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ACT NOW OR FACE TRANSACTION FREEZE: INTERIOR MINISTRY Biometrics rush begins for 670,000

June 1 ultimatum

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: Starting today, the Ministry of Interior has set a three-month period to collect biometric fingerprints from all citizens and residents. Individuals who fail to comply within this time-frame will have their transactions with the ministry frozen, such as renewing residency permits, vehicle registrations, and driving licenses, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to security sources the deadline is set for June 1. Approximately 670,000 people, primarily residents, are yet to undergo the fingerprinting process. Since the initiation of the biometric fingerprint project last year, the General Department of Criminal Evidence has recorded about 1.78 million citizens and residents who have undergone fingerprinting at various land, air, and sea border crossings, as well as designated centers.

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PM Diwan photos
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, in the presence of Minister of Trade and Industry Abdullah Hamad Al-Joan, received at Seif Palace on Thursday the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwaiti Saudi Pharmaceutical Industries Company, Rashid Riyad Khazal, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Federation of Kuwaiti Industries, Hussein Ali Al-Kharafi, and the members of the Federation's Board of Directors.

Brace for chilly weekend, rain

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29, (KUNA): Kuwait is forecast to remain gripped with a cold wave over the weekend with some rain-falls forecast at the beginning of next week, Kuwait Meteorological Center reported on Thursday.

Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, the department director, said in a statement to KUNA that the country is affected by northwesterly high altitude coupled with cold waves. Thursday's temperature will range between 19 and 21 degrees and will drop at night to the 9-11 degrees level.

The temperature Friday will range between 20 and 22 degrees and will subside at night to 7-9 degrees.

On Saturday, the temperature during the day will be between 22 and 24 degrees and at night between 11 and 13 degrees.

Media strategy unveiled

ICM taps Dr Al-Matar for 1st Constituency

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: The Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) has nominated Dr Muhammad Al-Matar as their parliamentary election candidate for the First Constituency,

replacing former MP Osama Al-Shaheen who had earlier announced that he will not run for the upcoming election. A few days before the period specified for the filing of candidacies; a number of citizens unveiled their plan to stand for the election including Dr Khalid Shukhair Al-Mutairi, former MP Musaed Al-Ardhi, Dr Muthana Ali Al-Bazzali, Abdullah Ali Al-Kandari and Yousef Al-Baidan.

Meanwhile, former MP Majed Mousa Al-Mutairi announced that he will not stand for the coming election to give way for Eid Shaman Al-Mutairi to represent the tribe in the Fourth Constituency.

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Participants gather for a group photo, marking the commencement of the Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging Conference, themed 'A New Era'.

Other Voices

Middle East's Western perceptions require humble rethinking

Kuwait leads in Nuclear Medicine with three hybrid imaging devices

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: The Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi has revealed the provision of two integrated hybrid imaging devices for the Nuclear Medicine departments of Farwaniya Hospital and the Kuwait Cancer Control Center. This follows the inauguration of the first device at the new Jahra Hospital.

In his speech at the opening of the Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging Conference under the title "A New Era", the minister said the presence of three hybrid imaging devices in Kuwait places it in the first place among the countries that provide the highest number of first-of-its-kind devices in the Gulf and the Middle East. This great technical develop-

ment is a matter of honor and pride for the State of Kuwait.

Dr. Al-Awadhi affirmed that he is confident in the capabilities of the medical staff in further advancing this service to raise Kuwait to the ranks of developed countries in providing health care according to the highest international standards.

He indicated that the world is showing more interest in participating in scientific publications related to the latest technologies and applications in the field of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging, adding, "The contribution of the teams of our national cadres to this research in the most famous scientific field is a source of honor and pride."

The minister highlighted the keenness and constant commitment of the Ministry of Health to keep pace with the latest technologies and scientific developments in this important specialty, and to share experiences and exchange future visions to enhance scientific and professional cooperation.

He stressed on the confidence in the future vision of those in charge of the conference in the field of nuclear medicine.

Dr. Al-Awadhi referred to the clarity of that vision to include advanced nuclear treatments, form specialized medical teams to confront challenges related to the safety and rights of patients, develop the work environment, benefit from the latest technologies and harness them to care for patients, and continue to work as one team.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Council of Nuclear Medicine Departments and Chairman of the conference Dr. Abdul Redha Ismail said, "The Minister of Health's sponsorship and attendance at the conference, the activities of which will continue over a period

Continued on Page 5

The truth in the Middle East has often become a casualty of geopolitical agendas. Firstly, consider the accusation linking Hamas with ISIS, a narrative pushed without substantial evidence yet readily accepted in Western discourse. This claim ignores the profound ideological and strategic differences between Hamas and ISIS. The lack of critical scrutiny by Western media to Israeli narratives starkly contrasts with the rigorous proof required from the Palestinian sides.

This pattern of selective skepticism casts a shadow over perceptions of Iran's role in regional conflicts too. Iran's involvement in Ukraine and Yemen, for instance, is frequently presented in a monolithic light, opting for a convenient scapegoat that aligns with broader geopolitical interests.

Historically, the West, including the US, has championed the ideals of peace, reconciliation, and inclusivity. Yet, when these principles materialize through Saudi Arabia's engagement with Iran, an initiative leading towards potential regional peace with China as the mediator, the reaction is less than celebratory. This lukewarm response, borders on the ironic.

Isn't it peculiar for the West to frown upon such a milestone? This stance starkly contrasts with decades of Western narratives advocating for exactly this kind of diplomatic breakthrough.

... Yet tomorrow is another day. Perhaps the prisoner could engage with the author directly, shedding light on the book's contents and its significance. This poignant moment highlights the stark reality faced by many around the world, where some nations are governed by folly and oppression, devoid of justice and fairness.

Following a lengthy discussion with the prison warden, it became apparent that the requested book was not among the library's collection. However, the warden offered an alternative - the author of the book was among

them. Perhaps the prisoner could engage with the author directly, shedding light on the book's contents and its significance. This poignant moment highlights the stark reality faced by many around the world, where some nations are governed by folly and oppression, devoid of justice and fairness. ... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Continued on Page 5

Day by Day

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Zahed Matar

Newswatch

GENEVA: Kuwait condemned, Thursday, the genocide taking place and war crimes against Palestinian civilians in Gaza by the Israeli occupation, with more than 30,000 killed and 70,000 injured or missing.

Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva Ambassador Nasser Al-Hain; addressing the UN Human Rights Council, emphasized Kuwait's role in advocating before the International Court of Justice on behalf of Palestine regarding the Israeli occupation's criminal practices, including the bombardment of Rafah City, southern Gaza. (KUNA)

RIYADH: Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Jassem Al-Budaiwi affirmed on Thursday that the council's 159th ministerial session would be held next Sunday in Riyadh in addition to separate meetings with foreign ministers of Jordan, Egypt and Morocco.

The GCC secretary-general said in a statement that the ministerial meeting would be chaired by Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammad Al-Thani, the president of the GCC ministerial council's current session, and the conferees would discuss reports concerning follow-up on implementing resolutions of the GCC Supreme Council, issued at the 44th summit, held in Qatar in December. (KUNA)

TEHRAN: Iran announced Thursday it successfully launched a new domestically-built imaging and research satellite into space.

The Iranian state television said that the Pars-1 satellite, weighing 150-kilograms, was blasted off aboard Soyuz launcher from Russian space base Vostochny Cosmodrome, settling into orbit 500 kilometers above the earth. (KUNA)

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:56 Asr 15:19
 Sunrise .. 06:15 Maghrib .. 17:46
 Zohr 12:01 Isha 19:03

Local

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

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Mild with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

By Night: Rather cold to cold with light to moderate northwest-

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec		
Kuwait City	23	12	erly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.	
Kuwait Airport	22	09		
Abdaly	23	07		
Jahra	23	09		
Salmiyah	21	13		
Nuwaisib	20	09		
Wafra	20	08		

Campaign demands justice for workers

'Scant appreciation keeps away young Kuwaitis from IT field'

By Inaas Awad

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: The "Be Fair to Me" campaign, organized by a group of specialists in the field of information systems and digital technology, launched its activities recently with a symposium hosted by Saud Al-Hayyan Office under the title "Challenges of the Information Systems Sector in Kuwait."

The symposium was moderated by the official spokesman of the Sahel application Yousef Kazem, with the participation of the former head of the Central Agency for Information Technology Qusay Al-Shatti, the cybersecurity advisor Hussein Al-Nakas,



Yousef Kazem

Head of the cybersecurity committee in the Kuwait Electronic Media Union Muhammad Al-Rashidi, and the Director of the Automation Center Department in the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Saud Al-Hayyan.

Kazem opened the symposium with a brief introduction in which he highlighted that the "Be fair with me" campaign is a national youth campaign targeting justice for workers in the field of technology and information systems, especially since they are considered a rare group at the present time, but do not receive sufficient appreciation for their efforts despite their great importance, particularly during the period of COVID-19 pandemic.

He clarified the reasons for the reluctance of national cadres to work in the field of information technology in the government sector, the most important of which is that they do not receive sufficient appreciation for their efforts.

Kazem stressed the need for workers in the field of digital technology to obtain the justice and status they deserve due to their importance in achieving cyber security for the country, which will reflect positively on promoting sustainable development and achieving the New Kuwait 2035 vision.

In this regard, the former head of the Central Agency for Information Technology Qusay Al-Shatti said Kuwaiti skill and competence are not valued in the field of information technology in the government sector, because the criterion for evaluation depends on the principle of seniority, not only in the field of information technology, but also in various other fields in the country.

He explained that the evaluation standard in the field of information technology has completely changed at the present time, as it has become more dependent on skill than certification in selecting those qualified to work in its various sectors.

Through his personal experience, he believes that employing Kuwaiti workers in the private information technology sector is better than employing foreign workers for several reasons, the most important of which is that it is a step towards investing in national cadres and building a mechanism for innovation and creativity.

Also, the financial obligations of the Kuwaiti employees will be lesser on the employer than the foreign employees.

Al-Shatti went on to explain that the percentage of national employment in the private sector in the fields of information technology exceeds 30 percent. Kuwait does not have the appropriate environment for technology accelerating factors similar to what is being done in neighboring countries, especially the Emirates. The first step to accelerating technology is increasing the number of national cadres working in its various sectors and enhancing their capabilities.

Cybersecurity

Meanwhile, the cybersecurity advisor Hussein Al-Nakas explained that supporting young people to join the private sector is an essential pillar of the New Kuwait 2035 vision. It is a demand worth considering in the current period in light of the digital transformation that the country and the world are witnessing. The rapid progress of digital reality, the automation of information, and the spread of artificial intelligence technologies will lead to the disappearance of many jobs, and other jobs and titles will appear in return.

He indicated that the job titles of workers in the information technology sector and their administrative and technical structures have not been updated by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) for years, unlike neighboring countries in the region that have many titles, including artificial intelligence specialist, for example.

Al-Nakas stressed the need for Kuwait to modernize legislation and laws related to the work in the information technology sector and its counterparts concerned with cybersecurity and digital transformation.

He said all governmental and private efforts must be crystallized to develop a clear strategy for protecting data and information.

Al-Nakas praised the efforts of the previous National Assembly in forming a parliamentary committee for cybersecurity and digital transformation, adding, "We live in a race in which everyone who invests more in infrastructure, education and training for national cadres is safe from the harms of cyber wars."

Kuwaitization

He concluded by calling for the Kuwaitization of jobs in the information technology sector as the first step towards achieving cybersecurity, especially in light of the widespread circulation of data and information that results in loopholes that can be infiltrated.

Furthermore, Chairman of the Cybersecurity Committee in the Kuwait Electronic Media Union Muhammad Al-Rashidi revealed that Elon Musk is planning to visit Kuwait to negotiate the establishment of a global center for artificial intelligence to use 700,000 Nvidia B-100 chips for a powerful computing group that works with artificial intelligence and consumes gigawatts of energy.

He indicated the possibility that this will reach the level of Zettaflops of computing power.

Al-Rashidi affirmed that Kuwait possesses many elements that qualify it to be a global capital of digital technology, including the availability of appropriate infrastructure and low electricity costs.

He revealed that a large country was exposed to 623 cyber attacks during the year, which caused 900,000 people to face losses exceeding USD 7 billion.

Al-Rashidi highlighted a defect in statistics on cybersecurity in Kuwait and a lack of interest in qualifying and training employees in the government sector and educating them on ways to protect systems from hacking.

He pointed out the state's responsibility to protect cyber borders just as it protects political borders.

Al-Rashidi said the graduation of new batches for the specializations recently approved by Kuwait University for the fields of information technology will bring about a shift and development in cyber security in Kuwait after five years.

He concluded by calling for giving confidence to Kuwaiti youth and empowering them with digital jobs to reduce data leakage and achieve cybersecurity.

In addition, the Director of the Automation Center Department at the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Saud Al-Hayyan pointed out the most prominent challenges facing the workers in the information technology sector, which were the reasons for launching the "Be Fair to Me" campaign.

Among them is the failure to update job titles in line with the outcomes of scholarships and higher education, the distinction between job level conditions (appointment degree) between the Support Engineering Diploma and the Computer Diploma, and the distinction between those holding postgraduate qualifications such as doctorates and masters at the job level when appointed between engineers (two higher degrees) and information technology. This includes the distinction between members of the training staff at the Public Authority for Applied Education in terms of the nature of work between the category of engineers and computer science, in addition to the similarity and overlap of specializations between a computer engineer and a computer science graduate.

Al-Hayyan concluded by stressing that the "Be Fair to Me" campaign seeks to achieve its primary goal of modifying the cadre of information technology workers and updating Civil Service Council's resolution No. 22/2012.



Palestinian food items on display at the exhibition. Inset top: The British and French ambassadors enjoying the visit. Inset below: Close-up of Palestinian food.

Envoy thanks Kuwaitis, residents for trust in goods

Palestinian food products fest pulls huge crowd

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: The Palestinian Ambassador to the country, Rami Tahboub, emphasized the exclusive representation of Palestinian products at the Palestinian Products Festival, where Palestinian merchants showcase and vend their wares. Speaking at the inauguration of the Fourth Palestinian Products Festival at the Graduates Association, Tahboub expressed gratitude for the significant confidence Kuwaiti society and other resident communities place in Palestinian goods.



Tahboub

Ambassadors and diplomats from many countries attended the exhibition. They expressed delight at the high standard of food and other items on display.

He underscored the festival's importance as a means of bolstering the Palestinian economy, particularly in light of ongoing challenges such as the aggression against Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Tahboub highlighted the presence of ambassadors from various countries, who consistently show appreciation for Palestinian craftsmanship, signaling robust international support for Palestinian industry.

Expressing pride in the quality of Palestinian products, Tahboub extended thanks to Kuwait for its ongoing support and facilitation of Palestinian affairs, particularly in matters pertaining to commerce.

Grace period mulled for teachers do biometrics

By Abdul Rahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: According to educational sources, the Ministry of Education is studying the possibility of granting an additional grace period to teachers and other workers who work in remote areas to apply for the biometrics process in accordance with flexible working hours. They revealed that a number of teachers submitted transfer requests from schools in remote areas after the application of the biometrics system.

The sources indicated that the ministry is considering granting flexibility to the leadership to apply the biometrics on them in a flexible manner. In the same context, the Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education Anwar Al-Hamdan, along with the Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education Hessa Al-Mutawa, the Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs Matrouk Al-Mutairi, and the Acting Director of the Coordination Department Miteb Al-Otaibi, held a meeting yesterday morning with representatives of the Capital, Hawally and Ahmadi educational zones inside the meeting room in the office of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education. Several matters were discussed during the meeting, the most important of which is the flexible working hours mechanism for members of the educational and administrative bodies in schools.

Process

In this regard, Al-Hamdan explained that the biometrics process for school employees is still in its experimental stage and will not be implemented until all technical and administrative problems are addressed before linking it to the integrated systems.

The educational field will be prepared during the period that precedes the actual implementation of the biometrics system by holding training courses and awareness seminars on the mechanism of its application and explaining its systems and regulations, while working on preparing a guidebook explaining all administrative structure.

This is to unify the procedures for their application in all educational institutions to create an attractive educational environment for teachers and the administrative body, which will reflect positively on their performance.

During the meeting, the observations of school principals from various educational levels were listened to, their suggestions were taken into account, their inquiries were answered, and all current obstacles were monitored to be studied and discussed before the actual application of the biometrics system and to ensure its suitability to the nature of school work in accordance with the governing systems and regulations.

'Change profession, lose driving permit'

Unified Gulf Traffic Week launched

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: According to the Chairman of the Unified Gulf Traffic Week Activities Committee Brigadier General Nawaf Al-Hayyan, the General Traffic Department declared that the Gulf Traffic Week is not about issuance of traffic violations, but is instead aimed at raising traffic awareness and achieving discipline on the road.

Launch

He revealed this during a press conference regarding the launch of the Unified Gulf Traffic Week activities under the slogan of "Driving Without a Phone" held yesterday morning in the Operations Room building in South Sabahiya in the presence of the Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs Major General Yousef Al-Khadda and other senior leaders in the General Traffic Department.

Brigadier General Al-Hayyan explained that "blocks" will be opened during the Traffic Week for all closed violations in Khairan Mall and the Avenues Mall including the violations for parking in the disabled parking lots, as they are within the jurisdiction of the General Department of Investigations. Any person with an impounded vehicle can receive clearance for his vehicle after paying the due fine.

Since its implementation on September 1 last year, the "Rasid" application issued about 650,000 traffic citations, but made it easier for the violator to quickly receive full details about the violation.

If some violations are repeated at the same time and place, a person may file a grievance through the Sahel app or any of the violations sections in the traffic departments. There are officers in the Violations Investigation Department who verify the repetition of violations. If the repetition is proven, the repeated violation is reserved.

Furthermore, there is a link between the General Traffic Department, the Public Authority for the Disabled Affairs (PADA), and all state institutions so that the driver's license of a person with visual disability will be suspended, based on a letter from PADA. The same applies to the Psychiatric Hospital and other state institutions.

Regarding the mechanism for withdrawing expatriates' licenses, Brigadier General Al-Hayyan indicated that the profession-based driver's license of any expatriate who changes his profession will be canceled, and he will have to apply again for a new driving license.

He said he hoped the members of the upcoming National Assembly would discuss the approval of the new traffic law because increased penalties for traffic violations will contribute to reducing serious traffic accidents.

Brigadier General Al-Hayyan reviewed the traffic statistics for the year 2023, explaining that

the population of Kuwait is 4 million and 824 thousand. The number of driving licenses issued by the General Traffic Department is 1,951,495 licenses. The number of vehicles is 2,546,798 vehicles. The number of private licenses and general licenses is 1,751,203 and 152,779 respectively. The number of driving licenses issued for citizens is 1,900,735 licenses, for residents 876,432 licenses, and for non-Kuwaitis 65,240 licenses. The number of construction licenses reached 16,299 licenses. The number of two-wheeler licenses is 31,284 licenses, including licenses for 11,992 delivery motorbikes.

The number of violators for exceeding the speed limit is 4,294,446 violations, for crossing red signal 853,220, for not wearing a seat belt while driving 370,120, for using a phone while driving 185,816, for annoying noises from the exhaust 102,816, for violations related to road safety 49,380, for not paying attention while driving 21,897, for reckless driving 8,540, and for racing on public roads 892 violations.

The number of direct violations amounted to 3,142,923, and indirect violations 5,977,83 violations, reaching a total of 9,120,000 violations.

The number of impounded vehicles reached 10,460 vehicles. The number of deportees was 155. Among the people arrested for traffic related issues, 3,698 were referred to the traffic police, 314 to the traffic court, and 80 rulings were issued against violators.

The number of traffic accidents in 2023 reached 74,870, including 985 run-over accidents, 2,132 vehicle overturns, and 296 accidents that resulted in death. Brigadier General Al-Hayyan indicated that the violations have been linked to the United Arab Emirates and the State of Qatar, and in the future they will be linked to all Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

He revealed a decrease in the number of eye-related injuries reported at the ophthalmology departments of the Ministry of Health hospitals during the national holidays, as the number reduced from 331 cases last year to 14 cases this year, which is a 95 percent decrease.

Citations

In related context, the Director of the Violations Investigation Department Brigadier General Muhammad Saad Al-Otaibi affirmed that police officers may issue citations through the Rasid application irrespective of whether when they are on-duty or off-duty.

He stressed that if violations are repeated, there are officers who receive grievances about this type of violation, and once they make sure that the violation is repeated in the same place and at the same time, the violation is saved and one violation is reserved.

Furthermore, Assistant Director for Technical Affairs at the General Traffic Department Brigadier General Mohammad Al-Adwani revealed that the General Traffic Department is working on a project to develop the technical inspection departments and provide them with modern equipment.



General Consulate in China's Quanzhou celebrates the national days.

Embassies mark national days

Kuwait Embassy to Gabon, General Consulate in China's Quanzhou and the Kuwait Permanent Mission to the UN organizations in Geneva have celebrated the 63rd National Day and the 33rd Liberation Day, in the presence of some officials and diplomats accredited in the two countries.

In Gabon's capital, Libreville, the Kuwaiti Embassy held a reception attended by some ministers and officials in Gabon, the embassy said in a statement to KUNA.

In Quanzhou, China, Kuwait's General Consul Abdullah Al-Turki held a reception on the same occasion that was attended by senior officials in Guangdong Province and its cities, and Arab and Muslim diplomatic missions' representatives as well as others.

Al-Turki extended congratulations to His Highness the Amir, and Kuwait's government and people.

In Geneva, the Permanent Mission of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations and other international organizations held a reception on Wednesday on the occasion of the 63rd anniversary of the Independence Day and the 33rd anniversary of Liberation Day.

