



tennis

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Amir congratulates citizens, residents on advent of Ramadan

Palace welcomes well-wishers

KUWAIT CITY, March 9, (KUNA): The Amiri Diwan on Saturday conveyed congratulations of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the citizens and residents of Kuwait on the advent of the fasting month of Ramadan.

The Diwan announced that His Highness the Amir and the gracious Al-Sabah family will receive well-wishers on the blessed month on the first and second days of Ramadan from 08:00 p.m. at the family's Diwan at Bayan Palace.

The Ramadan well-wishers will be allowed to enter the palace via the gate of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahad bin Abdulaziz road.

The Amiri Diwan prayed to His Almighty so he may safeguard His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and recur the gracious month with all blessings and goodness.

It has also hoped that Islamic states and their peoples may witness progress and prosperity.

Visa 17 for Egyptians gets nod; 'visit ban' holds for 2

'Anti-sheltering'

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: The Residence Affairs General Department at the Interior Ministry has reached an agreement with the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) to resume the issuance of work permits for Egyptians in the government sector only -- Article 17 visa, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting sources.

Sources revealed that the government institutions given the green light to recruit Egyptians are the ministries of Education, Health, Endowments and Islamic Affairs and Kuwait Municipality where they will work as doctors, teachers, nurses, Imams in mosques, dead body washers and grave diggers.

On the other hand, sources said the decision to open visit visas for the banned nationalities does not apply to Iranians for security reasons; and the Afghans because they have no embassy in Kuwait.

Sources also confirmed that PAM has finalized a draft law on sheltering expatriates involved in absconding cases. Sources disclosed the draft law will be submitted to Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah for approval; and then to the National Assembly for ratification. The draft law stipulates stringent measures, including substantial fines and severe administrative measures against anyone found guilty of providing shelter to expatriates with absconding cases.

P.M. INAUGURATES FIRST KUWAIT SPORTS DAY



PM Diwan photo His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah kicks off the Kuwait Sports Day by cycling.



Participants sprint during Kuwait Sports Day. Photo by Mahmoud Jadeed

Over 13,000 participate as event celebrates health

KUWAIT CITY, March 9, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on Saturday affirmed the necessity of exercise and lauded the participation of citizens of special needs at the launch of Kuwait Sports Day.

His Highness the prime minister was speaking as he sponsored and attended the launch of Kuwait Sports Day on Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Bridge -- organized by the Public Sport Authority.

His Highness the Prime Minister praised the authority, other involved bodies and the distinctive organization of the event, affirming necessity of exercise for all age segments.

Sports contribute to boosting collective action and positively affect human health, His Highness the Prime Minister has added.

He also noted participation of special needs' individuals in all the competitions. "This signals the solid will of the Kuwaiti people and their determination to attain their goals," he said, expressing gratitude to everybody participating in this initiative.

The first edition of Kuwait Sports Day kicked off on Saturday involving more than 13,000 racers on foot and motorbikes.

The event started under sponsorship and with attendance of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah along with a number of officials and diplomats.

The competitions involve some 13,000 on Sheikh racing on Jaber Al-Ahmad Bridge. They include a five-kilometer race-walking and a 15-km motorbikes race, in addition to other sports activities, shows and games.

Led by His Highness the Prime Minister, the moto bikers and the walkers started the races on the bridge from the beginning toward the end line; the bridge southern islet.

The Public Sport Authority had



PM Diwan photo HH the Prime Minister commends the active participation of citizens with special needs during the Kuwait Sports Day.



Photo by Mahmoud Jadeed His Highness the PM acknowledges a participant.

man Al-Mutairi. Al-Bidan said participation of more than 13,000 persons in the activity signaled its success, noting that it has been adopted as a state annual sports day by the prime minister

Oor her part, the assistant undersecretary for educational development and activities, Mariam Al-Enezi, said in remarks to KUNA that the ministry of education participated with 1,400 students.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) has provided 10 ambulances, four motorbike buggies, two golf carts and a field tent equipped with necessary medical supplies, as well as two ambulance helicopters for Kuwait Sports Day.

The Kuwait Sports Day kicked off on Saturday under patronage and attendance of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. The MoH mentioned in a statement that the Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi supervised the preparations done by the ministry for this huge sports event, which more than 13,000 participants.

The preparations included increasing the level of readiness in the main hospitals concerned with the event area, such as Al-Sabah and Al-Amiri, in addition to other supporting facilities.

The Dean of Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Tajikistan to Kuwait Dr. Zubaidullah Zubaidov said that the launch of Kuwait Sports Day is a great initiative to enhance sports culture amongst the society.

This community sport event, with the auspices and attendance of the Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, has witnessed a great turnout by members of the diplomatic corps in Kuwait, with the aim of making it a success and emphasizing the importance of sport for ones' health, Zubaidov said in a statement to KUNA.

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Opinion

Your Highness the PM, please be patient and hear us out

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

YOUR Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah, we hope that you will be patient with us and hear us out so that we can get out of the vicious circle in which we have been revolving for decades as a result of the unrealistic vision of the national economy, which, to say the least, considers Kuwait as an udder that has no reliable production.

Your Highness, the announcement of the increase in the assets of the Kuwaiti sovereign fund to about USD 923 billion came as good news. Expectations are that it will reach one trillion dollars, and is close



Al-Jarallah

to the tally of its Norwegian counterpart.

However, it must be considered that this rise is nominal, meaning it is book-based. If global stocks decline, losses will be recorded, and therefore a practical vision must be taken to preserve sovereign assets.

Therefore, we turn to Your Highness, as you are a veteran economic and political expert who is familiar with the ins and outs of state politics and their impact on global markets.

In this regard, there are several ideas that Your Highness is undoubtedly aware of, but they must be mentioned. For example, what prevents taking about USD 200 billion from this fund and investing it in Kuwait to develop the infrastructure, the islands and the northern economic zone.

In fact, there should be more than one economic zone that serves the region as a whole, as well as the construction of hospitals, universities and private schools, and for Kuwait to become a medical and educational attraction similar to some Gulf countries.

Investing part of sovereign assets at home leads to a recovery in economic activity, strengthens the financial cycle, encourages work and individual initiative, and increases the productivity that Kuwait needs, as its public finances have become more like a hole-in-the-wall drained by rentier spending, without any returns.

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Kuwait's medical team enters Gaza

GAZA, March 9, (KUNA): A Kuwaiti medical team entered the Gaza Strip Friday through the Rafah border crossing with Egypt to help their Palestinian peers treat victims of the ongoing Israeli aggression.

Several Gaza health officials welcomed the Kuwaiti team, the first of kind since the start of the war on October 7, 2023, at the Palestinian side of the crossing.

The officials underscored the importance the Kuwaiti team visit and its desperately-needed efforts to alleviate the suffering of Gaza people particularly after the collapse of the health system in the besieged Strip.

Head of the KRCS Operations Sector and the Kuwaiti medical team Dr. Musaad Al-Enezi told KUNA that the team would carry out several surgeries to Palestinian patients in the Strip.

He pointed out that the KRCS also entered medical equipment, tools and medicine to be used in the treatment of the Palestinian people and to back the health system there.

The medical team will perform surgeries in the European Hospital and the Kuwait Specialized Hospital in the city of Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, Dr. Al-Enezi said.

He added that Kuwaiti relief aid will also be distributed to displaced people in the makeshift shelter centers and refugee camps.

The team will also supervise the establishment of a KRCS field hospital in the Strip, Al-Enezi unveiled.

He indicated that this move comes as part of the KRCS efforts to aid Palestinian people who face inhuman war machine of the Israeli occupation forces.

He noted that the KRCS have also delivered 46 plane loads of relief and humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip through the Kuwait air bridge.

The Kuwaiti medical team includes four consultants: Orthopedic Surgeon Consultant Dr. Hussein Qwaiyan, Urology Consultant Dr. Faisal Al-Hajri, Anesthesia Consultant Dr. Muhammad Shamsah, Surgery Consultant Dr. Muhammad Haider, and Administrative Coordinator Abdulrahman Al-Saleh.

Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and Other International Organizations Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen on Friday denounced the systematic destruction by Israeli occupying forces of places of worship in the Gaza Strip.

163 register for April 4th

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh and Abdel Nasser Al-Aslami
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: A total of 23 male citizens on Saturday filed their candidacy for the parliamentary election that will be held on April 4, 2024. By the end of the sixth day of the 10-day registration period for candidates, the total number of candidates reached 163 including four women.

The candidates who registered on the sixth day are as follows:

First Constituency: three (Abdullah Abdulwahab Al-Herz, Mohammad Abdulhadi Al-Azmi and Maitham Abdullah Awadh)

Second Constituency: seven (Bader Hamed Al-Mullah, Khalod Saad Al-Rashedi, Falah Senian Al-Mutairi, Fahad Samawi Al-Dhefairy, Mohammad Falah Al-Shaalan, Huwaiti Sahn Al-Hajri and Yousef Abdulrazzaq Al-Fawzan)

Third Constituency: two (Abdulrahman Mohammad Al-Ajmi and Abdullah Mustafa Ghadhanfar)

Fourth Constituency: seven (Anwar Erak Al-Dhefairy, Hamdan Mohammad Al-Otaibi, Saad Ali Al-Rashedi, Abdullah Fahad Al-Anzi, Mubarak Homoud Al-Tasha, Meteb Ayed Al-Khaldi and Mohammad Hayef Al-Mutairi)

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Medical center in Abdali area opens

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: The Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi inaugurated the Ali Muhammad Thunayan Al-Ghanim and Sons Health Center in Abdali to serve over 13,000 citizens and residents in the area.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of the event, Dr. Al-Awadhi explained that the center will operate 24 hours a day and will include an emergency clinic, a recovery room, and a small operating room for one-day operations. It also includes a laboratory, a pharmacy, ten clinics, including five public health clinics, two diabetes clinics, a chronic diseases clinic, two dental clinics, a dental radiology department, an isolation room, another for vaccinations, and six insurance clinics.

There is also a residential section for workers with four apartments. The center is part of the government's 100-day work plan

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KUNA photo Head of the Kuwaiti medical team Dr. Musaad Al-Enezi speaking at a news conference after entering Gaza Strip.

KAC to unveil extensive job openings for Kuwaiti youth

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: In accordance with its expansion policy and Kuwaitization strategy, Kuwait Airways is set to announce significant employment openings for Kuwaiti youth across various departments.

Sources familiar with the matter confirmed to Al-Seyassah that the airline's Board of Directors will soon unveil a multitude of job positions, particularly targeting pilots, copilots, as well as roles in sales, shipping,

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NewsWatch

RIYADH: The Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council honored Secretary-General of Kuwait Women's Cultural and Social Society Ghada Al-Ghanem and the first head of the GCC Mission to the European Union (2006-2017) Ambassador Amal Al-Hamad as leaders of GCC action.

A ceremony was held on Friday under the slogan of "inspiring Gulf woman," with GCC Secretary-General Jassem Al-Budaiwi attending alongside with a number of diplomats, public figures and female leaderships. (KUNA)

DUBAI, UAE: Intense rainfall swept across Dubai and the wider United Arab Emirates on Saturday, causing localized flooding and disrupting flights at the world's busiest airport for international travel.

Nearly 50 millimeters (2 inches) of rain fell in Dubai over six hours - a heavy amount when the country as a whole averages under 120 millimeters (4.7 inches) of precipitation a year. (AP)

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:47 Asr 15:21
 Sunrise .. 06:05 Maghrib .. 17:52
 Zohr 11:59 Isha 19:09

Local

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

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Warm and partly cloudy with light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-38 km/h.

By Night: Rather cold and partly cloudy with light to moderate

southeasterly wind, with speeds of 12-45 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

Station
 Kuwait City

Max Exp
 26

Min Rec
 16

Kuwait Airport	26	11
Abdaly	27	11
Jahra	27	13
Salmiyah	23	18
Nuwaisib	27	12
Wafra	27	10

Other Voices

Clever thrive in a naive world

By Ahmad alsarraf

I received this anecdote from a friend: An Egyptian village announced, on social media, its need for someone to donate to build a mosque there, and he will be rewarded. A man approached them and introduced himself as so-and-so, saying that he was a businessman and worked in the Gulf.

He asked them about the cost of building the mosque, and they said 250 thousand pounds, so he asked them: How much did they collect? What is the remaining amount? They replied: "No penny, and we are poor, and our situation makes you no need to ask us, and the land of the mosque was donated by a philanthropist like you seven years ago!"

The man paid them 250 thousand pounds, in addition to another 50 thousand pounds to furnish the mosque. They thanked him and wished him to attend the ceremony of laying the foundation stone. He apologized to them under the pretext that his sponsor in the Gulf asked him to quickly contract with 200 construction technicians and send them to implement a huge project, and he did not have time.

"They all jumped in, saying that he would earn a large wage from them, as they have skilled blacksmiths, excellent carpenters, and professional builders, so he asked them to prepare a list of the names and specializations of each of them, along with a copy of the passport of each individual with a specialty written on it, and most important of all to bring a health certificate showing that he is free of infectious diseases; in addition to opening an account in the bank, to transfer the salary to them monthly.

He said that he would return after a few days to receive all the statements, along with an amount of 5,000 pounds for the visa and travel ticket expenses.

He returned a week later and received the amounts and statements from them, then disappeared, and

it was later revealed that he was a known fraudster.

What is sad about the matter is not that a person succeeded in fooling an entire village and making 700,000 pounds from an elaborate scam, but rather in the fact that these people took a million pounds out of their pockets in a week, and they are the ones who previously announced their inability to collect a single penny in seven years to build their mosque?

And they want God to reward them.

The story of the imposter reminded me of a story, less villainous and more intelligent, that I had previously written about years ago, and brother "Cancun" narrated it in a video and attributed it to himself, after he changed its facts. It is summed up in an individual's specialty in mediating to obtain a driving license for any resident in exchange for 150 dinars.

He added, he has someone in the relevant department to help him with the matter, and if the person does not succeed in passing the test, for any reason, even if it is due to illness or absence, the amount will be returned to him in full. The man always stuck to his pledge, and gained people's trust!

Suddenly, after almost four years, his matter was revealed, after the person who failed the test and he was surprised by the result, even though he had paid the amount of 150 dinars to so-and-so, so the latter was dragged for investigation, from which it became clear that he did not know anyone in the concerned department except for the cleaning worker who was only telling him the result of the driving test.

He was waiting for the one who failed the test to come back in order to return to him the money he had paid, and he relied on the fact that whoever passed would most likely not get it back, and the amount of 150 dinars would be his share, without any compensation!

It was said at the time that he had earned more than 100 thousand dinars for himself, and no one, of course, came forward to claim that he had received a bribe from him, for fear of being framed as an accomplice in the crime!

□ □ □

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Personnel who took part in naval exercises.

'Arabian Breeze' exercises draw to a close

The Kuwaiti naval force recently concluded the Arabian Breeze exercise (2024) with the participation of clearing and explosive disposal divers from both the divers battalion and divers units of the French forces, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Held in the State of Kuwait from February 22 to March 7, 2024, the exercise focused on marine surveying and disinfection of marine anchorages used for filling oil tankers.

The primary objectives of the exercise were to enhance combat readiness, facilitate the exchange of experiences between the participating forces, and provide training on the latest techniques utilized in clearing sea mines and disposing of explosives.

The collaborative effort between the Kuwaiti and French forces underscores the importance of international cooperation in maritime security and readiness operations.

Gang of three drug smugglers busted in joint Kuwait, UAE op

Millions of 'Lyrica' drug pills seized at airport

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: Two Kuwaiti citizens were arrested for the possession of drugs. The first was arrested at T4 terminal of Kuwait International Airport after he had arrived from the UAE with ten luggage pieces containing one million Lyrica pills. The second is a drug dealer who is an accomplice of the first, and he was arrested in Jahra. The two citizens were referred to the concerned authority with the seized drugs for necessary legal action.

Meanwhile, the UAE security personnel arrested an Egyptian national who was in possession of 2 million and 750 thousand narcotic pills. The arrest was based on Emirati-Kuwaiti security cooperation.

According to security sources, detectives received information about the arrival of a Kuwaiti citizen at T4 terminal of Kuwait International Airport in possession of bags packed with Lyrica pills. He was arrested upon arrival, and his bags were checked. During investigations, he revealed that he was planning to meet his partner who is a drug dealer in Jahra. The latter was also arrested.

Through Kuwaiti-Emirati security cooperation and the exchange of information, the Emirati security authorities managed to arrest the third suspect - an Egyptian national who was found in possession of two million and 750 thousand pills.

The Ministry of Interior announced in a statement that in a joint operation between the Kuwaiti and Emirati ministries of Interior, three people were arrested in possession of 3,750,000 Lyrica pills.

The ministry said, "This operation was carried out based on the efforts of the Ministry of Interior to combat the scourge of drugs and psychotropic substances, track down their dealers and smugglers, and protect society from this devastating scourge, and in cooperation with the General Department of Customs and our brothers in the United Arab Emirates."

Represented

The Criminal Security Sector, represented by the Drug Control General Department's International Control Department, was able to arrest two people in possession of approximately 1,000,000 Lyrica pills, which they attempted to bring into the country through Kuwait International Airport. This arrest happened with the cooperation of the General Department of Customs. When the two defendants were confronted, they admitted that the seized items belonged to them, and were intended for trafficking and abuse.

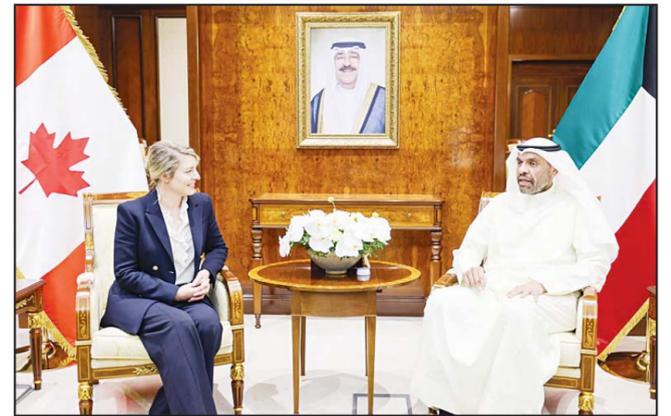
They found a third person outside the State of Kuwait. Immediately coordination was made with the authorities in the sisterly United Arab Emirates. He was arrested and 2,750,000 Lyrica narcotic tablets were found in his possession." The ministry extended its sincere appreciation for the fruitful cooperation and quick and decisive interaction with the incident by the Ministry of Interior of the United Arab Emirates in the process of arresting the accused in implementation of the Gulf agreements.

In a related context, the General Department of Customs said the customs officers at the Airport Customs Department dealt a new painful blow to drug traffickers by arresting a traveler coming from a Gulf country who was in possession of approximately one million Lyrica pills. This happened through the fruitful cooperation and joint coordination between the General Department of Customs, and the Drug Control General Department of the Ministry of Interior.

The statement explained, "Information was received from the Ministry of Interior to the Customs Investigation and Investigation Office about the arrival of a traveler accompanied by ten bags containing prohibited materials. He was arrested, and the bags were carefully searched. They found a large quantity of psychotropic substances that were wrapped in tightly sealed bags. Accordingly, the accused was arrested by the General Department for Narcotics and Alcohol Control in order to take the necessary measures.

The seizure was supervised by the Director-General of the General Department of Customs Abdullah Adel Al-Sharhan, the Assistant Undersecretary for Criminal Security Affairs Major General Hamed Al-Dawas, the Deputy Director-General for Customs Ports Affairs Osama Khalil Al-Shami, and the Director-General of Narcotics and Alcohol Control at the Ministry of Interior Brigadier General Muhammad Qabazard.

In conclusion, Al-Sharhan thanked the officials of the Customs Department and the Ministry of Interior for the great and strenuous efforts they exerted and the mutual coordination between the two sides, in order to protect Kuwait from the scourge of drugs and against anyone who dares to bring them into the country.



KUNA photo
 Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya receives the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Melanie Joly in his office.

Closer cooperation eyed

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya and Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Melanie Joly discussed Thursday means of enhancing and developing relations between the two friendly countries in all domains.

The two sides also mulled intensifying common coordination regarding international and regional issues as well as the region's developments, topped with the Palestinian cause and the Israeli occupation aggression on the Gaza Strip,

Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement. In addition, the two ministers covered means of supporting international peace and security, and working on maintaining international system, and cementing values and principles of international law, it noted.

Meanwhile, the Canadian minister expressed pride for the level of ties with Kuwait, saying that she looks forward to continuing this collaboration and upgrading ties for wider and inclusive horizons, it stated. (KUNA)



AU officials presenting a memento to the Ministry of Interior senior officer.

'Driving without distraction'

AU hosts traffic awareness event

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: Aligned with Unified Gulf Traffic Week Awareness Campaign for 2024, the Australian University (AU) hosted a traffic awareness lecture titled "Driving Without Distraction."

The event was held in the presence of senior officials from the Ministry of Interior, which included Lieutenant-General Muhammad Al Sabhan, Major Engineer Ali Bourabih, and Major Fahad Al Hayan, along with a big attendance of university students and staff. The lecture addressed several important traffic issues, focusing on the legal aspects of traffic law, including responsibilities regarding vehicles, the behavior of violating drivers, vehicle technicalities, the traffic system, various types of traffic cameras, digital transformation, and statistical data on traffic and vehicle violations, as well as the underlying

causes of traffic fatalities.

The event also included various interactive elements such as a knowledge quiz with prizes to participants, a display of multiple traffic vehicles, and the presence of Kuwaiti female police officers to highlight the comprehensive roles and services provided by the Ministry of Interior.

Mr. Abdulmohsen Al Refai, Senior Manager of the Health, Safety, and Security Department at AU underscored the significance of organizing awareness events. He emphasized on the importance of organizing awareness events and their role in educating the university community and students to traffic rules, regulations and what causes traffic incidents and on the importance of instilling precautionary concepts to avoid traffic casualties.

Kuwait's Al-Ojairi awarded AL post

CAIRO, March 9, (KUNA): The Arab League announced Thursday appointment of Kuwait's candidate Mohammad Al-Ojairi as an assistant for the secretary general.

In a press statement, the League's General Secretariat

pointed out that Al-Ojairi's appointment was approved by the Arab Foreign Ministers Council in their 161st session in Cairo Wednesday.

It added that Al-Ojairi would serve in the new post for five years.



Vietnam's ambassador talking to media persons.

Kuwait, Vietnam ties growing: envoy

'Trade exchange hits \$6 billion'

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: Ngo Tuan Tang, Vietnam's ambassador to Kuwait, disclosed that approximately 1,000 Kuwaiti citizens visited Vietnam last year, attributing the surge to the streamlined visa process, which now takes only four days online without the need for embassy visits. Efforts are underway to expedite this process further, aiming for Kuwaitis to obtain electronic visas within a single day.

Speaking at a press conference attended by accredited travel agencies and interested citizens, Ambassador Tang also revealed plans for an upcoming agreement between Vietnam Airlines and its Kuwaiti counterpart. This agreement will enable direct flights to Vietnam via Bangkok at competitive prices, facilitating tourism exchange between the two countries. Highlighting the special sig-

nificance of the current year, which marks the 48th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and Kuwait, Ambassador Tang expressed optimism for further development in bilateral ties.

Economic cooperation between Vietnam and Kuwait has seen significant growth, with trade exchanges reaching approximately \$6 billion last year. Notably, Kuwait's imports of Vietnamese goods, including coffee, cashews, seafood, leather, furniture, and electrical appliances, contributed significantly to this figure.

Ambassador Tang underscored the close parliamentary collaboration between the two nations, citing the recent hosting of Kuwaiti representatives in Vietnam's "Younger Representatives" program as a testament to their robust bilateral ties.

