if any, time off, even as he stormed across frigid Iowa and New Hampshire, often without a winter coat.

He ultimately decided that he needed to endorse Trump given his popularity in the party despite the deeply personal feud between them.

"While I've had disagreements with Donald Trump, such as on the coronavirus pandemic and his elevation of Anthony Fauci, Trump is superior

to the current incumbent, Joe Biden. That is clear," said DeSantis, who is in his second and final term as Florida's governor, which ends in January 2027.

The endorsement was a stunning tail-between-his-legs moment for DeSantis, whom Trump has mercilessly and relentlessly taunted in deeply personal terms for the better part of a year now.

For Trump, whose team includes many former DeSantis staffers, the attacks have often felt more like sport than political strategy. Trump and his aides have blasted the governor as disloyal for running in the first place, mocked his eating habits and his personality, and accused him of wearing high heels to boost his height.

## Attacking

DeSantis' team joined Trump in attacking Haley as news of his departure rippled across the political landscape. Some doubt Haley, who was seen as splitting Republican votes and preventing a head-to-head matchup between Trump, would benefit from DeSantis' decision.

"She will not be the nominee," key DeSantis supporter Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, told AP. "She will not be the president of the United States."

Trump had already shifted his focus to Haley in recent weeks, but minutes after DeSantis' announcement, the former president's campaign released a new memo highlighting the pressure on Haley to win New Hampshire.

"Now that we are a mere 48 hours from the primary, the tone has shifted mightily. We see it, you see it, but make no mistake, if Nikki Haley loses in New Hampshire - there are only two options," wrote senior advisers Chris LaCivita and Susie Wiles.

"Option A: Nikki Haley drops out, unites behind President Trump, and commits to defeating Joe Biden," they wrote. "Option B: Nikki Haley prepares to be absolutely DEMOLISHED and EMBARRASSED in her home state of South Carolina," which votes on Feb. 24.

"Now, for some important advice," they continued. "Choose wisely."

Trump himself addressed DeSantis' departure shortly after it was announced during a stop at Manchester campaign headquarters, according to a video shared by his staff.



US Republican presidential candidate Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis speaks to supporters during a caucus night party on Jan 15, in West Des Moines, Iowa. (AP)



Wray



Johnson

## America

**Ex-firefighter pleads not guilty:** A former firefighter with a previous arson conviction has been arrested on suspicion of detonating a homemade bomb and planting several other explosive devices along roadways across two Northern California counties, authorities said.

The 41-year-old man pleaded not guilty last week to multiple felony charges including possessing and exploding an explosive device with the "intent to injure, intimidate, and terrify a person, and to wrongfully injure and destroy property," according to the criminal complaint.

The Sacramento Bee reported the man was arrested Jan 12 following an investigation by the FBI, the California Highway Patrol and local sheriff's departments after a series of improvised explosive devices were found alongside roads and highways in El Dorado and Sacramento counties. Officials did not specify which roads were involved. FBI's director is Christopher Wray. (AP)

**3 killed in copter crash:** Three members of an air ambulance crew were killed when their helicopter crashed late Saturday in Oklahoma, officials said.

The crash was reported near Weatherford after the control center lost contact with the Air Evac Lifeteam helicopter crew shortly before 11:30 pm, the company said in a statement Sunday. The crew was returning to base in Weatherford, 70 miles (113 kilometers) west of Oklahoma City, after completing a patient care transport to the capital, the statement said. (AP)

**4 dead in shooting:** Four people were fatally shot in a community outside Chicago on Sunday in what suburban officials described as a "domestic-related shooting." Chicago's mayor is Brandon Johnson.

A suspect was taken into custody Sunday, according to a Tinley Park Public Safety Department social media post. The village of roughly 55,000 people is about 30 miles (50 kilometers) southwest of Chicago.

Police officers were investigating at the scene of the shooting in a residential area Sunday afternoon, officials said. (AP)

## 23 skiers, snowboarders rescued:

Twenty-three skiers and snowboarders had to be rescued in frigid temperatures on Saturday after becoming lost in the backcountry

in Killington, Vermont, police said.

After a call came in around 2:30 pm, search and rescue crews hiked, snowshoed and used skis with skins to travel about 5



A tree branch fallen on a car on Lisburn Road in Belfast, Northern Ireland, during Storm Isha, on Jan 21. A Status Red wind warning has been issued for counties Donegal, Galway and Mayo as authorities warn people to take care ahead of Storm Isha's arrival. Tens of thousands of people were without electricity and hundreds of trains were canceled on Monday after the latest in a wave of winter storms lashed Britain and Ireland with heavy rain and wind gusts of almost 100 miles (160 kilometers) an hour. (AP)

miles (8 kilometers) to bring a group of 21 lost skiers and riders back to safety. Killington police posted on Facebook. Temperatures were in the single digits.

The group of skiers and snowboarders, which included about six juveniles, warmed up in the Killington Fire Department's heavy rescue truck and search and rescue members' vehicles while they waited for their rides. (AP)

**'89 weather-related deaths':** There have been 89 confirmed weather-related fatalities linked to the past week's winter weather, according to US media outlets, as dangerous cold continues to impact the nation.

Tennessee Department of Health has confirmed 25 weather-related fatalities, and at least 16 have died in Oregon, including three adults who died when a tree fell on their car.

A baby in the vehicle survived, CBS News previously reported.

More deaths were reported in Illinois, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, Washington, Kentucky, Wisconsin, New York, New Jersey and more.

Some deaths remain under investigation to confirm that they are weather-related. (KUNA)

## Lat/Am

## Cartel leader detained

## Migrants dissolve in Guatemala: institute

MEXICO CITY, Jan 22, (AP): A caravan of some 500 migrants that departed northern Honduras in hopes of reaching the United States dissolved Sunday after crossing the border into Guatemala, the Guatemalan Migration Institute reported.

Authorities had been monitoring three border crossings and said part of the caravan advanced a few kilometers (miles) into Guatemalan territory, before the migrants were stopped by migration officials who processed them, prioritizing the minors.

According to the immigration agency, no force was used and dialogue prevailed. Those who had documents were able to continue on as Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador have free transit among them. Those who did not have the necessary documents returned to Honduras.

Authorities did not offer figures on how many stayed or returned.

The caravan left Saturday, walking from the bus terminal of San Pedro Sula in Honduras. It was the first such group to leave Honduras since January 2022.

The vast majority of migrants cross Central America and Mexico in small groups, using all types of transportation and smuggling networks. Only a few form caravans.

The largest ones left San Pedro Sula in late 2018 and 2019 and many made it as far as the southern US border. But after the pandemic, the US put pressure on Mexico and Central American governments to increase their efforts to stop migrants headed north.

Since then, the caravans were stopped first in southern Mexico and later in Guatemalan territory. Mexico's president is **Andrés Manuel López Obrador**.

In 2023, there were record numbers of migrants all over the hemisphere. Arrests of illegal crossings into the US from Mexico intensified by the end of year, when US authorities registered up to 10,000 illegal crossings over several days in December. The number dropped to 2,500 in the first days of January.

## Also:

**MEXICO CITY:** Mexican soldiers and police have found a small factory used to make a kind of bomb usually dropped by drones, authorities said.

The facility, which was found late Wednesday, was about the size of a warehouse and had a computer-controlled lathe and milling machine, suggesting the operators had considerable metalworking knowledge.

The factory also apparently produced under-barrel, 40mm grenade launchers designed to be attached to assault rifles, as well as fake Mexican military uniforms.

Prosecutors in the western state of **Michoacan** said the workshop was one of two discovered in the town of **La Huacana**.

The Jalisco cartel and local gangs have been fighting bloody turf battles in Michoacan for years.

The warring gangs frequently use bomb-dropping drones, improvised explosive devices buried in roadways, .50 caliber sniper rifles, homemade armored vehicles and grenades.

They also often establish checkpoints on highways, and wear fake military uniforms.

**MEXICO CITY:** Mexican marines detained one of the top leaders of the Gulf drug cartel, the gang that kidnapped four Americans and killed two of them in March 2023.

The public safety department of the border state of Tamaulipas said the suspect was arrested in the neighboring state of Nuevo Leon, and identified him as "La Kena."

That was the nickname the state previously listed on a Tamaulipas wanted poster for José Alberto García Vilano in 2022. Mexico's national arrest registry said García Vilano was taken into custody.

Mexico's Navy Department said in a statement that marines had detained a suspect it called "one of the key leaders of one of the most powerful criminal organizations in Tamaulipas," adding he was "one of the main targets of the Drug Enforcement Administration," but did not provide his name.

**Miguel Treviño**, the mayor San Pedro Garza García, located on the outskirts of Monterrey and considered one of Mexico's wealthiest communities, confirmed that García Vilano was arrested at a local shopping mall.

In 2022, Tamaulipas state prosecutors also identified **García Vilano** by a second nickname, "Cyclone 19," and had offered a \$150,000 reward for his arrest.

The Cyclones are one of the most powerful and violent factions of the now-divided Gulf cartel. The kidnapping and killing of the Americans has been linked to another faction, known as "The Scorpions."

The four Americans crossed into the border city of Matamoros from Texas in March so that one of them could have cosmetic surgery. They were fired on in downtown Matamoros and then loaded into a pickup truck.

Americans Zindell Brown and Shaheed Woodard died in the attack; Eric Williams and Latavia McGee survived. Most of them had grown up together in the small town of Lake City, South Carolina. A Mexican woman, Areli Pablo Servando, 33, was also killed, apparently by a stray bullet.

The Gulf drug cartel turned over five men to police soon after the abduction. A letter claiming to be from the Scorpions faction condemned the violence and said the gang had turned over to authorities its own members who were responsible. A Mexican woman also died in the March 3 shootings.

**CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico:** After a campaign by environmentalists, **Benito** the giraffe left Mexico's northern border and its extreme weather conditions Sunday night and headed for a conservation park in central Mexico, where the climate is more akin to his natural habitat and already a home to other giraffes.

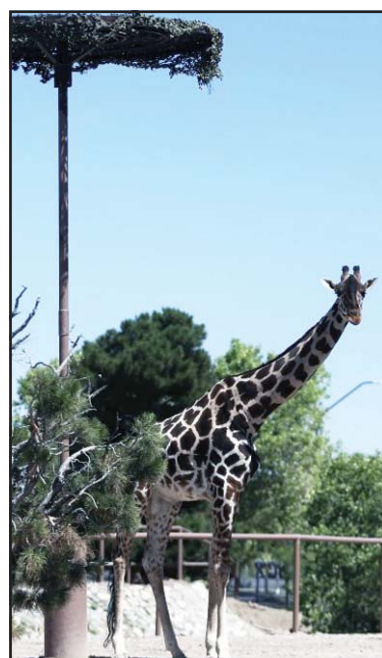
Environmental groups had voiced strong complaints about conditions faced by Benito at the city-run Central Park zoo in **Ciudad Juarez**, across from **El Paso**, Texas, where weather in the summer is brutally hot and temperatures plunge during the winter.

A crane carefully lifted a container holding the giraffe onto a truck while city dwellers in love with the animal said a bittersweet goodbye. Some activists shouted, "We love you, Benito."

"We're a little sad that he's leaving, but it also gives us great pleasure ... The weather conditions are not suitable for him," said **Flor Ortega**, a 23-year-old who said she had spent her entire life visiting Modesto the giraffe, which was at the zoo for two decades before dying in 2022, and then Benito, which arrived last May.



In this image taken from video footage run by China's CCTV, rescue workers search through rubbles in the aftermath of a landslide in liangshui village in southwestern China's Yunnan Province early Monday buried dozens and forced the evacuation of hundreds.



Benito the giraffe looks out from his enclosure at the city-run Central Park, in Ciudad Juarez, on June 13, 2023. A campaign to save the 3-year-old male from extreme hot and cold temperatures and a small enclosure has paid off with officials from Chihuahua state promising in a Jan 8, 2024 statement to move him to the more spacious African Safari park in the state of Puebla. (AP)



Modi

Alles

## Subcontinent

**Indians celebrate new temple:** Indian Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** on Monday opened a controversial Hindu temple built on the ruins of a historic mosque in the northern city of Ayodhya, delivering on a crucial Hindu nationalist pledge that his governing party hopes will catapult him to a record third successive term in upcoming elections.

The temple, which is still under construction, is dedicated to Hinduism's Ram. Modi's party and other Hindu nationalist groups who seized on the demand have portrayed the temple as central to their vision of reclaiming Hindu pride, which they say was shadowed by centuries of Mughal rule and British colonialism.

Modi, dressed in a traditional kurta tunic, led the opening ceremony.

Millions of Indians watched the ceremony on television, with news channels running non-stop coverage of the event.

Nearly 7,500 people, including elite industrialists, politicians and movie stars, witnessed the ritual on a giant screen outside the temple as a military helicopter showered flower petals.

Modi has been the face of an unprecendented and unapologetic fusion of religion and politics in India. (AP)

**Pak security forces kill 7 militants:** Pakistan security forces killed seven militants in a shootout in the country's volatile southwest near the border with Afghanistan, the military said Monday.

The military said the intelligence-based operation was conducted in Zhob district in southwestern Baluchistan province. In a brief statement, it said security forces also recovered munitions after the shootout.

Quetta is the capital of Baluchistan province, where Baloch nationalists, Islamic militants and the Islamic State group have claimed responsibility for attacks on security forces in recent years.

Gas-rich Baluchistan province at the border with Afghanistan and Iran has been the scene of a low-level insurgency by Baluch nationalists for more than two decades. They initially wanted a share of provincial resources, but later demanded independence. (AP)

**Heavy handed op in Lanka:** Sri Lankan authorities have arrested tens of thousands of people in a monthlong crackdown on drugs, and vowed to continue despite US criticism of possible human rights violations during the "heavy-handed" operation. Since the operation began in December, heavily armed police and military person-

## Asia

## Indonesia's Mount Merapi unleashes lava

## China landslide buries 47 in freezing temp

BEIJING, Jan 22, (AP): A landslide buried 47 people in a remote village in mountainous southwestern China on Monday, state media said. Hours later, two survivors were rescued amid freezing temperatures and falling snow.

The disaster struck just before 6 am in the village of Liangshui in the northeastern part of Yunnan province. By evening, nine bodies were retrieved and about 500 people were evacuated from the area.

## Try

Rescue crews continued to try and find victims who were buried in about 18 homes, the Zhenxiang county publicity department said. Reports said eight of the bodies were from the group that was initially buried by the landslide but did not say where the ninth body was found.

The cause of the landslide wasn't immediately known as survivors and rescuers struggled with snow, icy roads and freezing temperatures that were forecast to persist for at least the next three days.

Luo Dongmei, 35, was sleeping when the landslide struck, but she survived and was relocated to a school building by local authorities.

"I was asleep, but my brother knocked on the door and woke me up. They said there was a landslide and the bed was shaking, so they rushed upstairs and woke us up," Luo said.

Luo, her husband and their three children, along with many other residents, have been provided with food at the school but are still waiting for blankets and other protection from the cold weather, she said.