In a statement to KUNA, the Permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations and other international organizations, Ambassador Naser Al-Hayyan, extended his warmest congratulations to His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the political leadership, and the honorable Kuwaiti people. (KUNA)

KUNA photo



Al-Khadda

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

'Solve Palestine issue for peace & security in Middle East area'

"MY Greek friend, Mr. Tasso, spoke to me by phone from Athens, the capital of Greece, the heart of the history of world civilization, claiming that he had participated in the popular protest demonstrations that took place in the capital, Athens, in support of the Palestinian right to exist," columnist **Muhammad Salem Al-Balhan**, wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

"Mr. Tasso asked me: Is there a solution to stop this bloodshed to which the Palestinian people are exposed? My response was with my humble information: The matter is primarily due to the arrogance of the aggressor Zionists, who do not respect all the agreements signed between them and the Palestinian brothers regarding the establishment of two contiguous states on Palestinian land between the Zionists and the Arabs, except that the Zionists in particular — the leaders of authoritarian thought.



Al-Balhan

"In fact, they denied implementing the agreed-upon agreements, the most recent of which was the Oslo Accords, which brought the Palestinian issue to a dead end from which it exploded.

"As you can see, what is happening in terms of killing, violation, and assault against the defenseless, struggling Palestinian people, who did not surrender their demand for rights in the face of the strength of the supporting legions of American armies for the Zionists in Palestine.

"If we go back a little to the date of the beginning of the Palestinian issue and feel its repercussions, we will find that the reason for this is mistakes committed by the hands of colonialism with the support of America to achieve some of its interests in the Middle East region, which prompted it to support the Zionists who brought with them the dispersed people and them on land that they did not own, the land of Palestine.

"As you can see, the population of what is called Israel is a mixture of all the countries of the world who brought them and planted them in that land after they expelled its original owners, the Palestinians, through murder and oppression, and they were replaced and on their land by the Zionists who brought them from all countries of the world.

"This is in fact the problem — the problem of a people demanding their land, a demand that is considered one of their rights. Despite this, the Palestinians accepted what the international will dictated by establishing two states on the land of Palestine, meaning that the Palestinians gave up half the area of their land — the land of their country to the interest of foreign powers.

"However, the rulers of Israel, as the Zionists see them, steadfastly denied the Palestinian right and did not implement what they promised, relying on American support, which was governed by the interests of their rulers, far from the feelings of the American people, which, as the world saw, stood by the Palestinian right, including the non-Zionist Jews who declared with their demonstrations in front of the White House, they declared their innocence of everything that this misguided group is doing to the Palestinian people.

"This is, according to our humble opinions, the problem of the Palestinian issue, if it were resolved, peace and security would prevail in the Middle East region as the world sees."

Also:

"The gasp of joy of liberation with its hoarse voice still echoes: The homeland of the day has returned again. Today, as we live the renewed joys and celebrations of independence and liberation, we feel that our joy is not yet complete, as manifestations of tampering with national identity and nationality files are still present, and manifestations of political corruption are prevalent in the political scene," columnist **Dr Muhammad Al-Maqatei** wrote for **Al-Jarida** daily.

"They appear in the actions of the politicians appearing on the scene, unfortunately, and in fact signs of corruption. Parliamentarianism is increasing and spreading in Kuwaiti society faster than wildfire, and financial corruption and attempts to divide the country have not stopped, and the justifications for financial waste and the race to destroy the state's finances and wealth are the compass of parliamentarians, especially those who consider Kuwait a temporary project for wealth, and then take off from where they came from (and how many of them there are), or a life of voluntary exile, which is an option for some, after years of experience.

"Kuwait will not hide in any of its corners a corrupt person, a profiteer, or a bidder for the country's interest. In Kuwait, you will not find any manifestations of a political scoundrel trying to jump on legitimacy, undermine it, or infringe on its status, searching and panting after imaginary popularity.

"Kuwait was the era of the founding fathers who built it with their own hands, defended it by erecting its

walls, and sacrificed precious things for it. They were the generation that did not know the language of betrayal, insults, threats, or false stardom.

"Rather, they were distinguished by their unique strong solidarity, and rallied around their leadership in times of distress without hypocrisy or fawning, with honesty, frankness and courage, and without abuse or impropriety in addressing the ruler who respects them and gives them their homes, with friendship and mutual respect where everyone knows each other, and no stranger or anyone who does not follow their path creeps among them.

"Every elder among them was respected by the younger ones like their father, and every young person enjoyed the protection and care of the elder, and each of them learned from the other, and deterrence in it was subjective and did not need a law or authority. Security was a manifestation of their defense, not stopping their lawlessness.

"These are some of the aspects of our former Kuwait, which will return — God willing — during the era of Meshal's resolution and determination, and its return will require that we return to the stage of the founding fathers, so that we will be a support for the ruler to advise him, help him, and rally around him when he is in distress, and he reciprocates that with us, and that we return to the state of the constitution and institutions whose decisions he owns. Its children owe allegiance to it.

"They do not hold another nationality, and they do not forge, claim, or seek to belong to someone other than their family and origin. This is what the courts have narrowed down to, including cases of forgery of nationality and changing the first, second, third, and fourth names, taking advantage of lineage claims, which requires the application of genetic fingerprinting and the establishment of the authority.

"The Public Authority for Nationality must purify this file and resolve the chaos that has been on the pages of nationality for many years, and to infiltrate the legislative institution and manage to distort it and lead it to the path of decline, and the parliamentary seat has become a goal to be traded and sold in the political slave market, instead of the interest of the country, building it, and defending it being the goal.

"This is what we should feel in these days to prevent tampering with the homeland of the day, to sustain the gasp of joy of liberation with its hoarse rattle, "so that the homeland of the day" may return to its original appearance in the sixties and seventies of the last century again."

"Improving the living conditions... In the last two days, the Kuwaiti street has been abuzz with talks about the proposed improvement of living conditions through the increments that the government is studying or trying to approve before the election, so that the achievement can be counted for it, not for the unsatisfied dissolved National Assembly or its successor on the basis that the government 'settled or achieved something' for the people," columnist **Talal Al-Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"This is the right of the government. It has the right to make its mark on the political stage! However, real improvement of living conditions begins with controlling prices and curbing the unjustified price hikes by merchants who are preparing to devour the proposed increments — whether small or big!

"The government should know that an increment without protecting consumers from rising prices is not beneficial for the citizen. I believe that controlling prices is much more important than the increments that everyone is talking about. It is more important to talk about controlling prices!

"We have had bitter experience in relation to increments and price hikes. Every time a salary increase is approved, the prices rise as if our role as citizens is limited to receiving the increase with the right hand and handing it over to the merchants with the left hand. None of the goods has fixed prices, except the State-subsidized commodities. From time to time, we hear about attempts to cancel such a subsidy, while the reality is that it guarantees a minimum level of decent living for middle-income families. In case it is cancelled, we will be buying bread by kilogram due to the price increase!

"To be fair, the responsibility is not only on the part of the government, as the citizen must be aware of his responsibility as well by boycotting a commodity whenever the price increases in an unjustifiable manner. By doing so, he protects himself from the greedy merchant! In the past, the boycott of many goods was successful, since the merchant was forced to reduce prices!

"For example, but it not limited to this, a citizen will not die if he does not eat meat or fish for a whole month, but he will certainly force the merchant to reduce the price once his goods end up on the lower part of the shelf! People could impose their will if they are aware of their role."

— **Compiled by PFX Fernandes**



Municipality bulldozers removing illegally set up tents.

'Clean before leaving'

Camping season to end March 15: Municipality

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: The Kuwait Municipality issued a notice Thursday, emphasizing that the deadline for camping ends March 15. Owners are urged to voluntarily dismantle their camps before the official camping season concludes, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

According to a press release from the municipality, the Spring Camps Committee is scheduled to convene next Sunday to review the preparations of field teams tasked with removing camps that exceed the permitted camping period.

It has been stated unequivocally that establishing camps on government land will not be permitted after the aforementioned date. Camp owners are reminded to ensure the cleanliness of their camping sites and to adhere strictly to regulations and guidelines to avoid potential legal consequences.

Furthermore, it has been clarified that obtaining approval from the Environment Public Authority, indicating that the campsite is clean and devoid of any environmental harm post-removal, is a prerequisite for reclaiming any deposited insurance amounts.

Wanted Asian nabbed

Two dead, one hurt in two different mishaps

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: A traffic accident in Jahra, resulted in the death of a Kuwaiti citizen after his vehicle ran off the road and crashed into the fence of a public park, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Upon receiving a report of the accident, emergency services and law enforcement personnel swiftly responded to the scene. Unfortunately, despite their efforts, the Kuwaiti man, who was driving the vehicle, had succumbed to his injuries on the spot.

In adherence to standard protocols, a case was registered, and the investigating officer in charge of the incident ordered the removal of the deceased's body from the scene. The authorities have initiated an investigation to determine the circumstances leading to the tragic accident.

One dead, one injured: The security authorities have arrested a Kuwaiti after one person died and another was seriously injured following a traffic accident on the Fifth Ring Road (the new entrance opposite the Al-Omariya area), reports **Al-Rai** daily.

According to a security source, after the authorities received a report about the accident security personnel, medical emergency personnel, and the Shuwaikh Industrial Center Fire Brigade moved to deal with the incident. After the inspection, it was decided to inform the forensic evidence to transfer the body to forensic medicine, while paramedics transferred the injured person to the hospital.

Wanted Asian nabbed: Farwaniya security forces have apprehended an unidentified wanted Asian who had been sentenced to 12 years in prison for drug trafficking. The arrest took place in the Sabah Al-Nasser area as part of the continuous efforts to enforce the law and arrest individuals with outstanding warrants, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Under the direct guidance of Farwaniya Security Director, Brigadier General Salah Al-Daas, the operation was conducted by the head of Sabah Al-Nasser Police Station, Brigadier General Suleiman Al-Saeedi. The successful apprehension of the Asian suspect demonstrates the commitment of security forces to uphold justice and maintain public safety.

No casualties in fires: Firemen from Mangaf and Salmiya fire centers extinguished two fires in residential buildings. Prompt action by the firefighters prevented the fires from spreading to adjacent buildings. No casualties have been reported, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

In the first incident, the Public Relations and Media Department of the General Fire Force reported that firefighting teams from the Al-Mangaf and Al-Fahaheel centers swiftly responded to an apartment fire on the first floor of a residential building in Al-Mangaf. The residents were evacuated, and the fire was brought under control and extinguished without any injuries.

In the second incident, firefighting teams from Al-Bida'a and Salmiya centers controlled a fire that broke out on the second floor of a building in Salmiya area. The fire was successfully extinguished without causing harm to anyone.

Kuwaiti jailed for 7 years in multi-terrorism cases

By **Jaber Al-Hamoud**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: The Court of Appeals sentenced to seven-year imprisonment a Kuwaiti extremist who was convicted of planning to kill security personnel, insulting the Amir and the rulers of the GCC, and advocating for ISIS on social media platforms.

According to the case file, the accused was arrested in Lebanon under Kuwaiti security coordination.

Earlier, the Criminal Court had ruled that he be imprisoned for two years for insulting the Amir, but acquitted him of joining ISIS.

The Public Prosecution had charged him with issuing insults via video clips against the ruling regimes of two GCC countries, in a manner deemed harmful to the country's national interests. He was also charged with deliberately misusing a means of communication - mobile phone - to post such videos on the TikTok application, as well as of joining and advocating for joining a banned organization - ISIS - that aims to destroy the basic systems in the country.

All leave suspended: The Ministry of the Interior suspended all types of annual or administrative leaves for all the staff in military agencies as of Wednesday until further notice, except those who applied for leave through the system prior to the issuance of the decision, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

From 7 yrs to acquittal: The Criminal Court has overturned the ruling on the imprisonment of a health sector employee for seven years with hard labor, and acquitted him of forging an official document (sick leave form) attributed to several hospitals and forging the seals of these hospitals, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

'Upsurge in drugs use leads to crime, strife'

Govt must step in: study

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: The study conducted by the Youth Council emphasizes the critical need for comprehensive state intervention to tackle the growing drug problem in Kuwait, especially among young individuals, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

Presented by four Youth Council members — Walid Khaled Al-Kandari, Abdul Rahman Khaled Al-Qasba, Latifa Saleh Al-Furaih, and Hessa Hamoud Al-Nawafi — the study titled "When Pain Meets Hope" sheds light on the detrimental effects of drug abuse on society, including its link to rising crime rates, particularly violent offenses committed by drug-users.

Identifying various factors contributing to the spread of drug abuse, the study pointed to insufficient entertainment options for youth, fragmented efforts in combating drugs, and legislative gaps. Despite decades of anti-drug legislation, Kuwait has witnessed a surge in drug users in recent years, resulting in a corresponding increase in drug-related crimes.

The study recommends the establishment of a specialized rehabilitation center meeting international standards for diagnosing, treating, and monitoring drug addiction cases. It suggests collaboration with foreign medical experts to enhance the capabilities of Kuwaiti medical personnel in addiction treatment.

Additionally, leveraging technology to improve the dispensing of psychotropic

medications and enhance drug control measures is proposed.

In terms of media and public awareness, targeted campaigns through television, radio, and mosques are advocated to promote positive values and discourage drug abuse. Religious institutions are highlighted for their role in cultivating cultural and ethical awareness.

Addressing security concerns, the study proposes real-time mobile inspections to combat drug-related violence and traffic accidents. It stresses the importance of enhancing coordination between government agencies and implementing advanced investigative systems to combat drug smuggling effectively.

Legislative reforms are deemed necessary, including distinguishing between drug abusers and legal addicts, treating drug addiction as a medical condition rather than a criminal offense, and imposing severe penalties on drug traffickers.

Furthermore, the study recommends increasing youth engagement in sports and recreational activities to divert attention from drug abuse. It calls for improved access to sports clubs and recreational facilities for adolescents and partnerships with educational institutions and community organizations to promote healthy lifestyles among youth.

Ultimately, the study underscores society's collective responsibility in combating drug abuse and protecting Kuwait's youth from addiction's devastating consequences. It calls for collaborative efforts from government agencies, civil society organizations, and the public to address this pressing issue and safeguard future generations' well-being.



Fishermen pull out a net loaded with fish.

'New fishing licenses to further diminish already scant supply'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: Dr. Mohsen Al-Husseini, the Director of the Ecosystem-Based Marine Resources Management Program at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, has affirmed that issuing additional fishing licenses will not bolster the local fish supply. Instead, it will further diminish the already scant stock, potentially leading to its extinction. Moreover, this action would exacerbate environmental disturbances, jeopardizing Kuwait's marine resources, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Al-Husseini's remarks respond to the Ministry of Trade and Industry's appeal for new fishing licenses. He points out that fish stocks have been steadily declining since 2,000, as evidenced by data from the Central Administration of Statistics and marine surveys conducted by the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research between 2007 and 2017.

Referencing a project initiated by the Institute and supported by the Kuwait Foun-

datation for the Advancement of Sciences, Al-Husseini sheds light on the underlying causes of plummeting catches and the degradation of fish stocks. Analysis of available data has identified overfishing as the primary culprit, wherein the number of fishing vessels surpasses the sustainable capacity of the fish population.

Al-Husseini underscores that the depletion of fish stocks is attributable to an excessive fleet of fishing vessels. Additionally, he highlights other factors contributing to the deterioration of Kuwait's marine environment, including elevated sea water salinity, diminished primary productivity, and the destruction or contraction of marine habitats, particularly due to excessive use of bottom trawl nets for shrimp fishing. These factors collectively have led to a significant reduction in the current fish stock, meeting only 15 percent of the local demand through fishing activities alone.

HH Prime Minister sends congratulations to Sulyo

HH Amir congratulates Hungary's newly-elected president

'Social assistance for March to be disbursed before Ramadan'

MoSA opens new Family Unit in West Abdullah Al-Mubarak

By Fares Al-Abdan
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: Under the patronage and in the presence of the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Al-Malik Al-Sabah, and in the presence of the Assistant Undersecretary for the Social Development Sector Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi, the Family Unit was inaugurated on Tuesday morning in West Abdullah Al-



Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Al-Malik Al-Sabah with other officials taking tour of the newly-opened Family Unit in West Abdullah Al-Mubarak.

Mubarak.

In a press statement on the sidelines of the inaugural event, Sheikh Firas Al-Malik declared that social assistance for the month of March will be disbursed before the beginning of Ramadan, and social assistance for the month of April will be disbursed before Eid Al-Fitr holidays.

He affirmed the keenness of the Ministry of Social Affairs to support and serve Kuwaiti families who receive social assistance, and expand these units that play an important and vital role in society.

Sheikh Firas Al-Malik highlighted the Ministry of Social Affairs' interest in providing all its services in various parts of the country, especially the new areas, in implementation of the directives of the political

leadership and the instructions of the Council of Ministers.

He praised the efforts exerted by the ministry's employees to provide the best services to citizens.

Highlighting

It is worth highlighting that the minister met with a number of residents of West Abdullah Al-Mubarak and listened to their complaints. He then directed the sectors concerned to discuss them and work to solve them as well as overcome any obstacles as quickly as possible. He stressed that the strategy of the Ministry of Social Affairs puts the interest, care and service of the citizens at the top of the priorities.

Sheikh Firas Al-Sabah also inspected the multi-purpose hall of the Ministry of Social Affairs located in the Government Headquarters Mall in West Abdullah Al-Mubarak to review the arrangements, equipment, and the speed of preparing and receiving them.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable to the newly-elected President of Hungary Tamas Sulyo, congratulating him on winning the election.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished him everlasting health and well-

ness, and further progress and prosperity to his country and people.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah sent a cable to the newly-elected President of Hungary Tamas Sulyo, congratulating him on winning the election.



Kuwait's Minister of State for Youth Affairs Dawood Marafi during the 47th meeting of Arab youth and sports ministers.

Minister Marafi underscores supporting Arab youth

It is imperative to support Arab youth in all activities related to artificial intelligence (AI) and cyber security, Kuwait's Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Minister of State for Communications Dawood Marafi said Wednesday.

Speaking to KUNA at the end of the 47th meeting of Arab youth and sports ministers, Marafi, also Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, added that current times are rapidly accelerating, which requires paying attention to technology serving development in all

Arab countries.

It is necessary to empower and better prepare youth for such technology, he said, noting that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has been supporting youth as they are future leaders.

The government, headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, has set a roadmap to back youth initiatives in all related domains, Marafi concluded. (KUNA)

'Festival continues its march toward excellence'

Kuwait Theatre Festival, beacon of culture, art in Arab world: minister

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29, (KUNA): Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi said that the Kuwait Theatre Festival, whose 23rd edition kicked off Wednesday, has been a beacon of culture and art in the Arab world since its launching in 1989.

Speaking at the opening ceremony at the Abdullhussain Abduredha Theatre in Salmiya, Al-Mutairi, the festival's sponsor, said since its inception, the Kuwaiti festival formed its identity and continued its march toward excellence and dissemination of the culture of diversity.

The minister added that the festival has also become a platform for developing the theatrical movement in the country.

This year's edition coincides with Kuwait's national days' celebrations and the 50th anniversary of founding the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL), he said.

"We work at the NCCAL on implementing the directives of 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 backing and encouraging culture and arts in Kuwait," the minister elaborated.

This is done through the NCCAL's



Minister Al-Mutairi speaking at the opening ceremony of the festival.

strategy to boost intellectual production and the theatrical movement, and create environment that encourages theatrical creativity, he noted.

The pioneers of Kuwait's theatrical movement have left rich legacy for generations in order to cement the role of theatre in the society building, he stated.

He voiced delight at naming CEO of the Saudi Theater and Performing Arts Commission Sultan Al-Bazie as the festival's guest and the Kuwaiti artist Saad Al-Faraj the personality of this year's edition, honoring them as well as other dignitaries and artists.

Bid to enable investors to obtain licenses

Municipality issues circular on amending 'regulations' regarding stores in co-ops

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: Director of the Legal Department in Kuwait Municipality Hussein Al-Ajmi issued a circular to all relevant municipal departments regarding ministerial resolution No. 254/2023 on amending some provisions of the regulations organizing cooperative work, which obligated cooperative societies to amend the conditions of their stores invested by others by issuing licenses in the name of investors. This is aimed to take the necessary procedures and measures to implement the ministerial decision and enable investors to obtain licenses in their names in accordance with article 29 thereof, which stipulates that the cooperative society is obligated to address the relevant authorities to obtain initial approvals to permit the activity before the offering.

Following the awarding of the store, the necessary licenses to operate the activity will be issued in the name of the investor to whom the award was made.

Al-Ajmi stressed in the circular the necessity of referring to the Legal Department of Kuwait Municipality in the event of any legal problem during implementation to take the necessary action regarding it.

On a related level, the Municipal Council's committees will resume their meetings next week.

The Farwaniya Committee will hold its fourth meeting for the second session on Sunday headed by the Deputy Chairman of the Municipal Council Khaled Al-Mutairi to discuss five items on its agenda.

These items are:

1. A request from the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) to allocate sites for open basins to collect rainwater, open water channels, underground water connections, and rainwater drainage paths around the South Abdul-

lah Al-Mubarak residential area.

2. The Ministry of Social Affairs' request for the expansion of the central market of the Ishbiliyah Cooperative Society, located in the center of the Ishbiliyah suburb.

3. The proposal submitted by member Abdullah Al-Enezi regarding developing the buildings and lands in Grenada next to the residential area.

4. The proposal submitted by member Abdullah Al-Enezi for developing and reorganizing the properties located in the exhibition area in south of Khaitan shown on the cadastral plans No. M/25877 and M/35583 in order to establish a project titled "The Business Lagoon".

5. The question submitted by the chairman of the committee regarding the Kabd Road extending from the Sulabiya Bridge to Jawakhir Kabd.

Meanwhile, the Joint Technical, Legal and Financial Committee will also hold its 14th meeting headed by member Dr. Hassan Kamal on Tuesday to complete the discussion of amending the regulations organizing construction works and the schedules attached to it, and the final version of the proposal to amend table No. 1 on the requirements and specifications for private and model residential buildings.

Also, the Environmental Affairs Committee of the Municipal Council was to hold its fourth meeting of the second session on Thursday headed by Municipal Council member Alia Al-Farsi to discuss a number of items on its agenda.

These items include two proposals submitted by member Sharifa Al-Shalfan regarding maintaining the cleanliness of the marine environment, and recycling plastic bottles and their caps, the letter submitted by the Ministry of Health's Public Health Department regarding sanitary control of waste landfills, and the proposal submitted by a Kuwaiti woman regarding helping citizens, reducing burdens, and recycling.