New poll likely to pose more challenges; awareness rises

“PARLIAMENTARY elections for the eighteenth legislative term of the National Assembly are being held in a Ramadan atmosphere, and the next assembly – after the elections – occupies great importance in the Kuwaiti political reality, given the ongoing controversy regarding the reasons that led to the dissolution of the previous National Assembly,” columnist **Dr Muhammad Hussein Al-Dallal** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

“On the other hand, there are the roles and issues that will be assigned to the next council, the most important of which is the possibility of the council considering the issue of allegiance to the next crown prince.

“The most prominent manifestation of the previous National Assembly was the ability of most of its members to form a parliamentary coalition to cooperate with the government, according to an announced government parliamentary legislative map, from which many agreed-upon development and reform issues were completed such as the housing cities, the Election Commission Law, the Constitutional Court Law, the abolition of the local agent, combating land monopoly, raising the minimum salaries for retirees, etc.

“Despite the mistakes this cooperation was marred with, especially in expanding the issue of special amnesty, the majority of the positive results of cooperation and understanding were in the interest of the people, the state, and developmental and reform issues.

“The Kuwaiti people face a great challenge in the new elections, and this challenge is primarily linked to the awareness of the Kuwaiti people, who have gone through many experiences with the political path, which is supposed to have reached major results to promote reform, and agreed with what many say about the positivity and soundness of the approach, which was adopted by members of the National Assembly previously, by strengthening the mechanisms of cooperation and consensus with the government.

“This is in addition to the importance of continuing the same approach and path in the next council, with the necessity of addressing the shortcomings and negatives that marred the previous experience.

“Rather, I add my voice to those who say that it is our duty, as a conscious people, striving for progress and renaissance, to strengthen the approach of government parliamentary cooperation and consensus during the selection of candidates who support this approach and who work on it, and to stay away from any candidate who has a role in promoting individualism at the expense of collective parliamentary work, which requires everyone to be aware of the danger of campaigning for private interest agendas, and to confront their agendas that harm the public interest.

“The blessed month of Ramadan comes in an atmosphere surrounded by a number of conflicting feelings between joy, sadness, and pain. What is happening in terms of genocide, aggression, injustice, and starvation in Palestine in general, and Gaza in particular, and the painful atmosphere in the Sudan, leaves us confused at a time when we feel joy at the arrival of the month of goodness, faith, and closeness to God, the Palestinian people, especially in Gaza, are experiencing a Ramadan atmosphere filled with sadness, anguish, and intense pain.

“At a time when our mosques are filled with worshippers in a spiritual atmosphere, mosques are being demolished on the heads of worshippers in Gaza, and worshippers are prevented from coming to Al-Aqsa Mosque, and at a time when we feel security, safety, and stability.

“There is no security and an atmosphere of extermination and killing of women, children and civilians prevails in Palestine, especially in Gaza, and at a time when the people of most Arab and Islamic countries enjoy delicious food to the point of gluttony and excess, Gaza is witnessing famine and slow killing, and at a time when the Kuwaiti people enjoy an atmosphere of democracy, elections and public freedoms.

“The Palestinian people are deprived of the most basic human rights, and at a time when Ramadan is surrounded by an atmosphere of joy and happiness when visiting relatives and friends, the people of Palestine and Gaza feel the pain and disappointment due to the international and Arab conspiracy against the criminal and brutal attack that is taking place, in violation of all religious and international values and covenants.

“These conflicting feelings among the Arabs and Muslims come from the standpoint of a Qur’anic concept mentioned in the Holy Qur’an. These feelings are considered natural for a person who enjoys a degree of values, morals, and belief in human dignity; feelings that require positive direction to support the afflicted peoples in Palestine. And Sudan, by all means legally available, requires gratitude and praise to God for the security, stability, and prosperous decent living we enjoy.

“We congratulate His Highness the Amir, may God protect him, and the Kuwaiti people and the Muslims, on the advent of the blessed month of Ramadan, and we ask God for acceptance, forgiveness and satisfaction, just as we ask Him for security, victory and pride

for the Palestinians and all Arab and Islamic peoples.”

Also:

“I still continue to direct arrows of criticism and denunciation at the group that exploits social media technology to spread falsehood, ignorance, and stupidity, and that technology is supposed to be a source of science, culture, and exchange of experiences among members of society wherever they are,” columnist **Abdulaziz Al-Tamimi** wrote for **Al-Rai** daily.

“A disturbing incident has emerged involving a science professor from the Ministry of Education, who used his platform to disseminate false information about a purported conspiracy involving oranges and the spread of AIDS.

“The professor, in a misguided post shared on social media and private messaging platforms, warned of a sinister plot to infect oranges exported from Arab countries with the AIDS virus.

“This baseless claim, suggesting a deliberate attempt to harm Arab populations, is not only false but also deeply irresponsible.

“What is particularly concerning is that this misinformation comes from an individual entrusted with educating young minds. The fact that a teacher, supposedly knowledgeable in biology sciences, could believe and propagate such a rumor calls into question the level of critical thinking and discernment within our educational system.

“It is both lamentable and alarming that our children’s education is potentially compromised when educators become ensnared by unfounded rumors perpetuated by social media influencers. The allure of fame and financial gain has led some individuals to prioritize sensationalism over truth, contributing to the dissemination of harmful misinformation.

“This incident serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need for greater scrutiny and regulation of online content, particularly on platforms where misinformation can easily proliferate unchecked.

“Collective action is required to steer these platforms toward responsible and credible information dissemination, safeguarding not only our children’s education but also the integrity of our society as a whole.

“It is imperative that we come together to ensure that truth prevails over falsehood and that our educational institutions remain beacons of knowledge and enlightenment, free from the influence of misinformation peddlers.”

“Islamic stories... Ramadan is a chance to start over. Next week, we will have a big guest – the month of fasting or Ramadan. Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam when Muslims are encouraged to abstain from food and drink from dawn to sunset,” columnist **Mohammad Al-Fouzan** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Fasting is not limited to abstaining from eating and drinking, as you can also avoid harmful talk, such as speaking out of ignorance or inappropriately. This is in addition to avoiding negative action like arguing or fighting. We can focus on developing good behaviors and increasing the number of our good deeds.

“Ramadan gives us the chance to ‘reset’ ourselves. This blessed month is an opportunity for us to treat any unhealthy behavior that we might exhibit. It is the most appropriate time to ponder and evaluate unhealthy habits, such as smoking, drinking alcohol, consuming drugs or excessive use of the Internet. All these can be modified during the holy month.

“Dr Mustafa Mahmoud, may Allah have mercy on him, said: ‘While I was a student in America, on the day before Christmas, I stopped at a gas station and bought coffee while filling the car with gas. I saw a worker busy putting locks on the liquor refrigerator. I asked him about the reason. He responded: This is a liquor refrigerator and the State’s laws prohibit the sale of liquor on Christmas Eve – the day before the birth of Christ. I was astonished: Is America not a secular state? Why would the State interfere in something like that? He said: Everyone must respect the birth of Christ. One must not drink alcohol on that day even if he is not religious. If society loses respect, we lose everything.’

“It is a matter of respect. They view ‘Christmas’ as a guest that visits them every year, to remind them of the birth of Christ, Peace be Upon Him. It is disrespectful to get drunk with that guest. Get drunk and have fun another day if that is your lifestyle, but on this day everyone will respect this guest.”

“The article tackles respect as a human value. It is one of the values that some people lack in their behavior and decision-making. Some satellite channels have lost such a lofty value in terms of respecting Ramadan. They exert tremendous efforts to spoil the blessing of communicating with Allah, by remembering Him and worshipping Him, and devoting themselves to what He loves and is pleased with.

“They have mobilized numerous actors and actresses in low-quality artistic works or trivial competitions under various names. They are united by one goal -- to distract the Muslims from worship and communication with the Creator, Glory be to Him, as if this holy month is an opportunity to show all human beings the evil deeds to distract them from the worship of Allah Almighty. I am convinced that this is something planned in order to hit the lofty goal of this blessed and noble month -- for one to become righteous.”

— Compiled by PFX Fernandes



All cars were totally wrecked by the blaze.

Manhunt launched

‘My brother set fire to my cars’

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: A Kuwaiti citizen lodged a complaint with authorities in the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate today, alleging that his brother had intentionally set fire to 13 vehicles owned by him. According to the report, the accused brother allegedly ignited the vehicles in front of the complainant’s residence in the Mubarak Al-Kabeer area. A security source disclosed that law enforcement officers promptly documented the incident as a case of arson and property destruction, forwarding it to the Public Prosecution for further action. The Public Prosecution, in response, issued orders for the apprehension of the accused individual and dispatched forensic experts to assess the scene and compile a comprehensive report, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

Meanwhile, the Public Relations and

Media Department of the General Fire Force reported that their Operations Department received an emergency call early morning, alerting them to a significant fire outbreak involving multiple vehicles outside a house in the Mubarak Al-Kabeer vicinity. Upon receipt of the distress call, firefighting teams from the Al-Qrain and Subhan fire stations swiftly responded to the scene. Upon arrival, firefighters found that the blaze had ravaged 13 vehicles and a sizable umbrella.

Efforts were immediately directed towards containing and extinguishing the fire. Fortunately, the firefighters successfully managed to prevent the flames from spreading to the adjacent residence, neighboring properties, and other vehicles in close proximity.

‘All Kuwaitis worked as one during the vicious invasion & occupation’

Deal signed to highlight national heroes, martyrs

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: The Kuwaiti Society of Families of Prisoners and Missing Persons and the Kuwaiti Caricature Society signed a partnership agreement based on their belief in the importance of strategic partnership between public benefit associations on one hand, and with the society on the other hand, to protect the nation and highlight the heroic acts and sacrifices of the honorable Kuwaitis throughout history, reports Al-Anba daily.

The partnership agreement aims to strengthen coordination between the two parties to achieve the desired goals, including the documentation of important and pivotal events in the country, especially the brutal Iraqi invasion.

Provisions

The most important provisions of the agreement include addressing national issues; documenting heritage; and highlight the heroism of prisoners, martyrs and resistance fighters according to the data in the possession of the two organizations.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the signing ceremony, Chairman of Kuwaiti Society of Families of Prisoners and Missing Persons Fayeel Al-Enezi expressed happiness over the signing of the agreement with Kuwaiti Caricature Society that is known for its efficiency

among civil society institutions due to their artistic and creative capabilities. “It is our national and professional duty to establish community partnership with them to achieve the desired cooperation in the interest of the nation,” he asserted.

Agreement

Al-Enezi revealed that the agreement stipulates the establishment of a joint program and action plan to inform the Kuwaiti generations and others about the brutal aggression that befell Kuwait and the resistance of the Kuwaiti people of all sects. “We are working on media coordination through the joint issuance of all kinds of publications, in addition to using media advertisements in joint events and other media platforms,” he added.

He said the agreement also states concerted efforts in holding seminars, conferences and discussion panels; organizing and participating in exhibitions in and outside Kuwait, especially during the anniversary of the brutal Iraqi invasion and the glorious liberation; and contacting officials and government agencies to obtain support for the implementation of joint work programs -- the most important of which is holding specialized exhibitions commemorating the heroism and lives of honorable martyrs, with each party providing its own financial support.

On the other hand, Muhammad Thalab said the board is committed to the partnership, because the Kuwaiti Society of Families of Prisoners and Missing Persons plays a national role in following up the issues and concerns of the families of prisoners and missing persons to document biographies of the honorable martyrs of Kuwait, highlighting their heroism during the brutal Iraqi invasion.

Deputy PM tours islands, military & security sites

KUWAIT CITY, March 9, (KUNA): Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Youssef Saud Al-Sabah on Saturday highlighted the need of maintaining utmost degrees of preparedness and vigilance at all security and military facilities, including border outlets.

His remarks, according to a defense ministry statement, came after an inspection tour of military and security sites in the country’s northern region, along with the islands of Boubyan, Warba, and Meskan, where he was briefed with latest developments and duties in said sites.

During his tour, Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah to military and security personnel, urging them to continue on preserving safety, stability and sovereignty of the country.

Camping time extended to Ramadan end: panel

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: At the behest of citizens, hikers, and camp owners, the Spring Camps Committee has agreed to prolong this year’s spring camping season until the conclusion of the holy month of Ramadan. The municipality has reached out to the Director General of the Environment Public Authority to seek their perspective on this matter. The citizens’ plea stems from the delightful spring weather prevailing in the country during this period. Notably, the Committee, inclusive of representatives from the Environment Authority, has fully endorsed the extension request, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Given the imminent expiration of the original camping period, slated for March 15, the municipality has urged the Environment Public Authority to expedite their decision-making process. According to reliable sources, the authority holds the power to grant or deny the extension, as per the executive regulations outlined in the Environmental Protection Law. Consequently, the municipality is obliged to collaborate closely with the authority to ensure compliance with any directives issued.

Mol begins disbursing allowances to workers

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: In confirmation of what the daily published two days ago regarding the disbursement of cash allowances to employees of the Ministry of Interior before the month of Ramadan, the Ministry of Interior started depositing cash allowances in the bank accounts of beneficiaries from yesterday.

According to security sources, the Ministry of Interior has started sending money to banks in preparation for disbursing them before the month of Ramadan to those entitled to them.

This step was taken based on instructions from the Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Minister of Defense and Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, and the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Salem Al-Nawaf.

Wanted duo held: A Bedoun resident and a Pakistani expatriate, who are wanted by law for implementation of judicial sentences issued against them, were arrested on the Sixth Ring Road towards Messila.

According to security sources, traffic patrol officers stopped a vehicle that had committed a traffic violation, and checked the details of the driver and his companion to discover that an arrest warrant was issued against them. They were referred to Sabah Al-Salem police station to complete the procedures against them.

5 dogs killed: The head of an animal welfare society, a female citizen, has accused an unknown person of killing five dogs in Mina Abdullah, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The citizen submitted a report at Mina Abdullah and Ali Sabah Al-Salem Police Station, stating that an unknown person killed five dogs near the factories in Mina Abdullah. She said the society was taking care of the dogs and they were found dead at 6:10 pm on Thursday.

Female manager absolved in ‘breach’ of trust lawsuit

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: The Misdemeanor Section in the Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of the First Instance Court, which acquitted a citizen of breach of trust based on the complaint filed by her supposed friend who accused her of embezzling the funds of a financial association, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The complainant told the competent authorities that she is the manager of a financial association whose members are her friends, disclosing that each of them agreed to pay a certain amount every month until each member receives the total amount pooled every month. However, when the accused received the money during her turn – a total of KD12,600 – she stopped paying the agreed amount monthly.

The Public Prosecution questioned the accused based on the pieces of evidence presented by the complainant, including the payment schedule signed by the participants, but she denied membership to the association and that she does not know the complainant.

Commenting on the ruling, lawyer of the accused, Attorney Hadeel Al-Anazi, explained that the breach of trust charge should include criminal intent and proof that the act was committed concerning a movable property owned by others, while the money was delivered to the offender as a matter of trust.

Fire in warehouse: The Public Relations and Media Department of the Directorate-General of Fire Department (DGFD) declared Friday afternoon, firemen contained a warehouse fire in a camp located in the Al-Sulaibiya desert area.

Immediate action was taken by fire teams to combat and extinguish the blaze, with no reported injuries resulting from the incident. The warehouse was totally destroyed.





A photo from the 'Tourism Exhibition 2024'.

Municipality's new service to notify public about warnings & violations

MPW said received 3,310 complaints in January

By Inass Awadh and Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: Kuwait Municipality recently announced the launch of a new communication service for the public for notifying them electronically about a warning or violation through notifications that reach the concerned party via the Sahel app.

In a press statement, it explained that the launch of this service was based on direct directives from the Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan to facilitate citizens and residents to be informed directly of the measures taken in the event of a warning being issued regarding municipal violations in order to avoid legal accountability, as well as the financial fines that result from failure to respond to the warning or violation.

It also provides an opportunity to complete the reconciliation order process in order to avoid issuance of judicial rulings against the violator in

the event that a violation report is issued by municipal inspectors.

This step is consistent with the government's approach to developing services, and for benefiting from the Sahel app and the communication tools available within the government's electronic services.

In a related context, the Environmental Affairs Committee of the Municipal Council, during its meeting headed by Alia Al-Farsi, referred to the executive branch the Ministry of Health's letter regarding health control over waste landfills, in order to obtain a detailed report on it.

It also referred to the executive branch the proposal submitted by a citizen regarding helping citizens and reducing burdens.

The committee kept on its agenda the two proposals submitted by member Eng. Sharifa Al-Shalfan regarding maintaining the cleanliness of the marine environment and recycling plastic bottles and their covers.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Works announced that it had received 3,310 complaints in the month of January from all governorates of the country.

In a statement, it explained that these reports included 622 from Farwaniya Governorate, 655 from Jahra Governorate, 573 from Capital Governorate, 457 from Ahmadi Governorate, 313 from Hawally Governorate, and 173 from Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate. There were also 288 reports

related to highways. A total of 61 reports were received by Sanitary Engineering Department, and 68 reports were received by the ministry's Operations Room.

The ministry received many complaints related to streets and roads in different areas of the governorates.

The complainants appreciated the efforts exerted by the ministry during the current period for various maintenance works.

In some complaints, they stated that the roads have been suffering for years from severe neglect and lack of attention due to the lack of maintenance contracts for the streets and internal roads, most of which have eroded.

They called for the speedy repair of the streets and the elimination of the potholes found on most streets, especially the highways, which expose the users of those roads to accidents.

These complaints came from many areas that suffer from road problems, including Abdullah Al-Mubarak, Sabahiya, Saad Al-Abdullah, Rehab, Omariya, and other areas.

In a separate context, sources from the Ministry of Public Works indicated that the Construction Projects Sector of the Ministry of Public Works is in the process of proposing a consultancy agreement to design a building and headquarters for the Ministry of Higher Education, revealing that a budget has been allocated during the 2024/2025 fiscal year.

50 years celebration of diplomatic ties

Embassy of Bangladesh in Kuwait organizes 'Tourism Exhibition '24'

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: The Embassy of Bangladesh in Kuwait organized a day long "Tourism Exhibition-2024" on Thursday, 07 March, at the Multipurpose Hall of the Al-Shaheed Park (Phase Two), Kuwait City. The Tourism Exhibition was organized as a part of the celebration of Fifty Years (Golden Jubilee) of Bangladesh-Kuwait Diplomatic Ties.

Although this is a day-long event, the embassy welcomed the invited guests at 03:00 pm. Ambassadors and members of diplomatic corps in Kuwait, high government officials of Kuwait, tour operators both from Bangladesh and Kuwait, members of Traveler Association of Kuwait, members of Bangladesh community in Kuwait and representatives from the print and electronic media were present at the program. The Assistant Undersecretary for Tourism Sector at the Ministry of Information of Kuwait, Osamah H. Almekhyal, was present as the Chief Guest.

The daylong colorful exhibition began with the welcoming remarks by the Ambassador of Bangladesh, H.E. Major General (Retd.) Md Ashikuzzaman. In his speech, the ambassador thanked Osamah H. Almekhyal, Assistant Undersecretary for Tourism Sector at the Ministry of Information,

for gracing the occasion as the chief guest. He also expressed his sincere thanks to all the ambassadors and distinguished guests. In his speech the ambassador also focused on the tourism sector of Bangladesh and requested all to visit Bangladesh at their convenience to enjoy the natural beauty and hospitality of Bangladeshi people.

During the exhibition, colorful posters & banners, boards with beautiful photographs, audio-visual presentations were displayed and promotional brochures, books, flyers and handicrafts, etc were distributed to showcase various touristic attractions of Bangladesh. An attractive raffle draw for the visitors was organized in the exhibition where air tickets and hotel accommodation were given as prizes of the raffle draw.

To note that, fifty years of diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and Kuwait has been completed very recently and fifty years of the establishment of Bangladesh Mission in Kuwait is forthcoming in April 2024. To celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh - Kuwait relations with due fervor and festivity, the Embassy of Bangladesh in Kuwait is planning to undertake various programs and events throughout the year 2024. This Tourism Exhibition is organized as a part of this celebration.



Top and below: Some photos from the opening of the store.



Indian Heritage unlocks retail haven in Avenues Mall, Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: Indian Heritage, renowned for its commitment to preserving India's rich heritage while seamlessly integrating it with Arabian culture, proudly announces the grand opening of its sixth store in the prestigious Avenues Mall, Kuwait.

The inauguration, held on March 8, was graced by the esteemed presence of ambassadors from Bhutan, Nepal, Uzbekistan, the Indian Embassy Counsellor (Commerce), the Malaysian Embassy Counsellor and the Colonel & United States Air Force of the Embassy of the United States of America. Alongside them were executives of Indian Heritage, distinguished guests, media personnel, as well as a large gathering of enthusiastic shoppers eager to explore the brand's newest offerings.

Indian Heritage has long been synonymous with meticulous attention to detail and a dedication to excellence and exceptional quality. Each piece in their collection, be it ready-to-wear attire, fabrics, jewelry, or handicrafts, reflects this commitment. Established in 2000 as a specialized Indian textile house, Indian Heritage has since evolved into a premier retail destination in Kuwait.

The newest addition to the Indian Heritage family at the Avenues Mall is a testament to the brand's unwavering dedication to providing customers with luxurious, high-quality products crafted from the finest materials. The store not only offers a diverse selection of designer and heritage products but also features a patio space where exclusive events can be hosted, further enhancing the customer experience.

With existing stores in Souk Safat, Magic Mall in Abu Halifa, Al Sama Mall in Egaila, and Al-Khiran Mall in Kuwait, as well as a presence in Bahrain, Indian Heritage continues to expand its footprint



across the region, bringing its unique blend of Indian tradition and Arabian culture to an ever-growing audience.

"We are thrilled to announce the opening of our sixth store at the prestigious Avenues Mall," said a spokesperson for Indian Heritage. "This new location represents an exciting milestone for us as we continue to share our passion for Indian artistry with the people of Kuwait. We look forward to welcoming our customers to experience the essence of Indian craftsmanship and culture in this magnificent new space."

The Indian Heritage store at the Avenues Mall is now open to the public, offering a curated selection of exquisite products that celebrate the beauty and diversity of Indian craftsmanship.

'Traffic Culture' course for G12

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: During the 20th meeting of the Supreme Traffic Council, chaired by Lieutenant General Sheikh Salem Al-Nawaf, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior and Chairman of the Supreme Traffic Council, members discussed various items on the agenda, reports Al-Anba daily.

Notably, the Traffic Awareness Curriculum Committee presented a draft proposal for the "Traffic Culture" course book tailored for twelfth grade students.

The proposal emphasizes integrating traffic and cultural awareness into the curriculum, aiming to instill good traffic values and morals in students from an early age.

It was suggested that these concepts be incorporated into all grades across different educational stages.

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Women 'essential partners' in Kuwait development: minister

UN chief's rep praises Kuwaiti women's contributions to society

KUWAIT CITY, March 9, (KUNA): UN Secretary-General's Representative in Kuwait Ghada Al-Taher said Friday Kuwaiti women have deep contributions to, and played a vital role in, the advancement of the society.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement on International Women's Day, Friday, Al-Taher said she realized that there are still differences between men and women in all aspects of life, adding that the UN has been committed to supporting initiatives empowering women for social and economic leadership.



Al-Taher

She noted that the UN would continue cooperation with its partners in Kuwait regarding policies that boost women's welfare.

Empowering women is not only a moral necessity, but also a strategic investment in sustainable development of "our" societies, she stressed, pointing to investing in human capital as part of the

goals of Kuwait Vision 2035.

In addition, Al-Taher showed sincere solidarity with Palestinian women who have been facing unprecedented challenges amid complicated geopolitical conditions.