Luo said she's been unable to contact her sister and aunt, who lived closer to the site of the landslide. "The only thing I can do is to wait," she said.

State broadcaster CCTV put the death toll at nine by 6 pm, roughly 12 hours after the disaster struck. Zhenxiang county lies about 2,250 kilometers (1,400 miles) southwest of Beijing, with altitudes ranging as high as 2,400 meters (7,900 feet).

Heavy snow has struck many parts of China, causing transportation chaos and endangering lives.

Last week, rescuers evacuated tourists from a remote skiing area in northwestern China where dozens of avalanches triggered by heavy snow had trapped more than 1,000 people for a week.

Landslides, often caused by rain or unsafe construction work, are not uncommon in China.

In all, natural disasters in China left 691 people dead and missing and last year, causing direct economic losses of about 345 billion yuan (\$48 billion, according to the National Commission

## Taiwan says 6 Chinese balloons flew thru airspace; planes, ships detected

TAIPEI, Taiwan, Jan 22, (AP): Taiwan said Monday that six Chinese balloons either flew over the island or through airspace just north of it, while Chinese warplanes and navy ships were also detected in the area.

The dispatch of such balloons, which generally disappear into the Pacific to the east, appears to be on the rise, though their purpose has not been publicly announced.

The Defense Ministry noted the balloon sightings on a list of Chinese People's Liberation Army activity in the waters and airspace around Taiwan. One passed near the southern city of Pingtung, while the others flew just north of the port of Keelung, where Taiwan has an important naval base.

It remains unclear whether the balloons have an explicit military function, but they appear to be part of a campaign of harassment against the self-governed island, which China claims as its own territory and has vowed to reclaim by force if necessary.

In the leadup to Taiwan's presidential election earlier this month, China had been stepping up such activities, along with its rhetorical threats, though Beijing's threats are generally seen as backfiring.

The independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party won a third straight term in the presidency, this time under current Vice President Lai Ching-te, or William Lai. The pro-unification Nationalist

Party won just one more seat in the legislature than the DPP. The party of former Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je siphoned votes off both parties, especially by appealing to young people fed up with politics as they are.

In the U.S. early last year, President Joe Biden vowed sharper rules to track, monitor and potentially shoot down unknown aerial objects after a three-week drama sparked by the discovery of a suspected Chinese spy balloon transiting much of the United States.

**Also:** **SEOUL, South Korea:** South Korea's presidential office said Monday it approved a request by the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission to extend its term by a year through late-May 2025. Investigators had been calling for more time to examine a broad range of human rights violations linked to Seoul's past military governments, including a widespread falsifying of child origins that fueled a government-backed foreign adoption boom in the 1970s and '80s.

In granting the commission's request for an extension, South Korean President **Yoon Suk Yeol** acknowledged the need to "restore the honor of those who were unjustly victimized during our past history and those who sacrificed for the sake of the country," said **Hwang Sang Moo**, Yoon's senior secretary for civil and social affairs.

**BRISBANE, Australia:** The Australian state of Queensland is preparing for a severe tropical cyclone that could make landfall in its far north as soon as Wednesday.

Officials believe the storm, set to be named Cyclone Kirrily, could be more destructive than the one that hit the same area a month ago. Heavy rains and wind gusts of 220 kilometers per

hour are forecast.

Northern Queensland is still recovering from Tropical Cyclone Jasper in mid-December.

**YOGYAKARTA, Indonesia:** Indonesia's Mount Merapi erupted Sunday, spreading searing gas clouds and avalanches of lava down its slopes as other active volcanoes flared up across the country, forcing the evacuation of thousands.

On the densely populated island of Java, Merapi unleashed clouds of hot ash and a mixture of rock, and lava that traveled up to 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) down its slopes, said **Agus Budi Santoso**, the head of Indonesia's Geological Disaster Technology Research and Development Center. A column of hot clouds blasted 100 meters (about 109 yards) into the air as ash blanketed several villages without casualties, he added.

Acting police chief Deshabandu Tennakoon told The Associated Press that more than 40,000 people have arrested and questioned during operations conducted jointly by the police and security forces, and 5,000 were ordered detained by the courts.

The country of 21 million has long been known as a hub for drug trafficking, but authorities have stepped up action against narcotics amid complaints that more schoolchildren are using drugs that drug-related crimes are on the rise.

Tennakoon said 65% of Sri Lanka's narcotics distribution network has been dismantled over the past month and police hope to eliminate it fully by the end of this month.

He added that intelligence operations are being conducted to identify people who import drugs into the country and those who may be planning to start dealing drugs.

But Public Security Minister **Tiran Alles** insisted that the searches will continue, saying the human rights body should identify specific instances of abuse.

"We will not stop this operation. We will go ahead and we will do it the same way because we know that we are doing something good for the children of this country, for the women of this county and that is why the general public is wholeheartedly with us in these operations," Alles said.

Tennakoon said police have been ordered follow the law, and any violations can be reported to the police commission. (AP)

nel with sniffer dogs have made regular nighttime raids on homes and search buses, seizing narcotics and arresting suspects who include drug users, local dealers and distributors, and people with records of drug-related arrests.



Karim Wade, (centre), leaves the office of the special prosecutor investigating him on charges of embezzled funds, in Dakar, Senegal, on March 15, 2013. Senegal's top decision-making body has on Jan 20 published the final list of candidates for next month's presidential election, excluding two of the West African nation's top opposition leaders. Among the opposition candidates excluded are frontrunner Ousmane Sonko and Karim Wade, son of former Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade. (AP)



Salma Al-Hajjaj

### Gulf Bank 1st Kuwaiti bank to partner with Coach Hub

Gulf Bank takes pride in its leadership role in the Kuwaiti banking sector, showcased through its partnership with Coach Hub for mentorship programs dedicated to leadership development. This partnership reflects the bank's commitment to developing leadership in a rapidly changing environment through interactive and measurable one-on-one sessions, with a focus on senior management.

Coach Hub's platform takes pride in offering over 3500 certified coaches, in addition to coaching programs in 60 different languages. The platform provides high-level coaching opportunities for individuals to develop their leadership skills. At Coach Hub, coaches have the flexibility to customize their guidance, aligning it with the specific needs and goals of

individual learners by understanding their strengths and weaknesses. Salma Al-Hajjaj, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources, expressed her contentment in partnering with Coach Hub. Leveraging its capabilities and broad network of certified coaches, the bank aims to enhance the skills of its leaders. She envisions this partnership playing a crucial role in improv-

ing the performance and management effectiveness of the leadership team. Al-Hajjaj emphasized the significance of continuous development for the bank's workforce, recognizing them as the foundation of success in the banking sector. The bank is committed to empowering its employees for excellence, and elevating their professional capabilities.

### Market Movements 22-01-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts		
JAPAN	- Nikkei	+1.62	36,546.95	UAE	- DFM	-0.01	4,081.24
PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	+1.27	64,084.32				
PHILIPPINES	- PSEI	+1.23	6,583.47				
SAUDI	- Tadawul	+0.89	12,110.32				
EGYPT	- EGX 30	+1.19	28,050.33				

# Business

### Bank honored by International Finance magazine

## Warba Bank wins the 'Most Innovative Banking Technology' award

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: As a result of the Bank's digital strategy, which aspires to provide digital banking solutions in which the Bank is closer to its clients, and the outstanding performance provided by the Bank and the increasing growth of its digital banking operations in 2023, Warba Bank recently received an award from "International Finance Magazine", which is the "Most Innovative Banking Technology" award.

The magazine's evaluation adopted a deep analytical method as an electronic source that helps readers understand the driving forces of the market more fully.

Its awards are based on market developments and the performance of the economic forces described therein. It constitutes an essential reference for readers that sheds light on market changes, giving them a clear idea of the complex economic procedures taking place in the global business community.

Commenting on the award, Mr. Abdullah Waleed Al-Osaimi - Executive Director - Innovation and Partnerships Department at Warba Bank, said: "Awarding Warba Bank confirms the development of its digital banking products and services and it's assuming a leadership position in the digital banking sector and the augmented world, and this is proven by the Bank's achievements in 2023, which reflects the Bank's digital strategy path.

He added that during this period, Warba was able to offer digital banking services and products that greatly contributed to strengthening the Islamic banking sector and met modernization and technology, which today is a primary requirement for customers.



Warba Bank official receiving the award.

Al-Osaimi said that Warba Bank is focusing its efforts on the innovative digital banking products and services provided to its clients, which are designed to suit clients' requirements and their diverse lifestyles.

He explained that Warba Bank succeeded in making great leaps in providing distinguished banking products and services in the local market.

Al-Osaimi concluded his statement saying that Warba Bank, including its activities in the world of augmented reality, "Warba World," is part of its bold plan for digital transformation and innovation in 2023.

This unique digital initiative in marketing activation is the first of its kind in Kuwait and offers a local flavor along with educational materials ranging from simple banking questions to general facts to showcase the beginning of financial education for all members of society alike.

This allows everyone to participate in the adventure, and participants can go directly and choose their own avatar, which transports them to a stunning 3D version of Kuwait City, all supported by augmented reality technology.

Warba Bank is also considered the first bank in Kuwait to announce the launch of virtual recruitment through a job fair, where the application became virtual through augmented reality instead of the traditional application by visiting the Human Resources Group or through the website, making it easier for all applicants and those interested in jobs at Warba Bank.

Warba Bank is one of the banks that has achieved great successes in a short period, as it occupied a leadership 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.

## Real estate transactions see a significant 'downturn' in 2023

Decline translates to 29.3%

By Ahmad Fathi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Real estate transactions in Kuwait underwent a significant downturn during the year 2023, reflecting a decline of 29.3%, amounting to 1.15 billion dinars.

This decrease brought the sales volume to 4,442 properties with a cumulative value exceeding 2.78 billion dinars. This contrasts with the figures from the year 2022, where about 6,214 properties were transacted, amounting to 3.93 billion dinars.

The annual real estate trading statistics released by the Ministry of Justice provided a comprehensive overview of the market dynamics. In 2023, the number of registered contracts reached approximately 4,357, with a total value of 2.74 billion dinars.

This data underscores the challenging landscape faced by the real estate sector, depicting a noticeable decline in various segments.

Residential sector trades, for instance, witnessed a sharp contraction by 34.7%, with a total value of 697.5 million dinars.

This drop is significant, given the decline from 2 billion dinars in 2022 to 1.31 billion dinars in 2023.

Investment real estate trades also experienced a notable decrease of 25.5%, amounting to 285.1 million dinars, transitioning from 1.11 billion dinars in 2022 to 831 million dinars in 2023.

Similarly, commercial sector trades saw a reduction of 29.4%, totaling about 179.2 million dinars.

Conversely, there were some positive shifts in specific real estate segments.

### Kuwait's holding of US Treasury bonds sees 8.68% monthly surge

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Official data indicates that Kuwait's holding of US Treasury bonds witnessed an 8.68% monthly increase, amounting to \$3.44 billion at the end of November 2023.

This marks the highest level since the previous June. According to the monthly report from the US Treasury Department, Kuwait's ownership of Treasury bonds reached \$43.06 billion in November 2023, up from \$39.62 billion in Octo-

## KAPP opens door for bids from local, int'l companies for Dabdaba project

### Bid to activate public-private partnership

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects has issued a call for specialized local and international companies and alliances to submit qualification applications for the Al-Dabdaba Electrical Power Generation Project and the third phase of the Al-Shaqaya Renewable Energy Project, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement to KUNA, the Authority highlighted that this call aligns with the government's commitment to activating the partnership program between the public and private sectors. This initiative adheres to the provisions of Law (No. 116 of 2014) governing the partnership be-

between the two sectors and its executive regulations. The Authority is working in collaboration with the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy.

According to the statement, the first project (Zone 1) involves a renewable energy production station with a net capacity of 1,100 megawatts.

It is situated in the Al-Shaqaya area in the Jahra Governorate, west of Kuwait City, approximately 100 kilometers away.

The project aims to export its generated power to the Kuwaiti electricity network through a power purchase agreement (PPA) with the Ministry of Electricity and Water, spanning a 30-

year period. The Authority clarified that by partnering with the Ministry of Electricity and Water on this project, it seeks to attract private sector expertise in the realm of renewable energy.

Additionally, the collaboration aims to alleviate the financial and operational burdens on the Ministry.

The project's objectives encompass reducing local reliance on traditional fuel sources, minimizing overall costs incurred by Kuwait in energy generation, and enhancing the share of renewable energy within the country's energy mix.

1,100 properties. Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate claimed the third spot with a share of 13.2% and a total of 585 properties traded.

Farwaniya Governorate (12.3%) and the Capital Governorate (11.8%) followed, emphasizing the varying real estate dynamics across different regions. Jahra Governorate, while ranking last, still played a role in the overall real estate market.

These statistics provide a comprehensive insight into the challenges and opportunities within the Kuwaiti real estate sector in 2023.

The market's response to economic conditions, regulatory changes, and local demand dynamics will continue to shape the trajectory of real estate transactions in the coming years.

ment real estate sector constituted 30% of the total value, amounting to 1,149 billion dinars, with the trading of 1,149 properties.

Commercial real estate claimed the third spot with a 15.4% share, involving 117 properties sold at a value of 430.2 million dinars.

The geographical distribution of trades across governorates reflected varying trends. Al-Ahmadi Governorate emerged at the forefront, capturing a substantial share of 33.3%.

This governorate saw 1,478 properties traded, encompassing residential, investment, commercial, craft, industrial, and coastal properties.

Hawalli Governorate secured the second position with a 24.8% share, witnessing the trading of

the end of 2022. The data further revealed that Kuwait's holding of bonds consisted of \$39.73 billion in long-term bonds and \$3.34 billion in short-term bonds.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia maintained its leading position in the possession of US Treasury bonds with approximately \$128.1 billion, while Japan retained its global top position with bonds valued at \$1.13 trillion.

In general, the total value of US Treasury bonds in Novem-

## Boursa Kuwait undergoing an internal restructuring process

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Continuous improvement in global indices and the stability of the volume of foreign investment in the Boursa Kuwait despite the turmoil in the general environment, the Boursa Kuwait market is undergoing an internal restructuring process, and in the right direction, reports Al-Anba daily quoting the Al-Shall weekly report.

The report said that the Boursa Kuwait is constantly developing from the perspective of continuing to streamline its components, that is, reducing the large number of its listed companies, or that permanent movement to promote companies to the primary market and the role of those promotions in increasing transparency and levels of liquidity, which means raising its popularity.

The report explained that in 2020, the number of companies listed on the Boursa Kuwait was 171, almost half of which did not have the minimum acceptable level of liquidity, which required a movement to slim down or reduce that number.

The result is a continuous decline in the number of its companies to 167 companies in 2021, then to 155 companies in 2022, and to 149 companies in 2023, and the liquidity of many of its companies is still scarce, which makes it likely that the slimming process will continue.

Despite the decrease in the total number of listed companies continued by about 13% in 3 years, the growth of companies in the first market, that is, a decrease in number and an improvement in quality. Companies in the premier market are governed by better specifications and standards. After they were 20 companies in 2020, they became 31 companies at the end of the year 2023.