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Hospital said to be one of the largest in world with 800 beds capacity

'Ministry completes design of children's hospital project'

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: According to informed sources in the Ministry of Public Works, the ministry has completed the design of the children's hospital project, and it will present the project during the 2024/2025 fiscal year via the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT).

The sources explained that the children's hospital project is one of the important projects implemented by the ministry. It is one of the largest hospitals in the world with a capacity of 800 beds for children on an area of 120,000 square meters and a construction area of 224,859 square meters. It includes all medical specialties in the field of pediatrics.

The project, which is located in the

Sabah Health Zone in Capital Governorate, is part of the health care services carried out by the Ministry of Public Works for the Ministry of Health, which is the beneficiary of the project after its implementation is completed.

In a separate context, the sources explained that the ministry is currently considering merging some of the departments and divisions affili-

ated with its sectors to avoid overlapping specializations and to reduce the organizational structure of the ministry.

The ministry held a number of meetings to determine which departments and sections could be merged in a way that does not affect the work process within the sectors.

At the same time, it seeks to reduce the organizational structure that

no longer keeps pace with the current stage, which requires the necessity of separating and overlapping specializations, and paves the way for the completion of projects and the ministry's plans in general.

Meanwhile, the ministry recently prepared a training course for its cadres of engineers and technicians to qualify them to supervise projects, starting from new appointments until

retirement, especially since the ministry has been implementing important projects, and its plan includes future projects that require qualified national personnel.

The sources indicated that the new path depends on local training courses and external missions to learn about the latest new standards in the engineering, technical and administrative fields.



Photo by Rizk Taufiq
Children using water guns on motorists during last year's national day celebrations.

'Cultural and scientific week competition'

KU student earns 2nd place in GCC contest

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: Moaz Al-Fadhli, a student at the College of Education at Kuwait University, achieved second place in the ninth cultural and scientific week competition for universities and higher education institutions in the Gulf Cooperation Council held in Qatar, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The theme of the competition was "Towards a Promising Gulf Knowledge Economy." Al-Fadhli participated in a research competition in the cultural and social field with his research titled "Obstacles to prepare and implement the educational plan in educating students with disabilities from the point of view of a sample of special edu-

cation teachers in the Arab Gulf countries and the solutions proposed for them."

The research was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ohood Nasser Al-Hajri from the College of Education.

Additionally, several students from Kuwait University participated in various competitions during the event, including Abdulaziz Al-Otaibi, Abdullah Al-Anzi, Barak Al-Omran, Saad Al-Mikhil, Ali Al-Kandari, Abdul-Wahab Al-Obaid, and Ayed Abdul-Hadi. Their participation spanned competitions in areas such as the Holy Quran, the Noble Hadith, poetry, photography, and artificial intelligence.

Middle East's

Continued from Page 1

Also, social media has played a crucial role in challenging these narratives, providing unfiltered exposure to the realities on the ground. This transparency has fostered resentment among the Arab populace towards the West's continued bias, especially in its unwavering support for Israel.

This burgeoning resentment is not merely a transient phenomenon but a harbinger of deeper, more enduring implications for international relations. The West's persistent bias in its portrayal and support for certain narratives—especially those favoring Israel after the October 7 attacks, contrasted with its depiction of Russia and Ukraine—risks fostering an environment ripe with inherited hate and discontent.

In the theater of international politics, the United States' use of its veto power at the UN to protect Israel from global condemnation stands out. This action contradicts its proclaimed support for international consensus, revealing a selective application of principles when it comes to its Middle Eastern ally, turning international consensus into a flexible guideline rather than a steadfast rule.

In conclusion, the kettle in the Middle East is brewing, and the steam is about to blow out. For the West, the challenge lies in reassessing its narrative on Middle Eastern politics. Engaging rather than isolating, understanding rather than demonizing, may pave the way for more effective and equitable solutions to the enduring conflicts in the Middle East.

Biometrics rush

Continued from Page 1

Of the total individuals fingerprinted, around 900,000 are citizens, while approximately 880,000 are residents. However, about 1.1 million individuals under the age of 18 are exempt from the fingerprinting requirement.

It is imperative for those who have not yet undergone biometric fingerprinting to schedule an appointment via the Ministry of Interior's website for one of the designated sites, typically located within the Public Security Directorates across all governorates for citizens.

Residents can visit allocated sites in the Ahmadi and Jahra governorates. Additionally, fingerprinting can be completed upon returning from travel using devices installed at air, land, and sea ports. Failure to comply by the June 1 deadline will result in the suspension of transactions with the Ministry of Interior.

ICM taps

Continued from Page 1

Similarly, Abdullatif Al-Tuwairesh Al-Bazzali declined the candidacy offer of his tribe to give way for Muthana Al-Bazzali with the aim of increasing the chance for Bani Ghanim Tribe candidates to occupy the green seats.

Sources revealed that State Minister for National Assembly and Youth Affairs and former MP Dawood Maarefi will not run for the election, as he is keen on remaining in his ministerial post since he prefers to liaise between the government and Assembly.

On the other hand, the Public Prosecution has interrogated former MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf in a case filed by the former finance minister about the press statement of Al-Hajraf on Jan 11, 2024. In his press statement, Al-Hajraf urged HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah to refrain from appointing crisis-making minis-

ters, referring to former Minister of Finance Fahad Al-Jarallah whom he accused of involvement in crimes related to public funds.

Moreover, former MP Muhannad Al-Sayer accompanied former MP Abdullah Al-Mudhaf to the prosecution where the latter was questioned about the case filed against him in view of his grilling motion against former Minister of Finance Khalifa Hamada. Al-Sayer explained that he went to the prosecution as the lawyer of Al-Mudhaf in order to defend the latter's constitutional right as a lawmaker to file grilling motions. He pointed out that cases against the MPs are aimed at hindering the legislative process. He warned that if this continues, it will negatively affect the MPs' performance.

In addition, Al-Mudhaf asserted that everyone has the right to file a case in court, but if it is done to disrupt the grilling motion on violations at the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) like the illegal distribution of agricultural and industrial plots; then he is ready to pay the price for protecting public funds. He vowed to continue taking such step whether as a member of the Assembly or as an ordinary citizen.

In other news, Minister of Information and Culture Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi discussed Wednesday with officials the ministry's comprehensive and integrated plan to cover the upcoming National Assembly election slated for April 4.

The ministry is harnessing all its potential to cover the democratic event in a manner that shows Kuwait's status, through several TV and Radio live programs, within an integrated and comprehensive strategy, the minister told KUNA in a statement.

He added that the ministry also would facilitate the missions of media outlets, journalists and media people from inside and outside the country to report the election.

The minister prayed to Almighty Allah to maintain his unlimited blessing onto Kuwait under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Kuwait leads

Continued from Page 1

of three days, reveals the keenness and continued interest in striving to provide the best health services in the field of nuclear medicine."

He highlighted the ministry's support and keenness to develop the expertise of the medical and technical staff, and attract the best experts from various countries around the world to exchange ideas and knowledge, and provide the latest technology and its applications in the field of diagnosis and treatment, which will place the State of Kuwait in the top ranks in the field of nuclear medicine in the Gulf region.

Ismael praised the contributions of the early pioneers in laying the basic building blocks for the nuclear medicine specialty in Kuwait, and what they did in the beginnings of the specialty, which spanned more than 60 years, starting with the first application of nuclear medicine in Kuwait using therapeutic radioactive iodine in 1963.

In addition, the Deputy President of the conference Dr. Iman Al-Awadhi said, "Holding such specialized scientific meetings establishes the principle of participation and exchange of experiences between doctors in order to provide the best diagnostic and therapeutic services to patients."

When preparing for the conference, care was taken to keep pace with the rapid global development in the field of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging, with a focus on benefiting from artificial intelligence techniques and its applications to provide the latest levels of health service in nuclear medicine departments in the State of Kuwait.

Kuwait's water conservation efforts save 16.8m gallons during nat'l days

Minister Al-Hajraf praises citizens' positive response

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Dr Salem Al-Hajraf praised the positive response and commitment of citizens to the advisory on the need to conserve water and to use such a vital resource judiciously, as well as the instructions of the Ministry of Interior and Environment Public Authority (EPA) to refrain from hurling water balloons and other negative practices that lead to wastage of water, reports Al-Anba daily.

It has been reported that during the national holidays, the ministry saved 16.8 million imperial gallons of water; compared to the water consumption within the same period last year.

Al-Hajraf cited statistics stating that water consumption on Feb 25-26, 2024 reached 800.9 million imperial gallons, compared to 817.7 million last year – a decrease of 16.8 million or 2.6 percent.

He explained that although the demand for water increased by six percent this year due to population growth and the expansion of urban areas, the lower water consumption rate during the national holidays confirms that the citizens and expatriates are now fully aware of the importance of conserving water.

Before the National and Liberation days, the Ministry of Electricity and Water, Ministry of Interior and EPA launched a public awareness campaign urging the public to conserve water.

Panel to evaluate 'request' for land

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: The Farwaniya Governorate Committee in the Municipal Council is scheduled to hold its meeting next Sunday under the leadership of Khaled Al-Mutairi. The main agenda will include discussions on the development and reorganization of real estate in the exhibition area, south of Khaitan, aimed at establishing the Business Lagoon project, reports Al-Jarida daily.

During the session, the committee will evaluate a request from the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport regarding the allocation of sites for open basins to collect rainwater, open water channels, underground water connections, and rainwater drainage paths around the South Abdullah Al-Mubarak housing area.

Furthermore, member Abdullah Al-Anzi's proposal concerning buildings and lands in the Granada area adjacent to the residential zone will be reviewed. The committee will also address the Ministry of Social Affairs' request to expand the central market of the Ishbiliya Cooperative Society, located in the heart of the Ishbiliya suburb.

Additionally, the committee will discuss Vice-President of the Municipal Council, Khaled Al-Mutairi's query regarding the Kabb Road extending from the Sulaibiya Bridge to the Kabb farms.

In parallel, the municipal environmental affairs committee, chaired by Eng Alia Al-Farsi, is set to convene today. The meeting agenda includes discussions on two proposals presented by member Eng Sherifa Al-Shalfan – one focusing on preserving the cleanliness of the marine environment, and another addressing the recycling of plastic bottles and their caps.



Representative of HH the Amir, Kuwait FM, heads to Turkey.

FM heads to Turkey for 3rd Antalya Diplomacy Forum

Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya left on Thursday to

Antalya, Turkey to head the Kuwaiti delegation in the third Antalya Diplomacy Forum, scheduled to be held March 1-2. (KUNA)



A visitor views the drawings at the exhibition.

Kuwaiti artists present 77 paintings

Exhibition showcases plastic works depicting birds observed in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: An exhibition showcasing plastic drawings depicting birds observed in Kuwait was held at the Arts and Ahmed Al-Adwani halls in the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters, reports Al-Rai daily.

Kuwaiti artists, drawing inspiration from private photos captured by bird watcher Ahmed Salem, presented 77 paintings at the event. The exhibition was attended by notable figures including the Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait, Tuba Sonmez, and the Pakistani Ambassador, Malek

Farouk, along with the participation of 22 Kuwaiti plastic artists.

Organized under the auspices of the NCCAL, the exhibition commenced with a scientific lecture delivered by Ahmed Salem. During the lecture, Salem discussed various topics related to bird species globally and locally, highlighting their significance in both ancient and modern life, as well as their connection to heritage and art.

Salem shed light on the global distribution and population of birds, emphasizing the importance of con-

servation efforts due to the threat of extinction faced by numerous species, including some observed within Kuwait and the Arabian Peninsula.

He also shared insights into common bird species found in Kuwait and highlighted the significance of establishing national birds, such as the "Gangor" bird.

The exhibition provided a platform for Kuwaiti artists to showcase their talent while raising awareness about the diverse bird species present in Kuwait and the need for their protection.

Capital Markets Authority stresses brokerage firms to comply with policies and procedures

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: The Capital Markets Authority has issued alerts to brokerage companies, stressing the importance of compliance with various critical areas such as "operations management policies and procedures," "record retention policies and procedures," and the implementation of a "business continuity plan," reports Al-Jarida daily.

Despite efforts by the CMA and the Kuwait Stock Exchange Company to enhance the financial market, some brokerage firms operating within it still need to improve their technical and administrative systems.

These improvements are necessary for them to keep pace with the significant developments occurring in the market. Brokerage companies have been identified as the primary reason for delays in the development of the financial market in recent times. They have also been responsible for the need to re-conduct testing processes for investment tools and services introduced to the market.

While some companies have made progress in readiness to obtain a "qualified broker" license, others

By Khaled Al-Jales

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29. (KUNA): The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters organized on Thursday an artistic workshop (free studio) marking the 63rd anniversary of the National Day and the 33rd anniversary of the Liberation Day, with participation of formative artists from Kuwait and other GCC countries.

Sara Khalaf, in charge of the studio and the organizer of the workshop,

have faced criticism for inefficiencies in their risk assessment studies.

Upon review, the Capital Markets Authority found these studies and related information ineffective due to non-compliance with regulations outlined in Book Sixteen of the Executive Regulations of Law No. 7 of

Kuwait culture council holds workshop marking nat'l days

said in remarks to KUNA that the three-day, annual, activity was organized to "express our joy with the celebrations of the beloved homeland," noting that a number of renowned artists from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar are taking part in the workshop.

Nasser Nasrallah, expressed pleasure in partaking in the workshop that coincided with the Kuwaiti national days, noting that his works depict traditional ships, the Kuwaiti woman and the national flag.

2010 and its amendments.

The Authority mandates all licensed companies to adhere to a specific framework and system, monitoring their compliance with standards and controls. However, violations have been identified in the risk assessment studies of some companies.

World News Roundup

Europe

Train hits, kills 3 people

'Sending troops to Kyiv risks global N-conflict'

MOSCOW, Feb 29, (AP): Russian President **Vladimir Putin** vowed Thursday to fulfill Moscow's goals in Ukraine and sternly warned the West against deeper involvement in the fighting, saying that such a move is fraught with the risk of a global nuclear conflict.

Putin's warning came in a state-of-the-nation address ahead of next month's election he's all but certain to win, underlining his readiness to protect Russian gains in Ukraine.



Putin

In an apparent reference to French President Emmanuel Macron's statement earlier this week that the future deployment of Western ground troops to Ukraine should not be "ruled out", Putin warned that it would lead to "tragic" consequences for the countries who decide to do that.

Putin noted that while accusing Russia of plans to NATO allies in Europe, Western allies were "selecting targets for striking our territory and selecting the most efficient as they think striking assets and talking about the possibility of sending a NATO contingent to Ukraine."

"We remember the fate of those who sent their troop contingents to the territory of our country," the Russian leader said. "Now the consequences for the potential invaders will be far more tragic."

Speaking before an audience of lawmakers and top officials, Putin said the West should keep in mind that "we also have the weapons that can strike targets on their territory, and what they are now suggesting and scaring the world with, all that raises the real threat of a nuclear conflict that will mean the destruction of our civilization."

Russian forces targets more Ukrainian towns: Russian forces are pushing hard against more Ukrainian towns and villages in eastern and southeastern Ukraine as Moscow tries to press its current advantage in weapons and troops, Kyiv officials said Thursday.

Despite Russia's apparent offensive momentum on the ground, Ukraine claimed it has shot down 11 Russian warplanes in less than two weeks as the Kremlin's forces pushed forward.

With the war starting its third year, Russian forces have been bludgeoning some Ukrainian defensive positions into submission, deploying overwhelming amounts of artillery and troop numbers in an effort to punch through defensive lines at targeted points.

Though Russia's gains have been small, slow and costly, Ukraine doesn't have enough reservists and has a severe shortage of artillery shells as the supply of military aid from Western partners has waned.

'UK descending into mob rule': Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said Britain is descending into "mob rule" because of the pressures created by protests against the Israel-Hamas war - words criticized as alarmist by a human rights group.

Sunak told a meeting of police leaders on Wednesday that there was a "pattern of increasingly violent and intimidatory behavior" that's intended to "shout down free debate and stop elected representatives doing their job."

"There is a growing consensus that mob rule is replacing democratic rule," he said, according to a transcript released by the prime minister's office. "And we've got to collectively, all of us, change that urgently."

Tom Southerden of Amnesty International said Thursday that talk of mob rule "wildly exaggerates the issue and risks delegitimizing the rights of peaceful protest."

Mass protests have drawn hundreds of thousands of people to central London almost weekly to call for a cease-fire in a conflict that has killed more than 30,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

'Serbia poll held in unjust conditions': Serbia's recent disputed election was held in "unjust conditions" in part because of the president's involvement and systemic advantages for the ruling party, a report by international monitors said Wednesday.

The report by an office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe also said the December election in the Balkan nation was "marred by harsh rhetoric, bias in the media, pressure on public sector employees and misuse of public resources."

Serbia is a candidate for European Union membership, but the populist government of President Aleksandar Vucic has faced accusations of curbing democratic freedoms. The opposition asserts it was robbed of a victory in the capital, Belgrade, and that the entire electoral process was irregular. The political tensions have led to large street protests.

Vucic and his ruling Serbian Progressive Party have denied wrongdoing.

Germany hosts FMs of Armenia, Azerbaijan: Germany sought to move forward talks on a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan on Wednesday, welcoming the two countries' foreign ministers to Berlin.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock hosted her counterparts, Armenia's Ararat Mirzoyan and Azerbaijan's Jeyhun Bayramov, at a secluded government villa for what was billed as two days of talks.

The latest talks followed a meeting on Feb. 17 between German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference. Scholz underlined Germany's willingness to help conclude peace talks, along with that of European Council President Charles Michel.

Freight train hits, kills 3 in Sweden: A freight train hit and killed three people at a railway crossing at a station in central Sweden after they got off another train, police said Thursday.

The victims - a 25-year-old man, a woman in her 20s and a third person who was not immediately identified - crossed the tracks without seeing the freight train approaching. Felicia Davidsson, a spokesperson for the Swedish Transport Administration, told broadcaster SVT.

Police said Thursday that the accident was being investigated. The crossing only has lights to warn of oncoming trains.

Emergency services were alerted late Wednesday of the accident at the crossing at the station in Orebro and found three pedestrians "very seriously injured," police said.



The gold dome of the Georgia Capitol gleams in the sunlight in Atlanta, Aug 28, 2022. Under a \$392 million plan agreed to on Feb 26 the state Capitol would get a renovation while the state would build a new legislative office building for lawmakers on the north side of the complex, to the right of the Capitol. (AP)

Politics

GOP falls in line with Trump

McConnell to step down as Senate leader

WASHINGTON, Feb 29, (AP): Long before Sen. Mitch McConnell surprised colleagues Wednesday announcing he would step down as the Republican leader this fall, he knew the time had come.

Hard-right Republican senators aligned with Donald Trump wanted to oust him. Trump was easily becoming the party's frontrunner for a do-over election with President Joe Biden. And, having largely recovered his health from a devastating fall last year, McConnell was back on his game.

Intentions

In assembling top aides in January to disclose his intentions, ahead of his 82nd birthday, McConnell told them he had just one more priority to secure: supplemental aid for Ukraine as it battles Russia.

"Believe me, I know the politics within my party at this particular moment in time," McConnell said in a speech delivered midday Wednesday from the Senate floor.

His voice cracking at times, he said that's why he worked so hard to see the national security aid pass the Senate this month, insisting "America's global leadership is essential" - even though the aid is still tied up in the House.

He said, "I have many faults, misunderstanding politics is not one of them."

McConnell's departure leaves the Senate, and the Republican Party itself, at an uncertain crossroads, days before the Super Tuesday presidential primary elections when Trump is expected to sweep up more states in his march to the Republican Party nomination.

Trump's ascent proved to be an almost untenable political situation for McConnell - the two men have not spoken since December 2020, when McConnell declared that Biden had legally won that year's election. McConnell lashed out at the defeated president after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, calling Trump "morally responsible" for the bloody siege. He has not yet endorsed Trump for president in 2024.

Like the House, where Republicans ousted Kevin McCarthy as speaker in fall, the latest in a growing list of GOP speakers sent prematurely to the exits, the Senate is now following suit in the Trump era, essentially leaving the long-serving McConnell with few options but to decide for himself it was time to go.

"I think it'll be great, because I think Trump will win, we have a leader who

Biden 'continues to be fit for duty,' says his doctor after annual health checkup

BETHESDA, Md., Feb 29, (AP): US President Joe Biden "continues to be fit for duty," his doctor wrote Wednesday after conducting an annual physical that is being closely watched as the 81-year-old seeks reelection in November.

Dr. Kevin O'Connor, Biden's physician, wrote that the president is adjusting well to a new device that helps control his sleep apnea and has experienced some hip discomfort but also works out five times per week.

"President Biden is a healthy, active, robust, 81-year-old male who remains fit to successfully execute the duties of the presidency," O'Connor said in a six-page memo on the president's health, following a physical that took Biden to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center for more than 2 1/2 hours.

His memo added that Biden "feels well and this year's physical identifies no new concerns." The oldest president in U.S. history, Biden would be 86 by the end of a second term, should he win one. His latest physical mirrored one he had in February last year when O'Connor described Biden as "healthy, vigorous" and "fit" to handle his White House duties.

Still, voters are approaching this

year's election with misgivings about Biden's age, having scrutinized his gaffes, his coughing, his slow walking and even a tumble off his bicycle.

After he returned to the White House on Wednesday, Biden attended an event on combating crime and suggested that when it came to his health "everything is squared away" and "there is nothing different than last year."

He also joked about his age and people thinking "I look too young." Former President Donald Trump, 77, is the favorite to lock up the Republican nomination later this month, which would bring him closer to a November rematch against Biden. Trump was 70 when he took office in 2017, which made him the oldest American president to be inaugurated - until Biden broke his record by being inaugurated at 78 in 2021.

O'Connor's report said that Biden's stiff walking was no worse than last year and was the result of arthritic changes in his spine. He said the president also noted "some increased left hip discomfort." There were no signs of stroke, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's or other similar conditions in what the report called an "extremely detailed neurologic exam."

can work well with the next Republican president," said Sen. JD Vance of Ohio.