She affirmed the UN commitment to backing Palestinian women in getting their rights and dignity, calling for achieving their security and helping them accomplish their aspirations for a prosperous and fair future.

Meanwhile, Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Children Affairs Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Sabah said Friday that women play a fundamental role in progressing and building the State for a better future.

On International Women's Day, Sheikh Firas, Chairman of Supreme Council of Family Affairs, congratulated Kuwaiti women as an essential partner in development, stressing that Kuwait has been paying much attention to women and keen on empowering them for their positive role in all domains.

Women have made several achievements in multiple fields, and taken part in setting national strategies, the minister said.

Cold steam irrigation system aims to diversify water resources: Wasis

'System converts salty seawater into pure water'

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: Kuwaiti engineer Adel Al-Wasis, who invented the cold steam irrigation system, said this system aims to diversify water resources in anticipation of any water danger that might lead to seawater pollution, reports Al-Rai daily.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after delivering a lecture on the cold steam irrigation system at the Kuwait pavilion in Doha Horticultural Expo 2023; Al-Wasis, a senior communications specialist at the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, explained that this system converts salty seawater into pure water through a vacuum tank to reduce the boiling point of water while using solar energy to raise the temperature of the water and obtain the energy needed to operate the system. He pointed out the system is unique due to its capability to separate water from salt using clean energy and oil to operate the engines, affirming this serves various sectors such as agriculture.

He revealed the current system for producing drinking water results in the production of highly salty water and mixing with seawater, unlike the cold steam irrigation system, which contributes to preserving the environment and marine life through the use of clean renewable energy such as solar energy.

He continued: "Any problem in any system is considered a treasure for the researcher in finding appropriate solutions, and an entry point for a person to be creative and innovative... in addition to the ability to localize industries and innovations in the region, instead of importing them."

He said the cold steam irrigation system could contribute to solving the water problem in the Arab Gulf countries, especially since there are not many sources of potable water. He explained that the system contributes to solving this problem by converting salty sea water into potable water.

He thanked Kuwait's pavilion at the exhibition in the Qatari capital - Doha - for giving him a chance to explain the cold steam irrigation system and its benefits to everyone.

Al-Wasis won first place in the competition for the best water purification and treatment project in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which was held in the GCC pavilion at the Dubai Expo 2020. He also won several medals in international innovation exhibitions.

The Doha Horticultural Expo 2023 was launched last October under the slogan, "Green Desert, Better Environment".

'Online classes' for KU students

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: Kuwait University has announced that students with classes from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm will be allowed to use the distance education system during the holy month of Ramadan, reports Al-Anba.

In a press statement, acting Secretary General of Kuwait University and its official spokesman Dr Fayez Al-Dhafiri revealed: "The Kuwait University Council has agreed on holding online classes from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm during Ramadan."

Al-Dhafiri explained this will be based on the request of the concerned professors with the approval of their respective departments and deans of their colleges, in coordination with the dean of admission and registration.

He affirmed this approval is in accordance with the memorandum presented to the University Council, stipulating curriculum and distance education regulations when it was not possible to conduct traditional classes.

Saudi minister expresses his delight in visiting Kuwait

Media role hailed in boosting Saudi-Kuwaiti ties

KUWAIT CITY, March 9, (KUNA): Kuwaiti-Saudi media outlets play a key role in strengthening relations between the two sisterly countries, Saudi Minister of Information Salman Al-Dossary said Thursday.

Speaking during a symposium organized by the Kuwait's Journalists Association, in cooperation with the Ministry of Information at the National Library of Kuwait, Al-Dossary said the Kuwaiti-Saudi ties have been at their best levels throughout history which is reflected in media cooperation.

He expressed delight at his visit to Kuwait and meeting with media senior officials, saying that such gatherings give a clear image on how media cooperation goes in parallel with political cooperation. He underscored the importance of media work in countering any attempts to tamper with bilateral ties.

Al-Dossary said that media is one of the most attractive sectors in the Kingdom and plays a key role in creating job openings.

He also indicated that that his ministry supports the private sector contribution to the media in the Kingdom.

The Saudi minister stressed the need of keeping pace with social media platforms and benefiting from the opportunities they provide.

He pointed out that his ministry tries to merge traditional media with social



Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Suleiman Al-Jarallah with Saudi Minister Al-Dossary.

media, especially for reaching new readers and audience.

Talented youngsters are the major contributors to the media sector in the Kingdom and thanks to their creative ideas and products, media content has blossomed, he said.

He pointed to media collaboration between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, stating the signing of a memorandum of un-

derstanding (MoU) between the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) and the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) earlier in the day to share expertise and news, and enhance media cooperation.

The Saudi guest indicated that he met with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Salem Al-Sabah and Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

Your Highness

Continued from Page 1

Projections suggest that by the year 2030, salaries are poised to reach approximately KD 35 billion. However, the continued dependence on oil as the primary source of income undoubtedly carries significant risks for the future. It is imperative to swiftly and thoughtfully take action to mitigate these risks.

Your Highness, taking Norway as an example, the rate of unemployment does not exceed two percent there. Its gross domestic product rose to USD 579 billion last year, and therefore its sovereign fund maintains its assets and grows even more.

This is not the case with Kuwait, whose general budget records a deficit every year that almost devours the rate of increase in registered nominal income, due to the fluctuation of oil prices. On the other hand, the domestic products of other Gulf Cooperation Council member states recorded significant increases depending on the diversification of non-oil sources of income. They did not fall into the hole of demographics, something that Kuwait is still suffering from due to slogans and a skewed, short-sighted vision.

Upon making a decision to implement a pragmatic development plan leveraging our expansive desert lands, deserted islands, and extensive coastline along the Arabian Gulf, it is imperative to establish a proactive state that mitigates structural risks. The current challenges stemming from inadequate infrastructure and limited industrial and agricultural zones underscore the necessity for such strategic action.

The establishment of a government-imposed timetable for implementation within two or three years is expected to invigorate the economic cycle within the country. However, this requires stopping the absurd waste of public finances, and transforming into a productive economy through major and infrastructural projects such as the Silk City, which to this day is just ink on paper. It could be one of the assets that generates more profits than speculation in global stock markets.

Your Highness, building recreational areas, universities, hospitals, and other facilities, as well as openness to the world, undoubtedly reduces the wastage of money on foreign tourism.

Is it reasonable that Kuwaitis spent KD 3.1 billion last year on traveling abroad? Isn't Kuwait more deserving of that? Or will we remain like a well that nourishes those who are far while those around it die of thirst?

This is due to the fact that there are backward laws drawn up by a group of fanatic representatives, which have reached the point of inspecting people's intentions.

Because there are those who do not want anyone to come to us, and joy is forbidden, we ask - Why is Kuwait not a pilgrimage for people from all corners of the earth?

Your Highness the Prime Minister, we reiterate that withdrawing USD 200 billion from the sovereign funds and pumping it into Kuwait through major projects is the solution. Otherwise, international agencies will continue to record nominal profits for the sovereign fund, which is unrealistic, as any global crisis can result in losses. Therefore, it is necessary to invest internally.

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Fifth Constituency: four (Saleh Nasser Al-Hajri, Sabah Adnan Ali, Fahd Amer Al-Ajmi and Mishal Malek Al-Sabah).

Mishal Malek Al-Sabah will most likely be dismissed as per the explanatory memorandum of the Constitution, which bans members of the Al-Sabah Family from running for elections. In 2016, Malek Al-Malek Al-Sabah was dismissed for the same reason.

First Constituency candidate Abdullah Abdulwahab Al-Herz stressed the need for the government to submit a work program, which is totally different from that of its predecessors; adding the government should not be involved in any dispute.

Second Constituency candidate Yousef Abdulrazzaq Al-Fawzan stated that there have been systematic attempts to push the people into losing their power and getting fed up with the situation. "Fortunately, the political leadership is as committed to the Constitution as the citizens. Those calling for the suspension of the Constitution are not concerned about national interests," he stressed.

Second Constituency candidate Khalid Saad Al-Rashedi intends to focus on the citizens' demands, especially the nationals working in the private sector, who have not received any support and have had no one to represent them. He promised to solve their problems in co-

ordination with the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), which he accused of taking instructions from the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS).

Former MP and Fourth Constituency candidate Hayef Al-Mutair issued a press statement after filing his candidacy, in which he praised the achievements of the 2023 National Assembly. He is hoping the election will be held after Eid Al-Fitr.

He stated that he obtained information about parties, which hired some candidates in different constituencies in a bid to block the winning chances of certain candidates.

On electing the next Assembly speaker, Al-Mutair said that in case he wins in the election, he will invite his colleagues to a coordination meeting in his house.

Asked if former Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim will be invited to the meeting if the latter wins, Al-Mutair responded "no"; stating that Al-Ghanim has a different approach and has had political disputes, which will not contribute to the success of the meeting.

Fourth Constituency candidate Abdullah Fahad Al-Anzi thinks the country is at a turning point with some parties targeting the Constitution. He claims the government seemed keen on breaking the parliamentary position by requesting the postponement of the discussion of bills on raising the citizens' standard of living.

Medical center

Continued from Page 1

and program, to which the Ministry of Health and the government of the State of Kuwait are committed.

He expressed appreciation for Ali Al-Ghanim's donation to the center.

Dr. Al-Awadhi affirmed that the coming period will witness the opening of other health facilities, as work is underway to complete the final stages of their work in preparation for their opening.

He highlighted the ministry's constant keenness to continue improving the quality of health services provided to citizens.

Meanwhile, the donor Ali Al-Ghanim, in a similar statement, said, "I trust the pride of the people of Kuwait in the contributions that we make to benefit and serve the country. For years, the people of the farms and the residents of Abdali have been waiting for this inauguration of a health center that provides various health services to the region."

KAC to

Continued from Page 1

destination planning, and aviation engineering.

The forthcoming opportunities will cater to individuals with diverse educational backgrounds, including those with higher and intermediate qualifications, diplomas, and other relevant credentials.

Emphasizing a commitment to national workforce development, Kuwait Airways plans to regularly appoint new Kuwaiti talents to fill its vacancies, thereby limiting appointments of other nationalities to essential roles. Competitive salaries, particularly for experienced aviation professionals, will be offered to incentivize the engagement of local talent.

Moreover, Kuwait Airways aims to facilitate the entry of students and graduates from the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training into the company through specialized training programs. These initiatives seek to equip aspiring individuals with the necessary skills to excel within the aviation industry.

P.M. inaugurates

Continued from Page 1

He stressed his keenness to participate in the walkathon and complete it, expressing his wishes to see more of these events in Kuwait throughout the year, that will positively impact on the society, noting diplomatic corps members' eagerness to support all activities and events that take place in Kuwait.

Spearheaded by Kuwait's Public Authority for Sport (PAS), the fledgling initiative "Kuwait Sports Day" is chiefly meant to promote and fan out the concept of community sports.

The move obviously reflects the Kuwaiti government's belief in the paramount significance of sports, as well as its endeavor to build a healthy society where people can enjoy environmental, mental and psychological support.

The initiative, whose activities are to start at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway on Saturday, will be held under the aegis of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

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World News Roundup

Europe

Zelensky visits Turkey

Portugal elects new parliament and govt

LISBON, Portugal, March 9. (AP): Portugal is holding an early general election on Sunday when 10.8 million registered voters will elect 230 lawmakers to the National Assembly, the country's parliament. The lawmakers will then choose a new government.

Two moderate parties that have alternated in power for decades - the center-left Socialist Party and the center-right Social Democratic Party - are once again expected to capture most votes.

But a radical right populist party is feeding off disenchantment with the mainstream parties and could help propel Europe's tilt to the political right.

These are the issues that have been at the heart of the campaign:

The election is taking place because a Socialist government collapsed in November during a corruption investigation. The scandal included a police search of Prime Minister Antonio Costa's official residence and the arrest of his chief of staff. Costa has not been accused of any crime.

Also in recent weeks, a Lisbon court decided that a former Socialist prime minister in power 2005-2011 should stand trial for allegedly pocketing some 34 million euros (\$36.7 million) during his time in office.

The Social Democratic Party has also been embarrassed by corruption allegations.

A recent graft investigation in Portugal's Madeira Islands triggered the resignation of two prominent Social Democrat officials. The scandal erupted on the same day the Social Democratic Party unveiled an anti-corruption billboard in Lisbon that said, "It can't go on like this."



Costa

Corruption

A 5-year-old radical right populist party called Chega, or "Enough," has made the fight against corruption one of its political banners and could profit from the scandals.

House prices in Portugal jumped by around 80% and rents rose by some 30% between 2010 and the second quarter of last year, European Union statistics show. Those increases were way above wage rises.

Much of the price growth came in recent years, largely fueled by the influx of foreign investors and tourists seeking short-term rentals. The shift has been felt keenly in big cities such as the capital, Lisbon, where many locals have been priced out of the housing market.

The problem was made more acute by last year's surge in mortgage rates and inflation.

The Portuguese have long been among Western Europe's lowest earners. That rankles, and the latest street protests over pay have come from police officers.

Last year, the average monthly wage before tax was around 1,500 euros (\$1,630) - barely enough to rent a one-bedroom flat in Lisbon.



'Presence of NATO forces not unthinkable': Poland's foreign minister says the presence of NATO forces "is not unthinkable" and that he appreciates the French president for not ruling out that idea.

Radek Sikorski made the observation during a discussion marking the 25th anniversary of Poland's NATO membership in the Polish parliament on Friday, and the Foreign Ministry tweeted the comments later in English.

Last month French President Emmanuel Macron said the possibility of Western troops being sent to Ukraine could not be ruled out, a comment that prompted an outcry from other leaders.

French officials later sought to clarify Macron's remarks and tamp down the backlash, while insisting on the need to send a clear signal to Russia that it cannot win its war in Ukraine.

The Kremlin has warned that if NATO sends combat troops, a direct conflict between the alliance and Russia would be inevitable. Russian President Vladimir Putin said such a move would risk a global nuclear conflict.



Ukraine's Zelensky visits Turkey: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met Friday with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose NATO-member country has sought to balance its close relations with both Kyiv and Moscow and repeatedly offered to act as a peace broker between them.

During the talks in Istanbul, Erdogan was expected to press for negotiations to end Russia's war in Ukraine, now in its third year, a Turkish government official said.

Talks would also focus on a possible new measure that would guarantee navigational safety of commercial vessels in the Black Sea, the official said. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with Turkish government protocol.

Zelensky said in a statement at the start of the meeting that he was grateful for Turkey's support. He said he was interested in strengthening bilateral cooperation, protecting navigation in the vital Black Sea shipping corridor, and having Ukraine work with Turkish defense companies.

The visit comes as Zelensky and other officials continue to press other nations for more munitions and weaponry to halt the advance of Russian troops trying to make deeper gains into the Ukraine-held western part of the Donetsk region and also penetrating into the Kharkiv region north of it.



Detention centre in spotlight: Pressure is building on authorities in Italy to close a notorious Rome migrant detention center where a 19-year-old Guinean allegedly hanged himself last month. Visiting opposition senators have decried "undignified" conditions for people ordered to leave Italy but awaiting repatriation.

Italy's 10 migrant repatriation centers have long been criticized by human rights groups. They describe them as black holes of human rights violations where undocumented migrants are essentially detained for months without charges in conditions worse than prisons.

The centers are supposed to be temporary holding facilities for migrants whose asylum bids failed, or foreigners who have been ordered expelled for criminal or other reasons while the paperwork is completed to send them home.

But because of bureaucratic delays and a lack of repatriation agreements with countries of origin, only around half of the detainees are actually sent back and the centers end up acting as de facto prisons but without a prison's rehabilitation, educational or proper medical facilities, rights groups say.



US President Joe Biden delivers the State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress at the Capitol, on March 7 in Washington. Biden on March 8 laced into former president Donald Trump - by name this time - as he and his senior aides began barnstorming the country to aggressively sell his vision for a second term to voters. (AP)

Politics

US president's campaign tries to seize the offensive

Biden visits battleground states, expands staff

ROSE VALLEY, Pennsylvania, March 9. (AP): Fresh off his defiant State of the Union address, President Joe Biden on Friday laced into former President Donald Trump - by name this time - as he and his senior aides began barnstorming the country to aggressively sell his vision for a second term to voters.

The president is trying to ride the post-speech momentum to Pennsylvania and Georgia for campaign events in two critical battleground states that he flipped in 2020 and is hoping to keep in his column this November. He arrived at a private home in the pivotal Philadelphia suburbs along with his wife, Jill Biden, to hold what his campaign billed as a "kitchen table" conversation with brothers Jack and David Cunicelli, the owners of 320 Market Cafe, and their families ahead of remarks to supporters at the local middle school. He'll move on to New Hampshire, Wisconsin and Michigan next week.

Stay

Biden's reelection campaign was almost giddy after the speech, vowing to stay on the offensive against Trump. Introducing her husband at Strath Haven Middle School, Jill Biden said, "Last night, Joe showed the world what I see every day."

While Biden had referred only to his "predecessor" during Thursday's speech before Congress, on Friday it was a different story on the campaign trail, as Biden and his wife laid into Trump for raising the deficit, rolling back abortion access and fomenting the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the Capitol.

He also blamed Trump for the coarsening of the country's political discourse.

"When you ride down the street and there's a Trump banner with an F-U on it and a little 6-year-old kid putting up his middle finger," Biden said. "Did you ever think you'd hear people talk the way they do? It demeans who we are. That's not America."

Biden highlighted threats to in vitro fertilization in Alabama after a recent state Supreme Court ruling. "You know why it happened? I'll tell you why. One

Senate approves \$460 bln spending bill to avoid government shutdown

WASHINGTON, March 9. (AP): The Senate on Friday approved a \$460 billion package of spending bills in time to meet a midnight deadline for avoiding a shutdown of many key federal agencies, a vote that gets lawmakers about halfway home in wrapping up their appropriations work for the 2024 budget year.

The measure contains six annual spending bills and has already passed the House. It now goes to President Joe Biden to be signed into law. The White House said he would do so Saturday, and "agencies will not shut down and may continue their normal operations."

Meanwhile, lawmakers are negotiating a second package of six bills, including defense, in an effort to have all federal agencies fully funded by a March 22 deadline.

"To folks who worry that divided government means nothing ever gets done, this bipartisan package says otherwise," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

He said the bill's passage would allow for the hiring of more air traffic controllers and rail safety inspectors, give federal firefighters a raise and boost support for home-

less veterans, among other things. The Senate passed the bill by a vote of 75-22. The chamber labored to get to a final vote just hours before the midnight deadline for the first set of appropriations bills. Lawmakers sought votes on several amendments and wanted to have their say on the bill and other priorities during debate on the floor.

It was unclear midday if senators would be able to avert a short shutdown, though eventual passage was never really in doubt.

"I would urge my colleagues to stop playing with fire here," said Sen. Susan Collins, the top-ranking Republican member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "It would be irresponsible for us not to clear these bills and do the fundamental job that we have of funding government. What is more important?"

The votes this week come more than five months into the current fiscal year after congressional leaders relied on a series of stop-gap bills to keep federal agencies funded for a few more weeks or months at a time while they struggled to reach agreement on full-year spending.

reason: Donald Trump," Biden said.

And Biden criticized Trump for sowing doubts about America's commitments to its NATO allies and for hosting Hungary's Victor Orban at his Florida estate on Friday. "You know who he's meeting with today down in Mar-a-Lago? Orban of Hungary, who's stated flatly that he doesn't think democracy works, he's looking for dictatorship. Only member of NATO. That's who he's meeting with," Biden said.

"I see a future where we defend democracy, not diminish it."

Jill Biden called Trump "dangerous," said "he mocks women's bodies and devalues our existence" and added, "And we can't let him win."

Biden joked that he got his "usual warm reception" from Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, the Republican from Georgia, who heckled Biden to address the death of Laken Riley, a nursing student from Georgia. An immigrant from Venezuela who entered the US illegally has been arrested and charged with Riley's murder.

The president's campaign announced Friday that he and Vice President Kamala Harris will visit every major swing state in coming days, while launching a \$30 million, six-week advertising campaign on TV and digital platforms designed to highlight key themes from the State of the Union to Black, Asian and Hispanic communities.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, (right), and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky arrive for a joint news conference following their meeting at Dolmabahce palace in Istanbul, Turkey on March 8. (AP)



Evers



Hokanson

America

Firefighters get control of fire: Firefighters in Hawaii were able to get control of a large fire at a biomass plant on Kauai Island that broke out on Friday.

Crews were called to the plant at about 3:30 p.m., KITV Island News reported. The firefighters had the fire under control about two hours later.

An image of the fire showed red flames and black smoke billowing into the sky.

The fire was contained within Biomass Power Plant and didn't threaten the public, officials said.

Kauai firefighters are investigating what caused the blaze. (AP)



Texas copter crash kills 3: A helicopter flying over the US-Mexico border in Texas crashed Friday, killing two National Guard soldiers and a Border Patrol agent, the military said. Another soldier on board was injured.

The UH-72 Lakota helicopter was assigned to the federal government's border security mission when it went down near Rio Grande City, according to a statement released by Joint Task Force North. The cause was under investigation.

The crash happened mid-afternoon Friday while the helicopter was conducting aviation operations, according to the statement. No other details were provided.

Starr County Judge Eloy Vera, the county's top official, said those on board included one woman and three men. He said the person who was injured was in critical condition.

The names of those killed were not immediately released.

Gen Daniel Hokanson, head of the National Guard Bureau, in a post on X, sent his condolences to the families, loved ones, friends and colleagues of the three people killed, and prayers for the injured soldier's speedy recovery. (AP)



9 dead in Wis traffic crash: Nine people were killed Friday in a crash involving a semitrailer and a van at a western Wisconsin highway intersection.

Preliminary reports about the early morning crash indicated the semitrailer traveling on State Highway 95 collided with the van traveling on County Highway J, southwest of the small city of Neillsville, Clark County

Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy James Hirsch said in a Facebook post.

The van entered the intersection and was struck by the semitrailer, he said. Eight of

the nine people in the van, including the driver, died at the scene, while an injured passenger was taken to a nearby hospital, he said.



Prince William, (right), looks on as Pierre-Yves Paslier, co-founder of Notpla describes his seaweed-based food packaging at the Oval cricket ground made by the Earthshot 2022 winner Notpla in London on March 8. William will hear about the 2022 Earthshot Prize winner, Notpla, and a new multi-million-pound contract with Levy UK and Ireland, part of Compass Group, to introduce Notpla's seaweed-based, natural food packaging to over 50 sporting and event venues. (AP)

The driver was the only occupant of the semitrailer and also died at the scene, Hirsch said.

An investigation is ongoing. "Our hearts and prayers go out to the families and loved ones of all those involved, as well as the first responders who worked quickly to provide support at the scene," Gov. Tony Evers posted on X. (AP)

'Do not pick up debris': Authorities investigating a fire and explosions that rocked a suburban Detroit building filled with vaping industry supplies, killing one man as gas canisters soared up to 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) away, urged residents Friday not to pick up any debris because they still pose potential hazards.

The renewed warning about debris came as officials said their investigation into Monday night's fire isn't expected to begin in earnest until next week because the gutted building is filled with fallen steel beams that first need to be removed with heavy machinery.

Clinton Township Fire Chief Tim Duncan said debris is still smoldering inside the ruins but fire officials hope weekend rain will douse those areas so removal of the steel beams can begin next week.

"Obviously heavy equipment is going to have to get in there and start picking that apart so we can get to the bottom of what's going on there during the investigation," he said at a news briefing. (AP)

Lat/Am

Women mark IWD

Honduras ex-president convicted at drugs trial

NEW YORK, March 9, (AP) — Former Honduran president **Juan Orlando Hernandez** was convicted Friday in New York of charges that he conspired with drug traffickers and used his military and national police force to enable tons of cocaine to make it unhindered into the United States.