The latest information indicates that their number will reach 33 in 2024 after 3 companies were upgraded and one was downgraded according to the 2024 review. The premier market companies have a higher capital value,

are more transparent and are subject to periodic analysis and review, and have higher liquidity. The more their numbers increase according to the promotion criteria, the higher the stock market improves in the quality and value of its components.

The Premier Market began in 2020 with a contribution to the number of listed companies amounting to 11.7%, and its contribution to listed companies increased at the end of 2023 to reach about 20.8%, and until the difference between the two markets becomes clear, the Premier Market's contribution to the capital value of the Boursa Kuwait in 2023 was about 78.6%, and its contribution to the stock market's liquidity is about 79.1%, that is, the opposite of, or multiples of, its smaller contribution to the number.

While the Premier Market achieved relatively high gains in its capital value in two of the past three years, the Main Market lost its capital value in two of the past three years, and there remains a need to improve the liquidity and quality of the Main Market companies, and to accelerate the reduction of their number.

Al-Shall said: "It diligently believes that the performance of the Boursa Kuwait could have been better, specifically for the Main Market companies, if the general business environment in the world, the region, and locally had been a normal environment, but it has been a turbulent four years in all three arenas."

The pandemic, then the wars that affected Europe, through the armed conflicts in the region, the latest of which is the war on Gaza and its repercussions, including the war on inflation and the continued rise in interest rates, in addition to the state of local instability, are all headwinds, and any relief or change for the better in the general environment must "It reflects positively on the stock market's performance," the report said.

## KPI agrees in principle to waive the interest on Vietnam refinery loans

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: The Kuwait Petroleum International company has tentatively approved a proposal to waive interest on partners' loans in the Vietnam refinery, totaling around \$4 billion until 2029, with KPI share amounting to approximately \$1.4 billion, reports Al-Qabas daily.

This is according to a document, a copy of which is seen by the daily, discloses the willingness of KPI to decrease the interest rate on refinery loans to the lowest possible level, potentially reaching 0%.

In a letter sent to partners at the end of last December, the refinery company disclosed discussions about reducing interest rates on loans.

Recognizing the significant burden and adverse impact of financing costs, especially the partners' loans, on the expected financial performance in 2024 due to exorbitant interest rates, the company urgently sought a resolution. The proposal included a substantial reduction in the interest rate on loans.

The refinery company mentioned that it updated its studies on interest options on loans in early 2023, engaging external consultants for studies on the interest rates applied to long-term loans.

The studies revealed that the interest rate on the refinery company's loans significantly exceeded market counterparts. As of December 2023, the outstanding balance of the loans amounted to \$3 billion, with \$1.8 billion as the principal and \$1.2 billion as

unpaid interest.

The company projected that, from now until the final maturity in 2029, interest on the loan would accumulate to approximately \$360 million annually, totaling around \$2.1 billion over six years.

The refinery company, expressing a substantial expected financial loss, emphasized that, from a cash flow perspective, without a decrease in interest on sub-loans, it could only pay interest starting in 2034 and would never be able to repay the capital. Reducing the interest on subsidiary loans would positively impact financial performance, enabling repayment of interest and capital to the partners.

According to the latest financial model in 2023, if the sub-loan interest is reduced to 0%, the refinery company could begin paying interest to the partners in 2032 and repay the principal in 2034.

The refinery company, in its letter, stated that there are no legal objections to entering into an agreement to adjust the interest rate on loans. It proposed taking all possible measures to enhance its commercial performance.

The Nghi Son refinery, situated in Vietnam, began operations in November 2018, with a capacity of 200 thousand barrels per day. The total cost of the project was \$9 billion, with Japan's Idemitsu Kosan and the KPI each holding a 35.1 percent stake, Vietnam Oil and Gas Group owning 25.1 percent, and Japan's Mitsui Chemicals holding 4.7 percent.



## BUSINESS

## US sanctions UAE shipping firm

The U.S. on Thursday hit a United Arab Emirates shipping firm with sanctions after it transported Russian crude oil above the \$60 per barrel price cap.

This is Treasury's first oil price cap enforcement action of 2024 - imposed on Henne-sea Holdings Limited and its 18 vessels that the U.S. Treasury now considers blocked property. U.S. firms and people can no longer conduct business

with them.

"Today's actions once again demonstrate that anyone who violates the price cap will face the consequences," said Treasury Deputy Secretary Wally Adeyemo. "No one should doubt our coalition's commitment to stopping those who help the Kremlin."

A representative from Henne-sea Holdings was not immediately available for comment. (AP)

## S&amp;P predicts low demand

Standard & Poor's Commodities Insights predicts a lackluster outlook for the low-sulfur fuel oil market this year, anticipating a potential buildup in inventory levels in the region, reports Al-Rai daily.

While the Al-Zour refinery in Kuwait may not be a significant indicator of the low-sulfur fuel oil market in Asia, the addition of new production capacity in other regions, such

as the upcoming Dangote refinery in Nigeria, is expected to contribute to excess fuel oil availability.

The agency expects slower growth in demand for refining and distribution due to global macroeconomic concerns. It also notes that specially designed ships will likely drive increased consumption of high-sulfur content types, which are cheaper.

## Daihatsu sees long wait

A Japanese automaker that cheated on safety tests for decades said Monday it doesn't expect to resume shipping cars any time soon.

The Japanese government ordered a subsidiary of Toyota to halt production of its entire lineup after reports of faked safety test results emerged last year.

The Daihatsu Motor Co. skipped mandatory safety

tests by copying data from testing on one side of cars to the other, and used timers to ensure airbags went off in tests, a review found.

No major accidents have been reported in connection with the cheating, but the news has raised serious questions about oversight at Daihatsu, as well as its corporate parent Toyota. (AP)

## Awards highlight local leadership's effectiveness in enhancing shareholder value

## Zain named 'Best Telecom' and 'Best Corporate Governance' company in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces that in recognition of its excellence and market leadership in Kuwait and across the region, the company was presented with two prestigious honors during the 11th annual Excellence Awards ceremony hosted by UK-based business magazine International Finance in Dubai, UAE. Zain was named 'Best Telecom Company' in Kuwait for a fifth time, as well as 'Best Corporate Governance Telecom Company' in Kuwait for 2023. Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti was presented with both accolades during the event.

Zain Kuwait's naming as 'Best Telecom Company' adds to a list of other prestigious recognitions the company has received recently, which serve as a testament to the leadership position it enjoys domestically. The awards shed more light on Zain's outstanding success, digital innovation, and relentless pursuit of excellence to serve the nation's biggest customer base.

Zain Group's recognition as the 'Best Corporate Governance Telecom Company' reflects how seriously the company takes this area of



Waleed Al Khashti receives Zain's awards in Dubai.

its operations. Zain Group's Investor Relations and Corporate Governance framework is a cornerstone of its regional appeal and has attracted ongoing praise and admiration as its exemplary operation provides

stakeholders, including shareholders, industry analysts, and regulatory authorities with the utmost confidence of the company's state of being.

These awards reflect the strong operational and commercial leader-

ship positions Zain enjoys locally and regionally, further highlighting its excellence in offering best-in-class digital solutions and innovative services to corporate customers and consumers alike. It also sheds light on the com-

pany's excellence across other indicators including customer base, revenue, market share, investment in 5G infrastructure, and compliance with the best global practices and quality standards. Zain's Corporate Governance

framework helps the company to mitigate risks and facilitates an effective Board oversight over the company's executive management by monitoring the implementation of policies on a daily basis. Corporate Governance promotes strong internal controls to improve integrity of financials and establishes a culture of compliance. This governance structure has helped Zain to win the confidence of the market and attract global investors.

Zain Group's Investor Relations, Sustainability and Corporate Governance departments are committed to raising awareness on issues related to the environment, social, and governance (ESG) matters in response to global trends and best practices. Accordingly, Zain has developed new policies and is working to increase transparency in addition to focusing on social responsibility. Such policies and procedures are flexible and consider both short- and long-term challenges and risks.

The International Finance Excellence Awards continue to provide a prominent stage to highlight the region's best industry players. Zain is honored to be recognized with the two accolades and is especially proud of the recognition of excellence among Kuwaiti companies over the years through this platform.



Zain IFA Awards

## 'Demand huge and real'

## States expand low-interest loan for farms, businesses and new housing

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo., Jan 22, (AP) - On the first business day of the new year, Missouri Treasurer Vivek Malek began accepting applications for about \$120 million of state-subsidized, low-interest loans to small businesses, farmers and affordable housing developers.

Within six hours, Malek had so many requests for the money that he

had to cut off applications. "The demand is huge, and it is real," Malek said.

Missouri's situation, though extreme, is not entirely unique. From New York to Illinois to Montana, states have seen surging public interest in little-known programs that use state funds to spur private investment with bargain-priced loans. The programs have taken off after a series of key interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve made virtually all loans more expensive, whether for farmers purchasing seed or businesses wanting to expand.

To combat inflation in consumer prices, the Fed raised its benchmark interest rate 11 times from March 2022 to last July, setting it at a two-decade high.

Under so-called linked-deposit programs, states deposited money in banks at below-market interest rates. Banks then leverage those funds to provide short-term, low-interest loans to particular borrowers, often in agriculture or small business. The programs can save thousands of dollars for borrowers by reducing their interest rates by an average 2-3 percentage points.

States typically cap the amount of money available for such discounted rates at either a flat dollar amount or a percentage of their total fund balances, because the programs result in less earnings for the state. Many states have built large surpluses from pandemic-era revenues, meaning they have more money available to deposit in banks.

Though most states don't currently offer such programs, some that shelved them when interest rates were low are now considering whether to revive them to aid financially-strapped businesses and residents.

"I can say in talks with other state treasurers that there is a definite increased interest in treasury money, whether that is through a linked-deposit program or a different vehicle," said Illinois Treasurer Michael Frerichs, who is president of the National Association of State Treasurers.

Illinois has nearly \$950 million of deposits linked to low-interest loans for farmers, businesses and individuals. That's up substantially from past years. In 2015, Frerichs said, the state's agricultural investment program had just two low-interest loans. By 2022, that had grown to \$51 million of loans. Last year, Illinois made \$667 million of low-rate deposits for agricultural loans.

With rising demand, Frerichs recently raised the program's overall cap from \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion.

Though smaller in scope, New York's program also has seen an explosion of applicants.

## Libya restarts production at its largest oilfield after more than 2-week hiatus

CAIRO, Jan 22, (AP) - Libya's state-owned oil company resumed production at the country's largest oilfield Sunday, ending a more than two-week hiatus after protesters blocked the facility over fuel shortages.

The National Oil Corp. said in a terse statement that it lifted the force majeure at the Sharara oil field in the country's south and resumed full

## Job gains and free-spending shoppers lifted Wall St in '23



A hiring sign is displayed at a Chipotle restaurant in Schaumburg, Ill., Jan. 30, 2023. Job gains and raises helped power solid economic growth in the U.S. last year, but what if those gains were a mirage? The Labor Department overestimated job gains last year by about 13%. (AP)

## New data tells another story

## NEW YORK, Jan 22, (AP): Job gains and raises helped power solid economic growth in the U.S. last year, but what if those gains were a mirage?

Gross domestic product jumped 4.9% during the third quarter on an annualized basis and economists expect an initial reading of 1% growth during the final quarter of 2023.

The Labor Department, though, has been noticeably revising its monthly employment data, resulting in fewer new jobs added each month than initially reported. Employers in the U.S. added 145,000 fewer jobs than initially reported between September and November. That figure grows to about 400,000 fewer jobs than initially reported, or an overestimation of about 13%, for almost all of 2023. That suggests some of Wall Street's optimism last year was built on sand.

While it's not unusual for the government's statisticians to go back and revise their data, the changes to last year's job gains was especially pronounced, and undermines one of Wall Street's main cases for GDP growth

## Japan's Sekisui House buying M.D.C. Holdings for \$4.9 bln

LOS ANGELES, Jan 22, (AP) - Japan's Sekisui House Ltd. is buying Denver-based homebuilder M.D.C. Holdings Inc. for \$4.9 billion in a deal that would make the Japanese company the fifth-largest builder of new homes in the U.S.

The companies said Thursday that they reached a definitive agreement for Osaka-based Sekisui to acquire M.D.C. Holdings for \$63 per share. The all-cash offer translates to a roughly 19% premium over M.D.C. Holdings' closing stock price Wednesday.

Shares in M.D.C. Holdings jumped more than 18% in afternoon trading Thursday. The stock is up about 75% over the past 12 months.

The transaction is expected to close in the first half of this year, subject to shareholder and regulatory approvals.

M.D.C. Holdings, which was founded in 1972, builds homes under the Richmond American Homes brand in California, Florida, Texas and 13 other states.

of up to 2% and continued stock gains this year.

"Historically, labor revisions for the prior year turning negative indicates an economic downturn is on the horizon," said Jeff Schulze, head of economic and market strategy at ClearBridge Investments, in a note to investors.

A resilient labor market has been the driving force behind strong consumer spending, which essentially propelled economic growth in the face of high inflation. More job openings, low unemployment and higher wages meant more money in consumers' wallets for shopping and travel. That helped pull corporate America out of an earnings recession while also helping the broader economy stave off a real recession.

Other warning signs from the labor market include that fact that the latest bit of job growth was concentrated in a few industries. Roughly 60% of the gains in December were mostly concentrated in government positions and the hospitality and healthcare industries.

That could put the recovery for corporate profits in jeopardy and prompt a loss of confidence in Wall Street forecasts for profits this year. It also places a big question mark around growth prospects for the S&P 500 and other major indexes.

Analysts are forecasting growth of 5% during the first quarter and nearly 10% in the second quarter for companies in the S&P 500 index, according to FactSet. Wall Street expects 8% growth and 20% growth in the third and fourth quarters.

"If the economic and employment scenarios unfold as we expect, more unemployed consumers will have less money to spend, creating further speedbumps for positive economic momentum," said Scott Wren, senior global markets strategist at Wells Fargo Investment Institute, in a note to investors.

Solid earnings growth underpins much of the support for stocks to keep gaining more ground in 2024. The S&P 500 jumped 24% in 2023.

It is hovering around its all-time high of 4,796.56 and analysts expect it to surpass 5,000 before 2024 ends.

## 'Special program reflects our dedication'

## ABK launches Elite Plus

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is delighted to unveil its latest offering, Elite Plus. This exclusive tier is designed to provide an array of benefits and privileges to clients who meet the qualifying criteria, redefining the banking experience for Elite customers.

Johair Marafi, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, expressed her enthusiasm, stating, "The launch of Elite Plus aligns with our commitment to meet the evolving needs of our clientele. This special program reflects our dedication to providing a comprehensive suite of bespoke banking services, delivered with the exemplary level of customer service that ABK is renowned for."

The distinguished Elite Plus offering encompasses a host of exclusive privileges, setting a new standard for personalized banking services. It offers a range of features tailored to customers' lifestyles and financial needs, including but not limited to a series of complimentary products, such as prepaid cards and a supplementary credit card.