There was a time when few senators would dare criticize McConnell, a Ronald Reagan-era Republican first elected in 1984, who now controls a vast political operation that can make or break elections.

In fact, a majority of Republican senators still back McConnell's leadership, many heaping praise on the taciturn strategist who secured the Trump tax cuts in 2017 and led Senate confirmation of three justices to the Supreme Court, tilting its balance toward conservatives.

Behind closed doors, Republican senators gave McConnell a standing ovation during a private luncheon. Even some of McConnell's biggest critics praised him after he spoke.

Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson said it was a "poignant moment."

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., said while he thinks McConnell could have won another term if he sought one, he acknowledged the historic political shift underway in the GOP.

"I think the Republican Party is going through a pretty dramatic transition," Rubio said. "And that's obviously playing out in the halls of Congress as well."

And increasingly emboldened detractors piled on Wednesday saying McConnell's leaving could not come fast enough - and in fact, he should step down before his announced November departure.

"This is a good development - my question is: Why wait so long?" said Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo.

recent string of vehicle break-ins and property thefts and was facing possible felony charges of criminal possession of identification documents involving multiple victims and conspiracy to commit a felony. He also faces over 15 additional misdemeanor and petty offenses, police said in a statement. (AP)

Hunter Biden blasts GOP: Hunter Biden was defiant Wednesday in a closed-door deposition on Capitol Hill, blasting a Republican impeachment inquiry into his father and the family's business affairs as a "house of cards" built on "lies" as he faced a battery of probing questions from lawmakers.

"For more than a year, your Committees have hunted me in your partisan political pursuit of my dad," Hunter Biden said in an opening statement obtained by The Associated Press. He accused Republicans of trafficking in "innuendo, distortion, and sensationalism" and insisted, "I did not involve my father in my business."

After the nearly seven-hour deposition wrapped, an attorney for an attorney for **Joe Biden's** son told reporters that during the testimony Republicans "produced no evidence that would do anything to support the notion that there was any financial transactions that involved Hunter with his father. Period." (AP)



Hunter Biden, son of President Joe Biden leaves after a closed-door deposition in the Republican-led investigation into the Biden family, on Capitol Hill in Washington, on Feb 28. (AP)



Joe



Boebert

America

Orlando shooting kills 1: At least one person is dead and several others were injured Wednesday night following a shooting in Orlando, Florida, police say.

At approximately 11:00 pm Orlando Police officers responded to the area of Iron Wedge Drive and South Lake Orlando in reference to several shots fired, WFTV reported. Upon arrival, officers located multiple victims including one deceased.

"We are working to identify all victims and their conditions," police said. This is an ongoing investigation, once we have more information we will make that available." (AP)

Missing teenager found: A missing teen with autism has been found in New Mexico - about 200 miles (322 kilometers) away from his home in southern Arizona, according to New Mexico State Police.

The 13-year-old turned up at a Walmart in Deming on Tuesday after going missing the night before from his family's home in Tucson. In hopes of identifying the young man, authorities in New Mexico posted a picture on social media seeking the public's help.

New Mexico State Police said that within minutes, someone recognized the teen from an earlier post by the Tucson Police Department. They confirmed Wednesday that the teen had been reunited with his family and was safely back at home.

"Thanks to everyone who helped make this possible by sharing, commenting, and spreading the word," New Mexico State Police said in a social media post.

The family shared their gratitude for police and the community on social media. They have no idea how the teen was able to get to Deming. (AP)

Rep son faces possible charges: The oldest son of US Rep **Lauren Boebert** is suspected of being part of a group of friends who used credit cards stolen from cars to make purchases at gas stations and McDonald's, according to court documents released Wednesday.

Tyler Boebert, 18, was identified as a suspect after being spotted in a surveillance video at a gas station store with the group when one of the stolen cards was used for a purchase by someone else, according to his arrest affidavit. He was wearing a hoodie from Shooter's Grill, the restaurant once owned by Lauren Boebert, and was also

recognized by police from previous encounters, the document said.

The name of the other person using the stolen credit card, believed to be a juvenile,

was redacted.

Police in the small western Colorado city of Rifle announced Tuesday that Tyler Boebert had been arrested in connection with a



Rescuers arrive on the site where an avalanche broke loose in Racines di Denro, Alto Adige, northern Italy engulfing three German tourists on Feb 28. One person died and two were hospitalized after being rescued, the Italian Alpine and Speleological Rescue Corps Trentino said. (AP)

Lat/Am

UN accuses Nicaragua gov't of abuses: The United Nations accused Nicaragua's government of committing "serious systematic human rights violations, tantamount to crimes against humanity" on Thursday in an investigation into the country's expanding crackdown on political dissent.

The government of President **Daniel Ortega** has gone after opponents for years, hitting a turning point in mass protests against the government in 2018 that resulted in violent repression by authorities.

But in the past year, repression has expanded to large swaths of society with a focus on "incapacitating any kind of opposition in the long term," according to the independent group of U.N. experts investigating the issue since March 2022.

"Nicaragua is caught in a spiral of violence marked by the persecution of all forms of political opposition, whether real or perceived," Jan Simon, an expert who headed the investigation, said in a statement. "The Government has solidified a spiral of silence incapacitating any potential opposition."

Ortega's government has repeatedly said the mass demonstrations against it in 2018 constituted a failed coup attempt orchestrated by the United States, and often responds similarly to criticisms. (AP)



Ortega

UN appeals for \$674 million: Indiscriminate violence in Haiti is escalating - especially in the capital and surrounding region - with armed gangs carrying out killings and acts of sexual violence, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator in the conflict-ravaged Caribbean nation said Wednesday.

Ulrika Richardson told UN reporters in a virtual press conference from the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, that "the level of violence that people are exposed to is inhuman."

In her many years working for the United Nations, Richardson said, "I've seen things here that I've never seen in my life," that go beyond "your worst nightmare."

It's the suffering and pain that men, women and children are subjected to, she said, pointing to a 50% increase in sexual violence between 2022 and 2023, and the 314,000 Haitians who have now fled their homes to escape the violence, many living on the streets and in schools, and in need of humanitarian aid.

The UN just launched its humanitarian appeal for this year and is seeking \$674 million, with about half the money earmarked for food. (AP)

'Henry agrees to hold elections by mid-2025': Caribbean leaders said late Wednesday that embattled Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry has agreed to hold general elections by mid-2025 as the international community pushes to raise money for a foreign armed force to fight gang violence there.

Members of the Caricom regional trade bloc issued a statement at the end of a four-day summit in Guyana saying Henry agreed there is a need to hold elections and work with the aid and civil society groups to achieve that goal.

The statement said that all stakeholders in Haitian society, including Henry, will have to make concessions to allow for elections and the restoration of democracy in an impoverished country that has no elected officials in power. "Caricom heads expressed their deep concern over the continued deterioration of the security, humanitarian and political situation and the continued delay in overcoming the political stalemate, which have blocked the possibility of free and fair elections," the statement bloc said. (AP)

Assassination suspects to stand trial: A judge ruled Wednesday that five of six suspects in last year's assassination of a presidential candidate will stand trial, including a leader of a powerful criminal gang who Ecuadorian authorities accuse of coordinating the slaying from his prison cell.

Judge Irene Pesántez said Carlos Angulo, the imprisoned leader of a faction of the feared Los Lobos gang, and a woman will be tried as co-conspirators in the August assassination of Fernando Villavicencio. Three other suspects will face trial as accomplices, while one person was ordered released due to a lack of evidence.

Villavicencio, an anti-corruption crusader, was gunned down as he left a campaign rally Aug. 9 in the capital, Quito. The politician had not been among the front-runners in the Aug. 20 election, but his killing in broad daylight was a shocking reminder of the surge in crime that is gripping Ecuador. (AP)

More than 20 dates proposed for poll: Venezuela's government, its allies and other groups announced a proposal Wednesday on when to hold this year's presidential election, suggesting more than 20 potential dates ranging from as soon as mid-April through early December.

The proposal will be presented over the next few days to Venezuela's governing party-loyal National Electoral Council, whose members will choose the date. Should they pick a date before July 1, the government would be in violation of an agreement with a faction of the opposition that was signed in October and called for the vote to take place in the second half of the year.

Wednesday's proposal, which was drafted throughout February, does not mention any possible actions regarding the participation of candidates banned by the government from running for office, including President Nicolás Maduro's strongest adversary this year, María Corina Machado. (AP)

Bus collision kills 17 in Honduras: Two buses collided head-on Wednesday in a village in western Honduras, and 17 people were killed and 14 were injured, four of them seriously, authorities said.

Officials said witnesses in La Montaña reported the two buses were traveling at a moderate speed when the accident happened.

A large bus carried only its driver and an assistant as they returned from the Agua Caliente customs post on the border with Guatemala after dropping off a group of migrants, authorities said. A smaller bus was traveling in the opposite direction and was full of passengers.

"All the injured and deceased were traveling in the small bus and are Hondurans. The large bus was empty," Alexia Mejía, spokeswoman for the 911 emergency system in western Honduras, told The Associated Press.

The injured were taken to Western Regional Hospital, and officials said the four with severe injuries would be taken by helicopter to a hospital in the city of San Pedro Sula. (AP)

Spill from barge near Tobago soils beaches: An offshore oil spill that prompted Trinidad and Tobago to declare a national emergency earlier this month involves hundreds of thousands of gallons of fuel, some of which has reached the shores of the Dutch Caribbean island of Bonaire hundreds of miles away, authorities said. This is the first estimate of the size of the spill, and the first sign of how far the leaked oil has traveled.

A minimum of 420,000 gallons (1.6 million liters) of oil mixed with water have been vacuumed near Tobago where a barge capsized, officials announced Wednesday. However, they warned the number is likely larger since it does not include oil picked up with sand and sargassum.

"A substantial amount of this material found its way out of Tobago as well," said Farley Augustine, chief secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly. "It's hard to estimate precisely how much leaked out of the vessel." (AP)

'Mexico's Popocatepetl erupts 13 times': Mexico's National Disaster Prevention Center said Wednesday the Popocatepetl volcano, located just 50 miles from the country's capital, has erupted 13 times in the past day and urged people to not try to climb it due to debris shooting out of the crater.

Volcanic ash from the Popocatepetl disrupted flights out of Mexico City's largest airport on Tuesday and caused another airport even closer to the volcano to temporarily suspend activity.

Mexico City's Benito Juárez international airport said at least 22 flights were cancelled due to safety concerns after ash was found in some planes during safety checks. Other flights were rerouted to different parts of Mexico.

In Puebla, a city close to the volcano, airport operations were temporarily suspended on Wednesday due to the gas and fumes coming from the "Popo". The airport said staff was hard at work cleaning up the ash floating down from above. (AP)



Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., (top left), delivers an address to members and senators at Parliament House in Canberra, Australia on Feb 29. (AP)

Asia

Small drone flies into Fukushima N-reactor

Japan's PM vows no more fundraising parties

TOKYO, Feb 29, (AP) - Japan's beleaguered prime minister renewed his apology over his governing party's corruption scandal, promising to not hold any more parties himself as leader during a political ethics committee Thursday.

Fumio Kishida has fought against plummeting support ratings since his governing party's corruption scandal rocked the government. The scandal, considered the biggest in decades, centers on political funds raised through party event tickets bought by individuals, companies and organizations. It led to 10 people - lawmakers and their aides - being indicted in January.

Deadlock

While Kishida himself is not the focus of the scandal and was not even invited to the hearing, the surprise announcement of his personal appearance broke a deadlock between the opposition lawmakers and his governing party Wednesday when the five implicated attendants refused to go public, holding up a hearing. Kishida expressed a "sense of crisis" that the deadlock on the hearing would further deepen the public's distrust in politics.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party's resistance to have a fully open session fueled public criticism that Kishida's party is taking the corruption lightly and trying to hide something.

Kishida's action could help ease criticisms that he was too slow and lax in addressing the public's distrust and taking anti-corruption measures.

In his opening statement, Kishida renewed his apology for triggering public distrust in politics, and promised to take leadership in reforming his party, saying seniority-based tradition, lack of compliance and a sense of privilege among lawmakers need to be removed if they were part of the problem.

Kishida said he volunteered to appear at the hearing to provide an explanation as head of the LDP. But he brushed off questions from opposition lawmakers seeking further details about the fundraising problems, such as when and how they began. Kishida said the governing party's internal probe focused on preventive measures instead of digging deeper into details of the wrongdoings.

Former Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, now an executive of main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, criticized Kishida for holding a number of his own fundraising parties. Kishida in turn promised not to hold any more of what he called "benkyo-kai," or study meetings, during his leadership.

Asked about his own faction's accounting irregularity, which had to be corrected, and its prior status, he said documents were lost and details were unknown.

Philippine prez tells Australia strategic partnership more important than ever

MELBOURNE, Australia, Feb 29, (Agencies) - Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. told Australia's Parliament on Thursday that the strategic partnership between the two nations was more important than ever with the rule of law and peace in the region under threat from China.

Marcos told a special joint sitting of the two chambers during a state visit that the Philippines would not allow a foreign power to "take even one square inch of our sovereign territory."

It is a declaration he has often repeated since taking office in 2022 and refers to China's disputed claims to the Philippines' territory in the South China Sea.

Marcos said Australia and the Philippines need to band together against new challenges to the region's peace and stability, as they had against Japanese forces during World War II. "Not one single country can do this by itself. No single force can counter them by themselves," Marcos said. "This is why our strategic partnership has grown more important than ever."

Marcos said his father, former President Ferdinand Marcos, and then-Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam reaffirmed that the security of their two countries was bound together in 1974 when they toured the Philippines' WWII battlefields of Bataan and Corregidor.

Australia and the Philippines for the first time conducted joint sea and air patrols in the South China Sea in November last year.

Marcos said the Philippines and Australia fought to build a rules-based international order after WWII, and

that they must now fight to protect that order in the South China Sea. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese reminded Marcos of his words when the leaders last met: prosperity and progress dependent on peace.

Meanwhile, a Filipino immigrant who helped a small Outback town keep its volunteer fire brigade was celebrated in the Australian Parliament on Thursday during a special sitting to welcome Marcos Jr., who is on a state visit.

Albanese praised Samson Bocol as an example of the Philippine diaspora's willingness to give back to the community.

Also:

MELBOURNE, Australia: Tuvalu's new government on Wednesday committed the tiny South Pacific island nation to continued diplomatic ties with Taiwan instead of switching to Beijing, but said it plans to renegotiate a security pact recently struck with Australia in response to China's growing regional influence.

Prime Minister Feleti Teo and his seven Cabinet ministers were sworn into office on Wednesday following a general election last month in the strategically significant nation of 11,500 people.

Election campaign issues included whether the former British colony should switch its diplomatic allegiance from Taiwan to Beijing. Some candidates proposed scrapping a treaty, yet to be ratified, that would give Australia veto power over any security or defense-related agreement Tuvalu wants to make with any other country, including China.

Holdings also began releasing the fourth batch of the plant's treated and diluted radioactive wastewater into the sea Wednesday. The government and TEPCO, the plant's operator, say the water is safe and the process is being monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency, but the discharges have faced strong opposition by fishing groups and a Chinese ban on Japanese seafood.

A magnitude 9.0 quake and tsunami in March 2011 destroyed the plant's power supply and cooling systems, causing three reactors to melt down. The government and TEPCO plan to remove the massive amount of fatally radioactive melted nuclear fuel that remains inside each reactor - a daunting decommissioning process that's been delayed for years and mired by technical hurdles and a lack of data.

Also:

TOKYO: A drone small enough to fit in one's hand flew inside one of the damaged reactors at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant Wednesday in hopes it can examine some of the molten fuel debris in areas where earlier robots failed to reach.

Tokyo Electric Power Company



Children and their guardians gather outside a police station after they fled their homes in Cite Soleil, Haiti on Feb 12. Indiscriminate violence in Haiti is escalating - especially in the capital and surrounding region - with armed gangs carrying out killings and acts of sexual violence, Ulrika Richardson, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator in the conflict-ravaged Caribbean nation, said on Feb 28. (AP)



Itno



Ongwen

Africa

Two dozen migrants die: At least two dozen people died off Senegal's northern coast and many were injured when their boat capsized, said officials, underscoring the danger of the route used by an increasing number of migrants seeking to reach Spain from West Africa.

The boat was bound for Europe and capsized near the town of Saint-Louis where bodies washed ashore Wednesday afternoon and the fire department was alerted, said Alioune Badara Sambe, the local governor.

The injured are being treated in a hospital in Saint-Louis and an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the accident has been opened, he said.

The number of migrants leaving from Senegal on rickety wooden boats surged last year, and nearly 1,000 people died while trying to reach Spain by sea in the first six months of 2023, according to the Spanish migration advocacy group, Walking Borders. (AP)

UN hands over 1st military base: United Nations peacekeepers handed over their first military base to security forces in eastern Congo on Wednesday as part of an eventual withdrawal after decades of operating in the country. The handover comes as violence soars in the conflict-riddled region.

Peacekeepers transferred responsibility and equipment at its base in Kamanyola in South Kivu province to Congo's national police as part of a phased drawdown agreed upon between the government and the UN last year.

Eastern Congo has long been overrun by dozens of armed groups seeking a share of the region's gold and other resources. The UN has been operating in the country for 25 years with its primary mission being the protection of civilians. But frustrated Congolese say that no one is protecting them from rebel attacks, leading to protests against the UN mission and others that have at times turned deadly. (AP)

Group attacks security agency: Several people were killed Wednesday in the central African country of Chad in what the government said was an attack by an opposition group on the national security agency's office in the capital.

Government spokesman Aberaman Koulamallah said in a statement that the attack on the National State Security Agency, or ANSE, was carried out by The Socialist Party Without Borders. The group is led by Yaya Dillo, the

current president's cousin and a strong contender in the upcoming election. Koulamallah did not elaborate on who was killed or give the number of casualties but said

that some of the attackers had been arrested and others were being pursued. "The situation is now totally under control," he said.

Chad's interim president, Mahamat Deby



United Nations peacekeepers from Pakistan pack their base in Kamanyola, Democratic Republic of the Congo on Feb 28, 2024, as it is being handed over to local security forces as part of an eventual UN withdrawal after decades of operating in the country. The handover comes as violence soars in the conflict-riddled region. (AP)

Itno, seized power after his father who ran the country for more than three decades was killed fighting rebels in 2021. Last year, the government announced it was extending the 18-month transition for two more years, which led to protests across the country. (AP)

ICC awards \$56 million: Judges at the International Criminal Court on Wednesday granted reparations of more than 52 million euros (\$56 million) to thousands of victims of a convicted commander in the shadowy Ugandan rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army.

The nearly 50,000 victims covered by the order included former child soldiers and children born as a result of rapes and forced pregnancies. Dominic Ongwen was convicted three years ago of 61 offenses, including murders, rapes, forced marriages and recruiting child soldiers in 2002-2005. An ICC appeals panel upheld his convictions and 25-year sentence in late 2022, setting the stage for an order for reparations.

"Tens of thousands of individuals suffered tremendous harm due to the unimaginable atrocities committed" as rebel fighters led by Ongwen attacked four camps for displaced people in northern Uganda, said Presiding Judge Bertram Schmitt. (AP)

oil slumps

The price of Kuwaiti crude oil went down by 30 cents Wednesday to reach USD 82.01 per barrel, compared with USD 82.31 pb on Tuesday, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Thursday.

In international markets, Brent crude went up three cents to reach USD 83.68 pb, while the West Texas Intermediate crude dropped 33 cents to reach USD 78.54 pb. (KUNA)

The 7th Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) Summit, due for three days, kick-started on Thursday in Algeria where the member states will discuss the joint cooperation of producing countries to ensure stability of the global gas market and ways to combat any challenges.

The Algerian Ministry of Energy said in a statement that the joint cooperation between the producing companies is the most important topic in the agenda that also features discussions on ensuring global energy security, securing supply and demand,

serving common interest through long-term business contracts, and strengthening joint investment and financing projects.

The statement added that the Summit will look into methods for producing countries to keep up with the global shift towards sustainable energy sources, stressing the positive role natural gas plays in this transition. It also emphasized the need to protect gas markets from interventions and regulatory frameworks that might hinder one another's interest, resulting in damage to market stability in the medium and long terms.

GECF summit focuses on gas market stability

Algerian Minister of Energy Mohammad Arkab said in a press conference that the summit will bring together the member states to face the challenges of the gas industry, management of supply and demand in particular.

Arkab noted that international challenges, such as COVID-19 repercussions and adaptation to the Paris Agreement for climate change, are taken into account of the increasing pressure to accelerate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the use of fossil energy.

He added that the rapidly growing role of natural gas globally demands holding detailed discussions and supporting cooperation among gas-exporting countries to ensure the success of the energy shift.

"Holding the Summit in Algeria is considered a strategic event in the energy field where Algeria aims to strengthen its partnership among the member states to limit greenhouse gas emissions associated with gas, strengthening its potential position and role in sustainable energy solutions," Arkab noted. (KUNA)

Market Movements 29-02-2024

		Change	Closing pts			Change	Closing pts
SAUDI	Tadawul	+19.44	12,630.86	JAPAN	Nikkei	-41.84	39,166.19
UAE	DFM	+18.39	4,308.77				
EGYPT	EGX 30	+87.95	28,964.41				
PHILIPPINES	PSEI	+68.19	6,944.71				
PAKISTAN	KSE 100	+816.64	64,620.21				

Business

Bank promotes awareness with 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

NBK urges customers to keep informed about recent scams and protection methods

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to support the "Let's Be Aware" campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in collaboration with local banks and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) with the aim of promoting financial literacy and awareness among the different segments of society.

In this context, NBK calls on customers to follow the latest publications and awareness messages provided by the bank through its various channels, to keep informed about the latest scams and how to avoid them, as scammers always use devious and changing schemes to steal customer information.

NBK shares educational content including video clips and text communications on all its social media and other digital channels to warn customers from fictitious investments whether in cash, commodities, virtual currencies or real estate.