The jury returned its verdict at a federal court after a two-week trial, which has been closely followed in his home country. Hernandez was convicted of conspiring to import cocaine into the U.S. and two weapons counts. The charges carry a mandatory minimum of 40 years in prison and a potential maximum of life. Sentencing was set for June 26.

Hernandez, 55, who served two terms as the leader of the Central American nation of roughly 10 million people, patted a defense attorney, Renato Stabile, on the back as they stood along with everyone else in the courtroom while the jurors filed out after the reading of the verdict.

When the news reached nearly 100 opponents of Hernandez on the street outside the courthouse, they applauded and began jumping into the air to celebrate the outcome.

The scene in the courtroom was subdued and Hernandez seemed relaxed as the verdict on three counts was announced by the jury foreperson. At times, Hernandez had his hands folded before him or one leg crossed over the other as each juror was asked to affirm the verdict. They all did.

In remarks to the jury before they left the courtroom, Judge P. Kevin Castel praised jurors for reaching a unanimous verdict, which was necessary for a conviction.



Hernandez

Appeal

"We live in a country where 12 people can't agree on a pizza topping," the judge told them, saying his message would have been the same regardless of their verdict. "That's why I'm in awe of you."

Defense attorney Sabrina Shroff said Hernandez will appeal the conviction.

In a release, US Attorney Damian Williams said he hopes the conviction "sends a message to all corrupt politicians who would consider a similar path: choose differently."

He added that Hernandez "had every opportunity to be a force for good in his native Honduras. Instead, he chose to abuse his office and country for his own personal gain and partnered with some of the largest and most violent drug trafficking organizations in the world to transport tons of cocaine to the United States."

Hernandez was arrested at his home in Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital, three months after leaving office in 2022 and was extradited to the US in April of that year.

US prosecutors accused Hernandez of working with drug traffickers as long ago as 2004, saying he took millions of dollars in bribes as he rose from rural congressman to president of the National Congress and then to the country's highest office.

Hernandez acknowledged in trial testimony that drug money was paid to virtually all political parties in Honduras, but he denied accepting bribes himself.

Curb

He noted that he had visited the White House and met US presidents as he cast himself as a champion in the war on drugs who worked with the US to curb the flow of drugs to the US.

In one instance, he said, he was warned by the FBI that a drug cartel wanted to assassinate him.

He said his accusers fabricated their claims about him in bids for leniency for their crimes.

"They all have motivation to lie, and they are professional liars," Hernandez said.

But the prosecution mocked Hernandez for seemingly claiming to be the only honest politician in Honduras. During closing arguments Wednesday, Assistant US Attorney Jacob Gutwillig told the jury that a corrupt Hernandez "paved a cocaine superhighway to the United States."

Stabile said his client "has been wrongfully charged" as he urged an acquittal.

Trial witnesses included traffickers who admitted responsibility for dozens of murders and said Hernandez was an enthusiastic protector of some of the world's most powerful cocaine dealers, including notorious Mexican drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán, who is serving a life prison term in the US.

Hernandez, wearing a suit throughout the trial, was mostly dispassionate as he testified through an interpreter, repeatedly saying "no sir" as he was asked if he ever paid bribes or promised to protect traffickers from extradition to the US.

His brother, Juan Antonio "Tony" Hernandez, a former Honduran congressman, was sentenced to life in 2021 in Manhattan federal court for his own conviction on drug charges.

Also:

MEXICO CITY: Cities across Latin America were cloaked in purple Friday as hundreds of thousands of women marched to commemorate International Women's Day (IWD), coming at a moment of change in a region marred by soaring levels of violence against women.

While some are celebrating historic steps taken in countries like Mexico, which is slated to elect a woman as president for the first time, others are railing against potential rollbacks on rights they've long fought for in places like Argentina with the arrival of far-right President Javier Milei.

The shifts underscore the stark contrasts that divide the region of 670 million people.

Following decades of activism and campaigning by feminist groups, access to things like abortion has rapidly expanded in recent years, acting as a foil to mounting restrictions in the United States. At the same time, many countries across Latin America still suffer from soaring rates of violence against women, including disappearances and slayings of women, known as femicide.

According to figures from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, a woman is killed for gender-related reasons in the continent every two hours.

"They're growing up in countries where, on paper, Latin American women's lives look like they should be fairly well-treated, but that's not their experience on the ground. So they're angry," said Jennifer Piscopo, professor of Gender and Politics at the Royal Holloway University of London who has studied Latin America for decades.



In this image provided by the US Navy, Aviation Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class Nicholas Hawkins, signals an MV-22 Osprey to land on the flight deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln in the Arabian Sea on May 17, 2019. The military has greenlighted its Osprey to return to flight, three months after a part failure led to the deaths of eight service members in a crash in Japan in November. Naval Air Systems Command announced it on March 8. (AP)

Ospreys cleared to return to flight, 3 months after latest fatal crash in Japan

The Osprey, a workhorse aircraft vital to US military missions, has been approved to return to flight after an "unprecedented" part failure led to the deaths of eight service members in a crash in Japan in November. Naval Air Systems Command announced Friday.

The crash was the second fatal accident in months and the fourth in two years. It quickly led to a rare fleet-wide grounding of hundreds of Ospreys across the Marine Corps, Air Force and Navy.

Before clearing the Osprey, which can fly like an airplane and then convert to a helicopter, officials said they put increased attention on its propeller gearbox, instituted new limitations on how it can be flown and added maintenance inspec-

tions and requirements that gave them confidence it could safely return to flight. The entire fleet was grounded Dec 6, just a week after eight Air Force Special Operations Command service members were killed when their CV-22B Osprey crashed off Yakushima island.

Before lifting the flight restrictions the military also briefed officials in Japan, where public opinion on the Osprey is mixed, on the crash findings and new safety measures. In a statement Friday, Japan defense minister Minoru Kihara said his nation would likewise return its 14 Ospreys to flight status following an "adequate" analysis of the cause of the crash, extremely detailed information on the accident and the steps to mitigate the issue in the future. (AP)

Asia

China top court, prosecutors report surging cyberscams

HK unveils nat'l security bill with stiff penalties

HONG KONG, March 9, (AP) — Hong Kong unveiled a proposed law that threatens life imprisonment for residents who "endanger national security" on Friday, deepening worries about erosion of the city's freedoms four years after Beijing imposed a similar law that all but wiped out public dissent.

It's widely seen as the latest step in a crackdown on political opposition that began after the semi-autonomous Chinese city was rocked by violent pro-democracy protests in 2019. Since then, the authorities have crushed the city's once-vibrant political culture. Many of the city's leading pro-democracy activists have been arrested and others fled abroad. Dozens of civil society groups have been disbanded, and outspoken media outlets like Apple Daily and Stand News have been shut down.

Push

Hong Kong leader John Lee has urged legislators to push the Safeguarding National Security Bill through "at full speed," and lawmakers began debate hours after the bill was released publicly. It's expected to pass easily, possibly in weeks, in a legislature packed with Beijing loyalists following an electoral overhaul.

The proposed law will expand the government's power to stamp challenges to its rule, targeting espionage, disclosing state secrets, and "colluding with external forces" to commit illegal acts among others. It includes tougher penalties for people convicted of working with foreign governments or organizations to break some of its provisions.

The law would jail people who damage public infrastructure with the intent to endanger national security for 20 years - or life, if they collude with an external force to do so. In 2019, protesters occupied the airport and

vandalized railway stations.

Similarly, those who commit sedition face a jail term of seven years, but colluding with an external force to carry out such acts increase that penalty to 10 years.

On Thursday, an appeals court upheld a conviction for sedition against a pro-democracy activist for chanting slogans and criticizing the Beijing-imposed 2020 National Security Law during a political campaign.

Its expansive definition of external forces includes foreign governments and political parties, international organizations, and "any other organization in an external place that pursues political ends" - as well as companies that are influenced by such forces. Beijing said the 2019 unrest was supported by external forces, and the city government has condemned what it called external interference during the protests.

The bill allows prosecutions for acts committed anywhere in the world for most of its offenses.

Critics say that the proposed law would make Hong Kong even more like mainland China.

The European Union said the bill covers "an even wider range" of offenses than previously disclosed, including sweeping bans on external interference and significantly hardened provisions on sentencing.

Also:

PADANG, Indonesia: Torrential rains have triggered flash floods and a landslide on Indonesia's Sumatra island, killing at least 10 people and leaving 10 others missing, officials said Saturday.

Tons of mud, rocks and uprooted trees rolled down a mountain late Friday, reaching a river that burst its banks and tore through mountainside villages in Pesisir Selatan district of West Sumatra province, said **Doni Yusrizal**, who heads the local disaster

management agency.

Rescuers pulled out seven bodies in the worst-hit village of Koto XI Tarusan, and recovered two others in two neighboring villages, said National Disaster Management Agency's spokesperson **Yusrizal. Ten** are still missing.

He said that 46,000 people had fled to a temporary government shelter after the flood and landslide buried 14 houses while 20,000 houses were flooded up to the roof.

"Relief efforts for the dead and missing were hampered by power outages, blocked roads covered in thick mud and debris," Yusrizal said.

Heavy rains cause frequent landslides and flash floods in Indonesia, where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near floodplains.

□ □ □

BEIJING: China saw large increases in arrests and cases of phone and internet scams last year, according to reports presented Friday to the National People's Congress that stressed the ruling Communist Party's determination to safeguard national security and public order.

A report issued by the Supreme People's Procuratorate said the number of cases of computer crimes including social media fraud jumped 36.2% in 2023 and involved 323,000 people.

The sharp increase likely reflects a doubling down on cross-border computer fraud that has resulted in thousands of people, some of them victims of human traffickers who forced them to work for crime rings in remote areas of Myanmar and other neighboring countries, being returned to China.

Indictments of people for telecoms fraud jumped nearly 67% to about 51,000, the report said.

Overall, arrests surged 47% to 726,000 and indictments were up 17.3% to 168,800, the report said.

□ □ □

care of economic, social and security emergencies and combating the high cost of living.

Efforts also include ensuring a good marketing campaign for agricultural products, while guaranteeing the continuity of management and coordination, as well as preparing for Senegal's entry into the era of fuel production. (KUNA)

□ □ □

Parties urged to halt hostilities: The UN Security Council urged Sudan's warring parties on Friday to immediately halt hostilities during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and allow aid to get to 25 million people in desperate need of food and other assistance.

Ramadan is expected to begin on or around Monday, depending on the sighting of the crescent moon.

The 15-member council voted overwhelmingly in favor of the British-drafted resolution, with 14 countries in support and only Russia abstaining.

Sudan plunged into chaos in April, when long-simmering tensions between its military, led by Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary commanded by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo broke out into street battles in the capital, Khartoum.

U.N. Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres** urged both sides on Thursday to support a Ramadan cease-fire, warning that the nearly year-long conflict threatens the country's unity and "could ignite regional instability of dramatic proportions." (AP)



People board a truck as they leave Khartoum, Sudan on June 19, 2023. The U.N. Security Council urged Sudan's warring parties on March 8 to immediately halt hostilities during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and allow aid to get to 25 million people in desperate need of food and other assistance. (AP)



Sall



Guterres

Africa

Candidates kick off campaign: Presidential candidates in Senegal kicked off their election campaigns on Saturday, following weeks of violent protests across the African country after the vote was delayed.

The 19 approved candidates vying for the top job now have a shorter period to rally supporters ahead of the March 24 election, expected to be the most tightly contested race since Senegal gained independence more than six decades ago. The recent violent protests have also raised concerns for a country that used to be seen as a beacon of democratic stability in West Africa, a region plagued by coups and insecurity.

President **Macky Sall**, who is prevented from running because of term limits, postponed the election last month, just weeks before it was to take place on Feb. 25. His announcement that the vote would instead be held 10 months from now plunged Senegal into chaos as opposition protests filled the streets.

Senegal's highest election authority, the Constitutional Council, rejected Sall's postponement and ordered the government to set a new date as soon as possible. Government spokesman Abdou Karim Fofana earlier this week announced the new date.

Aliou Tine, the founder of the Senegalese think tank Afrikaom Center, said that because of the delay, the candidates with the most financial resources will likely benefit from this shorter window. "It's going to be a hard-fought battle," said Tine, adding that there is no clear favorite.

Most of the campaign ahead and the vote itself will take place during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, when the pious fast from dawn till dusk. Ramadan is expected to begin at sundown on Sunday, depending on the sighting of the moon. (AP)

□ □ □

Senegal forms new gov't: Senegal announced on Friday the forming of a new government consisting of 34 ministers, led

by Prime Minister Sidiki Kaba, a vital step to manage the upcoming Presidential elections on March 24.

The Prime Minister said in a statement aired on the Senegalese television, that for

his government, elections are going to be organized under the best conditions.

Kaba, who used to work as the Interior Minister in the last government, added that his new government's tasks would include taking



Former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez, second from right, is taken in handcuffs to a waiting aircraft as he is extradited to the United States, at an Air Force base in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, April 21, 2022. Hernandez has been convicted in New York on March 8, of charges that he conspired with drug traffickers, his military and police to enable tons of cocaine to make it unhindered into the United States. (AP)

oil surges

The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by 97 cents to USD 83.60 per barrel Friday as opposed to USD 82.63 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Saturday.

The price at the global level for the Brent crude went down 88 cents to USD 82.08 pb, the same occurred to the West Texas Intermediate, which went down by 92 cents to USD 78.01 pb. (KUNA)

The island nation of Bahrain reported a total of USD 2.4 billion in investment stemming from 9 major projects, which are set to generate 3,000 employment opportunities following the introduction of its Golden License in April 2023. The initiative, which delivers white-glove treatment and first-priority allocation on key project milestones such as land allocation, aims to maintain Bahrain's demonstrated ability to attract impactful businesses across industries to contribute to its positive trajectory of sustained economic growth.

The newly awarded large-scale projects span across diverse sectors, including Bahrain Titanium, the first facility of its kind in the region set to be established by Switzerland-based Interlink Metals & Chemicals, the construction of the first greenfield head office of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) outside of Kuwait, the installation of a data centre facility and regional submarine cable by Bahrain-born technology company Beyon, and finally, the vibrant urban waterfront development Bahrain Marina.

Bahrain's golden license attracts \$2.4 billion investment

H.E. Noor bint Ali Alkhulaif, Minister of Sustainable Development and Chief Executive of Bahrain Economic Development Board (Bahrain EDB), said, "Bahrain has proven itself as a trusted destination for local and global companies to set up or expand their operations owing to its unique value proposition. The Golden License is the latest of several initiatives introduced that reflect a vested commitment to living up to our pledge of being business friendly, ensuring a seamless journey across every

stage of progress, and ultimately acting as partners in building a solid foundation for long-term success."

"In alignment with Bahrain's national vision, the licenses awarded span across priority sectors, ushering into each industry a new wave of employment opportunities, innovation, and niche expertise. We are excited to witness the impact of these collective investments in contributing towards Bahrain's ongoing journey to economic diversification and prosperity," H.E. Noor bint Ali Alkhulaif, added. (PRNewswire)

Market Movements 08-03-2024

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts		
UAE	- DFM	+16.10	4,253.08	EUROPE	- EURO Stoxx 50	-13.11	4,961.11
JAPAN	- Nikkei 225	+90.23	39,688.94	UK	- EGX 30	-32.72	7,659.74
PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	+278.17	65,836.34				
PHILIPPINES	- PSEi	+104.87	6,942.21				

Business

Bank envisions to advance customer experience through its innovative services

Gulf bank mobile app offers payment link sharing and bill splitting services



KUNA photo

First news conference to launch renewable energy strategy.

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: Gulf Bank's latest mobile application has rapidly advanced towards digital leadership by offering a wide range of top-notch services. Among these offerings is the ability to send payment links to groups and divide bills among them, effectively improving the overall customer experience with Gulf Bank.

Mr. Bader Al-Ali, Gulf Bank's Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking, emphasized that the bank's mobile application offers numerous features and services through a smart user interface. This interface is tailored to meet the specific needs of each individual customer, ensuring a seamless experience that exceeds customer expectations. Al-Ali also highlighted the distinctive features of the bank's mobile app, positioning it as the most user-friendly, efficient, and advanced in the banking industry.

Describing the process of sending bills to multiple recipients, Al-Ali outlined a clear set of instructions to follow. It begins with choosing the recipients after clicking on "Request Money" upon selecting the payments button then choosing "Send group link and finally forwarding the link to the group.

In order to add beneficiaries, the application needs permission to access the user's phone contact list. From there, users can select recipients and specify both the amount and purpose of the payment. Once completed, a confirmation page assists in sending the links to added contacts via SMS.



Bader Al-Ali, Gulf Bank's Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking.

Bader Al-Ali: We are eager to enhance the customer experience with Gulf Bank even further

Regarding the bill splitting service, Al-Ali highlighted that users can access it by navigating their bank account, selecting the transactions to be split, choosing the desired payers, and confirming the process through a review and payment step.

Al-Ali concluded by emphasizing that the new version of Gulf Bank's mobile application represents a significant advancement in customer experience, impacting various banking services and transaction stages. It is accessible to everyone, regardless of location or time, via a simple, fast and secure interface.

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

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

Ministry launches renewable energy strategy

Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Salem Al-Hajraf announced Thursday Kuwait's 2030-2050 renewable energy strategy.

Al-Hajraf said the government, with this first news conference, is showcasing concepts and visions about new plans upon 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, with the aim of narrowing the gap between media and the government, and elaborating on transparency and information.

The 12-project strategy is planned for local and international markets, and Kuwait would have

22,100 MW from renewable energy by 2030, Al-Hajraf said.

"We will pave the way for citizens to build solar energy panels on their house roofs, and the state will purchase said energy," he indicated.

The move, which will be in favor of all, aims to help citizens be involved in energy production, while taking into account environmental aspects in implementation of His Highness the Amir's directives in terms of carbon neutrality, the minister pointed out.

He eluded to the possibility of turning the ministry into a corporation, revealing that water and electricity services will be obtained through companies, while the ministry keeps its production stations. (KUNA)

Other Voices

'Al-Zour refinery below peak capacity'

Kuwait: Do we have sufficient crude oil to run our refineries?!

By **Kamel Al-Harami**
Independent Oil Analyst

The highly advanced Al-Zour Refinery in Kuwait is currently operating below its peak capacity of 615,000 barrels per day, with its current output standing at 440,000 barrels per day. This marks a decrease of 175,000 barrels per day from its previous full capacity operation just a few months ago.

The main cause of the abrupt decrease remains uncertain. One potential factor could be attributed to the decision of the Ministry of Water and Electricity and Water to abstain from procuring 30 percent of its fuel, initially designated

for electricity generation within the state. Instead, the ministry appears to favor imported gas, leading to significant losses for both Al-Zour and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC). This trend of losses may persist unless there's an investment in new units or extensive upgrades. Alternatively, the shortfall of crude oil may also impede the operation of our refineries both domestically and internationally.

We currently produce 2.41 million barrels of crude oil daily, within a range of 2.75 million barrels per day. This figure reflects two voluntary reductions: 135 in 2024 and 128 in the previous year, totaling 263,000 barrels per day. This prompts us to question the necessity of such voluntary cutbacks and the reasons behind our agreement to them.

While we acknowledge the OPEC+ resolution, we must consider whether we are obliged to reduce our crude oil production, potentially harming our in-

dustry and risking market share and customer base. This concern is particularly significant as Kuwait endeavors to expand Al-Zour's refining capacity to over 800,000 barrels per day by 2026.

Undoubtedly, another solution to maintain the refinery at full capacity is to offer it to third parties for processing their crudes at Al-Zour. This could extend to nearby countries facing a shortage of refining capacity in the Arabian Gulf region. Given that the refinery is designed to process heavy crude oils abundant in our region, it presents a potential opportunity for countries outside the region lacking refineries or experiencing capacity shortages. Additionally, oil companies with crude oils seeking to convert them into finished products could benefit from refining margins as opposed to solely selling crude oil.

It appears imperative for Kuwait to enhance its crude oil production to fully utilize both existing and future refining capacities, ensuring that we do not fall short of meeting our refining potential.

KPC cannot afford to take double hits simultaneously, especially after investing billions of US dollars for constructing the most advanced refinery, only to end up with closing more than 30 percent of its capacity, and with Al-Zour running at 70 percent of its capacity. Have we considered buying foreign crude oils instead of idling one of the most advanced refineries in the world?

Alternatively, it might be more prudent not to propose any voluntary cuts to OPEC+ given our current constraints in boosting crude oil production, especially when other members are not adhering to their agreed-upon production levels. At this point, a straightforward request seems reasonable.

Email: nafitkuwaiti@yahoo.com

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: Recent figures released by the Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute (SWFI) reveal a substantial 15% surge in the assets of Kuwait's sovereign fund managed by the General Investment Authority, reports Al-Rai daily.

The fund's value has soared from \$803 billion in July 2023 to \$923.45 billion currently, marked by 811 transactions.

Despite this remarkable growth, Kuwait's Sovereign Fund, known as "Future Generations," maintains its fifth position among the world's largest sovereign wealth funds in terms of asset size.

It follows behind prominent funds such as the Norwegian Government Pension Fund, with assets totaling \$1.648 trillion, and the Chinese Investment Corporation at \$1.35 trillion.

Additionally, the State Monetary Administration of China holds \$1.09 trillion, while the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority manages assets worth \$993 billion. The Saudi Public Investment Fund occupies the sixth position with assets amounting to \$777 billion.

Within the Arab world, Kuwait's sovereign fund remains in second place, trailing behind the Abu Dhabi Authority.

This robust growth in the assets of Kuwait's sovereign fund coincides with the Investment Authority's anticipation of one of its most

Gov't reduces bank deposits by 264 million dinars

Kuwaiti bank deposits decline slightly, net foreign assets rise

By **Mahmoud Shendi**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: In the latest report released by the Central Bank of Kuwait for January, a nuanced picture of the banking sector emerges, reflecting both minor fluctuations and broader trends in deposit holdings and financial obligations. The total deposits held by local banks experienced a marginal decrease, amounting to 48.568 billion dinars, marking a modest 0.3% decline compared to the previous month's figure of 48.727 billion dinars in December 2023. However, when viewed from an annual perspective, there is a notable uptick, with deposits showing an increase of 1.36 billion dinars from January 2023's total of 47.206 billion dinars.

One significant contributor to this fluctuation is the government's

prosperous financial years to date. Benefitting from the overall market upsurge, the fund has

achieved returns exceeding 10%. Notably, more than 50% of its investments are concentrated in the

deposit activity. In January, the government reduced its deposits in banks by 264 million dinars, bringing the total down to 4.367 billion dinars, contrasting with December 2023's figure of 4.631 billion dinars. Despite this monthly decline, government deposits exhibited an annual rise of 884 million dinars, reflecting a strategic shift in financial management compared to the previous year's figure of 3.483 billion dinars.

Private sector deposits also witnessed a modest decrease of 50 million dinars in January, totaling 35.482 billion dinars, compared to 35.532 billion dinars in December 2023. However, there was a contrasting trend in private sector deposits denominated in foreign currencies, experiencing a 2.4% increase to reach 1.8 billion dinars (approximately 5.9 billion

dollars). Despite the fluctuations in deposit holdings, the report indicates stability in the total balances of local banks' obligations to the Central Bank, primarily represented by bonds, which remained steady at 3.3 billion dinars (approximately 11 billion dollars) in dinars.

Furthermore, while the assets of local banks witnessed a modest decline of 0.6%, amounting to 520 million dinars, reaching 87 billion dinars (around 287 billion dollars), there was a notable surge in the net foreign assets of local banks, increasing by 4.5% to 12.7 billion dinars (approximately 41.9 billion dollars). This indicates a robust presence and activity in international financial markets, contributing to the resilience and diversification of Kuwait's banking sector.