In addition, clients can enjoy an array of free-of-charge services, such as access to safe deposit boxes, cash delivery throughout the year, free chequebook, transfers, and much more.

Furthermore, Elite Plus customers are offered an Elite Plus credit card with exclusive benefits including a generous 10,000 welcome bonus points, participation in the Visa Advantage Elite Plus rewards program, and the flexibility to earn 5 points on local and 7 points on international spending per KD. Cardholders will also benefit from travel accident and medical coverage, complimentary access to over 1,000 airport lounges worldwide, and local and international concierge services.

In closing, Marafi said, "We are confident that Elite Plus will elevate the banking experience for our esteemed clients and further solidify ABK's position as a leading financial institution in Kuwait."

With the introduction of Elite



Elite Plus flyer

Plus, ABK continues to reinforce its position as a pioneer in offering tailored financial solutions, personalized services, and an unparalleled banking experience to its valued clientele.

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

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital.

This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients.

ABK is a strong supporter of Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign. Through its various initiatives, the Bank aims to promote financial inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customer rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services. Additionally, ABK consistently provides strategic information on how to avoid banking and financial fraud, loan application requirements, digital services, and more.

For more information about ABK, please follow the Bank's Instagram account @abk\_kuwait, visit eahlii.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

## PROPERTY

## Business Plus



Four high-profile disasters send warning

## Concerns rise over aging US buildings



An aerial photo of four condo towers on the beach. In the center is Champlain Towers South, which partially collapsed in June 2021. (AP)

By Abieyuwa Aghayere  
Drexel University

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



Many buildings today are designed to last from as little as 50 years to over 100 years, depending on the materials used and assuming periodic maintenance and repairs

Four recent catastrophic building collapses and a near miss are raising concerns about the state of America's aging buildings and questions about who, if anyone, is checking their safety.

Many cities have buildings showing signs of aging and in need of repair. In New York City, where a seven-story apartment building partially collapsed in December 2023, the median building age is about 90 years, and many neighborhoods were built before 1900.

As a civil engineer, I study building failures, and I have seen how crucial structural inspections and careful maintenance are - and how often the signs of trouble are ignored in the U.S. until a problem becomes a crisis. Too often, it is up to residents to call attention to the risks.

There were two common threads prior to many of the recent building collapses: visible signs of the defects that eventually led to the building's demise and a history of documents submitted to city building departments clearly showing deteriorating conditions.

For example:  
- In June 2021, the sudden collapse of the Champlain Towers South condominium in Surfside, Florida, killed 98 people and stunned the nation. Three years earlier, an engineers report had raised concerns about the structural integrity of concrete in the pool deck area that later collapsed, but the strength of the pool deck slab was not thoroughly investigated. Federal investigators in a 2023 preliminary report found that the original design of the pool deck did not follow building standards.

- In May 2023, three people died when part of a 116-year-old apartment building in Davenport, Iowa, collapsed. Inspectors pointed to a history of improper maintenance, and photos show clear signs of trouble, such as walls that were bowed.

- In April 2023, one person was

killed when a New York City parking garage collapsed. The nearly-100-year-old building had several past violations, and its collapse triggered a swift check of similar garages that turned up more potential hazards.

In a near-miss, in November 2023, a large hole opened in the base of another New York City parking garage, offering a view to the Amtrak rail line below. It forced the closure of the line while the building was repaired.

Many buildings today are designed to last from as little as 50 years to over 100 years, depending on the materials used and assuming periodic maintenance and repairs.

Just as human beings need to see their physicians on a more regular basis as they age, older buildings also require more care and attention. That is even more important when they are exposed to adverse environmental conditions, such as corrosive de-icing salts in the Northeast and saltwater and salt air moisture in coastal regions.

Yet, inspections of buildings primarily happen only as they are being built, resold or remodeled. Policies vary by state, but there are currently

few widespread mandated rules for structural inspections of entire existing buildings. Some exceptions are in Florida, where structural inspections are required for condominium and co-op buildings statewide at age 25 to 30 years, and every 10 years thereafter, and Jersey City, New Jersey, where periodic structural inspections are required every 10 years for all buildings. Several Florida cities and counties have extended the state-mandated periodic inspections to commercial buildings.

Some cities have enacted ordinances governing periodic inspections of specific structural elements, such as balconies and facades. And a few require periodic inspections or condition assessments for parking garages. After the Surfside condo tower collapse, the International Code Council initiated efforts to develop condition-assessment guidelines for existing buildings that local governments could choose to adopt.

In each of the recent collapses, there were signs of the problems that, had they been addressed, might have prevented the tragedy.

In the New York City apartment

building, a visible, vertical crack in the corner column, which should have been a glaring red flag, was ignored. The NYC Buildings Department commissioner recently said that "The Department of Buildings does not have enough of its own staff to inspect every building in New York City."

This problem is not unique to New York. Building departments across the country are understaffed and have oversight challenges.

If increasing budgets for municipal inspection departments is not an option, another route is to contract with structural engineering firms to review submitted documents. While this comes at a cost, so do legal settlements after building disasters.

If cities and states enact periodic structural condition assessment rules for existing buildings within their jurisdiction, problems could also be spotted by expert inspectors before they develop into failures.

Insurance companies could also be a partner in this effort by requiring periodic inspection and maintenance by licensed design professionals as a condition of continuing coverage.

Residents also must adopt a more vigilant and proactive approach to identify and prevent structural problems.

Anyone can learn to identify the telltale signs of building deterioration and defects, though there may be some hidden structural deterioration behind architectural finishes that may not be visible. If these problems are spotted and addressed in a timely manner, that could help reduce the likelihood of structural failures and more costly repairs in the future.

If you see any of the following problems, report them to your landlord or the city building department - they could be signs of structural trouble:

- Water intrusion, ponding, leaks, water stains, rust stains and peeling paint on floors or ceilings.
  - Sagging floors, roofs and ceilings and bulging or bowed walls.
  - Cracks that are expanding in elevated floors or roof slabs, walls, beams and columns.
  - Cracks on a floor slab that create a trip hazard, or wall cracks, which may be the result of the foundation settling.
  - Chunks of concrete falling from slabs, beams, walls and columns; and exposed rusted steel reinforcement.
  - Rusting or corroded steel beams and columns.
  - Balconies where the rainwater drains toward the interior of the building, rather than away from it.
  - Rotted wood structural parts, such as floor joists or wall studs.
- Everyone needs to understand the warning signs and be willing to speak up so officials and building owners take the necessary steps to stem this scary tide and protect residents.
- Our buildings are talking to us, and in some cases crying out for help - it's time everyone listened. (AP)

Overall property tax collections rose 41% from 2018 to 2022

## Georgia lawmakers mull property tax relief

ATLANTA, Jan. 22, (AP) - With a runup in home values sparking higher property taxes for many Georgia homeowners, there is a groundswell among state lawmakers in this election year to provide relief.

Georgia's Senate Finance Committee plans a hearing on Monday on a bill limiting increases in a home's value, as assessed for property tax purposes, to 3% per year. The limit would last as long as the owner maintained a homestead exemption. Voters would have to approve the plan in a November referendum.

Meanwhile, Republican House Speaker Jon Burns of Newington proposes doubling the state's homestead tax exemption, a measure likely to cut tax bills by nearly \$100 million statewide.

But Georgia is far from the only state where lawmakers are reacting to voter discontent over higher levies.

"Property taxes are likely to be the biggest tax issue in many states this year," said Jared Walczak of the Tax Foundation, a group that researches taxes and is often critical of increases.

In Texas, voters in November approved a plan cutting property taxes by \$18 billion. Kansas' Democratic governor and its Republican-majority legislature are both endorsing larger exemptions for homeowners to cut taxes by \$100 million annually. Colorado lawmakers meeting in a November special session approved higher residential deductions and a lower assessment rate. Pennsylvania is using lottery proceeds to cut property taxes and subsidize rent for seniors and people with disabilities.

In Georgia, supporters say a cap on homes' taxable value would keep school districts, cities and counties from increasing tax revenues by relying on rising values. Republicans have long pushed local governments to roll back tax rates to keep bills level, even requiring advertisements labeling a failure to do so as a tax increase.

Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Hufstetler, the Rome Republican sponsoring Senate Bill 349, says many school districts and governments are instead pocketing higher revenues based on value.

"I've seen some increases where, just in a couple of years, their collections have gone up 40%," Hufstetler told The Associated Press on Friday. "And they haven't dropped the millage rate and they are using it for a backdoor tax increase. And I think there needs to be some moderation on that."

Statistics show overall property tax collections rose 41% from 2018 to 2022 in Georgia. During that same period, total assessed value of property statewide rose by nearly 39%. Those Georgia Department of Revenue figures represent not only existing property but also new buildings. So they don't clearly state how much valuations rose on existing property.

Many governments and school districts have spent the windfall from rising values to increase employee pay and cover inflation-swollen expenses. A 3% cap could mean that governments would have to raise tax rates instead. In states including California and Colorado, property tax limits have been blamed for hamstringing local governments.

Already, at least 39 Georgia counties, 35 cities and 27 school systems have adopted local laws limiting how much assessed values can rise, according to the Association of County Commissions of Georgia. Some of those limits only benefit homeowners 65 or older.

Republican Lt. Gov. Burt Jones is backing Hufstetler's bill, saying it will prevent "large surprise increases in home values." It's also supported by at least one Democrat, Atlanta Sen. Jason Esteves.

"A key piece of this bill is trying to ensure that people are able to stay in their home," Esteves said, saying higher taxes are forcing owners to sell and move.

But state House leaders are cool toward imposing valuation caps statewide, saying that choice should be left to local communities. They instead back Burns' increased tax exemption.

"Our hope is to preserve local control," House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Shaw Blackmon, a Republican from Kathleen, said Friday.

Because the caps could hold down values more the longer someone owns a home, they could result in long-term residents paying lower taxes than newcomers. That's already the case in some Georgia communities with local caps.

Suzanne Widenhouse, chief appraiser of the Muscogee County Board of Assessors, told a House committee in October that one Columbus homeowner paid \$7.79 in property taxes last year, while a more recently arrived neighbor in a similar house paid \$3,236.19. That owner would have paid more except for a \$950 million property tax rebate championed by Gov. Brian Kemp.

More than \$2 billion in property value in Columbus is shielded from taxation by homestead exemptions which don't allow for any rise in value. That shifts the tax burden commercial and industrial property owners, as well as renters, Widenhouse said.

"Any time that you start capping values, you create inequality," Widenhouse said.

editor's choice



# Falchuk steps out solo with dark comedy 'Brothers Sun'

LOS ANGELES, Jan 22, (AP) — Brad Falchuk remembers earning his first real writer's credit on the sci-fi series "Earth: Final Conflict" in 2001.

Falchuk describes the project as a "deeply mediocre science fiction syndicated show ... that aired at four in the afternoon on a Saturday." Although he doesn't remember the words he wrote, Falchuk recalls how it made him feel to have his words make air.

"It's moving. It's exciting. You choose a dream, which is an irrational dream ... to become a writer that gets paid for their work ... Even a show like that, which is a very middling show, there's still millions of dollars invested in what you have written."

At present day, Falchuk has a list of multihyphenate credits on shows like "Nip/Tuck," "Glee," "American Horror Story" and "Pose," with frequent collaborator Ryan Murphy.

This month, Falchuk debuted his first Murphy-less project, a dark comedy he co-created with newcomer Byron Wu, called "The Brothers Sun." It's under his Brad Falchuk Teley-Vision banner. Falchuk also served as co-showrunner with Wu in an otherwise all-Asian writers room.

"You have all those voices in the room, and then it's just a matter of listening and humbling yourself without losing your strength and confidence, which is a dance that I have some experience doing and I have no problem doing," Falchuk said.

"The Brothers Sun" was Wu's first experience in a writers room. Wu

credits Falchuk for pushing him - and the other writers - to authenticate their writing.

"He asks such insightful questions having an outside perspective," adding that Falchuk was often "poking at things" to get to something deeper. He would ask, "Why do you think that is? What about your family? Where do you think that comes from," said Wu. "It allows us to really reach the truth and not just tackle the surface issues of our identities but the emotional and generational issues."

"The Brothers Sun" follows Charles (played by Justin Chien), a member of a Taiwanese criminal organization. When his father, the head of the triad, is targeted by an assassin, Charles leaves Taipei and heads to Los Angeles to protect his mother and younger brother, Bruce (Sam Song Li), who has no clue about his family's illicit side.

## Meeting

Falchuk and Wu landed Oscar winner Michelle Yeoh for the pivotal role of the mother, Eileen. They recalled meeting with the best actress winner at the Beverly Wilshire hotel to talk about the project.

Said Wu "I was an hour early to the meeting. I was like, 'I'm already gonna be nervous. I just want to acclimate myself to the space ... a very Hollywood place. I remember shaking and asking the bartender for a water.'"

Yeoh, who starred in "Everything Everywhere All at Once" says it was an easy yes because for one, she is a fan of Falchuk's prior work. "I'm a big fan of all the 'American Horror Stories,'" said Yeoh.

"He's not afraid to go beyond a particular genre. With 'Brothers Sun,' we've taken on a subject matter and then just thrown in the deepest dark humor that you've seen for a while."

Yeoh relishes that the show gives her an opportunity to show her comedic side.

"That was one thing I never thought I could do, to be honest. Everybody always puts me in the most serious role," said Yeoh, who learned that to be funny, she just had to play it straight. "I think that comes off across as even more funny because when you don't try to be funny, it's hysterical."

Throughout his career, Falchuk has helped give meaty material to veteran actors Jessica Lange and Angela Bassett and assisted in making stars out of a long list of performers, including Sarah Paulson, Billy Porter, Evan Peters, Lea Michele, Darren Criss and Michaela Jaé Rodriguez.

"Working with geniuses is always the best," said Falchuk. It's always such an incredible, edifying experience to be around somebody who is a master at their craft. You learn so much, and they push you in the right ways."

He wants to do that behind-the-scenes too, like with Wu.

"I said, 'You're my partner here and you're going to learn how to do this, and I'm going to teach you how to do this.' And then one of these days, hopefully the show goes on many years, and I don't need to be here anymore. To me, that's considered a success."

Television

Variety



This image released by Sundance Institute shows Kieran Culkin, (left), and Jesse Eisenberg in 'A Real Pain' by Jesse Eisenberg, an official selection of the US Dramatic Competition at the 2024 Sundance Film Festival. (AP)

Film

Eisenberg and Culkin shine in new collaboration

## 'A Real Pain' balances humor, trauma

PARK CITY, Utah, Jan 22, (AP) — Jesse Eisenberg had not seen "Succession" when he was writing his new film "A Real Pain." But his sister Hallie Eisenberg knew from years of watching Roman Roy that Kieran Culkin would be perfect.

The film, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival on Saturday, follows two very mismatched cousins, one anxiety ridden and rule following and the other a more spontaneous spirit, on a trip to Poland. They're reuniting to see where their late grandmother was from and also explore some Holocaust locations.