There are also other forms of fraud, such as tricking customers into investing in attractive stocks and bonds by promising highly lucrative returns, providing false information about a real investment, or enticing them to register their personal information on fake trading platforms to obtain profits.

Other examples include impersonating public figure and businesspersons on social media to trick customers that they provide financial aids, and requesting their banking information to deposit these aids, or calling customers directly and impersonating official entities from police or other authorities to



Diraya banner

steal their information.

NBK always warns customers of all fraud types via SMS, e-mail or phone calls by sharing content on its social media platforms to warn customers from clicking ads with unknown sources, or those pretending to be from legitimate entities like banks or telecom companies share subscriptions ads concurrently with ongoing real subscriptions.

NBK affirms that it will never ask customers for personal information via e-mail, SMS or phone calls, warning them of responding to such messages representing fraud attempts to obtain their banking information to steal their money or data.

NBK firmly believes in the importance of promoting financial culture among the different segments of society and increasing awareness on how

to maximize benefit from its wide range of services via branches or digital channels, using its social media platforms, which are the most popular among Kuwaiti banks.

Regarding this as a crucial part of its strategy, NBK makes consistent efforts to educate customers. To this end, it always urges customers to strictly adhere with the general security instructions and tips to steer clear of online scams. It also advises them to change card PINs frequently and not to share them with anyone impersonating a bank employee.

The "Let's Be Aware" campaign is the largest across the GCC region focusing on raising banking and financial awareness among banks' customers. The campaign covers a variety of crucial topics including: anti-fraud tips, awareness on high-risk investments, ways to maximize benefit from banking services, promoting savings and investment culture, as well as other related topics.

It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key advocate and participant in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives to increase financial and banking awareness among different segments of society. As a leading financial institution, locally and regionally, NBK frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector, as well as many training courses for its employees to enhance their knowledge and expertise in the areas of combating fraud and financial crime.

Oman eyes listing Kuwaiti-Omani Duqm Refinery on stock exchange

Expansion plans for Duqm Refinery await Kuwaiti approval

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: Oman OQ Petroleum Company is considering listing the Kuwaiti-Omani Duqm Refinery on the Omani Stock Exchange. This plan is contingent upon approval from the Kuwaiti side, represented by the Kuwaiti Petroleum International Company. If the Kuwaiti side agrees, Oman OQ Petroleum Company will prepare a study on the listing.

The sources emphasized that listing the Duqm Refinery on the stock market would enhance its importance and have a positive impact on stock market indicators.

The refinery's partners from both Kuwait and Oman envision increasing its production capacity to 270 thousand barrels per day. However, this expansion will occur after making payments to financial institutions, including local and international banks, as the Duqm Refinery is committed to repaying debts to 24 banks and inter-

Investors await Morgan Stanley's review

Boursa Kuwait sees slight decline

By Mahmoud Shendi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: The Boursa Kuwait experienced a slight decline, with the general index dropping by 12.7 points to reach 7420 points, marking a decrease of 0.17%.

Trading activity saw 158 million shares exchanged through 12,204 cash transactions valued at 33.4 million dinars (approximately 101 million dollars).

Investors are eagerly anticipating the implementation of Morgan Stanley's

national institutions.

The interest shown by local and foreign institutions and financing agencies in funding the refinery reflects their confidence in the significance of the Duqm Refinery Project.

Additionally, it underscores the confidence of international financial institutions in the management expertise of both Kuwait and Oman in overseeing oil projects.

review today, which includes the entry of Arzan Financial Finance and Investment for Small Companies Index.

The market's total value decreased by 76 million dinars, reaching 43.897 billion dinars compared to the previous session's 43.973 billion dinars. Conversely, the main market index saw an increase of 39.6 points, reaching 6094 points, representing a 0.6 percent rise.

This was fueled by the trading of 94.4 million shares through 6144 cash transactions valued at 11.6 million dinars (about 35.3 million dollars). However,

The Duqm Refinery primarily focuses on diesel production, accounting for up to 60% of its output. The remaining percentage is distributed among other products such as naphtha, liquefied petroleum gas, petroleum coke, jet fuel, and sulfur.

The construction of the refinery in Oman has also led to the development of other major projects, including an energy and water support project cost-

ing half a billion dollars, as well as a project for oil storage tanks amounting to \$519 million.

Meanwhile, David Baird, CEO of the Duqm Refinery Company (OQ8), revealed to Reuters that the refinery may start refining additional grades of crude oil by the end of the year.

This possibility is currently under study and was considered during the design process to enable the refinery to process heavier ores with higher sulfur levels.

Baird expressed gratitude for the full support of both shareholders. Since its commencement of operations in May, the Duqm Refinery has exported 100 shipments, totaling about 4.1 million tons of products globally.

Furthermore, a feasibility study is underway to establish a petrochemical complex in the Duqm Economic Zone, with potential participation from the Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) alongside the existing shareholders.

Baird noted that the feasibility study conducted throughout 2023 is nearing completion, with the Saudis expressing interest in joining the expansion.

Gulf agreement impacts tender policies

Kuwaiti government stresses equality in tender allocations

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: A recent directive issued to all government agencies by the Council of Ministers emphasized the importance of ensuring equality between Kuwaiti-origin (local) and Gulf-origin (national) products in tender allocations, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The directive stressed adherence to the legal opinion provided by the Fatwa and Legislation Department, which concluded that local products should not be given preferential treatment over national ones by more than a 20% margin, in line with tender laws regarding local versus imported goods.

Disagreements have surfaced among government bodies and regulatory authorities regarding the interpretation of Article 62 of Law No. 74 of 2019, amending certain provisions of Law No. 49 of 2016 concerning public tenders. This article prioritizes public procurement as follows: local products meeting specifications and conditions, with prices not exceeding similar imported products by more than 20%, should be awarded bids.

Despite the Audit Bureau advocating for a 20% price preference for local products while differentiating between local and national producers, govern-

ment agencies interpreted equality between producers differently, citing international agreements between Kuwait and Gulf Cooperation Council countries. This discrepancy led oversight agencies to intervene, resulting in a decision by the fatwa and legislation department for equal treatment of all producers.

Local industrialists have stressed the importance of supporting Kuwaiti national products, similar to practices in Gulf countries. They highlighted court rulings favoring Kuwaiti products in various tenders and emphasized the role of supporting local industries in diversifying the economy. Prioritizing local products in government tenders and projects, they argue, would encourage entrepreneurship, job creation, and stimulate small and medium enterprises, adding value to the economy.

One perspective is based on the Gulf Agreement signed in December 2001, supplementing the Gulf Free Trade Area agreement ratified by the National Assembly in November 1981.

This agreement mandates equal treatment of citizens across member states in economic fields and gives precedence to its provisions over local laws and regulations.

Firm signs contracts worth 17.17 mln dinars

Kuwait's Al-Nakheel inks deals for 'agricultural' development

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: The Al-Nakheel Agricultural Production Company has announced the signing of two tender contracts worth 17.17 million dinars, according to a statement on the Kuwait Stock Exchange, yesterday, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

"Al-Nakheel" indicated that it had signed a tender contract for the implementation, development and maintenance of cosmetic crops and irrigation in the Sabah Al-Ahmad area, the residential city of Al-Khairan and the roads adjacent to it, at a value of 16.70 million dinars.

The company noted that the procedures for signing the contract are being completed, noting that its financial im-

pact will be reflected in the operational revenues item and the profits item in the company's budget throughout the contract period of 5 years, and the financial impact is expected to appear in the third quarter of 2024.

"Nakheel" also signed a tender contract for the implementation, development and maintenance of cosmetic plantings and irrigation in the gardens of colleges and institutes of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training in the Shuwaik region for 470 thousand dinars.

The company expected the financial impact to be reflected in operating revenues and the profits item in the budget.

'Contracts worth \$17.5 bln expected'

MENA offshore projects set for record spending

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: Expenditure on offshore oil and gas projects in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is projected to reach its highest level in a decade in 2023. Regional oil and gas entities are set to award contracts worth \$17.5 billion, marking one of the most lucrative years on record for such contracts, reports Al-Qabas daily.

A recent report attributes this robust spending to a stable oil price environment, with Brent crude averaging around \$82 per barrel. Moreover, government-backed companies in the MENA region are striving to meet ambitious strategic targets for oil and gas production set by their respective governments.

MEED magazine predicts that investment in marine projects will remain high in 2024, with Saudi

Aramco expected to lead the way, Saudi Arabia's significant oil and gas output from offshore fields prompts Aramco to focus on maintaining and enhancing production from these fields through infrastructure development and the installation of new structures.

The report also discusses progress in the neutral zone between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, particularly highlighting the joint venture between Aramco and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation for gas development in the Dorra offshore field. French company Technip Energies has been chosen for engineering and design work for the project. Both sides aim to produce approximately one billion cubic feet of gas daily from the Dorra field, with an equal split in production.

If differences with Iran over asset development are resolved, Aramco

and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation could potentially award contracts worth an estimated \$5 billion for the Durrah gas field's development by year-end.

Additionally, ADNOC emerged as the largest spender on marine projects in the region last year, awarding contracts valued at around \$17 billion for the sour gas development project in Al Hail and Ghasha. Saudi Aramco ranked second, awarding \$5.5 billion in contracts in 2023.

Looking forward, ADNOC is expected to award contracts for major offshore projects, including efforts to enhance production from the Upper Zakum offshore field in Abu Dhabi. Similarly, Qatar Energy Company will award contracts for remaining phases of the North Field Production Sustainability Project (NFPS).

MENA sees record \$30.5 bln in Jan contracts

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: MEED magazine reported that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region kicked off the New Year with an impressive surge in contract awards, reaching a record-breaking value of \$30.5 billion, reports Al-Anba daily.

This figure represents the highest value ever recorded for contract awards in the first month of the year since MEED Projects began tracking regional project activity and awarding contracts in January 2014.

However, in contrast to this regional trend, Kuwait experienced a notable decline in contract awards during January. The country's contract awards dropped by 77.7% to reach \$127 million, compared to December 2023 when contract awards totaled \$450 million. Most of December's awards were attributed to a significant \$42 million deal concluded by the Ministry of Electricity and Water for the rehabilitation of the Al-Zour South power and water distillation station.

Consequently, Kuwait ranked fifth in the Gulf and tenth regionally in terms of awarding contracts it awarded last January, which were limited to only 4 contracts:

- A project worth \$42 million to supply and build an electrical power station with a capacity of 400 kilovolts to serve the areas of Al-Khairan, Al-Wafra, and Sulabiya.
- The Public Authority for Housing Welfare project worth

\$31 million to build a girls' center in the Jaber Al-Ahmad residential suburb.

- A \$30 million Public Authority for Housing Welfare project to build a girls' center in the Sabah Al-Ahmad residential suburb.

- The Public Authority for Housing Welfare project worth \$24 million to build a youth center in the Sabah Al-Ahmad residential suburb.

The magazine said that 6 countries in the region each awarded contracts worth more than one billion dollars, led by Saudi Arabia with a value of 11 billion dollars. The oil sector witnessed the largest value of signed deals, valued at \$8.1 billion, followed by the construction sector, valued at \$7.4 billion.

The largest contract awarded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in January was within the scope of the giant NEOM project worth \$5 billion to build dams that will create an artificial lake in the heart of the mountain resort of Trojena, which is scheduled to host the Asian Winter Games in 2029. The UAE came in second place in awarding contracts. In January, it was worth \$7.9 billion.

Qatar came in third place with a value of awards of \$5.1 billion, driven by four contracts with a total value of \$6 billion within a project aimed at increasing oil production from the Al-Kharj field.

Swisscom confirms talks

Telecoms operator Swisscom confirmed Wednesday it's in talks with Vodafone Group toward a possible purchase of its Italian subsidiary for 8 billion euros (\$8.65 billion). The Swiss company, which is majority owned by the Swiss government, said in a statement it's in "advanced exclusive negotiations" to buy all of Vodafone Italia and merge it with Swisscom's Italian sub-

siary, Fastweb. Swisscom says it expects the purchase, if concluded, would add value and cash flow to the Swiss company and help improve its dividend policy. The Swiss telecoms operator says the deal would bring lower costs and pave the way for synergies, and comply with aims of the Swiss executive branch, the Federal Council. (AP)

US applications for jobless benefits rise but remain historically low

More Americans applied for jobless benefits last week, but layoffs remain historically low even as more high-profile companies have announced job cuts this year. Applications for unemployment benefits rose by 13,000 to 215,000 for the week ending Feb. 24, the Labor Department reported Thursday. Last week's number was revised up by 1,000 to 202,000. In total, 1.9 million Americans were collecting jobless benefits during the week that ended Feb. 17, up 45,000 from the previous week and the most since November. Weekly unemployment claims are broadly

viewed as representative of the number of U.S. layoffs in a given week. They have remained at historically low levels since the pandemic purge of millions of jobs in the spring of 2020. The four-week average of claims, a less volatile measure, fell by 3,000 to 212,500 from the previous week. The Federal Reserve raised its benchmark borrowing rate 11 times beginning in March of 2022 in an effort to bring down the four-decade high inflation that took hold after the economy roared back from the COVID-19 recession of 2020. Part of the Fed's goal was to loosen the

labor market and cool wage growth, which it believes contributed to persistently high inflation. Many economists thought the rapid rate hikes could potentially tip the country into recession, but that hasn't happened. Jobs have remained plentiful and the economy has held up better than expected thanks to strong consumer spending. U.S. employers delivered a stunning burst of hiring to begin 2024, adding 353,000 jobs in January in the latest sign of the economy's continuing ability to shrug off the highest interest rates in two decades. (AP)

Key asset in Guyana cited

Chevron warns its \$53b acquisition of Hess Corp. may be in 'jeopardy'

WASHINGTON, Feb 29, (AP): Chevron warned Monday that its pending \$53 billion acquisition of Hess may be in jeopardy because it will require the approval of Exxon Mobil and a Chinese national oil company, which both hold rights to development of an oil field off the coast of the South American nation Guyana. The disclosure in a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission raised investor qualms, depressing shares of both Chevron and Hess. Chevron's stock price fell 3% Tuesday morning before rebounding; Hess stock lost 4% of its value but bounced back slightly.

Chevron's acquisition of Hess would add this major oil field in Guyana as well as shale properties in the Bakken Formation in North Dakota. Guyana is a country of 791,000 people that is poised to become the world's fourth-largest offshore oil producer, placing it ahead of Qatar, the United States, Mexico and Norway. It has become a major producer in recent years, with oil giants including Exxon Mobil, China's CNOOC, and Hess squared off in a heated competition for highly lucrative oil fields in northern South America. Chevron said it's been engaged in discussion with Exxon and

CNOOC, aka China National Offshore Oil Co. Both companies hold rights of first refusal for decisions regarding the oil field in question, known as the Stabroek Block. Exxon Mobil operates the Stabroek Block and holds 45% interest. Hess holds 30% interest, and CNOOC holds the remaining 25% interest. Production capacity at the field is expected to reach more than 1.2 million barrels per day by the end of 2027, Exxon said in November. If those discussions and subsequent arbitration fail to set aside those first refusal rights, Chevron said, "the merger would not close."



South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, right, talks with Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg during a meeting at the presidential office in Seoul, South Korea, Thursday, Feb. 29, 2024. Zuckerberg discussed cooperation on extended reality devices with LG Electronics executives on Wednesday as part of his visit to South Korea that highlights Meta's ambitions in artificial intelligence. (AP)

CEO meets LG, Samsung chiefs

Meta ramps up AI ambitions

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 29, (AP): Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg discussed cooperation on extended reality devices with LG Electronics executives on Wednesday as part of his visit to South Korea that highlights Meta's ambitions in artificial intelligence.

talk with Samsung about producing Meta-exclusive chips to ease its reliance on the AI chip market-dominant NVIDIA.

South Korea is the second leg of Zuckerberg's three-nation Asian tour that observers say is meant to discuss partnerships with tech powerhouses and forge good relations with business and government leaders in the region. He already visited Japan and will travel to India later this week.

Zuckerberg's visit to Asia comes as Meta ramps up its efforts in artificial intelligence amid a race involving technology firms OpenAI, Google and Microsoft. In a Instagram reel in January, Zuckerberg said that it was Meta's "long term vision to build general intelligence, open source it responsibly, and make it widely available so everyone can benefit."

On Wednesday, Zuckerberg met LG Electronics CEO William Cho for two hours to talk about business strategies for extended reality - known as XR - device development, LG said in a statement.

Meta is building massive compute infrastructure - equivalent to 600k NVIDIA H100 GPUs' worth - to support its artificial intelligence plans as it begins training its Llama 3 generative AI model, he said in the reel. Generative AI models like OpenAI's ChatGPT, Microsoft's Copilot and Meta's Llama 3 are artificial intelligence systems that can generate content based on user prompts.

While experiencing Meta's latest virtual-reality headset, the Quest 3, and Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses, Cho "expressed a keen interest in Meta's advanced technology demonstrations, notably focusing on Meta's large language models and its potential for on-device AI integration," the LG statement said.

Lee Tae-kyu, an expert at the Korea Economic Research Institute, said Meta would think cooperation with Samsung and LG is important as they are top-level tech companies outside the United States. Samsung and LG, on the other hand, would also highly value partnerships with Meta, whose products target customers around the world.

LG is ramping up its strategic collaboration with Meta, aiming to expedite its XR ventures, it said. XR includes augmented reality, virtual reality, mixed reality and other related technologies.

During his visit to Tokyo, Zuckerberg met Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and later told reporters: "We had a good productive conversation about AI and the future of technology, and I am really excited for the work that is happening here in Japan."

Later Wednesday, Zuckerberg met Samsung Electronics Chairman Lee Jae-yong, according to local media. He is scheduled to meet South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Thursday.

He was in Japan with his family for a trip that mixed business with pleasure. He went skiing with his family, visited a McDonald's outlet and learned how swords are made at a swordsmiths near Tokyo.

"Meta already collaborated with high-end sunglasses brand Ray-Ban to launch smart glasses last year. Just like this, Meta could possibly want to introduce their XR technology to a worldwide customer base of a global consumer electronics maker like LG," said Kim Yang Paeng, a technology analyst at the Korea Institute of Economics and Technology.

During his visit to India, he will attend a wedding ceremony for the son of billionaire Mukesh Ambani, head of the oil and technology conglomerate Reliance Industries.

Western Balkans leaders 'pledge' to speed up reforms for EU growth plan

TIRANA, Albania, Feb 29, (AP): The leaders of Western Balkan countries agreed Thursday to speed up regional cooperation to benefit more from a new European Union plan of financial aid that will help provide a faster road to membership.

our readiness for a shared European destiny," he said in an opening speech.

Brussels' plan calls for 6 billion euros (about \$6.5 billion) to be sent to the Balkan states over the next three years in an effort to double the region's economy over the next decade and accelerate their efforts to the join the bloc. That aid is contingent on reforms that would bring their economies in line with EU rules.

The region's six countries - Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia - are at different stages in their applications for membership, but residents have been frustrated with the slow pace of the process. Croatia was the last EU member country to be accepted in 2013.

Balkan leaders have welcomed the plan, but the reform agenda is a challenge to implement.

EU Enlargement Commissioner Oliver Varhelyi said the European Commission aims to halve the implementation time for the new "ambitious" plan.

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, who hosted the summit in Tirana, called the new growth plan "a truly encouraging result of a friendly and open exchange of views."

Varhelyi told reporters that the Western Balkan countries agreed to take concrete steps this year such as unifying their financial regulations. Rama said banking transaction costs are six times higher for countries in the region and the new rules would save a half billion euros (\$540 million).

"The new opportunity of this out-of-the-box plan represents not only recognition from the EU of our decade-long efforts to build a common future against the savage winds of the past, but also challenges us to demonstrate

The six countries also pledged to adapt customs regulations and create joint border crossings like EU member countries.

They also set targets of launching research and development hubs for industry and installing free Wi-Fi in public places.

WASHINGTON, Feb 29, (AP): American consumers are feeling less confident this month as concerns over a possible recession grew despite most recent data pointing to a healthy U.S. economy.

The Conference Board, a business research group, said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index fell to 106.7 from a revised 110.9 in January. Analysts had been forecasting that the index remained steady from January to February. The decline in the index comes after three straight months of improvement.

The index measures both Americans' assessment of current economic conditions and their outlook for the next six months.

The index measuring Americans short-term expectations for income, business and the job market fell to 79.8 from 81.5 in January. A reading under 80 often signals an upcoming recession.

Consumers' view of current conditions also retreated, falling to 147.2 from 154.9.

The decline in consumer confidence this month comes as somewhat of a surprise as the economy continues to show resilience in the face of higher interest rates and inflation. Though price growth has receded considerably in the past year, inflation remains above the Federal Reserve's 2% target.

Consumer spending accounts for about 70% of U.S. economic activity, so economists pay close attention to consumer behavior as they take measure of the broader economy.

Overall, confidence is barely above the average from last year, which was 105.4, according to Stephen Stanley, an economist at Santander, a bank.

Americans were slightly less worried about food and gas prices last month, the Conference Board said, but expressed more concern about jobs and the ongoing presidential campaign.

Consumers' expectations of future inflation fell to their lowest level since March 2020. Lower inflation expectations are a positive sign because they can become self-fulfilling: If people expect prices to rise rapidly in the months ahead, they may accelerate their purchases, which can fuel more price hikes.

Yet even as inflation concerns wane, the proportion of Americans who said jobs were "easy to get" fell.

"In the case of jobs, the market is still strong, it's just much less strong than a year ago when job swapping for higher pay was easy," said Robert Frick, an economist at the Navy Federal Credit Union. "And now the contentious election season is coming closer into view, and national elections strongly influence perceptions of the economy."

In a bid to combat four-decade high

Anxiety over potential recession reappears



Travelers move through the B terminal at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024, in Atlanta. On Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2024, the Conference Board reports on U.S. consumer confidence for February. (AP)

Sector still faces headwinds

Small business owners are optimistic for growth in '24

NEW YORK, Feb 29, (AP): While it seems increasingly unlikely the U.S. economy is headed for recession, small businesses still face headwinds like higher costs and difficulty retaining qualified But owners say they're optimistic as 2024 gets underway, according to a new survey from American Express.