United States, reflecting a diversified and globally oriented investment strategy.

Arizona governor takes stand on water security, land use

Saudi-owned firm ceases groundwater use in Arizona Valley

PHOENIX, March 9, (AP): Arizona officials said a Saudi-owned company they targeted over its use of groundwater to grow forage crops is moving its farming operation out of a valley in the Southwestern state's rural west.

Gov. Katie Hobbs and the Arizona State Land Department announced late Thursday that Fondomonte Arizona is officially no longer pumping water in the Butler Valley groundwater basin. Some residents of La Paz County had complained that the company's pumping was threatening their wells.

A statement by Hobbs says an on-site inspection had confirmed that Fondomonte was moving to vacate the property. Fondomonte has several other farms elsewhere in Arizona that are not affected by the decision.

A call placed Friday seeking comment from Fondomonte's Arizona office was not immediately returned.

Current Arizona regulations allow virtually unfettered groundwater pumping in the state's rural areas.

Climate-challenged countries like Saudi Arabia have increasingly looked to faraway places like Arizona for the water and land to grow forage for livestock and commodities such as wheat for domestic use and export.

Foreign and out-of-state U.S. farms are not banned from farming in Arizona nor from selling their goods worldwide. American farmers commonly export forage crops to countries including Saudi Arabia and China.

Fondomonte, a subsidiary of Saudi dairy giant Almarai Co., held four separate lease agreements in the Butler Valley Basin to grow alfalfa that feeds livestock in the Gulf kingdom. In October, Arizona's State Land Department notified Fondomonte that three of its four leases in the Butler Valley Basin would not be renewed. Fondomonte was simultane-

ously notified that the fourth lease would be canceled as well.

The Arizona governor's office said the State Land Department decided not to renew the leases the company had in Butler Valley due to the "excessive amounts of water being pumped from the land - free of charge."

Fondomonte appealed the cancellation, and that process is still pending. The last lease ended on Feb. 14.

Another company, the United Arab Emirates-owned Al Dahra ACX Global Inc., grows forage crops in California and Arizona, including on Butler Valley land it leases from a private North Carolina-based company. It is a major North American exporter of hay.

Hobbs took credit for the end of Fondomonte's operation in the valley.

"I'm not afraid to hold people accountable, maximize value for the state land trust, and protect Arizona's water security," she said.

BUSINESS

Turkey and Somalia strike an oil and gas co-op deal

Turkey and Somalia reached an oil and gas cooperation agreement for the Horn of Africa nation in Istanbul on Thursday, the Turkish energy minister said, the latest step in strengthening ties between the two countries.

The agreement comes against the backdrop of Somalia's dispute with Ethiopia over the breakaway region of Somaliland. Somalia announced last month that it also reached a defense deal with Tur-

key that includes support for Somalia's sea assets.

Turkey says Thursday's deal includes the exploration, exploitation, development and production of oil on "Somalia's onshore and offshore blocks."

"We aim to strengthen Turkey's presence in the Horn of Africa with these collaborations in the energy field," Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said on X, formerly Twitter.

Somalia's petroleum and mineral resources ministers, Abdirizak Omar Mohamed, was in Istanbul for the deal.

Turkey is a key player in Somalia, one of several states jockeying for influence in a country on the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden - a pathway to the Red Sea.

Under the Feb. 8 defense deal, Turkey is to provide training and equipment to the Somali navy so

it can better safeguard its territorial waters from threats such as terrorism, piracy, and "foreign interference."

The defense deal, which according to Somali authorities will be in force for a decade, is aimed at deterring Ethiopia's efforts to secure access to the sea by way of the breakaway Somaliland.

Ethiopia signed a memorandum of understanding with Somaliland on Jan. 1. (AP)



Photo during the signing ceremony posted on Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar's X account.

Bid to tackle regional security concerns

Japan and India agree to step up security and economic co-op



Indian Foreign Minister Subramanyam Jaishankar delivers a speech at commemorative lecture of 'Nikkei Forum' in Tokyo. (AP)

TOKYO, March 9, (AP): Japan's and India's foreign ministers on Thursday agreed to step up security and economic cooperation as the two Asian countries look to boost their ties in the face of China's growing influence in the region.

Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa told a joint news conference after talks with her Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar that they reaffirmed their countries would expand bilateral security cooperation, including in the field of defense equipment and technology transfers.

She also said they agreed to look for possibilities to extend their cooperation to new areas of space and cybersecurity.

Japan and India, members of the Quad grouping that also includes the United States and Australia, have rapidly intensified bilateral ties amid shared concern about China's increasingly assertive economic and military activities in the region.

"India and Japan, as two major Indo-Pacific nations sharing values, history and interests, have an abiding stake in the peace, security, and prosperity of our region, and are ready to play a responsible role commensurate to the needs of our times," said Jaishankar, who

is on a three-day visit in Tokyo to meet with Japanese government and business officials.

Noting rapidly changing strategic relations and a worsening security environment on the global stage where divisions and contention are deepening, Kamikawa said Japan wants to work with India in resolving common issues through dialogue and cooperation.

"Japan especially places importance on its relations with India, which has nurtured its own democracy and history and represents the Global South," Kamikawa said.

"In light of the increasingly severe security environment of today, we confirmed the need for our defense and security cooperation," she said.

The two ministers welcomed expanding joint military exercises.

Jaishankar said their countries would work together to enhance economic security and supply chain resilience, and discussed cooperation in areas such as semiconductor, green technology and digital transformation.

Japan has also been supporting infrastructure development in India, and Kamikawa reaffirmed Tokyo's continued help in high-speed rail projects.

stc Kuwait has 'appointed' Engineer Aldharrab as CEO

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the appointment of engineer Muataz Abdullah Aldharrab as Chief Executive Officer of stc Kuwait. Aldharrab brings extensive years of proven executive management experience within the telecom, information and technology sectors, along with an array of distinguished achievements and substantial contributions to the industries throughout his career.

Aldharrab's appointment marks a significant milestone for stc Kuwait as the company embarks on its next phase of growth and innovation under his leadership. His proven track record, strategic insights, and visionary leadership are set to propel stc Kuwait towards achieving new heights in the telecommunications industry.

Aldharrab's extensive background includes a combination of leadership, managerial, and technical expertise across various areas. His tenure in senior executive roles at both local and multinational companies has equipped him with a broad and diversified skill set, essential for navigating the complex landscape of today's evolving telecom and digital solutions industries.

Prior to joining stc, Aldharrab served as the Chief Strategy Officer at solutions by stc KSA since 2020, where he played a major role in building a distinct strategy that contributed to the company's transformative growth in the ever-evolving digital world. Aldharrab also played a pivotal role in leading the IPO team in 2021, successfully taking solutions by stc KSA public in the Main Market of the Saudi Exchange. Additionally, he contributed in positioning solutions by stc KSA as the digital enabler and leading ICT solutions provider for Saudi Arabia while ex-



Muataz Abdullah Aldharrab - CEO

panding the Company's strategic mergers and acquisitions. In 2015, Aldharrab joined solutions by stc KSA, where he took on several roles, rising from the Director of Government and Enterprise Solutions Engineering to General Manager of Corporate Governance and Customer Success by 2019.

Aldharrab's career began at CISCO Systems in 2007 as an Associate Consulting Engineer, followed by a pivotal role at Saudi Business Machines LTD (SBM) in 2009, where he played a significant role in leading several telecom infrastructure and international peering projects with global telecom providers. His exemplary work at CISCO earned him the Sales Achiever Award upon his return in 2012.

As for his educational background, Aldharrab completed his Bachelor's degree in Systems Engineering from King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals in 2007. After that, he earned an MBA from Prince Sultan University in 2014, a Master's in Change from INSEAD France in 2019, and completed the Senior Executive Leadership Program from Harvard in 2023.

China says the economy got strong start in 2024

Sets sights on latest technology, upgrading factories

BEIJING, March 9, (AP): China has plenty of room to maneuver to attain its annual target for robust economic growth of about 5% after a strong start for the year, top economic officials said Wednesday, though they acknowledged it's a challenge.

China's exports rose about 10% in the first two months of the year from a year earlier, while medium- and long-term loans from banks jumped more than 30%, said China's top planning official, Zheng Shanjie, who heads the National Development and Reform Commission.

Zheng said the priority will be on "supporting scientific and technological innovation, integrated development of urban and rural regions, food security and energy security, among other areas."

"The potential construction demand in these areas is huge and the investment cycle is long. It's hard to fully meet needs using existing funding channels and there's an urgent need to increase support," he said at a news conference on the sidelines of the National People's Congress, China's ceremonial legislature.

Premier Li Qiang announced the "around 5%" growth target for the year Tuesday at the opening of the congress, which runs for about a week and mostly just endorses policies set by top leaders of the ruling Communist Party.

China's economy, the world's second largest, grew at a 5.2% pace in 2023, but that was from a relatively low pace since it expanded only 3% the year before, one of the lowest rates since the 1970s. Growth of around 5% would be cause for rejoicing in the U.S. and other major economies, but it's moderate for a developing economy with a huge population like China's.

Pan Gongsheng, the head of China's central bank, and the other senior economic planners speaking on the sidelines of the congress said Beijing has more policy tools it can turn to, such as reducing the reserve ratio requirement, or the amount of funds banks must keep in reserves.

They emphasized Beijing's determination to put 1 trillion yuan (about \$140 billion) in special, ultra long-term bonds to productive use to upgrade industries and advance technologies in key areas such as clean energy.

The market for modernizing factory equipment amounts to about 5 trillion yuan (nearly \$700 billion), Zheng said. That compares with the \$649 billion the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden says private companies have committed to investing in such areas as clean energy, electric vehicles and semiconductors and electronics.

Despite robust growth in China's exports in the first two months of the year, Commerce Minister Wang Wentao said global demand may remain muted given the recent trend toward protectionist measures.

Trade in goods and services rose a mere 0.2% in 2023, according to the



A delegate poses for photos with Tibetan lamas after attending a plenary session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Saturday, March 9, 2024. (AP)

China trumpets rising car exports to Russia as its envoy holds talks in Kyiv

BEIJING, March 9, (AP): In Beijing and Kyiv, the divide between China and Europe over the war in Ukraine was on display this week.

As a Chinese envoy crisscrossed Europe for talks on ending the war, his boss, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, trumpeted a sharp rise in China-Russia trade - which the West sees as providing an economic lifeline to Moscow that undermines the sanctions it has imposed to try to pressure Russia to withdraw from Ukraine.

"Russian natural gas has entered thousands of households in China, and Chinese cars are driving in the streets of Russia, which fully demonstrates the strong resilience and broad prospects of mutually beneficial cooperation," Wang said at an annual news conference on Thursday.

Hours later, Chinese envoy Li Hui was given a rundown of the horrors of the war by Ukrainian officials in Kyiv. It wasn't clear how Li reacted. China re-

leased a terse statement on Friday saying only that Li arrived by train at noon, held candid and friendly talks, and departed by train the same evening.

The war has created a deep division between the West and China that threatens Beijing's relations with Europe, a major trading partner, and further strained ties with the United States.

The U.S. and Europe have asked China and its leader, Xi Jinping, to use their close relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin to persuade him to end the war. That seems unlikely based on China's official statements and state media coverage.

"We are opposed to any attempt to blame China or to shift the responsibility of resolving the Ukraine crisis to China," Wang, the foreign minister, said last month at the Munich Security Conference in Germany.

China has criticized sanctions on Russia rather than joining them and has accused the West of fueling the

fighting by providing Ukraine with weaponry for its defense. It avoids the words "war" and "invasion" to describe the conflict and cites NATO expansion as a root cause.

"What is the use of sanctions against Russia after all these years of sanctions from the West?" said Li Xin, the director of the Institute of European and Asian Studies of Shanghai University of Political Science and Law. "Other countries should act like China. Pouring fuel onto fire and providing weapons and ammunition to Ukraine will never solve the problem."

Expectations were low ahead of Li's trip to Kyiv on Thursday as part of his second European tour to seek a settlement of what China calls the Ukraine crisis. He started in Moscow last weekend, then met EU and Swiss officials in Brussels and held talks in Poland before his half-day visit to the Ukrainian capital. From there, he was scheduled to visit Germany and France.

World Trade Organization, and will increase this year but not to levels seen before the pandemic.

China's own exports fell last year, adding to drags on the economy from weak consumer demand and a downturn in the property market, a major contributor to demand for construction, appliances and many other industries.

China plans to do more to promote exports of higher-value products and to support smaller and mid-sized companies in tapping world markets, he said.

"We are confident about consolidating the fundamentals of foreign trade and foreign investment," Wang said.

To help spur more consumer spending, an increasingly important driver for growth as China becomes wealthier, the government plans to use tax policies and other incentives to encourage families to scrap their older vehicles, replace aging appliances and redecorate their apartments, the officials said.

In other comments, the chairman of China's Securities Regulatory Commission, Wu Qing, acknowledged

intervening in the financial markets at times when authorities deemed it necessary.

China's stock markets languished from late last year, though they have recovered somewhat in recent weeks following a crackdown on price manipulation and insider trading among other confidence-boosting measures.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng index is still 20% below where it stood a year ago, while the Shanghai Composite index has lost 8.5% at a time when many other world markets are breaching record highs.

Situation causing food and water shortages

Violence battering Haiti's fragile economy

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, March 9, (AP): Rotting fruit, withered vegetables, empty water jugs and spent gas canisters now stock the stores and stands that serve Haiti's poor - a consequence of the unrelenting gang attacks that have paralyzed the country for more than a week and left it with dwindling supplies of basic goods.

The terrifying violence as anti-government gangs battle police in the streets has crippled the fragile economy and made it extremely difficult for many of the country's most vulnerable to feed themselves.

The main port in the capital, Port-au-Prince, closed down, stranding scores of containers full of food and medical supplies at a time when U.N. officials

say half the country's more than 11 million inhabitants don't have enough to eat, and 1.4 million are starving.

Grocery stores in upscale parts of the capital remain stocked, but their goods are out of reach to most in a country where most people earn less than \$2 a day.

"People are desperate for water," said Jean Gérald, who was hawking blackened tomatoes and shriveled scallions on a recent day, confident they would sell quickly because food is so scarce in parts of Port-au-Prince. "Because of gang violence, people will go hungry."

Next to him were rows of empty jugs he hadn't been able to refill because the violence had forced one of the country's main bottled water op-

erators to shut down.

Gérald noted that he was running out of things to sell because the depot where he usually buys rice, oil, beans, powdered milk and bread had been set on fire and its owner had been kidnapped.

As he spoke, gunfire echoed in the distance.

Scores of people have been killed and more than 15,000 have been forced from their homes since coordinated gang attacks began on Feb. 29 while Prime Minister Ariel Henry was in Kenya to push for the U.N.-backed deployment of a police force from the East African country to fight gangs in Haiti. A Kenyan court, however, ruled in January that such a deployment would be unconstitutional.

As the gangs rampaged through

Port-au-Prince, freeing more than 4,000 inmates from the country's two biggest prisons, attacking its main airport and setting police stations on fire, Haiti's least powerful have suffered the most.

"It's a pretty bad situation," said Mike Ballard, intelligence director at Global Guardian, a Virginia-based international security company. "The gangs are trying to fill a power vacuum."

Schools, banks and most government agencies remain closed. Gas stations have also shuttered, and the few who can afford to pay \$9 a gallon - more than twice the usual rate - have flocked to the black market.

Street vendors are slowly losing their livelihoods and wonder how they'll feed their families.

What's On



Mr. Isam Al-Sager in his speech during the Graish ceremony.



Executive management during its follow-up of the ceremony.



NBK family at the annual Graish party.



Their talents excelled in singing during the ceremony.



Their talents excelled in singing with the orchestra.

Various exciting activities and amazing competitions with valuable prizes

NBK brings employees together in annual 'Graish' event

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: Following its annual custom at this time every year, with the advent of the holy month of Ramadan, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organized its annual "Graish" event for employees last Wednesday evening at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre (JACC) – National Theatre, in the presence of the bank's executive management. The event underscores NBK's dedication to foster the inherited traditions and values of the Kuwaiti society, and to strengthen relationships among employees from all departments, as well as to show appreciation to their vital contributions in the bank's ongoing successes.

During the ceremony, which saw a large attendance of more than 1,700 people, the bank's employees exchanged greetings on the advent of the blessed month of Ramadan, celebrating "Graish", a Kuwaiti tradition inherited down the ages. The event aimed to strengthen the NBK family spirit, being a key concept that NBK always seeks to promote among its employees of different departments bank-wide.

Over two hours and a half, the bank took advantage of the annual "Graish" to express its appreciation of the efforts of its employees and to create joyful atmospheres for them through various entertainment activities combined with the captivating live musical performance. The event also featured a number of exciting competitions and raffles, which all gained the admiration of all attendees.

One Family

The ceremony kicked-off with a video highlighting how the employees of one of NBK Branches spend their working hours, and demonstrating the one-family spirit and cooperation among them to provide unmatched service level to customers. This was followed by a brief speech by Mr. Isam Al-Sager, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait in which he extended greetings to all employees on the advent of Ramadan.



The orchestra is led by Maestro Dr. Khaled Nouri.

In his speech, Al-Sager mentioned that it is NBK's regular practice to organize the "Graish" event for employees before the advent of Ramadan every year, in appreciation of their noticeable efforts that greatly contributes to its leading position in the banking sector. He also noted that the opening video clearly represents NBK's uniqueness and excellence in everything, thanks to its highly professional and dedicated employees and the one-family spirit.

Music and competitions

NBK Graish also featured musical majesty by hosting an exhilarating live performance by a musical band consisting of 50 musicians in addition to the choir led

by Maestro Dr. Khaled Nouri, which played the most enchanting national songs and a variety of instrumentals, creating captivating atmospheres in an unforgettable evening. This was made even more impressive as a number of NBK's employees showcased their talents in playing music and singing along with the band, amidst loud applause from the audience.

NBK also sought to spread the spirit of familiarity and enthusiasm among employees by organizing various competitions during the event, and offered valuable prizes including travel vouchers, electronic devices and cash prizes, amidst thrilling and amusing atmospheres.

Strengthening relationships

Recognizing employees' efforts and strengthening relationships among them is at the core of NBK's strategy which aims to promote employee communication and appreciation, in addition to developing teamwork, productivity, and engagement among all departments.

NBK regards employees as the most valuable asset, and an instrumental element to maintaining its success, as the strategic goals of any organization are not attainable without the active participation and dedicated efforts of its employees. Therefore, we also seek to motivate employees and provide them with an ideal work environment that continuously promotes career development, unlocks their potentials and encourages them to go the extra mile, as the one-team spirit demonstrated by employees bank-wide is the main driver of NBK's success and provision of world-class banking service quality.

Graish is a deeply rooted Kuwaiti tradition inherited down the ages. It is a gathering held on the last day of the month of Shaaban to celebrate the advent of Ramadan, during which all family members gather to have their last meal before starting the fasting of Ramadan the next day.

Gastronomic journey awaits with unparalleled experiences and takeaway delights

St. Regis Kuwait Hotels welcomes Holy Month of Ramadan

Winners of monthly and weekly draws revealed

KIB launches Al Dirwaza account 2024 campaign

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the launch of the Al Dirwaza account 2024 draw campaign, distinguished by the highest number of winners throughout the year in addition to the highest expected annual return of up to 2% distributed monthly. As part of this year's campaign, 12 winners will be selected in the weekly draws, where the first to fifth winners will receive KD 1,000 each and the sixth to twelfth winners will receive KD 500 each. In the monthly draws, two winners will be crowned, with each winner receiving a prize of KD 5,000, while in the annual draw, one winner will receive a prize worth KD 100,000.

To this end, the Bank revealed the names of the winners in the monthly and weekly draws, which were held in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from the Bank. Saleh Eissa Saleh Alkamees and Mohammad Imad Adnan Alhoueach won a prize worth KD 5,000 in the monthly draw. As for the weekly draw, the KD 1,000 prize was awarded to Ahmed Elmitwalli Ahmed Elmitwalli, Noufa Hamed Mezael, Redha Bin Mohammad Bojadi, Hayef Reja Lafi Alharbi, Atallah Mubarak Balladi Aldhafeeri, whilst the KD 500 prize was awarded to Raghieb Ashraf Zuberi, Mohammad Hadi Abdulrazzaq Alhajri, Mahmoud Yousef Alibrahim, Bader Hammad Mesyar Drieeb, Hamida Hulaili Hamad Alenezi, Nawaf Saud Saad Alenezi, and Amar Humoud Naser Almusallam.

On this occasion, Ali Alsane, Manager - Product Development, Digital Innovation and Data Intelligence at KIB, said: "We are committed to enriching our customers' experience and have launched a distinctive draw campaign for Al Dirwaza account this year, featuring numerous benefits aimed at achieving success. This campaign encourages our customers to be keen on saving, offering them a chance to enjoy benefits and rewards in return for their savings. It motivates customers to deposit funds and enter the draws, which boast the highest number of winners throughout the year. On this occasion, we wish all account holders greater chances of winning in the weekly, monthly, and annual draws." He added: "At KIB, we constantly strive to introduce products and solutions that enable us to reward our customers, earn their loyalty, and ensure the highest levels of satisfaction. In line with KIB's



Al Dirwaza account flyer.

main slogan 'Bank for Life', we remain dedicated to offering the best banking experience that caters to the modern lifestyles of all customer segments and meets their expectations."

Alsane asserted that KIB also continues to develop the benefits and advantages of its campaign, which is designed to encourage customers to open an Al Dirwaza account digitally through the KIB Online platform or KIB Mobile application.

It serves to note that Al Dirwaza account is a savings account for individual customers, based on the Wakala investment principle, launched by KIB as one of its banking products for individuals. The account is currently the best of its kind in the sector, with annual expected profits of up to 2% disbursed on a monthly basis, where the customer gets an expected profit of 2% for the first 3 months from the account

opening date and up to 1% expected rate onward. The expected profits are automatically deposited into the customer's account within the first day of the beginning of each month.

Al Dirwaza account holders are eligible to enter the weekly, monthly and annual draws on the condition of maintaining at least KD 100 in their account. For the weekly and monthly draws, each KD 1 that has completed a full month's cycle in the account will count for one chance, and chances are calculated based on the lowest monthly balance preceding the draw. As for the mega draw, chances are calculated for each KD 1 that completes a two-month cycle in the account – based on the lowest two monthly balances prior to the draw.

Al Dirwaza account is also in compliance with the provisions of Islamic Sharia and approved by the KIB's Sharia Supervisory Board. Furthermore, the account comes with a wide range of benefits, including the ease of opening the account, which does not require a salary transfer, and the customer's ability to open it remotely without visiting a branch through KIB Online on the Bank's website or KIB Mobile application on smartphones.

Additionally, Al Dirwaza account automatically grants customers instant issuance of an ATM card, with a KD 2,000 ATM daily withdrawal limit, as well as the ability to issue credit cards against the cash collateral in the account. To open the account and participate in its draws, a minimum of KD 100 is required and can only be withdrawn upon account closure.

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: This year, the iconic St. Regis Kuwait Ramadan tent returns to the Diamond Ballroom with its exquisite design complemented by traditional Arabic elements. Our exceptional team of culinary Chefs has prepared an authentic selection of menu options for Iftar, Ghabga, and Sohour – with a buffet that promises to invigorate the senses. The splendid selection of soups, Western and Eastern salads, and mezzas, followed by the most exceptional hot dishes like traditional Kouzi, along with numerous live cooking stations further complemented by enchanting live music, will undoubtedly create heartwarming and cherished memories for all diners.