Eisenberg had wanted to play the spontaneous one, which was similar to a character he'd played on stage in "The Spoils" in England. But he was gently talked out of it. It was, he realized, a taxing role that might be too much to handle while also directing. And so, Culkin became aspirational.

They'd met previously through their mutual friend Emma Stone, who also produced "A Real Pain," but he really didn't know him well. And he'd quickly discover that casting Culkin and directing him, even getting him on set, was a different kind of challenge that he hadn't expected.

Three weeks before shooting, when Eisenberg was "knee-deep in securing locations," Culkin told him he was thinking of dropping out. He didn't drop out, but he also arrived on set only a day before filming, telling Eisenberg simply that he understood the character and that he also works best without blocking.

"I had spent months blocking out the scenes with Polish actors," Eisenberg said. "Halfway through day one we had to change our plan. And it was completely to the advantage of the movie because Kieran is such a live wire. He's such a spontaneous actor and he's so brilliantly funny. To kind of hem him in with my pre-planned shot list would have killed the spontaneity and the energy of the movie."

It both "flummoxed and elated" his cinematographer who had never worked with an actor who

didn't adhere to marks. But, Eisenberg said, the scenes where they could ditch the dolly and just follow Culkin "sparkled."

"I love both characters so much," Eisenberg said. "I suspect audiences will just assume I'm very much like the character I play. But both are people I know. At once I am kind of the nervous person in the room who wishes I can get out of my own head. And on the other hand, I am a performer."

"A Real Pain," which is seeking distribution at the festival, is both funny and profound - an odd couple trip and an exploration of ideas of modern pain in the face of historical family traumas.

## Adapt

Eisenberg has been wanting to set a movie in Poland for about 18 years. The first play he'd written was about a self-centered young American who goes to Poland to stay with his cousin, a survivor of the war, to take advantage of a free room in an exotic locale. It was based in part on an experience he'd actually had. On stage, Vanessa Redgrave played his cousin.

"I tried for years to adapt that into a movie, and it was never good," Eisenberg said.

It took on various iterations too, including one about cousins who are more contemporaries going to Mongolia for Tablet Magazine. But it wasn't until he saw an advertisement that said "Auschwitz Tour (with lunch)" that the story cracked open.

"I remember thinking, oh, that's the story. It's these kind of middle-class trips to the most horrific places on Earth where the interpersonal dynamics of the group could be explored against a backdrop of real historical trauma," he said "You can explore the dramatic irony of taking one of these trips, but staying in the Radisson Hotel. Seeing Auschwitz during the day and drinking wine at night with your group."

He enlisted the help of renowned Polish film producer Ewa Puszczynska, who was fresh off "The Zone of Interest," which would be essential both in

legitimizing this American production abroad and in managing logistics for a very complex shoot.

"We are in a different location every day and every location has challenges. We are in airports, on trains, in city centers, at monuments, at a concentration camp. The first feature film to be able to film at this concentration camp," he said. "It was just this incredibly ambitious production. And thank goodness we had the best producers in the country shepherding it."

Those in the tour group, led by a character played by "White Lotus" star Will Sharpe, are mostly retired Americans (Jennifer Grey among them). But Eisenberg also wanted to broaden the story and included a character, Elogé, (Kurt Egyiawan) based on a friend of his who survived the Rwandan genocide. His hope is that "A Real Pain" speaks to a cross-cultural, universal experience - though he's also worried that sounds too much like a commercial. What he really wants, though, is for audiences to find it funny.

"It plays lighter than the themes might imply," he said.

"A Real Pain" is his second as a director, after the mother-son film "When You Finish Saving the World" which premiered at the festival a few years ago. It's a busy Sundance for Eisenberg. In addition to trying to sell "A Real Pain," Eisenberg is also starring in "Sasquatch Sunset," about a family of Sasquatches. And on opening night he presented a tribute award to his friend and off-co-star Kristen Stewart, who said she hopes that he gets behind the camera more often.

"He been a real reluctant filmmaker. He's always like, 'Oh, I could never,'" Stewart said. "I'm like, no, no, you are a born storyteller. And that's the way that his acting comes across. Like some actors really service other people's stories. And then some people are writers themselves, even within their acting. Jesse is just like a kind of virtuoso artist."

Features

ARABIC TIMES

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2024

migrated to streaming platforms - since 2016's "Bridget Jones's Baby." Domestically, it came in fourth with \$5.4 million.

Much of the weekend's action was in expanding awards contenders. (AP)

DUBAI: Coffee enthusiasts came



Rapp



DeBose

together in Dubai on Sunday to discuss their passion for the buzz-inducing drink, discussing everything from production tips to drinking habits.

The gathering, christened, "World of Coffee Dubai," displays more than 1,600 coffee companies from some 51 nations around the world, providing coffee lovers

with an enriching experience and a plethora of variations to choose from.

To get a clearer understanding of what makes coffee an indispensable part of everyday life, KUNA was on hand to get some words from bystanders and participants alike, all of whom provided their insights into the world of coffee

production.

Mahmoud Ramadhan, one of the visitors in attendance, said that coffee is not merely a hot beverage, rather, it plays an integral part of culture and tradition in many countries, citing some of the instant benefits, such as enhanced concentration, that the drink provides. (KUNA)

People & Places

Music

Maestro's comeback

Welser-Möst back to music post-surgery

NEW YORK, Jan 22, (AP): **Franz Welser-Möst** is back on the Cleveland Orchestra's podium, concentrating again on music instead of his health.

"It was not my best year, the last year," he said Wednesday. "I feel good. You learn to live with the circumstances, and I'm extremely and grateful that I'm back at work."

On track to surpass George Szell as Cleveland's longest-tenured music director, the 63-year-old Austrian returned to his orchestra at Cleveland's Severance Music Center last week and leads it in a pair of programs at Carnegie Hall this weekend. He will be in Austria for five concerts with the Vienna Philharmonic in late February, then leads that orchestra on a seven-concert tour in early March to New York and Naples and West Palm Beach, Florida.

Quite a schedule, given his setbacks in 2023.

He had a slipped disk in his neck while conducting Wagner's four-opera "Der Ring des Nibelungen (The Ring of the Nibelung)" at the Vienna State Opera in June, an injury that caused him to enter an orthopedic clinic in the second half of July and again in August. He was forced to cancel a high-profile new production of Verdi's "Macbeth" at the Salzburg Festival.

Optimistic

Welser-Möst had surgery Sept. 1 to remove a cancerous tumor from his bladder and came back to Cleveland to conduct the orchestra's season opener on Sept. 28. After leading two weeks of programs there, he took the orchestra to Vienna and Linz for their 21st international tour together, then had a second operation on Oct. 25.

That was followed in November by six weeks of once-a-week immunotherapy treatment. He is scheduled for additional three-week cycles of treatment in March, July and October.

"The doctors are very happy. So am I, that it seems to work. It has been in my family, so it's genetic," Welser-Möst said. "Both my brothers had the same thing a couple of years ago."

Both are very well now, so there's every reason to be optimistic."

Welser-Möst has been Cleveland's music director since 2002-03 and has appointed 69 musicians, including 52 of the current 105 members.

"One of the keys to Franz's suc-

cess is his incredible discipline. He's like a great athlete in that way," said André Gremillet, the Cleveland Orchestra's president and CEO. "He's very focused, very disciplined in the way he approaches everything, and I think that has served him well also in facing his health challenges."

His name at birth in Linz, Austria, was Franz Leopold Maria Möst, and he switched it in 1985 to Welser-Möst in honor of Wels, a nearby city he grew up in. The change was made on the advice of a benefactor, Baron Andreas von Bennigsen of Liechtenstein.

Welser-Möst spent a decade studying the technique of Herbert von Karajan, the Berlin Philharmonic's chief conductor from 1954-89. He was 19 when he was brought to Karajan in 1979 by Albert Moser, then general director of Vienna's Musikverein. Welser-Möst was among the 10 finalists of the Karajan International Conductors Competition, though he failed to win.

Rehearsals

"I'd been to a lot of rehearsals in Vienna, in Salzburg and Berlin, and that made a huge impression on me because Karajan was highly efficient in rehearsals," Welser-Möst recalled. "He would just say one sentence and the sound of the orchestra changed completely. And in those days, of course, I was like: How on earth is he doing that?"

Welser-Möst first conducted the Cleveland Orchestra in 1993 and became music director for the 2002-03 season. On the afternoon of his return concert on Jan. 11, he announced he will retire as music director at the end of 2026-27, his 25th season. Welser-Möst maintained he wasn't focused on topping Szell's reign, which stretched from 1946-70.

"I'm not into that game. It just happened," he said.

Welser-Möst's New York concerts are part of Carnegie Hall's "Perspectives" series and its focus this winter and spring on the fall of the Weimar Republic.

"It is something that is so important to him and so important to his life," Carnegie Hall executive director Clive Gillinson said. "I remember doing one Zoom call where he was in his library and he showed me all the books he's got on Weimar."

Welser-Möst is proud of extending the orchestra's flexibility by programming semi-staged operas, with Mozart's "Die Zauberflöte (The Magic Flute)" next this May. He already has scheduled Janáček's "Jenufa" for next season, Beethoven's "Fidelio" for 2025-26 and Strauss' "Die Frau ohne Schatten (The Woman without a Shadow)" for 2026-27.



This image released by Showtime shows Ruth Wilson in a scene from 'The Woman in the Wall.' (AP)

Television

Wilson tackles sleepwalking and dark pasts

Mystery saga in 'Woman in the Wall'

LOS ANGELES, Jan 22, (AP): In her latest role in Showtime's "The Woman in the Wall," Ruth Wilson plays Lorna, a woman prone to sleepwalking and night terrors.

Waking up to the repercussions of her "night behavior" can be a nightmare in itself: In the first episode, Lorna awakens to discover a dead body in her home and no idea why.

Lorna's sleep issues are a manifestation of trauma she experienced as a pregnant teen forced to live in a church-run facility - sometimes called Catholic laundries or Magdalene laundries for unmarried and pregnant women and girls and others deemed to be trouble. In Lorna's case, she was forced to work throughout her pregnancy and her baby was taken immediately after birth.

Lorna's life intersects with a detective named Colman (played by Daryl McCormack) who is investigating the murder of a local priest. Initially leery of one another, Lorna and Colman find they each have a history with these institutions.

"The Woman in the Wall" premiered Saturday on Paramount+ before its broadcast debut on Showtime on Jan. 21.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Wilson spoke about learning of these Magdalene laundries, her complex thoughts on religion and how Sinéad O'Connor left her mark on the project. Answers have been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: How familiar were you with the

Magdalene laundries prior to taking this role?

Wilson: There's been a few dramas like "Philomena" with Judi Dench. And then there was "The Magdalene Sisters", which was made a number of years ago by Peter Mullan. There hasn't been a great deal of information about it or dramatization stories. The last laundry closed in 1996 so, actually, it's incredibly recent history. I think culturally, Ireland is still in the process of reconciling and acknowledging that this happened. When the pilot script came through, I thought, "This is a really important story that needs to get out there. We need to keep making dramas or stories about this subject matter."

AP: Your mother has been quoted as saying you've always had to have something to fight for and I'm wondering if this project is an example of that.

Wilson: I've always had a sort of thing about injustice. Even as a little kid if something felt wrong to me or unjust, I would stand up and say something about it or get angry. I think that in my work I have a responsibility. I'm lucky enough to have a platform to put work out there which might educate people or change people's minds about things or challenge them, as well as move them or entertain them. I think if I've got that responsibility, I should take it seriously and use it as I can.

AP: Before her death, Sinéad O'Connor granted permission for one of her songs, called "The Magdalene Song,"

to be used in the final episode of the series. She also was sent to a Magdalene laundry as a teen.

Wilson: She was sent to a laundry or an equivalent of a laundry. She was a bit of a naughty kid. Girls were put into these places for tiny little misdemeanors or for just being sort of outspoken or louder than they should be as girls. She spoke about it a lot. David Holmes, the composer of all the music on the show, had been working with Sinéad producing her last album. He knew about (the song) and asked Sinéad and she gave her blessing for us to put it on the end of the show. When he played it to me, I got goosebumps.

AP: Did this series make you look at religion differently since these laundries were Catholic institutions?

Wilson: I'm a Catholic. I grew up a Catholic. I don't practice anymore, but I'm fascinated by it and the impact on me. I find going to church quite hard these days. I still go with my dad. My dad goes every week and I understand why he likes it; I understand the ritual and the community. There's a lot to be said for having a community like that. Any religion or any sort of institution can be corrupted. It's run by people and people aren't always clear-minded. As long as things are run by humans, they've always got the potential to be corrupted. I find it fascinating, and I find the denial or the refusal to see clearly by communities and by people quite interesting.

Variety

NEW YORK: Taylor Swift's townhouse in New York City appears to have been the target of another break-in attempt, this time by a man who was arrested near the singer's Tribeca home Saturday as police responded to a report of a disorderly person.

Witnesses said the man tried but failed to enter the townhouse in the early afternoon, the New York Post reported.

Police would not confirm a break-in attempt at Swift's home, but officers arrested a man on the same street when they were told he tried to open a door to a building, an NYPD spokesperson said Sunday. The man was charged on an unrelated 2017 warrant out of Brooklyn for allegedly failing to answer a summons, the spokesperson said.

Authorities did not release the man's name. An email seeking comment was sent Sunday to a representative for the "You Belong With Me" singer. It wasn't clear if she was at the home at the time. She traveled Sunday to the Buffalo, New York, area, where her boyfriend, Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce, was set to play against the Buffalo Bills in an NFL playoff game in the evening.

The Tribeca townhouse has been the scene of several other break-ins and attempts when Swift wasn't there, including some by alleged stalkers.

In 2022, a man was charged with trespassing and stalking after authorities said he entered two Tribeca residences linked to Swift. Also that year, a man was arrested for crashing a car into the townhouse and reportedly told police he wouldn't leave until he met with Swift. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Mary Weiss, the lead singer of the 1960s pop group the Shangri-Las, whose hits included "Leader of the Pack," has died. She was 75.

Miriam Linna, founder of Weiss' label, Norton Records, said Sunday that Weiss died Friday in Palm Springs, California. No cause of death was given. Rolling Stone first reported her death Friday.

The Shangri-Las, formed in the New York City borough of Queens, were made up of two pairs of sisters: Weiss and her sister Elizabeth "Betty" Weiss, along with twins Marguerite "Marge" Ganser and Mary Ann Ganser. They met in school and as teenagers began performing at school dances and teen hops.

After producer Artie Ripp signed them to Kama Sutra Productions, the Shangri-Las found enormous success as a girl group with a tough, working-class image and drama-filled songs of teen dreams and heartbreak that consumed mid-1960s radio waves. Their name came from a restaurant in Queens.

Their first hit, "Remember (Walking in the Sand)," reached the Billboard top 5 in 1964 for Red Bird Records. Weiss was just 15 when it



Swift



Weiss

charted. The song, which Aerosmith would later cover, was written by Brill Building pop songwriter-producer George "Shadow" Morton.