Eighty-five percent of all small businesses surveyed said they were satisfied with the success of their business, and 86% said they achieved their 2023 business goals. In August 2023, by contrast, 80% of all small businesses

surveyed said their long-term financial confidence was being negatively impacted by the economy. "Even in uncertain economic conditions, small businesses continue to demonstrate resiliency and dedication," said Gina Taylor Cotter, executive vice president and general manager of American Express' small business products & Business Blueprint. "Our latest data shows small businesses see a positive 2024 ahead and they're taking steps, including hiring, and implementing new tools, in order to stay proactive and competi-

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inflation in the wake of the pandemic, the Federal Reserve raised its benchmark rate 11 times beginning in March 2022. However, the central bank has left rates alone at its last four meetings and is expected to start cutting rates later this year, which is expected to further boost an already strong economy.

Americans showed a continued willingness to spend freely.

"Overall, consumers are set to benefit from declining interest rates as the Fed starts to lower the target range this year," said Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics, "which should be supportive of sentiment over time."

The government reported last month that the nation's economy grew at an unexpectedly brisk 3.3% annual pace from October through December as

Despite some recent high-profile layoffs, the labor market continues to churn out jobs. U.S. employers added 353,000 jobs in January and the unemployment rate stayed at 3.7%, just above a half-century low.

In another contradictory twist, the number of people in the Conference Board's survey who said they planned to make a big-ticket purchase like a car or major appliance in the next six months rose.

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Though most economists did not anticipate a decline in consumer confidence this month, there doesn't appear to be great concern that an uptick in pessimism will be sustained.

Fed's preferred inflation gauge picked up last month in sign of still-elevated prices

WASHINGTON, Feb 29, (AP): An inflation gauge favored by the Federal Reserve increased in January, the latest sign that the slowdown in U.S. consumer price increases is occurring unevenly from month to month.

inflation is sure to be welcomed by the White House as President Joe Biden seeks re-election. Still, even though average paychecks have outpaced inflation over the past year, many Americans remain frustrated that overall prices are still well above where they were before inflation erupted three years ago. That sentiment, evident in many public opinion polls, could pose a threat to Biden's re-election bid.

summer of 2022. Supply chain snarls have eased, reducing costs of parts and raw materials, and a steady flow of job seekers has made it easier for employers to limit wage increases, one of the drivers of inflation. Still, inflation remains above the central bank's 2% annual target.

prices a better gauge of the likely path of future inflation.

The government reported Thursday that prices rose 0.3% from December to January, up from 0.1% in the previous month. But in a more encouraging sign, prices were up just 2.4% from a year earlier, down from a 2.6% annual pace in December and the smallest such increase in nearly three years.

The year-over-year cool down in

Excluding volatile food and energy costs, prices rose 0.4% from December to January, up from 0.1% in the previous month. And compared with a year earlier, such so-called "core" prices rose 2.8%, barely down from 2.9% in December. Economists consider core

Behind the monthly rise in inflation were rising costs for services such as hotels, health care and restaurant meals. Hospital services, for example, are becoming more expensive to cover higher labor costs for sought-after nurses and other health care workers. The same trend is also evident in other service industries. It's one reason why inflation has proved more chronic for services than for goods, where prices have eased as company supplies have been replenished.

Both sides share insights on strategic plans for aviation cooperation

Al-Fagaan receives the Irish delegation at Kuwait Airways



Abdulmohsen Al-Fagaan in a group photo with the delegation and company officials.



Abdulmohsen Al-Fagaan hands Simon Coveney a commemorative shield.



Al-Fagaan and Coveney on a tour of the company's exhibition.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: Kuwait Airways Chairman, Captain Abdulmohsen Al-Fagaan received an Irish delegation headed by His Excellency, the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment of Ireland, Mr. Simon Coveney, along with the Ambassador of Ireland to the United Arab Emirates, H.E. Alison Milton, and accompanied by various business delegates and Irish companies at the company's headquarters, in the presence of Kuwait Airways' Chief Executive Officer, Captain Ahmad M. Alkreebani and various officials representing the company.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to strengthen relations between Kuwait Airways and Ireland, with regard to the aviation sector and to work on its development that would benefit all parties involved.

Speaking about the meeting, Kuwait Airways Chairman, Captain Abdulmohsen Al-Fagaan stated, "We are pleased to receive H.E. the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment of Ireland, Mr. Simon Coveney and H.E. Ambassador Alison Milton and their accompanying delegation. During the meeting, we discussed strengthening relations between Kuwait Airways with enterprises and companies in Ireland, in addition to developing cordial relations between both parties, while exploring areas of collaboration in the operational sectors related to aviation."

Al-Fagaan added, "This joint co-



Al-Fagaan and Alkreebani receive the delegation.

operation paves the way for analysing prospects of operating flights between the two countries and concluding agreements for the exchange of expertise, innovation and investment opportunities between the two sides. This is in light of the fact that numerous Kuwaiti's travel to Ireland, be it for tourism, education or business purposes, boosting us towards strengthening this partnership towards greater possibilities to achieve the desired objectives. This is in addition to venturing into new and diverse markets with positive economic feasibility that simultaneously meets the requirements of our valued customers."

Al-Fagaan concluded his state-

ment by emphasizing on the deep-rooted historic relations between the two countries, expressing his hope that these relations would continue to develop in the best interests of the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Ireland.

As part of the visit, the delegation was also escorted on a tour to the company's exhibition gallery, where the visiting team was briefed about the history of the national carrier, its pioneering efforts and achievements over the course of 70 years since its establishment in 1954, covering the development of KAC's fleet and services over the years to the present day, and its commitment in providing distinguished services to its valued customers.

Exclusive charity gift cards unveiled

LuLu Hypermarket shines with traditional 'Ramadan Souq' launch



LuLu Hypermarket launches eagerly anticipated 'Ramadan Special' promotion.



KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: Embracing the holy month of Ramadan, LuLu Hypermarket launched its eagerly anticipated 'Ramadan Special' promotion on February 28, marking the occasion with the grand opening of the traditional 'Ramadan Souq' at its Al-Qurain outlet.

The ceremony, graced by esteemed officials from five distinguished charity groups in Kuwait – Namaa Charity, Qawafil Charity, Islamic Care Society, Wasm Ahl Al khair and Al Najad Charity – signalled the commencement of a month-long journey characterized by generosity and unity.

During the event, LuLu Hypermarket unveiled exclusive charity gift cards in collaboration with these humanitarian organizations, empowering patrons to effortlessly contribute to noble causes.

Festive gift cards, available in denominations of KD10, KD25, and KD50, were made accessible at all outlets, offering shoppers the ideal opportunity to spread joy and support during Ramadan.

Furthermore, the hypermarket committed to distributing over 400 free Iftar food kits daily throughout Ramadan. Additionally with a special focus on supporting indigent individuals across Kuwait through a partnership with Namaa Charity.

Enhancing the atmosphere of the 'Ramadan Souq' are a variety of promotions and discounts on essential Ramadan items, ranging from delicious foods to household necessities and heartfelt gifts.

Shoppers can explore specially curated Ramadan kits, offered in two options: a standard kit priced at KD10 and a premium kit at KD15. They can also savor convenient Iftar meal counters and immerse themselves in the festive spirit elevated by traditional decorations and impressive displays.

The 'Ramadan Special' promo-



Unveiling exclusive charity gift cards.



tion goes beyond ordinary shopping, providing captivating experiences like the 'Dates Festival,' 'Big TV Majlis,' and 'Ramadan Home Fest,' catering to a range of preferences and needs. Additionally, health-conscious consumers can delve into the 'Healthy Ramadan' segment, which offers organic, vegan, and allergen-free options to enrich their fasting journey.

LuLu Hypermarket, as a testament to its steadfast commitment to community engagement, invites patrons of all ages to join in the festivities of the 'Ramadan Nights' festival. It promises a blend of entertainment, gastro-

nomical delights, and cultural enrichment for all participants.

Through initiatives such as the 'Ramadan Special' promotion, LuLu Hypermarket reaffirms its dedication to enriching the social and religious fabric of the community. Additionally, it aims to provide unparalleled shopping experiences and access to premium products at competitive prices.

LuLu Hypermarket extends a warm invitation to all to join in commemorating the spirit of Ramadan, where tradition seamlessly blends with modernity, and generosity knows no limits.



Photos during the KFH celebration of National Days at Winter Wonderland.

As part of the National campaign

KFH celebrates National Days at Winter Wonderland

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: As part of the National campaign, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has celebrated the National and Liberation Days in KFH Zone at Winter Wonderland, the paramount entertainment destination in Kuwait. The celebration is part of the national days' extensive program to honor Kuwait's heritage, featuring a wide array of activities and events catering to both customers and the public.

The celebration events created a delightful atmosphere for the national festivities, leaving a lasting impression on over 12,000 visitors. KFH also hosted competitions on February 25th and 26th and awarded the winners with valuable prizes. Media agencies covered the events that garnered significant participation from the public. This reaffirms KFH's dedication to community engagement, solidifying its leadership in social responsibility.

KFH zone also hosted a diverse range of activities, including children's photography sessions in traditional attire and Ardha' folklore performance, a celebration of Kuwaiti heritage indicating joy during significant national events. Additionally, the various competitions offered insights into Kuwait's culture, alongside hospitality services for visitors. The highlight of the celebration was the national campaign TVC which amassed unprecedented views on social media platforms.



KFH Zone in Winter Wonderland.

ABK announces Ali Ahmad Bouftain as Alfouz KD 20,000 monthly draw winner

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced Ali Ahmad Bouftain as the KD20,000 Alfouz monthly draw winner on Tuesday, 27 February 2024, whereby the draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Since its launch, the Alfouz account continues to offer an impressive weekly draw of KD10,000. The Bank has recently expanded its offering by adding a new alluring monthly draw of KD20,000, and an exceptional quarterly draw of KD100,000.

The account also retains its hallmark mega annual draw of a KD5,000 monthly salary for ten years. Furthermore, the Bank now offers customers an increased opportunity to win for every KD10 as opposed to KD100 previously.

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account and/



Alfouz monthly draw winner.

or increase their balances to have more chances in winning in the upcoming weekly draw winner announcement, which will take place on Monday, 4th March 2024. The higher the deposits, the higher the chances to win.

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

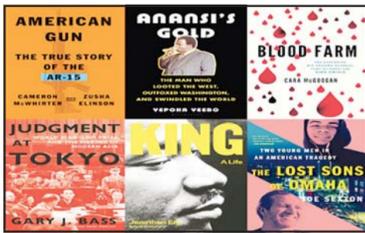
Blackhawk's work stands out with 'intellectual distinction and felicity of expression'

'The Rediscovery of America' nominee for \$10,000 history prize

NEW YORK, Feb 29, (AP): Ned Blackhawk's "The Rediscovery of America," winner last fall of a National Book Award, is a finalist for a history honor presented by the J. Anthony Lukas Prize Project.

Blackhawk's account of Native Americans over the past five centuries is among five nominees for the Mark Lynton History Prize, a \$10,000 award given for work which "combines intellectual distinction with felicity of expression." The other books cited were Gary J. Bass' "Judgment at Tokyo: World War II on Trial and the Making of Modern Asia"; Jonathan Eig's biography of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., "King: A Life"; Dylan C. Penningroth's "Before the Movement: The Hidden History of Black Civil Rights" and Yepoka Yeebo's "Anansi's Gold: The Man Who Looted the West, Outfoxed Washington, and Swindled the World."

Finalists for the Lukas Book Prize, also worth \$10,000, are Kerry Howley's "Bot-



This combination of book cover images shows some of the finalists for the Mark Lynton History and the Lukas Book Prizes, top row from left, 'American Gun: The True Story of the AR-15' by Cameron McWhirter and Zusha Elinson, 'Anansi's Gold: The Man Who Looted the West, Outfoxed Washington, and Swindled the World' by Yepoka Yeebo, 'Blood Farm: The Explosive Big Pharma Scandal that Altered the AIDS Crisis' by Cara McGoogan, bottom row from left, 'Judgment at Tokyo: World War II on Trial and the Making of Modern Asia' by Gary J. Bass, 'King: A Life' by Jonathan Eig and 'The Lost Sons of Omaha: Two Young Men in an American Tragedy' by Joe Sexton. (AP)

atoms Up and the Devil Laughs: A Journey Through the Deep State"; Cara McGoogan's "Blood Farm: The Explosive Big Pharma Scandal that Altered the AIDS Crisis"; Cameron McWhirter's and Zusha Elinson's "American Gun: The True Story of the AR-15"; Joe Sexton's "The Lost Sons of Omaha: Two Young Men in an American Tragedy" and Dashka Slater's "Accountable: The True Story of a Racist Social Media Account and the Teenagers Whose Lives It Changed."

Commitment

The Lukas Book Prize is given for a book which demonstrates "literary grace, commitment to serious research and original reporting." The Lukas prize project also announced the shortlist for the Lukas Work-In-Progress Awards, for which two winners each receive \$25,000 to "aid in the completion of a significant work of nonfiction on a topic of American political or social concern."

The nominees are Lorraine Boissoneault's

"Body Weather: Notes on Illness in the Anthropocene"; Alice Driver's "The Life and Death of the American Worker: The Immigrants Taking on America's Largest Meatpacking Company"; Ranita Ray's "Violent Schools: Slow Death in the American Classroom"; Jessica Slice's "Unfit Parent: On the Barriers and Brilliance of Raising Kids While Disabled and Chronically Ill" and Nilo Tabrizy and Khadijah Heydari's "For the Sun After Long Nights: The Story of Iran's Women-Led Uprising."

Winners will be announced March 19. The Lukas prizes, named for the late author and investigative journalist, were founded in 1998. They are co-administered by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard and sponsored by the family of the late historian and businessman Mark Lynton.

Previous winners have included Robert Caro, Isabel Wilkerson and Jill Lepore.

Books

Variety



This image released by Netflix shows Adam Sandler in a scene from 'Spaceman.' (AP)

Film

Renck transforms loneliness into cinematic poetry

Sandler in pensive sci-fi drama 'Spaceman'

LOS ANGELES, Feb 29, (AP): David Bowie's Major Tom, sitting in his tin can. Elton John's Rocket Man, missing Earth and his wife. Matt Damon in "The Martian," left behind to starve. Matthew McConaughey in "Interstellar," weeping as he watches his kids age without him.

Much art has been made of the infinite loneliness of space travel. And how could it not? Loneliness may be a universal human condition, but what could be lonelier than being removed from the human race entirely?

And so when Adam Sandler, as moody Czech astronaut Jakub in Johan Renck's "Spaceman," is asked by a young girl during a broadcast to Earth if he's lonely, he answers in platitudes but his eyes betray the truth. Yes, he is lonely. Very lonely.

At one point in Sandler's career, the idea of the actor in a spacesuit as an anxious astronaut heading to the outskirts of Jupiter could only have signaled comedy. But we've seen enough great work at this point from Sandler in dramatic roles to know what he's capable of when the stars are aligned, and he gives a hugely empathetic performance here.

Fascinating

If there's a flaw in "Spaceman," despite its tantalizing promise, it's not a lack of acting heft but strangely, a lack of story heft. Adapted from the novel "Spaceman of Bohemia" by Jaroslav Kalffar, it paints a world that should be fascinating but is often reduced to seductive yet ultimately frustrating dream sequences. They're lovely, but we'd like to actually know more about Jakub and his past on Earth, not to mention his relationship with wife Lenka (the always-wonderful Carey Mulligan) beyond seeing her run through yellow fields of flowers.

We begin halfway through Jakub's mission. That's 189 days since he left Lenka and Earth for a solo trip to explore the Chopra cloud near Jupiter, glistening and purple and mysterious, beating the Koreans to the punch.

What year are we in? The spaceship looks late-20th century, not 2024 and certainly not futuristic. The production design is terrific here, evoking what such an environment might look like when a guy's been living in it for six months - rather like what a studio apartment might look like after six months without a cleaning. There are half-consumed bottles of space food. The toilet is constantly malfunctioning, but ground control cares more about fixing the cameras than the plumbing.



Jackie Sandler, from left, Adam Sandler, Sunny Sandler and Sadie Sandler arrive at the premiere of 'Spaceman' on Monday, Feb. 26, 2024, at The Egyptian Theater in Los Angeles. (AP)

Fact is, Jakub, like John's Rocket Man, misses his wife. They've been sending each other video messages, but hers have become spotty. She is pregnant, and angry at having been abandoned for a year. In fact, Lenka records a message telling Jakub she's deeply unhappy and wants to leave him.

All of which creates a huge Houston-we-have-a-problem moment for the mission, which needs a focused astronaut. The head of the Euro Space program, Commissioner Tuma (Isabella Rossellini) decides Jakub won't get to see Lenka's message. But he senses something is wrong.

And then one night, Jakub awakens with a spider crawling out from his mouth.

Phew - it's only a dream. But soon enough, the spider appears for real, an actual, six-eyed, life-sized alien. Well, we think for real. The spider could be a

dream, and we're surely meant to consider that possibility. (In fact, maybe the whole mission is a dream and Jakub is a guy in a studio apartment, but let's not go there.)

At first, Jakub thinks he's going nuts. He puts on his suit and tries to kill the alien with exterminating gas. But the spider helpfully explains that this won't hurt him. He is, he recounts, on his way from his own planet, traveling through space and time. Oh, and he may have been around since the beginning of the universe. Also: he's voiced by Paul Dano, in a gentle tone arguably reminiscent of HAL in "2001: A Space Odyssey."

If HAL were, perhaps, a therapist - because that's essentially what the spider becomes, trying to ease Jakub's loneliness but also very curious about his life on Earth. He calls Jakub "skinny human," and absolutely loves the hazelnut spread "skinny human" eats, calling it "rich and creamy."

But mainly they discuss Jakub's marriage. Jakub is defensive. "Why do you resist exploration?" asks the spider, whom Jakub names Hanuš. At another point, Hanuš asks: "You have many boundaries, skinny human, perhaps they are the cause of your loneliness?"

This interplay is toggled with scenes of Lenka back home, as well as flashbacks of the genesis of the couple's love, memories that the spider forces Jakub to explore - along with that whole genesis-of-the-universe thing.

And so the spaceship approaches the mysterious purple cloud, a place that represents both the beginning and perhaps the end, while Jakub approaches an understanding of his love for Lenka and where that all fits in the universe, too.

These late scenes are both beautiful visually and somewhat lacking. Is the message simply that one must travel across space and time (and past Jupiter) to realize what love means? Questions arise but are not explored. For example, we learn briefly that Jakub's father back in Czechoslovakia had been an informer under Soviet rule, but little time is taken to detail how this affects Jakub.

Still, it's a pleasant and occasionally mesmerizing ride, thanks in no small measure to Sandler's skillful empathy and yet another absorbing turn by Mulligan, who never disappoints. In the constellation that is Hollywood, her star continues to be one of the brightest. "Spaceman," a Netflix release, has been rated R by the Motion Picture Association "for language." Running time: 107 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Features

ARABO TIMES
FRIDAY-SATURDAY, MARCH 1-2, 2024

STOCKHOLM: Legendary pop icon Cyndi Lauper, who rose to fame in the 1980s with hits such as "Time After Time" and "Girls Just Want To Have Fun," has entered a partnership with the Swedish masterminds behind the immersive virtual concert ABBA Voyage.

The partnership announced Thursday by the Pophouse Entertainment Group co-founded by ABBA singer Björn Ulvaeus, involves the acquisition of a majority share of the award-winning singer-songwriter's music. The aim is to develop new ways to bring Lauper's music to fans and younger audiences through new performances and live experiences.

Lauper said she agreed to the sale, for an undisclosed amount, when it became apparent the Swedish company wasn't just in it for the money. "Most suits, when you tell them an idea, their eyes glaze over, they just want your greatest hits," Lauper told The Associated Press at the Pophouse headquarters in Stockholm earlier this month. "But these guys are a multimedia company, they're not looking to just buy my catalog, they want to make something new."

Four decades after her breakthrough solo album, the 70-year-old Queens native is still brimming with ideas and the energy to bring them to stage.

Lauper said she's not aiming to replicate the glittery supernova brought to stage in ABBA Voyage where stupefying technology offers digital avatars of the ABBA band members as they looked in their 1970s heyday, but rather an "immersive theater piece" that transports audiences to the New York she grew up in.

"It's about where I came from and the three women that were very influential in my life, my mom, my grandmother and my aunt," she said.

Lauper has long advocated for women's rights and gender equality, and her 1983 hit "Girls Just Want to Have Fun," reinvented by other female artists through the years, has become a feminist anthem. Lauper seems humbled by this responsibility.

It was during the large Women's March in 2017 following the inauguration of Donald Trump where she saw protesters with signs reading "Girls just want to have fun (damental rights)" that gave her the impetus to raise money for women's health. So far, she has raised more than \$150,000 to help small organizations that provide safe and legal abortions. "I grew up with three women. I saw the disenfranchisement very

clearly. And I saw the struggles, I saw the joy, I saw the love," she said. "And it made me come out with boxing gloves on." (AP)

LONDON: Dave Myers, best known as one half of Britain's adored "Hairy Bikers" TV chef duo, has died after a battle with cancer, his co-star and long-time



Lauper



Myers

friend Si King said Thursday. He was 66.

Myers and King found fame in the U.K. and beyond with their "Hairy Bikers" TV series, an unlikely combination of motorbike travel show, humor and cookery program. The formula proved hugely successful and the bearded duo has published more than 25 cookbooks.

Myers first announced he was receiving treatment for cancer in 2022. He didn't provide details about his diagnosis.

King said in a post on social media that Myers died peacefully at home Wednesday.

"I am not sure I can put into words on how I feel at the moment. My best friend is on a journey that for now, I can't follow,"

King said. "I will miss him every day and the bond and friendship we shared over half a lifetime. I wish you god's speed brother; you are and will remain a beacon in this world."