During this holy month, our meticulous chefs at the St. Regis Kuwait

welcome all luminaries to a bespoke dining experience at our restaurants. Al Hambra restaurant offers distinguished dishes for Ramadan, extended to the poolside, while the English Tea Lounge welcomes you daily to enjoy its luxurious ambience and original tea flavors. Our takeaway options include Le Tarbouche Lebanese Restaurant, Bukhara Indian Restaurant, Shahrayer Restaurant, Al Hambra International Restaurant, and the English Tea Lounge. In addition to the unparalleled outside catering service which

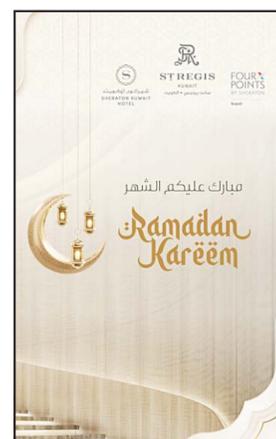
will cater to all special gatherings.

Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait will welcome guests to La Mamma Pizzeria, for a contemporary Iftar and Sohour experience that includes a variety of soups, appetizers, antipasti, delicious homemade pasta, and pizza baked in the classic wood-fired oven. As well, guests can order from our delicious takeaway menus at the Asseef International Restaurants and La Mamma Pizzeria.

Fahed Abushaar, Cluster Director of the St. Regis Kuwait and Sheraton Kuwait, Mounir Amer, General Manager of the Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait, along with all associates, extend their warmest greetings to His Highness the Amir of the State, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the people of Kuwait for a blessed holy month of Ramadan."



Abushaar



STR Ramadan Mubarak logo



Iconic St. Regis Kuwait Ramadan tent.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds sets aside KWD 190,000 for ESG activities during Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: Emphasizing its commitment of being a socially conscious & responsible organization, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally has announced the community welfare activities the brand will be carrying for the month of Ramadan. The brand has committed KWD 190,000 towards the distribution of Iftar meals amongst the needy during the holy month. These initiatives are planned in addition to the ESG initiatives conducted by the group throughout the year in the 13 countries of operation. The brand will associate with embassies, Authorities, NGOs, and like-minded organizations to carry out community welfare & empowerment acts throughout the holy month, including the distribution of Iftar meals and food provision kits to deserving families and individuals. These endeavors by Malabar Gold & Diamonds are anticipated to significantly benefit the underprivi-

leged segments of our society.

Over 180,000 Iftar meals will be distributed as part of this year's Ramadan food distribution drive across the UAE, KSA, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Malaysia, Singapore, the USA, the UK, Canada & Australia. In Kuwait, Iftar meals will be distributed amongst laborers in Abbasiya, Fahaeel, Farwaniya, Hawally, Jahra, Khaitan, Mahboubia, Mangaf, Riggae, Salmiya, Wafra Farm & Abdali Desert. The meal distribution drive will be conducted in association with Islamic Cultural Foundation, India Islahi Center, Islamic Guidance Center, Kuwait Kerala Muslim Association, Kuwait Kerala Cultural Center, Welfare Kerala Association and Youth India Kuwait.

"Our dedication to championing social welfare initiatives has been a central component of our operations since our inception in 1993 and has remained steadfast over the years. With Ramadan reflecting the spirit of piety and generosity, we are reaffirming our



Malabar Gold & Diamonds logo

commitment to bringing about a positive impact in the community through our food kit distribution. This noble endeavor, spanning across all 13 countries we operate in, ties into our larger objective of creating a Hunger Free World, which is one of the key tenets of Malabar Group's ESG objectives", commented Mr. M.P. Ahammed, Chairman of Malabar Group.

"The month-long welfare activities that we carry out every year during Ramadan is spearheaded by the goodwill of our entire team. Right from identifying communities that require our assistance to participating in the distribution of Iftar meals, our team members actively volunteer for every aspect of this initiative. This further reflects the fabric of social responsibility that is dominant amongst our organization. As this initiative commences, we express our heartfelt appreciation to our esteemed customers whose patronage enables us to initiate such noble endeavors," commented Mr. Abdul Salam K.P., Vice Chairman of Malabar Group.

"Malabar Gold & Diamonds has always been more than a jewellery retailer. The community empowerment initiatives that we have undertaken over the years are reflective of our motto of ensuring the collective growth of all our stakeholders, with society being among the most crucial.

The Iftar meal distribution is carried out on a large scale by our organization every year and as always, we sincerely hope that our actions will leave a lasting impression and motivate other organizations to carry out similar activities", commented Mr. Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director – International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) initiatives have been the primary commitment of Malabar Group since its inception in 1993, with 5% of net profits set aside towards such initiatives in each country of operations. The key focus is in the areas of Health, Hunger Free World, Housing, Education, Women Empowerment & Environment. Integrating the principles of responsibility and sustainability into its core business, the ESG goals of Malabar Group are periodically strengthened to remain a socially conscious and responsible organization.

'Means of Control' charts disturbing rise of secretive US surveillance regime

By Frank Bajak

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks, former national security advisor John Poindexter launched Total Information Awareness, intent on preventing future assaults on the homeland by amassing extensive databases on people and their movements.

The Pentagon program had a creepy eye-surveilling-the-globe-from-a-pyramid logo and was roundly rejected by civil libertarians as Orwellian overkill. Adm. Poindexter, an Iran-Contra conspirator, was skewered by late-night talk show hosts and Congressional resistance moved to defund it.

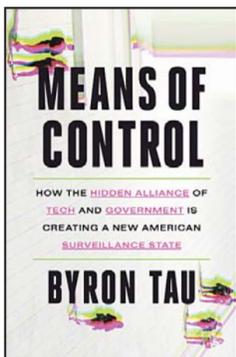
Except TIA wasn't DOA. Not by a longshot.

The data collection that Poindexter envisioned instead went underground, with code names such as "Basketball" and classified budgets. How private Beltway contractors grew what has

become a secretive surveillance regime is exposed in disturbing detail by journalist Byron Tau in his first book, "Means of Control." In the absence of a federal privacy law, the U.S. national security establishment has used commercially available data to craft a creeping panopticon.

As a Wall Street Journal reporter, Tau broke important stories on how the shadowy U.S. data collection and brokering industry has been indirectly — and legally, it seems — eavesdropping on tens of millions of Americans and foreigners in the service of U.S. military, intelligence and homeland security.

"In China, the state wants you to know you're being watched. In America, the success lies in the secrecy," he writes. "The government does not want you to notice the proliferation of license plate readers. It does not want citizens to understand that mobile phones are a surveillance system... that



This cover image released by Crown shows 'Means of Control' by Byron Tau. (AP)

social media is being eavesdropped on."

"Means of Control" traces Tau's efforts to cut through thickets of secrecy to show how

different kinds of data became available for purchase by the U.S. government post-9/11, how what author Shoshana Zuboff termed "surveillance capitalism" — the vacuuming up of personal data by Facebook, Google and others to feed the online ad market — stoked a thriving, under-the-radar bazaar of businesses selling data on people's habits, predilections and, importantly for soldiers and spies, physical movements.

"I've spent years trying to unravel this world — a funhouse of mirrors draped in nondisclosure agreements, corporate trade secrets, needlessly classified contracts, misleading denials, and in some cases outright lies," he writes.

Unlike Edward Snowden, the former National Security Agency worker whose 2013 data dump sounded piercing alarms on U.S. government surveillance, Tau is an outsider. So he is often stymied. But he is not alone in this

work, and generously credits his journalist competitors.

When Tau does get a breakthrough, it is often on surveillance partnerships that help foil a bad guy — like the U.S. border drug tunnel Department of Homeland Security agents uncover in 2018 with cellphone geolocation data obtained from a company called Venntel.

To gather intelligence, firms working closely with U.S. national security operators have embedded data-collecting software in smartphone apps — such as Muslim prayer apps popular in the Middle East. The app owners may or may not be aware of the software modules' surveillance mission, though there's a reason they're getting paid to include the data-gathering SDKs (software development kits).

Some of these tools have been developed with CIA funding and some, like VISR (Virtual Intelligence, Surveillance and Recon-

naissance), have been widely shared inside U.S. intelligence and among U.S. military special operators, Tau writes. The companies involved come and go in the sort of musical chair game we've come expect in U.S. national security contracting.

Which hasn't prevented some from being outed by privacy warriors led by Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon and, now, the Biden administration's activist Federal Trade Commission.

Take X-Mode, one firm Tau examines.

In 2021, X-Mode was found to have been selling access to location data to the U.S. military. In January, the FTC banned X-Mode and its successor, Outlogic, from sharing or selling data on cellphone users' location without their explicit consent. It expressed concern such data could be used to track visits to places like abortion clinics, places of worship and domestic abuse shelters. (AP)

Books

Variety



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Margot Robbie in a scene from "Barbie." (AP)

Oscars

From Grammys to box office: A new era for movie music

'Barbie' soundtrack strikes chord

LOS ANGELES, March 9, (AP) — Throughout the billion-dollar "Barbie" film, an instrumental version of Billie Eilish's hit "What Was I Made For" weaves in and out, soundtracking the famous doll's existential crisis. In the final scene — no spoilers! — Eilish's crackling, saccharine falsetto is finally heard atop the familiar piano. Cue the waterworks.

It is one of many standout musical moments in a movie stacked with them: from Dua Lipa's disco-pop "Dance the Night," with lyrics that perfectly sync up to Margot Robbie's bespoke choreography, to a reimagination of the 1997 Europop hit "Barbie Girl," courtesy Nicki Minaj and Ice Spice.

The music of "Barbie" has become its own blockbuster, selling 126,000 copies in its first week and debuting at No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 200 albums chart. "Barbie" music has also earned three Grammy Awards, one Golden Globe and two Academy Award nominations in the original song category — more than any other film.

It is hard to pinpoint how long it has been since a soundtrack has dominated conversation the way "Barbie" has, particularly at the Oscars — Lady Gaga's "A Star Is Born" performance comes to mind, with the success of "Shallow." Then there's "La La Land," and "Dreamgirls," which received three of the five original song nominations in 2007. But overwhelmingly, there has been a drought in zeitgeist-defining film soundtracks. So, is "Barbie" an exception? Or are soundtracks back?

Each decade has produced iconic soundtracks. The all-time best-seller is still 1992's "The Bodyguard" powered by Whitney Houston and her iconic "I Will Always Love You," with 45 million copies sold.

And there are many ways soundtracks are created. Often, studios will license recognizable, pre-existing music — likely "the safer play," as Gary Trust, Billboard's chart director says — because two-thirds of all music streams are older music.

In the current era, most "successful" soundtracks opt for that — like "Guardians of the Galaxy" and its 2014 "Awesome Mix Vol. 1" soundtrack, which hit No. 1 on the Billboard 200 with songs from the Jackson 5, David Bowie and Marvin Gaye. Musicals have also done well, like "La La Land," and Disney hits like "Moana," and "Frozen" — although the genre typically doesn't crossover to pop radio airplay. (Exception: "Encanto" and its megahit "We Don't Talk About Bruno.")

Another option is to use original material, like in "Barbie" — what Trust views as a throwback to movies like "Dirty Dancing," released during a time when a single soundtrack could produce multiple radio hits from various artists. In "Barbie's" case, that's Lipa, Eilish, Minaj and Ice Spice.

Spring Aspers, president of Sony Pictures Music Group, says a successful soundtrack is one that works with the film's narrative to become a critical part of its story.

"It's not just finding who's the most popular but finding incredibly talented artists that know how to create something that really does an extension of the storytelling," she said.

When it works, you get songs that permeate pop culture with real staying power linked to the film: like Seal's "Kiss from a Rose" from "Batman Forever," or Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On" from "Titanic."

Brilliance

"They just became these forever songs.... It's like a great band who has chemistry; the right song, the right visual, the right scene, it just becomes something so much bigger than itself," explained Aspers. "I know that that's because of the brilliance of the song and the movie. It's the two of them together."

The right soundtrack sync has the power to break an artist, like in the case of Post Malone's "Sunflower" with Swae Lee on the "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse" soundtrack — the first ever double-diamond single — overseen by Aspers.

Soundtracks can also introduce new audiences to an artist. Take Sophie Ellis-Bextor's 2001 indie dance hit "Murder on the Dancefloor"; recently, the song went viral because of its use in a very memorable (and very nude) final scene in the divisive film "Saltburn."

In January, "Murder" broke the Billboard Hot 100 — a career first for Ellis-Bextor — 23 years after the song's release. By the end of that month, on TikTok alone, the track has been featured in more than 550,000 videos and the #MurderOnTheDancefloor hashtag has nearly 170 million views. In February, the viral song brought her U.S. television debut on "The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon."

"Lucky me!," she told The Associated Press. "What a cool thing to be a part of." She theorizes that her song has connected with a new audience (and a nostalgic one who heard it the first time around) because of its rela-

tionship to the film. It is the last song in "Saltburn," it arrives in a pivotal scene, it's played loud in the mix and the entire song is heard — not just a snippet, which is most common.

In her view, "Murder on the Dancefloor" became one of those significant movie moments — think Elton John's "Tiny Dancer" in "Almost Famous" — because the right placement "unlocks the next level of emotion in the film," she says.

There's a synergy across fans of both film and music. According to Luminate's 2023 end-of-year report, U.S. movie theatergoers are 70% more likely to have attended a live concert in the last six months than those who don't go to movie theaters.

What's more, the industry data and analytics company found that 42% of female Gen Z consumers are more likely to discover new music through film soundtracks, which is 20% more than the general public — and could likely speak partially to the success of a film like "Barbie."

"The film is not a musical, but it was always going to have music at the heart of it," says Mark Ronson, the executive producer of the "Barbie" soundtrack.

Kevin Weaver, president of Atlantic Records West Coast, which released "Barbie The Album," says it was always the label's ambition for the soundtrack to stand on its own outside of the film but also work symbiotically — a reflection of how movies and their musical companions can work together.

"We tried to come with the highest caliber of music and artists," Weaver says. "And when we do (soundtrack) albums, we really try to do them in a way where they are a body of work, and where you can live with that as a body of work."

For artists like Ellis-Bextor, it underscores a connection between the two. "Music is a really useful tool. Nothing can set the tone for a scene like music can," she says of the relationship.

"Music will lead you by the hand to what it is hoping you feel. That's music's sole intention. So, a soundtrack is like an extra character... And with a soundtrack, you get a shared, emotional, visual memory."

Ronson agrees. "When you walk out of a movie on such a high that you want to relive it and you're like, 'What can I do?' and you go and get the soundtrack," he says. "I used to do that: I'd walk out of the movie theater to the mega store on the corner and buy it. So, I think that really helps when a movie gives you that feeling."

Features

ARABIC TIMES

SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 2024

LONDON: Now that he's been doing it for well over half a century, Anthony Hopkins believes acting is much "easier" now.

"As you get older, you have a little more knowledge of life. When you're young, you think you know a thing or two, but you don't. When you get to my age, you know a couple of tricks for a living," the 86-year-old, who stars as real-life hero Nicholas Winton in "One Life," said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

His "tricks" to acting are very simple: "Just learn the lines, show up and try to be real."

To play Winton in the movie out March 15, a stockbroker responsible for saving more than 600 children during World War II, Hopkins studied the way he walked and talked, watching his interviews and docuseries appearance. His performance was given the seal of approval by Winton's son.

"It was easy because I didn't have to act old, I am old," Hopkins said, smiling.

Nevertheless, "One Life" director James Hawes highlights Hopkins' "young spirit," adding that the knight of the realm "bloody loves what he does," and has a continued passion for movies.

"He would sit on an apple box on the edge of set and watch people rigging lights and rigging track because he has a joy for the world he's in," Hawes explained, adding, "he just wants to be there and part of the process."

"One Life" is told in two parts as the young Winton, played by Johnny Flynn, spearheads the extraordinary feat of arranging trains to transport children out of Prague. Hopkins plays the older Winton, looking back on his life but still haunted by images of children he couldn't rescue — specifically aboard the final train that didn't make it out of Prague.

One poignant moment recreated in the film is Winton's appearance on the British TV show "That's Life," where he was surprised by a studio audience made up of descendants of the children he'd saved. The extras surrounding Hopkins in the recreated scene were also related to the Kindertransport children, with Hopkins calling it a "pretty moving moment."

Hopkins says playing Winton is one of the highlights of his career, but playing Hannibal Lecter in "Silence of the Lambs," which won him his first Academy Award in 1991, "gave him a profound

change in the direction of my life." (AP)

AUSTIN, Texas: A panel featuring Meghan the Duchess of Sussex came together on International Women's Day to discuss how women and mothers are portrayed in traditional media and across



Hopkins



Meghan

social media, among other issues.

The panel was part of the annual SXSW (South by Southwest) being held through March 16 in Austin, Texas, and also included actor, model and author Brooke Shields, journalist Katie Couric and sociologist Nancy Wang Yuen.

SXSW showcases music, film

and interactive media.

Meghan — responding to a report on how mothers are portrayed in the media — said the report found that working mothers are paid 62 cents to the dollar to what working fathers are paid.

The report was funded by the Archewell Foundation, a non-profit created by Prince Harry

and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex.

"There's a lot of work to be done in supporting women and moms," she said. "It's almost feeling punitive at a certain point when you're a mom and you're juggling so much and caring so much and you want to be supported in the best way possible." (AP)

People & Places



This image released by Amazon Prime shows John Cena, right, in a scene from 'Ricky Stanicky.' (AP)

Music

Silence shattered

Grande's eternal sunshine triumphs over heartbreak

NEW YORK, March 9, (AP) — The new Ariana Grande era — marked by her seventh studio album and first in nearly four years, “eternal sunshine,” began with a question — “Yes, And?”

The single — named after a general rule of thumb in improvisational comedy — marked a new musical pivot for the performer. Sure, she was working with one of the greatest pop producers of all time again — the mysterious Swedish powerhouse Max Martin — but now, she was filtering her earworm hooks through '90s house music. The bridge has echoes of “Vogue” (not unlike Beyoncé’s “Break My Soul”) and its lyrics recall a kind of Lady Gaga “Born This Way” empowerment (an example: “Boy, come on, put your lipstick on/No one can tell you nothin’”) while also offering a public defense to tabloid representation (“Don’t comment on my body, do not reply.”) It’s a great song, but it doesn’t include Grande’s signature runs; there’s no larger-than-life vocal moment, what her listeners have come to know her for. In some ways, it makes “Yes, And?” a bit of a red herring on “eternal sunshine.”



Grande

Belt she does throughout the release — her idiosyncratic vocal tone stretches across the funky, finger-snapping, shimmery disco of “Bye.” There’s her breathy falsetto on “Don’t Wanna Break Up” (sung with “I’m too much to you/ So I really gotta do the thing I don’t wanna do,” a reminder that this is her first album since her divorce from real estate agent Dalton Gomez), the pop “Supernatural,” and the wobbly '00s R&B pop of “True Story” like a long lost Destiny’s Child cut. In the latter, her weapons are once again raised: “I’ll play whatever part you need me to,” she sings. “And, I’ll be good in it, too.”

There’s a kind of Y2K revivalism here done in distinct Grande fashion — and at least partially inspired by her girl group-inspired track “Fantasize,” which leaked on TikTok last summer. That’s evident on a reimagining of “The Boy Is Mine,” inspired by the Brandy and Monica classic, with a dramatic tempo change.

Organic

For a record completed in around three-and-a-half months — notably after she finished filming “Wicked,” as she told her fans long ago was the plan — there’s marked innovation and evolution here. “Imperfect for you,” is another slight genre shift, with its distorted synths sounds like an out-of-tune guitar atop a blues-y trap beat. And there’s the big, Robyn-esque euro-pop production of “we can’t be friends (wait for your love),” which explodes into a string crescendo, electronic sounds effortlessly blending into organic ones.

There’s also quite a bit of love on this album, for someone navigating life after marriage; the tragic loss of another partner, the rapper Mac Miller, who died of an accidental overdose; and the terrorist attack on her show in Manchester, England in 2017. Instead of leaning into a kind of overt optimism like on past releases — “Thank U, Next,” anyone? — Grande allows herself to feel it all, even when she wishes she couldn’t.

Any missteps are blips — an overly explanatory intro and interlude likely included to give the record a kind of “concept album” shape, as Grande has said in interviews, which could’ve been excised. The contradiction, of course, is that an apparently honesty on Grande’s albums has always been a highlight: like in the closer “Ordinary Things,” which includes a recording of her grandma (and a credit: “featuring Nonna.”)

Grande, a lifelong and well-documented Jim Carrey fan, lifted her album title from the 2004 rom-com “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind,” which centers the impossibility of erasing a relationship through the selective removal of memories.

Film

Zany adventure packed with laughter and chaos

Cena steals show in ‘Ricky Stanicky’

NEW YORK, March 9, (AP) — Your tolerance for the new Peter Farrelly comedy “Ricky Stanicky” may come down to whether or not you think the idea of accidentally miming a certain act is funny.

The concept is of little consequence to the plot. It’s something that a few of the leads notice that the buttoned-up leader of a financial company (William H. Macy) does when he makes speeches.

They didn’t mean to commit arson, they simply wanted to burn some dog poop on the doorstep of a house that didn’t give out any Halloween candy.

When the fire gets out of control, they leave behind a jacket with a fake name inscribed in it: Ricky Stanicky.

He becomes their imaginary fourth friend and forever fall guy even into adulthood (in which they’re played by Zac Efron, Andrew Santino and Jermaine Fowler).

But their house of alibis is in danger of crumbling when suspicious partners and one nagging mother-in-law demand that the elusive Ricky materialize.

So, the guys decide to hire a washed up Atlantic City celebrity impressionist who goes by “Rock

Hard” Rod (John Cena) to play Ricky for a day.

This idea did not originate with Farrelly, who, of course, with his brother defined a moment in broad 1990s comedy with movies like “Dumb & Dumber,” “Kingpin” and “There’s Something About Mary.”

The sensibility was always more than a bit juvenile — but done so gleefully and with such unabashed commitment that it was hard not to just laugh along with the antics.

Some of their comedies have aged poorly, a fate that is not unique to them, but again, they were of a moment that long ago passed (they were like the younger, sweeter sibling of the frat guy mentality of the early aughts).

Comedies

And unfortunately, “Ricky Stanicky” feels like one of those lesser 2000 comedies that wanted so badly to be “There’s Something About Mary.”

It makes a certain amount of sense when you consider that the script has been circling Hollywood for about 15 years.

At one point, James Franco was attached to the title role. A few years later, it was going to be Jim Carrey.

This development journey is one of the reasons why there are six credited screenwriters on the version that finally got made (Jeff Bushell and Brian Jarvis & James Lee Freeman & Peter Farrelly & Pete Jones & Mike Cerrone).

It’s impossible to tell where the

(I assume) good ended and the bad started to creep in, but three amper-sands are rarely a good sign in film credits.

It has stamps of a Farrelly romp — a bit with a dog and a duck, a little accidental drugging, a comedic circumcision and an album’s worth of pop songs reworked to be about masturbation — but little of the charm. Is this, perhaps, a piece of comedy that should have been made when it was written? Was it doomed to be revived for 2024 audiences?

One of the problems is that it is filmed with all the artfulness of a yogurt commercial. Everything looks like a set.

Everyone looks like an actor. The women are all surface. Nothing seems remotely real, ever, not even the blindingly bright lighting.

The one bright spot is Cena, who is quite good. Like his character, who goes above and beyond to adeptly play Ricky Stanicky, Cena really and truly commits and brings a kind of unexpected depth and pathos to Rock Hard Rod.

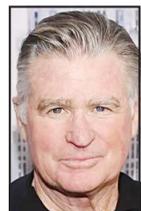
He’s flexed his comedy muscles before and should again, soon. Is it enough to save the movie? Not for me.