Morton would be a key architect of the Shangri-Las, developing a sound that fused a Ronettes-style R&B with big teenage emotions. "Leader of the Pack," co-written by Morton, was the top Billboard single of 1965. On it, Weiss sang:

"My folks were always putting him down They said he came from the wrong side of town They told me he was bad, but I knew he was sad"

That's why I fell for the leader of the pack" The Shangri-Las didn't last long. They disbanded in 1968 amid legal issues. But they remained a pioneering all-female group.

"I truly believe a lot of men were considered artists, whether or not people wrote for them where women were considered products," Weiss said in a 2007 interview at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

After the break-up, Weiss moved to San Francisco and fell out of the music business. For years, she worked at an architectural firm. It would be four decades before Weiss recorded an album of new material again. She made her solo debut with the 2007 album "Dangerous Game."

"I didn't even sing along the car radio," Weiss told Rolling Stone in 2007 about her post-Shangri-Las years. "When I put something down, I really put it down."

On "Dangerous Game," Weiss recaptured some of the spirit and sound of the Shangri-Las but from a more adult perspective.

"I just want to have fun now. And I'm going to. People can take advantage of you in your youth," Weiss told New York magazine. "And they're not going to do it again. There are benefits to being a grown-up." (AP)

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## The Conversation

## Celebrity stories amplify the debate

## Parenthood via surrogacy ... balancing ethics and joy

By Danielle Tumminio Hansen  
Emory University

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. The Conversation is wholly responsible for the content.

In her new book, actress Gabrielle Union became the latest celebrity to discuss her decision to become a parent via surrogacy. She joins the ranks of household names such as Neil Patrick Harris, Nicole Kidman, Kim Kardashian, all of whom have hired a surrogate to give birth to their future child.

The publicity Union generated about surrogacy reignited ethical questions about this controversial form of assisted reproduction that range from whether women should be able to sell their reproductive abilities to what it means to be a parent.

There is global disagreement about the ethics of surrogacy. Several countries have banned it, while others have limited its scope. In the United States, laws permitting surrogacy vary by state.

The legal range is due to ethical concerns, ranging from the potential exploitation of surrogates to worries that surrogacy negatively affects the life of the resulting child.

In the decade that I've been researching this form of assisted reproduction, I've discovered that surrogacy can be exploitative, but it can also be a positive experience when undertaken with appropriate societal support and when all participants practice mutual respect, kindness and empathy. At its best, it can also encourage people to adopt a more expansive view of what it means to be a family.

One could argue that the concept of surrogacy dates back to a biblical story in the book of Genesis in which Sarah, the wife of Abraham, pleads with him to have children with the slave Hagar because of Sarah's inability to conceive.

Fast forward to modern times, and surrogacy is now performed predominantly in high-priced in vitro fertilization centers in one of two ways. In "traditional surrogacy," the fertilized egg belongs to the surrogate. In "gestational surrogacy," which is more common today, the fertilized egg comes from either the intended mother or a donor. In both cases, that egg combines with a sperm to become an embryo that grows in the surrogate's womb and not the intended mother's.

## Connection

Gestational surrogacy may be preferable because it allows intended mothers to maintain a genetic connection with their child. Others may prefer it because of fears that a surrogate could lay claim to the child with whom she had a biological connection.

The fear that a surrogate will try to steal or adopt a child is one of many legal and ethical fears surrounding surrogacy. In the 1980s, the Baby M Case in the United States attracted much media attention because it tapped into these fears. In this situation, the surrogate named Mary Beth Whitehead attempted to retain custody of the baby she birthed.

The case fueled a stereotype of surrogates as emotionally unstable, defying the reality that surrogates undergo psychological testing before participating in a procedure.

Documented instances of surrogates retaining children are rare. Research shows that surrogates often experience pregnancy and birth differently than they did with their own children. They also often see themselves as heroes or gift givers instead of mothers.

If the public perceives surrogates negatively, intended parents often fare no better. They are often categorized as selfish, desperate and filthy rich, especially when they choose surrogacy without a medical reason.

Those popular images of intended parents fail to account for the reproductive trauma many of them experience prior to turning to surrogacy. Psychologists have shown that the inability to start a family can be a form of reproductive trauma. The decision to hire a surrogate, then, is often the last option for parents who have tried everything else. What is seen as desperation, in other words, is actually, as I've proposed in my own research, an attempt to write a happy ending to the story of their

productive lives.

It is true that this way of becoming a parent is expensive, at least in the United States, where use of the technology routinely costs over US\$100,000. The cost is so extreme because intended parents pay health care fees for both themselves and the surrogate, many of which aren't covered by insurance.

They also have to pay legal fees, agency fees, and compensate the surrogate, which alone can range from \$45,000 to \$75,000. Contrast that price tag to one in India prior to its ban on international surrogacy in 2015: Couples who traveled there could expect to spend between \$15,000 to \$20,000 in total for their surrogacy journey.

The extreme costs of surrogacy in the US limits its availability to the wealthy and to high profile celebrities like Union, raising important ethical questions about whether this is an appropriate use of resources, especially given the possibility of adopting.

In addition to ethical questions about surrogacy's relation to wealth, feminists are divided on how surrogacy affects women. Some feminists feel that surrogates have a right to choose what to do with their bodies. Others object to surrogacy on the grounds that systemic oppression drives women into surrogacy; or that it's unethical for women to sell their bodies, arguing that it parallels prostitution.

Cases documented in India support these concerns. Investigative journalist Scott Carney found one prominent Indian surrogacy clinic where surrogates were kept in crowded bedrooms on restricted diets and forced to have caesarean sections in order to streamline the labor and delivery process.

Scholars also worry about surrogacy's impact on children. Studies suggest that children of surrogates may struggle with their identity, especially if those children are not told of their origins.

Extensive research hasn't been conducted with children of surrogates. Research by social scientists studying children born via egg and sperm donation largely mirrors the findings of adoption research: Children have questions about their identity, and answers to these questions are often most accessible when children have access to those individuals who are part of their birth story. Yet agencies and governments rarely regulate how surrogates, intended parents and children interact following the baby's birth.

Finally, many religious groups, most prominently Roman Catholics, object to surrogacy because it results in the destruction of human embryos during IVF cycles and violates their theological conviction that life begins at conception. Roman Catholics encourage heterosexual couples who cannot procreate via intercourse to adopt as an alternative.

Such objections might lead to the conclusion that there is never a reason to hire a surrogate. But this might be too simplistic. Even with the documented struggles on the parts of both intended parents and surrogates, many are profoundly grateful for the technology.

## Empower

Intended parents often feel surrogates are "gifts from God" who help them reach their dream of parenthood. Meanwhile, some surrogates believe their powers of procreation provide them with a unique opportunity to help others. Many surrogates see their ability to create life as a source of power, a profound act of altruism and part of their legacy.

When I spoke with a group of surrogates in Austin, Texas, while conducting research for my book, I found that their stories aligned with the findings of other researchers who discovered that many surrogates had positive experiences in which they experienced themselves as heroes. These women felt empowered because they helped infertile couples create families. Without surrogacy, these individuals would have no way to have a genetic connection with their children.

The surrogates acknowledged that sometimes intended parents could be difficult, that pregnancy and labor could be challenging, and that it could be confusing when a checkout clerk at the grocery store asked what they were planning to name the baby. (AP)

85% of millennial women face regular stress

## Study shows women more stressed than men affecting their gut health

WHIPPANY, N.J., Jan 22: MiraLAX, top brand choice for effective, gentle, occasional constipation relief from Bayer, has released the findings of a brand-commissioned survey which found women to be more than twice as likely as men to be pooping less than three times a week.

Stress may be a contributing factor to this constipation; in fact, the

survey, which was conducted among 2,000 Americans aged 27-42, found a staggering 85% of millennial women report routinely having stress on their minds.

This high frequency of stress and constipation that American women are facing is what MiraLAX has coined "The Gut Gap™." With 9 in 10 millennial women reporting that stress impacts their gut, MiraLAX

is committed to exposing – and closing – The Gut Gap and helping women get the relief they need.

While the stress women face can take a physical toll, sometimes in the form of occasional constipation, there are a number of activities that can help alleviate stress and its effects. With the survey revealing that nearly half of women (48%) cite laughing as a way they reduce stress, MiraLAX has reunited comedic duo Abbi Jacobson and Ilana Glazer, best known for their friendship on and off the screen, to draw awareness of The Gut Gap and help women lighten their loads through laughter.

"Poop is an important tenet of one's comedic voice, and Abbi and I have written, acted in, directed and produced (no pun intended) many storylines and scenes on the topic," said stand-up comedian, producer, writer and actor, Ilana Glazer. "When MiraLAX approached us to connect our special gift to the conversation around women's stress, we knew we could get the job done."

## Constipation

Launching this week, The Gut Gap campaign includes multiple touchpoints across digital, social and broadcast, with all content co-written and co-created by the duo.

"While stress and constipation can be a heavy issue, we hope by bringing some laughter and levity, we'll also help to lighten the mental loads women carry," said Abbi Jacobson, director, writer, producer and actress. "Reuniting with Ilana to write and film the campaign ads has certainly brought lots of laughter to us, and we hope they resonate with women everywhere and ultimately help spark a movement, pun intended."

According to the survey, stressors ranging from major life events to everyday responsibilities are disproportionately affecting women, with nearly half (47%) experiencing stress on a daily basis and 84% feeling stressed at least once a week. While this stress can cause constipation in women, the inverse is also true – two in three women feel more stressed when they experience constipation.

"The link between mind and body has been well documented," said Dr. Jessica Clemons, a board-certified psychiatrist and guiding medical consultant for the campaign. "Stress activates the body's fight or flight response, which can disrupt the digestive system, leading to constipation, among other issues. Women, in part due to societal pressures and burdens, but also hormones, are particularly susceptible to stress-induced constipation. Alleviating stress, and in turn, the discomfort associated with constipation, can promote a healthier, happier gut and better quality of life."

"Constipation is no laughing matter, but our approach to exposing The Gut Gap and the reality of how stress leaves women feeling metaphorically and physically backed up is bound to evoke a few laughs," said Dana Valentino, Marketing Director, Digestive Health, Bayer Consumer Health. "With our new campaign featuring Abbi and Ilana at the helm, we're hoping to engage women in a national conversation about the root causes of constipation and offer some much-needed comedic relief."

## Revolutionize angioplasty

## 'Injectable catheter' shows promise in 1st human trials

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., Jan 22, (AP) — Summa Therapeutics, has announced that the first-in-man injectable angioplasty procedures for patients with below-knee peripheral arterial disease (PAD) were performed successfully using its Finesse Injectable balloon catheter platform.

The Summa Finesse Injectable catheter is the industry's first hybrid diagnostic and therapeutic angioplasty balloon catheter developed to facilitate treatment of patients at risk of limb loss due to below-knee PAD. It was designed to improve the efficiency of peripheral angioplasty procedures by reducing equipment and contrast needs.

Each year, there are more than 140,000 lower extremity amputations in the US, most due to circulation issues. For patients at risk of amputation due to poor circulation, angioplasty procedures below the knee can be limb-saving. However, angioplasty procedures below the knee are complex and typically require numerous exchanges of specialized equipment during a procedure.

## Convenience

The Summa Finesse Injectable platform is designed to reduce the need for some cumbersome catheter exchanges through its ability to provide contrast injection on the fly, enabling users to move seamlessly from injection to balloon inflation throughout complex procedures. This distinct operator convenience streamlines the procedure and reduces the need for equipment. All users reported that the injection ability exceeded expectations.

Angioplasty procedures below the knee also require x-ray contrast, which can cause damage to kidney function. This is an especially critical issue because many patients undergoing angioplasty procedures below the knee have diabetes and kidney dysfunction. Operators reported that the Summa Finesse Injectable catheter allowed for decreased use of x-ray contrast, with 100% of procedures requiring less contrast than typically used with conventional devices. In the calf, ultra-low contrast angiograms were obtained with as little as 1 ml equivalent of contrast.

The first-in-man procedures were done at Mt. Sinai hospital in New York City by Drs. Rahul Patel and Robert Lookstein, and at the Advanced Vascular and Interventional Services office-base laboratory in West Orange, New Jersey by Drs. John Rundback and Kevin Herman.

"The Summa balloon platform is a game changer that provides several unique advantages," said Dr. Rundback, award-winning interventional radiologist and vascular specialist. "In our busy limb salvage practice, it will be an important tool."

The Summa Finesse Injectable is a multi-functional catheter that serves as a crossing catheter, diagnostic angiography catheter, and angioplasty catheter to reduce equipment and contrast needs. It was noted that in many cases with the Summa Finesse catheter functioning



First in-man experience exceeds expectations, cited as 'game changer' for below-the-knee angioplasty procedures.

as a crossing catheter, microcatheters were not needed to cross arterial obstructions.

"Summa's system makes below-knee angioplasty cases easier compared to a conventional setup," said Dr. Herman, nationally acclaimed interventional radiologist. "I start with Finesse and use it to perform angiography, cross lesions, and do serial angioplasties of multiple arterial segments in the calf -- all with the same catheter. It's a better designed system for below-knee angioplasty."

"In the first cases, expectations were met or exceeded, including improved procedural efficiency and lower equipment needs," said Dr. Timothy Murphy, CEO, Summa Therapeutics. "All users reported using less contrast and yet angiographic quality was described as excellent. The Summa Finesse Injectable has tremendous market potential and may become the standard of care when treating patients with chronic kidney disease, for whom contrast sparing is paramount."

The first-in-man experience represents a significant clinical milestone for Summa Therapeutics, a leading innovator in the cardiovascular medical device industry. The Summa Finesse Injectable is the first hybrid catheter launched in the planned line of interventional radiology devices from Summa.

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# Clippers close with 22-0 run, beat Nets 125-114



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (right), dunks as Portland Trail Blazers guard Anfernee Simons defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024, in Los Angeles. (AP)

## Celtics shoot down Rockets

**LOS ANGELES, Jan 22, (AP):** Kawhi Leonard scored 14 of his 21 points in the final five minutes and the Los Angeles Clippers overcame an 18-point deficit in the fourth quarter to beat the Brooklyn Nets 125-114 on Sunday.

The Clippers took their first lead on Leonard's basket with 2:50 remaining. They closed with a 22-0 run, capped by Leonard's 3-pointer from the corner, to win for the 10th time in 12 games.

### BASKETBALL

James Harden led the Clippers with 24 points and 10 assists. Russell Westbrook added 23 points off the bench.

Mikal Bridges scored 20 of his 26 points in the first half for Brooklyn. The Nets were coming off an 18-point victory over the Lakers on Friday night.

### Celtics 116, Rockets 107

In Houston, Kristaps Porzingis scored 32 points and NBA-leading Boston beat short-handed Houston.

The Celtics improved to 33-10, rebounding from their first home loss of the season Friday night against Denver. Boston is 20-1 at home and 13-9 on the road.