Myers was working as a makeup artist specializing in prosthetics when he first met King on the set of a BBC television drama in 1995. (AP)

People & Places



Van Noten



Van Noten

PARIS: Paris Fashion Week's fall shows, headlining with Balmain, traversed an encyclopedic range from history to the future, blending tradition with cutting-edge innovation.

Designers delved into archives on Wednesday to reinterpret the past while projecting forward with futuristic silhouettes and materials. From utilitarian details that ground regal aesthetics in the contemporary to surreal interplays of form and texture, the collections celebrated the industry's ability to innovate while honoring its past.

Here are some highlights of fall-winter 2024 ready-to-wear collections:

Cher led the VIP pack at Balmain's latest fall show, as Olivier Rousteing embarked on a personal journey back to his roots.

The designer drew inspiration from the "green thumb" of the house's founder, **Pierre Balmain**, and the verdant landscapes of his upbringing in **Bordeaux**. Known for his sharp tailoring and bold aesthetics, Rousteing this season wove a story filled with natural motifs, bringing a touch of the "provincial" to the Paris runway.

"Today I'm returning to Bordeaux, the city that formed me," Rousteing reflected. He said his collection blended Pierre Balmain's iconic "New French Style," characterized by its bold architectural lines and precise tailoring, with the "graceful dignity of Bordeaux."

This fusion was evident in nature-inspired designs, from earrings shaped like bunches of grapes to garments adorned with grape embroideries, prints and even whimsical snail buttons. A standout piece, a snail-shell golden breastplate, captured the audience's attention, prompting a flurry of camera clicks from the VIP guests.

Vibrant grape embroideries punctuated the palette of khaki and black across silhouettes that nodded to the '80s. Adding a burst of color and humor, a bright red net shopping bag evoked memories of hometown markets for Rousteing, infusing the collection with a sense of levity.

While the organic musings stayed within the familiar territory of Balmain's aesthetic under Rousteing, the collection was noteworthy for its diversity, particularly in casting models of all ages to present the 56 designs.

Belgian designer **Dries Van Noten** sews history, tension, and elegance into each look. His latest womenswear show was no exception, kicking off with a display of grandeur meeting a contemporary edge. The opener, a thick beige coat seeming regal, was immediately grounded in the present with a utilitarian studded collar, reminiscent of a choker, steering clear of vintage territory.

Van Noten, a master of blending the old with the new, further demonstrated this skill with a simple gray skirt that draped in a manner both fashion-forward and evoking the turn of the (last) century. A loose top managed to straddle the worlds of sportswear and



Van Noten



Van Noten

Style

the refined elegance of Princess Anne of **Britain**, showcasing Van Noten's unique ability to navigate between different eras and styles.

The show was a visual feast of illusions and contrasts. The sleeves were cut to make them almost two-dimensional, an innovative play on perspective that challenges the viewer's gaze.



Van Noten

Sweaters seemed to animate, embracing their wearers in a dance of fabric and form. This interplay of textures and colors created a dynamic energy and

poetry that has become a Van Noten hallmark. In an age where digital communication reigns supreme and environmental



Van Noten



Van Noten

Fashion

PARIS

ment to combining art with fashion. Meanwhile, **Chloe's** invitation, a giant leather keyring adorned with a golden metal banana, introduced a playful element to **Chemena Kamali's** anticipated debut. **Rick Owens** personalized the experience with a white fabric neck-piece bearing the guest's name. **Yohji Yamamoto's** invitation, an enigmatic black plastic cutout of a human face in profile, added a layer of mystery.

These invitations, rich in creativity and craftsmanship, underscore the fashion industry's appreciation for tradition and personal touch in an increasingly virtual world - while they may seem at odds with growing ecological concerns.

In a saleable display of monochrome, **Nicolas di Felice** unveiled his latest collection for Courreges on a pared-down, sanitized white runway, drawing fashion insiders into a world where **Andre Courreges'** space-age legacy meets the enigmatic allure of underwater scuba wear, all while channeling a dash of '90s nostalgia.

Fall was a study in cool, low-energy sophistication. Each piece boasted minimalist utilitarian details-flappy tassels, headwear caps reminiscent of scuba gear, and geometric paneling with scooped-out shapes that spoke of intergalactic adventures. One of the models' arms was often loose, appearing bare, tucking in the front of a garment, as the sleeve it was meant to occupy hung stiffly and empty at the side in a surreal touch. This geometry, a reverential homage to Courreges' founding vision, was reimagined through di Felice's contemporary eye.

Noteworthy were fashion-forward elements like pale body panels that cleverly played with the silhouette, erasing the traditional shape of the torso and introducing a fresh narrative on form and space. (AP)



Van Noten



Van Noten



Van Noten

Ahead of World Obesity Day, Cleveland Clinic unveils groundbreaking ARMMS-T2D study

New research confirms benefits of weight-loss surgery for patients with diabetes

CLEVELAND, Feb 29: A new study is offering hope to individuals with obesity and diabetes, showing that bariatric surgery can help to improve both conditions, even putting diabetes into remission in some cases, according to a bariatric surgeon from global health system Cleveland Clinic who co-authored the study.

Ahead of World Obesity Day (March 4), Ali Aminian, MD, Director of Cleveland Clinic's Metabolic and Bariatric Institute, explains that obesity and diabetes go hand in hand – the accumulation of excess body fat can cause and exacerbate type 2 diabetes.

"When we treat obesity effectively, associated conditions such as diabetes, as well as high cholesterol and high blood pressure, are likely to improve too. Bariatric surgery also results in favorable hormonal changes that can improve diabetes control," says Dr. Aminian. "In this study, we wanted to compare the impact of weight-loss surgery on diabetes as

compared to medications or lifestyle changes typically used in diabetes management."

The study, known as the Alliance of Randomized Trials of Medicine vs Metabolic Surgery in Type 2 Diabetes (ARMMS-T2D), in particular investigated the long-term durability of diabetes control resulting from bariatric surgery and included pooled results of patients at Cleveland Clinic and three other U.S. centers, who were studied over a period of up to 12 years.

"The ARMMS-T2D study is significant as it provides randomized clinical trials of bariatric surgery were limited in size, surgery type, and follow-up duration," says Dr. Aminian. "Our findings have confirmed the results of many of these smaller studies; demonstrating that bariatric surgery leads to superior diabetes control as compared with medical and lifestyle interventions. Post-bariatric surgery, fewer diabetes medications were needed, and



CCF Dr. Ali Aminian

more patients had diabetes remission than was the case of patients in the group using medication and lifestyle interventions."

Glucose Levels, Insulin Use, and Diabetes Remission

The study compared the results of patients' hemoglobin A1C blood tests. These tests measure a patient's average blood sugar levels over the preceding three months, and a level of 6.5% or above classifies the patient as having diabetes. The results showed patients in the post-bariatric surgery group had better hemoglobin A1C results than the medical/lifestyle group, at 1.4% lower at the seven-year point, and 1.1% lower at 12 years.

Insulin usage was also significantly lower in the bariatric group when measured after seven years, at 16% versus 56%. Dr. Aminian points out this is an important benefit as it can be challenging to adjust insulin doses for some patients, with serious consequences if blood sugar falls too low, and also because insulin can cause weight gain and is an expensive medication.

The study also looked at how many patients had achieved diabetes remission, meaning they no longer

needed to take insulin or any other medications to control their blood sugar. Diabetes remission was greater after bariatric surgery, with 18.2% of this group achieving remission compared with 6.2% in the medical/lifestyle group at seven years. At the 12-year mark, 12.7% of the surgical group was still in remission compared to 0.0% of the medical/lifestyle group.

Two other notable durable benefits of bariatric surgery over lifestyle and medical interventions were found in the study. Over time, many post-bariatric patients had healthier cholesterol levels and those with high blood pressure appeared to need fewer medications to control it.

Dr. Aminian is quick to point out that the study does not suggest that all patients with obesity and diabetes should rush to undergo bariatric surgery. "Lifestyle changes and medications are the first line treatments, but where the adequate response is not achieved, bariatric surgery is an

excellent option. It is also one that should not be delayed for too long – diabetes is a progressive disease that, if not properly managed, can cause serious long-term complications and even death. In addition, the shorter the duration of the patient having diabetes, the more likely long-term remission following bariatric surgery will be achieved," he explains.

While new classes of diabetes medicine made available recently also support weight loss, the study points out that these can be costly and require long-term use, while the durability of their efficacy has not yet been determined.

"For suitable candidates who have diabetes and obesity – particularly those with a very high body mass index, who are less likely to respond to medication – surgery can be a great choice. Surgeries are safer than ever before, and bariatric surgeries can prevent the serious long-term health consequences of obesity and diabetes."

Future depends on emissions

Climate change cost US ski industry billions, study says

DENVER, Feb 29, (AP): U.S. ski areas lost \$5 billion from 2000 to 2019 as a result of human-caused climate change and could lose around \$1 billion annually in the 2050s depending on how much emissions are reduced, a new study found.

People "may not care about the loss of the species halfway around the world, or a flood that's happening in some other part of the world. But sport is often something people care about," said Daniel Scott, a scientist at the University of Waterloo and study co-author. "And they can see some of these changes happening."

Warm weather has upended winter recreation across North America and Europe this year, cancelling a 250-mile dog sled race in Maine, opening golf courses in Minnesota, and requiring snow saved from the previous year to run a ski race in Austria. A warm, dry El Niño weather pattern coupled with global warming is to blame, scientists say, and has put the threat to winter on center stage.

"It's a now problem, not a future-looking problem," said Auden Schendler, senior vice-president of sustainability at Aspen One, a ski and hospitality company that helped fund the study, published in Current Issues in Tourism.

It models what average ski seasons would have looked like from 2000 to 2019 in the four major U.S. markets – the Northeast, Midwest, Rocky Mountain and Pacific West – without climate change. Its baseline comparison is ski seasons from 1960 to 1979 – a period when most ski areas were operating and before significant trends of human-caused warming began. It found the average modeled season between

2000 and 2019 was shorter by 5.5 to 7.1 days, even with snowmaking to make up for less natural snow.

Under an optimistic emissions reduction scenario, the future of the U.S. ski industry would see seasons shortened by 14 to 33 days in the 2050s, even with snowmaking. A high-emissions scenario would nearly double the days lost.

Countries meeting for annual climate talks agreed in December that the world needs to be "transitioning away" from the fossil fuels that are heating the planet to dangerous levels, but set no concrete targets for doing so. Earth last year had its hottest year on record, and monthly records have continued this year.

"The future of the ski industry, if that's something you care about, is really in our hands and it will play out over the next 10 to 15 years in terms of the policies and actions that we take to reduce emissions," Scott said.

The researchers calculated economic losses based on increased operating costs for snowmaking along with lost skier revenue. Scott called the estimates "probably somewhat conservative," noting that they don't include such things as the loss of money that skiers spend on goods and services in winter sport communities.

The researchers said they undertook the study in part to fill a void in good data about how much climate change was costing the ski industry. They also suggested such data would be needed if the industry pursued lawsuits against fossil fuel producers, citing as a precedent ongoing litigation by several Colorado communities that are suing oil companies ExxonMobil and Suncor Energy for the cost of adapting to the impacts of climate change.



A skier descends Black Mountain of Maine, Feb. 11, 2023, in Rumford, Maine. A new study says U.S. ski areas lost about \$5 billion from 2000 to 2019 as a result of human-caused climate change. (AP)

Patients urge Alabama lawmakers to restore IVF services in the state

'Life begins at conception, not implantation'

MONTGOMERY, Ala., Feb 29, (AP): LeeLee Ray went through eight miscarriages, one ectopic pregnancy and multiple surgeries before turning to surrogacy in her hopes of having a child.

She and her husband found a surrogate through a matching program, and they hoped to soon transfer frozen embryos. But now that plan is in doubt as Alabama fertility clinics paused IVF services in the wake of a state court ruling that embryos are considered children under the state's wrongful death law.

"I'm just frustrated. We had a light at the end of the tunnel," Ray said. She said they can't transfer their frozen embryos to their surrogate and can't move the embryos out of state. Ray was one of more than 200 IVF patients who descended on the Alabama Statehouse Wednesday to urge lawmakers to find a way to restore IVF treatment in the state.

Republican lawmakers promised swift action and advanced proposals to provide criminal and civil lawsuit protections to in vitro fertilization service providers. But GOP lawmakers – navigating both a backlash over the IVF decision and hardline abortion opponents in their own party – steered clear of trying to define whether the embryos should be considered human life.

"We're trying to find a solution ... It should get the clinics back open," Republican Sen. Tim Melson, a doctor and sponsor of one of the bills, said of the immunity proposal.

Alabama justices this month said three couples who had frozen embryos destroyed in an accident at a storage facility could pursue wrongful death lawsuits for their "extrauterine children." In reaching the decision, Alabama justices cited anti-abortion language added to the Alabama Constitution in 2018, saying the state recognizes and protects the "rights of unborn children." The constitutional amendment was approved by 59% of



Sarah Brown, from Birmingham, Ala., holds a sign in support of IVF treatments during a rally advocating for IVF rights outside the Alabama State House on Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2024 in Montgomery, Ala. Brown has two children, age three and one, who were conceived using IVF at Birmingham Fertility center. (AP)

Alabama voters.

The ruling, treating an embryo the same as a child or gestating fetus under the wrongful death statute, raised concerns about civil liabilities for clinics. Three clinics announced a pause on IVF services.

Melson shelved an earlier proposal that said an embryo should not be considered a human life until implanted in the uterus.

"There's a lot of different opinions on what's alive, what's viable, what's not," Melson said Wednesday.

Some conservative groups had expressed concern about proposals that would exclude embryos from the definition of human life. Eagle Forum of Alabama issued a statement urging lawmakers to avoid "legislation that may be in direct violation of our Constitution as well as the clear definition of human life."

"Life begins at conception, not implantation," Eagle Forum stated. The group urged lawmakers to find a way to let IVF treatments proceed, but also supported prohibitions around the destruction or donation of viable embryos.

Some lawmakers questioned the need to pause IVF. Republican Sen. Larry Stutts, an obstetrician who is also sponsoring one of the proposals, noted that some clinics "never closed."

A Democratic senator said Wednesday that Republicans are not "dealing with the issues that got us here." Some House Democrats have proposed legislation to state that a human embryo outside of a uterus "is not considered an unborn child or human being for any purpose under state law."

"Unless we redefine this as to whether an embryo is a child – and if we don't deal with the elephant in the

room that got us to this place – we're going to be back here," Sen. Linda Coleman-Madison, a Democrat from Birmingham, said.

Rep. Chris England, a Democrat from Tuscaloosa, said lawmakers may be able to provide a "temporary solution" through legislation, but that a long-term solution must address the 2018 constitutional amendment.

"That amendment is essentially a personhood amendment," England said. "It's interesting that everybody keeps saying the decision was wrong, but the legislation doesn't address the decision."

Advocates are concerned that IVF will become increasingly entangled in the debate over abortion.

Barbara Collura, President of RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association, said the nation is watching to see what happens in Alabama.

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SPORTS

Karachi's top order struggles

Munro's aggressive 82 earns Islamabad big win over Kings

KARACHI, Pakistan, Feb 29, (AP): Opening batters Colin Munro and Alex Hales shared a century partnership as Islamabad United snapped its three-match losing streak with a seven-wicket win over Karachi Kings in the Pakistan Super League on Wednesday.

Munro made a blistering 82 off 47 balls and Hales scored 47 in anchoring Islamabad to 169-3 in 18.3 overs for its second victory.

Karachi's top-order struggled in their first home game of the season on

was bowled by offspinner Agha as Islamabad tied down Karachi through spinner Imad Wasim (1-20) and Naseem Shah (1-29).

Pollard and Irfan Khan (27 not out) counterattacked pace bowlers in the last five overs with Rumman Raees (0-45) conceding 30 off his last two overs and Hunain Shah, brother of Naseem, going for 20 off the final over.

Islamabad had lost to Multan Sultans, Quetta Gladiators and Peshawar Zalmi after its season-opening win against Lahore Qalandars.

CRICKET

a slow wicket before Kieron Pollard made an unbeaten 48 and spurred the total to 165-5. Karachi has four points after two wins and two losses.

Hales missed Islamabad's last game because of a family commitment, but his return bolstered the two-time champion's top-order. Munro scored his second straight half-century and dominated both pace and spin as he shared a match-winning 108-run stand off 69 balls with Hales.

Munro, who hit eight fours and four sixes, didn't allow Tabraiz Shamsi to settle down and smacked the wrist-spinner for three successive sixes in his first over that featured an extravagant reverse swept six.

Mohammad Nawaz (1-23) trapped Munro leg before wicket as the left-hander tried to cut the left-arm spinner but missed the line of the delivery and was caught on the backfoot before Salman Ali Agha (25 not out) finished off the run-chase in style with two big sixes off Hasan Ali.

Earlier, Tim Siefert (8) of New Zealand got stumped in his first game of the season and Leus du Plooy (24) showed some aggression before he

Also

LAHORE, Pakistan: Fast bowler **Haris Rauf** has been ruled out of the remainder of the Pakistan Super League after dislocating his shoulder during two-time defending champion Lahore Qalandars' two-wicket loss against Karachi Kings on Saturday.

The franchise said in a statement on Sunday that doctors have advised Rauf to rest for 4-6 weeks to recover from the injury after undergoing scans.

Rauf fell awkwardly on his shoulder in the last over while holding onto a stunning catch of **Hasan Ali** during Karachi's thrilling run-chase as Lahore lost its fourth successive game in Pakistan's premier domestic Twenty20 event.

Rauf struggled in the first three games but bounced back against Karachi with economical figures of 1-22 off his four overs.

"We are deeply saddened by Haris Rauf's injury," Lahore captain **Shaheen Shah Afridi** said. "It was painful to see him missing out ... and his absence will be felt."

Rauf's injury is the second major bowling setback for Lahore after its premier spinner **Rashid Khan** of Afghanistan was ruled out before the tournament due to a back injury.

LeBron James, Lakers rally with big 4th quarter to stun Clippers 116-112



Chicago Bulls guard Jevon Carter, right, drives to the basket against Cleveland Cavaliers guard Max Strus during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Chicago, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2024. The Bulls won 132-123 in double overtime. (AP)



Islamabad United' Alex Hales plays a shot during the Pakistan Super League T20 cricket match between Karachi Kings and Islamabad United, in Karachi, Pakistan, Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2024. (AP)

LOS ANGELES, Feb 29, (AP): **LeBron James** scored 19 of his 34 points during a brilliant fourth quarter, leading the Los Angeles Lakers back from a 21-point deficit for a dramatic 116-112 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers on Wednesday night.

Kawhi Leonard missed a 12-footer with five seconds to play, and James threw a long pass to Cam Reddish for a dunk that punctuated a stunning victory for the Lakers in these Los Angeles

rivals' final regular-season game as co-tenants of their downtown arena.

The 39-year-old James was the center of it all, hitting five of his season-high seven 3-pointers while outscoring the Clippers by himself in the fourth quarter (19-16). He either scored or assisted on 11 of the Lakers' 13 baskets in the final period.

The Clippers led 98-77 in the opening minute of the fourth quarter, but James led a 29-8 run in just 7:34. The Lakers won three of four over the Clippers this season, winning the season series for the first time since 2011-12.

Davis had 20 points and 12 rebounds for the Lakers, while Russell had 18 and Hachimura added 17.

Leonard scored 26 points and James Harden had 23 points and nine assists for the Clippers, who have lost back-to-back games for the first time since Dec. 23. The Clippers played without All-Star Paul George, who missed his second straight game with a sore left knee, and starting center Ivica Zubac, who was ill.

Nuggets 117, Kings 96

In Denver, Jamal Murray scored 32 points, Nikola Jokic had 14 points, 14 rebounds and 11 assists in just three quarters for his fourth straight triple-double and Denver beat short-handed Sacramento.

Jokic had his 19th triple-double of the season as Denver avoided losing all four games to Sacramento this season. Murray made 13 of 16 shots, including 5 of 6 3-point attempts, to help the Nuggets win their fourth straight since the All-Star break.

Kings guard De'Aaron Fox was

scratched from the lineup about an hour before tip-off because of a left knee contusion. He went through pregame warmups before being ruled out.

Domantas Sabonis, the NBA triple-double leader with 21, was held to 13 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists, while Keegan Murray scored 21 points for Sacramento.

BASKETBALL

Denver trailed 47-32 early in the second quarter and outscored the Kings 68-22 over the next 18:21 to lead by 32. Jokic completed the 124th triple-double of his career when he fed Kentavious Caldwell-Pope for a corner 3-pointer that made it 100-68 with 1:14 left in the third quarter.

Mavericks 136, Raptors 125

In Toronto, Luka Doncic had 30 points, 16 assists and 11 rebounds on his 25th birthday for his 11th triple-double of the season and Dallas beat Toronto.

Kyrie Irving scored 15 of his 29 points in the fourth quarter for Dallas Doncic shot 11 for 23, going just 1 of 8 from 3-point range, as Dallas snapped a two-game skid. He went 7 for 9 at the foul line.

Immanuel Quickley scored a season-high 28 points and RJ Barrett had 26 points for Toronto. The Raptors lost for the first time in four games since the All-Star break.

Bulls 132, Cavaliers 123, OT

In Chicago, DeMar DeRozan scored 35 points, Andre Drummond had 26 rebounds and Chicago out-

lasted Cleveland in double overtime Wednesday night.

DeRozan scored 16 points in the 10 extra minutes. Nikola Vucevic added 24 points and 13 rebounds and Drummond had 17 points to help the Bulls rebound from a loss to lowly Detroit to beat one of the Eastern Conference's best teams.

The Cavaliers were coming off a wild 121-119 victory over Dallas, with Max Strus hitting a 59-footer as time expired. Evan Mobley led Cleveland with 25 points and 13 rebounds. Darius Garland scored 23 while making 7 of 14 3s. Donovan Mitchell finished with 19 points, but the Cavaliers came up short after winning 12 of 15.

Timberwolves 110, Grizzlies 101

In Minneapolis, Anthony Edwards scored 17 of his 34 points in the third quarter, helping Minnesota beat Memphis for the outright Western Conference lead.