“Ricky Stanicky,” an MGM/Amazon Studios release streaming on Prime Video Thursday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for “language throughout, some drug content and sexual material.”

Running time: 112 minutes. One and a half stars out of four.



Amy Durning, left, and Fred Berner attend the 96th Academy Awards Nominations Program for Producers/Best Picture, Thursday, March 7, 2024, in Los Angeles. (AP)



Williams



Portman

Variety

BENNINGTON, Vt. A Vermont man on Friday pleaded guilty to a reduced charge of negligent driving with death resulting in the June crash that killed actor **Treat Williams**.

Ryan Koss, 35, who knew Williams, was given a one-year deferred sentence and as part of his probation will have his driving license revoked for a year and must complete a community restorative justice program on the misdemeanor charge.

Koss was turning left into a parking lot in a Honda SUV on June 12 when he collided with Williams’ oncoming motorcycle in **Dorset**, police said. Williams, 71, of **Manchester Center**, who was wearing a helmet, suffered critical injuries and was airlifted to **Albany Medical Center** in **Albany, New York**, where he was pronounced dead, police said.

After the crash, Koss called Williams’ wife to tell her what happened, said **Bennington County State’s Attorney Erica Marthage**, who said Koss from the beginning has taken responsibility for the accident.

In the emotional hearing on Friday, Koss apologized and offered condolences to Williams’ family and fans. The managing creative director of the **Dorset Theatre Festival** in Vermont knew Williams for years as a member of the tight-knit community, as well as a fellow theater member, and considered him a friend.

“I’m here to apologize and take responsibility for this tragic accident,” he told the court.

Williams’ son **Gill**, 32, wore his father’s jacket and spoke directly to Koss, who he had met before the crash. The family did not want to press charges or have Koss go to prison, he said.

“I do forgive you, and I hope that you forgive yourself,” he said. But he also added that “I really wish you hadn’t killed my father. I really had to say that.”

Gill Williams said his father was “everything” to their family and an extraordi-

nary person who lived life to the fullest, and it’s now hard to figure out how to go forward.

His father had given him the motorcycle

the day before the crash, and he was “the safest person in the world,” **Gill Williams** said.

“It’s very difficult to have this happen based on someone’s negligence,” he said,



Dragon Ball Z booth is seen during New York Comic Con at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center on Oct. 12, 2023, in New York. Akira Toriyama, the creator of one of Japan’s best-selling “Dragon Ball” and other popular anime who influenced Japanese comics, has died, his studio said Friday, March 8, 2024. He was 68. (AP)

urging people to take driving a lot more seriously and to look out for motorcycles. Statements from Williams’ wife, **Pam**, and his daughter, who both did not attend the court hearing, were read aloud. (AP)

NEW YORK: **Natalie Portman** and **Benjamin Millepied** have divorced after 11 years of marriage and two children.

The Oscar-winning actor and Millepied, a choreographer and director, finalized the divorce last month in **France**, where they live, *People* magazine reported, citing a representative for Portman. A representative for Portman declined comment on the record to *The Associated Press*. Representatives for Millepied did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

According to *People*, Portman, 42, filed for divorce from Millepied, 46, eight months ago.

Portman and Millepied met on the set of 2010’s “Black Swan,” **Darren Aronofsky**’s ballet film. Millepied choreographed the film, for which Portman won the Oscar for best actress. They wed in 2012 and share two children.

Portman’s most recent film was 2023’s “May December,” the **Todd Haynes** film that earned its stars critical praise. Millepied made his directorial debut with “Carmen,” starring **Paul Mescal** and **Melissa Barrera**, which opened at the 2022 Toronto International Film Festival and debuted in cinemas last year. (AP)

Step aims to push AI-enabled innovative services and 5.5G network automation

Zain and Huawei team up to establish AI Center of Excellence

KUWAIT CITY/BARCELONA, March 9: Zain announced it is teaming up with global partner Huawei to establish an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Center of Excellence. The step aims to push both partners' plans for AI-enabled innovative services and 5.5G network automation in the region.

The announcement was made during the Mobile World Congress (MWC 2024) in Barcelona, Spain. In attendance were Zain Kuwait Chief Executive Officer Nawaf Algharabally, President of Huawei Middle East and Central Asia Region Steven Yi, Zain Group Chief Investment and Digital Transformation Officer Malek Hammoud, Zain Kuwait CCO Meshal Al Kandari, Zain Kuwait Chief Enterprise & Business Officer Hamad Al Marzouq, and executives from the companies.

Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Algharabally commented: "Our proactive efforts to offer AI-enabled services on 5G and 5.5G networks will establish a new benchmark and create new opportunities for the telecom industry in Kuwait and the region. These AI services encompass innovations such as New Calling, network energy conservation, and efficient O&M solutions, all aimed at keeping up with our everchanging industry and to exceed our customers' expectations."

Algharabally added: "We will leverage on the innovations of AI to achieve network transformation, enhance data analysis, and introduce novel AI-based services. Our collaboration with Huawei to establish an AI Center of Excellence marks the initial steps toward achieving this vision."

President of Huawei Middle East and Central Asia Region Steven Yi said: "Zain Kuwait and Huawei have partnered to establish this center to leverage on AI tools and create new services for consumers and businesses, as well as to improve network operations for the 5.5G era."

"This will involve training AI algorithms to enhance network automation to offer faster customer service, provide high-quality network solutions, and optimize maintenance.



Nawaf Algharabally and Steven Yi with Zain and Huawei executives.

This will also support the development of high-quality networks, fast and efficient services, and the best-in-class user experiences." Yi added.

Zain aspires to reinforce its efforts to further push AI-enabled innovative services and 5.5G network automation. The company strongly believes in the pivotal role AI tools and applications play in transforming networks, ultimately improving performance, efficiency, optimization, operations, and maintenance. These innovations also improve other aspects for networks, such as self-healing, power saving, analytics, and more.

This announcement solidifies the collaboration between Zain Kuwait and Huawei to leverage AI-driven applications. Together, the companies aim to revolutionize services such as cutting-edge calling features, improved network efficiency,

and optimized operations. This partnership is dedicated to adapting swiftly to evolving demands while maintaining cost-effectiveness at its core.

Zain works to provide revolutionary technology like the market's first AI-powered, real-time voice/video translation communication. By integrating AI into its 5.5G New Calling services, Zain takes communications to new heights with instantaneous translation across multiple languages (including Arabic and English).

This groundbreaking solution has undergone successful testing by Zain and is now being prepared for commercial launch in Kuwait with support from Huawei. Its primary goal is to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps through voice and video calls. Consumers and enterprises alike can enjoy seamless translation experiences, unlocking significant mar-

ket opportunities in areas such as social networks, tourism, businesses, call centers, and content creation.

In addition, Zain recently announced that it has achieved speeds of 10 Gigabits per second after completing a 5.5G technology trial on its network, becoming the first operator to reach this significant milestone in Kuwait's telecom market. The company also succeeded in testing Ultra-Reliable Low Latency Communication (URLLC), a key 5.5G feature.

The announcement was made after the successful completion of a 5.5G trial on Zain's network with Huawei, and under supervision and in collaboration with the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA).

Zain has invested early in upgrading and enhancing its network's infrastructure to prepare for the shift towards the 5.5G era, which brings limitless opportunities and opens up new horizons for businesses and consumers alike. In addition, the achievement serves as a testament to Zain's leadership position and goes in line with its digitization efforts for the "New Kuwait" vision.

5.5G, which features blazing-fast speeds and higher efficiency levels, combined with Ultra-Reliable Low Latency Communication (URLLC), which brings reduced latency and ultra-reliable connections, will meet the ever-growing demand of cloud computing, AI, big data, immersive AR/VR experiences, autonomous vehicles, and more. These fast growing technologies and more rely on higher, more stable speeds, and are increasingly adopted by businesses and government agencies.

Zain maintains its leadership position within the local ICT industry through its robust ecosystem of strategic partnerships with the world's biggest technology leaders. Building upon early investment in cutting-edge technology infrastructure and harnessing the talent of its national workforce, the company remains at the forefront of innovation, consistently delivering groundbreaking technologies to Kuwait's largest customer base.



Stick and ground cinnamon is displayed for a photograph in Concord, N.H., on March 2, 2008. (AP)

FDA urges caution

Lead-tainted cinnamon recalled

WASHINGTON, March 9, (AP): Several U.S. discount retailers recalled packages of ground cinnamon after federal health officials warned that they were contaminated with high levels of lead.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued a safety alert for six brands of cinnamon, including those sold at Dollar Tree and Family Dollar stores.

The move followed massive recalls last fall of WanaBana and other brands of cinnamon applesauce pouches linked to nearly 500 reports of lead poisoning in young children in 44 states. The FDA tested retail samples of spices to determine whether other products were contaminated.

The new recalls are raising questions about the safety of cinnamon, a popular spice found in many American kitchens.

Here's what you should know: Recalls have been issued for Marcum and Supreme Tradition brand ground cinnamon sold at Dollar Tree, Family Dollar and Save A Lot stores nationwide.

Other recalls include El Chilar brand cinnamon sold at La Joya Morelense in Baltimore, Maryland; and Swad cinnamon powder sold at Patel Brothers stores across the U.S.

FDA officials said they have not been able to contact MTCI of Santa Fe

Springs, California, which distributes MK brand cinnamon sold at SF Supermarkets in several states.

FDA tests found lead levels ranging from 2 parts per million to 4 parts per million in the recalled cinnamon. That's far lower than the 2,000 to 5,000 parts per million detected in the ground cinnamon from Ecuador that contaminated the applesauce pouches.

There is currently no FDA limit for heavy metals in spices. However, the agency has set a limit of 1 part per million of lead in candy likely to be consumed by small children.

The American Spice Trade Association, an industry trade group, calls for no more than 2 parts per million of lead in bark spices such as cinnamon.

The source of the recalled cinnamon is unclear, as is where it was produced, FDA officials said. Cinnamon in the U.S. is imported from many places, including India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia.

However, the agency said there's no reason to believe that the recalled cinnamon came from the same Ecuadorian supplier implicated in the contaminated applesauce pouches.

Many foods, including spices, contain lead from natural sources such as soil and water, said Karen Everstine, technical director for FoodchainID, a company that tracks food supply chains.

Insurer obstacles hinder patients seeking home respiratory devices

'Breathing not a luxury'

SAN FRANCISCO, March 9, (AP): Lou Gehrig's disease took away Grace Armant's ability to speak, but the 84-year-old still has plenty to say about her insurance.

UnitedHealthcare has rejected several requests from her doctors for coverage of a machine Armant needs to breathe as she deals with the fatal illness.

"They are no good," Armant said, typing slowly into a device that speaks for her. "I can't do without the machine."

Doctors around the country say UnitedHealthcare and other insurers have made it harder to get coverage for certain home ventilators that patients like Armant need as their lungs fail. They say patients often must struggle first with less effective - and cheaper - devices before some insurers will pay. In other cases, insurers balk at paying for a second machine needed when patients transfer from their bed to a wheelchair.

Temple University doctoral student Jagger DeMarco waited more than three years to get his. "Breathing is not a luxury," he said. "It's really the bare minimum, and that's what we're asking for."

Medicare program

Some physicians believe insurers are making it harder on patients because more of the devices are being prescribed. Spending by the federal government's Medicare program on the ventilators jumped from about \$3 million to nearly \$269 million between 2009 and 2017, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General.

Insurers say they do cover the machines, but that coverage can depend on several factors.

These "noninvasive" ventilators help patients breathe around the clock by forcing air into the lungs, often through a mask. They are called noninvasive because they don't require trachea surgery to open the airway, like ones used in hospitals.

The machines have battery backups so they can keep working when the power goes out. They also are more powerful than other devices meant to be used mainly at night for conditions like sleep apnea. At around \$1,200 a month, they can be three times as expensive as those devices.

These ventilators can help prolong the life of



Temple University doctoral student Jagger DeMarco poses for a portrait while utilizing a battery-powered ventilator in Philadelphia, Wednesday, March 6, 2024. (AP)

someone with Lou Gehrig's disease, also known as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, doctors say.

But insurance rejections have picked up for those patients and people dealing with advanced cases of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, said Chuck Coolidge, chief strategy officer for VieMed, which provides respiratory equipment for patients in 46 states.

That includes both initial approvals and re-authorizations, he said. "In early 2023, it was almost like a switch flipped," he said.

UnitedHealthcare spokeswoman Heather Soule said her company covers the machines and re-evaluates requests if it gets new information. Coverage can depend on the patient's condition, terms of their health plan or guidelines from the federal government's Medicare program.

Those guidelines give insurers room to reject many ventilator requests, even those for seriously ill patients, said Dr. John Hansen-Flaschen, a pulmonary medicine expert with the University of Pennsylvania. Government-funded Medicare Advantage plans

run by UnitedHealthcare now deny nearly all initial requests for the ventilators, said Dr. Cathy Lomen-Hoerth, a neurologist with the University of California San Francisco.

In West Virginia, Dale Harper says it took several months and a personal plea before UnitedHealthcare would cover a ventilator for his 25-year-old son, Jacob, who has a rare and aggressive form of ALS.

After appeals from Jacob's doctor failed, Harper called a number on his insurance card and asked for a supervisor.

"I said, 'I can feed him, I can help him go to the bathroom, I can move him from one place to the other,'" the Winfield, West Virginia, resident recalled. "The only thing I cannot do is breathe for him ... and he can't breathe."

Harper said ventilator coverage was approved within an hour of that call early last year.

Doctors caring for Armant, who lives outside New Orleans, say they usually get decent ventilator coverage.

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LeBron-less Lakers' stun Bucks 123-122



Los Angeles Lakers center Jaxson Hayes (right), guard Spencer Dinwiddie and guard D'Angelo Russell (left), celebrate the team's 123-122 win over the Milwaukee Bucks in an NBA basketball game Friday, March 8, 2024, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Wizards top Warriors to end losing streak

LOS ANGELES, March 9, (AP): D'Angelo Russell scored 21 of his season-high 44 points in the fourth quarter and hit a go-ahead jumper with 5.9 seconds to play, and the Los Angeles Lakers overcame LeBron James' injury absence for a 123-122 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks on Friday night.

Spencer Dinwiddie blocked Damian Lillard's step-back jumper right before the buzzer to preserve a stirring win for the Lakers while James sat out to rest his sore left ankle, missing his ninth game of the season overall due to the persistent injury.

They were carried by Russell, who tied his career high with nine 3-pointers while also handing out nine assists in a spectacular performance. He scored eight points in the final 1:13 while the Lakers rallied from a late deficit.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 34 points, 14 rebounds and 12 assists. Lillard scored eight of his 28 points in the fourth quarter, but the Bucks couldn't hang on in their second consecutive loss.

Anthony Davis had 22 points - just two in the fourth quarter and 13 rebounds for the Lakers, who have won 11 of 15 as they fight to gain any ground in the competitive Western Conference.

Wizards 112, Hornets 100

In Washington, Kyle Kuzma scored 28 points, Deni Avdija added 18 and Washington beat Charlotte to end a 16-game losing streak.

Washington had matched a team record of 16 consecutive losses set during the 2009-10 season, but the Wizards avoided claiming the mark alone. Charlotte now has the NBA's longest active skid at six games despite a 32-point, 12-rebound effort from Miles Bridges.

One game after squandering a 21-point second-quarter lead against Orlando, the Wizards let a 15-point advantage get away and trailed by 10 late in the third quarter. But on a night when both teams had a terrible time shooting 3-pointers, Kuzma and Avdija were able to hurt Charlotte down the stretch by attacking the basket. Kuzma nearly had a triple-double, finishing with nine assists and eight rebounds. Avdija had 14 rebounds, and Washington's Richaun Holmes had 14 points and 11 rebounds without missing a shot.

Cavaliers 113, Timberwolves 104, OT

In Cleveland, Darius Garland scored 34 points, Jarrett Allen added a career-high 33 and had 18 rebounds and injury-thinned Cleveland handed the NBA's best road team a loss, beating Minnesota in overtime.

Allen made a career-best 15 free throws, including 14 after halftime. He scored 10 points in overtime as the Cavs outscored the Timberwolves 16-7. Cleveland was without starters Donovan Mitchell, Evan Mobley and Max Strus because of injuries.

Naz Reid scored a career-high 34 points for Minnesota, coming off a

victory at Indiana on Thursday night. The Timberwolves dropped a half-game behind Oklahoma City for the Western Conference lead.

Thunder 107, Heat 100

In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 23 of his 37 points in the second half and Oklahoma City overcame a 14-point deficit to beat Miami and take the Western Conference lead.

The Thunder moved a half-game ahead of Minnesota for the West lead, with the Timberwolves falling in overtime at Cleveland.

Gilgeous-Alexander made 13 of 25 field goals and 9 of 11 free throws. The NBA's No. 2 scorer was greeted with "M-V-P! M-V-P!" chants when he went to the line in the fourth quarter as he helped Oklahoma City take control. Miami rookie Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored 25 points. Jimmy Butler added 20 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists.

Knicks 98, Magic 74

In New York, Jalen Brunson scored 26 points in his return from a bruised left knee and New York ended Orlando's five-game winning streak. New York held Orlando to the lowest points total in the NBA this season.

The Knicks missed Brunson in a loss to Atlanta on Tuesday night, then barely missed at all in the early going with him back. New York started 8 for 9 from behind the arc in a game it never trailed.

BASKETBALL

New York won for just the fourth time in the last 12 games as its battles injuries to multiple starters. But this victory was enough to put Knicks back ahead of Orlando into fourth place in the Eastern Conference.

Paolo Banchero had 23 points and nine rebounds for Orlando.

Pelicans 103, 76ers 95

In Philadelphia, Zion Williamson had 23 points and 12 rebounds and New Orleans beat a Philadelphia team spiraling without injured All-Stars Joel Embiid and Tyrese Maxey.

The Pelicans held on after a 35-point lead was trimmed to five on a Jeff Dowtin Jr. 3-pointer with 45 seconds left.

Tobias Harris had 21 points and 10 rebounds for Philadelphia. The 76ers lost for the 15th time in 21 games.

Hawks 99, Grizzlies 92

In Memphis, Tenn. Dejounte Murray matched his career high with 41 points and Atlanta beat Memphis for its third straight victory.

Murray, who also had seven rebounds and six assists, shot 17 of 25 from the field including 6 of 10 from 3-point range.

Jaren Jackson Jr. led Memphis with 21 points.

Rockets 123, Trail Blazers 107

In Portland, Ore. Jalen Green had 27 points, including two statement dunks in the third quarter, and Houston pulled away to beat Portland.

Fred VanVleet added 18 points and 10 assists for the Rockets, who had lost four of their previous six games. Dalano Banton had a career-high 30 points for Portland.

Sinner cruises to a 6-3, 6-0 win over Kokkinakis

Top-ranked Swiatek moves on at Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS, Calif., March 9, (AP): Top-ranked Iga Swiatek moved on at the BNP Paribas Open with a 6-3, 6-0 victory over power-hitting Danielle Collins on Friday.

Swiatek improved to 15-2 this season and earned her fifth straight win over the 30-year-old American, who previously announced that she intends to retire after the season.

The two met in January in the second round of the Australian Open, with Swiatek winning 6-3, 3-6, 6-4.

This one was much easier. Swiatek, a four-time major champion, won 71.1% of her first-serve points, compared to Collins' 50%. Collins did herself no favors with unforced errors and seven double-

faults. Swiatek will face Linda Noskova. Noskova beat Swiatek in the third round at Melbourne Park to the 19-year-old Noskova.

In other women's action, Angelique Kerber battled back to beat Jelena Ostapenko 5-7, 6-3, 6-3 in a matchup of former Grand Slam

TENNIS

champions. It was similar to Kerber's three-set win in Cincinnati in 2021 before she became a mother and returned to action this year.

Kerber, who reached the Indian

Wells final in 2019, is a three-time Grand Slam titlist.

On the men's side, Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner cruised to a 6-3, 6-0 win over Thanasi Kokkinakis to extend his winning streak to 16 matches. The third-ranked Sinner won 74.5% of his service points to run his all-time record against Kokkinakis to 4-0.

Defending tournament champion Carlos Alcaraz came back from a set down to beat Matteo Arnaldi 6-7 (5), 6-0, 6-1.

Also, Andrey Rublev defeated Andy Murray 7-6 (3), 6-1, while Alejandro Tabilo, Alexander Zverev, Stefanos Tsitsipas and Alex de Minaur also won in straight sets.

Gut-Behrami closes in on GS season title

ARE, Sweden, March 9, (AP): Lara Gut-Behrami closed in on the women's World Cup giant slalom title Saturday, as the Swiss skier posted the second-fastest time in the opening run of the penultimate race of the season.

Olympic GS champion Sara Hector held a commanding lead of 0.61 seconds at the event in her native Sweden. Mikaela Shiffrin sat out the race after recovering from knee injury, but the American star plans to return to racing at Sunday's slalom.

After winning four races this season, Gut-Behrami leads the GS discipline standings by 135 points from her only remaining challenger, Federica Brignone.

With only one more GS coming up at the World Cup finals in Austria next week, Brignone must gain 35 points more than Gut-Behrami does to stay in contention, but the Italian trailed Gut-Behrami by 0.55 seconds in third.

"I didn't have a good feeling in the first part. A lot of wind and no visibility, usually that's good for me, but today I didn't get the feeling, it was tough," said Brignone, adding she didn't fancy her chances of overtaking Gut-Behrami even before the race.

"No, it's decided. I'm here only to race well and hopefully finish on the podium."

If Gut-Behrami locks it up, it would be the first discipline title to be con-

SKIING

firmed this women's World Cup season. The Swiss star is also a strong favorite to win the overall title since Shiffrin didn't race in the past six weeks, and Gut-Behrami holds healthy leads in the downhill and super-G standings.

The only discipline Gut-Behrami cannot win is the slalom, where Shiffrin is likely to secure the season title upon her return on Sunday. It would be the American's record-equaling eighth slalom globe.

Opening the floodlit race in light snowfall, Hector was near-flawless in an attacking run on a course she skied "countless times" when she visited the local ski gymnasium in her junior years.

"It didn't feel so easy, but it was good to start first," said Hector, who is chasing her sixth career GS win and first since triumphing in Jasna, Slovakia in January.

Time differences in the first run were remarkably large, as a deficit of more than two seconds was still enough to rank inside the top 10.

Austrian skier Katharina Liensberger had a nasty crash when she skied through a gate and lost balance, then fell backward with her helmet hitting the snow. Liensberger, the 2021 slalom world champion, stayed down for a minute, but ultimately stood up.



Miami Heat center Bam Adebayo, front, drives against Oklahoma City Thunder forward Jaylin Williams, back, during the second half of an NBA basketball game Friday, March 8, 2024, in Oklahoma City. (AP)

Dayton rallies to down VCU 91-86

DAYTON, Ohio, March 9, (AP): Kobe Elvis hit back-to-back 3-pointers and a pair of free throws in the last 1:09 of overtime to lift No. 25 Dayton to a 91-86 win over VCU in a white-knuckle final regular-season game Friday night. Max Shulga hit a 3-pointer to get VCU within two points with 4 seconds left in OT, but Enoch Cheeks and DaRon Holmes II hit foul shots to seal it for Dayton (24-6, 14-4 Atlantic 10), which finished 15-0 on its home court.

"I've been doing this a long time, and that's about the grittiest performance I've seen," Dayton coach Anthony Grant said. "I'm in awe

of these guys." Elvis scored 10 of his 15 points in overtime as the Flyers fought back from a 17-point first-half deficit to tie the game at 70 in the last 2 1/2

BASKETBALL

minutes of regulation. Holmes finished with 23 points and 10 rebounds, and Nate Santos had 21, leading all five Dayton starters in double-digit scoring.