Derrick White added 21 points and 12 rebounds, and Jayson Tatum scored 18 points. Jaylen Brown had 13 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his third career triple-double. Dillon Brooks led Houston with 25 points.

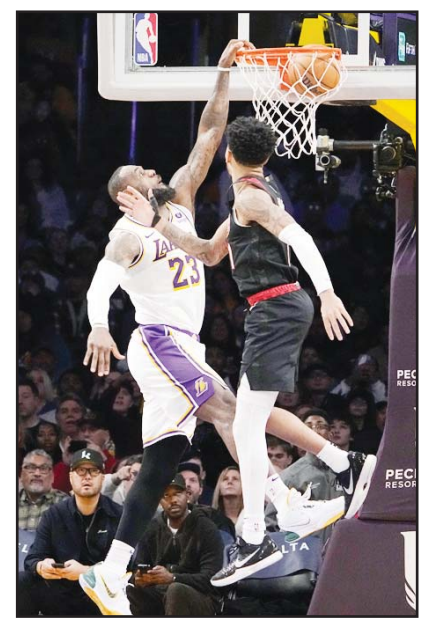
Houston played without Fred VanVleet (lower back), Jabari Smith Jr. (ankle), Jeff Green (calf), Reggie Bullock (lower back) and Tari Eason (leg). Boston was without Al Horford (rest) and Jrue Holiday (right elbow sprain).

### Suns 117, Pacers 110

In Phoenix, Kevin Durant scored 40 points, Devin Booker had 26 and Phoenix beat Indiana for its fifth straight victory.

Bradley Beal added 25 points on 11-of-16 shooting. He hit three baskets in the final 2:11 that were crucial in helping Phoenix keep the lead. Booker shot just 9 of 24 from the field, including 1 of 7 from 3-point range, but had a crucial steal with about 25 seconds remaining to seal it.

Indiana has lost four of five. Buddy Hield led the Pacers with 18 points, and Pascal Siakam - acquired this week from Toronto - had 15 points



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (left), dunks as Portland Trail Blazers guard Anfernee Simons defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024, in Los Angeles. (AP)

and seven assists. All-Star guard Tyrese Haliburton sat out for the sixth time in seven games because of a left hamstring strain.

### Lakers 134, Trail Blazers 110

In Los Angeles, D'Angelo Russell scored 34 points, LeBron James added 28 and Los Angeles routed Portland to get back to .500 at 22-22.

Austin Reaves scored 15 points, and Anthony Davis had 14 points and 14 rebounds to help the Lakers bounce back from an 18-point loss to Brooklyn two nights earlier. Russell and James combined to score the Lakers' first 19 points of the fourth.

Malcolm Brogdon led Portland with 23 points and nine assists.

### Nuggets 113, Wizards 104

In Washington, Nikola Jokic had 42 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists and defending champion Denver beat Washington.

Jokic was 15 of 20 from the field and made 12 of 14 free throws. Jamal Murray AND Michael Porter Jr. each had 19 points.

Tyus Jones had 15 points and 13 assists for Washington.

### Magic 105, Heat 87

In Orlando, Fla. Paolo Banchero scored 20 points and Orlando handed Miami its straight loss.

Wendell Carter Jr. added 17 points and nine rebounds and Franz Wagner, back in the lineup after missing eight games because of a sprained ankle, also had 19 points.

Bam Adebayo led Miami with 22 points and 11 rebounds.

## Stadium now open to fans

# Tokyo prepares for '25 track and field worlds in stadium built for Tokyo Oly

**TOKYO, Jan 22, (AP):** Tokyo's \$1.4 billion National Stadium was without fans for the 2020 Olympics, delayed for a year and held in 2021 because of the pandemic.

The stadium, which has been open to fans since the Olympics, will get a second chance to show itself off to track and field followers when Japan's capital is host of the 2025 track and field world championships.

"We are all looking forward to being here in Tokyo in a year's time to celebrate a world championships in a stadium - on this occasion - with spectators," Sebastian Coe, the president of World Athletics, said Monday at a news conference in Tokyo to promote the event.

"We have a small test event in Paris this year," Coe said, getting a laugh for his portrayal of this year's Paris Olympics.

Coe mentioned the need to maintain "budgetary control" and also satisfy the "public of Tokyo" at the Sept. 13-21, 2025, event.

Coe spoke seated next to Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike, who was among many Japanese politicians who faced criticism over Japan's heavy spending on the Olympics.

Organizers said Japan spent about \$13 billion to organize the Games, although a government audit sug-

gested it might have been twice that.

Neither Coe nor Koike took questions, which might have included costs and any role for Japanese advertising giant Dentsu. Dentsu, which has historic ties to World Athletics, has been ensnared in a massive bribery and corruption scandal around the Tokyo Olympics.

Mitsugi Ogata, the president of the local organizing committee, said the worlds would give the city - among other things - a chance to show off the "Tokyo brand."

### ATHLETICS

The pandemic kept the city from marketing itself through the Olympics. Even before the pandemic struck, the International Olympic Committee forced Tokyo to move the marathons to the northern city of Sapporo to avoid Tokyo's scorching heat. The move angered Koike among others.

Weaving through Tokyo's picturesque streets, organizers had hoped to use the marathons to show off one of the world's cleanest and most modern cities.

Summer heat should not be a problem with the 2025 worlds being held at the start of the fall, or autumn, season.

## 1st amateur winner on PGA Tour since 1991

# Dunlap bags win at The American Express

LA QUINTA, Calif., Jan 22, (AP): Nick Dunlap doesn't possess a false confidence, and he doesn't project a supernatural calm.

### GOLF

The University of Alabama sophomore fully understood just how crazy it was to be fending off a field of professionals Sunday while he tried to become the PGA Tour's first amateur winner in 33 years.

"Most nervous I've ever been, by far," Dunlap said. "Just tried to breathe, but also look up and enjoy it a little bit."

The 20-year-old simply



Nick Dunlap holds the trophy after winning the American Express golf tournament, Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024, in La Quinta, Calif. (AP)

played through it all - through his mistakes, the rising pres-

American Express.

Dunlap came out of it with a victory that could herald the arrival of a major golf talent - and one who might not even need to finish the homework he brought with him to the West Coast.

Dunlap swallowed his nerves one last time to make a 6-foot par putt on the final hole, holding on for a one-shot victory over Christiaan Bezuidenhout.

"Everybody's got doubts," Dunlap said. "I probably had a thousand different scenarios in my head of how today was going to go, and it went nothing like I expected. I think that was the cool part about

it. That's golf."

The reigning U.S. Amateur champion is the tour's first amateur winner since Phil Mickelson at the Tucson Open in 1991. Playing in his fourth tour event, Dunlap became the seventh amateur winner since 1945 - and the third since 1957.

The only amateur in the 156-player field in the tournament long known as the Bob Hope Desert Classic, Dunlap surged into a three-shot lead with a sizzling 12-under 60 in the third round. He lost that lead Sunday on the front nine on the Stadium Course at PGA West, but he played with the resilience of a seasoned veteran down the stretch, capped by his recovery from two errant shots on the 18th for the winning par.

"Nothing like I've ever felt," Dunlap said. "It was so cool to be out here and experience this as an amateur. Whether I had made that or missed that (last putt), if you would have told me (on) Wednesday night I would have a putt to win this golf tournament, I wouldn't believe you."

After a day of back-and-forth competition, Dunlap and Sam Burns were tied for the lead when Burns put his tee shot in the water and double-bogeyed the 17th. Dunlap thought he had a two-stroke lead when he stepped up to the 18th, because and his caddie didn't check the leaderboard or see Bezuidenhout's birdie moments earlier.

Dunlap's tee shot then landed high in the rough, and his second shot might have hit a spectator before it took a fortunate roll from the rough into a grassy drainage area off the green.

Dunlap got inside 6 feet with his third shot, and he celebrated the par putt for the title with hugs from his parents, his girlfriend and his college coach, Jay Seawell, who all flew cross-country over the weekend to watch in person.

He ended up with a 70 - his worst round of the week by far - to finish at 29-under 259 and break the tournament scoring record as a 72-hole event. He's also the youngest winner in the event's history, and he became the youngest amateur to win on the tour since 1910.

Dunlap and Tiger Woods are the only players to win both the U.S. Amateur and the U.S. Junior Amateur. While Dunlap got the celebration Sunday for one of the most impressive performances in recent golf history, he doesn't get the \$1.5 million first-place prize, which goes to Bezuidenhout after the South African's final-round 65.

## Rybolovlev mulling sale of Monaco

**MONACO, Jan 22, (AP):** Russian billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev is exploring the possibility of selling his stakes in French soccer club Monaco.

Rybolovlev has been the majority owner of Monaco since 2011.

After Les Echos newspaper reported that the fertilizer magnate was open to selling the club and had mandated The Raine Group to work on a total or partial divestment project, a representative of Rybolovlev's family office confirmed the move.

"The majority shareholder of AS Monaco has decided to commence a process to explore strategic alternatives for its stake in the club after receiving unsolicited inbound interest," the representative said in an email to The Associated Press.

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## SPORTS

# Alcaraz sets up quarterfinal showdown with Zverev

First-timers advance

**MELBOURNE, Australia, Jan 22, (AP): Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz will meet Olympic gold medalist Alexander Zverev in the Australian Open quarterfinals and Daniil Medvedev is also back in a last eight that is stacked with the top six seeds.**

While the men's competition is playing fairly true to the rankings, the women's really is a tale of two halves.

No. 12-seeded Zheng Qinwen, a quarterfinalist at last year's U.S. Open, is the highest-ranked player left in the top half of the bracket, where all four women who won Monday reached the last eight at Melbourne Park for the first time.

## TENNIS

"The people who arrive to quarterfinals, for sure they're all feeling really well in this tournament," Zheng said after her 6-0, 6-3 win over No. 95 Oceane Dodin. "It's one player against another player, and we will compete."

She'll next play No. 75-ranked Anna Kalinskaya. No. 50 Linda Noskova, who beat top-ranked Iga Swiatek in the third round, will meet No. 93 Dayana Yastremska.

There's still three Grand Slam winners in the other half of the bracket. No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka, the defending champion, will take on 2021 French Open champion Barbora Krejčíková and U.S. Open winner Coco Gauff will play Marta Kostyuk in quarterfinals on Tuesday.

The first of the men's quarterfinals - 10-time Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic vs. No. 12 Taylor Fritz and No. 4 Jannik Sinner vs. No. 5 Andrey Rublev - were set on Sunday, well before Alcaraz completed a Grand Slam set by reaching the last eight in Australia for the first time.

The 20-year-old Alcaraz missed the 2023 Australian Open because of injury, but is making up for lost time.

He beat Miomir Kecmanovic 6-4, 6-4, 6-0 in less than two hours to open Monday's night session on Rod Laver Arena.

"Every match I'm playing, I'm



Carlos Alcaraz of Spain plays a forehand return to Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia during their fourth round match at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

feeling better and better on a court I didn't play so much," Alcaraz, the only man to beat Djokovic in a major last year, said of his buildup here. "Hopefully the same as Wimbledon. Yeah, could be the same."

He has dropped just one set. Zverev is into the quarterfinals here for the third time but is coming off some long five-set wins, including a four-hour, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (3) fourth-round victory over No. 19 Cameron Norrie.

It was the 32nd five-set match so far at the tournament, an Open era record in Australia.

Their match on Margaret Court Arena was prolonged after being delayed briefly when a protester threw anti-war pamphlets onto the back of the court in the third set. The protester was escorted out by security.

No. 3 Medvedev, a two-time Australian Open runner-up, beat No.



Anna Kalinskaya of Russia plays a backhand return to Jasmine Paolini of Italy during their fourth round match at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

69-ranked Nuno Borges 6-3, 7-6 (4), 5-7, 6-1 and will next face No. 9 Hubert Hurkacz, who ended the run of French wild-card entry Arthur Cazaux 7-6 (6), 7-6 (3), 6-4.

Some unexpected charges continue in the women's field, with opportunities opening up for the likes of Noskova, Yastremska and Kalinskaya to advance to the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam for the first time.

Kalinskaya beat No. 26 Jasmine Paolini 6-4, 6-2 to end a streak of 13 majors that didn't go beyond the second round.

Yastremska beat the 18th-seeded Victoria Azarenka, a two-time Australian Open champion, 7-6 (6), 6-4, and No. 23-seeded Elina Svitolina had to retire after hurting her back when she was trailing Noskova 3-0.

"I got a spasm, like a shooting pain," she said. "Couldn't do any-

thing, completely locked my back, just very sad. I had some injuries to my back before where it just was tiredness ... but this one was really out of nowhere. I felt like someone shot me in the back."

The 19-year-old Noskova now is the youngest player to reach the Australian Open women's quarterfinals since 2008.

Yastremska saved set points in the first against Azarenka and was down a break in the second but rallied to win six of the last seven games.

"I think I need to take a thousand breaths because my heart I think is going to jump out of my body," Yastremska said. "During the match, I was imagining how I lost already like 25 times. I was losing the tie-break, second set I was losing, I always felt I was running behind the train."

"But because I'm a little bit of a fighter I think I won this match."

## Al-Daihani on the verge of leaving Al-Qadisiya

# Kazma ink deal with Nigeria's Teddy as Al-Qadisiya return from Bahrain camp

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Kazma Club has officially inked a deal with Nigerian midfielder Benjamin Teddy, securing his services until the conclusion of the ongoing season. Teddy, born in 1994, brings a wealth of experience from his professional stints in Georgia, where he clinched the league title twice with Dynamo Batumi. His previous affiliations include Gagra, Lanchkhuti Municipality, Marnoli, Imereti Khoni, and Martvili in Georgia, as well as a professional tenure with Liepaja in Latvia. This acquisition comes in the wake of the departure of Brazilian Douglas Vale, who fell short of meeting the club's expectations.

## SOCCER

Kazma's current roster features Guinean professional Tony Silva, Jordanian Ahmed Arsan, and Palestinian Michel Milad. Notably, the club has decided to part ways with Algerian defender Imad Eddine Ezzi. On another front, there are indications that Al-Qadisiya defender Abdul Rahman Al-Daihani is on the verge of joining Kazma, responding to the coach Muhammad Dehelis's request. This move aims to compensate for Ezzi's exit and addresses rumors surrounding Milad's potential departure.

Dehelis is diligently preparing his team for the upcoming challenges, with Kazma set to face Burgan in the preliminary round of the Amir Cup competition next Sunday. Meanwhile, Al-Qadisiya's Tunisian striker, Youssef Bin Souda, finds himself excluded from the technical staff's plans led by coach Dr. Mohamed Al-Mashaan. The team is currently exploring various CVs to secure a suitable alternative capable of meeting their requirements.

Bin Souda's performance with Al-Qadisiya has fallen short of expectations since his arrival last August. In a related development, the Al-Qadisiya delegation is returning from a preparatory camp held in Manama, Bahrain. The camp aimed to ready the team for the resumption of local activities, with Al-Qadisiya scheduled to meet Yarmouk in the preliminary round of the Amir Cup competition next Saturday. During their time in Manama, the team played three friendly matches, concluding with a 5-3 victory against Al-Khalidiya. While facing chal-



Teddy with his former team Dynamo Batumi.