Naz Reid provided a spark off the Minnesota bench with 19 points, and Karl-Anthony Towns had 13 points and 11 rebounds. The Timberwolves (42-17) have won three straight and lead Oklahoma City by a half-game in the West.

Jaren Jackson Jr. led Memphis with 33 points and 13 rebounds.

Pacers 123, Pelicans 114

In Indianapolis, Pascal Siakam had 24 points and 11 rebounds, Tyrese Haliburton added 17 points and 13 assists - four on late consecutive possessions - and Indiana beat New Orleans.

The teams will complete the home-and-home set Friday night in New Orleans.

Petkovic hired by Algeria for 2026 W. Cup qualifying

ALGIERS, Algeria, Feb 29, (AP): The coach who helped Switzerland to eliminate then-world champion France at the last European Championship was hired to coach Algeria on Thursday through qualifying for the 2026 World Cup.

Vladimir Petkovic will arrive in Algiers this weekend. A news conference is scheduled on Monday, the Algeria Football Federation said in a statement.

Public Offer

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Los Angeles Lakers guard D'Angelo Russell, right, shoots as Los Angeles Clippers guard Norman Powell defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2024, in Los Angeles. (AP)

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Inter Milan's Alessandro Bastoni (left), and Atalanta's Hans Hateboer jump for the ball during the Serie A soccer match between Inter Milan and Atalanta at the San Siro Stadium, in Milan, Italy. (AP)

Inter rout Atalanta

Inter Milan extended its perfect start to 2024 with a 4-0 win over in-form Atalanta that boosted its lead over Juventus to 12 points.

Matteo Darmian and Lautaro Martinez scored first-half goals as Inter won its 11th straight across all competitions this year and ended Atalanta's 10-match unbeaten run across all competitions.

Federico Dimarco added another for Inter by redirecting in the rebound of a penalty kick from Lautaro and Davide Frattesi scored with a header following a free kick.

Inter also beat Lecce and Salernitana by the score of 4-0 in its previous two league matches.

Atalanta remained fifth, two points behind Bologna.

Atalanta appeared to have taken the lead early on but a goal from Charles De Ketelaere was waved off following a VAR check for a handball by the attacking team.

Darmian then scored from the edge of the area after Atalanta goalkeeper Marco Carnesecchi came charging out but couldn't control.

Lautaro scored with his weaker left foot, using a quick control before curling in a long shot.

Both matches were rescheduled from last month when Napoli and Inter were in Saudi Arabia for the Italian Super Cup, which Inter won.

Career in danger

Pogba banned for 4 years for doping

ROME, Feb 29, (AP): Juventus midfielder Paul Pogba was banned for the maximum four years by Italy's anti-doping court on Thursday after the World Cup winner tested positive for testosterone.

Pogba's positive test was announced in September, stemming from an exam that was carried out on Aug. 20 after Juventus' game at Udinese. Pogba did not play in the Serie A match but was on the bench.

Pogba opted not to make a plea bargain with Italy's anti-doping agency and so the case was tried before the country's anti-doping court. A person with direct knowledge of the case confirmed the verdict to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the sentence was not made public due to Italy's privacy laws.

The sentence could end Pogba's career, as the France international turns 31 next month.

Pogba, who has made no public comments on the case, could appeal the decision to the Swiss-based Court of

SOCCER

Arbitration for Sport. But it could take a full year for a CAS verdict - at least that's the typical timeline unless one party pushes for a fast-track process and the other side agrees to it.

Four-year bans are standard under the World Anti-Doping Code but can be reduced in cases where an athlete can prove their doping was not intentional, if the positive test was a result of contamination or if they provide "substantial assistance" to help investigators.

Pogba rejoined Juventus from Manchester United in 2022 but struggled with injuries, playing in only six Serie A matches for Juventus last season and two this season. He was ruled out of France's run to the World Cup final that year due to a knee injury.

Pogba helped France win the previous World Cup, scoring in the 4-2 win over Croatia in the final. He played in 178 matches for Juventus from 2012-16.

Pogba's contract with Juventus was slated to expire in June 2026 but it could now be terminated early. The Turin club had no immediate comment on the sentence.

Title race in Zain Premier League intensifies

Dr. Muhammad under pressure as Al-Qadisiya face Al-Salmiya

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: Today marks the commencement of the seventeenth round of the Zain Premier League, featuring a match between Al-Shabab and Khaitan at Al-Awal Stadium at 6:15 pm. tomorrow, the action continues with Al-Jahra hosting Al-Nasr at 4:55 pm, and Al-Qadisiya faces Al-Salmiya at 7:35 pm. The round concludes on Sunday with two matchups: Kazma versus Al-Fahaheel and the highly anticipated encounter

SOCCER

ter between Al-Arabi and Kuwait Club.

The clash between Al-Shabab and Khaitan today holds significance for both teams aiming to accumulate points for a stronger position in the impending "avoid relegation" league. Al-Shabab enters with 14 points, while Khaitan has 9 points.

Al-Qadisiya fans are keenly watching tomorrow's match against Al-Salmiya, hoping to end their bad run after three consecutive matches without a win. Al-Qadisiya coach, Dr. Muhammad Al-Mashaan, faces pressure with the team standing at 33 points, 6 points behind leaders Al-Arabi and 4 points behind second-placed Kuwait. To stay in the title race, Al-Qadisiya must secure a victory, especially with a crucial summit meeting scheduled the day after tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Al-Salmiya, with 24 points, continues to seek positive results, playing without pressure as they have secured a spot in the Six-League League. They are also gearing up for



A file photo of players in an aerial battle for the ball.

the Amir's Cup final against Al-Qadisiya.

Notably, the two teams previously tied 1-1 in their initial encounter.

In the second match, Al-Nasr, with 21 points, aims to recover from recent losses, notably the 6-3 defeat to Al-Arabi in the sixteenth round. On the other hand, Al-Jahra, with 5 points, seeks its second victory in the competition after defeating Al-Shabab 5-0 in the previous round.

Kuwait Club battle Bahrain's Al Shabab for semifinal berth



Kuwait Club players fight for the ball during their match against Al-Rabban.

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DOHA, Feb 29: Kuwait Club will play an important match against Al-Shabab of Bahraini at 6:00 pm in the third and final round of the preliminary round for the second group in the Gulf Cup Handball Championships Club Championship in the 40th edition hosted by the Al-Arabi Club in Doha. It will continue until March 5 of this month. It will be preceded at 4:00 pm by the match between Al-Rayyan of Qatar and Malhiha of the Emirates.

"Al-Abyad" lost in the second round to Al-Rabban with a score of 26-30, while Al-Shabab beat Mleiha 38-36. The standings of the second group before today's matches are: Al-Rayyan 4 points, Kuwait Club and Al-Shabab 2 points, with Al-Abyad having goal difference advantage and Mleiha without a

point. Today's confrontation is an important one between Kuwait Club and Al-Shabab, as the winner will advance to the semi-finals of the tournament as second in the group. At the same time, the loser will play in the consolation rounds, and a draw, naturally, is in the interest of "Sons of Kaifan."

HANDBALL

The tournament teams will rest tomorrow, Saturday, and the semi-final and consolation round matches will be held next Sunday. The following Monday will be matches for places from fifth to eighth, and the tournament will conclude next Tuesday, with the final match and the match to determine third and fourth places.



Kuwait Club player goes for a spike against Al-Shabab.

Kuwait Club lead volleyball league as Federation Cup kicks off

By Khaled El Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 29: The Federation Cup Volleyball Championship kicks off today, featuring the Yarmouk and Sulaibkhat matches at 5:15 pm in the Al-Ittihad Hall. The tournament, running until the 21st of this month, includes the participation of nine clubs.

In a closely contested match, Kuwait secured a narrow 3-2 victory over Al-Shabab in the recently postponed volleyball league preliminary round. This win propelled Kuwait Club to the top spot with 42 points, closely followed by Al-Qadisiya at 40 points. Al-Arabi and Burgan share the third position with 35 points each, while Kazma stands at 34 points.

The tournament format dictates that the top four teams will qualify for the semi-finals. Following an in-

ternational points system, a 3-0 or 3-1 victory awards the winning team three points, leaving the loser with none. In a 3-2 victory, the winner receives two points, and the loser gains one point.

Several matches involving Kuwait Club, Al-Qadisiya, Kazma, and Burgan were postponed due to their participation in international competitions.

VOLLEYBALL

Kazma and Burgan recently concluded their involvement in the Arab Championship by competing for the seventh and eighth places. In a closely fought encounter, Burgan emerged victorious with a 3-2 win. The Libyan Al-Suwaihli Club secured the championship title by defeating Qatari Al-Shorta 3-1 in the final match.

Liverpool visit Sheffield United

Derby can further expose gulf between City and United

LONDON, Feb 29: Jim Ratcliffe's determination to bring down Manchester City is abundantly clear.

So is his admiration, it seems, for the team he calls "the enemy."

Since becoming co-owner of Manchester United last week, Ratcliffe has spoken about the "driven and elite environment" that has been created at City in its Abu Dhabi-controlled regime.

He described City's 4-0 win over Real Madrid in last season's Champions League semifinals as "the best football I have ever seen."

He was even behind United's recent appointment of one of City's former top executives, Omar Berrada, as the new chief executive in what United said was the first step on a journey "to put football and performance on the pitch back at the heart of everything we do."

Ratcliffe acknowledged United was a "long way behind" City. Just how far might be placed into sharp focus this weekend.

It's the 192nd Manchester derby on Sunday, pitting two rivals at opposite stages of their modern development: City, the English, European and world club champion, vs. United, a fallen giant looking to be kickstarted by the riches and passion of a locally born billionaire.

Few are giving United a hope in the Premier League clash at Etihad Stadium - privately, maybe even Ratcliffe will not expect a win, either - but his recent investment in United, not forgetting his comments about knocking City and fellow local rival Liverpool "off their perch" within three years, provides the narrative and backdrop to a fixture that, for the most part, has been one-sided in recent years.

Take last season's match at the Etihad, for example, where Erling Haaland and Phil Foden scored hat tricks in City's 6-3 thrashing of United.

Or this season's match at Old Trafford, where United was over-run and ultimately humiliated in a 3-0 loss in October.

City comes into the derby following a 6-2 win at Luton in the FA Cup highlighted by a five-goal performance by Haaland. United has actually won seven of its nine games in all competitions in 2024 but barely ever convinces, which leaves Ten Hag under permanent pressure. Tellingly, Ratcliffe, in his round of post-takeover inter-



Chelsea's Ben Chilwell kicks the ball during the English FA Cup fifth round soccer match between Chelsea and Leeds United at Stamford Bridge stadium in London. (AP)



Brighton and Hove Albion's Lewis Dunk, (left), and Wolverhampton Wanderers' Mario Lemina challenge for the ball during the English FA Cup fifth round soccer match between Wolverhampton Wanderers and Brighton & Hove Albion at Molineux Stadium, Wolverhampton, England. (AP)

views, never gave his complete backing to the Dutchman.

March will also see United take on its other big foe, Liverpool, in the FA Cup quarterfinals. It's a

month of great opportunity for Ten Hag and his players but also one of potential danger, if United was to lose to City - and therefore further jeopardize its Champions League qualification ambitions - and Liverpool.

Fifteen points separate second-placed City and sixth-placed United, and that could be 18 by Sunday evening.

More important for City is the points gap to leader Liverpool, which stands at one heading into the weekend. Liverpool plays first, away to Nottingham Forest. Third-placed Arsenal, which is a point behind City in third place, visits Sheffield United on Monday.

Man United, Liverpool meet in FA Cup quarterfinals. Man City continues title defense vs. Newcastle

Great rivals Manchester United and Liverpool will meet in the quarterfinals of the FA Cup while Manchester City will continue its defense of the trophy with a home match against Newcastle.

The Old Trafford showdown between United and Liverpool was determined after both teams won in the fifth round on Wednesday.

City and Newcastle were already assured of progressing after winning on Tuesday. City beat Luton 6-2 and Newcastle won a penalty shootout against second-tier Blackburn.

City has beaten Newcastle home and away in the Premier League this season.

Second-tier Coventry advanced on Monday with a victory over sixth-tier Maidstone and will next play Wolverhampton.

Leicester, another Championship team, upset top-flight Bournemouth on Tuesday and will face Chelsea in the quarterfinals, which are played over the weekend of March 16-17.

Quarterfinals draw:
Wolverhampton vs. Coventry
ManUnited vs. Liverpool
Chelsea vs. Leicester
Man City vs. Newcastle

Govt to tighten regulation of owners

LONDON, Feb 29, (AP): Plans to tighten regulation of English soccer club owners will not rule out more state-backed take overs, a U.K. government minister said on Thursday.

The government's Football Governance Bill would give an independent regulator powers to safeguard the future of clubs and ensure their financial sustainability. It includes strengthened tests over who can run or own clubs.

Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer said the government did not propose to block state-backed investment, such as the Saudi-backed takeover of Premier League club Newcastle in 2021.

"What we want (is) to ensure clubs are financially sustainable, not who owns them. So it is not going to be in this bill whether a foreign state, for instance, should own a club," Frazer said at the Business of Football Conference. "What we're interested in as a government is that the people who run the clubs run them well and that they survive. That is what the bill is all about."

Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund led the buyout of Newcastle as part of the oil-rich kingdom's move to become a major player in global soccer.

The ruling family of Abu Dhabi bought Manchester City in 2008 and has transformed the club into one of the most dominant forces in Europe. City won a historic treble of trophies last season including the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup.

"We're a conservative government. We don't want to over-regulate, we just want to solve this issue about financial instability," Frazer said. "So what we're doing to ensure financial stability is making sure that owners and directors pass a fitness and proper test so good people are running and owning clubs, and clubs have financial plans and have financial stability within them."

Under proposals, a regulator would also have powers to block English teams from attempting to join a breakaway league, such as the failed European Super League in 2021.



Spain's Olga jumps for the ball with France's Kadidiatou Diani (right), during the Women's Nations League final soccer match between Spain and France at La Cartuja stadium in Seville, Spain. (AP)

Sports

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Spain win inaugural Women's Nations League

France lose

SEVILLE, Spain, Feb 29, (AP): Spain hasn't lost momentum since winning its first World Cup title, defeating France 2-0 to also win the inaugural edition of the Women's Nations League.

Ballon d'Or winner Aitana Bonmati and Mariona Caldentey scored a goal each for Spain in front of 32,657 fans at La Cartuja Stadium in southern Spain. It was a record crowd for Spain's women's team in the country.

Spain also holds the men's Nations League title, having beaten Croatia in the final in June.

"We have a very good present and a very good future," women's team coach Montse Tomé said. "I have a group with very experienced players and with new young players coming up. It's a very positive mix. They have a winning mentality. France haven't had a shot on goal and that's also a credit to all of the players."

Bonmati, named the player of the match, volleyed in a low cross in the first half and Caldentey doubled the lead shortly after the break in a dominant performance by the hosts.

"Happy to win another title," Bonmati said. "It may seem that what we have achieved is easy, that we have an obligation to win everything, but this is not something easy. And here we are lifting another trophy."

It was Spain's first victory over France.

"They'll be the team to beat at the Olympics, it won't be easy," France coach Hervé Renard said. "We are going to have to keep improving, learn lessons and keep moving forward. Let's say we have taken one step but we haven't taken the second. There's still a lot of work to do."

SOCCER

Spain had its breakthrough tournament at the World Cup in New Zealand and Australia, winning the title in its third appearance.

The celebrations were marred by one of the country's worst crises, though, as the then-president of the Spanish soccer federation, Luis Rubiales, made contact with Henni Hermoso during the awards ceremony to spark an outrage in soccer and Spanish society in general. Rubiales eventually resigned, and prosecutors later accused him of assault.

"Today we get to celebrate again. We deserve it," Hermoso said. "We try to enjoy ourselves but we also have the responsibility that there are so many people behind us who want to follow in our footsteps. We are so proud that there are so many girls who want to be champions in the future."

Spain defeated the Netherlands 3-0 in last week's semifinal, a result that also secured the team a place in the Paris Olympics.

France was already qualified for the Olympics as the host country.

"We didn't play a good game against a team that are world champions and flying high in women's football," Renard said. "You have to be aggressive and keep the ball when you get it, but we lost it again straight away."

Spain scored a competition-high 28 goals, seven more than any other team. It also had the most total attempts at 131.

Alexia Putellas, the former Ballon d'Or winner, did not enter the match for Spain. She hasn't played for club or country since undergoing arthroscopic surgery on her left knee last year.



Spain's team captain Irene Paredes lifts the trophy after winning the Women's Nations League final soccer match between Spain and France at La Cartuja stadium in Seville, Spain. (AP)



Ahmed Al-Bazzaz raises the Kuwaiti flag as he celebrates his second-place finish.

Al-Bazzaz 'secures' second place in the World Ice Diving Challenge

VLADIVOSTOK, Feb 29: Kuwait's champion and representative of the Kuwaiti Marine Sports Club in free diving, Ahmed Al-Bazzaz, secured an impressive second place in the World Ice Diving Challenge Championship held in Vladivostok, Russia.

Ali Al-Shamali, the head of the committee overseeing speedboat, wakeboard, and freediving at the club, commended Al-Bazzaz's outstanding global achievement. Al-Shamali emphasized the significance of this accomplishment, stating, "Al-Bazzaz managed a double triumph by clinching second place in a highly competitive field of seasoned divers. Notably, this marks his debut in the tournament,

renowned as one of the most challenging events in sports diving under ice, where temperatures plunge below 15 degrees Celsius. Participants navigate through a circular hole and plunge into ice measuring over 40 centimeters thick, striving to cover the greatest distance possible."

Highlighting the timing of this achievement during Kuwait's national celebrations, Al-Shamali expressed gratitude for the support extended by the Marine Club Council, the General Sports Authority, and the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee. The ceremony to crown Al-Bazzaz included proudly raising the Kuwaiti flag, symbolizing a moment of pride for the nation.

Ronaldo suspended for one match

RIYADH, Feb 29, (AP): Cristiano Ronaldo has been suspended for one match for making an alleged offensive gesture during a Saudi Arabia league game while playing for Al Nassr in the Saudi Pro League.

After Al-Nassr defeated Riyadh rival Al-Shabab 3-2 on Sunday, video footage appeared to show Ronaldo cupping his ear and repeatedly thrusting his hand forward near his pelvis, in a gesture that

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seemed to be aimed at Al-Shabab fans.

Background chants of "Messi," referencing Ronaldo's longstanding soccer rival Lionel Messi, could be heard.

The Disciplinary and Ethics Committee of the Saudi Arabia Football Federation (SAFF) committee announced the ban on social media early Thursday morning local time. Al-Nassr's next league game is at home to Al-Hazm on

Thursday.

The former Real Madrid and Manchester United star will also have to pay a fine of 20,000 Saudi Riyals (\$5,333) to Al-Shabab, to cover the costs of the club filing the complaint, and half of that amount to the federation.

The committee said that the decision was not open to appeal.

While the incident was not captured by television cameras, the actions of Ronaldo, who scored a first-half penalty in the game, were widely criticized in Saudi Arabia by former players and commentators.

According to reports in the Saudi Arabia media, the 39-year-old told the committee that the gesture was one of victory and common in Europe.

It is not the first time that the Portuguese forward has been at the center of controversy since joining Al-Nassr. Last April, upon leaving the field after a game against Al-Hilal, Ronaldo appeared to grab his genitals as fans chanted Messi's name. On that occasion, Al-Nassr said that the forward had sustained a groin injury in the match.

KCC celebrates Kuwait's List A Status achievement

Kuwait qualify for next round of ICC 50 Overs Cricket World Cup Challenge League with convincing victory

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 29: Kuwait national men's cricket team powered by Al Muzaini Exchange has clinched a berth in the next round of the International Cricket Council (ICC) 50 Overs Cricket World Cup Challenge League. In their 4th match of the tournament held today, Kuwait defeated Vanuatu by a commanding 228 runs, solidifying their position among the elite teams of Associate Cricket. Kuwait's victory was a testament to their batsmen's dominance. Openers Meet Bhavsar and Ravija set the tone with blistering centuries, one half, one full, amassing 132 and 55 runs respectively with Ravija coming to the party today

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with four 6's. Meet Bhavsar's dominance at the top of the order with back to back centuries in the tournament for Kuwait will go down as the most memorable and impactful knocks in Kuwait Cricket's international progress. It has been top class batting from the young dynamite of Kuwait.

Captain cool Muhammad Aslam leading from the front with both bat and ball throughout the tournament steered and accelerated the innings with an unbeaten 82, while the experienced Mohammad Amin who has been consistently performing in this tournament added another valuable 34 runs to his tally and the hard hitter Bilal Tahir smashed an unbeaten 24 with three back to back 6's taking Kuwait to a mammoth total of 360 - the highest by any team thus far in the tournament.



Players celebrate their victory.

sure that Kuwait cricket will continue to shine on the international stage and this time in 50 overs cricket.

Speaking to the media on this monumental occasion, Haider Farman, the proud President of Kuwait Cricket Board said "This is an extremely satisfying, historic and path breaking moment for Kuwait cricket and a reflection of all the hard work that's been put in for so many years by the entire KCC family. I congratulate each and every single member of the delegation to Malaysia and the entire KCC fraternity for this huge breakthrough. I strongly believe that we have the potential to achieve more and excel even further with an eye on the ODI Status now. We look forward to the team's return as they deserve a grand welcome in Kuwait."

KCC Director General Sajid Ashraf said that "We have many dreams, one of them has come true today. With today's win and qualification for the ICC CWC Challenge League, Kuwait has been granted List A Status by the ICC and the team has demonstrated exceptional skill, determination, and teamwork to achieve that and we are immensely proud of their achievements... Kuwait will now participate in as many as 15 List A matches spread across this 50 overs cycle over the next four years... huge congratulations to the entire team led by skipper Aslam, head coach Qasim Ali and Team Manager Naveen Dhanajayan and all the players as they are the real heroes of the game having worked tirelessly on the ground and performed exceptionally well when it mattered the most to achieve this for our beloved country Kuwait."



A Kuwaiti batsman hits a shot during the ICC 50 Overs Cricket World Cup Challenge League match against Vanuatu.