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SPORTS

Anderson joins exclusive 700 club in Test, despite England's loss to India

Hosts win series 4-1

DHARAMSHALA, India, March 9, (AP): James Anderson became only the third bowler to pick up 700 test wickets but his celebration was muted when England lost by an innings and 64 runs against India in the fifth and final cricket test inside three days.

India scored 477 runs in its first innings while England was 218 and 195 in reply.

Anderson, already the third-highest wicket-taker in test history, joined the 700-club when he dismissed India's Kuldeep Yadav on Saturday morning at Dharamshala. The England veteran achieved the feat in his 187th test and is the first pace bowler to reach the milestone.

CRICKET

He followed Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan (800 wickets in 133 tests) and Australia's Shane Warne (708 wickets in 145 tests), both spin bowlers to have achieved the mark.

India had a winning 3-1 lead. It won the fourth test in Ranchi by five wickets to capture the series.

England was in deep trouble and staring at a heavy defeat after being 103-5 at lunch, trailing by 156 runs.

India finished the second day at 473-8, with Yadav (30) and Jasprit Bumrah (20) at the crease. India only added four runs to its overnight score - Anderson had Yadav caught behind in the fourth over of the morning to achieve his milestone.

Then off spinner Shoaib Bashir had Bumrah stumped to finish with 5-173. It was his second five-wicket haul in four tests, and he became the first England bowler to achieve the feat before turning 21.

Indian skipper Rohit Sharma did not take the field in England's second innings because of a stiff back. Vice-captain Bumrah took charge, sharing the new ball with Ravichandran Ashwin.

Ashwin took 5-77 and finished with match figures of 9-128 in his 100th test and had ushered in England's slide in the second innings.

Ashwin began in the second over, bowling Ben Duckett for two, as the opener danced down the track.

Ashwin then dismissed Zak Crawley for a 16-ball duck in the sixth over. Ollie Pope tried a sweep shot, but only ended up offering an easy catch to Yashasvi Jaiswal at short leg. Pope made 19 runs and England was down to 36-3.



Indian cricket team members pose with the winning trophy after they won the fifth test match against England in Dharamshala, India. (AP)



England's Joe Root bats on the third day of the fifth and final Test match between England and India in Dharamshala, India. (AP)

Jonny Bairstow, appearing in his 100th test, and Joe Root added 56 runs for the fourth wicket. Bairstow was aggressive, hitting three fours and three sixes in his 31-ball, 39-run total.

But Yadav provided the break-

through, trapping Bairstow lbw, as England lost a fourth wicket leading up to lunch. It got worse as Ashwin bowled skipper Ben Stokes for just two runs leaving the English second innings in tatters.

Post lunch, Ashwin completed his 36th five-wicket haul in tests as Ben Foakes attempted a slog sweep and was bowled for eight.

Bumrah picked up the next two wickets with immaculate yorkers.

He trapped Tom Hartley lbw for 20 with a slower ball, and then repeated it with a quicker yorker to send Mark Wood back for a two-ball duck.

Joe Root played the lone hand and top scored with 84 runs off 128 balls, including 12 fours. It wasn't enough to save England's blushes as Yadav finished proceedings with time to spare on the third day.

Ravindra Jadeja, too, picked up a wicket, bowling Bashir for 13.

India had rebounded from England's 28-run victory back in January by winning the second test in Visakhapatnam by 106 runs, the third test in Rajkot by 434 runs and the fourth test in Ranchi.

India thus cements its top spot in the ICC world test championship rankings, with 68.51 percentage points from six wins in nine tests. England is eighth in the standings, with only three wins in 10 tests in this current 2023-25 cycle.

Babar, Ayub propel Zalmi into playoffs

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan, March 9, (AP): Babar Azam and Saim Ayub upstaged Akeal Hosein's hat trick as Peshawar Zalmi thumped Quetta Gladiators by 76 runs and booked a playoff spot in the Pakistan Super League.

Quetta batters fumbled for a second straight game and were bowled out for 120 in 17.5 overs after Peshawar made 196-8.

Ayub continued to make the most of his new allrounder role by claiming the key Quetta wickets of skipper Rilee Rossouw (8) and Khawaja Nafay (5) in one over.

Babar notched his fourth half-century of this PSL in a blazing 53 off 30 balls. Babar is the league leading batter with 447 runs at a strike rate of 154.67 in eight games.



Kazma and Al Arabi players battle for the ball.

Kuwait Club, Al Arabi dominate standings

By Hassan Musa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 9: The Zain Premier League concluded its eighth and final round, adding the finishing touches by determining the sixth team entering the championship group, the "Big Six League." Simultaneously, it unveiled the fourth team

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securing a spot in the "Four" League to avoid relegation, with Al-Fahaheel set to compete in the "Six" after a 4-1 victory over Al-Salmiya, elevating its points to 23. This pushed Kazma down to seventh place, losing to Al-Arabi by a single goal, ending their previous score at 20 points.

The Big Six group featured Kuwait Club leading, with 43 points, Al-Arabi in second with 42 points, Al-Qadisiya securing third place with 39 points, Al-Salmiya at 24 points, narrowly edging out Al-Nasr in goal difference, and Al-

Fahaheel claiming the sixth spot with 23 points.

The Four-League group, focused on avoiding relegation, consists of Kazma (20 points), Al-Shabab (14 points), Khaitan (12 points), and Al-Jahra at the bottom with 8 points.

The commencement of the first round for both the Six-League and the Four-League is scheduled for the middle of this week. Matches in both groups will follow a home-and-away system, with the team amassing the most points claiming the league title. Meanwhile, the third- and fourth-place finishers in the "Avoid Relegation" League will face relegation to the First Division League next season, while the remaining two continue in the Premier League.

Kuwait, the defending champion, celebrated another victory, while Al-Arabi persisted in its pursuit of the leader, as did Al-Qadisiya. On the other hand, Al-Jahra revived its survival hopes with two consecutive victories, contrasting with Kazma, which faced disappointment by failing to secure a spot in the Big Six and losing its eighth match in the competition.

Hurricanes beat Blues, take lead in Super Rugby Pacific standings

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, March 9, (AP): Josh Moorbey scored two first-half tries while Kini Naloholo scored one and set up another as the Wellington-based Hurricanes beat the Auckland-based Blues 29-21 Saturday to stay unbeaten after three rounds in Super Rugby Pacific.

The wingers profited from being at the ends of a very skillful Hurricanes backline in which scrumhalf Cam Roigard and fullback Reuben Love were outstanding. Roigard made line breaks on the fringe of a strong Hurricanes scrum and in the loose and Love stretched the Auckland defense with kicks and long passes. Both were also part of a strong Hurricanes defensive effort.

The Hurricanes and Blues both came into the match with two wins and the Hurricanes now move to the top of the points table near the end of the third round.

The Blues won matches against the Fijian Drua and Dunedin-based Highlanders while the Hurricanes had a harder task and won matches in Australia over the Western Force and Queensland Reds.

"We came back from Australia with two wins under our belt and we went over there trying to accomplish that," Moorbey said. "Coming into this New Zealand derby we wanted to continue our good start this season so taking the win was massive. They're a big pack

RUGBY

and they battled hard. It was just a massive effort from the boys on defense."

The Blues suffered a major setback when they simultaneously lost full-back Zarn Sullivan and winger A.J. Lam to injuries early in the match. Going into the match, the Blues chose a 6-2 split on the bench with six forwards and two backs. That meant they had no back reserves left after replacing the injured players.

Scrumhalf Taufa Funaki played most of the match on the wing and backrower Hoskins Sotutu had to move to the wing when Mark Tele'a was injured late in the match.

The Hurricanes stung the Blues with tries to Moorbey in the 13th and 26th minutes.

Torino slow Napoli good run Teen prodigy Yamal steers Barcelona to victory over Mallorca

BARCELONA, Spain, March 9, (AP): Teenager Lamine Yamal curled in a second-half goal to grab Barcelona a 1-0 win over Mallorca at home.

Yamal's exquisite shot from just inside the corner of the area for the 73rd-minute goal salvaged an otherwise lackluster Barcelona from a second straight draw.

It was the 16-year-old Yamal's sixth goal across all competitions in his first full season with Barcelona. He's set several milestones for his young age, such as the youngest player to debut and to score in the Spanish league, to score for Spain, and to start in the Champions League.

"I was trying to keep their left back occupied, but since they gave the space I went for my shot," Yamal said about his goal. "Now we have to think about the Champions League, where we face one of the most important games of the season."

Coach Xavi Hernández kept Rob-

SOCCER

ert Lewandowski on the bench until the final half hour, resting him before Tuesday's Champions League match against Napoli to see which advances to the quarterfinals. Their first game in Italy ended 1-1.

The other standout player for Barcelona was 17-year-old center back Pau Cubasí, who excelled again with his defending and passing.

Mallorca goalkeeper Predrag Rajkovic kept the game close. He saved a penalty taken by Ilkay Gundogan in the first half after Raphinha was fouled in the area by José Copete. Rajkovic also got just enough of a touch of a Yamal shot to push it onto his bar early in the second half.

Raphinha would eventually need to be substituted in the first half, apparently for the knock to his leg by Copete that was penalized.

Xavi said Raphinha did not appear to be seriously injured and he expected him to be good to go against Napoli.

Barcelona was without first-choice midfielders Pedri González and Frenkie de Jong after they were injured in the previous round's scoreless draw at Athletic Bilbao.

Mallorca, which will play Athletic Bilbao in the Copa del Rey final next

Sri Lanka cruise past Bangladesh to win series

SYLHET, Bangladesh, March 9, (AP): Opener Kusal Mendis hit a brilliant 86 and pacer Nuwan Thushara added a career-best 5-20 including a hat trick as Sri Lanka cruised to a 28-run victory over Bangladesh in the final T20 to win the series 2-1 on Saturday.

Sri Lanka won the first match by three runs but Bangladesh leveled with an eight-wicket victory.

Mendis' 55-ball knock that included six fours and as many sixes single-handedly drove the side to 174-6 and then Thushara, playing his first game in the series, ripped through top-order in a swing bowling display.

"This is our last series before the World, so we take a lot of confidence from this," Sri Lanka captain Wanindu Hasaranga said.

"It's Thushara's first game this series, he bowled really well," he added. "This is a good series win for us and just think our bowling attack was too good for them."

Rishad Hossain hit seven sixes, the highest by a Bangladesh batter in this format in an innings, for his 30-ball 53 as Bangladesh recovered from 32-6 to be all out for 146 in 19.4 overs.

Thushara, the replacement of injured Matheesha Pathirana, took four wickets in his two overs including a hat trick to ruin Bangladesh's hope to seal its first-ever T20 series victory against Sri Lanka.

Dhananjaya de Silva broke through with the wicket of Liton Das (7) and then in next over, Thushara joined the party. He removed captain Najmul Hossain Shanto (1) and Towhid Hridoy by rattling their stump before

trapping Mahmudullah for leg-before. Mahmudullah reviewed in vain as Thushara became the fourth Sri Lankan bowler to achieve a hat trick in this format.

In his next over, Thushara got the better of Soumya Sarkar, and Hasanranga dismissed Jaker Ali (4) to leave Bangladesh 32-6.

"We have to be careful going forward how we play in the first six overs," Shanto said. "If you look at all three matches, we played some good cricket. Especially the way Rishad, Taskin (Ahmed) and Mahedi (Hasan) bat-

CRICKET

ted, really happy for them."

Earlier when Bangladesh put Sri Lanka into bat first for the third time in a row in the series, Kusal Mendis led the charge with the second best 19 not out coming from Dasun Shanaka.

Fast bowler Taskin Ahmed, who claimed 2-25, broke through with the wicket of De Silva.

Kusal put on 34 with Kamindu Mendis (12) and 59 with Hasaranga (15) to lay the platform.

Taskin took the crucial wicket of Kusal to deny him the century. His dismissal also sparked a mini-collapse, denying Sri Lanka a chance to take its total past 200.

The teams will also play three one-day internationals and two test matches to conclude the tour.

month, was left in 15th place.

Antonio Sanabria scored with a spectacular bicycle kick to give Torino a 1-1 draw at Napoli in Serie A and slow the Neapolitan club's good run since coach Francesco Calzona took over.

The reigning champion has been dogged by inconsistency but has stabilized since Calzona joined the club in February.

Napoli won its last two games, including a 2-1 win over Juventus, and Friday's game was Calzona's fifth without defeat.

However, he will doubtless be angry at his side for throwing away all three points after taking the lead in the 61st minute thanks to Khvicha Kvaratskhelia's fourth goal in three games.

The Georgian forward started a move near the halfway line and, after feeding Mário Rui on the right, kept running to stab home Rui's cross.

Paraguayan substitute Sanabria equalized three minutes later when he rose acrobatically inside the six-yard box to score with a sublime overhead kick.



Barcelona's Lamine Yamal (right), duels for the ball with Mallorca's Manu Morlanes during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Barcelona and Mallorca at the Olímpic Lluís Companys stadium in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)



The winner Italy's Federica Brignone celebrates after an alpine ski, women's World Cup giant slalom, in Are, Sweden. (AP)

Sports

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Man Utd revive CL qualification hopes

'Now every game is a final'

MANCHESTER, England, March 9, (AP): Bruno Fernandes and Marcus Rashford converted first-half penalties won by Alejandro Garnacho as Manchester United beat Everton 2-0 on Saturday to recover from back-to-back Premier League losses that had jeopardized its Champions League qualification hopes.

Fernandes tucked away his spot kick in the 12th minute for his first home goal since August after James Tarkowski clipped the leg of Garnacho just inside the area.



Manchester United's head coach Erik ten Hag shouts during an English Premier League soccer match between Manchester United and Everton at the Old Trafford stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

The Portugal midfielder then handed over penalty duties to Rashford after Garnacho went down under a rash lunge by Ben Godfrey. Rashford slotted his kick into the corner after a stuttered run-up to double the lead in the 36th.

Sixth-place United, which was coming off losses to Fulham and Manchester City in the league, trimmed the gap to Tottenham in fifth to three points. Spurs, which plays fourth-place Aston Villa in a crucial match on Sunday, has two games in hand on United.

United will be hoping the Premier League has five places - rather than the current four - in next season's expanded Champions League format. An extra berth will be determined by English clubs' overall performance in European competition this season.

"Now every game, the manager said, is a final," said Garnacho, a 19-year-old Argentine winger who

SOCCER

was a persistent danger on the counter-attack. "We have to win every single game, we're Manchester United."

Everton, which started the match at Old Trafford five points clear of the relegation zone, had more shots than United (23 to 15) but many were from long range and few seriously troubled goalkeeper Andre Onana.

Sean Dyche's team is now winless in 11 league games stretching back to Dec 16, while its situation could soon get worse if the Premier League decides to hand the club another sanction for breaching the competition's financial rules. Everton has already been docked six points this season for overspending.

Meanwhile, New Manchester United co-owner Jim Ratcliffe is quickly moving ahead with plans to build a



Everton's Beto (right), is challenged by Manchester United's Diogo Dalot during an English Premier League soccer match between Manchester United and Everton at the Old Trafford stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

"world class" stadium for the storied English soccer team.

The British billionaire, who last month bought a 27.7% stake in the club, has made redeveloping or rebuilding its iconic Old Trafford stadium one of his key objectives.

On Friday, United said it assembled

a task force including World Athletics president Sebastian Coe and former player Gary Neville.

"The north-west of England has a greater concentration of major football clubs than anywhere else in the world, yet we don't have a stadium on the scale of Wembley, the Nou Camp

or Bernabéu," Ratcliffe said. "We will not be able to change that on our own, which is why this task force is so important to help us seize this once-in-a-century opportunity."

The task force also includes Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham and Trafford Council chief executive

Sara Todd.

Coe was also the organizing chair for the 2012 London Olympics.

"Throughout my career in sport, I have seen the potential for stadiums to become focal points for strong communities and catalysts for social and economic development," he said.

'Don't leave boxing'

Joshua knocks out MMA star Ngannou in 2nd round of one-sided boxing match

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, March 9, (AP): Former heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua stopped Francis Ngannou in the second round on Saturday, dominating his matchup with the ex-UFC heavyweight champ.

Joshua floored Ngannou in the first round and again in the second with right hands at Kingdom Arena in Riyadh. He finished the fight with one punch immediately after the second 10-count, apparently knocking Ngannou out cold with an unblocked right hand.

The 37-year-old Ngannou eventually got up to his stool, but the mixed martial arts star was dazed and clearly hurt after his encounter with Joshua (28-3, 25 KOs) in only his second pro boxing match. Joshua and Ngannou embraced and talked afterward.

BOXING

"I told him he shouldn't leave boxing," Joshua said. "He can do well. Remember, he's two fights in, and he's fought the best. He can go a long way if he stays dedicated, but it's up to him."

The fight world had optimism for Ngannou after he gave an impressive performance in a near-upset of Tyson Fury last October, losing by a narrow split decision. Joshua quickly proved there's no substitute for years of boxing experience - and possibly revealed just how lightly Fury treated his bout with Ngannou last fall.

Joshua came out to control the distance with his famously sharp jab, but Ngannou got in a few good shots early. Joshua abruptly floored Ngannou with less than a minute left in the first round, firing a straight right hand through Ngannou's patchy guard.



British former world champion Anthony Joshua (left), and MMA fighter Francis Ngannou fight during the heavyweight boxing showdown at Kingdom Arena in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. (AP)

Ngannou went down again from an unblocked right hand in an exchange early in the second. He got up shakily, and Joshua quickly ended the punishment.

Joshua has held multiple world heavyweight titles in a successful professional career following his gold medal-winning performance in the London Olympics, but the Englishman had to rebuild his reputation after losing his three title belts in the first of consecutive losses to Oleksandr Usyk in 2021 and 2022.

Now 34, Joshua won his last three fights before accepting this meeting with Ngannou, whose talent and name recognition turned it into a big-money matchup.

Ngannou began his pro boxing career last year after a mixed martial arts career in which he claimed the UFC's heavyweight belt in 2021 and defended it in 2022.

The Cameroon native then walked away from the UFC due to contractual disagreements and signed an innovative deal with the Professional Fighters League. Although he has yet to fight for the rival promotion, Ngannou is expected to take on PFL heavyweight champ Renan Ferreira later this year.

But Ngannou was enticed by the big paydays of pay-per-view boxing, and he put on an outstanding performance in his ring debut while fighting heavyweight kingpin Fury to a split-decision loss in Saudi Arabia. Ngannou knocked down Fury in the third round and challenged him throughout a defeat that showed Ngannou was much more dangerous than any other MMA fighter that has made the recently fashionable move into boxing.

The result sparked interest in Ngannou as a legitimate contender in the heavyweight division, which has been repeatedly hurt by promotional clashes and ego-driven disputes during an era featuring impressive talents who haven't fought each other as often as they should.

First place on the line as Liverpool host Man City match

Klopp pays tribute to Pep ahead of Anfield showdown

Brignone stays in contention

ARE, Sweden, March 9, (AP): Federica Brignone keeps hanging on to her slim chance of winning the women's World Cup giant slalom title this season.

But the Italian skier prefers not to think about it.

Brignone reduced the gap to GS standings leader Lara Gut-Behrami to 95 points Saturday by winning the penultimate race, but she still needs something extraordinary to happen at next week's World Cup finals in Saalbach, Austria if she is to overtake the Swiss star.

A race win is worth 100 points, so Brignone will only take the globe if she wins that race and Gut-Behrami does not finish in the top 15.

"No, it's too much, but this is for the show," Brignone said about making up the points difference in the last race. "I will just try to do my best and I just want to enjoy

SKIING

this as I did today - with no thinking about cups or anything else, just skiing."

Brignone won the GS title in 2019-20, the same season she also took the overall championship.

On Saturday, the Italian used a blistering second run to win the race and stay in contention for the discipline title.

Brignone needed to gain at least 36 points more than Gut-Behrami did, and managed to do so with the help of first-run leader Sara Hector.

The Olympic GS champion from Sweden finished runner-up and pushed Gut-Behrami into third position. The Swiss star would have locked up the title if she had finished second. But after winning four races this season, Gut-Behrami is still in a favorable position to clinch it next week.

Mikaela Shiffrin sat out the race after recovering from knee injury, but the American star plans to return to racing at Sunday's slalom.

Gut-Behrami is also a strong favorite to win the overall title since Shiffrin didn't race in the past six weeks, and the Swiss standout holds healthy leads in the downhill and super-G standings.

The winner of the 2016 overall and four super-G titles, Gut-Behrami was reluctant to think about the finals, where she can earn

four crystal globes, the traditional awards in World Cup ski racing.

"I'm going home first and that is a super feeling," Gut-Behrami said. "I don't like this weather, the last two-and-a-half weeks, it was always dark. Before I think of Saalbach, I rather look forward to a few days off at home."

The only discipline Gut-Behrami cannot win is the slalom, where Shiffrin is likely to secure the season title upon her return on Sunday. It would be the American's record-equaling eighth slalom globe.

On Saturday, Brignone was 1.16 off the lead after the first leg. But with a gutsy all-or-nothing run, the Italian posted the fastest second-run time for her 11th career GS win.

"The first run, I was not really happy with my run, I started really bad, I had no confidence," Brignone said. "In the second run, I said to myself, 'OK, you have to try everything.' I tried my best and I'm so grateful and proud of what I did."

Gut-Behrami dropped to third after posting only the 16th-fastest time in the final run.

"Today I didn't have the right feeling in both runs. I cannot complain about the podium, but the skiing was not what I wanted," she said. "It's not an excuse, but this is not my favorite snow, a bit spring-like. I have a good feeling for a lot of things, but not for soft snow."

Opening the floodlit race in light snowfall, Hector was near-flawless in an attacking first run on a course she skied "countless times" when she visited the local ski gymnasium in her junior years.

"It didn't feel so easy, but it was good to start first," said Hector, who was chasing her sixth career GS win and first since triumphing in Jasná, Slovakia in January.

Weather conditions improved for the second run, but the race jury had already decided by then to lower the start gate, which reduced run times by more than 10 seconds.

Austrian skier Katharina Liensberger had a nasty crash in the first run when she skied through a gate and lost balance, then fell backward with her helmet hitting the snow. Liensberger, the 2021 slalom world champion, stayed down for a minute, but ultimately stood up.

LIVERPOOL, England, March 9, (AP): Jurgen Klopp can't figure out how he has a winning record against Pep Guardiola, whom he called the "best manager in the world."

The glowing tribute served as a prelude to Sunday's highly anticipated match between Liverpool and Manchester City at Anfield with first place on the line in the English Premier League.

It will be the 30th meeting between Klopp and Guardiola - and potentially the final one given that the German manager is leaving Liverpool after this season.

"In this moment, I just got told now, I have a positive record against Pep. I have no clue how that happened, to be honest," Klopp said Friday at a news conference.

In their 29 head-to-head matchups,

SOCCER

Klopp's teams - Liverpool and Borussia Dortmund - have won 12 and lost 11 against Guardiola's teams - City and Bayern Munich. Six ended in draws.

City won the treble of trophies last season - the Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League. City has won the league title five times under Guardiola, including the past three.

"Pep is the best manager in the world. I have a really good life being not even close to that," he said.

Klopp knows he's no slouch, either. "I know I'm not bad. But you ask about the best and, for me, he is the best - bam," said Klopp, who restored a winning culture at Anfield - domestically and in Europe - after arriving in October 2015.

After Sunday's game, the teams could still meet in the FA Cup if they advance past their quarterfinals this month.

Guardiola was complimentary of his rival, as well.



Liverpool's head coach Jurgen Klopp attends a training session at the AXA Training Centre in Liverpool, England. (AP)