## Al-Obaid extends financial reward to Al-Youha for remarkable victory

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Dedicated sports enthusiast Khaled Al-Obaid extended financial reward to Yaqoub Al-Youha, the standout athlete from Kuwait athletics team. This recognition follows Al-Youha's remarkable triumph at the Dortmund Inter-



Khaled Al Obaid

national Championship, where he clinched first place, securing the top spot in the world rankings. Al-Youha's stellar performance included setting a new international record with an impressive time of 7.58 seconds in the men's 60-meter race. This achievement serves as a significant milestone in Al-Youha's preparations for the upcoming Asian Championship scheduled to take place in Tehran.

Expressing his sentiments, Al-Obaid emphasized that this token of appreciation is a modest gesture for a distinguished and radiant star in athletics. Al-Youha's extensive list of titles and championships, earned in the name of Kuwait and its sports, warranted such recognition, according to Al-Obaid.

Al-Obaid conveyed his best wishes for continued success to the accomplished Yaqoub Al-Youha in all his future endeavors, particularly in the upcoming Asian Championship.

lenges against Bahraini clubs Bussaiten and Al-Riffa, losing 0-1 and 1-6, respectively, Al-Qadisiya is

gearing up for training and an internal camp in anticipation of the clash with Yarmouk.

"I'm very excited about this opportunity"

# Kuwait Cricket Board appoints Qasim Ali as head coach & development manager

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Kuwait Cricket Board appointed Qasim Ali as the head coach & development manager for Kuwait cricket teams of Men's, Women's and Juniors.

Qasim, born and raised in the United Kingdom is a highly qualified and experienced Level Four Master Coach from England And Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and comes on board as highly recommended within the international scene of the ICC & ACC with a depth of experience from South Asia, Middle East & Europe.

Haider Farman the President of Kuwait Cricket Board said that "It's with great pleasure that I'm able to announce, following an extensive and rigorous global recruitment process, that we have appointed Qasim Ali, ECB level 4 master coach and former head of the ICC Global Cricket Academy as the Head Coach & Development Manager for all our national teams of men's, women's and juniors...On behalf of the board, I welcome Qasim to our beloved State of Kuwait and wish him all the best for the upcoming challenges and opportunities of ICC & ACC pathway events as well as all the bilateral series that are being lined up."

Qasim started his coaching journey with Lancashire County Cricket Club working with the youth, women's and senior professionals of Lancashire CCC before taking up a leading role in coaching within the ECB set up where he won the Coach of the Year award



Qasim Ali, the head coach & development manager for Kuwait men's, women's and juniors teams.

at the ECB's Annual Asian Cricket Awards.

After completing his Level 4 coaching qualifications, Qasim was appointed as Head Coach and Head of Development for the ICC Global Cricket Academy in Dubai for over 5 years plus. During his time at ICCA, Qasim was instrumental behind the design, implementation and the success of the ICCA Scholarship Programme, which has developed numerous international players who have gone on to play for the UAE & various franchise leagues.

Qasim, also comes with a range of high level experiences in T-10 & T-20

Franchise Leagues representing T10 winners Maratha Arabians & Deccan Gladiators working as Fielding Coach and more recently Bangla Tigers.

The Director General of KCC, Sajid Ashraf said "we feel confident that with Qasim's knowledge and international experience spread across various cultures with Test playing countries and associate member countries that all of our national players who are

## CRICKET

a permanent part of the high performance camp will soon feel the impact of the continued improvement of our cricket development programs under Qasim's modern day style of coaching and leadership."

Qasim Ali on the signing of his appointment and role with Kuwait Cricket said "I'm very excited about this opportunity and honored to be considered for such a critical role for an upcoming cricketing nation like Kuwait in the region that's progressed consistently well over the past few years.... and my objective will be to build on the incredible foundations established here and continue to develop an exceptional cricketing environment with the target of pathway qualifications and a continuous improvement in ICC T201 rankings for both men's and women's"

The entire Kuwait Cricket fraternity wishes Qasim all the very best.

## Minister pledges support for Kuwaiti equestrian sport

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Youth Affairs, and Communications Affairs, Daoud Marafie, expressed his backing for Kuwaiti equestrian sports. He pledged to carefully examine decisions affecting this sport and its practitioners, particularly those impacting a significant number of Kuwaiti equestrians.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the tenth edition of the "Atyab Al-

## EQUESTRIAN

Marshoud" International Show Jumping Championship, where Kuwait Club's Ali Jassim Al-Kharafi emerged as the champion, Marafie stated, "Having recently assumed responsibilities at the Ministry of Youth, ongoing matters related to equestrianism will undergo a thorough review. We are committed to ensuring that every rightful claim is duly addressed. Our focus is on sup-



Daoud Marafie, Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Youth Affairs and Communications Affairs

porting our fellow equestrians and understanding the legal aspects behind decisions concerning equestrian sports

to facilitate appropriate amendments. We will approach this matter judiciously and uphold a legal perspective."

Minister Daoud Marafie actively participated in awarding the championship title to Ali Al-Kharafi. Present at the ceremony were tournament sponsor Walid Sulaiman Al-Marshoud and the head of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation, Masoud Jawhar Hayat. During the event, Minister Marafie attentively listened to the concerns raised by Kuwaiti riders, particularly in light of Kuwait hosting two upcoming international tournaments, including one in the three-star category and another leading to the World Cup in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Expressing gratitude to the organizers of the "Atyab Al-Marshoud" International Championship, Minister Daoud Marafie emphasized the tournament's decade-long significance in supporting dedicated male and female knights striving to enhance Kuwait's reputation on the global stage.



Saudi Arabia's Saleh Alshehri, (right), and Kyrgyzstan's Stalbekov Nurdoolot fight for the ball during the Asian Cup Group F soccer match between Kyrgyzstan and Saudi Arabia at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, in Doha, Qatar. (AP)

# Sports

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## Winning title the ultimate goal: Kuwait



Kuwait handball players celebrate with fans at the end of their match against Iraq.

Each player receives KD1000 as financial reward

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

MANAMA, Jan 22: Abdullah Al-Theyab, Assistant Secretary of the Kuwait Handball Association, announced the Kuwaiti national handball team's readiness for upcoming matches in the Asian Handball Championship hosted by Bahrain, with the ultimate goal of securing the title. Al-Theyab highlighted the impressive performance and high level demonstrated by the Kuwaiti players, emphasizing the team's status as one of the top four in Asia.

Reflecting on their 15-year hiatus from the World Cup, Al-Theyab noted the team's determination to fight until the end and their successful qualification for the global tournament. Despite facing injuries, he expressed pride in the team's ability to achieve their objectives and showcase the best of Kuwaiti handball on the Asian stage.

Al-Theyab extended congratulations to the leadership, government, and people of Kuwait for the team's qualification for the World Cup in Croatia, Denmark, and Norway, scheduled for January 14, 2025. He expressed gratitude to everyone who contributed to supporting the team in

### HANDBALL

reaching this milestone. The upcoming challenge for Kuwait is the semi-final match against Qatar scheduled for Tuesday.

The Secretary General of the Handball Federation, Qayed Al-Adwani, extends heartfelt congratulations to the political leadership, including His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, Prime Minister Dr. Sheikh Mohammed Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Daoud Marafi, and the President of the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahd Al-Nasser, as well as the Kuwaiti people, for the outstanding achievement of our national handball team in qualifying for the 2025 World Cup finals.

Al-Adwani announces that, in recognition of this achievement, the Handball Federation's Board of Directors has decided to grant a financial reward of one thousand Kuwaiti dinars to each player in the national team, along with the technical and administrative staff. He acknowledges that this gesture is a small token for the heroes who brought joy to the Kuwaiti people and reinstated Kuwait's strong position in the handball arena, affirming the team's status among the elite teams in the

### Al-Khalidi shines in Dubai

DUBAI, Jan 22: Hamad Al-Khalidi, a key member of Kuwait triathlon team, secured two notable accomplishments in the Dubai Triathlon Championship, sanctioned by the International Federation of Triathlon. Al-Khalidi demonstrated his prowess by securing the second position in the overall standings for the sprint distance and clinching the top spot in his respective age group.

### TRIATHLON

The Chairman and members of the Board of Directors of the Kuwaiti Triathlon Club extend their heartfelt congratulations to Hamad Al-Khalidi for this remarkable feat, which adds a significant achievement to the annals of Kuwaiti sports. Emphasizing their unwavering support for our national team players, whether in regional Gulf, Arab, continental

yellow continent.

Highlighting the significance of this achievement, Al-Adwani emphasizes that it comes after years of hard work and effort, despite challenges such as limited resources and weak government support.

Kuwait secured qualification for the 2025 World Cup by defeating the Iraqi team 32-20. Kuwait is set to face Qatar in the semi-finals, with the aspiration to clinch a podium position in the tournament, as expressed by Talal Al-Otaibi, a member of Al-Ittihad.

Faisal Siwan, the Director of the National Teams at the Handball Federation, applauded the players for bringing joy to the Kuwaiti people amidst other sports' setbacks. Siwan praised the team's unmatched de-



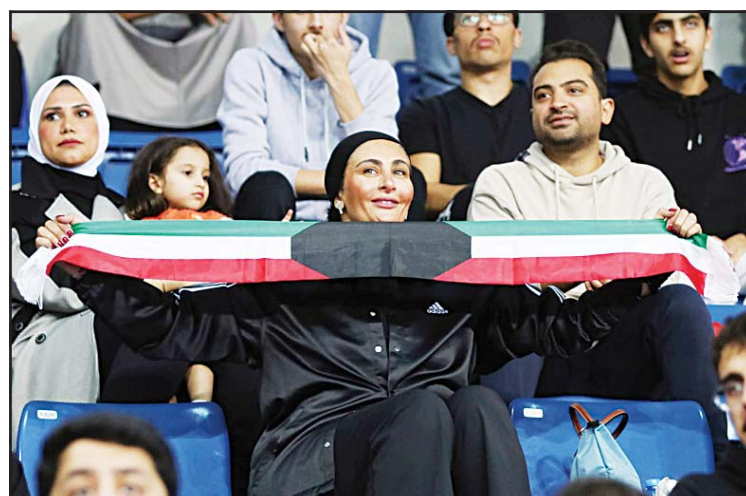
Hamad Al-Khalidi displays his trophy on the podium.

terminations, or on the international stage, they express pride in the continued success of Kuwaiti athletes.

termination and high spirit throughout the matches.

Addressing the injury of star player Mohamed Al-Hendal, Siwan discloses that he sustained a finger injury, receiving treatment from a specialist doctor. Additionally, Al-Hendal has a knee injury, and further assessments will determine its nature.

Siwan emphasizes the equal chances of the four teams in the upcoming semi-finals, expressing gratitude to the Handball Federation's Board of Directors for their unwavering financial and moral support, which has contributed to the development of a strong team, predominantly comprising young players capable of competing at the continental level.



A Kuwaiti fan displays the national flag as she cheers the team during Kuwait and Iraq match.

Sports clubs advertising cancellations addressed

## Minister charts ambitious plans for Kuwaiti sports development

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 22: Minister Daoud Marafi, holding the portfolios for National Assembly Affairs, Youth Affairs, and Communications Affairs, underscored a commitment to advancing the sports movement in the forthcoming period. Emphasizing the sponsorship and support of sports youth by meeting their requirements, he highlighted adherence to the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad. The objective is to ensure the impartial implementation of laws and hold accountable those found negligent. Marafi conveyed these sentiments during a visit to the General Sports Authority, where he engaged with the Director General, his deputies, and members of an investigation committee formed by ministerial decision to examine violations within the Authority.

In a press release issued by the General Sports Authority, Marafi revealed that discussions covered various issues, including decisions to cancel advertising for certain sports clubs. The Minister of State for Youth Affairs stated, "I listened to the officials of the Authority and members of the investigation committee, and all the legal justifications for these decisions were stated."

He added that individuals affected by these decisions have the right to appeal in accordance with regulating laws. Marafi affirmed his role as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the General Sports Authority, overseeing the submission of grievances through legal channels. He assured a thorough and transparent examination of appeals, with restoration of rights if any decisions are found to be in violation.

Minister Marafi commended the dedication of the Director General of the Authority, Youssef Abdullah Al-Baidan, and his deputies in supporting sports youth and facilitating sports activities. He stressed the significance of digital transformation in streamlining transactions between the Authority, government agencies, and sports bodies. Marafi also emphasized the necessity of developing the sports movement, enhancing control measures, and providing facilities to encourage investment in compliance with legal provisions.

Youssef Al-Baidan, the Director General, briefed Minister Marafi on the achievements attained during his tenure, including the success of national teams and Kuwaiti champions who secured medals at the Asian level. Al-Baidan highlighted increased financial support for champions following amendments to regulations.

### Liverpool, Middlesbrough protect slim 1st-leg leads

LONDON, Jan 22, (AP): The English League Cup semifinals remain in the balance after the first legs, with second-tier Middlesbrough taking a 1-0 lead to Chelsea and Liverpool protecting a 2-1 advantage heading to Fulham.

Here's some things to know ahead of the return matches at Chelsea on Tuesday and Fulham on Wednesday:

Just when things appeared to be finally settling down at Chelsea under Mauricio Pochettino, the team threw in a dismal display in the first leg at Riverside Stadium to underline the work that still needs to be done to get back among England's best. Still, Chelsea might be favored to reach the Feb. 25 final, with the cups offering the best - likely the only - chance of silverware this season while the team is languishing in ninth place in the Premier League. Chelsea is still in the FA Cup, but faces a tough fourth-round match against Aston Villa. Of all the expensive signings made over the past two years, the most shrewd might be Cole Palmer from Manchester City. The 21-year-old forward has scored five goals in his last six league games and is Chelsea's most creative player. He did, however, miss a great chance in the first leg.

It has been 11 years since a team from outside the Premier League

reached the League Cup final, with Bradford - then in the fourth tier - remarkably getting to the title match in 2013 before being hammered 5-0 by Swansea at Wembley Stadium. Middlesbrough, man-

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aged by former Manchester United and England midfielder Michael Carrick, is in a good position to do so after a sturdy display in the first leg despite losing two players to injury in the opening 20 minutes. With two more players - Isaiah Jones and Jonny Howson - joining the injury list, three players cup-tied and Australia international Riley McGree and Sam Silivera at the Asian Cup, Carrick's options are extremely limited. A back-to-the-wall effort will likely be required at Stamford Bridge by 'Boro, which is 11th in the 24-team Championship.

Fulham is in the League Cup semifinals for the first time and gave itself an outside chance of upsetting Liverpool thanks to the early goal by William at Anfield two weeks ago. Marco Silva's team has only played once since then - a 1-0 defeat at Chelsea in the league - but has lost five of its last eight matches in all competitions.



Daoud Marafi, Minister for National Assembly Affairs, Youth Affairs, and Communications Affairs speaks during his visit to General Sports Authority.